

Sounding Dartmoor: A case study on the soundscapes of rural England at the opening of the 21st Century.

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As if in answer to his words there rose suddenly out of the vast gloom of the moor that strange cry which I had already heard upon the borders of the great Grimpen Mire. It came with the wind through the silence of the night, a long deep mutter, then a rising howl, and then the sad moan in which it died away. Again and again it sounded, the whole air throbbing with it, strident, wild, and menacing. The baronet caught my sleeve, and his face glimmered white through the darkness.

'Good heavens, what's that, Watson?'
'I don't know. It's a sound they have on the moor. I have heard it once before.'

Arthur Conan Doyle's *Hound of the Baskervilles*
(1939)

1. Introduction

Dartmoor National Park is the largest open space in southern England, covering an area of 368 sq miles, 12,906 hectares of which is used by the MOD (Ministry of Defence) for military training activities including live firing. Interspersed by carefully managed woodland, its primary topography is characterised by heath- and moor-land, divided between privately owned enclosed land, and unfenced commoners land (the rights of which are believed to go back as far as the ninth century) used for rough grazing by hardy livestock breeds such as Scottish Blackface sheep, Galloway Cattle and Dartmoor Ponies. Its domicile population is *circa* 33,000 (DNPA, 2008), however the overall population dramatically fluctuates throughout the year due to tourism

and recreation: in 1997 Dartmoor had *circa* 10.98 million recreational visits (DNPA, 2008). In popular psyche Dartmoor is synonymous with *wilderness*: infamous for its blanket bogs and an antiquated prison dating back to the Napoleonic Wars (i.e. 1806) immortalised in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *Hound of the Baskervilles* (1939).



Spanning January 2000 to November 2002, Sounding Dartmoor was an environmentally orientated public-arts project taking the sounds of Dartmoor as its field of inquiry – those of its people, places and habitats, in one word, its soundscape. It was initiated by a grant secured from Arts Council of England by the Touring Exhibition of Sound Environments (TESE), and brought together a number of organisations: TESE, the Digital Crowd (University of Plymouth) and Aune Head Arts (based in Princetown in the middle of Dartmoor).

This paper will provide an account of Sounding Dartmoor's research methodologies, as well as reflect on some of its findings. It will consider this project as a case study in grappling with the question: how does the prevailing soundscape relate to notions of place within rural England in the early 21st century? Helping elucidate such a thorny yet woolly agenda, the paper will extend from acoustic ecology/

soundscape studies discourse, referring to pertinent theory from the more academically established field of cultural geography and beyond.

2. What is a soundscape?

Before we go any further in this endeavour we need to clarify the central research concept of soundscape – a term that today is much overused and often misunderstood. It was coined by R. Murray Schafer in the late '60s and subsequently developed into a field of study by his research group the World Soundscape Project (WSP) in the early '70s, based at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. A terse reflection would lead us to consider soundscape a sonic/audible analogy of landscape – a manifestly visual term with its partisan arts practice of landscape painting.

2.1 The Theme of Landscape

Landscape is primarily concerned with the surfaces of the earth, but more than that, its Germanic etymological roots *landshaft* suggests a set of active relationships: the suffix *shaft* denoting a “state or condition of being” (OED 2008). Thus landscape concatenates an experiential tie with the land. Crucially this everyday expression comes with baggage, as each pictorial representation and subsequent reading is culturally and historically contingent, bound up in territorial pulls of power and resistance (i.e. exemplified in the practice of cartography). The cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove has unpicked these issues, addressing landscape as an “ideological concept” (Cosgrove 1998:15):

“Landscape is not merely the world we see, it is a construction,

a composition of that world. Landscape is a way of seeing the world.” (Cosgrove 1998:13)

He goes on:

“It represents a way in which certain classes of people have signified themselves and their world through their imagined relationships with nature, and through which they have underlined and communicated their own social role and that of others with respect to external nature.” (Cosgrove 1998:15)

Landscape tends to arrive at us *via* a singular fixed point of view or latterly extended into a panorama, delineated by a quadrilateral frame. The canvases of Friedrich, Turner and Constable come to mind, reinforced by the writings of Goethe, Shelley, Coleridge, Wordsworth...: the spectre of romanticism pervading. We observe a landscape as a spatially detached observer, yet stimulating aesthetic values predicated on latent notions of the picturesque and the sublime.

2.2 The Theme of Soundscape

Soundscape likewise is not limited to an exhaustive list of sound sources within a given location; it pertains a comparable concern for how we listen to the world. Taking this further, one’s relationship to the soundscape is a two-way engagement: I am both a listener and a sound maker, engaged in a circular process of call and response – reflexively adjusting inflection and amplitude in accordance or discordance with the prevailing soundscape and its aural architecture coupled to the prevailing social conventions. This field of study evolved

in the *milieu* of the green movement of the 70s, under the potent title, acoustic ecology. An orthodox, yet anthropocentric, reading of ecology is taken here as: "the study of the relationship between individuals and communities and their environment" (Schafer 1994:205). With aspiration verging on the holistic, acoustic ecology "is therefore the study of sounds in relationship to life and society" (Schafer 1994:205). The label "soundscape studies" is often used interchangeably with acoustic ecology, perhaps with the dropping of 'ecology', eschewing some of its overtly green legacy.

To help communicate nascent concept of acoustic ecology to the public, Schafer often uses the metaphor of an all-encompassing symphony, "unfolding around us ceaselessly" (Schafer 1994:205). Crucially, we are not merely passive members of the audience; rather we are empowered with the responsibility as "performers and its composers" (1994:205). Such a concept is hard to acknowledge, immersed in the poised soundscapes of the privatized shopping malls of the early 21st century metropolis, where one's role is prescribed and proscribed as submissive consumer. Julian Treasure, chairman of the Sound Agency states:

"...well-designed soundscapes can increase sales in shops by up to 50%." (Sound Business 2008)

Furthermore, in a multi-cultural context such as London, with its regional government's much-touted pursuit for social cohesion, a symphony is manifestly an awkward model, unless the postmodern eclecticism displayed by John Zorn or Carl Stalling are at play. This

begs the questions: in the context of the English countryside, does such a unifying, monadic metaphor still afford some leverage?

Advancing the ideas of Schafer, and Alain Corbin – who wrote a cultural history on bell-ringing in nineteenth-century France (Corbin 1998) – in the introduction to *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900-1933* (2002), Emily Thompson's provides an elaboration on the definition of soundscape which more closely resonates with Cosgrove's notion of landscape:

"Like a landscape, a soundscape is simultaneously a physical environment and a way of perceiving that environment; it is both a world and a culture constructed to make sense of that world... A soundscape's cultural aspects incorporate scientific and aesthetic ways of listening, a listener's relationship to their environment, and the social circumstances that dictate who gets to hear what. A soundscape, like a landscape, ultimately has more to do with civilization than with nature, and as such, it is constantly under construction and always undergoing change." (Thompson 2004: 1-2)

2.3 The Theme of Place

On positing the epic themes of soundscape and now landscape, it unavoidably raises the even more unwieldy theme of place. The humanist geographer Yi Fu Tuan has spent much of his academic life in quest of the hard to articulate and even harder to quantify yet

habitually experienced sense of place. He begins by differentiating it from notions of "space":

"Space is more abstract than 'place'. What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value." (Tuan 1977:6)

You can numerically measure space with calibrated protocols recognised by the international scientific community; *vis-à-vis* sound, you can accurately compare and relate the intensity of a sound (i.e. the logarithmic scale of the decibel) and the interplay of frequencies within a given space. There are no international standards however to quantify or qualify place just as, to date, there are no agreed standards for evaluating a soundscape. Quantitative measurements can be taken swiftly, mechanically and objectively. In contrast, to get to know a place takes time. And to effectively communicate that tacit knowledge, we require a robust system for conveying affect: a source of data that is subject to unpredictable change.

Tuan demarcates two modes for getting to know a place (Tuan 1977:6):

- The direct and intimate formed through sensuous experience *in situ*. i.e. audition, vision, equilibrium, touch, gustation, olfaction. In the everyday we habitually experience a combination of sense data that informs each other (i.e. synesthesia/ polymodal). The philosopher Jonathan Rée, suggests:

“You are not really at home in a place until you have made yourself familiar with how it sounds and resounds.” (Rée 53)

- The indirect and conceptual, “mediated by symbols” (Tuan 1977:6), i.e. the political entity of DNPA, the Ordnance Survey® map of Dartmoor (Outdoor Leisure 28), *Hound of the Baskervilles*, etc. This does not necessarily require experience *in situ*, as the symbols transcend physical geography.

As sense of place is formed through a blending of these modes (which may be best regarded as a spectrum rather than a dichotomy), the challenge comes when we try to express the former.

“[We] can articulate ideas but [we have] difficulty expressing what [we know] through [our] sense of touch, taste, smell, hearing, and even vision.” (1977:6)

The volatile nature of articulating such sensory data is exasperated when it interacts with the capricious character of memory and culture. This does not necessarily mean that such data is invalid, however. The social and political geographer Doreen Massey, disregards the “romance of a pre-given collective identity or of the eternity of the hills” (Massey 2005:140), rather she celebrates the ephemeral and effervescent nature of place, opting to refer to it as an “event”:

“...what is special about place is the throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now

(itself drawing on a history and a geography of thens and theres); and a negotiation which must take place within and between human and nonhuman.” (Massey 2005:140)

One rare paragon on researching and communicating *in situ* sensuous knowledge extrapolated from assiduous fieldwork is found in the ethnomusicologist/ ethnographer Steven Feld. On studying the Kaluli people of the Bosavi, Papua New Guinea, he articulated his pioneering approach as an acoustemology:

[Acoustemology explores] acoustic knowing as a centrepiece of Kaluli experience; how sounding and the sensual, bodily, experiencing of sound is a special kind of knowing, or put differently, how sonic sensibility is basic to experiential truth in the Bosavi forests. Sounds emerge from and are perceptually centred in place, not to mention sung with, to, and about places. Just as "life takes place" so does sound; thus more and more my experiential accounts of the Kaluli sound world have become acoustic studies of how senses make place and places make sense. (Feld 1994:4)

3. Sounding Dartmoor's Methodology

An isolated researcher visiting from another region may be able to convey something of the sounds that can be heard on Dartmoor that occurred during their time *in situ* – from my own perspective, I was born and brought up in Scotland, and prior to the project only had fleeting visits on Dartmoor. But to begin to approach the

“soundscape” of Dartmoor with all its complexities and vicissitudes as articulated by Thompson, *et al.*, proactive participation with the prevailing community was fundamental. In fact for Sounding Dartmoor the local inhabitants were regarded as the authority of the Dartmoor soundscape. It was their perceptions, affections, experiences, comments and anecdotes, in general their sound practices that the project was concerned with (be that imaginary or otherwise): they live with the sounds of Dartmoor year in year out and contribute to its makeup. On this occasion we chose not to include perceptions from tourists despite this group far outweighing the local population in number. Albeit sharing experience *in situ*, the feeling was that tourists’ consumption of Dartmoor is an “out-of-the-ordinary” (Urry 1995:132) experience. The sociologist John Urry has named this form of consumption, *The Tourist Gaze* (1990):

“Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is an anticipation, especially through day-dreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasure, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered. Such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, newspapers, TV, magazines, records and videos which construct that gaze.”
(Urry 1995:132)

The “gaze” is the visual concept *par excellence*, however it is uncontroversial to assert that sound and allusion to sound, through the practice of sound effects contributes in analogous and discrete ways to the greater economy of signs.

3.1 Research Questions

So conflating the above notions on soundscape, landscape and place, Sounding Dartmoor's research was orientated around the following questions:

- What kind of sound making is practiced?
- What are the listen practices of the inhabitants?
- How is their listening and sound making interlinked?
- What are their affective ties of sound to the environment?
- How does their attitude to the soundscape tell us about their relationship with notions of the natural world and/ or wilderness?

We were also very keen to learn how such relationships were changing over time, but sadly this was far beyond the timeframe and budget of the project. Pulling from all of the above questions an overriding question emerged:

- Does the prevailing soundscape relate to notions of place within rural England in the early 21st century, and if so, how?

Frankly this project was only a humble start on addressing the above questions, although at the time, a project that even begins to address such research questions was an exception.

3.2 Methods

Aimed at getting the public to participate and contribute in a creative discussion on the state and their perception of the Dartmoor soundscape, a range of methods were adopted. This included:

- Sound nominations.

- Directed soundwalks.
- Field recording.
- Interactive website and sound archive.
- Multi-channel sound installation in a local gallery (SpaceX, Exeter).
- Publication of a CD of evocative recordings of Dartmoor soundscapes.

The sound nominations – a method adapted from the *100 Soundscapes of Japan* project run by the Environment Agency of Japan in 1997, and the TESE project on the Isles of Harris and Lewis, Scotland, 1999-2002 – provided an initial scoping of Dartmoor soundscape themes pertinent to Dartmoor residents. It also helped us tune into the community to allow us to engage them further in the project's process – Aune Head Arts, based in the centre of Dartmoor was essential here. Field recording offered an invaluable resource for documentation, interpretation and analysis, however soundwalks open to the public and led by a range of individuals with distinct relationships to the land and its sounds, formed the primary activity for Sounding Dartmoor, allowing for the dynamic experience of listening *in situ*. Due to the ephemeral nature of sound, the planning of a soundwalk can only be fixed in advance to a certain extent, and thus the actual carrying out of a soundwalk is always sprinkled with unexpected and yet worthy of note, sonic events. The exhilaration from walking can also give rise to a lucid and yet profound mode of listening:

“The feel of a place is registered in one's muscles and bones.”
(Tuan 1977:184)



The conclusion of a soundwalk in falling snow led by Andy Stevens.

Moreover, a soundwalk traversing the environment also functions as a mental trigger for issues that extend the audible, towards thoughts that transcend the here and now. Anthropologist Keith H. Basso in *Senses of Place* (Feld & Basso 1996), maintains that:

“...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. And that is not all. Place-based thoughts about the self lead commonly to thoughts of other things – other places, other people, other times, whole networks of associations that ramify unaccountably within the expanding spheres of awareness that they themselves engender.” (Basso 1996)

To aid the challenge of communicating direct and intimate sensuous experience, arts practice was regarded as a valid even vital method of research (see Drever 2002) in *Sounding Dartmoor*, as encouraged by Tuan:

“[We] may say that deeply-loved places are not necessarily visible, either to ourselves or to others. Places can be made visible by a number of means: rivalry or conflict with other places, visual prominence, and the evocative power of art, architecture, ceremonials and rites. Identity of place is achieved by dramatizing the aspirations, needs, and functional rhythms of personal and group life.” (Tuan 1977:178)

The multi-channel sound installation devised by myself, certainly had such motivation, providing a non-linear blend of evocative Dartmoor field recordings, presented in a darkened space. The deterritorialization of sounds, reframed in an immersive environment within a gallery space, invoked a liminal site engendering considered contemplation and reflection of the Dartmoor soundscape without the polymodal distraction of *in situ* experience.

3.3 Sounding the Title

The suggestive project title, *Sounding Dartmoor*, denotes a concern for the study of the sounds within a geographically and politically determined territory. However there is a second reading: “sound” in English can also refer to health, from the German *sund*, e.g. the familiar cry of “*Gesundheit!*” after a sneeze. In English this can be

extended from the pathological towards notions of political and moral health:

“The soundness of her judgment had hitherto guarded her both from error and blame.” (Burney, F., *Cecilia V.*, 1782, quoted in Oxford English Dictionary, 2008)

Within “Sounding Dartmoor” the two readings are interlocked, resulting in an ambiguous questioning of sound (of the sonorous kind) in regards to health, with all its connotations.

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4. National Parks and the Preservationists

The identity and management of Dartmoor is tied up in the politics and ideology of the National Parks. Dartmoor has been a National Parks since 1951 and is one of nine in England. It is run by the Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA), which is funded by Westminster to:

- “Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage.” (National Parks, 2008)
- “Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of National Parks by the public.” (National Parks, 2008)

These aims can be set in conflict with each other, but the former overrides the later when such conflicts arise, i.e. preservation prevails. Local communities are treated as imperative for the sustainability of this agenda. Thus there is an onus to:

“Foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park.” (National Parks, 2008)

Such a concern has been made manifest with the DNPA’s scheme to stop “incomers wanting to move to the moor”, (BBC, 2002), by restricting availability of housing to those with no roots in the region.

The original selection criteria for National Park status was based on a quest for “wild scenery” (National Parks, 2008) whilst being within easy reach of the metropolis, and in this regard the approach has been seen to be both preservationist and educational (Matless 1998:84). For Vaughan Cornish, one of the iconic figures pushing for the establishment of National Parks, there pertained an overriding spiritual goal:

“the urban population, the majority of our people [could] recover that close touch with Nature which is needful for the spiritual welfare of a nation.” (Preservationist Geographer Vaughan Cornish quoted in Matless 1998:84)

Cornish believed that such “spiritual welfare” was available through direct sensuous contact with “nature”, inducing a deep state of contemplation. But for this to happen the environment had to be quiet:

“the quietness of the scene is essential, for only in

quietude can Man hear the voice of Nature and receive its message of eternal truth." (Cornish National Parks 1930, Matless 1998:85)

In contrast to Conan Doyle's gloomy depictions of Dartmoor (i.e. "this most God-forsaken corner of the world. The longer one stays here the more does the spirit of the moor sink into one's soul, its vastness, and also its grim charm." *Chapter 8 - First Report of Dr. Watson*, Conan Doyle, A., 1939), such profound pastoral sentiments as posited by Cornish were not out of kilter with prevailing thought of the time; "Englishness" has long been enmeshed with mythological pastoral themes. Stanley Baldwin, iconic Conservative Prime Minister during the 20s and 30s, regarded the English countryside as typifying what England as a nation symbolized. Associated with this impression, Baldwin included the sounds of hammer on anvil and mating call of corncrakes, announcing:

"These things strike down into the very depths of our nature" (Baldwin, S., *On England*, 1926, quoted in Matless 1998:30)

In parenthesis, the "rattling" mating call of the corncrake disappeared from the English soundscape during the latter 20th century and is only now beginning to make a return through an RSPB programme. A corncrake was recorded during a soundwalk of Northton Machair in July 2001, in the TESE project on Harris.

Cornish went on to develop, "aesthetic principles for landscape design"

under the label, "harmonies of scenery" (Matless 1998:45-6). This includes a selection of specific sounds that he regards as "amenities":

"The song of birds, the sounds of running water... are scenic amenities. Discordant noises are an offence against one of these amenities." (Cornish, *The scenic amenity of Great Britain*, 1934, quoted in Leyshon, Matless, Revill, 1998:24)

Patrick Abercrombie, a founder of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England in 1926, (who in this regard suggested adapting Feng Shui), remarked on the:

"a special ... tone in different countrysides the honk of the motor-car, the sound of the gramophone ... do not enter into the chord: their dissonance is seriously felt and of singular pervasiveness." (Town and Country Planning 1933. quoted in Matless 1998:69)

In the school-masterly introduction to the *National Park Guides, Number One, Dartmoor* (1957), Sir Henry Slessor writes of the "undisturbed peace and grandeur... age-long solitude and integrity of the Moor" (ix-x) of which the Dartmoor National Park Committee, of which he was chair, seeks to preserve. All this effort is compromised, however:

"The fact is that there are still people who, either through ignorance or indifference, have failed to give us mutual

assistance without which our work as guardians of the Park can be so easily set at naught.” (Slesser 1957:x)

It is interesting to see some of the founding concepts being carried into the contemporary National Park. Under a list of Special Dartmoor Qualities outlined by the DNPA, include, “opportunities for quiet enjoyment”. In order to preserve this “special quality”, bylaw no. 20 – the infringement of which can incur a £500 fine – states that:

“No person shall play or operate or knowingly cause or permit to be played or operated any musical instrument, radio, television set, record or cassette player, amplifier or similar appliance in such a manner as to give reasonable cause for annoyance to another person on the access land.” (DNPA, 2008)

5. Pre-History of Rural Soundscape Studies in the UK

There is a patchy pre-history to rural soundscape studies in the UK.

5.1 *Five Village Project (1975)*

Funded by the Canada Council in 1975, the WSP travelled to Europe to learn about aspects of the contemporary Northern Europe soundscape, resulting in a comparative study of five villages, including Dollar in Scotland. There is some discussion regarding the selection of the particular villages, and even, why villages over cities? The WSP acknowledged that their funding was limited even to carryout a rigorous study of villages. So cities were ruled out from that start:

“The prospect of arriving at intelligent conclusions regarding the complex soundscapes of cities in the brief time at our disposal would have been quite impossible.”
(Schafer 1977:1)

When it came to the selection of villages, however, a more pronounced criteria came into play. The villages had to be:

- “off a main road”
- “self-contained and not contiguous with other settlements”
- “buildings would be fairly closely grouped so that soundmaking activities of the village would constitute the largest events in the quiet countryside beyond”
- “the village would have a strong and cohesive social life”
- “acoustic signals of distinction”
- “unusual vernacular sounds”
- “good ambiances to record” (Schafer 1977:1-2)

It is evident that behind their criteria was a salient preconception of a cohesive rural village untarnished by globalisation and industrialisation. Moreover a village that manifests these characteristics gives itself to the terminology already developed by the WSP on studying Vancouver: e.g. keynote sounds, soundmark, etc.

They visited each village for 7 to 10 days, to collect data. Their research process included:

- “Study local archives for references to sound.”
- “Record all antiquated sounds”
- “Record and measure intensity of all village sound signals.”

- "Make lists of sounds heard throughout the village at different times of day."
- " Sound Preference Tests in village school(s)."
- "Conduct interviews with older people concerning the past soundscape."
- "Focus special attention on any unusual features." (Schafer 1977:2)

Although limited in funds as well, due to the spread-out timescale, Sounding Dartmoor had the advantage that we were able to take in seasonal variation, and thanks to Aune Head Arts, engage the public in a more thorough fashion. There is also a shift in orientation: the Sounding Dartmoor management team functioned more like facilitators of an arts project rather than scientific researchers.

5.2 Humphrey Jennings' *Listen to Britain* (1942)

There is history to soundscape work that pre-dates the WSP in England. In Humphrey Jennings documentary/ propaganda film, made from the Crown Film Unit, *Listen to Britain* (1942), we experience a sound portrait (i.e. images cut to sound with no voice over) of pastoral scenes, interjected with the noises of war, suggesting a threat to the hitherto unbroken primordial bond between man and the management of the English landscape.

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5.3 Ludwig Koch on Dartmoor (1950)

Another character of note is the great pioneer of natural history recording, Ludwig Koch. On attempting the first definitive collection of recordings of British Birds, he visited Dartmoor in May 1950 to record a sparrow hawk, buzzards and a Montagu's harrier (now an extremely

rare bird in the UK). On attempting to record on Dartmoor with his rudimentary and highly cumbersome equipment, he remarked on a familiar scenario:

“For the casual visitor, and even for the owner, this spot seemed to be a paradise of quiet – almost – silence but I have learned to be very suspicious, and to reserve my judgment until my machinery is in action and my loud-speaker in position. When I switched on in this paradise I was not surprised to hear a constant shunting of trains, engines whistling, and noise of distant traffic. Apart from that it was indeed silent – for not a bird could be heard.”
(Koch 1955:144)

Having spent some time on Dartmoor doing field recording myself, I too was drawn to the continuous and ubiquitous noises of transport, now included to the mix the overhead passage of transatlantic flight, and I am sure, hugely increased vehicular transport that brings the *circa* 10.98 million recreational visits.

6. Prevailing Soundscape Issues on Dartmoor

During the Sounding Dartmoor study period (2000-2002) the prevailing Dartmoor soundscape encountered a number of impinging issues: the MOD noise survey, the foot and mouth outbreak and the imminent fox hunting ban.

6.1 The MOD

The outcome of a MOD noise survey, assessing the “noise impact with

respect to sensitive receptors”, reported that any increase in ambient noise levels was very short-term and no further measures were required. The report asserts that:

"working farms are less sensitive to noise from military activities than residential properties as working farms typically generate noise during operation of machinery, making additional noise sources less noticeable." (MOD 2002)

This noise survey was done using accepted quantitative methods, and as such does not solicit responses from the public as part of its data gathering. Sounds that “represent the noise and friction of battle... may be heard during dry tactical training, are blanks and pyrotechnics, and are of no danger to the public” (*Dartmoor and its Military Use*, DNPA, 2008), however beyond their limited definition of “sensitive receptors”, the exposure to such sounds by a resident or recreational visitors is in sharp conflict to the goals and founding ideology of the National Parks as posited above. The larger argument concerns striking a balance between the MOD’s vision statement with the National Parks’: “Defending the United Kingdom and its interests” and “Strengthening international peace and stability” (MOD 2008) and the National Park’s principal aim of the preservation of “natural beauty”.

6.2 Foot and Mouth Disease

On the 27 February 2001, all moorland and other access land within the Dartmoor area was closed to public access and all recreational activities, including walking, cycling and horse riding, on such land was

prohibited due to the foot and mouth disease outbreak. These restrictions were not completely lifted until the 14 July 2001. Farms in the North West fringes of the National Park, and an isolated case in the centre, lost their livestock due to government enforced culling. It is not only the livestock that are lost through such a procedure; as a knock-on effect the birds that feed on the manure also depart. We hear, in the words of photographer Chris Chapman based in North Devon, of the:

"descending and consuming silence that so many farms experienced during the epidemic." (The Devon Foot and Mouth Inquiry, 2002)

This predicament is ominously reminiscent of Rachel Carson's epoch making *Silent Spring* (1962), which charts a dystopian narrative on the ultimate effects of herbicides and pesticides on wildlife, where, "agriculture is restyled as an enemy of landscape and nature" (Matless 1998:280).

"On the mornings that had once throbbled with the dawn chorus of robins, catbirds, doves, jays, wrens, and scores of other bird voices there was now no sound; only silence lay over the fields and woods and marsh."
(Carson 2000:22)

6.3 Fox Hunting Ban

Fox Hunting with hounds is a wide spread practice on Dartmoor, with

five active hunts. Towards the end of the 2002 season there was a real sense that fox hunting was about to be banned by Parliament. The sounds related to fox hunting, something that Ludwig Koch studied in his sound book *Hunting by Ear* (1937), were a common nomination in Sounding Dartmoor, so an effort was made to record fox hunting. In fact the Hunting Act, which makes, "hunting wild mammals with dogs" illegal, was not ratified until 2004. The act still allows for 'trail hunts' and as such hunt meetings are still legal and the sounds of the hunt persist. This is supported by the DNPA:

"The National Park Authority will work closely with the Hunts and other organisations to maintain the tradition and spectacle of activities associated with hunts, whilst ensuring that full respect is afforded to the conservation of Dartmoor, to the enjoyment of other recreational users and the interests of local residents." (DNPA, 2008)

7. Sound Nominations

Free post Sound Nomination cards were distributed around Dartmoor in public centres such as libraries and local shops. The questions posed were ostensibly straightforward:

- What is your sound?
- Where is the sound?
- Why have you selected this sound?

From *circa* 150 nominations received, they included the sounds of: chopping of firewood, waterfalls, the cry and mewing of buzzards,

stags in rut, low military aircraft, the blacksmith shoeing, crows, a lone bicycle, the sound of grit and gravel crunching underfoot, cars driving over cattle grids, wind in different kinds of trees, water gushing in streams, cry of a fox, rain, tawny owls, horses hooves on turf, the twittering of the skylark, lambs calling, bat calls, cockerels crowing in the morning, water in a brook, thunder, bagpipes, the raven's 'cronk' call, pack hounds, the horns that are blown on a hunt, farmers calling cows in for milking, crackle of a pub fire, the silence of Dartmoor...

Sounds were nominated more than once, i.e. buzzards, ravens, skylarks, wind and silence. Sounds provoked poetic responses, were valued for their heritage or regarded as out of character with the National Park, i.e. low military aircraft. Many of the nominations were highly specific, providing exact location where the sounds were (or can be) heard or could be heard throughout Dartmoor but at only certain times of the year, i.e. gorse popping. Often sound were nominated due to their signification of ownership of land or property by the nominator; behavioural characteristics reminiscent of Deleuze and Guattari's writings on territory:

"No sooner do I like a color that I make it my standard or placard. One puts one's signature on an object as one plants a flag on a plot of land." (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:316)

Continuity with passed ancestors, the bond between "man and land", evocation of childhood memories and sounds under threat such as hunting, also made themselves' manifest. Chiming with the DNPA aims

as explored above, the most common reason for nominating a sound was for its role in signifying Dartmoor as a place of peace and relaxation,

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The range and depth of responses highlighted the role sounds play in our day-to-day experience and understanding of Dartmoor and perhaps more generally English ruralism.

7.1 Sound Romance

We were aware, and in fact quite welcome to the fact that the wording of the sound nomination process ultimately encouraged nostalgia and even aspiration, thus many of the comments openly hark back to childhood and the desire to control, own or preserve. Murray Schafer named the almost hallucinatory, self-selective filtering process on summoning up memories of past sounds as a *sound romance*:

"Any past or disappearing sound remembered nostalgically, particularly when idealized or otherwise given special importance. Whereas new sounds are often experienced as sound phobias, old or past sounds are often elevated to the category of sound romances in memory. Many such sounds were often regarded as unimportant when actually current; yet later, hearing them may trigger strong memories." Truax (1999)

7.2 "Metaphorical Evocation" (Rée 1999:57)

It is also possible that although the nominations submitted may have indicated something sonorous, they were in fact metaphors, standing

in for poetic pointers to transcending notions. We are reminded of the allusion to environmental sound in the work of the Lake District (another National Park) poets, Wordsworth and Coleridge. Peppered throughout their poetry and prose we often find recourse to descriptions of rural sounds. Attributing a "voice to nature" (Rée 1999:56), Coleridge writes of the "the brook's chatter" and "the breeze, murmuring indivisibly" (Coleridge, 'Lines written in the Album at Elbingerode' 1799, quoted by Rée 1999:56-7).

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8. Topophonophilia

"Topophilia takes many forms and varies greatly in emotional range and intensity. It is a start to describe what they are: fleeting visual pleasure; the sensual delight of physical contact; the fondness for place because it is familiar, because it is home and incarnates the past, because it evokes pride of ownership or of creation; joy in things because of animal health and vitality." (Tuan 1990:113)

Adapted from Yi-Fu Tuan's concept of *topophilia*, (developed in the same era as Schafer's pioneering work) from his book *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (first published in 1974), my notion of *topophonophilia* stresses the relationship between place, the sensation of sound and sentiment. The detailed and perceptive response of the public to this project was a clear indicator of the deep connection that people have with the sounds they live within and help contribute towards making. Moreover

the "place" of Dartmoor is still a long way emotionally if not physically from the *non-place of supermodernity* which we experience whilst, "driving down the motorway, wandering through the supermarket or sitting in an airport waiting lounge airport waiting lounge" Augé (1995). But as Augé's warns:

"In the concrete reality of today's world, places and spaces, places and non-places intertwine and tangle together. The possibility of non-place is never absent from any place. Place becomes a refuge to the habitué of non-place (who may dream, for example, of owning a second home rooted in the depths of the country side)." Augé (107:1995)

This concept is manifest by the rapid growth of the urban retreat of second homeowners, seasonally visiting a region such as Dartmoor in search of a "pastoral idyll", out-pricing the *natives* in the process.

9. Conclusion

"...the ongoing debate on the cultural effects of ruralism, nostalgia and a concern for heritage. For some these are symptoms of cultural health, denoting a continuing concern for nature, for place, for roots; for others they signal only cultural decline, a country unable to face up to the modern world." Matless (1998:16)

Whether we regard the findings of *Sounding Dartmoor* as one of, as

David Matless has articulated, "cultural health" or "cultural decline", it was nevertheless marked how sound played a distinct role in the evolving sense of place in Dartmoor by its inhabitants. And returning to one of the framing questions, judging from the reasons given for sound nominations, Schafer concept of the "all-encompassing symphony" still in part holds – the inhabitants signaled that they actively play the role of "performers and its composers" (1994:2005).

The poetic, metaphorical or overtly nostalgic nature of many of the sound nominations should not be considered contaminated data, as they tell us something of today's prevalent ideologies at play:

"The group expressing and enforcing the cultural standards of society, affects strongly the perception, attitude, and environmental value of its members. Culture can influence perception to the degree that people will see things that do not exist: it can cause group hallucination." (Tuan 1990:246)

There is much to be learnt from the gap between the *real* and the *remembered* and the *imagined*. A pertinent follow-up project could be to solicit responses on the sounds of Dartmoor from people who have had no experience *in situ*, creating a projected soundscape of Dartmoor comprised of transcending symbols. Tuan writes:

"Still more curious is the fact that people can develop a passion for a certain type of environment without the benefit of direct encounter." (Tuan 1977:184)

Such data could in many regards be considered as *real* as the Dartmoor that the inhabitants of Dartmoor apprehend.

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Appendix: Selected Nominations

What is your sound?

Ponies breathing out through nostrils to say hello. (you have to breath first & they reply)

Where is the sound?

Domestic or semi wild Dartmoor Ponies

Why have you selected this sound?

Cos it's a very nostalgic sound to me & part of living and breathing Dartmoor

What is your sound?

Stonechat

Where is the sound?

Haytor Down

Why have you selected this sound?

The isolation on the moor is quiet save for occasional bird songs & wind

What is your sound?

The sound of a lone bike racing across the moor

Where is the sound?

Any of the roads on Dartmoor

Why have you selected this sound?

It is the sound of peace & freedom – getting away with it all + being alone – but not lonely because there is always the presence of the moor

What is your sound?

Fireworks

Where is the sound?

Sutryfield, Mortonhampstead, 2 November

Why have you selected this sound?
Pyrotechnics v strong in Morton

What is your sound?
Crickets

Where is the sound?
In fields at night

Why have you selected this sound?
Because whenever I hear it I think of Dartmoor

What is your sound?
Intermittent clanging of underground pump ringing out in the middle
of a wood

Where is the sound?
Hembury woods, nr Buckfastleigh

Why have you selected this sound?
It has rhythm and is very unexpected

What is your sound?
Water running in brook

Where is the sound?
Beckabrook

Why have you selected this sound?
Uplifting yet not overwhelming light and tinkle sound. Peaceful but not
soporific

What is your sound?
Waterfalls rushing onto rocks below

Where is the sound?
In river and brooks

Why have you selected this sound?
It is calming and also violent

What is your sound?
Walking down a crunchy lane of stones and leaves

Where is the sound?
On the lane by the house where I grew up.

Why have you selected this sound?
It was 'my land' and brought ownership and a sense of being present in the landscape. A feeling of returning.

What is your sound?
Skylarks

Where is the sound?
Above me, lying in the gran on Dartmoor

Why have you selected this sound?
It is the essence of Moor Sounds in the summer and I feel content to be there.

What is your sound?
Crackle of a pub fire

Where is the sound?
Warren House Lane

Why have you selected this sound?
Like its ability to be comforting in an 'in from the cold' way, yet be the pre-emptive sound amid otherwise silence to the telling of creepy stories in such remote locations.

What is your sound?
THUNDER (very low thunder)

Where is the sound?
SKY

Why have you selected this sound?
Because it comes from something bigger than any man made sound thing.

What is your sound?
Badgers

Where is the sound?
In my head

Why have you selected this sound?
Because they are great

What is your sound?
Transport sound – An air ambulance

Where is the sound?
In the sky, high above the ground.

Why have you selected this sound?
The idea of movement + vibration + people combined.

What is your sound?
The horns that are blown on a hunt

Where is the sound?
In the country side

Why have you selected this sound?
I fins the sound very eerie and unpleasant/ obviously know what it signifies/ travels across the valleys.

What is your sound?
Wind in the trees at Smallcombe Rocks.

Where is the sound?
At smallcombe rocks!

Why have you selected this sound?
Its so peaceful and relaxing

What is your sound?
Early morning song birds

Where is the sound?
Within the environment

Why have you selected this sound?
Because it is a pleasant, a wake up call

What is your sound?
The bleats of sheep, and lambs calling.

Where is the sound?
North Devon

Why have you selected this sound?
Evokes for childhood and thankfully I can

What is your sound?
The sound of grit and gravel crunching underfoot

Where is the sound?
Pathways, drives + anywhere stoney!

Why have you selected this sound?
It reminds me of childhood walks.

What is your sound?
The sounds of 3 different cascades of water in the same place, each
with it's own musical notes

Where is the sound?
Above Spitchwick

Why have you selected this sound?
I first heard this phenomenon in Thailand and when I heard it so close
to home it brought back the feeling of tranquillity I'd 1st had.

What is your sound?
Sound of running water and animals calling

Where is the sound?
West Webben River near Jordan Mill.

Why have you selected this sound?

Calming, sometimes arousing.

What is your sound?
Footsteps

Where is the sound?
Under your feet (behind / in front of you)

Why have you selected this sound?
Personal – relating to you / me being there.
Fear
Loneliness

What is your sound?
Wind

Where is the sound?
Dartmoor

Why have you selected this sound?
Peaceful and relax. Harmonized.

What is your sound?
Waterfall

Where is the sound?
Behind black curtains that I'm too scared to pull across!

Why have you selected this sound?
It makes me feel peaceful

What is your sound?
Fox hunting

Where is the sound?
Down the valley, Exmoor

Why have you selected this sound?
Might not be around much longer

What is your sound?

Farmers calling cows in for milking.

Where is the sound?

In the few small dairy farms left in Dartmoor

Why have you selected this sound?

It evokes memories of childhood and in a sound that is rooted in time as long as man & woman have herded cows. It is international. I've heard the same in Africa and Asia.

What is your sound?

Cars going over cattle grid from a distance

Where is the sound?

Leg O'Mutton corner Yelverton

Why have you selected this sound?

When the wind is in the right direction I can often hear this at night through my open bedroom window as I fall asleep

What is your sound?

The silence of Dartmoor and the peaceful sound of the wind blowing, making the silence dramatic.

Where is the sound?

In the open moor far from the forests and roads

Why have you selected this sound?

It makes me feel very relaxed, free, nostalgic sometimes, full of energy some other days.

It's always very good to enjoy the wilderness of Dartmoor.

What is your sound?

Bad

0. Low military aircraft

Good

0. Drop hammers

Where is the sound?

. Any

0. Finchs foundry – stickle path

Why have you selected this sound?

0. It's intrusive and out of character with the national park

_. Traditional industrial noise

What is your sound?

The water gushing down the hill via the stream which cuts through the village of Christo

Where is the sound?

Outside my house on a still winter's night

Why have you selected this sound?

Because it is very powerful, perhaps frightening until you realise what it is and how far away the stream is from the house. It's a sound that always takes me by surprise.

What is your sound?

The cry of a fox

Where is the sound?

Everywhere

Why have you selected this sound?

Because so few people recognise it

What is your sound?

Sound of a pack of hounds, preferably with a skylark in the foreground

Where is the sound?

Hound Tor/ Hay Tor area

Why have you selected this sound?

For me this typifies the long running relationship between man and the moor. Sadly a sound which the urban majority may prevent my future grandchild from experiencing.

What is your sound?

Sawing and chopping wood (for firewood)

Where is the sound?

In our woodland

Why have you selected this sound?

Because it is something that we do everyday in the Dartmoor region since humans arrived here many millennia ago, for warmth, for cooking, for comfort.

What is your sound?

Cockerels crowing in the morning

Where is the sound?

On this farm/ smallholding

Why have you selected this sound?

Although we are only on the edge of the moor, the old farms I remember always had chickens pottering around the yard. Nowadays, with the increased pace of living, few people keep 'unproductive' creatures. Although they pay for themselves in eggs, they are not commercially viable kept like this. Also, if other people live close by, or with busier roads, there aren't so many places out of the way enough. (Fortunately out neighbours are fairly tolerant).

What is your sound?

Foxhounds were 'on the scout' and baying as they came down through the wood and over the river. They dispersed and the next sound was the huntsman's horn calling them back in the dusk.

Where is the sound?

By the river Webburn between Jordan Hill & Pondsworthy

Why have you selected this sound?

Although I am anti-fox hunting I felt this was such a haunting sound and one which will be part of the past in times to come and should be included.

What is your sound?

Red Deer in rut

Where is the sound?

In the deer park on Scoriton Down.

Why have you selected this sound?

It is such a powerful and earthy sound of beautiful animals and their natural desires.

What is your sound?
Gorse Popping (distributing the seeds)

Where is the sound?
On any part of the moor where there is gorse that is finished flowering

Why have you selected this sound?
Because only places like Dartmoor are quiet enough to hear it.

What is your sound?
Ravens & Buzzards calling sheep herding

Where is the sound?
Down a long track downhill

Why have you selected this sound?
It is what the countryside should have looked like thousands of years ago and hopefully will be like in thousands of year's time.

What is your sound?
Wind

Where is the sound?
Dartmoor

Why have you selected this sound?
Peaceful and relax. Harmonized.

What is your sound?
Water on rocks

Where is the sound?
Along river neat Dart

Why have you selected this sound?
Remember enjoying a day walking and scrambling along the banks.

What is your sound?
Devonport Leat, flowing down Raddock Hill. The sound of water, Both gentle and torrents.

Where is the sound?

Why have you selected this sound?

One of the things I love about Dartmoor is the water, having lived in a dry part of Spain for 15 years. It's soothing, life giving, resisting the deprecations of man.

What is your sound?

Old time farmers calling in their cows for milking

Where is the sound?

Why have you selected this sound?

I've listened to this for 16 years and it never fails to stir me – hawks to something long gone.