

‘The McBrides are from here’: listening to *Green Ways* as creative cartophony

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Abstract

In this article we discuss how Áine O’Dwyer and Graham Lambkin’s 2018 album *Green Ways* connects with recent criticisms of sound mapping practices. Following an interpretation put forward by the artists themselves, we investigate the cartographic aspects of their project, and how these are conveyed in an album format. The concept of *cartophony*, suggested elsewhere by Samuel Thulin (2018), is employed as a way to consider different relationships between sound and mapping practices that extrapolate common assumptions of what sound maps are and how they operate. First, we listen to how the artists create sonic performances in which they interact with different elements of the places they’re performing in, making sounds not only *in* place, but also *with* the place. Then, we consider the different ways in which specificities of place are mapped through the incorporation of speech and singing. Finally, we show how the album’s underlying narratives directly address the problematic distinction between performance situations and everyday life. Considering the project’s unusual emphasis on the artists’ presence, as well as its incorporation of speech, singing and artistic performances, we suggest that *Green Ways* invites us to broaden our understanding of what field recordings and sound maps can be.

1. INTRODUCTION

Two human shadows hang over a blurry, sunlit green field in one of the pictures found inside the digipack for Áine O’Dwyer and Graham Lambkin’s collaborative project *Green Ways* (Erstwhile Records, 2018). Although little textual information accompanies the album, this photograph seems to provide an adequate description of the field recording strategies employed by the artists in much of these 17 tracks.

Green Ways was their first collaboration to come out as an album, but both artists were already familiar with using field recordings in their individual projects. Áine O’Dwyer is an Irish harpist, organist, sound artist and poet who has extensively explored the interactions between soundmaking and place. In works such as *Music for Church Cleaners* (Fort Evil Fruit, 2012), *Beast Diaries* (self-released, 2017) and *Gallarais* (MIE, 2018), O’Dwyer has recorded her sound performances in ways that highlight the sonic qualities of the performance spaces, often including contributions from other people who react, interrupt or add to her performance. Graham Lambkin is

a British musician and multidisciplinary artist whose recent sound works have been described as an exploration of the idea of ‘listening to listening to music’ (WFMU 2012) and as the creation of music ‘out of listening itself’ (Goldner 2018). In his *Salmon Run* (Kye, 2007), excerpts of classical music are heard alongside footsteps, laughs and other everyday noises, while in *Amateur Doubles* (Kye, 2011) progressive rock records from the 1970s are heard from the inside of a moving car.

In an interview given to Eden Tizard from the British website *The Quietus* during the album’s production, Lambkin stated that their original intention with *Green Ways* was to create a sound map of Ireland, the country where O’Dwyer was born, focusing on the places that had particular significance to her (Tizard 2018). Although the concept of sound map is not explicitly put in the textual information found in the album’s package, nor is it described as such at the label’s website, Lambkin has reinforced this interpretation of the project in a recent interview given to the author of this article. Meanwhile, O’Dwyer seemed more ambivalent to this reading, suggesting that although there is something topographical about their practice, ‘sound map’ is a loose term in this case (personal information).

Even though *Green Ways* might seem out of place within certain traditions of sound mapping, in this article we attempt to listen to the different ways through which it conveys spatial and locational information. We will inquire what cartographic aspects can be inferred by listening to a series of sound recordings presented in an album format, without employing a visual map. We adopt this approach in order to suggest that *Green Ways* resonates the arguments of several scholars who have recently claimed for more adventurous forms of sound mapping through propositions such as ‘soundmapping beyond the grid’ (Anderson 2016), ‘critical soundmapping’ (Droumeva 2017) or ‘expanding cartophony’ (Thulin 2018), and therefore represents an important contribution to field recording and sound mapping practices.

2. SOUND MAPS: OVERVIEW AND RECENT CRITICISMS

The expression ‘sound map’ gained popularity in the last twenty years with the proliferation of online interactive platforms that usually present a visual map of a certain part of the world over which audio archives are uploaded and attached to the corresponding place where they were recorded. Public engagement is central to many of these projects, inviting the map-reader to contribute with the sound mapping process by uploading their own recordings to it. Examples of sound maps that match this definition include the *Radio Aporee* soundmap, developed by Udo Noll (nd); the *SP SoundMap*, developed by Renata Roman (nd); the *Sons do Porto*, developed by

Claudia Holanda (nd); and the *Mapa Sonoro de México*, coordinated by Bruno Bartra (Fonoteca Nacional de México nd).

The recent proliferation of online sound maps has been accompanied by a growing academic interest on the subject. Jacqueline Waldock (2018 [2011]) notes that this new medium has inherited several presumptions from soundscape studies and acoustic ecology, although she acknowledges a significant increase in the representation of urban soundscapes in contrast to the earlier privileging of ‘ecologically positive’ rural environments. Waldock also questions to which extent the interactive approach of online sound maps actually represents a democratisation of the mapping process, highlighting the overall predominance of male contributions and an encouragement towards the use of high-quality, professional recording equipments which are relatively expensive, and might result in the underrepresentation of low-income communities.

Samuel Thulin recognises a certain logic inherent to the approximation between cartography and phonography in the fact that both practices ‘navigate the line between partial, artistic, culturally-influenced expression and aspirations to objective, neutral truth’ (Thulin 2018: 202). Similarly, Michael Gallagher and Jonathan Prior (2013: 7) identify the risk that the employment of field recordings in the form of maps might be used to maintain an uncritical view of the map as an artefact that represents truths, a notion that has been deconstructed by developments in human geography and critical cartography (cf. Anderson and Rennie 2016: 225; Droumeva 2017: 338; Thulin 2018: 195).

Different authors have acknowledged that sound maps tend to privilege certain types of recordings, as well as a restrictive kind of association between recording and place. Waldock (2018 [2011]), for example, observes an emphasis on public places in contrast to private ones, as well as a tendency towards the impersonal that manifests itself both in the way these recordings are tagged and in the absence of sounds produced by the recordist. Milena Droumeva (2017: 343) notes that sound maps frequently privilege ‘high-fidelity phonography as the golden standard of representation for sonic environments’. Thaís Aragão (2019: 169) recognises that most sound maps offer access to audio files based on an association with the place where the recording was made, and Thulin defines this standard mode of association as ‘this-was-recorded-here-and-this-is-how-it-sounds-here’ (Thulin 2018: 195).

These articles not only provide thoughtful criticism on traditional sound mapping practices, but also point towards alternative possibilities for creative practices in sonic cartography. Anderson (2016) proposes that, under the influence of critical cartography, mapping can be understood as an expressive form, and the cartographic process as a creative act. Anderson and Rennie suggest that ‘field recordings can be subjective, expressive, meaningful and personal to the recordist, rather than purely objective documents of sound environments’ (Anderson and Rennie 2016: 222). Similarly,

Waldock argues that '[f]or the soundmap to be effective for future researchers from all fields, the personal relationship of the sound to the contributor must also be understood.' (Waldock 2018 [2011]). Thulin highlights that sound maps don't need to restrict themselves to documental approaches, and that they may also be considered 'in the ways they contribute to the circulation and transformation of sounds, revealing and performing relationships between people and places through listening, recording and sound production' (Thulin 2018: 195). Finally, Gallagher and Prior establish relationships between the concept of the non-representational in geography and an understanding of phonography as performance, suggesting that 'performance and the arts may offer ways to engage with the intangible, imperceptible, ephemeral and affective dimensions of life' (Gallagher and Prior 2013: 11). All of these arguments seem to point towards the same fact: that places are made through 'a relationship between the perceiver and the perceived' (Norman 2012: 258). By attempting to remove the artist's presence, many field recording and sound mapping practices have therefore left out fundamental aspects of how places are shaped by human presence.

3. CARTOPHONY

Although the type of interactive online sound map described above has been the main focus of most academic publications over the last decade, it is not the only existing format for the development of sonic cartographies. Some sound maps rely exclusively on visual representations, as is the case with several noise maps (cf. Droumeva 2017: 341), and some employ creative combinations of visual and aural information in an installation format, such as Isobel Anderson and Fionnuala Fagan's *Stories of the City: Sailortown* (cf. Anderson 2016).

Moreover, Anderson (2016) suggests that the sound walks led by Max Neuhaus in his 1966 work *LISTEN* and the field recordings conducted by the World Soundscape Project in Canada and Europe during the 1970s can both be regarded as pioneers in the use of sound as creative cartography. These early examples take part in a long tradition of listening to the environment and investigating place through sound (cf. Drever 2009) and, even if they were not originally conceived as sound maps, Anderson recognises these two particular cases as cartographic in their own ways.

Thulin (2018: 193) proposes the term *cartophony* as a more general way of referring to different possible associations between sound and mapping practices. Thulin identifies five modes through which this association may happen: *sound-as-map*; *sound-into-map*; *map-into-sound*; *maps-of-sound*; and *maps-of-sound-as-interfaces*. The *sound-as-map* is based on spatial and locational information that can be obtained through listening to sounds, regardless of the presence of a visual map. The *sound-into-map* is understood as the employment of sonic technologies to generate maps through the conversion of sonic material into visual information. Inversely, the *map-into-sound* operates through the sonification of visual information, allowing the sonic

communication of information found in visual maps. The *maps-of-sound* are defined as visual representations of the sounds or acoustic properties of specific places. Finally, the *maps-of-sound-as-interfaces* expand on this last category by being interpreted not only as representations of sounds and acoustic properties, but as tools that guide their users through these places (Thulin 2018: 196-7).

Thulin's concept of *cartophony* aims at a broader understanding of the different possible relationships between sound and cartography, encompassing projects that stretch beyond the conventions of traditional sound mapping practices. The category of *sound-as-map*, which we regard as the most useful in our attempt to listen to O'Dwyer and Lambkin's project as a form of *cartophony*, is exemplified in his article by practices as distinct as echolocation and soundscape composition.

Among the artistic projects that Thulin identifies with the category of *sound-as-map*, Annea Lockwood's *A Sound Map of the Hudson River* (1982) is a notable example of *cartophony* that was originally developed as an installation for the Hudson River Museum in Yonkers, New York, and later released as a CD by the North-American label *Lovely Music*. In its album version, each of the 15 tracks is named after the place where the recording was made, describing a linear trajectory that begins at the river's source in Lake Tear of the Clouds and ends at its mouth in the Atlantic Ocean. The album flows without interruptions between tracks, providing the impression of a continuous motion along the river's length, as if we were following its course.

Although the presentation of the recordings in an album format differs from the online sound maps discussed earlier, the type of field recording created by Lockwood for this project has many similarities with current sound mapping practices. Denise Von Glahn and Mark Sciuchetti argue that

[o]n balance the composition favors, overwhelmingly, sounds of the non-human natural world: water in its infinite variety, birds, ducks, seagulls. At no point do listeners hear the composer as she walks along the water's edge or navigates the terrain or adjusts her equipment, and this was intentional on Lockwood's part. The recordings appear to be the product of an omniscient, but inaudible recordist: perhaps an "every-ear." Lockwood assured visitors that her recordings had "not been processed nor juxtaposed in any structure other than the river's own natural descent from Mount Marcy to the Atlantic" (Hudson River Museum, n.d.). This sonic cartographer was eager to have her map understood as an authentic, if perhaps artistic, representation of her subject. (Von Glahn and Sciuchetti 2019).

The authors are correct in noting that the recordist is made inaudible throughout the album, but this doesn't necessarily mean that its artistic aspect should be downplayed. Lockwood states that her main interest in recording river sounds is 'not to document them, but rather for the special state of mind and body which the sounds of moving water create when one listens intently to the complex mesh of rhythms and pitches' (Lockwood 2003), which suggests a particularly musical

way of listening. It's also worth noting that the CD version omits six interviews made with local inhabitants, which were available for headphone listening in the installation and which Lockwood considers a crucial part of the full work (personal information).

Lockwood's quiet listening and her discreet manipulation of the recordings is only one of the many possible approaches to the practice of field recording, but it is one that has a great influence over current online sound mapping practices.¹ The release of her installation project in an album format could be seen as a significant precedent to Lambkin's proclaimed intention of making a sound map album. However, we shall see that *Green Ways* presents a significantly different approach to field recording. While this approach might be unusual within the sound mapping tradition, we argue that it is consistent with a contemporary understanding of cartography as "performative and personal" (Anderson and Rennie 2016: 226). In the following section, we will focus on the album's first three tracks as examples of how O'Dwyer and Lambkin include sounds produced by themselves in their recordings.

4. ONE AND ONE IS...

Green Ways starts with a series of similarly titled tracks: *One and One is One*; *One and One is Two*; and *One and One is Three*. This sequence immediately contrasts with many of our expectations regarding field recordings and sound maps. Instead of soundscapes that appear to develop independently of the recordists' actions, we hear three performances made with different strategies of sound production: in the first one, vocal and percussive sounds that seem to be produced by the artists' bodies are foregrounded; in the second, we hear sounds that suggest interactions between human bodies and water; in the last one, percussive sounds are accompanied by piano playing. In each of these cases, the sounds immediately indicate a human presence that is not hidden, but highlighted.

Therefore, this sequence of tracks might suggest a proximity with the conventional format of the *live album*, which presents itself as a documentation of live musical performances by the artists, often featuring interactions with an audience. In fact, O'Dwyer has suggested that some of her earlier projects such as *Beast Diaries*, *Music for Church Cleaners*, *Gegenschein* and *Gallarais* 'are all site specific performances as much as they are recordings and albums' (personal information), and perhaps these first tracks could also be considered as such. However, we should note that all of these releases highlight an attention to the particular characteristics of the performance spaces that is unusual in most recordings of live music, in which the interference of elements external to the performance is often restricted to conventionalised interactions such as applause. In *Green Ways*, the practice of field recording is not placed in opposition to performance. On the contrary, we will

¹ A different approach to field recording may be heard, for instance, in Hildegard Westerkamp's *Kits Beach Soundwalk* (1989) (cf. KOLBER, 2002).

see that the presence of place is revealed in these first three tracks not only by directing a microphone towards it, as is frequently assumed to be the standard field recording practice, but also through an active sonic interaction between the artists and elements found in that place. The performance is presented as being part of the local soundscape: not merely taking place *in* that soundscape, but happening *with* it (cf. Norman 2012: 258).

One and One is One, the first track in the album, begins with a high level of background noise. This remarking presence might indicate two things to the listener: first, that we're not facing the controlled sonic ambience of a recording studio; second, it seems to suggest a 'raw' recording, that is, a recording that has not been 'cleaned up' in the conventional sense, in which different post-production techniques are often employed in an attempt to reduce noise and favour the sonic elements that are considered relevant to the performance. Therefore, this background noise may be perceived not only as indicative of the place where the recording was made, but also as indicative of aesthetic choices during the post-production of the album.

Over this noisy background, two voices begin humming long tones, which soon become breathing and blowing sounds with undefined pitch. Although these two voices assume a privileged position in the sonic distribution, the listener is able to recognise the presence of other people in the same place as the performers, indicated by punctual interventions such as coughing sounds, short high-pitched vocal interjections – which we assume to be produced by a kid – and occasional percussive sounds that could be interpreted as the public attempting to accommodate themselves in their seats.

In the second half of the track, the vocal sounds are replaced by percussive sounds similar to handclaps, probably produced on the artists' bodies. Different rhythm patterns are created through body percussion, occasionally accompanied by sounds that are perceived as exterior to the performance, such as brief interventions from the public. In the final section of this performance, the rhythmic pattern produced by the artists gradually overlaps with handclaps that seem to come from the public, soon becoming a collective applause. The handclaps dissolve into a brief period of silence, after which a new round of applause begins, this time more intense and also including some laughs.

Our attempt to describe the track reveals a listening that is constantly distinguishing between elements that are internal and those that are external to the performance, a boundary that is finally dissolved with the incorporation of handclaps from the audience during the last section of the performance. This distinction is perceived through an imaginary reconstruction of the performance situation, supported by the recognition of sounds that are conventionally heard in the context of an artistic performance, such as laughing or handclaps.

However, our imaginary reconstruction of the performance situation frequently faces questions to which the sounds represented in the recording do not offer an unequivocal answer: Who are the performers in this track? Is it O'Dwyer and Lambkin themselves, or have they recorded someone else's performance? Are the sounds produced only through the artists' bodies or are they also interacting with other objects? What kind of interaction is going on between the two performers? Which sounds are being produced by each one of them?

In many moments, *One and One is One* sounds like a decontextualised fragment of an artistic experience that originally involved more than just sound. Our imagination tries to complete the picture by creating suppositions for the events which are not adequately represented in the sound recording. For example, after the first round of applause emerges from the percussive sounds of the performance, a short silence marks a moment of uncertainty. We can intuit something inaudible in this silence, something that makes the audience laugh and that instigates a second round of applause. Whether it's provoked by an expression or gesture from the performers, the source of this humour seems to stand just outside of the sound recording, and therefore a feeling of strangeness and mystery prevails.

In the following track, *One and One is Two*, the performance plays a crucial part in mapping the soundscape. The recording is characterised by three predominant elements: a repeated water splash, possibly provoked by someone's hand striking a water surface; a low-pitched noise that emerges occasionally, suggesting the incidence of wind over the microphones; and birds sounds in the background. The coupling of these three simple elements is enough to evoke a particular kind of landscape in the listener's mind during the short duration of the track. The presence of water in this place is not revealed by sounds produced autonomously, such as the flow of a river or waves crashing on the shore, but depends on the interaction with human bodies through a performative action.

A sequence of percussive attacks marks the beginning of *One and One is Three*, the last track in this series. Here, we hear sounds that seem to be provoked by the interaction of the performers with different kinds of objects, among which we can recognise a small bell and a piano. The sounds are produced sparsely over a constant background noise, whose intensity is nearly as strong as that of the performed sounds. Although the presence of recognisable musical instruments could instigate a listening mode more focused on identifying abstract structures such as rhythmic and melodic figures, the way these instruments are played seems constantly committed to frustrating this attempt. The sounds are produced in irregular, hesitant rhythms, emerging discretely over the background noise, and the dialogue established between the two performers doesn't produce any recurrent recognisable structures. In our experience, this particular mode of sonic production helps bringing our listening outside of a more familiar mode of musical *comprendre* (cf.

Schaeffer 1966). In the context of the album and taking into consideration the idea of sonic cartography, we suggest that *One and One is Three* can also be listened to as the result of performative actions that produce the audible image of a place. This place might be recognised, for instance, as an attic full of old objects forgotten in time, or as a children's room full of toys.

During an interview with the author, O'Dwyer confirmed the presence of sounds produced by her and Lambkin in this first sequence of tracks. Lambkin also told us that *One and One is One* consists in an 'authentic' recording of a performance presented by the artists in Sweden.

In his review of the album for the *Brainwashed* website, Anthony D'Amico (2019) considers this initial sequence as distinct from the following tracks because it sounds as if 'O'Dwyer and Lambkin were willfully creating "music" (of a sort)', and also describes the first track in this sequence as 'the most self-conscious bit of deliberate art' in the whole album. Although it's true that this initial sequence stands out due to the predominance of sounds that seem to originate from O'Dwyer and Lambkin's performative acts, we'll see that sounds provoked by human actions continue to mark the rest of the album, even if their presence is not always perceived as the result of an artistic performance.

5. SPEAKING AND SINGING

In both *Expatriate Union* and *Metallurgy*, speech takes a predominant role in the recordings, but the way we perceive it is different in each of these tracks. In the first case, we initially recognise a reverberating interior space, inside of which we identify sounds of footsteps, chatter and giggles, suggesting some kind of social gathering. At 0:46, a female voice rises above this indistinguishable chatter, and seems to announce the beginning of a ceremony. As if in response to this announcement, the density of noises is gradually reduced, opening sonic space for a male voice that makes a declaration in a solemn tone. Although the location's acoustics make it hard to understand what is being said, the tone of the voice, the type of background noise and our perception of space through the reverberance and timbral qualities of the recorded sounds are sufficient for us to interpret this as a ceremonial situation. At the end of the track, an enthusiastic applause contributes to a logical sequence of sonic events that we recognise as familiar.

In *Metallurgy*, distant vehicle sounds and low-pitched wind noises form a background to a dialogue in which two people talk about a landscape that they seem to be looking at. Unlike our experience of *Expatriate Union*, in *Metallurgy* understanding what is being said in this conversation plays an essential part in forming a mental image of the place where the recording was made. The interlocutors mention a 6000-year-old boulder, volcanic ash used to make cement, bats, hot weather and animals bawling in the background. In this case, the elements mentioned in the dialogue are not recognised through causal listening to the sounds presented in the field recording, and it might even

require some imagination of the listener to actually hear the ‘bawling’ animals mentioned during the conversation. However, the description of these elements through spoken word contributes to an imaginary mapping of the place where the dialogue occurs.

Therefore, we note that the use of speech in *Green Ways* may contribute with the mapping of places both through its verbal contents and through its non-verbal contents, such as intonation, reverberation and timbre. Samuel Thulin (2018: 200) suggests that, although spoken words are rarely incorporated into traditional sound maps, perhaps the voice could be regarded as its own cartography, representing places through its inflections and particular accents. The relationship between verbal and non-verbal information transmitted through the voice can also be observed in three tracks on the album that incorporate singing: *Beef for the Craic* and the two homonymous *Wings to Fly* tracks.

In the first *Wings to Fly*, which provides a closing to the first CD in *Green Ways*, we hear a voice with an Irish accent comment the introduction of metallurgy in Ireland and the participation of Vikings in the construction of Dublin. We also identify evidences of the presence of other people, such as a female voice which occasionally reacts to the story being told and the sound of a liquid being poured, possibly in a glass or cup, which reappears four times. Halfway through the track, the voice who was telling the story offers his listeners something to drink. Shortly after this, a continuous low intensity noise is introduced, which in the narrative context of the track we may interpret as water being boiled. Towards the end of the track, the same voice starts singing a traditional Irish song, *Carrickfergus*, with the occasional accompaniment of a glass object being stroked. In its second verse, the song is interrupted by a post-production fade out, ending the track.

Our imaginary recreation of this scene is guided by a combination of verbal and non-verbal information retrieved from the sounds. Our imagination establishes connections between the sound of liquid being poured and a beverage being served, between a continuous noise and water being boiled, between the percussion of a glass object and the act of stirring with a spoon. Taken in isolation, each of these sounds could be interpreted differently, being recognised as indexes of different objects and activities. However, in the imagined context of someone telling a story and a beverage being prepared, these sounds acquire specific meanings.

The second *Wings to Fly* opens up the second CD in *Green Ways* with the same song that had been interrupted in the previous track. After the first verse, a female voice starts accompanying the male vocals, following the melodic line of the song on a higher octave and in an improvised manner. We also hear the occasional intervention of a sipping sound that draws us back to the imaginary narrative of the previous track, suggesting a hot beverage being taken. Towards the end of the track, a different male voice repeats the contour of the melodic line in a lower register, seeming to improvise the lyrics through it.

Following Thulin (2018), we may argue that the mapping of a specific place is produced in the second *Wings to Fly* through an interaction between vocal accent, melody and song lyrics. Although the track is mostly a recording of a song, the way this song is interpreted by the three singers significantly contrasts with well established modes of musical performance, especially those that are usually featured in music records. The first verse of the song is followed by a long silence, after which the singer comments: 'This is the beginning of it. My mind is confounding now, I am forgetting the words.' The performance continues filled with moments of hesitation like this one, and parts of the lyrics are replaced by wordless singing. The incorporation of hesitation and mistakes in the vocal performance, along with the presence of noises that are external to the performance, contribute in situating the performance in an everyday context, suggesting the capture of a spontaneous, unpremeditated moment. Therefore, when listening to the track we have the impression that this vocal performance was not rehearsed or even anticipated, but improvised in an informal setting.

A similar case is heard in the track *Beeaf for the Craic*. In it, we hear a male voice singing a fragment of Erich Bogle's *No Man's Land*, whose lyrics narrate the death of a young soldier during the First World War. The performance is occasionally interrupted by the singer's hesitations and commentaries on the song. For instance, right after singing the verse 'Did they beat the drum slowly?', he comments: 'I said beef, for the craic'. The use of the popular Irish expression 'craic' is highlighted by O'Dwyer and Lambkin in choosing to name the song after this comment. After finishing the first chorus, the singer proposes a toast to his listeners, who answer by vocally approving the performance.

After repeating the first verse of the song, 'Well, how do you do, young Willie McBride?', the singer interrupts his performance for another commentary: 'See, the McBrides are from here'. This intervention is particularly significant in our cartographic listening, for it builds a connection between the narrative of the song and the context of the recording. By replacing singing with speech, the performer shifts our attention from the persona of the song, who laments the death of a soldier, to the persona in the room, who celebrates with his friends. Through this change in tone, the voice quickly shifts from a performative context to a mundane situation. The vocal performance heard in *Beeaf for the Craic* is simultaneously placed inside the everyday (through the noises that surround the singing) and trespassed by it, being repeatedly interrupted by contingencies that are exterior to the song's narrative.

6. PERFORMANCE AND EVERYDAY LIFE

The Mushroom Field, the fourth track on the album, is marked by the insistent repetition of a loud noise that resembles some kind of fabric scratching the microphones, possibly produced by the

friction between the recording equipment and the recordist's clothes while he or she moves around the place. Behind this layer of noise, we recognise a dialogue going on between two or three people. We're able to understand some of the words uttered by a female voice, possibly closer to the recording equipment, while the other voices are heard in lower intensity, making it harder to understand the other parts of the conversation.

Our imaginary mapping of the place and action represented in *The Mushroom Field* is produced through an interaction between the title of the track, the semantic listening of the conversation, and an indicative listening of the other sounds present in the audio. We assume that the title gives us an indication of the place where the recording was made, and thus from the very beginning we already picture an imaginary setting over which the sonic events will take place. In the fragments of dialogue that we're able to understand, we hear references to a yellow flower that will be used to make tea (1:02), and one reference to mushrooms (3:17) which reinforces the general setting suggested by the title. Through the exclamation 'Graham! You got something?' (1:48) we're led to believe that the people involved in the dialogue are attempting to collect these flowers and mushrooms. In this context, the loud scratching noise that permeates the track obtains a more specific significance, indicating the constant movement of the recording agent through the field in the process of looking for and collecting their nourishment.

O'Dwyer confirmed some of the suppositions raised during our listening: she told us that this track was recorded in the village of Doon, in Ireland, while gathering mushrooms with a friend, and also noted that '[t]he action of reaching down to pull the mushrooms and the rhythm of the body is recorded as I walk through the landscape with Tom'. However, even before interviewing her, we were already able to imagine a narrative that connected the sounds produced throughout the track. The potential of field recordings to convey narratives of how they were made has been previously discussed by Isobel Anderson and Tullis Rennie, who suggested that this approach allows the recording to 'become as much documents of their makers (the recordist) as of their associated location's environmental sound' (Anderson and Rennie 2016: 225).

As in other moments of the album, the sounds heard in *The Mushroom Field* are contextualised as mere sub-products of another action – in this case, the gathering of mushrooms and flowers. As we imagine the situation represented in the track, we interpret what we're hearing as being peripheral to its original context, that is, as consequences of actions that were not primarily focused on sound production. Therefore, this track might be perceived not as the recording of a performance, but as a fragment of so-called 'everyday life', which distinguishes itself from the specific contexts of artistic production (cf. Hollerweger 2011: 18-20).

The separation between performance and the everyday, however, cannot be taken too literally when it comes to field recordings. Even while engaged in some other activity, the recordist

has set up the recording process and is certainly aware of it. Moreover, Anderson (2015) suggests that the activity of field recording can sometimes be considered a performance in itself, as the recordist's peculiar gestures of manipulating the recording equipment and monitoring through the headphones frequently becomes a spectacle to everyone else around. *Green Ways* directly addresses this issue by presenting situations in which the distinction between performance and the everyday is often made ambiguous.

In tracks like *Greenways* and *Night Music*, we find it hard to identify the source of many of the recorded sounds. As a consequence, our listening is put into a situation of constant uncertainty, in which we're unsure if the sounds that we're hearing were 'found' by O'Dwyer and Lambkin in the soundscape or if the recordists are contributing to the soundscape by actively producing some of them. On the one hand, this difficulty in recognising exactly what is causing the sounds heard in the recording might discourage the listener from building an imaginary narrative based on indexical relationships between the sounds and their sources, leading him or her to privilege a reflective listening (cf. Norman 1996: 5-8) or focus on the sound's inner complexity (cf. Truax, 1994). On the other hand, guided by the highly referential context introduced throughout the rest of the album, we may also be led to rethink the recorded soundscape as the result of an interaction between 'human and more-than-human actors: beings and objects vibrating in the world, air, microphones, cables, recording devices and media, gain controls, level meters, headphones, ears, eyes and hands' (Gallagher and Prior 2013: 12). In these tracks, the distinction between moments of performative action and moments of listening to the soundscape that has guided much of our previous descriptions seems completely blurred. O'Dwyer and Lambkin appear as participant agents in these complex soundscapes, completely assimilated inside of them. Place is no longer perceived as a static object merely represented through the recording process, but as a product of a performative act.

7. FINAL REMARKS

As we have seen, *Green Ways* doesn't comply with a certain tradition of field recording and sound mapping practices that privileges sound capture over sound production and discovery over invention (Thulin 2018: 201), frequently avoiding any kind of sonic interference from the recordist in an attempt to guarantee an impression of objectivity and impartiality (Dantas 2019: 154). On the contrary, O'Dwyer and Lambkin emphasise the recordist's *presence*, understood here as 'the sum of whichever traces indicate that a recording was performed by someone' (Dantas 2019: 153). In this particular case, the artists' presence is not only implicit in their choosing of what was recorded, the

type of microphone used, and their particular point-of-listening, but also made explicit through the incorporation of sounds actively produced by them.

The marks of presence that we identify throughout the recordings are well represented by the photographs featured in the CD artwork. In its back cover, for instance, we see O'Dwyer and Lambkin holding a green cloth against the external wall of a grocery store, while two other people casually pass through the scene. This image provides a good synthesis of the different elements that we identify throughout the record: a specific place, a performance happening in interaction with this place, the transformation of the place through the performance, and the incorporation of elements that are perceived as external to the performance.

The recognition of some of the elements as contingent, happening independently of the artists' interests or choices, plays an important part in our interpretation of some of the sounds as originally belonging to a non-fictional 'everyday life' setting. Lambkin reinforces this aspect of the recordings when he argues that 'one of the mandates of working in a found space' is to 'let the vocabulary of the space have its say rather than try and control it' (Lambkin apud Tizard 2018). Also supporting this view, the artist told us that '[a]ll the material on *Green Ways* was captured live in the moment or improvised with no expectation of success. Nothing was premeditated' (personal information). Distinguishing between performed sounds and contingent sounds happens almost automatically while we listen to the album and has a huge impact in our previous description of these tracks, allowing us to imagine the different interactions established between the artists and the places they visited. However, we should stress that there is nothing inherent in the recording process that certifies the authenticity of these elements that we perceive as contingent. In other words, we can't tell for sure if, in spite of what our intuition suggests, these apparently accidental elements weren't actually carefully selected or created by the artists themselves. If we listen to them as such, it is partly because of our familiarity with how field recordings are made, and also because we trust the album's implicit rhetoric, which Lambkin's comments above only make more evident.

Green Ways also distinguishes itself from traditional models of sonic cartography for not being based on a single type of relationship between sound and place. Thulin considers that many sound maps favour 'what appears to be a self-evident connection: a recording made in a particular place', ignoring other possible relationships between sound and place such as 'a sound inspired by a place or created for a place' (Thulin 2018: 199). In *Green Ways*, this association happens in different ways throughout the album. Although Lambkin describes it as a sound map of Ireland, some of the recordings were made in London, England, and some were made in Singö, Sweden (O'Dwyer and Lambkin 2018). In addition to this, some of the track titles suggest locational information (*Mushroom Field*; *Down by the Sally Gardens*), but none of them actually specify the city or country where the recording took place. Therefore, *Green Ways* acts cartographically mostly

through information we extract from the recorded sounds, such as the recognition of a specific accent, hearing people talk about the place they're in, the performance of a song that can be associated with a particular culture, or the feeling of spatiality provided by the timbre and reverberation of the sounds. We consider this to be a particular approach to *cartophony* in the sense that it reflects Samuel Thulin's category of *sound-as-map*, described in section 3.

As we have seen, different scholars have suggested that sound mapping practices could benefit from the influence of critical cartographers who have proposed an interpretation of maps 'as texts, discourses or practices (...) in opposition to the empirical search for a verifiable generalisation' (Nakahodo 2014: 44). O'Dwyer recognises that the recordings presented in *Green Ways* 'are not so much about the representation of each of these places but more about our interaction and play with each environment' (personal information). In this sense, the album doesn't point towards a generalist vision of Ireland as an autonomous object, but to particular experiences of the artists in and with this place. The artists not only listen to the place, but also produce it by establishing interactions with all the other elements that happen to be there in that particular moment.

Anderson criticises the sound map tradition for frequently dislocating sound from the experience of listening, and suggests that 'if we are to harness sound as a creative and expressive cartography, we must map listening rather than solely fixed sound' (Anderson 2016). The recordings presented by O'Dwyer and Lambkin may be interpreted as subjective listenings of these specific places. However, considering that the subjects who listen are recognised as active participants in the making of place, the activity of listening to place also becomes an activity of listening to themselves, listening to their presence in this place and to the ways in which the place affects and is affected by them.

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