

Accepted draft of **Listening at home**, published in *Affective Landscapes in Literature, Art and Everyday Life*, Christine Berberich, Neil Campbell and Robert Hudson, eds, Ashgate, 2015, 207–221.

Listening at Home

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What did you do this morning? Run me through the basics. Let me tell you mine. Nothing special:

... got up, fed the cat, had breakfast, looked out of the window to check the weather, put on the washing machine, sat down to write.

Relating experience in a purely descriptive manner, without reflection or interpretation, is reportage of events. When the experience is itself routine (to the point of tedium) there is no point in going into detail, no mileage in dwelling on a sense of place, and no call to create a subject position for a listener that makes them ‘feel’ as if they were there. The bare bones are enough to put you ‘in the picture’. (Or so it seems.) Despite that, I suspect you came up with more than rudimentary visuals to accompany that narrative, which were quite likely informed by memories of similar or comparable experiences. After all, I didn’t give you much to go on. Were there any sounds? I mean then, not now – when you first read the text.

... the alarm goes off, the rustle of sheets pulled back, padding of bare feet on carpet, swishing of water and ablutions, wardrobe doors rattle. Downstairs, the cat is already mewing behind the kitchen door. The microwave pings. Plates clatter.

Now there is more to hear. A narrative space begins to form. Even that’s not quite enough to put you there, in place; these sounds are cartoon correlates for a narrative of largely visual things that make illustrative sound.

... the bubbling thrum of the rolling water, the click as the kettle switches off. Sound’s sudden absence brings listening forward.

There is more to the landscapes of sonic experience than first appears, and more to the role the sounds at the perceptual edgelands of everyday life than we ordinarily imagine. While one-off extraordinary events may colour day-to-day felt response, there is a rumbling ground formed from passing interpretations that seem hardly worth bothering to describe, but are spilling over with extra-sonic meanings and associations.

Filling the teapot – I know which one it is, from the way the interior space changes audibly as I pour – I am wondering if it’s time to mow the lawn. Last year, the dandelions took over, rising like soldiers. I don’t want to have to dig them up again. I remember that time in Walthamstow when we came back

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from the pub and pulled up the dandelions after dark – drunk, laughing hysterically, newly wed, and waking the neighbours with the noise.

As a composer and sound artist, I spend much of my time preoccupied with sound, either writing about sonic art or making it, but it is listening that I think about most. I am especially interested in making sound art that encourages a listening approach similar to that we use in everyday life, in which sensory perception is not focused on one sense to the exclusion of all others, and where emotions, knowledge, and reflection are interlaced with all kinds of routine actions and responses, as a matter of course. I will describe some of my work in this chapter (all of which is available online¹) in the service of examining what part listening can play in the affective landscapes of everyday life and, especially, how listening contributes to that most familiar landscape of all – ‘home’.

Local explorations

How, and to what extent, does listening in everyday life inform and create an affective relationship to the places, landscapes, and interior and exterior environments in which we live, perceive, breathe, and dream? As with sight, hearing ‘tells us’ about the features of the land in which we travel and, as with looking, listening calls on a variety of learned, felt, and remembered experience, with the goal of interpreting, and bringing meaning and relevance to sensory perception. Rather than privilege listening, however, I would like to situate it as part of a more fluid exploration, taking my cue from musicologist, Eric Clarke:

Perception is essentially exploratory, seeking out sources of stimulation in order to discover more about the environment. This operates in so many ways and so continuously that it is easy to overlook: we detect a sound and turn to it; we catch sight of an object, turn our eyes to it, lean forward and reach out to touch it; we get a whiff of something and deliberately breathe in through the nose to get a better sense of its smell.
(Clarke, 2005, p. 19)

In his ecological approach to listening, drawing on J.J. Gibson’s approach to the study of perception, Clarke notes the exploratory, active ‘quest’ for information, and characterizes perception as constantly in motion, its operations interlocked and responsive to change. He goes on to explain that this natural exploratory tendency is blocked ‘in circumstances of entertainment and aesthetic engagement’ (p. 20), with vestiges remaining in, for instance, tapping a foot in time to the music, or dancing (the amount of response significantly dependent on cultural norms). But what is going on there, in everyday life, while I fill the teapot and that familiar sound accompanies – or does it make? – a moment’s pause, and so opens up a few seconds to contemplate the day ahead? What connection might there be between that ordinary experience and the opportunity to feel, or to dream?

When the subject of study is the feelings and associations that contribute to everyday experience, a dilemma, shared by other disciplines and not least by

¹ See links provided in References list; other works available via www.novamara.com

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ethnography in general, is how to study that experience without transforming it in the process. How might it be possible to study, and make art about, the way a landscape *feels* without losing the ‘ordinary’ ways we engage with our surroundings? Musical listening, for instance, despite the possibility that we bring to it the same ecological approach we adopt in everyday life, is not a ‘normal’ listening experience; although ‘natural’ perceptual exploration might be blocked when listening to music, as Clarke suggests, awareness of ‘doing’ listening is heightened. Whether seated in the concert hall, singing along with the band, or nodding in time to an iPod while buttering toast, at some level we *know* that we are listening; listening becomes ‘self-aware’. In this situation, listening experience cannot be ‘the same’ as the listening activity undertaken in everyday life. It is difficult to explore the ordinary.

Acquiring a hypersensitized appreciation of everyday experience is not difficult. We can set out with a psychogeographic agenda, stepping in the footsteps of Debord or Segal (according to preference) and drift knowingly through the ordinary, while noting our every response, every connection, and every historical, psychological, or personal association. We can take ‘soundwalks’, and trace either known or unusual routes while focused on listening. Or we can become a gastronome, closing our eyes to savour the texture and taste of food or to scent the aroma of the wine. There are ways to contemplate the familiar anew, and they often involve prioritizing or aestheticizing one or other sensory perception. Such activities can unearth an unexpected intensity of feeling but, in following them, we tend to focus on one or other sense in an unusually inflexible manner.

Perhaps there is something to be gained from seeking out scenarios in everyday life that naturally foster ‘sensory malleability’, and where perceptual explorations are already more prone to deflection or subject to drift towards one sense or the other. I suggest one such opportunity is when we are comfortable and in familiar surroundings, with no requirement to be especially alert to threat. In such situations we already know the landscape from previous encounters and can ‘function on autopilot’ – our attention sometimes wanders or turns inward without conscious effort. We dream. Our perceptual judgement allows time for reflection. Away from home, trapped in a stuffy hotel room, we might be kept awake by that intermittent noise from the lift, but here, safe at home, we’re undisturbed – and even reassured – by the chiming clock that regularly wakes our unfortunate, bleary-eyed guests.

The same kind of ecological approach to listening that Clarke so helpfully delineates often informs my creative efforts, but rather than think about how ‘everyday’ listening informs listening to music, in my creative sound work and writing I often attempt small inroads into understanding how listening contributes to the affective landscapes of everyday life, and how one might draw attention to its ‘malleability’. In particular, I am interested in creating sonic landscapes that celebrate quotidian experience both of spaces and those *places* that, as philosopher Edward S. Casey poetically conjectures, gather not only things but:

... experiences and histories, even languages and thoughts. Think only of what it means to go back to a place you know, finding it full of memories and expectations, old things and new things, the familiar and the strange, and much more besides. What else is capable of this massively diversified holding action?

(Casey, 1997, p. 24)

Listening in place

Listening is, normally, an essential activity in coming to ‘know’ spaces, with our judgements as to their size, shape, and nature formed from continuous perceptual processing and cognitive evaluation, alongside previously acquired understanding of how a particular kind of space with particular dimensions and properties will respond acoustically: how it should ‘sound’. Even cursory listening is finely tuned for judging distance and extent – whether on a mountain, in the kitchen, or immersed in the dynamic, artificial spaces of cinema surround sound. The spatial landscape is given substance through the quality of reverberation, the amount of diffusion and absorption, and the way high frequencies and low frequencies convey materials and proximity.

How does this translate to having a ‘sense’ of where we are? We go into the sitting room and it feels ‘different’ from the bathroom; we would likely know immediately if we had moved from the room to the outside. Although experience of a space is not a mono-sensory experience (... we do not habitually glide from room to room wearing blindfolds, and suspended mid-air), perception of acoustic space is complex, subtle, and both effective and affective, as any designer of virtual room acoustics will attest. It is more than simply hearing sound. In general, this activity is often unnoticed and implicit, embedded within the sensorium as a whole; but without sight, for instance, listening’s contribution to understanding how space ‘feels’ can become explicit. John Hull, a writer and theologian who became blind in middle age, has written about his changing experience of the world at length, offering an unusual perspective that has proved intriguing for several writers on perception and affect²:

I opened the front door, and rain was falling. I stood for a few minutes, lost in the beauty of it. Rain has a way of bringing out the contours of everything; it throws a coloured blanket over previously invisible things; instead of an intermittent and thus fragmented world, the steadily falling rain creates continuity of acoustic experience ... over the whole thing, like light falling upon a landscape, is the gentle background patter gathered up into one continuous murmur of rain...

(Hull, 1992, pp. 29–31)

For Hull, the aural experience of rain is not ‘ordinary’ so much as wondrous: listening provides aesthetic pleasure and provokes emotional response. In his ‘acoustic experience’, an emotional, felt response is inseparable from his ‘functional reading’ of how rain – or rather, listening to it – provides aural continuity, yielding up ‘things’ that rise out of, then recede back into the landscape. Perhaps Hull’s touching description is alluring not so much for any novelty but because this experience is not so completely alien, it’s just that we never think about it. For most of us, listening normally goes on at the edges of conscious attention, and only comes to the fore when

² *Notes on Blindness*, a film about John Hull’s experience, based on transcriptions of his extensive audio diaries, has recently been released to critical acclaim: http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/01/16/opinion/16OpDoc-NotesOnBlindness.html?_r=0

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a particular sound becomes noticeable or informative – a low-flying jet plane, or the doorbell’s ring.

Hull throws aural light on just how large a part listening plays in defining both affective and functional responses to space. Also evident in his response is the close interaction between these differing responses, showing that emotion and feeling is not incidental to a more ‘functional’ understanding. Perhaps this fusion of affective and functional ‘readings’ of sonic experience assists in strengthening the ‘holding action’ that Casey attributes to place and, although not exclusive to one or other sense, might it be that listening is privileged in the ‘gathering’ of memory and expectation that he describes?

Being in sound

Those are big questions that I certainly can’t answer definitively, but it might help to start from considering if, when, and how listening supersedes looking in everyday life. Definitions of ‘landscape’ and ‘place’ are continually raked over by cultural theorists and etymologists alike, with complex and sometimes divergent results. But in everyday life, and in everyday parlance in ordinary language, we most often refer to landscape and place with an eye on the visible terrain. While this is a simplistic view in terms of studies of multi-modal perception, listening more likely comes to the fore when time or necessity dictates, or when there is a reason to ‘stop and listen’. There are, of course, natural and manmade environments that hinder visual perception as a primary means of knowledge gathering – the dense, enclosed environment of a rainforest, for instance – but for many, colloquially speaking, vision seems the most direct means of obtaining immediate information. This premise cannot be taken at face value, but there is a sense that, ordinarily – or often – things are *seen*, and are remembered visually.

Does vision have its drawbacks, as social anthropologist, Tim Ingold, here suggests?

Having installed vision as the chief instrument of objective knowledge, leaving hearing to float in the primordial realms of emotion and feeling, we know what it means to hear sound but have effectively lost touch with the experience of *light*. (Ingold, 2000, p. 253)

If we are to take this view, standing in the rain with John Hull, we naturally hear ‘in’ sound, and in a manner that more closely connects us to a felt, emotional awareness of ‘being’ in a place. Ingold presents hearing as remaining in a kind of ‘state of grace’, closer somehow to our ‘true knowledge’ of sensory being in the world by comparison to the objective focus of vision which, Ingold suggests, leaves us estranged from a *felt* sense of seeing ‘in’ light. (Such a clear division might be more difficult to hypothesize convincingly while gazing, heart-in-mouth, at a glorious sunset, perhaps.) Ingold speaks in the context of constructing a case for a renewed understanding of visual experience that ‘learns’ from hearing’s stronger connection to emotion and feeling (as he regards it) and brings us closer to ‘knowing’ that vision as an experience of light.

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Taking a less optimistic view of hearing, however, surely the way that we ordinarily talk about both listening and hearing (to ‘a voice’, ‘a car’, or ‘a plane’) habitually objectifies sounds in the same way as we do so adroitly for visual things? Possibly this is because ascribing the precise cause of a sound is difficult to verbalize (at least for those of us untutored in vocal production, mechanics or aeronautical engineering, as examples) and often unnecessary. Perhaps referring to object-ness is simply shorthand language for explaining hearing experience. Yet, there is more to it than that; listening more closely, we still try to hang on to the object in ascribing sound to the thing that sounds, rather than to the action that instigates that ‘sounding’. A *spoon* clinks against a cup; *footsteps* thud downstairs, *leaves* rustle in the wind, and *rain* patters on the roof.

This kind of language is enough to create a working narrative, but behind those ordinary, objective articulations there is far more going on – someone, something, or some force is doing the stirring, running, blowing, or falling. Despite this tendency to speak of sounds in objective terms comparable to the language of vision, all but the most naïve or animistic listener knows that sounds proceed not from objects, but from human or other agency. A cup does not break of its own accord, and the sound that the breaking cup ‘makes’ is caused by an explicable action – believing anything else becomes poltergeist horror, a divergence beyond the norm. A sound, when noticed, is perceived as a change in the gestalt listening environment. There is no obvious correlate for the experience of noticing an object in the visual field. It is easier, and surely more common, to hear sounds *going on* (a continuum to ‘tap into’) in the background than *catch sight* (a singular, directed ‘feat’) of something out of the corner of your eye. Hearing, and listening, is freer, more immersive, and less tied to position than seeing, and looking.

Within listening, but beyond the sounds, the sonic landscape elicits memories of other spoons, feet, leaves, and rain, and the stories that lie behind them – that come from places containing personal or imagined experiences. We are sensitive to the implications of the actions that shift our sonic landscape and often interpret them imaginatively and in detail, ascribing feeling or emotion: her hand, languidly stirring a cup of tea; his feet, as he hurries down the stairs, that awful storm, sending the leaves into whirlwind piles and the rain cascading down the gutters. Beyond sounding objects, there are actions, recollections, and metaphors that arise from affective responses to exterior, and interior, landscapes – and this tendency is itself ordinary, and part of everyday life.

Some years ago I lived on an island off the West Coast of Canada. In this wooded, rainy environment, the frequent autumn wind storms generally presaged extended power cuts when towering fir trees eventually toppled in the sodden earth, bringing down overhead electricity lines as they fell. This common conjunction of blackouts and wind became bound up in the experience of living in a place where ‘home’ could, quite literally, turn from light to dark in an instant. In ‘One way or the other’, the second in a set of short audio works, *Islands of One*, based on my island experience, I took this as the theme for an exploration of metaphors of storms and darkness (Norman 2007). These are those same metaphors that slide into place when chatting about ‘the dreadful weather’ with a stranger at a bus-stop, as the rain hammers against the shelter and the evening closes in. Such responses extend from the most clichéd turn of phrase to the highest prose – it’s a terrible night, these tears shall drown the wind. These powerful, communicative metaphors, in which listening quite often has a starring role, are bound up in human experience and proceed quite

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unselfconsciously from a ‘poetic’ listening perception of the ‘real world’. Sound matters.

Moving into the view

But look at that view of the mountains! It was well worth pulling over for. Keep looking. Time passes, things happen. See – there are wisps of smoke rising from a farmhouse on the hillside, and now a group of sheep moving en masse across a field, a couple of birds rising into the sky, and a distant red car. There it is, look to where I’m pointing – barely visible, winding back and forth on the switchback bends. Behind you the main road traffic is still ebbing and flowing, the scrubby lay-by trees shiver with a papery hiss, and a vagrant carrier bag slaps against branches. But you are still watching that red speck as it traverses the landscape and descends into the valley. Down below in the fields, some unseen machinery hums. Above, there’s the nasal whine of – now you look up to check – a tiny plane.

Sight seeks out the thing, but listening often travels in the landscape, following the sound. We stand still, yet still we move. Without sound, the landscape is a distant, flattened view, from which we stand apart. For a sighted person in a culture and environment where the visual takes precedence, ‘non-visual’ sensory experiences are often non-ambulatory by necessity, since wandering around in the dark is hard without mishap. Even drawing attention away from vision is an effort that often requires a pause — we stop, cock our head and hold a hand to our ear. Returning to the possibility of the ‘sensory malleability’ that might arise in familiar, unthreatening scenarios, for many of us (in visually oriented societies and cultures) it is in such ‘ordinary’ moments that listening naturally comes to the fore. Listening then tends to be undertaken in relaxed circumstances, or at least in stillness, and often with the potential to keep eyes closed – lying on the beach with a book over your nose, to the accompaniment of gulls mewling overhead, the distant roar of the waves, and children’s squealing; or feet up on a summer afternoon, while the wood pigeons coo-coo or a blackbird trills; or snoozing on a morning commuter train, lulled by the rumble of wheels on rails while staring out at the view. These are points of rest, and yet even these listening situations are often supplanted with headphone listening – blocking out the ordinary ‘sonic weather’ that would otherwise ease in to accompany stillness and give us room to dream. In stillness, the listening periphery moves inwards.

Michel de Certeau, that inspired and idiosyncratic thinker on the everyday, comments on the ‘strength of an exterior silence’ experienced in train travel, where the passing landscape presents an ever-changing and – as he presents it – soundless diorama:

... paradoxically it is the silence of these things put at a distance, behind the window pane, which from a great distance, makes our memories speak or draw out of the shadows the dreams of our secrets ... Glass and iron produce speculative thinkers or Gnostics. (de Certeau, 1984, p. 112)

There is an assumption from de Certeau, here: that it is the ‘silence’ of things at a distance that provokes that reflective, imaginative state of mind. Seated, and carried through the landscape, we are distanced from the external sound environment,

from which we are ‘excluded’, and can view ‘things’ from a place where ‘only the partition makes noise’ (p. 112). But I’m not sure that I agree. Perhaps that noisy partition is not so much an aggravation, but makes all the difference. In describing the noise, de Certeau makes that easy ‘mistake’ of conceiving of sounds as ‘issuing from things’ – and of them remaining attached to objects in the listening experience. Rather than silence, I’d suggest that the noisy partition, along with all the other sonic fluctuations in the listening landscape inside a train, encourages travel into the periphery of everyday perception, allowing imagination to venture towards those sounds that are ordinary, unremarkable and, it would appear, unrelated to the view ‘outside’. I am sitting on a different train.

I am looking out of the window. The November morning sun is a huge gold-yellow ball, suspended low over the flat fields. They are empty of crops now, and the purple-brown soil has a white bloom. Out in the distant centre of one of the great squares of furrowed earth, a tractor is already working. The light glances sharply off its wheels and cabin, but is still hazy over the line of trees in the distance. A yellow gleam catches the long grasses that border the lodes, as they call the man-made waterways around this part of Norfolk. The occasional farm buildings are low to the ground, sometimes a surprising pink. All this is silent.

Behind this passing landscape there’s the rattle of the train door between carriages, the papery rustle of a carrier bag, the thrum and rhythmic drumming of the wheels over the rail joins, and the tinny insect song of someone’s leaking headphones. We commuters, packed inside the train, are at rest – still. We are reading, typing, sleeping, dozing, thinking, looking, and lulled by the motion and the rumbling hum.

Outside, a parade of electric pylons mirrors the journey; the cables loop across the landscape without respecting boundaries. The sky is still tinged orange. Suddenly, right by the window, there’s an entire field flooded with white-glass water.

The train begins to brake and the intercom crackles into action. The view outside slows down, and becomes audible: a siren bleats at the level crossing as the gates fall with a rattle. The railway embankment is full of huddled blackberry bushes. Everyone on the station platform has their hands in their pockets. This train is for London Kings Cross via Ely and Cambridge.

Perhaps listening, in such conditions, permits an affective reverie on visual experience. The familiarity of various sonic behaviours – from pneumatic doors to rumbling wheels – puts us in a ‘place’ that we know, and feel that we know – a ‘home’. Sitting still, at rest in this temporary permanence, we observe and travel through the external visual landscape ‘by proxy’, without the need to remain alert to sight. Indeed we are almost infantilized, as various new things move around us and are brought coaxingly into view. On this passive journey, and especially on a daily commute through familiar terrain, from home to work and back home again, we can be both comfortable and comforted. Lulled by the sonic ‘detritus’ of travel, we listen at the edges, to sounds of no great importance. This is a mundane journey of movement and return.

Home again

Home is also a place to rest. Over and above its textbook definition as a place of permanency in which to live, leave from and return, ‘home’, is a place idealized, either in reality or imagination, as providing security and familiarity. These lead themes in the landscape of ‘home’ are supported and confirmed by sense memories, experience, and recollection, as well as by imagination, dreams, and affect. Home is where the heart is, and where the hat is hung. Home is where the roses are winding around the door that marks the transition between in here and out there. To ‘feel at home’ is to acknowledge a landscape (physical or psychological) that confers a sense of ‘belonging’ through myriad repeated journeys. And while we travel, we create and affirm those quotidian landscapes that encapsulate the sense of home.

In *London E17*, (Norman 1992), for example, I made a composed audio journey through my then home environment – taking in my back garden, local street market, tube trains, a café, and all the associated sounds of living in Walthamstow, London E17 in the early 1990s. Constructed as a series of audio ‘scenes’ about each environment in turn, *London E17* is neither a documentary nor a radio play – there is no text or linear narrative other than that suggested by the way the sounds are arranged and processed. The piece has no pretensions other than to convey a sense of moving through ordinary scenarios – at home, in the market, travelling. The sonic landscape is ‘directed’ only in that the way the sounds are manipulated is intended to accentuate the ‘feeling’ of the place: for instance, I tried to indicate the nostalgia of the ‘eel pie café’, a hangover from times past, through colouring the recordings with gentle, ringing tones; or to convey the rough and tumble of a street market through ‘rough’ cuts between sounds, which come at the listener from all directions.

Although it is some 20 years since I made *London E17*, and the environment has changed in the interim (certainly the market sellers are crying far higher prices now), the timeless sounds of quotidian listening experience remain: rain, voices, drills, trains, and urban life ‘going on’ in sound. Even if these sounds might seem ‘exotic’ to a listener unfamiliar with similar environments, they are easily understood as sounds from the listening periphery that carry weak information about precise events, but have a strong sense of ambience and ‘place’. They are just part of everyday life.

The affectiveness of landscape come from a certain *interactivity* – in terms of the individual or community that perceives and moves within it, thereby simultaneously (and continuously) creating, and recognizing their understanding and knowledge of it, making and revisiting points of contact, reawakening related memories, and drawing on relevant comparisons with other landscapes and places. Revealing how communities make and use local knowledge, including their affective response to it, is at the heart of phenomenological landscape studies, and is no less so when thinking about the role of listening and sound in fields such as sound studies and anthropology. Perhaps, also, art that addresses those edgelands of quotidian listening experience that are routinely encountered in daily domestic landscapes and common to any habitual activity, might encourage similar habitual interactions in its viewers, readers, and listeners? And perhaps it is in conveying that sense of interactivity with the seemingly unimportant reaches of ‘peripheral perception’ that takes place in ordinary, quotidian experience that we might convey that ‘intense experience’ of place and landscape to which Casey alludes. I have been trying to do this for a while.

For a year I took a photograph from my window nearly every day, often in the morning while getting up. I recorded sound as well, pointing the microphone from the window or sometimes back into the room. While I frequently stopped to look and listen, sometimes I was in a hurry and had other things to do. In any case, listening doesn't require contemplation, and looking can thrive in a fleeting glance.

As I looked and listened each day, and re-looked and re-listened to my recordings (feeling possessive, as if they were part of me), I was conscious of how familiarity arises from the accumulation of small, ordinary experiences, repeated innumerable times – this is how it feels to know a place.
(January, from *Window*, Norman 2012)

This text is taken from my online interactive work, *Window*, which presents 12 months of listening, and looking, from an ordinary window – my bedroom window. The text is a description of the approach I adopted in making the piece. While I am not going to dwell on a detailed analysis of *Window* here (for this, see Norman 2013 and Flores 2012), the process and rationale for collecting the materials are described in brief below.

Both images and sound are mundane. In recording the sounds I simply set up the microphone and recorded. There is no attempt to 'exclude' the ordinary sounds that some might consider extraneous – the shower running in the background, the radio or TV, traffic noise, other people, doors opening and shutting, birds, children, cats, cars ... all these are the sounds that *make* home, and the feeling of home, and are part of forming the landscape of home. Similarly, the images, though all taken from the same viewpoint, are simple 'snapshots', rather than attempts at artistic abstraction. The sounds and images are grouped by the month in which they were collected, and are available for the participant to move around in. There are layers, one of which reveals a series of short texts (as above), one for each month. Another layer reveals hidden fragmentary texts, only 'discovered' by moving in the landscape and discovering shadowy shapes that are hardly visible. Some of these fragments are about listening experience, but many are not: 'floorboards complain in that familiar way', 'and there are birds that listen', 'thinking of playing the piano', 'my small Walden' ... However, whichever 'layer' the participant explores, the sounds are always there, moving in or out of the periphery – according to the participant's movement: in each 'month', sounds are assigned to 'handles' (small polygonal shapes) that the listener can drag from place to place, so affecting the volume or direction of each sound independently. The participant makes the sonic landscape in response to their own listening, in a conventional manner, in the context of other senses and non-aural information.

I have no expectation that participants will find the materials themselves inherently fascinating or interesting, and they may well be very different from those associated with an individual's personal 'home' experience; it is the process of interacting with them that I am trying to encourage. Rather than the sounds, texts, or images, it is the 'user interaction' that represents the experience of 'being' in a place, forming its affective landscape through moving within it, perceiving it, and making paths of memory, knowledge, and feeling without apparent conscious effort.

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Figure 1. Screenshot from *Window* (www.novamara.com/window) showing essay text and sound 'handles' for December



Figure 2. Screenshot for *Window* (www.novamara.com/window) showing hidden text and sound 'handles' for July.

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In analysing how the depiction of landscape shifted in the 18th and 19th century from its previous role in topographic or decorative representation, Casey remarks that:

Landskip becomes full-fledged landscape painting when a desire to convey a perceptual totality gives way to a passion for re-implacing a finite but intense experience of natural scenery... .. Displacement of site becomes transplacement of place... .. that is to say, *placing again* ...
(Casey, 2002, p. 90)

Familiar landscapes are far more than their geography, as is obvious to anyone who has revisited their childhood home after long years. But nostalgia is a revisiting of ingrained behaviours and routines, and is the result of a constant reinvestment in place, and in our feelings about, and in, a place. Casey cites Constable's many paintings of his 'home turf', the Dedham Vale area of East Anglia, as examples of successive representations of the landscape of an artist's known region³ – the landscapes represented are not so much representations of physical landscape's visual topography, as a felt, internalized response to knowing the place. In these successive representations Constable is not conveying a composed landscape but is capturing a personal response to the ordinary – *his* ordinary – in which he is embedded. So, each painting is not only an affirmation but also a self-reflexive affective response, in that in making the painting, he was both representing landscape and 'doing' his experience of a familiar landscape, and so intensifying his experience of place through the process.

Coming home from work each night on the rattling train, or looking out of the bedroom window each day, we trace, no less than Constable, the contours of 'intense experience'. In returning to the same view from an ordinary window, time and time again, I am trying – I think – to elicit that feeling. Since place is temporal as much as geographic, the view is never the same twice: every Dedham Vale painting represents a different nuance, a different feeling, and a different point in time.

The stories whispering in the edgelands of perception are affective narratives built from memory and repetition. Let them seep in and gather. Listen to a domestic landscape that is composed entirely of those things that really don't matter – known, but deemed unimportant and hardly worthy of attention. They're part of the perceptual furniture. Don't try too hard; just allow your mind to float beyond vision. Close your eyes for a moment and ...

... listen. The clock in the hall is ticking, unnoticed until now. I remember the grandmother clock that stood – still stands – in my parents' hall, and the way the weights fell and the chain turned with a grudging clank. Back in this room, the plastic click and tapping of the touchpad and the laptop keys; and the hissing of blood in my ears. When I sniff, then exhale, there's a whistling in my nose. The tumble dryer beeps. The wind blows down the chimney. His footsteps on the stairs.

This landscape is enough. This feels like home.

³ For example, http://www.nationalgalleries.org/collection/artists-a-z/C/2960/artist_name/John%20Constable/record_id/2463

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