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 medium, this project engages with original methods within the techné (the crafts and aesthetics) of radio drama. 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 radiogenic, 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 scale (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 contested, 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.

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3 Andrew Crisell, Understanding Radio, p. 49.