

Look Under Your Feet, The Past Is There – The Importance of Place in the Development of Audio Drama

Look Under Your Feet, The Past Is There is a Practice-as-Research project which interrogates the way location speaks through the medium of audio. As radio has traditionally been conceived as a time-based rather than space-based medium¹, this project engages with original methods within the *techné* (the crafts and aesthetics) of radio drama². *Look Under Your Feet* began as an audio drama script researched and written in the physical location of the Badlands National Park in South Dakota, USA with the imperative to use radiogenic qualities to reach as wide a listening audience as possible, including listeners who may have never heard audio drama before. For a work to be considered radiogenic³, it must follow the unique conventions and aesthetics of radio. To that end, I envisioned *LUYF* would

- Make use of interesting, rich, site-specific soundscapes
- Personify non-human characters in a way that would be less effective in other media
- Make use of audio's macro and micro scale⁴ (its mass broadcasting address and its intimate appeals to emotion and companionship)

This sense of place was bound up integrally with the process of making the audio drama, from the research and scripting process to the casting, recording, mixing, and producing stages. While the subjective sense of place is always contested⁵, throughout the process of writing and producing *LUYF*, I discovered how to be a better, more effective writer by understanding the production process. I also better understood how the collaborative *techné* of audio drama can produce a radiogenic drama infused with a sense of place.

¹ Andrew Crisell, *Understanding Radio* (Abingdon: Oxon, 1994), p.6.

² Andrew Dubber, *Radio in the Digital Age* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2013), p.21.

³ Andrew Crisell, *Understanding Radio*, p. 49.

⁴ Dermot Rattigan, *Theatre of Sound: Radio and the Dramatic Imagination* (Dublin: Carysford Press, 2002) p.13.

⁵ Tim Cresswell, 'Sense of Place', *Encyclopedia of Geography*, Barney Warf (ed.), (London: SAGE, 2006), p. 424.