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The Composer Isn't There

A personal exploration of place in fixed media composition

by

Hilary Mullaney

A thesis submitted to Plymouth University in partial fulfilment for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

School of Art and Media

December 2012

Blanket

Low_r

Hollow

Invisible

Dawn

Green Gate

Voice

Morning

Throbbing

Áitleku

Biography

Hilary Mullaney (b. 1979, Mayo, Ireland) is a composer based in Dublin, Ireland. She graduated from National University of Ireland, Maynooth in 2000 (BA Music, Hons) and from Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) with an MA in Music Technology specialising in Electroacoustic Composition in 2001. She subsequently lectured in DIT in Electroacoustic Music and Composition to both undergraduate and postgraduate students before taking up a permanent full-time post at the School for Informatics and Creative Media at Dundalk Institute of Technology where she has lectured in the Dept of Music and Creative Media since 2004 to both undergraduate and postgraduate students. Since 2001 she has supervised seventeen MA students on topics primarily concerned with electroacoustic music and composition but also in areas of musicology, music education and music therapy. From 2001 – 2006 she worked as a music facilitator with Drake Music Project, Ireland, an organisation enabling musicians with disabilities to perform and compose music using assistive technology. Other areas of interest are piano pedagogy, in particular the musical development of young children.

As a composer, her works have been broadcast and performed at various festivals and concert events worldwide. With funding from the Arts Council of Ireland she studied at the Centre de Création Musicale Iannis Xenakis in Paris in 2005 and completed the Mamori Sound Project residency in Brazil with Francisco López in 2008. She has curated various concerts and events and is co-director of *Musica Nova* at Dundalk Institute of Technology.

List of Publications and Public Performances

Blanket

Publication
2007 Non Standard (Various Artists) CD Non Standard Collective

Public Performance
2005 07 CCMIX (Centre for the Composition of Music Iannis Xenakis) Paris.
2007 03 Inner Voices: Women in New Music Festival USA;
2007 03 Postcards from the Edge, Back Loft Gallery, Dublin
2007 10 Electronic songs unspoken, Immersive Vision Theatre, University of Plymouth.
2008 06 The Shed, Dublin, Ireland
2009 02 Beckett and Music, University of Sussex, UK

Low_r

Publication
2010 Soundtrack to a Catastrophic World, CD, published by Leeds Metropolitan University

Public Performance
2007 03 EAR-Drum, The Project, Dublin, Ireland
2007 03 Postcard from the Edge, Back Loft Gallery, Dublin
2007 05 Futuresonic - NetworkEXPOSED, Victoria Baths, Manchester, UK
2007 06/07 broadcast on Art Radio at Cornerhouse - radio station based at the Cornerhouse Gallery, Manchester, UK.
2007 10 Electronic songs unspoken, Immersive Vision Theatre, University of Plymouth
2008 06 The Shed, Dublin, Ireland
2009 02 Beckett and Music, University of Sussex, UK
2010 05 MANIF D'ART, Quebec Biennial

Hollow

Publication
2008 Sound Report II (Various Artists) CD Soundnetwork, UK, launched at Liverpool Biennial 08

Public Performance
2007 10 Electronic songs unspoken, Immersive Vision Theatre, University of Plymouth
2008 02 Voices III: Peninsula Arts Contemporary Music Festival, Plymouth, UK
2008 06 The Shed, Dublin, Ireland
2008 09 broadcast on artinliverpoolfm, Liverpool Biennial 08

Invisible

Public Performance
2007 10 Electronic songs unspoken, Immersive Vision Theatre, University of Plymouth
2008 06 The Shed, Dublin, Ireland
2008 11 An Foras Feasa Conference, NUI Maynooth, Ireland
2009 02 Beckett and Music, University of Sussex, UK

Dawn

Conference Paper
2009 07: Mullaney, H. Dawn: a composition exploring time and place at the Mamori Art Lab, Humanities Challenging the Future, An Foras Feasa Conference, DkIT, Co Louth

Public Performance
2009 06: 2009 03: New Music Festival Cal State Fullerton, USA
2009 02 Voices IV: Peninsula Arts Contemporary Music Festival, Plymouth, UK

Green Gate

Publication
2010 Grey is the Colour of Hope [CD] Leeds Metropolitan University

Public Performance
2010 03: 9th Annual New Music Festival Cal State Fullerton, USA
2009 06: An Foras Feasa, Humanities Challenging the Future, Ireland
2010 05 Sonic Vigil, Cork, Ireland

Voice
Public Performances
2010 03 BR.ADA: Celebrando Ada – online exhibition, Brazil.
2010 08 Hilltown Music Festival, Castlepollard, Ireland
2010 Sonic Vigil, Cork, Ireland
2010 Musica Nova, Louth, Ireland

Morning
Public Performances
2013 07 Hilltown Music Festival, Castlepollard, Ireland
2013 Plymouth University

Throbbing
Public Performances
2013 05: Fourth International Symposium on Music/Sonic Art: Practices and Theories, MuSA Karlsruhe (IMWI) (8 channel)
2012 05: Musica Nova, Dundalk Institute of Technology (8 channel)
2012 03: 9th Annual New Music Festival Cal State Fullerton, USA (stereo)

Áitleku
Public Performances
2013 Plymouth University

Hilary Mullaney

The Composer Isn't There: A personal exploration of place in fixed media composition

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Abstract

This practice-based research is concerned with a collection of fixed media compositions written between 2005 and 2012 with accompanying contextual writing.

The primary focus of this research was to produce sound works, but the concept of place has played a significant role throughout both the compositional process and in the reflection of each composition. This research explores how place is '*heard and felt*' (Feld, 2005) in a composition and how recollected memory impacts on the compositional process. Artistic decisions made with regard to creating the compositions reflect my personal place and associations with these sound materials at a given time whether they are field recordings or synthesised materials. The way in which sound material is subsequently processed and structured reflects this.

Place and the compositional practice inform each other in a two-way process. This results in what Katharine Norman (2010) has referred to in her writing on sound art as an '*autoethnographic*' journey; a representation of the creator's personal experience. I have begun to reflect on these compositions as art works that represent a particular time or place. The artwork represents the *trace* of the place from which it was composed (Corringham, 2010). I believe that I cannot totally transport a person to my place; rather, I intend this creative representation to enable the listener to create and inspire their own narrative.

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Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without my supervisor Dr. John Matthias for his exceptional help and support in bringing this research to completion. Without John's support, I feel I would not have discovered and realised my own voice as a composer; I am eternally grateful. Many thanks for your help, creativity and understanding over the past number of years.

I would like to thank Katharine Norman for her enlightening writing and practice, which enabled me to understand my processes as a composer. I am also incredibly grateful for the time she has spent engaging with my work and offering advice; this has been invaluable.

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I would like to thank the Art + Sound research group in Plymouth University, in particular Jane Grant who is very helpful, encouraging and always has kind words of support.

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I would like to thank Randal Neal and Gerard Pape for facilitating an inspiring residency at CCMIX. Likewise I would like to thank Francisco López for facilitating an extraordinary experience at the Mamori Sound Project.

I am grateful to many of my work colleagues who support me, in particular Paul McGettrick who assisted with thesis formatting and layout. I would also like to thank the many composition students I have taught over the last 12 years; you only really understand something if you teach it and this sharing of ideas has enabled me to grow as a composer.

Helen Byrne, thank you for being both an amazing mentor and friend; you have no idea how much your teachings have influenced and shaped me as a person over the years, which in turn has shaped my artistic practice.

A huge thank you to all my friends, in particular all the fantastic people I met during my time in Plymouth - Joao Martins, Eduardo Coutinho, Andrew Brouse, Nikolas Valsamakis and Peter Beyls in the ICCMR. Lucy Davies, Shaun Lewin, Cathy Mc Cabe and Dan Buscombe - thanks for keeping me propped up with friendship, wine and many laughs. Thanks due in particular to Maria Campbell for being a fantastic friend, always understanding and supportive as well as providing a welcoming home from home on my trips to Plymouth.

I would also like to thank my family for their support throughout my education, and my neighbours (and second family!) the Lavin's who are always so thoughtful. I have a wonderful bunch of nieces and nephews who bring light relief when I need a break from academia - Ruth, Brian, Barry, Seán, Rachel, Sarah, Katie and Shane, you are all inspiring and unique; I love you all dearly.

Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Graduate Committee.

Word count of main body of thesis: 32, 540

Signed …………………………………………….

Date ……………………………………………..

Chapter 1   Introduction

1.1 The Composer Isn't There.

This practice-based research is concerned with the development of a collection of ten fixed media compositions which have been disseminated at various concerts and installations internationally. These compositions are art works that represent a particular time or place; a recollected memory. Creating fixed media works allows me to embody my relationship to the sound material at that time.

1.2 Research Questions

My initial idea was to explore composition from a personal perspective. The research questions which arose from this include:

What does 'place' mean in the context of my work? How do I explore this in my artistic practice?

What is the significance of the presentation medium? How does fixed media allow me to present my artistic ideas?

How does my practice and concepts connect to that of other composers and artists working with similar techniques, in particular field recordings?

Is my approach uncovered through listening? What do other listeners gain from the experience?

How does existing research into place inform my work?

My working definition of place is a geographical place which I have been to and in addition, I include the 'place' of memory and association with this

experience. The research methodology is embedded in the practice, in that creating the music enables me to begin to form answers to the research questions presented. Experiencing various locations and exploring these places within my practice allows me to create a new 'place'; my personal interpretation of this place. Sounds are placed against other sounds; manipulated sound, instrumental and vocal expressions which create a new place, one which is personal to me. This artistic research has enabled me to understand my processes as an artist, in particular with regard use of acousmatic sound in exploring place and recollected memories. Using acousmatic techniques has allowed me to provide a personal portrayal of place, rather than a literal one through unprocessed field recordings or soundscapes. This experience has enabled me to consider my work as an 'autoethnographic' journey (Norman, 2010); an artistic representation of personal experiences throughout this research period.

This practice has developed from initially using entirely synthesised material in *Blanket* (2005), a composition exploring sounds composed using the UPIC synthesis system invented by Iannis Xenakis and completed in 1977 (Chadabe, 1997, p. 213). I created this work when I attended a summer residency at the Centre de Création Musicale Iannis Xenakis (CCMIX), Paris in 2005. The work explores the idea of place; merging a personal place and the historical importance in a studio / digital setting. My exploration of place continued to develop and eventually became a personal exploration using anecdotal materials. The final composition in this portfolio, *Áitleku* (2012) explores a number of ideas developed in my practice within this collection; sounds from home and imagined places. *Áitleku* is composed using field recordings captured

from 2010-2012 from my home life, which was split between Ireland and the Basque Country 'Euskadi', northern Spain. The work tells stories of places and people. An extensive amount of materials were recorded during this time, and I decided to listen and reflect on these to create a work which is a very personal exploration of my 'places'. My places in this work are my dreams, people close to me, sounds I long for, memories of the past. This work consists of three sections; a personal narration recorded immediately on waking after a vivid, dramatic dream, the local soundmarks on a busy street in Euskadi and stories from the past narrated by my father accompanied by the awakening of the countryside at dawn, which explores the traces of this place and the people who lived there. These anecdotal recordings of my father placed next to recordings from another country create a new 'place'. The sounds of these places create a new place in the mind of the listener which changes endogenously as the listeners change and their listening experience. *Áitleku* is a composition which is exploring where I am in relation to where I have come from; a journey which helped me to discover what is at the core of my practice.

I present these as fixed media works, primarily because I consider fixed media compositions have the potential to portray place and can represent the '*trace*' (Corringham, 2010) contained within a place. Francis Dhomont states of composing with fixed media that it '*fixes onto a medium (magnetic tape, computer disk or other) with precision and no maybes, the most subtle nuances chosen by the composer: what we hear doesn't resemble what is wanted, it is what is wanted*' (Acousmatrix, 2005, p. 26). It is this fact that attracts me to fixed media composition and one which I believe has the potential to explore the meaning of place. The work represents a particular

moment for me and was created during a certain time and place; a *'trace'* of these places (Viv Corringham, 2010). Through the process of composition, the work absorbs the memory of those places and my experiences of them.

1.3 **Trace**

Viv Corringham, a British musician and sound artist, stated that her work *Shadow-walks* was influenced by James Joyce's comment that *'places remember events'* (Corringham, 2010). Her way of interpreting this is that *'everything that happens leaves traces that we might be able to sense'* (Corringham, 2010). She wonders if this not only includes larger events in history but also small, more ordinary aspects of every day life. In this work she attempted *'to make a persons traces, their shadow, audible'* (Corringham, 2010). This idea of 'traces' led me to research her influences; she is interested in exploring the special relationships people have to familiar places and how that is connected with an *'interior landscape'* of their own personal history, memories and associations with place (Corringham, 2010).

Shadow-walks is a work which began in 2003, and which has been performed in numerous different places around the world. It involves *'walking with others, listening to environmental sound, and my own improvised singing'* (Corringham, 2010). Corringham states that walking can aid a direct experience with the location, while improvised singing is her way of responding to the environment and place; *'All the sounds and singing heard in the work were recorded in the actual place'* (Corringham, 2012). In my composition, *Voice* I responded vocally to my feelings at the time of recording, and incorporated the sounds I particularly heard around me into the final composition; namely seagulls and thunder at night. I did not vocally respond to the environmental

place, but rather to a more personal one, which allowed the sounds from the environmental place to share the space within this composition; my memory of this place I was in.

In *Shadow-walks*, Corringham explores places in Cobh, Co. Cork with companions such as Hilda, a native of the area. They both went through places *'that spoke to her (Hilda) of her life and the history of the town'*, which explored both the past and present in Hilda's life. In *Áitleku*, I have recorded selected places of personal significance; various environments, people's voices - these are the sounds which evoke place and meaning for me. While Corringham's ideas are very clearly explored, I believe that we cannot truly represent another person's place artistically. While Corringham does not suggest that this is what she is trying to do, I want to represent a personal world and my relationship to that place in all its facets. *Áitleku* and *Dawn* contrast as the former is something which is full of collective memories from my '*familiar*' (Norman, 1994) life, whereas the latter is a composition which emerged from an intense experience of visiting a particular place, a contrast which can be experienced in the compositional landscape of each work. *Dawn* uses harsh, intense sounds; noise and sound mass to create intensity whereas musically *Áitleku* has more ambient sounds, and when treated are done so subtly, creating a much less intense composition

All of my works are fixed media works rather than evolving and changing compositions like Corringham's audio-walks, where the output in performance or experience is physically different on each listening. The research in this portfolio is an exploration of the traces and essences places leave at particular times, by reflecting on the practice and how I have interpreted place through

each work. My working definition of 'trace' consists of the elements of a former presence that are held within a place; its history, people and landmarks and what they have left behind and contributed to a place. I see my works as representing something from a particular time, whether that is a feeling, an emotion or my relationship to sounds created and recorded during a certain time and place. I am interested in how those feelings, emotions or relationships evolve with time. Corringham's work represents a 'trace' of a time or place, and are different on each performance, whereas my works are all fixed media, the 'trace' of these works do not change overtime, but my relationship to the sound material has the potential to change. In my compositional practice I am not attempting to re-create a particular place or time in its true sonic perceptual sense, rather I re-work and interpret that place and time through acousmatic composition. These works are fixed in the sense that they are fixed media or 'tape' works, but my compositions have the possibility of changing within the mind of the listener because of their own context and relationship to the materials and practice; their recollected memories will shape this.

Aden Evens (Grant and Matthias 2012) has described *The Fragmented Orchestra* created by Jane Grant, John Matthias and Nick Ryan as an *'endogenous composition'* in which the music becomes an artefact of two parallel structures; the internet and the brain. Installed in the UK between December 2008 and February 2009, it consisted of 'soundboxes' located at 24 fixed geographical locations. The sounds captured at these locations were transmitted by internet to a server computer at the FACT Gallery in Liverpool, with a continually running artificial neuronal network, which triggered fragments of the sounds through the 24 hanging speakers in the gallery at

neuronal firing events. The geometry of the hanging speakers allowed the audience to listen to the live 'composition', while navigating through the space. The 24 channels were then mixed to a single channel and sent back to the soundbox locations to be made audible by a Feonic (Piezzo) Speaker attached to a vibrating surface creating a huge musical 'instrument'. The way the music is experienced by the audience is related to how they engage with both the gallery space and the 'compositional' space, and how the music becomes arranged in the listener's mind. *The Fragmented Orchestra* uses human made and environmental sounds with differing timescales familiar to the listener; the listening experience begins from within where the listener engages with memories and associations with that sound material (Grant and Matthias 2012).

1.4 Site

I do not consider the works presented for this research as site-specific works, in the way that for example, composer and sound artist, David Prior (Prior, 2010) does for his work, *Black Water Brown Water* (2008). Prior intended the audience to listen to the work at the site; Stourport canal basins in Worcestershire, UK. The work is a '*walk, visitors pick up an mp3 player and listen to the piece on a small, man-made island that sits between these water systems'* (Prior, 2010). Prior also produced a version of this work for acousmatic/radio listening**,** describing it as '*a cinematic rendering in sound of the characters involved in the creation of the Stourport Basin'* (Prior, 2009). In my own practice, listening does not occur at the place the materials were recorded or influenced by; in some instances it is not possible, for example in *Throbbing* the place was my dream; only I experienced it. Because my representation of place is personal, I want the listener to experience *my*

experience of place, but to interpret this themselves; the listener has the possibility of creating their own place or narrative when listening; this is what the listener gains from experiencing my work.

In order to evaluate my processes, the compositional language employed throughout this portfolio is considered, outlining the variety of techniques and practices which have influenced and been adapted throughout this research over the compositional period, namely anecdotal composition in an acousmatic context, sound mass techniques, field recording, glitch and noise in musical context, silence as a structural technique, and the use of voice in an acousmatic context. I explore how my work connects to that of other composers and artists working with similar techniques. Each work within the portfolio is evaluated from an aesthetic and technical viewpoint.

1.5 Outline of Thesis

Chapter 2 outlines my relationship with place and how this impacted on my research throughout this period, explaining what 'place' means in the context of my work. This also outlines existing research into place and how this informs my work. This will include contextual material relating to other composers' work which explores ideas related to place. In order to investigate what 'place' means in the context of my work I will particularly discuss the works and writing of Katharine Norman and Luc Ferrari, with reference to other researchers and composers, such as Viv Corringham, Steven Feld, David Prior, Pauline Oliveros, Chris Watson, Francisco López and Michelle Nagai.

Chapter 3 outlines my primary compositional methodologies within this collection. Artistic and technical methodologies will also be evaluated in

Chapter 4, which consists of an evaluation of each of the compositions within the portfolio. Each evaluation consists of an introduction to each composition, a description of how it emerged artistically and was realised technically, considering the particular methodologies used, both in terms of the artistic and technical procedure.

Chapter 5 elucidates how this research contributes to current knowledge and practice in addition to my own conclusions and thoughts relating to the research process. It includes my conclusions to the research questions presented, and how this research can contribute to future research ideas and practices.

Chapter 2   Place

What has become evident for me in recent times is how important place is with relation to my practice. My working definition of place is a geographical place which I have visited and in addition, the 'place' of memory and association with this experience; my surroundings infiltrate my work, in how I interact with the environment, through composition.

Place for me is not just a geographical location or mapping. I am interested in the way in which place evolves in its own way for each person, place is not always a position or site; it is an interpretation of a position or site by the person experiencing it. The word 'place' is used to describe particular locations and sites, but when dealing with place in an artistic context I deem that other factors are at play; the artist is allowed to have a more open interpretation of what place means for them. Tacita Dean, an artist who works with the theme of place, describes that the most difficult thing about place is how amorphous it is, that it is incredibly hard to define what it is. As an artist can work using non-verbal methods it can be easier to express place using the imagination in an inventive way to create sound or narrative (Dean and Millar 2005).

> The artist can evoke a place that will always only exist as a memory of another place in the mind of the viewer, because I think you need to have visited a place before you can really know it, and then only you will know it in that way. That is why place is so personal, and intangible, but at the same time universally understood (Dean and Millar, 2005, pp. 182 – 192).

In my work, I engage with this 'intangible' element through intuition, expressing my experiencing in the artistic practice.

With the advent of sound recording, it became possible to not only frame sound

from a particular location but also to explore these sounds through composition therefore imparting the composer's personal place. While works by composers such as Luc Ferrari, including his *Presque Rien* series, denote the use of recorded sound – there is also a hidden place within these works, they tell a story or narrative from the perspective of the composer. As Katharine Norman writes; '*Somebody* (authors italics) is telling their tale, and we're aware of their presence' (Norman, 1994, p. 105). Steven Feld suggests that landscape has traditionally been represented through visual arts and literature '*by and large, ethnographic and cultural geographic work on senses of place has been dominated by the visualism deeply rooted in the European concept of landscape*' (Feld, 2005 p. 182). Feld cites Cosgrave who states that '*seeing is believing*'; that landscape came to mean a representation of a visible world, and dependency on sight as the primary medium through which the truth about place be uncovered, but also that within the general academic study of geography, that landscape is considered as an '*integration of natural and human phenomenon… analysed by the methods of scientific enquiry*' (Feld, 2005, p. 182). Given this focus on the visual, Feld questions how place is '*heard and felt*' (Feld, 2005, p. 182). Feld states that sound, hearing and voice form a bodily link for feeling and emotion due to their coordinated engagement of many muscles, organs and other structures in the torso, throat and head. These physical sensations of sound in our bodies, allow us to create a gestural world within time and space (Feld, 2005, p. 184). I regard these memories and feelings are what impact on our experience of place, and are ones which I feel has an impact on how I experience place. This is what particularly interests me with regard to the concept of place and its relationship to artistic practice; how does place impact on this process? This is an important question in my research. A

clear example of the impact of place on this work is in *Dawn* where the 'intensity' of the place is revealed in the composition by the gradual increase in volume and density. While the recordings are not manipulated so much as to destroy the origins of the recording, it is clear to the listener that this is a place outside. The sound mass technique employed and its subsequent climax creates an intensity which represents my personal place while at Mamori; while I was in a place which was physically demanding and intense, I realise I was also in a similar personal place; being at Mamori heightened this. Another example in my work which considers place in a different guise is in *Throbbing*, but the place here is not a geographical location, this is a place imagined and perceived from my familiar (Norman, 1994) life through a dream. The landscape of this dream is not a reality, but nonetheless at the time of occurring was 'real' in my experience. *Throbbing* explores this landscape through sound and I am the only person who can truly remember this landscape, as I am the only person to experience it. This dream occurred because of my personal place at the time in the real world, one of anxiety. The composition acts as a memory of this place and the listener interprets this by creating their own narrative.

My discovery of Corringham's explanation of 'trace' in her work was a very important turning point in my understanding of place in my work. Corringham writes of anthropologist Keith H. Basso, who wrote in *Senses of Place* (1996) how *'places possess a marked capacity for triggering acts of self-reflection, inspiring thoughts about who one presently is, or memories of who one used to be, or musings on who one might become'* (Corringham 2006, p 31). Corringham wishes to investigate work previously related to memory and psychogeography and further develop her vocalised interpretation of place. I

do this through field recordings and I consider my manipulation of these recordings and the composition is my 'vocalised' interpretation of place. Unlike Corringham, I do this in a solitary manner, whereas she wishes to do this '*through the filter of the other person's experience, while remaining aware of the present reality of my own walk and its unique sonic landscape*' (Corringham 2006, p 34). My relationships to places I have explored throughout this research have enabled me to 'filter' the sounds used in order to interpret my perception of place. The concept of 'landscape' influencing our memories and relationships is an interesting idea (Schama, 1995). For example, my memories of landscape in my family home where I grew up are memories of large, open green fields, lonely places with just the sounds of farm animals, birds, and dogs barking in the distance. In *Áitleku* I am not trying to recreate a landscape or 'soundscape', rather my sense of place evolves within the work itself. Steven Feld states '*The sense of place: the idiom is so pervasive that the word 'sense' is almost completely transparent. But how is place actually sensed?*' (Feld, 2005, p. 179) My father's stories used in *Áitleku* reminds me of his endless humorous stories and anecdotes about this place and the people or 'characters' in it - the timbre of his voice which is familiar to everyone who is accustomed with this place, the sounds of the birds in the morning, the cow's grazing on the land - this is my 'sensing' of this place. When I spent time in Euskadi, I realised that the sounds in this place were not entirely different from my family home, there was a commonality; characters, voices, sounds in nature, yet there was also some unique elements such as cow-bells in the country side, bells ringing in a local church but with a different melody from those which I was used to in Ireland. These works have evolved because of my memories towards these places and the sounds within them which are significant.

Feld questions how the senses conceive place and how sensations were always experienced presences which were later referred to by cognitive psychologists and philosophers as an 'embodied mind' or a 'body of the mind'. (Feld, 2005, 180) Feld writes that

> 'Lived experience involves constant shifts in sensory figures and grounds, constant potentials for multisensory or cross-sensory interactions or correspondences. Figure-ground interplays, in which one sense surfaces in the midst of another that recedes, in which positions of dominance and subordination switch or co-mingle' (Feld, 2005, p 180-1)

This idea of 'lived experience' could also be applied to the multi-sensory and shifting changes, and interactions with certain sound materials recorded in various places at a given time. While on one occasion I may work in a particular way with a sound, given my current place and memory of this experience, on a later occasion, I may work with it very differently.

Perhaps the most profound and relevant statement in Feld's article in the context of my work is a quote he uses by Henri Bergson in *Matter and Memory*; *'there is no perception which is not full of memories. With the immediate and present data of our senses, we mingle a thousand details out of our past experience… and is in fact, reduced to the image of that which interests you'.* (Feld, 2005, p. 180-1)

This relates to my experience of composing, in that when I hear new sounds which interest me, while using them to compose, I will bring myself back to the place where I recorded them. When I hear familiar sounds that evoke memories or a response and I decide to use them in my work, many thoughts and associations go through my mind. The listener will have a different lived experience of the sound in my work, but when sounds are unrecognisable, their

memories will shape how they perceive this; it will come from within. The process of composing for me is endogenous in the sense Aden Evens describes (Grant and Matthias 2012), and I consider the process of listening is also endogenous in the same evolving sense, both on first listening and in subsequent experiences.

Feld writes that when experiencing place *'sensual bodily presence and perceptual engagement'* (Feld, 2005, p. 181) become entwined through the kinaesthetic interplay of sound, vision and touch. This is what I deem is at the core of my work practice; for example in *Green Gate* which uses sounds that are comforting to me, I engage with them in a subtle, gentle manner. In *Voice,* my presence on that night listening to the sounds around me caused me to utter something personal in the form of my own voice. In *Hollow* I felt the engagement of my feelings and the resultant sounds created engaged with each other. Feld describes experiences mingling together with many details; I feel that when focused while composing, this interplay of senses inspires how the composition unfolds. This is at the essence of what I consider is fundamental to my work and one which is influenced by place in its myriad of connotations in the mind of both the composer and listener of this material; this results in what Feld has described as a *'multisensory conceptualisation of place'* (Feld 2005, p 182).

Oliveros writes in *Deep Listening*: *a composer's sound practice* (2005) of consciousness and that it is an

> 'awareness of stimuli and reactions in the moment…
> acting with awareness, presence and memory…
> knowledge of events, feelings and experiences can be
> brought forward from the past to the present. In this
> way one has self-recognition' (Oliveros, 2005, p. xxi).

I consider this awareness and reaction to the moment as being very similar to the way in which I work; being present with your processes and letting them unfold within that place. *Hollow* and *Voice* are examples of where this unfolding happened; a vocal utterance, a key pressed on the piano and the awareness of these events, led on to others. Sounds occurring as I created these sound events, impacted on materials I chose to use while composing, past awareness co-mingled with the present.

I attended a lecture at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in May 2010 where composer Bunita Marcus spoke about the music of Morton Feldman. Marcus was a close companion of Feldman; they were inseparable for over seven years, composing side by side, with Feldman even dedicating a piano composition to her '*For Bunita Marcus*' (1985). At this lecture, Marcus spoke of Feldman's methods of composing. He would compose in the morning and they would meet in the afternoon to share opinions. Feldman would work page by page, write out his ideas and sketch them, and 'copy' at the end of the day, in other words complete a page of a score which a performer could easily interpret as opposed to a sketch. For him that page was finished, and the next day he would move onto the following page. This idea of gradual addition really interested me, as Feldman kept adding to his work, day by day, idea by idea. Like Feldman, I respond to sound events and cumulatively build a composition from that point; subsequently, I know when the work is complete and its time to move on.

2.1 Listening: Place & Fixed Media

'All our senses ultimately inform our experience of how we exist in time and, with sight as a primary means of defining what is happening in our presence, we readily visualize to draw other senses into our

temporal domain' (Norman, 1996, p. 3).

I consider fixed media composition is a medium which gives the listener the ability during this timeframe to visualize and create place while experiencing the work. While the listener's imagination may not re-create my place, it has re-created their own place in their mind through listening. I feel that what we experience in our environment on a sensory level, impacts on how a composition unfolds, an example of which can be seen in my composition *Dawn* where the sound mass and noise causes a listening intensity similar to my experience when composing.

Nagai writes about how, '(Katharine) *Norman goes on to describe the trajectory between sensing, remembering and composing as a process of 'imaginative making up' in which "the listening composer is creatively writing sound"* (Norman 2004 cited by Nagai, 2011, p. 211) Nagai's description of experiences between the *'immediate psycho-sensory interaction and a finished composition'* is the same viewpoint to the manner in which I view my own work: as a composition which has absorbed my personal place over time during this creative process. The only person who can be certain of this is the artist herself. I feel and see place in my work, and in hindsight I transport myself back to that place when I listen to my work. The places I see for example in *Dawn* are locations at Mamori, but also memories of various aspects of my life at that time, which are not geographical locations, but which were occupying my place at the time of writing. In *Throbbing,* I see myself walking through an unfamiliar place, one which is imagined, but I remember fondly the intensity of the sound in my dream. The ephemeral events which arise in *my* place impact on this. In *Blanket,* I hear intensity, a blanket of sound and I see myself

sitting in the studio at CCMIX, feeling heavy, insecure. When I listen to *Hollow* I see myself at the piano, improvising but remember how empty and inadequate I felt that day, lonely for something. My place as an artist is relevant and intellectually driven in my practice and has provided a framework for my practice within each composition presented in this portfolio. My theorizing of place is in actually experiencing it and allowing that experience to be communicated within my artistic practice. This is translated into the compositional practice by choosing sound materials which explore the feelings that relate to the place; a personal one. For example in *Hollow,* the work uses sounds sparsely, punctuated by silence. This evokes how I felt at the time of writing. Rather than coming up with musical solutions when composing, I prefer to translate my feelings and place into sound, and this is what inspires my work.

I believe an essence of a place is captured and within that essence contains memories, a time where 'life', human or otherwise, has interacted with this place; this is my idea of 'trace'. I see the recording as absorbing not only the sound qualities, but for me as a composer the act of being present when recording a particular sound event or place and hearing this in its real environment has an impact on my relationship to that sound when I use it for compositional purposes. Oliveros writes in *Deep Listening* (2005) of how listening with headphones while creating field recordings can heighten your awareness of sounds (Oliveros 2005, p. 28). My relationship with a particular sound impacts on decisions I make when subsequently editing and manipulating, it affects how this sound will be moulded within a composition. Norman writes of how '*listening is as much a 'material' for the composer as*

the sounds themselves' (Norman, 1996 p. 2).

Chris Watson says of his practice

> '…the quiet atmosphere of a place, location or habitat can be a revelation – a profound "presense" made up from the component parts. I tried to capture this real sense of place with my Touch CD – Stepping into the Dark – after experiencing several atmospheres that I felt had a tangible character' (Toop, 2004, p. 52).

I can relate my practice to Watson's evocation that the experience of a place can have its own uniqueness and that there is a sense of presence within it which one attempts to capture in a composition. This sense of place is heightened through both the process of composing the work and within the compositional space of the final work. Watson describes how when he evaluates recordings in the studio, he thinks of that particular place and how it had a significant influence on his mood and questions whether or not this could be recreated by replaying the recordings (Toop, 2004, p. 52). This resounded with me as I think the process of editing and listening to recordings impacts on the compositional process and results in a place of memory intertwining with a present place, the compositional place.

> 'while there is a vast body of more 'abstract' tape music using real-world sounds as a basis for sonic alchemy, there is also much music which seeks to preserve our connection to its recorded sources. In this latter kind of approach the meaning of the sounds is maintained, heightened or transformed. These pieces are about the real world (Norman, 1996, p. 2).

Nagai (2011) writes, *Listen Compose Listen* a paper in which she presents a study of two works *Centre Bridge* (2009) by Frances White and *A Sound Map of the Danube* (2005) by Annea Lockwood, which were created using sounds composed through the experience of sounds heard. *Centre Bridge* (2009) for two shakuhachi and tape is primarily based on the sounds of a sonorous metal grate

bridge that crosses the Delaware River between New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Lockwood's *A Sound Map of the Danube* (2005) displays four years of sound recording from along the length of that river's European to Balkan path.

> It is, perhaps, less tidy to invoke emotional feelings and physical sensations in reference to a composer's musical choices, than to draw on well-established harmonic or rhythmic theories to understand musical design and meaning (Nagai, 2011, p 212).

Lockwood states that even though analytical theories are useful, they are *'insufficient for fully decoding'* a composer's body of work. Lockwood states that music similar to *Sound Map* and *Centre Bridge* has a distinct series of compositional concerns *'that has only partial overlap with instrumental music of the Western classical tradition'*. Lockwood suggests that in social science research the experiences of the body and the self is very relevant, and refers to Wood, Duffy and Smith (2007), who question how to *'carry out research, with music and its making (and how to engage with what music making makes)'* but also how to *'(re)present these deliberations'* (Nagai 2011, p 212).

Lockwood states that the experience of the body and the 'self' places embodied experience as central to the analysis of work of this nature, *'tracing emotionality, sensation and perception through all phases of music's production and dissemination… music "made from listening" is different from other kinds of music'* (Nagai 2011, p 212). Like Lockwood, I think it would be disingenuous to this research to describe the recorded sounds in a 'musical' manner only, and not consider the place from which they evolved and how crucial the experiencing of that place is to how I subsequently interact with the sound material. White describes (Nagai 2011, p 212) that certain sonic

experiences are 'resonant' inside her, doorways which lead her into a musical world of composition, with its own associated emotional and spiritual matter. Nagai states that these sonic experiences can inform us of ways in which composers connect a dynamic relationship between perceptual experience and creativity (2011). White's work suggests both a real-world place from which the work arose, and also the imagined realms to which it takes the listener. Rather than *trying* to construct a composition, it is *allowed* to happen. I relate to her idea of the experiences leading her into the composition; the composer being invited into a world and the composition's structure arising from the interaction with this world. Listening to material, moulding and sculpting it results in the structure; these 'doorways' evolving and opening within the structuring; the connection of perceptual experience and the embodiment of this through a creative act.

Other Places (2011), an 8 channel, fixed media work composed by David Prior opens with the sound of a machine, while in the background a layer of gentle sound can be heard. This sound has a consistent pulse, and a gritty, intricate texture. This becomes louder as another layer enters; the texture becomes denser, intense. I listen and feel surrounded by a large industrial machine, grey colours. This sound fades to introduce a sound pitched somewhat higher than previous, and the initial sound re-enters. We are directed and ushered away from our previous listening space, even if the timbres are somewhat similar.

The sounds continue in an almost hypnotic way, constant; I get lost listening to the subtleties. As soon as I get lost in a place, the sound landscape changes again and I am brought into another place. All along these sounds feel as though they are taking you somewhere, their complex, mechanical sounds

propelling the listener onwards. At 3:14 the atmosphere changes and we are taken to another place. A constant rhythmic sound gradually enters, pulsing along; propelling the listener onwards. The presence of something, or indeed somebody is marked with the entry of a short motif; the sound of movement. A dense blanket of sound takes me into a dark but comforting cocoon; somewhere to get lost in. Short sounds, vocal and almost animalistic in nature: Are these sound machines talking to us? The opening sound returns drowning these machine grunts, but they continue. We come back to where we started. A click, then silence.

Other Places was a commission for Amsterdam-based Lunapark ensemble. Although an instrumental ensemble, the circumstances in which this fixed media work would be performed was as a composition played between instrumental pieces as part of a programme that was toured in 2011. Prior explains in the programme note for this work, that during this time, much of his creative energy was involved with a piece with architect Frances Crow, called *Organ of Corti;* an acoustic device, which sculpts environmental noise by means of an array of cylinders that guide sound waves as they pass through the structure. Prior states that *Other Places* almost functions as an electronic 'auralisation' of *Organ of Corti* which uses passive acoustic principles to mediate the 'noise' of the environment, while *Other Places* uses field recordings of noise: air conditioning, wind and in particular the noise of slide and cine projector fans, as the basis for '*an immersive tableaux of sculpted noise'*, static but complex sounds (Prior, 2011). The materials used for *Other Places* are recordings which are fundamentally unprocessed, although significantly edited. The composition uses field recordings, which are somewhat

recognisable, but takes them into an acousmatic realm; we begin to focus on their nuances, but there is an opportunity in the listening experience to go to, or indeed create a site or place.

Telling Tales (Norman, 1994) discusses the problem of performance related issues with regard to fixed media. Norman suggests that the composer is the performer of the sounds and describes the use of 'realworld' recorded sounds as a '*look back on reality… recollected experience*'. One often perceived problem in the performance of fixed media works is related to the absence of a performer on stage for the audience to see. Norman considers the comparison of live performances to fixed media performances to be meaningless; she considers that there isn't room for comparisons between fixed media works and live music performance or traditional norms in this context; she states that fixed media is a type of composition which '*celebrates a connection to the real world*' (1994, p. 104). She compares this connection to a '*story about real life*' (1994, p. 103). Traditionally, storytelling and oral performance are dependent on '*the listener's creative involvement in a believable tale… the interpretation of images of actual human experience*'. This idea relates to the 'autoethnographic journey' – the composer gives the audience their interpretation, one of '*many possible stories*' (1994, p. 105); the composer's version of events. This results in the listener not only evaluating musical material but also evaluating the composer's interpretation of the familiar. This holistic approach presented by Norman contrasts to the approach of Pierre Schaffer who championed reduced listening; focusing only on the morphology of sound material as opposed to referencing its sound source. My position draws analogies more closely with approaches taken by Katharine Norman and Luc

Ferrari. While Ferrari was part of the early experimentation in fixed media or 'tape' compositions using musique concrète techniques, he used this technique to create anecdotal compositions, telling a story from real life; his version of events (as detailed in Chapter 3).

When I make field recordings, I feel that 'something' is captured. One point I have discovered through this research is that when I work with that 'something', whether it is a particular sound or a collection of sounds, place and my experience of this place impacts on the capturing of and the subsequent moulding of the sounds, and my subsequent experience of this experiencing is revealed in the work. Norman states that we are listening to the composer's interpretation of the sound; the composer's *interpretative performance… essentially emotional remembrance of experience… a particular emotional poignancy in listening to the passing timbres of human experience*' (1994, p. 107-8). This remembrance of familiar sounds of daily life is now in the present, telling this story. Norman states that unlike a static recording, 'realworld' music is the presentation of the *composer's transformation of it*' turning the composer into an aural storyteller; this is her suggested performance model – one which I have adopted for my own telling of 'place'; the autoethnographic representation of my world (and my place in it) through sound within fixed media composition.

Chapter 3   Methodology

3.1 Compositional Process

As a composer, my main interest lies in electronic music and in the predominant use of electronic techniques within my work. Within this portfolio I have also explored the use of more traditional instrumentation by using piano and voice. My primary method as a composer is to write cumulatively. I do not necessarily start the compositional process with very strict preconceived ideas or sound worlds in my mind, but rather I choose particular sound material which interests me at the time of writing and explore this material within that context. For me composing is experimental; I am never quite sure how the work will unfold and this approach informs my work; my work absorbs my expression, chosen surroundings and place. In *Microsound,* Curtis Roads discusses time scales of music and from this how form evolves. He writes the *'macro level of musical time corresponds to the notion of form, and encompasses the overall architecture of a composition'* (Roads, 2004, p. 11) and uses examples such as Stockhausen's opera *Licht* (1977-2003) which lasts seven days and nights as an example of a work which is on the upper part of this scale. He writes of how an audience's perception of this macro level is perceived on reflection unless they are informed before listening of the structure. Roads refers to examples of this in music written by classical composers such as Bach, Mozart and Beethoven, in which repetition and cadences inform the listener of various structural events and in popular music in which these events happen in a more regular, shorter time base. He refers to composers writing using either a 'top down' or a 'bottom up' approach. The 'top down' approach is favoured by composers who begin composing with structural forms, for example using serial techniques, a technique which can be

witnessed in the work of composers such as Schoenberg, Berg, Webern and Boulez. Roads uses a quote by composer Edgard Varèse to describe the 'bottom up' approach; '*Form is a result – a result of process*' (Roads, 2004 p. 13) which is the approach which most resonates with my methodologies. Roads discusses time and how it is distorted by various factors. He writes '*A composition that we do not understand or like appears to expand in time as we experience it, yet vanishes almost immediately from memory*' (Roads, 2004 p. 12).

As a 'bottom up' composer, I initially choose sound material and then mould and shape the sound material, reflect and continue in a similar manner until the process comes to a natural end. Landy writes that composer Trevor Wishart would appear to have a similar approach and speaks of his art form as being similar to plastic art '*sound materials become like clay in the hands of the potter*' (Landy, 2007, p. 134). Landy also writes that Wishart supports an antiformalist approach, stating that music is not primarily reliant on '*structure (architecture), but instead on moulding (chemistry)*' (Landy, 2007, p. 134). Like Wishart, I view the art of composing as a 'sculpting' of sound. While my initial compositions relied more on using sound manipulation tools to sculpt sound, I feel that my editing techniques have developed in recent years, and I find that I rely less on sound manipulation. I generally do not have any interest in processes from a purely technical perspective; and rely more on listening and my ear while 'sculpting' and choosing source sounds. This is a technique which I have embraced in my practice and which I continue to use (Nagai, 2011). I try to consider all paths that the sound could follow and make my decisions cumulatively. Each event unfolds.

3.2 Intuition as Methodology

My working definition of intuition concerns how we are guided to proceed, without analysis whether making decisions artistically or otherwise. Intuition (Ferrari, 1998) guides my practice and my creative choices, alongside skilful selection, addition and editing and re-editing. Intuition is combined with memory and place; sounds are chosen then gradually the works evolve cumulatively by an evaluation of what arises during the process, combined with very honed editing skills, making a form out of the sound material chosen. Intuition is coupled with a lot of very skilled, thoughtful manipulation and thoughtfulness about what not to manipulate.

Igor Stravinsky writes of how art arises out of methods gained through inventiveness or learning, '*We grasp them by intuition rather than conscious knowing*' (Stravinsky, 1970, p. 24). In my own practice I attempt to grasp and seize these moments; times when you hear a sound that you connect with, or when you know a composition is gradually forming its structure through actively sculpting and engaging with the sound material, knowing what direction to take. Intuition combined with focus in my opinion can have a very powerful outcome; this is where my work arises from. I assert that having artistic intuition is an innate quality and while we can learn creative methods, as Stravinsky outlined, there is something more intangible at play. I feel that I have learnt many methods in both my academic study, and own independent study learning from composers, performers, sound artists and many more creative sources, but as Elfyn Jones notes in his response to Schenkerian analysis '*Where a composer's own creations lose value and indeed credibility is when they are mechanical inventions*' (2007, p. 48). I deem that in order to

create works which are meaningful (in the context of an interesting composition that engages a listener) there needs to be an element of intuition at play, knowing when something works and when something does not. I cannot put this into words, and I have no desire to do so, I will even be so brave as to state that I hope I never can put this in words, as this is the beauty of creativity. Rather I consider this is revealed in my practice.

While many people gain knowledge and learn various techniques with regard to music and sound, they will not necessarily have the ability to express creativity effortlessly and freely through practice. I feel the intellectual is at play in this regard, but, intertwined with intuition, and the act of letting artistic ideas and events unfold. I do not work with preconceived ideas or notions of what an outcome will be; I just use my technical skills and experiment with chosen sounds. I find working in this way, I rarely come up against a creativity obstruction or not knowing 'what to do'. The act of composing or making music and playing music, comes very easily to me. It is never something I struggle with; I always know that if I focus and follow my skills intuitively that there will be a creative outcome.

Monty Adkins, a British composer and lecturer of electroacoustic music describes his classical music education and his time spent studying at Cambridge University. He describes how during this time, he was around contemporary composers who since became very famous, and that he found their methods 'alien' as they placed an important emphasis on pre-compositional planning and process. He feels more of an affinity to painting, sculpture and digital art, the '*hands on physical way of making art that values intuition and empirical thought*'. Adkins feels there is a shared vocabulary

'slow transformation and manipulation of long lines of material and colour with very little abrupt editing... translucency of layers... multi-perspectival approaches... detritus and other found objects in our work... electronic music sculpting sound in space'. For Adkins he needs to work with materials in order to see their potential of sounds, therefore in this instance a pre-determined approach would not work (Adkins, 2011).

Very often in academic music, a pre-determined approach is taken and I can relate to Adkins' experience as a music student, analysing music in a 'mechanical' (Jones, 2007, p. 48) way, and in my opinion, it is unfair to view the composers metaphysical significance as not being part of an intellectual experience, with the evidence of this manifested in the practice.

Aus den sieben Tagen (From the Seven Days) (1968) is a collection of fifteen text compositions composed by Stockhausen. Stockhausen describes how a thirty minute performance consists of a score that has been worked on over a much longer period of time, and it is now down to the intuition of the performer. Stockhausen notes in the text composition *Unbegrenzt* (Unlimited):

> 'While composing a score there are sometimes beautiful moments late at night when you've worked all day long and all of a sudden everything falls into place. These are fantastic moments. But it has nothing to do with the tension of sitting in a hall, the people are there, and you know you can't erase anything." (1974. p. 182)

He gave text instructions to performers that they respond 'intuitively'. While in this type of performance situation, if the performers do not acquiesce in some manner, or if the instructions outlined by the composer are too complex, perhaps the conditions will not be so favourable that the performers collectively connect into individual intuitive processes. For a solitary composer

or performer, intuition can be a very powerful tool and that unlike Stockhausen's dependency on the performers to capture this, in fixed media composition, the composer decides.

3.3 Acousmatic Music

As a composer, I classify the majority of my compositional output as being acousmatic; even works that incorporate acoustic instrumentation. My working definition of acousmatic music is that such compositions are fixed media compositions which use manipulated sounds, for which the listener will not recognise the source. I also consider a sound landscape which uses manipulated sounds against familiar materials as acousmatic, as the sounds are removed from their origins, by being placed in a new listening context.

In its strictest sense, acousmatic music is music which uses sounds which are separated from their origin; a presentation of audio works with no performance elements. The term was first used in the context of music by Jérôme Peignot in 1955 (Peignot, 1955). The term also describes a style of music composition which developed from the musique concrète practice. Pierre Schaeffer coined the term 'concrète' to describe the music he created using recorded material from which it was his intention to extract musical qualities which he used as the basis of his compositions. This compositional process took a different approach from that of western art music which starts with the abstraction of notes on a page which then become music on performance (EARS, 2011). Chadabe writes about the '*expansion of the tape music idea*' (Chadabe, 1997, p. 63) where many studios around the world began to create a vast array of tape pieces, many of which have influenced this research (Various, OHM, 2000). This expansion of the tape idea also led to composers attempting to incorporate an

element of live performance within these works such as Maderna's *Musican su Due Dimensiono* for flute, percussion and tape (1952). In 1972, François Bayle suggested adopting the term 'acousmatic' rather than electroacoustic music for representing the special conditions of listening to music on tape (Emmerson, Smalley 2010). Dhomont states that *'acousmatic art presents sound on its own, devoid of causal identity, thereby generating a flow of images in the psyche of the listener'* (Dhomont, 1996, p 24). In this research I have created a journey for the listener through acousmatic sound; created a narrative or series of images, as Dhomont refers to.

The term 'tape music' was used by many composers during 1950's and is still in use to this present day to describe fixed media works. In terms of methodology and aesthetics these pieces differ from composer to composer with some adopting the use of synthesised and/or recorded material. Even though they differ aesthetically, the one element these pieces have in common is the removal of performance; the pieces are fixed. Bayle states that the term acousmatic music *'serves to demarcate music on a fixed medium (musique de support) – representing a wide aesthetic spectrum – from all other contemporary music'* (Bayle 1993, p 18).

In 'Soundscape Composition: the convergences of ethnography and acousmatic music', John Levack Drever discusses *'making and presenting of representations of environmental sound'* and suggests the discipline of ethnography as a methodology of representing environments through sound. Drever quotes respected ethnographer Dwight Conquergood

> '(Ethnography) privileges the body as a site of knowing… Ethnography is an embodied practice: it is an intensely sensuous way of knowing. The embodied

ethnographer is the instrument' (Drever, 2002, p. 23).

He writes of how ethnography

> 'continuously calls for a high level of self-awareness and the importance of reflexivity... the reflexive ethnographer does not simply report 'facts' or 'truths' but actively constructs interpretation of his or her experiences in the field and then questions how those interpretations came about' (Hertz cited by, Drever, 2002, p. 23).

Drever uses Westerkamp's acousmatic composition 'Kits Beach Soundwalk' (1989) as an example of a composition in which *compositional processes and audio manipulations that previously lay transparent could be exposed and discussed within the work*. In this work, Westerkamp narrates the events occurring in the composition, which forms part of the composition. My research identifies place as a means of creating something personal within an acousmatic context, not to comment on the place of recordings from a geographical or wider social perspective, but rather through my listening and interpretation of the sounds; the personal place is embodied in the compositions. Drever considers acousmatic music as *'work [which] bares little correspondence to the site of study, unless that site is where acousmatic music aesthetics and its concomitant technical innovations drive work. Such work bears little correspondence to the site of study, unless that site is where acousmatic music is a feature of the prevailing culture'* (Drever, 2002, p. 25). He states a work of this kind reveals more about the composer's listening habits and cultural exposure. I consider this is a positive aspect for the listener; the site of study is usually the place in which the composer decides to create a composition and this is what I feel emerges in my work. Rather than view the use of field recordings and their subsequent artistic representation as a means of creating an ethnographical representation of a particular site, something

more personal is created, but is nonetheless an autoethnographical representation.

3.4 Anecdotal composition: Luc Ferrari

Ferrari states (1998) that meeting John Cage in Darmstadt in 1954 was most illuminating in terms of the formation of his own philosophy and aesthetics; he felt that Cage was starting to suggest other methods, which differed from ideas which were beginning to become institutionalised, such as that of serialism which was prevalent. Cage *'spoke about everyday life... the little details of life, minimalist observations on society, human feelings, things we've seen, things we've experienced... Things we've experienced have so much to teach us - that's what was so extraordinary'* (Ferrari, 1998).

Ferrari was not impressed with the work of composers such as Boulez, stating he was like a *'guy who writes laws... a company lawyer'* (Ferrari, 1998). Ferrari wanted to work using more freedom and felt more comfortable using intuition. Ferrari moved away from the Darmstadt scene and felt more comfortable amongst composers using concrète techniques such as Schaefer and Henry who according to Ferrari were like 'samplers'. Ferrari wrote his first études in 1958 and it was during this time that he

> '...really learned to listen a lot. First you record the metal, springs or whatever, but as soon as you can't see them anymore you're listening to tapes and what they have to say. You're not listening to images or causality anymore. So the ideology was that: use sounds as instruments, as sounds on tape, without the causality. It was no longer a clarinet or a spring or a piano, but a sound with a form, a development, a life of its own' (Ferrari, 1998).

He formed part of the GRM in the 1960's and worked alongside the early pioneers of music concrète. Ferrari was one of the first composers to take

recording outside of the studio and to record sounds from familiar environments. At the time, Ferrari differed from his peers at the GRM; he wanted the listener to recognise the causality of the sounds which led to the term 'anecdotal composition' being coined to describe his work.

Ferrari's anecdotal compositions employ the use of recognizable sounds for their anecdotal or narrative aspects, rather than for their abstract potential. Ferrari's compositions such as *Hétérozygote* (1963-64) capture the essence of a scene or situation whether real or imaginary

> 'he fine-tuned his understanding of the sound material in order to extract its "essence"… He used to check out morphologies, spatial relationships and natural theatrical games between sound sources and arranged them like stories. The sounds were seen as characters with adventures (Gayou, 2008).

In this work of montage like quality, we hear familiar sounds against long drawn out ambient sounds, stringed instruments, voices, water flowing, pitched 'musical' sounds, we are flung (sometimes humorously so) between real and imaginary landscapes, so much so that we have to lean more on the imaginary as we continue to listen. Ferrari stated of this work '*where realistic sounds are treated as such, contributing to an imaginary musical tale*' (Acousmatrix, 2005). '*He was able to bring us to the edge between the concrète and the abstract, between sounds with recognizable sources and sounds thereto unheard of, thereby giving us extra depth to those events*' (Gayou, 2008).

During this time Ferrari also composed *Music Promenade* (1964 - 1969), a composition full of the cacophony of familiar sounds from life in which Ferrari used recordings he made throughout Europe while travelling with a group of

film-makers. Ferrari has said of his anecdotal compositions

> 'I have realized works that are removed more or less from merely preoccupations. Some amongst them appeal to a meeting of different branches of what could be one single tree. The problem was to try to express ideas, feelings and passing intuitions through different means, to observe everyday affairs in all their realities, whether they are social, psychological or sentimental' (Acousmatrix, 2005, p. 1).

Ferrari stated that his anecdotal compositions *'brings to the public the pictures of its own reality and its own imagination'* (Emmerson, citing Pauli, 2007, p. 8). My compositions attempt to do that, but with sound which is more removed from the original recordings, more acousmatic in nature. If Ferrari was attempting to bridge concrète techniques with reality, in my practice I am attempting to do the same through acousmatic music, not only the listening situation, but also aesthetically even if my narrative/place conflicts philosophically with the Schaefferian aesthetic.

3.4.1 Presque Rien N° 1

Ferrari describes *Presque Rien N° 1 ou le lever du Jour au Bord de la Mer* (Almost nothing, dawn at the seaside)**,** as one particular place at a particular time of day; dawn. This composition is a *'realistic picture of a fishing village coming to life'* (Ferrari, 1995). He put his recorder on the windowsill of his home to capture the sound events, and later in the studio turned these into something which was *'truer than true'* (Ferrari, 1995)**.** He describes of how the silence of this place; a Dalmatian village in Yugoslavia, woke him up at night, but he slowly began to appreciate the nuances in sound which occurred and began recording in the early hours of the morning. In this work we hear many layers of sound which takes us to this place; dogs barking, a donkey braying, chickens cackle and squawk, water from the seashore, people moving objects; working,

hammering, their voices and accents, bells from a bicycle pan across and come to the foreground, voices become louder and the landscape becomes more active. The engine of a motor boat whirrs, dogs continue to bark louder, birds twitter. All of these sounds blend at various times in the composition, with the sounds people are making coming to the fore of the soundscape. We are in Ferrari's place and then the piece comes to an abrupt end. Are people what make a place for Ferrari? He said that he began to record sounds which repeated themselves everyday, sounds decided and created by the people in this community. He made these recordings and afterwards he thought that '*it's good to have a really strong concept-and then to forget it. If not, things can pass you by... You have to listen to your intuition'* (Ferrari, 1998). This is an approach which resonates with me, in that while I may have an idea to start with, I let events unfold as I compose. For example in *Áitleku* while I had an idea of initially creating a narrative work it evolved into a personal exploration of familiar places. Voices were used, but not necessarily to tell a story in the way Janet Cardiff does in her work (Dean and Millar, 2005) rather the voices represented the people in these places.

In *Presque Rien N° 1*, it does not matter that the geographical location of these recordings is a Dalmatian village, in this work we can only imagine our own memories and associations with these sounds that Ferrari has chosen to share with his listener; we create our own story and images which for each listener will be unique and take them to their own place. Ferrari had the desire to bring concrète techniques into his reality, to create a narrative '*I thought it had to be possible to retain absolutely the structural qualities of the old musique concrète without throwing out the reality content of the material which it had*

originally. It had to be possible to make music and to bring into relation together the shreds of reality in order to tell stories (Emmerson, citing Pauli, 2007, p. 7). Despite his attempts to bridge the qualities of musique concrète with references to reality, this work was very badly received by his colleagues at the GRM who did not think this was music. It was released by Deutsche Grammophon and had some success in the US, Ferrari believes due to the interest at the time in *plans-séquences;* a scene in a film which was one single, uninterrupted shot.

Ferrari would undoubtedly be a composer whose compositional philosophies I can relate to; taking field recordings of familiar sounds, and interpreting this by adding your own shades through the compositional process. Sometimes these shades are subtle, and other times they expand and intensify into a more acousmatic domain, but nonetheless the compositions speak of the realities and associations I have with these familiar sounds I have selected to work with; in these are the 'essense' of the composer, in these works are me, my life.

3.5 Synthesised Sound: using the UPIC

My experience using the UPIC system in 2005 at the CCMIX studio in Paris, and the place in which I experimented with this compositional tool set this research in motion. In 1972, Xenakis formed CEMAMu (Centre d'Etudes de Mathématique et Automatique Musicales/Centre for Studies in Mathematics and Automated Music), which was located in Issy les Moulineaux, outside Paris. It was here that Xenakis began to develop the UPIC alongside technicians and programmers funded by the French Ministry of Culture (Chadabe, 1997, p. 213). The UPIC system *'allowed users to draw a shape on a tablet and interpret the shape as a control for some aspect of the sound or*

music' (Chadabe, 1997, p. 213). It was during this time that Xenakis used the system to compose his works *La Légend d'Eer* (1977) and *Mycenae-Alpha* (1978). Other composers to use the system at this time included François-Bernard Mâche and Jean-Claude Éloy. At a UNESCO sponsored show on technology and art in 1978 the public were shown the UPIC and soon after the UPIC was used for demonstrations in various countries such as Holland, Germany, Portugal, Greece and Japan (Chadabe, 1997, p. 214). Further developments by engineers Jean-Michel Racinski and Gerard Marino led to the UPIC having the capability of representing almost any aspect of musical sound through the arc, a graphic shape where up to 4000 arcs could be drawn on any one page. In 1985 Les Ateliers UPIC was formed to store the UPIC as well as to function as a satellite for pedagogy and production. Composer Gerard Pape became the director of Les Atelier UPIC in 1991 and after this time many composers such as Bernard Parmegiani and Jean-Claude Risset came to work with the system (Chadabe, 1997, p. 214). In 2000 the centre changed its name to CCMIX: Centre for the Composition of Music Iannis Xenakis, a homage to Xenakis (Mode Records, 2011). It is currently known as Centre Iannis Xenakis (CIX), and since Autumn 2010 resides at the Université de Rouen, under the History Research Group (GRHiS) (Centre Iannis Xenakis, 2011).

In July 2005 I visited the CCMIX (Centre for the Composition of Music Iannis Xenakis) studio as part of a summer programme that included lectures by composers such as Trevor Wishart, Agostino di Schipio, Gerard Pape and musicologist Sharon Kanach who has written extensively on Xenakis' output (Kanach, 2008). These lectures were incredibly inspirational. I appreciated the opportunity to compose using this technology with such a rich history, having

been created and used by Xenakis, and also by various composers I admire such as Bernard Parmegiani and Jean-Claude Risset (Chadabe, 1997, p. 214). Rather than this experience being one where I made a conscious decision to use the UPIC in my practice, I saw this as an opportunity to try something new and to experiment with new terrain. My previous experience of using synthesis as a compositional tool was through CSound where I had to type code in order to achieve results, I much preferred the graphical interface that the UPIC provided. I could draw in the information and the results were instant. This did not disrupt creative progression. *'If the system is fast enough, the composer gets the result of his work directly, so that the exchange between thought and ear is made very easy and immediate'* (Marino et al, 1993, p. 260).

The UPIC (Unité Polyagogique Informatique du CEMAMu) was developed by Xenakis and is a computerised tool for music composition. The user draws sound parameters on a digitising tablet and the computer then renders this. He saw the system as a 'universal' interface: "*Anybody, even myself or you, or children, can draw lines or graphics with an electromagnetic ballpoint, and they are transformed by computer directly into sound ...* " (Electronic Music Foundation, 2010).

The UPIC was completed in 1977 though the inspiration for this tool began in 1953-4 when Xenakis was working on his orchestral piece *Metastasis* (Xenakis, 1993) where he uses glissandi effects to create a sound mass using 61 instruments. In this work Xenakis used *'graphic notation for representing musical effects that were too complicated to be specified with traditional staff notation'* (Marino et al, 1993 p. 258). Xenakis was completing designs for *Metastasis* and *Pithoprakta*, as he felt it was easier to control large numbers of

events in this way, rather than writing on a stave which he found to be tedious in this instance. Rather he linked one pitch to another using lines. Xenakis thought *"Why should I write them as notes instead of as these lines?" – we are used to seeing things in visual shapes, it's natural'* (Chadabe, 1997, p. 213).

Xenakis had '*came up with the idea of a computer system that would allow the composer to draw music'* (Marino et al, 1993, p. 260). The advent of real time computer technology in the 1980's allowed the *'composer to experiment with new music ideas, listen to them, and modify them at will… the exchange between thought and ear is made very easy and immediate'* (Marino et al, 1993, p. 260). The system allows the composer to control a number of object types such as envelope, wave table, page and frequency table. The page consists of a pitch-versus-time space, with time from left to right on the page and pitch from top to bottom. The system is designed to be user friendly to musicians; once I understood how to save and record my experiments I was able to work freely

I had a limited amount of time to use the UPIC, just a couple of hours per day over two weeks. This short time duration impacted on my methodology as I decided to create as many samples as possible, rather than a completed composition within the studio. At first, it was very much experimental in that I did not really know what I was doing with the technology; I was finding my way, making discoveries. Once I got comfortable using the equipment I realised that I could easily spend the next two weeks just experimenting and not actually composing anything. I also thought that there may never be an opportunity to use this machine again, and that perhaps I should record a library of sounds of these experiments. I recorded approximately thirty minutes

of samples that were recorded in a very experimental way; I explored the UPIC and recorded this material. I did not focus too readily on the visual component of the software, rather I thought that the rich sound of this machine was really interesting and I focused on the sound rather than on the visual elements. What I found interesting about this method of working was that it was basically an adaptation of my methodology when using field recordings; I would record a large amount of material, and then edit out the parts which I wished to use and further manipulate by editing and using various sound manipulation tools. Other composers at the residency during this time who were using the system decided to perform works using the UPIC and saw it as an instrument, whereas I saw it as a source of sound. Though I could connect with the drawings I created, I did not necessarily become influenced by them and I could have easily worked with some other form of input and without graphical notation. When recording the given drawing, I also experimented with changes in tempo and jumping between different parts of the score. In a sense this was performance, captured on recording. I never saw these recordings as compositions but rather as sound material. Years later, I vaguely remember my drawings on the UPIC and I do not have any documentation of them – but the sounds produced are still clear in my memory. I find this interesting in terms of how I perceived and worked with the machine. One of the most memorable is the sample I used as the basis of *Blanket,* the first piece I composed in this portfolio.

On experimentation I grew to understand how each component worked and how the visual corresponded to the sound, but overall I did not draw anything very interesting. I did not document any of the visual elements at the time,

though all material was recorded using a digital software sequencer and rendered to audio files for future use. My plan was to use this library of sounds on my return home and incorporate them into my work. I completed *Blanket* in Paris, which was to form the beginnings of this research. I subsequently used UPIC samples in *Low_r* and *Invisible.*

Using the UPIC did not cause a shift in my thinking about the compositional process, but, rather I considered the place; the CCMIX studio, and the memory of Xenakis kept alive by the people in this organisation who were close to him, that caused a shift in my thinking and the traces that have been left there through history and the people which inhabit the studio. My experience of being at the CCMIX certainly removed the limitations which previously existed with regard to my own thinking about my work and a sense of place definitely conceptually emerged in the composition I completed there both from a personal perspective and also through the use of this particular technology; there was a two-way process between personal expression and reverence of place that was attached to this technology. I remember being on my own in the studio, and having a sense of Xenakis' trace there while looking at his various architectural sketches and the painted portraits of him adorning the walls. I felt his presence and trace here through the lectures delivered by his friends and colleagues, who remembered him and their memories of him fondly. Though I did not have a conscious awareness of this at the time and had not yet defined the idea of representing place within my compositions, the experience of working directly with the UPIC and in this place caused the idea to germinate.

3.6 Field Recordings

My working definition of field recording is the recording of sound outside of a

studio setting; recording life events. For me it is about going to a place or location and recording sound. Commonly the term is interchangeable with the term concrète recordings, but strictly speaking they can mean two different approaches. Concrète refers to a sound that is captured on a recording that now has its own entity independent of the sound source; the sound is an object, independent of its source. Schaeffer wished to become removed from the abstraction of scored music and compose with sound itself. He strived to listen to sound in a 'reduced' manner; listening to a sound's shape and sonic qualities, not associating it with its sound source.

> 'Audio recordings are a hybrid of creative art and historical document. They can be amazingly accurate sound pictures of actual events which speak for themselves, or be massaged and manipulated during and after the fact to reflect the artist's or recordist's point of view. They can also be something in between' (Dorritie 2003, p. 4).

Before developments in technology which led to field recording, the preservation of music involved transcribing and writing down the information by hand. In 1890, anthropologist Jess Walter Fewkes recorded songs in Calais Maine, which is recognised as the first instance of recording 'in the field' (Shepherd, 2003, p. 25). This led to composers such as Percy Grainger and Béla Bartók recording and preserving English and Hungarian folk songs respectively (Bartók, Suchoff 1976). Ethnomusicologists such as John Lomax began using field recording for ethnographical study. Lomax carried out extensive fieldwork both within and outside his native United States, for example in his research project *Cantimetric*, a comparative study in singing styles and techniques (Shepherd, 2003, p. 25). His work was to form '*the most important collection of "world music" ever assembled*' (Dorritie 2003, p. 18). From the 1920's onwards recording companies such as Columbia began to record rural musical traditions.

The accessibility of portable recording technology led to various practitioners exploring remote regions, such as David Lewiston whose recordings from locations such as the Amazon and the Himalayas were issued by Nonesuch Records (Shepherd, 2003, p. 25). These recordings mark the beginning of the use of portable recording for ethnographical purposes.

In my work, I structure and manipulate recordings, using them as a means for artistic exploration. These early recordings tell a story and represent a particular time and culture and have evolved into works of art allowing a wider audience to experience these styles of music. In my work, I see the act of using real-world sounds and creating something, which is real, yet intangible. David Toop writes of how composers such as Chris Watson and Hildegard Westerkamp, who use field recordings in their practice, are *'musicians rather than hobbyists or scientists… raised on electronic music, improvisation or scientists'* (Toop, 2004, p. 50). Toop describes Watson's musical past with the Cabaret Voltaire between 1973 and 1981 where he performed using tape, electronics and organ, and suggests that *'inevitably, a recordist with this kind of background will contextualise their soundscapes within a wider history of experimental music and communication theory'* (Toop, 2004, p. 50).

There is a very clear difference between both concrète and field recordings; field recordists do not necessarily intend on removing a sound from its source, whereas Schaeffer initially began using recorded sound to obtain and extract musical material. In my methods as a composer, my work has incorporated both methods in approach to using recorded sound. Firstly, I see the recording process as a documentation of *something*: place, time, feeling, emotion - though there are instances in my work also where I record sound purely for its

concrète qualities for example in *Green Gate*. I do not necessarily remove the sound completely from its origins in an artistic sense; I tend to try to represent place but indirectly and not in a documentary style. The title of the work *Green Gate* denotes this is something from the real-world, or inspired by such. Programme notes presented to audiences refer to the recorded place; without these allusions, the work can be described aesthetically as acousmatic in style, extracting musical material from familiar environmental sounds presented as a fixed work. This leads to working with sound in a concrète manner, but in doing so I am trying to explore place and by that I mean the essence of the place, through textural and timbral qualities rather than direct documentation; resulting in something of a personal interpretation. I record to document, albeit not directly and use the sound in a concrète manner by extracting musical qualities from it.

The composition *Morning* is an artistic representation or documentation of a place or time not dissimilar in method to the development of Tallentire's *Instances* (1999). In this film, Tallentire focuses on an urban housing environment and in the background familiar sounds are heard in this environment. *Instances* reminded me of where I live as I watched it. Tallentire's film is not dynamic; it consists of a video loop of a single image; it describes 'ordinary', 'everyday' living spaces.

Will Montgomery writes that '*Field recording is now commonly encountered both as an artistic practice in its own right and as a component of experimental music and sound art*' (Montgomery, 2009). Montgomery considers two artists who have had an immense influence on the crossover between field recording and experimental music: Francisco López and Chris

Watson, although both have very different approaches. López tends to use field recordings in an absolute manner by extracting musical qualities, whereas Watson creates soundscapes that he feels reference the place that the recordings have taken place. Watson, a phonographer and nature recordist has released a number of albums of 'acoustic atmospheres'. *'On some of these recordings, the sounds seemed close to the sonic world opening up concurrently with the widespread use of digital processing in electronica* (Montgomery 2009). Watson said in an interview in 1997, '*I enjoy the challenge of recording animals and also gathering sounds of the habitat and creating a sense of place or 'atmosphere' for the film soundtrack*' (Touch Music, 1997). While this is the intent of many sound recordists for film, I can relate to this idea of creating a sense of place through recording. Watson's interest in recording transpired as a child using a portable tape recorder he received as a gift from his parents and later in the late 1960's and early 1970's when he became aware of music concrète through his discovery of a book titled 'Composing With Tape Recorders' (Dwyer, 1971) which he says helped him to understand his desire to use recordings in a musical context, treating the tape recorder like an instrument (Turner, 2013). He was inspired to work as a sound recordist for nature documentaries, as he felt that the music and sound used in this context was not representing the place and he has subsequently worked on many nature programmes produced by the BBC. He also spent time during the 1970's as an experimental musician with *Caberet Voltaire.*

In his article*, Something in the Air* (2011), Watson describes an overnight stay in a large Victorian terraced house outside Glasgow, where the wind blows through the gaps in the window of his bedroom, producing a tone which rises

in pitch and intensity as the wind strength varies. Here inside an unfamiliar room, Watson recounts how this sound enveloped the darkness of his room, and how these entered his imagination as he drifted off to sleep in this warm, secure place. As a location sound recordist, Watson describes how he has often attempted to avoid recording noise, but that he has since radically changed his approach by including sounds created due to the wind. He describes being on the Scottish Highlands, where the only sounds are those created by wind, and rather than trying to record a particular sound, he used omni-directional microphones and decided on the positioning of these microphones by walking around this space to find his preferred natural balance, something he compares to being like the standing position of a conductor in front of an orchestra. He writes of how he is now recording something which he would have at one time considered 'noise'; listening has opened his ears to the potential of using these sounds (Watson, 2011). On reading this account, I was struck by how similar my experience was when creating *Green Gate;* the sounds recorded were created by the wind, a sound I associate with the warmth and comfort of my home and within this sound the fluctuating pitch caused by the intensity of the wind blowing through the gates. In this instance, I resolved the fact that the event causing this sound would be part of the recording landscape and subsequent composition.

López' first musical explorations were in bands in Madrid, and collaborative experiences, but he realised that he preferred to work on his own, and began experimenting with recording onto tape during the late 1980's. López has a particular connection with the rainforest, but he also records sounds from all types of different environments. López does not have an interest in

representation when presenting his work, or soundscapes that represent reality (López, 1998). Nor does he create recordings to listen to this reality repeatedly, as he states this is pointless. Rather López is attracted to the *'substance of reality, in texture, complexity, richness, virtual space, the idea of space that we have from reality, the idea of time that we get from reality. All those things are not necessarily representational'*. López acknowledges that we are obviously influenced by experiences in particular with regard to real sounds and how we listen to them, but López is interested in that intangible place – a *'reality to the experience and a reality to the place, I wanted to have this information'.* The rest he states is in the hands of the listener (López, 2011).

In my own practice, I use a portable recorder, usually recording my material in stereo. In December 2008 I attended the Mamori Sound Project with Francisco López. The purpose of this residency was to carry out field recordings in the rainforest, which was directed by López. There were other composers and artists present, and we shared our work and experiences with each other, and López also delivered lectures and workshops on his creative output.

I decided to go there, as I was searching for a similar experience to the one I had in CCMIX, one to learn from other people and to be inspired – something to drive my work onwards. I felt that in order to achieve this, I needed to be away, in another place. What I realised is that you cannot escape personal place, even if you are in a different environment and this was revealed in the composition I completed there; *Dawn.*

Spending time with López instilled confidence in my practical methods and also my views on the compositional process. This experience and my time with

López certainly established a change in my methodologies and inspired more self-confidence in my technical methods and my approach. Though methods of recording may be simple, the hand of the artist is what turns it into something creative and complex: a work of art. López *'rejects the idea that sound recording can ever be simply representational and argues instead that it is always a creative act'* (López, 2004, p. 82). It is a creative act as the person using the recorder has for some reason made a decision to record and frame; the sound environment is interesting or there is a connection, and this evolves further through composition.

On return to Dublin, I decided to explore the use of field recordings by making recordings of the direct environment around my home. Previously I would have carried the device while recording, capturing individual sound events and now I practiced the same methods we practiced in Mamori; where we would leave recorders in a certain environment and return to pick them up an hour or so later which would capture the environment changing and evolving. For the Mamori project, I purchased a tripod that can fold securely around fixed objects, which is very useful for placing the recorder in more unusual spaces. I practiced these methods in Dublin, simply as I preferred the idea of capturing a 'place' and the 'trace' that leaves. All of the recordings were made at night-time into early morning, during which I would leave my recorder at various parts of my apartment building, or on one occasion I spontaneously captured my own voice. I also wanted to compare and contrast how pieces composed in a familiar environment would differ from the unfamiliar. After composing *Green Gate, Voice* and *Morning* using these recording methods, I continued to explore this by recording sounds in many different places in my everyday life between

Ireland and Spain, which results in many hours of documented sounds. This results in the works *Throbbing* and *Áitleku*, works which represent the *trace* of the place in a more explicit way than previous works.

Norman amusingly writes in the style of a TV infomercial presentation

> 'the beauty of the field recording – of any documentary sound recording – is that this bounded slice of life can be yours, dear listener, to take home and enjoy in the comfort of your sitting room. You can make sense of it in your own time – and away from reality, without the distraction of mosquitoes or pungent smells' (Norman, 2004, p. 61).

She goes on to write of how wonderful it is that people are exchanging their recordings for others to listen to. This is not something I have ever engaged in and does not feature in my practice. Norman writes that *'there is a blurring of distinction between a documentary field recording and a recording that is subsequently composed in a response to the sound environment (however indirect that response may be)'* (Norman, 2004, p. 61). My approach is to use material and respond to it. I question why I want to engage in sound in this way rather than just simply listen to the event as it happens naturally? Rather I take a sound from its environment and place it in a different environment – a composition. This composition can impact the listener and be interpreted by them in numerous ways. Sometimes, artistically speaking I am of the opinion that I am destroying this sound by treating it in this way, but yet there is an urge to continue moulding and creating which propels the composition onwards. This change leads to something new. There are a number of recordings in this portfolio which use voice and piano, and in a sense I see these recordings as field recordings also, as they did not take place in a recording studio, but rather in my familiar environment in my home. I prefer to

work in this way, using materials close at hand to capture a creative moment. These works are fragments of a particular time in my life; sound material capturing a particular temporal event is later edited and structured into a 'different' timeframe; an artistic context. The time frame of the composition feels like time has been condensed into an artistic form, representing a particular time and place. The result is an embellished version of place using sound. Though the composition may appear a *reality* in my own world as this is my perception, to the listener it will more likely tell a different narrative, a different place. This is what I find inspiring, that my place can recreate another place for the listener.

When recording, I tend to often get very excited about given sounds/events that I ignore technical procedure. This can result in many glitches during recording whether that is a microphone accidentally hitting off an object or levels being too high and producing noise, to levels being too low and producing quiet, almost non-existent recordings. I am fascinated by how mistakes can shape something, and make it more interesting, make you view it in a different manner; so rather than not use recording mistakes, I tend to want to use them as a feature in my work.

> The inclusion, development, propagation, existence, replication, acknowledgement, rights, patterns and beauty of what are commonly known as accidents, is encouraged. Furthermore, they have equal rights within the composition as deliberate, conscious, or premeditated compositional actions or decisions' – Matthew Herbert, PERSONAL CONTRACT FOR THE COMPOSITION OF MUSIC [INCORPORATING THE MANIFESTO OF MISTAKES] (Herbert, 2005)

Technical 'perfection' for me is uninteresting and this is a prevailing theme throughout my portfolio for example in *Low_r*, *Hollow* and *Voice* in which I use glitch sounds.

When editing recorded material and listening to it repeatedly, sounds become heightened therefore, I focus more on their concrète properties which is combined with the image I have of that place, which is in the background while the musical material comes to the fore. When I begin to manipulate the sound, say for example, using filtering sometimes sounds emerge that feel like they have been hidden in the recording. This is how my imagination perceives them as I listen and compose. The piece emerges from these events rather than it being a process controlled by the composer.

I want to take recordings and place them in a new place, one which I have created through the compositional process. I want to create a place where the listeners can create their own narrative or place, not just recreate a real environment. As Dean states, a person cannot truly understand place unless they have been there (Dean, 2005) and I cannot totally transport a person to *my* place, rather I hope that my self-referential representation will enable them to create and inspire their own narrative.

Demers writes of how objecthood can explain '*how these field recordings use appropriated sounds that are nonetheless treated as non-referential, autonomous materials*' (Demers, 2009, p. 39). The recordings she is referring to is the artistic output of Francisco López and Toshiya Tsunoda. She states that these

> 'are not site specific in the conventional sense because they are not tied to a particular architectural or listening space… [The recordings are] detached from any particular venue or aural architecture. They can be heard whenever and wherever the listener likes, and seem best suited to the interior experience of headphone listening. [They] display little of the editing or compositional intervention that categorise much musique concrète and acousmatic music' (Demers, 2009, p. 39).

These methods and possible mode of listening (via headphones) does not

necessarily remove the works from the domain of sound art; 'site' can exist outside of the original site and enter a hyperreal place. In this writing, Demurs does not take into account López allusion to self-reference. Through fixed acousmatic music, the listener can choose where they experience the work without the composer infringing on this experience through either a concert setting or installation. In terms of defining a sound installation as occupying a certain space (Hegarty, 2007, p. 171), in my work the space it occupies is within the listener.

Halim El-Dabh an Egyptian composer who in 1944 attended a zaar, a gathering of women '*which is a practice of healing*'. Under a burka he smuggled in recording equipment and subsequently created several hours of field recordings which he used to compose a 25 minute composition '*Ta'abir Al-Zaar'* *(The Expression of Zaar)* at the Middle East radio station (Young, 2007, p. 26). El-Dabh said of this experience '*I felt that these people are a part of me – what they were doing is also me, I didn't feel separate. So the sound they were making is part of me – it resonated into me*'. For me his comment on his experience mirrors my own. Any experience I have where I decide to record an event or sound source and subsequently make a decision to use this in a composition, within that there is an expression of self.

Chapter 4   Composition Portfolio: Commentary

4.1   Blanket (2005)

Blanket was composed using a sample created on the UPIC system which is 19 seconds in length. The composition uses this sample in a variety of different guises for the entirety of the piece, apart from a different high-pitched sample for the last 45 seconds of the composition, which was created by pitch shifting a sound produced on the UPIC and panning it. The piece opens with 7 seconds of silence and ends with 20 seconds of silence. I included these silences intentionally; when the work begins either in performance or in an installation I wanted there to be silence at the opening in anticipation, and silence at the end of what was a very dense, rich texture throughout, a break for the listener and space to absorb previous events.

The composition opens quite slowly, but there is a sense of impending intensity. I see this composition as an aural representation of anxiety; during the process of composing as each layer of events was added the piece became more and more intense. I felt a compulsion to keep doing this until there was a thick, dense layer of sound. This composition uses very simple techniques, mainly changes in volume, texture and movement to create this effect.

In the opening section after the silence, I introduce the 19 second sample at 0:07 which gradually rises in volume, with a second entry of this sample pitch-shifted and entering after at 0:10. Another entry occurs at 0:17 at a higher pitch followed by a further entry at a low pitch. Each of these entries is treated with panning to give a sense of movement and separation to these individual parts, allowing time for each entry and changes within that. This drone like effect interweaves with volume changes and becomes more prominent at 0:35 but

events seem to stabilize at this point as the parts unfold. At 0:55 there is a sense of a build in climax and parts become less distinguished as more layers build up. 1:19 brings a change in timbre which is introduced again at 1:35 and 1:45, and all the while the texture becomes dense until 1:58 where there is a clear drop in the intensity with it dispersing at 1:58, with one last entry of this motif at 2:09 gradually fading while a new motif enters; a high pitched single sound provides an extreme contrast to the previous material. This is followed by silence, which allows some time to reflect on the space which was created by using earlier textures.

Sound mass is a compositional technique which features in a number of my works including *Blanket* (2005) and *Dawn* (2008). This technique focuses on using textural and timbral features in which the details are less important than the large-scale musical effect (Griffiths 2010) and I use it as a means of creating textural depth. I choose a short sound or recording and layer this using a sequencer. I layer each part in a staggered manner and manipulate into different pitches within a limited range. I use this technique to create tension and climax, and I feel it is an interesting way of exploring time by using minimal material, as in essence the timbre of the sound does not change drastically, but it becomes more intense through layering. In *Blanket* the climactic effect results quite quickly, whereas in contrast, in *Dawn* the sound mass takes much longer to build to a climax at which point the sound material becomes dense and cluttered, as the sounds of nature becomes a cluster of noise. Composers such as Ligeti (*Atmospheres*, 1961), Xenakis (*Metastasis*, 1953-4) and Penderecki (*Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima*, 1960) are renowned for using sound mass technique. Xenakis' *Metastasis* written between 1953-54 was

written for 61 orchestral musicians, with no two musicians playing the same part, rather each musician plays a glissandi part beginning on a different pitch, starting at different times. This part of the score is based upon the hyperboloid figure which was later used as the inspiration in Xenakis' architectural design for the Phillips Pavillion in 1958 (Chadabe, 1997, p. 61). In this work, though there are momentary melodic motifs, in essence this work moves away from a linear time line, rather it could be referred to as a textural composition. Griffiths says of Ligeti's *Atmospheres* (1961) that '*there is no longer any attempt to deal with units of pitch, duration, loudness, and timbre in a serial manner, or indeed any other*' (Griffiths, 1995, p. 136). As with Xenakis' *Metastasis*, Ligeti used staggered instrumental entries which he called 'micropolyphony', sustained sounds with no sense of pulse and suspended, harmonic clusters which results in '*sound as texture*' (Griffiths, 1995, p. 136).

My use of sound mass is an extension of the use of glitch and noise; in that I use it for textural effect. On layering what could initially be considered a flawless recording (in technical terms), it is possible through layered effect that this flawless texture can become quite dense. I spent time at the CCMIX listening to *Metastasis* and also listening to lectures by Sharon Kanach about Xenakis' work and his use of the hyperboloid figure as both an architect and composer, and this has been a major influence in my decision to use this technique, though I feel an unconscious one.

The sample used in *Blanket* was created on the UPIC system at the CCMIX studio in Paris. The origins of this synthesis system go back to 1953-54 when Xenakis wrote Metastasis which uses glissandi, a '*continuous transition between two notes of different pitches*' (Marino et al, 1993, p. 258) His use of a

large number of glissandi results in *'a sound space of continuous evolution comparable to the ruled surfaces and volumes that he used in architecture'* (Marino et al, 1993, p. 258). It was during this time that Xenakis was inspired with the idea to create a computer system that would allow the composer to draw music. This type of system of graphic representation allows for the simple implementation of intricate sound events such as glissandi, and frees the composer from traditional notation which traditionally has limitations in indicating a range of sound phenomena (Marino et al, 1993, p. 260). Even though I used a number of different manipulation tools such as CDP and various plug-ins incorporating changes in pitch and added reverb, the source material remains relatively similar to the original 19 second sample. I edited and sequenced this composition using a software sequencer, where I layered each part densely, and at the climactic part of the composition there were 15 individual tracks with similar material, at various pitches which created the density. As a result, each individual sound becomes part of one mass of sound. The original sound was quite dense, but I layered this sample up at varying pitches which were close in register to each other. These multiple layers created the sound mass that you hear in the final composition.

With regard to creating a work which is intense and representative of tension and anxiety, using this particular sample and sound mass as a technique allowed me to achieve that in this work because of the density of sound and the intensity produced layering this into a sound mass. I realise that this work is emulating techniques used by Xenakis, Penderecki et al, and at times this work does not have a uniqueness in that sense, but it captured an intangible place between the history of that machine, and the references to myself at the time of

composing; which I find interesting and helped to propel ideas in later works; this experience acted as a learning ground for that.

4.2 Low_1 (2007)

I was invited to write this composition for EAR-Drum International Festival of Electroacoustic Music which took place in Dublin in March 2007. EAR is a collective of composers and musicians based in Ireland (EAR, 2011).

For this composition, I decided to use samples from a composition I wrote in 2001 titled *Water 3*. Much of my earlier works incorporated sound recorded in a natural environment, which were then heavily manipulated. These recordings were used as sound sources for manipulation rather than to represent a particular landscape or environment. I also used some samples from the UPIC library which I had created at the CCMIX. All the material I used for this composition was recorded in a different time to the compositional period – the final composition was a re-interpretation of previous ideas. I used previous samples, 'regurgitated' from a composition contained within a collection titled *Water Sounds,* which explored the use of recorded water samples and areas where water was prevalent. At the time, my main reason was that I was never entirely happy with the structure of the original composition and decided to edit out the parts I preferred most, and re-compose. I was also interested in memory and how my memory of working previously with these samples would be expressed in the new work.

My methods included repeated listening to the original composition, *Water 3*; I simply edited out the parts which I found interesting. The next step was importing these samples into CDP where I experimented a great deal with

manipulating the sounds. After this I structured the samples in a sequencer trying different sounds against each other, trying different rhythmic motifs until I had a composition unfolding.

Low_r opens with a low-pitched muffled drone, which varies in pitch and continues to underline the following section up until 0:39. 0: 29 – 0:44 a new sound enters, which is not too dissimilar in texture to the opening sound, but different enough that it adds subtle contrast. At 0:32 a contrasting high-pitched motif enters, and is the first entry of the 'voice' motifs. This is in extreme contrast in terms of movement, pitch and timbre to previous ideas, so this instantly creates listening space under which the other ideas continue.

At 0:45 a new motif begins, which is quite sharp and contains a lot of movement and panning and acts almost as a bridge into a new section which contains more rhythmical material. At 0:54, I consider this a new section which contains a number of further 'voice' motifs, which are repeated and converse with each other in a rhythmical manner. This idea is extended and it is not until 1:32 that new material enters, where the structure changes, where a grainy, glitch like motif enters which pulsates while further ideas enter, coming to a climax at 1:57. There is a clear distinction at this point with regard to voice, whereas before it was heard in a more metaphorical sense. At 2:05 the voices are recordings of human voices which have been manipulated, which most listeners could relate to as being produced by a 'real' person. These samples were not manipulated for this composition; rather I sampled these directly from *Water 3*. This section relates to the idea of 'inhaling'; these voices sound as if they are being drowned out, and this is emphasised by the pulsating glitch sound underneath and high-pitched rhythmic motifs. Similar material

continues until the composition fades in momentum and volume at 3:12 when a metronomic motif enters gradually becoming slower as the drones fade to an echo.

I decided to break up this flawlessness with more glitch, rhythmic and looped sounds, trying to include as much contrast as possible. Though I did not enjoy the composition process, it did result in a composition which is strong, both structurally and in the textures used and has since been performed at many festivals, receiving very positive feedback from audiences. This work contains 'hidden voices' representing that desire to express a voice which I was struggling with at the time and this emerged in the composition. For a number of years, I did not enjoy listening to this composition which is a result of an association with the difficult compositional process rather than the final result. This change over time in how I listened to the work is an interesting exploration in how our listening and approach to listening alters over time.

4.3 Hollow (2007)

I became interested in Cage's philosophies through my interest in Morton Feldman. He taught Feldman *about the importance of silence as positive void (in the Eastern religious sense) rather than simply as negative space'* (Feldman, Friedmann, 2001, p. xix) and this was something that was discussed at great length between him and his non-academic teacher. The idea of silence as a structural feature is certainly a compositional technique that interests me greatly, and a technique that I have used liberally to create compositional space. Feldman expresses an '*aspiration, similar to Cage's, to let the sounds be themselves, and not to push them around*' (Feldman, 2001, p. 283). Feldman's, *Palais de Mari* (1986), is a composition which '*lets the sounds be*'. I first heard it

at a recital in Dublin, and to say that this experience had a profound effect on me is an understatement; I was completely enthralled and present for the entire performance of this work. It uses very sparse material and recurring motifs with simplicity which results in an incredibly beautiful piece. Bunita Marcus, a close friend of Feldman's asked him to write this piece as a means of condensing the ideas he explored in his larger scale compositions. After this performance, I became familiar with Feldman's writings, in particular finding inspiration in the publication *Give my Regard to Eighth Street* (2000), finding the anecdotal material in this book interesting and inspiring, material I related greatly to.

I had heard a number of Feldman's works previous to this, (as well as after this performance), but they did not have as great an impact on me as this performance. After the performance, I was not sure whether it was the music itself or the performance that moved me. I immediately purchased a copy of the composition online (Decoding Skin, 2006) and listened to it within a few hours of the concert. I was really moved and inspired by time with relation to this work – in the concert I had no notion of time passing, I felt that with each musical event that I was fully present and with that event. When I purchased the composition, I was surprised to see the recording was almost 26 minutes and would never have guessed this after hearing the composition for the first time. I was fascinated by this and more from the point of view of truly being present with something and in the moment – and artistically how that can affect composer and audience. I was intrigued to discover a paper by a musicologist Frank Sani titled *Morton Feldman's Palais de Mari: a pitch analysis* (Villars, 2011). Sani wrote of how this composition '*defies explanation*'

and in writing this paper his intention was to prove that the composition shows a

> 'catalogue of playful workmanship, making through-composing into a highly skilled flow of invention, where groups of pitches are inverted, transposed, reshaped, and where the introduction of new pitches from time to time is instinctively alternated with echoes of previous harmonies…(Sani cited by Chris Villars, 2004).

Sani states that Feldman took an almost improvisational methodology to his compositions. The idea of taking an improvisational approach and intervening with these musical materials in various ways resound greatly in terms of my approach to composing *Hollow*. The composition evolved from improvisations; I was playing some chordal patterns at the piano and decided to write down the pitches, but not approach them in a systematic way, or associate them harmonically.

This technique led me to record an improvisation on piano that evening, which formed the basis of the piece *Hollow*.   For a number of months before hearing *Palais de Mari* in concert, I had wanted to compose a composition for piano and tape and on this evening, I felt very inspired but sensitive. This sensitivity allowed gentleness in my approach to playing the piano, and the material I chose. This piece uses gaps of silence, though on composing I was not aware of this; I saw these silences as a chance for the listener to absorb each event, in addition to allowing a sound to become more prominent; the ear of the listener is waiting for something to happen. When listening to gaps of silence, they enhance the next sound and therefore amplify its significance. It also gives both the previous sound and the following sound space. Another feature in this work is the use of 'mistakes' or glitch sounds. In this context they are beautiful,

gentle disruptions which represent place and its imperfections. Young writes that *'When you let sound be itself, strip it of the imperative to represent human sentiments literally, you are not necessarily making something inhuman. At their best, these nicks and cracks are wounds – reminders of the frailty, mortality and imperfection of human endeavours'* (Young, 2002, p. 49). I see these as being as much part of representing place and the compositional process as the recording of events that I *intend* and make happen.

Hollow evolved from a variety of pitch rows. I did not write them out on a stave, but rather letter names, arranged as such:

> › F# A C Eb
> › F Bb Db
> › E A C Eb
> › F Ab C
> › E A E
> › F B C Eb E

These pitch rows were written on a piece of paper and, sitting at the piano I began to focus on these ideas and began to improvise. After doing this for 2 – 3 minutes, similar to the process I used when working with the UPIC, I realised that I should capture these events in a recording. I decided to record an improvisation, which lasted approximately 9 minutes, using a sound interface connected to my laptop. While recording this event, to say that I was truly present is an understatement – it was almost like a meditation. I was not thinking logically with regard to musical progression I just let instinct take over and allowed each sound event to breathe by allowing time for each event to begin and end, before moving onto the next event. Having listened back to the recording, I decided to make another recording but I was not satisfied with the

results. I also tried this the next day, but similarly I was not satisfied; it was as if my inspiration from that day was absorbed into that improvisation and recording.

While recording this composition, I was using a soundcard, which I left on my piano – and the cables used were not good quality. I had only intended to use the recording as a document of the improvisation, which could later be scored and re-performed if I was satisfied with the results. As a result, there were some glitches in the recording where the loose cable accidentally hit off a wall while I was playing the piano. Unlike *Low_r,* which used glitches in an interventionist way using sound manipulation and editing techniques, here these mistakes happened by accident, but they were a sonically interesting accident which I wanted to incorporate into the composition. These mistakes were part of the compositional process and the recording which took place, and given that I felt they complemented the gentleness of the piano part, I wanted to use them in the work. I also found it interesting that my previous composition was inspired by the contrast between perfect/imperfect and this seemed like a chance but fateful event.

I completed the composition quickly, over two days. While composing, I decided to sequence the piano improvisation into a software editor and to take the glitches and sequence these to compliment the piano part. In what was then referred to as the tape part, I also included decays from some of the notes, to add texture, contrast and a sense of rhythmic progression. My intention was to later score the piano part and perform this part live with the tape part. On reflection, I decided against this for a number of reasons. I found it difficult to decide whether the composition should always remain an improvisation, in

other words, should the score consist of a series of pitch rows written on a page similar to the one I used, and given to a performer. In the initial programme notes given to audiences I stated: The score consists of six chords, scored in a grid to be interpreted by the performer and could be played in any order or inversion. Later, I decided against this, as for me, this would lead to interpretation and would not necessarily capture what the initial essence of the composition was. I was intending to re-record the composition, score each part – although after writing a score for performance I began to practice the composition and realised that this no longer sounded improvised or a series of events which instinctively followed the next, or at least that was how I felt about the process. This led to much consideration with regard to tape music and how this captures the essence of a moment or place. I felt that the essence of place which was captured in the initial recording could not be re-performed live. It took two years of consideration with regard to this and I have come to a solid decision that the composition should remain as it is presented in this portfolio, as a recorded, fixed media work.

The basis of this composition is the untreated piano recording, with parts added to expand these musical events. The composition begins at the middle register of the piano, following pitch pattern 1 closely followed by pitch pattern 2. Each chord is repeated and is followed by a falling resolution of pitch pattern 2. This contrast gives a sense of momentum and movement, almost like a pendulum effect between events. The initial chords are held for approximately 10 seconds, something which I was not consciously aware of until I analysed the work more closely. This type of discovery is interesting in that it raises the issue of time and how we associate with that. Instinctively each of the chords was

played for a specific period of time without reference to other framework. Given each of these chords is sounded for 10 seconds, it allows the chord to decay and this decay is almost pre-empting later sound events. This also allows more focus on the chord, and the repetitiveness allows the listener time to absorb the chord. At 0:30 the initial chord is reiterated and this is repeated at a sooner interval of 5 seconds. Each pitch row is presented with periods of silence, to allow the listener space to reflect.

At 1:59 the edited piano sounds are introduced, which are similar in pitch and timbre to the piano chord which has been previously used, but as the sound has been edited to only include the main body of the sound, it has a rhythmic, percussive effect and within this context given its timbre blends into the piano chord. At 2:04 panning of this decayed motif is introduced to give movement and compositional space. 2:57 – 3:02 there are a number of very gentle clicks and glitches present, with a sudden gap before the next piano chord is struck which appears isolated as it is not surrounded by other material. At this point, it is worth noting that the register of the piano part has moved up to a higher range while still playing the pitch rows. I intended for this to be a gradual, undetected climb, that there was not an awareness of the pitch rising in register. Further rhythmic configurations of the edited piano parts enter. At 3:56 the lower pitched motif introduced heightens the contrast in register, as well as contrasting in timbre with the piano chords. 4:24 the register in the piano part continues to rise, repeating these events with small configurations. At 5:00 the previous decay material re-enters adding contrast and filling the space which has been created by this change in register. Ideas are presented and repeated as the ear begins to become familiar with these ideas; there is a further lull in the

structure at 6:00 with moments of single piano events, with delays between striking the chords. Similarly, piano decays are used from this new register to compliment and contrast, and are repetitive of previous ideas. These continuous repetitions make it difficult to grasp where the composition is going to before it begins to suggest an ending at 9:00 which follows 54 seconds later.

At the time of recording and playing the improvisation, physically I felt 'hollow', but not in a negative sense, more so in a contented, resolved way. This physicality emerged within the recording, the chords played out in a meditative, present sense. The gaps of silences and repetitive nature of the sound events created space 'hollow-ness' a sense of calm; still and stagnant. It was after composing this composition I became more interested and engaged in time/place and its emergence within the compositional process – for the remaining works in this portfolio I had a heightened awareness of this. I began to understand how place was emerging in my work.

4.4 Invisible (2007)

This composition uses very simple materials, a short 25 second sample created using the UPIC, noise and silence. In this composition, I wanted to further explore the ideas used in the previous compositions of the collection; UPIC material, using noise as a feature, exploring the perfect/imperfect concept, silence as a structural point and creating space through changes in register. I use noise and silence as a structural feature as well as to create a context. Sound, which is equally interspersed with noise and silence, is used to convey this idea of imperfection and how it exists, compares and is conceived within a given context. As I composed *Invisible*, I noticed that the more repeated listening that was necessary to create the piece, the more listenable it became.

Boundaries were stretched as my ears and my mind became used to the sounds.

When referring to Japanese noise music, Paul Hegarty refers to *'sadomasochism, which is of vital importance in contemporary Japanese aesthetics'* (Hegarty, 2007, p. 134). It was learning more about this aesthetic which led me to incorporate noise within my work, but in a more subtle way. Artistically I see noise as being the opposite of silence but I use both in a similar manner, to create and extend compositional space and boundary, and for textural and structural effect. Another experience to note, which has been a source of inspiration in my use of noise or extremes, was a performance of C4I and datamatics (ver.1.0) by Japanese sound artist Ryoji Ikeda at IMMA (Ikeda, 2007). The performance was loud, and frenetic, with an impressive array of visuals projected on an enormous screen. It was in the weeks after this time period that I wrote *Invisible*. Sound artist Ryoji Ikeda whose work features the use of glitch and noise has said that

> "...my intention is always polarized by concepts of the beautiful and the sublime. To me, beauty is crystal; rationality, precision, simplicity, elegance, delicacy. The sublime is infinity, infinitesimal, immensity, indescribable, ineffable…" (Edwards, 2010, p. 87)

Cascone writes of how Ikeda brought a *'serene quality of spirituality to glitch music'* (Cascone, 2000, p. 16).

The UPIC sample is edited into short samples with abrupt endings. The intention was to gradually introduce this sample, similarly as if the sample was played back, stopped abruptly, rewound, played again and so on; adding a little more information on each play. I always felt that the sample had a voice in a similar way that I referred to voice in *Low_r*; the shape and morphology of the sound evoked a feeling of somebody trying to be heard and the frustration of

that despite repeated statements; the methods explore this idea using montage style editing.

The composition opens with a 1 second edit of the original sample, followed by 10 seconds of silence. This is reiterated further, and on each occasion is lengthened slightly, with silences becoming less pronounced. At 0:55 there is a longer reiteration of this sound, which is repeated with the sound being opened by the use of a filter. This idea continues until new material is introduced at 1:53 with a high-pitched voice contrasting with the original sample. This is followed by noise rather than silence. At 2:20 the original sample is layered into two parts, varies in volume and begins to open up further and expand because of this. At 3:01 more voices enter and this pre-empts the cacophony, which follows and ends abruptly at 3: 33 and is followed by 17 seconds of silence.

This composition emerged from the UPIC sample. I was fascinated by its harshness and wanted to explore this idea further. If this was imperfection, what was perfection? On repeated listening to this sound, silence may appear to be perfection. Given that I found it difficult to listen to the material, it is very interesting that I repeatedly listened to this over a number of days for hours at a time while editing this work and making compositional decisions with regard to how I was going to use this sample. In a sense it was almost a punishment and if that was the case, why would I do that to an audience? *Hollow* was a piece which could lull a listener into a meditative state, whereas *Invisible* has the potential to create unrest and unease, in a similar way to the sadomasochistic tendencies of noise music which Hegarty writes of (2007). I thought that this sample had the potential to be torturous in nature if repeatedly played, and this is what results in the structure of this composition.

The unease is lessened by introducing the sample in short spurts, followed by silence. My intention was that these moments of silence would be ones of relief; but as the piece progresses, there would also be moments of expectation as this sound pattern becomes evident to the listener. The prolonged unease unfolds and the silences disappear, instead replaced by noise, a sound event which is often uneasy for listeners, but in this context could be seen as a welcome relief. I think this concept challenges listener's notions with regard to noise and silence in a sonic context and expands this boundary. This composition has the ability to raise discourse, if only within the mind of the listener.

4.5 Dawn (2008)

Feldman discusses the idea of surface in art and quotes his contemporary; artist Brian O'Doherty *'the composer's surface is an illusion into which he puts something real – sound. The painter's surface is something real from which he then creates an illusion'*. Feldman then asked O'Doherty to expand this idea and asked *'would you now please differentiate between a music that has a surface and a music that doesn't'* to which O'Doherty responded *'a music that has a surface constructs with tim*e. *A music that doesn't have a surface submits to time and becomes a rhythmic progression'* (Feldman, Friedmann, 2000, p. 85). In my own work, the listener can interpret the surface of my compositions through the textures used, and therefore imagine certain visual and physical properties which are elicited from these - be transported into place and what this means (or meant) within the compositional space. There is something unconscious at play during the compositional process and a certain surface emerges due to place and this in itself represents place within the final

composition. This impacts the textural surface of the composition.

> Tropical rain forests hold a special place in our imaginations. They sustain myriad life forms yet retain a mysterious sense of presence. A place of marvels where we sometimes fear to thread (Watson, 2011).

Watson's statement resounded with me as my experience within the rainforest was very similar and impacted greatly on this composition which results in a work which constructs with time; in a similar way O'Doherty described surface in music to Feldman. The material for this composition was recorded in a region beside the Mamori Lake within the Amazon, Brazil. The material I chose for this composition is a sample from a recording, which I made at dawn. The recording equipment was set up before sunrise at approximately 04:00. We left the area so as not to disturb the natural awakening of the rainforest at dawn and returned a number of hours later to collect the equipment. On listening to the recording I was stunned by the gradual awakening of nature, and how dense the material became over this two hour period. This inspired an idea to use only a short sample of the recording and create a similar density using only a small amount of material. These methods were influenced by my previous methods of using small fragments of ideas and developing them into larger compositions. Technically, this composition was realised using very simple techniques. I chose a section of the recorded material lasting approximately four minutes and presented this at the opening of the composition. Making a copy of this section I added delay and made further copies of this with varying degrees of delay. I then sequenced and layered these parts, with the intention of creating a gradual build up in sound to create a dense texture. I allowed this idea to build up over 11 minutes until there was a tense climax, but quickly dropped to introduce an untreated sound of nature, after which the piece ends.

The composition opens with sounds of the rainforest at dawn. In this section I intended to present this section unprocessed so as to give the listener a chance to immerse themselves in this environment. There are many interesting layers which occur in this section: short bird sounds, various high pitches, gentle crunching on the ground, an intermittent drone like effect from a distance, a falling pitch in the background. This section gives a very clear sense of place in a literal sense. From 0:00 to 1:00 is completely untreated. After this point new material enters, which is the original sample layered with a delay of itself. This transition is quite gentle as there is a gradual increase in volume. By 1:35 it is clear that the piece is entering a more acousmatic domain, with the manipulation of the original recording now being clear. The delay which was used on the sample has resulted in a drone like effect, which loops rhythmically underneath this part and gives the composition momentum. It was at the time of writing the composition that I decided to explore the idea of time and decided to experiment with the idea of extending the initial ideas to their limit, exploring how long I could attempt to achieve this. At 3:11 the landscape becomes more warped, yet the ear still associates with the initial bird sounds which were presented. At 3:58 the sounds almost merge into a cluster of sound as they become masked by other events. During this section, it is so easy to become removed from what you are listening to, and get so lost that you are unaware of time; the previous three minutes could be much shorter or longer events. What was once a busy landscape is turning into a mass of indistinguishable noise and dense sound matter. This is achieved by gradual entries of the delayed sample and by 6:30 there are five entries of this sound, each one created more densely than the previous. By 6:40 the overall landscape is extremely intense and yet the morphology of the initial sound is still present.

At this point it was my intention to push this idea to its limit and discover how long this could last comfortably until the ear sought relief. By 7:54 the climax in this section is reached, and remains so until 9:55 where it becomes somewhat louder. What I consider interesting about this section is that it is difficult to understand whether the sound is getting more intense or whether psychologically the sonic landscape is causing this. At 10:19 a sound from nature is introduced, a call out to the rainforest. The listener is brought back to the real landscape. The introduction at 11:00 of a frog sound brings the listener back in a somewhat humorous way. This material was introduced at this point to break the intensity of previous material as I felt that the composition was at a climax that could gradually end using the same time length that it took to reach the climax, so I decided upon a quick dispersion of energy by using familiar, natural sounds.

In the context of writing this composition I felt a very definite sense of place, both in terms of the environmental location and also due to my own place personally. While completing this composition I felt a sense of place emerge very clearly in this composition and this heightened my awareness of this aspect in my work. The textural and timbral components of the composition and the way in which these ideas were structured convey a sense of the composers place at the time of composing.

The sense of claustrophobia in this piece, and its emergence caused me to think about how the space in which you compose and where you are (in a number of senses; environmentally, physically, emotionally) impacts on the composition. Though I cherished being in the rainforest, I did get ill a number of times due to infections, and I was weary physically. This led to a feeling or need to be in

familiar surroundings or place, which in turn led to feelings of claustrophobia on brief occasions. On evenings I would look out on the lake and think about these ideas – and feel these ideas emerging in the composition I was completing there. I took video footage and photographs as a reminder of how vast the area was, but how we were confined to a small area/camp due to its location and the obvious dangers. Having experienced time creating a composition at CCMIX where I did not visually document the place or materials used, I decided that it was important that visual events which influenced me at Mamori were an important part of the process of capturing and remembering place even if they do not feature in the final work. The end result in this composition is an intense listening level, and I felt ending the piece at this intense level would not be effective structurally in the composition, so I contrasted this by using unprocessed sounds, clearly recorded in a natural environment. This 'claustrophobic' idea unconsciously emerged in *Dawn* – there is definitely a causal relationship between a personal sense of place, and the place itself. Having experienced this, I wanted to experiment further with this idea and discover if this occurred in my 'normal' space of practise. This resulted in a series of works which incorporates recorded sounds from my home and my compositional response to these; *Green Gate*, *Voice* and *Morning*.

This work is an exploration of time, both from a personal perspective of capturing a 'time' or place, but also it explores time within the compositional landscape. Each time I listen to the composition I get very lost in the density of sound, almost in a hypnotic sense and when I come to my senses what feels like eight minutes have passed, it is really only three minutes or vice versa.

Time for me behaves in an unusual manner when experiencing this composition. This composition captures the intensity of the rainforest in an artistic sense, the vast area, dense vegetation, rich soundscape and the intensity of being in that environment for an extended period of time and the effect that has on an individual both physically and psychologically. For me this composition represents how I attempted to create place in my work, as not only does this composition include actual recordings of place, but the sonic qualities of the work represent the feeling which was within this space at the time of composing. This composition was of significant importance in understanding my practice.

4.6 Green Gate (2009)

This was the first composition in this portfolio which explores the use of sounds recorded in familiar surroundings around my home. In this work, I wished to explore the use of familiar sounds and my relationship to these recordings, the places they evoke for me, and how that shapes the final compositions.

The basis of this composition is a recording of a sound produced when wind blows through a set of large green gates in my apartment building. These gates lead into a concrete, grey car-park behind the building, but sheltered by the four-story building itself. Late into the night I heard the gates 'performing'; the sound coming up through the building. Using a portable stereo recording device, I recorded short pieces and listened back – but it was such a disappointing recording, far too noisy. I knew that the wind would interfere with capturing the true essence of the recording and I was trying to find a solution to this. On the second attempt to shield the recorder I put it behind a concrete wall, but still the recordings were too noisy. Personally, I wanted to

capture it on that night, as it was so stormy that I knew it could be a long time before I could capture this again and that capturing this sound was dependent on something out of my control. I was very disappointed as I knew that the very thing creating the sound (the wind) was also going to be the main culprit in not capturing the essence of this sound onto a recording. As it was late at night and in the city my partner came with me for safety and we went back to my apartment to try to find something to shield the recording device. He suggested we use a clothes basket which I found very amusing at the time, but it was very effective in that moment. It is made of tough linen; square in shape, therefore it stood up over the recording device, and has no gaps or holes for wind to find its way into. I put the clothes basket over the recorder (which was on a tripod) and made certain the edges of the basket did not touch the microphone and sheltered it beside a wall in the car park. This produced a much better recording, and I resolved the sound of the wind being present as without it, the sound would not exist.

I stayed up that night and listened to the recordings, editing the parts which I wished to use. I liked the way the pulse of the wind dictated the sound; the pitch would change according to the strength of the wind. What I find interesting about this is that I feel my recording methods impacted on the final composition, and my association of the very interesting and amusing time trying to capture the sound has impacted in that idea of place. Place has also been captured within this composition, as the sound is so familiar to me and one which I will always associate with the duration of the compositional process and creating this work, and since 2009, it is a sound I hear on a frequent basis.

The piece unfolded over four days – and the musical aspects of the recording certainly influenced this idea. I feel this has really captured the essence of place, and I now hear this soundmark in a completely different way having used it within the compositional process and for artistic purpose. What is also interesting about this work and the process of making it is that I usually make recordings by myself and then work with them. Having my partner present and getting involved was a different experience and he was part of my familiar environment and living space; these associations also represent place. As with *Dawn*, there were other people present during the recordings but we individually decided where to put recording devices and though they were carried out in a group, we did not interact with regard to the actually recording process.

The sounds used in the opening of this composition are quite difficult to distinguish in terms of what type of environment this could have been recorded in. As a result the landscape is somewhat indecipherable. A hollow sound opens the composition which opens out by using contrasting changes in volume which creates movement and is used with the intention of drawing the listener into the place which is created within this composition. This is quickly followed with shorter rhythmic events which are recordings of water travelling through the pipes of the building. The natural rhythm of the wind coming through the gates provides the palette on which these sounds contrast and hang from. These ideas continue to repeat themselves until 2:22 when more pitched sound events enter, and are looped. The pitched sound which is created by wind entering the gates is introduced at 2.28; this idea is repeated, but this is influenced by the rhythmic nature of the landmark, dependent on

the strength and frequency of wind passing through. Certain parts of the recording are filtered so as to make the low frequency events more pronounced, and this material is introduced at 2:50. Within this sound, there are a number of varying frequencies and moments of grainy, glitch like material. At 3:14 the sound which enters could be mistaken for a recording of birds, but is actually the sound produced from water travelling through the pipes in the building, which were changed in pitch. At 3:50 the low sound event is heard again on its own, which leads to the composition fading out

I chose this as the first recording to explore the site of my usual surroundings; the recording is the sound created as the wind blows through the enormous gates at the front of my building – a very musical sound. Since 2005 I have been completely obsessed by this sound which I would hear sporadically, a few times per year, and would sit and listen to it having resolved that I would not be able to find where it was. The sound would envelope the building - in a sense remind me of that idea of a blanket of sound covering an area; it had some connections with *Blanket* in that sense. I could not decipher if it was coming from one of the many apartments surrounding the building – was it in my building, the building across the road? It was almost similar to a childlike experience of following a rainbow; once I would start walking around the area trying to find it, the sound would disappear. It was when a friend stayed with me in late 2008, architect Rosa Urbano, that I discovered how this sound was created – we were coming in one windy night, we heard the sound and she immediately said this sound was coming from some part of the building, pipes perhaps and when she saw the gates explained that this was the source. This generated so much excitement for me as I was really amazed by this. On windy

nights I hear this sound coming up through the building. Though Irish weather is not the best, it requires very strong stormy conditions for the gates to 'perform'. If the window is open I can hear it and I find it so comforting and relaxing. The problem with this sound is you cannot quite predict when it is going to happen – the night I recorded it, it was extremely windy. The wind dictates its pulse and movement; the pulse of the sound was dependent on how often there was a gust of wind. The events in this place dictate the musical content of the sound. I also like the contrast in that this sound is produced on a cold, stormy evening but yet the sound is so warm and comforting. My association with this sound is the comfort of being at home in stormy conditions. The act of composing this sound has changed my relationship to it as I feel I personalised this through a composition. For me, using these recordings capture the essence of that evening and how mindful and aware I was of nature interacting with man-made objects and the beauty that can come from that.

4.7 Voice (2009)

Hildegard's Dream (1994) by Alejandro Viñao has inspired *Voice*. The work is sung by Frances Lynch and inspired by Hildegard von Bingen, a composer and visionary from the Middle Ages. Bingen had a musical dream in which one of her compositions is being performed by 80 nuns. The melodies reveal microtonal intervals, signifying the 'infidel' and the rhythms dictate no clear meter. This inspired Viñao's *'study on the relationship between melody and timbre in a micro-tonal context'* (Viñao, 1994). This is so haunting and beautiful and is an electroacoustic work I listen to frequently. I realised that as the piece started to evolve that this influence was there, the point where the

human voice moulds into something surreal, something which it is not capable of producing, yet is familiar to the listener as a human voice. It should be clear to the listener that there is human interaction involved with these vocal samples, no matter how manipulated they become.

I see the voice as having a connection with place. Voice can be taken literally to mean a vocal utterance or it can be taken as a style of composition or sense of a composer's presence. It is often a word used to describe a composer who has 'found their voice' meaning they have a particular signature sound or style. Corringham uses her voice to respond to place, as she did in *Shadow-walks.*

> 'Any number of persons sit in a circle facing the centre. Illuminate the space with dim blue light. Begin by simply observing your own breathing. Always be an observer. Gradually allow your breathing to become audible. Then gradually introduce your voice. Allow your vocal cords to vibrate in any mode which occurs naturally. Allow the intensity of the vibrations to increase very slowly. Continue as long as possible, naturally, and until all others are quiet, always observing your own breath collection. Variation: translate voice to an instrument' (EST Magazine, 2011).

Though I read this 'sonic meditation' by Oliveros after I composed this work, I think it emulates how I was feeling at the time of recording the vocal material for this piece. *'Oliveros always seems to be a lot more interested in the sound and the experience than in the concept, with these pieces'* (EST Magazine, 2011). Oliveros' intention was that this be a social piece; in contrast I was alone, in a more personal space. I think this composition unfolded with a place which was more personal than the other works which have considered this theme. In this composition, I decided to record vocal samples and create something of definite pitch/duration. I recorded myself singing whatever came out when I hit record; so in a sense it was improvised and the musical material not necessarily thought of in advance. I was interested in the idea of place while

composing this – since this was an exploration of composing in a personal space and using this space for artistic purpose I had thought that there is nothing more personal than your voice, coming from within, so I wanted to explore this idea, using personal material, in a personal space. I was interested in how I would respond to this, and how that would unfold as the compositional process took place. Not only did I want a literal representation of place at that time, that is the composer singing, but I also wanted the work to absorb the place and how that evolved in the final work. The act of sitting listening to these samples in a particular place, was the mood or the indefinable going to impact on the work? Was composing in the middle of the night, in the quiet with an awareness of other people hearing me sing as I recorded going to impact on this? The getting lost in what you were doing, while as day breaks sea gulls crying out outside the apartment windows, the following night while I edit the piece, a thunder storm breaks and the sound associated with that. All of these events absorbed within the composition over time.

As I live in an apartment, I am always conscious that my neighbours can hear me practising the piano, singing – so when I do sing, I tend to sing very softly, which is how I recorded my voice for this work. For this piece I do not think that the voice is the place – I think the place is one more personal and represents 'place' in a less literal sense. I think that there was something in me that night which wanted to 'let something out' as opposed to the voice representing a programmatic imaginary place. I think this connects also with *Hollow* in that a personal space on a particular day resulted in that work.

In Janet Cardiff's work, '*The Missing* Voice *(case study b)*' she uses her voice, '*Cardiff plays a central role in these psychologically absorbing fictions, her*

distinct, softly spoken Canadian voice being her own seductive style' (Dean and Millar, 2005, p. 152). Dean and Millar suggest that Cardiff *'implicates you emotionally and environmentally. Her voice leads. You follow'* (Dean and Millar, 2005, p. 152). I feel that voice enters my work both in a literal sense, in that I use vocal recordings and also that voice can be represented in a non-literal sense of evoking an idea or place; rather the timbral and textural depth evoke this. I am interested in the possibility of acousmatic music evoking this idea, and sense of place and person. This idea was further explored using voice three years later in *Áitleku* (2012).

The composition opens with a single pitch, 7 seconds in duration, which begins slightly panned left, but which gradually moves to the right. This sound is repeated four times, though on the fourth repetition the length of the sound is extended, with an introduction of some gentle, metallic-like ideas to contrast the pureness of the tone. At 1:04 a contrasting pitch is introduced and extended synthetically, where the voice moulds into a more electronic sound. At 1:36 we are reminded of the opening vocal motif, with the other pitch of this motif entering and these ideas overlap at 1:58 where they are extended. At 2.21 this contrast is somewhat dissonant, but still in terms of timbre and texture is still gentle and inviting to the listener. At this point it is very clear that the material used was generated from the initial vocal samples, but the sound is more synthesised, 'less natural'. Contrasting pulsating parts of this sample enter at 3:22 which last briefly until the listener is reminded at 3:42 of the initial samples used which is repeated but at 4:03 it changes pitch and shorter glitch like sounds enter in a pulsating manner. This acts as a bridge into a new section, which still used the same materials, but it is shortened and more rhythmic and

pulsating. Contrasting voice enters at 5:11, harking back to the initial material used. At 5:19 an untreated version of the initial sample enters, to remind the listener that this material is 'human'. Hard panning at 5:52 and continued pulsating introduce a new section – which is reminiscent of motifs used in *Low_r*; we hear a bass like sound enter underneath the vocal samples, one which is calling in a change in the landscape and the sound of thunder enters bringing the listener into a more natural landscape The composition ends at this point.

In contrast to *Invisible* I feel that in *Hollow* and *Voice* the use of glitches in this context is beautiful; gentle disruptions and ones which represent place and its imperfections (Young, 2002, p. 49). The methods used to compose this composition consist of sound editing and manipulation techniques. To create the main vocal motif which opens the work I layered three vocal parts, one of the original single note recording, a second with slight delay, and a third where the pitch was slightly wavering. This results in a rich pure sound, and remained true to the original recording, while at the same time adding texture and depth to the recording. This motif provides the material for the majority of this composition, in various guises and edits. I have used layers of this motif at 0:40 but unlike previous works where I have layered material to create a sound mass, in this work it was used to extend the vocal part, and make it more instrumental in a sense as it is now extended in various pitches and guises to create various entries, almost in a contrapuntal style. There is very little sound manipulation used in this work, and the remainder mainly consists of editing techniques for effect, such as shortening the initial motif to more pulsating, rhythmic patterns. Within this editing, I have also allowed space for silence

and periods of rest between ideas. The sound of thunder was recorded on the night following the initial vocal recordings and I had already begun working on the composition. I decided to include this recording as it was a literal representation of place and the place of composing, as well as being an interesting contrast to the vocal samples.

4.8 Morning (2009)

An example of contemporary art which has impacted on my recent work and thinking is a piece by Anne Tallentire, an Irish artist based in London. Her work *Instances* (1999) contemplates the passing of time in relation to perception and meaning and was produced when Tallentire represented Ireland at the 1999 Venice Biennale. In three parts this work consists of a video projection which depicts, in real time, dawn breaking over a nondescript city landscape, a series of improvised actions and a single image video loop (Tallentire, 2010). Experiencing this work reminds me of *Morning.*

The composition *Morning* is an artistic representation or documentation of a place or time not dissimilar in method to the Tallentire's *Instances*. In this film, Tallentire focuses on an urban housing environment and in the background familiar sounds can be heard on this film. Tallentire's film is not dynamic; it consists of a video loop of a single image; 'ordinary', familiar living spaces, and this reminded me of the urban environment I live in and the sounds within that.

Morning is a natural landscape with the initial sounds heard being of birds and cars passing, the sound of bells from a church enter, sounding repeatedly. There are subtle sounds surrounding this; wind and gentle noise, the church bells

continue to chime. At 1:50 we hear another church bell enter, which contrasts with the other bells. All the while, cars pass by and city life continues. Bird tweets contrast with more urban sounds. Sound of somebody walking on the street below, and the seagulls crying out, people talking; by 3:08 these ideas become busier than previous. At 3:41 a sound of warped bells enters briefly, and within seconds the 'natural' landscape returns. The listener at this point realises that the bells have been chiming constantly; they are almost never ending. At 4:48 there is heard a 'warped' bell sound, which contrasts with the natural. 5:02 there is a sound of metal on the street. The bells stop chiming which marks the end of the composition.

The methods used for creating this composition consist of making a number of recordings using similar methods that I had learnt at Mamori in Brazil, that being to leave a recording device in a place, let events happen around this without the person present and to return to the event. I completed a number of recordings during July 2009 on the rooftop of my apartment. I live on a roof top apartment, like a city cottage, with an open garden so there are lots of birds that settle themselves in this area, especially as dawn approaches. There are also a number of churches in the area, and especially on Sunday morning these bell sounds overlap. I was interested in this idea and decided to record on two different locations on the roof, one facing the churches and the other where the events on the street can be heard. The sound to listeners on the rooftop is of sound coming upwards and I wanted to capture that. I took the risk of wrapping a tripod around the edge of the four-story building and pointing the recording device in the direction of the street. My intention in doing this was that it would capture that same sense of place, as if the listener was on a roof

top. All these levels of sound, from high and low on the street were interesting to work with, and listen to closely. The chattering on the street was indecipherable, and contrasting with the clear communication of the bells sounding out to the community.

In comparison to other compositions, the editing for this was very simple; and this is something which I grapple with as a composer, because I do not feel like the hand of the composer has impacted on this work. Norman writes of Peter Cusack's work *Canalside atmosphere,* a work which uses sound recordings of a marshland beside a canal in Lea Valley, North East London as a '*listening adventure... it would be evasive... to call this experience music*' (Norman, 2010, p. 63). Cusack, a composer and performer, does not refer to this as music either, and has categorised the CD as 'sound recordings'. Norman writes that these are not just documentation '*They are a map, drawn by an expert listener*' (Norman, 2010, p 63). When reading Norman's description of this work and also listening to it, I could relate this to *Morning* and felt that my work very much related to this description of Cusack's work. Like Tallentire's *Instances* (1999) which records a city landscape on video I felt that *Morning* is an artistic representation of a place in a more literal sense, but nonetheless capturing a particular time and place in an artistic way. My decisions to capture the sounds using a microphone on a 'city canopy' reflect the artistic decision to capture this soundscape; the hand of the composer is behind the microphone as Norman referred to with regard to Cusack's sound recordings.

I used the recording from 9am on a Sunday morning as the first recording and at 2:00 in the composition, the dawn recording enters, which has more contrasting sound activity than later on a Sunday morning, which I found

interesting. I began to loop the bell sounds at 2:30 as this place is surrounded by churches and bells, they ring frequently by either denoting the time, or a religious event. I thought that this was an amusing representation of this place. I also created some movement and pulse within the work. Interspersed there are warped bells sounds used very subtly; they can barely be heard.

4.9 Throbbing (2012)

In late 2011 I began to have anxiety based dreams, which were incredibly disturbing. For the first time in my life, sound was amplified in my dreams like never before. Sometimes these dreams would endure all night, consisting of brief time cycles of waking and falling back to sleep. When asleep it felt as if they were taking place for hours, but it would only be minutes before I would wake up again. And so the cycle would continue, repeatedly, for hours. In one particular dream I was walking through a strange place, in a large, open building with grey walls and came upon a piano. In the dream the piano made warped sounds; the sound was incredibly vivid. On waking I wished I could record these sounds and unlike writing a narrative of a dream in words, here I had to rely in my memory and description of the sounds and this is what inspired *Throbbing*. This work incorporates many of both the compositional and conceptual influences in my music since beginning writing this portfolio of work.

These dreams made me question what place I was in while sleeping, what was happening temporally, why was I hearing these sounds. When composing this piece and being reminded of this place that was between the imaginary and reality, how did this impact on this work and the process of creating it? This composition is influenced not only by the sounds I heard in the dream but also

by the idea of place in my dreams and my memory of it. This work incorporates the use of manipulated extended instrumental sounds, glitches during the recording process, sharp montage-like editing, clicks and voices.

This work began as a recording of me performing various musical events on a piano. Unlike *Hollow* where a composition emerged, in this recording I was experimenting with the sounds the piano could produce both externally and internally. I used a portable recorder and left it on different parts of the piano while I experimented playing the instrument in a conventional way. I explored the inside of the piano by placing the recorder internally while playing the instrument conventionally, plucking the strings and experimenting with the sustain pedal by creating decays of chord clusters. The recordings results in a series of sound experiments which I edited and manipulated to create this work.

The work emerged cumulatively; I began working with the various piano sounds I had recorded, editing out interesting sounds, distorting and manipulating them through sharp editing, pitch changes and reversing. What resulted was a series of sound motifs; some rhythmic, others more ambient and slower moving, but nonetheless the durations of which propel the structure onwards. Some of the sound motifs were not manipulated, for example, there is a series of piano notes and the sound of the lid of the piano closing. I feel like this idea is almost like a structural changing point. In this work, I am present; the sounds of me closing the piano lid, creaking wood, laughter.

The composition opens with a manipulated piano chord and a pitched rhythmic motif enters gradually, and subtly increasing in volume, moving to

the right of the listening space. At 0:28 the piano samples which enter are more glitch-like with pops at the end occupying the left of the listening space; these contrasts in listening space allow each motif to be experienced clearly by the listener. I used these ideas for texture, in a similar way I have in previous works for example *Low_r, Hollow* and *Voice*. These ideas continue to develop and expand in the compositional landscape due to their changes in movement and how the sounds develop over time both in the landscape and in the listening space, subdued changes, interweaving in this space. At 2:23 there is a change in structure which is marked by using the listening space; the glitch like sound moves from front left across each speaker to centre right. This movement in the listening space allows the sounds to create an unnerving, jagged movement through the space, gradually allowing them to envelope the listener. At 2:35 a new sound motif begins, a human voice, laughing behind the listener, closely followed by a return of the 'jagged' motif moving again from the front of the listening space to the centre. This human voice has been edited, so is not obviously detected as such at this point, but later in the work at 3:17 the voice returns less manipulated, albeit the context is quite eerie and distant. The listening space is slightly fuller by now, with sound emanating from every side. At 3:29 can be heard the creaking of wood. These two events are the beginning of my presence in the work. Further familiar motifs continue and new textures emerge at 3:40 which are texturally dense, and also in the background somewhat noisy, with pops in sound moving through the listening space, each moment heard on one speaker, while following onwards to other places in the space. This is interrupted by a brief montage like edit, and at 4:11 we hear the movement of something closing behind the listener on the left. Sharp piano edits continue over a wash of sustained piano decays shared amongst the

speakers from front left and centre right. The laughing vocal motif re-enters behind the listener at 4:36, this time extended further, and followed by high pitched sounds, creaking wood and a wash of ambient sound from the front and right of the space. At 5:04 a scraping rhythmic motif at the back of the listening space contrasts with notes struck on the piano, which have been sharply edited. At 5:16 a short tonal melody played on piano enters, but this quickly changes, becomes edited and warped; various sections blended over the speakers on the right in front of the listener which gradually move around to the left. Higher piano pitches begin at 5:40 which gradually become more atonal, and lost amongst a blend of sounds. At 5:50 these sounds are accompanied by a continuous rhythmic pulse on the left of the listening space, while a dense wash of sound continues underneath. By 6:20 the sound landscape becomes busy and cluttered and begins to open up gradually. At 6:30 I enter the landscape with the subtle sound of my sighing. This is interspersed with chords on the piano and staggered entries of piano motifs.

Sustained piano decays, scraping textures, crackling sounds, echoes and banging continue, creating an unnerving place and by 7:20 this reaches a climax which is broken by a piano motif at 7:39. These sounds are separated amongst various speakers, allowing each sound to be heard, as if it was a single entity or character; the space is used to highlight these. For example, the movement of the piano notes creates further rhythmic development, as they build up momentum moving from speaker to speaker. It feels like the character or person playing these sounds is moving around the sound landscape. At 8:31 this is further enhanced by the sound of banging against wood, as if trapped in the piano, coming from the back of the listening space at first and then slowly

moves to centre, left and right. The scratching continues and at 9:05 a new motif enters; a hollow percussive sound. The sound landscape gets more hurried and busy with the concentration of these sounds at the centre and back of the listening space. This is released somewhat by 9:37 after which the sound gradually dissolves to nothing by gradually fading to the right of the listening space.

The 8 channel listening space allows the individual motifs to 'sit' on each speaker; taking their place in the landscape, like characters, conversations between parts. Rather than have a lot of movement in the work through spatialisation, I allowed the sound to envelope the listener, before pulling back; a subtle flow and retreat. Jagged, glitch-like clicks and sounds contrast with this, moving in the space in a similar way as their timbral qualities. Each sound is respected in the space, allowed its time. Events (closing lid, laughing) mark a change in structure, in narrative. Rhythmic aspects of the sounds are highlighted in the spatialisation, in the way they are spread, and move in the listening space. Each speaker allowing a different place, and movement; forward and back, memories of previous motifs floating, lingering, while new ones enter in another part of the space.

I wrote *Throbbing* for the New Music Festival Cal State University Fullerton, USA. I submitted the work as a stereo piece but a number of weeks later I decided to re-mix this for 8 channels. I had wanted to explore the idea of placing the listener 'in' the work and in the space, in the same way that I had been in this place in my imagination. The work was influenced by a dream, a place only I had been to and nobody else could experience. I felt that creating this for a multi-channel performance could enable this artistic representation.

I decided to place the sounds within different parts of the listening space; a standard, 8 channel array (Appendix 2). This was again influenced by my dream of walking through a strange place and the sounds that I heard around me; I wanted to create a more open, dynamic listening space in contrast to stereo listening.

The structure of the work subsequently changed somewhat going through the 8 channel mixing process; the work lengthened somewhat and there were more staggered, rhythmic piano motifs, in particular towards the end of the work. I consider the structure of this work stronger as a result of mixing this for 8 channels.

4.10 Áitleku (2012)

Áitleku is a composition that explores the memories I have of various familiar sounds, stories and places. The composition uses recordings created in Dublin and Mayo, Ireland and the Basque Country 'Euskadi' in Northern Spain and consists of three distinct sections. Firstly, a vocal piece, where I am narrating a story with various familiar sounds in the background. Secondly, a landscape of sounds recorded on the streets of Amorebieta, Euskadi and the outskirts of this town, in the countryside and surrounding mountains. The third section consists of stories and sounds from my family home in the countryside near Kiltimagh, Mayo. My 81 year old father, Frank, telling stories from the past which took place here when he was young, and the sounds of the fields outside our house recorded at dawn; birds, cows grazing and sounds of rain.

I made a large number of field recordings in Ireland and Spain between 2011 and 2012. I wanted to create a composition using the various sounds that I

employed in *Áitleku*, but I had imagined that these sounds would be used to create individual, shorter works. I began working with these, and realised that I wanted to create a larger scale work in which each section merged together in one listening setting or composition. This work captures personal moments in my experience of my familiar places and home life. Unlike *Voice*, *Morning*, *Hollow* which shared personal moments in an artistic context, this work shares not only my interpretation of these places, but also the people in these places and my memories of these people and places.

Áitleku opens with a female voice describing an event. Like *Throbbing*, this part was influenced by a vivid dream I had that was incredibly detailed. Recorded in my apartment in Dublin, I woke up completely confused and decided to record my memory of the dream, a recording which was 25 minutes long. It was created using a smartphone, so the quality of the recording was dull in quality in comparison to the other recordings in this composition. At the time, I recorded this as a way to remember the dream; I had no intention in using this for a composition (similarly to how *Hollow* consists of a recording which was initially made to document), but the subsequent recording sounded interesting to me, and I liked the way it sounded as if it was somebody talking over a phone. The voice sounds confused and groggy; I was half asleep while speaking into the phone; my head on a pillow and the phone left beside me. I had been interested in Janet Cardiff's work for some time and wanted to create a narrative work, but I could not decide on how I was going to write the script, or what / who I would record speaking. On listening to this recording some weeks later I decided to use the recording in a composition. At the time, I did not know how this would develop, but I just began editing it and later more sounds

and ideas followed from various recordings.

Dean and Millar discuss the work of artist Janet Cardiff, whose 'audio-walks' are a production created by Cardiff lasting up to forty minutes where she begins the process by writing a script '*that reads like a cross between murder mystery, thriller detective novel, film noir and popular science fiction*' (Dean and Millar, 2005, p. 152). She then acts out this script at various locations, creating characters in specific places. She records all this narrative as she moves through the chosen place. An example of a work of this nature was The Missing Voice (case study b) (1999) which was set and performed in London's East End. These works are then re-presented in a gallery where the artist speaks directly to the spectator through tape and headphones. Dean and Millar describe this experience

> '…like sharing someone else's meditations or dreamlike thoughts… the more involved you become, the more you realize that the power of these walks resides in your own perceptions. You are central to the story, because it happens in your head… Cardiff implicated you emotionally and environmentally. Her voice leads. You follow' (Dean and Millar 2005, p. 152).

I was reminded of this description while listening to the recording of the account of my dream, but rather than tell a story as such, I kept the content quite mysterious and did not reveal until close to the end of this section that it was a dream. The voice enters on one speaker only, creating a sense of tension as if there is somebody behind the listener. One voice is slow and confused, hiss in the background, with vocal parts beginning to layer and overlap at 0:52. Sounds of snoring and another person enter the landscape; sighing, yawning, moving around, shuffling keys. At 2:40 can be heard seagulls squawking and the sound moves to the right of the listening space, while I wake the sound

begins to spread, denoting the change of 'place', snoring and another person can be heard. The end of this section is marked by the sound of a key unlocking a hotel room door (3:00) which wakes me, and the voice speaks to me; the compositional landscape comes back to 'reality'.

These sounds were recorded in a hotel room in Gijon, Northern Spain. In my sleepy state in a strange hotel room, I left a recorder on the window sill and went back to sleep, but what was subsequently captured was primarily the sounds of me sleeping and the sounds outside; mainly seagulls and peoples voices. This reminded me of my connection in Dublin with my home, the sounds of seagulls in the summer; a sound I also associate with the process of composing *Voice*. My partner did not realise I had a recorder on, and went about his morning routine as I slept. I decided to use these in the context of this section, as it represented what really happens in reality when you are dreaming, but from a personal perspective we go into another place; a strange, sometimes surreal place.

At 3:15, the composition quickly merges into a new scene and the listening space opens up due to the sound being balanced across the space. I decided to use the sounds I associate with my memories of Amorebieta, a town located near Bilbao. I composed this work using very simply editing techniques, keeping the sounds more or less familiar, and similar to what was originally recorded. This section opens with the sounds of a street scene; people talking, cars passing. The bells of the church sound and I have manipulated these slightly and edited them so as there are very slight, staggered entries. These bells are a soundmark I associate with this place. The bells sound various melodies throughout the day and differ greatly to the sequence of church bells

in Ireland, far more varied and melodic in nature. The sound of crickets in the evening time in the fields surrounding the town, and the dogs barking; there always seems to be a dog barking in the countryside in this place. The barking move in the listening space from the front left to the back right, in tandem with the rhythmic sequence of their sound, while crickets can be heard subtly in balance. A louder cricket sound emerges at 4:12 and this continues, in the distance can be heard a car horn and the engine passing by to the front right of the listener. At 5:08 the sound landscape becomes more acousmatic as the sound of crickets become subtly manipulated in pitch, and although sparsely layered, rich in texture with volume changes adding some contrast. Spatially the work remains focused on the right side of the listener, but there remain subtle moments on each speaker. These gradually move behind the listener, while suddenly at 6:00 it moves to the opposite side of the listening space.

New sounds enter behind the listener to mark a further change in scene. The sound of various birds and a rhythmic, textural sound; we don't know what place we are in, it could still be Amorebieta. A male voice enters at 8:10 on one speaker situated behind the listener, the voice telling a humorous story, his voice deep and clear. We hear female laughter in the background, then the storyteller says there was '*a limb of a tree growing out on the road... down somewhere at Gallagher's'* with the sounds of the birds and a cow bellowing in the background, coming from the front of the listening space. There are two distinct places in this composition; two recordings merge into one compositional landscape. The sound of the voice is not one which is outside in nature; this recording was made in his home. The memory of these funny stories for my father and mother (the female voice) cause them to laugh

remembering this. While recording these stories, it just so happened that a Laurel and Hardy (1974) clip came on the television, apt considering the stories being told are similar in nature to the humorous scenes and infamous practical jokes my father played on neighbours as a child in this place, still recounted and remembered, so I decided to use this briefly in the final composition, which enters the front of the listening space in contrast to where my fathers voice is in the space. Other voices enter; my voice explaining that 'delph' meant bric-à-brac of cups and saucers. We hear a male voice ask what 'innocent' meant in this context, was it negative? '*Martin was up in court…*' enters at the front of the listening space; a change in space with the change in stories, and the rhythmic, textural sound continues. '*That time, there'd be the funniest things in the paper…*' enters on the right of the listening space at 11:12, while the sound of a cow rustles and grazes to the right of the listener,

At 11:20 the stories end, and just the sound of nature can be heard; the birds, the cow coughing at 11:40 as it rummages around early in the morning looking for something to eat. In the far distance, a sound of a car can be heard at a main road. The sound of the cow coughing moves from speaker to speaker as if in conversation. This is contrasted with subtle changes in volume from speaker to speaker which are intended to be undetected in a sense, then the rain drops become heavier. The rhythmic textural sound re-enters, with intensity created as the sounds build up both in volume and spatially, then fades away to the sound of the cow at 13:10, as it continues to rattle; pushing itself up against the metal gate, which is isolated in the listening space on one speaker. Sounds begin to come from our home, a drone of the sound of the heating system being turned on when my mother, Celia, gets up from bed. The voices of my parents

at 14:23 saying things were 'simple' back then; their memories of a different time and the trace that these leave now on this place. The piece ends with the sounds of birds and the rain pattering on the umbrella used to protect my recorder, while I sleep in bed.

When composing *Throbbing* I had already made the recordings of my father's stories, something which occurred due to many people telling me that these need to be preserved because of the unique words and phrases he uses which in the future will most likely fade in use. Initially, I did not think I could incorporate them into a composition, and felt that perhaps it was too personal to include. As I listened to the stories repeatedly, I began to imagine a multi-channel composition using his voice and placing this in a similar context as *Throbbing*, where the listener would be in a more open space, listening to the sounds of storytelling, and sounds of the place where these stories took place, the 'trace' of this place (Corringham 2010).

Chapter 5   Conclusions

This research is concerned with my compositional output from 2005 – 2012, with accompanying contextual documentation of this practice-based research. The outcome of this research has resulted in ten original compositions which contribute to existing knowledge including the creation of three compositions using the UPIC system and the remainder using field recordings. This thesis outlines the research questions and methodologies, detailing the influences which have impacted on this practice and includes detailed commentaries on each composition.

Many practitioners have explored the use of place in their artistic practice and these compositions add to this field of practice and existing knowledge with ten new, original compositions. The new elements within this research are the originality of my compositions including my portrayal of place in a personal, acousmatic context.

5.1 Research Questions

5.1.1 What does 'place' mean in the context of my work?

Place is represented in my work by my experiencing place and using the memory and experience of this to influence the compositional practice. I explore this in my artistic practice by using acousmatic techniques, which allows me to explore my interpretation of place; create a new place.

In the context of working with the UPIC at the CCMIX studios, place evolved from one which represented an historical and personal context of place, into exploring my memory of these sounds. The techniques which I developed in these works such as the use of noise, glitch and silence alongside the UPIC

sound material were to propel further these techniques – they helped me to develop my ideas and approaches by using these elements for structural and textural effect. These ideas, in particular silence, glitch and limited use of sound materials were further developed in *Voice*, a composition using only field recordings and which was composed at a time where I had a greater awareness and understanding of place in my practice. The experience at the CCMIX ignited an interest in exploring place in my practice. Three of the compositions use sound materials created using the UPIC and add further to the existing compositions which have incorporated this former groundbreaking technology. Yolande Harris writes in *The Building as Instrument*:

> 'The sound of the instrument then comes from another place, it is not an echo, it is an electronic mirror taking the sound and playing it back from another location. The instrumental source has walked away from the player assuming a break, a disembodiment of sound from its intimate location as the cyborg extension of the person' (Harris, 2009, p. 408).

This quote resonated with me with regard to my interaction with the UPIC; this technology was an extension of my processes and I was engaging with it in an interactive way and also as an extension of my personal expression. The end result mirrored the inner-self in that I felt that the material created, in particular within *Blanket*, represented a composer trying to find their personal expression through sound. My personal place was 'captured' in this composition, and also that the experience of being in the CCMIX studio and the history associated with the UPIC impacted on how I used this technology and how I interacted with it. Various composers had left their trace and I was interacting with this trace and being inspired artistically by that trace, propelled onwards to create new works. The techniques which I applied when using this synthesis device were similar to my approach to creating field

recordings; recording sound in an experimental way and then manipulating and editing this in a digital format to create a fixed composition. I used these recordings like a sound bank, referring to them at a later time outside of the CCMIX studios and in my own personal place as can been seen in *Low_r* and *Invisible.* By creating a sound bank using the UPIC, I was using the device as a source of sound rather than using it as a tool to compose a structured composition.

The other major technique I chose to engage in was the use of field recordings. Though I had previously used concrète material in my initial compositions as a student, through this research I have gained more insight into recording approaches and more importantly the awareness of listening to sound. By using field recordings, this allowed me to explore place and my memory of a place in a more concrete manner. My experience at the Mamori Art Lab allowed me the space and time to focus on field recording; how it fits within my practice and how I can adapt this method to express my own ideas as a composer through acousmatic works. Connecting with Francisco López's practice and artistic output during this time informed my practice for the remaining compositions in this portfolio. These ideas and thoughts were brought back to familiar surroundings and infiltrated my future practice in *Green Gate, Voice* and *Morning* which use field recordings exclusively as a sound source. In hindsight, the results of this experience were very similar to my experience using the UPIC at CCMIX; I returned to familiar surroundings and these ideas infiltrated my practice. When comparing these two experiences it is interesting to note that with the UPIC sound bank, I kept using these sounds for subsequent compositions and my experience in Mamori marked a

break from using these sound sources. Whereas after Mamori and creating *Dawn,* I have to date not used any of the field recordings I created in Mamori to compose a new composition, rather I chose to explore sounds recorded in my own familiar environment. The experience in Mamori inspired me to become more engaged with both field recording, and the concept of place, and this led on to further exploration in my artistic practice, exploring the familiar (Norman, 1994) for the remaining works in the portfolio.

While theses residencies occurred in two highly contrasting environments, the commonality between these two experiences was that there was a personal expression which occurred in each place which was evoked from my experiencing of these places. Reflecting on the compositions completed in each of the environments, they both employ the use sound mass techniques and have an intensity which develops over time. This searching for my voice as a composer is something which I feel caused me to partake in these residencies in the first instance, and I feel this is perhaps why these works display these sound characteristics. Subsequent work completed after these experiences are in a sense less intense as if the experience of being part of a residency has helped me to resolve and understand the ideas I wanted to express.

5.1.2 What is the significance of the presentation medium? How does fixed media allow me to present my artistic ideas?

Creating fixed media works allows me to embody my relationship to the sound material at that time, from a given place. The listener could go to a place of their own, with no connection to the work and I cannot control this, nor do I want to; the listener can navigate their own listening terrain or narrative. I engage more readily with the ideas that Ferrari proposed in his early anecdotal

works, and I do not believe that it is possible for a listener to engage with these compositions and only listen in a reduced manner; there is too many self-references in my practice, as López referred to when using field recordings in a compositional context; this involves exploring the reality of the place, and the rest is left up to the listener (López, 2011). Ultimately, most of our experiences as people are universal; familiar everyday occurrences and sounds, people we love, places we go to - all of these sounds can be engaged with by the listener and interpreted in their own way. Fixed media allows me to embody this development in my practice with *'precision and no maybes'* as stated by Dhomont (Acousmatrix, 2005, p. 26).

5.1.3 How does my practice and concepts connect to that of other composers and artists working with similar techniques? How does existing research into place inform my work?

Listening to my works I believe that I have captured place; I do not consider this a primary aim when creating my work as the work evolves cumulatively, 'something will happen'.

> … day after day brought a new experience… it was the daily gradation which interested me… this progression, this accumulation of memory fabricated a sort of narration… (gave) a concrete attachment to social, political and sentimental life (Ferrari, 1996, p. 99).

Composers such as Ferrari, Norman, Corringham, Prior and López inform my work, helping me to understand my processes and how I can create place within an acousmatic realm, while also incorporating my own compositional techniques and practice. No matter where or what we are doing in life, we are always in a 'place' and things in life influence what place we go to.

Bailes et al write of how

'little creative work seems to use field recordings as a source for digital sonic manipulation, at least with regards to the creation of sonic images of place; probably there is a common assumption that sense of place will be lost progressively during such a process. (2009, p. 151).

The works I have created add to the body of work which uses field recordings for the creation of acousmatic music in an attempt to create place. I have captured place, even though much of the material has undergone digital manipulation. This can be seen in all of my works which use field recordings, for example; the intensity and exploration of time in *Dawn,* the familiar sounds from my home in *Green Gate* which are in an acousmatic environment, but nonetheless recognisable as being from that place if this sound is familiar to you, *Voice* which expresses a personal place 'I can hear your insides in that piece' one audience member said to me after a performance of this work, *Throbbing* which takes the listener into a surreal place through an acousmatic landscape 'I felt like I was inside a piano' was an audience members response, and *Áitleku* taking the listener to a place through narration and stories against a backdrop of familiar sounds; having played this for my father who narrates the humorous stories in this work, it brought him to a place of memories, where he was laughing enthusiastically at his own storytelling – him and my mother continuing to laugh and remember. This exploration into using narrated stories within an acousmatic context influenced and informed by the work of Janet Cardiff and Katharine Norman.

5.1.4 Is my approach uncovered through listening? What do other listeners gain from the experience?

My output during this research will have the ability to inspire and evoke interest from other practitioners and learners interested in using these techniques. I see my art works as pieces which incorporate the use of

electroacoustic techniques but also explore the idea of interpretation, and not just compositions which explore music in an absolute manner. In the way that art works incite imagination and discourse, my music creates this and also a narrative or journey for the listener. In this sense, my music is communicative and the listener has the ability to gain from this listening experience.

Norman writes of how film narrative speaks through real things or images from real life. It requires a great deal of equipment and resources to make, and the end result is usually the audience member looking at the film. The film is reflected back to the viewer and therefore an individual experience. Norman questions how often an audience experiences sonic works in a similar way and asks if sonic works can act as a *'map of the world where sounds reverberate toward you – an individual who listens?'* (Norman, 2004, p. 56). This is something which I have questioned throughout this research period, wondering if I can recreate place for the listener. While place exists in my compositions, how listeners perceive my work is beyond my control. Feedback from listeners at times is fascinating in that my place recreates another experience for them; their memories shape how they perceive and experience the composition. This is exactly how I want my listener to experience my work; my compositions enable them to have their own experience personal to them, whether it is narrative or otherwise. I have found that as my own life evolves and changes, so too does my experience of these compositions and 'memories'. As I now reflect on work created in a different time and place, I also reflect on how my relationships to the people and places in these compositions have changed and evolved, therefore so too does my artistic experiencing of these compositions change, bringing about a different response.

5.1.5 Future Research

The portfolio considers place, narrative and voice - the voice of the composer and inner expression and how this is embodied in the listening and composition (Feld, 2005). The context in which this portfolio arose in terms of environmental and personal changes, results in a portfolio which displays development of style and technique, but also personal development as a composer. This has brought about new confidence in my work which has been demonstrated in this research and which has been personally liberating in an artistic sense. When I listen to this entire body of work, I can hear my techniques develop and change; I have challenged myself to explore uncharted territory and my attempts to find my own voice and experience. These compositions reveal the connection of perceptual experience and the embodiment of this through a creative act.

The process of completing and writing this research has heightened an awareness of my practice where place is inherent and is impossible to ignore. I plan to continue to expand my horizons and explore new places in which to carry out field recordings in addition to being open to explore other techniques as they arise, in particular, the 'familiar' (Norman, 1994) and what that place and time means to me as an artist. My approaches to place will constantly evolve and change over time as my practice and knowledge develops; I will continue to explore 'place' and its context in my work, and explore new terrain in my artistic practice. I will continue to be interested in how my work is communicated to listeners, how this evolves over time and what they acquire from this listening experience. Likewise, I will be more mindful of how my own experiencing of my work evolves over time, as this has been a learning

experience during this research period.

The term mnemonic palimpsest was used to describe Tacita Dean's work, whereby she uses an idea or encounter to assist the process; mnemonic means a phrase to remember something and palimpsest a script that has been repeatedly written on which has a history (Museo Reina Sofia, 2010). This relationship to memory, which Dean speaks of, used a doodle from her childhood as the basis of her inspiration of the piece *The Friar's Doodle* (2010), which the artist refers to as internal, to resemble the religious life which she views as something which you '*can't get out of*'. She used this doodle as her inspiration and in this video she stated that '*when I remember things like that, I trust in that process*' (Museo Reina Sofia, 2010b). The impact of memory, our relationship with ideas from the past and how that unfolds in the creative process is also an important element in my work and one which I will continue and trust in as Dean does. This research will impact on my future output in this way as this experience has been an important one in my development as a composer and artist. Likewise the ideas expressed in this research will evolve and change over time for both the composer and the listener.

Appendix 1: Programme Notes

Blanket (2005)

The imagery evoked from this phrase represents a feeling of helplessness, an unawareness at times of how our emotions can have a stifling effect on us. For me, this composition represents this – a heavy burdened feeling of not being able to express ones feelings, a 'blanket' thrown upon emotions, blocking them out, which is represented sonically by the dense timbres used in this piece. The high pitched motif which ends the piece represents a dispersion of this burden. The original sound sources were created using the UPIC system at the CCMIX studios in Paris in 2005 and the piece was completed using some sound manipulation techniques, editing and overlaying of sounds while still remaining true to the original material composed using the UPIC.
(2:59)

Low_r (2007)

I was invited to write this piece for the EAR-Drum International Festival of Electroacoustic Music, Dublin 2007. With recent compositional output, I am more interested in using 'glitchy' sounds, mistakes, noise – 'imperfection' (whatever that is perceived to be) is more interesting for me to work with. All of these influences have resulted in Low_r. The concrète sounds were regurgitated from a previous work which used recorded water samples, hence the title of the piece Low_r - a play on the French word for water L'eau, 'r' standing for 'revised'.
(4:18)

Hollow **(2007)**

I wrote *Hollow* after hearing Morton Feldman's, Palais de Mari (1986), for the first time at a performance given by the Irish pianist Hugh Tinney in Dublin, September 2007. Palais de Mari is a piece written for solo piano and uses quite sparse, repetitive material which in my opinion still manages to engage the listener for its entire 27 minutes. I found the performance mesmerizing, I was completely unaware of 'time' in its true sense, I had absolutely no sense that the piece lasted as long as it did. This fascinated me, and as a result I wanted to attempt to write a piece which uses very little material but which can sustain the listener over a period of time, and which had a similar 'meditative' effect. *Hollow* is presented as a fixed media work consisting of an unedited recording of an improvised piano part performed by myself, with the accompanying tape part.

As this piece evolved I began to realise that describing them as 'chords' in this context was perhaps incorrect as what evolved was a series of pitch rows, played as chords, where I tried to evolve them slowly into each other, using different inversions and patterns, while bringing them up in register without making it too obvious to the ear. While recording this version some glitches occurred and I used these in the subdued electronic part along with a number of edits of the decay's from some of the notes.
(9:55)

Invisible (2007)

With this piece, similarly to *Hollow* I wanted to limit the material I used in this piece, and similarly to *Low_r* I wanted to explore the perfect/imperfect idea to greater extremes. In this piece I use only one short 25 second sample, which I created using the UPIC in CCMIX, Paris in 2005. This synthesised sample has been edited up into various guises within this work, and is used alongside silences and noise which both act as structural focal points within the work, which uses montage style editing. Short abrupt samples open the piece and are accentuated by silences. As the piece evolves, the silences are replaced by noise, but what effect does this have? Does the noise make this sample sound more beautiful or harsher?
(3:50)

Dawn (2008)

Dawn was composed while attending the Mamori Sound Project residency, with Francisco López at the Mamori Art Lab, located in the Amazon, Brazil. The piece uses recordings of the rainforest awakening at dawn. The opening of the piece consists of an unprocessed section of this recording, which throughout the duration of the piece gradually builds in intensity through processing and dense layering. My personal experience of the rainforest was a contradiction in that there was this large expansive environment that paradoxically felt constrictive through its rich vegetation and isolated landscape, but yet created an environment conducive to artistic expression and exploration. This contradiction created an intense experience which I believe has unconsciously emerged in this composition.
(11:30)

Green Gate (2009)

This work uses recordings of the sound produced when wind blows through the gates of my home in Dublin. On first hearing, it was a mystery as to how or where it was produced until I followed it to its source. The varying sound which is produced travels around the building providing a beautiful contrast to the unsettling sounds of a storm. This piece is an attempt to capture my relationship with this soundmark which to me is both comforting and familiar

(4:32)

Voice (2009)

This composition explores the manipulation of the human voice. The vocal sounds used come from a short recording of me singing two pitches which was recorded in the same area as where the 'concrète' sounds used in the piece were recorded – on the roof garden of where I live. At night in summer time there is always an eerie presence of seagulls flying overhead creating an unnerving feeling. Their sounds are always present and contrast with the sounds of city life. The concrète sounds used in the latter half of the piece use recordings of various sound events which happened during the compositional process; the sound of the seagulls flying overhead and explosive thunder on a summers night. This piece evolved in this environment and uses many of the aspects which are present in my previous works including silence, limited use of sound material, contrasts in timbre, rhythmic clicks and glitches. In terms of timbre the voice remains quite true to the original recording though it is quite clear to the listener that at points it has been manipulated and stretched beyond the possibilities of what the human voice can 'normally' produce.

(7:06)

Morning (2009)

Like *Voice* this composition uses field recordings which capture the early morning sounds around my home on a roof top in Dublin. My initial idea was to overlay two different recordings; one captured at dawn and one captured at 9am. Both of the recordings showed a subtle difference in the soundscape. The recordings at dawn capture voices and footsteps of people passing on the street below as well as seagulls flying over head and other birdlife perched on the city's rooftops. The other recording captures the bells ringing from the surrounding churches on a Sunday morning at 9am and there is much less human activity captured on this recording. Though these recordings overlay in places I wanted to capture the essence of these different times so the end result is a simply edit of sounds, with some very subtle manipulation in parts.

(5:36)

Throbbing (2012)

In late 2011 I began to regularly have anxiety based dreams, which were incredibly disturbing. For the first time in my life sound was amplified like I had never heard before in my dreams. On waking I wished I could record these sounds and unlike writing a narrative of a dream in words, here I had to rely in my memory and description of the sounds. Sometimes these dreams would go on and on all night in a cycle of waking and falling back to sleep again, over short periods of time. When asleep it felt as if they were going on for hours, but it would only be minutes before I would wake up again. My recent works have been influenced by the idea of place. These dreams made me question what place I was in while sleeping, what was happening temporally, why was I hearing these sounds. When composing this piece and being reminded of this place as an influence, how did this impact on this work and the process of creating it? This composition is influenced not only by the sounds I heard in the dreams but also by the idea of place in my dreams and my memory of it. This work incorporates the use of manipulated extended instrumental sounds, glitches during the recording process, sharp montage-like editing, clicks and voices.

(10:22)

Áitleku (2012)

Áitleku is a composition that explores familiar sounds, stories and places, and the memories I have to these. The composition uses recordings created in Dublin and Mayo, Ireland and the Basque Country 'Euskadi' in Northern Spain and consists of three distinct sections. Firstly, a vocal piece, where I am narrating a story with various familiar sounds in the background. Secondly, a landscape of sounds recorded on the streets of Amorebieta, Euskadi and also the outskirts of this town in the countryside and surrounding mountains. The third section consists of stories and sounds from my family home in the countryside near Kiltimagh, Mayo. My 81 year old father, Frank, telling stories from the past which took place here when he was younger, and the sounds of the fields outside our house at dawn; birds, cows grazing and sounds of rain. There are so many sounds which connect these two places for me personally and I explore that in this work. 'Áit' is the Irish for place, 'leku' is the Basque for place; I felt this title was appropriate as in this composition I have brought these two places together.

(14:42)

Appendix 2: Schema for Multi-channel Playback

LEFT   **RIGHT**

Front

1   2

3   4

5   6

7   8

Back
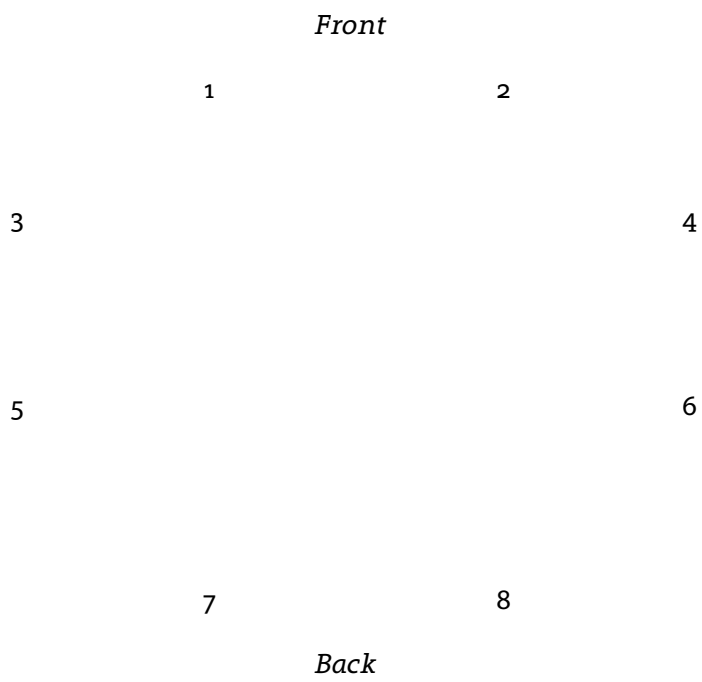
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