



LISTENING IN:
APPROACHING DIFFERENCE, MULTIPLICITY AND COLLECTIVITY THROUGH A PRACTICE
OF LISTENING IN DOCUMENTARY

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Kim Munro

BFinArt (Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne), GDipFT (Victorian College of the
Arts, University of Melbourne), MAppLing (Monash University), MA (La Trobe University).

School of Media and Communication

College of Design and Social Context

RMIT University

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DECLARATION

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE EXAMINERS

This dissertation includes images of the works I have made throughout this research and links to the projects I discuss in Chapter Two: *Events of the Alone*, Chapter Three: *Why do the ducks not fly south?* and Chapter Four: *The Park*. These works can be viewed or listened to at any time during, before or after reading the chapters.

Additional documentation for work discussed in each chapter can be seen on the website:
www.listeningin.me

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Parts of this PhD from chapters two, three and four have been published in the following articles:

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Munro, Kim. "From voice to listening: becoming implicated in multi-linear documentary". In *Critical Distance in Documentary Media*, edited by Gerda Cammaer, Blake Fitzpatrick and Bruno Lessard, 279–300 London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

_____. "Hybrid Practices and Voice-making in Contemporary Female Documentary Film". In *Female Authorship & Documentary Image*, edited by Anna Backman Rogers and Boel Ulfsdotter, 70–83. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

_____. "Listening as practice: a month in Ólafsfjörður". *Qualitative Research Journal*, 19, no. 1 (2019): 9–17. doi: 10.1108/QRJ-D-17-00022

_____. "Rethinking First-Person Testimony Through a Vitalist Account of Documentary Participation", *Frames Cinema Journal* 12: 1–15. doi: 2053-8812

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ABSTRACT

Documentary filmmaking has long been concerned with 'voice', a term used to speak both to how a film communicates as well as the contributions of those who participate in the film. However, there continues to be a paucity of attention in documentary studies to the strategies that documentarians employ to represent multiple voices while also ensuring that individual voices are heard.

This PhD addresses the practice of negotiating the tension of multiple and individual voices by foregrounding documentary's strategies for listening over those of speaking. Such a foregrounding has consequences for the practice and form, as well as for the politics of documentary.

The research inquiry is developed through a series of documentary experiments which examine experiences of aloneness, through spatial configurations of interactive and multi-screen works, to a site-specific walk and finally, a polyvocal installation. The methodology is informed by critical understandings of the neoliberal subject as a socially and politically isolated figure, and also phenomenological accounts of listening as an embodied and relational experience. Alongside these theoretical reflections, there is a self-reflexive charting of the evolution of my practice from the initial experiments in eliciting participatory voices to the reconceptualisation of documentary as a space for listening.

As a constellation of creative artefacts, descriptions of process, reflective meditations and theoretical insights on place, self and others, this PhD argues that when we attend more closely to the act of listening, documentary presents a way of being with, rather than, simply knowing others.

PREFACE

Prelude to Listening



Figure 1. Ólafsfjörður, Iceland. January 2017.

I recall a sonic moment in Iceland. It was a daily walk in the cold, across the bridge leading to the tunnel out of town. Stopping to look at the frozen water, I heard the tiny clacking sounds of plates of ice that had broken free from the surface, a floe. Part lake, part river and part estuary. The slight shifts in the current made them collide, forcing small sounds from their contact. One dipped and the other rose to overlap an edge. And then they went their separate ways. Not so much bobbing as drifting within limited space. A clement sound audible only due to the otherwise muted auditory space — dampened and heavy with cold and moisture. I recall juxtapositions of ice plates as I contemplate how these words go together, clacking and abutted and drifting here on page and screen. How they are transformed by their collaborative voicing and how they are listened to.

INTRODUCTION

I began this PhD with a practice that spanned across art and documentary making, interrupted by a period of studying linguistics. I was interested in how language is used to construct meaning, create individual and group identity, and how it evidences unconscious and structural inequalities. Studying how we speak with each other can reveal how a few dominant voices hold the most power. These dominant voices are reflective of majoritarian discourses enabled by gender, race, class and other determiners of privilege. I also have an acute awareness of who gets to speak and who is heard from growing up as the youngest and only girl in a family environment dominated by talk of supermarket empires, cars and football. And although I find my theoretical and creative home beyond the social sciences, this training has given me some understanding of language and communication as tools to illuminate that which is often overlooked, or more significantly, that which is not listened to.

With a background in art and photography, I developed a fascination with documentary filmmaking and its potential for translating stories into forms that might reach broader audiences, making use of imagery, and also language, sound, rhythm, and music. My creative practice, my writing and also my teaching experience, have increasingly compelled me towards considering how documentary is a relational tool for engaging, learning and making sense of the world — with other people, places and things. However, more than a relational practice, documentary enables the filmmaker to reflect critically on and question how knowledge is instrumentalised through audiovisual strategies and rhetorical devices that not only reflect the world, but also to some extent shape it. Documentary forms part of a broader dialogue with the topic it frames and references. That is to say, rather than constructing a world, documentary participates in how audiences come to know the world and their relationship to it. A practice of documentary can therefore model other ways of knowing through creating alternative spaces for audiences to encounter the world. This practice involves questioning how documentary communicates as well as how practitioners and audiences can use it as a tool for listening.

The vignette in the preface evokes a memory of my time in Iceland during this PhD research. It is the first of many descriptions throughout this dissertation where I write from the sites of my practice, and where I find myself as something of an 'outsider'. These passages can be read as thick (auto)ethnographic descriptions although I don't necessarily draw on the theoretical framework of ethnography throughout my research. Writing the sounds of the ice echoes an account I could give

of the process of this PhD as a gradual movement from the dominant towards the smaller and more subtle voices of the world. Expanding on this, the trajectory traces a shift from the individual towards the collective. Writing the vignette at the culmination of my research, I was also struck by the sonorous materiality of words when spoken aloud. And it is not without an awareness of contradiction that so much of this work is predicated on the written and spoken word as I simultaneously make a case for a shift from 'speaking' to 'listening', from the 'visual frame' to the 'audio sample' and from 'singularity' to 'multiplicity'. While this dissertation, by its necessity, is written as a chronology, I suggest that it can be read with a sense of how all the components— images, words, ideas, borrowed concepts, sensings, videos, sounds, sites visited, humans and other-than humans— all relate in considering documentary as a shifting constellation of contingencies and urgencies.

Project description

This PhD thesis is presented in two parts: this written which contains embedded images from the various experiments and works I have made throughout the research, and also a website. The website, hyperlinked at the beginning of each discussion of the work, contains both the finished works as well as some of the documentation, structured through a chronological and iterative progression of how the ideas and projects have evolved in dialogue with each other. In this way, there is an evolution of the concepts as well as the work. The works I have made throughout this research have all been exhibited publicly without any exegetical explication. They function as both research and autonomous artefacts. Making the documentary projects in this research has resulted in the theoretical insights I write about which in turn feed back into the practice. In this way, the practice has led the research. The writing consists of six parts: *Introduction*, *Dialogues*, *Fields*, *Presencing*, *Translating* and *Conclusions*. Each title refers to specific theoretical concepts I have explored through the practice of the work. I will further discuss the chapter outline in detail towards the end of this introduction.

.

Rationale for the enquiry

Documentary has traditionally been a communicative tool to frame and impart knowledge about a subject matter, prompted by both intrinsic and extrinsic imperatives. According to Paula Rabinowitz, documentary's "purpose is to speak and confer value on the objects it speaks about".¹ Documentary elevates and legitimises its subject matter and certain voices but in structuring its material, also

chooses what to exclude. The documentary object, in its hermetically sealed and often linear form, proffers what Trinh T Minh-ha has referred to as a “totalizing knowledge”.² This documentary knowledge is transmitted through its ‘voice’, a term first introduced in Bill Nichols’s influential essay, “The Voice of Documentary” (1983). For Nichols, the ‘voice’ of documentary is how it frames an argument or perspective through its sound, image, editing and the way the material is organised.³ Primarily, in Nichols’s schema, ‘voice’ represents authorship.⁴ In his most recent version of this essay, Nichols writes, “Technologies change, but the need to have a voice with which to address others, a distinct way of seeing our shared world, remains a constant”.⁵

According to Kate Nash, ‘voice’ in documentary reflects the “changing relationships surrounding documentary production and consumption”.⁶ Nash claims, however, that discussions of voice are complicated by the broad interpretations of how it is used, distinguishing between voice as authorship and voice as social participation.⁷ While I do speak to the concept of voice as authorship, this research primarily focuses on an expanded sense of voice as social participation. The continued focus on voice as speaking highlights the ongoing dominance of the assumed ‘active’ function of communication over the receptive function of listening — assumed to be ‘passive’. With so much emphasis on speaking through the documentary, it is essential for documentary makers to enable ways for these voices to be heard. More than speaking, telling, arguing and informing, documentary should also be considered a practice and model of listening.

This research explores documentary practice and the production of artefacts through the trajectory from speaking to listening by examining how a practice of listening in documentary foregrounds multiplicity and difference in order to reconstitute a sense of the collective. Listening in presents a documentary practice that carves out spaces and makes incursions into prescribed ways of doing documentary, as a way to make visible multivalent relationships and draw attention to multiple perspectives which enable a more nuanced understanding of difference. Focused listening is an ethical imperative to reconsider our positions as implicated within a broader ecology of existence. This can be understood through how we occupy spaces with each other alongside our difference and similarity — across species, class, educational privilege, nationhood — and how we simultaneously affect and are affected by others. This practice moves beyond the human-centred conception of voice that needs to make itself heard, towards those that might be silent, incomprehensible or disagreeable. These include the environmental, the other-than-human, the opinions we disagree with and the ones traditionally not afforded the space to be heard. Strategies of documentary practice

that foreground listening can engender a closer listening to the world and others. This practice requires listening to what is both said and unsaid. Listening can attune one towards another to reveal less dominant, incomplete and multiple perspectives. This research explores ways in which documentary making can shift from speaking the world to us to one which creates spaces to be among. Rather than transmitting knowledge, the documentaries that I have created in this research position the audience within spaces to co-exist. Through rethinking voice as listening, I interrogate the nature of listening as both an active proposition as well as a matter of urgency. If we can listen to voices that are not immediately understandable, articulate, and familiar, then we can listen to and stimulate difference. In a shift away from the individual act of speaking, listening can, therefore, reconstitute a collective.

The here and the now

The times we live in demand a rethinking of strategies that engage with, mediate and translate the emergent issues of the world. While advances in civil rights characterise the period of this research, these are also countered by global swings to the right and the continuation of cruel regimes. Votes on marriage equality and the legalisation of abortion in Ireland marked the past few years. In Kerala, India, up to three million women formed a human chain to protest an ongoing ban on entering a temple after being granted permission from the government, while also encountering outrage from many men.⁸ While Germany accepted 1.2 million refugees in 2015–16,⁹ Australia intensified its cruel treatment of asylum seekers in offshore detention centres on the islands of Manus and Nauru. Systemic and insidious racism and violence against women, children, minorities, and people of colour continue to haunt so-called-developed countries. The mass displacement of people due to war, famine, religion or discrimination has continued to present problems with no foreseeable solutions. Many jobs are being automated, and in the meantime companies like Amazon are fitting wristbands to workers to monitor the speed at which they work, in effect turning them into machines.¹⁰ Increasingly, people find themselves working with increasing precarity and underemployment.¹¹ Climate change is approaching a tipping point, after which, interventions to reduce emissions will prove futile.¹² Mental health issues including depression and anxiety are on the rise¹³ and people are increasingly lonelier.¹⁴ The catalogue of grim is writ large. I iterate this roll-call of maladies as a way to contextualise my practice, proposing that the micropractices of documentary making can act as interventions and model processes much needed in both citizenship and politics.

Since early filmic experiments in framing, rendering and representing the world, documentary has continued to evolve through making use of technological innovations. In doing so, documentary has charted its parallel trajectory with technology in order to address contemporaneous issues, tell stories and challenge ideologies. To study documentary is to understand the instruments that make meaning through reflecting our lived experiences. However, known routes must be re-examined, reinvented, disrupted and then reconfigured. We should interrogate the doing and the means of doing to gauge where we are, and who we are, in this place and at this time. Jacques Rancière suggests that we should always assess the particular moment that we find ourselves in as a way to “reconsider the framework we use to ‘see’ things and map situations, to move within this framework or get away from it”.¹⁵ Rancière asserts that this framework should guide how we apply tools and knowledge to locate ourselves within the political and cultural moment that is the “here and now”.¹⁶ What Rancière is suggesting is that we should always consider the instrumentalising forces and mechanisms that both shape us, and that we in turn perpetuate in our *Weltanschauung* or world view.

Documentary frames

This PhD research interrogates documentary practices that are not codified through a formula dependent on narrative pleasure, seductive affect and a spectacle of difference. Rather than a blunt-edged method of known approaches, I claim a way of doing documentary that deals with less perceptible relationships. This is a practice that uses tactics that can wedge their way into dominant discourses, disrupting and calling attention to themselves and challenging the way documentary speaks its knowledge and constructs a world.

This dissertation makes much mention of the word ‘documentary’, and while documentary has been a contested term,¹⁷ it is useful in how it pertains to a field of enquiry or discipline of studies. However, it also comes with its own set of expectations of what it looks like, or how it functions as a cultural or epistemological artefact, and increasingly, as a form of entertainment. More relevant documentary definitions speak to the shifting terrain of the field. John Corner writes, “the term documentary is always much safer when used as an adjective rather than a noun... To ask ‘is this a documentary project?’ is more useful than to ask ‘is this film a documentary?’”¹⁸ For Corner, documentary is a broader proposition than the film as artefact and its associated categorical definitions. Pooja Rangan further articulates documentary as a term that constantly needs to be reimagined not as “a stable set of conventions, ethical motivations, or ground of reference but instead an evolving and

heterogeneous constellation".¹⁹ Alex Juhasz and Alisa Lebow cite a roll-call of methods that are immediately identifiable as tropes of the form, such as the talking heads interview, or the B-roll shots which are transitions in between the interview. However, they also acknowledge these conventions are some of the least compelling strategies.²⁰ Instead, Juhasz and Lebow deny the need for any "formal element, or set of elements to which all documentaries adhere, just as there is no set of aesthetic characteristics".²¹

Documentary filmmaking in the commercially funded landscape requires outcomes to be prematurely predicted while employing familiar tropes such as journeys, stakes, transformation and tidy resolutions. Of course, documentary encompasses many strategies and forms that exceed reductive categorisation. There are also documentaries that disrupt or challenge conventions which do find their way into mainstream distribution in order to share experiences and call attention to important issues, topics and stories. Looking beyond the mainstream towards the margins of documentary production, we find a proliferation of forms and organisational strategies that probe how knowledge is framed and communicated, and how relationships are understood. According to Juhasz and Lebow, these can include:

... spatial, graphic, interactive, atemporal, aesthetic, and abstract associations. They can be motivated by inquiry, using experimentation and open-ended analysis to express associative logics and heterogeneous relationship to genre. They can also be pedagogically oriented, using styles of persuasion closely associated with the academic, journalistic, or third personal essay, proposing clear argument.²²

Along with these ways of organising the material, forms that combine traditional and new technology continue to provide imaginative ways to shape and present documentary to audiences.

Documentary's broad palette ranges across an ever-mutating field of forms that encompass online spaces, gallery installation, mobile media apps, site-specific and locative works, audio pieces, essayistic and hybrid fiction/nonfiction, theatre, live events and virtual, augmented and mixed reality. The works that I discuss within this research fit broadly within the field of expanded documentary. This is a documentary practice that can exist beyond and in spite of the commercial market, and that can find an audience but is not dependent on one to dictate its structure. It is a practice that may benefit from financial investment but can also exist without it, one that insists on being heard despite increasing challenges and constraints. I also make a case for documentary's existence and ability to flourish beyond conventionally sanctioned spaces of exhibition, distribution and spectatorship. While

acknowledging there is no limit to what critical issue, question or wicked problem is worthy of documentary treatment, for documentary to be able to address situations of urgency on a human and environmental scale, we must consider both available and emergent practices. In saying this, we need documentary forms that respond to the subject matter through finding alternative methods of challenging, translating and representing phenomena in ways that can reconstitute spaces for engagement. And more so, that can inscribe new strategies for being *in* and *with* the world.

In staking out a territory for where my PhD research is situated, I draw on a tradition of feminist film and documentary practice that feels evermore relevant in disrupting known paths and assumed ways of thinking, evidencing how the cultural artefacts that we interact with shape our perceptions. Rather than relying on any defining characteristics or strategies, feminist documentary makers have been concerned with both the representation of female lives on screen as well as presenting alternative ways of constructing these representations. In her foundational essay from 1973, "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema", Claire Johnston claimed the uninterrogated depiction of reality on screen is bound up with the association of the "truth" of the camera with patriarchy and logic.²³ For Johnston, meaning should be constructed and communicated explicitly rather than expecting the means of production or inherent value of the subject matter to be evident in the film. Although speaking predominantly about narrative cinema, Johnston claimed that "New meanings have to be created by disrupting the fabric of the male bourgeois cinema within the text of the film".²⁴ This intervention requires a new language. Expanding on Johnston's essay, E. Anne Kaplan considers the debates between the textual strategies within the film and the "institutional context"²⁵ including the production, distribution, and exhibition which can address the way the audience member reads the film.

Although written in 1983, many of the claims Kaplan makes about the contradictions of feminist and alternative practices are still relevant in systems and institutions dominated by patriarchal, neo-liberal capitalist and realist approaches to representing the world.²⁶ Kaplan notes the recurring ideological cul-de-sacs that the documentary filmmaker finds themselves in: A reliance on funding while opposing the systems that provide this same funding; using strategies that are unpopular among audiences accustomed to narrative structures and commercial films; and limited viewers through niche art-house distribution. While documentary makers may seek to disrupt institutions and systems, often they end up speaking only to audiences that share their aesthetics and values.²⁷ My PhD research draws on a feminist lineage in considering contemporary documentary theory which

emphasises the principles of non-dominant, participatory and independent production which exists in the margins *between* disciplines and forms.²⁸

My documentary practice exists within a field which challenges the hegemony of mainstream documentary filmmaking that purports to know and communicate the world. In situating my practice, I draw on Patricia Zimmermann's ongoing reach into independent and emergent, non-linear, digital and participatory forms of documentary. These documentary works occupy public and temporary spaces, are heterogeneous in form, employ a range of aesthetic strategies, and foreground affirmative difference and resistance.²⁹ Zimmermann claims that documentary that has unhinged itself from commercial constraints and dominant discourses are "resolutely works of hope" which "can dislodge spectators, ideas and pessimism".³⁰ The idea of hope is revolutionary in a medium so often predicated on the concept of the 'victim', as Brian Winston asserts,³¹ or as Rangan suggests, one that exists for and because of "disenfranchised human beings".³² Rather than re-inscribing problems, documentary can also offer hope through what posthuman theorist Rosi Braidotti calls the contradiction of "affirmative politics", offering "sustainable alternatives" through engagement in critical theory while resisting the overwhelming tenor of despair of the current moment.³³

More broadly, Zimmermann presents documentary as a shape-shifting and "deterritorialized" project which occupies an essential position in democracy through action and pedagogy.³⁴ Not necessarily by way of subject matter and content, interventional opportunities can occur through documentary's methods of prying open closed spaces with multivalent strategies, combining lo-fi and hi-fi aesthetics and technologies that can disrupt expectations by their refusal to conform to established modes of production and spectatorship.³⁵ This research confirms documentary's imperative, not only as a means of producing and questioning knowledge, but also as a catalyst for facilitating relationships and initiating action. With Helen de Michiel, Zimmermann writes on their theory of "open space documentary":

Documentary is not so reductively, in this open space model, about changing lives or establishing deductive rhetorical arguments, but about opening up complex dialogues that reject binaries through polyphonies and which creates mosaics of multiple lenses on issues. Open space documentary is where technologies meet places meet people.³⁶

The concept of open space documentary proposes a terrain of documentary practice notable by three inter-related concepts: "the first, rejecting enclosure; the second, permeating borders; and the

third, abandoning entrenched positions in favor of dialogic positions".³⁷ This is a practice that shifts between documentary forms, mobilising affordances of the spatial, the linear and the non-linear. Methodologically, it eschews adherence to a particular approach, in preference to practices that respond to, rather than impose themselves upon the world. Open space documentary is defined by complexity, multiplicity and mutability. It celebrates heterogeneity through its use of new media technology and myriad practices that expand beyond traditional and heritage models of documentary making. For de Michiel and Zimmermann, technology is only part of the new paradigm of documentary making. The social relationships formed through practices allow new forms of participation and the disruption of traditional spaces of production, therefore enabling deeper engagement with communities and politics.³⁸ This approach to the broader project of documentary embodies an ideological tendency rather than a specific practice of making.

Methodology

The following section discusses some of the methods I have employed in this research, which as an assemblage, creates the methodology. The trajectory of this research begins from my initial and quite explicit focus on the subject of aloneness and the intention of making a series of related works. *What is aloneness when shared?* This topic underpins all the work in this dissertation as I move from a clear focus on aloneness as subject matter, towards a turn to listening as a process of challenging what aloneness and singularity mean. This section explores strategies of my documentary process, theoretical framing, and discussions on what practice-led research can bring to the field of documentary. Central to this research is why documentary is a relevant practice and how it can be regenerated to be a malleable and responsive form that leverages contemporary debates, problems, and urgencies while also using materials and technology that are accessible — speaking to, of and *through* the now. My documentary practice draws on philosophical, aesthetic and formal strategies from experimental film practices, socially situated media art, sound studies and interactive forms. Underpinning this research is the question of how documentary can keep reinventing and redefining itself in the context of emerging challenges, situations and contingencies.

Part of my methodology is informed by experimenting with a range of *forms* and *approaches*. In this research, I have employed some of the traditional methods of documentary production such as the interview (audio and video), observational footage and directed set-ups. I have also used a variety of other techniques to elicit participation and material such as user-generated content and poetic approaches to recording non-indexical images. I have mixed lo-fi with the high, turned interview

transcripts into music, and wandered ice and deserts with a microphone in hand. These creative strategies cannot be separated from the more expanded ones which include reading, analysing documentary projects, attending conferences and academic and reflective writing. I also include conversations I have had, chance encounters and material found in other interactions and moments. These strategies reflect a practice aligned with Braidotti's nomadic cartography which I will discuss further in the document.

Each project made throughout this research employs different strategies and forms, as per the subject matter. I have experimented with various ways of collecting, editing and recording as well as with sound, song, words, effects, and images. These works have ranged from the multi-linear online space to the site-specific and the gallery-based. Each work collects, constructs and composes alongside voice, speaking in different ways and enabling various approaches to the act of listening. These bring forth previously unheard propositions, draw attention to multiple forms of meaning making or challenge the equation of voice with a unified perspective. Each of these experiments move incrementally beyond a focus on speaking, opening up expanded spaces for listening. The projects presented and discussed in this dissertation are a combination of sketches, experiments, and excursions. Some are finished and have been publicly exhibited while others served as prompts for further works.

Much documentary theory has been written as textual analysis at a distance, rather than from within the process of making. It is therefore useful to begin by looking at how practice as research can be a meaningful way of explicating knowledge. To begin, I borrow from Jill Godmilow's experimentation with her documentary practice, underpinned by theory. In discussing finding ways to approach the limitations in her film *Far from Poland* (1984), she writes of how theoretical insights enabled her film to shift from a closed text to one that was an open, "incomplete, multivalent heteroglossic".³⁹ Godmilow foregrounds contributions from academics, which through the rigour of applied theoretical knowledge, might deepen a filmmaking practice. While there continues to be a tension between the creative making and the writing, the practitioner as researcher is also able to offer insights from within that can only be gained through the messy process of testing and failing.

Further expanding on the premise of maker-as-researcher, Ross Gibson suggests that the practitioner can dwell within an ecology of complex relationships, thereby being granted a perspective beyond one who only theorises with finished artefacts. This idea speaks particularly well to my documentary practice, and how I consider the evolving notion of voice and listening. Gibson writes:

Most of our inherited disciplines in the humanities, the social sciences and the sciences all espouse the dispassionate assessment of carefully distanced objects. But all around me now I see cultural phenomena and interactive relationships that are not objects, not stable or amenable to modelled analysis, not susceptible to distanced appreciation. Instead I see networked and interactive phenomena that are complex, dynamic, relational, ever altering and emergent.⁴⁰

Making documentary, while theorising about the process, is a way to experiment with complex relationships between material and ideas. To invoke Tim Ingold, the entanglement of all elements in this research is a braided process of becoming, where all material participates in a “continual coming into being and who, in laying a trail of life, contributes to its weave and texture”.⁴¹ This network or braid combines my documentary practice which includes making, writing and teaching, performing a deep connection between all of these practices.

I also draw on the reflective writing from my sites of practice. To be emplaced and in-place requires an openness to the conditions of physical and social spaces. This writing through the space has much in common with Jane Rendell's methodology of site-writing as a way of rethinking the distancing effect of objectivity as the preferred mode through which to write about art or architecture. For Rendell, writing from within the site is a political act that creates an intimacy with place, “in relation to and in dialogue *with* the work”.⁴² I expand upon Rendell's concept of site-writing in writing about my practice as furthering this intimacy with process, the participants and also with my own ways of making, thinking and sensing. This writing becomes a form of listening in developing a politics of attunement designed to respect the relationality of not only the geographical space but also the people, environment, beings and processes of making work. In writing from within the site of practice, we engage with the rhythms and raptures that emerge from being *within* or being alongside it.

In considering the *theoretical framing*, this research draws in part on posthumanist thinking. A documentary practice which responds to conditions and contexts in ever-changing ways calls to mind

Braidotti's idea of nomadic cartography, in which she suggests a framework for establishing one's own theoretical positioning.⁴³ For Braidotti, moving fluidly across spatial, temporal and theoretical spaces aligns with a situated ethics that takes note, listens and reformulates itself continuously, and in response to each encounter or subject. A nomadic and relational way of being with the world and with others is aligned with a documentary practice that always considers its own conditions of production, and that must constantly shift to allow for new and appropriate representational strategies to emerge. According to Braidotti, nomadic cartographies "need to be redrafted constantly; as such they are structurally opposed to fixity and therefore open to rapacious appropriation".⁴⁴ The nomadic approach to documentary is defined through constant reformulation and a multiplicity of modes in telling stories or translating experiences which embody affirmative action as a way to engage both critically and creatively. Through this practice, I question the conventional approaches to and forms of documentary that are pre-formulated rather than emergent from the context and subject matter.

Braidotti's concept of nomadic posthuman thought, described as "very much a philosophy of the outside, of open spaces and embodied enactments",⁴⁵ is characterised by a celebration of difference as a feminist concept which embraces positions counter to those that are dominant, mainstream and patriarchal. Braidotti suggests the posthuman is not nonhuman.⁴⁶ Instead, it reflects tendencies beyond the traditional dominant narrative endemic to positions of privilege, which invariably include: white, male, heterosexual, Western, educated and middle-class. Nomadic theory "destabilizes" the centre by challenging "mainstream subject positions" and how they interact with "marginal subjects".⁴⁷ Through a documentary practice which disrupts established ways of framing and experiencing subjects, the world can be experienced in unfamiliar ways. If conventional ways of making documentary comply with the dominant paradigm of constructing knowledge and argument, alternative modes of production foreground other ways of knowing and even model processes of unknowing through making visible (or audible) structures that shape our thinking. This concept might also be extended to any practice that does not assume the dominant position, methods, forms, and distribution. It might include documentary projects that find their centres, audiences and impact beyond institutions that often gatekeep distribution. Or it might take iterative and experimental process-based forms, replete with all their attempts and failures, which occupy ephemeral spaces through de-emphasising the artefact. This practice inhabits public spaces and actively questions how knowledge is constructed, voices are spoken and heard, and relationships are negotiated.

Contemporary documentary debates have interrogated how non-traditional documentary practices and forms can collapse distinctions between the maker, participant and audience. Rethinking these relationships challenge binary subject/object positions. Disrupting binaries codified through spectator/author relationships is challenging when making screen-based documentary work where the audience is at a distance and looking towards the object. That is to say, where the object is in turn speaking back at the audience. Having said this, throughout this dissertation I continually return to the question of how disrupting conventional forms, by using concepts from sound and listening, can destabilise fixed positions of self and other. This shift can reframe these binaries through a broader concept of non-dyadic space.

I also borrow from the field of sound studies in framing this research, through increasingly applying its lens to my documentary practice. In particular, I draw on the work of sound theorist Brandon LaBelle, who writes that interrogating the field of sound can open our perception to that which is beyond sight.⁴⁸ That is to say, sound allows for other ways of knowing and being. For LaBelle, sound presents a site which is both “associative and connective” in its propensity “to foster confrontations between one and another”.⁴⁹ Considering sound as both an important aspect of documentary making — as well as a way of thinking about the collective space we occupy — has resonance with concepts I borrow from political theorists such as Hannah Arendt, Rancière, Chantal Mouffe and Jean-Luc Nancy. The writings of these theorists provide lenses with which to approach notions of aloneness, collectivity and participatory democracy within a broader context of voice and listening.

I take inspiration from theorists and documentary practitioners who preference emergent forms, politics, and knowledge rather than established frameworks. Charted through digressions, loops, various geographical locations and micropractices throughout this research, I rethink different concepts of voice through foregrounding listening as both a physical practice as well as having deep ethical imperative. In examining voice through social participation, documentary forms, environmental presence and ideas of community, I trace a movement from that which is formulated, configured and transmitted through the act of speaking, to that which is listened to. Examining voice through the lens of listening embodies Kathleen Stewart’s idea of the “generativity” of “ordinary things”.⁵⁰ For Stewart, observing the resonances of what surrounds us, and might otherwise be overlooked, can reveal previously unknown phenomena. Stewart writes that these moments and observations are “loosened from any certain prefabricated knowledge” and “uncaptured by claimed meanings”,⁵¹ are suggestive of a shift beyond representation towards more dynamic presences. This

has implications for documentary practice and playful forays beyond narrative arcs, characterisations and the propensity to fix relationships through the filmed artefact.

Chapter outline

In the following section, I outline each chapter and what it contributes to the overall research.

Chapter One, *Dialogues* begins with a discussion of the initial subject of this research, aloneness, and explores how one might 'participate in aloneness'. This topic provides a way into thinking about the individual subject and the concept of voice as social participation. I take voice, not as a singular proposition but examine it as dialogue through the participatory requests by discussing various approaches to, and strategies of, eliciting creative participation. This chapter explores a number of my experiments framed by theories of participation and concepts of democracy in considering a common world. The works presented form a collection of sketches, attempts and investigations into how voice might be facilitated through conversation, negotiation and listening. As *Dialogues* correlates with the preliminary experimentation phase, it is somewhat distinct from the following three chapters that discuss specific projects. Through an interrogation of participatory practices, and the relationship to 'having a voice', I highlight how that which might unite might also separate.

In Chapter Two, *Fields*, I discuss how documentary artefacts can create spaces which constitute a world where multiple entities and voices can exist. This chapter discusses voice as plural, polyphonic and contrapuntal through two documentary projects I made. The first, *Events of the Alone* is an online interactive work produced from interviews, performance, text, music and video clips about aloneness, composed in the Korsakow program. The second work is *The last few months I thought I wanted to be alone, but now that I'm alone, I realise I don't want to be alone anymore*. This was a six-screen video installation that re-constructed the story of the last remaining flamingo in Australia, held at First Site Gallery in September 2016. In this chapter, I move from collecting voices to doing things with voices. Through a shift in emphasis from the act of speaking to one of listening, I conclude that the field of sound can present opportunities to rethink voice and how we can listen to that which is more subtle, variable, complex and different.

Chapter three, *Presencing*, takes listening as a methodology for documentary practice to focus on lesser heard voices. I write this chapter in response to the month-long residency I did in a remote town in the north of Iceland in January 2017. Through practices of listening to and in place, I employ an expanded concept of voice beyond the human towards the other-than-human. This chapter

includes reflective writing on my practice and the production of the site-specific audio documentary walk, *Why do the ducks not fly south?* I draw on posthuman concepts of voice that align with attunement to how the environment speaks and how it can be made audible. This work transforms a practice of listening as a documentary maker into an experience for the audience. The process of making this work leads into the final section of my research, asking how I can apply a practice of listening to contexts that are more conflictual and urgent.

Chapter Four, *Translating*, discusses the final project which consists of a short film, *The Park* and a collaborative exhibition, *Am I at Home?* Through the process of making these works, I discuss the implications of how documentary practice can rethink representation through listening to and translating the material in order to negotiate and reveal multiple perspectives around a social issue. These projects are centred around the forced eviction of a hundred and fifty long-term residents of a caravan park. The practice of listening in this context manifests through longitudinal filming of a traumatic event. *Translating* proposes listening not only as an individual process but one that can be translated into collective action.

Implications

Although this is a documentary project, it also has the broader intention of how listening relates to social, economic and political placemaking, and what these traumatic times demand. I make recurring reference to the individual neoliberal subject, as one who is shaped by structural forces as well as under compelling pressure to take responsibility for their position with all their 'successes' and 'failures'. To some extent within this project, I have equated voice and speaking with the expression of the individual subject position and listening as a movement towards more communal or collective subjectivities. Underpinning the practices and projects in this research is the underlying imperative to finding more attuned ways of sharing space with others which accounts for the inherent plurality.

Through exploring a range of approaches to documentary voicing, I examine how a turn to listening can reveal multiple ways of knowing, complex relationships and difference. Practices of listening include how the documentary filmmaker listens as well as strategies and forms which constitute the audience as a listening subject, affecting how we construct knowledge, and how we approach difference and another. In refocusing on the act of listening beyond speaking, we can become attuned to a sense of the collective. In concluding this research, I make a claim for a documentary

practice that can actively and consciously transform encounters with the many voices of the world through artefacts that engender listening. The knowledge emerging from this research has broader implications that are pedagogically informed, contribute to citizenship and account for the plurality of differences.

NOTES

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Figure 2. Lighthouses, Dungeness UK, May 2015.

CHAPTER ONE: DIALOGUES

Prologue

Winter again and I'm on my third bout of sickness. Temporarily clear-headed with pseudoephedrine, we drive to Canberra to see the James Turrell exhibition at the National Gallery. This time of year is notably cold in the capital with morning frosts legendary.

After seeing the exhibition, we spend the rest of the long weekend strolling around other immense monuments dedicated to culture and civilisation. Everything here is grand and sprawly. On the last day, we visit Old Parliament House as we're both fans of the woody interiors and mid-century bureaucratic furniture. Since the new Parliament House was built in 1992, the old one has been repurposed as a museum. We temporarily attach ourselves to a tour before ditching it in favour of the current exhibition "Living Democracy: the power of the people". Such hopes! From first glance, it has the hallmark look of a participatory project. Repeated sentence beginnings followed by ellipses to fill-the-blanks. This format calls to mind "Before I die...", a global project started by artist Candy Chang in New Orleans in 2011. After the death of someone close, Chang stencilled the phrase "Before I die I want to ..." on the side of an abandoned house and passers-by would write their own endings. It has since spread to seventy-six countries, inspiring multiple iterations.

Similarly, on the walls in the democracy exhibition are giant posters requesting input: "My voice counts because ..." and "I would fight for the right to...". Hand-written text ranges from the cynical (I hope), "I am a white man aged 18-99" to the literal, "I have the chalk", to the nationalistic; "love it or leave it" and the puerile "poop". While the exhibition intends to provoke thought on the nature of democracy, the space provided for participation seems isolated from democratic processes.

On the grounds outside the old Parliament House, smoke rises from the small campfire outside the Aboriginal Tent Embassy erected in 1972 to protest the denial of sovereignty. The site represents both a presence and a denial of voice. From 1972-1992, the embassy shifted nomadically around various locations in Canberra, eventually becoming a permanent fixture on these lawns. However, I'm uncertain what this now represents. Perhaps a cultural artefact; a symbolic structure; or even a historical footnote. But as a white Anglo-Australian, I also feel ill-equipped to speak on what it means.

Voice as social participation alludes to the democratic principle of inclusion. However, there is also a disconnect between the equation of 'having a voice' with that 'voice being heard'. In considering the above examples from a trip I took early on in my PhD, I noticed the dissonance between invitations to voice and the ability or desire to actually listen to those same voices. Was this because of the way the request was made, seemingly only invited into sanctioned spaces? In *The Human Condition* (1958), Arendt claims that, "Each time we talk about things that can be experienced only in privacy or intimacy, we bring them out into a sphere where they will assume a kind of reality which, their intensity notwithstanding, they could never have had before".¹ Whereas documentary can create a sphere where these voices can be heard, I also wondered what kind of participatory practices might elicit these "private" and "intimate" experiences. Also, how might the request be negotiated so that respondents and participants feel listened to?

In this chapter, I trace the first phase of my research, which contains experiments framed within concepts of participatory documentary practices and voice as social participation. My enquiries make a broad exploration of the subject of aloneness. The participatory methods with which I engage throughout this chapter draw on dialogue, underpinned by negotiation and listening. I focus on three types of participatory material collection: *negotiated requests* which draw on instructions and ideas from participatory art design, *interview as negotiation* which is informed by the social cartography concept known as the "Cartography of Controversies" and *user-generated content* which considers the participant's labour through using the task sharing website Airtasker. The experiments and investigations explore the premise that everyone is a potential participant if the request is framed in a way that engages their desire to participate. And further, that through engaging in participatory practices, documentary can be a tool for collective action. Exploring participation and its continual challenges leads me to consider how refusal and non-participation might also question notions of voice as agency and how others may or may not be heard.

On Voice

Voice announces our presence in the world. Voice is also integral to our relationship with fellow humans. It contributes to the formation of subjectivity and its outward expression, a metonym for agency and self-representation. More than linguistic signification, in *For More Than One Voice* (2005), Adriana Cavarero calls it the "vocal ontology of uniqueness".² Braidotti uses the very-human definition of voice as "the acoustic, sonic footprint of the soul".³ Echoing this bodily comparison,

psychoanalyst and philosopher Mladen Dolar likens the voice to “a fingerprint, instantly recognisable and identifiable”.⁴ The timbre, pitch and materiality or the ‘grain’⁵ of the voice vary. While one voice may soothe, others might grate, startle, assure or challenge. The voice can be either attached to a body or separated from it, disembodied or acousmatic.⁶ Proximity and relationship to the source of the voice also affect our experience. The embodied voice is accompanied by paralinguistic features: the way the eyes shift as we speak, the way the lips voice the words, and the hands that speak as loudly as the words themselves. It is both what is said, and how it is said, a combination of sound, meaning, and action.

At the beginning of this chapter, I recalled a memory of the democracy exhibition and the enduring presence of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy as an ongoing call to not only have a voice, but also to have it heard and valued.⁷ By value, I refer to Nick Couldry’s equation between voice and value. In *Why Voice Matters* (2010), Nick Couldry equates voice with the ability “give an account of oneself and their place in the world”.⁸ Couldry argues that equating voice with “value” acts as an intervention by disrupting the neoliberal equation of value with the economic market. It acknowledges other forms of value beyond the monetary. Couldry suggests that through valuing voice, a more generative and fluid interpretation of politics can be imagined. Couldry writes:

I offer ‘voice’ here as a connecting term that interrupts neoliberalism’s view of economics and economic life, challenges neoliberalism’s claim that its view of politics as market functioning trumps all others, enables us to build an alternative view of politics that is at least partly oriented to valuing processes of voice, and includes within that view of politics a recognition of people’s capacities for social cooperation based on voice.⁹

Before proceeding, it is useful here to briefly make note of neoliberalism and its relationship to my research. In the introduction to *The Sage Handbook of Neoliberalism* (2018), Cahill, Cooper, Konings and Primrose write that over the past five years, neoliberalism has increasingly been used as a catch-all term. Yet neoliberalism is always context-specific, often alluding to ideological positions while also eluding any definitive meaning. Cahill et al. write that as a field of studies, neoliberalism intersects with such varied disciplines as cultural studies, anthropology, politics, science and technology, sexuality studies and social theory.¹⁰ For the sake of narrower scope, I am interested in how neoliberalism constructs subjectivity. In discussing how economic models shape subjectivity, sociologist Tomas Marttila draws on a Foucauldian framework which posits that institutions such as

schools and universities train people into the neoliberal entrepreneurial project through focusing on individual success. Marttila writes:

entrepreneurialization cannot be reduced to a strictly economic process restricted to the system of economic production, but denotes a wider process of cultural transformation geared towards the propagation of entrepreneurial ideals, norms and values throughout society.¹¹

For Couldry, reinstating the value of each person's voice in the social realm can destabilise the economic models of value which promulgate class hierarchies.¹² In a concrete example, Couldry writes of the neoliberal dominance of the market which negates the voices (or rights) of the workers, especially those of migrants, in favour of owners.¹³ While speaking exercises agency, not all voices are afforded the same power. I offer these thoughts on voice as a signifier of subjectivity and "value" as a way into this chapter which explores voice as social participation in documentary.

Participatory imperatives

In the social spaces that we occupy, we are increasingly inundated with possibilities to participate. The call to contribute individual voices through participation is an attempt to counter the individualising tendencies of political and economic systems. In discussing the importance of the 'public' sphere as a space where private and intimate thoughts, feelings and sensations can be given voice, Arendt highlights the increasing distance between a private and public sphere of the self. Arendt suggests that this idea of 'public' "signifies the world itself, in so far it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it".¹⁴ For Arendt, "What makes mass society so difficult to bear is not the number of people involved, or at least not primarily, but the fact that the world between them has lost its power to gather them together".¹⁵ This "world" that Arendt speaks of is constituted from the activities, interactions and ways that humans can be together. It is the space that both connects and separates, much like an ordinary 'table'.¹⁶ The table is both literal and metaphoric as a device, connecting as well as distancing. Although written over sixty years ago, Arendt's writing remains increasingly relevant in its discussion of the burgeoning sense of separation born of the breakdown of the 'public' and 'common world' in deference to the private sphere. This drift towards separation underpins the embracement of participatory projects in art and documentary — an attempt to redress a landscape of increasing individual isolation.

In thinking about the motivation for both creating participatory projects as well as desiring to engage with them on an individual scale, I first want to explore the broader concept of aloneness. Aloneness is not only a personal and private experience, but also relates to the many ascribed associations with the political, economic and social forces of late capitalism. My own interest in aloneness is paralleled by my interest in relationships between people, places and things. This may be indicative of both fear and pleasure, with my research being a kind of mitigation against the negative potential of loneliness through a practice that demands interaction with others. Aloneness is both a personal condition and a social issue, experienced in multiple ways, often simultaneously. Searching the thesaurus, I discover at least thirty-seven synonyms, ranging from the positive to the dysphemistic. These words include solo, abandoned, companionless, independent, forlorn, solitary, friendless and lonely.¹⁷

Conditions of aloneness

Aloneness is to be both desired and avoided. In acting on impulses to distract ourselves, aloneness often turns to loneliness. Being alone has become a problem to be solved by technology. Sherry Turkle writes in *Alone Together* (2011), her extensive study on technology and loneliness, that with the omnipotent pull to connect, we are “increasingly insecure, isolated, and lonely”.¹⁸ The heightened experience of online interactions, which encourage us to “attend to the highlights”, only exacerbates our separation.¹⁹ With studies finding links between loneliness and illness, the adverse effects of aloneness are tangible, evidenced by a correlation between depression and loneliness in elderly research participants.²⁰ Aloneness might also manifest more subtly as a disengagement from the world with the inability to see oneself as part of a more comprehensive network of relationships.

Within industrialised societies, we are increasingly expected to operate as a sole trader and entrepreneur our place in the world. For an increasing number, this means cobbling together careers of precarious employment in disparate fields. Economist and long-term advocate of basic income, Guy Standing, refers to this as the “precariat” class — an increasing section of society who lack the social and financial stability familiar to previous generations through the traditional pathways of hard work and education.²¹ This phenomenon has more far-reaching implications than economics in how it permeates through our experiences with others. We function within multiple spaces of proximity to other people, constantly held in some form of mediated communication all the while constructing identities that are fluid and contingent on our needs and desires. Loneliness has everything, and

nothing, to do with how many people we are surrounded by. As Olivia Laing writes in *The Lonely City*:

You can be lonely anywhere, but there is a particular flavour to the loneliness that comes from living in a city, surrounded by millions of people. One might think this is antithetical to the urban living, to the massed presence of other human beings, and yet mere physical proximity is not enough to dispel a sense of internal isolation. It's possible — easy, even — to feel desolate and unfrequented in oneself while living cheek by jowl with others.²²

Despite the promise of connecting with other people through social media, participatory projects, collaborative workplaces, educational institutions, and public spheres of engagement, we are more fragmented in our precarious existence. For Braidotti this is a “complex political economy of fear and consumerist comfort”.²³ Braidotti further suggests that the focus on our own existence exacerbates the general trend of apathy towards human rights, environmental issues, and increasing inequality. Braidotti calls this a culture of “mourning and melancholia” indicative of late capitalism²⁴ where we are so busy engineering a secure place where our needs, fundamental or otherwise, can be met. While few would celebrate the success of advanced capitalism accommodating either individual needs or an ethic of care towards a broader community or environment, even fewer can imagine an alternative.

From aloneness to participation

While in the UK for what is to be my first conference, I rent a car and drive around the south coast. Stopping at Dungeness, a strange and beautiful place, I visit Derek Jarman's house, the washed-up boats on the rocky beach, and the multiple lighthouses. There are so many of them which feels wrong to me as the lighthouse is a symbol of solitariness, both structurally and also in the lifestyle it once afforded. After looking around, I arrive early for my tour of the nuclear power plant and eat cold leftover curry in the carpark. Later I drive to Brighton and walk by the pier where I once made a film. I visit other coastal places like the isle of Portland where I stay in a tiny attic and do a walk about quarries and a loss adjuster. I choose another hostel to stay at in a field in Somerset. It's cheaper than others, so I figure there's a sale on remote hostels in May. Here I meet a group of retired ramblers who invite me to the pub and tell me about the lost migratory bird they spotted. I feel I am getting into aloneness and embracing it, testing it out. I inhabit the aloneness as a way to talk to other people about their aloneness. I look at art and coastlines and cliffs and pubs. I document. The conference at the University of Reading feels disappointing after all this. In fact, it feels lonely.



Figure 3. Solo road trip, UK, May 2015. From top left: Derek Jarman's house in Dungerness, Dungerness nuclear power station, cheese and cider meal, Portland lighthouse, a Sussex road, traditional English breakfast, Katrina Palmer's *The Loss Adjusters* in Portland, the Dorset coast.

While enjoying my solo road trip (field work) through the south of England early on in my research, I also visited the *Mass Observation* archives. Initiated by documentary filmmaker Humphrey Jennings, poet Charles Madge and anthropologist Tom Harrison in 1937, the project ran until the mid-1960s and was subsequently revived in the early 1980s albeit in a much scaled down form. *Mass Observation* was a pioneering ethnographic documentary project that used multiple methods of collecting participant input including autoethnographic diaries, questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The collection forms a mass of individual responses with themes that are common to a generation living through World War II and its aftermath. Most striking, in the entries I read, was the sense that nothing unites people like a disaster. In *A Paradise Built in Hell* (2009), Rebecca Solnit reflects on the power of disasters to form temporary communities. For Solnit, disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes and terrorism have the uncanny ability to galvanise a sense of common purpose. Solnit observes the collective feeling which arises during and after such disasters is “an emotion graver than happiness but deeply positive”.²⁵ Catalysing the power of this affect provides “a glimpse of who else we ourselves may be and what else our society could become”.²⁶ Although far from sites of disaster, there is something similar in the desire to shift the emphasis from the pressure of individual creativity towards something more collective in Harrell Fletcher and Miranda July’s internet project and subsequent book, *Learning To Love You More*.²⁷ Drawing on socially-engaged art practices, they suggest that the use of tasks and instructions can liberate and guide participants in unlocking creative ideas.²⁸ For their project, Fletcher and July gave simple instructions for seventy different assignments including requests for stories on a specific topic, a memorable outfit, photos under the bed or making an inspirational banner. Participants’ responses were submitted and formed an online archive of experience. These mini projects became a crowdsourced mosaic of collective experience and storytelling.

Spaces for participation

I compare the writings on pub toilet walls, the tennis club, the shopping centre and the park: intimate thoughts, poems, humour and despair. The walls make for a discursive conversation, contextualised and dictated through location, demography, institutional ideologies and paint surface. At a Friday afternoon event in an old theatre, people bring a vinyl record, play a song and share a memory. There is a teenage boy who has discovered his dad’s The Cure records and an elderly couple who request Benny Goodman. Sitting in the theatre drinking wine and eating popcorn, we listen and then clap at the end. I visit an art gallery and am asked to wear a strange garment and take a photo for Instagram. I try to get my students, who would rather sit alone, to join

*a group and discuss their thoughts, readings, ideas, experiences, hoping the table between will gather them.*²⁹

As I became interested in participatory requests, I started to notice them everywhere. And with this, I grew aware of the parameters, rules and contexts of how participation was requested. Some spaces, such as toilet walls, were illicitly sanctioned. Other spaces had emerged as forums for sharing a collective experience. Some requests operated for the benefit of the author or artist, while others were pedagogical. All these spaces for participation, however, shared the commonality of a negotiation between acts of speaking and modes of listening.

To test individual participation, I began a series of experiments. These were designed with individuals in mind rather than as a way to elicit contributions. I was interested in the interpersonal exchanges between myself and others. Each of these involved a dialogue with the participant where we negotiated the participation they would like to contribute. Often these involved a certain physical and emotional distance from home, a recurring motif throughout this research, and the relationship to considering aloneness, self and other. It also calls to mind poet Eileen Myles's thoughts on travel from *The importance of being Iceland* (2009):

Most likely we travel to exist in an analogue to our life's dilemmas. It's like a spaceship. The work for the traveller is making the effort to understand the place you are moving through is real and the solution to your increasingly absent problems is forgetting. To see them in a burst as you are vanishing into the world, Travel is not transcendence. It's immanence. It's trying to be here.³⁰

Although this work is not about travelling, or necessarily being elsewhere, it is at the same time about being attuned to where one is. It is, as Myles writes, "trying to be here". The following assignments were imagined as tests or prototypes which I would later distribute more widely.

Negotiated Request no. 1 was intended to observe incidences of perceived aloneness in unfamiliar places. For this, I asked a friend travelling in Japan to photograph the following, taking one photo each day. She could choose from the following options or make her own interpretation.

- The back of a person who looks alone
- A time when you have consciously chosen to be alone
- An object or image that represents aloneness
- A vista of aloneness
- Something sold to offset the feeling of aloneness
- A meal for one
- A time when you wish you could really be alone
- A window to aloneness
- A lonely photograph

At the end of the seven days, the participant completes the request, sending me the seven photographs each with the location and the caption to describe the image. She enjoys the task, which is only a minor incursion into her time, and also sees it as a different way of encountering the environment she is travelling in.



Figure 4. *Negotiated Request 1*. Photos by Jenelle O'Callaghan



above left: a time when you wish you could really be alone
above: the back of a person who looks alone

Wanting to expand on the previous assignment, I draw on strategies from participatory design and the “cultural probe pack” to inform *Negotiated Request no. 2*.³¹ The cultural probes often include diaries, maps, cameras and recording devices which are used to collect information related to how people in various communities interact with their environment by logging movements, feelings and observations. Bill Gaver, Tony Dunne and Elena Pacenti claim that in the projects where they have used these packs, there is a conscious effort to create materials and tasks that are appealing and stimulating while also providing subjective data that can be interpreted and applied in design solutions.³² The packs focus on an aesthetic and creative response to a given situation by using a combination of instructions and artefacts to document and record.

I make one of these cultural probe packs for someone who is travelling alone to the East Coast of the United States. In testing these materials, I will ascertain their effectiveness in engaging the participant with a view to distributing to others. I develop a kit that has a disposable camera, a map, a journal and some glue, scissors and a pen. The camera has a sticker posted on the back with instructions to document various experiences of aloneness. These range from the specific to those quite open to interpretation. There are also options where the participant can add her own photographic prompts. The materials allow for a range of conceptualisations of voice. These include the visual responses through photographing, a coding system for various feelings of aloneness associated with each location, as well as a notebook where she can add drawings, writing and collages. I give the participant a photocopied map of the areas she will travel to and asked her to label each place she stays with coloured stickers, thereby creating a taxonomy of aloneness. She categorises these with predominantly literary and poetic references:

Red: peeping, eavesdropping, luring

Yellow: ‘So you walk into the cold you know’ — Dorianne Laux

Green: ‘But essentially, and finally, alone’ — Hunter S. Thompson

Blue: ‘Behind pickets and posture and print’ — John Ronan

White: ‘Even though it isn't mine’ — Truman Capote

- PEEPING, EAVESDROPPING, LURING
 - "SO YOU WALK INTO THE COLD YOU KNOW" JORIANNE LAUX
 - "BUT ESSENTIALLY, AND FINALLY, ALONE." HUNTER S. THOMSON
 - "BEHIND PICKETS OF POSTURE AND PRINT" JOHN RONAN
- "EVEN THOUGH IT ISN'T MINE" TRUMAN CAPOTE.

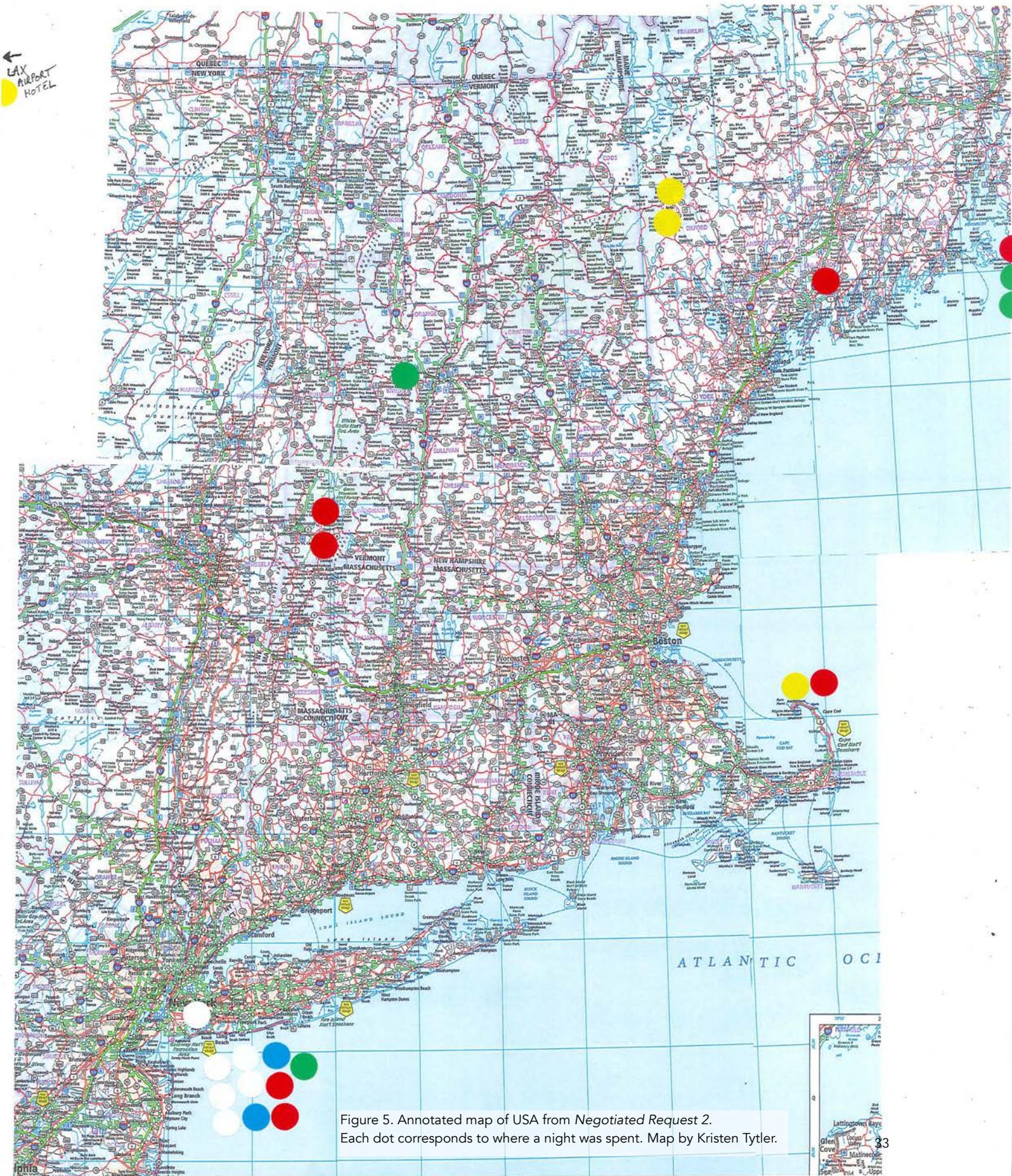


Figure 5. Annotated map of USA from *Negotiated Request 2*. Each dot corresponds to where a night was spent. Map by Kristen Tytler.

The map is a literal cartography of the area covered through the trip. It also prompts an affective interpretation and response to place — a geographical and emotional cartography. Another unexpected result of this project is that the disposable camera is damaged by water at some point, producing images that are abstracted and absent of representational signification. The analogue materiality of these images is voiced by the grain of the photographic image³³ — nature reminding us of our lack of control. In a post-trip discussion, the participant replies that she enjoyed the exercise and it allowed her to think in a different way about the places she visited. However, this task could have the potential for over determining the way someone might approach their travels. With an overarching emphasis on aloneness, this might be a lens through which one frames their experiences.

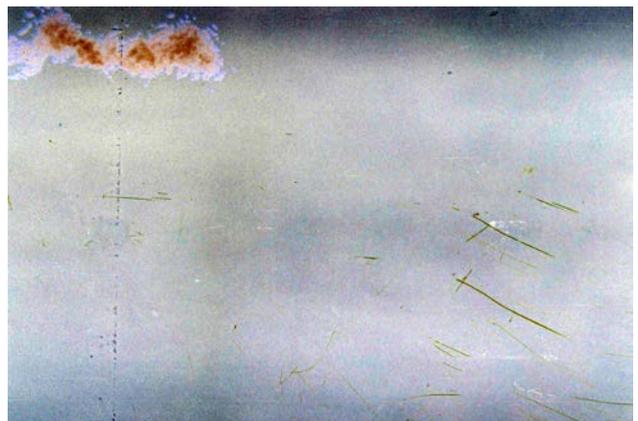
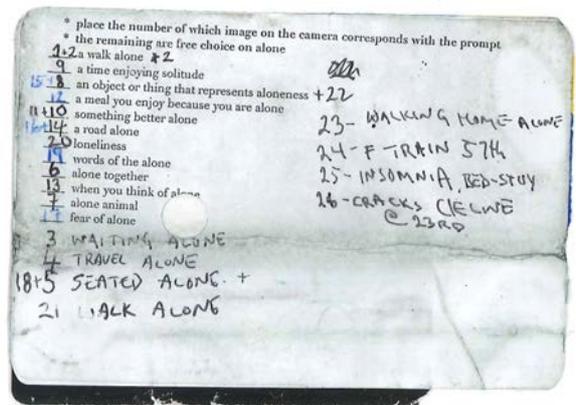


Figure 6. Images from a disposable camera from *Negotiated Request 2*. Photographs by Kristen Tytler.

The disposable camera was the most successful element of the previous task, so I decided to test this out on another participant in *Negotiated Request 3*. Here, I provide only one instruction for the photographs she should take. On the back of the camera I give her, I write the prompt: *When I am, think or feel alone, I...* I develop the photos and interview her about what the images are, and why she took them. The photos act more as prompts for memories and insights around experiences of aloneness rather than being indexically connected to what is represented. This experiment reflects a shift from the prescribed approach in previous tasks to one which is more open to affective interpretation.

The word 'participation' is used to discuss a range of strategies to involve people in almost any stage of a project. In his discussion of institutionalised politics, Nico Carpentier, who writes extensively on participation and democracy, suggests that without specific contextual anchoring, the term can mean almost anything. Participation exists on a continuum between highly controlled approaches and more collaborative practices.³⁴ In his discussion of the landscape of documentary participation and collaboration, Jon Dovey suggests that participation might occur at any phase, ranging from ideation to pre-production, production, through to marketing, distribution and sharing.³⁵ For Dovey, participation operates through reciprocity of labour motivated by multiple factors such as "money, or for passion, hope and social enterprise" and may produce a range of benefits including those that are "reputational, affective, in skills development or sharing cultural capital".³⁶ Dovey further notes that "it may be economically effective, politically mobilising, sexual, creative, subversive or deviant".³⁷ There are myriad reasons why one includes participation as project method, which strategy is used to elicit participation, and similarly why someone might choose to participate in documentary projects.

Participatory practices are often an integral component of creative projects, employed for their perceived ability to facilitate more voices. The multiplicity of perspectives can offer a panacea to the singular authorial vision and are often synonymous with an idealised concept of democracy where 'each voice counts'. Increasingly facilitated by technology and the subsequent ability to interact, participatory practices have catalysed a flatter hierarchy of media production and authorship. However, often participation is more of an overture to an ideal rather than a re-routing of established hierarchies. Although ubiquitous, questions remain as to whether we all really do get to participate, or at least to what extent our participation is affective or effective. And if we do contribute, which participatory voices are then heard? Additionally, with the increase of voices and the erosion of

traditional top-down cultural production, comes a proliferation of information, affect and spectacle.³⁸ The plethora of voices creates a mass of noise to negotiate and filter — predicated on the dissolution of boundaries between traditional structures of production and consumption. In addition, participatory projects can also blur the divide between the audience and the maker. While the incorporation of other participatory voices expands the possibilities of the documentary work, it also raises ethical and creative questions around the complexities, negotiations and applications of participatory practice.

If participation is presented as a path to counter isolation and re-imagine a public sphere, some projects would seem to be more successful in achieving this than others. Participatory practices can also operate as methods of eliciting a mass of contributions without building relationships between any of the contributors to a project. A project on aloneness might have the potential to engage people who feel it is of social benefit to participate. However, there is also the inherent tension in the creative interpretation of the theme of aloneness I have requested, rather than using more 'realistic' or conventional documentary approaches. While the assignments I have outlined above are experiments to collect experiences of aloneness, I recognise that my parameters significantly determined the responses. I also consider how the request for participation could be negotiated to shift from the author-participant relationship towards a more collaborative dialogue based around the moment of encounter. In outsourcing my content collection, I consider Dovey's fundamental point about the nature of participation — that it should address some critical question. Rather than being a mass of information and data that is easy to collect, it should be shaped to counter public opinion and re-route discourse away from dominant narratives.³⁹ I also consider the motivation and reasons why someone might participate, especially in light of some of my early and cynical contentions around the plethora of opportunities and requests to do so.

The documentary interview as negotiation

It is all feeling so distant. In creating a project around aloneness, I am using methods that exacerbate this distance.

Although the previous experiments have yielded some insight, they do not feel particularly aligned with what I have come to value in the practice of documentary which is predicated upon a deep engagement with others. The dialogue between myself and the participants has been more of a discussion after their involvement. I am sceptical of how these activities are contributing, in any

significant way, to the subject matter of aloneness. In discussing the impetus for the pioneering participatory filmmaking project *Challenge For Change* (1967–80), George Stoney writes “The last thing I want to do is develop media to get in the way of person-to-person interchange because ... I think all communication should end with either a handshake or a kiss”.⁴⁰ In experimenting with the participatory requests in the initial phase of research, I conclude that in trying to extricate myself from the position of maker or author, I have exacerbated separation and reliance on individual pursuits. Underlying these experiments is the somewhat reductive belief that the role of the filmmaker as author is equated with the inscription of power and therefore unethical. What I take from Stoney’s reflection is the role that the filmmaker has in facilitating an exchange.

In returning to the documentary interview as both a research strategy and a way to collect material, I interview twenty-three people on the topic of aloneness. I focus on audio interviews for pragmatic and conceptual reasons. The elimination of visuals means that I can work in multiple locations and collect more material. It also facilitates a sense of ease with the participants and a more conversational approach indicative of an open style that allows for digressions. More so, a turn to the auditory encourages a space for listening.

The documentary interview operates upon an axis of control from the highly authored to a looser, more open approach. At one end of this scale, the filmmaker might have pre-conceived ideas, based on preliminary research, about what they want from the interview and proceed to control the interaction to facilitate this. The filmmaker might direct the interview so only the interviewee’s voice is heard. Alternatively, they might use a more conversational approach where the filmmaker is more present, either visually or through audio. A lateral shift from the field of documentary into social cartography presents opportunities to rethink interview strategies through a lens more akin to research rather than with predetermined ideas. Thomas Venturini proposes adapting a technique, conceptualised by Bruno Latour, known as the “Cartography of Controversies”.⁴¹ This approach is an examination into unresolvable issues through observation, without imposing any preconceived methods, theory, constraints or structure. However, Venturini also notes that this method requires precision in its detailed and nuanced descriptions of the phenomena.⁴² To outline Venturini’s cartographic approach, he proposes three ‘commandments’:

1. You shall not restrain your observation to any single theory or methodology
2. You shall observe from as many viewpoints as possible

3. You shall listen to actor's voices more than your own presumptions⁴³

This set of guidelines proposes a methodology that is open and responsive, allows for plurality, and implies the necessary act of listening beyond one's own epistemic assumptions. Using Venturini's 'cartography of controversies' as an approach to interviewing raises questions around how to begin making a documentary project without knowing what you're making beforehand. A process that emerges from the relational exchange is counter to conventional and commercial documentary strategies where outcomes are often predicted. The cartographic approach can reveal voices and perspectives of the participants and afford them greater agency in the process. It has resonance with Briadotti's concept of the nomadic cartography that is predicated on a deep listening to what is present rather than what ideological position can be applied to a situation.

The interviewees I meet range in age from seventeen to over seventy and are sourced through social media or referred on by others who I know. I begin by asking the participant to select a word about aloneness to speak on. Each interview ranges from about thirty minutes to an hour. I notice some similarities in the concerns raised by my older participants, predominantly involving death and illness. My youngest interviewee speaks of her fear of aloneness. She equates ageing with loneliness. One of my interviewees reveals that she is transgender. Another speaks of his time spent in socialist communities in Central America and collectivism. He opines about the propensity for individual selfishness on public transport. Another interviewee speaks of crossing the often-painful threshold between solitude and company. One participant brings a poem to share. Another plays Bach on the piano. These are all moments that have emerged from the micropolitics of a documentary practice embedded within interpersonal encounters, dialogue and listening. It also returns me to what I value in a documentary practice — the licence for an in-depth inquiry and sharing through the relational aspect of the interview. I store this interview material to use in the works in the next stage of my research.

Negotiated voice through user-generated content

To comprehensively explore how documentary voices can be elicited through participation, it is valuable to employ multiple strategies of engagement. Rancière suggests, "true" democratic participation counters power structures through fleeting moments of action rather than merely contributing to the allocated spaces for participation.⁴⁴ Considering Rancière's notion of democracy as a fluid space for participatory encounters can illuminate the way different strategies for collecting

documentary material and the kinds of voice they enable, restrict or control. There can be no fixed position that allows democracy to evolve and take root, to do so is to suffocate and restrict. Rather than relying on the known and formulaic paths, staging interventions through this dialogical approach, temporary spaces and opportunities are opened up for unpredictable contributions — one of the signifiers of participatory democracy. Applying this to documentary participation is complicated by the underlying question of why someone might choose to participate. For Dovey, the ethics of participatory practices is determined or negated by what he calls the ‘framing of the request’. Dovey also draws attention to the potentially exploitative nature of participation. In his discussion of user-generated content, Dovey explores the issue from a post-Marxist framework equating participation with work as “capital” and thus open to exploitation through power imbalances. One of Dovey’s key questions is: what’s in it for the participants.⁴⁵

Although I had conducted a number of interviews, the participants were mostly from social and familial circles. To widen my participatory approach and elicit more and varied responses, I start to experiment more broadly with requests for user-generated content. In consideration of the relationship between participation and labour, I contemplate what kind of market value participants might place on their own contributions. I create a job post on the website, Airtasker, a site where people can post small jobs that others bid for by sending a short message expressing their suitability and offering a price. The task-setters and task-completers rate each other — similar to other sharing platforms such as Uber and Airbnb. I am also interested in how the Airtaskers might interpret the request for participation. I make a post offering to pay \$20 per submission. Within a few days of posting I have around ninety messages.

This experiment evokes some concerns, not least ones of an ethical nature. Although I am upfront about the project and my research, the nature of the platform means that potential taskers compete for the job. Not everyone who responds wants to participate, some just want to join in the conversation and comment on each others’ posts. Some offer to do it for free. A psychologist suggests meeting up to talk about aloneness, but then she disappears from the site. Some respondents try to convince me to pick them because they are the loneliest, citing traumatic experiences of aloneness. Through these online interactions, it is difficult to ascertain what impact their participation might have on them, despite the caveats and explanations in the required participant information sheet I email them.

Hi Kim, I'm interested. Happy to meet you in parramatta park and help you with you documentary. Thanks



Interesting word "aleness", Kim. Thank you for highlighting it. Unfortunately I am not a candidate for the task. If, in the future, you make a documentary about aleness-less-ness, maybe. All the best.

Megan, "aleness" is a surprising word. It means you are in a loving relationship. Not to be confused with "loneliness" (unless that was Kim's intention).



Im interested. Am a amateur filmmaker myself and after many years of being social I have been going through a very lonely time for the past 2 - 3 years.



I cant tell you my story im going through a terrible time right now with loneliness



I'd be happy to get more information and do this for you

I'd be interested and available all the time. Used to being in front of a camera



I am currently 28 years old. I was in a relationship for 7 years from the age of 17 and got married to this person at the age of 24. 5 months after my wedding day my partner and I seperated. The last 4 years has been at times excruciatingly lonely however has had many highs and lows



Figure 7. some of the messages in response to my call for participation on *Airtasker*

The first few submissions I receive are shot vertically with the contributors speaking into their phones. It is not without irony that I confess my disappointment with these video selfies and their lack of aesthetic potential, wondering how I will use this format. However, I am also intrigued by these confessional style videos in what resembles YouTube vlogs. My participants speak in direct address while looking at the camera. Perhaps this is just a job they are doing for twenty dollars. Another participant sends five images to me: an empty chair, a glass of water, a face-turned away from the camera while posed on the couch, a laneway and a grey sky. She includes an audio track of herself talking about aloneness. The fourth participant tells me she has made a task like this before and constructs a short film with a voice-over about her "unspeakable depression", feelings of weakness and then finally overcoming her despair. She includes shots of herself walking along paths and on the beach with toes dipped in rock pools. She uses royalty free music and even sends me a version without the music when I request it. The fifth contribution is from a man who works in remote regions of Western Australia doing geological surveying. He recounts the dangers of aloneness when working in the outback. I am interested in seeing the landscape of where he works, but he sends another selfie-style video talking to the camera only in landscape format this time. He asks if this is the kind of thing I require. It isn't really, but I thank him for his time and rate him five stars. I decide that at \$20 a video, I will not be able to afford many, so I make a similar post for \$5 which feels tokenistic. Some people offer an hour of their time to meet up for a sum of money with the view to further negotiate their fee after this. I do not take up any of these offers.

I had been interested in broader ideologies around participation, and what the collection of multiple varied responses to a prompt might allow in terms of polyvocality. However, the practicalities in eliciting participation are more complicated. While I had read the literature around the problems of participation, the attempts and failures are knowledge-producing at the level of practice.

Participatory practices allow us to re-imagine alternate ways of engaging in spaces, ideas and with each other. Although my vignette at the beginning of this chapter from the exhibition on democracy at Old Parliament House presents a cynical portrait of what participation can offer, there is also a core of idealism in the gesture, if not the result. Participation can still allow for the unexpected to occur. Rancière claims that:

Democracy is the regime of multiple accommodations... In order to approach perfection, each regime must therefore correct itself, striving to welcome opposing principles, to make itself unlike itself...the good regime is characterised precisely by the fact that it is always a mixture of constitutions, a constitutional marketplace.⁴⁶

If participation is representative of voice in documentary it must similarly shift to accommodate the multiple ways that people might choose to speak (or not speak). It is also important to find ways to incorporate the failure or lack of participation into the project.

Resistance to participation: the right to remain silent

I visit a residential home predominantly for men who have a history of mental health issues, alcohol and drug dependency and other circumstances that have negatively affected their lives. The residents are friendly, open and talk about the difference that secure housing has made to their well-being. I mention that I'd like to do a project, but I'm not sure what form it will take. I will probably begin with interviews and see what emerges. One man expresses an interest. He suggests that my approach is sui generis. He defines this term for my benefit, and I Google it later. I also learn that he has a degree in Latin and other 'dead languages' as he puts it. He has severe depression. We arrange to meet several times before it happens. At our second meeting, he is surprised when I tell him again about my project. He has me confused with the other people doing a project on hope. I tell him that's the local private boys' school. Mine's on aloneness. It's a downer. I buy him a sandwich and a coffee. Sitting at a small table in the centre of a brightly-lit café, he tells me he's lost everything because of a back injury and depression — his job, his family, the house. I feel powerless, at a loss, and ask myself how his participation in my project will help him. I doubt that it will. There is no resolution in what he tells me. He collects guitars and sometimes buses. I ask about filming him playing his guitars. He seems interested, so I send him some text messages. After no reply, I give up.

I read a how-to book on aloneness and contact the author who lives in a remote part of Scotland. I have to reach her through her agent as she is practicing mostly uninterrupted solitude. I ask if she might be available for an interview. I would even take a trip there en route to Iceland. I also suggest that perhaps she would not be interested in doing this as she values her aloneness so greatly. She sends a reply back through her agent saying that yes, my assumption is correct and wishes me luck. She also hopes to go to Iceland sometime.



Figure 8. Still image from a video submitted by a participant on Airtasker



Figure 9. Still image from a video submitted by a participant on Airtasker

These refusals to participate also prompt the question of how to represent the absent voices or the absence of voice. The desire, or need, to remain silent does not negate the existence of voice. However, it also presents the challenge of how they can be represented or even if they should be. Choosing not to participate can be an act of resistance to the demands of the systems we unavoidably find ourselves part of. And also, why should someone choose to participate in my project? In "The right to be lonely," Denise Riley claims that we should temper the unreserved desire to belong to whatever society, community or group we perceive as desirable, as sometimes the act of belonging means accepting all the concomitant normalising tendencies and dilution of heterogeneity.⁴⁷ If loneliness is the flip side of belonging, then does being an outsider equate with being lonely? Riley interrogates cultural and social attitudes to loneliness, not as a personal condition but rather as a protest against the imperative to belong and participate in the dominant ideologies and normative societal expectations. Being in the world does not mean being subject to normalising dictates. For Riley, we should fight for different ways to be in the world with the "bitter knowledge that in the process, new hierarchies of social acceptability are being generated."⁴⁸ If the only voices represented are those that choose to participate, then what of the others? Resistance to conventional ways of being in the world present more spaces for difference. While this chapter has explored multiple methods in eliciting participatory voice with its contingencies and relationality, there was also the supposition that negotiating these individual voices would allow each participant more agency in their representation. However, I conclude that these experiments in 'getting others to speak' are still subject to my authorial control. I also conclude that if voice as agency is contingent on participation then this is flawed as it already omits the silent, reluctant, quieter, unknown, inaccessible and oppositional voices and those that may not be heard, seen or known.

Rethinking participation

Participation sought is not always found, offered or desired. The very intention of seeking participation in this project seemed to be counter to an intrinsic element of my research — that it should be emergent rather than contrived and that my methods should be fluid and shifting. If participatory practices are intended, to some extent, to reconstitute a sense of the collective, drawing on Nancy's idea of the "inoperative community" is illuminating. Nancy writes that considered effort and "work" does not produce a community.⁴⁹ For Nancy, attempting to create the object of community, whether through "sites, persons, buildings, discourses, institutions, symbols" is

counter to any kind of “communitarian existence”.⁵⁰ This leads me to question how voice can be actualised to consider this idea of a “participatory community”.

I had been attracted to participatory practices as a way to collect more and varied voices and material around aloneness — to create a collective of the alone. However, I also concluded that most aspects of documentary making involve some kind of participation. Participatory projects are intended to enact a more democratic approach to authorship or allow for multiple perspectives. But I also began to question what this idea of the voice of social participation meant. In these experiments, the requests had often been quite contained to individuated experience. This only reinforces the idea of the singular subject, with my work attempting to create a collective of singularities. It was as though by seeking more and more independent voices, a sense of the collective could be realised in the work. In rethinking this singular subjectivity as collective, I borrow again from Nancy’s concept of community. Nancy writes that “Community is made up of the interruption of singularities, or of the suspension of singularities, or of the suspension that singular beings are”.⁵¹ For Nancy, the community is not a collection of individual beings. It is the dissolution of the boundaries between them. Rethinking our individual voice and its representational potential as porous and relational begins to question the notion of subjectivity as a singular proposition. Instead, as Braidotti suggests, subjectivity is better conceptualised as “a socially mediated process of entitlements to and negotiations with power relations”.⁵²

Concluding this chapter marks a shift in my research from focusing overtly on participatory practices as a mode of engaging in and building social relationships. The following chapter discusses the production of documentary artefacts and how, rather than only seeking material, a practice of listening can transform the private into the public sphere. In returning to the anecdote at the beginning of this chapter, if voice is commensurate with value, and the signification of presence, how can we account for their multiplicity and difference? What kinds of requests can call them forth, and what types of spaces can hold them?

NOTES

- ¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* 2nd. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 50.
- ² Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 173.
- ³ Rose Braidotti, "Language Is a Virus", Serpentine Galleries, 2016. Radio Serpentine Gallery. <https://soundcloud.com/serpentine-uk/rosi-braidotti-language-is-a-virus-1>.
- ⁴ Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2006), 545.
- ⁵ Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, translated by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977): 179.
- ⁶ Michel Chion, Claudia Gorbman, and Walter Murch. *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- ⁷ In 2017, only 50 years after Indigenous people in Australia were recognised in the constitution, a thousand participants held a four-day meeting in Central Australia to request permanent Indigenous representation in the constitution in Australia. The "Uluru Statement from the Heart" asked for a "First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution" stating "In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard" (Parliament of Australia, "Uluru Statement: A Quick Guide", June 19, 2017, https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1617/Quick_Guides/UluruStatement). This request was rejected by then prime-minister Malcom Turnbull. In response Megan Davis writes "We hoped Australians would listen. And they were listening. They are listening. The support we have received from the Australian people for the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the proposal for a Voice has been overwhelming. My people have not been abandoned by the Australian people; they are simply consistently abandoned by the Australian political elite". (Megan Davis et al, "The Uluru Statement from Heart, one year on: Can a First Nations Voice yet be Heard?" *ABC News*, May 26, 2018 12:18pm, <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/the-uluru-statement-from-heart-one-year-on-can-a-first-nations-v/10094678>).
- ⁸ Nick Couldry, *Why Voice Matters: Culture and Politics after Neoliberalism* (Los Angeles; London: SAGE, 2010), 10.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.
- ¹⁰ Damien Cahill et al., eds., *The SAGE Handbook of Neoliberalism* (London: SAGE Publications, 2018): xxv.
- ¹¹ Tony Mattila, "The Knowledge-Based Economy and the Entrepreneur as Metaphor", in *The SAGE Handbook of Neoliberalism*, edited by Damien Cahill, et al. (London: SAGE Publications, 2018), 566.
- ¹² Couldry, *Why Voice Matters*, 3.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 4.
- ¹⁴ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 50.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ Oxford Dictionary Online, "Alone", accessed March 20, 2019, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/thesaurus/alone>.
- ¹⁸ Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 157.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 288.
- ²⁰ Julianne Holt-Lunstad et al., "Loneliness and Social Isolation as Risk Factors for Mortality a Meta-Analytic Review", *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (2015): 227–37.
- ²¹ Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. (A&C Black, 2011).
- ²² Olivia Laing, *The Lonely City: Adventures in the Art of Being Alone* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2016), 3.
- ²³ Rosi Braidotti, "Writing as a Nomadic Subject", *Comparative Critical Studies* 11, no. 3 (2014): 177.
- ²⁴ Rosi Braidotti, "Affirming the Affirmative: On Nomadic Affectivity", *Rhizomes* 11/12 (Fall 2005/Spring 2006): n.p., <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue11/braidotti.html>.
- ²⁵ Rebecca Solnit, *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disasters*, (New York: Viking, 2009) 5.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.
- ²⁷ Since 2010, this project has been archived by the San Francisco MOMA, <http://www.learningtoloveyoumore.com/index.php>
- ²⁸ Harrell Fletcher et al., *Learning to Love You More*, (Munich: Prestel, 2007).
- ²⁹ Here I reference Hannah Arendt's metaphor of the common table: "To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time". *The Human Condition*, 52.
- ³⁰ Eileen Myles, *The Importance of Being Iceland: Travel Essays in Art* (California: Semiotext(e), 2009), 41.
- ³¹ Bill Gaver, Tony Dunne and Elena Pacenti, "Design: Cultural Probes", *Interactions* 6, no. 1 (1999): 21–29.
- ³² *Ibid.*

³³ In reference to Barthes's grain of the voice: *Barthes, Image, Music, Text*: 179.

³⁴ Henry Jenkins and Nico Carpentia, "Theorizing participatory intensities: A conversation about participation and Politics", *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 19, no. 3 (2013): 269.

³⁵ John Dovey, "Documentary Ecosystems. Collaboration and Exploitation", in *New Documentary Ecologies: Emerging Platforms, Practices and Discourses*, edited by Kate Nash, Craig Hight, and Catherine Summerhayes (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014): 21.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Spectacle here can be understood as the cumulative effect of capitalism as theorised in Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (1967).

³⁹ Dovey, "Documentary Ecosystems", 22–23.

⁴⁰ George Stoney, video interview, Media Network Conference, New York University, 1985 (Stoney Video Archive, uncatalogued). Cited in Brian Winston, " 'A Handshake or a Kiss' The Legacy of George Stoney (1916–2012)", *Film Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (Spring 2014): 36.

⁴¹ Tommaso Venturini, "Diving in Magma: How to Explore Controversies with Actor-Network Theory", *Public Understanding of Science* 19, no. 3 (2010): 258–73.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 258.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 260.

⁴⁴ Jacques Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*. (London; New York, Verso, 1995), 60.

⁴⁵ Dovey, "Documentary Ecosystems".

⁴⁶ Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, 42.

⁴⁷ Denise Riley, "The Right to be lonely," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 13, no. 1 (2002).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁹ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 31.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 18.



Figure 10. Video still from *Events of the Alone*, 2017.

CHAPTER TWO: FIELDS

The world as sound

I recall an experience I had several years ago when I was training to be a Lifeline counsellor. We were to sit on a chair with another person either side. I think we closed our eyes, but probably not, since it was also essential to see the others. The people sitting to the left and right would start speaking in each ear — a monologue of sorts. A fourth person sat in front and tried to engage me in a conversation. This activity was designed to immerse us in the experience of schizophrenia where we must contend with multiple competing voices. Years later I met the woman, a poet with schizophrenia, who had devised this activity. I'd heard her at a writers' festival in a small town in rural Victoria and had contacted her to discuss a project around voice, memory and a decommissioned psychiatric hospital. We met outside a bookshop at the end of the train line. After talking for some time, I told her of this training to which she replied that it was as close as one could get to know what it was like for her.

I recollect the above experience of listening to multiple competing voices and the difficulty of filtering or deciphering through the cacophony. But also, of course, nothing can create the experience of having schizophrenia. Becoming aware of the sounds in space can elucidate the co-existence of multiple entities or voices. In thinking about the world as sound, questions arise about what we hear in terms of meaning and material and where it begins and ends. Contemplating sound as intrinsically formless and pervasive recalls Nancy's dissolution of boundaries between singularities.¹ Sound gets inside, it affects and creates an affect. It also presents a space where the multiple can co-exist. In considering my previous experiments in collecting voices, perspectives, and experiences of aloneness, I also wondered what form would be able to gather and represent these voices, simultaneously in their singularity and as a collective. And how might these voices form a constellation where relational networks could reveal themselves.

In this chapter I explore concepts of visual and auditory space and their potential in shaping documentary through different representations of voices. I discuss some of my experiments which bring together voice, sound, image, and text, as well the two documentary works I made about aloneness. *What is aloneness when shared? How to make a collective of aloneness?* As a prompt, I

consider Latour's question: "Can we cohabitate with you? Is there a way for all of us to survive together while none of our contradictory claims, interests and passions can be eliminated?"² This question asks us to reflect on what kind of space can hold these competing, conflicting, divergent and parallel voices. In the online interactive work, *Events of the Alone*, I draw on some of the experiments from the previous stage of research, combining it with other material to assemble a polyvocal response to the experience of aloneness. The second work I discuss is *The last few months I thought I wanted to be alone, but now I'm alone, I realise I don't want to be alone* which applies various choric techniques to the multiple voices in the space. This work is an installation where six screens present a fragmented narrative around aloneness. Through experimenting with sound, both spatially and formally, the importance of listening emerges as an ethical mode by which the singular can become a collective, multiple ways of being can co-exist, and the audience can become implicated in the work.

On visuality

Before discussing the nature of sound, I will briefly explore the visual field. We believe what we see, considering sight to be logical and trustworthy — concepts familiar to documentary. The visual is the stable and reliable sense, showing the material and concrete things we can touch. For Trinh, the dominance of the image in conventional film has perpetuated "the ear [being] subordinated to the eye".³ Documentary has long been connected to knowledge and truth through what is shown, primarily through the indexical visual image and through what it tells us. However, Godmilow critiques the often-unquestioned assumption that the documentary confers knowledge through self-evidentiary representational means. Godmilow writes:

Here's the big question: how do we know what we 'know'? Philosophers, psychologists, and cultural critics have many answers to this question, but classical documentary always answers it this way: if you see it with your own eyes, and hear it with your own ears, you can understand it, and thus know something. And you can know it especially if you have seen it in a quasi-scientific, sober form, like the documentary film. The documentary film implicitly speaks of the world as knowable, because it is observable. And of course, if it is observable, it is filmable. So if I show it to you in my film, that is enough.⁴

Although Godmilow is primarily critiquing the reliance of uninterrogated strategies of realism to convey 'truth' and impart 'knowledge', documentary as a form is often dependent on specific structures and characteristics that render the material as hermetically sealed and reliant on fixed

relationships. In shaping the documentary to tell a single story or present an argument, the complexity of other positions and possibilities, beyond what the filmmaker might intend, must be omitted. Although documentary may not necessarily replicate the dictates of a traditional narrative or the three-act structure, conformity to a sealed linear composition forms a unified voice which dominates in its construction of knowledge. The linear form can limit more complex readings of the material in documentary where multiple perspectives and relationships might otherwise be made apparent.

The etymology of 'vision' lies in Greek language and philosophy, which equates seeing and knowing.⁵ Phenomenologist Don Ihde writes that to "visualise is as old as our own cultural heritage"⁶ and rather than being a hard experiential truth, this classical tradition of philosophy and language has prioritised 'visualism' as the dominant sense.⁷ Framing to see, and to know, have been inscribed in the tradition of documentary since the Lumiere brothers' 'actualities'. This has been perpetuated through ongoing developments of the camera as a tool for discrimination, thereby extending the capability of the eye to see farther, deeper or closer. Documentary pioneer, Dziga Vertov, knew the visionary power of the camera as an enabler of the human eye when he stated, "I am kino-eye".⁸ In writing about facts and truth, poet Susan Howe claims that Vertov's camera was intended to "recuperate the hiddenness and mystery of this 'visible' world".⁹ But the camera has its limits. We also need instruments and strategies to make visible, or rather, perceptible, that which the camera cannot reveal.

If sight is fact, and to see is to know, where does this leave the more slippery sense of hearing? It is here that I call on the field of sound studies to explore what the auditory can offer in terms of alternate and expanded ways of knowing. Media theorist, Kate Lacey calls the dominance of the visual over the auditory endemic of "critical and complex binaries" that frame the often gendered and problematic positions of active/passive and public/private.¹⁰ In his discussion of the classical Greek equation of seeing with knowing, informed by both linguistics and philosophy, Ihde references Aristotle's claim that "Above all we value sight . . . because *sight is the principle source of knowledge* and reveals many differences between one object and another".¹¹ Ihde, however, counters the claim that vision is the prime sense of knowledge and discrimination with specific examples where one can attend to what we might otherwise miss through careful and trained listening.¹² Ihde uses the example of a motor mechanic who might only be able to discern the problem with a car's engine through listening to subtle sounds. Listening imbues us with the power to differentiate subtle and

nuanced phenomena. In listening to differences in vocality, we are able to ascribe meaning through intonation, inflection, stress and pitch. For Ihde, the enduring dominance of 'visualism' has resulted in it being considered more trustworthy than other senses. Of course, these binaries are complex and best understood in how they reinscribe certain ontological positions around knowledge and power. Ihde suggests that a turn towards the auditory sphere can reconnect us with that which might be "overlooked". He writes, "It is to the invisible that listening may attend".¹³ Rather than a negation of the visual, the auditory presents us with opportunities to come close to that which is unknown or different, while providing a space for co-existence.

Overlapping and competing voices: three versions of Glenn Gould

If you turn your ear outwards through the surrounding space, what can you notice? "How many sounds can you hear all at once?"¹⁴ "What would you have in your soundscape?"¹⁵

Documentary work often includes putting voices together, one after another and shaping them so that the film will mean what we, the filmmaker, want it to say.¹⁶ These voices might sing in unison thereby creating a unified perspective where the edges of difference are blunted or smoothed out. Voices might also be in counterpoint. Here I borrow Glenn Gould's idea of the contrapuntal voice which informed his radio documentary, *The Idea of North*. As a musical term, contrapuntal refers to works that have simultaneous individual melodies. To explore the use of contrapuntal voice in documentary, I discuss three occasions of Glenn Gould, first from the portmanteau biopic on the composer, *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould* (1993) the second from his radio documentary, *The Idea of North* (1967), and the third from the film version of same project (1970).

In François Girard's 1993 film, *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould*, the character of Glenn Gould pulls up at a truck stop twenty miles from Toronto. The car radio is playing Petula Clark's *Downtown*. With an audio match-cut, we hear, and then see, the radio in the diner playing the same song albeit with a different acoustic quality. Gould enters the diner. The song's volume recedes as he goes deeper inside. The din of plates and clanging cutlery increases. He sits down, and the waitress takes his order; the exchange is polite and minimal, he's having the usual. The diner ambience recedes, giving way to a man telling a story about picking up a hitchhiker. Through editing and sound design, the audience hears as Gould hears; ears attuned to this story, isolating this strand amidst the multiple other intrusions. Another conversation in French begins at the counter. The audience, aurally identifying with Gould, listens to both parties talking. The ear trains towards and

intercuts between the two speaking subjects across the space of the diner. Another conversation begins, becoming another instrument in this orchestra. Finally, the scrambled eggs and salad arrive, and the voices recede.

In the beginning of the radio documentary, *The Idea of North* (1967), a female recounts her memory of flying over Northern Canada. Peering out of the cockpit window, she scans the expansive ice for evidence of polar bears. She continues with her description until a male voice interrupts, seemingly discounting her recollections. His utterances are independent, but they form a counterpoint to her impressions. The North is not as she describes, he says. The volume of his voice increases with conviction as hers trails off into the auditory distance. Each voice that enters challenges and overtakes the previous. They speak of ducks and geese. Then amidst the cacophonous collision of utterances, the phrase 'mass media' breaks in. An allusion to Marshall McLuhan? The auditory space is getting busy; eventually, the meaning of each perspective breaks down into concrete poetry of sounds, nouns, vocal idiosyncrasies and the materiality of voice. I abandon all attempts at understanding until it gives way to Gould's singular narrating voice: "I've long been fascinated by that incredible tapestry of tundra and taiga that constitutes the Arctic and the subarctic of our country".¹⁷

In the opening scene of Judith Pearlman's film version of *The Idea of North* (1970), Glenn Gould arrives at the station to board a train. Scanning down the list of destinations, his gaze, the camera's gaze, rests on Winnipeg. I think of Guy Maddin's attempts to escape this city.¹⁸ Gould walks along the station platform. The woman's voice from the audio documentary describes flying over the "vast tundra". Now, however, our visual senses are activated by seeing what we hear in the diegesis and through montage. We momentarily cut back to the station, but the cut is made more evident through the use of the diegetic sound of the trains. This hard and short interruption competes for multi-sensory attention, a challenge to our immersive viewing experience. As the second speaker interjects, the film's vision crossfades, overlaying the tundra cockpit scene with a bar scene, and by the third speaker's arrival, the visual track has become a muddled mix of imagery. While we might differentiate between the multiple voices, the vision colludes in its unified disintegration of signification. We can only glimpse the co-existence of differences through intercutting and separate spatial fields. It is in this comparison between sound and vision that we can see how different approaches to form can represent multiple co-existing individual elements.

The first example "Truck Stop" illustrates Gould's relationship to the human voice as a musical instrument and demonstrates how listening to multiple voices in the environment inspired *The Idea of North*. Through filmic techniques and sound design, the audience is positioned to experience how Gould hears the space. Gould believed that listeners could absorb information and meaning through complex and multiple contrasting inputs.¹⁹ In the second example, each voice in Gould's *The Idea of North* speaks in ongoing counterpoint. The four interviews: A sociologist, an anthropologist, a nurse, and a surveyor all present conflicting perspectives. As these perspectives coalesce through the work, the listener must work hard to extract meaning. Gould plays on the musicality and the materiality of the voice in this piece.²⁰ *Where is meaning to be found beyond the word?* The voices weave together fragments of memory, idea, and fact, like the 'tapestry' of Northern Canada of which Gould speaks. The third example of the film translates the contrapuntal aural properties of *The Idea of North* into the materiality of vision. Here, Pearlman applies overlay and montage techniques to the filmed images.

The three versions of *The Idea of North* discussed above illustrate the challenges in presenting multiple co-existing perspectives while being fixed into the linear visual form which is so reliant on the progression of one thing after another. With the linear form comes a particular position regarding causality, ordering and fixing relationships between ideas and knowledge. Elizabeth Cowie claims that documentary film creates false causal relationships to make the world knowable.²¹ This fixity renders the world as constructed of discrete elements hermetically sealed from the dynamic nature of relationality. As Cowie claims, "In presenting a narrative of cause and effect, the documentary creates the certainty of a knowable world, centring the spectator as subject of (but also subject to) this certainty".²² While the subject matter may question or counter our understandings of ideologies and hierarchies, the structural approach continually replicates power dynamics endemic to the form. Rethinking the linear structure of documentary allows documentary voice to occupy an expanded space in which emergent forms of meaning and knowledge come into existence.

Experiments: linear, visual, sound, space

In considering the above examples from Glenn Gould, I conducted some experiments in composing with multiple voices, images, and perspectives. Each iteration with the linear form tests out how the voices can be given their own space while also manipulating the visual and audio material through editing, fading in and out, overlay and text on the screen. Through these experiments, decisions have to be made which ultimately constrain the voices. Either some voices are given preference, or the results are a cacophony which diminishes meaning. The linear form and its required prioritising of some voices over others restrict the potential for a polyvocal assemblage of aloneness.

split screen linear experiment



Figure 11. Screenshots from experiments combining the material I had collected through some of the experiments from Chapter One along with other material I had recorded and collected.

linear overlay with text, image, audio experiment

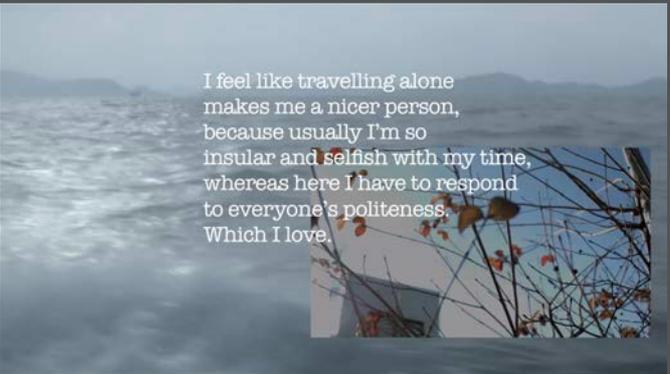
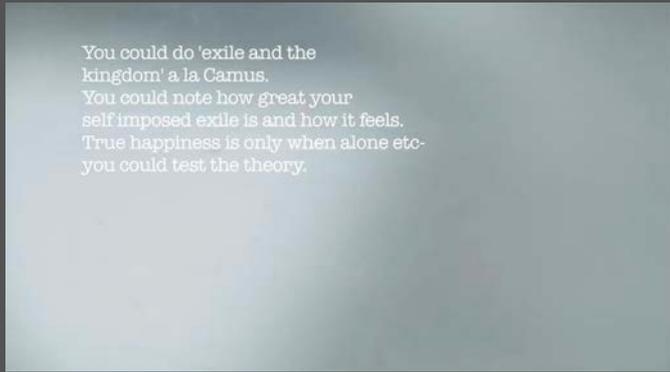


Figure 12. Screenshots from experiments overlaying footage, text and interview material. Some of the voices overlapped but were mostly edited so they could all be understood.

grid experiment

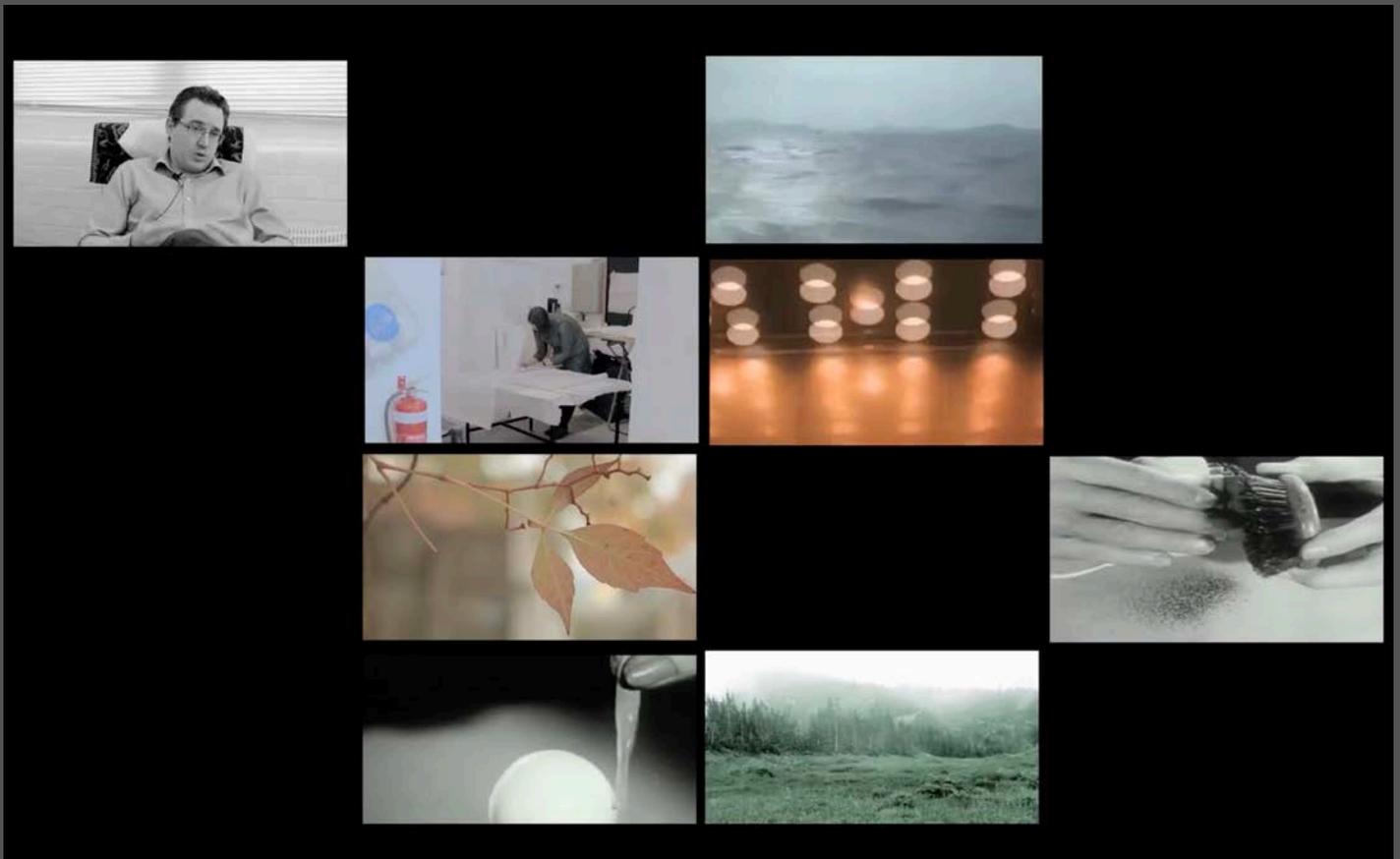


Figure 13. Screenshots from individual clips arranged in a grid. While a multiplicity of voices are represented, it does result in something of a cacophony.

Collective voices

Conferences, filming, sound recording, and writing are all fine occupations (or companions) for the solo traveller. I have an archive of material collected from different trips which I revisit and recycle. In February 2016, I went alone to Japan. I had lived there for three years so Japan is familiar, although I'll always feel like an outsider. It is winter (again); I think there's something more alone about this season. It could be the darkness, the muted sounds amidst the snow, the dryness of the air. I had planned to do some filming, and before I left for Japan had asked people a range of questions to help me visually construct the aloneness. What does aloneness feel like when travelling, what would you like to see? People offered existential questions alluding to Camus's belief that one can only experience true happiness when alone. Others who had never been to Japan wanted to see what it looked like: the pachinko parlours and dirty streets (if they exist), the bars with old men (and women).

Despite my preliminary information gathering and carrying this collective assemblage of ideas and requests for aloneness with me, I film as I usually do: extreme abstract close-ups, vast bodies of space, air, and water, views from trains, ferries and buses, and places devoid of people — alonescapes. I also record audio ambiences to give more texture to what I film: the individual melancholy tunes of trains approaching the station, a downtown bar on the tenth floor, the snow crunching underfoot. I wonder how to transcribe the ideas and voices of others through my own. What is my voice and what is the voice of another? Boundaries are porous between voices and subjectivity. I can no longer ascertain what is mine and theirs — a "collective assemblage".²³

Events of the Alone

★ [link to the project: Events of the Alone](#)

The material I collected on this trip, along with multiple other collected fragments, forms the visuals and soundscape to an interactive work called *Events of the Alone*. The title comes from one of the interviews where the participant tells me being alone is an event. *Events of the Alone* is a non-linear interactive film made with the Korsakow software program, an open-source interactive platform which uses an algorithm based on keywords. Using only one keyword, however, I disrupt this algorithm, thereby creating a flatter hierarchy where every clip has an equal chance of appearing. There is both a logic and randomisation that occurs with the arrangement of the clips that might appear within the interface at any given moment. I construct *Events of the Alone* from over fifty short video and audio clips ranging from ten to sixty seconds. *Events of the Alone* presents an interface of three videos of equal size, seamlessly joined in a triptych. One of the windows plays continuously,

regardless of user interaction. The other two windows are activated to play when scrolled over. When the cursor moves away, the clip pauses and resumes again when it returns. The user can aurally mix these tracks by scrolling the mouse to play the clips, thereby hearing fragments of multiple responses around the theme of aloneness. Underscoring the clips is a soundscape providing an experience of continuity through transitions.

The clips contain fragments of nature, scenes through windows, a passing train, a tree in the winter sun, the soft waves out of a ferry window, snow on the trees and street lights among others. I inspect my archive of footage to find interior scenes from London, views from trains in various countries and an empty road just after the rain during a solo road trip through the summer plains of Montana. These are quiet images. Most of the sequences are cut together with audio from the twenty-three interviews I did. I include music played by an interviewee, a poem read by another and a spoken-word piece. Some clips are silent, and some contain the diegetic sounds of the location: my breath, the moving camera, a train, a bird, or footsteps on leaves, evidence of my presence beyond the frame. Some images contain what Ihde refers to as "mute objects",²⁴ These are the things that do not emit a sound. *Can the mute object become a subject?* To accompany these mute objects, I have increased the volume of the location sound, creating a dominant auditory rather than visual presence.

The user can control what clips are heard in *Events of the Alone*, lending the sense of eavesdropping in on these moments, or to borrow a term coined by Elias Canetti, "earwitnessing".²⁵ *What does it mean to witness with the ear instead of the eye?* If the sense of sight is one of evidence, truth, and unassailable knowledge, does the ear render the information partial, incomplete or less trustworthy? Sociologist, Justine Lloyd claims that the act of earwitnessing "allows other voices to remain intact, pre-existing and simultaneous with the visual".²⁶ Rather than a drive towards complete and totalising knowledge, witnessing with the ear facilitates a participation in becoming. For Braidotti, becoming is akin to a listening position, an "emptying out the self, opening it out to possible encounters with the 'outside'".²⁷ Being guided by auralty through interactivity imbues the listener with agency in determining which voices are heard. Enabling the co-existence of voices presents a shift from the organisation of the voices in the linear experiments, where one strains to discern and make sense of each voice within the fixed space of the work. Selecting the clips to be played in *Events of the Alone*, reduces the space between subject, object and audience. Through listening, the audience becomes implicated in a plurality of different voices.

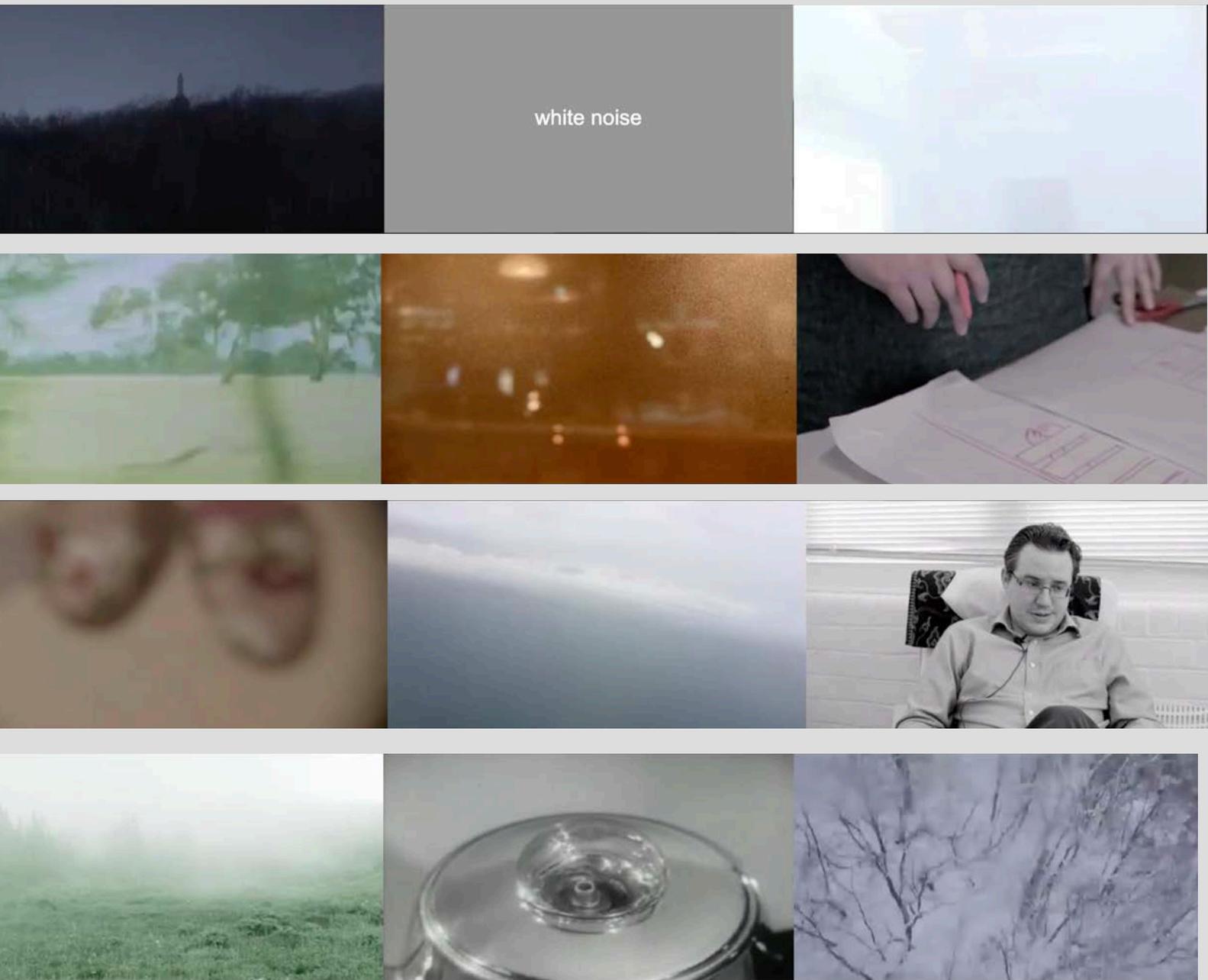


Figure 14. Screen shots from *Events of the Alone*. The images include a view from a gondola in Sapporo, Japan, window view from an aeroplane, the Australian countryside, steamy window Sapporo Hokkaido, Jennifer making work based on May Sarton's *Journal of a Solitude*, Japanese Slippers, another sky and David Ferraro discussing the relationship between neoliberalism and Lacanian psychoanalysis.

In a panel titled "Poetics and Politics of Polyphony" at the i-docs Symposium in Bristol in 2018, Anna Wiel commented that polyphonic experiments, through interactive documentary, transcend being mere platforms. Rather, they are a methodology for dealing with a complex world. Weil goes on to suggest that expanded and interactive documentary forms enable new ways of experiencing oneself through encountering all elements in the documentary constellation in a "conversation" which is "networked and networking".²⁸ Weil uses the term polyphony, and although it might be a difference of semantics, I prefer to use the term polyvocality which I feel allows each element to retain a sense of separateness without being subsumed. However, casting documentary as an interplay among multiple elements, forms, materials, participants, and the conditions of its production, can illuminate a plurality of the form that moves well beyond considering the individual voices usually aligned with the human.

Interactivity and listening

Opening up the documentary space beyond the closed and the linear and enabling the material to expand across multiple platforms and iterations allows for a broader conceptualisation of knowledge and relationships between the components in the documentary. It can also facilitate a movement towards others. Rather than presenting knowledge as totalising, implicating the audience as a listening subject can highlight incompleteness and multiplicity. For Roland Barthes, the one who listens (as differentiated from the one who hears) moves away from their own self-contained subjectivity. Listening, therefore, "compels the subject to renounce his 'inwardness'".²⁹ Barthes proposes the idea of the listening subject as one who seeks out experience and knowledge which is more subtle and obscure, or the "'underside' of meaning (what is experienced, postulated, intentionalized as hidden)".³⁰ As the audience in an interactive work, the listening subject constructs meaning through piecing together the fragments. They are aware of the gaps and spaces in the piece, of the need to make connections, add their internal voice, and cognitively organise the experience in combination with what of themselves they bring to the work.

The act of listening to the voices enables the transcending of boundaries that might seek to hold it, for voice spills over, leaks, dissipates and recedes. The voice is also a connective force that occupies a space between the self and other, signaling its trajectory into the world. LaBelle situates the voice in a liminal space, "echoing forward away from the body while also granting that body a sense of

individuation".³¹ In speaking of voice with its material qualities and linguistic signification, boundaries dissolve.

As I made *Events of the Alone*, listening emerged as the point of focus (to use a visual term), so I expanded this element to include clips that only had sound. I wondered how much audio information one could take in, recalling Glenn Gould's claim of the listening audience's capacity to not only absorb information, but also to comprehend. The word 'audience' has its etymology in audio and hearing. Best experienced through the proximity of headphones, the listener of *Events of the Alone* can track and trace their path through the work. Listening to these overlapping moments immerses the audience in a relational space through this sensory experience.

There are, however, limitations to *Events of the Alone* and the space it occupies. In the solitary space of the small single screen, the relationship between the self and other is mediated. I recall Turkle's meditations in *Alone Together* on the new technological paradigm of being connected while being more alone. The small screen interactive space, so ubiquitous in much of our daily actions and interactions, is also imbued with all kinds of distractions. The temptation to click away out of the project and move on to other tasks and online activities is substantial. The constant pull of the click and new screens disavows a prolonged engagement, resulting in the potential for tuning out these voices for alternative experiences. Rather than considering this work as resolved, the production of the work revealed the possibilities of what a practice of listening might afford.

The space of...

Rethinking the space that conventional documentary occupies, with its attendant spatial relationships, can reconfigure relations between filmmaker and filmed and audience and subject. In discussing the relationship between sound and media, Frances Dyson considers the potential of new embodied spaces beyond those which traditional media has provided.³² Dyson suggests that the shift away from the traditional binaries between the active and passive and maker and viewer, enable a deeper experience of immersion and being.³³ For Dyson this transfigures the feeling that you *are there*, to one of actually *being there*. Creating a space to be immersed in the documentary, rather than watching it at a distance, can move the experience beyond one that is representational. This liminal space calls to mind Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of the *intermezzo*.³⁴ Deleuze and Guattari suggest that this is the in-between and generative space typified not by beginnings, endings and trajectories along known paths, but emanates from the centre and moves

back and forth, opening up possibilities. Nancy further explores the relationship between space and listening through its ability to transcend the perceived bounded subject. For Nancy, "To listen is to enter that spatiality by which, *at the same time*, I am penetrated, for it opens up in me as well as around me, and from me as well as toward me: it opens me inside me, and from me as well as outside me".³⁵ Creating a space for the documentary material and the audience to move around in, implicates them in the work rather than being at a distance. Through *listening in* on this work, the audience transcends distance and separation.

Making the private public: Natalie Bookchin

Bringing that which is private into a public space, where the audience becomes implicated in the work, expands on Arendt's proposition of making visible or audible that which might otherwise be hidden.³⁶ The slippage between the private and public inform the filmmaker and video artist Natalie Bookchin's often large-scale video installations. Often compiled from the many thousands of individual testimonies or vlogs on YouTube, Bookchin's work focuses on issues such as self-medication, unemployment, sexuality and racism. The vlogs convey opinions and otherwise private moments made public. The self-recorded subjects speak with no sense of an interlocutor. And yet the very act of recording these pieces insinuates the desire to be heard. Lone voices, framed by their own personal *mise-en-scene*, speak to their webcams intimately and unimpeded. In echoing social media's great paradox, they speak to no one and everyone at the same time, public and intimate.

The methodology that Bookchin applies is evidence that someone is listening. The re-presentation of the vlogs through the multiple-screen video installations or split-screen films, creates a re-contextualised space where the audience is positioned to listen to what would probably otherwise go unheard. This re-presentation of listening troubles the intimate and public spheres where listening is transformed from a private activity to a public one. Lacey makes a claim for the political implications of shifting listening from the private to the public space as one that is necessary to relocate the dialogue around urgent issues away from the responsibility of an individual to a broader concern.³⁷ This moves away from the perpetuation of the neoliberal subject where each person is expected to assume responsibilities that are primarily systemic.

Bookchin's multiple-screen video project *Now he's out in public and everyone can see* exists in two forms: the 2012 18 video-screen installation which surrounds the viewer in a gallery space, and the 2017 version where Bookchin reworked the multiple-channel work into a linear film composed of the

videos. At times only one video appears full frame; at other times, multiple videos play on screen in different configurations. In sourcing the material for this work, Bookchin sifted through YouTube vlogs of Americans of various racial backgrounds, who speculate and comment on incidents involving famous African American men. Although these men are not named, we can guess at who they are by attitude and context. For example, we hear the speculation on Barack Obama's place of birth and racial identity and listen to the calls for him to produce his birth certificate. For some, he is not black enough, for others too black. The selection and composition of these clips draw attention to the language that people use to discuss and judge behaviours of black men while also defining what positions they think black men in the United States should occupy.

Many of the utterances in *Now he's out in public* are preceded by; "I'm not racist but...". Bookchin combines the voices for polyphonic or contrapuntal effect, to concur or to contradict. These videos represent the inherent quality of social media with their seemingly one-way unimpeded transmission of voices with an absent interlocutor. Lacey critiques the ability to share these kinds of opinions through platforms that allow extensive participation in the public media space as evidence of a "culture that celebrates and privileges the freedom of expression".³⁸ Lacey claims the listener is subsequently "rendered mute and helpless",³⁹ for through the plethora of voices and opinions, the listener's agency is silenced. The act of speaking and giving voice is distanced from the responsibility of hearing them. Lacey notes the assumption that if there is a public address, there will be the corollary reception of the address — that a listening audience will receive the delivery of message.⁴⁰ The disconnect between the increase in more spaces for voices, and the neglected attention towards practices of listening has parallels for documentary practice. Making work that explicitly considers strategies to re-stage voices, and with a consideration of how they can be heard, can shift documentary away from representational strategies towards an ethics of how they are encountered.

The last few months I thought I wanted to be alone, but now that I'm alone, I realise I want to be alone.

On the first trip, I wait by the pond. After about forty minutes, he appears. I see him through the gate with a carer. I grab my camera but don't have time to put it on the tripod. And then he is gone, locked away. On the second visit, I don't see him at all, so I film the rocks, the pond, the small waterfall, the clouds, the pacing caged lion, and then the empty shopping mall downtown. What do you film when the subject is absent?

The observations I had made about how voices could be interacted and engaged with in *Events of the Alone* informed my next project, *The last few months I thought I wanted to be alone, but now that I'm alone, I realise I don't want to be alone* (referred to hereafter as *The last few months*). The impracticably long title comes from one of the many dating profiles I scoured as part of my research into the construction of online identities on dating websites. I centred this installation around the last remaining flamingo in Australia, Chile.⁴¹ I had first heard about this flamingo in 2014 after his companion flamingo had died. The zoo-keepers had placed a mirror by his pond to give the impression of being one of a pair. Travelling to Adelaide twice to film this flamingo, he was all but absent, preferring to spend his time in a small heated cabin, away from both human visitors and pesky resident waterhens. With the elusiveness of the flamingo, I decided to proceed with a construction of *aloneness* in the face of *absence*.

The last few months was an installation consisting of six video screens positioned in the long rectangular First Site Gallery. Entering through an arch on the long side, to the left and on the back wall of the gallery were two screens with the works: *Forever Alone/Heat Lamp* and *Forever Alone/Flock*. At first, the videos look similar with their pulsating shades of textured pink, red and orange. The use of super-8 film gives the flat screens a materiality. With lines, water spots, and scratches, usually absent in the high-definition digital image, they resemble digital Rothkos. The screens act as a counterpoint in mitigating loneliness, drawing the viewer in, replicating the glow of the heat lamp — a motif drawn from the refuge sought by the old flamingo.

While there are subtle variations in the appearance of the *Forever Alone* videos, the audio tracks vary. In *Forever Alone/Heat Lamp*, a pair of male and female computer-generated voices read out a series of definitions of 'forever alone'. I found these definitions in a spreadsheet on a Reddit discussion thread called "Forever Alone". A male voice is heard in the left channel, and a female's in the right. The voices are of slightly different speeds, gradually going out of sync. With the auditory dissonance, the listener becomes more acutely aware of what is being said. This work creates a slippage between public and private. Sounding the written words, which would otherwise be hidden in a spreadsheet on a Reddit strand, feels very private. Yet it also exists within a public forum designed to share such personal vulnerabilities. LaBelle writes that "to produce and receive sound is to be involved in connections that make privacy intensely public, and public experience distinctly personal".⁴² While making this work, I remember Felix Gonzalez-Torres's work *Untitled (Perfect Lovers)* (1987–90), created while his partner was dying from AIDS. In Gonzalez-Torres's piece, two

generic-looking clocks sit side by side in a gallery. They begin at the same time but gradually go out of sync. Symbolising the unequivocal fact of his partner's imminent death, one clock will stop before the other. In this work, while the eye shifts back and forth between the clocks' second hands, the ear registers the sounds simultaneously in synchronicity and dissonance. I also recall some *maneko neko* (beckoning cats) I filmed in Japan, side by side in the windows of a shop. One keeps regular metronome-like timing while the other pauses frequently, intermittently beckoning. Sometimes they align, but usually, they do not. I had used this shot in a previous film to symbolise the vacillating disjunctive and aligning shifts that occur between people in relationships.

Returning to *The last few months*, occasionally the two voices cease and a computerised singing voice interrupts with lines from dating profiles such as "I live alone, I work alone at the computer, but I don't want to die alone". Occasionally the voices stop altogether and the sound of a synthesiser takes hold, pulsating in minor chords. Then the voices resume again, returned to their unstoppable parallel mantras of forever aloneness. These works are intended to be viewed and listened to alone through the headphones, with the sound penetrating within the intimate and closed space. The digital voice allows for the words to be spoken without ascribing them to any human body or subject. *What is the voice when not spoken by a human?* Giselle Beiguelman claims that it is important to think about and understand that the "digital voice is not merely an upgraded version of the human voice or a translation into a technological device, but a more complex approach to technology and the presence of the networked body in our daily life".⁴³ The individual yet communal spaces reflect the online spheres from where these words and sentiments come from. The partner video of this diptych is paired with the audio of a flock of flamingos — an auditory signifier of the collective.

At the opposite end of the long narrow gallery, is a full wall projection of the flamingo in black and pink duotone. Looming spectre-like, this video presents the brief sighting of the flamingo. To further reflect on this work, I quote at length from Miles Campisi's essay on the exhibition:

The projection encourages distance. If one gets too close, the image becomes pixelated and hazy. The very act of walking towards the flamingo hides it, as your body obscures the projector and the image disappears. But, furthermore, the flamingo is standing behind a pond, and the pond is abstractly extended to the floor of the gallery, as the cement reflects the image. It is as if there is a real pond between us and the flamingo. We cannot get close and comfort him, much as we want to.⁴⁴



Figure 15. Installation shots of *The last few months I thought I wanted to be alone, but now that I'm alone, I realise I don't want to be alone*. Photos by Ariel Cameron.

On the floor of the gallery, a monitor with white text fading in and out over pale pink clouds leans against the wall. This work, *The Story*, is quite literal in its imperative to convey narrative information. *The Story* is based on facts. Facts are important in documentary, but these are authored facts — filtered through my own voice. *The flamingo lives alone. He is bullied by other birds. Flamingos live in flock of thousands. There will be no more flamingos.* The two screens on the opposite wall continue to provide fragments of the flamingo narrative and a reflection on aloneness. The video on the left *Home, Pond*, is a series of black and white videos taken around the pond and the cabin where the flamingo lives. The scenes are all empty of people or animals, only the slight movement of the foliage or the waterfall reveal that these are not still images. The third video, *Wish Fulfilment*, is a slow-motion piece of footage of a lone flamingo taking flight from a lagoon. The featured flamingo gradually picks up speed, appearing almost as though running on water as it ascends into the air. The flamingo leaves the frame and the footsteps on the water gradually dissolve, fading into a repeated loop.

A significant aspect of this multi-screen installation is the song cycle that accompanies the three videos. Whereas the *Heat Lamp* videos evoke a closed space for the audience to listen in to, the other works open up to an immersive polyphony. The interviews I previously conducted around aloneness form the basis of the song lyrics, arranged and performed by a composer and songwriter, Tamara Violet Partridge. The songs chart a trajectory through three states of aloneness. At times, all three videos play concurrently with the songs merging in the space. At other times, only one can be heard. The songs overlap so that the music and the words may become indistinguishable. The first song's title *Old and Alone* presents the fear of being alone. The song lyrics thematically fuse multiple observations from interviews, a lamentation on ageing, loss, and loneliness. *Solitude Threshold* focuses on the idea of aloneness being a state susceptible to both positive and negative experience. The third song, *Being Alone* accompanies the video *Wish Fulfilment* and celebrate the joys of being alone rather than with others.

hi kim i stumbled on your installation about the alone flamingo today. i was with friends and we were talking about what has been going on in our lives in the few weeks since we saw each other so i wasn't really paying so much attention at first. but we sat down to talk more and i started watching the films more closely and worked out what was going on. i'd had some valium earlier so the videos were really mesmerising to me. somehow it really resonated. i feel alone a lot of the time & it's usually ok, but recently i spent a single night with a man i've known a while, we were in unbroken physical contact of some sort for maybe 6 hours, feet on top of feet, back to back, breath in hair. for the first time in a long while i didn't feel alone, not in a romantic sense, i just had something anchoring me to the world. there's too too much in the way for it to happen again, but he won't stop talking to me & I feel more alone than ever. so i sat there watching your films today and realised i feel like the flamingo rejecting the mirror.

Figure 16. An email sent to me anonymously after someone had seen the exhibition.

When in the gallery, the voices blend. Sound fills the space — emerging from beyond the lines of sight. Sound precedes the image, evoking concepts of a pre or post-individuated state with the dissolution of the gulf between ourselves and others. As Dyson writes, attending to sound and the auditory field subverts the dominance of the act of looking and creates perspectival shifts:

Whereas eyes can be closed, shutting out unwanted sights, ears have no lids. Whereas seeing positions the subject symbolically as director of its look, always looking ahead towards the future, hearing subverts this role: the listener cannot control what is often overheard, what is muttered "behind my back." Immersed in sound, the subject loses its self, and, in many ways, loses its sense. Because hearing is not a discreet sense, to hear is also to be touched, both physically and emotionally.⁴⁵

Rather than reinscribing binary relations between the subject and object, sound envelops and permeates by creeping up, interjecting and surrounding. It also complicates the space as it presents more than one way of knowing and more so, more than one way of being. Sound is a complex mix of elements, and with its uncontrollable nature, it can be slippery to grasp. In the darkened space between the videos and the sonorous space in *The last few months*, the audience finds themselves immersed in the "boundless" space that McLuhan attributed to the auditory sphere.⁴⁶ McLuhan draws a distinction between visual space which is "static and container-like with a fixed center and margin," and acoustic space which he describes as "dynamic; it has no fixed boundaries. It is space

created by the method or process itself... and whose margin is nowhere."⁴⁷ While the frame contains that which is visual, the auditory is expansive and challenges the dominance of the field of vision. Instead, the auditory calls attention to the unfurling of an alternate sensory dimension. This is a space to hold multiple voices, rather than subsuming these components into a singular voice.

At the beginning of this chapter, I quoted Latour's question of how we might imagine other ways of living together in a shared world where we co-exist with difference and alterity. For Latour, thinking spatially rather than temporally accounts for the coexisting interrelatedness of material, events, thoughts and beings of the world. This position, or the "*time of Simultaneity*"⁴⁸ acknowledges that the linear construct of history, organised as a progression of time, is inexact. New eras or beliefs do not emerge to replace the old.⁴⁹ This has implications in considering the two works I have discussed and the related concepts of polyvocality and polyphony and how they might facilitate cohabitation of difference. The *phonos* of polyphony refers to voice and the merging of multiple voices into either harmony or disharmony. Linguist, Theo van Leeuwen claims that the intrinsic nature of polyphonic works is a sense of cohesion. That is to say, while each voice retains its individual presence, they blend in unification. In applying this concept to the social space, van Leeuwen claims polyphony emphasises pluralism and reinforces social cohesion.⁵⁰ In his illustration of classical spaces of architecture such as the Agora, Paul Carter further discusses the idea that polyphony absorbs and flattens out difference. Carter writes that these spaces were designed to collect voices and render them as a polyphonic unity, thereby repressing any positions antithetical to the dominant political message.⁵¹ The faltering, disagreeable voices are subsumed by the mass, paralleled by the muting of noise by stone. The polyphonic creates bonds between similarities and is built on cohesion and unison while the Latourian position of cohabitation of differences is better expressed through polyvocality, which retains the granularity of multiple voices and perspectives. Listening to polyvocality through documentary works can facilitate the reimagining of a collective that is underpinned by difference and dissonance.

From speech acts to listening acts

Although voice is often discussed in its many forms, little scholarly attention has been paid to the role that listening might play in how these voices are heard in documentary. A turn to listening moves beyond the dominance of the visual field and its epistemological position, towards the field of sound and its attendant properties as spatial, temporal and multiple. The auditory sphere is a site for the co-existence of complex propositions. It presents a space for rethinking the relationships

between ourselves and others. For LaBelle, the non-binary nature of auditory knowledge enables simultaneous ways of thinking and being.⁵² To explore the space of sound, it is essential to interrogate the politics of not only speaking but also listening. While the previous chapter discussed the concept of voice as participation, and who gets to speak, similarly it is vital to examine who is heard. Communication theorist Lisbeth Lipari calls this a “habitus of listening” which is formed through life experience, culture, socialisation, and personality.⁵³ The habitus is what shapes how we listen, and how we are listened to, which is always relational and dependent on context. How we listen is subject to forceful unconscious systemic biases and conditioning, reflective of the impact of majoritarian discourses which continue to privilege some voices over others. Given the potential for divisiveness and distance in our social, cultural and economic spaces, cultivating a practice of listening through documentary can call attention to others in ways that the visual may disavow through its discrete framing.

Events of the Alone and *The last few months I thought I wanted to be alone, but now that I’m alone, I realise I don’t want to be alone* create documentary spaces which engage the viewer in the act of listening. Through these works, listening transforms aloneness from the private to the public. The two works allow for multiple, simultaneous, open-ended and speculative experiences, simulating closer proximity to how we encounter the world. Through the interaction in the work, the viewer moves from a passive spectator subject position to one that is actively participating in the construction of the documentary, moving towards a more collective and collaborative position. These shifts in perspective matter in that they contribute to a power shift from the documentarian as speaker to hearer, and the audiences collectively as listeners. Making these works also brought about the question of how I might situate a documentary methodology of listening within the world. And also, how might the concept of voice be further expanded beyond human and linguistic signification.

NOTES

- ¹ Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, 31.
- ² Bruno Latour, "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik or How to Make Things Public," in *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, edited by Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2005), 40.
- ³ Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *D-Passage: The Digital Way* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 155.
- ⁴ Godmilow, "Kill the Documentary as We Know It", 2.
- ⁵ Don Ihde, *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound*, 2nd ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 7.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Dziga Vertov and Annette Michelson, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 17.
- ⁹ Susan Howe, *Sorting Facts, or, Nineteen Ways of Looking at Marker* (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 2013), 10.
- ¹⁰ Kate Lacey, *Listening Publics: The Politics and Experience of Listening in the Media Age*, (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 3.
- ¹¹ Cited in: Ihde, *Listening and Voice*, 2007, 7 (emphasis in original).
- ¹² Ibid., 7.
- ¹³ Ibid., 4.
- ¹⁴ Pauline Oliveros, *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice* (New York: iUniverse, Inc., 2005), 56.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., 56.
- ¹⁶ Again, here I refer to Bill Nichols's use of 'documentary voice' in how it pertains to authorship (Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*).
- ¹⁷ Glenn Gould, "The Idea of North", 1967, (see above comment) <http://www.openculture.com/2017/12/listen-to-glenn-goulds-shockingly-experimental-radio-documentary-the-idea-of-north-1967.html>.
- ¹⁸ From Guy Maddin's "My Winnipeg" (2008).
- ¹⁹ Glenn Gould & Tim Page, eds., *The Glenn Gould Reader* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 393.
- ²⁰ Jonathan Alexander, "Glenn Gould and the Rhetorics of Sound", *Computers and Composition* 37 (September 2015): 74.
- ²¹ Elizabeth Cowie, *Recording Reality, Desiring the Real*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 39.
- ²² Ibid, 96.
- ²³ Braidotti, "Writing as a Nomadic Subject", 171.
- ²⁴ Ihde, *Listening and Voice*, 24.
- ²⁵ Elias Canetti, *The Earwitness: 50 Characters*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1979).
- ²⁶ Justine Lloyd, "The Listening Cure", *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 23, no. 4 (2009): 478.
- ²⁷ Braidotti, "Writing as a Nomadic Subject", 171.
- ²⁸ Judith Aston et al, "The Politics of Polyphony" i-docs.org. video of panel session at the i-Docs 2018 Symposium, at Watershed, Bristol, March 2018. Uploaded 2018, <https://vimeo.com/292672091>.
- ²⁹ Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms*, 259.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 249.
- ³¹ LaBelle, *Acoustic Territories*, 149.
- ³² Frances Dyson, *Sounding New Media: Immersion and Embodiment in the Arts and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 1–2.
- ³³ Ibid., 5.
- ³⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 25.
- ³⁵ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 14.
- ³⁶ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 50.
- ³⁷ Lacey, *Listening Publics*, 9.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 7.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 17.

⁴¹ After Chile was euthanised in 2018, they discovered that she was in fact female. Aged in her 60s she was believed to be the oldest flamingo in captivity.

⁴² Brandon LaBelle, "Auditory Relations", in *The Sound Studies Reader*, edited by Jonathan Sterne (New York: Routledge, 2012), 468.

⁴³ Giselle Beiguelman, "Media Voices: Beyond Talking Heads", in *Voice: Vocal Aesthetics in Digital Arts and Media*, eds. Norie Neumark, Ross Gibson and Theo Van Leeuwen (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010), 356–57.

⁴⁴ Miles Campisi, "The last few months I really thought I wanted to be alone, but now that I'm alone, I realise I don't want to be alone", *Critical* (2016), <https://rmitcritical.wordpress.com/portfolio/the-last-few-months-i-really-thought-i-wanted-to-be-alone-but-now-that-im-alone-i-realise-i-dont-want-to-be-alone/>.

⁴⁵ Dyson, *Sounding New Media*, 4.

⁴⁶ Marshall McLuhan and Bruce R. Powers, *The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 34.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Latour, "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik," 40.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Theo van Leeuwen, *Speech, Music, Sound*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 80.

⁵¹ Paul Carter, *Material Thinking: The Theory and Practice of Creative Research*. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004), 40.

⁵² LaBelle, *Acoustic Territories*, xvii.

⁵³ Lisbeth Lipari, *Listening, Thinking, Being: Toward an Ethics of Attunement* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014), 52. Here Lipari draws on sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's work around habitus.



Figure 17. Duck pond, Ólafsfjörður, Iceland. January 2017

CHAPTER THREE: PRESENCING

★ [link to the project: Why do the ducks not fly south?](#)

“Where I am makes a difference to who I can be and what I can know”.¹

Arrival

Ólafsfjörður is a quiet place. This is what I first notice. From the little information I can find online in English, I know there are about eight hundred and thirty people, a supermarket, a coffee shop, a pizza restaurant, and a swimming pool. These places seem to ebb and flow with social activity at different times of the day. When I arrive, I also find there is a bank, a handicraft gallery closed for winter, a hardware shop, music school, petrol station, guest house, a hotel and cabins and a small library which is open infrequently. My house is on the main road, opposite the supermarket and the cafe with excellent cake. The cafe owner’s daughter tells me that it is easy to identify the non-locals in town because they’re the ones who walk the unpopulated streets and spend a long time choosing food in the supermarket. Most activity seems to occur inside the home, and as many Icelanders don’t use curtains, I entertain my voyeuristic pleasure of looking into their lounge rooms as they watch television, and into their kitchens as they wash the dishes. I catch myself hoping to see a little more, something out of the ordinary.

After a time, I start to hear the sounds — the low hums of unknown and unseeable industry, the few species of birds that have remained through winter, and the sounds of water in its many shifting forms. The longer I stay, and the more people I meet and talk to, the more I hear fragments of stories, songs, poetry and personal philosophies born of this landscape and a demanding climate. The project I make during my month in Ólafsfjörður becomes a confluence of my initial observations, as well as what I bring with me through my own experiences and documentary practice. With this meeting of known and unknown, listening becomes a guiding methodology to immerse myself in the new environment, to learn how it speaks, and how to hear it.

Drawing on my findings from the two projects discussed in the previous chapter, this chapter explores how ‘listening’ as a documentary practice can reveal unheard voices and implicate the

audience within a space which to hear these voices. Through my site-specific project, *Why do the ducks not fly south?*, I discuss the application of listening as a methodology to attend to a broader conception of voice beyond the spoken. This project, a twenty-five-minute audio walk through various locations in the town, was made for the Skammdegi Mid-Winter Art Festival in Ólafsfjörður in January 2017. The audio is composed of interviews, poetry, songs and sounds collected on location. It also includes my own guiding voice which provides direction while also asking the listener to attune themselves to the sounds of place, notice what is within and beyond themselves, aiming to prompt other ways to consider voice.

Why do the ducks not fly south? transfers the action of listening to an embodied experience that engages the audience in strategies for rethinking their relationship to environmental voices and the other-than-human. Considering voices beyond those which are immediately apparent has implications for documentary practice more generally. By developing strategies which shift beyond dominant voices, narratives, and forms, we can better explore the edges and fringes of the human, through making audible, and subsequently elevating those voices which are marginal and emergent. A broader conception of voice, and how we are implicated in an ecology of co-existence, enables a disruption or refusal of the established power relationships that plague not only documentary practice but our relationship to the world around us. By creating a space for listening, we can attend to that which is otherwise neglected.

Cartographies: mapping place through listening

A cartographer makes maps. She charts the land and the sea and new spaces, making marks and positioning co-ordinates. The survey is topographic. She systematically understands the land and the situated politics of place. The cartographer can see where the natural formations lie, without prejudice or bias. For Braidotti, cartographies are more relevant now than ever to survey and expose debates and power-relations and to make these forces visible.² This method of observing and laying bare is an attunement to the rhythms of place. I am reminded of Ingold's wayfaring which he suggests is the essential "mode by which living beings, both human and non-human, inhabit the earth".³ For Ingold, wayfaring is a participation "from within in the very process of the world's continual coming into being".⁴ In this way, participation is evident in all beings and matter, even when not initially apparent or intended.⁵ This opens up the potential for not only humans to be participants in events and phenomena, but also for other beings and environments.

The process of becoming attuned through listening calls to mind Stewart's concept of "atmospheric attunements", or a considered attention to the "qualities, rhythms, forces, relations, and movements" within our world.⁶ Stewart proposes that attuning oneself to the resonances of the environment can exceed mere representation. Rather, it is a dwelling *with*, and a listening *to*, what is present. For Stewart, being attuned is "living through what is happening".⁷ Becoming attuned is also attending to what is emergent and present in the atmosphere instead of being driven by preconceived ideas. It embodies the sensibility of a nomadic cartographer. An atmosphere is something that we can sense and feel, a space that can hold many affects at once. It has resonance with McLuhan's boundless auditory space where there is movement in multiple directions, unconstrained by the frame. For Dyson, an atmospheric presence is "one that surrounds, envelopes, enables, and affects".⁸ With its flux and flow, Dyson's concept presents an atmosphere as unpredictable and therefore unknowable.⁹

I feel lost as I wander through this new space. I have no reference points to guide me.

Unsettling habitual and prescribed movements through space has been an occupation of artists and social critics, notably the Situationist Internationale in Paris in the 1950s. Through a process Guy Debord termed psychogeography, interventions were conceived as ways to disrupt the known and controlled paths and dominance of urban space by commercial enterprise. Debord claimed these new ways of mapping and traversing cities would evoke "complete insubordination to habitual influences".¹⁰ More recently, participant-led projects have used methods of surveying and collecting information to explore the nexus between private experiences and public spaces. Christian Nold's *Greenwich Emotion Map* (2005–06) draws on psychogeography and records emotional responses to place. Over a six-month period, Nold held weekly workshops with residents of Greenwich, London where participants wore electronic devices which recorded the biometric data from their emotional responses as they walked the area. Nold then aggregated the information and created a map that used cartographic methods such as contour lines to reflect hot spots of emotional input. The public could then use this map to navigate the area of Greenwich with an attunement towards a different way of experiencing the space.

Locative mapping projects can reconfigure places and histories through embodied experience. Blast Theory's *Rider Spoke* (2007) sought to eliminate the divide between audience and participant by making a project that was only accessible by those who contributed their stories. This project took

place in a number of cities at night, beginning with London. Equipped with a bike, riders were given small computers which asked them to find a hiding place and then to record a response to a question. The riders then used locative data to find other hiding places in the city and were prompted to listen to other participants' stories. Making use of technology, data collecting techniques, and locative information, these are two examples of how participatory input can be used to shape a project.

To produce a cartography of Ólafsfjörður I make a map. I ask some locals I meet at the cafe to make marks that draw on local knowledge, experience, and feelings of this place. These include:

- a surprising event
- a significant event
- a place to listen
- a place of warmth
- other (please describe)

I'm not sure how effective this strategy beyond a conversational prompt, but I make a few discoveries:

- There is one romantic place in town — a solitary bench that overlooks the lake.
- For all participants, the place of warmth is the home.
- Nature is to be listened to.
- A researcher came to the library once to search for strange creatures.

Listening to Ólafsfjörður

Listening to Ólafsfjörður becomes a daily practice in immersion, revealing the co-existence of many subtle sounds. Equipped with the shotgun microphone, and with headphones doubling as ear muffs, I spend as much time as I can out in the cold, listening. The most apparent sounds are cars approaching and leaving. They are too present. I listen for the more discrete and subtle sounds of nature. I wonder whether my footsteps on the snow or breaking the ice count. Like the cars, these are immediate sounds of human impact on the environment. I question my dismissal of these human-made sounds as intrusions into the auditory space and also my desire for a more profound silence.

Soon after becoming aware of the manifest quietness in Ólafsfjörður, I noticed the darkness. It was about 2.30 in the afternoon when my wind-battered bus pulled up, but the light was already receding. I wondered what peak light was like here in the winter. I had brought a suitcase of filming equipment with me and was curious about how this place might be rendered both visually and aurally through a practice of listening. However, I soon realised that the darkness made filming difficult and so I became more attuned to how sound might reveal the matter of this place.

Listening is often likened to states of awareness, alluding to that which can and cannot be seen. In 1988, Pauline Oliveros used the term 'deep listening' to describe the physical process of listening to geological sounds in a cavity made deep in the earth.¹¹ Since then it has become a movement which draws on music composition, meditation and the observation of sounds which are external and internal through a quietening and stillness. Oliveros proposes that an attunement to sound can reveal the resonances between all beings.¹² This acknowledges the application of listening as a philosophy that expands beyond the capacity of the ear both inwards to the internal sounding of the body and mind, as well as toward others.

I hear

I am

I receive what is. . .

Listening

No argument

My body is sound

Listening guides my body

Sound is the fibre of my being and of all sentient beings without exception¹³

The interview as site for listening

In addition to navigating the exterior spaces of this town, I also begin to search for people to interview. In the first three weeks of being in Ólafsfjörður, I interview seven people. The first is Lara, founder, and principal of the progressive high school as well as a photographer, storyteller, musician, and sheep-owner. She also co-ordinates the local search and rescue operations. Through frequent visits to the only cafe in town, I befriend and interview Elisabét who works there. She has recently moved back to finish high school at the age of twenty-four after leaving home at fifteen. I also interview and record some chanting by poet and musician, Thorárin who runs the national Icelandic Poetry Museum. He has five albums of poetry and music, and I buy his first and reportedly most

critically acclaimed collection. I also approach Alda after seeing her through a window stacking boxes of taxidermied birds while relocating the natural history museum. The other three participants are Gumi who drives the rubbish truck and volunteers at the search and rescue centre, Siggy, the occasional long-haul fisherman and native of this town, and Ida, the cafe owner, Danish teacher and slow tourism enthusiast. I also record conversations in the library mid-snowstorm, customers' reflections on Friday's fried chicken in the supermarket, and traditional folk songs by the local children's singing group.

Sometimes I approach the interview with a few topics to explore, and at other times I wait to see where the participant takes our conversation. Some of the subjects we discuss include: travelling alone, sleeping and dreaming, darkness and light, sounds of water and related forms, words for snow as well as poetry, rescue, and birds. I conduct the interviews where the participant lives or works. Often the sounds of life break in but these are all part of the aural atmosphere. I consider these unanticipated sounds part of the networked conversation between all the participants of this place. Taking into account the idea of sound as a network disrupts the binary positions which dictate much conversation which often manifests an alternating exchange between positions. Deborah Bird Rose writes of dialogue as an ethical counterpoint to the position of the monologue which is predicated on the binaries of active-present and passive-absent.¹⁴ Her scope of inquiry goes beyond the inter-human and encompasses other living beings in a broader ecological ethic of concern. Rose claims that power lies not only in the privileged speaking position but also in "the ability not to hear what is being said, not to experience the consequences of one's actions".¹⁵ Further, she contends that often what constitutes communication is predicated on pre-existing structures where "the pole of power sustains its privilege by refusing any feedback that would cause to open itself to dialogue".¹⁶ The interviewing process functions to elicit experiences and gauge the tenor of this place and the people. What is the specificity of living here? What is their relationship to home? How are they shaped by the environment?

Locating people to interview results from a combination of stalking, persistence, and listening. As I listen and record, I also note connections to the environment, stories, traditions, and beliefs. Elisabét, my first interviewee, informs me that the ravens have arthritis and you can hear their creaking wings as they fly. I take this as folklore rather than literal truth. She tells me her mum's name means raven and she is the raven's baby. I meet Alda, whose name translates as 'wave'. Alda runs the natural history museum. She tells me more about the ravens; they are hungry at this time of the year. She

gives them food. In keeping with this bird-trope, I ask Thorárin, director of the Icelandic poetry museum. He shows me a photo of a famous Icelandic poet flanked by two handsome ravens. It's these small snippets of information I hold and store in a safe place. I recall them on subsequent occasions when I am out recording material. How do my observations of what I see and hear in the fjord correspond with what I have been told?

The raven as symbolic object or muse becomes emblematic of multiple forms of knowledge. It is an object that I take and turn around to examine from different angles. Each anecdote I collect about the raven provides me with another aspect from which I construct a multivalent portrait of a bird I know only about through superstition and literature. I start to search for them in the sky. I attune my ear to their difference and specificity. From a distance of about a hundred metres, I hear a single raven cawing. It works in rhyming triplets, with the odd fourth. It punctuates with clarity. I follow the path of the sound and see the bird standing alone upon a lamp-post on the road leading away from the town. I record it as it breaks through the crisp silence of the fjord. And then it is gone, flown. The quality of the air and quietness make the smaller sounds discernible, and I feel my attention expand beyond the immediate, through the space, searching and straining to find new discrete sounds.

I wonder how to get inside the space to hear voices that one might not hear at a distance. New media artist and sound theorist Norie Neumark writes of the posthumanist perspective on how a deep listening to the sounds of a place enables a more intimate relationship with that place.¹⁷ For Neumark, "listening to voice in a place is always the voice of place".¹⁸ While sound has the propensity to penetrate, so does the act of listening that extends away from the self, searching for and seeking an object. But more than an object to attach to, there is also an acknowledgement that these sounds are the place. Claudia Pederson and Patricia Zimmermann suggest that the representation of these other-than-human environments allow for a shift away from the "logocentric domains"¹⁹ of the speaking subjects that are usually the focus of documentary. Rather, presenting the voices of the environment can enable an "intellectual contemplation and slow immersion".²⁰ While Pederson and Zimmermann speak of the documentary image as a site for this contemplation, the acoustic field can further expand on this immersion into voices of, and the voice of, place.



Figure 18. Images from Ólafsfjörður. From top left, removing the Christmas decorations, the Icelandic Poetry Museum, Alda and a taxidermied bird, mid-morning sunrise, local pool and hot pots, the children’s choir, serenading the sheep with traditional Icelandic poetry and view over the frozen lake.

Sound leads

Often it is sound that leads and I who follow. At times when I am listening, I begin to notice sounds which are only perceptible with a microphone, and I use the equipment as a device for locating the source. Such sounds which soon become familiar are the low hums of machinery. I follow. I am led to a shed with a generator, then to a factory with no windows, and then to some street lights by the harbour. All these sounds are variations on a theme, frequencies of generated power. One day it is particularly windy. Wind is not easy to record with its harsh brush against a microphone, but the flagpoles are rattling. On another day, the snow and wind make leaving the house feel dangerous. Nevertheless, I climb over the wall of snow which has been ploughed up outside my door rather than shovelling a path and stumble onto the street. I see a plastic bag and bracing myself against the wind I turn the microphone to listen to what it has to say. It remains silent. I know there is a sound somewhere, but I must bend to the elements of the weather and retreat.

I also hear watery sounds: the dripping water as the snow melts, the small waterfall, the roaring smash of black sandy waves from the Norwegian Sea, and the sheets of ice that rub up against each other like mini tectonic plates on the fjordal waters. This gentle drifting clacking sound is my favourite. I insert a camera under the ice to get inside it. This listening experience is a metaphor in methodologically considering how all the fragments of this research correlate. On the beach, the creamy seafoam is deposited then dissipates once it hits landfall with a shrivelling sound. The subtle and the fierce sounds coexist, becoming more apparent here and receding there like the ebb and flow of the tide.



Figure 19. Recording the ducks, Ólafsfjörður, 2017



Figure 20 . Recording the sounds under the ice, Ólafsfjörður 2017

The car tyres make different sounds according to the weather conditions: snow, ice or rain. But they all sound loud with their grippy studs. They interrupt and take over. Good sounds and bad sounds? John Cage wonders if it were possible to arrive at a place where “the ugly sounds were beautiful?”²¹ He asks, “If we drop beauty what have we got? Have we got truth?”²² In conventional documentary practice, the tendency to evaluate material and how it fits into preconceived ideas casts a shadow over the possibility of presenting what is emergent, unfolding and ‘truthful’.

Although there is often a distinction made between hearing as a passive condition and listening as active, listening is more involved, sensorially as well as phenomenologically. Cage suggests that the act of listening draws the listener outwards into the auditory space. The quietness of this town facilitates and attunement to smaller, quieter and more subtle sounds and resonances. In the silence, the ear reaches out beyond the peripheral but also within oneself. In speaking of silence, there is also the acknowledgement that there is no such thing; there is always sound — outside of us and inside our heads.²³ A focus on listening begins with what I can hear and expands towards a more encompassing attentiveness to what is in my broader sensory sphere. This attentiveness by way of listening has much in common with what Stewart suggests as an “intimacy with a world”.²⁴ For Stewart, these are “the kinds of agency that might or might not add up to something with some kind of intensity or duration”.²⁵ As I listen, the sounds in the fjord become “enigmas that might be barely sensed and yet are compelling”.²⁶

Amplifications

In the Argentinian savanna lives a spider that spins its web, not in isolation but as part of an intricate community. In August 2017, after the Visible Evidence conference had concluded, I spent some days wandering around the cemeteries, parks, markets, and galleries of Buenos Aires. In the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, I encountered an exhibition by Argentinian artist Tomás Saraceno called *How to Entangle the Universe in a Spider Web*. On one floor there was a giant immersive network of three-dimensional spiderwebs that 7000 spiders had collectively woven over three months. Titled, *Quasi-Social Musical Instrument IC 342 built by 7000 Parawixia bistrata*, this installation was the largest spider web ever constructed inside. In the basement of the expansive museum, there was another installation titled *The Cosmic Dust Spider Web Orchestra*. In this installation, a spider weaves a web and as the floating dust particles in the atmosphere come in contact with this web, the vibrations produced are amplified by microphones and emitted through large speakers in the dark cavernous room. Accompanying the resonant sound of dust particles is a

large-scale video projection, also of the dust. The relational network of spiders, dust, and web are made both visible and audible through amplification techniques. The *Parawixia bistriata* spiders the artist employed to do this labour had been specifically collected from a region of Argentina because of their natural tendency towards working collectively rather than in isolation. Being immersed in this networked auditory space brought about a closer proximity to the workings of not only the spiders but also matter which is otherwise neither visible nor audible. This experience called forth what Dyson describes as a space that is filled with the “possibility of immersion, habitation and phenomenal plenitude”.²⁷

The use of amplifying technology enables access to a sensory dimension that is otherwise inaudible. Ihde claims that the use of amplification techniques, afforded by advancements in technology, has facilitated the extension of human perception, beyond the visual, and into the aural field. That which was previously only seen, now has voice.²⁸ Similarly, listening is as an active and conscious process which illuminates that which is not immediately apparent. When I teach my students about recording sound, I initially ask them to listen to the spaces they previously thought of as silent, first with their ears, and then with microphones and headphones. The practice of listening is not always easy as it requires a certain stillness and surrender. To listen, you must also surrender your own speaking voice and expand outwards beyond the dominant and towards the subtle. While some sounds make themselves immediately heard in the auditory environment, others must be sought out in the apparent silence. Real listening, philosopher Gemma Corradi Fiumara implies, is requesting the unknown to talk to us.²⁹ For Corradi Fiumara, only when we have invited the unknown to speak, we are living.³⁰

Like those who live in Ólafsfjörður during winter, I am guided and constrained by the weather. The conditions are keenly felt and dictate the rhythms of daily activity. *What is the auditory quality of climate? What is its grain?* In discussions of the aural resonances of place, music scholar Murray Schafer notes the distinctly different sounds of natural elements in different locations; “No two raindrops sound alike, as the attentive ear will detect”.³¹ While voice is usually equated with the human, there is also a tradition in sound studies, as well as posthuman thought, that suggests a broader conception than the anthropocentric. It is to voices that I attune myself, not to interpret linguistic signification, but rather to hear their expression of presence. In this Icelandic fjord, and in the middle of winter, what better place to understand that we need to listen to nature.

Considering the power of nature requires me to confront and accommodate the constant threat of its changeability. This awareness is shaped through my interactions. In an interview, I ask Elisabét about the sounds of this place. She has never been asked this before and pauses before recalling the rushing intensity of the sounds of the wind and the waves. She tells me that although these sounds can be intimidating, they can also catalyse a “survival instinct” reminding her of the relatively small scale of human within the powerful environment. Listening to the voice of the environment disrupts the human-centric position of dominance over nature. In her critique of the term ‘Anthropocene’, Donna Haraway argues that humans should not be afforded so much power in determining the future of the planet. And while not dismissing the impact that humans have had, she is wary about perpetuating negative storylines as a *fait accompli* for future imagining. For Haraway, “Species man does not make history... Revolt needs other forms of action and other stories for solace, inspiration, and effectiveness”.³² In this fjord, nature rules in its magnitude. I am reminded of my early response to the human-made sounds as evidence of crushing imposition, but also that among these dominant forces and rhythms, the less forthright voices persist.

Local fisherman, Siggy, tells me about some Airbnb guests who were afraid that the mountains surrounding the town would fall, or at least envelop them. I imagine this as a kind of inverted vertigo in response to the visual immensity of nature. I recall Elisabét’s reflection on nature’s force. My interview question both uncovered this experience for her, and at the same time, becomes something I contemplate when I am out recording sounds and thinking about the direction of the project. The exchange was relational in that we both affected and were affected by what we discussed. The words I hear during the interviews, and after as I re-listen and transcribe, and later edit, always replay in my mind. When I am out, listening, I now contemplate the wind and record the waves with thoughts of survival.

Why do the ducks not fly south? became a composition of contingencies, dependent on who I met, what stories I heard and which plans eventuated during my month in Ólafsfjörður. Sometimes this involved multiple attempts to meet up an interviewee. At the cafe on the first day, I had met Lara. She had played me a song about shovelling snow that she recorded the previous winter as a way to deal with the heavy snowfall. To use her words, it was “a kind of therapy”. I considered how I could incorporate this song into my project and had made a tentative plan to meet her for an interview. In another instance, I had also spent many days circling the church and went looking for the church minister who could put me in contact with the local choir. Amid a snowstorm and discussions of

Scandi-noir, the librarian had shown me a house on Google Maps, directing me to the road above the town where she lived. No one was home, so I left a note. Other times winter had intervened, and there were cancellations due to a closed road, avalanche danger, a snowstorm or illness.

Endings

Incremental changes in the amount and quality of light mark each day that passes. I feel like winter is ending, but I'm told it's only half over. It is ending for me though with the beginning of the Skammdegi Arts Festival. January 26, the first day of the festival, marks the return of the sun from behind the mountains. Carmela from the supermarket tells me that people make pancakes to celebrate. Their shape and colour resemble the pale light of the brief sun.

In the final few days of making *Why do the ducks not fly south?*, I edit the sound, enact the walk, refine the directions, add more personal reflection and navigate the rearrangement of the supermarket stock and the daily changing ice on the walking path. Every sound element I use in the piece I have found here. For the installation in the Landsbjörg or rescue centre at the end of the walk, I make a series of short videos in response to the lack of sun. These suns are stand-ins, born of my escalating habit of looking towards light-emitting objects, seeking that familiar intensity, the warmth. I construct the images in the videos from the kitchen light, a ball of foil, car headlights and the fluorescent sign from the supermarket. I borrow the mountains, an empty wall and the sky for backdrops. I edit the videos with sounds from fireworks, a joyful children's song and an amplified crackle of electricity. I think of these works as manufactured suns. I'll take my suns where I can find them.

Walking, Listening, Being

My experience of site-specific audio works has often correlated with being elsewhere — Berlin, Sydney, the UK. Often commissioned for arts festivals, they find their home in non-traditional spaces and locations that ask the audience to seek them out specifically. Foremost practitioners of this form include the collaborative pair Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller. While Cardiff and Bures Miller's work make use of documentary elements, they are primarily complex scripted audio narratives with sophisticated sound design instructions on where to walk and look, and what to listen to. Sometimes these are immersive spaces that the audience enters into with props and sets. There is a deep sense of intimacy in having Cardiff speak into your ear as you navigate one of their works, brought about by the proximity of her voice, the tangible presence of her breathing and the binaurally recorded

sounds. The site-specific walks map cities and other spaces with real and imagined memories and histories. These audio walks can draw links between past, present and future narratives while enabling an embodied experience for the audience as participant. Early on in my research, as recounted in Chapter one, I travelled to the island of Portland in the UK to hear another audio walk, Katrina Palmer's *The Loss Adjusters* (2015). Portland is riddled with deep quarries where the stone has been excavated to build some of London's most significant buildings. The location where the walk began was cold and uninhabited. I followed the map I was given and wandered the backstreets and paths, quarries, church and graveyard alone, pausing in different locations to let the story unfold. Being in the place, or emplaced, foregrounded the resonant connections between the loss of the narrative and the pillaging of the precious stone from the island. This island was a metaphor with the audio connecting the space between the site, historical narrative and the feelings it evoked for me around loss.

Imagine you have just arrived in a place you don't know. Or maybe you know a little or even think you know well. These are the first words the audience hears in *Why do the ducks not fly south?* The voice is mine and addressed to the listener. The walk begins at a red armchair upstairs in Joe's Guesthouse (or Gistihús Jóa in Icelandic). The audience imagines their own arrival in the town and enters the single room and sits on the bed. The room is small and simple, but it is enough for one. Other voices speak of first impressions and thoughts about the specificity of this small town. These are drawn from the interviews and include history, the location, and how the residents came to be here. The window onto the main road provides a panoramic view of one angle of the town.

Observing the ambient sounds in the environment, the listener is also asked to consider their own reflections and recollections. Following my instructions, the audio walk leads the listener out onto the street to survey the town, through the supermarket, around the harbour and finally to the search and rescue centre. Throughout the piece, I speak of my memories and experiences of being here as well as the questions I have considered. Sounds of the location weave through, sometimes connecting the listener to where they are, while at other times recalling other places. The audio prompts the listener to notice what is in the environment such as the changing light conditions. *How does the light differ from yesterday? How might it change tomorrow?* My voice frames and narrates. Nancy proposes that listening positions the self "in the presence of".³³ Listening is not an object as such but rather "a coming and a passing, and extending and a penetrating".³⁴



Figure 21. Images of participants doing the audio walk, *Why do the ducks not fly south?* Ólafsfjörður, January 2017. Images 1, 3, 4 & 6 by Ka-Lun Leung.

As the listener walks, in solitude, exploring the auditory resonances, there is an unfolding of awareness of their presence in the space. It also calls forth others who inhabit this place, the water in the harbour, the snow, the cars, the poetry and songs and also of their own internal rhythms and sounds. In discussing practices of listening, visual anthropologist, Sarah Pink suggests there should be a guide for an audience in how they might perceive and make sense of these sounds as an embodied listener so that the listener might better attend to the place and “hear as others might”.³⁵ The audio piece includes my own instructions to the audience to bridge their own experience while framing the pre-recorded interviews and sounds. Being enveloped in both sound and the landscape calls to mind Salomé Voegelin’s metaphoric links between walking and listening as active and immersive states:

Listening is not a receptive mode but a method of exploration, a mode of ‘walking’ through the soundscape/the sound work. What I hear is discovered not received, and this discovery is generative, a fantasy: always different and subjective and continually, presently now.³⁶

Traversing the town alone gives space to attune to what can be heard and seen. Sometimes it is my voice that speaks; at other times it is the voice of another or the sounds of place. Sometimes there is silence which allows the possibility of listening to what is near and far. Yet silence is never really silent after all. The address varies between the first, second and third person evoking degrees of proximity, drawing the listener near, and asking that they listen outwards into the space beyond what is visible. This space to roam is as LaBelle suggests, a “network that teaches us how to belong, to find a place, as well as how not to belong, to drift. To be out of place, and still to search for new connection, for proximity”.³⁷ Although walking alone through the work, the voices disavow aloneness, as does the presence of the other-than-human. I wonder what this means anymore, to be alone. I have come to reconsider aloneness since being here; it is more a feeling than a physical state. And here I have rarely felt alone. In his book *A Philosophy of Walking* (2014), Frédéric Gros interrogates the act of walking as a perceived state of aloneness. He proposes that one is never alone as the presence of nature demands our attention, drawing us near with its promise of companionship.³⁸



Figure 22. Video stills from *I'll take my suns where I can find them*. Exhibited as part of *Why do the ducks not fly south?* at the Skamdeggi Arts Festival. Ólafsfjörður, January 2017

The strategies of listening in *Why do the ducks not fly south?* demand attention to the smaller, quieter or often unheard voices of the environment. The multiple voices coalesce at times with audio tracks as a polyvocal collage. The human voices sometimes interrupt each other to disagree, and other times continue a trajectory that one of them has started. At times the voices are heard simultaneously, and the listener is directed to stretch their focus beyond the dominant sounds and to pinpoint a subtle and barely audible sound in the distance. This listening calls forth a shift towards the minoritarian, or that which might otherwise be neglected because it is not immediately apparent or obvious. Scholar of rhetoric Jaishikha Nautiyal suggests that this is an ethical shift of attuning oneself to the acousmatic sounds emitted from unseen sources such as nature. According to Nautiyal, the polyphonic quality of these sounds instigates a movement from the self towards the other through listening.³⁹ If we equate sight with logic and knowing with truth, then acousmatic sounds which emanate from unseen sources sit beyond the realm of what is immediately recognised. This shift presents a way of considering documentary material which implicates the maker and audience in a movement towards the other, and therefore towards a position that is less known.

Expanding listening

In this chapter, I have discussed how the making of *Why do the ducks not fly south?* presents a number of ways to explore documentary listening as an attunement to place and the other-than-human. Listening is an ethical concern and a practice that requires us to consider that which is beyond our singular selves. While listening might be an essential practice in documentary making, it is vital to examine which voices are heard beyond the dominant ones. Listening positions each of us not as the centre of a universe, but as small shifting connected parts of a constellation. Through a practice of listening, both in and with the documentary, we can better imagine a sense of the collective beyond the human-centric. The space afforded by the focus on listening and sound in this work has broader applications for documentary practices in thinking about the shared world and how we occupy it. Presenting the multiple voices of a site calls to mind properties of auditory space which Lacey suggests "has no point or favoured focus".⁴⁰ Rather, "It's a sphere without fixed boundaries, space made by the thing itself, not containing the thing".⁴¹ Listening allows us to reimagine the subjective position of the singular as participatory and enmeshed within an ecosystem of relationships. This is essential in imagining how we can live in the world with more attunement to other beings and difference.

The practice of listening reflects a movement from the inwards to the outwards, beckoning that which is beyond us to come closer through considering the simultaneous existence of differing perspectives and non-evaluative representation. After making *Why do the ducks not fly south?* during the month-long residency, I wondered how I might employ a practice of attuned listening in documentary to engage with documentary subjects that were more political, conflictual and urgent. This question leads to probing how listening might rehabilitate the voices of spaces, beings and people who would otherwise remain unheard. And subsequently, how might I, as a documentary practitioner, translate this material into works, that are in turn, listened to in all their complexity? Underpinning these questions was a concern of how to engage listening as a method of collective action.

NOTES

- ¹ Rendell, "Site-Writing," 150.
- ² Rosi Braidotti, "Nomadic Ethics", *Deleuze Studies* 7, no. 3 (2013): 342–59.
- ³ Ingold, *Lines*, 81.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ For further discussion of the participatory nature of material see: Jane Bennet, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). I have also written on the application of Bennett's "vibrant matter" in relation to the participatory practices in the project discussed in the next chapter, The Park. See: Kim Munro "Rethinking First-Person Testimony Through a Vitalist Account Of Documentary Participation", *Frames Cinema Journal* 12 (2017: 1–15). DOI: 10.1068/d9109
- ⁶ Kathleen Stewart, "Atmospheric Attunements," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29, no. 3 (2011): 445. DOI
- ⁷ Ibid., 446.
- ⁸ Dyson, *Sounding New Media*, 16.
- ⁹ Ibid., 17.
- ¹⁰ Guy Debord, "Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography," *Les Lèvres Nues* 6 (September 1955), <https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/presitu/geography.html>.
- ¹¹ Deep listening is also a term used by Aboriginal peoples of Australia to refer to a deep respect for the land and its stories. It is also called 'dadirri' in Ngan'gikurrunggurr and Ngen'giwumirri languages of the Aboriginal people of the Daly River region, 220 kilometres south of Darwin, NT. For Aboriginal writer and elder Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann, dadirri is a deep state of quiet contemplation from where she can be "made whole again". Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann, "Dadirri: inner deep listening and quiet still awareness" (2002) <http://nextwave.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Dadirri-Inner-Deep-Listening-M-R-Ungunmerr-Bauman-Refl.pdf>.
- ¹² Oliveros, *Deep Listening*.
- ¹³ Pauline Oliveros, "The Earth Worm Also Sings: A Composer's Practice of Deep Listening", *Leonardo Music Journal* 3 (1993): 35. DOI
- ¹⁴ Deborah Bird Rose, "Dialogue," in *Manifesto for Living in the Anthropocene*, eds. Katherine Gibson, Deborah Bird Rose and Ruth Fincher (New York: Punctum Books, 2015), 127.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., 128.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Norie Neumark, *Voicetracks: Attuning to Voice in Media, and the Arts*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2017), 64.
- ¹⁸ Ibid, 65.
- ¹⁹ Claudia Pederson and Patricia Zimmermann, "Habitats of Documentary: Landscapes, Color Fields, and Ecologies in the Avant-Docs of Vincent Grenier," in *The Philosophy of Documentary Film*, ed. David LaRocca (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016), 225.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ John Cage & Kyle Gann, *Silence: Lecture and Writings* (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 2011), 110.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Ibid., 109.
- ²⁴ Stewart, "Atmospheric Attunements", 448.
- ²⁵ Ibid., 445.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Dyson, *Sounding New Media*, 1.
- ²⁸ Ihde, *Listening and Voice*, 5–6.
- ²⁹ Gemma Corradi Fiumara, *The Other Side of Language: A Philosophy of Listening* (London: New York: Routledge, 1995), 122.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ R. Murray Schafer, *The Tuning of the World: Toward a Theory of Soundscape Design*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), 19.

³² Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. *Experimental Futures: Technological Lives, Scientific Arts, Anthropological Voices* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2016), 49.

³³ Nancy, *Listening*, 13.

³⁴ Ibid. (emphasis in original)

³⁵ Sarah Pink, *Doing Sensory Ethnography*, (Los Angeles; London: SAGE, 2009), 143.

³⁶ Salomé Voegelin, *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 4.

³⁷ LaBelle, *Acoustic Territories*, xvii.

³⁸ Frédéric Gros, *A Philosophy of Walking*, trans. John Howe (London: Verso Books, 2014), 55.

³⁹ Jaishikha Nautiyal, "Listening with/to Nature's Voice: An Ethical Polyphony," *International Journal of Listening* 30, issue 3 (2016): 159.

⁴⁰ Lacey, *Listening Publics*, 67.

⁴¹ Ibid.



Figure 23. Image from Wantirna Caravan Park after Con, who had been living there for 13 years, moved out. This image is representative of the destruction in the aftermath of the eviction.

CHAPTER FOUR: TRANSLATING

★ [link to the project: The Park](#)

Hidden voices

The caravan park sits in a small valley — a dip in the landscape hidden from the road. Situated between a freeway for which one must pay per use, and Mountain Highway which is nowhere near a mountain, the park is easy to miss.

This chapter discusses the final project in this research: *The Park*, a twenty-two-minute film and the exhibition, *Am I at home?* The Park is the result of eight months of filming around the closure and forced eviction of almost a hundred and fifty long-term residents at the Wantirna Residential Park on the outskirts of Melbourne, Australia. I first heard about the soon-to-be eviction in *The Guardian* in May 2017.¹ This article profiled some of the residents who would be affected by the recent purchase of the park by a developer who plans to build three hundred townhouses. Some of these residents had been living for nearly thirty years in this low-cost and safe alternative housing. For these residents — many elderly, disabled and/or on low incomes — there were few viable options for relocation. While the residents didn't own the land, they did own their houses which primarily consisted of portable cabins with added extensions and decks. Their private gardens evidenced years of work, care, and financial investment.

Through the production of *The Park* and *Am I at home?*, I seek to reinstate the idea of voice as value within a site that has devalued people in the pursuit of profit. I explore the transformative quality of listening and its propensity for *translating* the material and experiences to evoke a listening experience in the audience. Through the collective act of listening, I consider how documentary can be a tool that allows maker, participant, environment and audience to be implicated in a common world. In thinking about the implications for documentary practice, I further expand on listening's potential to shift away from the 'need to know' and towards the idea of 'dwelling'. Through this shift, documentary practice can be a mode through which we occupy space with that and those which are unknown. This cohabitation can reimagine and model ways of being in the world with complexity and difference.

I take a drive out to the park on a cold Saturday afternoon. Conspicuously middle-class and attached to my inner-city lifestyle, I am clearly not a resident. I am also keenly aware that I would not be able to afford to buy property here and wonder about the strange interconnection between money and class. Money talks. The overwhelming feeling at the first meeting I attend the next day is one of despair. The Wantirna Residents' Action Group (WRAG) has organised this meeting as things are moving fast. A heated discussion ensues about what action the residents should take; do they try to save this park from impending razing, or fight for compensation to cover relocation costs? The residents are still in shock, and few have plans. And then there is the issue of race. The developer is a Chinese company, and to the residents, this is a defining element of their eviction. Someone has put up a sign outside on the road which reads, "China Park".

Apart from childhood memories of caravanning, I know little of the people who live in caravan parks. Most depictions, that I can recall, come from American films and the parks themselves are not generally celebrated as desirable places to live. I think of Eminem and *8 Mile* and Mickey Rourke and *The Wrestler*. I also think of the 2011 documentary *Bombay Beach* filmed by the once watery and now arid Salton Sea in California, where a collection of caravans create a community of fringe-dwellers.² In these parks, however, there seems to be a sense of communal living with everyone in relatively close proximity. Usually situated by the beach or in a small town, this was the first time I'd entered one on the edge of a city and the village-like atmosphere was distinct.

From May 2017 to January 2018, I went out to the caravan park twenty-two times. Each time I encountered the same core group of residents who were often holding roadside protests to escalate their action, collecting signatures for their petition, and making themselves otherwise visible. However, life was moving on for many of them as the number of remaining residents dwindled. By Christmas 2017, most of the residents had moved. Filming this process posed the question faced by many documentary makers; what happens when so much of the filming feels futile. And with a lack of time and resources, there will always be omissions in the material and a limited capacity to 'tell the story' as it happened. But documentary narratives are also carefully crafted from the material that is captured. Throughout the filming at the park, I questioned the ethics; how to continually document a situation which is traumatic for most participants. And subsequently, I considered how documentary works can engage an audience in hearing these stories that both speak to the specificity of the situation as well as being emblematic of a neoliberal culture of alienation and how we treat each other within it.

On knowing and listening

The desire to translate actuality and experience into knowledge often compels the documentary making impulse. And further, the acquisition of this knowledge considered the primary driver of spectatorial desire. It is what Nichols refers to as “epistephelia”.³ This is an interest in learning about the world and its matter rather than a critical understanding of how knowledge is transmitted and systematised through rhetorical strategies and framing. Thinking through the auditory sphere presents us with positions which require us to attend to multiplicity, complexity, and discomfort, thereby promoting a proliferation of subjectivities. While documentary speaks the world to us, the process of listening through, and in documentary, can open up and make apparent the spatial properties of sound as an atmosphere or ecology. Listening allows us to become aware of that which is not immediate and not in the frame, a peripheral experience of presence.

To expand on how listening can facilitate other ways of knowing, I draw on LaBelle’s idea of auditory knowledge which he suggests is “non-dualistic [and] based on empathy *and* divergence, allowing for careful understanding and deep involvement in the present while connecting to the dynamics of mediation, displacement, and virtuality”.⁴ While LaBelle writes of listening as a path to “know the other,”⁵ for Lipari, listening also suggests a position beyond that which can be known. To claim to know something is to assume that we can understand it. Lipari suggests that listening opens up a space which is:

... a dwelling place from where we offer our ethical response, our hospitality, to the other and the world. Listening being is thus an invitation — a hosting. This hosting of other is as a guest, as a not-me.⁶

This “dwelling place” transcends the kinds of listening reliant on learnt techniques and strategies. Rather, it is concomitant with a more complex sense of being implicated in the subject position of another. In documentary, this concept of listening can be translated to the filmmaking site as an ecology with all the attendant material, participants and beings. This way of listening is about ‘being with’ rather than ‘knowing’ another or others. This shifts documentary practice beyond the acquisition and creation of knowledge towards dwelling within the complexity and an acknowledgement that we may not either know or understand. Listening also has a pragmatic application in the simple act of sound recording. Being present with a microphone and headphones, and with the necessity of remaining silent, can open up the space beyond our sightline and

peripheral vision. It can facilitate an awareness of what the camera does not see and what is beyond the frame.

When I start filming, I think I will make a short video that the residents can use for their campaign. I plan to make video profiles to put on their Facebook page. They don't have one yet, so I make one for them. I am also interested in things that are not commensurate with their message, and that may even problematise it. For example, why do so many of the residents refuse to participate in the protest? I am interested in the hand-painted signs with drippy red and blue paint on white background (Australian flag colours) that say things like: "TRASHED FOR CASH", "SHAME ON YU" or "LONGRIVER NOT A GIVER" (Andrew Yu is the CEO of the company Longriver that bought the land). I am also interested in the sign that says "PHUC YU" that one resident leaves in the back seat of the car and turns over to hide as we are filming. And then there's the presence of the Australia First Party, which is a fringe far right (and white) political party. One of the leaders tells me about the genocide of white Australia, and some of the residents take the pamphlets, pleased that someone is listening.

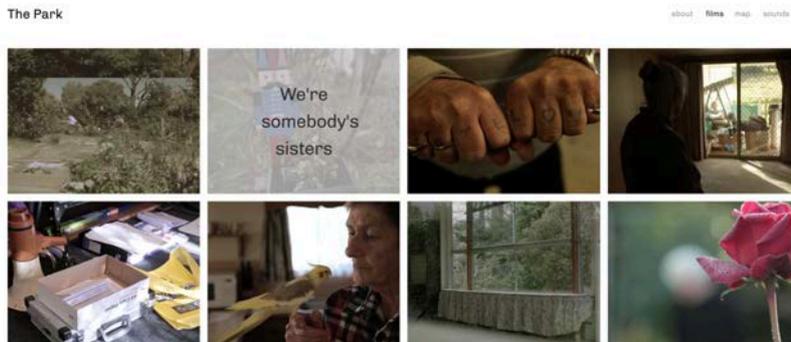


Figure 24. Screen shot from the website (www.thepark.me) I made with short films and other information about the Wantirna Caravan Park. I later used these short videos as sequences in the longer film.

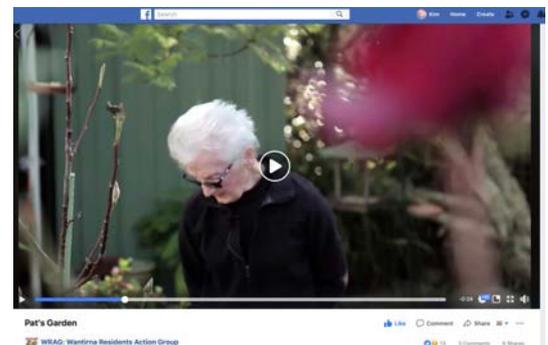


Figure 25. Screenshot of Pat's Garden — a video I made and posted on the Facebook page.

Encountering the residents at Wantirna Park, I am initially confronted with the myriad voices and messages. I want to find a way to re-present all the positions and perspectives that I hear: the sad, the resigned, the philosophical, the xenophobic. What is the message, what is the story? Making work that reflects multiple, co-existing and often conflicting perspectives better reflects the nature of the world we live in and presents a model through which we can learn how to navigate and hear the minor, the disagreeable, the complicated or the forgotten voices.

Returning to the inherent properties in the auditory sphere is the acknowledgement of the propensity to contain multiple competing entities and voices. LaBelle suggests that our experience of sound spaces is manifold; "It sparks annoyance and outrage, while also affording important opportunities for dynamic sharing".⁷ Being able to hold all these competing perspectives at once is representative of the increasing concern around the need to hear voices that are divergent and often challenging. It is also part of the broader project of contemporary democracy, which according to Mouffe, is the acknowledgement of a pluralism of differences rather than the adherence to a singular and 'better' way of 'doing' democracy.⁸ However, the inclusion of divergent voices is also fraught with ethical and representational concerns as I am building relationships with the residents. Further, the inclusion of other more contentious perspectives might undermine the narrative they want told, and perhaps the documentary's ability to bear adequate witness to their experiences.

Visibility and representation

In the previous chapter, I wrote about how listening can make the invisible present through an expanded sense of voice within the environmental context. In documenting the situation in the caravan park, where people may not feel seen, this sense of invisibility is more socially and politically situated. Being seen, or heard, means to be considered and to be taken into account. Visibility, according to LaBelle, is the "psychological and affective base by which we feel ourselves part of the world".⁹ I am not talking about the visual here because 'being seen' has little to do with the visual. Being seen means listened to in a way that recalls Lipari's notion of being present.¹⁰ For Lipari, listening means that:

I don't have to understand, although you may feel "understood." I don't have to translate your words into familiar categories or ideas. I don't have to "feel" what you feel, or "know" what it feels like to be you. What I do need to do is stand in proximity to your pain. To stand with you, right next to you, and to belong to you, fully present to the ongoing expression of you.¹¹

In filming and recording the residents of the park, there is an additional consideration to being seen. For some residents, there is a deep sense of shame connected to living in a caravan park, and some do not want me to film them in case they are recognised, pitied or judged. These same residents agree however to have their voices recorded and used in a less recognisably way through audio representation.

'Making visible' and 'giving voice' have long been concerns for documentary practitioners despite critiques of paternalism. The term 'to give voice' is problematic due to the inherent power difference implied through the filmmaker being in a position to give voice. For Trinh, giving voice is contentious due to how the interviewee's voices are often directly and objectively transferred from the source through to the film without reflexively acknowledging the subjectivity and mediation of the filmmaker.¹² Trinh argues that "In affirming righteously that one opens a space for those who do not have a voice, one often forgets that the gaining of voice happens within a framed context".¹³ Trinh goes on to say that "one tends to turn a blind eye to one's privileged position as "giver" and framer — albeit a framer ultimately framed as well".¹⁴ For Trinh, using strategies that call attention to the power relationship between filmmaker and participant remain ongoing challenges.¹⁵

Despite otherwise worthy intentions, documentary filmmaking has the potential to re-inscribe positions of power at multiple sites. There is the act of filming evidences through the camera's gaze and the often off-frame direction from the filmmaker. There is the selection process of who to film, when to film and how the filming occurs. Despite the infinite potential and possibilities, power is also inscribed through the editing of the material into some form and structure. In naming just a few sites where the filmmaker makes decisions, I also do not wish to make a reductive binary of the filmer/ filmed relationship. These power relationships are complex as power also exists with the participants who have their own desires, motivation and agency in how much or little to give to the project. In the often-small scale, underfunded or not funded at all productions, the documentarian works because this subject matter compels them. The often-fraught nature of participation in documentary can be grist for navigating the complexity of positionality, power, desire, and representation. In exploring the participant-filmmaker relationship through a more complex framework, Nash foregrounds the fact that reductive discussions of power imbalances obscure more nuanced conversations. Instead, Nash highlights the importance of actually listening to the insights of documentary participants and their experiences of being filmed.¹⁶ In discussing participatory and collaborative documentary practices, Liz Miller, Edward Little and Steven High suggest that these projects are inherently about the quest to find ways to create knowledge which embody this complicated nature. For these three practitioners, "Learning with rather than simply about represents a fundamental shift in knowledge production – one that breaks the disciplinary illusion of the omniscient historical narrator or curator".¹⁷ These complex negotiations and tensions which emerge through the documentary process are valuable in how they reflect and speak of the world we inhabit.

Documentary has traditionally sought to address social, political, environmental and personal issues while also championing the more admirable humanist traits such as resistance and courage. The human and corollary documentary character have traditionally been the central subjects of documentary film. In making work involving people, ethics continually need to be negotiated and reoriented. However, problems remain around the position of the filmmaker and the question of which voices should be heard. At its most self-serving and unethical, documentary can be considered an act of colonisation of stories and experiences, implying a selective listening that filters what is present into pre-conceived goals. Fiumura draws a parallel between the negation of other voices with a refusal to listen and the history of human dominance as a species.¹⁸ A practice of listening that doesn't reduce the voices to formulaic and known paths presents implications for documentary making as a model for spaces of difference.

In providing a space for listening, as documentary filmmakers, we must be prepared to listen to troubling opinions. In knowing what to do with these voices, it is essential to think about their framing so that they are not just transferred into the documentary artefact. Instead, these voices should be positioned with a context where they can be seen as symptomatic of broader political and social issues. I recall the interview with Chris from the Australia First Party at the caravan park, and the subsequent tension in wanting to represent his opinions — because they are real and reflective of more complex issues around class, race, and politics. But in representing these views, I should also resist merely providing a platform for these extremist views. The documentary process and subsequent artefact then provide ways to listen critically to these opinions. Documentary as a space of dialogue and critique again recalls de Michiel and Zimmermann's manifesto on open space documentary, where the practitioners become "context providers" instead of "content providers".¹⁹ Grappling with these questions around complexity is also part of the documentary process which calls to mind Latour's work on networks, or social worlds, which he suggests are constituted not through sameness but difference and complexity. Latour asks, "What if the disagreements were not the sort of issues that divide people in the normal state of things, but were bearing instead on the very way to assemble at all?"²⁰ Reflecting these dissonances goes some way to address documentary's tendency to foreground some voices and perspectives while occluding those more complicated or disagreeable.



Figure 26. Chris from the Australia First Party. How do you contextualise and represent xenophobic opinions? I used the split screen as an experiment so it would appear as though he is speaking to himself.

Translation of forms

The limitations of representation present ongoing questions for documentary scholarship and practice. How can the filmed form ever approximate a likeness to lived experience? The act of documenting might be a matter of recording real moments, but in doing so, it has already become reductive through selecting and framing. Directing the camera towards, pointing the microphone at, choosing this setting, or that participant, already reveals much about the filmmaker and their intention or desire. Nichols claims the fundamental problem of documentary is in representing real people, with a filmed likeness of them.²¹ It would, therefore, seem imperative to apply multiple modes and approaches in reflecting and representing the lived world or an event. Again, I borrow from Latour, who when writing with Adam Lowe draws on the metaphor of a river to discuss the idea of the source of a work and its reproductions. Latour and Howe claim that we should not only be interested in locating and pursuing the source of the river as some semblance of originality but that we should also consider the “catchment area, a river along with its estuaries, its tributaries, its rapids, its meanders, and, of course, its hidden sources”.²² Each aspect of the assemblage of the waterway then contains its own properties, values, and interpretations. While Latour and Howe use this analogy to speak of works of art and reproducibility in a post-Benjamin Actor Networked approach, it has applications for documentary and my project in the caravan park.

Rather than representation, translation is a more useful concept to rethink how listening can transform the world of the documentary event into an artefact. Translation is not the transference of one language into another through a reduction. Rather, it is the reformulation of one thing into



Figure 27. Video still from *The Park*: drone view of the Wantirna Caravan Park.

another with its own attendant properties. In reference to the Walter Benjamin essay written in 1916, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man", media artist and theorist Hito Steyerl claims that shifting documentary representation towards a process of translation, which both critiques indexical images and realism's claim on authentic depiction, can free the filmmaker from making decontextualised claims on what the documentary is and how it purports to know. According to Steyerl:

A documentary image obviously translates the language of things into the language of humans. On the one hand it is closely anchored within the realm of material reality. But it also participates in the language of humans, and especially the language of judgement, which objectifies the thing in question, fixes its meaning and constructs stable categories of knowledge to understand it.²³

Steyerl suggests that each "thing" has its own language, and while much documentary tends to flatten and reduce all these languages through its representational codes, filmmakers can employ alternative strategies that will make relationships between maker and subject, and conditions of production more apparent within the text. Borrowing Steyerl's use of translation supports my claims throughout this dissertation that the form of the documentary should emerge from each context, rather than rely on predetermined approaches which configure knowledge and experience as teleological. In my own practice, and in the case of *The Park*, this involves shifting from the conventional linear film that produces narrative arcs and argument that simplify the situation, to a consideration of how to translate the materiality of the eight months of filming into a work that evokes the concept of a listening-as-dwelling space. Grappling with the form and material and the ethics of involvement can be complicated when working with participants in traumatic situations, and especially when working in a research environment where the outcomes may not be clear.

Each time I visit Charlie's home, the Australian flag outside is a bit more tattered. And each time I film, he seems more resigned to the impending move. In our first interview, he talks about wanting to barbecue the developer. He tells me he has nowhere to go and they'll have to bulldoze him out of there. By the second interview, he has started packing away his Elvis CDs and Clive Cussler books into tidy boxes. He's not sure where he's going but he's on a waiting-list for public housing. I see him over the next few months and ask to film him some more. He tells me that he's done enough, the anger that was initially so apparent has given way to the inevitable. One day I find his cabin half gone, on the walls inside there are clean shapes where his collection of Elvis pictures had hung.

Listening through documentary: *The Quipu Project*

Creating documentary works that foreground a practice of listening can translate unheard experiences through methods and forms that enable a listening experience in the audience. The act of listening is a central tenet that is methodological, ontological and literal in the Peruvian interactive documentary the *Quipu Project*.²⁴ This project grew out of community development work undertaken by the directors Maria Court and Rosemarie Lerner around the forced sterilisation of nearly 300,000 women as well as thousands of men which was part of a family planning program instigated by Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori in the 1990s. According to the testimonies of many of the victims, this procedure took place without consent. Additionally, the majority of victims were rural indigenous Peruvians, who were often illiterate and spoke the non-dominant local dialect of Quechua. As linguistic minorities, these people were disenfranchised and lacked access to systems of support and power.²⁵ Having already built relationships through outreach programs, Court and Lerner were able to train participants to help engage communities in collecting stories about their enforced sterilisation through the distribution of mobile phones and setting up an anonymous telephone answering service.

The *Quipu Project* is composed of a suite of documentary artefacts including an interactive online project, a short linear film embedded in *The Guardian* website and a campaign for action. As a structuring device, the online version uses the motif of the quipu, an ancient Andean and Incan instrument of knots on string used to communicate complex messages and tell stories. The introduction sets the context and gives background to the events surrounding the sterilisation program. The individual testimonies of the victims are broken into segments including: *The Sterilisation Program*, *The Operations*, *The Life After*, and *Looking for Justice*. Facilitated by this online platform, the private testimonies enter a listening space in a public world. In her discussions of listening within public spaces, Lacey claims that while the visual is individual and subjective, focusing the attention on the subject and object, a focus on the auditory world is a shift to the “intersubjectivity of the public, plural world”.²⁶ Shifting towards the public through the act of listening enables a transformation from the neoliberal subject position towards being implicated in a collective subjectivity. Beyond listening, the website also enables the possibility to record messages of support for the participants as an acknowledgement that someone is listening to them. This feedback loop circumvents some of the inherent issues in interactive documentary that echo traditional transmission models predicated on a one-way exchange.

“What did they say? Yeah, it’s sad but what can we do?”

I am interested in the gardens which remind me of those little gardens in Germany, Kleingartens. I am drawn to the knick-knacks in the windows and the gnomes and wandering contraband cats. I notice the flags in various states of disintegration: Australian, New Zealand, Confederate. These details tell me something that the voices don’t. And as time passes, and people move and spray-painted FOR SALE signs pop up in front of almost every house, the weeds take over. Some days when I go out to the park, I spend time walking around the streets with my camera noticing what is changing. On a particularly windy day, I film the trees, bamboo wind chimes, and the interior of a demolished cabin. I try to get ever closer to the material, to remove the distance between myself and the camera (kinoeye)²⁷ and the stuff. I stand among the piles of insulation that are disappearing into the earth. A snail carries its home-for-one on its back on the wet ground and under a sheet of corrugated plastic. These are all the more noticeable as the residents leave.

Whenever I turn the camera on, the residents of the caravan park relive their experiences. My initial appearance on the scene presents an opportunity to record these accounts. And despite my belief that I am not the ‘voice-giver’ it’s also easy to try to fulfil a role that I feel the participants desire. My camera bears witness to the effects of this situation, but while I listen through the camera, I also struggle with the limits of the spoken word. Rabinowitz claims, “As ‘star’ of the documentary, the presence of the body, especially the body in pain, signifies truth and readiness which seem to defy contextualisation”.²⁸ Without the presence of the filmmaker in the frame, the camera is disembodied and “the filmed bodies are over-invested with meaning yet deprived of agency”.²⁹ They are separated from the mechanics of filming. The over-dependence on the human subject, and more specifically as the speaking subject, as the focal point for the viewer’s gaze creates a dissonance with the notion of agency because it’s as though the more they speak, the less ability they have to effect change, rendered through the distancing and flattening of the framed image. Another challenge I face as a documentary filmmaker is how to be receptive to the event that I am constantly filming, and how to keep listening when the recounting feels repetitive. The decentralising of realist representation by way of montage, collage, visual effects and soundscapes can translate the material of the world into documentary artefacts, thereby providing multivalent strategies to approach the representation of the experiences of the filmed participants.



Figure 28. Video stills from *The Park*. From top left to right, early morning sun, Pat digs up her garden to take what she can with her, Margi talks about her race horse, mid-winter rain on the car window the first roadside protest, Peter's house is removed and taken to another caravan park.

In August, at one of the roadside protests, I meet some of the residents I have interviewed and tell them that I have just been to a documentary conference. I tell them that I presented some of the material I have been filming at the park. I almost say: "I talked about this project" as though their lives and experiences and filmic representations have become my 'project'. One of them asks, "What did they say? Yeah, it's sad but what can we do?"

When I am filming, it is the small moments of resistance, humour, and difference that draw me in. I focus on Charlie talking about his tattoos. Love and hate tattoos on his fingers like the Robert Mitchum preacher in *Night of the Hunter*. He tells me that the left hand was done with fountain pen ink and he nearly lost his arm due to an infection. *I can't remember whether it's the love or the hate hand. It is the love hand.* He tells me he's a lover, not a fighter but that these tattoos have made it hard for him to have a regular job, like being a bank teller. I talk to Yvonne about her twenty-three-year-old cockatiel called Wilbur. *I hope he's good for some years after this ordeal. He still looks youthful.* Margi shows me the ashes of her dead dogs. They are a blended mix in a doggy bag, inside a box flanked by two Australian-flag edition bottles of bubbly. Mary brings out some Looney Tunes drawings from her childhood and a large framed photo of her daughter who died as a baby.

The caravan park residents are people I would otherwise never meet. I want to show them as people who were treated unjustly despite the legality of the proceedings. It's not as though they need me to give them voice, or that they didn't have a voice until I came along and recorded it. In being present, I am also engaged in what Lucia Farinati and Claudia Firth refer to as the power of listening. The title of their book, *The Force of Listening* (2017) draws on the Latin term *potentia*, meaning both "force and power".³⁰ For Farinati and Firth, listening has the power to create affective solidarity, connected to both individual transformation and political action.³¹ Through the practice of listening within an affective space, I also see how my role and position as a documentary maker can frame and represent the events in the park to an audience. While documentary codifies phenomena through the creation of artefacts, Juhasz and Lebow also claim that there is a politics to the form.³² Reconfiguring these forms with an attention to how they will be heard and listened to can highlight complexity as well as the multiplicity of voices and knowledge, drawing on affordances of the porous nature of the auditory sphere.

Early on in the filming, I cut together some interview material and take these edits to a production company. We spend some time together discussing the potential for this material, the situation and the 'story'. They are empathetic and interested but also as producers they naturally they ask, "What's the story?" In a landscape of minimal funding and limited potential for the range of documentaries once broadcast on television, narrative arcs and compelling characters are essential. But it also feels wrong to shoehorn these people's stories into preconceived or invented narratives. This presents something of an irony in that they would probably like a 'significant' documentary film that narrativised their plight, and attracted an audience, even if it meant a certain amount of manipulation of the material and 'reality'. However, it also feels more important to spend time listening to the residents in the environment of the caravan park and letting the project take shape of its own accord.

Sometimes I film because I'm not sure what else I can do but keep documenting. I keep listening and collecting voices and experiences, keep filming the weeds and the plants and the detritus at different times of the day and in passing seasons. And I keep meeting Peter. One day I take croissants, another day cake, and another a frittata. I try to assuage my guilt that I haven't made something they could use to communicate their message so that more people might hear. Sometimes I forget. I forget that I am not only trying to make a film or some other kind of documentary project but that I am also engaging and interacting with people who are experiencing trauma. That I am there to listen, however useful or not this is, even if I am not always filming. I am aware that the filmed artefact that I make is also the evidence of their struggle and their involvement in the filming and the thing that I make from the affective labour. Sometimes I forget that I need a certain cushion of time between arriving at the park and beginning filming. I need this time to reconnect, to catch up on what has been happening, to look at documents and hear the latest evidence. This place has a different sense of time and the usual drop by for a quick chat and interview doesn't work. Sometimes it becomes difficult even to pick up the camera and start filming as though it breaks the connection.

Notes on collaboration

In addition to the infamous documentary question of 'What's the story?' comes the more ethically attuned, 'Whose story is it?' I question who this work is for and how it can fulfil multiple roles of keeping the issues present while also positioning them with an ongoing broader conversation around housing, sustainability, economic systems, displacement, and disenfranchisement. I want to make

something that acknowledges and includes the contributions of the participants as well as prompting engagement and associative connections beyond the subject matter and personal stories. I suggest to some collaborators, who have also occasionally documented the events at Wantirna, the possibility of having an exhibition in the local area. Amelia is a writer and Peter is a photographer. We find a gallery within the local council to situate the work. Amelia and I drive out to the gallery to meet the curator. We talk about our vision. Amelia says I should focus on the poetic. She tells me that I make beautiful, sad things. She also thinks we should make work that celebrates the people and their experience rather than reiterating what happened. She says the actual 'story' of what happened is not that 'interesting' and can be told in a sentence. Again, I consider the 'story' of what happened compared to the kind of 'story' that is constructed around narrative conventions designed for maximum affective engagement. The word "interesting," used to connote such a range of responses calls to mind Corradi Fiumara's interpretation of Heidegger's notion that judging something as interesting lasts momentarily before being relegated as boring.³³ Corradi Fiumara writes of the numbing effects induced through constantly seeking spectacle:

In a culture determined by the technology of information the human condition is ever more scrutinized and exposed, as if the dominant tendency were to seek out ever more 'interesting' material, with the result that we are increasingly immunised through exposure to human suffering as it is passed to us by the media. Thus humans seem to reconcile themselves to indifference while they are induced to say: 'We know everything and we can't do anything about it.'³⁴

This idea of being 'interested in' serves the commodification of documentary, driven by market forces. Further, it trains audiences through presenting experiences as knowable, characters as 'relatable', all the while selling a new product which replicates known patterns. The search for "interesting" in documentary often relies on foregrounding subject matter that has not been seen before or stories that have not been told before. Documentary's commercial drive, predicated on the spectacle of difference, echoes Braidotti's critique of capitalism as the co-opting of difference for the purpose of consumption.

We have a plan, and the next day I drive out to see Peter Gray, leader of the Wantirna Residents Action Group at his new home. I remember the day in mid-January that he moved. It was about 43 degrees Celsius: hot, dry and windy. The new location is all red dirt and gum trees they call widow makers. It feels like being in a paddock, but doesn't resonate fields of open space and roaming

ideas, instead it feels remote and desolate. Now it is winter — equally windy but also cold and raining. Peter shows me the chains that he has fastened to concrete blocks embedded in the ground that will keep his home earthed amidst the interminable winds. I tell Peter about the plan for the exhibition, and ask him if he can contribute some images. He makes some suggestions, but I am not sure about how they will work. He wants to have audio of the residents reading the letters they wrote to the local parliamentary member. However, when listening to this audio, it sounds stilted and unaffectionate despite being 'authentic'. He wants the signs to be prominent. He wants people named. He wants what happened to be clear — that they were evicted and did not receive compensation, that this is an ongoing injustice. I talk about presenting the residents as multifaceted people beyond the event. I explain my vision of a space for contemplation, for listening. I tell him about the text that Amelia will write about home and displacement and the systemic mechanisms that divide and dehumanise. After I leave, I feel that in explicating my idea of what would be best for the exhibition, perhaps I had failed to listen, despite hearing what Peter had said.

In discussing embodied knowledge as a resource to call on, Henrietta Moore writes that “We need always to revalorise the voice of social actors, their perspectives on their lives, their practice of politics, the way they attach value to life, and the worth they attach to life itself”.³⁵ Moore goes on to contend that we need to acknowledge the experience and the “ontologies of others - their practices and theories of life and being”.³⁶ Moore calls for a deeper awareness of how the rhythms of life move beyond what we can see. I am also interested in how the eviction of the residents can be extrapolated to broader global issues of displacement, shifts in spatial occupancy and attitudes to difference. This situation presents a site to explore issues around rights to home, place, and belonging.

Transforming and translating: the exhibition - *Am I at home?*

Am I at home? was conceptualised as a polyvocal response to the closure of the Wantirna Residential Park through the perspectives of myself and the film *The Park*, as well as photographs by Peter Casamento and Wantirna resident Peter Gray, and writing by Amelia Swan. *The Park* was screened in the black-walled Bakery Gallery, projected onto a large screen surrounded by about thirty photographs on the other walls, a selection of mounted letters written by the residents and text, and protest signs hung from the ceiling. *Am I at home?* would re-present this material and the stories back to the local community and convey the effect that this closure has had on the individuals. It would be indicative of the global epidemic of displacement and loss of home, near and far.

For the exhibition, I made a twenty-two-minute film, *The Park*. Not quite an essay film, it lacks some of the more apparent tenets of the form such as the self-reflective voice-over and the questioning tone. Instead, it foregrounds multiple voices. The audio track of the film is composed of interview material, often heard from disembodied voices, interactions between myself and the residents, jokes, collages of voices — which often obscure their linguistic signification — and field recordings such as cicadas, birds, traffic, machinery, rain and wind. Onscreen text, in the form of quotes and excerpts from residents' letters, reflects other voices. These non-verbalised words become internalised as the audience gives them their own voice and remediate the connective auditory space between audience and participant. The soundtrack is designed to be a listening experience so that even when not watching the images in the gallery space, it will draw the audience towards what is being said. At times the voices convey meaning, and at other times the sonorous materiality. One of the residents, Yvonne, has recently had face cancer and the audience strain to understand her words. Sometimes, the voices are layered, requiring expanded 'listening in' so as to extract moments of comprehensibility, reminiscent of Glenn Gould's *The Idea of North*.

Voice as materiality and silence counters the critique by Geoffrey Cox of the overuse of speaking, whether as narration or interview, in mainstream documentary.³⁷ Cox claims that the dominance of speaking in documentary forecloses the space for reflection.³⁸ As though without being told, the audience would be at a loss for meaning. Withholding the narrational voice can thereby subvert dominant expectations of what documentary will do, thereby presenting another way to experience it. Rather than documentary as a space for speaking and informing, in *The Park*, and within the exhibition, documentary becomes a space of listening.

The strategies employed in *The Park* and the installation space of *Am I at home?*, call forth another kind of listening which Lipari suggests, disavows unequivocal knowledge. For Lipari, this is a listening that:

opens a space of being in which we may hear things not otherwise audible: the absent, the broken, and the radically strange. In contrast to radical eloquence, which is itself a form of mastery, to be listening is to refuse to control or master. It is to hold lightly, if to hold at all. Actually it is not to hold, not to grasp.³⁹

This way of listening challenges notions of "mastery" and is part of the ongoing project which requires constant navigation of one's relationships, desires, and motivations in documentary making.

Listening requires being nomadic, being cognisant of difference and being continually open to interrogating one's own positionality.

The image track of the film similarly demonstrates different aesthetics. These include devices such as overlaying of material and superimposing images, much like the sonic strategies applied to the audio track, to create a ghosting effect which destabilises the image as representative of truth. Sequences are intercut with observational footage and interview material, making use of different colour grades. In moments when the participants speak of the most pain brought about by their imminent eviction, there is no image, only a blackened screen. The lack of image encourages the audience to listen 'out' and 'in' to the grain and words of the voice. Listening in the space of the exhibition subverts the reliance on the dominance of the visual field to evaluate the participants, their character, the mise-en-scène of their homes, and the hardships often worn on their face or clothing. The treatment of the material reflects the seasonal shifts, the durational period and the affective qualities, calling to mind Ihde's idea of everything having its own voice where "each object bespeaks its nature".⁴⁰ With this comes a de-emphasis on constructing an overarching narrative. Instead, it is moments that are depicted, emblematic of a constellation of events, people and environment. Rather than a story with resolutions, the film, and more broadly the exhibition, foreground a network of relationships and affects.

Translating the material of this event into a listening experience provides a space which the audience can enter, beyond narrative arcs and preconceived notions of what the filmed artefact will be. In applying this to a practice, it resonates with many ideas explored throughout this dissertation and the works I have made about being attuned to the emergent nature of the documentary world and responding to it.



Figure 29. Installation view of *Am I at home?* Photographs by Peter Casamento and Peter Gray, video by Kim Munro. Installation images by Peter Casamento.



Figure 30. Images from the *Am I at home?* event. Performance by Peter Gray. Photographs by Peter Casamento.

The documentary event

Finding audiences for truly independent or unconventional documentary works can be difficult. Creating an opportunity for the documentary project to facilitate a broader discussion around the issues calls for a different kind of event beyond the traditional film festival, cinema screening or online distribution. In March 2018, when I was in the U.K. to attend the biannual i-Docs symposium, I went to a presentation of Dorit Namaan's interactive documentary *Jerusalem, We Are Here*⁴¹ which was held at a small community centre in North-East London, fittingly called Rumi's Cave. This work maps the neighbourhood of Katamon in Jerusalem through the memories of places once occupied by Palestinians before they were expelled in 1948. The work is a meditation on the ongoing trauma of displacement in this region, as well as part of a broader project that involves walks, public presentations, an art installation in Jerusalem, symposia, a polyvocal blog and resources to share stories and raise awareness. While interactive projects can struggle to find audiences, there was something deeply relational in sitting on cushions in this small room, drinking tea and watching Dorit navigate the work. The filmmaker acting as a conduit for the experience and mediating the interactive work brought it into a more discursive space. The ensuing discussion facilitated not only an entry point to the ongoing project, but also the politics of the region. In this way the filmmaker acted as steward for the work, translating it through the somewhat-old-fashioned, yet revolutionary idea of getting people together in a room to have a conversation.

As part of Am I at home?, we had an afternoon event towards the end of the exhibition. The event was an opportunity to connect an audience with some of the previous residents in the gallery, located some distance from the metropolitan region. The event included a circus clown performance by Peter Gray, based on a homeless character, and a screening of the film followed by afternoon tea and an opportunity for people to talk about the work and the issues. Despite the distance many had to travel, and the rainy winter day, about forty-five people including past residents, local council members, friends, and other concerned citizens attended. All stayed on for a conversation that intersected through various approaches presented in the works as well as different themes around home and housing affordability. Some audience members found connections with Australia's treatment of refugees, while others were more attuned to localised politics and issues concerning housing and the aged.

The transformational quality of listening: from individual to collective practices

Although testimony still has the power to produce affects, these are increasingly manipulated and rendered ineffectual with audiences often numbed through a media-saturated environment that perpetuates spectacles of difference and novelty. In documentary films, strategies are often used to appeal to emotions as an end unto itself, intensified for entertainment. Rabinowitz asks how filmmakers can activate documentary's call to action without relying on melodrama to create this desire.⁴² Melodrama is the over-exaggerated emotional response to a situation without the nuanced complexity of character. Rabinowitz claims that a process of making the audience feel challenged enough to take action has more potential power than the creation of affects.⁴³ This question lends itself to reconsider what documentary is for and what it can do, beyond quantifiable outcomes and impacts.

A practice of listening to documentary within an expanded space of exhibition, such as in *Are you at home?*, can operate through multivalent related and intersecting strategies. According to Lipari, the transformative power of listening lies not in the action that it instigates but rather in "letting ourselves be transformed in the face of the suffering other".⁴⁴ This transformation is born of a micropolitics of documentary practice, subsequently translated to the audience experience. Being transformed through listening, as Lipari proposes, enables us to move beyond our logocentric perspective in how we approach knowledge. Lipari expands on her idea of "listening otherwise"⁴⁵ as a way of shifting from the singular subjective self, and the known, towards the difference of another. "It's not about the acquisition of facts or information," writes Lipari, "Our world only changes when there is a kind of de-centring that calls us to question or shed our old views and certainties about our world".⁴⁶ Listening, as a way of approaching difference and complexity, destabilises and recasts what can be known and understood through a documentary practice beyond knowledge. This practice of listening draws parallels with critical and documentary theories that affirm difference rather than, as Braidotti writes, appropriating them for consumable products — traits indicative of advanced capitalism.⁴⁷ For Lipari, "To *listen otherwise* is to welcome the *other* inside, but as an other, as a guest, as a not-me. It doesn't insist on understanding or familiarity, or shared feelings".⁴⁸ While the transformational power of listening can attune practitioner and audience to what is both said and unsaid, the form should also reflect ways that engage in making these forms of knowledge apparent, further promulgating what documentary can do.

Presenting documentary as a collection of voices speaking in different registers within a shared space, as well as an event as in *Am I at home?*, can mobilise what Lacey calls the “radical possibilities of listening publics”.⁴⁹ Here the act of listening transcends the individuated experience and positions the audience as part of a shared event. Lacey suggests that for listening to be critical, it should be part of a process that instigates “embodied, face-to-face encounters”.⁵⁰ The practice of collective and critical listening is a core methodology of the activist group, Ultra-red. The group, formed by two AIDS activists in 1994, uses sound and listening practices to map and analyse the politics of contested public spaces. In their “Protocols for a listening session” they list a series of instructions for collective listening to pre-recorded sounds followed by observational note-taking and discussion around the central question “what do you hear?”⁵¹ Through these listening sessions, they develop strategies for individual and group action. These might occur at the hyperlocal level or be more far-reaching.⁵² For Farinati and Firth, these practices mobilise “feminist models of epistemology” of consciousness raising.⁵³ Listening critically and politically followed by a dialogue around what the participants hear, or don’t hear, can highlight difference and the plurality of individual experiences. These listening and discussion sessions create an opportunity for understanding complexity as well as how social, educational, class and other factors shape our listening experiences. What can be illuminated through a critical practice of listening resonates with Mouffe’s concept of democracy as a plurality of differences.⁵⁴

A practice of listening in documentary does not present polemics through argument or insistence. It draws us into the space where we can explore the limits of our own knowledge, and what we can and cannot know. To do this, we need visual and auditory strategies that will shift our perceptions. A practice of listening in documentary that transcends our tendencies for reductive categorisation of the experiences of others, and the phenomena of the world, can open up spaces which recast how we experience difference and complexity. Further, through always interrogating the forms that documentary can take, and creating spaces that the listener inhabits, we can reveal a plurality voices, perspectives and truths within sites for transformation.

NOTES

- ¹ Melissa Davey, "'It's Public Housing or My Car': Longriver and the Caravan Park Residents Facing Homelessness", *The Guardian*, May 14, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/may/14/its-public-housing-or-my-car-longriver-and-the-caravan-park-residents-facing-homelessness>.
- ² More recently, the term 'caravan' has been used to refer to the large number of people fleeing Central America through Mexico to seek asylum in the USA. These people are usually victims of complex ongoing global and local forces and they travel in large numbers for safety.
- ³ Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 178.
- ⁴ LaBelle, *Acoustic Territories*, xvii.
- ⁵ *Ibid*, xxii
- ⁶ Lipari, *Listening, Thinking, Being*, 102.
- ⁷ LaBelle, *Acoustic Territories*, xxii
- ⁸ Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London; New York: Verso, 2000).
- ⁹ Brandon LaBelle, *Sonic Agency: Sound and Emergent Forms of Resistance*, (Cambridge MIT Press, 2018), 29.
- ¹⁰ Lipari, *Listening, Thinking, Being*, 351.
- ¹¹ Lisbeth Lipari, "Listening, Thinking, Being". *Communication Theory* 20, no. 3 (2010): 350–51. DOI
- ¹² Eva Hohenberger, "Vietnam/USA: Trinh T. Minh-ha in an Interview", in *Truth or Dare: Art and Documentary*, ed. Gail Pearce and Cahal McLaughlin, (Bristol: Intellect, 2007), 115.
- ¹³ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁶ Kate Nash, "Exploring power and trust in documentary: A study of Tom Zubrycki's Molly and Mobarak", *Studies in Documentary Film*, 4:1, (2010):31–32. DOI
- ¹⁷ Elizabeth Miller, Edward Little and Steven High. *Going Public: The Art of Participatory Practice*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 11.
- ¹⁸ Corradi Fiumara, *The Other Side of Language*, 39.
- ¹⁹ de Michiel and Zimmermann, "Documentary as Open Space," 358.
- ²⁰ Bruno Latour, "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik," 35.
- ²¹ Nichols, *Representing Reality*.
- ²² Bruno Latour and Adam Howe, "The Migration of the Aura, or How to Explore the Original through Its Facsimiles", in *Switching Codes: Thinking Through Digital Technology in the Humanities and the Arts*, ed. Thomas Bartscherer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2010), 278.
- ²³ Hito Steyerl, "The language of things", *European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies* 3 (2006), <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0606/steyerl/en/print>.
- ²⁴ Maria Court and Rosemary Lerner, "Quipu Project", 2015, <https://interactive.quipu-project.com/#/en/quipu/intro>.
- ²⁵ *Ibid*.
- ²⁶ Lacey, *Listening Publics*, 13.
- ²⁷ Džiga Vertov's term for the fusion of human and camera.
- ²⁸ Paula Rabinowitz, *They Must Be Represented*, 21.
- ²⁹ *Ibid*.
- ³⁰ Lucia Farinati and Claudia Firth, *The Force of Listening* (Berlin: Errant Bodies Press, 2017), 18.
- ³¹ *Ibid*.
- ³² Juhasz and Lebow, "Beyond Story: An Online, Community-Based Manifesto", *World Records* 2, article 3 (2018): n.p., <https://vols.worldrecordsjournal.org/02/03>.
- ³³ Corradi Fiumara, *The Other Side of Language: A Philosophy of Listening*, 171–72.
- ³⁴ *Ibid*.
- ³⁵ Henrietta Moore, "Living in Molecular Times", in *The Subject of Rosi Braidotti: Politics and Concepts*, edited by Bolette Blaagaard and Iris van der Tuin (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 55.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

³⁷ Geoffrey Cox, "Introduction", in *Soundings: Documentary Film and The Listening Experience*, eds. Geoffrey Cox and John Corner (Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield Press, 2018), 5.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Lipari, *Listening, Thinking, Being*, 359–60.

⁴⁰ Ihde, *Listening and Voice*, 191.

⁴¹ Dorit Naaman, "Jerusalem, We Are Here", 2016. <https://jerusalemwearehere.com/#/>

⁴² Rabinowitz, *They Must Be Represented*, 28.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Lisbeth Lipari, "Listening Otherwise: The Voice of Ethics," *The International Journal of Listening* 23, no. 1 (2009): 54.

⁴⁵ Lisbeth Lipari, "Listening Others," in *On Listening*, edited by Angus Carlyle and Cathy Lane (Devon: Uniformbooks, 2013), 158.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*, 25.

⁴⁸ Lipari, "Listening Otherwise," 56.

⁴⁹ Lacey, *Listening Publics*, 135.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 147.

⁵¹ Farinati and Firth, *The Force of Listening*, 86.

⁵² Ultra-red, "Notes on the Protocols for a Listening Session," in *On Listening*, edited by Angus Carlyle and Cathy Lane (Devon: Uniformbooks, 2013), 30–33.

⁵³ Farinati and Firth, *The Force of Listening*, 10.

⁵⁴ Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, (London: Verso, 2000).

FREE
POEMS

... Just Ahead

PLEASE turn off your
cell phone (+ wifi, cellular +
to hear a poem **THANKS** if you can)
blue tooth, fms

*... I have
redaction
you may find
one copy for me
wife THANKS!!!*

Figure 31. Free poems, Sedona Arizona, 2018

CONCLUSIONS

Since I was going all the way to Arizona for a conference, I thought to spend some time working on my dissertation in the desert. This would also give me plenty of time with the saguaro cactus in all its unique and singular disposition. The architectural compound of Arcosanti, just north of Phoenix, seemed to be the perfect location to have unimpeded desert views, limited distractions, and a few basic meals. A few days into my stay, I took a day trip to Sedona, famed for its two vortexes. Admittedly, I wasn't quite sure what a vortex was. How would I know what one looked like? What would I feel? It was late Sunday afternoon nearing dusk as I approached the second alleged vortex at Cathedral Rock. In the fading light, the climb seemed extra precarious. On the path, a handwritten sign offering free poems greeted me. As I approached, I could also read the side note informing me about the poem gifter's radiation sickness from exposure to wifi — and a request to disconnect from the network. In other words, to turn off the mobile phone. Although a bit shy about how to receive a free poem, I requested a Mary Oliver one I didn't know from the menu. She recited it with joy and asked me what next. Sensing my hesitation, she launched into another poem 'Wild Geese', which to me, invariably feels melancholy. Hearing it here, and in this way, felt like punctuation — endings and beginnings. I continued on the path, wanting to be alone, but also hoped she'd still be there on my return. She was and continued to recite more poems amid our conversation which ranged across disparate topics. I wasn't sure what I was supposed to experience in the vortex, but standing on the red dirt of Northern Arizona, and with this woman, unexpectedly listening to these poems, felt like something.

I began this PhD research with a thematic survey of aloneness in its many inflections, euphemisms, and dysphemisms. My inquiry ranged from the personal to the social to the cultural. Further, I had wondered how individuals perceived aloneness, when they desired it and what loneliness meant. Loneliness is a subject worthy of its own investigation and perhaps material for further research, but it cannot be considered in isolation. In looking at aloneness, and more specifically loneliness, I felt my focus on the individual experience should also acknowledge its systemic influences. Separation, disconnection and loneliness are symptomatic of a neoliberal climate with an over-emphasis on personal responsibility while also neglecting the causal relationships and instrumentalising structures that shape our experiences.

Ever-increasing competitiveness divides us from each other, precarity destabilises our sense of security, and the power and privilege of dominant positions of patriarchy, whiteness, educatedness, and birth place, among other conditions, leave deep marks on our subjective position and experience of the world. I do not wish to instil a culture of blame and negation of individual responsibility, but rather ascertain ways that we should be cognisant of our place within a relational network. This network includes not only our own species, but also the other-than-human and the environment. It takes account of vertical and horizontal strata which include our privileges and differences, and the institutional and political systems which impact upon us. This constitutes a complex world. The tendency to seek coherence and assurance in this era of late capitalism, Claire Colebrook argues, can be seen through the desire for simple and reductive narratives and fixed forms. Colebrook suggests that to address the multiple local and global problems, we need to embrace complexity and multiplicity, using nomadic theories which resist clarity while attending to the “infinite ways in which the world is unfolded”.¹ Through this documentary research, I have used nomadic practices that address and make an account for each situation and its multivalent properties while also acknowledging my own positionality within each documentary site.

Although aloneness is no longer the sole focus of this research, for we are always in relation with and to others, it underpins the directions I’ve taken, ideas tested, and conversations activated. In this research, I have used the concept of voice, both literally and theoretically to think about subjectivity, coexistence, and ways of knowing. This trajectory marks a shift away from speaking in and through documentary, to one that uses documentary practice as a way to engender listening in the creation of spaces to inhabit, and from where we can be transformed. The works I have produced through this research interrogate how listening can recast voice in order to reconstitute a sense of the world as relational and difference as affirmative. A practice of listening enables us to approach another. But even more so than approaching, listening becomes a mode to be with another. As Barthes writes, “What is plumbed by listening is intimacy, the heart’s secret”.² If documentary becomes a mode of listening rather than speaking, then the idea of the knowable, so connected with documentary, can be destabilised in order to open up spaces where other forms of knowing, thinking and being can be encountered.

Some reflections on changes throughout this research

Despite technological advancements which have always had a close relationship with documentary practice, a lineage can still be traced to the original tenets of documentary’s concern with social and

environmental issues. I first became curious about transmedia and non-linear forms at a session run by Screen Australia with Lance Weiler in 2014. I remember a group activity which involved constructing towers with spaghetti, string and masking tape. Sceptically, I wondered what this craft experiment had to do with anything, although making the highest freestanding tower did alleviate some of the team-building anxiety. Weiler spoke about some of his transmedia projects which intersected through social justice, community health and education, and which drew on strategies from narrative, documentary filmmaking and gaming. These multi-platform participatory projects presented ways to open up multivalent spaces across media to activate sites and engage audiences in ways I hadn't previously imagined. And as I gazed at our spindly spaghetti tower that was slowly sinking, I also thought about how a practice that worked at the margins, and beyond conventional forms, could open up more expansive and unexpected possibilities around documentary's potential.

Although I began this PhD with a focus on online interactive documentary, increasingly I felt as artefacts in isolation, webdocs can be lost among the mass of internet material. However, as integral components of a larger constellation that might span community outreach projects, events, screenings, and participatory and pedagogical activities, they can be highly effective. Exemplars include Liz Miller's *Shoreline Project* and Dorit Namaan's *Jerusalem, We Are Here*, which act as tools for engaging conversations, imagining alternate futures and promoting action. In the expanded space of documentary, VR has more recently dominated, capturing attention at film festivals, museums and art biennales. As an evolving form, some VR works that shift beyond representational strategies are impressive in their ability to present alternate worlds.³ At the i-Docs Symposium in Bristol in 2018, while VR was more than prevalent, i-Docs founders, Judith Aston, Sandra Guadenzi and Mandy Rose also hailed a heterogeneity of forms as integral to the expanded and expanding field of documentary.⁴ At this symposium, documentary practitioners spoke about their work with social and environmental issues and the role new technologies can play elevating previously neglected or silenced voices in non-traditional spaces. What has become apparent over the past four years of doing this research, is the increasingly inter-disciplinary, technologically informed and mutating field that documentary occupies. That documentary continues to transform and renew itself, is evidence of its continuing relevance in leveraging its power to engage with urgent global and local issues.

A summary of the movements

This PhD has covered four stages, each addressing how we can rethink documentary's communicative intent through a focus on different forms of listening. These movements are: *Dialogues*, *Fields*, *Presencing* and *Translating*. Each phase corresponds with creative experiments, actions and projects, situated within an expanded documentary practice. In tracing the four stages of this research, I have mapped an approach to considering voice through dialogue, social participation, space, and environment. The works I have produced use participatory, interactive, installation, non-linear, site-specific, gallery-based, and audio and visual strategies. The trajectory — with its essayistic asides and digressions as well as returns and refrains — explores how a documentary practice can shift from thinking of subjectivity as singular towards how it is mediated through social, economic and political structures. Each stage of research raised questions which led to the subsequent creative work, reflecting my practice-led methodology. These works are points of entry and departure which propose thinking and questioning rather than answers.

The first part of this research, *Dialogues*, collected voices and explored the importance of the request in documentary practice. Dialogue does not pertain solely to speaking but also includes listening through the politics of the encounter. During this stage, I used a number of approaches to elicit material. Participatory requests can cover a spectrum, ranging from the collaborative and those perceived as mutually beneficial, to the outright fraught. As Carpentier suggests, participation as a utopian ideal is problematic, but through its constant failure, we can continually test boundaries of what is possible while challenging and critiquing systems of power that both allow and disallow voice.⁵ In seeking participation, it was only natural that I should also encounter non-participation. And if participation is equated with voice and representation, then how do we account for those that cannot or choose not to participate. This inquiry into voice as social participation questioned notions of agency and how we might listen to these voices who do not speak.

The second part of this research, *Fields*, prompted a shift in my research. This stage, a doing things with voices, re-presented collected voices in ways that activated listening in the audience. The interactive online work, *Events of the Alone*, used the premise that each of the short clips (fragments) contained its own voice and the entire work was an assemblage of different responses to aloneness. The intention was that these voices could be heard equally and autonomously without being overpowered by a dominant voice. Through navigating this work, the audience (or user) was able to

'listen in' to different experiences of aloneness and co-compose the work through their own movement and selection, creating a new sense of voice as plural and heard.

In *Events of the Alone*, the spatial arrangement with multiple clips and audio challenges the causal relationship in linear documentary film where one sequence is placed after another. And while the eye can take in more than one image, it is always through juxtaposition and separation. The assemblage of overlapping voices enables the audience to experience differing and contrasting material equally and simultaneously, which is unique to the auditory sphere. In shifting the 'spoken to', to the 'listened to', this work allows an attunement to what is being said. 'Listening in' activates a cognitive engagement through which the audience can hear the quieter and less dominant voices.

Intrigued by these auditory learnings, I wanted to expand this imperative to listen in, and transpose voice into a larger space through which the audience could physically move. The result was the six-screen video installation at First Site Gallery in Melbourne: *The last few months I thought I wanted to be alone, but now that I'm alone, I realise I don't want to be alone*. This exhibition implemented a range of strategies with voice by focusing on collective aloneness and the last remaining flamingo in Australia. The voices, drawn from my interviews, were curated into three movements reflecting an evolution of aloneness, from fear through to acceptance and finally celebration. A singular voice sings, yet the lyrics evidence material from the twenty-three interviews. As a more intimate part of this exhibition, a soundscape of digital voices chant lines from a Reddit thread spreadsheet filled with 'Forever Alone' definitions through headphones. The body, bathed in the pink screen light, replaced the cursor moving through the gallery space and accessing different voices. The treatment of voices subsequently resulted in synthesising difference, in contrast to the granular voices of *Events of the Alone*. While both works made use of the multiple voices that I had collected and shaped, they each had different intentions in situating the audience as listener.

In the third stage of this research, *Presencing*, I wanted to further test conceptions of voice and listening within a specific site. The month I spent in Ólafsfjörður, Iceland, allowed for an immersion in the space and its many voices: human, musical, environmental and mechanical. The lack of people and the seemingly silent fjord presented an opportunity for listening to that which was not immediately apparent. The audio walking essay I made, *Why do the ducks not fly south?* was constructed of interviews, songs, poems, field recordings and reflections on place and experience. The work required the audience to listen, follow the instructions and directions, and navigate their

way around the town, harbour and rescue centre. While human voices were a significant part of this work, the other-than-human voices were also emphasised. As they traversed the town, the audio walk asked the listener to attune themselves to multiple voices, including their own internal voices as well as what they brought to the work from their experience, the voices that were immediately present in the environment and those that had been pre-recorded and mediated. Why do the ducks not fly south? presented voice as multiple, co-existing and other-than-human, calling attention to the ecology of relationships within place.

After the Iceland project, I sought to expand listening beyond the auditory to include the visual. In an increasing desire to re-situate my work within a context of social issues, I applied a methodology of listening to a more socially charged and politically complex documentary environment. The final project of the PhD includes the film, *The Park* and the exhibition, *Am I at home?* These works underpin the fourth chapter, *Translating*, which addresses questions relating to the translation of material and its multiple voices based around an urgent social issue while using strategies to promote engaged listening.

The Park, filmed over the final eight months of the Wantirna Caravan Park, presented a situation where listening was challenging for many reasons within a context where people felt unheard. This longitudinal project questioned what it meant to listen to different perspectives and how to include opinions that might challenge the preferred narratives and representations.⁶ In filming the eviction of these residents from the caravan park, I realised that I could never really 'know' their experience, no matter how hard or for how long I listened. However, the work evoked a way for the audience to listen to these experiences, despite stories of eviction and displacement being common documentary subjects. Listening to these people was not about knowing the other, but rather, a way of 'dwelling' near.⁷ To listen is to attend to what is both said and unsaid, to register the repetition, and understanding how the silences might speak louder than the words uttered. Listening here becomes a "living through"⁸ these subtle shifts and resonances.

In this final project, it was essential to not only listen through the documentary but to consider my ethical relationship to the participants deeply affected by their eviction. In considering the production of the documentary works, listening would need to be foregrounded not only through making the work, but also evidenced in the finished artefact. To make works that are listened to is a challenge when the situation can feel all too familiar to an audience. This work is still in progress as I

navigate the multiple implications of listening as a mode of action. Future outcomes include making a work that provides for the complexity of divergent voices around race, class and the politics of housing, and using the material in a site-specific way that allows visitors to the developed site to listen in on the experiences of those who previously lived there. The ongoing process of working with this material speaks to the idea that listening, as well as documentary practice, is a continuing negotiation and active dialogue.

Listening in: returns, endings and beginnings

This research is presented in two parts: this written dissertation and a website which has video and audio work. The focus is on an emergent practice that uses multiple forms and formats. In writing about my practice, I have focused less on the artefacts and their legacy than what has been enabled through the process. However, this is a practice that exists in the world and has found audiences, whether at a small festival in Iceland or a local gallery in the outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Through making these works, I have acted as a conduit, creating dialogue and opportunities to listen, as part of an expanded ecology of documentary practice.

The purpose of this research project has been to explore and expand concepts of voice in documentary through an ear towards listening. I have discussed the communicative nature of documentary from how it engages in dialogue, through what a practice of listening might look and sound like, to the works it produces. In this way, it moves away from the focus on voice and speaking in documentary and the communicative intent as understood through a transmission model. Where I have ended feels far from where I began with participatory practices and aloneness. But at the same time, it is not. These elements remain embedded in the work, but the process of this research has also been one of complicating and troubling notions of categories, names, and binaries. It does not seek to eliminate, but rather to augment an acceptance of non-binary difference.

The plurality of voices calls to mind what cultural and political theorists Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri call the political and material project of 'love'.⁹ *Is this work a work of love?* Hardt is keen to reclaim love from the normative and dyadic concept of the couple and says, "I think rather love has to be thought of as a proliferation of differences, not the destruction of differences. Not merging into unity, but a constructing of constellations among differences, among social differences".¹⁰ Through a "constellations among differences", love has the capacity to transform the neoliberal tendencies towards isolation and separation. What Hardt refers to here as love can be constituted through a

practice of listening that foregrounds this plurality of differences and can hold them within a space of co-existence. Hardt and Negri's idea of love is as revolutionary as the concept of hope amid despair that Zimmermann and Braidotti call for.¹¹ This shift also resonates with the iterative projects made throughout this research with their expansion from the individual to the social, and in a movement from private to public spaces.

Contribution to documentary practice

Research focusing on the practice of documentary has tended to emphasise the actual finished film or the process of making the film. Relatively little research to date deals with the experiments and failures and the knowledge that such exploration can unearth in the nexus between documentary practice and theory. This research then draws on the privileged position of being immersed in the process and critically reflecting on the challenges encountered through testing ideas and approaches. The practice of documentary can be a way of interacting and engaging in the world through building relationships and having conversations, whether concerning people, places or matter. It can promulgate knowledge of oneself and another as well as interrogating how this knowledge shapes our epistemic beliefs.

The emergence of new forms of documentary opens up spaces that can allow other ways of voicing and listening. A nomadic practice that considers the shifting terrain evolves and responds to each documentary event, story space or participant anew. This shifts documentary away from dominant modes and forms of production in order to facilitate new dialogues through action as well as the politics of form. It is increasingly important that we don't just rely on prescribed methods of doing, and that we create new cartographies to think about representation, narratives, knowledge and ways to be in the common world. Moreover, this is a documentary practice that mobilises the action of listening to other people, places and things to facilitate an experience where an audience can listen to difference.

The research evidenced through the writing and the documentary projects weaves together moments, many of which have occurred during the process of making the documentary works. These include the relational moments where I am having an experience with another person through filming and recording or navigating participants' experience and contributions or testing out ideas. All of these moments give credence to the importance of academic scholarship that emerges from the practice. Through a process of stumbling and grappling, this practice negotiates paths anew.

Sometimes knowledge has emerged while on a trip alone when collecting material. At other times it has been reading scholarly works, or experiencing creative projects which resonate and make me think about my work in a particular light, or the classroom when teaching. Whilst this PhD research does not focus on the pedagogical influences or implications of how teaching impacts and engages my ongoing creative practice, it should be noted here as an important part of the greater integrated project

My practice has increasingly drawn on theories of auditory space around multiplicity and complexity, through experimenting in documentary forms that preference non-logocentric and teleological knowledge. Through the projects in the PhD, I have shifted from a focus on the individual towards the social. This trajectory involves a shift from viewing aloneness not as personal, but as part of a broader way of considering our place in the world both with others and within systems. Through examining the many vectors of a documentary practice, this research has asked what it means to negotiate a space where all participants are acknowledged — human and other-than-human. Engaging in the act of listening can enable documentary to move beyond being an epistemological tool. For Lipari, listening is about presence rather than knowing:

I don't have to understand, although you may feel "understood." I don't have to translate your words into familiar categories or ideas. I don't have to "feel" what you feel, or "know" what it feels like to be you. What I do need to do is stand in proximity to your pain. To stand with you, right next to you, and to belong to you.¹²

Listening makes a space where multiple and complex propositions can exist together without cancelling each other out and without becoming subsumed into a unified presence. This dissertation presents documentary as a way to be with others rather than to know them through reductive characterisation, narrative conventions and causal relationships of the material. It presents documentary as a constellation of affects, truths, concerns and actions.

Further Implications

While this research is situated in the field of documentary, I propose a turn to listening as a broader methodological and ethical practice. A practice of listening involves a constant decentring and deterritorialisation of one's subject position. Listening is not a static state to occupy, or that can be occupied. It is a constant negotiation of oneself with others whether that be human, environmental or other in form. The radical act of listening can enable us to rethink our seemingly atomised

positions, both broadly within the spaces where we live, work, travel and socialise, as well as on a personal and intimate level. This is an intimacy that feels as political as it is personal, and one that embodies an ethic of care. In this research, I propose this as a practice of documentary that matters. Critical and engaged listening through documentary, can interrogate the comfortable positions which are validated through familiar structures, narratives and systems that we occupy and perpetuate. In documentary making, this often takes the shape of static forms, closed texts and a knowable world. A practice of listening, and facilitating listening occupies a position within the unknown and unfamiliar. It asks us to suspend our inclination to dominate and colonise spaces and ideas with our own voices.

Throughout this research, I have also been confronted at times with my own difficult relationship to listening. Although an uncomfortable realisation, this also helps me to keep learning and unlearning. For when we listen, we should also ask what it means to be a listener, and how listening can be enacted on a broader scale than the personal and interpersonal. Listening should not be an empty gesture. Instead, it should cast the ear towards the unknown and the 'other' as a shift away from majoritarian discourses. Listening through documentary can also mirror the micropractices of listening that we can exercise in everyday life through a deeper relationship with how we relate to others with all the complexity and unknowing. This can shift from a culture of despair and complaint towards notions of hope, as methods to "hold, sustain and map out sustainable transformations".¹³ A practice of attuned listening than allow us to dwell with that which is unfamiliar and perhaps uncomfortable can train us in "dreaming up possible futures, anticipatory virtue that permeates our lives and activates them".¹⁴

The focus on listening in documentary practice is a concern that should weave its way through the ethics of relationships, methodologies and into the work itself, ultimately prompting the audience to consider their relationship to knowledge, difference and complexity through others' voices. By making work that listens, we also enable the audience to listen to the experiences, stories and worlds of the participants. This practice can shift documentary from a cultural and epistemological artefact towards a social project. To call on Braidotti again, this project encapsulates a tendency "worthy of the times while resisting the times".¹⁵ A turn to listening is an acknowledgement that while voice and speaking in documentary have been well theorised and remain relevant, conventional approaches need to be destabilised. Re-invigorating the concept of voice, through its counterpart listening, addresses the dominance of documentary as a mode of telling, informing and giving. Through

listening, there is engagement in documentary as a process of questioning which enables a rethinking of our epistemological and ontological positions. While documentary should encompass more voices, these must also be myriad, material, environmental and come from unlikely and unheard places. But more so than voices, documentary also needs ways to listen. Through a practice of listening, documentary can continue to question and reimagine how we come to know, be and act in the world.

NOTES

¹ Claire Colebrook, "Disaster Feminism", in *The Subject of Rosi Braidotti: Politics and Concepts*, eds. Bolette Blaagaard and Iris van der Tuin (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 73.

² Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms*, 250.

³ Kim Munro, "The feeling of being somewhere: VR at MIFF 2018", *Metro Magazine*, no. 199, (2019): 102–07.

⁴ Judith Aston, Sandra Guadenzi and Mandy Rose in their opening address "The Politics of Polyphony" at the i-Docs symposium at Watershed, Bristol, March 2018, <https://vimeo.com/29267209>.

⁵ Henry Jenkins and Nico Carpentia, "Theorizing participatory intensities: A conversation about participation and politics", *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 19, no. 3 (2011): 267.

⁶ I have written about making this film and about the negotiations and complexity of participatory practices in Kim Munro and Paola Bilbrough, "An Ecology of Relationships Tensions and Negotiations in Documentary Filmmaking Practice as Research", *Media Practice and Education* 19, no.3 (2018): 256–69.

⁷ Corradi Fiumara, *The Other Side of Language*, 171.

⁸ Kathleen Stewart, "Atmospheric Attunements", 445.

⁹ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), 351–52.

¹⁰ Leonard Schwartz, "A Conversation with Michael Hardt on the Politics Of Love", *Interval(le)s* 3, no. 1 (2008): 810–21.

¹¹ Zimmermann, *States of Emergency*, xix and Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*, 267.

¹² Lipari, "Listening, Thinking, Being", 350–51.

¹³ Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*, 237.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 298.

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APPENDIX

Ethics Approval and Amendments

Notice of Approval

Date: 03 August 2015

Project number: CHEAN A 0000019474-06/15

Project title: Participating in aloneness: modes of participation, interactive non-fictions, and the collective experience of aloneness

Risk classification: Low Risk

Investigator: Dr Leo Berkeley and Ms Kim Munro

Approved: From: 03 August 2015 To: 22 May 2017

I am pleased to advise that your application has been granted ethics approval by the Design and Social Context College Human Ethics Advisory Network as a sub-committee of the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

Terms of approval:

1. Responsibilities of investigator

It is the responsibility of the above investigator/s to ensure that all other investigators and staff on a project are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure that the project is conducted as approved by the CHEAN. Approval is only valid whilst the investigator/s holds a position at RMIT University.

2. Amendments

Approval must be sought from the CHEAN to amend any aspect of a project including approved documents. To apply for an amendment please use the 'Request for Amendment Form' that is available on the RMIT website. Amendments must not be implemented without first gaining approval from CHEAN.

3. Adverse events

You should notify HREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.

4. Participant Information and Consent Form (PICF)

The PICF and any other material used to recruit and inform participants of the project must include the RMIT university logo. The PICF must contain a complaints clause including the project number.

5. Annual reports

Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an annual report. This form can be located online on the human research ethics web page on the RMIT website.

6. Final report

A final report must be provided at the conclusion of the project. CHEAN must be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

7. Monitoring

Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by HREC at any time.

8. Retention and storage of data

The investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

In any future correspondence please quote the project number and project title.

On behalf of the DSC College Human Ethics Advisory Network I wish you well in your research.

Daniel Martini
Research and Ethics Officer (*acting*)
College of Design and Social Context
RMIT University

Website: www.rmit.edu.au/dsc

Notice of Approval

Date: 1st August 2016

Project number: CHEAN A 0000019474-06-15 - A Miles

Project title: Participating in aloneness: modes of participation, interactive non-fictions, and the collective experience of aloneness.

Risk classification: Low Risk

Investigator: Dr Adrian Miles

Approved: From: 1st August 2016 To: 22nd May 2017

I am pleased to advise that your extension request has been granted ethics approval by the Design and Social Context College Human Ethics Advisory Network as a sub-committee of the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The scope of data collection for the project has been broadened from interview responses to include photos, video and sound recordings. Participant information and Consent forms have been altered to reflect this change.

Terms of approval:

1. Responsibilities of investigator

It is the responsibility of the above investigator/s to ensure that all other investigators and staff on a project are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure that the project is conducted as approved by the CHEAN. Approval is only valid whilst the investigator/s holds a position at RMIT University.

2. Amendments

Approval must be sought from the CHEAN to amend any aspect of a project including approved documents. To apply for an amendment please use the 'Request for Amendment Form' that is available on the RMIT website. Amendments must not be implemented without first gaining approval from CHEAN.

3. Adverse events

You should notify HREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.

4. Participant Information and Consent Form (PICF)

The PICF and any other material used to recruit and inform participants of the project must include the RMIT university logo. The PICF must contain a complaints clause including the project number.

5. Annual reports

Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an annual report. This form can be located online on the human research ethics web page on the RMIT website.

6. Final report

A final report must be provided at the conclusion of the project. CHEAN must be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

7. Monitoring

Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by HREC at any time.

8. Retention and storage of data

The investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

In any future correspondence please quote the project number and project title.

On behalf of the DSC College Human Ethics Advisory Network I wish you well in your research.

Kevin Anslow
Acting Research and Ethics Officer
College of Design and Social Context
RMIT University

Website: www.rmit.edu.au/dsc

Notice of Approval

Date: 14 June 2017

Project number: CHEAN A 19474-06/15

Project title: 'Dwell'

Risk classification: Low Risk

Investigator: Associate Professor Adrian Miles, Ms Kim Munro, Dr Seth Keen

Approved: From: 14 June 2017 To: 28 February 2018

I am pleased to advise that your amendment request has been granted ethics approval by the Design and Social Context College Human Ethics Advisory Network (CHEAN), as a sub-committee of the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The CHEAN approves:

- The change of title of the project to reflect the broadening of the research topic beyond aloneness;
- The recruitment of new participant groups (Wantirna Residents' Action Group and urban planning academics); and
- The revised participant information sheet.

Terms of approval:

1. Responsibilities of investigator

It is the responsibility of the above investigator/s to ensure that all other investigators and staff on a project are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure that the project is conducted as approved by the CHEAN. Approval is only valid whilst the investigator/s holds a position at RMIT University.

2. Amendments

Approval must be sought from the CHEAN to amend any aspect of a project including approved documents. To apply for an amendment please use the 'Request for Amendment Form' that is available on the RMIT website. Amendments must not be implemented without first gaining approval from CHEAN.

3. Adverse events

You should notify HREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.

4. Participant Information and Consent Form (PICF)

The PICF and any other material used to recruit and inform participants of the project must include the RMIT university logo. The PICF must contain a complaints clause including the project number.

5. Annual reports

Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an annual report. This form can be located online on the human research ethics web page on the RMIT website.

6. Final report

A final report must be provided at the conclusion of the project. CHEAN must be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

7. Monitoring

Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by HREC at any time.

8. Retention and storage of data

The investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

Please quote the project number and project title in any future correspondence.

On behalf of the DSC College Human Ethics Advisory Network, I wish you well in your research.

Dr David Blades
DSC CHEAN Secretary
RMIT University