

SOUNDWALKING IN SPACE-TIME

Andrew Brown

NOTA SOBRE EL AUTOR

Andrew Brown 

Nottingham Trent University, Reino Unido.

Correo electrónico: andrew.brown@ntu.ac.uk

Recibido: 15/05/2024

Aceptado: 16/10/2024

<https://doi.org/10.18800/kaylla.202401.004>

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes features of the author's artistic research in which he investigates space and time through soundwalking, an immersive and embodied practice with the capacity to engage critical attention and reanimate otherwise familiar surroundings. Inspired by social geographer Doreen Massey's (2005) conception of space as "a simultaneity of stories so far" and "always in the process of being made," the author's soundwalks explore the points of intersection at which space is produced. In this paper, the author analyzes the temporal and corporeal aspects of the soundwalking, and their approach based upon an initial capture of sound recordings while walking a particular route, before returning them to be experienced in their original context, thereby exploiting the consequent temporal shift. Through the deliberate blending of these field recordings with the live soundscape during the shared experience of the group soundwalk, perceptions can be destabilized and new relations constructed to the socio-political realities facing particular communities (LaBelle, 2018). Soundwalks challenge assumptions of present-day lived experience and invite the imagining of alternative pasts and potential futures. The author offers the soundwalk *Pentrich Rising – South Wingfield* (Brown, 2017) as a case study, sharing insights into their original methodology. Soundwalking is shown to be an effective means of spatio-temporal exploration, with potential to be investigated by researchers from artistic, sonic, spatial, social-historical, socio-political, and environmental disciplines.

Keywords: Soundwalking, Environmental Sound, Binaural Recording, Embodiment, Temporal Dislocation, Augmented Reality.

PASEO SONORO EN EL ESPACIO-TIEMPO

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza las características de la investigación artística del autor que, a su vez, interroga el espacio y el tiempo a través del paseo sonoro, una práctica inmersiva y corporeizada con la capacidad de captar la atención crítica y reanimar entornos que de otro modo serían familiares. Los paseos sonoros del autor exploran los puntos de intersección en los que se produce el espacio, en función de la concepción del espacio de la geógrafa social Doreen Massey (2005), entendida como "una simultaneidad de historias hasta el momento" y "siempre en proceso de creación". En este artículo, el autor examina los aspectos temporales y corpóreos del paseo sonoro y su enfoque basado en una captura inicial de grabaciones sonoras mientras recorre una ruta en particular, antes de devolverlas para ser experimentadas en su contexto original, para así explotar el consiguiente cambio temporal. Mediante la combinación deliberada de estas grabaciones con el paisaje sonoro en vivo durante la experiencia compartida del paseo sonoro grupal, las percepciones pueden desestabilizarse y construir nuevas relaciones con las realidades sociopolíticas a las que se enfrentan ciertas comunidades (LaBelle, 2018). Los paseos sonoros desafían los supuestos de la experiencia vivida en el presente e invitan a imaginar pasados alternativos y futuros potenciales. El autor ofrece el paseo sonoro *Pentrich Rising – South Wingfield* (Brown, 2017) como estudio de caso y comparte ideas sobre su metodología original. El paseo sonoro ha demostrado ser un medio eficaz de exploración espacio-temporal, con potencial para ser investigada desde las disciplinas artísticas, sonoras, espaciales, sociohistóricas, sociopolíticas y ambientales.

Palabras clave: Paseo Sonoro, Sonido Ambiental, Grabación Binaural, Corporeización, Dislocación Temporal, Realidad Aumentada.

CAMINHADA SONORA NO ESPAÇO-TEMPO

RESUMO

Este artigo realiza uma análise das características da pesquisa artística do autor, na qual investiga o espaço e tempo através da caminhada sonora, uma prática imersiva e corporificada com a capacidade de atrair a atenção crítica e de reanimar ambientes que de outra forma seriam familiares. Baseados na concepção de espaço da geógrafa social Doreen Massey (2005) como “uma simultaneidade de histórias até agora” e “sempre em processo de criação”, as caminhadas sonoras do autor exploram os pontos de intersecção nos quais o espaço é produzido. Neste artigo, o autor analisa os aspectos temporais e corporais da caminhada sonora, e a sua abordagem baseada numa captura inicial de gravações sonoras enquanto percorre um determinado percurso, antes de devolvê-las para serem experienciadas no seu contexto original, explorando assim a conseqüente mudança temporal. Através da mistura deliberada destas gravações de campo com a paisagem sonora ao vivo durante a experiência partilhada da caminhada sonora em grupo, as percepções podem ser desestabilizadas produtivamente e novas relações construídas com as realidades sociopolíticas enfrentadas por comunidades específicas (LaBelle, 2018). As caminhadas sonoras desafiam suposições da experiência vivida no presente e convidam à imaginação de passados alternativos e futuros potenciais. O autor oferece a caminhada sonora *Pentrich Rising – South Wingfield* (Brown, 2017) como estudo de caso, partilhando insights sobre a sua metodologia original. A caminhada sonora mostra-se um meio eficaz de exploração espaço-temporal, com potencial para ser investigada a partir de disciplinas artísticas, sonoras, espaciais, sócio-históricas, sócio-políticas e ambientais.

Palavras-chave: Caminhada Sonora, Som Ambiental, Gravação Binaural, Incorporação, Deslizamento Temporal, Realidade Aumentada.



SOUNDWALKING IN SPACE-TIME

In June of 1817, a band of revolutionaries set out in the pouring rain from the Derbyshire village of Pentrich to march to Nottingham, robbing and press ganging others to join them as they went. But after only a few miles a troop of Hussars appeared and the men fled. Three of their leaders were hanged and beheaded and twenty were transported or jailed. Thus ended what was intended to be a nationwide uprising (Stevens, 2016, p.6).

This essay articulates soundwalking as an embodied artistic research practice through which to explore space and time. The author/artist has over 16 years of experience composing soundwalks in diverse contexts and has developed a methodology with the capacity to provoke states of immersion as well as critical detachment. His *modus operandi* involves archival research, site visits, binaural sound, field recording, studio editing, and rigorous testing, culminating in an artist led group walk and collective discussion.

According to composer Hildegard Westerkamp (2007), the definition of the soundwalk is “any excursion whose main purpose is listening to the environment” (p. 49). This definition encompasses listening exercises that forego recording technology and those that apply it. The author’s approach falls into the latter category, as he captures digital field recordings, which he then edits in the studio, and subsequently returns to the location from which they were originally taken. This process creates an effective synthesis of recording and live sound.

This text describes the author’s distinctive approach to soundwalk composition and its capacity to produce experiences that are at once embodied and temporally dislocated. Intrigued by the Pentrich revolt that took place over 200 years ago and its ongoing place in our collective memory, he composed the soundwalk *Pentrich Rising - South Wingfield* (2017) to summon the spectre of Pentrich and the lost future it embodies. Using the soundwalking as a case study, in this paper he also draws upon the work of influential social geographer Doreen Massey (2005) whose conception of space is of “an open ongoing production” (p. 55), “the product of interrelations”, and imaginable as “a simultaneity of stories-so-far” (p. 9). Massey (2005) describes time and space as being implicated in one another, stating that “on the side of space there is integral temporality of a dynamic simultaneity. On the side of time there is the necessary production of change through practices of interrelation.” (p. 55). She goes on to write “conceptualising space as open, multiple and relational, unfinished and always becoming, is a prerequisite for history to be open and thus a prerequisite, too, for the possibility of politics” (Massey, 2005, p. 59).

This article examines the artist/author’s soundwalking practice, offering a detailed description of his methodology before addressing the influences of sound and walking upon the body, and how to explore time and space with soundwalking. It concludes by inviting for fellow artist-researchers to apply the soundwalking to their own fields of enquiry.



METHODOLOGY OF SOUNDWALKING

The soundwalking can be adapted in numerous ways and applied to diverse spheres of interest. For an artist such as Christina Kubisch, the hidden electromagnetic soundscapes of urban infrastructure inspire her *Electrical Walks* (2004-2024) for which she uses custom-built induction headphones to pick up a range of unfamiliar frequencies. Another artist whose soundwalks expose what would otherwise remain unheard, unseen, and unimagined is Janet Cardiff. Her *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)* (1999) is an audio walk that leads the audience on a journey through layers of time and place, in this instance, London's Whitechapel district. In both cases, the moving bodies of audience members are placed in a direct relationship with their environment.

In 2006, while making field recordings in the seaside town of Burnham-on-Sea, the author stumbled upon soundwalking as a means of simultaneously occupying different temporalities. His soundwalks continue to utilize field recordings that he captures along previously determined routes. He edits these using computer software into layered compositions to be experienced by groups of participants, each person listening via an iPod or mobile phone through on-ear headphones. At the start of the soundwalk, having been requested to remain silent throughout, participants simultaneously press play before being led along the route by the author who acts as a *pacemaker* to ensure that the recording is heard in synchrony with landmarks. Like Janet Cardiff, the author draws upon the immediate environment as both a sound source and soundwalk setting, the unpredictable occurrences along the walking route becoming integral to the augmented reality of the experience. Confusion arises as to the sources of what is heard, and the participant becomes productively disoriented, even in what may be a location familiar to them.

The author's approach is concerned with listening, but also experiencing place through the full range of senses and critical faculties. Each soundwalk invites participants to engage with both granular and panoramic features of the land and soundscape. As the author leads a group along the route, and in maintaining synchrony between soundtrack and landmarks, his pace and consequently that of participants can veer between rapidity or slowness, or even



► **Figure 1. Participants during Pentrich Rising - South Wingfield.**

Note. Taken by the participant Jo Wheeler.

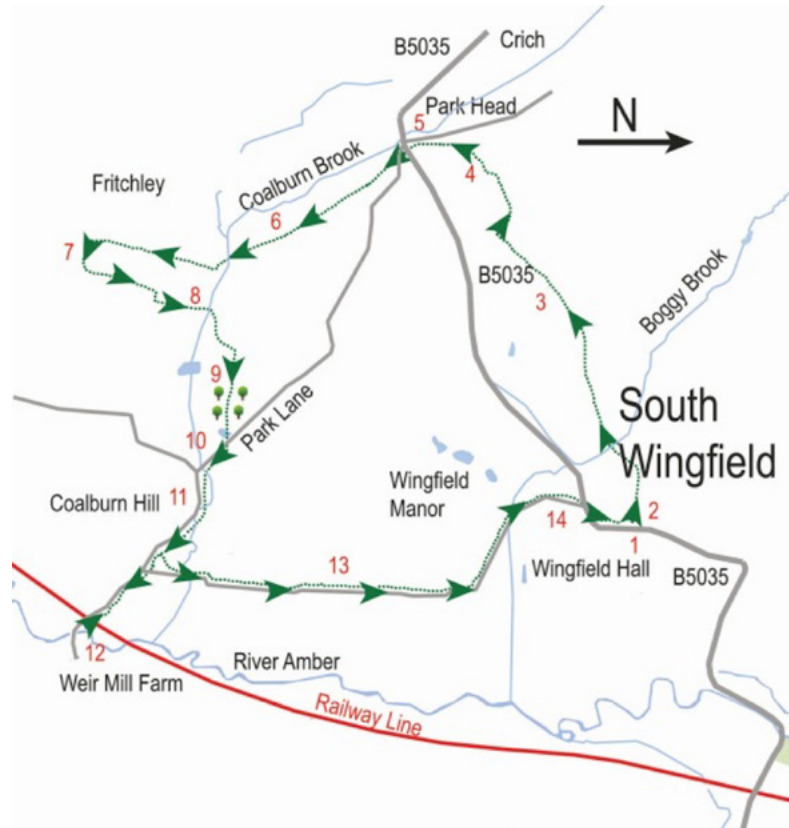
come to a complete stop. Disruption from a familiar and comfortable walking pace, particularly when slowed down, can lead to a heightened state of attention in which objects, textures, and events experienced along the way are given focused attention.

Soundscapes are replete with sounds continually combining and re-combining to create what composer and writer R. Murray Schafer (2004, p. 37) describes as a “macrocosmic musical composition”, available to all through the simple performance of active listening. Pauline Oliveros (2024) likewise celebrates the expansiveness of sound in stating “I see and hear life as a grand improvisation — I stay open to the world of possibilities for interplay in the quantum field with self and others — community, society, the world, the universe, and beyond (p.8).” Each of the author’s soundwalks is an aleatoric composition, in which significant aspects are left open to chance in concert with the live environment. Each takes place within its own context, time, and space; with locations offering distinctive soundscapes. Their uniqueness is reflected in the recorded soundtrack that the author activates by replaying it in the environment from which it originated. The soundwalk is based upon a compound score comprised of the following elements: 1) a walking route undertaken by the author and subsequently shared with participants, 2) a synchronous sound recording edited from field recordings captured along that route, and 3) the unpredictable encounters that take place along the route during each iteration of the soundwalk. The route and soundtrack can be re-performed on multiple occasions but due to the ever-changing features within the live environment, each will be different to the last.

The sound recordings that form the soundtrack will have been captured by the author repeatedly walking the route using binaural microphones and a digital recorder, days, weeks, or even years previously. The soundmarks on the recording are designed to be experienced in synchrony with the landmarks along the walking route. Because the soundtrack features sound material listened to in the location from which it originated, misinterpretation can occur as to whether it is diegetic, or appropriate to that context. Artist and writer Janhavi Sharma (2022), who participated in *Pentrich Rising - South Wingfield*, wrote in response:

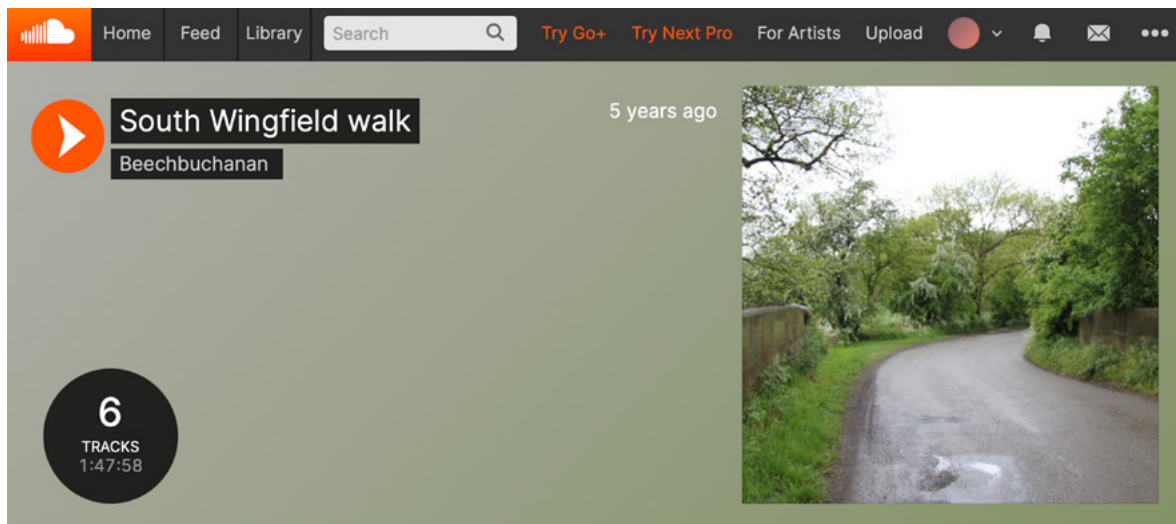
The seamless way in which the sounds would overlap with the surroundings made it difficult to distinguish what was immediately around me, and what was not. Thinking that you deliberately layered the sounds that way, made me wonder about your intention as an artist, to invite me to be aware, to actively listen, and to listen intently (personal communication, April 11, 2022).

An important consideration is the on-ear headphones offered to participants which are deliberately selected to allow the live environmental sound to merge with the recording. Any given location has its own *soundprint* and thus, although the soundtrack seems appropriate to the site of its capture, a significant temporal gap will have been created. The time lapse between the recording and the playback reveals, often playfully, the transience of everything. The full-throated motorbike engine that featured on the original recording might now be heard as an accompaniment to a passing pushbike. A couple of passers-by engaged in conversation become transformed into ghostly presences.



▶ *Figure 2. Element 1 of compound score. Map of the Pentrich Rising - South Wingfield walking route.*

Note. Extracted from flyer number 2 of a series of 19 produced by The Pentrich and South Wingfield Revolution Group. Walk compiled by John Hardwick.



▲ *Figure 3. Element 2 of compound score.*

Note. Screenshot of sound recording edited from field recordings captured along the South Wingfield walking route.

The act of listening during a soundwalk to a recording captured days, weeks, or years before can initiate what soundwalk participant Jo Wheeler (personal communication, March 2020) has described as “a playful, sensory confusion — a thrill and mild panic about the sound of a car fast approaching.” In such moments one can readily become disoriented. In *Pentrich Rising – South Wingfield* (2017), the author recorded songs during the re-enactment walks that formed part of the bicentennial commemorations for the original revolt and incorporated these into the soundwalks. Within the narrative arc of a soundwalk, overtly *theatrical* sounds such as pieces of music can also lead to a collapse of the 4th wall and interrupt the immersivity of the experience. These act as reminders of the artifice behind the work and call into question both one’s perception and surroundings.

For a participant retracing the footsteps of the revolutionaries¹ within a 21st century soundwalk, the experience can lead to imaginative leaps as well as disorientation. Ryan Boultee (2020), a participant in *Pentrich Rising - South Wingfield*, felt at its conclusion as though physically and historically he didn’t “really belong” and another participant, Klara Szafrńska (personal communication, June 21, 2021), alluded to the “emancipatory” in describing escaping from present-day reality into the semi-fictional and temporally ambiguous. Artist, writer, and theorist Brandon LaBelle (2018) has suggested sound works unsettling and exceeding “arenas of visibility by relating to the unseen, the non-represented or the not yet apparent” (p. 2). The soundwalk summons not only the spectre of 1817 but also, through its inclusion of the sounds of drones and helicopters, the notion of authorities monitoring the English countryside through an array of technological surveillance capabilities, and a warning of the futility of resistance.

The author applies the same core methodology to each soundwalk composition, offering a point of departure and allowing for comparison between sites and experiences. A typical soundwalk involves the following stages:

An initial survey of the area in which the soundwalk is to take place using Google Streetview. This helps to identify potential start and end points, calculate time and distance, and consider practicalities such as transport hubs. On occasion, a curator might suggest some parameters to work within, such as a time frame and a start or end point.

The author incorporates a variety of locations through which to walk, often selected for their liminality and potential as portals, such as bridges and gateways. The author seeks to temporarily occupy spaces and enter a liminoid zone where voluntary disorientation and the resultant instability can take place. Artist and writer Emma Cocker (2012, p. 60) states that

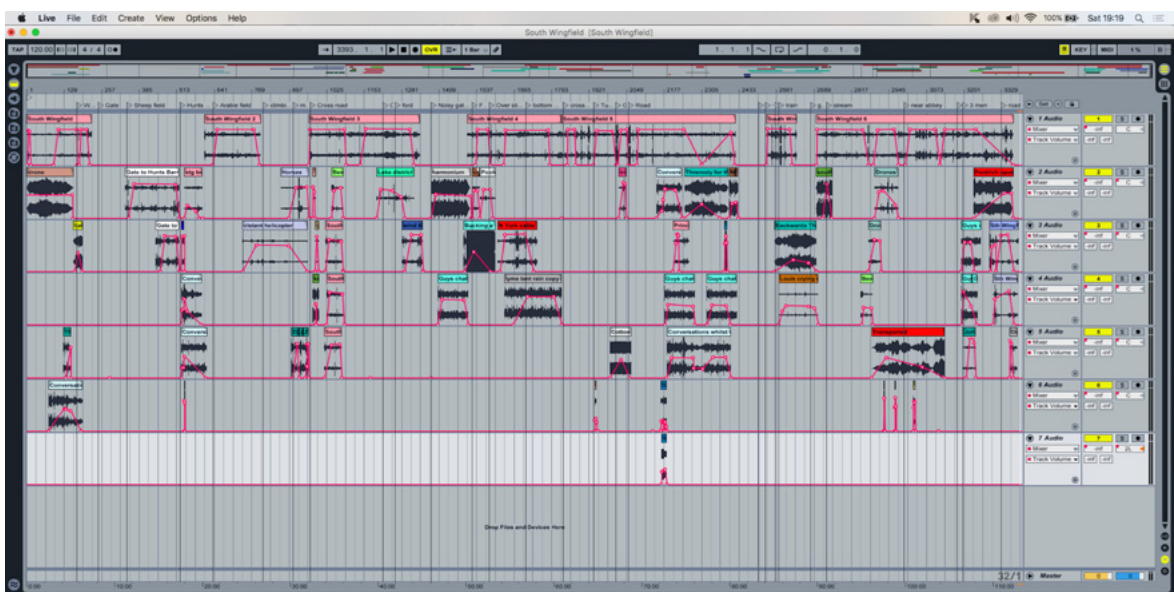
1 The Pentrich revolution took place in 1817 in response to the dire economic and socio-political situation in England in the wake of the Napoleonic wars. A lightly armed group, comprising men employed in a variety of trades, including stockings and iron workers, marched on Nottingham from various Derbyshire towns and villages. In this desperate act, they had been persuaded by their overzealous leaders and a government *agent provocateur* that thousands of fellow revolutionaries from the North would be joining the enterprise. From Nottingham, they planned to commandeer boats down the River Trent and capture Newark, and thence onto London to force the government to make reforms.

These vague plans failed at the first hurdle as the group were routed on their way to Nottingham in a location now occupied by an IKEA retail park. Through their network of spies, the government had deliberately fomented the revolt in order to justify their own harsh reprisals and thereby suppress further protest. Mounted soldiers awaited the group and, accompanied by magistrates, rounded up many of the fleeing men. Others, including the ringleaders, were subsequently captured and tried for treason. Three were executed and beheaded, while others were imprisoned or transported to servitude in Australia. In the once thriving town of Pentrich and neighbouring villages, the homes of the men involved were demolished and their families banished.

“inhabiting the specificity of one liminal landscape — the border — provokes the production of new ways of operating, which in turn, might contribute to a more critical approach to the navigation or negotiation of the wider cultural landscape” making “explicit the connection between spatial and social manifestations of liminality.”

During the research for *Pentrich Rising – South Wingfield*, the author extensively used previously published maps to reveal the boundaries of human settlements, associated industries, and the infrastructure connecting them, such as roads, railways, and canals. In-depth local knowledge was gleaned from current inhabitants including John Hardwick, a descendant of one of the original Pentrich revolutionaries, which offered human-scale stories that deepened his appreciation of the place and its history. Contributions from published sources, such as journalist John Stevens and local historians like Roger Tanner, further informed the research.

Once on site in a potential location the author performs a series of psychogeographical *dérives* or drifts, to identify aspects that appeal, repel, or intrigue in some way. In response to what is seen and heard, a theme will begin to emerge, around which the soundwalk can coalesce. For example, in West Berlin, appalled by the large numbers of people sleeping rough cheek by jowl with shoppers and tourists, and with the pampered animals in the adjacent zoo, the author plotted the route for his soundwalk to draw attention to these contradictions. A route might equally be based upon a watercourse, or the path of a medieval procession. Parts of the soundwalk route that might be considered mundane offer light and shade into the composition and provide opportunities for hearing and other senses to recalibrate. Once the route has been fixed, the author makes repeated passes along its length at an appropriate pace, recording as he goes and clicking his fingers at landmarks to facilitate the editing process. He calls these recordings *baselines*.



▲ *Figure 4. Editing process of Pentrich Rising - South Wingfield.*

Note. Taken during the editing process using Ableton Live programme.

Baseline recordings are placed into the Ableton Live editing programme and the key points along the timeline are given an identifying name, to enable accurate synchronization with subsequent recordings. The entire recording is scrutinized to find and delete unwanted material, and to select appropriate points at which to fade in and out. Sounds from other sources are tested alongside the baseline and even obviously non-diegetic sounds, such as music, can be experimented with. The author adjusts volume and panning, and may lower or raise the pitch of certain sounds; however, despite the seemingly infinite malleability of digital sound, effects are used sparingly, if at all.

The soundwalk is then uploaded to an iPod and repeatedly tested along the route of the walk, in order to check the synchrony of soundtrack and landmarks. Once complete, the author shares the soundwalk with participants, and each culminates in an opportunity to share responses in a post-walk discussion.

OPENCITY

The author titles his urban based soundwalks with the prefix *OpenCity*, alluding to the city being approachable via new perspectives. The inspiration for this came from an event he witnessed one early evening in Nottingham city centre, when several (presumably unconnected) people began to run in different directions at the same moment, creating a disturbance and a momentary *rip in the fabric* of the city.

Living in a city can induce a deadening effect, lifted at moments such as when snow has fallen, a building has been demolished, or something *out of the ordinary* is taking place. The above event, observed within an urban space in which movement and behavior are strongly (and internally) regulated, produced a moment of liminality and creative interest.

Professor of tourism Philip L. Pearce (2005) describes the willful separation from the individual's *normal* state at *home* into the liminoid, an elective state of transition in which life is abnormal, often puzzling, and yet in which possibilities are expanded. The soundwalk group comprising the author and participants is engaged in a liminoid activity. In performing the soundwalk, the group may well appear to passers-by as liminal figures, all wearing earphones, strangely attentive, and out of step with fellow walkers. OpenCity soundwalks deliberately operate on the thresholds of public/private space and gravitate towards the often-overlooked transitory places in which such interventions offer subtle resistance to the fast-moving city's alienating and depersonalizing effect, and potentially reclaim something of what makes us human.

Transposing this approach to a far less populated and seemingly more tranquil rural setting (in the UK, at least) as we navigate field edges, stream crossings, farm tracks and country lanes, a similarly rich environment can be found in which to intervene and explore its less than bucolic features. Writer Robert Macfarlane (2015), reflecting upon scholar and author M.R. James' evocations of the English landscape, has described them as "constituted by uncanny forces, part-buried sufferings and contested ownerships" and of "a realm that snags, bites and troubles." One can readily perceive this landscape as yet another form of factory, industrialized and commodified, in which uneven balances of power, contested land ownership and usage, absent owners, and unemployment are rampant.



PENTRICH RISING - SOUTH WINGFIELD

The author composed the rural soundwalk *Pentrich Rising – South Wingfield* (2017) in Derbyshire, UK, inspired by a plaque near a local bridge that referred to the Pentrich Revolution of June 1817. The bicentenary provided an opportunity for the composition of a series of soundwalks. The author approached the Pentrich and South Wingfield Revolution Group, a local organization that was planning to stage a series of commemorative events. The commemorations offered access to thematic talks, articles, and walks around the locality delivered by local historians and the author recorded songs and conversations for inclusion in his soundwalk which he led over two weekends in June 2017.

His initial creative response centered around comparisons between the contemporary economic and socio-political climate in the United Kingdom, and that of 1817 in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars. The causes of the original revolt echo down the ages into the present day, including austerity, rampant inequality, unemployment, a disempowered workforce, and the intrusion of the state into local communities, through government/police spies and *agents provocateurs*. Despite 200 years of unimaginable technological progress, as evidenced by motor cars, aircraft, and even the mobile phone signals picked up by the recording device, as well as the gains of universal suffrage and the welfare state, power continues to be wielded by and on behalf of the powerful in British society, including the industrialist and landowning classes.

With this backdrop in mind, the author designed the Pentrich soundwalks to follow a narrative arc inspired by the original revolt and evoke a cumulative sense of foreboding, isolation, unease, and surveillance as the modern-day participants traverse the seemingly benign English rural landscape.

HAUNTOLOGY

Soundwalks offer a means of simultaneously inhabiting multiple times and places, opening portals for alternative histories. Writer and critic Mark Fisher alludes to “time ‘breaking in’ via portals in the landscape, and anachronisms, images, and figures from the past, appearing unbidden” (as cited in Brown, 2017, p. 3). The portals described by Fisher are not opportunities for touristic time travel but rather unsettling evocations of haunted landscapes. They seem ambiguous, arousing feelings of uncertainty regarding where they lead to or from, and whether they offer potential routes of escape or of entrapment. The supposedly dead past bleeds into our present, its inhabitants refusing to depart. Schafer (1994) mourns extinct sounds, which might seem nostalgic but suggests an exhaustion with the contemporary soundscape, and a hint that something may have been missed, worthy of returning to via further *digging*. Fisher (2013) expands on this idea in his writing about hauntological music, describing the melancholic yearning and mourning for an anticipated future that failed to arrive, of which the Pentrich Revolt is a salient example. Like Fisher, the author grew up during the era of what the former calls *popular modernism* in which a progressive post-war cultural landscape in the United Kingdom, supported by a functioning welfare state, offered the hope of a brighter future, only for it to succumb to the hegemonic *new reality* of neoliberal capitalism. According to Fisher (2013, p. 24), the refusal to adjust to “reality” results in feeling “like an outcast on your own time.” To identify with a futile act of resistance such as the one that took place in Derbyshire in 1817 is to acknowledge that political change is only possible through collective action, but also

that attempting to overturn existing power structures, then and now, is almost certain to fail. Whilst on the 14-mile re-enactment walk in June 2017, the author imagined the mixed group of re-enactors, historians, and fellow travelers simply refusing to stop at the IKEA car park where the original march had fallen short, and continuing to Nottingham, from where, joined by legions of fellow revolutionary re-enactors from across the former industrial heartland of the North, boats would be commandeered down the Trent to Newark and onto London to overthrow the present-day government.

For contemporary *outcasts*, the collective memory of events such as the Pentrich revolt, while painful, reclaims the narrative from those who would wish us to simply forget and accept *the way things are*. As the philosopher Jacques Derrida described in *Specters of Marx* (1994, p. 64):

There is today in the world a dominant discourse [...] to the rhythm of a cadenced march, it proclaims: Marx is dead, communism is dead, very dead, and along with it its hopes, its discourse, its theories and its practices. It says: long live capitalism, long live the market, here's to the survival of economic and political liberalism!

EMBODIMENT

Urban anthropologist, Cristina Moretti (2016) describes walking tours as opening “a performative space: a time and place for inhabitants to take on, bend, and respond to the many histories, questions, and meanings that might be associated to particular locales” (p. 78). The author’s soundwalks are designed to engage through the action of walking, and produce embodied knowledge. By providing the audio-visual and spatial score, and leading the group, taking care of pacing and navigation, the author creates the conditions in which participants can have, what Professor of Acoustic Ecology and Sound Art John Levack Drever (2009) describes as “the erstwhile unprecedented luxury of focusing on listening” (p. 2). Periods on the recording in which the soundtrack fades out allow environmental sounds to come to the fore, returning the participant to their own body as they proceed through the land and soundscape. Through its repetitive and rhythmic qualities, walking draws the walker into a reflective state of mind, especially at a slow pace when an elongated perception of time can occur. Harvard Project Zero researcher Shari Tishman (2018) writes that “when people take the time to look slowly and closely at things, they come to discern multiple ways that things are complex” (p. 125). She goes on to describe three types of complexity: concerning systems (parts and interactions), perspectives (connections), and engagement (self-awareness as observer). Giving one’s attention to sounds similarly identifies the elements of the soundscape and their interactions, such as the intricacies or textures of birdsong or traffic noise that often accompany both rural and urban soundwalks. By perspectival complexity, Tishman (2018) means looking from “different physical and conceptual vantage points” (p. 126) which suggests a reflection upon the relative imbalance between birdsong and traffic in each location. Our position as observer/listener occupies the third layer of complexity, in which we become self aware, perhaps in considering our presence concerning the absence of birdsong, or our use of motorized transport to reach our location.

Professor of Political Ethics Thomas Dumm (as cited in Bennett, 2009, p. 5) celebrates the capacity “to be surprised by what we see”, implying the richness of experience that can be derived from focused attention. The capacity to experience at a granular level is not restricted to participants in a soundwalk, but by remaining silent and allowing oneself to be guided, stepping out of everyday concerns, a deeper interaction with one’s surroundings can be achieved.

Artist and professor emeritus of art Karen O’Rourke (2013) writes that “as we move through and immerse ourselves in the world of a soundwalk our full sensory array of hearing, sight, touch, and smell are fully engaged, vision, smell and proprioception as much as listening” (p. 39). Alongside moments of pleasure, through touching, tasting, and hearing, there are likely to be periods of fatigue and frustration, when the body and its weight become an encumbrance, and one might long for the soundwalk to end. Such an experience of ordeal becomes especially poignant when participants walk in the footsteps of the revolutionaries of 1817. Such encounters can invite a productive state of defamiliarization, of experiencing the world differently, described by theorist and artist Simon O’Sullivan (2006) as rupturing “our habitual modes of being and thus in our habitual subjectivities (producing) a cut, a crack. However... the rupturing encounter also contains a moment of affirmation...a way of seeing and thinking this world differently” (p. 1).

In sharing the soundwalk with participants, the author provides earphones that facilitate a full mix of the recorded and live sound following his aleatoric approach. Sound artist Andrea Polli (as cited in Carlyle, 2013) describes headphone listening as akin to “taking over someone’s head”, raising the issue of power within the artist/audience relationship. This is especially true in the Pentrich soundwalks in which field recordings are captured along the route using binaural microphones. This technology exploits the briefest of moments between sound reaching one ear and the other, highly spatialized recordings can be captured. For the listener an intimate relationship is forged with the author/artist through the sound of their breathing and the retracing of their footsteps, effectively staging a re-performance of the recordist’s re-performance of the original revolutionary march.

RE-PERFORMANCE

By walking where our ancestors have lived, worked, and died — particularly when evidence remains in the form of old buildings and elements once familiar to them — we can readily imagine their presence in the landscape. On a soundwalk, we can as it were walk in their footsteps, an activity that could be conceived as a form of pilgrimage. On the rural paths around the village of South Wingfield, tracing field boundaries, footpaths, and bridleways established centuries ago, we can follow the revolutionaries and speculate upon their changing mood, from collective bravado to individual doubt about the likely success of the enterprise, and ultimately, when confronted by armed cavalry, to self preservation.

A further layer to the re-performance of past lives is the author’s own artistic labor. His field recordings, as audio artist and writer Gerald Fiebig (2015) describes, “bearing witness to a recordist’s presence at a certain place and time in history” (p. 14). He walks in others’ footsteps but also his own, treading and re treading the route of the soundwalk while leaving and picking up new traces. By following the route that the revolutionaries took through the Derbyshire

countryside, *Pentrich Rising - South Wingfield* is itself a partial re-performance of what took place in 1817. One of the benefits of working with sound is that, conceived as a form of touch, following the ethos of leaving no trace, it avoids imposing or treading too heavily upon the site.

TEMPORAL SLIPPAGE

The passing of time impacts all aspects of existence and the deceptively simple action of time shifting can draw our attention to human lives and communities as well as those of other life forms with which we share and, in Massey's paradigm, co-construct space. Brown (2017) states:

An imaginarium is opened up on our contemporary world in which, for example, the not dissimilar sounds of traffic and crashing waves might lead to imaginative speculation on the sea reclaiming the city, in its future, its distant past, or some parallel universe (p. 6).



▲ *Figure 5. Soundwalk participants in OpenCity Stockholm.*

Note. Taken by participant Eliza Black.


Soundwalking can encourage us to take huge imaginative leaps into deep time, long before humanity asserted itself on the planet, as well as of a far-distant future when human beings will be long gone.

Soundwalking captures ongoing processes of transformation and brings to the fore the precarious and temporary nature of existence. One cannot re-perform the same soundwalk as both ourselves and our surroundings will have changed. As conscious life forms, humans can struggle to conceive of the changes that take place around and within us. Contrary to a self-perception as a point of relative fixity in a world that is changing around us, the centre of our personal universes, we are subject to the same processes. As Massey (2005) writes “the truth is that you can never simply ‘go back,’ to home or to anywhere else. When you get ‘there’ the place will have moved on just as you yourself will have changed” (p. 124). She goes on to assert that both time and space are “mutually imbricated [. . .] you can’t go back in space-time” (Massey, 2005, p. 125).

Returning to Massey’s proposition that we are situated at the confluence of a multitude of existences, and that space is the product of these meetings — “a simultaneity of stories so far” (2005, p. 9) — each soundwalk is itself a manifestation of such confluences. This reflects the *contingent tableau* described by political theorist and philosopher Jane Bennett (2009), comprising objects, the street, the weather, and participants. Each fortuitous encounter between humans (participants, passers-by), and other existences is unrepeatable, yet serendipity can reliably bring about an occurrence worthy of our attention.



SPACE-TIME



Soundwalking acts as snapshots of an ever-changing land and soundscape. The soundtrack constitutes an archive that preserves a soundscape at a specific moment in time. The act of walking the soundwalk route is an activity reminiscent of the ancient custom of *beating the bounds*, a community ritual performed in parts of England, Wales, and New England in the United States in which boundary markers are re-committed to collective memory by swatting them with tree branches. Memories often resurface when we return to locations in which significant events have taken place. Soundwalks, in which participants may be led away from familiar and predictable paths, offer a juxtaposition of the present with the recent and distant past. Through their recreation in the soundtrack sounds from days, years, and centuries ago re-surface spectrally to combine with the sounds in the present and those of possible futures. Soundwalks also co-construct space through the coming together of participants and other human and non-human agencies. Space becomes place through the meaning-making actions performed by this “particular constellation of social relations” (Massey, 1991, p. 128).

The author’s soundwalks explore and evoke the mundane or traumatic events in particular locales and re-spatialise our perception of them. Within the ever-unfolding meetings of Massey’s ‘stories-so-far’ (2005, p. 9), new permutations inevitably arise, not all of them benign. Janhavi Sharma (2022) in her response to *Pentrich Rising – South Wingfield*, described experiencing a sense of historical continuum:

Thinking about the structures of power today, the need for dissent in the socio political dynamics of contemporary times, made me wonder if anything has even changed, if time has actually even passed. I would look at trees, stones, ruins around me and wonder which of them would have been spectators of these historical events. The work makes you think of landscape in general, and how it passively witnesses the world and its wars.

FINDINGS

The author has described the soundwalk and provided a detailed account of his distinctive methodology through which he hopes to encourage the use of soundwalking by fellow researchers in artistic, sonic, spatial, social-historical, socio-political, environmental disciplines, and beyond.

Soundwalking is a listening exercise as well as an effective means of spatio temporal exploration. Soundwalks provide sensorially rich liminoid experiences that encompass states of immersion and detachment and play with participants' perceptions. Embodied knowledge is generated of the places through which we walk, and of their contested histories, their contemporary circumstances, and of the complexities inherent in our own perception. The soundwalk both creates space and interrogates the points of intersection at which space is produced.

A key element of the author's approach involves the three-part compound score, that incorporates the unpredictable features along the route into soundwalk. The temporal gap, created when sounds are returned to their source locations and are brought into dialogue with the live environment, draws our attention to the processes of change.

The soundwalk chosen as a case study, *Pentrich Rising – South Wingfield*, demonstrates how an event that took place over 200 years ago, can be re-performed in a critique of the present-day context. It also invites us to imagine alternative pasts and potential futures. Through his invocation of the spectre of the failed 1817 revolt, the author draws upon hauntology in considering a future anticipated by popular modernism in the decades following the Second World War that, similarly to the hopes of the Pentrich revolutionaries, albeit less dramatically, failed to arrive.



REFERENCIAS

- Beechbucanan. (2019). *South Wingfield walk* [Audio]. SoundCloud. <https://soundcloud.com/beechebuchanan/sets/south-wingfield-walk>
- Bennett, J. (2009). *Vibrant Matter*. Duke University Press.
- Brown, A. (2017). Soundwalking: Deep Listening and Spatio-Temporal Montage. *Humanities*, 6(3), 69. <https://doi.org/10.3390/h6030069>
- Cardiff, J. (1999). *Tour: The Missing Voice (Case Study B) — part 3* [Audio]. SoundCloud. <https://soundcloud.com/artangel-2/talk-the-missing-voice-03>
- Carlyle, A. (2013). Andrea Polli. In C. Lane & A. Carlyle (Eds), *In the Field. The Art of Field Recording* (pp. 15-26). Uniformbooks.
- Cocker, E. (2012). Border crossings. Practices for beating the bounds. In A. Hazel & L. Roberts (Eds), *Liminal Landscapes. Travel, Experience and Spaces In-between* (pp. 50-66). Routledge.
- Derrida, J. (1994). *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. Routledge.
- Drever, J. L. (2009). Soundwalking: Aural Excursions of the Everyday. In J. Saunders (Ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Experimental Music* (pp. 163-192). Ashgate.
- Fiebig, G. (2015). The Sonic Witness. On the Political Potential of Field Recordings in Acoustic Art. *Leonardo Music Journal*, 25, 14–16. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43832522>
- Fisher, M. (2013). *Ghosts of My Life. Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*. Zero Books.
- Kubisch, C. (2024). *Electrical walks*. Christina Kubisch. <https://christinakubisch.de/electrical-walks>
- LaBelle, B. (2018). *Sonic Agency. Sound and Emergent Forms of Resistance*. Goldsmiths Press.
- Macfarlane, R. (2015, April 15). The eeriness of the English countryside. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/apr/10/eeeriness-english-countryside-robert-macfarlane>
- Massey, D. (1991). A Global Sense of Place. *Marxism Today*, 38, 24-29. <https://banmarchive.org.uk/marxism-today/june-1991/a-global-sense-of-place/>
- Massey, D. (2005). *For Space*. Sage.
- Moretti, C. (2016). Walking as a creative ethnographic practice. In D. Elliot & D. Culhane (Eds.), *A Different Kind of Ethnography* (pp. 91-112). Centre for Imaginative Ethnography.
- Oliveros, P. (2024) *Quantum Listening: From Practice to Theory (To Practice Practice)*. Silver Press.
- O'Rourke, K. (2013). *Walking and Mapping. Artists as Cartographers*. The MIT Press.



- O'Sullivan, S. (2006). *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought beyond Representation*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pearce, P. L. (2005). *Tourist behaviour: Themes and conceptual schemes*. Channel View Publications.
- The Pentrich and South Wingfield Revolution Group. (n.d.). *The Pentrich Revolution 1817 England's last armed rebellion*. <https://pentrichrevolution.org.uk/index.html>
- Schafer, R. (1994). *The Soundscape. Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Destiny.
- Schafer, R. (2004). The Music of the Environment. In C. Cox & D. Warner (Eds.), *Audio Culture. Readings in Modern Music* (pp. 54-67). Continuum.
- Stevens, J. (2016). *England's Last Revolution Pentrich 1817*. The Pentrich and South Wingfield Revolution Group.
- Szafrańska, K. (2021). *Notes from the sound walk*. Email to: Andrew Brown, 21 June.
- Tishman, S. (2018). *Slow Looking. The Art and Practice of Learning Through Observation*. Routledge.
- Westerkamp, H. (2007). Soundwalking. In A. Carlyle (Ed.), *Autumn Leaves, Sound and the Environment in Artistic Practice* (pp. 49-65). Double Entendre.



KAYLLA

REVISTA DEL
DEPARTAMENTO
DE ARTES ESCÉNICAS

*Esta publicación es de acceso abierto y su contenido está disponible en la
página web de la revista: www.revistas.pucp.edu.pe/index.php/kaylla/.*



Esta obra está bajo una Licencia Creative Commons Atribución 4.0 Internacional.

© Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú.

ISSN: 2955-8697