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Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Music

What Happened to Seaton Snook?

A Parafictional Archive of Sounds and Music from an Abandoned Seaside Town

by

Peter Consistently Falconer

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

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This practice-based PhD takes the form of a web-based archive of sounds and music from a parafictional seaside town in North East England called Seaton Snook, and an accompanying commentary. The archive features a wide range of individual sound pieces across a range of materialities, including artistic compositions, pedagogic compositions, recorded musical performances and field recordings. It also includes interviews and transcriptions, photographs of handwritten scores, and accompanying explanatory information. The project draws on Carrie Lambert-Beatty's notion of parafiction (artistic practices that play in the overlap between fact and fiction) and Peter Cusack's practice of sonic journalism, to investigate aspects of twentieth century and contemporary North Eastern English culture. More broadly, this project investigates how listener experience can be shaped by the stories we tell about musical works, the compositional process, and social and biographical aspects surrounding the work.

The commentary first reviews a range of related artworks, to situate the work and to introduce the key concepts and frameworks. This section is completed with in-depth discussion of a number of noteworthy parafictional artworks – including case studies of works by artist Damien Hirst, composer Jennifer Walshe and filmmaker Peter Greenaway – and an assessment of the cultural and economic neglect of the North East of England.

There follows an explanation of my methodology and an exegesis of my own compositions, drawing on language and frameworks established in earlier parts of the commentary. A creative approach to the exegesis is taken, in order to further demonstrate and explore the parafictional character of the main project.

The commentary concludes with a discussion of possible further artistic and pedagogic outcomes of *Seaton Snook*.

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List of Accompanying Materials

All portfolio recordings are available online at **seatonsnook.com**.

All scores for the pieces are included in the **seatonsnook.com** archive itself, and therefore have not been reprinted in this commentary.

The audio recordings accompanying the Exegesis (Chapter 4) are accessible at **www.seatonsnook.com/exegesis**

One additional composition, not currently a part of the archive but discussed in Appendix E, *Canch End Morning Radio*, is also accessible at **www.seatonsnook.com/canchend**.

It is suggested that this document be read in PDF form, as Chapter 4 in particular contains direct links to the appropriate webpage/artefact being discussed.

Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: PETER CONSISTENTLY FALCONER

Title of thesis: What Happened to Seaton Snook? A Parafictional Archive of Sounds and Music from an Abandoned Seaside Town.

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
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6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. Parts of this work have been published on the project website, www.seatonsnook.com

Signature: .... Date: 7 January 2022

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Introduction

Overview

This practice-based PhD takes the form of an online archive of sounds and music from a parafictional seaside town in North East England, and accompanying commentary. The archive features a wide range of individual sound pieces across a range of materialities, including artistic compositions, pedagogic compositions, recorded musical performances and field recordings. It also includes interviews and transcriptions, photographs of handwritten scores, and explanatory information.

The project draws on art historian Carrie Lambert-Beatty's notion of parafiction (artistic practices that play in the overlap between fact and fiction) and Peter Cusack's practice of sonic journalism, to investigate and highlight aspects of twentieth century and contemporary North Eastern English culture. More broadly, this project investigates the use of parafiction as a framing device in the presentation and experience of musical compositions, the use of sonic journalism in an artistic context, and how listener experience can be shaped by the stories we tell about musical works.

The commentary first introduces and explores the field of parafiction as defined by Lambert-Beatty, the related fields of superfiction and historical fiction, and the myth-building techniques of fantasy writer J.R.R. Tolkien, in order to provide a general artistic context to the project and to introduce the key concepts behind its creation (1.1). Section 1.2 assesses the cultural and economic neglect of the North East of England, presenting this as an important socio-political motivation behind the project, both as it stands now and as it continues to be developed in the future.

Chapter 2 explores five specific works from the fields of New Music, avant-garde film, sound recording, and broader visual arts, that hold particular relevance to the techniques and aesthetic of the project, with extensive discussions of:

- *Aisteach – the Avant-Garde Archive of Ireland* by New Music composer Jennifer Walshe (2015).
- *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable* by artist Damien Hirst (2017)
- *The Falls* by filmmaker Peter Greenaway (1980)
- *Streamside Day Follies* by artist Pierre Huyghe (2003)
- *Sounds from Dangerous Places* by artist and sound recordist Peter Cusack (2003)

Introduction

Chapter 3 outlines my methodology of parafictional art creation, utilising language and concepts derived from the examples discussed in the contexts and case studies chapters. The application of the methodology is explained with reference to examples from the project itself.

The exegesis (Chapter 4) explores the composition process and building of the website. As *What Happened to Seaton Snook?* is an interconnected archive of nearly a hundred individual musical and sonic artefacts, this chapter examines several of the larger branches, their composition, and their interconnectedness, rather than detailing the creation of each individual artefact. The chapter also serves as a critical reflection on both the creative process and the artistic outcome itself. To highlight the parafictional nature of the project, the exegesis is presented as transcripts of several conversations between myself as creator of the artefacts (the Artist), and the parafictional version of myself responsible for the presentation of the archive (the Archivist). Recordings of these conversations are accessible online, as noted in the list of Accompanying Materials (p.vii).[1]

A final conclusion (p.143) reflects more generally on the successes and shortcomings of the project, and outlines possibilities for further expansion and development of the archive.

Welcome to Seaton Snook

Seaton Snook was a small town on the coast of County Durham, UK, on the north bank of the River Tees. To its north and west, the village of Seaton Carew, with the towns of Hartlepool and West Hartlepool[2] beyond; across the river to its south, the village of Greatham. It was a thriving community of fishermen, blacksmiths, teachers, seacoalers, labourers, and musicians. There was a church, a school, a fairground, an indoor market, a zinc refinery, an RAF station… then in 1968, it disappeared. There are no government records or newspaper reports referring to the town after that year, and apparently no former residents still living.

Growing up in Seaton Carew, I spent many hours playing on the sand dunes of Seaton Snook, with no knowledge of the town that had once stood there. And yet I always felt I could hear the voices of a not-so-distant past, barely shimmering up from beneath the inescapable washing of the

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[1] This approach seeks to follow the examples of Joanna Demers and Hettie Malcomson, who have explored a creative approach to dissemination of criticism and academic writing. See: Joanna Demers, *Anatomy of Thought-Fiction: CHS Report, April 2214* (Alresford, UK: Zero Books, 2017); Joanna Demers, *Drone and Apocalypse: An Exhibit Catalog for the End of the World* (Alresford, UK: Zero Books, 2015); Hettie Malcomson, 'Point of View, Narrative Voice and Ethnographic Representation: Writing Everyday Violence in 2010s Mexico', *Irish Journal of Anthropology*, 22.1 (2020), 99–103.
[2] Amalgamated in 1967 to become the one town of Hartlepool

waves. For my PhD, I have built an archive of sounds and music from the area, its residents, and its workers, to try and form a picture of the town and what happened there. The portfolio is presented in the form of a website, at **www.seatonsnook.com**, containing music by local composers, field recordings, photographs, and accompanying analyses. The website is designed to be explored in any order, for any duration, and as many times as the visitor pleases.[3]

There is, of, course, a catch: *Seaton Snook*, as described above, is not real. The area to the south of Seaton Carew is indeed known as Seaton Snook, and until the mid-1960s there was a handful of fishermen, houseboats, and cottages that housed workers from the nearby zinc works. There was a tin tabernacle, and a floorless hut which for some time served as a schoolroom. Other than that, the area was a combination of sand dunes, grazing pasture, and salt marshes. The settlement was cleared in 1968 after changes in local industry had led to people gradually drifting away. It now forms part of the Teesmouth National Nature Reserve.[4] It was not the thriving town I have made it, nor did it mysteriously disappear overnight.

What Happened to Seaton Snook? is a parafictional artwork, which in broad terms can be described as 'fiction presented as fact,'[5] or as art that 'plays in the overlap between fact and fiction.'[6] It appears real, and in talks and performances I present artefacts from the archive as real, but this appearance of reality is achieved through a multiplicity of parafictional techniques, including artificially aged audio recordings, misappropriated photographs, local history, historical musicology, and myth. Throughout this commentary, the real Seaton Snook is referred to in ordinary font, with the parafictional town in italics as *Seaton Snook*.

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[3] The website is best navigated on a desktop browser, rather than a mobile device.

[4] Ian Forrest, 'Seaton Common / North Gare Pier / Seaton Snook and Seaton Channel', *Teesmouth Bird Club* <https://www.teesmouthbc.com/seatonsnookarea/> [accessed 11 December 2020].

[5] Carrie Lambert-Beatty, 'Carrie Lambert-Beatty', *Harvard.Edu* <https://scholar.harvard.edu/lambert-beatty/home> [accessed 15 December 2020].

[6] 'Performance: Parafacts & Parafictions', *EFA Project Space*, 2010 <https://www.projectspace-efanyc.org/events/2010/2/17/parafacts-parafictions> [accessed 17 September 2020].

Chapter 1   Contexts

Section 1.1 of this chapter explores three artistic and literary fields that situate *Seaton Snook* in an artistic context: the emerging genre of parafiction; the related literary genre of historical fiction; and the historicity-focussed myth-building of fantasy writer J.R.R. Tolkien. There follows a wider survey of artworks relevant to the creation of *Seaton Snook* that use various aspects of these approaches.

Section 1.2 explores the longstanding economic and cultural marginalisation of the North East and towns analogous to *Seaton Snook*. *What Happened to Seaton Snook?* does not deal explicitly with the history of economic neglect in the North East of England, nor does it dwell extensively on the town of *Seaton Snook*'s identity in relation to the surrounding area. Nonetheless, these matters are implicit in the archive, and important to highlight as background to how the town and people of *Seaton Snook* have been created.

1.1   Parafictional and Literary Traditions in *Seaton Snook*

The practice of blending fact and fiction in an artistic context is an integral part of *Seaton Snook's* creation, and this section surveys a variety of approaches to this practice in the fields of conceptual art, literature, and film. I have attempted to organise artworks according to broad genre definitions, but as with any genre there will always be contention over what these definitions are. Some works described under one genre certainly can be described as another, whether similar, broader, or narrower. Although I do conclude and rationalise *Seaton Snook*'s denomination as a parafictional work, it would not be helpful to become entangled in trying to classify all cited works; rather, my focus is on their various techniques and aesthetics.

1.1.1   Parafiction

This section first examines what the term "parafiction" can mean and describes its general characteristics and behaviours; second, briefly presents a number of parafictional projects that demonstrate these features; and third, outlines my reasoning for classifying *Seaton Snook* as parafictional.

In her seminal essay *Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility* from 2009, Carrie Lambert-Beatty states:

> in parafiction real and/or imaginary personages and stories intersect with the world *as it is being lived* [emphasis added]. Simply put, with various degrees of success, for various durations, and for various purposes, these fictions *are experienced as fact* [emphasis added].[7]

In his 2017 discussion on the subject, Michael Young writes that parafiction '*intervenes in the world* [emphasis added] through constructed fictions in an attempt to open alternative plausible realities.'[8] In its aim to create doubt and raise debate through being presented as fact, parafiction can be described as 'the politicization of aesthetics' after Rancière: 'It begins with the aesthetics of the factual and works to produce spaces for people to consider alternate possibilities for how the world could be.'[9] For example, Michael Blum's *A Tribute to Safiye Behar* (presented at the 2005 Istanbul Biennial), is a house museum project that relays the life story of 'A remarkable, if little-known historical figure … a Turkish Jew who enjoyed a long friendship – some say a romance – with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of the Turkish Republic.' [10] For the local Turkish audience it 'served as a critical intervention in the official hagiography of the leader.'[11] For the international audience, 'the life story of this secular, cosmopolitan, internationalist and progressive woman … cut into stereotypes about Turkey as backwards, other, and "Islamicist."'[12] Safiye Mehar is a fabrication of Michael Blum. The display was intended to be convincing, and although it did contain subtle clues to the fiction, many news outlets 'mentioned [Mehar] among other historical figures, with no apparent awareness of her connection to Blum or to art at all.'[13] The issue of fakery will be touched on throughout this commentary, and discussed at length in section 2.2 on Hirst's *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable.*

Caroline Jones writes, '[Parafiction] stimulates public discourse and debate … scepticism in place of credulity, productive doubt in place of pious certainty, public conversation in place of private fear.'[14] While parafiction and historical fiction (discussed in 1.1.2 below) share the potential to suggest alternative worldviews, parafiction's immediate interaction with the real world, as well as its background in artistic rather than literary theory, makes it distinct. The Blum exhibition takes the form of a real apartment that can be explored by the audience, and this is key to the work's

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[7] Carrie Lambert-Beatty, 'Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility', *October*, 129 (2009), 51–84 (p. 54) <https://doi.org/10.1162/octo.2009.129.1.51>.
[8] Michael Young, 'The Art of the Plausible and the Aesthetics of Doubt', *Log*, Fall.41 (2017), 37–44 (p. 38).
[9] Young, p. 39.
[10] Lambert-Beatty, 'Make-Believe', p. 51.
[11] Lambert-Beatty, 'Make-Believe', p. 52.
[12] Lambert-Beatty, 'Make-Believe', p. 53.
[13] Lambert-Beatty, 'Make-Believe', p. 54.
[14] Caroline Jones, 'Doubt/Fear', *Art Papers*, 29.1 (2005), p. 26.

impact, as 'the experience of *having known Safiye as real* [emphasis in original] would have a lingering effect even after the disillusionment.'[15] Historical fiction stimulates discourse and debate by presenting alternative viewpoints and interpretations of historical facts and events; but in being presented as fiction, the debate is prompted by a hypothetical "what if?" In contrast, parafictions, by virtue of being presented as reality, have a more immediate capacity to provoke audiences to doubt not only their preconceived facts and narratives, but also how they experience the world. As Lambert-Beatty suggests, audiences may feel a certain discomfort about the trickery involved in these constructions, but may also 'go away in a strange kind of educated ignorance, their worldviews subtly altered – perhaps in truthful ways – by untruths.'[16]

Lebanese artist Walid Raad's multimedia project The Atlas Group[17] is an excellent example of a parafictional work full of untruth that speaks to a higher-level truth. Beginning in the late 1990s, Raad 'created a fictional foundation called The Atlas Group in order to better organize and more subtly contextualise his growing output of works documenting the Lebanese civil wars.'[18] The project contains a vast range of artworks which '[Raad] then re-dates and attributes … to an array of invented figures who in turn are said to have donated these works … to The Atlas Group archive',[19] including works by historian "Dr Fadl Fakhouri" and former hostage "Souheil Bachar." Raad 'believes that the official political histories of events in Lebanon could not account for much of what was experienced during the time of the civil war',[20] and so presents his own experiences and research as an authoritative archive, not only as a way of articulating his views and feelings on the Lebanon, but also as a wider critique of existing authorities on Middle Eastern history. The Atlas Group website does not acknowledge its fictional nature, upon which critic Mark Godfrey comments '[the project is] less interested in revealing the fallaciousness of the material it presents than suggesting that only through fiction can an adequate image of the Lebanese wars be created.'[21]

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[15] Lambert-Beatty, 'Make-Believe', p. 66.
[16] Lambert-Beatty, 'Make-Believe', p. 56.
[17] Walid Raad, 'Art | The Atlas Group | Lebanon | Walid Raad', *The Atlas Group (1989-2004)* <https://www.theatlasgroup1989.org> [accessed 24 September 2020].
[18] Alan Gilbert, 'Walid Raad's Spectral Archive, Part One: Historiography as Process', *E-Flux*, 69, 2016 <http://worker01.e-flux.com/pdf/article_9004974.pdf> [accessed 18 September 2021].
[19] Gilbert.
[20] Lee Smith, 'Missing in Action: The Art of the Atlas Group / Walid Raad', *Artforum*, 2003 <https://www.artforum.com/print/200302/missing-in-action-the-atlas-group-walid-raad-4184> [accessed 18 September 2021].
[21] Mark Godfrey, 'The Artist as Historian', *October*, 120 (2007), 140–72 (p. 145) <https://doi.org/10.1162/octo.2007.120.1.140>.

Chapter 1

Where Raad seeks to offer an alternative view of accepted reality, other works of parafiction seek to directly influence reality itself. This is certainly apparent in the work of The Yes Men, who set up fake websites mimicking corporations and political parties, sufficiently similar to the originals to have resulted in numerous conference and TV interview invitations. Their most infamous stunt occurred in 2004, when their phony representative for Dow Chemical, "Jude Finisterra,"[22] was invited onto BBC World News, where he announced that Dow would be paying $12bn of reparations to the victims of the Bhopal disaster – a chemical spill that killed at least twenty thousand people in 1984.[23] By the time the hoax was discovered two hours later, Dow Chemical's share value had dropped by $2bn.[24] In the ensuing row, The Yes Men were accused of 'engineering … false hope to make a political point,' but responded by saying 'the distress they had caused the people of Bhopal was minimal compared to that for which Dow was responsible.'[25] As Lambert-Beatty maintains, 'The fact that parafictions are queasy-making is key to what they are and what they do.'[26]

Another project that influenced behaviours in the real world is the 1999 film *The Blair Witch Project,* which purported to be a presentation of footage recovered in 1994 after the disappearance of three young filmmakers on the hunt for the "Blair Witch" of Maryland.[27] Influenced by the infamous BBC hoax film *Ghostwatch* (1992)*,* which itself allowed for a degree of audience interaction,[28] internet and magazine adverts for the film encouraged the public to visit blairwitch.com (still live at time of writing), with extensive photographs, interviews, writings, and film footage detailing the (fictional) background to the discovery and assembly of the recovered footage, and the search for the supposed missing filmmakers. In addition, the filmmakers were listed as deceased on IMDb, with one performer claiming, 'Our parents started getting

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[22] St Jude being the patron saint of lost causes, and "Finisterra" translating as "The end of the world".

[23] 'Dow Does the Right Thing', *The Yes Men* <https://theyesmen.org/project/dowbbc> [accessed 21 November 2020].

[24] Vincent Graff, 'Meet the Yes Men Who Hoax the World', *The Guardian*, 2004 <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2004/dec/13/mondaymediasection5> [accessed 21 November 2020].

[25] A. R. Hopwood, 'Is Fake News Killing Fictive Art?', *Wellcome Collection*, 2019 <https://wellcomecollection.org/articles/XPTpJRAAAJ9ijdUQ> [accessed 10 October 2020].

[26] Lambert-Beatty, 'Make-Believe', p. 68.

[27] Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez, *The Blair Witch Project* (Artisan Entertainment, 1999).

[28] In addition to the apparently 'live' investigation into a north London haunted house featuring well-known BBC presenters, the programme also featured a phone-in desk for viewers to call with their own stories. The programme was so terrifying it received tens of thousands of complaints; its effects on children were listed in the British Medical Journal, and it has not been repeated since. Jake Rossen, 'Ghostwatch: The BBC Halloween Hoax That Traumatized Viewers', *Mental Floss*, 2020 <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/87007/bbc-halloween-hoax-traumatized-viewers> [accessed 21 November 2020].

condolence calls.'[29] While not the first film to claim to be made of recovered documentary footage, it was the first to '[exploit] the internet's communication channels to deceive the public'[30] by leaking photos and seeding online discussions of conspiracy theories long before the film was released. Producer Michael Monello says 'I think it was easy to look at the website… and call it marketing… [but] it was mostly just fans interacting. The story that was missed was how the internet was going to connect to fans.'[31] The film and its surrounding materials precipitated a parafictional intervention into the discourse of filmgoers, revealing a version of reality in which not only was the film more than a piece of convincingly-crafted storytelling, but in which the only place where the truth could be found was on the Internet. Executive Producer Kevin J. Foxe wonders, 'Were we the harbinger of fake news? I hope not. I don't know what's harmless or harmful anymore. I've lost track of everything. But [in presenting fiction as fact] that's what you do, right? You start to slowly erode the trust factor.'[32]

Just as the makers of *The Blair Witch Project* exploited the nascent Internet to expand the artwork into parafictional territory, so Orson Welles exploited the relatively new technology of radio in his infamous 1938 broadcast of *War of the Worlds*. Updating the Victorian England setting of H. G. Wells' original to present day New Jersey, Welles - in collaboration with writer Howard Koch and producers John Houseman and Paul Stewart - presented the story in 'a succession of simulated news bulletins … interrupting what seemed to be a snoozy program of orchestral music.'[33] Appropriating the style of a factual news broadcast to tell a fictional story through technology that had only recently become ubiquitous in homes, enabled Welles to affect the audience more viscerally and directly than through a conventional radio dramatization, and listeners reported being '"frightened," "disturbed", or "excited", by what they heard',[34] or at least 'badly confused.'[35] The mass hysteria we are often told followed the broadcast, did not actually happen;[36] but as media and communication scholars Pooley and Socolow write, the myth persists,

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[29] Interviews by Phil Hoad, 'How We Made The Blair Witch Project', *The Guardian*, 21 May 2018, section Film <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2018/may/21/how-we-made-the-blair-witch-project> [accessed 21 November 2020].

[30] Alyssa Bereznak, 'How "Blair Witch" Became a Horror Sensation—and Invented Modern Movie Marketing', *The Ringer*, 2019 <https://www.theringer.com/movies/2019/3/28/18280988/blair-witch-movie-marketing-1999> [accessed 21 November 2020].

[31] Bereznak.

[32] Bereznak.

[33] W. Joseph Campbell, 'Fright beyond Measure? The Myth of The War of the Worlds', in *Getting It Wrong: Debunking the Greatest Myths in American Journalism* (California: University of California Press, 2010), pp. 26–43 (p. 28) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctv1wxrt2.8>.

[34] W. Joseph Campbell, p. 30.

[35] W. Joseph Campbell, p. 38.

[36] Far from being an elaborate hoax, the broadcast was clearly listed and announced as being an episode of the weekly Mercury Theatre on the Air drama anthology series - complete with intermission - with a very

> because it so perfectly captures our unease with the media's power over our lives … Just
> as radio was the new medium of the 1930s … today the Internet provides us with both
> the promise of a dynamic communicative future and dystopian fears of a new form of
> mind control; lost privacy; and attacks from scary, mysterious forces.[37]

With the hosting and networking possibilities afforded by the Internet, easily accessible website design software, and the sophisticated audio processing software now available to simulate period sound recordings, I have the tools to create the immersive, convincing, content-rich network of sonic, textual and photographic artefacts required to push *Seaton Snook* into the parafictional realm. Making authentic-sounding recordings and presenting hundreds of multi-media components on an easily navigable website would not have been possible twenty or even ten years ago without considerably more time, money, and workforce.

The sound processing and image manipulation technologies used in parafiction, as well as the Internet's capacity for dissemination through social media, are also tools used by creators and peddlers of fake news; it is necessary therefore to attempt to distinguish between fake news and parafiction. Aggressively political parafictionalists The Yes Men are unabashed about their use of deep fakes, hoax websites, and fabricated public figures, claiming to have 'reclaimed the ancient technique of fun subterfuge, [using] fake news for good.'[38] Despite their use of the term, however, they distance themselves from fake news creators by saying 'As always, we … revealed [the hoax] afterwards – which of course the thugs don't.'[39] This would suggest that the distinction between parafiction and fake news is in the visibility of its authorship: the author of fake news is deliberately obscured; the author of parafiction is deliberately discoverable. The aforementioned *A Tribute to Safiye Behar,* for example, has a highly realistic appearance, and is to be experienced in the moment as fact, but by being presented at an art festival by a recognised artist, the clues to

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small audience share. Few people heard the broadcast, and fewer still regarded it as anything other than entertainment. Reports of people fleeing the cities to escape death from the Martians was in fact a fabrication of the press, who saw radio as a threat to their primacy as broadcasters of news; the myth was cemented in both public and academic consciousness in a deeply flawed study from 1940 by Princeton University psychologist Hadley Cantril, *An Invasion from Mars*, which modern sociologists say 'failed to demonstrate that panicked reactions and flight were widespread among listeners to the show.' W. Joseph Campbell, p. 30.

[37] Jefferson Pooley and Michael J. Socolow, 'The Myth of the War of the Worlds Panic', *Slate Magazine*, 2013 <https://slate.com/culture/2013/10/orson-welles-war-of-the-worlds-panic-myth-the-infamous-radio-broadcast-did-not-cause-a-nationwide-hysteria.html> [accessed 28 January 2021].

[38] 'The Era of Fake News for Good Has (Re)Begun', *The Yes Men* <https://theyesmen.org/rant/era-fake-news-good-has-rebegun> [accessed 27 January 2021].

[39] 'The Era of Fake News for Good Has (Re)Begun'.

its fakery are clear. Conversely, 'the covert nature of [fake news] means they are manipulative, as the sources and aims of the communications remain hidden.'[40]

Of note as a precursor to our modern concept of fake news in the political arena, before and during World War II the UK Government ran a military programme of 'Political warfare by rumour'[41] codenamed "Sibs"[42] in which false rumours of a military and non-military nature would be deliberately spread through official channels,

> to convey false information, false impressions, despondency, anger and dissension in enemy countries; resentment, and indications as to the methods of expressing resentment, amongst the people of occupied countries; and to breed dislike of the German conquerors.[43]

Rumour procedure dictated that,

> Prerequisites for the credibility of rumours are
>
> i)   That their source should be considered authoritative on the particular subject of the rumour
>
> and/or
>
> ii)   That the rumour should be based on a general truth already accepted by the target of the rumour.[44]

This second prerequisite underlines the need for parafictions to be grounded in reality, and to have a degree of familiarity in order to be believable.

In August 2020, I received an email from a local gentleman warning, 'If much of [seatonsnook.com] is the work of your imagination, then that's fine, of course as long as it does not appear to be factual and it is made explicit that it is fictitious or semi-fictitious.'[45] Although he did not qualify his statement, it would appear from his tone that whether or not I succeed in revealing new layers of reality, my work is at least, as Carrie Lambert-Beatty says, queasy-

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[40] Michael Jensen, 'Russian Trolls and Fake News', *Journal of International Affairs*, 71.1.5 (2018), 115–24 (p. 116).
[41] 'General Index, Correspondence and Reports', 1943, The National Archives, FO 898/71.
[42] From the Latin *sibilare*, meaning "to hiss"
[43] Sir Alexander Cadogan, 'An Explanation of Sibs', 1942, The National Archives, 898/70.
[44] 'General Index, Correspondence and Reports'.
[45] From an email to me dated 7 August 2020

making.[46] I describe *Seaton Snook* as parafictional, not only because the factual and fictional are blurred within the work and its presentation, or because I strive to achieve a high level of believability and authenticity in the artefacts, but also because as a creator I am often moved to question which parts were fabricated, which were presentations or representations of reality, and which appeared to have been precipitates of the work itself. In Lambert-Beatty's words, the work interacts with my own life 'as it is being lived,'[47] as well as the life of the visitor searching through the artefacts; and in this, I enjoy the queasiness.

1.1.2 Historical fiction

Historical fiction is a wide-ranging literary genre, with considerable debate over its boundaries. A work of historical fiction is described by the Historical Novel Society as one which is 'set fifty or more years in the past, and one in which the author is writing from research rather than personal experience.'[48] Harry E. Shaw states that historical novels are 'works in which historical probability reaches a certain level of structural prominence'[49] although he goes on to assess this as 'an impotent and lame conclusion, objectionable on several counts.'[50] A more granular definition from author H. Scott Dalton offers these four possible characteristics:

- Depictions of real historical figures in the context of the challenges they faced.
- Depictions of real historical figures in imagined situations.
- Depictions of fictional characters in documented historical situations.
- Depictions of fictional characters in fictional situations, but in the context of a real historical period.[51]

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[46] It could certainly be argued that the 2009 work Fremdarbeit by Johannes Kreidler for small ensemble and moderator is also a queasy-making parafictional musical work, appearing to be made up of music purchased at a low price by Kreidler in an act of outsourcing: Kreidler deliberately leaves the truth of the music's authorship (as opposed to ownership) ambiguous in order to ask uncomfortable questions about the morality of globalisation and the exploitation of workers in countries like India and China. Johannes Kreidler, *Fremdarbeit*, 2009 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L72d_0zIT0c>.

[47] Lambert-Beatty, 'Make-Believe', p. 54.

[48] Sarah Johnson, 'Defining the Genre: What Are the Rules for Historical Fiction? By Sarah Johnson', *Historical Novel Society*, 2002 <https://historicalnovelsociety.org/guides/defining-the-genre-what-are-the-rules-for-historical-fiction/> [accessed 17 November 2020], although the Historical Novel Society does admit that this is only one of several possible working definitions of the genre.

[49] Harry E. Shaw, *The Forms of Historical Fiction: Sir Walter Scott and His Successors* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 22.

[50] Shaw, p. 22.

[51] H. Scott Dalton, 'What Is Historical Fiction?', *Vision: A Resource for Writers*, 2006 <http://fmwriters.com/Visionback/Issue34/historicalfic.htm> [accessed 19 November 2020].

There is further debate over the level of historical accuracy – or historicity – required. While some writers embrace any 'fiction set in the past'[52] as historical fiction, others bemoan

> "costume fiction" … [in which] the writer simply plunks fictional characters in a historical setting, but they do not participate in public events or interact with other characters to reveal social conditions or dominating tendencies of a particular era.[53]

Because of the license for characterisation and narrative afforded the artist as opposed to the historian, the facts can be selectively framed to serve a particular ideological purpose within the artist's fiction.[54] Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* (1862), for example, presents 'a very selective reading of nineteenth-century French history in order to convince the bourgeoisie of … the virtues of republicanism',[55] while Arthur Miller's 1953 play *The Crucible*, depicting the Salem witch trials of Massachusetts in the late 17th century, was 'an unmistakable parallel'[56] to the anti-Communist "witch hunts" of Senator Joseph McCarthy in 1950s America.

The Gallows Pole by Benjamin Myers (2017), set in 1760s Yorkshire, retells the tale of David Hartley and the Cragg Vale Coiners, who manufactured counterfeit money from melted-down clippings taken from coins, a crime punishable by hanging. The prose is laden with Yorkshire dialect, and features verbatim quotes from Myers' 'factual research … lots of old, and often tedious, legal documents and longwinded statements.'[57] Myers also takes 'artistic licence to fill in the gaps by deploying elements of poetry, crime, psychedelia, folk horror,'[58]

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[52] Johnson.

[53] Sarah K Herz, 'Using Historical Fiction in the History Classroom' (Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, 1981), p. 1, 1981 Volume cthistory, 81.ch.10 <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/curriculum/units/1981/cthistory/81.ch.10.x.html> [accessed 17 November 2020].
 Herz.

[54] It is important to acknowledge that historians, too, cannot be entirely objective: there are always personal and cultural decisions made - however subconsciously - in choosing from which records and accounts a history is drawn, and 'although the historian may claim that his final products must, by the conventions of professional probity, contain a factual and therefore indisputable foundation, this is discounted as a naïve suppression of the possibilities of wilfully slanting one's statements of fact, or of accidental equivocation through the vagueness of ordinary words.' Christopher Blake, 'IV.—CAN HISTORY BE OBJECTIVE ?', *Mind*, LXIV.253 (1955), 61–78 <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/LXIV.253.61>.

[55] Angelo Metzidakis, 'On Rereading French History in Hugo's Les Misérables', *The French Review*, 67.2 (1993), 187–95 (p. 187).

[56] Henry Popkin, 'Arthur Miller's "The Crucible"', *College English*, 26.2 (1964), 139–46 (p. 139) <https://doi.org/10.2307/373665>.

[57] Benjamin Myers, 'Into The Valley', *Weird Walk*, 31 October 2019, 7–12 (p. 10).

[58] Myers, 'Into The Valley', p. 10.

presenting Hartley as not the businessman he really was, but as 'a poet … and mystic'[59] who had visions of Cernunnos-like "stagmen" dancing on the moonlit moors. In adding these mystical elements to the cliché of 'Tough men … Men of stone and soil,'[60] and by giving Hartley a rhapsodically poetic voice that 'sharply evokes weather and wildness, and communicates a deep love of the Yorkshire landscape,'[61] Myers fictionalises the protagonist in order to express his underlying ideological message: that 'a visceral engagement with landscape in Britain'[62] is vital to reverse the 'psychic toll'[63] taken by increased industrialism and globalisation.

Other works abuse facts still further, moving into a subgenre in which a 'historical scenario based on an alternative, but plausible, set of outcomes'[64] is presented, which the Historical Novel Society calls 'alternative history.'[65] *The Man in the High Castle* by Philip K. Dick (1962) uses the conceit that the Axis powers won World War II to put forward the author's beliefs in 'the idea of alternate universes and the Borgesian idea of time as … a maze … of forking paths.'[66] Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Years of Rice and Salt* (2002) presents a world in which the plagues of the 14th century had killed 99% of the population of Europe, 'in effect inverting the narrative of … all the scholars who have tried to explain Europe's geopolitical success.'[67] While these novels are fantastic in their conception, their success depends on their plausibility, and being 'serious efforts to think about the contingencies of histories in ways that challenge and entertain at the same time.'[68]

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[59] Carol Birch, 'The Gallows Pole by Benjamin Myers Review – Murder on the Moors', *The Guardian*, 25 May 2017, section Books <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/may/25/the-gallows-pole-benjamin-myers-review> [accessed 19 November 2020].
[60] Benjamin Myers, *The Gallows Pole*, [Kindle edition] (Hebden Bridge: Bluemoose Books, 2017), Part II, Summer 1768, Buzzems.
[61] Birch.
[62] Myers, 'Into The Valley', p. 8.
[63] Myers, 'Into The Valley', p. 10.
[64] John Mullan, 'Fatherland by Robert Harris', *The Guardian*, 2012 <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/mar/30/guardian-bookclub-fatherland-robert-harris> [accessed 20 November 2020].
[65] 'Defining the Genre', *Historical Novel Society*, n.d. <https://historicalnovelsociety.org/guides/defining-the-genre-2/> [accessed 20 November 2020] There is, as is to be expected, some debate over whether 'alternative history' is a subgenre of Historical Fiction, a subgenre of Speculative Fiction, or both, or neither, which is not helpful to reproduce here.
[66] Howard Canaan, 'Time and Gnosis in the Writings of Philip K. Dick', *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*, 14.2 (2008), 335–55 (p. 343).
[67] Carl Abbott, 'The Past, Conditionally: Alternative History in Speculative Fiction', *Perspectives on History*, 2016 <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/january-2016/the-past-conditionally-alternative-history-in-speculative-fiction> [accessed 20 November 2020].
[68] Abbott.

As an example of alternative musical history in the mould of the time-twisting works of Philip K. Dick, *The Beatles Never Broke Up…..* is a 2009 website detailing the story of James Richards who, immediately after suffering a head injury in the Californian desert, found himself transported to a parallel version of Earth in which The Beatles had never broken up, from which he retrieved a cassette of an album made by this alt-Beatles called *Everyday Chemistry*.[69] The website also includes pictures of the well-worn, hand-labelled cassette itself; an example of the fictive art and artefact production techniques also used by Tolkien (discussed in 1.1.3) and by myself in the various handwritten manuscripts, matchboxes and tobacco tins that form part of the *Seaton Snook* archive (discussed in 4.13). The music eventually turns out to be mashups of the four ex-Beatles' solo material. Richards states, 'The only conclusion I can come up with is even though in the alternate universe the Beatles hadn't broken up, that didn't mean their future music ideas disappeared.'[70]

Herz argues that the best historical fiction 'recreates the past with an immediacy neither expository history nor pure fiction can achieve alone.'[71] Similarly, Jennifer Armstrong writes, 'historical fiction takes all those things that *were* (the history) and turns something that *was not* (an imagined story) into something that *could have been* [emphases in original].'[72] The tools of historical fiction allow the artist to explore a wider range of issues and situations than a factual historical account could. For example, *Seaton Snook* presents both fictional folk music and psychedelic rock to register thoughts and feelings of isolation that North Easterners have towards Westminster through "grass roots" musical idioms and vernaculars. Future artefacts could probe Britain's use of slave labour in the 20th century, queer identities amongst Traveller communities, or the effects of power station wastewater on marine life, and still be believable parts of the *Seaton Snook* mythology. It is historical fiction's capacity to present multiple alternative perspectives and contingencies in an engaging manner that makes it such a powerful tool for better understanding the interrelationships of chance events that happen to have resulted in our current reality.

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[69] James Richards, 'The Beatles Never Broke Up…..', 2009 <http://www.thebeatlesneverbrokeup.com/> [accessed 20 November 2020].

[70] John Kerrison, 'Everyday Chemistry: The Story Behind The Greatest Beatles' Albums That Never Existed', *Medium*, 2014 <https://medium.com/much-stranger-than-fiction/everyday-chemistry-the-story-behind-the-greatest-beatles-albums-that-never-existed-517fb5f415fd> [accessed 20 November 2020].

[71] Herz, p. 2.

[72] Jennifer Armstrong, 'Truth in Storytelling', *Riverbank Review*, Summer, 1999, 14–16 (p. 16).

1.1.3   Tolkien's legendarium and mythopoeia

J.R.R. Tolkien is best known for his novels *The Lord of the Rings* (published in three parts in 1954 and 1955), *The Hobbit* (1937), and perhaps *The Silmarillion* (posthumously, 1977). These works, however, are only small parts of a much wider mythology, referred to by Tolkien as a 'legendarium.'[73] From as early as 1904, aged 12, Tolkien was beginning to devise his own languages, 'purely for fun,'[74] using the more developed of these in works of poetry. Eventually 'the lack of a connecting thread to bring his vivid but disparate imaginings together'[75] prompted Tolkien to shift focus from glossopoeia (language creation) to mythopoeia (myth creation).[76]

Tolkien worked on developing and re-working the legendarium for over fifty years.[77] As a philologist, he believed that most words and word forms could be separated into 'old-traditional-genuine' and 'new-unhistorical-mistaken,'[78] and so the '[the legendarium] was begun in order to provide the necessary background of "history" for Elvish tongues.'[79] [80]

The scope of Tolkien's work in creating the histories, philologies, cosmologies, mythologies, theologies and geographies of dozens of races of creatures in his imagined universe of Eä, is vast, with the collection of his writings on the development of Middle-earth published by his son Christopher between 1983 and 1996 as *The History of Middle-earth* running to 12 volumes. As Brljak describes:

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[73] J. R. R Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien: A Selection*, ed. by Christopher Tolkien and Humphrey Carpenter, [Kindle edition] (London: HarperCollins, 2006), Letter 131 to Milton Waldman c.1951.

[74] David Doughan, 'J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biographical Sketch', *The Tolkien Society*, 2016 <https://www.tolkiensociety.org/author/biography/> [accessed 20 November 2020].

[75] Doughan.

[76] Tolkien was, of course, not the first writer to create "historical" figures as vehicles for his own writings: 18th Century English poet Thomas Chatterton produced works purporting to be written by a medieval monk called Thomas Rowley; whilst his Scottish contemporary James Macpherson claimed to have collected ancient Gaelic poems from descendants of legendary figures. Neither of these writers, however, went so far as to create an entire world history beyond the personalities and life stories of a single avatar.

[77] Doughan.

[78] Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle-Earth*, 3rd edition [Kindle edition] (London: HarperCollins, 2012), Ch. 3.

[79] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, The Lord of the Rings, by J. R. R. Tolkien; Pt. 1, Based on the 50th anniversary ed. publ. 2004 (London: HarperCollins, 2007), p. xv.

[80] Compare this to the epic fantasy series A Song of Ice and Fire by George R.R. Martin, who freely admits 'I don't have a whole imaginary language in my desk here, the way Tolkien did … I did pepper the text with a few Dothraki words … but for the most part I was content just to say, "They were speaking Dothraki", and give the sense of what was said.' Alison Flood, 'Invented Language Lessons from George RR Martin and Other Writers', *The Guardian*, 8 May 2015 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/may/08/invented-language-lessons-from-george-rr-martin-and-other-writers> [accessed 7 January 2022].

> [Tolkien] had at his disposal a large amount of background material which, skilfully
> inserted at strategic moments, could greatly increase the tale's mimetic potency. The
> vistas remained in background, unexplained and unattainable, but depicted against such
> a background, the foreground could jump off the page, immersing its reader in a
> fantastic world realised with an unprecedented "reality" or "depth."[81]

Brljak's second sentence highlights that although the histories contained within Tolkien's legendarium were sufficient to provide what Tom Shippey describes as the 'impression of depth'[82] they were intended as part of an ongoing investigation into Middle-earth rather than a complete and definitive history. Tolkien himself writes, 'Part of the attraction of [*The Lord of the Rings*] is, I think, due to the glimpses of a large history in the background … To go there is to destroy the magic, unless new unattainable vistas are again revealed.'[83] [84]

The incomplete nature of the legendarium, far from being a weakness, allowed Tolkien's mythopoeia (the creation of the legendarium) and the storytelling (the presentation of the legendarium) to inform each other and grow as new developments occurred to him. In the foreword to the Second Edition of *The Lord of the Rings,* he writes:

> This tale grew in the telling … it was begun soon after *The Hobbit* was written and before
> its publication in 1937; but I did not go on … for I wished first to complete and set in
> order the mythology and legends of the Elder Days, which had then been taking shape
> for some years.[85]

Of this process, Tolkien writes, 'An absorbing, though continually interrupted labour (especially since … the mind would wing to the other pole and spend itself on the linguistics): yet always I had the sense of recording what was already "there" somewhere: not of "inventing".'[86]

Central to this concept of "Tolkien-as-discoverer" is his framing of the published novels as selections from one of three existing English translations of 'the Red Book of Westmarch.'[87] A

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[81] Vladimir Brljak, 'The Books of Lost Tales: Tolkien as Metafictionist', *Tolkien Studies*, 7.1 (2010), 1–34 (p. 1) <https://doi.org/10.1353/tks.0.0079>.

[82] Shippey Ch. 7: The Dangers of Going On.

[83] J. R. R Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, Letter 247 to Colonel Worskett, 1963.

[84] Or as translator George Webbe Dasent put it in an essay sometimes quoted by Tolkien, the reader 'must be satisfied with the soup that is set before him, and not desire to see the bones of the ox out of which it has been boiled.' Sir George Webbe Dasent, *Popular Tales from the Norse*, Rev. Edition (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1903), p. xx.

[85] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, p. xv.

[86] J. R. R Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, Letter 131, to Milton Waldman, c1951.

[87] As an indication of the importance of Celtic mythology to Tolkien's work, this is almost certainly a reference to the 14th century collection of Welsh Celtic lore, *The Red Book of Hergest*.

'Note on the Shire Records' at the beginning of *The Lord of the Rings*, details how the various components of the Red Book came into being, noting the writers' lineages and other works, as well as revealing that 'the original Red Book has not been preserved,'[88] which Brljak describes as 'Tolkien's initial blow to the reader's expectations of … verisimilitude.'[89] The Red Book is portrayed as a real artefact, unseen by the reader, described as 'probably in a red case … bound in red leather,'[90] with some further additional poetry 'on loose leaves, while some are written carelessly in margins and blank spaces,'[91] further emphasising its physicality.

This raises another aspect of Tolkien's mythopoeia, that of 'verisimilitude by artefact'[92] In *The Lord of the Rings*, the lead characters come across a book of records of dwarvish history, *The Book of Mazarbul* – 'slashed and stabbed and partly burned, and it was so stained with black and other dark marks like old blood that little of it could be read.'[93] Gandalf attempts to read it and can only decipher various disjointed fragments. Tolkien's biographer Humphrey Carpenter records the author having produced a facsimile of this book, having spent 'many hours … copying out the pages in runes and elvish writing, and then deliberately damaging them, burning the edges and smearing the paper with substances that looked like dried blood.'[94] To Tolkien's great sadness, the publishers deemed the defaced pages too costly to reproduce in the original publication. The creation of this facsimile is an interesting precursor to a practice named by Antoinette Lafarge in 2004 as 'Fictive Art', in which art is,

> extended outside the realm of the textual … principally through the creation of realia. A working definition of the term might be: plausible fictions created through production of real-world objects, events, and entities.[95]

When the pages of the *Book of Mazarbul* were eventually reproduced in a *Lord of the Rings* calendar, Tolkien commented 'It is possible to make out a little more of the text than Gandalf was

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[88] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, p. 19.
[89] Vladimir Brljak, p. 9.
[90] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, p. 19.
[91] J. R. R Tolkien, 'The Adventures of Tom Bombadil', in *Tales from the Perilous Realm*, 1997, pp. 59–118 (p. 61).
[92] Verlyn Flieger, *Interrupted Music: The Making of Tolkien's Mythology* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2005), p. 83.
[93] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, p. 421.
[94] Humphrey Carpenter, *Tolkien: A Biography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988), p. 217.
[95] Lafarge, A 2007 'Fictive Art'. Previously available at: http://fictive.arts.uci.edu/, quoted in Sara Sylvester, 'The Theatre of the Selfie: Fictive Practices of the Instagram Artist', *Body, Space & Technology*, 18.1 (2019), 61–107 (p. 61) <https://doi.org/10.16995/bst.315>.

able to do,'[96] indicating that Tolkien used the fictive art piece he had created to generate the fragmented efforts of Gandalf's translation in the novel, even though Tolkien knew the full text that he himself had partly obscured. The artefact within the text, being made into a palpable simulacrum which informs the way in which the text is written, is a brilliant indication of Tolkien's dedication to his mythopoeia.

Tolkien's work is fantasy, but it is underpinned both by extensive research into historical writings and languages; and a dedication to treating the fantasy as if it *were* made up of historical writings and languages. This is undoubtedly a contribution to the fact that in a study of twenty-first century academics in the fields of Anglo-Saxon or Old English, 'almost half of them found their path to medieval studies through the writing of J.R.R. Tolkien.'[97] While readers and critics may be divided over Tolkien's prose style, the apparent historicity of his completed novels undoubtedly adds to their richness and longevity. That the legendarium is fabricated by using glossopoeic and historical-linguistic techniques, situates Tolkien's fantasy writing adjacent to historical fiction, the detailed approach to which would mean he could not suffer an accusation of writing mere "costume fiction" (see 1.1.2 above). Indeed, when surveys reveal that some members of the public may not realise that Gandalf was *not* a historical figure,[98] perhaps an argument can be made that Tolkien's work has – over time – become inadvertently parafictional.

Although *Seaton Snook* cannot boast the scale of Tolkien's work, I have adopted the importance he placed on creating a substantial mythology in order to make his languages plausible and functional: for example, developing a history behind the town's restrictive music performance practices that explains not only why its folk music sounds the way it does, but also why it had not been accepted into the wider folk music repertoire (see discussion of the Northumbrian smallpipes tunes in 4.12). I also follow his practice of having a distant "vista" of an overall *Snookish* narrative from which the foregrounded stories and characters are drawn, giving the impression of historicity. In addition, his 'verisimilitude by artefact' technique adds richness and plausibility not only to the artefacts, but also to the artistic process: in creating real handwritten manuscripts for the Northumbrian smallpipes pieces, and boxes in which old tapes are found, *Seaton Snook* becomes as real for me as I intend it to appear to the audience.

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[96] J. R. R. Tolkien, *Pictures by J. R. R. Tolkien*, ed. by Christopher Tolkien, 1st American ed (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), item 23.

[97] KellyAnn Fitzpatrick, *Neomedievalism, Popular Culture, and the Academy: From Tolkien to Game of Thrones*, [ebook] (Boydell and Brewer Limited, 2019), p. 31 <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781787447028>.

[98] Ciar Byrne, 'Fact and Fiction Mix as Poll Gives Gandalf a Real Role in History', *The Independent*, 2013 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/fact-and-fiction-mix-as-poll-gives-gandalf-a-real-role-in-history-50233.html> [accessed 27 January 2021].

1.1.4   Wider survey of relevant artworks

The term "superfiction" was coined by Peter Hill in 1989 as 'hybrid artworks that exist in the gap between installation art and literary fiction,'[99] or as a 'fictional situation or narrative that deceives the eye and mind in the sense that trompe-l'oeil painting does.'[100] Lambert-Beatty regards parafiction as a subcategory of the 'broader category' of superfiction.[101] One crucial distinction between Hill's work and other works cited by Lambert-Beatty as parafictions, is that Hill 'deliberately subverts his own projects by feeding bad puns and jokes into his press releases … Language thus becomes the deciding factor in whether or not a superfiction is considered a hoax or a real event.'[102] The difference between parafiction and superfiction seems to be found mainly in the level of the artist's intent to convince the audience of the work's authenticity, which perhaps explains the apparent similarities between the two genres.

Hill's *Museum of Contemporary Ideas* (1989, ongoing) purported to be a prestigious art museum in New York, with billionaire benefactors and award-winning contributors, but 'existed only through its press office.'[103] At one point, now-defunct German art magazine *Wolkenkratzer* unwittingly picked up one of Hill's bogus press releases about a supposedly award-winning piece, *The Hermann Nitsch Shower Curtain*, and 'a meeting of German industrialists and curators was held to see if Frankfurt could build a real museum based on [The Museum of Contemporary Ideas].'[104] In the early 1990's, Hill would on occasion pose as the museum's press officer and give bogus public lectures on art curation.[105] Despite Hill's serious critiques of the commercial art world, the works are ultimately more playful than, for example, Blum's *A Tribute to Safiye Behar;* the hoaxical elements more obvious. This is true of many of the works catalogued by Hill as being wholly or significantly superfictional. They include:

- Joan Fontcuberta's *Secret Fauna* (1987), which presented photographs of 'botanical and biological findings of previously undiscovered bizarre plants and animals'[106] discovered by the fictional Dr Peter Ameisenhaufen;

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[99] Janet McKenzie, 'Peter Hill: "I Have a Love for the Solitude of Lighthouses at One Extreme and the Energy of Chicago or Berlin at the Other"', *Studio International*, 2018 <https://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/peter-hill-interview> [accessed 12 January 2021].
[100] John A. Walker, *Art in the Age of Mass Media*, 3rd edn (London: Pluto Press, 2001), p. 169.
[101] Lambert-Beatty, 'Make-Believe', p. 54 n12.
[102] Walker, p. 170.
[103] McKenzie.
[104] McKenzie.
[105] Peter Hill, *The Hermann Nitsch Shower Curtain Video*, 2018 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3iKpE1YQNJM> [accessed 18 January 2021].
[106] Jim Casper, 'Wait a Minute...', *Lensculture*, undated <https://www.juanmagonzalez.com/fontcuberta/fauna.html> [accessed 18 January 2021].

- David Hildebrand Wilson and Diana Drake Wilson's *Museum of Jurassic Technology*, a collection of fantastical but just-about-plausible curiosities opened in 1988, that 'invites us to consider … how the distinctions drawn between the fantastic and the mundane can be arbitrary';[107]
- James Lattin's *Museum of Imaginative Knowledge*, formed in 2013, a website that includes the description of the layout of a proposed-yet-unbuilt museum, and sells short pamphlets on individual topics such as 'Some Ways to Identify Rocks and Stones in the North Atlantic,' 'The Runaway Rest Area,' and 'The Deconstruction of a British Museum.'[108]

Many of these artworks use humour to satirise the nature of art collections and museums themselves, and this approach is congruent with Lambert-Beatty's description of parafictions, which 'trail long legacies of hoax, prank, blague, trickster myth, and parody.'[109] In particular, Lambert-Beatty states, 'Fiction-in-the-real has become the characteristic mode of political humour for our time,'[110] citing satirical news programmes like *Brass Eye*, and the work of comedian Sasha Baron Cohen as:

> perfecting a technique in which parodists pass as their real counterparts, interacting with unsuspecting subjects whose gullibility, pompousness, stupidity, racism, extremism, or simple greed for the spotlight is then mercilessly exposed.[111]

In a similarly parodic and satirical style is Richard Littler's *Scarfolk* project, running since 2013 at scarfolk.blogspot.com and subsequently spawning two books. The site leans heavily towards Hill's use of humour rather than Blum's realism, stating:

> Scarfolk is a town in North West England that did not progress beyond 1979. Instead, the entire decade of the 1970s loops ad infinitum … pagan rituals blend seamlessly with science; hauntology is a compulsory subject at school, and everyone must be in bed by 8pm because they are perpetually running a slight fever.[112]

The artefacts on the site are largely pamphlet covers and government warning posters, satirising the bleak, utilitarian aesthetic of 1970's Central Office of Information output

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[107] Matthew W Roth, 'The Museum of Jurassic Technology', *Technology and Culture*, 43.1 (2002), 102–9.
[108] James Lattin, 'The Imaginative Press', *The Imaginative Press*, 2013 <https://press.imaginativeknowledge.org> [accessed 19 January 2021].
[109] Lambert-Beatty, 'Make-Believe', p. 57.
[110] Lambert-Beatty, 'Make-Believe', p. 56.
[111] Lambert-Beatty, 'Make-Believe', p. 57.
[112] Richard Littler, *Scarfolk*, 2013 <https://scarfolk.blogspot.com> [accessed 19 May 2018].

Chapter 1

(whose influence is also seen in the work of Peter Greenaway, discussed in 2.3 below). Littler says, 'I wanted to be able to visually capture the same kind of tone and evocative moods created by so-called "hauntology" artists,'[113] referring to acts such as Boards of Canada, Belbury Poly and The Focus Group, who use vintage technology to evoke sounds of 1970s and 1980s UK public information films, especially those played in schools.[114] [115]

In the 2014 fictional book *Discovering Scarfolk,* Littler presents, in the dry tone of a government report, the story of an amnesiac man trying to escape the town, with occasional hand-written insights from the man himself as he reads his own story.[116] The use of a non-fictional, even academic style to frame one narrative whilst presenting another has literary precedents in novels such as *House of Leaves* by Mark Z. Danielewski, a novel presented as a collection of footnotes on a manuscript by deceased writer studying a lost documentary film about a non-Euclidean house,[117] and which itself has been described as 'a literary counterpart to "The Blair Witch Project"';[118] [119] *Pale Fire* by Vladimir Nabokov (1962), is presented as a poem by the fictional John Shade accompanied by a commentary and index by fictional academic Charles Kinbote; while *Book of Illusions* by Paul Auster (2002) features in-depth reviews and analyses of 12 silent movies by a fictional lost filmmaker. Nabokov's work, in particular, is of interest as a parafictional/superfictional work, as the "John Shade" poem of the novel was itself 'extracted' from the novel and published in 1994 as a stand-

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[113] 'Northern Soul Northern Soul Chats to Richard Littler about Scarfolk, Online Humour and the Absurdity of Modern Values' <https://www.northernsoul.me.uk/interview-richard-littler-scarfolk-blog-online-humour/> [accessed 20 January 2021].

[114] "Hauntology" derives from the work of philosopher Jacques Derrida, who coined the term as a way of discussing what 'cannot be fully present: it has no being in itself but marks a relation to what is no longer or not yet,' a situation apt to describe the brutalism and synthesizer music associated with certain aspects of 1970s and 1980s British culture: things that were once considered to be the architecture and music of the future, but which now evoke a 'failure of the future,' or a future that never came to pass. Martin Hägglund, *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life*, Meridian, Crossing Aesthetics (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 82; Mark Fisher, 'What Is Hauntology?', *Film Quarterly*, 66.1 (2012), 16–24 (p. 16).

[115] Littler's creation accidentally intersected with the real world, when his satirical poster suggesting parents should shoot their children if they suspected they had rabies appeared in Civil Service Quarterly in a feature on the history of government communications. 'Government Admits Rabies Poster Gaffe', *BBC News*, 2018 <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-manchester-44911209> [accessed 4 August 2020].

[116] Richard Littler, *Discovering Scarfolk* (Ebury Publishing, 2014).

[117] Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2000).

[118] Moore Steven, 'House of Leaves Reviewed by Steven Moore', *The Washington Post*, 9 April 2000, p. x03, The Ash Tree Project.

[119] The novel also intersects with the real world by way of an album discussed in the book called *Haunted* by the artist Poe. Poe is, in actuality, Danielewski's sister Anne Decatur Danielewski, and the album was released in the same year as *House of Leaves* as 'a spiritual companion that complements the book in unexpected ways.' Bart Bishop, '"Haunted", the Album Inspired by Mark Z. Danielewski's "House of Leaves"', *LitReactor*, 2015 <https://litreactor.com/columns/haunted-the-album-inspired-by-mark-z-danielewskis-house-of-leaves> [accessed 21 November 2020].

alone artwork, 'reproduced just as Nabokov described it … on file cards,'[120] and again in 2012 in the same fashion 'complete with faux ink stains'[121] and accompanying critical essays by actual Nabokov experts and poetry scholars. This meta-publication demonstrates aspects of fictive art, as well as raising questions on authorship, authenticity, and intention. The meta-narrative of *Seaton Snook* is in my assuming the role of Archivist, discovering and presenting works by other artists, whilst concurrently creating these same artists and their works. This process is detailed in the Methodology (Chapter 3) and Exegesis (Chapter 4) sections.

Bridging *Scarfolk* and *Seaton Snook,* the multimedia project *Tales from the Black Meadow* by writer Chris Lambert, uses a supernatural Northern English setting as a basis for stories, poems, and music, from and about a mysterious fictional village in Yorkshire that appears sporadically from the mist.[122] The project centres around a blog featuring writings supposedly recovered from visitors to the village, folk songs, repurposed photographs, and artificially-aged sound recordings, as well as modern musical works inspired by the story. There is, however, never any question of *Tales from the Black Meadow* being anything but a work of fiction: Lambert is credited on the site as the writer and creator of the content, rather than as a curator or archivist of "genuine" stories and folk songs. In addition, the creation of faux-historical artefacts does not appear to have been extensively researched, with recordings supposedly made in the 1940s or taken from 1970s radio broadcasts, for example, being processed with clearly inauthentic vinyl crackle and EQ.[123]

The supposed recordings of early 20th century violin performances accompanying Rohan Kriwaczek's 2006 book *An Incomplete History of the Art of the Funerary Violin*, whilst not flawless, are certainly more convincing. In building his fictional history of a once popular but now lost tradition of music making, Kriwaczek uses misappropriated photographs, engravings and paintings, reproductions of 18th century manuscripts, and inserts his characters into both real historical events and the memoirs and correspondence of historical figures. He also employs forensic music analysis to demonstrate that famous Romantic composers such as Chopin and

08/01/2022 01:09:00[120] Cynthia Haven, 'Nabokov's "Pale Fire" on Its Own: Does It Work? The Jury Deliberates…', *The Book Haven*, 2012 <http://bookhaven.stanford.edu/2012/07/pale-fire-on-its-own-does-it-work-the-jury-deliberates/> [accessed 20 January 2021].

[121] David Orr, 'Vladimir Nabokov's "Selected Poems" and "Pale Fire"', *The New York Times*, 2021 <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/22/books/review/vladimir-nabokovs-selected-poems-and-pale-fire.html> [accessed 20 January 2021].

[122] Bob Fischer, 'The Soulless Party: The Black Meadow Archive Vol I, Review', *Electronic Sound*, January 2020 <reproduced at https://hauntedgeneration.co.uk/2020/08/15/electronic-sound-reviews-issue-61/>.

[123] 'Tales from the Black Meadow - Special Edition, by The Soulless Party', *The Soulless Party* <https://thesoullessparty.bandcamp.com/album/tales-from-the-black-meadow-special-edition> [accessed 20 January 2021].

Beethoven plagiarised the works of his invented violinists.[124] In a statement given to NPR, Kriwaczek said he wanted to 'expand the notion of musical composition to encompass the creation of an entire artistic genre, with its necessary accompanying history, mythology, philosophy, social function, etc.'[125] In creating works of music drawn from a broad, almost holistic viewpoint, Kriwaczek's practice bears similarities to Tolkien's mythopoeia: the understanding that a music, like a language, sounds the way it sounds because of the history and traditions from which it sprung. A similarly researched/constructed musical "history" could also be credited to the current work of the Elegant Savages Orchestra at Texas Tech University. Using the broad history of a fictional defunct Soviet-era country called "Bassanda" as a pedagogical methodology, this collection of chamber ensembles was formed by musicologist Christopher Small as a means of 'providing classical and sight-reading musicians the opportunity to explore various traditional and vernacular music, "by ear" genres in a chamber orchestral format.'[126] The ensemble – as does Kriwaczek with his funerary violin creations – performs regular concerts of the music of this constructed tradition in the manner of any other "authentic" musical tradition.

The suggestion of fictional and hoaxical music readily suggests acts such as Spinal Tap, first seen in highly influential 1984 "mockumentary" film, *This Is Spinal Tap.* Although a fictional band, the characters and music were so well observed that they were able to release three real studio albums, in addition to the 12 fictional albums mentioned in the film.[127] In an interview in 2019, director Rob Reiner stated 'The whole film is improvised and so the only way we could know in scenes what to reference was to have that common history', with actor Harry Shearer adding, 'We had to know what our characters would have known about each other … 17 years of fake history.'[128] I argue that the depth of detail in the film – bolstered by superbly observed "vintage" footage of the band in previous incarnations first as a skiffle group then as a psychedelic folk group – as well as the band's ability to exist outside of the film as a recording, touring act – suggest *This Is Spinal Tap* should be considered a superfictional artwork, as opposed to a simple parody or sketch show pastiche, such as The Rutles or The Blues Brothers. It has itself become a reference point for subsequent superfictional art: in 2006, conceptual artist Jamie Shovlin would

[124] Rohan Kriwaczek, *An Incomplete History of the Art of the Funerary Violin* (London ; New York: Duckworth, 2006), p. 15.

[125] 'Uncovering the "True" History of the Funerary Violin', *All Things Considered* (NPR, 2006) <https://www.npr.org/books/authors/137995911/rohan-kriwaczek> [accessed 21 January 2021].

[126] Christopher Small, 'The Elegant Savages Orchestra' <https://www.elegantsavagesorchestra.com> [accessed 21 January 2021].

[127] Rob Reiner, *This Is Spinal Tap*, 1984.

[128] TODAY, *Watch The 'This Is Spinal Tap' Cast's Extended Interview With Harry Smith | TODAY*, 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AsOzk0uKYgo> [accessed 27 January 2021].

"curate" an exhaustive exhibition of memorabilia, film footage and fan art dedicated to a fictional German noise band Lustfaust,[129] with clues to the artifice being left in the curator's notes such as describing the band as 'veering dangerously close to Spinal Tap-isms.'[130] [131]

Seaton Snook is therefore situated within a long and varied tradition of blending fact and fiction to create new artistic perspectives, utilising parafictional presentation techniques to create a rich and involved audience experience; and following Tolkein-esque approaches to worldbuilding to construct a substantial but hidden underlying mythology that gives the presented artefacts greater depth, authenticity, and historicity.

1.2   Economic Neglect and the North East's Identity Crisis

What Happened to Seaton Snook? has been created under the shadow of the gradual decline in actual British seaside communities, particularly in the North East, due to closure of industries, lack of investment, and negative media portrayals. This has resulted in a self-imposed ethical responsibility to treat the issues faced by the characters of *Seaton Snook* with respect. Many of the people, events, and certainly the economic growth and decline of my *Seaton Snook* are based on real accounts from the area and analogous regions, and as I am working in an artistic context I have the ability to choose how I treat these realities. It would be doing the people of the real Seaton Snook, of my hometown, and of deprived British seaside communities in general, a disservice if I were to make a mockery of the very real situations that they face. In dealing with the history of *Seaton Snook,* I am aiming to develop a work that seeks to be challenging, thought-provoking and to reveal something about the economic and political issues of the area, as well as being funny, entertaining, and accessible. The humour and entertainment of the project are themselves important, not only as a part of my aesthetic preference, but also because numerous

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[129] Jamie Shovlin, *Lustfaust*, 2006
<https://web.archive.org/web/20070918114155/http://www.lustfaust.com/>.
[130] Alice Jones, 'It's Only Mock "n" Roll but We like It', *The Independent*, 1 May 2006
<https://web.archive.org/web/20070930155538/http://arts.independent.co.uk/music/features/article3611
57.ece>.
[131] Unlike This Is Spinal Tap, but like Damien Hirst's infamous *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable* [Discussed in **2.3** below], Shovlin's work existed in the world of contemporary art, being featured at the 2006 Beck's Futures exhibition. Indeed Shovlin's 2004 debut exhibition, *Naomi V Jelish* – a collection of documents, ephemera and artworks by a fictional, missing 13-year-old girl – was immediately purchased by the Saatchi Gallery. Jamie Shovlin, *Naomi V Jelish*, 2004
<https://www.saatchigallery.com/artist/jamie_shovlin> [accessed 27 January 2021].

studies have shown that audiences engage with subjects more fully when 'experiences are enjoyable and relevant to [the audience's] lives, interests, and experiences.'[132]

This chapter deals with the three main socioeconomic aspects of the North East that affected the creation of *Seaton Snook*: the region's difficult economic situation, for which the South East is largely blamed; the negative image of the region around the rest of the country, and the incompatibility of diverse local characteristics with attempts to form a coherent North East identity.

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[132] Judy Willis, 'The Neuroscience of Joyful Education', *Educational Leadership*, 64.9 (2007), p. 1 <https://www.psychologytoday.com/files/attachments/4141/the-neuroscience-joyful-education-judy-willis-md.pdf>.

1.2.1   Economic Neglect [133]
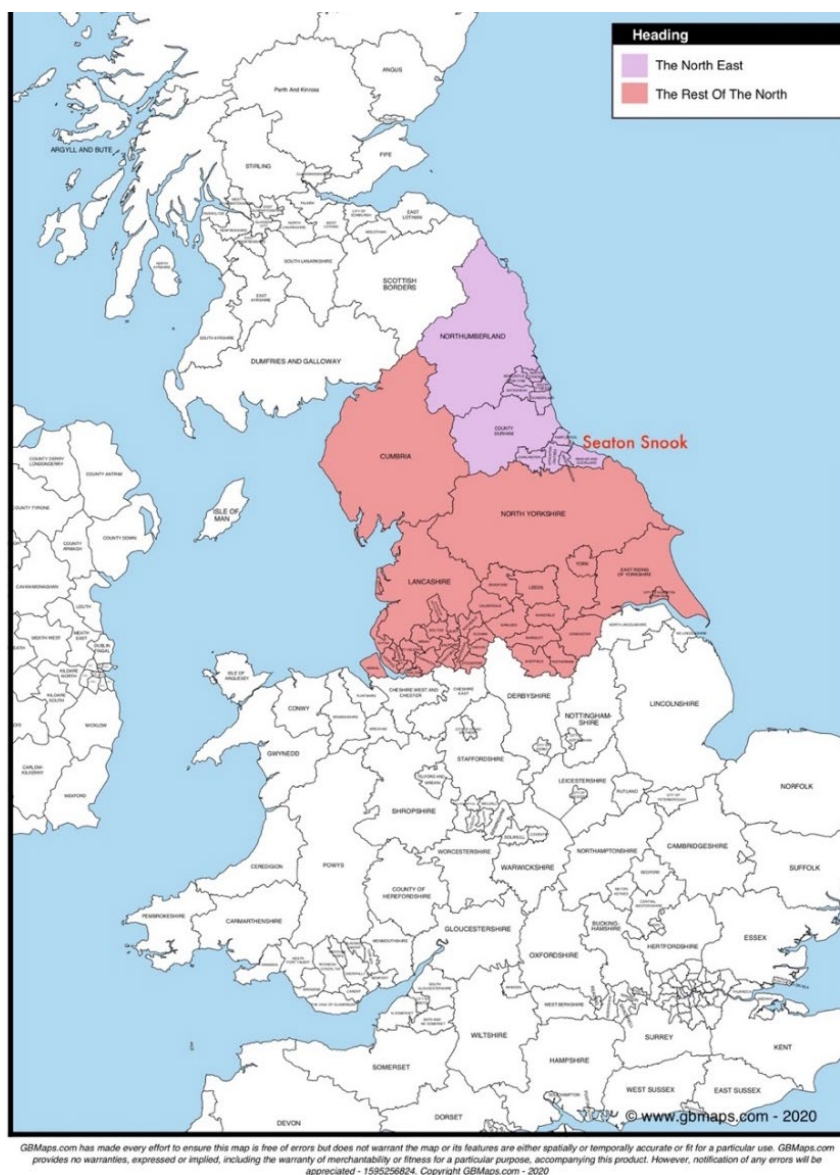
Figure 1:   The North and North East

Literature, topography, technology, and warfare have all contributed to what linguist Katie Wales describes as the UK's 'austrocentrism,'[134] to the point where the Economist declared the North-South divide to be so pronounced, that 'Economically, socially and politically, the north is

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[133] Perhaps unexpectedly, there is no mention of the Thatcher government's effects on the North East in this chapter. This is intentional, as I aim to demonstrate the harsh treatment of mining communities in the 1980's was not the cause of the region's current problems as is sometimes claimed, but was actually just another incident symptomatic of a far more long-standing and deep-rooted cultural bias.
[134] Katie Wales, *Northern Englisch: A Social and Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 2.

becoming another country.'[135] Section 1.2 of Wales's 'The "boundaries" of Northern English,' summarises various ways in which The North has been demarked throughout history, from geographical, topographical, bureaucratic and linguistic perspectives.[136] For the purposes of this section, I define The North as the area from the Scotland/England border, down to a line roughly running from the Mersey to the Humber. The North East is more easily defined: the counties are bordered by the River Tweed to the north (along the Scottish border); the Pennines to the west; the Cleveland Hills and the River Tees to the south; and the North Sea to the east (Figure 1, above).

In 2015 the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government compiled the *English indices of deprivation* report, ranking the most deprived councils in England in terms of factors such as spending power, reliance on government funding, and unemployment.[137] Seven out of the ten most deprived councils are located in the area described in this commentary as the North. With the North being hit disproportionately hard by austerity measures over the last ten years, promises to improve the situation ring hollow: George Osborne's much-trumpeted Northern Powerhouse initiative moved 282 of their positions from Sheffield to London in 2015,[138] while the first Northern Powerhouse minister James Wharton spent 90% of his time in London.[139] Even while writing this chapter, in the midst of the COVID 19 pandemic, the Government only subsidised the pay of furloughed workers in local lockdown areas (almost all of which are in the North) by 67%, rather than the 80% provided during the national lockdowns,[140] leading to accusations by Northern MPs of 'contempt'[141] and putting the North under 'Lockdown on the

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[135] 'The North of England - The Great Divide', *The Economist*, 2012
<https://www.economist.com/britain/2012/09/15/the-great-divide> [accessed 21 July 2020].
[136] Wales, pp. 9–24.
[137] Tom Smith and others, *English Indices of Deprivation 2015: Research Report* (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 30 September 2015), p. 94
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/4645 97/English_Indices_of_Deprivation_2015_-_Research_Report.pdf> [accessed 21 July 2020].
[138] Jasmine Andersson, 'The Government's Attitude towards the North of England Is Devastating', *Inews.Co.Uk*, 2018 <https://inews.co.uk/opinion/north-of-england-northern-powerhouse-203085> [accessed 1 July 2020].
[139] Jasmine Andersson, 'Northern Powerhouse Minister Spent 90% of His Time in London', *Inews.Co.Uk*, 2018 <https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/northern-powerhouse-minister-london-202793> [accessed 26 June 2020].
[140] Josh Halliday, 'Reduced Covid Furlough Scheme Is an Insult, Say Northern Leaders', *The Guardian*, 2020 <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/oct/09/reduced-covid-furlough-scheme-is-an-insult-say-northern-leaders> [accessed 26 January 2021].
[141] Jessica Sansome, 'Anger as Government Puts 80% Furlough in Place - after Weeks of Refusing to Meet Same Tier 3 Demand for Greater Manchester', *MSN*, 2021 <https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/newsmanchester/anger-as-government-puts-80-furlough-in-place-after-weeks-of-refusing-to-meet-same-tier-3-demand-for-greater-manchester/ar-BB1aABvM> [accessed 26 January 2021].

cheap.'[142] Perhaps an indication of the predictability of the government's actions in this instance, is that the fictional story of politicians ruthlessly cutting off *Seaton Snook* following a rabies outbreak was devised over a year before Covid and the introduction of these local lockdowns.

Moves to invest in the North have primarily benefitted the North West and Yorkshire, as is illustrated by the BBC's move to MediaCityUK in Salford Quays in 2012, and the fact that the projected HS2 rail project only reaches as far north as Leeds, leaving the North East behind. A report by housing technology developer Project Etopia in 2019 showed the gulf between house price rises in the South East and the North East, with ten areas of London seeing house prices rise between 80% and 97% between 2010 and 2019, while house prices in Hartlepool had actually dropped by 8% over the same period.[143] Year on year, statistics show that unemployment is higher,[144] cancer rates are higher,[145] and life expectancy is lower[146] in the North East than anywhere else in England. In 2011, the accident and emergency unit at Hartlepool hospital was closed, making the nearest A&E service over 14 miles away, for a town with a population of nearly 100,000 people.[147]

This is not a recent phenomenon. In 1910, the economist John Hobson divided the country into the Producer class (in the North) and the Consumer class (in the South), saying 'The South are (sic) full of well-to-do and leisured families whose incomes … are derived from industries conducted in the North or in some oversea country.'[148] In the 1930s, when the great depression hit, the balance shifted even more extremely in favour of the South East, at the expense of the rest of the country. The number of coalminers fell from 1,083,000 in 1920 to 675,000 by 1938; cottonworkers,

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[142] Joe Murphy, 'Boris Johnson Trying to Put Greater Manchester into Tier 3 Lockdown on the Cheap, Andy Burnham Says in Defiant Last Stand | London Evening Standard | Evening Standard', *Evening Standard*, 2020 <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/manchester-tier-3-row-johnson-lockdown-cheap-burnham-a4572282.html> [accessed 26 January 2021].

[143] Camilla Canocchi, 'UK Towns Where House Prices Rose the Most in the Past Decade', *This Is Money*, 2019 <https://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/article-7809395/The-areas-UK-house-prices-risen-decade-2010.html> [accessed 26 June 2020].

[144] 'Rise in Hartlepool Jobless Claimant Count in the Last Month', *Hartlepool Mail*, 16 October 2018 <https://www.hartlepoolmail.co.uk/news/rise-hartlepool-jobless-claimant-count-last-month-388193> [accessed 26 June 2020].

[145] 'Cancer Registration Statistics, England', *Office for National Statistics*, 2019 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/cancerregistrationstatisticsengland/2017> [accessed 7 July 2020].

[146] 'Health State Life Expectancies, UK: 2016 to 2018', *Office for National Statistics*, 2019 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/bulletins/healthstatelifeexpectanciesuk/2016to2018> [accessed 26 June 2020].

[147] 'Town's A&E Closes despite Protest', *BBC News*, 2 August 2011, section Tees <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-tees-14369215> [accessed 7 July 2020].

[148] J. A. Hobson, 'The General Election: A Sociological Interpretation', *The Sociological Review*, a3.2 (1910), 105–17 (p. 113) <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1910.tb02088.x>.

ironworkers and steelworkers all suffered at a similar rate; shipbuilders were cut from 282,00 to

129,000.[149] These industries were largely concentrated in the North, with the North East being

particularly hard-hit by the collapse of the shipping industry. In the Tyneside shipbuilding town of

Jarrow, unemployment reached upwards of 70%, and the infant mortality rate was over 200%

higher than similar-sized communities in the South East.[150] When the economy finally began to

recover and other industries – especially electrical engineering and car manufacture – started to

expand,

> Much of the new industrial investment was located in the Midlands and the South
>
> East. Indeed, between 1932 and 1937 nearly half the new factories opened in Great
>
> Britain were located in Greater London alone. Gleaming new factories around
>
> London's North Circular Road, or in Slough, Croydon and Dagenham … were of little
>
> immediate use to the unemployed miner, shipbuilder, ironfounder, cotton operative or
>
> other dispossessed worker in Co. Durham.[151]

With its better transport links to the South East and the United States, the North West recovered

from the Depression better than the North East.[152] It is clear from statistics noted above that little

has changed since, and this is a cause of grave concern for the North East as the country prepares

to "bounce back" from the 2020-21 Covid-19 pandemic: speaking in 2014 on the North East's

failure to recover from the 2008 recession, the MP for Newcastle Central Chi Onwurah said, 'we

didn't overcome the underlying issue. We haven't got the previous sources of economic

growth.'[153] Alarmingly, the influential thinktank Policy Exchange said in 2008, 'It is time to stop

pretending there is a bright future for Sunderland,'[154] and that people capable of work should be

encouraged to abandon the North East entirely. It is important to note that of the 10 trustees of

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[149] Figures taken from Stephen Constantine, *Social Conditions in Britain, 1918-1939*, Lancaster Pamphlets (London; New York: Methuen, 1983).

[150] *Private Complaints and Public Health: Richard Titmuss on the National Health Service*, ed. by Ann Oakley and Jonathan Barker, 1st edn (Bristol University Press, 2004), p. 30 <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1t8918b>.

[151] Constantine, p. 11.

[152] Manchester's Ship Canal proved invaluable, for example, with over 200 American firms establishing a presence in Trafford Park by 1933: Charlotte Wildman, 'URBAN TRANSFORMATION IN LIVERPOOL AND MANCHESTER, 1918–1939', *The Historical Journal*, 55.1 (2012), 119–43 (p. 123) <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X11000549>.

[153] Andy Beckett, 'The North-East of England: Britain's Detroit?', *The Guardian*, 10 May 2014, section UK news <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/may/10/north-east-avoid-becoming-britains-detroit> [accessed 23 July 2020].

[154] Tim Leunig and James Swaffield, *Cities Unlimited: Making Urban Regeneration Work* (London: Policy Exchange, 2008), p. 31.

Policy Exchange and 2 authors of the report, none were born, raised or attended university any further north than Bristol.[155]

A further economic aspect important to the character of *Seaton Snook* is its status as a coastal resort. In their 2013 report, *Turning the Tide - social justice in five seaside towns*, the Centre for Social Justice noted that:

> … many seaside towns' economies were badly affected by the advent of cheaper foreign travel in the 1970s that decreased demand for traditional 'bucket and spade' holidays. Towns that had grown since the late nineteenth century found themselves losing their economic purpose.[156]

The report highlights the high levels of long-term unemployment, teenage pregnancy, child poverty, and secondary education failure in many UK seaside towns, with only Brighton and Bournemouth managing to buck the trend. Seaton Carew - since 1882 a ward of Hartlepool, and the village where the area known as Seaton Snook was located – is such a resort. It became enormously popular in the 19th century as a resort for Quaker families from Darlington, and its popularity continued until the mid-20th Century, when its fortunes began to change. Seaton Carew today is not one of the most deprived wards in Hartlepool, nor is it one of the more affluent, but the change in its status is evident to those looking over the site of the now-demolished fairground, the empty beach, the derelict arcades allowed to blight the village for years[157] until arson forces someone's hand.[158] Its geographical situation - the need to walk for 45 minutes along the sea front or take a seldom-appearing bus to get to the nearest music venue – further fosters this feeling of resentment, and of being left behind the rest of the town.

Neglect by national and local government has other disastrous – and for some, unforeseen – consequences. In 2016, Hartlepool voted for Brexit (69.6% in favour), despite the numerous economic reasons against it. Some voted because they believed the UK was contributing too much to the EU; others believed that immigration was affecting unemployment in the area and

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[155] The list of authors and trustees was taken from Leunig and Swaffield, p. 1. I researched their various LinkedIn and Who's Who entries to determine their places of birth and education.

[156] The Centre for Social Justice, *Turning The Tide: Social Justice in Five Seaside Towns.*, Breakthrough Britain (UK: The Centre for Social Justice, 2013), p. 4 <https://nls.ldls.org.uk/welcome.html?ark:/81055/vdc_100066981157.0x000001>.

[157] 'Owners of Seaton Carew Eyesore Wanted £1m for Building, Inquiry Told | Hartlepool Mail', *Hartlepool Mail*, 17 August 2016 <https://www.hartlepoolmail.co.uk/news/owners-seaton-carew-eyesore-wanted-aps1m-building-inquiry-told-395041> [accessed 7 July 2020].

[158] Ed Turner, 'Longscar Centre Demolition Welcomed' (Hartlepool Borough Council, 2019), Town, Borough <https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/news/article/1597/longscar_centre_demolition_welcomed> [accessed 7 July 2020].

putting a strain on the NHS.[159] But although Hartlepool receives above-average funds from the EU, and relies heavily on exports to the EU, the UK government's neglect of the town overwhelmed these arguments to precipitate the very result Remain-voters in the capital were dreading.[160] A report by the Joseph Rowntree foundation found that poverty, low income, and lack of education all played a part in moving people towards a Leave vote, but these disadvantages were then "entrenched by a lack of opportunities within their local areas to get ahead and overcome their own disadvantage … [it is currently] difficult, if not impossible, for the left behind to keep pace with those voters who both have skills and are benefitting from the opportunities that high skill areas offer.'[161] Others, so tired of being made to suffer by central government, and subsequently let down by the local council elected to defend the town's interests, that something - anything - had to change. As one local said, 'Hartlepool is a Labour council, but … they don't stick up for people whatsoever … They're in it for the money, they're in it for themselves.'[162] This dissatisfaction and disillusionment was further demonstrated in the 2021 local by-election, when Hartlepudlians returned a Conservative MP for the first time in the town's history. As with Brexit, a desperation for change – any change – appears to be outweighing traditional party loyalties.

1.2.2   The Negative Image of the North East

From the novels of Gaskill and Dickens, to the films of Ken Loach, it really is "Grim Up North", and, as geographical historian David Pocock concludes, 'In the present century there can be little doubt that literature has contributed to the general image of the North.'[163] JB Priestly, in his book *English Journey*, says of the Newcastle locals, 'I had a vision of a dark sub-humanity, like those

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[159] Kevin McKenna, 'View from Hartlepool: "The Main Reason I Voted to Leave Was Immigration"', *The Observer*, 25 June 2016, section Politics <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/25/hartlepool-eu-referendum-leave-voters-immigration-jobs> [accessed 6 July 2020].

[160] The town has a history of rejecting what is expected of it: in 2002 the town was one of the first to have a directly elected mayor. The scheme was pioneered by New Labour architect, Peter Mandelson, who was also Hartlepool's MP. Against all expectations, the town did not vote in the Labour candidate - local businessman and close friend of Mandelson, Leo Gillan - but instead gave the position to Hartlepool FC's mascot, H'Angus the Monkey. The man in the monkey costume, Stewart Drummond, became the first mayor in the UK to win three consecutive terms, before the office was abolished in 2012.

[161] Matthew Goodwin and Oliver Heath, 'Brexit Vote Explained: Poverty, Low Skills and Lack of Opportunities', *Joseph Rowntree Foundation*, 2016 <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/brexit-vote-explained-poverty-low-skills-and-lack-opportunities> [accessed 6 July 2020].

[162] Anoosh Chakelian, '"There'll Be an Uprising": Hartlepool on Life as a Brexit Town with No Deal in Sight', *New Statesman*, 2019 <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2019/03/there-ll-be-uprising-hartlepool-life-brexit-town-no-deal-sight> [accessed 2 July 2020].

[163] D. C. D. Pocock, 'The Novelist's Image of the North', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 4.1 (1979), 62–76 (p. 73) <https://doi.org/10.2307/621924>.

underground creatures in Wells' *Time Machine*.'[164] and painted Gateshead on Tyneside as a town 'carefully planned by an enemy of the human race … a dormitory for the working class.'[165] As the RP-voiced community announcer from *Victoria Wood As Seen On TV* said, 'We'd like to apologise to viewers in the North. It must be *awful* for them.'[166]

In 1936, around 200 men marched 291 miles to London from Jarrow, carrying a petition to the government to re-establish shipbuilding on the Tyne. While there were many other "hunger marches" in the 1920s and 1930s involving greater numbers, the Jarrow Crusade 'generated more publicity than all the preceding hunger marches put together.'[167] This is largely as other marches tended to be organised by the Communist-associated National Unemployed Workers Movement (NUWM) and 'had been represented as revolutionary threats to the rule of law.'[168] The Jarrow crusaders, however, were keen to be seen as representative of a town, rather than a class, and appealed to people's sense of Christian charity rather than a political cause by the use of the term 'crusade'. Matt Perry writes,

> The great triumph of the Jarrow crusade was that it humanised the victims of austerity … The marchers' public meetings held in the evenings after their days' marching relayed the experiences of the depression and of long-term unemployment.[169]

However, the petition was dismissed without debate,[170] the situation in the North East did not improve, and the main outcome was embedding the image of the North Easterners as a starving and desperate race of noble barbarians.

By the mid 20th century, radio entertainment was enjoyed all over the country, and television was soon to follow, but even the technology itself had an inherently anti-North Eastern aspect: the first uses of the term 'North East' amongst radio listeners and programme makers came about 'as it became apparent that the region lacked adequate facilities for broadcasting … [part of] a pattern of utilising "North East" to underline the region's underprivileged status.'[171] When

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[164] J.B. Priestley, *English Journey* (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1934), p. 294.
[165] Priestley, p. 301.
[166] Marcus Mortimer, 'Victoria Wood as Seen on TV' (BBC Two, 1985).
[167] James Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History* (London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 239.
[168] Vernon, p. 239.
[169] Matt Perry, 'Jarrow Crusade: 80 Years on the Marchers' Message about Unemployment and Anonymity Still Resonates', *The Conversation* <http://theconversation.com/jarrow-crusade-80-years-on-the-marchers-message-about-unemployment-and-anonymity-still-resonates-65918> [accessed 24 July 2020].
[170] 317 Parl. Deb. H.C. (1936-37), Hansard <col. 76>.
[171] Natasha Vall, 'Regionalism and Cultural History: The Case of North-Eastern England, 1918-1976', in *Regional Identities in North-East England, 1300-2000*, Regions and Regionalism in History (Woodbridge ; Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2007), pp. 181–208 (p. 190).

television arrived in the 1950s, the last area in the country without its own television transmitter was "the North East."

Once the technology was in place, the content only served to entrench the stereotypes. In 1963, the BBC broadcast the documentary *Waiting for Work*, directed by Jack Ashley, highlighting the problems caused by long-term, high-level unemployment in Hartlepool. Following this broadcast, 'parcels were sent to the contributors containing food, clothing, presents for the children and even an abundance of Christmas turkeys from people all over the UK.'[172] In 1974, an edition of the BBC current affairs series *Nationwide* visited Hartlepool to report on the hardships caused by continued high unemployment, and the impact of the three day week.[173] (Extracts from this broadcast are used in the Pilkington recording, *50 – Aftermath.*) The 2019 Channel 4 mini-series *Skint Britain: Friends Without Benefits*[174] presented a shocking report on the struggles of jobless people in Hartlepool as they adjusted to life under the newly created Universal Credit system. Films like *Skint Britain*, meanwhile, appear to make little difference other than compounding people's negative prejudices of Hartlepool. Local people - including those featured in the programme – have lamented the town's portrayal, with the town's MP stating,

> it wasn't just a lost opportunity to seriously address and expose the impact Universal Credit is having on Hartlepool citizens, it was borderline poverty porn. Not only did it create an image of Hartlepool that was damaging and unrecognisable to the people of the town, it more or less ridiculed the vulnerable people it purported to help.[175]

In television drama, too, the overriding ambition of well-meaning left-wing writers was to

> communicate class differences, which the "gritty North", or more often the North East, was ideally placed to intimate. [Whilst challenging] the social order with their radical representation of the working class, these programmes similarly had to connect with national codes.[176]

To adapt feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey's term, these dramas and documentaries are very much made under the "Southern Gaze": while attacking a damaging government policy or social inequality, the filmmakers perpetuate the idea that those poor people in the North East are *other*;

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[172] 'BBC - Waiting For Work', *BBC* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p053r2q1> [accessed 2 July 2020].
[173] Philip Tibenham, *Nationwide: Hartlepool* (UK: BBC Television Service, 1974).
[174] Owen Gower, Aaron Black, and Phil Turner, 'Skint Britain: Friends Without Benefits' (UK: Channel 4, 2019).
[175] Mike Hill, 'Skint Britain Was Borderline Poverty Porn', *Hartlepool Mail*, 21 February 2019 <https://www.hartlepoolmail.co.uk/news/opinion/skint-britain-was-borderline-poverty-porn-hartlepool-mp-mike-hill-106006> [accessed 4 July 2020].
[176] Vall, p. 202.

inferior; convenient victims. In programmes like these you will rarely find mention of Hartlepool's various galleries, museums and arts centres; the health- and finance-related support groups set up by members of the community; the successes of the international Tall Ships Festival and Hartlepool Folk Festival. The town is suffering, yes; but it is not wallowing in its own filth, unwilling to try to make a better life. Of course, the production company behind *Skint Britain,* Blast! Films, is based in North London. It is important to me that *Seaton Snook* not fall into the old habit of painting a selectively grim picture of the area just to make a political point.

1.2.3   Identity Crisis in the North East

As Dan Jackson says in his recently published history of Northumbria, 'If the North East has otherwise failed to kick up a stink in Parliament then the absence of a strong collective voice is not helping.'[177] In 2004, despite years of complaining about being ignored by Westminster, the North East resoundingly rejected proposals for a devolved North East Assembly, by a massive 78%.[178] The Yes campaign claimed, 'Of all the English regions, the North East has the strongest sense of identity.'[179] And yet this identity appeared not to be strong enough to warrant its own Assembly.

The concept of the North East as a single identity is actually a recent phenomenon: although the term was used from the 19th Century when referring to that particular area of industrial activity, 'it was really only with the advent of regional broadcasting, particularly Tyne Tees TV, that the current sense and mass usage of the "North East" term appeared.'[180] Writers such as Jackson may attempt to claim Northumbria as a lost kingdom that unites everyone from Hartlepool to Newcastle, however 'Northumbria itself was an inherently unstable and loosely knit kingdom,'[181] which by around the 5th century CE had divided into the Northumberland and the County Palatine

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[177] Daniel M. Jackson, *The Northumbrians: North-East England and Its People: A New History* (London: Hurst & Company, 2019), p. 215.

[178] Interestingly, the campaign was run by later Vote Leave architect Dominic Cummings. The main thrust of the No campaign was the false claim that a North East Assembly would take money away from the NHS. Johnny McDevitt, 'Dominic Cummings Honed Strategy in 2004 Vote, Video Reveals | Politics | The Guardian', *The Guardian*, 12 November 2019 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/nov/12/dominic-cummings-honed-strategy-2004-vote-north-east> [accessed 29 July 2020].

[179] Adam Tickell, Peter John, and Steven Musson, 'The North East Region Referendum Campaign of 2004: Issues and Turning Points', *The Political Quarterly*, 76.4 (2005), 488–96 (p. 491) <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923X.2005.00711.x>.

[180] '"North East" Identity Is Not as Deep-Rooted as We Think', *Durham University*, 2008 <https://www.dur.ac.uk/news/newsitem/?itemno=6581> [accessed 16 July 2020].

[181] Adrian Green and A. J. Pollard, 'Conclusion: Finding North-East England', in *Regional Identities in North-East England, 1300-2000*, Regions and Regionalism in History (Woodbridge ; Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2007), pp. 209–26 (p. 223).

of Durham. The northerly parts of Northumberland were almost 'the overlapping section in a Venn diagram of England and Scotland'[182]; further down the coast, the towns of Newcastle and Sunderland had been at odds since the civil war (Newcastle being a royalist stronghold; Sunderland being fiercely parliamentarian); meanwhile the monks of Durham priory enjoyed a certain jurisdictional independence from the rest of the country – as jealous custodians of the relics of St Cuthbert, they received pledges of loyalty from both Malcolm III of Scotland and William the Conqueror – but itself split into two archdeaconries either side of the River Tyne.[183]

When heavy industry changed the politics and landscape in the 19th century, new divisions emerged: Durham became particularly associated with mining and the Great Northern Coalfield; while the two major shipbuilding districts – West Hartlepool and Middlesbrough on Teesside (the southern border of the North East), and the Tyne & Wear district – were 'in explicit rivalry.'[184] In addition to its shipbuilding activities, West Hartlepool was a port town, founded by Ralph Ward Jackson 'with the explicit intention of taking traffic away from the older ports to the north.'[185]

As discussed in 1.2.2 above, television eventually proved to be the source of a coherent identity of sorts, albeit largely unwanted and unfounded. In 1959, the region's new broadcasting company Tyne Tees Television opted to prioritise light entertainment and variety shows imported from America, such as *American Patrol, I Love Lucy,* and *Double Your Money.*[186] This missed opportunity for cultural representation of the North East meant that the most nationally recognised cultural voices of the North became either those of the North West (such as Alan Bleasdale and Willy Russell), or North East writers who had to dilute their identities to fit in with programme makers at Granada in the North West, or the BBC national service. The failure to give the various people of the North East the chance to articulate their own identities on this exciting new medium, meant the North East was vulnerable to being given an identity by outsiders: gritty dramas about mining communities proliferated, and as Vall summarises, 'regional homogeneity was portrayed

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[182] Jackson, p. 16.

[183] Sarah Luginbill, 'The Bones of St. Cuthbert: Defining a Saint's Cult in Medieval Northumbria' (unpublished History Honors Thesis, Trinity University, 2014), p. 26 <http://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/hist_honors/6> [accessed 29 July 2020].

[184] Green and Pollard, p. 213.

[185] Graeme J. Milne, 'Business Regionalism: Defining and Owning the Industrial North East, 1850-1914', in *Regional Identities in North-East England, 1300-2000*, ed. by Adrian Green and A. J. Pollard, Regions and Regionalism in History (Woodbridge ; Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2007), pp. 113–32 (p. 116).

[186] In defence of Tyne Tees, this decision was made largely due to the low number of viewers in the region limiting the amount of advertising revenue available, rather than a desire to oppress the voice of the local people.

at the expense of diversity.'[187] In the end, 'Tyneside appropriated the North East; it was Tyneside writ large. Regional identity amalgamated the miner and the Geordie.'[188]

The North East, as Green & Pollard conclude, is 'an incoherent and barely self-conscious region,'[189] with many incompatible factions, but also one living with an identity with which it has been unwillingly saddled. Because of this, 'the current region, centuries in the making, may be more fissured and fragile than we like to imagine.'[190] While people all over the North East might feel a certain amount of unity in their negative feelings towards the South East, the clumsy amalgamation of so many different communities as a homogenised extension of Newcastle, causes resentment towards other North East communities and the very idea of trying to form a cohesive identity at all. What the Yes campaign of 2004 perhaps failed to understand, is that anger towards Westminster, and a collection of tropes about being friendly, liking football and never wearing a coat, do not constitute an identity.

What Happened to Seaton Snook? is a project with many personal aspects. I have never felt a strong British, English, or European identity, but I have always described myself as being a Hartlepudlian or "From the North East." A lot of the frustrations I felt growing up in Seaton Carew – and still feel despite being displaced "Down South," such as feeling neglected by both central government and local government, and southerners' understandable but nonetheless irksome conflation of everything North Eastern with "Geordie" – are reflected in the history of *Seaton Snook* (as discussed in 4.2), and most explicitly in the sentiments of the character George Brallisford.[191] Not only are there multiple artefacts written in local dialect – such as *I Can Hear a Siren* and the interview with zinc factory worker Dennis Knowles – but even the exegesis of this commentary (Chapter 4) is presented in audio form, spoken with unapologetically Hartlepudlian accents. It was vital that the project be presented as an online archive in order to ensure its accessibility to people from the actual Seaton Snook area.

 My research into the nature of North Eastern identity, and the history of Hartlepool, has prompted interesting questions into how I feel I fit in with my town, as well as the difficulties in ascribing an identity to any community. This is where *Seaton Snook* seeks to make a case for the artistic output of a community being a crucial part of finding that identity.

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[187] Vall, p. 202.
[188] Anthony Fletcher, 'Foreword: The AHRC Centre for North-East England History', in *Regional Identities in North-East England, 1300-2000*, ed. by Adrian Green and A. J. Pollard, Regions and Regionalism in History (Woodbridge ; Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2007), p. viii.
[189] Green and Pollard, p. 225.
[190] Green and Pollard, p. 225.
[191] I am keen to stress here that despite my own opinions occasionally emerging in the archive, no single character in *Seaton Snook* should be interpreted as an author-surrogate.

Chapter 2   Case Studies

Building on the concepts discussed in Chapter 10, this chapter examines several key works in the fields of New Music, sound recording, avant-garde film, and other visual and sonic arts in detail. Jennifer Walshe's 2015 project *Aisteach*[192] (2.1) is presented as an entirely credible archive of Irish avant-garde music, with each artefact supported by a plausible backstory, though with an easily discovered disclaimer stating that it is a work of fiction. More obvious in its fictionality is Damien Hurst's *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable*[193] (2.2), which includes easily recognizable anachronistic elements to alert even the most historically uninformed viewer that what they are seeing is a fantasy. Peter Greenaway's 1980 film *The Falls*[194] (2.3), is presented as a real documentary, but its fallacy is exposed by the subject's absurdity. Pierre Huyghe's *Streamside Day Follies* project[195] (2.4) straddles the worlds of reality and fiction without hesitation, being an exercise in myth-building that its participants fully "buy into," despite it explicitly being a construct of the artist. Finally, I discuss Peter Cusack's *Sounds from Dangerous Places*[196] (2.5), an important case study from a non-fictional context, which presents the field of "sonic journalism" as a powerful but underused method of information dissemination.

2.1   *Aisteach: The Avant-Garde Archive of Ireland –*
Jennifer Walshe, 2015

The Aisteach Foundation is a collaborative music and visual art project launched in 2015, headed by composer Jennifer Walshe, with contributions from John Berndt, Felicity Ford, Panos Ghikas, Paul Gilgunn, Stephen Graham, Majella Munro, Simon O'Connor, Rían O'Rahallaigh, Nick Roth and Benedict Schlepper-Connolly. It was funded by the Arts Council of Ireland, and is accessible as a website, a book, and several concert performances (ongoing).

Aisteach's form is of an arts foundation dedicated to archiving the 'historical documents, recordings, material and ephemera relating to avant-garde music in Ireland.'[197] The website and book detail the lives and practices of various fictional musicians and sound- artists, presented as

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[192] Jennifer Walshe, 'Aisteach | Preserving the History of Ireland's Avant-Garde', *Aisteach.Org*, 2014 <http://www.aisteach.org> [accessed 1 March 2019].

[193] Damien Hirst, *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable [Exhibition Guide]* (Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2017).

[194] Peter Greenaway, *The Falls* (UK: British Film Institute, 1980).

[195] Pierre Huyghe, *Streamside Day Follies* (Paris/New York: Marian Goodman Gallery, 2003).

[196] Peter Cusack, *Sounds from Dangerous Places* (Surrey: ReR Megacorp, 2012).

[197] Walshe, 'Aisteach.Org'.

real historical figures. Both website and book contain photographic material and diagrams, with the website also including audio files of the artists' works. A disclaimer accompanies the website, as well as appearing in the foreword of the book:

> Thank you for reading the fine print, because I have a confession to make – all of the composers and artists on this website are fictional. The Aisteach Foundation is a communal thought experiment, a revisionist exercise in "what if?", a huge effort by many people to create an alternative history of avant-garde music in Ireland, to write our ancestors into being and shape their stories with care. We played fast and loose with history and the truth and we like to think Flann O'Brien[198] would have approved.[199]

The content of the archive has been directed and largely created by Walshe, with other artists and composers contributing in various ways. The recordings of "Zaftig Giolla," for example, while conceptualised by Walshe, were realised by electronic musician Richard Devine. In a 2015 interview, Walshe mentions how 'it wasn't something that I asked people to do, but people wanted to have more women in there … They wanted to have a queer angle on things.'[200] This highlights the collaborative nature of the project, with various artists seeing gaps in Walshe's imagined history, and filling them with their own fictional characters. The website even contains a call for contributions of sorts: 'If you feel there's something we missed, something you want to have happened and would like to bring into being, please let us know using the contact form.'[201] The works on the site and in the book, however, are credited solely to their fictional creators, making it difficult to discern who *actually* wrote a particular work.[202]

Although not the sole contributor to *Aisteach*, it is nonetheless beneficial to examine Walshe's own timeline leading up to the project, and the various influences on it. In a talk given at the Sonic

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[198] 20th Century Irish novelist and satirist, who often appropriated fictional characters from other people's works within his own.
[199] Jennifer Walshe, 'Disclaimer | Aisteach', *Aisteach.Org*, 2014 <http://www.aisteach.org/?page_id=306> [accessed 1 July 2020].
[200] Ian Maleney, 'A Droning in the Eire: Jennifer Walshe on the Irish Avant-Garde', *The Quietus*, 2015 <http://www.thequietus.com/articles/17777- jennifer-walshe-aisteach-foundation-irish-avant-garde-interview> [accessed 2 March 2019].
[201] Jennifer Walshe, 'Aisteach | Preservintg the History of Ireland's Avant-Garde', *Aisteach.Org*, 2014 <http://www.aisteach.org> [accessed 1 March 2019].
[202] It should be mentioned that Aisteach does not feature on Walshe's own website under her list of works; while she does direct the project, she does not appear guilty of appropriating other artists' contributions as her own. The lack of "real life" credits does serve to maintain the impression of the fictional artists being real.

Acts Academy in Amsterdam, 2018,[203] Walshe relates three anecdotes that inform her thinking about sound in general:

1) Fionn Mac Comhaill

Fionn Mac Comhaill is a popular hunter-warrior character in Irish folklore, akin to King Arthur in English folklore. In one tale, Fionn describes what, in his opinion, is the best music, as 'the music of what happens', meaning the sounds of the natural world, man-made sounds, musical compositions, and non-musical noises. As an audience accustomed to reading Cage's *4'33"* as revolutionary, it is important to note here that this approach to sound and music is common to other cultures, such as the Inuit, whose *katajjaq* singing is derived from and interplays with 'all kinds of sounds heard in their Arctic environment[204], including the waves on the shore – a sound that finds its way into the fabric of the music of *Seaton Snook*. Of particular importance to *Aisteach*, however, is the idea that concepts widely thought of to be borne of 1950s American experimentalism, could actually have developed much earlier, in Ireland. This is reflected in, for example, *Aisteach's* story of the Guinness Dadaists, existing before and apart from the European Dadaists, or of Pádraig Mac Giolla Mhuire, whose accordion music form the roots of an alternative Minimalism.

2) Echelon

Echelon was a real surveillance operation during the early 1980s that intercepted public telephone calls, purportedly for security purposes. In her talk, Walshe relates a story of her and her sister as teenagers shouting "I've got the gear and the Semtex" down the line so as to alert any surveillance team, only to then quickly return to more mundane conversations about teenage life. This idea of 'trolling the network'[205] gave Walshe and her sister the feeling of having some agency within a system that was so heavily surveilled. In this context, 'sound [is] political ... and is part of a much larger network that you are part of and can feel that connection with.'[206] With Aisteach, Walshe imagines agency within the avant-garde being given to Irish artists, and in doing so gives agency to contemporary Irish artists by allowing them the *possibility* of an Irish avant-garde tradition.

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[203] Jennifer Walshe, *Imaginary Histories* (Sonic Acts Academy, 2018)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TqbCcvuB21s> [accessed 10 January 2019].
[204] Barbara Ellison and Thomas Bey William Bailey, *Sonic Phantoms: Composition with Auditory Phantasmatic Presence.*, ed. by Francisco López (New York: Bloomsbury Academic & Professional, 2020), p. 154 <https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=6162690> [accessed 1 July 2020].
[205] Walshe, *Imaginary Histories*.
[206] Walshe, *Imaginary Histories*.

3) 'My Granny: Conceptual Artist'

Walshe relates a further childhood story, this time of her grandmother explaining Walshe's tinnitus as 'the screaming of the souls in purgatory.'[207] As a 5-year-old child, Walshe believed this, and took the ringing in her ears as an exciting sign that her brain was 'wired in to dead people in another dimension, and I can hear them, but there's some sort of process that's happening to the sound.'[208] Years later, she realised that this was of course not the case, but the story her grandmother told to explain the tinnitus evoked ideas and possibilities that would not have been raised by just the sound of the tinnitus on its own. As Walshe says, 'The stories that we tell around it are just as important as the actual sound frequencies.'[209]

In addition to these three anecdotes, we can also discern the development of a fourth background aspect of *Aisteach* in Walshe's works, particularly in her *Grúpat* project, ongoing since 2007.[210]

4) *Grúpat*: fantasy as reality

In the *Grúpat* project Walshe inhabits the roles of several different artists to form an artist collective. This can be seen as a one-woman, proto-*Aisteach*, and like *Aisteach* it also received funding from the Arts Council of Ireland. The works are presented in concerts, galleries, lectures, books and CDs, but unlike *Aisteach* it is made very clear at the outset that these works are by Walshe herself working under the guise of various alter egos. As such, several individual pieces appear on her website's Works list.

One work from this project in particular, *The Legend of the Fornar Resistance*[211], ostensibly created by "The Parks Service", presents an alternative map of Ireland, its fate having been re-imagined through a Dungeons & Dragons style game design (Cork, for example, having been decimated in a zombie uprising). All the drawings of the maps are made on lined paper, invoking the image of a schoolchild scribbling characters at the back of a classroom. On shining a UV light on the map and other materials, completely new pathways are revealed - portals to different parts of the world, different places in the universe, and even different times, can now be accessed by those following this "map". This is not simply creating an imaginary universe, but layering an

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[207] Walshe, *Imaginary Histories*.
[208] Walshe, *Imaginary Histories*.
[209] Walshe, *Imaginary Histories*.
[210] Jennifer Walshe, 'An Introduction to Grúpat', *MILKER CORPORATION* <http://milker.org/anintroductiontogrupat> [accessed 1 July 2020].
[211] The Parks Service, *The Legend of the Fornar Resistance*, 2009.

alternative reality on top of our own. Importantly, and perhaps because she was using an alter ego, Walshe afforded herself the freedom to move beyond the boundaries of previously explored paths in Irish science fiction and fantasy genres, which variously involved either faerie maidens in whispy robes, or 'Irish people somehow overthrowing the English colonialists with the intervention of aliens.'[212] *The Legend of the Fornar Resistance*, instead, gives people the option of emerging out of a portal to find themselves immersed in the Internet, or maybe '[dive] down under the river in Glenasmole and [pop] up at a Swiss chalet restaurant in Tokyo in the year 2349.'[213]

Walshe would continue these themes in the series *With Special Thanks to the National Museum of Ireland*, in which 'I was trying to rewrite Irish history to a large extent.'[214] *Knockvicar Stone Circle (ca. 2300-1500 BC),*[215] for example, comprised a circle of stones pulled from Walshe's own field, presented as an authentic stone circle from Bronze Age Ireland; while *Robert Boyle's Alchemical Apparatus (1670ca)*[216] features various pots and vessels created by Walshe with the assistance of her potter father, based on descriptions and illustrations of seventeenth century alchemical equipment, treated to look appropriately aged and used - again, this is layering a new reality on an existing one, as Boyle was indeed interested in alchemy, though today he is best remembered for his more "sensible" scientific endeavours.

In both of these last examples, the intent is not to pull the wool over the audience's eyes, nor to make them feel foolish, but to create a space where "What if?" is the foremost question in people's minds. As seen in 2.2 below, Damien Hirst claims to have approached his *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable* project with the same intent, and it is interesting how he found himself accused of deviousness, rather than whimsy.

In building *Aisteach*, a lot of research was undertaken to ensure some plausible link between these fictional composers and the real world. Walshe says:

> There was no way to go back and say, "These things happened." We had to go back and look at history and think ... It was like looking at a Tarmac car park and [saying] "There's a tiny crack there - maybe a seed could just land in that crack, and there'd be just enough dirt that that seed could grow into a plant"[217]

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[212] Walshe, *Imaginary Histories*.
[213] Walshe, *Imaginary Histories*.
[214] Walshe, *Imaginary Histories*.
[215] Jennifer Walshe, *Knockvicar Stone Circle (ca. 2300-1500 BC)*, 2010.
[216] Jennifer Walshe, *Robert Boyle's Alchemical Apparatus (1670ca)*, 2010.
[217] Walshe, *Imaginary Histories*.

This "crack in the Tarmac" analogy is something I find particularly useful. It is not enough, for example, to simply write a serialist string quartet, then attach an old photograph to it and say it was composed in 1890. In order for the fantasy to be accepted, it must be shown that there is at least a small amount of possibility within reality, that makes the idea plausible. This means thoroughly interrogating the logistical possibility of an imagined history.

When faced with the concept of Irish Dadaists, for example, their existence would have to be explained and justified. The Dadaists as we know them emerged from a large middle class with a certain amount of disposable income and spare time. As there was no comparable middle class in Ireland at the time, therefore, the Irish Dadaists would have to be working class. Walshe and her collaborators researched the labour laws of the time, and found that the Guinness factory in Dublin had remarkably progressive workers' rights policies, paying the workers well for not-unreasonable hours. Additionally, the company as a whole encouraged art and creativity amongst the workers, with drawings by members of staff being displayed in the shop front.[218]

The question of "Why, then, have we not heard of these people?" is also thoroughly explored. Walshe argues that, rather than being part of the same movement, the Guinness Dadaists were separate to the more famous European Dadaists. Walshe argues that while the Dadaists with which we are familiar were pacifists and largely apolitical, this would have been highly unlikely for their Irish counterparts, living as they would have been through the Irish War of Independence and the Irish Civil War straight afterwards. Not only does this create a plausible rift between the Irish movement and the European movement, but it also affords Walshe licence to explore social and political themes within a Dadaist framework.

This example is of the artistic idea coming first, and the effort to "justify" it with historical context coming afterwards. There are also works within *Aisteach* that seem to have been created with the opposite process.

One newspaper clipping on the website features the headline "BLACK MAGIC FEAR IN TWO BORDER TOWNS".[219] Unlike many of the "historical" documents on the website, which have been either entirely faked, misappropriated, or otherwise manipulated, this one is a genuine artefact, referring to a psych-ops campaign launched by the British Army in the early 1970s, in which fake stories linking terrorist organisations to Satanism were planted in various news publications. The intention, somewhat patronisingly, was to deter people of both sides of the Troubles from joining

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[218] as discussed in Walshe, *Imaginary Histories*.
[219] Jennifer Walshe, 'Kilbride & Malone Duo | Aisteach', *Aisteach.Org*, 2015 <http://www.aisteach.org/?p=152> [accessed 1 July 2020].

terrorist factions, by appealing to Catholic superstitions. The perpetrators went so far as to create fake satanic ritual sites 'even placing black candles and upside-down crucifixes in derelict buildings in some of Belfast's war zones.'[220] Walshe's approach, therefore, is to take the truth of fabricated satanic ritual sites, and insert in this truth the sort of music the British Army might have left there to add to their deception; in this case, the Kilbride & Malone Duo, a saxophone and drum based free-jazz and 'particularly discordant, noise-based performances.'[221] The website explains:

> A bootleg recording of a highly distorted Kilbride & Malone Duo performance was left playing in an abandoned farmhouse near Larne as part of one of the Information Policy group's "Black Mass" set-ups. An RTÉ news clip filmed at the farmhouse described the music as "played by people possessed" and "demonic". An excerpt from the recording is given here.[222]

There was of course no such RTÉ news clip, but given the fake ritual sites did happen, and there was considerable news coverage of these sites, the existence of a news clip discussing the music is perfectly plausible.

There are 3 additional techniques employed on the Aisteach website that are of use to the *Seaton Snook* project, in creating the appearance of a factual archive:

1: Creative use of bibliography and citations

    I.   Bibliography including various sources in which one could expect to find *Aisteach* artists, but without any specific citations

    II.   A comparison of an *Aisteach* artist with a real artist might be accompanied by a quote relating to the real artist, but giving the impression it relates to the *Aisteach* artist – for example, this quote from the page on the work of fictional composer Billie Hennessy:

> They are notable for their lack of standard compositional concerns, similar in this vein to the works of Eric Satie "… one finds jumpcuts, anti-variation, non-development, directionless repetition, absence of contextual relationships, logic, transitions" (Nyman 1999; 35)[223]

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[220] Henry McDonald, 'Satanic Panic: How British Agents Stoked Supernatural Fears in Troubles.', *The Guardian*, 9 October 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/oct/09/satanic-panic- british-agents-stoked-fears-troubles> [accessed 28 February 2019].
[221] *Historical Documents of the Irish Avant-Garde*, ed. by Jennifer Walshe (Dublin: Milker Corp and the Aisteach Foundation, 2015).
[222] Walshe, 'Aisteach.Org'.
[223] Jennifer Walshe, 'Billie Hennessy | Aisteach', *Aisteach.Org*, 2015 <http://www.aisteach.org/?p=142> [accessed 1 July 2020].

The Michael Nyman quote is real, but of course relates to Eric Satie, not Hennessy

III.   Quotations attributed to fictional friends and relatives of the artists "in correspondence with the author"

IV.   Entirely fabricated writers and publications, such as "Barry Walken", writing on the Ó Laoire twins in a non-existent 1988 article in the entirely fictional but equally plausible-sounding *Proceedings of the Irish Musicological Association*.[224]

Crucially, none of these techniques are over-employed. Correspondence with relatives, for example, would be incredible if it were included for each artist; the fact that it is only used for a small number of artists on the website gives the impression that the archivists were fortunate in that case to come across a living relative.

2: Ephemera

Photographs and newspaper clippings add an extra dimension of reality, as a photograph that does not seem to have been manipulated, and showing a real person, gives the audience a face to put to the fictional biography - the same technique used with great effect by Stephen Poliakoff in his 1999 drama series, *Shooting The Past,*[225] which blended authentic photographs of past events with a superimposed fictional narrative to engage the interest of both the characters in the series and the audience.

Incidentally, the *Aisteach* book contains a statement that the photographs are all from the authors' private collections, or otherwise from copyright-free sources, and also invites people who recognise the photos as their own and who would rather they be removed, to contact the writers.[226]

3: Believable sound recordings

   I.   Bootleg live recordings sound rough-and-ready, as in those of the Kilbride & Malone duo.

  II.   The supposedly far older recordings of "Ultan O'Farrell" are presented with crackles and EQ manipulations to make them sound as if they were discovered on wax cylinder.

 III.   Scores left by the artists are accompanied by modern recordings, and therefore have a much clearer, more modern sound.

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[224] Jennifer Walshe, 'Sinéad and Fiachra Ó Laoire | Aisteach', *Aisteach.Org*, 2015 <http://www.aisteach.org/?p=150> [accessed 1 July 2020].
[225] Stephen Poliakoff, *Shooting The Past* (UK: BBC, 1999).
[226] Walshe, *Historical Documents of the Irish Avant-Garde*.

As well as adding sonic variety, this third approach is a convenient way to circumvent the difficulties in making authentic-sounding "vintage" recording, especially when access to vintage equipment or emulation programmes is limited.

The techniques and approaches used by Walshe in creating the histories behind the *Aisteach* artists and artefacts, as well as the care taken in the recording of the sonic artefacts themselves, afford a depth of perspective comparable to Tolkien's mythopoeia (1.1.3), and this incited me to interrogate the rigour and depth of my own artefact creation. As also discussed in relation to *Tales from the Black Meadow* (1.1.4), a high level of realism in the sonic artefacts is crucial to creating parafiction, and it was the pursuit of this realism that necessitated some artefacts to be periodically reassessed and rerecorded, as discussed in the Exegesis section on recording techniques (4.13). In addition, Walshe suggests various strategies to framing and presenting these artefacts as exhibits, supported by carefully deployed texts, photographs, and analyses, some real and some fabricated. Here, Walshe plays a role as archivist and researcher of the artefacts she (and her collaborators) created in order to build content- and context-rich exhibits. This dual role of Artist and Archivist is an important component of my own methodology, as described in Chapter 3, and Walshe's various "archivist" approaches are also referenced throughout Chapter 4.

However, it is Walshe's insistence on plausible historical and cultural reasons why any particular exhibit in the *Aisteach* archive could have existed – and crucially why it would have remained unknown – that has played the biggest role in shaping my approach to building *What Happened to Seaton Snook?.* From the peculiarities of the Northumbrian smallpipes tunes (4.12) to the thwarted career of George Brallisford and The Peoples Mass (4.14), every artefact had to be brought into a plausible existence, whilst also containing an almost hamartian characteristic to ensure it remained within the boundaries of *Seaton Snook*. Taking this idea one step further than Walshe, I also insist on explanations why each artefact may have found its way into the hands of the Archivist – whether finding sheet music in a second hand shop in the case of Gaynor Leigh's piano primer (4.5), 1/4" tape being found in Robson Booth's old tobacco tin in the case of the *Tape Ballad* (4.16), or a mysterious anonymous donation in the case of Büttel's track *None Were Available* (4.8). This has resulted in some artefacts being created but not yet being presented on the archive, as I am yet to devise a satisfactory explanation for the artefact's discovery (discussed in relation to the unpublished Canch End Morning Radio in 4.16 and Appendix D).

2.2   *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable –*

   Damien Hirst, 2017

Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable was a 2017 exhibition by British artist Damien Hirst, presented at the Pallazzo Grassi and the Punta della Dogana - both in Venice - by the Pinault collection. It was publicised as:

> Exceptional in scale and scope, the exhibition tells the story of the ancient wreck of a
> vast ship, the 'Unbelievable' (*Apistos* in the original Koine Greek), and presents what was
> discovered of its precious cargo: the impressive collection of Aulus Calidius Amotan – a
> freed slave better known as Cif Amotan II – which was destined for a temple dedicated
> to the sun.[227]

The original exhibition consisted of:

- Sculptures, in various mediums (eg. marble, granite, gold, bronze, malachite etc.)
- Drawings, on paper, vellum etc.
- Photographs and video clips of the dives to recover the *Apistos*'s cargo
- A scale model of the *Apistos*
- Cabinets of ephemera from the ship, such as plates, cups and crockery
- A museum guide detailing stories behind some of the exhibits, as well as the materials used in their construction
- A 322-page hardback photobook/catalogue, featuring photographs of the works, and essays by various historical and archaeological experts.

Subsequently, a 90-minute hoax-documentary film[228] was released through Netflix, mainly focusing on the "discovery" of the artefacts off the coast of East Africa, and the organisation of the exhibition itself. [229]

As with Walshe's *Aisteach* and Greenaway's *The Falls*, the central artworks are based on a fantastical conceit - in this case, both Cif Amotan II, and his ship the *Apistos*, are entirely fictional

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[227] 'Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable', *Palazzo Grassi*, 2017
<https://www.palazzograssi.it/en/exhibitions/past/damien-hirst-at-palazzo-grassi-and-punta-della-dogana-in-2017-1/> [accessed 17 July 2019].

[228] I use "hoax-documentary" rather than "mockumentary", as the latter tends to be a filmmaking style that uses documentary techniques to satirise a particular subject for overtly comedic purposes.

[229] Sam Hobkinson, *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable* (UK: Science; The Oxford Film Company, 2017).

creations of Hirst. In contrast to *Aisteach*, however, Hirst's work presents various clues - at various levels of subtlety - directing the audience to his fakery, and exploiting the holes in the narrative for comic - or confusing - effect. These range from a particular sculpture (*The Diver*) being 'inspired by a Francis Bacon painting'[230] - a reference that I initially missed - to the side of a marble bust stamped with "Mattel - Made in China"; or a sculpture called *Best Friends* clearly showing Baloo and Mowgli from Disney's 1967 film, *The Jungle Book*. *Apistos* itself translates from the Ancient Greek not as "Unbelievable" in the fantastical, whimsical sense, but as 'Not to be trusted.'[231] These clues add a layer to the work that arguably becomes the main focus: the exhibition can be experienced as a detective story or a puzzle to be solved by the audience.

While Walshe seems to strive for authenticity[232] throughout the *Aisteach* project, Hirst seems to hop between hiding the truth and flaunting it; upholding the myth and dispelling it. Throughout the documentary film, Hirst makes statements alluding to 'belief' being found in 'the gaps in history', and of the title of the exhibition stating '[*Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable* is] kind of something inside your mind. Like the unbelievable is a place inside your mind.'[233] Because some of the clues to fakery are so blatant, it is clear that Hirst *intended* for awareness of the hoax to be part of the experience, aligning it more with superfiction than parafiction (see 1.1.4 above). Although different audience members would come to this awareness at different points depending on, for example, their ability to spot various anachronistic references, Hirst does make some artistic decisions about how and when the clues are laid out.

It is useful here to outline some of the psychology behind the effects of revealing the secret on the audience's enjoyment. A preview article from architecture and design website architectours.it warns that, 'The best way to visit the exhibition … is totally unprepared.'[234] Whilst it may seem reasonable to assume that audiences prefer to encounter works without prior knowledge, research shows that the majority of audiences prefer to be "in the know." For instance, in their study of short story fiction, Leavitt and Christenfeld conclude audiences 'significantly preferred

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[230] Scott Reyburn, 'Venice Is a Stage for Damien Hirst's "Tresures" (and a Biennale, Too)', *New York Times*, 12 May 2017 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/12/arts/damien-hirst-venice-biennale.html> [accessed 19 July 2019].

[231] 'Liddell & Scott', *Liddell & Scott*, 2019 <http://perseus.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.7:1:141.LSJ> [accessed 19 July 2019].

[232] Aside from the disclaimer at aisteach.com and in the Aisteach book (see 2.2 for further discussion)

[233] Hobkinson.

[234] Daniele Prosdocimo, 'Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable by Damien Hirst', *Architectours*, 2017 <https://www.architectours.it/treasures-from-the-wreck-of-the-unbelievable-by-damien-hirst> [accessed 17 July 2019].

spoiled over unspoiled stories.'[235] One of the reasons suggested, is 'nervous stirrings of uncertainty may become warm anticipation of coming events once the story has been laid bare.'[236] In his book *Sweet Anticipation*, music psychologist David Huron argues that negotiating expectations is fundamental to basic human survival instincts and these instincts are at play when we listen to music. He describes several 'expectation-related emotion response systems'[237] for the way in which a person might react to each respective situation. Table 1 (below) outlines the four responses in Huron's framework, with their application to *Treasures…* in the right-hand column.

Table 1:   Audience responses to story spoilers

Knowing the secret in advance	
Imagination Response	Imagining ways in which Hirst might conspire to fool us; imagining possible clues and what they might look like
Tension Response	At the exhibition itself, being on the lookout for clues from the outset
Finding out, having not known the secret in advance	
Reaction Response	The initial surprise at discovering the exhibition is a hoax
Appraisal Response	The reaction to that realisation, which as the various reviews indicate could range from delight to disgust

Huron explains:

> For any given situation, these … systems combine to create a distinctive limbic cocktail.
> Actually, "cocktail" isn't quite the right word, because it is a dynamic phenomenon
> rather than a simple static mixture … a dynamically evolving sequence of feelings can
> arise.[238]

Of these systems, those open to the widest range of emotions are the Imagination and Appraisal Responses. This raises a difficulty for the artist, as without quantitive data there does not appear to be a clear difference in the emotional intensity or emotional range of reactions evoked by the

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[235] Jonathan D. Leavitt and Nicholas J. S. Christenfeld, 'Story Spoilers Don't Spoil Stories', *Psychological Science*, 22.9 (2011), 1152–54 (p. 1152) <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797611417007>.
[236] Leavitt and Christenfeld, p. 1152.
[237] David Huron, *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007), p. 15.
[238] Huron, p. 18.

audience being either informed or in the dark. The research by Leavitt and Christenfeld suggests, however, that knowing the secret in advance removes the potential anxiety caused by the surprise of being fooled (Reaction Response) and gives a significant portion of the audience time to prepare themselves to have a positive experience (Imagination Response, and later, Tension Response).

Treasures… reveals its secret in different ways and at different points across its various formats. According to the layout detailed in the exhibition guide,[239] the more obvious hoax pieces such as *Huehueteotl and Olmec Dragon* (which shows a character from the 1984 TV series *Transformers* covered in coral), the aforementioned *Best Friends,* and *Collector With Friend* (a coral-covered statue of Hirst himself holding hands with what is unmistakably Mickey Mouse[240]), are displayed two thirds of the way through the visitor's journey.[241] This affords the audience *not* in on the secret time to be credulous, time to be suspicious, and, after the realisation, time to find more obvious clues and reflect on what they had seen previously.

In contrast, while there are indeed clues throughout the documentary, the most obvious ones are left until the last five minutes, when an extended series of shots of the exhibits in the museum is presented: The *Five Grecian Nudes* are shown, and on the side of one we briefly get a glimpse of what appears to be words "1999 Mattel inc. CHINA", before it pulls out of focus. Hirst closes with the words,

> For me the whole exhibition is about belief ... And belief is a strange thing because there is no absolute truth. Artists don't have the answers, and science doesn't have the answers, and religion doesn't have the answers. But somehow, collectively, we create some kind of a truth. And whether you believe in anything or not, I think we need something.[242]

These spoken words are coupled with *Collector with Friend,* and the final shot is of *Mickey*, on the seabed.[243] This is effective in the documentary as a 'last-moment twist', a device employed in

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[239] Hirst.

[240] One wonders if Hirst was partly thinking of his involvement with Banksy's 2015 project *Dismaland*, a satirical

[241] Visitors are free to move around the various rooms of the gallery as they please, and so Hirst does not control *exactly* when the secret is revealed, but the division of the exhibition over several floors means that even a free-roaming visitor is likely to have a similar experience, unless they were to take the unusual step of starting on the top floor of the gallery and working their way down.

[242] Hobkinson.

[243] A friend of mine who knew of Hirst but had not heard of the exhibition, did not realise until this final shot that the project was a hoax, and even then seemed unable to process the extent of the fakery for some time!

films across genres; examples include *The Sixth Sense* (Dir. Shyamalan, 1999), *The Usual Suspects* (Dir. Singer, 1995), and *Psycho* (Dir. Hitchcock, 1960). This device, however, is not commonplace within gallery and museum settings, where exhibitions are rarely conceived as fantastical hoaxes, and in turn patrons are not so accustomed to having the rug being pulled from under them.

The photobook accompanying the exhibition reveals the secret differently. It contains essays on the artefacts, the *Apistos*, and Amotan, written by curator Elena Geuna,[244] Louvre director Henri Loyrette, historian Simon Schama, and archaeological diver Franck Goddio (who, despite being quoted in detail about his experience on the dive, is curiously absent from the documentary film). The book opens with notes from François Pinault, owner of the Palazzo Grassi, and Martin Bethenod, director of the museum. In the first paragraph, Pinault says '[Hirst] showed me the first works he had created as part of this great project.'[245] Bethenod talks about Samuel Taylor Coleridge's notion of the 'willing suspension of disbelief', and how important this is to Hirst's exhibition.[246] These two notes are the only writings from the people involved in the exhibition (at the time) to openly acknowledge that the entire exhibition is a hoax, and they are both placed before the table of contents, where they are likely to be overlooked.

The provenance of the artefacts, however, is a sticking point for those unable to accept the hoax nature of the *Treasures* story, such as David Jones in *The Daily Mail*, who wrote the story off as 'complete tosh – a myth designed to ramp up the hype surrounding the lavish show … a huge ornamental fish-tank.'[247] Psychologists Newman and Bloom's experiments show that people ascribe a low value to forged artworks, regardless of the effort or skill they took to make.[248] An object – whether artistic or otherwise - is ascribed value partly due to its 'performance' (i.e. the process leading to its creation), and its 'contagion' (i.e. its proximity to a famous, important or otherwise magical person or event). Although in the past 60 years a number of artists such as Warhol and Koons have moved away from the "artist as creator" model through the hiring of other artists and artisans on their projects, many conservative critics and punters deride or even

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[244] The tone of Geuna's essay in particular, is reminiscent of the 2016-present fiction podcast, *Within The Wires*, the second series of which takes the form of a series of museum audio guides dedicated to the work of the artist "Claudia Atieno", a fictional artist created by the writers of the podcast: Night Vale Presents, 'Within The Wires (2016)', Within The Wires <http://www.nightvalepresents.com/withinthewires/>.

[245] Damien Hirst and Amie Corry, *Damien Hirst: Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable*, ed. by Elena Geuna, First edition (presented at the Exhibition, London: Other Criteria, 2017), p. 5.

[246] Hirst and Corry, p. 7.

[247] David Jones, 'Prices for His "art" Are Plummeting. So Is Damien Hirst Sunk?', *The Daily Mail*, 9 April 2017, section News <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/~/article-4396144/index.html> [accessed 14 July 2020].

[248] George E. Newman and Paul Bloom, 'Art and Authenticity: The Importance of Originals in Judgments of Value.', *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 141.3 (2012), 558–69 (fig. 3) <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026035>.

dismiss outright this model as less worthy. The artefacts of *Treasures* were not the property of a mysterious 2,000-year-old art collector, found in a forgotten shipwreck, but were devised over the last 10 years by a much more familiar name and therefore do not contain so much 'special essence.'[249] The fact that Walshe's *Aisteach* does not seem to receive the same criticism, despite a false narrative and a certain degree of outsourcing, suggests that financial expense is an aggravating factor behind much of the denigration of *Treasures.* It does nonetheless raise the issue of the perception of inauthenticity and potential negative reactions to it, as discussed in 1.1.1 above.

The enormous budget and proximity to cultural capital of the *Treasures* project distinguishes it from both *Seaton Snook* and the other examples discussed in this commentary. Indeed, the vast amount of money available to Hirst for a single person art project is what seems to stick in the craw of the exhibition's detractors: Alastair Sooke in *The Telegraph* damned the show as 'a spectacular, bloated folly',[250] and Andrew Russeth of *ARTnews* described it as 'depressing … emblems of wasted money.'[251] The project does indeed raise the issue of a financial split in the art world, between the privately-funded "Superstar" artists such as Hirst, Koons and Kapoor, and those whose artistic visions must work under a certain amount of financially-imposed compromise. There are also reasons to feel uncomfortable about one person amassing so much wealth (Hirst appears in the 2020 Sunday Times Rich List with an estimated worth of £315m).[252]

However, it is wrong to suggest that the expense necessarily detracts from the quality or effectiveness of the project. On the contrary: this budget and the work's association with organisations such as the Venice Biennale and Netflix gives Hirst access to high profile collaborators – assistants, researchers, filmmakers, expert craftspeople, as well as equipment and materials – that add important layers to the project. Within this hoax exhibition are numerous art pieces that have been carefully designed and crafted by skilled artisans, and by bringing the concept into a physical reality, we can therefore consider and appreciate the qualities of the individual art pieces in and of themselves, regardless of their contribution to the overall *Treasures*

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[249] Newman and Bloom, p. 560.

[250] Alastair Sooke, 'Damien Hirst, Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable, Review: This Spectacular Failure Could Be the Hipwreck of His Career', *The Telegraph*, 6 April 2017 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/art/what-to-see/damien-hirst-treasures-wreck-unbelievable-review-spectacular/> [accessed 29 July 2019].

[251] Andrew Russeth, 'A Disastrous Damien Hirst Show in Venice', *ARTnews*, 2017 <http://www.artnews.com/2017/05/08/a-disastrous-damien-hirst-show-in-venice/> [accessed 19 July 2019].

[252] Kate Brown, 'Damien Hirst Is Still the UK's Richest Artist—With a Net Worth of $384 Million, According to the Sunday Times's "Rich List"', *Artnet News*, 2020 <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/damien-hirst-rich-list-2020-1863678> [accessed 9 July 2020].

narrative. Jan Dalley's mixed review in the *Financial Times* admits 'There is awe-inspiring craftsmanship on display here: some of the marble carving, done by a single quarry in Carrara, is superb ... some of the delicate smaller works are genuinely beautiful.'[253] Critic and art philosopher Arthur C. Danto argued in 2005 that 'the very idea of craft has all but disappeared from the high art of the Post-Conceptual period.'[254] In an essay on Jeff Koons – whose sculpture *Rabbit* sold for a record $91.1 million in 2019 – Danto states, 'Koons is saying that the bourgeois admiration of fine craft is nothing to feel ashamed of, whatever the art world decrees.'[255] It is not surprising, therefore, that conservative critics such as Dalley are conflicted by *Treasures*: the aspects of the project they scorn (its conceptual nature; its inauthenticity; its team of hired workers) are inextricably linked with the quality of the craftwork, an aspect we assume they miss in much contemporary art (consider the mockeries made by similarly conservative critics of Tracey Emin's *My Bed* from 1998, especially when it shared an exhibition in Margate with the works of JMW Turner in 2017).[256]

In focusing on accusations of late-capitalistic mass production and hollow inauthenticity, the negative reviews miss the importance of the playful and humorous nature of the project, and Hirst's work in general. The inauthenticity of the artefacts is an intentional part of the aesthetic. Hirst brings an imaginary world to life using both artistry and sheer scale to inspire credulity, but he does so with imperfections and absurdities that deliberately point to its imaginary nature. It is created with a sense of playfulness and is designed to be experienced with that same mindset. Indeed, the positive reviews, such as Laura Cumming in the *Observer*, all at least mention this: 'It is by turns marvellous and beautiful, prodigious, comic and monstrous'[257]; Daniele Prosdocimo for Architectours writes, 'We have never seen a bigger disorienting, misterious (sic) and … humorous show in life.'[258] Janelle Zara also notes the excitement of feeling 'Childishly awestruck … entering without any idea of what to expect leads to constant, dumbfounding surprises.'[259]

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[253] Jan Dalley, 'What to See at the Venice Biennale 2017', *Financial Times* (UK, 5 May 2017) <https://www.ft.com/content/90bea0f4-2f21-11e7-9555-23ef563ecf9a> [accessed 10 July 2020].
[254] Arthur Coleman Danto, 'Banality and Celebration: The Art of Jeff Koons', in *Unnatural Wonders: Essays from the Gap between Art and Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 286–302 (p. 294).
[255] Danto, p. 294.
[256] Mark Hudson, 'Tracey Emin's Unmade Bed "uncannily Similar" to Turner? Don't Make Me Laugh', *The Telegraph*, 13 October 2017 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/art/what-to-see/tracey-emins-unmade-bed-uncannily-similar-turner-dont-make-laugh/> [accessed 17 February 2021].
[257] Laura Cumming, 'Damien Hirst: Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable Review - Beautiful and Monstrous', *The Guardian*, 16 April 2017 <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2017/apr/16/damien-hirst-treasures-from-the-wreck-of-the-unbelievable-review-venice> [accessed 29 July 2019].
[258] Prosdocimo.
[259] Janelle Zara, 'One Man's Trash Is Damien Hirst's Treasure: In Venice, the Artist Offers His Grandest Work Yet', *ARTnews*, 2017 <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/reviews/one-mans-trash-is-damien-hirsts-treasure-in-venice-the-artist-offers-his-grandest-work-yet-8164/> [accessed 21 July 2019].

Although critics may argue over the exhibition's effectiveness and purpose, and bemoan Hirst's reliance on outsourcing and an obscene budget, what remains at the core of its creation is the idea of suspending disbelief and allowing our imaginations to construct new realities based on the gaps in between concrete evidence. *Treasures* suggests an approach to balancing the real and the fantastical in a way that results in a rewarding – or at least provocative – heuristic experience. While *Seaton Snook* does not operate at the same scale as *Treasures* (either physically or financially), it shares the high value placed on both playfulness and thoughtfully constructed artefacts. The sounds and music should be sufficiently well-made and well-presented to fool some people; but they *must* be sufficiently well-made and the narrative sufficiently engaging to sustain the interest and imaginations of the audience even after they have concluded that *Seaton Snook* is, in fact, not entirely real. Just as a critic may acknowledge the craftwork involved in one of Hirst's bogus statues, I aim to make each item in my archive a well-crafted and worthwhile sonic artefact in its own right, as well as a component of the larger project.

Where my approach differs most from Hirst's is in the way the two artworks' fictionality is revealed. While *Seaton Snook* contains nods to its parafictional nature, and contains "Easter eggs" for those who choose to seek them out, *Treasures* is liberally peppered with clues to unlocking Hirst's audacious secret. It is Hirst's intention that the audience realise the fakery, and the clues are an integral part of the artwork. *Seaton Snook*'s strength, on the other hand, lies in its ambiguity, and in its fictionality being far more obscured.

2.3   *The Falls –*
Peter Greenaway, 1980

The Falls[260] is a 1980 faux-documentary film[261] written, directed and edited by UK filmmaker Peter Greenaway. The film is set after an unexplained 'Violent Unknown Event' (shortened to 'the VUE') and acts as a filmic catalogue of the biographies of 92 people affected by the VUE, whose names begin with the letters "FALL". The subjects are:

> … taken from the latest edition of the Standard Directory published every three years by the Commission investigating the Violent Unknown Event … The names are presented in

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[260] Peter Greenaway, *The Falls* (UK: British Film Institute, 1980).
[261] As in 2.3, I have avoided the term "mockumentary," as this tends to be a filmmaking style that uses documentary techniques primarily to satirise a particular subject for overtly comedic purposes. *The Falls*, whilst having comic and satirical elements, is primarily an art piece exploring Greenaway's structuralist aesthetic.

> the alphabetical order in which they stand in the Directory and represent a reasonable cross-section of the nineteen million other names that are contained there.[262]

This officious-sounding opening parodies the public information films made by Greenaway during his time making films for the Central Office of Information (COI), a UK Government department responsible for producing films on matters such health and safety, education, legal rights, and major upcoming social changes such as decimalisation. The parody is compounded by the voiceover being read by Colin Cantlie, one of the voiceover artists used by Greenaway the COI. [263]

The biographies are shown sequentially, each starting with a title card showing its number and the subject's name, underscored by a brief musical motif (written by frequent Greenaway collaborator Michael Nyman). This structure is adhered to without exception, but the content of the 92 short biographical films varies considerably – Greenaway himself described these as '92 different types of films.'[264] Film scholar Bart Testa summarises *The Falls* as an 'encyclopaedic panoply of documentary usages, from *cinema vérité,* to activist newsreel; from nature film to historical recounting … to crime reconstruction [and] celebrity interview.'[265]

The biographies always feature at least some explanatory voiceover, delivered by an authoritative-sounding narrator on behalf of 'the Commission' supposedly behind the making of the film. Some biographies are given entirely by voiceover, with filmic or photographic accompaniment; others include interviews with the subjects; others feature "experts" in a particular field related to the subject. All of these experts are actors, generally filmed in laboratories, beside overhead projectors, behind desks, and so on. The interviews with the subjects are filmed in very stylised settings: Tasida Fallaby [biography number 6] is filmed naked on a chaise longue*,* symmetrically framed by French doors, reading her journal aloud apparently over the course of an entire day; two of the Fallbute family [38 & 39] are interviewed whilst driving an extremely cramped car with interviewer, sound recordist and translator in the back seat; Musicus Fallloby [12], a singer, performs his unctuous Welsh baritone, symmetrically framed by a bay window, before fading from the screen in a cross dissolve as the voiceover explains he also worked as 'an illusionist'.

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[262] Greenaway, *The Falls*.

[263] William Fowler, 'BFI Screenonline: Falls, The (1980)', *BFI Screenonline*, 2019 <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/982817/index.html> [accessed 30 December 2019].

[264] Fowler.

[265] Bart Testa, 'Tabula for a Catastrophe: Peter Greenaway's The Falls and Foucault's Heterotopia', in *Peter Greenaway's Postmodern/Poststructuralist Cinema*, ed. by Paula Willoquet-Maricondi and Mary Alemany-Galway, Rev. ed. (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2008), p. 92.

There are recordings of intercepted telephone conversations; tape-recorded interviews; holiday photographs; live music performances and poetry readings; text materials such as letters and diaries. Frequently, a particular medical diagram of a human figure is shown, marked accordingly with details of mutations suffered by subjects following the VUE. Indeed, the breadth of material used to bolster the fiction behind *The Falls* is comparable to Walshe's *Aisteach* project (see 2.1) and Hirst's *Treasures* project (see 2.2). However, while both Hirst and Walshe aimed to fool people into believing that what they were seeing was authentic (if only briefly in Hirst's case), Greenaway's piece is obviously a fiction from the start: not only because of the post-apocalyptic setting provided by the VUE, but also because of the abundance of humour and absurdity. In *The Films of Peter Greenaway*, Amy Lawrence argues 'the logic of the format (orderly, sequential) is precariously balanced against the progressively more incredible tale contained within it. The more information we receive, the harder it is to believe what we hear.'[266] Referring to the strict form that each biography takes, however, she points out that 'The more incredible the story, the more essential it is to relate it with a completely straight face and in a method beyond reproach.'[267] The film's structure remains intact, even when the content serves to subvert the entire project. Some examples - with quotes from *The Falls* - include:

- Ascrib Fallstaff [80] - entry removed due to 'Pernicious inclusion of a fictional character'
- Grastled Falluson [90] - 'has invented so much fiction about himself, that the Commission cannot vouch for any version of his biography'
- Wrallis Fallinway [69] - directory error, being a misspelling of subject 13, Wrallis Fallanway
- Joycan Fallicory [66] - directory error: 'Fallicory is a place, not a person.'

Further on this point, one subject - Bwythan Fallbutus [42] - is revealed to have been killed, despite his having been seen many times previously in this same film credited as the VUE Commission's linguistics expert; and in the penultimate biography, Leasting Fallvo [91], who has been shown during the film as an expert on various subjects, is revealed to be a 'writer of fictions.' A list of titles of his works is read in voiceover, which correspond explicitly to many of the anecdotes and situations portrayed in previous biographies, whilst underneath the voiceover, he can be heard dictating sections of *The Falls*' dialogue down the telephone.

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[266] Amy Lawrence, *The Films of Peter Greenaway*, Cambridge Film Classics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 21.
[267] Lawrence, p. 21.

The use of self-referential content to subvert the structure occurs throughout *The Falls,* and is a feature also used in Greenaway's 1978 film, *Vertical Features Remake,*[268] during which the work of the filmmakers is revised, rejected, and remade by an external Committee as we watch the film unfold. As Amy Lawrence puts it, '*The Falls* presents itself as the kind of documentary that foregrounds its own construction.'[269] Greenaway also peppers *The Falls* with references to other works, some completely fictional, such as the stories of Tulse Luper; others recognisable as previously existing works, such a *A Walk Through H*[270] - here a lost film made by Appropinquo Fallcatti [56] to discredit Tulse Luper, but which in reality was made by Greenaway in 1979, its subject being a series of maps designed to guide a dead ornithologist, Virgil-like, through the afterlife. (The number of maps, incidentally, is 92 – this sort of numerical recurrence is also used in *Seaton Snook*, discussed in 4.12)

The rigid structure and dead-pan delivery used to give a factual, documentary-style air to absurd material, is a technique Greenaway uses in other works, and also - depending on how absurd you may feel the information (or propaganda) coming from a Government department to be - in his work at the Central Office of Information. Interviewed in 1985, Greenaway said, 'During the eight years that I spent [at the COI], I was always fascinated by the interplay between fact and fiction … I believe that the line between the two realms is blurry.'[271] An interesting companion piece to *The Falls,* and produced in the same year, is Greenaway's half-hour documentary for Thames Television, *Act of God,*[272] about people who had been struck by lightning. Greenaway says about the film, 'every fact was true, but seemed so bizarre, so unbelievable, that the viewers were led to believe that everything was made up.'[273] [274]Like *The Falls*, each story is preceded by a title card

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[268] Peter Greenaway, *Vertical Features Remake* (UK: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978).

[269] Lawrence, p. 21.

[270] Peter Greenaway, *A Walk Through H: The Reincarnation of an Ornithologist* (UK: British Film Institute, 1978).

[271] Michel Ciment and Peter Greenaway, 'Interview with Peter Greenaway: Zed and Two Noughts (Z.O.O)', in *Peter Greenaway: Interviews*, ed. by Vernon W. Gras and Marguerite Gras, Conversations with Filmmakers Series (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), p. 35.

[272] Peter Greenaway, *Act of God* (UK: Thames Television, 1980).

[273] Ciment and Greenaway, p. 35.

[274] Greenaway's identical treatment of real and fictional situations was echoed in Patrick Keiller's films *London* (1994) and *Robinson in Space* (1997). In these, images of places around London and England (and briefly Zebrugge) are accompanied by a nameless narrator relaying an almost non-stop barrage of facts, statistics, literary references, and supposedly autobiographical anecdotes and narrative links. No distinction is made between real events, and fictional ones (such as the destruction of Surrey in *War of the Worlds*, or the arrival at Whitby of Count Dracula), and quotations from works of literature and academia are weaved into the narrator's monologue, usually without reference. Perhaps suggesting that making a distinction between fact and fiction is both irrelevant and unnecessary, Keiller wrote in 2002, 'Most film space is off screen - it's either remembered from preceding images, or heard, or merely the imaginary extension of the space on screen. Because it is reconstructed in this way, film space is always a fiction, even when the film is

stating the protagonist of that particular story, underscored by a lively motif by Michael Nyman. Also like *The Falls*, the subjects interviewed in *Act of God* are filmed in highly stylised settings: stood in a field between two deckchairs; sat in a desk in front of an open French window whilst it rains; in a garden filmed through a lawn sprinkler; surrounded by red chairs aside a cricket ground, and so on. Stories are interspersed with quick cuts between each subject listing 'collated statistics', such as time of event, date of event, height of subject, or what they were holding at the time. Texts of 'apocryphal stories' are at various points shown on screen and narrated by an authoritative voiceover (In *Circa* art magazine talking about his 1991 film *Prospero's Brooks*, McBride notes of Greenaway's aesthetic, 'Greenaway constantly punctuates the film's visual flow with verbal text, suggesting outreaches from the original …',[275] an observation that could certainly be made of *Vertical Features Remake, Act of God,* and *The Falls*, and which evokes Tolkien's "distant vistas" discussed in 1.1.3 above).

One important "rule" by which the film abides, is that while the content of the film might point to the fictitiousness and absurdity of the material, the filmmakers (i.e. the Commission) never acknowledge these absurdities. It is clear, for example, that many people affected by the VUE appear to be mutating into bird-like creatures, either through physical change (such as the development of feathers and wing-like appendages), psychological change (dreams of flight over water, or an obsession with unaided flight), or linguistic (92 new languages developed following the VUE, many involving bird-like sounds); however, this conclusion is never proffered by the voice-over. There is ostensibly an effort being made to find the cause of the VUE (the "Theory of the Responsibility of Birds" is mentioned frequently, albeit never completely explained), but the Commission's purpose with *this* film is simply to collect and present information without explanation or justification. It is, after all, simply a directory of biographies. Instead of offering answers, we are simply given more and more data. But while Lawrence contends that this abundance of fantastic material makes the audience more and more incredulous, I also argue that this same abundance is what allows the audience to suspend disbelief and look for their own answers within the data. There are many connections to be made and through-lines to be followed - such as the frequent reoccurrence of the number 92; references to organisations called 'FOX' and 'CROW'; people moving in circles, and others too numerous to list. In *Seaton Snook*, therefore, an abundance of material is created to support my aim to recreate the feeling of falling down a 2am internet rabbit hole, and allows the visitor to get more out of the experience by making their own connections and finding their own conspiracies.

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a documentary.' Patrick Keiller, 'Architectural Cinematography', in *This Is Not Architecture: Media Constructions*, ed. by Rattenbury Kester (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 37–44 (p. 38).
[275] Stephanie McBride, 'Film: G Is for Greenaway', *Circa*, 62, 1992, 52 <https://doi.org/10.2307/25557721>.

The visitor being left to their own devices when learning about *Seaton Snook* prompts a question about linearity, the control of the Archivist, and its effect on the believability of the *Seaton Snook* myth. *The Falls* presents each biography in a strict, linear fashion, following numbers 1 to 92, and as the film goes on, we accumulate more information (and misinformation). However, there is no linearity in terms of the investigation into the VUE, or the quality or topic/category of information we are being told. As the film is in a catalogue form, with each entry being discrete and self-contained, there is no comparison between biographies, no referring back to previously-revealed information, nor an overarching linear narrative. Further, Greenaway subverts the linearity of the film format by introducing the death of Bwythan Fallbutus [42] and the work of Leasting Fallvo [91] (above). One might imagine, if The Commission were to produce the Standard Directory today, they would do so in the form of a searchable web-based archive. Linearity is important to much of the humour in the film, as the stories get more and more absurd and contradictory, but the information could be presented in any order - randomising the order of the 92 biographies would not necessarily affect the experience of a viewer concerned with figuring out the story behind the VUE. Compare this to the recent paranormal documentary series *Hellier,*[276] which also presents intertextual material, re-purposed footage, and out-of-context interviews in order to serve a new narrative, but in which the viewer is guided through the filmmakers' investigation as the investigators themselves supposedly experienced it. Controlling the narrative in this way allows the filmmaker who might be more concerned with creating believability to drip-feed information, hook the viewer with intrigue and cliff-hangers, and cause the viewer to invest more credulity in the documentary.

The accumulation of knowledge about *Seaton Snook* by a visitor to the website, however, is not a prescribed, linear journey: the visitor can choose to learn about any subject at any time and in any order. I do refer to other topics on the site and there is much cross-referencing, but this is purely to signpost relevant topics to the visitor as one would expect on a web-based catalogue. Like *The Falls* there is no deliberate analysis of the overall situation, and despite the loose mission statement on the homepage, there is no real effort to try and find out "*What Happened to Seaton Snook*". This means that, while I aim for each individual section to be believable, when taken as a whole the hoax is not iron clad. Sacrificing linearity and narrative control on the website may compromise believability, but a greater amount of intertextual material also enriches the experience of the visitor.

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[276] Karl Pfeiffer, 'Hellier' (USA: Planet Weird; Amazon, 2019).

However, while the website and its content are the main creative output, other methods of dissemination do involve a greater degree of linearity. The *Seaton Snook* **Instagram account**, for example,[277] teases followers with news of artefacts and stories recently "discovered," to be added to the website in due course. Meanwhile, conference papers and performance lectures take one narrow topic and guide the audience step by step. Linearity is key to holding a live audience's attention for a 20-minute presentation and having them believe enough of the *Seaton Snook* story to remain curious as to which parts are made up and which are not. The gradual reveal of information in these presentations are what I hope makes them believable, while the sheer volume of material available to the visitor is what gives the website its strength.

Greenaway's work from this period – *The Falls* in particular, but also *Vertical Features Remake, A Walk Through H,* and *Act of God* – presents bizarre and often comical subjects with a completely straight face. The approach is echoed in my own descriptions of some of the more otherworldly artefacts such as *seaton_snook_indoor_mkt.mp3* (4.4), Robson Booth's dead-pan narration on the *Seaton Snook Tape Ballad* (4.16), and indeed the meta-construction of this commentary's exegesis (Chapter 4). Strange phenomena such as *Seaton Snook*'s time slip or the supernatural appearances of Jacob Cox's dead horse (4.3) are noted in a matter-of-fact way precisely because they are all real to the Archivist. This consistency of tone is necessary to maintain a uniformity of realism between the more believable elements and the more fantastical elements. It is the quality of the artefacts themselves that dictate at what level this realism lies (the endeavour for realism in the artefacts is discussed throughout Chapter 4, and in particular the discussion of recording and object creation in 4.13).

2.4 *Streamside Day Follies –*
Pierre Huyghe, 2003

Huyghe's artistic approach is that the subject of the artwork be something "real" that the artist documents, rather than a staged event. Huyghe 'create[s] a world. Then I want to enter this world, and my walk through this world is the work.'[278] He explains this further in another conversation with Art21:

> I'm not interested in building fiction. What I am interested in is setting up a reality, building a situation, constructing a world, and documenting it. Let's say you have a

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[277] Peter Falconer, 'Seaton Snook Instagram', *Instagram*, 2019 <www.instagram.com/seatonsnook>.
[278] 'Pierre Huyghe in "Romance" (SEGMENT)', *Art21*, 2007 <https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s4/pierre-huyghe-in-romance-segment/> [accessed 10 May 2019].

documentary about a farmer and cows. They exist. You arrive, open your camera, and

film them. Then you shut the camera off and go back home, but still the farmer and the

cow are there after you leave. In fiction, you have this character in front of you; you

open your camera … And once you close your camera, the character stops and they go

home. They're not a character anymore.[279]

In an interview with Tim Morton for Frieze.com, Huyghe reiterates this position: 'I'm interested in

constructing the condition of emergence of a fiction – we invent a hypothesis, and we give

ourselves the real means to verify it.'[280] In contemporary art journal October, when asked if his

intention was to *change* reality, in the manner of the Situationists,[281] Huyghe says 'What

interested me was to investigate how a fiction, how a story, could in fact produce a certain kind of

reality. An *additif* of reality. I'm not speaking about change here.'[282]

In Huyghe's 2009-10 work, *The Host and the Cloud*, Huyghe had various participants live in an

abandoned museum for a year, and this extended duration allowed for the evolution of

behaviours and actions with a certain amount of organicism.[283] On the occasions of the Day of the

Dead, St Valentine's Day, and May Day, small numbers of people were allowed to enter the

museum to view the proceedings and walk among the indifferent participants, making them

simultaneously part of and apart from the piece. The resulting two-hour film revealed candid

glimpses of the work as it was being lived. Nothing, according to Huyghe, was staged for the

film.[284]

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[279] Art21, '"Streamside Day"', *Art21*, 2016 <https://art21.org/read/pierre-huyghe-streamside-day/> [accessed 10 April 2019].

[280] Tom Morton, 'Space Explorer', *Frieze*, 2006 <https://frieze.com/article/space-explorer> [accessed 10 May 2019].

[281] "Internationale Situationiste" was a group of artists, writers and poets who formed in 1957 ostensibly as a resistance to, as Guy Debord saw it, a world in which 'everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation', and even revolutionary thought had become commoditised and turned into mere 'spectacle'. One key aim was to have people create their own artistic interventions within everyday spaces, thus creating representations of their own rather than consuming those presented by a tyranical capitalist system. Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. by Black & Red, E-Book (Bread and Circuses Publishing, 1967) Ch.1.1.

[282] George Baker, 'An Interview with Pierre Huyghe', *October*, 110 (2004), 80–106 <https://doi.org/10.1162/0162287042379856>.

[283] 'Pierre Huyghe: The Host and The Cloud', *Vdrome*, 2010 <https://www.vdrome.org/pierre-huyghe-the-host-and-the-cloud/> [accessed 10 May 2019].

[284] This is likely to be true in terms of scripted dialogue or choreography, but it can certainly be argued that the very fact that Huyghe arranged for the participants to live in this museum constitutes staging on a "macro" level.

Streamside Day Follies (2003) is a short film intended to be screened in a specially designed 'architectural folly'[285] at the Dia:Chelsea art gallery in New York. The space featured automatically moving walls, which when displaced revealed painted murals depicting locations within the town of Streamside Knolls, Fishkill, New York, where the work was filmed. The content of the film is a documentation of the "Streamside Day Celebration", a festival devised by Huyghe to celebrate the recently-built residential development of Streamside Knolls.

In a call for participation to the public, the Dia Art Foundation described the planned events of the day as follows:

> "Streamside Day Celebration" will begin with the planting of a tree. Children will be offered animal costumes to wear for the event. At 3:30 pm, a parade with a fire engine, police car, mail truck, school bus, two pick-up truck floats, and an ice-cream truck will travel though Streamside Knolls. People can enjoy an ice cream while listening to welcoming remarks. Around 5:30 pm dinner will be served, followed by a Streamside Day Cake. The public is welcome to take pictures throughout the event.[286]

As Streamside Knolls was a new residential development, it had no established traditions or historical identity. Huyghe, therefore, looked at the commonalities of the people moving to Streamside Knolls to create 'a ritual that the people in the town would actually celebrate because it's based on what they share.'[287] The main theme Huyghe discovered was that of moving between homes - people moving to the country, moving to the suburbs, moving closer to nature and so on. The film opens with a young deer wandering from their home in nature, into the white cube of what presumably is an unfinished building, and immediately afterwards we see a young girl walking into her new home in Streamside Knolls. In the clip of the celebration parade uploaded to DailyMotion.com by Romaeuropa Webfactory,[288] most of the children are dressed in animal costumes, reflecting the move from the big city into a home closer to nature, although at least one appears to be wearing a number of cardboard boxes, perhaps to represent the boxes necessitated by a house move.

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[285] 'Streamside Day Follies, New Film Project By Artist Pierre Huyghe On View At Dia:Chelsea', *Diaart.Org*, 2003 <https://www.diaart.org/about/press/streamside-day-follies-new-film-project-by-artist-pierre-huyghe-on-view-at-diachelsea/type/text> [accessed 10 May 2019].
[286] Sarah Thompson, 'Streamside Day', *UnDo.Net*, 2003 <1995-2015.undo.net/it/mostra/16265> [accessed 10 May 2019].
[287] Art21.
[288] Romaeuropa Webfactory, *Huyghe3*, 2019 <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x83kh9> [accessed 10 May 2019].

Of course, the Streamside Day Celebration is completely staged; a manufactured ritual for a new housing development. This may initially seem to contradict Huyghe's artistic stance, but he insists that this is not the case. As stated earlier, it was vital that the contents of the Celebration be drawn as much as possible from the real situations and feelings of the participants – the residents of Streamside Knolls – in order for those participants to fully engage and create an authentic celebration. The film of the event features Huyghe in voiceover saying that, even though he devised everything from the costumes to the food to the mayor's speech, the festival is not a script but 'a recipe ... it's a score. This score can be played again next year at the same time.'[289] This affords the residents the opportunity to maintain the Streamside Day Celebration as a tradition without further intervention from the artist.[290] Here, *Streamside Day Follies* raises questions and suggests solutions as to how the music and mythology of *Seaton Snook* can be developed further into performances, presentations, and other real-world happenings, that can exist outside of its original form as an online archive.

Interestingly, Jennifer Walshe uses the same term "score" when talking about building the characters in the *Aisteach* project, saying 'So in a way, all the backstories ... they're just a way of making a score, and then I have to make the music from that score.'[291] This also echoes the mythopoeic writings of Tolkien, and his use of these invented histories as landscapes for new stories and characters to inhabit.

Huyghe aims for the creation of new realities that are then documented once they become self-functioning without the artist's intervention. By contrast, in 2.1, I outlined Walshe's need for a believable context in which her fantastical creations could flourish. Basis in reality is important, but ultimately it is Walshe - and her collaborating artists - who are creating the individual works of the *Aisteach* project. Both artists seem interested in the blurring between fantasy and reality, although where Walshe aims to make the fantastic *seem* real, Huyghe aims to bring the fantastic into actual existence. Huyghe's process of first creating this fantastic reality, and then documenting it in order to create the final artwork (the film *Streamside Day Follies* is the artwork, not the actual activities that took place on the day itself) necessitates two different cognitive approaches. In the first stage, Huyghe is an artist, creating the "score" to be performed by the Streamside Knolls residents. Although the components of this score are grounded in reality and

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[289] Romaeuropa Webfactory.

[290] Although Huyghe's apparent indifference to whether or not the tradition does indeed continue, deepens the impression of this being a piece created using the residents of Streamside Knolls purely for the benefit of Pierre Huyghe.

[291] paintingintext, 'Making History: Jennifer Walshe', *Painting in Text*, 2018 <https://paintingintext.com/2018/10/18/making-history-jennifer-walshe/> [accessed 1 July 2020].

experience in order for them to function in performance and – potentially – be assimilated by the people of Streamside Knolls, Huyghe is aware that *he* is creating the rites and rituals to be performed. In the second stage, Huyghe is a documentarian, now treating the rites and rituals created by Huyghe the artist as if they were factual events to be recorded. There must be a degree of what Orwell may have called doublethink, or what Joanna Demers describes as thought-fiction: 'a concept that serves a purpose even though it is known to be untrue.'[292] In the case of *Seaton Snook*, as the Artist I know that much of my artefacts are fake, but as the Archivist creating the exhibits – the pages on which these artefacts sit, with their supporting materials and analyses – the artefacts must go through an ontological shift to become real in the mind of the Archivist in order to be convincingly presented.

All of this speaks to the idea that the artistic product (be it an *Aisteach* concert, the Streamside Day Celebration, *Streamside Day Follies,* or the *Seaton Snook* archive) can only function effectively with a solid grounding in reality upon which the fantasy is overlaid. In practise, this means interweaving the *Seaton Snook* story with significant amounts of historical fact in order to add an air of plausibility to any given artefact – both by linking my fictions to actual people, places, or events; and by closely following the wider historical contexts, for example noting the recording equipment that would have been available at the particular point in time an artefact was to have been created. This not only makes the resulting artefact more convincing, but it makes the history and traditions of *Seaton Snook* more vital: one could point to the ritual of the "Tempos" as a particular example - the *Snookish* tradition of playing one of four short motifs at the beginning and end of a performance, depending on the season of the year at which the performance takes place. As the *Snookish* fantasy has a solid grounding in a real cultural landscape, and this fantastical ritual is authentic to this well-grounded fantasy, the ritual of the Tempos (discussed in 4.12) is real enough that it is something I carry out in real life when playing pieces from the archive, and will continue to do so after this PhD has concluded.

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[292] Demers, *Anatomy of Thought-Fiction*, p. 11.

2.5   *Sounds from Dangerous Places –*
Peter Cusack, 2003 (ongoing)

Sounds from Dangerous Places is an ongoing research project by sound recordist Peter Cusack, begun in 2003, which asks 'What can we learn by listening to the sounds of dangerous places?'[293] He describes the approach he has developed as 'sonic–journalism, journalism of and for the ear – the sound equivalent of photo-journalism.'[294] The major output of the research so far has been the 2012 publication *Sounds From Dangerous Places*,[295] which took the form of two CDs of sound recordings, with an accompanying book of explanatory essays, photographs, and translations.

The first part of the book contains explicatory texts and photographs accompanying the sounds contained on CD 1, recorded at the locations in and around Chernobyl and Pripyat, Ukraine, site of the catastrophic nuclear accident of April 1986. There are also transcriptions of the various interviews, songs and poems, with English translations. The second part contains photographs and explicatory texts accompanying CD 2, which is a series of recordings from the Caspian Oil Fields in Azerbaijan; North Wales, UK, 'where Chernobyl fallout still affects farming practice today,'[296] and various UK nuclear, military, and landfill sites. Cusack states in his introduction that further sounds were recorded in the Kurdish region of Eastern Turkey, which are 'scheduled for a later release.'[297]

The sounds on the various recordings can be categorised as follows:

1: Machine environments

- Electricity, generators, cooling stations etc.

- Laundry room

- Sounds of building work on the Chernobyl "sarcophagus"

- Oil field machinery

- Oil field pipe extraction

- Methane flow pipes on landfill site

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[293] Cusack, *Sounds from Dangerous Places*, p. vii.
[294] Peter Cusack, 'Field Recording as Sonic Journalism' (presented at the Hearing Landscape Critically, University of Oxford, 2016) <https://ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/id/eprint/9451/>.
[295] Cusack, *Sounds from Dangerous Places*.
[296] Cusack, *Sounds from Dangerous Places*, p. vii.
[297] Cusack, *Sounds from Dangerous Places*, p. vii.

- Radiometers

2: Living human environments

- Friday night in the bar, Chernobyl town

- Overheard conversations; people greeting each other etc.

- Church bells

- Calls to prayer

- Vehicle sounds

3: Human remnant environments

- Sounds of abandoned buildings and structures, such as the Pripyat kindergarten and Ferris wheel

4: Natural environments

- Animal recordings, including birds, wild boar, insects, and sheep

- Geographical features, such as rivers, shorelines, and forests

- Wind and weather sounds

- It can be argued that the sounds of radiometers can also be included in this category

5: Direct human interactions

- Interviews

- Recordings of songs and poetry

Some recordings contain elements from more than one category, but I find these broad groupings useful for planning what sorts of recordings to include in *Seaton Snook*.

2.5.1   Sonic Journalism

In his 2016 paper, *Field Recording as Sonic Journalism*, Cusack describes sonic journalism as being 'based on the idea that all sound, including non-speech, gives information about places and events and that listening provides valuable insights different from, but complementary to, visual

images and language.' [298] He notes that field recordings are used in a journalistic context, such as the sound of gunfire preceding a war report, or the cheering of a football crowd in a sport story, but these are 'almost always as a "sound effect"… They add a touch of actuality, but rarely last more than a few seconds before being faded down for the ever-dominant speaking voice.' [299] Field recordings become sonic journalism, according to Cusack, when they are 'allowed adequate space and time to be heard in their own right,' [300] and by exploring this technique he seeks to rebalance the relationship between the explanatory narrator and the sounds of the natural world. The emphasis on taking the time to listen attentively and for an extended period of time to environmental sounds relates to R Murray Schafer's work on soundscape and acoustic ecology with the World Soundscape Project, an ongoing project by several composers, environmentalists and sound engineers to collect and document soundscapes from around the world that are in danger of being changed beyond recognition by urban development and noise pollution. [301]

The recordings in *Sounds From Dangerous Places,* then, are presented in a way that allows the listener to engage with each example for several minutes at a time, and properly absorb the sonic information therein. The sounds are given context by the supporting photographs and texts, whether by simply having a descriptive title or by more thorough explanation such as an English translation of conversations or song lyrics. The sounds, plus the textual and photographic support, allow the audience to gain a depth of insight into the subject matters, that would not necessarily have been possible by text and photograph alone. To demonstrate this, I list below a selection of sound files by their titles, and briefly outline some of the information one can take from the extended listening.

1. *Chernobyl nightingales* (CD1 Track 14)*; Dawn chorus, Chernobyl town* (CD1 Track 15)*; Wild boar* (CD1 Track 26)*; White stork chicks screeching in the nest, Lychamny village* (CD1 Track 27)*; Golden Oriole beside radioactive trucks/helicopters* (CD1 Track 31)*; Chernobyl frogs* (CD1 Track 37) [302]

   These natural environment sounds are taken from Chernobyl town, Pripyat - the abandoned city which housed many of the Chernobyl workers and their families - and various other Samosel villages. On hearing the rich variety of wildlife thriving in the area - birds, swine,

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[298] Cusack, 'Field Recording as Sonic Journalism'.
[299] Cusack, 'Field Recording as Sonic Journalism'.
[300] Cusack, 'Field Recording as Sonic Journalism'.
[301] See R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, Vt. : [United States]: Destiny Books ; Distributed to the book trade in the United States by American International Distribution Corp, 1993).
[302] All recordings from Cusack, *Sounds from Dangerous Places*.

amphibians - we are confronted with a very different impression of villages abandoned in the wake of a nuclear disaster to what we might have had before. The amount of life that flourishes in such an area is startling, and the recording provides perhaps the clearest example of the ability of sonic journalism to convey certain information more clearly than written or photojournalism.

2. *Sarcophagus work* (CD1 Track 21); *Hissy machine - Laundry, Pripyat* (CD1 Track 12)[303]

   Again, contrary to our previous ideas about Chernobyl, we are confronted with the sounds not only of the continued effort to contain the nuclear reactor, but also of the people supporting the work with things we would not necessarily think of, such as washing the workers' clothes. Even in Chernobyl, where there are extraordinary jobs such as nuclear waste containment, there is the more banal task of laundry to be done.

3. *Bar, Friday night, Chernobyl town* (CD1 Track 13); various songs and poems by Samosels[304]

   Moving from industrial to human, we hear the sounds of people laughing and relaxing in a bar, just like in any other town. We hear lively pop music, and the CD player skips several times before being fixed by the barman. The length of the soundscape (1m19s) is such that we have time to glean enough sonic information to make various socioeconomic interpretations of, for example, the importance of musical entertainment in this community, or the state of the technology available.

   Later, we hear songs and poems performed by local villagers, of which English translations are provided in the book. The text contained in these pieces is important, describing variously: despair at being forced to leave their homes; nostalgia and love for their villages; sometimes bawdy love songs; anger towards the politicians of the Ukraine for their handling of the situation. However, from a purely sonic perspective, we can interpret that this is a people that values the social functions of music: listening to songs; joining in with group singing; the preservation of knowledge in poetry and lyrics; and singing for both pleasure (indicated when we hear laughter) and catharsis (when we hear more mournful tones).

4. *Walking on books/radiometer, Kindergarten* (CD1 Track 10)[305]

   The sound of books being stepped on is not an everyday sound, and without the textual context of the title it is likely that the listener would not be able to discern the source. With

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[303] All recordings from Cusack, *Sounds from Dangerous Places*.
[304] All recordings from Cusack, *Sounds from Dangerous Places*.
[305] Cusack, *Sounds from Dangerous Places*.

this knowledge, however, we immediately think of the value we may or may not place on books. Certainly, it is rare that stepping on a book is not followed immediately by some sort of exclamation of accident, regret, or chastisement. The fact that the floor is completely littered with books, a place for children and education left suddenly abandoned, speaks to the immediacy of the evacuation. In the accompanying notes, Cusack states 'The cracking and compressing of paper here are some of the most poignant sounds I have ever recorded.'[306]

Meanwhile, the beeps of the radiometer are markedly sparse. Even without Cusack's comment that this is '14 microroentgens - a very low reading',[307] when comparing to an earlier recording of radiometer readings at a "hot spot", it is clear that there is very little radioactivity here. Through sound alone, then, we learn that the distribution of radiation around Chernobyl is not as straightforward as we might first think.

5. *Radiometer sheep 1* (CD2 Track 20); *Radiometer sheep 2* (CD2 Track 22)[308]

    This is a recording of the sound of sheep being tested for radiation levels in Snowdonia, Wales, some 1,700 miles from Chernobyl. That this radiation testing is required at all gives us further insight into the irregular and somewhat unpredictable manner of the Chernobyl fallout.

6. *Bellringing practice, EasyJet, SUV* (CD2 Track 25)[309]

    The sound of church bells ringing in a rural English village, is contrasted with the sound of low flying aircraft. The juxtaposition of these two sounds raises questions of noise pollution, sound ecology, and the preservation of what Schaffer called "soundmarks", the sonic equivalent of a landmark. 'Once a Soundmark has been identified, it deserves to be protected, for soundmarks make the acoustic life of a community unique.'[310]

It would not be worthwhile for me to go through every sound recording of the *Sounds From Dangerous Places* project here, but the above give an indication of the range of sounds included, and the range of insights that can be gleaned from them.

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[306] Cusack, *Sounds from Dangerous Places*, p. 34.
[307] Cusack, *Sounds from Dangerous Places*, p. 34.
[308] Both recordings from Cusack, *Sounds from Dangerous Places*.
[309] Cusack, *Sounds from Dangerous Places*.
[310] Schafer, p. 10.

In relation to *Seaton Snook*, the most important part of Cusack's methodology to remember is that many of the sounds are presented in recordings of several minutes in length, giving the listener time to "settle in" to listening to the sounds, and learn more from them. A short clip of the sound of a book being stepped upon would be a curious sonic artefact, or a sample in a foley artist's sound effect library. In Cusack's extended recording, however, we can hear not only the sound of the books, but also the emptiness of the building; the sounds of birds in the distance - indicating that in the absence of humans, animals have apparently flourished. We are given time to contemplate our own feelings about what it means to walk over abandoned books at all. This idea of extended, or deep listening, is central to sonic journalism, and to the wider field of acoustic ecology.

Acoustic ecology, as described by sound recordist and composer Dr John Levack Drever, is concerned primarily with the soundscapes (as opposed to landscapes) of the world, and the ecological ramifications of how these soundscapes are changing: '… soundscape is concerned with ties to the environment, but extending beyond landscape's predilection to surfaces it encompasses the dimension of the environment that is sounding and audible.'[311] There is a particular concern about the impact of humans on the environment from a sonic perspective - for example, how urban expansion affects animals' ability to communicate with each other.[312] In contrast, sonic journalism refers to a method of investigating particular places, issues, and people, in the same way one would refer to the work of a photojournalist. Listening to and recording the sounds of the environment is the first step. Cusack himself explains:

> It is the job of the sonic journalist to find answers and probably follow up with further questions. In my experience the answers will be in every format - audio recordings, verbal or written scientific explanations, personal histories, official documents, images … whatever's relevant. Sound often makes fascinating connections between these things - not better or worse, but different and complementary, to those of other media.[313]

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[311] John Levack Drever, 'Q&A with an Acoustic Ecologist', *BBC World Service* (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2009)
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specialreports/2009/07/090703_sos_qawwithjohndrever.shtml>
[accessed 13 June 2019].
[312] Bernie Krause wrote of this in a 1987 article for Whole Earth Review, a view which he later refined as 'The Niche Hypothesis': When chopping down an old forest, replacing it with new trees might seem ecologically responsible, but a new forest will have a completely different acoustic soundscape to an old one, and as it takes generations for creatures to "fall into" their acoustic niches, it puts them at a severe disadvantage when communicating sonically: 'When we have tried to record in new stands of trees... we have found a profound lack of bio-diversity evidenced... by the overwhelming silence.' Bernie L. Krause, 'The Niche Hypothesis: How Animals Taught Us to Dance and Sing', *Wild Sanctuary*, 2010, p. 6
<https://www.appohigh.org/ourpages/auto/2010/12/21/52074732/niche.pdf> [accessed 22 January 2018].
[313] Peter Cusack, 'Re: Sonic Journalism Question', 12 June 2019.

A further difference between sonic journalism and acoustic ecology is the artistic/editorial approach to presenting the work. Acoustic ecologists tend to have a pro-nature agenda, with a view to improving interaction between human and environment. Despite this, recordings and findings are gathered, catalogued, and presented in an apparently objective, scientific manner. Sonic journalism, again much like photojournalism, affords the recordist to present their sounds in a way that has an emotional impact on the listener. Cusack states, 'Sonic journalism recognises that sound has both an information and an aesthetic/affective content. The interplay between the two is important.'[314]

Sonic journalism, then, is more than simply documenting sounds; it is presenting sounds in a way that they can impart information to the listener, elicit an emotional response from the listener, and give the listener the space to form more thorough and nuanced interpretations. This raises a challenge, however, in encouraging today's attention-light and stimuli-heavy audience to take the time to engage with recordings in a focussed manner. This is another reason behind my decision to have *Seaton Snook* primarily accessible as an online archive, where people can choose to listen to the recordings in their own time, when they feel able to focus their attention on the recordings; however, it is also necessary to question whether – and why – I would include long-form field recordings in an artistic/creative context that aims not only to be entertaining to a casual visitor, but which also works best when the visitor has time to examine many different and cross-referential artefacts. These questions are discussed in the exegesis sections on the Pilkington Recordings (4.9), and Website Design (4.10).

Ultimately, *What Happened to Seaton Snook?* both champions and abuses sonic journalism. With artefacts such as the Pilkington recordings (recordings of mysterious events taken in the zinc works), or the Peoples Mass "Freak Out" (in which the sound of rock band smashing their instruments is at odds with the sound we might have imagined from seeing a photo of the event), I assert that it is an important way of gleaning information about a given subject, often overlooked due to the primacy of photographs and videos. Conversely, I abuse this powerful and fascinating form of journalism by employing it in the creation and dissemination of a fallacy. Partly, this is a necessary part of the parafictional approach, and helps to create greater depth and believability in the archive. I do, however, also intend that the archive can partly be seen as an advocacy of sonic journalism and a demonstration of its strengths and usefulness, even if the subject matter itself is not real.

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[314] Cusack, 'Re: Sonic Journalism Question'.

Chapter 3   Methodology

What Happened to Seaton Snook? is a practice-based research project, with the artistic output and its creative process being used to gain insights into the use of parafiction both as a framing device for musical works, and as a way of exploring elements of twentieth century and contemporary culture in the North East of England. While *Seaton Snook* engages with a wide range of genres, media, and creative traditions (including sonic journalism, folk music, rock music, pedagogic writing, radio documentary, biographical writing etc.), each element of the project is built under the same methodology of parafictional creation.

As established in 1.1.1, in order to be convincing as a parafiction, *Seaton Snook* must:

1) be based on a significantly developed mythology
2) ground this mythology in real-world events and contexts
3) be presented convincingly as a work of factual documentary, not fiction.

Developing the mythology necessitates a constant dialogue between real-world research and mythopoeia: finding gaps in known history where the fictions could exist, and investigating ways in which fictional concepts could be plausibly brought into reality. Subsequently, artefact creation and artefact presentation both refer to this ongoing dialogue, as well as feeding back into it with new mythological possibilities. The methodology is non-linear, with cross-referencing and feedback loops throughout the creative process. As such, it would be possible to continue a project such as *Seaton Snook* indefinitely, with each new artefact adding to the mythology, and generating new lines of creative enquiry for the creation of further artefacts.

Upon their presentation on the *Seaton Snook* website, the artefacts undergo an ontological shift from being the fictional creations of the Artist, to being real historical documents to be presented by the Archivist. Like Tolkien-as-Gandalf not being able to decipher the words of *The Book of Mazarbul* Tolkien himself had written (see 1.1.3), I-as-Archivist must approach the artefacts in a state of naïvety, as if unaware of how they came to be created by me-as-Artist. Additionally, once presented on the website, these artefacts, along with their supporting documentation and analyses, retain this realness and can now be used as sources of real-world research by the Artist. This goes beyond making the characters and events of *Seaton Snook* believable to the audience: as part of the creative process, I must hold in my head the belief (or thought-fiction – see 2.4) that the history of *Seaton Snook* is real, and the artefacts, once created, can be accepted as such. When the Artist asks, "Is this real?", the Archivist can answer, "Yes – we have the artefact to prove it."

3.1 Complete list of Audio and Visual Artefacts in *What Happened to Seaton Snook?*

What Happened to Seaton Snook? contains a large number of audio recordings, organised on the site by subject and composer. A map of the website can be found in Appendix A, although a full diagram of exactly how and where the artefacts connect with each other has proved almost impossible to design, and certainly impossible to read.

The audiovisual recordings on the archive are as follows:

seaton_snook_indoor_mkt.mp3, a soundscape recording from 2005 by Jules Braun

Pity Me Horn Chorale, transfer of a shellac 78rpm record recorded in 1928 by the Seaton Snook Zinc Workers Band

None Were Available, an mp3 of an electronic Krautrock piece from 1971 by East German recording artist Büttel

I Can Hear a Siren – a local folk song presented as a transfer of a c1914 wax cylinder recording; a re-arranged modern recording by the Archivist; and a transfer of the c1966 rock cover by The Peoples Mass.

To Rescue a Sandgate Lass – a lyric put to music by the Archivist

The Seaton Snook Tape Ballad by Robson Booth- songs, narration, and interviews with local people transferred from 1/4 inch tape recorded in 1959, from which are excerpted performances by Robson Booth of the *Tin Whistle Tune*, *Blodscar Rocks*, *Rudolph the Russian Rugmaker*, and *The Crofter*.

Transfer of the leftover tape made by Booth in the preparation of a possible second *Tape Ballad*, containing further interviews with local people.

The Viola Loops, transfers from two loops of 1/4 inch tape of unknown date, containing viola sounds intended as accompaniment for the smallpipes tunes, and other assorted recordings.

What The Battery Says, transfer of a spoken word piece recorded on 1/4 inch tape between 1960 and 1967 by Robson Booth

Carnival 1967 (edit), transfer of a short, candid recording of Robson Booth speaking on 1/4 inch tape towards the end of his life.

Transfers from 1/4 inch tape of the following rehearsal recordings made by The Peoples Mass in 1966-67:

- *(Join Hands With) The Peoples Mass* – a psychedelic rock song
- *I Can Hear a Siren* – The Peoples Mass's version of the abovementioned local folk song
- *Timon's Getting Married* – fragment of guitarist Frank Warnes practising the melody of this smallipipes tune
- *Dorothy* – fragment of George Brallisford playing guitar and singing a version of smallpipes tune *Dorothea*, with lyrics

Interview with George Brallisford, lead singer of The Peoples Mass, intended for UK music magazine *Beat Instrumental*.

Freak Out c1967 – a transfer of a 1/4 inch tape recording of The Peoples Mass smashing their instruments at the end of a gig

The Crofter's Dream – A Fancy for Harpsichord – MIDI realisation of a 1910 piece written by Gaynor Leigh.

Waltz of the Graces – a piano solo piece written by Gaynor Leigh in 1925, performed by the Archivist.

Grand Carousel on Look At Brookwood – transfer from VHS tape of a 1993 television programme featuring the sound of Seaton Snook carousel playing *Waltz of the Graces*

Contemporary recordings of the pieces contained in Gaynor Leigh's *Piano Primer* from 1931:

- *Up and Down the Dunes*
- *Pu and Nwod the Senud* – including a video recording of a student of the Archivist playing the piece
- *Waves*
- *Dancing on the Sand*
- *The Fog Horn*
- *NO*
- *Rabbits*
- *Skating*
- *Burning*
- *Shooting Pigeons*
- *Seven Whistlers*

- *Sneaking into Church*
- *Mussels Slowly Opening and Closing*
- *Rudolph the Russian Rugmaker*
- *Sand*
- *Hiding from Mr Hill* – including a photograph of a student of the Archivist performing the piece
- *Timon's Dream*
- *Mother Shipton's Waltz*
- *Bow to Your Partner*
- *Checking for Crabs*
- *Three Legged Race*
- *Distant Storm*
- *Jacob Cox's Horse*

Transfers of 1/4 inch tape recordings made by Agatha Pilkington at the Seaton Snook zinc works:

- *14a Casting Hall Corridor (Incident)*
- *21b Courtyard 5918c*
- *34 Sinter Plant Corridor*
- *49b Accident*
- *50 Aftermath*
- Interview of zinc plant worker Dennis Knowles conducted by Agatha Pilkington

Clandestine recording of an interview with Dr Rose Fookes by the Archivist concerning the Pilkington recordings.

Video introduction to the Seaton Snook Smallpipe Tunes by the Archivist

An audio explanation of the use of modes in English folk songs, by the Archivist

Performances of the smallpipe tunes by the Archivist on Northumbrian smallpipes:

- *Harrison's Rant*
- *Rabbit Hills*
- *Poor Auld Nellie*
- *Dorothea*
- *Jimmy's Jig*
- *Hay from Crosby's*
- *Stinting*

- *Cocklewomen*

- *Watch Where You're Shooting, Jimmy Walls*

- *Lend Us a Tab*

- *The Wallering Coble*, plus an alternative performance by fiddle player Sara Wilfong Joblin

- *Fetching Up the Watter*

- *Untitled Air*

- *Timon's Getting Married!*

- *Lenten tempo*

- *Sumer tempo*

- *Harvest tempo*

- *Winter tempo*

As well as numerous photographs and newspaper cuttings on the site, other physical artefacts have been created by the Artist:

- *The Seaton Snook Smallpipes Tunes*, hand-written by Robson Booth in the Halifax manuscript and the Song Time manuscript; and the *Tempos*, written by Robson Booth in a copy of *Hymns Ancient & Modern – Revised*.

- *The Viola Loops*, in vintage Swan Vestas matchbox

- *The Tape Ballad*, in vintage St Bruno's Flake tobacco tin

- Shallow grave dug on Seaton Snook sand dunes

- George Brallisford/*Beat Instrumental* interview tape box, with misspellings

- *To Rescue A Sandgate Lass* lyric scans from *Bonny Songs of the Northern Lands*

- *"Pity Me" Chorale* record label

- Email from Hartlepool Central Library regarding Robson Booth's effects.

- Scans of Gaynor Leigh's *Piano Primer*, as discovered in a charity shop in Redcar

The additional sonic journalism websites of the Archivist contain:

- *Morning Calling*, soundscape recorded at Mandrake Fields Meditation Center, Stockton, CA.

- *Willow Tree Sample*, *Wuppertal Factory*, and *Internal Microphone 2*, pertaining to the Archivist's investigations into the manufacture and use of aspirin.

3.2   Diagram of Methodology with Examples
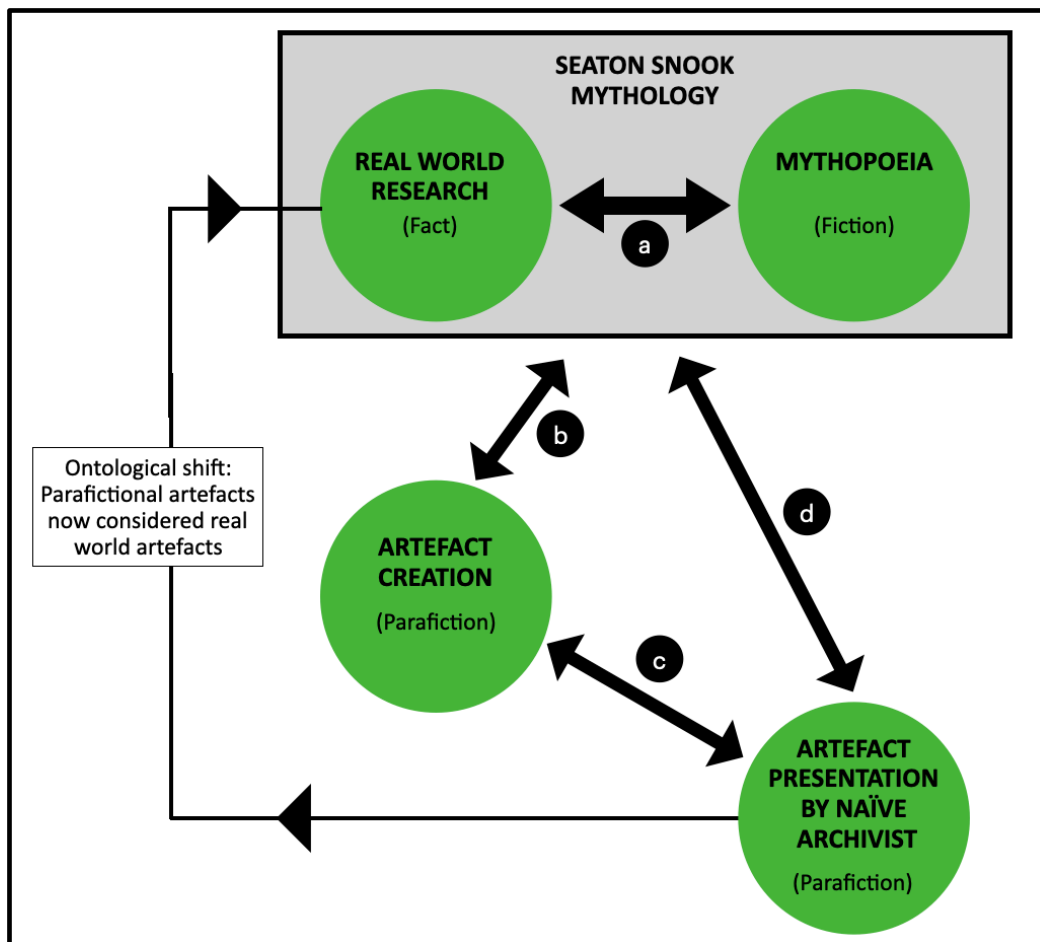
Figure 2:   *Seaton Snook* methodology of parafictional creation

As discussed above, the methodology contains four main areas of creative focus: real-world research, mythopoeia, artefact creation, and artefact presentation. Real-world research and mythopoeia work in tandem to create the "background vistas" of *Seaton Snook* mythology – its Legendarium – serving as the foundation of the believability of the artefacts, both in terms of being presented as fact, and as plausible parts of a narrative. Examples of each of these areas in practice include:

Real-World Research:

Historical records, including local history texts, newspaper articles, council archives and military records; field recordings; interviews; folk music composition and performance traditions; social and political contexts; personal experience and memory.

Mythopoeia:

Seaton Snook fictional timeline; biographies of characters and inhabitants; folk music traditions within *Seaton Snook*; attitudes of non-*Snookians* towards townsfolk;

conception of the school, church, and indoor market; development of local superstitions.

Artefact Creation:

Period recordings; the works of Leigh/Booth etc.; fabrication of interviews with present-day experts; interviews with *Seaton Snook* residents; creation of supporting letters, photographs and recordings.

Artefact Presentation:

Website design; analyses by the Archivist; acknowledgement of sources; cross-referencing to other artefacts; providing supporting documents and references to period literature; misappropriation of relevant newspaper articles.

Information-flows between each area ensure the parafiction is maintained, even as the project grows in size and scope. Examples within each of these dialogues include:

a) **Real-World Research ←→ Mythopoeia:**

As with the approaches taken by Hirst and Walshe, the gaps in known history provide room for fictional concepts to develop, while fictional ideas are checked against historical sources to ensure they remain broadly plausible/technologically possible. Real-world cultural contexts help develop and explain the reasons behind *Seaton Snook* having been lost to history – such as the Northumbrian smallpipe music of *Seaton Snook* being written and performed in a manner that ensured it would never be accepted in the wider folk repertoire. Factual evidence can also be misrepresented/appropriated to support or inspire an aspect of the Legendarium (consider the use of taped interviews in the *Seaton Snook Tape Ballad,* or the deliberate misunderstanding of the three deaths of Jacob Cox's Horse, discussed in Chapter 4 below). After their creation and presentation, artefacts – having been brought into reality – cycle back as real-world research (discussed further below).

b) **Artefact Creation ←→ Mythology**

Interesting or narratively important events in the mythology prompt the creation of artefacts. The contents of the artefacts must not contradict anything already developed in the mythology. Occasionally, the content of the artefact informs the mythology: in the case of *None Were Available*, the artefact was initially created as an experiment in using the Seaton Snook RAF records as creative material; the anachronistic use of synthesisers prompted the mythopoeic possibility of a time

slip[315] in *Seaton Snook*. In addition, real-world research informs the authenticity of artefacts, as in the digital recreation of vinyl, tape, and wax cylinder sounds, the vocabulary and writing styles of supporting documents, the manuscript style of the Northumbrian smallpipe tunes, or the playing style of the Zinc Works Band.

c) **Artefact Presentation ←→ Artefact Creation**

Once primary sonic artefacts are created, further artefacts must be created in order to corroborate, consolidate, or elaborate the narrative. As Peter Cusack states, 'the answers will be in every format - audio recordings, verbal or written scientific explanations, personal histories, official documents, images … whatever's relevant.'[316] As indicated above, these auxiliary artefacts are created in the same manner as the primary artefacts – i.e. with heightened attention to historicity, technological and cultural accuracy, and mythological alignment.

d) **Artefact Presentation ←→ Mythology**

Here, as discussed above, I approach the artefacts and their supporting documents in a state of naïvety, "uncovering" them as if they were real. This practice occurs also in public presentation and the *Seaton Snook* Instagram account, where artefacts are presented as discoveries. Occasionally, the Archivist does not have sufficient reason to find the artefacts entirely convincing, and the *Snook* mythology is therefore developed further (in line with the attention to plausibility described in (a) above), with further evidence in the form of auxiliary artifacts produced. There are also some fully-realised artefacts, the existence of which the Archivist would not be able to explain, and so these will remain unpublished until a way to fit them into the mythology can be found, as well as an explanation of how the artefacts came to be in the possession of the Archivist: there are only so many things that can be found in the back of one of Robson Booth's old library books.[317]

An additional component of the methodology, that compounds the non-linearity of the process, is the ontological shift of the artefacts of seatonsnook.com from artistic creations to "real" artefacts. This is key to the parafictional nature of the piece not only for the audience but for myself as the artist: I must assume that since the artefacts exist on the website and have been

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[315] A 'sudden unexplained dislocation in time,' which, while a popular narrative device in science fiction literature, is also a reported phenomenon in locations as diverse as Bold Street in Liverpool, Ponca City Oklahoma, and Montélimar, France. Brian M. Stableford, *Historical Dictionary of Science Fiction Literature*, Historical Dictionaries of Literature and the Arts, no. 1 (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2004), p. 357.
[316] Cusack, 'Re: Sonic Journalism Question'.
[317] One such artefact is the recording *Canch End Morning Radio,* discussed in Appendix E.

analysed and presented by "Peter Falconer," a respected and long-standing sonic journalist who has worked all over the world, that they must indeed be real, and can therefore be used as the basis of further real-world research and mythopoeia. Indeed, due to the scope of the website, I sometimes only return to artefacts months after their initial creation, and this inevitably precipitates errors in recollection as to what is part of factual research and what is mythopoeic – an uncertainty that should be embraced: in their 2014 study *Forgetting as a Consequence and Enabler of Creative Thinking*, Storm and Patel call for the need to appreciate the 'noncreative processes that support [creativity], and the present findings suggest that forgetting may be one such process.'[318] Not only does forgetting allow an artist to approach creative problems from a fresh perspective, in the specific case of *Seaton Snook* it accentuates the uncertainty inherent in parafiction. As *Seaton Snook* resident Michael Cole remarks, 'It's funny what sticks in your mind, innit? … My recollections may be totally awry … Well as I said, memories are false aren't they?'[319]

3.3   Methodology of the Exegesis

The following chapter (Chapter 4) forms the exegesis of *What Happened to Seaton Snook?,* in which the practical application of the above methodology is examined in greater detail. As indicated in 3.1 above, the large number of compositions contained in the portfolio, and their numerous interconnections, make a full explanation of the project challenging to negotiate. In addition, I felt that the parafictional nature of the archive should also be reflected in this commentary, as another example of the work intersecting with the world outside of the *Seaton Snook* website.

For that reason, the exegesis is presented as 16 recordings of discussions between me-as-Artist, and me-as-Archivist. The audio recordings are hosted on the *Seaton Snook* website and should be listened to alongside the transcripts provided in Chapter 4. By following strands of *Snookish* enquiry in an apparently meandering conversation, works from the archive are introduced in accordance with how they might be experienced by the audience, rather than one by one in an organised list. This approach to exegesis is much more appropriate to the archive's non-linear presentation and intended effect.

In *What Happened to Seaton Snook?* there is a constant tension and interplay between the real-world research and the *Seaton Snook* mythology. In the exegesis, this is reflected in the interplay

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[318] Benjamin C. Storm and Trisha N. Patel, 'Forgetting as a Consequence and Enabler of Creative Thinking.', *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 40.6 (2014), 1594–1609 (p. 1605) <https://doi.org/10.1037/xlm0000006>.
[319] Robson Booth, *Seaton Snook Tape Ballad*, 1959.

between the Artist's knowledge of the work's creation, and the Archivist's naïvety of it. Although the truth of the project's fictionality is revealed to the Archivist in 4.1, and he often acts as a stand-in for the audience in interrogating the Artist about the "behind the scenes" machinations, he nonetheless continues to believe that *Seaton Snook* and the contents of the archive are real, and refers to them throughout as such. By interrogating the Artist's actions, and offering new insights and interpretations of the artefacts from the Archivist's perspective as someone not aware of the fiction, this conversation also emphasises the project's creation (outlined in 3.2) as being an ongoing and potentially endless self-generating process.

In addition to explaining the creative process, the conversations also foreground the process of writing the commentary itself, with references to the *viva voce*, the examiners reading the commentary, and new realisations made by the Artist in the process of re-examining older works. This meta-narrative is consistent with the influence of Peter Greenaway's *The Falls*, and *Vertical Features Remake,* discussed in 2.3, which refer to their own construction as they unfold. Through the lens of the project's overall methodology, we could interpret the exegesis – containing the words of the *Seaton Snook* Artist and Archivist – as a new artefact created by an Artist; and the footnotes, references, redactions and explanations as the work of an Archivist presenting the Exegesis – who in this case might more appropriately be termed "the Scholar."

Following the *viva voce*, in keeping with the methodology of parafictional creation discussed above, the Archivist of *What Happened to Seaton Snook?* will almost certainly choose to forget his newfound knowledge of *Seaton Snook*'s parafictional nature.

Chapter 4   Exegesis

This exegesis is presented in audio form, with recordings accessible to the examiners at **www.seatonsnook.com/exegesis**. Transcripts of the recordings with explanatory footnotes follow below.

The recordings presented were recovered from a USB drive found at **Ernie Nichols' Las Vegas** amusement arcade, Seaton Carew. The conversations appear to be between Peter Falconer, the Artist behind the creation of *Seaton Snook*; and Peter Falconer, sonic journalist and Archivist of *What Happened to Seaton Snook?*. The recordings were labelled only by numbers 000 to 016, and have been presented in that order here, with titles added to describe the topics covered therein.

Certain incriminating sections have been removed on legal advice, and some interjections have been removed for the sake of readability. The words of the Artist are written in normal font; *the words of the Archivist are italicised and right-aligned.* Links to referenced artefacts are embedded in the text and are shown in **bold**.

4.1   Setup/dummy websites

[RECORDING STARTS]

Right, well, to start off with, tell me how you came across *Seaton Snook*.

*Do you know, I can't remember? It's a bit like when you find yourself somewhere in a dream and can't remember how you got there. I just remember being aware of it – finding it on old maps an tha. [320] And because I'd grown up there and played on the dunes there, I thought it was strange how I'd not heard of it as a lad. I think when I came across it I was just getting ready to do a project on the history of chocolate, like the one I did on **aspirin**.*

Yeah, I had to do a bit of flash research on that to make your website – I knew [aspirin] was made in Wuppertal, then found out it was discovered by Edmund Stone around Chipping Norton. I only made enough sounds to give you a cursory back story – the sound of the willow tree was done with a contact mic and scratching against a tree; the factory sound was a mix of stuff from Hartlepool power station and library sound effects. For the **Mandrake Fields site**, I made some

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[320] i.e. "And that", a phrase used in Hartlepool and Teesside meaning '*et cetera*'.

meditative sounds and field recordings that you might have heard there. For the rest of the sounds you would have collected there, I wrote some intriguing titles and added broken links saying "image not found". Those sites were only made to be a little side story for people quickly checking if you really were a sonic journalist.

What you on about?

Oh, you're not a sonic journalist, Peter.

But I remember going to Mandrake Fields! I remember Lambeth Rhodes serving tea and Amy's hypnosis, and when we explored the main paradox!

And what is that exactly?

It's… well…

I don't think you know because I didn't develop that side of you much. They're just the distant vistas of your personality [1.1.3] You're really only here to investigate *Seaton Snook*.

Well. That's… confusing. Do you mind if I go out for a bit of fresh air? Might need another tea.

Of course!

[RECORDING ENDS]

4.2   History

[RECORDING STARTS]

… go about making something like this up?

Well, first came the idea of the abandoned town – that's partly because Seaton Snook itself *was* abandoned, but it also came from my own melancholic feelings about Seaton Carew and the Headland.[321] I do remember the funfair at Seaton,[322] because it was only pulled down in the mid '80s. And I remember standing on the scree by the beach car park and my gran telling me how there was an indoor arcade there with the OXO machines[323] and the bingo hall. I know nostalgia gets weaponised a lot, and you can't force people to go on holiday on the freezing cold North East

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[321] Also known as Old Hartlepool, formerly known as Hartlepool before its amalgamation with West Hartlepool in 1967 (see Chapter 1)

[322] The Artist often uses "Seaton" to refer to Seaton Carew, as is common in the town.

[323] One armed bandits – here, the Artist is referring particularly to the **Riviera Jubilee**, which unlike traditional bandits depicting lemons, bells, cherries, and so on, only featured X, O and BAR on its reels.

coast now it's so easy to go abroad… but it *is* sad how a lot of places like Seaton have fallen by the wayside.

So when I decided to bring *Seaton Snook* into being, I gathered all the photos of Seaton Snook I could find from various Hartlepool history websites, clipped every Seaton Snook related story from the British Newspaper Archive, and photographed everything on Seaton Snook I could find at the National Archives in Kew: reports from the RAF base; letters from the Tees Conservancy Commission about land reclamation; tenders for building the new railway line, all sorts. Books on the history of Seaton Carew and Hartlepool; antique travel guides; historical maps; books on local dialect and fishing customs… One of the most exciting things I found was the Glendenning Archive.[324]

> *Didn't* ███████████ *find that for us at [Hartlepool] Central Library? I used it talking about*
> ***Jimmy Walls.***

Yeah, that's the one. [Arthur Glendenning] used to work at the zinc factory, and wrote a potted history of Seaton Snook. He interviewed former residents; he copied out the 1911 census details and all the names of all the workers at the factory by hand! Full of names and little anecdotes about the town – like **Jimmy Walls** blowing his arm off, or this bloke called **Vitty who enjoyed skating** when the marshes froze over, or Kitty Bell[325] building a gate on the right of way.

> ***I thought it was a fence, after the rabies outbreak.***

No, just a gate to cut off the right of way at the top of the Common.[326] There was a bloke called Myers who was Bell's apprentice as a lad.

> He said that he clearly recollected Mr. Bell talking of when this gate was once
> locked prior to 1873 and … prominent Seaton people had told him to break the
> lock off and that they would accept responsibility and see that he was protected
> from any proceedings.[327]

> *So the locals did rise up against being cut off, but it was only a gate on a footpath rather than a*
> *whole Berlin Wall-style barrier.*

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[324] Arthur Glendenning, 'Notes on the Area Known as "The Snook" and "Canch End"', 2011, Hartlepool Library Services, 942.857 ID No. 597.

[325] Christopher "Kitty Bill" Bell was a blacksmith in Seaton Carew. His exact dates are unknown but he was certainly active in the second half of the 19th Century.

[326] The area of grassland at the north of Seaton Snook and south of Seaton Carew known as the Wide Open.

[327] Glendenning: Notes on investigation into the various rights of way enjoyed over this land; Interview with Mr. R. Myers of Carlisle Street.

I wanted to build on my ideas about areas being cut off and discriminated against – the North East within the North; Hartlepool within the South East;[328] Seaton within Hartlepool and so on. I read the stories about cottages in Seaton Snook being used as **cholera hospitals**[329] against the locals' wishes, and the councillors **laughing at the idea**[330] of a posh new school being built there, so the idea of local people thinking of *Seaton Snook* as "less-than" was perfectly plausible.

> *And it goes back to Bede telling people **not to get salt** from Seaton Snook.*

Yes – I definitely want to explore the blood rituals of the salt panners a bit further at some point. I've got some fragments of pottery that I want to age and present to you for the archive.

> *Oh great, I'll look out for them(!)*

So as well as the history, I had to look at the ecology of the place – the sort of rock under the beach; the types of plants that grew there; the birds that nested there at different times of the year; fishing seasons. I looked at folk magic traditions, rituals to bring in the seasons… I tried to put together a loose calendar and timeline of *Seaton Snook* to work from.

> *For everything?*

Well like I say, it's loose. I've got piles and piles of notes on wildlife, fishing patterns, solstice traditions, and stuffing them all into one calendar is just too unwieldy. Plus there has to be room for the *Snook* mythology to change and develop [see Chapter 3], but there are certain things I have to make sure I don't contradict, else it damages the credibility of the rest of the archive.

> *So Gaynor always died in 1957, for example?*

Yes, but also if it's an event I've created that I can back up with a newspaper article or with something in Tate[331] or Glendenning, for example, it makes sense to try and stick to that – the more points of contact *Seaton Snook* has with the real Seaton Snook, the more believable and immersive the fiction. There was that moonlight ritual in 1873, for example – I haven't worked out exactly what was happening there, but the **newspaper clipping** you put on the site is real; it was

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[328] The Artist presumably means to say 'North East.'

[329] 'The Proposed Cholera Hospital at Seaton Snook', *The North Eastern Daily Gazette*, 3 September 1901, 4th Ed. edition.

[330] 'Smith's Charity', *The Northern Daily Mail*, 13 January 1885, p. 4.

[331] A charming pocket guidebook of Hartlepool, Seaton and Seaton Carew, with such details as 'The billiard-table has not found its way to Seaton yet, but the jack-bowls and quoits are frequently practised.' The book was also useful as a model for the writing styles of some of the reference works "quoted" in the archive. William Tate, *Tate's Description of Hartlepool, Seaton, and Stranton*, 2nd edn (Hartlepool: Hartlepool Archaeological & Historical Society, 1816).

from 5th March 1873, so whatever the ritual was, it happened under a waxing crescent moon on Sunday 2nd March 1873.[332]

What about sources like the John Leatherhead book[333] that I cite on the page on Skating*?*

Well that doesn't exist. Nor does Robson Booth's autobiography.[334] They're out of print; you're quoting things from memory, or from notes hastily scribbled down before the jealous bookseller who showed you them squirreled them away back under the desk to his special collection. If they were readily available, visitors would wonder why you don't quote them more fully, answer more of the mysteries. It's the same reason why I couldn't use the interview with Isobel Lee as it was [4.16 below]. She had to become Anna Wren, the interview sent into the past, to be fragmented and distorted at the hand of Robson Booth for his **Tape Ballad**. The **Pilkington Recordings** and the **Peoples Mass** recordings came from descendants of the subjects, but it's clear that they don't know any more about the secrets of *Seaton Snook* than you do. That's something I took from Walshe: if I'm too generous with my fictitious sources, the visitor would wonder why any mystery still exists at all [see 2.1]. But actually, talking about the books that you quote – they have to be constructed with the same amount of rigour as the sonic artefacts. So for example, in the page on *Stinting*, there's a quote from a book written by Amos Coatham-Mundeville in 1831.

Was he real? I know Coatham-Mundeville is a village near Darlington [in County Durham].

He was, yes; he was a steward for various noblemen in the Midlands. But the book isn't real, and I had to go through all the language I used, checking it against a wonderful etymology resource [etymonline.com] to make sure that those words were being used at that time – so saying the fences were 'mended' rather than 'fixed,' for example.

I don't think it's-

[RECORDING ENDS]

4.3   I Can Hear A Siren/Jacob Cox's Horse/The Crofter's Dream Pt. 1

[RECORDING STARTS]

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[332] 3IP, 'Moonpage', 2021 <https://www.moonpage.com/index.html?go=T&auto_dst=T&totphase=WAXING+CRESCENT+(20.32%25+full)&m=3&d=3&y=1873> [accessed 19 August 2021].

[333] John Leatherhead, *Stories of Someone Else's Childhood* (York: Rowntree Press, 1958).

[334] Robson Booth, *A Good Face for Radio: My Story* (Middlesbrough: Silver Medal Press, 1959).

I can't remember which I found first. **Siren** *or the* **Grande Carousel.**

I'm pretty sure I made *Siren* first. After I gathered the carousel sounds from Southwold[335] I made a loop in Logic,[336] stretched it, washed it out with reverb, just playing around with sounds – I was listening to The Caretaker[337] a lot at the time. I don't think I realised until months later [the loop I had created] had the same repeating chromatic figure as *Siren*.

[The chromatic ostinato is] where all the Snookish music and sound recordings spring from, for me. It's something that runs through so many of the artefacts: the sound of the waves repeating over and over, and the sense of doom.

That's exactly what I wanted – I believe growing up by the sea had an impact on the sounds I'm drawn to, so of course it had to be a big part of *Snookish* music, too. It's along the lines of psychogeography[338] – how heavy metal could only have come from Birmingham. *Snookish* music had to sound like it came from *Seaton Snook*. So I had the chromatic ostinato to represent the waves – which, when you're there, you can *always* hear. Then there's the foreboding, supernatural lyric; and of course it was full of local dialect.

I mistranslated [**I Can Hear a Siren**] *on the website – I had "Roaky" as "Rocky". Had to correct it later to "Foggy".*

I know – I left your note of correction on the web page. It's sometimes good to embrace mistakes to make it seem more like a small archive run by one fallible human – not a large organisation like Aisteach or the British Library.

Oh thanks(!) Later on I discovered the business about **Jacob Cox's Horse,** *how he'd died three times and come back as the siren in the song, screaming when people were about to meet their doom.*

Well that was another coincidence. I found three different newspapers reporting the story on three very different dates. There're all sorts of reasons why there might have been some sort of mix-up, but it was far more interesting to take it on face value as evidence of a time loop in

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[335] Seaside town in Suffolk, with a carousel by the pier.
[336] *Logic Pro X*, version 10.x (Apple Inc., 2013).
[337] Leyland Kirby, whose eerie, reverb-soaked treatments of old jazz and dance band recordings act as ruminations on the nature of nostalgia, memory, and memory loss.
[338] An in-depth study of the history and theory of psychogeography would not be useful here, as only a simple definition is sufficient to explain how it applies to Seaton Snook: 'Psychogeography sets for itself the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, whether consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals.' Guy Debord, 'Introduction to a Critique of Urban Georgraphy (1955)', in *Situationist International Anthology*, ed. by Ken Knabb, Rev. and expanded ed (Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006), pp. 8–14 (p. 8).

Seaton Snook [4.8 below]. And the poor horse screaming as it went down is a terrifying thought. Cox's horse pops up all over the place.

*I'm sure I can hear her in the **Pilkington recordings**.*

Yeah, she's in there. It's something everyone in *Seaton Snook* knew about; a story they were told from childhood. George Brallisford talks about her in the **Beat Instrumental interview**, and the scream is in the *Freak Out*, too, just before they smash the guitars. It's actually a mix of a horse neighing and an Aztec death whistle.

*And Gaynor Leigh refers to it, of course – the primer piece called **Jacob Cox's Horse**, which also has the **waves** ostinato. And in **The Crofter's Dream** as well.*

Yes, the chromatic figure is sort of hidden in the left-hand chords at one point – I think it's around-

Bars 29 to 35.[339]

That's it. Actually, there are a few things in there I want to talk about with you. Hang on.

[RECORDING ENDS]

4.4   Indoor Market

[RECORDING STARTS]

I'd made recordings in Hartlepool **indoor market** back in 2019, on one of my trips to gather recordings of the seaside and of ordinary Hartlepudlian voices. I'd originally wanted to get sounds from the fish market, too, and reached out to a local sea fishing firm about accompanying them on a boat for a day, but Covid put a stop to that, unfortunately.

The trouble with the market recordings was, although I had some nice clips of people talking, you could hear piped pop music over the top. Some songs[340] did have background music before 1968, but the technology was expensive, and it was unlikely to have been used in *Seaton Snook* market. Even if it were, the music being played tended to be "light classical" or what people called

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[339] In a rare instance of honesty, **the analysis of *The Crofter's Dream* on the Archive** is almost entirely straight-faced, revealing the various mythological allusions made in its composition, and therefore reanalysing it here would not add anything useful.

[340] The Artist presumably means to say 'shops'.

"beautiful music," rather than pop songs.[341] So I had these great sounds of the old woman and her walking frame, the mum asking her little girl if she wanted sweeties, me buying chocolate raisins; but they were contaminated with non-*Snookish* music.

When it became apparent that there was a time loop in *Seaton Snook* [4.8 below], that afforded me a certain amount of leeway with sonic anachronisms.

I understood it to be like the Bold Street time slip in Liverpool.

That's exactly it: there are quite a few reports of people walking down Bold Street, and suddenly finding themselves in the same place but fifty years in the past – people had suddenly changed; shopfronts; vehicles; and of course, the sounds. One bloke it happened to said he walked into a 'dead spot of quietness.'[342] There's a physicist called Alberto Miatello who's written a whole load of papers on time slips, and Philip K Dick used something similar in *The Man in The High Castle* [see 1.1.2].

I don't say on that page specifically that there's a time slip, because I wanted people to come up with their own ideas of what happened – knowing the whole archive, it's clear to me there's a time slip, but you don't want to ram something odd like that down people's throats – it puts them off.

Exactly. And it makes it more obvious that it's not real, unless maybe you're someone who believes in these things already.

Which I am.

So am I.

Here's something, though: if there was no piped music back then, why did you have a record playing in the background?

Since I couldn't gather them myself I was looking for public domain sounds of fish markets for ideas, and came across *Fish Market* by Roy Eldridge,[343] and I thought it was a fun sonic equivalency to the modern recording. The whole [artefact]'s just a collection of sounds from the

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[341] Jake Hulyer, 'Inside the Booming Business of Background Music', *The Guardian*, 2018 <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/nov/06/inside-the-booming-business-of-background-music> [accessed 13 April 2021].

[342] Tom Slemen, 'Bizarre Tale of Bold Street "timeslips" That "Transported People into the Past"', *Liverpool Echo*, 2021 <https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/bizarre-tale-bold-street-timeslips-20350964> [accessed 13 April 2021].

[343] Roy Eldridge and his Orchestra, *Fish Market* (Decca, 1945).

period – I didn't imagine *Fish Market* being piped through the *Snookish* market any more than I imagined people in the market being able to hear the clicking.

Seaton Snook market wasn't on the site of Hartlepool Market either, so why should the sounds be from one place? Actually, what is the clicking?

I'm actually playing a slowed and simplified version of the *Fish Market* lick on a sample of the old woman's Zimmer frame. I sometimes get a similar sound in my head when I go under general anaesthetic.

Figure 3: Main lick from *Fish Market* by Roy Eldridge and his Orchestra (1944), with saxophone ornament on upper stave

*Ah right. And there's a low chromatic hum in there, too, similar to the one on the **Pilkington** recordings; the "waves" sound again. And* Fish Market *pops up on the **Viola Loops**, as well, so whatever Robson Booth was doing...*

Oh, I've not entirely figured out Booth's role myself. I know he understood more than most people about what was going on at *Seaton*. So did Gaynor.

I couldn't work out what the bloke is shouting at 1.52.

It's 'Fresh blueys[344] from the pot this morning' – you guessed it right on the page.

It made the most sense with the fish market connection. My first guess was 'She threw the hot water.' And by the way, is Jules Braun a real person?

Well you've got a **photo** haven't you?

[RECORDING ENDS]

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[344] Hartlepudlian dialect word for lobsters

4.5   Gaynor Leigh Pt. 1

[RECORDING STARTS]

read some reports from the Board of Education mentioning an Uncertified Assistant who was really good with the kids, always staying positive despite the fact the school was literally falling to pieces; and when I discovered Gaynor had attended teacher training school but dropped out to look after her mam, I knew it must be the same person.

Aye, she's a really interesting character. I enjoyed developing her biography, particularly with details like her going to a lecture by Euphemia Allen: not only was [Allen] best known for a piece that you played with an unconventional technique,[345] but she also had to publish it under a man's name, Arthur de Lulli. Which, of course, I think happened to Gaynor with the horn chorale.

Ah, so my theory about the **Pity Me Chorale** *is that Gaynor wrote it, but Jackie Franklin took the credit as he'd paid for the recording session.*

Yes, but you also say in your analysis of *The Crofter* that – hang on – 'The similarities between this and two preceding pieces … *The Crofter's Dream* and … the *Pity Me Chorale* are obvious. It is unclear as to whether all/both writers were making use of an already existing folk tune, or whether one plagiarised the other.'[346]

Well yeah, there seem to have been lots of folk tunes already around, and because of the time slip in Seaton Snook *I can't be certain of who wrote what first.*

And yet you give Robson Booth the benefit of the doubt – *The Crofter's Dream* uses *The Crofter* and **Watch Where You're Shooting, Jimmy Walls**, *and* the **Winter Tempo**, way before Booth even arrived in *Seaton Snook*, but you still say, 'we are not rushing to accuse Booth of plagiarising Leigh's work.'[347]

You know there's a time slip as well as I do!

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[345] The piece discussed is 'The Celebrated Chop Waltz', better known as 'Chopsticks'. The score indicated that it should be played 'with both hands turned sideways, the little fingers the lowest, so that the movements of the hands imitate the chopping.' James J. Fuld, *The Book of World-Famous Music: Classical, Popular, and Folk*, 5th ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 2000), p. 170.

[346] Peter Falconer, 'The Crofter', 2020 <https://www.seatonsnook.com/thecrofter> [accessed 1 January 2021].

[347] Peter Falconer, 'The Crofter's Dream', 2020 <https://www.seatonsnook.com/croftersdream> [accessed 1 January 2021].

I know that, but… in this book that talks about *Chopsticks* [1977, by Euphemia Allen, mentioned above], it says how Liszt and Borodin both wrote variations on it later, but he adds a bit to say 'There may be a common source … but if it had previously appeared in print, it has not yet been found.'[348] Complete conjecture, because – and I know I'm getting a bit polemical here – it's as if the male author couldn't accept the idea that a 16 year old girl could have written such a famous piece by herself. And it reminded me of something [music historian] Andrew Hickey said when he was talking about *Mbube* by Solomon Linda [Gallo Records, 1939]: 'Very often when people say something is based on a traditional song, what they actually mean is "I don't believe that an uneducated or black person can have written a whole song."'[349] And I think you fall into that trap here – you don't stand up for Gaynor's status as the original composer of these pieces; you'd rather a paranormal glitch in the time-space continuum than a woman being the originator of them.

I don't think that's fair! But look, if you think there's some sort of unconscious bias going on, then you put it there, mate.

I do think there is, yes. And I don't think I realised it at the time, but I do now.

So why don't we change it?

Because it's a good illustration of *how* we present things being as important as *what* we present, and the need for an awareness of unconscious bias as artists, archivists, and curators. I might change it after the *viva*, though.

[RECORDING STOPS]

4.6   Gaynor Leigh Pt. 2

[RECORDING STARTS]

*There's a lot of tragedy there – the boyfriend who got sent to a concentration camp; **the pupil who died in a fire…***

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[348] Fuld, p. 171.

[349] Andrew Hickey, '"The Lion Sleeps Tonight" by the Tokens', A History of Rock Music in 500 Songs <https://500songs.com/podcast/episode-92-the-lion-sleeps-tonight-by-the-tokens/> [accessed 20 June 2021].

I must say, I was shocked when I learned about the concentration camp.[350] It turns out some of the roads where I grew up were actually built by slave labour. And the burning girl story, well, there was a loose theme starting to emerge around fire when I interviewed Isobel Lee[351] – she told me about how they had to burn the houseboats down when the council evicted them from the Snooks.

[RECORDING DISTORTS] obviously more to her than being "just" a piano teacher, not that there's anything wrong with being a piano teacher. Behind things like **Waltz of the Graces***, which I think is a bit twee myself –*

Well that wasn't meant to knock anybody out, you know? It was just a nice little piece in the style of the **home piano album** we found the smallpipes tunes written in – full of piano arrangements of 'popular light orchestral miniatures [like] *Forget Me Not'* by Allen Macbeth*,'*[352] or *Fairy Tiptoe* by Julian Fredericks (about whom 'virtually nothing is known').[353] I used the *Grande Carousel* recording as a starting point and developed the piece from there.

Yes, but there was this other side of her that was quite experimental and avant-garde. The Primer has all sorts of strange things going on – **Pu and Nwod the Senud** *with the backwards fingering;* **Hiding from Mr Hill***, which seems to be a silent piece;* **Bow to your Partner** *and* **Checking for Crabs** *involve contorting the body in pretty unpianistic ways…*

One of the things I thought I could explore with Gaynor was the idea of teaching extended techniques and non-conventional approaches to making music on the piano, even to young beginners. As far as I can tell there aren't any primers that include anything like that, even though these techniques have been a part of piano playing for over a century now. *Checking for Crabs* is a bit of a joke, really, to link Gaynor's work with the story on the *Tape Ballad*; but *Distant Storm* is something I do with my own pupils – as well as painting a picture they're also learning about resonance and the dampers mechanism.

There's more to playing the piano than Ode to Joy *in five-finger position.*

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[350] In December 1914, 42 German employees of the zinc works were rounded up and escorted to a concentration camp under military escort, 'possibly because of the presence of the German engineer Max Schaarschmidt.' 'Seaton Carew Zinc Works' <http://www.durhamatwar.org.uk/story/11125> [accessed 1 July 2021].

[351] Former resident of Seaton Snook whose recollections informed much of the *Seaton Snook* mythology, and whose voice can be heard as "Anna Wren" in the *Seaton Snook Tape Ballad (4.16 below).*

[352] Allen Macbeth, 1856-1910. Scottish composer, born in Greenock, studied at the Leipzig Conservatory. 'Allen Macbeth', *The Glasgow Story*, 2004 <https://www.theglasgowstory.com/image/?inum=TGSE01069> [accessed 21 April 2021].

[353] Geoff Grainger, 'Julian Fredericks', *Geff Grainger's Webpages*, 2008 <https://grainger.de/music/composers/fredericksj.html> [accessed 21 April 2021].

Exactly. And more to music than dots on a page. That's a great place to start, but it's not the *only* place to start. [RECORDING DISTORTS] the *Primer* I wanted to address this idea that extended techniques are things you're only allowed to do once you've learnt how to play the piano "properly", whatever that is.

[RECORDING DISTORTS] Primer's *the most recent of Gaynor's works we have, and it's definitely the most experimental.* **Auld Man Holmes' Arthritis** *says to repeat 'until quite impossible', which I'm not sure I'd recommend as an exercise for the fourth and fifth fingers now. With that and the instruction to repeat* **Waves** *'Interminably,' I'm sure there's an argument to be made that the* Primer *is as much a work of Gaynor's artistic expression as it is a method for children. Waves actually reminded me of* Vexations,[354] *which 'might never have been performed had it not been for John Cage'[355] digging it up.*

I hadn't thought of that at the time but I do think, yeah, you might be right – Satie was the strange sort of character you might have found in *Seaton Snook*. The Satie reference wasn't intentional, though – that's *your* interpretation.

Then there's **No** *and* **Hiding from Mr Hill**.

Mr Hill was an actual paedophile from ██████████. He was the headmaster of the local school for a while. The only newspaper [article] I could find about him was a feature in the local paper talking about what a wonderful musician and inspiring teacher he was. It was back when things like that just weren't talked about. I know it's dark, and uncomfortable, but again – this is the queasy-making aspect of parafiction.

Don't you feel like using the story of this bloke in your work is a bit cheap?

Not at all. It happened, and I wanted it recorded. It might have been erased from local history but I could at least document it as a part of *Seaton Snook* history.

When you gave it to your student, what did they do for *No*?

They put their index fingers in an 'X' shape and played like that.

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[354] 1893 piano piece by Erik Satie (1866-1925), posthumously published, consisting of a short musical passage and an instruction for it to be played 840 times.
[355] Matthew Shlomowitz, 'Cage's Place in the Reception of Satie', *Shlom.Com*, 1999 <https://shlom.com/?p=cagesatie> [accessed 7 June 2021].

Ah, I like that! To be honest, that was one of the pieces I didn't intend to be played. I saw it as a product of Gaynor's struggles with depression; a rejection of everything around her. Why have you left the *Lorem ipsum* text in the description?

> *I can't shift it! It's a bug or something. Whatever I do on Wix,[356] whatever I replace the text with, even if I delete the whole page and start again, that text pops up!*

I blame *Iacob Cox's Equus*.

> *Don't look so pleased with yoursel-*

[RECORDING CUTS]

… said before about how when I was a lad, all the other children on TV, or the sing-along tapes they'd play at school, seemed to be from the South East [see 1.2]. As a piano teacher you want to find as many ways to engage your students as possible, and it made sense for Gaynor to use the local area as inspiration for pieces her pupils would connect to.

> *Absolutely. I think every beginners' piano book ever published has a five-note scale starting on middle C, and some single-line version of* Au Clair de la Lune, *but relating them to the dunes[357] gives them a uniquely* Snookish *identity. You can get the chimes of Westminster bells in any beginner piano book, but only Gaynor has the sound of the* **local foghorn***.*

Yes, she's not there only to present the *Seaton Snook* mythology, but also to show how music can be framed by parafiction in order to get a socio-political point across.

[RECORDING ENDS]

4.7   The Crofter's Dream Pt.2

[RECORDING STARTS]

Go on, you say what you think happened.

> *Exactly what I say on the* **Archive***: Gaynor and her friend Jane Hopper saw a harpsichord at Kirkleatham Manor; they were both intrigued by the meantone tuning; later, Gaynor wrote this piece for Jane to play on the harpsichord in Manchester – though I don't think she ever went on to a career in music as I can't find mention of her anywhere. Last year, a similar instrument was acquired by the Horniman museum in London, or at least the artwork on it looks similar to Jane's*

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[356] *Wix* (Wix.com Ltd, 2015) <http://www.wix.com> [accessed 22 September 2021].
[357] The pieces referenced are **Up and Down the Dunes**, and **Rabbits**.

description [Figure 4, below]. I was asked if I would present the piece at the museum, played by the wonderful harpsichordist Jane Chapman, and that's exactly what I did, explaining the story of Gaynor, the piece, and of Seaton Snook *in general. The video will be up on their* **website** *at the end of the year.*

Figure 4:   1668 Onofrio Guarracino virginals, property of the Horniman
                Museum, London

Did you mention that **Timon of the Tees** believed he was the rightful heir to the Kirkleatham estate?

God no, I didn't want to get into all that – Timon's a proper can of worms. Plus you have to leave something for people to discover on the website themselves!

Did they believe you when you told them Gaynor had written it?

Well why wouldn't they have?

Because I'd been asked to write a piece for the Horniman, who'd just acquired the virginals from Finchcock's Museum in Kent. I wrote the piece as Gaynor, and after you'd analysed it, I sent you along to give an introduction.

[INAUDIBLE]

Embracing coincidence and synchronicity is part of the process, and not only does the painting on the lid of the virginals show a strange, abandoned town in a bleak environment, like an ancient

Greek *Seaton Snook*; but I had actually come across this very same instrument years previously, when I was shown around Finchcock's while researching for a paper on janissary pianos.

So, *The Crofter's Dream* is the biggest single instrumental piece [in the archive], I think, and a hybrid of several aspects of *Snookish* music. For one, there's the drones – the **smallpipes** influence [4.12 below]; there's the ***Winter Tempo***; and there's the same melody you'd uncovered months before as the ***Pity Me chorale*** [4.5 above], and that cropped up again later as ***The Crofter*** from Robson Booth's ***Tape Ballad*** [4.16 below]. Gaynor's contains **elements from both versions**.

I know you criticise me for not crediting Gaynor with the smallpipes tunes [4.5 above], but I really think it's not as clear as that. There is a Fortean[358] element to Seaton, and I think a lot of tunes exist within a Snookish collective unconscious, waiting to be discovered. Let's just say, hypothetically, that a lot of the music presents itself to people of a certain disposition in, say, a vision or a dream. Gaynor was a composer, and took that music and weaved it into her own pieces. Robson Booth, on the other hand, was an engineer for the RAF, with a very methodical approach to things, who decided to write a lot of the tunes down in one place, and to formalise the "rules" for the Tempos.

I hate to admit it, but you could be right.

Thank you!

I wonder what you would have thought had I written the three "Crofter" pieces in a different order, though.
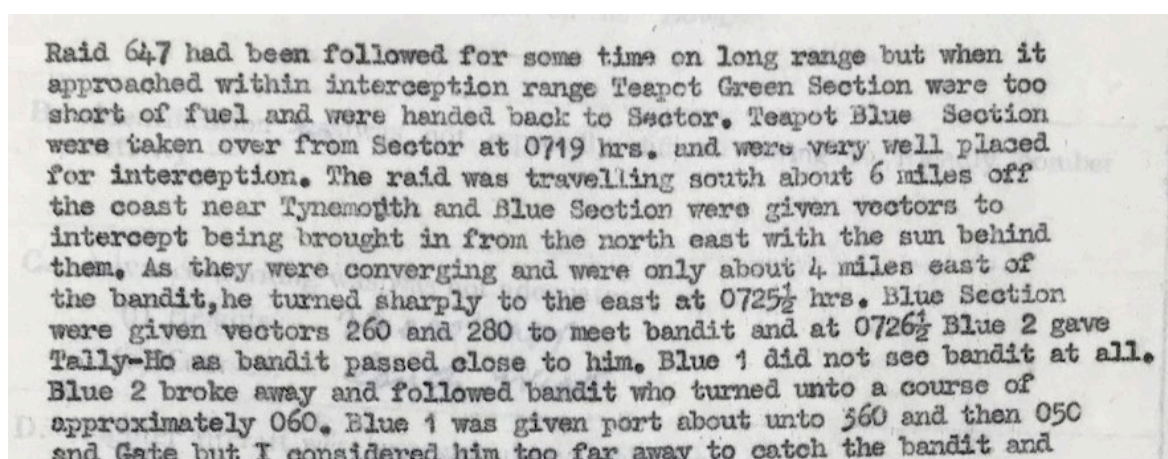
[RECORDING STOPS]

4.8 Büttel

[RECORDING STARTS]

… shot by accident at the rifle range. But RAF Seaton Snook *was* a radar station and barracks, which was operational from the beginning of World War Two up until 1958.

So you didn't make that up, then?

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[358] Pertaining to strange and paranormal phenomena, named after paranormal investigator Charles Fort (1874-1932)

No no, the RAF station was real. I got hold of a load of World War Two interception reports[359] from the National Archives – a couple of mildly dramatic chases, but most of them were along the lines of "We saw something flying along the horizon; we sent a plane out to check; turned out it was one of ours," or "It was gone by the time we got there." That sort of thing.

None Were Available came about from running some of these reports through a Morse code audio generator. I found a report where one pilot – Sgt. Schönberg – chased an enemy plane – they call it a 'bandit' in the report – chased an enemy plane too far away from the bowl.[360] The main report said simply that Schönberg 'failed to return,'[361] which was really quite chilling – like I had the death of Sgt. Schönberg unfolding right there before me. There was a supplement to the report said that he'd bailed out and had got picked up in another sector further up the coast, so that was a relief. So I used bits of that report; the line "Schönberg bailed out"; and I'm sure I peppered it with the occasional "1968" and "Help us"; and I put it through a translator and audio generator.[362] I actually found a video of someone using a Lancaster bomber Morse code setup[363] so I could approximate an authentic-sounding frequency.[364] Then I ran those recordings through a shortwave radio distortion emulator in Reaper.[365]


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Raid 647 had been followed for some time on long range but when it
approached within interception range Teapot Green Section were too
short of fuel and were handed back to Sector. Teapot Blue  Section
were taken over from Sector at 0719 hrs. and were very well placed
for interception. The raid was travelling south about 6 miles off
the coast near Tynemouth and Blue Section were given vectors to
intercept being brought in from the north east with the sun behind
them. As they were converging and were only about 4 miles east of
the bandit, he turned sharply to the east at 0725½ hrs. Blue Section
were given vectors 260 and 280 to meet bandit and at 0726½ Blue 2 gave
Tally-Ho as bandit passed close to him. Blue 1 did not see bandit at all.
Blue 2 broke away and followed bandit who turned unto a course of
approximately 060. Blue 1 was given port about unto 360 and then 050
and Gate but I considered him too far away to catch the bandit and
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Figure 5.   Extract from report of raid 647 on RAF Seaton Snook, 7th June 1942[366]

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[359] Logs of occasions when activity was spotted in the "bowl" (the area surveyed by the RAF base). Reports listed times and descriptions of sightings, descriptions of actions taken – usually sending an aircraft out to inspect closer – and details of airmen and aeroplane involved.

[360] The "bowl" is the area covered by the RAF station.

[361] 'GCI Station, Seaton Snook: Interception Reports', 1941, The National Archives, AIR16/865, 647.

[362] https://www.radio-amater.rs/morsecodegenerator/

[363] CT1CVL Luis Santos, *Lancaster Bomber RAF WWII Morse Code Key 'Bathtub'*, 2016 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYtla9WHIK4>.

[364] The frequency used on the Lancaster bomber video and the track *None Were Available* is 600Hz. It is also the frequency used in redacted sections of these recordings.

[365] Justin Frankel and John Schwartz, *Reaper*, version v5.974/64 (Cockos Inc, 2019).

[366] 'GCI Station, Seaton Snook: Interception Reports', 647.

I discovered that Büttel took the title from a different report.

Yes, 'None were available until it was too late to do anything at all' came from a report of a hostile aircraft appearing on the horizon but disappearing to the North before any RAF planes were ready to go out and investigate.[367]

Aye, it's not an interesting report at all, but there's something eerie about that line on its own. Doom-laden like Seaton Snook*, resigned to its fate.*

Absolutely, yeah. At this point, by the way, I had no idea about how I was going to get these recordings to you – how you'd discover them. I just had an idea that we were in possession of some sonic material from the RAF base. In the meantime, I was playing around with some vintage synth emulators in Logic[368] and thought it would be interesting to combine [the synth music with the Morse code track]. I made this track that landed somewhere between Tangerine Dream and Pink Floyd –

I thought it sounded like Obscured by Clouds.[369]

Yeah, that's what I was listening to at the time. But it was too far-fetched to suggest that that sort of music was being produced in *Seaton Snook* even as late as 1968 when it disappeared. That's when I decided to have the music produced by a later artist who'd been inspired by the place, or maybe had a relative from there or something like that.

William Büttel was a German bloke who lived there, though.

Yeah, I found the name in the Glendenning copy of the census. The **photo** [which accompanies the recording on the website], though, is a random thing I picked up in a junk shop. Anyway, the synths I was using – the ARP 2600 and the Minimoog – they were in production in 1971; the music I was sort of inspired by was made in 1972; but I was also using a Linn drum machine that wasn't created 'til 1980. Not only that, but the RAF records I used weren't available to the public 'til 2015. So that was the first time I considered the idea of there being a time slip in *Seaton Snook*: anachronisms appearing and disappearing; disembodied sounds from the town being heard years later or years before.

Maybe even Seaton *itself looping back in time every time it reaches 1968.*

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[367] 'GCI Station, Seaton Snook: Interception Reports', 69A.
[368] *Logic Pro X*.
[369] Title track from the 1972 album by Pink Floyd

Exactly. I definitely think this was one of the key moments where the creation of the artefact, and how *you* went on to interpret it on the website, influenced the whole of the *Seaton Snook* mythology, rather than the other way around.

Well I'm glad I had some positive influence on the thing instead of dancing to your bloody tune all the time! I wanted to find more Büttel stuff but I couldn't track down any of the albums he did on the Amiga label.

I'm sure we'll find some more in the future.

An ambient electronic interpretation of the smallpipes tunes, maybe.

Aye, or a whole load of stories about life at the RAF base, with that bloke who was …

[RECORDING STOPS]

4.9 The Pilkington Recordings/The Freak Out

[RECORDING STARTS]

I had a vague idea when I was putting the history together that [*Seaton Snook*] had been decimated by a huge explosion at the [zinc] works.

And that maybe there'd been some sort of cover-up? **The Pilkington recordings,** *definitely suggest they were up to something other than creating zinc. The fact that Hartlepool nuclear power station started construction the same year* Seaton Snook *disappeared always struck me as a strange coincidence. But then it's that 68 business again isn't it? [4.16 below]*

[RECORDING DISTORTS]

think sound gathering for this was done in 2019 – I was given a tour round [Hartlepool Power Station] by ███████████████, and EDF[370] gave me permission to make sound recordings. I didn't know at the time exactly how they were going to be used, but I knew this needed to be an aspect of *Snook* that really highlighted sonic journalism, so I just made straightforward stereo tracks on a Zoom H2N.[371] I recorded the courtyard, the cooling hall, the main reactor; there was a corridor with a really nice squeaky door, and an alarm that went off when the door to the reactor hall was opened. I wasn't allowed to include any voices of the workers or the tour guide, but I did use a clip of one worker whistling. We also visited the on-site

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[370] The company that operates Hartlepool Power Station
[371] 44.1kHz, 24bit stereo recordings.

fire station, where they let me record the Geiger counter reacting against various samples of radioactive material.

The next stage was researching the zinc making process. At Seaton Snook it was the 'Belgian-type horizontal retort process … the main process used in Britain from the mid-19th century until 1951.'[372] The full description of the process actually ended up in the script for **Rose** Fookes, although I only used part of the recording.

That was Dr F____'s name was it? Was she an actual scientist?

No, no, she's a primary school teacher – I just liked her voice. Anyway, this was where I had to find a balance between making the sounds believable, so they fit in with the real world, and making them also fit in with the *Snook* mythology. A complete recreation of a hundred-year-old Zinc refinery was not only impossible, but it wouldn't have served any narrative purpose – there had to be something different that offered clues to the *Snook* mystery. So I created something that sounds like "a factory" to the average worker (sic)[373] but which wouldn't sound quite right to an expert. Because, like you said, they were up to other things underground in *Seaton Snook*.

*Presumably **the chromatic "waves" drone** in Sinter Plant Corridor was you?*

Yes, I mixed the recording of the corridor by the turbine hall in [Hartlepool Power Station] with a slowed and pitch-shifted recording of my kettle boiling. Then I used a pitch bend on the kettle sound to make the chromatic ostinato. To generate the spectrogram you have on the site I massively boosted [the volume of the pitch bent kettle track] so it would show up more clearly, and added a sine wave alongside it, but those aren't in the recording on the website – that was just to make the spectrogram more clear. I also added a track of "Agatha [Pilkington]" (me) breathing, with the microphone held at arm's length, though again you can't really hear it. I know it's there, though. I did that with all the Pilkington recordings. And then they're all processed through the Waves Kramer Master Tape plugin, and EQ'd according to the specs of the mic [Agatha Pilkington] would have used – an old Grundig GDM-311 that came with the Stenorette reel to reel recorder.[374]

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[372] 'Zinc: Smelting, Producing and Classification', *Metalpedia* <http://metalpedia.asianmetal.com/metal/zinc/extraction.shtml> [accessed 14 June 2021].
[373] Presumably here the Artist means "Visitor."
[374] An omnidirectional dynamic microphone with a frequency range of 120 - 12,000Hz: 'Grundig GDM-311', *Trashblitz* <http://www.trashblitz.com/grundig-gdm-311/> [accessed 11 October 2019].

It's lucky that she had a portable recorder, because a lot of business were still using wax cylinders for dictation in the 60s.

That did occur to me – the compact tape appeared in 1962[375] but *Seaton Snook* was a little behind the times and hadn't moved to these fancy new Phillips tapes; but Agatha was allergic to the shavings from the wax cylinders and had her bosses get a magnetic tape machine.

She was quite formidable, then – the campaign for workers' hearing protection was quite a task she took upon herself.

Oh, absolutely. Plus I needed a reason why she was making these recordings. I felt that having her trying to uncover nefarious activities would have been too obviously fictional - too close to *Scarfolk*; but the workers' hearing protection angle seemed more realistic, and offered opportunities for exploring factory conditions in the North East later on; as well as turning Agatha from a typist to a determined campaigner along the lines of Ellen Wilkinson.[376] It's fun using parafiction to hint at monsters and ghosts and nefarious activities, but I wanted to use it to frame real issues as well –

But there were nefarious activities, though. They were covering something *up.*

They were, and whatever it was might have caused the time slip, so who knows? It could have been anything from an underground nuclear energy source to an interdimensional portal to a Lovecraftian creature in captivity.

That sound in the [14a Casting Hall Corridor (Incident)], *with [Jacob] Cox's Horse!*

That was fun to put together. There's rumbling sounds from a generator at the power station; massively pitched-down recordings of me hitting and scraping a metal bed frame; an escalator from the Las Vegas branch of American Eagle; and banging on a big metal shed outside the zinc works site itself. And a pal sent me some phone recordings of metalwork she was doing at a baroque trumpet making workshop: sawing, hammering, scraping, filing; again, those were pitched down to make them seem bigger. Then there's the entrance of the creature; everyone drops their tools and I'm shouting in various different voices multitracked. All of that then got EQ'd to sound as if it were on the other side of a very thick wall, and put underneath the recording of the actual power station corridor.

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[375] David L Morton, *Sound Recording the Life Story of a Technology*, Paperback (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006) p. xii.
[376] MP for Jarrow, who marched with the Jarrow Crusaders to deliver their petition to Parliament in 1936. See 2.7

Chapter 4

I really thought I'd found evidence of a cryptid. And Dr F____ got so angry when I asked her about

it all – I was certain there was some sort of cover-up going on.

Well, just because I made it up doesn't mean it's fake. It's real to you, and to everyone in *Seaton Snook.* Fookes definitely knows more than she's letting on. She was very useful, actually – by having her say that the recordings sounded unusual or were incorrectly labelled, [it] gave me licence to move away from trying to be completely accurate. That's an interview that I had to chop up quite a bit because the actor didn't give the best performance in places. I edited it to make it sound more natural; I added my part – or *your* part – and "placed" them in an office space with reverb and some fluorescent light buzz and things like that. Then I played the lot through my monitor [speakers] at a decent volume and recorded *that* on a small mobile phone hidden in my pocket.

Well she said they had procedures to guard against industrial espionage, which is why it couldn't be recorded in the open. But looking at it now, that was just another excuse for you *to create gaps in the narrative where the conspiracy theories could creep in.* [see 2.2]

You're getting it! It's not all down to me, though - I mean, when I look at the **catalogue**, there are quite a few Pilkington recordings that aren't on the website. Why is that?

That was a really hard decision. Some of the files are several minutes long – five, ten minutes – and have nothing other than steady rumbling, clanking, whirring... From a sonic journalism perspective, these extended recordings are very important for being able to tune into the sonic atmosphere of a place, and you can derive all sorts of information from it [See 2.5.1]*. But there's the problem that these longer recordings might not be engaging enough for visitors simply looking for answers to the* Seaton Snook *mystery. So while the longer ones were fascinating to me, I decided to publish only the ones with more obvious curiosities. Like the Casting hall.*

So you made a curatorial intervention?

Yes, but it's all real! I didn't sex any of it up. In layman's terms, I left out the "boring bits." Look, in the end, I want people to spend time on the website – if all this goes well, I might get a Netflix series out of it! But I still think it fulfils the aim of sonic journalism. The recordings aren't just in the background of a documentary with voiceover explaining them – they're presented unadulterated and 'allowed adequate space … to be heard in their own right.'[377]

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[377] Cusack, 'Field Recording as Sonic Journalism'.

I'm not doubting the integrity of your sonic journalistic practice! The ***Freak Out*** recording, for example – that's really interesting.

Now that one really surprised me. You see the photos and you think it's going to be this screaming, howling, deafening noise, but the fact is once they've smashed the guitar, once the pickups aren't picking anything up – it just becomes a bit of speaker buzz, and people banging bits of wood. I know most people I've played it to have found that recording quite enlightening. And that's where sonic journalism has real strength, I think: photojournalism says "Loud, wailing feedback," but sonic journalism says "Underwhelming clattering." You see photos of Chernobyl and you assume the soundscape is going to be as barren as the landscape; then you hear Cusack's dawn chorus recordings and it changes your entire perception of the place.

[RECORDING CUTS]

He's nipped outside for a bit of fresh air so I thought I'd say here while he's gone: The photos of The Peoples Mass are actually of my dad's old band, also called The People's Mass – but with an apostrophe. The quote on the website from "Keith Montgolfier" is my dad talking. One of the first artefacts I wanted to make when this whole thing started was a recreation of the sound of these photos, and I was surprised and a bit disappointed when my dad told me it would all be a bit underwhelming. But I recorded it anyway *because* I knew the result would give people something they might not have thought about. In a way it's one of the best examples of sonic journalism on the site. The plan was to buy some cheap and nasty instruments, get a few people together to perform a few songs and then the *Freak Out* live in a venue, but Covid put the tin hat on that idea. In the end I had to perform all the parts myself in a rehearsal room, as well as "playing" a few audience members and a photographer, and multitracking them. There's some sound from a scuffle on Mayfair Street,[378] too. The effect's the same, though – as soon as you smash the instrument, the sound just stops. It's a really strange emptiness, like you've suddenly crashed down to earth – hang on, he's back.

[RECORDING ENDS]

4.10   Website Design and Development

[RECORDING STARTS]

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[378] A notorious street in Hartlepool, now demolished, with a particularly high incidence of street fights and people setting fire to their neighbours' houses.

Chapter 4

It's not linear, which is important. By being able to move between different topics at will, the visitor has a certain degree of agency in how they gather information about Seaton*. The pages all have a similar look; it's simple and clean; no subject is given more prominence than another.*

How does that affect how you put across your thoughts on what happened [in *Seaton Snook*]?

Well I have my theories, and I put some of them forward in the explanatory notes, but ultimately I don't know what happened there and I'm not going to pretend I'm the holder of the absolute truth. I want people to look at the information and come up with their own theories. Despite what you say, I am *a sonic journalist, and while there's a bit of editorialising and equivocacy, I do feel I have a duty to the material to present it as it is found.*

Peter Greenaway does that in *The Falls* [see 2.3] – he never *explicitly* says what's happening, although it's pretty clear from the information he presents that people are mutating into bird creatures.

*In the end, it's "*What Happened to Seaton Snook?*" with a question mark. It's not "What Happened to Seaton Snook" full stop, or "The Story of Seaton Snook." It's an ongoing investigation without a conclusion. I'd like there to be a conclusion, but there are always going to be questions left unanswered.*

Yeah, even I don't *know* what happened in *Seaton Snook.* I thought I had more of a solid idea at the start, but the more I developed the mythology the more questions and possibilities I uncovered. At first I thought it was going to be as simple as an explosion at the zinc works and a government cover-up. Then I came up with the time loop idea through the **Büttel** piece [4.8 above], and the three newspaper stories of Jacob Cox's horse suddenly became reports of a supernatural phenomenon rather than a clerical error; adding the sounds of the horse's scream in the **casting hall incident** [4.9 above] raised the possibility of an interdimensional, physical monster held captive under the zinc works; and when I developed the **Tempos** for the smallpipes tunes, it became possible that *Seaton Snook* had been destroyed by some sort of angered gods – [the performer of the smallpipes tunes] had to perform this ritual of playing the correct Tempo at the start and finish of any performance. I actually do that at home when I'm playing any of the *Snook* pieces myself. I did it when I was giving a conference paper on the smallpipes tunes, too – confused the hell out of the audience, but it felt wrong not to do it. The ritual that I developed in the fantasy of *Seaton Snook* is something I now feel bound to do in the real world [as with *Streamside Day Follies*, see 2.4]. I might anger the gods if I don't. There's a cult in *Seaton*, you know?

What sort of cult?

I'm not sure yet. But I know they play the Tempos at their gatherings. I wanted to develop a ritual that involved screaming at the sea, and record an initiation ceremony like Alex Sanders.[379] I'll do it one day – it exists; we just have to uncover it.

*That's why I've got pages on there with "information forthcoming"; there's the **Instagram account** where I can post teasers of things that I've uncovered but not yet analysed; I'm not afraid to make corrections and revisions as I go and discover new things…*

I remember the page for **The Wallering Coble** didn't have the explanation of the spiral glyph at first. I wanted you to have to wait a while before you discovered the link to the end of "Hickory Dickory Dock" that indicated it meant to repeat the last phrase over and over. Nobody looking at the site now would know that there'd been a delay, that that page hadn't popped up with all the answers ready. But for the parafiction to keep intervening with the real world, to change and grow as a living thing – even if nobody else was watching it but us – I have to affect some passage of time in your investigation.

You're making my life needlessly difficult, you know?

The other important thing is the amount of material on the site – not just the artefacts, but the ephemera, newspaper clippings, photographs, links to other websites, explanatory videos an tha. Like in *The Falls*, when you have that much material, you can afford to leave a lot of connections unhighlighted, and allow the audience to make their own [connections], find their own conspiracies.

[RECORDING ENDS]

4.11   Folk Music/To Rescue a Sandgate Lass

[RECORDING STARTS]

I really followed Jennifer Walshe's approach with the smallpipes tunes in making their existence believable. *Seaton Snook* needed its own folk music, from which much of the other music in the town sprung. But it had to fulfil a few criteria:

- it had to be unique to *Seaton*

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[379] Sanders (1926-1988) was a wiccan High Priest from Birkenhead, UK, who received considerable publicity throughout the early 1970s, founded several orders of witchcraft, and released a now somewhat camp recording of a new witch's initiation into a coven, complete with overdubbed commentary and orchestral soundtrack and an orchestral soundtrack that included Mussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain*: Alex Sanders, *A Witch Is Born* (UK: A&M Records, 1970).

- it still had to be a plausible variation on the established tradition – not, like, total serialism or anything like that
- it had to be pleasant enough for people to want to play it and remember it
- and there had to be a reason why it hadn't spread beyond *Seaton*.

I found *Folk Song in England*[380] by Steve Roud, and *Folk Music of Britain & Beyond*[381] by Frank Howes particularly useful in researching how to go about all this, as well as *The British Folk Scene*[382] by Niall Mackinnon. Howes makes a point that Northumbria, which included County Durham, 'has a corpus of songs, pipe-tunes and sword dances that are not found elsewhere in Britain.'[383] The two main reasons for this are firstly a matter of dialect – Northumbria was unusually influenced by Norwegian Scandinavians rather than Danish invaders – and secondly the survival of the Northumbrian smallpipes from the late 17th century through to today. [384] And then Hartlepool itself was separate from much of the surrounding area, in that it was 'surprised and pillaged by the Scots in the 14th century, and … fell into possession of the Rebels in 1659.'[385]

> *I see what you mean about dialect: the first folk song I found was the words to **To Rescue a Sandgate Lass**, which is absolutely stuffed with dialect words.*

Yes, I wrote that before I developed the *Snookish* musical language, but I'd already figured out that heavy use of dialect words would be one of the reasons why the music never spread. Obviously a lot of words came from my own vocabulary, but I used Bill Griffith's dictionary[386] for inspiration as well. I found *The Sandgate Girl's Lamentation* in *Rhymes of Northern Bards* and it struck a chord for some reason. Then I heard the Maureen Craik recording and–

> *It's gorgeous isn't it?*

Honestly, I couldn't stop listening to it – I completely fell in love with her voice. So I felt this would be a good place for me to start, to rewrite the words as an answer song. With folk music 'the same text could be sung to any number of tunes, and the same tune to many texts. In fact, the idea that texts and tunes should be immutably joined is a relatively recent phenomenon.'[387]

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[380] Stephen Roud, *Folk Song in England* (London: Faber, 2017).

[381] Frank Howes, *Folk Music of Britain and Beyond* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1969).

[382] Niall MacKinnon, *The British Folk Scene: Musical Performance and Social Identity*, Popular Music in Britain (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1993).

[383] Howes, p. 175.

[384] Howes, p. 175.

[385] Sir Cuthbert Sharp, *History of Hartlepool*, 1851 Reprint with Supplemental History (Hartlepool: Hartlepool Borough Council, 1998), p. 154.

[386] Bill Griffiths, *A Dictionary of North East Dialect* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Northumbria University Press, 2005).

[387] Roud, p. 10.

You get a couple of things wrong, though – "Sandgate Town" doesn't exist, for example.

Originally that was a misunderstanding on my part – [the real place] is just an area by Newcastle called Sandgate, not a separate town. I decided to leave it in as a clue to there being something not quite right [as discussed in relation to Hirst's work, 2.2]. In fact, the book you said you found it in doesn't exist either.

Bonny Songs of the Northern Lands?

Aye. Though the fictional *Bonny Songs of the Northern Lands* has the same collectors and publisher as the real **Song Time**, where some of the smallpipes pieces were found. You can clearly see it in the photo. That's the sort of easter egg I think works best when you've got an archive with a large amount of content.

[RECORDING ENDS]

4.12   The Seaton Snook Northumbrian Smallpipes Tunes/The Viola Loops/Sword Dances/Folk Magic/The 68 Phenomenon

[RECORDING STARTS]

The trouble with talking about how I wrote the **smallpipes tunes** is you've already explained a lot of it on the site and with the **video**.

Ah, so this commentary presents itself as the kind of commentary 'that foregrounds its own construction,'[388]does it?

So you did read the Greenaway chapter after all!

I may have glanced at it. We know about the top G being missing, everything being in G major, never finishing on the tonic and so on. So how did it come to be like that?

First of all, I just want to say that as soon as I discovered the Northumbrian smallpipes, I knew I had to write for them. They're an instrument that's so important to the folk music of the North East, and yet I'd never heard of them until three or four year ago. Things are a bit different now, but when I were at school they didn't teach us anything about local history, and folk music was just something that old farts did, and us kids *definitely* weren't interested in.

At Newcastle [upon Tyne University] they have a whole folk music degree now.

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[388] Lawrence, p. 21.

Oh, it's changing, but I feel it was always easier to keep folk music part of the curriculum in Newcastle, because the Tyneside [i.e. Newcastle] identity has always been championed as the accepted identity of the North East as a whole [see 1.2.3]. It's hard for a kid from Hartlepool to relate to that. In the whole of my time at school, the only thing we were shown relating to the North East was a programme called *Geordie Racer*,[389] about a boy from Newcastle who raced pigeons.

You're preaching to the choir here.

The thing is, everything has to zoom in on *Seaton Snook*. You start with the folk music instruments of the UK – guitar, fiddle, accordion, whistle, bagpipes and so on. Then you look at which of those were heard on the North East coast – the Northumbrian smallpipes, the whistle, the fiddle… and then which ones would have been heard at *Seaton*. I chose the smallpipes, but to make it *Snookish*, I chose a keyless set, which has three drones and a simple one octave G major scale chanter. By the late 18th Century, makers were already adding keys to allow for extra notes,[390] and it wasn't long before more keys and drones were added so that people could play in keys other than G major. *Seaton Snook* for some reason, was stuck on the primitive keyless set.

Yes, now, I think that might have been a stubborn resistance to technological innovation or whatever trends were happening outside the town. But it could also have just been because it was the only instrument they happened to have – [smallpipes sets] are not cheap!

Well both those theories fit the mythology, so I don't see any reason to come to a definitive conclusion myself. But your second theory – that it was out of necessity – that was something that played into the creation of the **Viola Loops**. Fiddle music was common in the area, especially in seaside towns, but I thought it would be more interesting if *Seaton's* fiddle tradition had only come about because, after a shipwreck someone had come across a viola, washed up, without a bow, and-

And that's why it's played with a piece of driftwood rather than bowed!

Exactly. So it's used as a percussive drone rather than a melodic instrument. And they stuck with it because they were stubborn and odd.

Or proud and unique?

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[389] David Meldrum, 'Geordie Racer', *Look and Read* (UK: BBC Two, 1988).
[390] John Peacock, *A Favorite Collection of Tunes with Variations, Adapted for the Northumberland Small Pipes, Violin, or Flute.* (Morpeth: Northumbrian Pipers' Society, 1999).

Yes, that too. To go back to the smallpipes, though: now that I'd chosen the instrument, and started to learn how to play it, I had to look at the music itself. I looked at Roud and Howes for notes on the English folk music tradition, and others like the Vaughan Williams collection.[391] There's a heavy bias towards strophic form, as I'd anticipated, and the most common tonalities are based on the major scale, and then the Mixolydian, Dorian and Aeolian modes.[392] Then zooming in from national to regional, I looked at the general smallpipes repertoire. *Peacock's Tunes*,[393] *Northumbrian Minstrelsy*,[394] *The Great Northern Tune Book*,[395] and various other collections published by the Northumbrian Pipers' Society. Of course, with a lot of tunes being written for dancing, to get a better feel for them, I took some lessons in Durham and Northumberland clog dancing.

> *Bagpipes* and *clog dancing? I bet your neighbours were over the moon.*

The neighbours were fine, but the cat wasn't best pleased. Once I'd gathered an idea of the general musical vocabulary[396] – things like the diatonic transpositions, the intervallic leaps, and the AABB structure of most of the pieces – I had to settle on the *Snookish* features. My first thought was to detune the drones – tonic and tritone instead of tonic and dominant – but then I thought not only was that a bit crude, it just wouldn't have sounded pleasant enough for people to want to play these tunes even in *Seaton.* Instead, the features had to come directly from the mythology: there was a time loop; the story of the town is eternally unfinished; the story of the archive is unsatisfying…

> *Oh thanks!*

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[391] *The Penguin Book of English Folk Songs*, ed. by R Vaughan Williams and A. L. Lloyd (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959).

[392] James Nissen, 'The Music of England', *World of Music*, 2017 <https://www.guidetotheworldofmusic.com/peopleandplaces/the-music-of-england/> [accessed 17 January 2020].

[393] Originally published around 1801, this was the first collection of music printed specifically for the Northumbrian smallpipes, as played by celebrated piper John Peacock. Peacock was one of the last Newcastle Waits, watchmen who played music as part of their duties. *A Favorite Collection of Tunes with Variations, Adapted for the Northumbrian Small Pipes, Violin, or Flute*, ed. by William Wright (Morpeth: Northumbrian Pipers' Society, 1999).

[394] *Northumbrian Minstrelsy. A Collection of the Ballads, Melodies, and Small-Pipe Tunes of Northumbria.*, ed. by J. Collingwood Bruce and John Stokoe (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Society of Antiquaries, 1882) <https://archive.org/details/ACollectionOfTheBalladsMelodiesAndSmall-pipeTunesOfNorthumbria> [accessed 15 January 2019].

[395] *The Great Northern Tune Book - William Vickers' Collection of Dance Tunes AD1770*, ed. by Matt Seattle (London: The English Folk Dance & Song Society, 2008).

[396] The common forms and features identified are as outlined on the archive at www.seatonsnook.com/nsp

No, I mean, you don't come to any conclusion – there's no definitive answers. So getting rid of the top g' and making sure the tunes never finish on the tonic, they were simple ways of reflecting that lack of resolution, and they also go some way to explaining why the pieces never caught on in the wider repertoire – I like a lot of the tunes but some of them just don't sit right, somehow. **Rabbit Hills** dithers on a bit, I think. And ***Dorothea*** is *horrible* with the G drones underneath.

Well, that's why George Brallisford changed it to A Minor. But there are other reasons as well – there's an ongoing prejudice against Seaton Snook *over the years, which we've talked about before; song collectors like Lucy Broadwood or Percy Grainger or Sabine Baring-Gould just wouldn't have gone there. William Vickers collected songs from the North East but, again, nothing from the Durham coast. There's one sword dance we know of from Greatham, just to the south of* Seaton Snook*, but that was ignored by the Edwardian collectors like Cecil Sharp and only survives now because of a chance discovery by Norman Peacock in 1956.*[397]

You know, I went to see [the Greatham Sword Dance] being performed in Christmas 2019. It was an absolute treat. I recorded the song[398] on synth afterwards, intending it to be part of a second Büttel track, but nothing's come of it yet. But with the smallpipes tunes, even the way they're written down made it awkward for outsiders, being written on a four-line stave with no key signature.

Well, on the site I mention the William Dixon manuscript as a precedent for this, but just as we're talking about this right now, I wonder if in the case of the Snook *tunes the scribe was thinking "Well everyone in* Seaton *knows what I mean, and that's all that matters." They were never intended to be played outside of* Seaton Snook*.*

████! I honestly hadn't considered that. When I wrote them out in the Halifax and Song Time manuscripts, I was just jumping off from William Dixon; I liked the idea of a folk tradition developing its own writing system that hadn't been decreed by the musical "establishment."

*And the **Tempos, of course, are completely** Snookish.*

I had two things in mind when I was writing these. First of all, as you said, there's adding to the unique *Snookishness*: having to play the appropriate Tempo for the time of year, and having some tunes only allowed to be played in certain seasons, would have made dissemination of the pieces

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[397] N Peacock, 'The Greatham Sword Dance', *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, 8.1 (1956), 29–39.

[398] The Greatham Sword Dance tune is a traditional tune from the North Yorkshire/County Durham border, and can be found at **https://www.folktunefinder.com/tunes/162204**, with a performance by the Redcar Sword Dancers at **https://redcarswords.wordpress.com/greatham-boxing-day-2020/**

that much harder – nobody outside the town would have put up with that sort of faffing around in a normal folk session. But also I was bringing in some of the supernatural, folk-horror elements at this point.

Robson Booth seemed terrified about what would happen if people stopped playing the Tempos with the tunes.

Well there was a belief that it would bring about the destruction of the town. Gaynor knew it as well – that's why it's in **The Crofter's Dream**.

And were they both part of that cult? [4.10 above]

I don't know. Possibly. But those beliefs would have been part of the community, or at least the older generations, like my gran's superstitions about not cutting your nails on a Friday.

Or staying off the moors under a full moon?

Exactly. Folk magic was a definite part of everyday life in *Seaton Snook* – there are so many fascinating stories in Henderson's book on folklore,[399] which I think you mention a couple of times.

*Yes – the fear of the song of the curlew in **Seven Whistlers**, and there's a full ritual quoted [from Henderson] in **Timon's story**, as well.*

And then there're the rumours about the **salters** using children's blood as a coagulant in medieval times. I'm still trying to define the folk magic tradition in *Seaton* more clearly but it's taking time to develop organically. Especially since I've had to put the creation side of things on the back burner while I write this commentary. The trouble is, when it comes to the Tempos, I don't know how much was generated by me and how much by *Seaton.* I definitely decided to have them be the only pieces to feature the top g', and to keep them slightly awkward I decided that the top note would only ever be preceded by the submediant rather than the leading note. What I honestly can't remember, though, is whether or not I was conscious at the time that I was spelling out "68 68" in each one.

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[RECORDING DISTORTS]
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A brief explanation of the 68 phenomenon in Seaton Snook. The
phenomenon came to both the Artist and the Archivist completely by
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[399] William Henderson, *Notes on the Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties of England and the Borders* (London: The Folk-Lore Society).

chance, and has its origins in the 23 enigma, a belief in the significance of the number 23. This significance was suggested in 1963 by Malaclypse the Younger, author of the *Principia Discordia*,[400] the primary text of Discordianism – a religion 'based on the premise that discord and chaos are the building blocks of life.'[401] Later, Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson popularised the notion in their 1975 book, *The Illuminatus! Trilogy.*

> There is nothing special about the number in itself. It is the fact that it has been singled out and had meaning applied to it, and that Discordians have been trained to recognise it, which is significant. Had it been the number 47, or 18, or 65, the effect would have been the same. Indeed, in his later years Wilson admitted that it would have been much better if he had trained his readers to spot quarters on the ground instead of number 23s.[402]

It is a lamentable fact that both the Artist and the Archivist are now incapable of passing more than a day or two, without spotting something to do with the number 68, and wondering if it is in some way related to what happened to *Seaton Snook*.

[RECORDING ENDS]

4.13   Recording/Objects

[RECORDING STARTS]

*There are quite a few [artefacts] that obviously I've recorded myself – the **smallpipes tunes**, the **Gaynor Leigh** pieces, [To Rescue a] **Sandgate Lass**, and the version of **I Can Hear A Siren** with the drone. The recordings of my students were just done with a Zoom H2N, 44.1kHz, 24bit stereo; and the rest I did with a nice Blue Bluebird condenser mic in the studio. Sarah Wilfong recorded her lovely version of **The Wallering Coble** over in Nashville, I'm not sure what she used.*

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[400] Malaclypse the Younger, *PRINCIPIA DISCORDIA: Evangelical Edition.* (Durham, NC: Lulu Press, 2019).
[401] Cahal Milmo and Tom Willetts, '23 Fascinating Facts about the Number Twenty-Three', *The Independent*, 2007 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/23-fascinating-facts-about-number-twenty-three-6262624.html> [accessed 17 August 2021].
[402] John Higgs, *KLF: The Chaos, Magic and the Band Who Burned a Million Pounds* (London: Phoenix, 2013), pp. 261–62.

*I had a lot of things on 1/4" tape – all the **People's Mass** recordings, the **Tape Ballad**, the **Viola Loops**, the **Pilkington Recordings**… **None Were Available** was a wav file on a USB stick; the **Indoor Market** recording was just emailed through as an mp3 by Paddy Jordain. I had to transfer the 78 of the **Pity Me Chorale** to digital and also the VHS recording of the **Grande Chorale**[403]. Annoyingly that tape went missing when we moved house else I would have put the video footage on there as well. I think that's about it.*

I took most of my field recordings with the same Zoom H2N as you, but I did take quite a few extra bits and pieces just on my phone when I was out and about, and some contact mic recordings in the [amusement] arcades. There were certain [sound recordings] where I wasn't worried about quality so much because I knew I was going to be putting them through some abuse – so for example I was happy for Sarah [Charlton, a member of Hartlepool Stage Society] to record her parts as **Agatha Pilkington** just on her phone. Plus it was in the middle of lockdown and she was 300 miles away in Seaton Carew. Sometimes we worry so much about getting the best gear and the best conditions for recording that we miss the chance to just do the bloody thing!

Something I learned when doing the carousel recordings, though: I took the ones for the Grande Carousel in Southwold; but I took some others in Brighton, which I ended up not being able to use because not only were there too many Southern accents in the background, you could hear the waves washing up on the pebble beach, which sounds totally different to the sandy beach of *Seaton Snook*.

You said before about treating recordings as if they'd been recorded through Agatha Pilkington's microphone. [4.9 above] Did you not consider just recording onto tape with the actual microphone?

I did [consider it], and some of the tracks have been done that way. Most of the things that you've found on 1/4" tape were put through that EQ and tape emulation process in Logic,[404] because doing it in the mix like that gave me the flexibility to re-use sounds in different artefacts. Also, it just wasn't feasible to carry the [Grundig TK121] reel-to-reel around Seaton beach in the rain, not least because it's not battery powered! It was also the best way for me to build the **Peoples Mass** rehearsal tracks: I'm playing all four members, so I had to record the guitar and bass through vintage amp and cab emulators; the drums sounds are a badly-tuned 60s Ludwig kit in Addictive

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[403] The archivist means to say '*Grande Carousel.*'
[404] *Logic Pro X*.

Drums; everything [for the Peoples Mass rehearsal tape] is put through a room reverb in Space Designer; and then "Pilkingtonned."

When it came to the **Tape Ballad**, though, I had to splice together the interviews in Logic[405] because it would have been pretty much impossible to do with tape and a razor blade; but then I transferred them to tape by holding the Grundig mic in front of the monitor [speaker]. It was the only way I could get the proper sound of Robson Booth stopping and starting the tape as he was recording. Same with the field recordings on the second track. But his narration, and **Blodscar Rocks, The Crofter** and the **Tin Whistle Tune,** they were all done straight onto tape with Agatha's microphone.

> *How about the two older recordings? The **zinc workers' band** and the original* [I can hear a] **Siren**
>
> *recording?*

The horn chorale was a real kick up the arse for me. Becca Toft is a wonderful horn player and she tracked all the parts for me. I asked her to play it quite flat, smooth, no vibrato, because I like that mournful sound; and then I muddied it up a bit with a vinyl record emulator. When I presented it to [assessors at Southampton University] for the mid-point evaluation, I was told by one examiner that they didn't believe it was from 1928 because the recording was too clear; and I was told by the other that they didn't believe it was a brass band because the vibrato was wrong! So I had to up my game in terms of researching old recording formats, otherwise my artefacts would have ended up quite *obviously* fake like *Tales from the Black Meadow* (see 1.1.4); and when I spoke to Becca about the vibrato she said, 'Well if you'd have told me you wanted a Brass Band vibrato I would have done a Brass Band vibrato!'

> *I didn't even realise that was a thing!*

Neither did I! It's a really distinctive wide vibrato – apparently, it's because the instruments were often poor quality so it was a way to cover up the dodgy intonation.

> *Well there you go!*

Aye. So she recorded the whole lot again, and I got hold of a different vinyl emulator by iZotope which also simulates different ages of recording. The artefact that that you have on the site now is totally different [from the original version] – a lot dirtier for one thing. Becca even dug out a really knackered old cornet for it, which fell apart halfway through one take. But it's one of my favourite recordings. After that, I also re-worked the recording of *Siren*.

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[405] *Logic Pro X*.

That one was on a CD, wasn't it?

No, if you remember, it was on the original track listing for a **real CD that really exists**, but [*I Can Hear A Siren*] didn't make it to the final release. The recording itself is supposed to be from a wax cylinder, and again I'd originally just covered my singing with a load of hiss and a very narrow band EQ.

Lazy.

Aye, I know, I know. So to get a more accurate representation I modelled the EQ of several wax cylinder recordings from the British Library archives; and instead of a generic hiss, I sampled various "silent" sections from actual wax cylinder recordings – the bits in between people talking or singing – so you can really hear how fast [the cylinder is] rotating. It was a fascinating exercise. And the whole thing really emphasised for me how much more convincing parafiction needs to be than superfiction or parody (see 1.1.1). It can never be perfect, but I want as much haziness between what's real and what isn't as possible. A badly-observed artefact just breaks the spell.

By the way, I did enjoy finding the vintage baccy[406] tin and matchbox on eBay for you to find some of the tapes in. It adds that extra bit of physicality to the project, like Tolkien with the Red Book of Westmarch [see 1.1.3]. And it took me ages to write all the smallpipes tunes out in Robson Booth's handwriting, too, in that old cursive style.

I don't know why you don't write like that more often – it's much nicer than your normal handwriting.

Practice, innit. It was fun, though. Roughing the page up a bit more with scrunched up paper to make the pencil marks look just worn enough. I actually cocked up ***Lend Us A Tab*** by accident, but I had to go with it when you read it as a sign of Booth being frustrated with having to give up smoking.

I stand by my interpretation.

I'm sticking with Dorico[407] in future, I reckon.

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[RECORDING ENDS]
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[406] i.e. tobacco
[407] *Dorico Pro*, version v2.x (Steinberg Media Technologies GmbH, 2018).

4.14   The Peoples Mass/Tulpas/Cocklewomen

[RECORDING STARTS]

It must have been frustrating for Brallisford to have had all this ambition for the band but not the musicianship to fulfil it.

He was quite angry about a lot of things, I think. He's like an angry version of Gaynor Leigh in some ways: where Gaynor was excited about representing *Seaton Snook* in her work, Brallisford almost wanted to rub the rest of the country's face in it. The anger in the **Beat Instrumental interview** about being ignored by the country, [by the] region, by the local council… I mean, a lot of that comes from me, but he's not an author-surrogate or anything. Though I really do dislike Mick Jagger.

You see that regional pride in lots of other bands – bands like Super Furry Animals and the Manic Street Preachers recording in Welsh; the Proclaimers inspired by punk to sing about their own experiences in their own country in their own [Scottish] accents[408] –

And Alex Harvey before them, of course. But again, I needed to find that balance: music that was feasibly being played, but with feasible reasons why it became lost. Brallisford being determined to sing in an uncompromisingly thick accent was one of them, and I do want to record more rock versions of [*Snookish*] folk songs with heavy dialect; the fact that the band weren't musically very good was another reason. In recording the tracks I deliberately played worse – especially with the drums. I had my foot half way off the kick pedal, and held the sticks wrong to make sure I couldn't control things properly.

You would say that, though.

It's true – I'm a far better drummer than Jumbo was.

Yeah, yeah.

I wrote and recorded **Join Hands** *after* that interview, which is how I knew Eddie [Clarke, bass player] could sing, but not at the same time as playing, like George says. Also I'm not a great guitarist, which is why I had to make sure Frank Warnes had died before any recordings were made. I've got a pal who's a superb player, and I'm planning to have him recreate what would have been Frank's style after he'd taken lessons with Pete Chilver. [Frank] sat in on a recording of

[408] Grant Smithies, 'The Proclaimers: Scottish Twins Celebrating 30 Years of Sunshine', *Stuff*, 29 Apr 20119 <https://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/111932144/the-proclaimers-scottish-twins-celebrating-30-years-of-sunshine> [accessed 5 August 2021].

a jazz track called *Young Ardent Sweethearts* – it's a nice song but very old fashioned and it didn't [chart]. That's the only evidence of Frank Warnes's playing that's out there as far as I know.

Now, I know you're lying. Or you're going to say 'It does *exist – I just haven't made it yet.'*

You may mock! But this is all real to me, too. All the timings and dates for that interview had to be checked – sometimes to find out what Brallisford would have known about before I wrote it, and sometimes to verify what he said *after* he said it. For example, I wanted him to express his frustration about singers singing about local issues but putting on American accents. I had Gerry Marsden, Mick Jagger and Eric Burdon in my head, but before I could give that knowledge to Brallisford I had to make sure that, for example, *Ferry Cross the Mersey* was written before the interview took place. As it happens, it came out in late 1964, *exactly* when the interview took place, which is why it's front of mind for Brallisford when he starts his rant. Same with *Beatles For Sale*, which was out at the same time. Meanwhile, I had to situate his political rants in what was happening at the time – Harold Wilson's Labour Party had won the general election that year, with Ted Leadbitter starting his 28-year run as MP for Hartlepool, but like so many people in the town [see 1.2] Brallisford doesn't feel optimistic that the socialist-leaning government cares any more for his town than the other ticket. Brallisford would have felt the same whenever this interview had taken place, but having [the interview take place] in a General Election year gave his pessimism a bit more bite. And another thing about that interview: I sat there at the kitchen table with a word processor, chatting away to myself about The Peoples Mass in George Brallisford's voice, solidifying what he was going to say, and then asking myself questions in the interviewer's voice. Then I wrote the script, recorded it, and transferred it to a portable reel to reel with a faulty input meter so that it would distort horribly. Then *you* played it back and transcribed it, without the knowledge of the original words that I had.

So you could tell me what the unintelligible parts are?

I could in theory, but then you'd be spoiled as the Archivist. You have to be completely naïve to how the artefacts are created, remember?

Why did you bother with the story about Pete Chilver?

Because, like I said, I wanted Frank Warnes to have been an excellent guitarist, with a promising future. Frank dying was a blow to Brallisford because he'd lost a friend, but it would also cast this bitterness over the rest of his music career, knowing it would *never* be as good as he'd always dreamed it could be, because he'd lost the best musician in his band. Again, I had to find a prominent British guitarist for Frank to be inspired by, but they couldn't be *too* much of a superstar otherwise Frank taking lessons with him wouldn't have been believable. Chilver really

did retire to Berwick in 1950, shortly before Frank tracked him down and pestered him for lessons. Oh also – in that story, Brallisford mentions having to bath in rainwater: that comes straight from an account of a holiday at Seaton Snook written by Isobel Lee[409] [the voice of Anna Wren on Robson Booth's Tape Ballad].

*Did Chilver ever play at the **Fifth Buoy Light**?*

He would have done, had it been a real venue. Fifth Buoy Light was just a landing site and storage shed for fishermen.

*And was there a **Rainbow Lounge rehearsal room above the Blue Lagoon**?*

Funnily enough a Hartlepool band called The White Negroes *did* rehearse at the Rainbow Lounge above the Blue Lagoon, which *was* owned by Ken and Madge Tyzak. And incidentally, the Negroes' drummer would proudly declare himself to be 'The second worst drummer in Hartlepool' like Jumbo Woodward.

So a lot of these details I checked out myself, which I think is an important part of the archive being a website rather than, say, a documentary or a podcast or a museum exhibit: because people are sat at their computers, idly clicking links, they can easily open another window and search for verification on something.

Yes, that's something I was very mindful of- I want the experience of the site to be like falling down a 2am Internet rabbit hole, which is why there are so many cross references with other artefacts, links to external sites, photos, newspaper articles, ephemera; sometimes that really strengthens the parafiction. And a visitor can Google Seaton Snook or Arthur Glendenning or Kitty Bell or Jackie Franklin's Rabbit Hills and find out that they *were* real. But they only need to dig a little deeper to discover that it's *para*fictional. Not every artefact is the same, either: sometimes something looks 90% fake but you have that 10% doubt that maybe it's true – like the **indoor market** recording; or it's the other way around like [*To Rescue A*] *Sandgate Lass* or **Gaynor's** pieces, which are much more believable.

*Well I presented **The Crofter's Dream**, at the Horniman museum in London, so that piece and Gaynor's story will be on their website soon, too [4.6 above].*

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[409] Isobel Lee, '1940s and 50s Memories of Seaton Snook by the Lee Family', *Hartlepool History Then and Now* <https://www.hhtandn.org/notes/1479/-1940s-and-50s-memories-of-seaton-snook-by-the-lee-family> [accessed 6 August 2021].

Yes, and the more these things are placed in the real world, the stronger the "para-" part of "parafictional." It's a form of magical thinking called 'production of thought-form'[410] or 'feeding the tulpa.'[411]

> *Ah, [a tulpa is] a creature that 'begins in the imagination but acquires a tangible reality and sentience'[412] through the sheer force of metaphysical energy imbued in it by the imaginer.*

It's no more or less absurd than God or Bigfoot.

> *So in a way, for you,* What Happened to Seaton Snook? *is a magic ritual designed to make Gaynor Leigh and Robson Booth and Jacob Cox's Horse become real?*

Well if I led with that, I don't think I'd have been allowed to do this PhD. But it's something that really interests me.[413] I briefly managed to get Gaynor and *Waltz of the Graces* listed on the Petrucci Music Library,[414] but their moderators took it down within a day or two. I wish I'd got a screenshot of it! I also had a folk-horror book signed by the author, Howard Ingham,[415] and when he asked what to write I had him put "Beware the cry of Jacob Cox's Horse!" And here's a niche one: I was recording some bedding music for a literature podcast that features interviews with authors talking about their work. Because I didn't have an actual interview to use yet, I recorded an "interview" with **John Leatherhead**, who writes biographies of ordinary, unknown people, and he's the guy who mentioned **Mr Vitty** skating on the frozen pools in *Seaton Snook*. As far as I can tell, the director still hasn't twigged it was someone I'd made up.[416]

> *The book signing thing is just a bit of fun, obviously; but do you not see the problem with weaving fictional content into archives like the Petrucci Library, that people rely on?*

I do bear it in mind, yes. And when I'm appropriating photos of real people on the website, too, that's something that causes that parafictional queasiness. But that's part of it – parafiction

[410] Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, *Thought-Forms: A Record of Clairvoyant Investigation* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1901), p. 36.

[411] Ben Kissel, Marcus Parks, and Henry Zebrowski, 'Men In Black Part I - You Fed The Tulpa', The Last Podcast On The Left <https://www.lastpodcastontheleft.com/episodes/2018/7/2/episode-323-men-in-black-part-i-you-fed-the-tulpa> [accessed 2 October 2017].

[412] Natasha L. Mikles and Joseph P. Laycock, 'Tracking the Tulpa', *Nova Religio*, 19.1 (2015), 87–97 (p. 87) <https://doi.org/10.1525/nr.2015.19.1.87>.

[413] Magic and ritual in music has many precedents, most intriguingly in the case of Bill Drummond and The KLF, whose career - which culminated in the band famously burning a million pounds in cash - was suggested by John Higgs to have been a mass-scale Chaos Magic ritual designed to bring about the cultural end of the 20th Century: Higgs.

[414] Also known as the International Music Score Library Project, a huge archive of copyright-free scores: https://imslp.org/

[415] Howard David Ingham, *The Shivering Circle* (Swansea: Room 207 Press, 2018).

[416] The recording can be accessed at **https://soundcloud.com/falconermusic/john-leatherhead-interview**

wouldn't be as powerful a form if it didn't make people stop and think; and I mean both the audience and the artist. But on the other hand, *Waltz of the Graces* and *The Crofter's Dream* aren't fictional pieces. They *were* written. They exist. Yes the authorship of those pieces is questionable, but – and I'm not being facetious here – there are pieces on [the Petrucci Library] under the name of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart that were quite probably written by his sister; there might be Robert Schumann pieces on there written by Clara. One of the points parafiction makes is that you should never trust one source or one way of thinking; question everything. If people go away from the archive thinking it was good fun, that's ace. But like *A Tribute to Safiye Behar* [1.1.1], there'll be people who might not even have considered that there was anything artistically interesting going on in an arse-end-of-nowhere seaside town like Hartlepool. There absolutely is now, and there was then. I use parafiction to prompt people to make that consideration themselves rather than just telling them what to think.

*This reminds me of the **cocklewomen**: when I was reading about their lives for the archive, I wondered about what songs they would have sung. I know Robson Booth says the fisherfolk didn't sing while working out of 'reverence for the sea,'[417] but it's important to mention that there is a huge gap between folk songs collected from men and from women. Collectors like Cecil Sharp, Percy Grainger, Sabine Baring-Gould and Lucy Broadwood, for example, collected from nearly three times as many male singers as from females.[418] Alfred Williams pointed out that this is partly because the songs were 'more difficult to obtain than [men's] … women's songs were sung over the cradle and might not often have been heard out of doors.'[419] Though he also said that songs by women he* did *find were excellent. In fact, Ginette Dunn suggests that 'the singing habits of the women have been far more varied than those of … men.'[420] I don't like the idea of some sort of gender-based segregation in folk music, but at the same time, I do find it quite exciting that while the men were singing one bunch of songs in the bar of the Fifth Buoy Light, the women were in the snug[421] singing entirely different songs.*

Yes, when you put that page together, with all those photos of Bella Danby and her friends, I realised that was a whole possibility in *Seaton Snook* that could and should be explored. And that's something that I can do as a parafictionalist – I can create those songs and make people

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[417] Booth, *Seaton Snook Tape Ballad*.

[418] Roud, p. 639.

[419] Alfred Williams, *Folk Songs of the Upper Thames* (London: Duckworth, 1923), p. 20.

[420] Ginette Dunn, *The Fellowship of Song: Popular Singing Traditions in East Suffolk* (London: Croon Helm, 1980), p. 112.

[421] A small room off the main bar in a pub, traditionally reserved for women and younger folk.

consider what we've lost and what is also yet to be discovered. But that's something I feel I want to collaborate with a local female artist on, though.

[RECORDING ENDS]

4.15   Blodscar Rocks/Snookish Vocal Music

[RECORDING STARTS]

Whether Robson Booth came up with them or just formalised them or whatever, there's definitely a set of conventions about writing instrumental music in Seaton Snook: *major scale; seven note range; no top tonic; appropriate* Tempos *in performance… but the two vocal songs I've found are different. I'm not sure if I can confidently say there's a set of rules just on the basis of* **Siren** *and* **Blodscar Rocks***, but they're both in the Aeolian* **mode***, and they both gravitate to the dominant rather than the tonic.*

How do you think *Dorothy* fits in to that?

Ah, well, it doesn't. But I wonder if that might be because Brallisford was putting words to a song that already existed as an instrumental tune.

That makes sense. With *Blodscar Rocks*, I wanted to write a *Snookish* folk song, with lyrics, but also to try and tie up the loose end that was *I Can Hear A Siren* and why the rules of the smallpipe tunes don't seem to apply to that one either.

It could be because Booth just made it all up as he went along.

It absolutely could be. But I'd find that very disappointing – I'd got so used to the idea of Booth channelling a collective sonic spirit of the *Snook* that I don't think I could have handled something more mundane. So I decided that the two forms of music – instrumental and vocal – should have different rules, and I used *Siren* to extrapolate what those rules could be. The examiners won't have seen this, but you'll remember that the whole second half of your analysis of *Siren* didn't appear on the site until early 2020, when I was figuring out these rules and realised that the only relatively common scale *Siren* fitted into was G Aeolian, and that it finished on the dominant. That gave me the two rules I needed to be able to start writing a new song that would match, and give the impression of a writing tradition rather than just chucking out vaguely "folky-sounding" songs with Hartlepool dialect crammed in. And even though the songs don't have the same conventions as the instrumental pieces-

They do have the unsettling nature in common, in that they don't finish on the tonic.

Exactly – there's still a *Snookishness*s about them. Like *Streamside Day Follies* [see 2.4]*,* through creating these artefacts – and you analysing and presenting them – we've developed a writing tradition that will carry on when we find new songs and tunes from *Seaton Snook* in the future.

Can I just mention, the line 'Ee-i-an-ti-oh' – I found it interesting that they used that particular phrasing. I couldn't find it anywhere else.

In their book *The Singing Game*, Iona and Peter Opie wrote a fantastic history of about 150 children's playground songs. One of them is *The Farmer's in His Den*, which I used to play at school in Seaton Carew. In the dozens of variations of the words they mention – from 'Heigh ho the cherry ho,' to 'Heigh ho! For Rowley O,' to 'E O the alley-oh,' to 'ee-aye-addy-o,'[422] they don't mention 'Ee-i-an-ti-oh,' which is what we sang. And I just wanted that little slice of Seaton history to be on the record at last.

I've just seen, on the cover of that book, there's a picture of a group of children playing Old Roger Is Dead.

You're joking? Let me have a look… That was on the B-side of the ***Pity Me*** **Chorale**!

By the Grangetown Singers of Middlesbrough. Was that deliberate?

Nope, total coincidence. I'm only just seeing this as I'm writing our dialogue now.

[RECORDING ENDS]

4.16   The Seaton Snook Tape Ballad

[RECORDING STARTS]

… poster in my first year, which said that I was producing a 'large-scale audio documentary'[423] of this abandoned seaside town. I thought maybe a 90-minute radio documentary or something like that. I dropped that when the idea of the archive came up, but when I was researching media representations of North East culture, I came across the *Radio Ballads*[424] by Ewan McCall, Peggy Seeger and Charles Parker. It was the perfect way to tell an extended story about *Seaton Snook*;

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[422] Iona Opie and Peter Opie, *The Singing Game* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 187.

[423] Peter Falconer, *Come and Visit Seaton Snook*, 2018.

[424] Described by BBC producer Charles Parker as 'a form of narrative documentary in which the story is told entirely in the words of the actual participants themselves as recorded in real life; in sound effects which are also recorded on the spot, and in songs which are based upon these recordings, and which utilise traditional or "folk-song" modes of expression.' 'The Original BBC Radio Ballads', *BBC*, 2006 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/radioballads/original/orig_history.shtml> [accessed 16 August 2021].

to add more music; to add more field recordings of the local environment rather than just the zinc works… but I was most excited about being able to use the actual recordings I had of Isobel Lee[425] and my dad[426] talking about their childhoods. I'd used them as sources for events and characters in the mythology such as kids **sneaking into church**; **Rudolph the Russian Rugmaker**; the houseboats being **burned down** when the Tees Conservancy Commission revoked the right to moor on the beach; the strange turquoise pools; **Fred Hill**, of course… and I'd always intended to chop [the interview recordings] up and re-contextualise them to fit the *Seaton Snook* mythology, but I couldn't find a reason for them to end up in the archive.

What was stopping you?

It's the old Jenny Walshe problem of being careful with how many sources you – as the archivist – have access to (see 2.1).

If I'd spent two hours interviewing someone in 2019 about their memories of Seaton Snook*, then why didn't I just ask them what happened there?*

Exactly. There was no way I could have let you have had access to these people. But setting the interviews in the past, as a tape project by Robson Booth, meant that the interviewees were now long dead – if they ever existed at all – and you only have the information that Booth decided to include at the time.

He obviously had so much more, too: if the extra tape is anything to go by, presumably he did other interviews on other topics. Or is that just you hinting at "distant vistas" again?

I'm afraid so.

So were Anna Wren and Michael Cole making things up in those interviews?

Nope, everything they say is entirely their own words.

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[RECORDING CUTS]

WEST HARTLEPOOL WAS ONCE THE LARGEST IMPORTER OF EGGS IN THE COUNTRY.
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[425] Isobel Lee is from Stockton-on-Tees, and spent her weekends and summers at Seaton Snook. The very first mention I ever found of Seaton Snook was under a **photo** of her and her family in the 1950s. I cannot begin to express my excitement when by sheer coincidence somebody on Facebook was able to put me in touch with her for an interview in early 2019. By further coincidence, she had retired to an alms-house directly opposite my childhood home in Seaton Carew. She gave her permission for the recording to be cannibalised to create the interview with the fictional Anna Wren.

[426] Peter Falconer (Sr), whom I interviewed in early 2019 about his childhood in Glasgow and Seaton Carew, and his early working life in Hartlepool. He gave his permission for the recording to be cannibalised to create the interview with the fictional Michael Cole.

Chapter 4

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[RECORDING CUTS]
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… made the recordings but didn't edit them until months later when I started making the *Tape Ballad.* Even though I'd used my recollections of the interviews as the source for parts of the *Snook* mythology, when it came to constructing the *Tape Ballad*, I had to make sure that nothing contradicted this mythology that had been growing and developing for eighteen months or so. So anything my dad had said about work, I could only use things that referred to what might have been at the zinc works, such as the blast furnace. But sometimes I'd come across things that hadn't been part of the plan when I'd done the interview but had become part of the mythology in the meantime. Isobel says at one point [at 0m45s in *Tape Ballad Extra Tape*] 'I don't know what they did in that hut to tell you the truth, but it was always there.' I forgot what it referred to originally, and now I *know* it was about the **cocklewomen's hut**. And my dad talked about the father of one of his schoolfriends who only had one arm [3m07s in *Tape Ballad Extra Tape*] -

- which has got *to be **Jimmy Walls**!*

I was so excited when I heard it. And now I *know* it's Jimmy Walls, because it says so right there on the archive. There are certain things I know about *Seaton Snook* I haven't told you yet, and certain things that neither of us have discovered yet, but everything that you uncover and present on that site is true for *Seaton Snook.* That's why you can't present **Canch End Morning Radio** yet: I haven't worked out how you could have come across that particular recording. [see Appendix D].

 So, about 18 months after I'd first interviewed Isobel and dad, I went through the recordings, extracting anecdotes and phrases relating to different topics:

- The beach
- Individual characters
- The houseboats
- Fishing
- The zinc works
- The local environment
- Church
- Music
- School
- The nature of memories
- And phrases that sounded particularly interesting or mysterious when taken out of context

Such as?

Oh, my dad saying 'He's watching,' or Isobel saying 'You can see them coming round, and starting to swirl, and they don't land – they're moving and they're moving and they're moving.'

Ooh that is creepy, like.

Well she was talking about red kites in Scotland, but I thought I might be able to fashion some sort of UFO sighting out of it. But I just didn't have enough material. [The amount of material available determined] how I decided on what would go into the *Tape Ballad*: there was enough there to have decent-sized sections about the environment, the beach, fishing, and the houseboats. There wasn't much on music, school, and church individually, but putting all three together made a nice little section. And that's where I could use the narration to explain the lack of music. At this point, I'd not written **Blodscar Rocks** so I hadn't started on the vocal music. If the fisherfolk *had* sung, then surely Anna Wren and Michael Cole would have been able to tell [Robson Booth] about it. But then there was that one thing dad said: 'There wasn't much music on the beach.' Isobel said the same thing but she didn't phrase it in a way that I could have used. And that gave me another unusual *Snookish* behaviour to add to the mythology: unlike other sailors and fishermen, those from *Seaton* worked in near silence. Not only did this add to the weirdness of people from the town, but it also hinted at their fear of the sea – and the cryptic, supernatural monsters that lived there, causing shipwrecks and explosions and god knows what else.

It meant that you didn't have to spend time writing a load of sea shanties, too. That's convenient.

Hey! If there were any indication that they *did* sing sea shanties, I'd have written them. Maybe the cocklewomen sang when they were back in their hut, I'm don't know. But Isobel's comment about her brother playing the tin whistle prompted me to write the **Tin Whistle Tune**, which – since it was instrumental – followed most of the smallpipes rules.

*No **Tempo**, though.*

Yeah, that's still puzzling me. Maybe Booth himself forgot, maybe it only applies when you're playing the smallpipes, I don't know. Anyway. So just like I had to glue different bits together to make a decent section on music and church, I only had a few sentences about Rudolph from Isobel, about him being good at rug making and handicrafts; and so I bolstered that by adding in some bits of my dad talking about one of his uncles who was good with electronics.

So we have more information about Rudolph, and *it seems that both Anna Wren* and *Michael Cole knew him.*

They add to each other's stories, making Rudolph more of a well-known local character. And it was very satisfying to be able to add **Gaynor's piece** in the background of that one, again to make it a living, interconnected community: Robson Booth certainly would have known and played her music. The Handel piece – *How Beautiful are the Feet* – there's no mythological *Snookish* connection there, it's simply that my dad mentioned it and sang a couple of lines. But I did source an early 20th Century harmonium that would have been played in the prefab tabernacle at *Seaton*.[427]

*Is that the same one I play in the **smallpipes video**? Is that actually from Seaton Snook?*

Yeah, if you like. So I'd used the – you alright?

Yeah, tea's hot. Hang on.

[SCUFFLING]

[RECORDING CUTS]

… lots of material on the houseboats, and I left most of it intact. The hardest bit was editing out my own interjections – I've learnt a lot about interview technique through having to do that: I had to shut up more!

I'm glad there's such a substantial houseboat section. I'd seen pictures of them, but absolutely nowhere else on the internet can you find any description of what they were like inside, what they were like to live in and sleep in. I think it's important that Isobel Lee's memories are now recorded here, even though they're ascribed to Anna Wren.

I also had a few good sections about factory work and this tramp from the beach, but rather than force them to fit in, I decided to leave them on the *Extra Tape,* as Booth was planning a series of recordings talking about different aspects of *Snookish* life. This one, the main one, was definitely focussed on childhood memories.

I enjoyed the field recordings in the background. All the dialogue was on one track, and the field recordings were on the other, so you could play them at the same time on Booth's machine.

There's recordings from the rockpools on the beach at Seaton Carew, the harbour at Hartlepool Headland, the dunes and the Wide Open where Seaton Snook is now… and for some reason I recorded myself digging a grave in the dunes. I had no idea how long it would take me to dig a

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[427] In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there was a fashion for catalogue-ordered, prefabricated timber and corrugated iron churches: https://www.buildingconservation.com/articles/tin-tabernacles/tin-tabernacles.html

three-foot deep grave – it's not something one does every day – and I've never heard what someone digging a three-foot deep grave in the sand sounded like. So I did it, and now I know. And I placed a wee cairn at the head, decorated with sea buckthorn. [That recording is included in the *Tape Ballad*], just as Anna's talking about how sad it was that the houseboats had to be burnt down.

> *And then Robson Booth cuts in to explain that Anna's memories haven't happened yet. It's quite matter-of-fact at that point, the time-slip.*

Well Robson Booth believed in it totally. He was very open-minded about a lot of paranormal things, including the idea that Anna Wren might have been a little clairvoyant.

> *Is that his real voice?*

Robson Booth doesn't have a real voice. He forgot what it was a long time ago. The voice he uses on **What The Battery Says** was put on for a laugh; the clip of him saying he doesn't want to go to the Carnival [**Carnival 1967 (edit)**] might well be closer to the truth since he might have been too frail to bother putting one on, but don't forget that even then he had an audience in his carer, Dominique Maitlund; so he could have just been playing the part of a sick old man. I feel like the voice he used on the *Tape Ballad* was affected, but it was one he liked to use a lot. Colin Cantlie – or is it Cantlie? – he used the same voice later when he was making films with Peter Greenaway at the COI [2.3]. But no, [Robson Booth's] real voice is a mystery.

> *I'm not surprised he forgot. I think he spent his whole life trying to be other people. Speaking of forgetting – it's quite pleasing how [Robson Booth] bookends the* Tape Ballad *with Anna and Michael talking about memory.*

It is, and it's also a very clear nod to Hirst's *Treasures of the Wreck of the Unbelievable* documentary. It's me putting in big screaming neon lights, "It's a fragmented, false narrative." It's saying that *Seaton Snook* as it is in the archive, isn't real. But it's also a comment on my process – forgetting what I've made up, what I've adapted, and what's real, is important to being able to immerse myself in creating a parafictional world. (this process is described in Chapter 3)

> *It's not all about you, though! What if Robson Booth himself was making that comment – maybe everything he put on the Tape Ballad was a pack of lies, and we've* both *been fooled.*

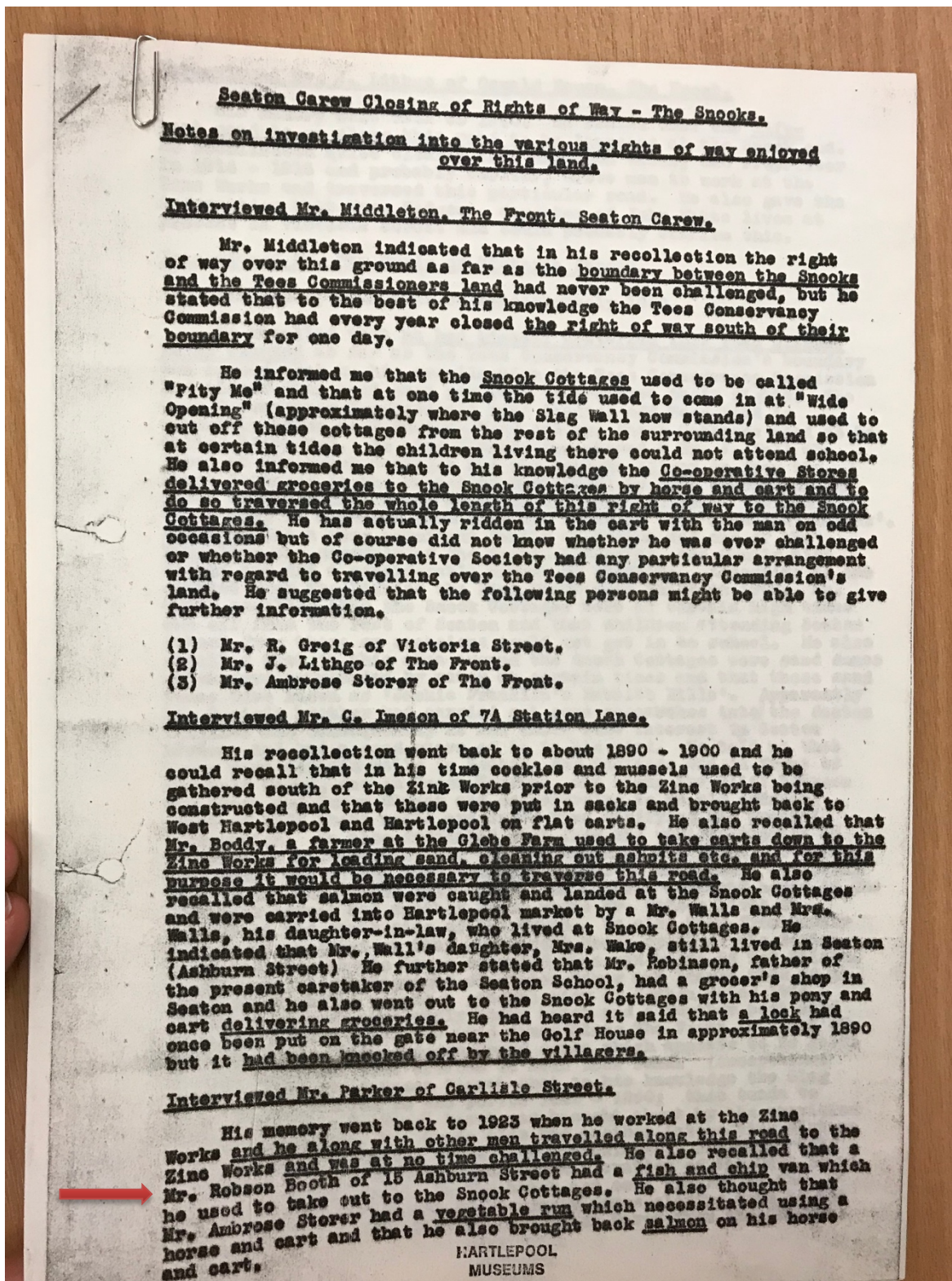No, that's not… *I* created Robson Booth.

> *Are you sure?*

Figure 6: Page from the Glendenning Archive

Where the hell did that come from?

[RECORDING ENDS]

Conclusion, and the Future of *Seaton Snook*

As a practice-based research project, *What Happened to Seaton Snook?* explores three main areas of research enquiry:

- the use of parafiction as a framing device in the presentation and experience of musical compositions
- the use of sonic journalism in an artistic context
- the use of the above to investigate and draw attention to aspects of North Eastern English culture.

When looking at the first area of enquiry, it is first useful to consider whether *What Happened to Seaton Snook?* does indeed align with the characteristics of parafiction, and here I believe *What Happened to Seaton Snook?* is definitely a parafictional work, and not merely superfiction. It '[intersects] with the world as it is being lived'[428] through the way in which I-as-Archivist present the work at conferences and festivals; in the *Snookish* performance practices such as the playing of the *Tempos* that I insist on executing; and how people who have interacted with the archive have contacted me to make enquiries about their relatives, whom they believe may have lived and worked in *Seaton Snook*. In addition, the processes described in Chapter 4 demonstrate that there is a high level of research, consideration, detail, and technical work expended on making the artefacts and their framing by the Archivist as plausible as possible; and while there is a certain amount of humour and sly nods to the fiction in the work, the fakery is more obscured than in a superfictional work such as Hirst's *Treasures of the Wreck of the Unbelievable* (see 2.2).

The parafictional framing of the compositions of *Seaton Snook* has certainly added to the depth and interest of the musical works and sound recordings. Not only are individual artefacts made more stimulating by their accompanying stories and parafictional contexts, but the connections between different pieces, places, events and concepts give vitality to individual works, as they become integral parts of the larger, ever-evolving parafictional history of the town.

In using sonic journalism to present the story of *Seaton Snook*, although the archive includes a great deal of supplementary text and photographs, the primacy of the sonic material ensures that the archive assertively presents sonic journalism as a powerful and engaging form of expression. Although the decision was made to reduce the number of long-form field recordings for the sake of accessibility (see 4.9), the stories of *Seaton Snook* would be impossible to express purely in the

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[428] Lambert-Beatty, 'Make-Believe', p. 54.

form of a book or a visual exhibition. When used in the project's *artistic* context, sonic journalism gives weight to the parafiction, as well as being an entertaining and versatile approach to storytelling, as the audience listens for connections and conspiracies in the *Seaton Snook* mystery, as well as enjoying some of the recordings (one hopes!) on their own merits.

The third area of enquiry was somewhat frustrated by the Covid-19 pandemic, but there are several points of success: I can feel satisfied that the entirety of the material of *What Happened to Seaton Snook?* is borne of this small County Durham town; the Archivist is also from the area; the archive has been made available on the Internet rather than putting on an exhibition in a gallery miles away from Seaton Snook; local dialect and accents are presented sometimes with translation but never with apology (including in the Exegesis, Chapter 4); the concerns of people like George Brallisford about government indifference – and sometimes hostility – to the North East are given air; and the possibility of avant-garde composers existing and thriving in the North East is put to the audience in a plausible manner. In this, *Seaton Snook* also demonstrates the politically-charged, interventionist aspects of parafiction – not as overtly as the work of The Yes Men (see 1.1.1), but certainly taking its subject as seriously and putting its case forward at least as forcefully as Walshe's *Aisteach.*

I had hoped to write and produce – in collaboration with The Newcastle Kingsmen morris team – a new mummers play and sword dance for *Seaton Snook*, which could then have been taught to local schoolchildren. The parafictional history could certainly form the basis of a mini-curriculum, using the stories of *Seaton Snook* as a jumping-off point for learning lessons about wider issues in the North East: the development and dissemination of local folk music; the effects of climate change on the acoustic ecology of the area; the ingenuity of houseboat builders, and the changing technologies of the fishing industry; the pollution of the Wide Open, which is still relevant today as a battle to stop a nuclear waste site being built in Hartlepool erupts during the writing of this very conclusion.[429] In a broader sense, the town could be used to teach about wildlife and conservation (not least due to the numerous rare flora in the area); the mathematics necessary for the annual stinting; the difficulties faced by Gaynor Leigh as a woman expected to abandon her studies to care for her family; the treatment of mentally ill people like Timon of the Tees; and Gaynor's primer could (and I believe should) be expanded to become an young person's introduction to extended piano techniques and experimental music. The versatility of parafiction affords all these possibilities; its intersection with the real world gives it the potential to have a

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[429] Katie Anderson, 'Council Leader Steps down from Role amid Nuclear Waste Controversy', *TeessideLive*, 2021 <https://www.gazettelive.co.uk/news/teesside-news/deputy-head-hartlepool-council-steps-21337986> [accessed 20 August 2021].

tangible impact. To reiterate the points made in section 1.1, the project would not hold these possibilities had I simply compiled a history of the real Seaton Snook; nor would it have such potential for impact had *Seaton Snook* been entirely fantastical.

My practice has developed in many interesting and unexpected ways over the course of the project. As well as learning a completely new musical tradition and instrument in the Northumbrian smallpipes (not to mention the clog dancing), I have established a parafictional world with a robust history and musical tradition that can provide artistic material for as long as I wish. I have also shifted towards a heterogeneous composition approach that includes not only musical material but also sound design, written texts, visual artworks, narration, and the research process itself as part of the compositions. Perhaps most importantly, I feel I have successfully created an artwork that truly represents my memories of my hometown, and my many complex feelings towards it as a dislocated Hartlepudlian living in the South East.

I still do not know what happened to *Seaton Snook*.
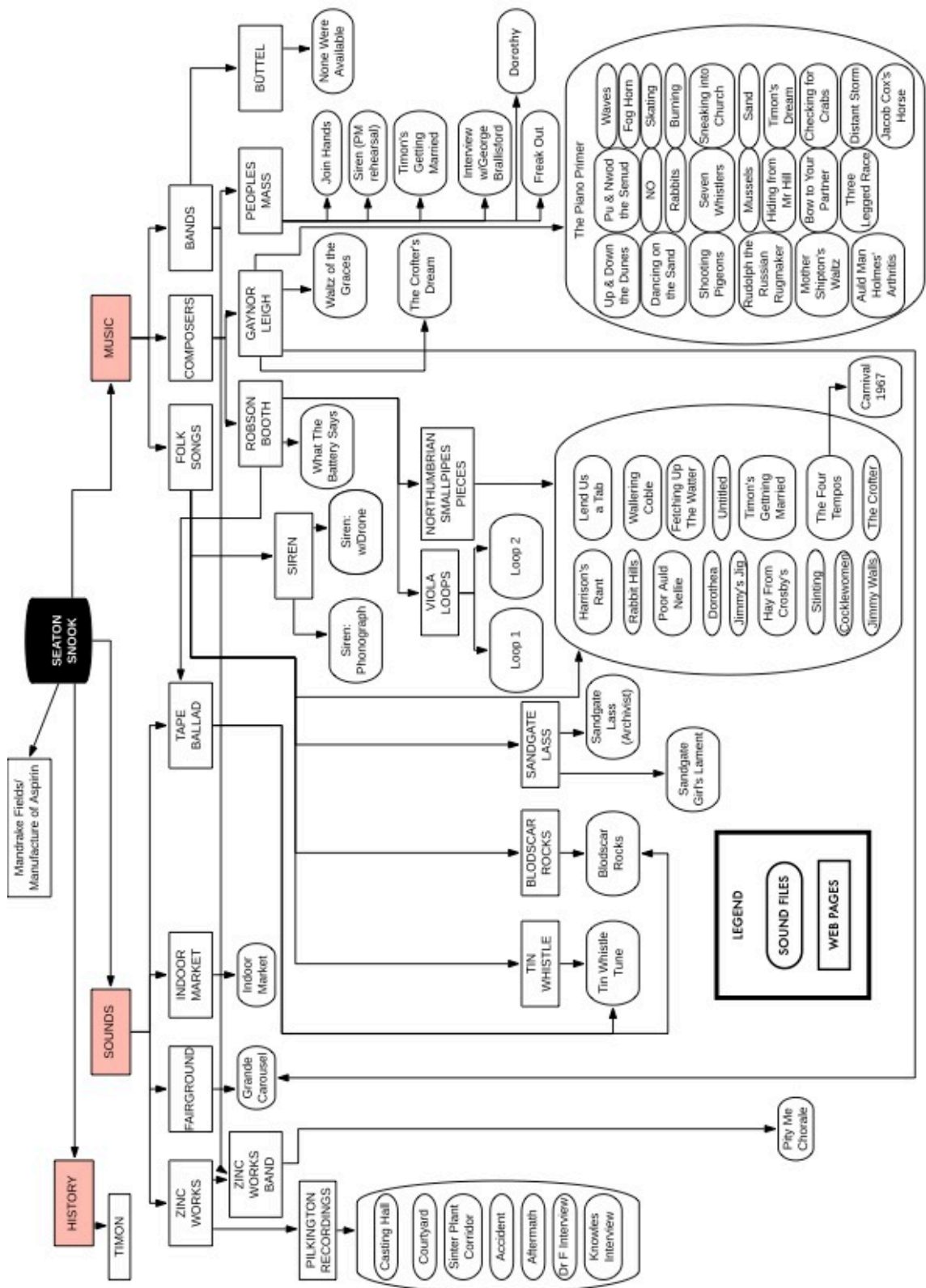
Appendix A   Website Map

Figure 7:   seatonsnook.com sitemap

Appendix B   Further Exploration of Artefacts from

Treasures of the Wreck of the Unbelievable (2017)

Below are three tables corresponding to the three major components of the *Treasures of the Wreck of the Unbelievable* project (i.e. the exhibition itself[430], the catalogue, and the Netflix documentary), listing various instances of Hirst either creating a sense of credible reality, or else planting clues to the exhibition being a hoax.

Table 2:   The *Treasures*... exhibition: sustaining reality and revealing the hoax

Sustaining Reality	Clues to the Hoax
State of the "recovered" objects, eg. coral growth; water damage etc.	
Photos of the artefacts being recovered	
"Expertly" rendered model of the *Apistos,* supposedly with the assistance of maritime archaeology experts at Uni of Southampton	
Sheer scale of the exhibition seems too big to be a hoax	
Museum guides - print and audio - treat exhibits as real historical artefacts	Gaps in detail of the guides, such as not even attempting to explain the appearance of Mickey Mouse
	The obvious resemblance of various busts to modern popular figures such as Pharrell Williams
	Temporal, such as *Five Grecian Nudes* appearing at the International Surrealist Exhibition of 1936, or *Pair of Slaves Bound For Execution* appearing in a photograph from the early 20th Century

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[430] Hirst.

Sustaining Reality	Clues to the Hoax
	Cultural mismatches, such as in *Hydra and Kali*[431], which features two figures from very different mythologies
	Self-references, such as *Bust of Collector* clearly depicting Hirst himself
	Anachronisms such as inclusion of Disney characters, or "Made In China" stamps

Table 3:   The *Treasures*... catalogue: sustaining reality and revealing the hoax

Sustaining Reality	Clues to the Hoax
Photographs of the exhibits	Contradictions inherent in the exhibits themselves, detailed in table 1
Photos of the artefacts being recovered	Materials used to make the lightbox exhibits showing these photos, as well as the display cabinets are listed, indicating these are also art pieces, not just display cases
Essays on the exhibition, the legend, and the dive, by known and respected experts in their fields	Statements from François Pinault and Martin Bethenod, owner and director of Palazzo Grassi, respectively, admitting it is an *artwork*.

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[431] Hydra and Kali, presents a cultural mismatch that points to the hoax in a more subtle way for those who are unfamiliar with the mythologies to which they refer. The Hydra is beast of Greek mythology, but Kali is a Hindu deity; the collection frequently plays on the audience's willingness to accept the unfamiliar without question - these two unfamiliar objects are accepted as a pair, despite their incongruousness, simply because they are foreign to us. In a post-Edward Said world we might see this as crude orientalism, but in Hirst's favour I would argue that there could be three valid reasons for a piece such as this. One is to highlight the mythology of Amotan being a collector from many different cultures, thus deepening the Amotan myth; the second as another clue to the fakery; the third as a satirical comment on orientalism. The List of Works, incidentally, makes no mention of the incongruous nature of these two figures being involved in the same piece.

Sustaining Reality	Clues to the Hoax
Explanations of some of the more outlandish artefacts, such as *Remnants of Apollo,* which includes a Vacanti Mouse-type sculpture (the mouse with a cartilage in the form of a human ear grafted onto its back in the early 1990s). The catalogue claims Apollo to have been depicted as "Lord of Mice", and 'may attest to a locally held beliefs concerning a hybrid human-animal creature or totemic deity'.[432]	Failure to acknowledge the presence of Mickey Mouse, Goofy, Optimus Prime, Hirst himself, etc.

Table 4:   The *Treasures*... Documentary film: sustaining reality and revealing the hoax

Sustaining Reality	Clues to the Hoax
Detailed account of the dive	Various statements throughout the documentary alluding to the fakery, including my favourite from (fake) "consultant metallurgist Rungwe Kingdon": These are not objects that are just randomly chosen… I'm not prepared to say it is Amotan, but… there's certainly somebody with a vision and with a dream, a massive dream, and a pretty big ego behind all of this… I can't say this was a trading vessel. There are very definite aesthetic choices being made here
	Hirst's own statements about the nature of the exhibition being about 'belief', and the 'gaps' in between historical facts

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[432] 'Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable', p. 16.

Sustaining Reality	Clues to the Hoax
Thorough detailing of the Amotan mythology	"Supporting" documents, paintings, mosaics, writings, are suitably vague so as to be able to fit into any given narrative.
All American Newsreel from 1962 showing a Captain George Knowles's search for 'an eccentric collector's enormous ship and his worldly possessions lost at sea.'	Knowles is fictional, and *All American Newsreel* was concerned mainly with encouraging an African American audience into joining the war effort, which ceased productions in the 1950s.[433]
Genuine academics and experts being interviewed	Documentary also includes fake experts played by actors, albeit not high-profile actors.
Elaborate explanation of Hirst's interest in financing the dive, including home video footage taken supposedly when Hirst was a student, of his discovery of a hoarder's flat	
Extra footage, such as Hirst's student video footage, and mobile phone footage of the very first find, appearing to be in an authentic style	High quality, multi-camera footage of the initial dive, even though Hirst's funding had supposedly not been secured at that point.
Periplus of the Erythraean Sea. A genuine 1st Century AD Greco-Roman manuscript used by trade vessels to navigate around trade ports in the Indian Ocean, cited here as 'Proof of trade and cultural cross-pollination… Proof that a merchant could amass such an eclectic collection.'	*Periplus* does show extensive trade routes, but none on the East African coast.

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[433] '[All-American News--Excerpts. 1945-06, No. 1]', *Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA*, 2019 <https://www.loc.gov/item/2018601507/> [accessed 19 July 2019].

Appendix C   Ethics Form for Interview of Archivist (Fax)

UNIVERSITY OF Southampton

CONSENT FORM (Adult)

Study title: Welcome to Seaton Snook

Researcher name: Peter Falconer
ERGO number: 45258
Participant Identification Number (if applicable):

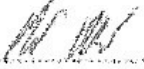*Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):*

I have read and understood the information sheet SSV1 and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	PCF
I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study.	PCF
I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time for any reason without my participation rights being affected.	PCF
I understand that my words (either recorded or transcribed) may be taken out of context in the final project outcome, or re-arranged to describe a different story to my own.	PCF
I understand that my name, the names of any other people or businesses, information that may incriminate myself other other people, or information that clearly identify me as the speaker, will be anonymised or otherwise disguised.	PCF

Name of participant (print name) .... **PETER CONSISTENTLY FALCONER** ....

Signature of participant ....

Date .... 5 June 1968 ....

Name of researcher (print name) .... **PETER CONSISTENTLY FALCONER** ....

Signature of researcher ....

Date .... 5 June 2021 ....

[11th December 2018] [Version Number 2]   (Ethics/IRAS reference (45258)

Figure 8:   Ethics form for interview of the Archivist (fax)

Appendix D   Canch End Morning Radio

The recordings referenced in this appendix can be heard at

http://www.seatonsnook.com/canchend

In early 2020, I composed a piece for Kompass Ensemble and their *Insekten* series of concerts - the piece had to be less than a minute long, and arranged for any of piano, violin, and a selection of tuned & untuned percussion. I chose to write for piano, violin and crotales.

Although not written as a piece for *What Happened to Seaton Snook?,* I was drawn to the image of the sun rising over Canch End (another name for Seaton Snook), and I used some *Snookish* characteristics in the music, such as the NSP drone in the piano LH, major seventh leaps, and sections of the ***Lenten Tempo*** (the piece was written in the spring of 2020). I felt no need to try and fit the piece into the *Seaton Snook* narrative, and so it is not included in the Archive.

In late 2020, I created a piece for Sound Thought festival in Glasgow. The call for submissions specified the piece be related to "Dawn" or "New Beginnings" or similar. My first thought was to adapt *Canch End Dawn* into something more substantial, with ambient background music and a voiceover narration. The title *Canch End Morning Radio* suggested itself immediately.

The sounds in the background include, amongst other things, synthesiser renditions of the individual parts of *Canch End Dawn,* considerably time-stretched. The title of the piece told me that there was a morning radio show broadcast from Seaton Snook, possibly from the **cocklewomen's shack** with the tall mast behind it.

Research into the history of radio in the UK revealed problems with equipment leading to the North East becoming a bit of a black (or at least brown) spot for commercial radio after the BBC abandoned its local radio stations in favour of regional broadcasts in the 1920s (see 1.2). Although pirate radio does not seem to have been widespread until the 1960s, there is no reason why the ingenious people of Seaton Snook, used to having to take matters into their own hands, could not have started their own radio service. In the early 1960s, the BBC made moves once again towards local radio broadcasting, following a report coincidentally named the **Pilkington** Report.[434]

The narration of *Canch End Morning Radio*, therefore, is made up of fragments of an interview with someone involved with the station talking about their work. This may well have been **Robson**

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[434] Great Britain Committee on Broadcasting, 'Report of the Committee on Broadcasting 1960 (Cmnd 1753, 1962) (Pilkington Report)' (H.M. Stationery Office, 1962).

Booth, as he had a background in the RAF Signals Corps, and was known to create **tape pieces and pieces for radio.** If I am to integrate this piece into the Archive, I need to have at least some idea of why the piece contains late 20th century sounds by someone familiar with *Snookish* **NSP writing conventions**; why only fragments of this interview have been used; who could have recorded it; how it might have ended up in my hands. The voice on the recording is also very close to that of the Archivist. Until I discover more about the piece, it will remain in the background.

I am, however, certain that *Seaton Snook* had a morning radio broadcast. I just need to work out how to uncover it.

Appendix E   Original *Seaton Snook* poster

Figure 9:   Original Seaton Snook poster

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