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SONGS OF PLACE

What techniques can songwriters use to portray place in song?

SAMUEL JAMES HODGSON

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters by Research

January 2022

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Abstract

The focus of the following thesis is to examine the techniques that songwriters can use to portray place through song.

The research involved in discovering and analysing these techniques was approached from two perspectives. Firstly, through the examination of ten place-inspired songwriters and then through the exploration of myself as a place-inspired songwriter. The songwriters examined for this research are: Björk, Darkstar, Jarvis Cocker, Paul Simon, Richard Hawley, Sigur Rós, Sufjan Stevens, The Magnetic North, Tinariwen, and Toby Martin. Data was collected by cross-referencing what the songwriters say about their process with the music and lyrics in their place-inspired songs. Through the data patterns emerged which suggested some techniques were used more frequently than others. This led to the identification of eight prominent place-based songwriting techniques. I then used those techniques to write my own songs, all the while reflecting on my process through journals and evaluations.

The findings are discussed qualitatively throughout this thesis within sections. Each section is devoted to the understanding of one place-inspired songwriting technique. In Part One, for example, there is a section dedicated to the technique of drawing on landscape and climate in song. Then, Part Two, a corresponding section explores how I have used that technique to produce new place-inspired songs.

This thesis aims to be a guide for future place-inspired songwriters. The hope, through extrapolation, is that a Part Three might one day exist in which another songwriter would use this resource to create their own songs of place and write up their findings.

Introduction

The following thesis is an exploration of the techniques that songwriters can use to portray place in song. The overarching research question is What techniques can songwriters use to portray place in song? To find the answer to this question I first looked at other songwriters and then at my own songwriting practice.

In doing this research I aimed to further the understanding of place-inspired songwriting process and to obtain a deeper knowledge of my chosen songwriting places.

Research Question 1: In what ways have musicians used place to inspire song?

The first objective of the research was to study the processes of ten place-inspired songwriters in order to discover the commonalities in their practice, labelling and determining place-based songwriting techniques as they arose.

The thesis displays the findings of that research in two parts. Part One is a qualitative detailing of the songwriting process of the ten place-inspired songwriters.

Research Question 2: How can we use the techniques of other songwriters to inform our own practice?

The second objective was to use a practice-led approach to research by writing my own songs of place.

To do this I first chose my place - the Huddersfield and Halifax area. I wrote songs of those places whilst simultaneously studying my own process and those of the composers studied. By doing so I hoped to deepen my understanding of the techniques whilst learning more about the area in which I live.

Part Two of this thesis is a reflective practice, demonstrating how I used those techniques to create new material.

Research Question 3: How can we display sensory and factual information about place across art forms in a meaningful and interesting way?

Alongside Part Two is a web page which exhibits my songs of place. Within this exhibition are maps, photos, lyric sheets, quotations videos, poems, and other miscellaneous creative outputs. The aim of the exhibition was to have a space in which the songs were consolidated, and one that displayed factual and sensory information about place. Within this exhibition the viewer will also understand something about the songwriting process.

www.samhsong.com/songsofplace

Thesis Structure

The thesis is presented in two parts.

Part One is an exploration of the interviews, documentaries, podcasts, song lyrics and song recordings of ten place-based songwriters. Through the analysis of this data, eight songwriting techniques have been outlined. The thesis dedicates a qualitative, exploratory section to each technique.

Part Two is a reflective practice of the exhibition of new musical and artistic material that I have produced by exploring the techniques identified in Part One.

The techniques are titled as follows:

1. Drawing on landscape and climate
2. Referencing local histories
3. Understanding local voice (i.e., field work)
4. Collaborating with local musicians and recording studios
5. Drawing on tastes, traditions, and techniques of regional musics
6. Including place names in lyrics and titles
7. Place-inspired decisions
8. Interweaving personal experience with place

The ten artists that have been identified as place-inspired songwriting artists are as follows:

Björk, Darkstar, Jarvis Cocker, Paul Simon, Richard Hawley, Sigur Ros, Sufjan Stevens, The Magnetic North, Tinariwen and Toby Martin.

Using the techniques detailed in the eight sections I then reflect on my own practice of music making. It includes the songs, poetry, photographs, and videos, all forged during the process of songwriting.

Literature Review

By examining the context, audience response and the social/cultural/political environment of songs and albums the academic literature of popular musicology has presented much insight into place and song (Long, P and Barber, S. 2015). It is the purpose of this thesis to expand on the literature through an understanding of the songwriting process.

Topics of texts which have explored place and popular music include; music scenes and their environment (Cohen, 2012, Keeling, 2011, Johnson, 2010), the geography of American rap music (French, 2017), place-identity in popular music (Cohen, 1995), the effects of globalisation and migration on place-based musical genres (Bennett, and Guerra, 2020, Leyshon, Matless and Revill, 1998, Biddle and Knights, 2007, White, 2012), descriptions of global music tourism and some of its effects (Gibson and Connell, 2005), appropriation and reverse appropriation of musical culture (Mitchell, 1996, Cohen, 1999), musical collaboration, democracy, distribution of power and the role of music in politics (Meintjes, 1990), and the effects of songwriting in nature on well-being (Arbuthnott and Sutter 2019).

The contextual intersections between music, place and identity are in question in these texts. Keeling describes how songs become reflections of the experience of people in places at particular points in time (2011) which is supported by the story of Jack Lewy (Cohen, 1995) which demonstrates how changes in a places' culture are tied to transformations in the creation and interpretation of music. Cohen highlights the musical symbols that become indicative of certain places over time. However, musicians and audiences can sometimes identify more succinctly with musical scenes that emerge in a different culture from their own (Leyshon et.al, 1998). In other situations, global music is a result of migration – people bringing music with them as they move (Mitchell, 1996). Partly because identity and place are often linked to heritage and ethnicity, the study of localised music brings into question authenticity and ethics. Whilst cross-cultural music can work as a positive force for musical connection, it can also bring complexities (Meintjes, 1990).

These texts provide insight into the context around songs and their artists but with that focus, they sidestep the discussion of the songwriting process itself. To gain insight into this there are several step-by-step songwriting publications (Niles, 2017, Cheney, 2013, Citron, 2000) that offer everything from tips to getting started (Miller, 2001) to techniques on writing hits (Blume, 2008). The aspiring songwriters that those texts are aimed at are also in mind throughout this thesis. The difference is that rather than giving instructions to completing a song, this thesis offers a detailed palette of broad techniques without suggesting a direction.

There is a smaller section of the literature still dedicated to the songwriting process of commercial successful artists. Zollo's *Songwriters on Songwriting* (2003) is a written publication of many hours of interviews with popular songwriters. Long and Barber (2015)

examine passion in songwriting through the interviews of Sodajerker (a songwriting podcast). Carless (2018) and Harrison (2014) have written autoethnographic accounts of their songwriting experience, which includes some insight into process. Gibbs briefly describes his songwriting as a creative geographical tool in 'Rock the Boat' (2019).

Popular music aside there are many occurrences of place and sense of place within texts concerning classical music, sound art, visual art, literature, and indigenous, traditional, and folk musics. The enormity of this material makes detail of it beyond the scope of this literature review. However, some examples include texts with topics such as sense of place within Latino music scenes in Houston (Nowotny, et.al 2010), the musical representation of landscape in the compositions of Delius (Grimley, 2016), and the uncertainty and complexity of site-specificity within experimental installation and performance art (Kaye, 2013).

This thesis takes a qualitative look at the ways in which songwriters write for place. The closest texts to which are Martin's 'Making Music in Bankstown: Responding to Place Through Song' (2017) and Lamb's 'I Cannot Sing You Here, But for Songs of Where' (2014). Lamb's PhD thesis looks at qualitative and detailed definitions of different types of places and their articulations through his own and other's songwriting practice. In Martin's journal, he takes a close look at the songwriting, rehearsal and production processes involved in the making of his album *Songs from Northam Avenue*, which attempts to capture some essence of the suburban city of Bankstown, Australia. Within that journal are descriptions of musical decisions, representations of landscape, collaborations with local musicians, responsive rehearsal and recording techniques and background/context of song lyrics.

Methodology

The project triangulates creative practice, history, musicology, and sociology. The research involved gathering and analysing secondary and primary data as well as personal creative practice.

In collecting data, the methodological priorities were to find information about ten place-inspired songwriters, collate sensory and factual information about five places around Huddersfield and Halifax, understand place through the voices of people and local documentation, and reflect on my own place-inspired songwriting.

The methods draw on secondary and primary data in the following ways:

Secondary Data Collection:

Musicology of practice -> newspapers, magazines, journals, podcasts, interviews, and published texts on the music.

To guide creative practice -> local history and creative writing, exhibitions, and maps.

Primary Data Collection:

Musicology of practice, social research -> personal interviews with composers in person or over email, phone etc. Questions aimed towards their process, practice and philosophy when engaging with place-based composition.

Social research to guide creative practice -> interviews with pertinent people, personal journals (during immersion into place and practice), sound recordings, photographs, deep mapping, sketches.

Summary of the data

	Song's lyrics	Interviews and reviews	Documentaries and podcasts	Journals and books	Personal communication	Total sources
Sufjan Stevens	5	8	0	0	0	13
Bjork	4	4	2	2	0	12
Paul Simon	4	4	2	1*	0	11
Jarvis Cocker	5	3	2	0	0	10
Tinariwen	5	2	3	0	0	10
Toby Martin	4	4	0	1	1	10
Richard Hawley	4	4	1**	0	0	9
Darkstar	3	6	0	0	0	9
The Magnetic North	4	4	1	0	0	9
Sigur Ros	4	3	1	0	0	8

*(Zollo, 2003) - an interview published in a book.

** (Walker, 2017) - a podcast-interview

Instances where the songwriter or commentator mentions the writing process, or something related to place within the texts were inputted into NVivo and labelled with

codes, nodes, and classifications. Out of the 53 original nodes, many were dismissed as occurring an insignificant number of times and others were broadened to create umbrella categories. This resulted in a thematic analysis (Richards, 2015) of the eight nodes which occurred most frequently.

After some analysis of the data, I began to write new songs inspired by five locations all in Huddersfield and Halifax. The locations were decided partly on my personal feelings towards the area and partly through reading books on the area, particularly about the Huddersfield and Halifax woollen cloth trail.

As a member of the 'writing music about place' community and the cultures that exist within the specific realm of whichever locations I have engaged with, I have participated in a reflective practice. This has put me in the position of I-Thou, studying location and the musical practice through participation in them both, therefore at one with the community (Panko, 1976).

Positionality Admission

Like many British children of the 1990s, my early music taste was swayed by my parents, who were both working-class white teens in the 1960s and early 1970s, listening to the new folk, blues, rock, and electronic music of the time (Tangerine Dream, B.B King, Leonard Cohen and Melanie, for example). Academic research is never entirely unbiased, so in this respect the songwriter choice is very likely guided by my musical tastes, which are still heavily influenced by my formative pop-music experience. All of the songwriters I have identified to be place-inspired broadly fit into the categories: folk, blues, rock, and electronic music. The artists were also, in part, gathered from conversations with Toby Martin whose research focuses on place and songwriting (Martin, 2017). He introduced me to Darkstar, Richard Hawley and The Magnetic North.

Regarding the practice-led research, I am not from Huddersfield or Halifax and have a perspective on the area which is romanticized. I have however lived in Huddersfield for 11 years and have a deep engagement with the local community. My position is therefore somewhere in between being an outsider and an insider. Still a 'northerner' but also from the 'wrong side of the Pennines'. I live here but was not born here, but also was not born far away. This, I believe, puts me in a strong position to approach the writing of these songs and enables me to understand somewhat the perspectives of all the songwriters studied in Part One of the thesis.

Sense of Place and Space

During the discourse of this thesis, the terms 'place', 'space' and 'sense of place' are mentioned. It is difficult to define these terms in a way that works from all perspectives (Escobar, 2001), however some general rules may be applied to reach a cohesive understanding of their meanings for the purpose of this thesis. A place is a social construct developed over time through psychological, social, and emotional engagement with a fixed, geographic area (Convery and Davis, 2012). This term is used when referring to somewhere that has been named due to its physical location. It can be local, national, or international as long as it has a fixed position and a defined area (even if that definition varies depending on personal factors). A sense of place refers to the 'character of lived experience in place' (Masterson, et.al, 2017, Introduction) or an emotional understanding of place (Convery and Davis, 2012). Space refers to the organisation and physical properties of a place. By extension, a sense of space is the way in which one feels when experiencing some physical property of space. For example - Marsden Moor is a place, the moor itself (with reference to its physical properties) is a space and how one feels about it is the sense of place/space.

Part One

The songwriting techniques of place-inspired songwriters.

Drawing on landscape and climate

Reflecting on landscape, geography, climate, and weather is one way in which songwriters can summon a sense of place in their music. Landscape and climate can be conveyed in song lyrics or expressed by dynamics, melodies, instrumentation, and post-production techniques.

Both Björk (Dibben, 2009) and Sigur Rós (Grist, 2008) describe their native Iceland as being "raw" (Sky Arts, 2014) and "powerful" (Grist, 2008. 2:56). The landscape, which in single regions can contain both lava fields and glaciers (Simmonds, 1999), has been formed quickly by volcanos, geysers, and earthquakes. The music of both Björk and Sigur Rós reflect this with dramatic dynamic changes, moments of sparse instrumentation against others of thick orchestral quality and open harmonic structures that span considerable frequency ranges. "The beats in 'Jóga' (Björk, 1997) are aligned with the idea of seismic energy" (Dibben, 2009, p. 47) and Sigur Rós portray "climactic and melodic intensity" (Mitchell 2009), expressing the isolated vastness of the everchanging landscape. According

to Tore Stovold, the track *Brennisteinn* (meaning sulphur), from Sigur Ros' volcano inspired album *Kveikur* (meaning candlestick or fuse) starts with the mimicking of an erupting volcano through distorted instrumental sounds and noise (2019).

Songwriters' depictions of landscape differ as vastly as their homelands do. In contrast to the Icelandic songwriters mentioned above, Tinariwen's music is reflective of the Sahara Desert, which is 9.2million km². Despite its vast size, the landscape and climate, unlike in Iceland, is relatively unchanging (Cook and Vizzy, 2015). The dissolution of clouds is practically permanent, rainfall is rare, brief, and irregular and large areas are covered by rocky plateaus and sand dunes (Cloudsley-Thompson, 1984). Tinariwen's music, consciously or not, is representative of this repetitive, consistent environment. Tinariwen (whose name roughly translates as deserts, countryside or 'the people of the desert' in Tamashek¹) write in a style known as 'assouf' among the Tuareg people. Assouf is characterised by repetitive riffs and drones alongside constant tempos and polyrhythms. Like the desert, the music relies on nuanced flourishes and tiny dips in and out of instrumentation. Songs are formed on single melodic lines that repeat over faintly differing lyrics.

In 'Making Music in Bankstown', Martin mentions that the harmonic minimalism in *Songs from Northam Avenue* reflects "the spaciousness of Bankstown's suburban streets" (Martin, 2017. p. 26). Hannah Peel, of The Magnetic North, describes representing the euphoria and fragility felt from the Old Man of Hoy (a rock stack off the coast of the Orkney Islands) with the sound of a music box, set against a symphonic melody playing in unison (The Mitcham Submarine, 2016). 'Bay of Skail' uses sparse arrangement to portray a deserted beach (Liptrot, 2012). Peel also recounts the story of how an improvised couple of notes in a darkened room sounded like the MV Hamnavoe's horns, so integral to the sound of Stromness (Liptrot, 2012). By engaging in the "long-term listening" (Martin, 2017, p. 23) of place, the songwriters have found creative ways to make music sound like the spatial elements of the landscape they are depicting.

Another way to capture the local landscape is through sound samples. Darkstar's 'A Different Kind of Struggle' (2015) opens with a recorded sound of a public service

¹ In Tinariwen Documentary Part 1 on their YouTube channel (2017) Andy Morgan (Manager) says "Tinariwen is the plural of the word Ténéré. Ténéré means desert but not only desert, also country or countryside" (Tinariwen, 2007, 01:01) but in Reichenbach's *The Guitars of the Tuareg Rebellion*, Alhabib says "we would go out into the desert to play. And that's how we got our name, The Tinariwen, 'the people of the desert'" (Reichenbach, 2005, 24:24).

announcement at Huddersfield Bus Station: "For your safety, do not walk on the bus carriageway". This kind of PSA is not necessarily indicative of Huddersfield, but here Huddersfield is representative of a larger theme - the forgotten northern youth (Cliff, 2015). It's within that theme that a bus station PSA is significant. *Foam Island* contains several such sound-samples, building up a picture of Huddersfield over the course of the album.

Using recording and production processes is a key feature in the songs of Darkstar and Björk. Björk uses a filter over the beats between the first two verses of 'Jóga' to create the sound of them moving away from the listener, as if they were in a state of motion over the barren Icelandic planes. She cuts out the low frequencies of instruments to create the sound of winter and ice, and uses distorted, unpitched beats to suggest the sound of a geological activity (Dibben, 2009. p. 46 - 61).

Another way of depicting local landscape is through lyrical material. The detailing and symbolism of landscape in lyric is found in cultures across the world - Aboriginal Australian songlines (Killin, 2018, p9), Native American tribal poetry (Sepass, 2013) and Irish folk song (Stuart, 1971, p66). It is the normal course of many songwriters to reference landscape, be it 'natural' or otherwise in their lyrics (or both as in 'Concrete Jungle', Marley, 1973), so when studying composers that are deliberately writing songs about place it is rife.

Paul Simon has an ingenious way of summing up vast feelings of local area in very brief periods of fast-moving lyrical passages that reach out to a global audience succinctly. "The Mississippi Delta was shining like a national guitar" (Simon, 1986, 'Graceland') instantly highlights many associations with the culture and geography of southern USA. The Mississippi Delta has been called 'the most southern place on earth' due to its complex, musical, and socio-political history. Here it shines like a varnished guitar in the sunshine, evoking notions of national pride of American music, much of which is inseparable from the history of the deep south and its connections to Europe and Africa.

With a similar poetic nuance (although not quite as universal in its message) are the opening lines of "'As the Dawn Breaks' (Hawley, 2009) / Over roof slates / hope hung on every washing line" - against the chorus of - "As the light creeps over the houses / and the slates are darked by rain." The edging dim light through bunched up houses in an area in which you can see all the washing lines over low garden fences overlooked by 'darked' slate rooves in the rain evokes British urban scenes, characterised by such TV and film as *Last of the Summer Wine*, and *Wallace and Gromit*. Hawley describes the area as "very typical late

Victorian, early Edwardian house. It looks like Coronation Street but on a hill" (BBC, 2019, 3:51).

Tinariwen are skilled and experienced at evoking desert scenes, even when discussing something entirely different. In their song 'Nànnuflày' (2017), Tinariwen sing "I have a friend I can trust who quenches the thirst that burns in my heart. I walk in his footsteps, pursuing memoires built on a dune that is always moving" the lines highlighting the desert's characteristics - heat, dehydration, lasting indentations, unforgiving sunlight, and shifting dunes. The line 'walk in his footsteps' might be a reference to an 'Elephant' (a translation of the song's title).

Björk mixes lyrics about geographic features with those about her body in an ongoing attempt to express the belief that she is as natural and instinctive as the native animals and their habitat. Lines such as "as fast as your fingernail grows, the Atlantic ridge drifts" (2011, 'Mutual Core'), "I'm a tree that grows hearts" (1997, 'Bachelorette') and "in a forest pitch-dark / glowed the tiniest spark / it burst into a flame / like me" (1995, 'Isobel') we can hear her poetic musings about the self-place symbiosis as she references the Icelandic sagas (Walker, 2003).

Referencing local histories

By referencing the sagas in the above example, Björk connects landscape with notions of self, and local legend. By referring to local literature, history and other local publications in lyrics, songwriters can express something about place beyond their own personal experience of it. This technique is tackled in four different ways:

1. Reading or singing existing local published text as part of a song
2. Referencing local history in the lyrics of a song
3. Sampling audio from local documentary, TV, or film
4. Being inspired by local documentary, TV, or film in the musical sound

Darkstar's 'Cuts' (2015) takes a soft but unnerving piece of instrumental synth pop and overlays a reading of an announcement from the local government website. The chirpy, light accented sound of the voice actress starting "we're Kirklees Council" subtly loses enthusiasm and hope through the piece. The last phrase "the cuts are hitting us hard" supported by an oscillating low, gloomy synth accents the overall message of the track and its album.

Whilst Darkstar decided their chosen local text would be spoken, another option is to sing the text with a newly composed melody. In The Magnetic North's 'Nether-ton's Teeth' Cooper and Peel sing 'The Brothers' poem by Orkney born Edwin Muir (1991).

Songwriters may choose to include references to local history in their lyrics rather than using exact quotations. Lyrical phrases such as "Jump off/your building's on fire" from Bjork's 'Cover Me' (1995) "is a reference to the burning houses and their occupants" in the Icelandic sagas (Dibben, 2009). The character 'Isobel' from her song titled as such is also a reference to the local literary tradition.

In both *Songs from Northam Avenue* and his song 'The Linthwaite Houdini', Martin references newspapers to weave details about place into song (2017, p. 25). Sufjan Stevens mentions reading "books on frontier life and immigration", the "poems of Carl Sandberg" (TheBoss2332, 2007a, 4:38) and "a lot more about American history and the formulation of boundaries in the states" (TheBoss2332, 2009, 4:05). For example, in 'Decatur', Stevens sings:

Sangamon River it overflowed
It caused a mudslide on the banks of the operator
Civil war skeletons in their graves
They came up clapping in the spirit of the aviator (Stevens, 2005)

The Sangamon is an important historical and geographical feature for the people of Illinois, having roots in Native America, playing a role in the Beaver Wars and being an important part in the career of Abraham Lincoln. Although the passage doesn't reference any specific text, it is clear that Stevens has done his homework in writing lyrics about a particular location's history. In 'Detroit, Lift Up Your Wear Head' he includes the word wolverine - which is likely a reference to the mascot of the Michigan American Football Team or to the nickname 'Wolverine State'. It might, however, also refer to the mythological symbolism identified by Native American people; especially with the following line including "Iroquois". Whichever way Stevens meant it, the word conjures up thoughts of American history, sport, mythology and, to some extent Len Wein's Marvel Comic Character (also a North-east American creation).

Stevens includes a song dedicated to the remembrance of the sad events that surrounded John Wayne Gracy, Jr. (2005):

He'd kill ten thousand people
With a slight of his hand, running far, running fast to the dead
He took off all their clothes for them
He put a cloth on their lips, quiet hands, quiet kiss on the mouth.

The Magnetic North (TMN) also include the dark history of Orkney in their album about it with their inclusion of the story of Betty Corrigan who “killed herself amid the shame of being pregnant and unwed” (Smith, 2012). Cooper’s dream about the ghost of Corrigan and the mysteries that surrounded the event made him and the band wonder throughout the album such questions as “what happened to the father of her child?” These wonderings probably led to the heart-breaking lyrics from the track ‘Betty Corrigan’ which end with:

When I fell into your eyes
You're already gone
When you leave me by the house
When you leave me on the first call
A lover has gone

If a local text is already being transmitted as audio, it may be more authentic to sample a recording and use that in the music. In the recordings and videos of TMN’s second album, which is about Skelmersdale, the band use samples and video footage from the *Prospect of Skelmersdale* documentary (Gresty, 1971). Their song ‘Signs’ (2016) starts with a sample from the documentary that sounds: “The idea of new towns in Britain is in fact an old one. In the 13th century, King Edward the first was looking for growth points.”

Or a band may simply be inspired by place-related audio. TMN also decided on the sound of their album, *Prospect of Skelmersdale* (also named after the documentary) by relating it to TV soundtracks of the time Skelmersdale was built. They used “flutes, clarinets and other woodwind” to mimic the sound of 1970s TV and film” (Freeman, 2016). Similarly, Darkstar tell us of how they were inspired by 1980s documentary *Made in Huddersfield* (Gordon, 1985): “Young became fascinated with the way the film’s interviewees’ perspectives intersected with its music.” This partly inspired them to do the same - overlaying recordings of interviews as creative samples throughout the music (Cliffe, 2015).

Understanding Local Voice

The use of historical interview recordings by Darkstar highlights another aspect of place-based songwriting: assessing and articulating the voice of local people. Expressing a

feeling of place in this way is a novel and interesting method, it invites a communal approach to songwriting that potentially offsets the focus of a song away from the writers' vision and re-directs it towards the perspective of multiple people, or centralised communal voice. This tactic has been approached from several angles by different songwriters. The essential elements associated with this technique are as follows:

1. Interview residents and use their conversation to direct lyrical passages - exact quotations or paraphrasing.
2. Audio record interviews with residents and use snippets of their conversation as samples that sound alongside musical passages.
3. Centre the local voice through music and lyrics after conversing with a number of local people over a period of time (usually long-term).

Using many people's voices to create a fictionalised central narrative has been used by Toby Martin in his recent songwriting collaborations. Again, his method was not focussed around one technique but rather interweaving his personal history with direct quotations and paraphrases from interviewees. In his IASPM article Martin states that by "listening to stories from people in those places" (2017, p. 29) he could "poetically re-cast stories and anecdotes" (p. 25). Part of his songwriting process is not writing songs but rather "drinking coffee and talking" (ABC Arts, 2015, 1:16). Through this long-term observation he can create universal fictional characters which filter the neighbourhood stories into songs (Buckley, 2016).

Darkstar also use their songwriting as an opportunity to learn about and socialise with the local people. In an interview with 'Why We Bleep' (Mylarmelodies, 2019), Young reminisces on "becoming friends" with "really cool people" and taking it "easy all day" (01:34:28). These kinds of interactions likely influenced the central socio-political theme of the album and possibly inspired some of the lyrics. The most noticeable technique in *Foam Island* however is their use of interview sampling. For example, in 'A Different Kind of Struggle' and 'Basic Things', conventional lyrical material is replaced by sampled clips of conversation from Huddersfield residents. A sample from Chantel sounds "I think that's where the young people are having a problem in that, there doesn't seem to be anybody current that's able to understand the issues that we have at the moment, It's 'A Different Kind of Struggle' now." (Darkstar, 2015) A significant part of that sound is the dialect and accent of local people in samples of interviews, used throughout the album.

Although not for a song, Jarvis Cocker also briefly discusses the lifting of local conversation for the use of poetic metre. During his psychogeographic podcast (Waxpancakes, 2012) he says: "One day the milkman caught us and said, 'don't they teach you no brains at that school?' and that phrase stuck in my head" (50:58). This informed a poem he wrote for the side of new student flats in Sheffield which reads:

Within these walls the future may be being forged.
Or maybe Jez is getting trashed on cider.
But when you melt you become the shape of your surroundings.
Your horizons become wider.
Don't they teach you no brains at that school?

Jarvis Cocker admits to deliberately choosing to exaggerate the Sheffield accent in songs after moving to London, an accent that was admittedly not really his, but belonged to the working class of that area (Waxpancakes, 2012).

Collaborating with local musicians and recording studios.

Arguably, nobody captures the essence of local music more than the musicians working in the area. For this reason, it is important in most cases to work with locally-based musicians when creating music intended to capture the feeling of place; especially if the songwriter isn't from the area themselves. As Peel declared on the making of TMNs first album "you can't make a record about the Orkneys without including Orkney" (Tyler, 2012). They did it through working with the voices of the Stromabank Pub Choir (The Mitcham Submarine, 2016).

Richard Hawley takes a holistic approach to collaborating with locals. He thinks that there is no need to source any of his collaborators from outside his native city of Sheffield. Not only does he mostly work with local musicians and producers - Collin Elliot, Andy Cook, Simon Stafford, Shez Sheridan and Jarvis Cocker to name a few (Kitson, 2005) - but over the years he has been quite loyal to Yellow Arch Studios, which "was just a stones-throw from" where his dad and uncles used to work (Trendell, 2019). Unlike many of his contemporaries he has never moved to London or sought collaboration with anyone from there. In fact, after once working with a London producer he later claimed, "it was a nightmare", and refused to continue (Kitson, 2005).

Not all songwriters concerned with place have such a stubborn refusal to work outside their home city, but it is a theme that they have considered an important asset to their music. On *Homogenic*, for example Björk "deliberately chose to work with Icelandic string players"

(Dibben, 2009, p. 37) who went to the same school as her (Walker, 2003) and on *Volta*, an Icelandic brass ensemble. On tours of her albums *Utopia* (2017), Björk was backed by The Hamrahlíð Choir, that she herself was in as a teenager (Shaffer, 2020). On *Vespatine* (2001) Björk sang with a choir of Inuit girls from Greenland, a decision that reflects the Nordic themes on that album (Walker, 2003).

By working with local collaborators Björk fulfilled some of her desire to corroborate and project a regional sound. This was also in the intention of Sigur Ros as they were learning about the old chanting style, Rimur. They worked with Steindór Andersen, who is the head of the rhyme society in Iceland and one of the few remaining masters of Rimur singing (DeBlois, 2006). Sigur Ros also have toured and recorded with Amiina, an Icelandic string quartet / instrumental band.

Simon's position as an outsider attempting to express the crossing of South African and North American music in *Graceland* (1986) was embedded within a more complex context. His aim and process however were similar - to invite collaborations between people that represented the cultures being explored through the music. He reminisces writing alongside General Shirinda for 'I Know What I Know' when during the recording, in came "the whole family, mothers and children. It was like a party" (Simon, 2012, 3:06) - a process that was clearly novel and somewhat unexpected to Simon but perhaps more commonplace with his SA counterparts.

Collaborations such as these sometimes thrive through or require making amendments to usual processes, especially in recording environments. In the case of TMN the Orkney choir were recorded in their usual rehearsal space. Paul Simon allowed for as much freedom as the political situation would permit, recording the vast majority of *Graceland* in South Africa, despite it being potentially dangerous to do so. Similarly, Martin adjusted his recording process to suit the needs of his collaborators. For him it was an essential part of creating *Songs from Northam Avenue*. He spent time connecting with the music local people played and the ways they chose to compose and record. Many of the musicians that represented that area had globally eclectic musical backgrounds. He adjusted his usual recording process accordingly, to suit the needs of his collaborators, the core group of which consisted of a diverse group of musicians:

Alex Hadchiti playing oud (a lute-like instrument found across the Middle East),
Mohammed Lelo playing qanun (a plucked dulcimer, from the Mediterranean and

Middle East), and Dang Lan playing đàn bầu (monochord), đàn tranh (zither), sênh tiền (coin and clapper) and teacup percussion. (Martin, 2007, p. 26)

Sigur Rós have recorded several of their albums at their converted swimming bath studio in Iceland, which is “located about 30 minutes outside Reykjavik in the small, scenic community of Mosfellsbaer” (Pytlik, 2002). Tassili (named after a national park in Algeria) by Tinariwen was recorded on site, in tents and around campfires (Rohter, 2011). They recorded it in this way in order to capture the atmosphere in which the band was initially formed. It is highly remarked that part of the production of music that provides audible cues to the source of its local identity is where (and when) it has been recorded. Distinctive approaches to recording in different areas provide noticeable characteristics in the end product of the music. The use of riddims and the prominent use of only a handful of studios in 1960s and 1970s Jamaican Dancehall provides obvious cues to its origins (Manuel and Marshall, 2006).

Drawing on tastes, traditions, and techniques of regional musics.

As well as using local musicians and studios, some of the songwriters studied for this thesis have paid homage to a pre-existing regional music. Although this is not a pre-requisite to writing place-based songs, the technique is common enough to be added into this thesis.

Assouf (Tinariwen, 2007) or Tishoumaren (Dearling, 2008) is the style adopted by Tinariwen. It is a joining of several traditional north-west African styles (such as Tuareg melodies and Berber music) with blues. This ‘desert blues’ sound, as it is sometimes referred to in the West, is indicative of several Malian/Algerian musicians including Ali Farka Touré, Vieux Farka Touré, Kel Assouf, Imarhan and Fatoumata Diawara. This merging of traditional and modern, local, and imported music² indicates something about the history and influences of the band, and message of the songs.

In Martin’s album of Bankstown, he worked with players of traditional instruments and residents of the area. Those instruments are not traditional of Bankstown but rather of those musicians’ heritages. By using traditional musics of other cultures, Martin expresses the multiple regional identities within the place he is attempting to capture through song. In 2016, 55% of people in Bankstown spoke a language other than English in their own homes³.

² Although Blues music has African roots, Tinariwen first heard the style in the 1980s, played by American musicians (Millevoi, 2019).

³ See: <http://profile.id.com.au/bankstown/language> and <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/map/where-australias-immigrants-were-born-sydney> 4

By including such instrumentation and collaboration, the album also poses questions about the style of the local area and about the role of globalisation on local music. Martin was an outsider to Bankstown despite being an Australian citizen. *Graceland* poses similar questions but for different reasons. In *Graceland* the music, which was written before the lyrics, is based on black SA traditional styles such as Township Jive, Basotho, Shangaan and Zulu Choral (Zolo, 2003 and Berlinger, 2012) but the lyrical material is largely about the U.S.A and arranged in a very Anglo-Western style and produced by predominantly white Americans. This contrast between the music and lyrics questions notions of place, identity, and regional style; questions that are beyond the remit of this thesis.

The modern globalised network of music sharing has made pinpointing a regional sound interesting and complex. When Björk went searching for the sound of Icelandic music she had difficulty finding it (Dibben, 2009). Instead, she partly relies on influences of a Nordic or Arctic or Northern European/American 'origin'. Despite this there is similarity in her music to "Icelandic folk traditions in the voicing of instrumental parts, in her arrangements, and her melodic and modal style" and in her use of *tvísöngur* (Dibben, 2009).

Martin's most recent, album, *I Felt the Valley Lifting* (2021), about English village Slaithwaite is inspired by English folk music and Yorkshire poetry. He has also collaborated with local brass bands, which he affectionately tells his Australian audience are around every corner when living in a Yorkshire village (Double J, 2020).

Darkstar quote Joy Division and the Human League when discussing music of the area; genres that also contain complex origins and yet are associated, as having a Northern sound.

Including place names in lyrics and titles.

When songwriting artists are attributed to having a sound associated with a particular place, it is not uncommon that this is exploited further through mentions to that place in song and album titles and lyrics. Examples include notable East Coast hip-hop artist, 50 Cent's 'A Baltimore Love Thing' (2005) and renowned London-based band The Kink's 'Waterloo Sunset' (The Kinks, 1967). Place is an important aspect of people's lives and central in giving clear identity to touring bands (Keeling, 2011).

Seven out of eight of Richard Hawley's studio albums are named after a part of Sheffield. Some of these titles aren't place names exactly but all of them conjure up a specific location to those who know the city intimately. Like Herbie Hancock's 'Watermelon Man', inspired by the cobble stoned alleys of Chicago and the singing call of the ladies "leaning over their

back porch saying hey, watermelon man" (Russel and Coletti, 2009) Hawley named his first album after the cry of the vendors selling the Sheffield Star - 'Late Night Final'. By doing this, he evoked a feeling of the streets of the city without being explicit or exclusive; the words 'Late Night Final', like 'Watermelon Man' could easily mean many other things to people that aren't aware of the deliberate intention. The album *Cole's Corner* immortalises the old site of the Cole Brother's department store, which was gone by 1963, before Hawley ever got to know it. The following section of the thesis deals with such things as this - the utilization of place names, landmarks and buildings in lyrical material and titles.

Stevens is clear in his use of place names in album and song titles. His albums *Illinois* and *Michigan* couldn't be more explicit about their intention to reference place. Within them there are song titles such as, 'Jacksonville', 'Go! Chicago! Go! Yeah!', 'Let's Hear That String Part Again, Because I Don't Think They Heard It All the Way Out in Bushnell', 'Flint (For the Unemployed and Underpaid)'... the list goes on. Although his titles are still creative and interesting, he is being much more overt about their meanings than the Hawley examples.

In the intro to 'Sheffield Sex City' by Pulp, over the sounds of keyboard and a theremin sounding squeal Cocker reads a double spread of the A to Z (Waxpancakes, 2012), listing Sheffield's wards, streets, and villages: "Intake, Manor Park, The Wicker" (Cocker et.al, 1993). The sexy whisperings of Cockers otherwise monotonous list are overlaid by the recalling of the local love making sounds from the street before the song lyrics go on to personify the city as the narrator's erotic desire. He admits that "when people get off the train at Sheffield station, I would have thought that's not the first thing that pops into their head "mmm, I'm in sex city"" but to him it was, because that is where all his "formative experiences took place" (Habicht, 2014, 35:19).

TMN use place names as part of their song and album titles, this usage is not reflected in their lyrical material. 'Sandy Lane' (2016), for example doesn't include that lyric in the song but is hinted at in the chorus 'you are golden'. In the same manner, Hawley never mentions Pitsmoor in 'Naked in Pitsmoor' (2001) or Cole's Corner in 'Cole's Corner' (2005) etc. Stevens, however, prolifically scatters place names all over his lyrics throughout *Michigan* and *Illinois*. In TMN's case this is likely explained by Tong when he says:

"On both albums we came up with the song titles first - before we had the songs. We had 11 or 12 titles that were quite evocative, and we would then try to write to those titles. It's a really nice and different way of doing it and it just seems to work for us." (Haskell, 2016)

Martin's 'Olive Tree' mentions Damascus as a reference to the heritage of the character underpinning the song - another nod to the diversity of Bankstown's residents.

Making place-inspired decisions.

Having place names in titles and lyrical content often makes obvious the songwriter's intent to their audience. Other songwriting decisions however remain deep in the songwriting process and therefore are not easily noticed by the consumer.

Some of these decisions are big, expensive, and risky but there may also be thousands of tiny, unconscious ones as well (Barber and O'Conner, 2016). These decisions are recognised in three distinct songwriting processes - experimentation, editing and responding to audience.

For the album *Biophilia* (2011) Björk collaborated with engineers, programmers, and other creatives to co-invent new instruments, which in some cases represented place. A collaborative process like this requires significant cost, risk, work, and experimentation (Hooper, 2014). The pendulum harp, featured in Björk's *Biophilia*, harnesses gravity to play each note, which in a song about the earth's rotation about its own axis, is a symbolic feature that represents some essence of place, in this case the solar system (Hooper, 2104). Sigur Ros have used Pall Gudmundsson's steinharpa - a marimba made from Icelandic rock.

Using instruments made to represent place is an experimental, uncommon songwriting decision. This kind of open, experimental play is marked as an important part of the creative process.

For some place-inspired songwriters, the first decision is to travel to a new location. TMN decided to write an album for each of their members' birthplaces. All three members spent time in Orkney and Skelmersdale, discovering and rediscovering the areas that meant something different to each of them. Darkstar made trips to Huddersfield for *Foam Island* (2015), Martin stayed with a Bankstown resident for *Songs of Northam Avenue* and Simon journeyed to South Africa for *Graceland*. These are playful decisions but also risky choices that could have led to failure either in audience response, finance, or an inability to finish the task. For Simon, writing and recording in SA during a period of Apartheid led to people criticising, boycotting, and protesting the album.

Martin's long rehearsal periods, learning of a Vietnamese song, practice of artistic citizenship and other performance and music making choices were also potentially risky,

investigational choices that required effort and dedication. Martin expressed in a personal communication with me:

Songwriting can be really, really hard, and not fun. For me, particularly recently, it is work in that I don't look forward to it. I know I have to do it and I don't look forward to it. I have to work very hard to dig things out that I think are going to be good and that's hard. I put it off all the time.

As the examples above highlight though, "play is not just goofing off" (Thompson, 2015, p. 19) but rather a challenging, focussed, and intense activity. The initial decision to write music inspired by place provides songwriters with the focus required for play. It seems that in this situation play, and work are part of a symbiotic relationship that allow songwriters to sustain long and lustrous careers even after they have exhausted all of their immediate, youthful inspirations as Simon hints towards:

When you're young and you're writing there's really no problem with the words because you don't know anything so whatever you say is fine." "Later on, you say "oh, I can't say that; that isn't exactly true" so things become more sophisticated as our brains become more sophisticated and tuned to irony and tuned to the yin and yang of everything. (CinemaMusic, 2018, 1:56)

Rather than writing only of their selves and their experiences, the songwriters have decided to choose a theme that requires learning and exploration. This process involves understanding others' points of view, and sometimes prioritising that perspective above their own.

At some point, each of the songwriters has gone through the process outlined above and released it to an audience. Songwriters sometimes consider the local audience when performing and writing songs about place. Both Pulp and Hawley have mentioned their Sheffield audience as being difficult to please and Simon considered his African audience when writing certain lyrical lines (Habicht, 2014; Zollo, 2013). Jonsi echoes this when he says, "It's a bit like being on trial, playing in Iceland." Cooper was excited for people discovering Orkney based on TMN album and Alhabib explains the roots of Tinariwen playing music only for the people of the community (Tyler, 2012; Pornon, 2019). In these examples the local audience has likely made an impact on the decision-making process of the songwriters and reaching out to audiences might intensify as artist popularity grows (TheBoss2332, 2007b). But as Simon points out, audience members can interpret lyrics in

ways the artist never imagined (Zollo, 2003). How people will react to the music is largely out of the artists control or understanding.

Interweaving personal experience with place.

The inclusion of personal experience in songwriting is sometimes described as a somewhat mysterious process. It involves the songwriter submitting to the hazy whims of memory and the wild subconscious inspirations of flow state. Personal history, memories, flow state and the songwriting process are all aided by the passing of time.

In an interview posted on YouTube (TheBoss2332 2007c), Stevens discusses the interweaving of personal history, fiction writing and the supernatural forces of songwriting in his album *Michigan*. He says that personal history is the subject he knows best and therefore is a good starting point for writing songs. The use of memories (especially from childhood) to underpin music inspired by place is common amongst the ten songwriters.

Alhabib (Tinariwen) uses the lyrical line "63, remember his story, the memory of his days passed" (Reichenbach, 2005, 10:15) to envelop the history of Mali with a deeply personal event. In this line he is recalling the memory of his father being arrested and a woman being killed by the Malian army during the 1963 uprising (Reichenbach, 2005). By inserting memories into the lyrics, songwriters can express detailed lyrical shading to a place-based event. Tinariwen's experiences, memories and histories are entwined with their sense of place, as is present in the line "I don't take part in meetings that address his departure until my bones blend with its stones; the desert, I don't sell it I love it; I love its hardships" (Reichenbach, 2005, 45:00). The complexities of the musical message are portrayed through personal experience, rather than the historical/geographical information.

The place-personal lyrics of Tinariwen are complimented by equally emotional music - blues guitars, traditional percussion and whaling communal choruses. This mix of retro culture references, *deja entendu* and vintage aesthetics contributes to the nostalgic sound of Tinariwen, which according to Gueson and Guern is a desirable feature of popular music (Niemeyer, 2014). Studies have shown the relationship between the positive affective signature of nostalgia and its lonely, sad feelings (Wildschut, et.al, 2006). Those same studies indicate that sensory inputs (such as music) are a significant trigger of nostalgia. There is a close link, therefore between music, autobiography, melancholy, and nostalgia. One way of evoking this feeling in popular music seems to be through autobiographical lyrical lines about place.

By inserting detailed snippets of life history, the songwriters add intrigue and mystery to songs about place. Lines such as "I went there again for old time's sake hoping to find the child's toy horse ride that played such a ridiculously tragic tune" (Cocker et.al 2001) and "In early memory, mission music was ringing 'round my nursery door" (Simon, 1986, 'Under African Skies') induce feelings of nostalgia and reminiscence whilst sharing an intimate detail about place. These lines express the faint sorrow heard in the melody of a children's toy and the hazy recollections of early childhood but also describe features of place - publicly situated toy horse rides or the cultural mark of having a nursery in the home.

Memories don't have to be grounded in autobiography to spark a strong feeling of place or time. Martin has written about Bankstown and the Colne Valley, of which he has long memories of neither. However, his practice of stream-of-consciousness allows him to weave stories of his own life into those of his chosen place (Martin, 2017). The line "I put an olive tree in the garden 'cause it reminded me of Lebanon. I don't ever wanna go back there" from his song 'Olive Tree' (2017) provides an ample sense of relatable melancholic nostalgia and expresses place but is overtly not about Martin's experience.

TMN, Darkstar and Stevens also use geographically distant personal history, fictionalised events, and other peoples' memories to form sentiment within their place-inspired lyric writing. Perhaps the point is not so much to tell a literal truth but to capture some essence of place through feeling and storytelling. The listener would, undoubtedly, turn to another source if they wanted direct fact and accurate accounts of history. The role of place-based songwriting is not to depict exactly what, when or where but to connect the audience with a myriad of multifaceted emotional cues.

The stream-of-consciousness technique that is mentioned above might be partly explained by the term 'flow' or 'optimal experience' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991); i.e., feeling exhilaration after doing (or during) something enjoyable and rewarding with no worry of failure and with clear goals every step of the way (Macdonald et.al, 2006 p295). Simon likes to throw a ball at a wall and catch it continuously to access this flow state (Zollo, 2003). By accessing flow state, a songwriter can sometimes allow creative thoughts to bubble up with minimal effort. However, getting into a flow state is difficult to guarantee. Perhaps partly because of this, songwriting has gained a reputation for being "unpredictable", (Mollylurcher, 2012, 1:23)

“abstract”, (TheBoss2332, 2007c, 2:23) and mysterious⁴ (CinemaMusic55, 2018). Songwriting is partly a process of submitting to the complexities of the mind.

Simon discusses the mystery of songwriting in some detail throughout several interviews. He pinpoints it to an “underground river of your subconscious” which “comes to the surface occasionally” (Zollo, 2003, p. 120). He says that creative ideas are already in existence and that you don’t possess them but rather wait for them to arise so that you can reveal and transmit them (ratuldhaka, 2012).

Waiting for these moments to arise often requires giving songs/albums a suitable length of time in which to be written, as Björk sums up when she states:

Most of my work I do in my head just when I’m doing other things and I don’t know if it’s because I’ve been doing it for long or because I spend so many years without recording my song. (Sky Arts, 2014)

Songwriters often describe melodies and lyrics coming to them whilst they walk⁵. Walking is an opportunity to be inspired by the local landscape. Walking (or travelling slowly) also gives the time and space required for song ideas to bubble to the surface from the subconscious, as highlighted by Martin when he says: “You just need space to make connections between things” (personal communication 00:20:10).

Time, it seems, tackles the issue of an inability to manage the access of flow. Björk can work on a song for a year and Simon says that it’s important to give yourself breaks after songwriting every day for a certain amount of time. Darkstar’s James Young says, “it takes us a really long time” (Mylarmelodies, 2019; 37:36). And while some songs can emerge in a flash⁶, others need long periods of gestation.

⁴ Paul Simon: “It’s a mystery – you don’t know why that jumped into your head but it’s not important.” (CinemaMusic55, 2018, 9:13) Sufjan Stevens: “You have no idea where it’s coming from, it just manifests itself as a melody or as a chord progression.” (TheBoss2332, 2007c, 2:28) Toby Martin: “I do think it’s very hard to articulate it, how you’re feeling about a place can turn into sound.” (Personal communication, 00:17:20)

⁵ Björk: “I just go for a walk in nature for a while and out comes a song that I don’t understand” (Dibben, 2009, p. 53) Richard Hawley: “I don’t really sit with a guitar thrashing away trying to come up with something; I just walk the dogs” (BBC, 2019b, 10:08) Zollo on Simon: “he wasn’t quite sure why he wrote them, but that they occurred to him one day while walking past the Natural History Museum in Manhattan.” (2003, p.85)

⁶ Cocker: “a lot of the best songs that I’ve ever written were written in 5 minutes” (GigsinParis, 2015)

Conclusion

By capturing place in song, songwriters succumb to the faults that are embedded within experiential perceptions of place. By searching to capture a concept greater than themselves, songwriters inevitably weave in inaccuracies, and subjectivity. By doing this though, they can reveal a different kind of truth. Using metaphor, nostalgia, memory, and fiction writing as their tools, they can portray a feeling of place that interweaves personal experience with local history, landscape, and tradition. Connections can be oblique and distant, spurring memories that didn't happen in the place being sung about. Inaccuracy is part of all of our experience of place and therefore it must be included in songs about place.

The songwriter's job is not to be a travel guide or historian but to capture an essence of place through song. In doing so the hope is that the songs have an appeal to audiences, even that don't know the place at all. The songwriters do this by drawing out themes that are true of many places, like Darkstar's 'forgotten youth' which Huddersfield acts as a good example of but can be seen worldwide.

This thesis has addressed references such as landscape, history, people, and musical traditions, within the songs separately. However, within the songs themselves, those references are addressed holistically. The Icelandic sagas referenced in Björk's lyrics are inextricably connected to notions of landscape and local people. Sufjan Steven's lyrics often glide effortlessly between place names, historic figures, and landmarks. Tinariwen's *Tassili* is recorded on location in the place it's named after and heavily infused with local musics, lyrics depicting local lifestyle and musical mimicry of desert lands. Paul Simon connects two worlds, that of South Africa and North America: the musics, people, and skies of both as if they, in another world, might be one.

Because topics such as landscape and history are steeped in so much context and complexity, they combine to create new themes greater than the sum of their parts. Ineffable musical qualities emerge from the sewing together of place and song. The songwriter weaves sagas and stories, climates and scenes, the lives of people and the great expanses of time, ancient traditions, modern recording techniques, old musics with new.

Toby Martin tells of English folk music seeming to "emerge from the soil" (Double J, 2020) as if the music and the earth were connected through an innate and visceral feeling. It is this feeling of capturing place through song that I imagine the writers trying to achieve through their explorations.

The songwriters each took a divergent path to write their songs about place but had commonalities in their methods. They used creativity, ingenuity, and open, playful, sometimes risky, experimentation. The most prominent link that ties all the songwriters together though is a genuine curiosity about a place and how it relates to their experience. I expect that without that curiosity one would not begin on this songwriting exploration and as long as one has it, it matters little what techniques one uses in doing so. However, my hope is that the techniques detailed above can be a useful tool for future songwriters with a curiosity about place.

Part Two

A reflection of the practice-led songwriting research.

Context

My place-based songwriting journey started shortly after I fell in love with West Yorkshire. Like Sufjan Stevens, I was writing songs informed by literature, personal experience, and the things around me that seem pertinent. My habitat was influencing my experiences and I was writing songs about my experiences.

As my fondness and understanding of Britain and W. Yorkshire increased, so did my consciousness of including local traits in song. Melodies were inspired by those I heard in British folk music, lyrics began to include names of geographic features, and recordings included sound samples of countryside. I felt, like Björk, that I was mapping melodies to the landscape. The melody in 'Drift' (Samh, 2013), for example, was written on the cliffs of Thurso in response to that dramatic landscape.

Years after moving here, the University of Huddersfield, Kirklees Council, and Toby Martin commissioned me to write some music about Huddersfield (Marland, 2019). I worked with The Huddersfield Mission, The Huddersfield Community Gospel Choir, Savvy (hip-hop artist), and Christine Avis (Cellist) to compose songs influenced by peoples' experience of Huddersfield, using a partially verbatim lyrical style (Samh, 2019).

My place-based songwriting practice is linked to the four stages of creative intuition mentioned by Samier: preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification. After amassing an innate understanding of the place (by experiencing it, reading about it, and appreciating it), I allow thoughts to ruminate, then make wilful (often failing) attempts to write songs about it before unleashing an unexpected intuitive force which usually ends in a song that I am happy with. For *Songs of Place*, topics which I had a long-standing understanding of were quick to write about because I had already allowed a preparation

and incubation period whereas others needed time, and therefore were slower to come together.

This half of the thesis is a brief outline of the songs and their processes. It does not make note of every time one of the techniques listed in Part One is included in the musical material. It is intended to be read alongside the place-based exhibition, which will provide the reader with a more holistic understanding of the songs and process. The exhibition can be found here: <https://www.samhsong.com/songsofplace>

Each song has an accompanying video. Some of the videos are a documentation of the recording process, whilst others depict some other part of the process or the place they were written about.

Below is a list of the songs that were recorded for this project:

1. Naked Landscape
2. Gateway to Saddleworth
3. Edith Calder
4. Piece by Piece
5. Worship Song S01: Mothers Bones
6. WS07: Build Us a Room
7. WS29: Beacon Hill
8. WS50: Lazy Spring
9. WS96: On the Stanedge Moors
10. Jamie the Ratcatcher
11. Run of the Mill
12. Cropper Lads (traditional)

Landscape

In the 1900s Phyllis Bentley stated that all Halifax history depends on its geography (Hargreaves and Haigh, 2012) and so is true with much of West Yorkshire. The landscape is inseparable from the culture and history. Hillside clothier houses, intricate canal networks, mills on tributaries, heathland farmsteads, tunnelled trainlines and sandstone cloth halls are some of the landmarks that emphasise the influence this landscape has upon its human happenings. In conversations with local people about the area, one is likely to hear of the role its becks, bogs, dales, dells, gritstone, towpaths, and turnpikes play on lives.

As someone who actively seeks connections with the outdoors, my task of writing songs about place was always bound to include notions of landscape and climate. Throughout this project I regularly cycled and walked down the streets, paths, and towpaths that lead to Slaithwaite, Marsden, Meltham, Elland, Halifax, Sowerby Bridge, and Dewsbury from my house. It was on one of these excursions with my partner that I made notes on a cold winter walk around Marsden Moor. I noted in my journal (05.01.20) that "Unless Monika was stood next to me, I couldn't hear what she said" and "the wind was blowing a fierce gale into my cheek and rain was wafting into my left ear". This barren looking landscape is an unrelenting and harsh physical experience at times. I was keen to express the visceral feeling of moorland through Björk's 'body writing technique', mentioned in Part One of the thesis. In 'Naked Landscape' words such as body, naked, creases, scars and shivers connect the moors with the human body. The wild, powerful weather battering the open, undulating landscape is indicated by timbre changes in the vocal, sudden dynamic shifts, dramatic structural climaxes, and desolate, ringing, clashing chords.

But there is also a softness and fragility to the heathland - the gentle puffs of cotton grass, the fresh solitude of heather, and the distant villages buried into cosy nooks in the hills. The reflections on this element of the landscape are depicted throughout the song too. Within it are moments of fragility and nudity, exposing sections of quiet and delicate melodies. Surprising lyrical lines such as "will you dare to run your fingers through the heather?" offer sensuality to the song; suggesting that the moors are in equal part frightening and peaceful, other, and self.

Down in the valleys though, the prevalence of these dramatic changes isn't quite as apparent. To use the same musical tropes for songs about cloth halls, canals, churches, and mills, would be a disingenuous representation of those spaces. Standedge tunnel hides peacefully underneath the battling moorland, and Halifax Piece Hall's great walls shelter the users from the prevailing winds. The songs about these spaces required less harmonic and dynamic drama. The musicality in these songs were tackled with a different objective in mind. 'Piece by Piece', for example, has a consistent tempo, dynamic, and groove. The intention here was to reflect the building's firm structure and evenly spaced rows of windows.

In other songs I used sounds of the space itself in the musical material. The sound world of 'Run of the Mill' is made largely of samples of Bates Mill. The rhythm was made first - by organising sound samples and experimenting with orders and grooves. Slamming doors,

rattling chains, the bellowing of huge cylinders, and other mechanical/industrial noises can be heard. The key was decided using the prominent frequencies of machinery hums.

Local histories

Alongside the musical representations of landscape in 'Naked Landscape' are hidden quotations from authors reflecting on that locality. The words wuthering, furrowing, and eddying would not be in my usual songwriting vocabulary but by capturing these from literary texts the song has local material embedded within it.

The lyrics throughout *Songs of Place* are scattered with references to Huddersfield/Halifax and English history, folklore, traditions, and literature.

'WS50: Lazy Spring' has several hidden references within the lyrics to guide the listener to discovering where this story may be taking place. Firstly, the idea of the Anglo-Saxon Eostre as a Goddess of fertility that Jacob Grimm proposed in the 8th century (Shaw, 2011) (Sermon, 2008), here simply named 'Spring', waking up to start the season. This is reminiscent of Marsden's Imbolc festival where the Green Man of spring fights off Jack Frost. The song next mentions the cuckoo, which I have heard several local Marsden people mention as a symbol of the return of spring, as it does across much of Europe (BTO, 2020). The song goes on to reference the birth of lambs on the moors, the shedding of adder skin, the building of fox dens, the dawn chorus, the April showers, blooming flowers, and buzzing bees. Whilst this could still be several places around the UK, the pagan / druid celebrations in Marsden and the context of the other songs in this project, place it firmly in its surroundings.

'Piece by Piece' is another song in the collection that has several references to written and aural traditions. This song personifies the Piece Hall (a large cloth hall in Halifax), using characteristics of Anne Lister, described by our guide when visiting the hall in January 2020. Lines such as "she swapped out every colour, changed it all for black, as soot poured out the chimneys of Hell and Halifax" weave together the life of Anne Lister and the history of the Piece Hall. Anne Lister famously only wore black for a period of time and the Piece Hall turned black during industrial revolution's outpouring of smoke.

The song goes on to say:

"Halifax is made of wax and Heptonstall of stone,

There's pretty girls in Halifax, in Heptonstall there's none."

According to *Stories of Old Halifax* (Hanson, 1968), this was a rhyme that boys and girls used to sing on playgrounds when red brick (the colour of sealing wax) was being introduced to Halifax. The second verse of the song also mentions 'Hell and Halifax, which is a nod to 'The Beggars Litany' by John Taylor (1639) and the final poem is a rework of the first verse of the song sung at the opening of the Piece Hall (1779).

Understanding Local Voice

This merging of local history, texts on the area, and personal accounts of happenings is sprinkled through *Songs of Place* but perhaps appears most literally in 'The Gateway to Saddleworth'. In an attempt to centre the voice of people living and working in the Marsden area during the building of Huddersfield Narrow Canal the following sources were used:

- An interview with a prominent local historian (anonymous personal communication, 2020)
- John Sutcliffe's *A Treatise on Canals and Reservoirs* (1816)
- George Phillips' *Walks Round Huddersfield* (1848)
- Ammon Wrigley's *The Wind Among the Heather* (1916)
- Charles Hadfield's *The Canals of North West England* (1970)
- E Irene Pearson's *Marsden Through the Ages* (1984)
- John Hargreaves' *Slavery in Yorkshire* (2012)
- Several informative websites and online videos from sources such as - Pennine Water Ways and Canal River Trust
- The recollections and diaries from walks down the canal and trips through the tunnel

Like The Magnetic North did on their song 'Betty Corrigall', I have attempted to use historical research to portray an overall feeling of what life might have been like for local people at that time (Liptrot, 2012).

The two verses in this song are made up of specific historical events, with slight poetic elaborations. The bridge is a fictionalised first-person account of what it might have been like to have a canal dug into the local environment in the early 1800s. The chorus is intended to contrast the bitter-sweet lifestyle of jovial festivals, and amusing anecdotes detailed in books such as *The Wind Among the Heather* (Wrigley, 1916) against the high cost of industrial progress on human life.

Another approach used to re-centre the lyrical voice away from my own experience was using a style of verbatim writing from an interview. For the making of 'Run of the Mill' I was given a tour of a mill, which I audio recorded and then partially transcribed. The transcription only included words and phrases that my host said that I thought were particularly poetic or succinct.

I broke the transcriptions down to different sections of the tour. 'Boiler Room', for example includes:

"Superheated steam running through these pipes that heats the mill. Slag heap. It used to be coal fired. This is oil fired. [Boiler sound]. Brick tunnel. Flue gasses. [boiler sound]. Steel flue so they chopped a hole in the floor. Five tonnes of ash."

This still left me with pages of notes which were difficult to navigate, so I kept organising, arranging, and deleting until I could begin to make poetry with the words I had left. The end result is a lyrical interpretation of what my host had said during that tour. The synth solo at 02:09 is a recording of a section of the tour which has been sent through several audio effects and converted into MIDI and synthesised.

Local Musicians and Recording Studios

Songs of Place was not attached to the support systems that are commonplace with successful songwriters (budget, management, etc.). This project also coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic. With both of those things in mind, I had to be conservative with my aspirations regarding collaboration. The musicians that contributed to the project are as follows:

- Alessia Anastassopulos - Violin.
- Nigel Cudjoe - Beats ('Piece by Piece').
- Rob Crisp - Clarinet and saxophone.
- Sameena Hussain - Spoken Word ('Piece by Piece').
- Monika Hodgson - Backing Vocals ('Piece by Piece' and 'WS07: Build Us a Room').
- Oliver Craig - Backing Vocals ('Run of the Mill')
- Aidan Kilroy - Bodhran ('Cropper Lads')

All of whom are currently based in Huddersfield or Halifax but have diverse heritages.

In Vadoliya's documentary for WeTransfer, Björk says: "If I collaborate, I want connections to be genuine" (2018). The artists I collaborated with on *Songs of Place* were also chosen based on genuine personal connection.

Instead of including a wide range of local musicians, I have taken a novel approach to the recording of the songs. It was important to embed a deep sense of place within all of these songs. Whilst I visited all the places regularly, the majority of the process did not occur in the area it was attempting to recreate. Lyrics were written at home; music on pianos at the university; books were read in libraries; and melodies arose out of the blue. In order to brand the place into the end product I took influence from Tinariwen's *Tassili* and used the literal sound and look of those places within the songs and their accompanying artwork/videos.

On November 20th, 2020, Monika and I went to church to record 'WS01: Mothers Bones'. When thinking about churches of the Huddersfield/Halifax area, spires nestled between hills are first to come to mind. St John's spire church in Birkby helped me get my eye in for these distinctive pins in the West Yorkshire map. It is here, although I had never been inside before the recording, that always captured my imagination when writing songs about places of worship for this project. The sound of the building's reverb is accentuated in the production of 'Mother's Bones', putting the church front and centre.

This recording process was emulated for the other songs. The spoken word section in 'Piece by Piece' was recorded in the courtyard of the Piece Hall. 'Gateway to Saddleworth' was recorded at Standedge Tunnel. 'Lazy Spring' was recorded at Blackmoorfoot quarry. 'On the Stanedge Moors' was recorded at the packhorse bridge at Eastergate, Marsden. The vocals in 'Run of the Mill' were recorded in the basement of Bates Mill. 'Edith Calder' was recorded next to the river Calder near Sowerby Bridge.

By playing and recording the songs in the area they were written about, I felt a connection to those spaces that was not felt previously in the process. I romantically imagined the process to be like the Sami tradition of yoik - not singing 'about' a place but singing the place (Hämäläinen et al., 2018). The cold air at dawn on Blackmoorfoot made my fingers cold, the guitar harder to play and my voice was still croaky. The reverb in Bates Mill was long and boomy, encouraging different vocal accents and dynamics than I had practised. In the case of 'Edith Calder' the recording came out too dry and thin, which meant finding a balance between the raw recording and some studio enhancement. These factors of climate, space and place had an impact on the performance and the recorded sound, further embedding the place in the song.

Regional Musics

Songs of Place isn't as explicit in its regional musical sound as *Tassili* or *Rímur* but as with Darkstar's references to Northern electronic bands, I have also been inspired by regional musics. The West Yorkshire Pennine region is known for its brass bands, choral societies, and English folk music as well as its history in music brought over from economic migration - steel band, bhangra, reggae, boliyan, gospel and Irish folk. More recently, the area has developed contemporary classical, punk, jazz, and hip-hop scenes (Samra, 2019).

For most of this album I have concentrated on what I know, the British and Irish folk music sound, but other influences are scattered throughout. 'Naked Landscape' includes a brass section, referencing the historical local brass band scene. There is a subtle choral sound in 'Piece by Piece' and a nod to hip hop in the beat and rap.

'WS07: Build Us a Room' uses musical elements from an English folk tradition. By using a major IV chord in a piece rooted in Cm and avoiding the A^b the melody, 'WS07' has a C Dorian mode sound. It also uses stanzas instead of a conventional popular music structure and has a lyrical arrangement typical of an English folk ballad with a refrain and an ABBB rhyming pattern. These qualities are reminiscent of Yorkshire songs such as 'Scarborough Fair' and the 'Dalesman's Litany', which have similar musical features.

Further influences were taken from local folk song. The score below shows the similarities between the melody and chords of 'WS07' and the traditional song Cropper Lads, which is about the Huddersfield Luddites.

Figure 1. A score that shows the melody and chords of 'WS07: Build Us a Room' on the top line and Cropper Lads (C.L.) in the bottom line.

The image shows a musical score for two pieces, 'WS07: Build Us a Room' and 'Cropper Lads (C.L.)', in 4/4 time. The score is written in C minor (two flats). The top line is for 'WS07' and the bottom line is for 'C.L.'. The score is divided into four systems. The first system shows the first three measures. The second system shows measures 4 through 8. The third system shows measures 9 through 12. The fourth system shows the final two measures. Chords are indicated above the notes. The chords for 'WS07' are Cm, Gm, and A^b. The chords for 'C.L.' are Cm, Gm, and A^b in the first system; B^b, B^b6, Cm, Gm, and B^b in the second system; and Gm and Cm in the third system.

Another nod to local music is the regular use of Codas and Outros that include either a change of the tonal root, unison/octave melodies, and/or new musical and/or lyrical material.

This musical trope was inspired by the brass and choral ensembles which are so often referenced when discussing the musical traditions of the area (Samra, 2019). These musical performance mediums are known in part for the spectacle of their grand finales which make them popular at festivals and protests. Unison and octaves are used in brass music to give power and emphasis to melodies (Miller, 2015) and locally popular choral songs such as 'Praise the Lord God! His Glories Show' have new, distinct end sections that introduce rhythmically and harmonically simple concluding passages.

I was inspired by this idea when writing outros and endings for *Songs of Place*. The table below shows the regularity of this feature:

Song	Outro / Coda timestamp	Tonal root - alteration	Unison / 8ve melody	New musical / lyrical material
'Naked Landscape'	04:23 - 05:00	F# - A	✓	Melody and Chords
'Piece by Piece'	03:32 - 04:24	A - C		Lyrics
'Gateway to Saddleworth'	02:48 - 03:22		✓	Melody
'WS29: Beacon Hill'	02:18 - 02:55		✓	Melody and Chords
'WS50: Lazy Spring'	03:27 - 04:31	C# - B		Melody and Lyrics
'Run of the Mill'	02:55 - 03:56			Lyrics

I would have preferred to pay greater homage to the area's cultural diversity within the regional sound. It would, however, have been insincere to do that without proper collaboration with relevant members of the communities that understand that music best, which, was made difficult because of restrictions regarding budget and the Covid19 pandemic. Maintaining sincerity is a high priority of mine when making musical decisions and therefore I would not want to attempt to mimic a sound that I had little experience of.

Place Names

Keeping the songs firmly within a sense of place are the regular use of place names. A list of place names included in Songs of Place are:

Space	Place Name	Song Origin	Where mentioned
CLOTH HALLS	Piece (Hall)	Piece by Piece	Title and Lyrics
	Halifax	Piece by Piece	Lyrics
	Heptonstall	Piece by Piece	Lyrics
	Sheffield	Piece by Piece	Lyrics
	Manchester	Piece by Piece	Lyrics
CANALS	Saddleworth	The Gateway to Saddleworth	Title and Lyrics
PLACES OF WORSHIP	Beacon (Hill)	WS07 Build us a Room	Lyrics
	Pule (Hill)	WS07 Build us a Room	Lyrics
	Beacon (Hill)	WS29 Beacon Hill	Title and Lyrics
	Standedge	WS96 On the Stanedge Moors	Title and lyrics
	OTHER	Sowerby Bridge	Edith Calder
	Denby Dale	Edith Calder	Lyrics
	Dewsbury	Edith Calder	Lyrics
	Wakey (Wakefield)	Edith Calder	Lyrics

Some of the place names mentioned in the lyrics are not part of the area that is being examined in the music. Here the place names are used to add perspective and context to Huddersfield and Halifax's wider geographical location. Huddersfield and Halifax are experienced within the frame of their neighbouring cities, towns, and villages.

In 'Piece by Piece', the song defines Halifax against the walls of its big city, industrial neighbours. Halifax is the queen of cloth, like Sheffield is the city of steel, and Manchester is the post-modern metropolis. This section acts as a geographical rap-battle between areas, demonstrating the towns prowess:

'Sheffield's made of steel and Manchester of glass
Nothing's softer than her cloth so come to Halifax'

Edith Calder is a song about the route, history, and features of the Calder River as if it were a 'working lass' from Sowerby Bridge. The river runs between Halifax and Huddersfield. Here the place names give geographical understanding to the river's direction - Sowerby Bridge, Dewsbury, Wakefield. It then 'gets lost in the Aire', the Calder being a tributary of the river Aire. Denby Dale is not on the river's route but is close by - it's mainly used for poetic purposes, as Martin explains in our personal communication:

"[Place names] are readymade poetry in a way. They are often very poetic words in themselves but they also, for anyone that knows the place, they embody a certain character. It's like a shorthand, you don't have to explain too much." (17.12.20)

Place-inspired Decisions

Some decisions, such as including place names in lyrics or song titles, were not made with a planned intention but rather made intuitively. Other decisions were made with a much more deliberate intention to capture the essence of place.



Inspired by Björk and Sigur Ros I too made instruments to include within the sound world of the music. My first attempt was hollowing a fallen branch from a Huddersfield woodland to make a wood block (image on left). I also collected stone and slate in order to try to create a textured, percussive instrument section. These sounds did not make it onto *Songs of Place* because I eventually opted for an aesthetic sound quality that didn't include much percussion. An energy expensive exercise, the risk of which did not pay off.

Other risks, however, were less expensive and more fruitful. Like Simon, TMN, Martin, and Darkstar, much time was spent journeying to places in order to be inspired by them. Tours around the Piece Hall and Bates Mill, and long walks through the moors and down canals often paid off in inspiring musical/lyrical ideas or giving me the thinking time to make lyrical connections.

The journey towards writing new songs about Huddersfield and Halifax was not straight forward. Hours were spent re-working small lyrical phrases, practising guitar parts that were later thrown away, and casting heavy doubt on whether any of it was any good at all.

I found concurrence with Björk's 'gestation period' - 'Piece by Piece' was put aside for several months before work started on it again. I learned several English folk songs to enhance the journey. As when Toby Martin learned a Vietnamese song when he collaborated with Dang Lan, I also partially learned and played some Greek tunes with Alessia, the violin player, which helped strengthen our musical relationship.

The audience was also taken into consideration at times. One of the reasons 'Piece by Piece' was left for such a long period was because a listener told me that the song didn't sound connected, and there was too much material in it. It wasn't until two other trusted confidantes assured me that the song was worth pursuing that I did so. The songwriting was also influenced by the pride and wealth of local knowledge that many Huddersfield residents have in the area. Like Jarvis Cocker and Sigur Ros I felt a pressure to local expectations. Being an outsider made me even more eager to unearth history and perspectives that were not widely considered or known about. Writing a song based on the poetry of Ammon Wrigley was the idea of a local historian that I interviewed for the project.

By and large, the immersive nature of this project meant that decisions were made as part of a natural flow of direction. I was so involved in the music making and the historical research that choices seemed obvious to me - I rarely found myself deliberating for long periods. Exceptions to this included the arrangements, instrumentation and recording locations. These decisions were made partly on the necessity to centre place in the end result but also partly on a desire to give the album continuity.

Personal Experience

By engaging in songwriting in the way I have for this project I have attempted to centre place in song, but as Martin explained in our personal communication:

"There's no such thing as a mutual observer of life. As much as you try and say you're going to document conversations and record what's happening around you, obviously it's impossible." (17.12.20)

He goes on to say how although *Songs from Northam Avenue* was an attempt to capture Bankstown in song, it was influenced by his own life events and political persuasions. Presumably, these biases mostly go unnoticed, but in some instances, decisions are consciously made to suit the aim of the project. In Martin's case, the political dimension of the album was deliberate, he says:

“Recent migrants to Australia get vilified all the time and I wanted to paint a picture of a place which I thought was a really interesting, vibrant, fantastic place to live.”

In that same way I am sure that much of my place-based research was influenced by personal feeling. The lyrics in Edith Calder, for example, are calculatedly feminist.

For ‘WS01: Mothers Bones’ and ‘WS29: Beacon Hill’ my intention was to imitate Sufjan Steven’s technique of intermingling personal experience with fictionalised events and place-based phenomena. For these songs I rifled through memories and photos of times spent at church and journaled the nostalgic feelings that arose during these investigations. ‘WS01’ reflects on my childhood experiences of going to church with my sister and mum but as if those experiences took place in Huddersfield.

At other times I allowed an unconscious bias to take a central role in the songwriting. Whilst ‘Run of The Mill’ started with an organised approach to sound samples and lyrics, the sung melody came from a state of meditative free flow. The tour of Bates Mill left me with the melancholic feeling that the rich historical and cultural learnings from the cloth industry have largely been lost. The mill is being kept alive by the rent of other struggling industries, much of the working machinery has been assembled from imports, and vast corners of the building go unused. I focussed on this feeling as I explored the music with vocal melody.

These inspiration-driven songwriting moments are indeed mysterious. Although songwriting is a problem-solving exercise it does not necessarily have a question, or definite methods, and the answer will never turn out the same. When writing a song, I am influenced by how I feel, where I am, what music I have been listening to, etc. The issue of understanding songwriting is that it comes from the vastness of personal experience and the complexity of the mind. As such, some of these songs were written ‘by accident’. The melody and the bases for the lyrics to ‘Gateway to Saddleworth’, for example, was unexpectedly first sung in the shower.

As with Samier’s four steps to creative intuition, and Björk’s separation of discipline and unpredictable mood swings with gestation periods, I too have divided my place-based songwriting into parts. I am defining these steps as:

- *Conscious understanding* - studying a place through preparation, and deliberate interactions with the place itself and pre-existing sensory and factual information about it.

- *Organisation of material* – attempting to give that data meaning and order by making connections and finding patterns.
- *Allowing time* – gentle periods of mulling time assisted by walking or doing everyday activities during which I am not deliberately thinking of the place or subject in question.
- *Explosive intuitive moments* – rare and unpredictable occasions in which creative material is surfaced at a time when I am available to harvest the rewards of the previous three steps.

Conclusion

Through the Songs of Place project, I have, despite Hawley's warning not to, looked the "songwriting genie" in the eye (BBC, 2019. 00:23:00) and returned with techniques that address the writing of songs about place. I have used techniques discovered in Part One of this thesis to produce songs about five chosen places/spaces around Huddersfield and Halifax.

Those techniques have informed my songwriting process for this research, leading me to new ways of songwriting, pushing me outside of my comfort zone to experiment with lyric writing and recording processes in a way I have not done before.

As with the ten songwriters in Part One, I have merged the techniques highlighted throughout this thesis, rather than sticking to one technique per song. As a result, no songs are just about landscape, or just about history, for example. Rather, the essence of representing place comes about by the blending of many aspects of it.

Capturing that essence has also been attempted in the accompanying exhibition. Like the songs, the exhibition muddies the water between facts and their interpretation. The inclusion of quotations, historical documents and local poetry indicates that this project has a focus beyond the songwriter themselves. My intention was to write music about place, not about myself.

In the end however it is I who has made decisions such as what history to lyricise, which genres are most appropriate, how the feeling of place can be represented in ton, melody, rhythm, pitch, harmony, and performance. The relationship between place and songwriter becomes key, as John Lamb points out in his PhD thesis:

"...the emphasis becomes more about the subject's relationship with place than the place itself." (Lamb, 2014).

The maps included in the *Songs of Place* exhibition have a similar emphasis. They are an interpretation of place, giving focus to the routes, landmarks, elevations, and so on, that the map maker deemed important. They are inaccurate, imperfect, and personal representations of place, like my songs.

Therefore, whilst my original aim was to obtain a deeper knowledge of Huddersfield and Halifax, I actually found out more about what it is to be me in this environment.

Like in any other area of study, songwriters must build on the work of those that came before them if they are to improve. By not looking the songwriting genie in the eye, songwriters risk halting the improvement of their songwriting ability. In accepting that the songwriting process is mysterious, as many have⁷, and therefore not examining it, there is a potential block to learning and improving. Alternatively, by studying the techniques that others have used to write songs, songwriters can realise new creative endeavours and explore new musical terrain.

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⁷ "There are aspects of the creative process that you really don't understand and that's part of the great joy of it; 'cause it's a mystery" – Paul Simon (CinemaMusic55, 2018. 9:13). "The act of writing remains mysterious to me on so many levels" – David Carless (Carless, 2018. P. 227). "I don't control it. I don't have any idea... so it's as much a mystery to me. It's a pretty exciting mystery." – Sufjan Stevens (The Boss2332b, 2003. 3:10). "I can't really control the writing." – Bella Hardy (Bannister, 2020).

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