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Mapping the Canadian landscape : the performing arts and experiential perspectives

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Mapping the Canadian Landscape:
The Performing Arts and Experiential Perspectives

by

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B.F.A. (Drama)
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A thesis

presented to Ryerson University and York University

in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of

Master of Arts

in the Joint Programme of
Communication and Culture

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Abstract

Mapping the Canadian Landscape: The Performing Arts and Experiential Perspectives

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Master of Arts
Joint Programme in Communication and Culture
Ryerson University and York University

Focusing on a specific time period in Canadian performing art history — from the 1970s through to the late 1990s — this thesis “maps out” three artists’ experiences in the landscape and the way these experiences are represented to an audience through performance. Using specific examples from the repertoire of Davida Monk, Paul Thompson, and R. Murray Schafer, I make a case for considering these performing artists as landscape researchers. I suggest that their performances explicitly and implicitly explore foundational questions about the meanings, uses, and affective power of landscape in ways that are analogous to the writings of cultural geographers during the same period. Like Yi-Fu Tuan, John Jakle, Denis Cosgrove and Jay Appleton, these performing artists examine the experience of humans in the landscape and focus on issues of place and space, homeland, and the meaning of landscape. Monk, Thompson and Schafer extend the perspectives of the geographers and bridge important gaps in their ways of knowing landscape.

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Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my family: my parents Brian and Dianne, my sister Shannon, and my brother David. I am deeply thankful for their ongoing love and support that made this thesis possible and for giving me the courage and strength I needed to accomplish my academic goals.

This thesis is dedicated to my family:
my parents Dianne and Brian,
my sister Shannon, and brother David.

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Introduction

Preamble

“Landscape” is a multifaceted term that refers to nature, the physical environment, personal surroundings, memory of place, and people’s relationship to all of these. At different times, landscape has been considered a natural or built environment, a genre of art, a cultural and social construction, a fetishized commodity, a discourse that produces and reinforces political positions, a social hieroglyph, and a power relation. It figures as a foundational concept in the work of geographers, geologists, landscape architects, writers, theorists, artists, and the general public and, as a result, it evokes multiple meanings. This thesis brings together some of the meanings of landscape for performing artists and cultural geographers and identifies similarities in their research.

Focusing on a specific time period in Canadian performing art history – from the 1970s through to the late 1990s – I undertake a close examination of three artists’ experiences in the landscape and the way these experiences are represented to an audience through performance. Using specific examples from the repertoire of Davida Monk, Paul Thompson and R. Murray Schafer, I am able to show the impact that the landscape has had on each artist, their audiences and communities. I make a case for considering performing artists like Monk, Thompson and Schafer as landscape researchers; their performances explicitly and implicitly explore

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foundational questions about the meanings, uses, and affective power of landscape in ways that are analogous to the writings of cultural geographers during the same period, but they also extend the perspectives of the geographers and bridge some important gaps in their ways of knowing landscape. The landscape pieces of artists like Monk, Thompson, and Schafer have transformed and continue to transform the perception and understanding of the actual landscapes and the geographies of Canada, but they also raise intriguing theoretical questions about the way landscape can be known, understood, and felt.

Since the term landscape has taken on a variety of meanings, covering natural, contrived and built environments, I feel it necessary to define the term in relation to my study. I adopt a definition similar to that of geographers John Jakle and Yi-Fu Tuan, who suggest that landscape is a general term that covers natural land-forms and the social or cultural meanings that arise from these environments. For my purposes, landscape concerns not only the reality of the physical environment, but also the images formed and interpreted in the mind as the result of the artists' experiences in the landscape (Jakle 16).

I adopt a particular discourse on landscape that has emerged from the field of landscape aesthetics. A sub-discipline of cultural geography, landscape aesthetics

incorporates the cultural and humanist elements in geographic study with art history in an effort to further understand the human experience in the natural environment. Although I briefly address some of the theories from the field of geography in chapter one, I disregard traditionalist geographic language which is rooted in science. Instead I adopt the landscape aesthetician's vocabulary, as well as echo and reframe a discourse that originates with the Picturesque and Romantic art movements.

Taking my cue from scholars such as Jay Appleton, Yi-Fu Tuan, Jiahua Wu and John Jakle who study the human experience of landscape, my project expands upon and extends the scholarly work on landscape research by examining landscape representation within the lesser explored artistic areas of orchestral music, theatre and dance. Theoretically, I draw upon the cross-disciplinary techniques utilized by Jay Appleton who brings Romantic and Symbolic painting, along with architecture, literature and photography, to the problem of the aesthetics and experience of landscape for geographers. Yi-Fu Tuan provides me with the framework for understanding the importance of human experience and emotion in creating a sense of place. I draw upon theories outlined by Jiahua Wu, especially her understanding of landscape aesthetics which calls for an uncovering of the essence of landscape beauty and the way that humans participate in the natural environment. I also draw

from Denis Cosgrove and D.W. Meinig, who study the phenomenon of emotional bonds between people and symbolic values of landscape and place.

While many theorists address both the rural and urban landscape, this study focuses specifically on the rural and natural environment and refers to the spaces located outside of a city environment. In order to provide a context for my research, even though my main focus is not sociopolitical, I find it important to note at the outset some of the social, political and economic currents affecting the environment, such as urban and industrial sprawl, pollution, forestry and strip mining. These changes in the landscape are rooted in the growth of Canada as an increasingly modern and technological society and are contributing to the deterioration of the environment and the loss of natural space. Theorists, geographers, scientists and planners have studied environmental deterioration, the loss of the rural and the growth of the urban, yet little critical attention has been directed to the human experience of landscape. In order to have a full understanding of landscape, these experiences need to be examined and “mapped out.” Few geographers, however, are able or willing to undertake such a task. According to Barry Sadler and Allen Carlson, a study of the experience of landscape calls for individuals with the ability to combine a sensitivity to setting, scenery and symbolism with intuitive and imaging capabilities, who are able to understand the historical, local, regional and national

contexts from which the research originates. For this reason, environmental and social scientists need to be brought into contact with individuals in the arts (Sadler and Carlson 2). By bringing the discipline of cultural geography into contact with the performing arts and by combining the theories, skills and techniques of researchers in both disciplines, my interdisciplinary research assists in advancing the broader field of landscape research.

Methodologies

Since the field's relatively recent inception, methodologies associated with landscape research have generated ongoing and intensive debate. Early researchers found few existing frameworks to guide them in an assessment of the landscape experience. Researchers coming from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds generated often speculative, non theoretical, and narrowly focused that were either tied loosely or not at all to theories and methodologies drawn from philosophy, psychology, geography, geology, art history, socio-biology, landscape design and other areas. The result of this range has been a divide in the way landscape has been researched and studied: on the one hand, is a reductionist, quantitative-objective perspective generally adopted by scientists and geographers, and on the other, is a qualitative, interpretist perspective generally used by humanists and artists (Dearden and Sadler 6-7). My thesis adopts the latter, interpretist perspective and

brings together theories of cultural geography, aesthetics, art history, musicology, and theatre and dance studies in order to more fully understand landscape experience.

Since my research focuses specifically on three individuals' experiences with the landscape and the influence it has had on their art, the majority of my research consisted of informal interviews and conversations with the three artists. Additional background material was gathered from theatre and music archives, libraries, and the personal collections of the artists. Following an extensive literature review that began in January 2002 (and will continue long after this thesis has been bound and shelved), I began my research with a trip to Western Canada during the summer of 2002. During this time I spent numerous hours in the University of Calgary Archives and Calgary Public Library searching through clippings and microfilmed newspapers for previews, reviews and articles about Davida Monk, whose career for the last decade has been based in Calgary and its surrounding areas. Following several telephone conversations and email correspondence with the dancer and choreographer, I traveled to Banff, Alberta in June of 2002 to meet with her at the Banff Centre for the Arts.

Although Monk has been involved in the Canadian dance scene for over twenty-three years, very little has been written about her outside of favorable reviews of her dance and choreographic talent. Because only limited material is available on Monk, much of the research in the second chapter of this thesis was collected by studying numerous taped dance performances, archival photographs of previous works, written accounts by Monk of her experiences in the landscape (obtained from her personal collection) and my direct conversations and written correspondence with Monk. Both profoundly insightful and intimately passionate about her experiences with the prairie landscapes of Alberta and Saskatchewan, Monk provided detailed and lyrical accounts which mirrored the Romantics' experience of landscape and inspired my own writing in this area, as reflected in this thesis.

Following my return to Toronto, Ontario, I spent the next few months researching Paul Thompson and R. Murray Schafer. In the Performing Arts Archives at Toronto Reference Library, I was able to examine newspaper clippings, microfilmed reviews and articles dating back to the beginning of both artists' careers and continuing until the mid-nineties. My research on Thompson took me to Archival and Special Collections at the McLaughlin Library of The University of Guelph whose extensive and comprehensive files on Theatre Passe Muraille and Thompson proved invaluable. The Canadian Music Centre gave me access to dozens of recorded radio

appearances and guest lectures by Schafer, and allowed me to borrow numerous musical scores, articles and clipping files. Thompson and Schafer proved difficult to track down for personal interviews, but thanks to contacts at Alberta Playwrights Network and Blyth Festival, I was able to contact Thompson and meet with him in February 2003. I brought my own background in theatre (I hold an undergraduate degree in theatre) to my meeting with Thompson; we spent hours talking about his work as well as the current state and future of theatre in this country. Thompson's reflections about the landscape were less lyrical than Monk's. Whereas Monk focused on her personal experiences with landscape and used emotional, art-based language, Thompson articulated a desire to document the rural Canadian lifestyle and to bring real examples of regional cultural and local landscapes to the stage.

Just days after my Thompson interview, Schafer was scheduled to give a talk in the Faculty of Music at York University. I secured permission to attend and tape his lecture and I also was able to meet with him briefly afterwards for an interview. Schafer's landscape references closely mirrored Monk's when he spoke poetically about the influence that living in the "wilderness" has had on his work and the importance of the environment on his musical compositions. Similar to Thompson and unlike Monk, Schafer did not engage in philosophical discussion; however, he did discuss the political and social consciousness that is prominent in his work.

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Monk, Schafer and Thompson all see landscape as something that is embodied, subjective and continually evolving along with their work. For these artists, landscape is not an external structure or force but rather an internal one that prompts personal feeling and emotion. The interviews with Davida Monk, Paul Thompson and R. Murray Schafer were invaluable to my research and I thank all three artists for taking the time to reflect on their experiences and critically examine the role of landscape in the creation of their work.

Chapter Outline

In the following chapters, my discussion of landscape's role in the performing arts in Canada, particularly in the work of artists R. Murray Schafer, Davida Monk and Paul Thompson, unfolds. I focus specifically on the work of three performing artists; however, across the country, other artists are building a rich tapestry that reflects the Canadian people's diverse experiences of their culture and environment. They are documenting the landscape, recording it on canvas, paper and stage, in film and buildings and imprinting it on the ears, eyes and minds of Canadians. In *Chapter One: The Relation of the Arts and Landscape*, I place Monk, Thompson and Schafer within a larger tradition of Canadian landscape art. This chapter traces the development of landscape's relation to the arts and attempts to find common ground among practitioners from a variety of disciplines concerned with the

landscape idea. It provides an overview of the historical context for my research and introduces the theories that are used in subsequent chapters. *Chapter Two: Moving the Land: Experiences of the Prairies in the Choreography of Davida Monk*, studies the emotional bonds between people and the symbolic values of environment and place in landscape dance. The chapter also touches on theories of intimate experience as they relate to creating a sense of place. *Chapter Three: Collectively Experiencing the Land: Paul Thompson and Theatre Passe Muraille*, examines Thompson's exploration of rural Canada through his collective creation method of directing and the regional Canadian focus of Theatre Passe Muraille. Drawing heavily upon documentary theatre studies, this chapter further develops regional landscape research about how communal experience relates to the rural environment. *Chapter Four: Wilderness Sounds: From Landscape to Soundscape in the Compositions of R. Murray Schafer*, discusses Schafer's landscape compositions and the contribution they make to the image of Canada as a northern region of wilderness, lakes and isolation. This section examines the environment as mediated through human experience and touches on personal, mythical, social and political ideas relating to landscape.

The work of Monk, Thompson and Schafer provides insight into the human experience of the landscapes of Canada and provides integrated perspectives on the relationship between humans, art and the natural environment. Throughout this

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thesis, it is my contention that landscape plays a central role in the performing arts in Canada and that the performing arts potentially can play a crucial role in the development of landscape research.

Chapter One:

The Relation of Landscape and the Arts

The purpose of this first chapter is to locate my research within a history of ideas about landscape and to frame the critical methodology I use in chapters two, three and four to analyze the works of Paul Thompson, Davida Monk and R. Murray Schafer.

Historical Significance

The first part of this chapter looks at the historical period that shaped the landscape-based work of these artists. Of particular relevance during this period are the arguments made in the spheres of politics, literary studies and geography that draw attention to the landscape and its various meanings. For instance, the late 1970s marked the beginnings of a national environmental movement in Canada that spanned the public, private and political arenas and brought landscape into public discourse. Margaret Atwood's Survival, published in 1972, argued for a renewed attention to nature and the environment within Canada's cultural sphere. Atwood returns to the observations made by Northrop Frye in his Conclusion to the literary History of Canada (1965) and attempts to develop a particular way of interpreting culture that is based on assumptions about Canadian's relationship to the landscape.

Atwood drew scholarly attention to landscape as a preoccupation in Canadian poetry, and fiction and set the stage for further landscape research in the arts. Also in 1972, the creation in North America and Europe of a sub-discipline in cultural geography known as landscape aesthetics encouraged cross-disciplinary research into the aesthetic qualities of place, space and landscape. This new emphasis brought cultural geographers closer to the fields of philosophy, humanities and art and integrated perspectives on the aesthetic relationship between humans and the landscape. Thompson, Monk and Schafer's work emerges at a time of intense interest in landscape issues. However, what makes these artists stand out as landscape researchers is their ability to detail the experience of humans in the physical environment through performing art techniques.

Characteristics of the Performing Arts

In this next section, I will briefly identify some characteristics that set the performing arts apart from other aesthetic forms. While many art forms privilege space, such as painting, sculpture and architecture, others privilege time, such as fiction, poetry and recorded music. The performing arts are in the unique position of privileging both time and space, able to stimulate multiple senses simultaneously. Performance is a spatial art requiring a location suitable for movement, set, props and costume,

but is also dependant on time and duration. The performing arts are highly social activities, both in production, requiring the collaboration of many individuals, and in reception, being experienced by groups of people rather than individuals. While a performance may be archived by video or audio recording, it is nevertheless ephemeral. The nature of performance allows it to be created as people are watching. Each performance is an original, and, as a result, the only true place a performance can be preserved is in the mind of the performers and the audience. Recordings are excellent research tools, but they lack the spatial and social dimensions of the original performance.

The central experience of the performing arts is the interaction between the performers and the audience. The audience is just as important to a successful performance as are the dancers, actors, musicians or technicians. Performing artists often speak about the “energy” that transfers to them from a responsive audience that is then used to increase the actors’ performances which then energizes the audience even further, continuing in a repetitive circle. Schafer and Thompson extend the audience / performer relationship so the audience is not merely a passive participant. For Schafer, audience members become essential to the performance, often acting as “performers” themselves, while Thompson mirrors the actual lives of audience members in his performances.

For both the audience and the artists, the performing arts are about taking risks. While the other arts might involve some risks, such as controversial content or negative reception, live performance relies heavily on chance. No matter how rehearsed a piece might be, due to a large number of variables, the performing arts are never completely controllable. Live performances do not have a second take. They can not be painted over, started again, or manipulated in post-production. They are unpredictable, just as life and nature are unpredictable. Thompson, Schafer and Monk situate many of their performances in the natural environment rather than in a theatre or concert hall. The unpredictability of nature adds another variable closely connecting their work to the landscape. For example, a large number of Schafer's performances take place out of doors, some at the edge of a remote wilderness lake and others in the middle of a forest. Due to the costs associated with travel and set-up, his shows are often one-time-only performances that must be performed in any weather condition. Extreme heat, rain, wind and snow have all been a part of his performances, shaping each one and making each unique. A piece that incorporates the sounds of wind, a passing train or loons on a lake could never be replicated exactly and it is this unpredictability and being able to incorporate any environmental element into the performance that brings the performers and audience close to the landscape.

Although their landscape work is region specific – Thompson in Saskatchewan and Ontario, Monk in the prairies, specifically southern Alberta and southwestern Saskatchewan, and Schafer in northern Ontario – they all produce experiential work. In other words, from Thompson's involvement in a rural farming community and Monk's first look at the Saskatchewan prairie to Schafer's relocation from Vancouver to a wilderness lake in Ontario, all three artists document their experiences of the landscape. Monk, Thompson and Schafer reveal intimate details and emotions about their landscape experiences and use their experiences to create a connection between themselves, their audiences and the performers. These artists examine the minute details of the land. They spend time with the people in the community, talking to them and observing how they relate to the landscape. The community, which will later become the audience, is a part of the process of production and performance. The landscape surrounding the community is not represented as particular structures, landmarks or icons. Rather, the representations of the landscape emerge out of the performance as a series of images and emotions that evoke human experiences with the land.

The subsequent chapters of this thesis explore specific examples from Thompson,

Monk and Schafer's body of work to explore the way performances convey ideas of region and homeland, feeling and emotion, sense of place and community in relation to landscape experience.

Landscape in the Arts in Canada

Prior to examining the landscape art being produced in Canada since the 1970s, it is important to undertake a historical look at the role landscape has played in the arts in Canada. I have focused this examination on the visual arts because they are the most prominent art form of landscape representation to date, and they have received the most scholarly and historical attention. Although this thesis does not directly relate to the Canadian Art Movement initiated by the Group of Seven painters, I find it impossible to undertake research into the use of landscape in the arts in Canada without first discussing the impact the Group has had on the Canadian arts scene. The work of the Group of Seven has impacted indirectly all subsequent landscape based work in this country, including that of Thompson, Monk and Schafer, influencing how Canadians see and view the landscapes of their country, and encouraging artists to look towards their own surroundings for inspiration.

Northrop Frye has concluded that “everywhere we turn in Canadian literature and painting, we are haunted by the natural world. Even the most sophisticated Canadian artist can hardly keep something very primitive and archaic out of our imagination” (Frye 1977). Although Frye is speaking specifically about “The Canadian Art Movement” and Canadian literature, the incorporation of environmental images into art dates as far back as the earliest indigenous artworks in this country. The northern indigenous carvings on bone and rock, west-coast wood carvings, the birch-bark scrolls and masks of the eastern woodlands, and the “pictography throughout several regions all demonstrate aesthetic as well as worldly and spiritual concerns” (Osborne 163). Both subject matter and the media of bark, wood and rock all address the primary concern of the human place within the natural world.

Colonial settlement in Canada brought new views of the natural world that reflected European values, ideas and tastes. The physical landscape of Canada, as depicted by indigenous artists, was deemed unfit subject matter by the newly settled painters; the hinterlands were considered “too ugly as a medium of expression for a painter unless disguised to look like Europe or England. Canadian artists and the Canadian public preferred the softer, mistier and tamer landscape of the old world” (Housser 11-12). The “disorderliness of the wilderness” was replaced in Picturesque paintings

“by the cultivated and geometric order of the domesticated world” (Osborne 164).

Bright spring gardens, green summer fields and colorful autumn homesteads appeared as prominent subject matter and “untouched nature” — the forbidding forests, the dry cracking soil, even the Canadian winter — was noticeably absent from the paintings. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century arrival in Canada of Paul Kane and Cornelius Krieghoff that the “rougher” elements of the Canadian landscape would be explored. Reflecting some of the European Romantic techniques, such as the focus on the “real” environment and on human experience in the landscape, Kane and Krieghoff were among the first artists to represent the environment as they saw and experienced it (McInnes 43). Although their work was not fully appreciated until the early twentieth century, Kane and Krieghoff set the stage for Canadian landscapes to be seen as subject matter worthy of artistic expression.

At the dawn of the new century, the influence of the French Impressionists would force the Canadian painter to look towards his own landscapes for inspiration. The freer techniques and broader vision characteristic of the Impressionists resulted in painters abandoning the artificial environment previously created and seeking out “lessons that nature herself had to teach out-of-doors” (Colgate 38). “It is inevitable,” observed art scholar Charles W. Jefferys in one of his talks on Canadian

art, "that a country with such strongly marked physical characteristics as Canada possesses should impress itself forcefully upon our artists" (Colgate 42). The flatness of the prairies, the mountains, vast oceans and wilderness lakes and bush, all of which were so fascinating to Kane and Krieghoff fifty years earlier, were suddenly the subject matter of choice in the early twentieth century (Colgate 76-78).

This new Canadian art movement was nurtured by a group of young commercial artists employed at Grip Limited in Toronto. The group, consisting of Tom Thomson, J. E. H. MacDonald, Arthur Lismer, Lawren Harris, Frank Carmichael, Frank Johnston, Fred Horsman Varley, along with a few others, would take weekend and holiday sketching trips to Northern Ontario in order to capture the "rough" country of rivers, waterfalls, lakes, canyons and cliffs. In 1928, scholar F. B. Housser claimed that the Canadian landscape had a particular magnetism for these young painters:

Once its air has filled your lungs and its spaciousness entered you, it calls you back. At night the stars look larger than elsewhere. In the daytime the sun is brighter. In autumn the color is more vivid. In winter the snow is whiter. It is a dramatic land, sometimes stern, sometimes friendly. It lures you to learn what lies around the next bend of the river, over the ragged outline of a hill or spruce, or on the other end of a portage. (Housser 26)

In 1913, A. Y. Jackson formally joined the group and in 1920, the artists held their

first joint exhibition and formally called themselves the Group of Seven. While Tom Thompson was never officially a member of the group (he died in Algonquin Park two years prior to the Group's first exhibition), he became an honorary member and was instrumental in the formation of the Group. The Group of Seven argued forcefully against the previous pastoral and cultivated painting style in this country, claiming it was too refined and sedate to reflect the rugged nature of the Canadian landscape. Issues surrounding national identity were being hotly debated during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and the Group's nationalist ideals exactly suited a young Canada. Following Confederation, nationalism was in full swing and was enhanced by the dream of a coast-to-coast railway, the Sault Ste Marie locks and World War I (Osborne 164-166).

By the mid-1920s, the Group's members had begun to travel across Canada, painting en route. Jackson visited Quebec while Harris and MacDonald traveled to the Maritimes. In 1927, Jackson became the first Group member to visit and paint the Arctic. During this time, other members made the first of many trips to Western Canada. Since the members spread across the country, they met formally only once or twice a year to plan group exhibitions. After a final exhibition in December 1931, and MacDonald's death the following year, the group disbanded and merged themselves into a more broadly based group of artists called the Canadian Group of

Painters. While the new Group did some landscape work, they also were concerned with many different forms of art, including figure and abstract painting (McInnis 84-89).

Following the disbandment of the Group of Seven, Canadian art has failed to see any single “national” style of art emerge. During the late 1940s through to the 1960s, the trend was to steer away from the dominant landscape tradition of the Group of Seven and depart from the nineteenth century Romantic ideals of the Sublime and the Picturesque. A move towards surrealism and abstraction encouraged freedom of expression in artists such as Gordon Smith, Jack Shadbolt and later Toni Onley who painted abstract images of the physical environment. During the early 1970s, the focus of several artists shifted to the ideas embedded in a work of art; the process of making art became as important as what was represented in the art work itself (“Modern and Contemporary Art”). Landscape became a more broadly defined term, encompassing a wide range of traditions and genres, suggesting both subject matter and concept. In the past two decades, artists such as Tomas Jonsson, Sara Graham, Kelly Bushell and Edward Burtynsky have looked at landscape as a conceptual domain by exploring the ways in which landscape is imagined, positioned and understood. These contemporary artists expand their view of landscape beyond the natural environment and see it as both rural and urban and a

vehicle for political, cultural, social, historical and critical discussions (“Elsewhere”).

Landscape’s role in the arts in Canada has been politically, socially and culturally fundamental to the development of a Canadian national identity. Landscape is not a neutral or objective term; it is a historically-contingent term, constructed in part by the artists of this country.

A Historical Development of Landscape Research

The final section of this chapter outlines the historical development of the role of art within landscape research, particularly in the areas of geography, cultural geography and landscape aesthetics. It is my intent in this section to provide an introduction to some of the key scholars and their theories that have emerged in geography and aesthetics to influence the field of landscape research. I do not intend here to engage in theoretical or methodological debate; rather, I intend to shed light on certain ways of thinking about landscape that contribute to a deeper understanding of the use of landscape by Monk, Thompson and Schafer from the 1970s through to the late 1990s. These artists explore the human experience in the landscape, often addressing the same issues that concern cultural geographers. By tracing the development of landscape research from its inception as a scientific undertaking through to its recent focus on human landscape experience, I am able to

historically situate their work and make a case to consider these artists as landscape researchers.

Historically, the study of landscape has brought into view tensions between the centre and the periphery, the rural and the urban, the natural and the constructed, the local and the cosmopolitan, the regional and the national. Some scholars are interested in the explanation, presentation or representation of landscape itself; others explore the way we look at or interpret landscape. For some, landscape is most meaningful when it is perceived through a medium of art such as painting or sculpture; for others, it is essential to experience landscape directly. For geographers such as Carl Sauer, landscape is an important subject for scientific study; for painters such as Lawren Harris, or art historians such as Kenneth Clark, landscape is a term that belongs solely to the arts. This debate over the “ownership” of the term can, in part, be traced back to the seventeenth century and the formation of the Royal Society in 1660, when a formal distinction was made between the arts and sciences. Although this dichotomy was argued to be false right from the beginning, it was quickly adopted by some members of the scientific community. Today, this dichotomy is still accepted by many scientists, but over the years some scholars have acknowledged the importance of art, specifically the study of landscape, to the field of geography.

During the scientific expeditions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, European artists were included in explorations of the North American continent. They were considered critical to the task of scientific documentation; they sketched, painted and wrote poems about the foreign landscapes, sometimes the native inhabitants. As Barbara Novak has written, "the artist [on such expeditions] was explorer, scientist, educator, frontiersman, and minister" (137). During these voyages, the artist's work became an observation tool, an instrument for empirical expedition studies. One critic in 1859 went so far as to declare the landscape painter a geologist:

Continually meeting with different strata, the query naturally arises, why this diversity? He meets with immense fissures and volcanoes, and he asks himself whence did they originate and by what convulsions were they produced? To him, therefore, belongs the study of geology, as he more thoroughly than any other can imitate what nature has produced. ("Relation," 256)

By the mid-nineteenth century, the notion that artists have a special closeness to nature by virtue of their ability to recreate the physical environment was commonplace, and this idea coincided with art's movement towards more Romantic ideals. However, the established connection between artists and scientists did not prevent the early cultural geographers from dismissing the work of artists as important landscape research.

Emerging from the field of physical geography in the mid-twentieth century, early cultural geography sought to explore the fundamental relationship between humans and the natural environment. From the field's inception, scholars sought to establish universal scientific laws in order to explain the involvement of humans in the natural environment. These investigations initially were carried out according to a model of environmental determinism, based on the belief that the land "is a stable force. It never sleeps: this natural environment, this physical basis of history, is for all intents and purposes immutable in comparison with the other factor in the problem — shifting, plastic, progressive, retrogressive man" (Semple 19). This belief, that "man is the product of the earth," was rejected shortly after its inception, as was the notion of environmental determinism itself, because its hypotheses and conclusions failed to stand up to the rigours of scientific investigation.

Environmental determinism was quickly replaced with a form of regional examination, description and landscape classification (Cosgrove 1984, 261).

Geographer Carl Sauer, who led this new regional approach, believed that environmental determinism got it backwards; it was not nature that caused culture, but rather culture, working together with and affecting nature, that created society. Examining or reading the landscape provided the geographer with a window on individual regions and cultures within a particular nation (Sauer 1968).

Sauer was the first scholar and scientist to make the distinction between the natural landscape and the cultural landscape. In his view, the natural landscape existed as fully natural only before human activity was introduced to a particular area. Any natural scene begins with a set of factors – environmental, climatic, vegetative – that comprise the morphology, the shape and structure of the natural landscape itself. Sauer suggested that the real task for the geographer was to see how this natural landscape was both the stage for and the prime ingredient in human geographic activity (Sauer 1963, 333 – 41). He explains:

The natural landscape is being subject to transformation at the hands of man, the last and for us [geographers] the most important morphological factor. By his culture he makes use of the natural forms, in many cases alters them, in some destroys them The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape the result The natural landscape is of course of fundamental importance, for it supplies the materials out of which the cultural landscape is formed. The shaping force, however, lies in culture itself. (Sauer 1963, 341)

Although Carl Sauer's theories on cultural geography are generally accepted as the earliest in the field, in fact similar arguments were offered in 1947, in J.K. Wright's essay "Terrae Incognitae: The Place of Imagination in Geography." Wright argues that it is not so much what an individual perceives but how the individual feels about how he perceives that is crucial to understanding human behaviours (Porteous 8). Following this publication, many other theorists adopted a cultural

approach to geography. Lownthal (1961), Tuan (1974), Buttimer and Seamon (1980), and Appleton (1986), for example, examined the relationship between humans and the landscape.

By 1972, the field of cultural geography was well established as an independent discipline with its own sub-discipline of landscape aesthetics which acknowledged art as a legitimate site of study for geographers. These changes in thought can be traced back to a number of moments, the most dramatic of which came in 1972 when a “small group of distinguished scholars met to consider the specific problem of ‘Visual Blight in America’ and issued a call for action on the broader front” (Sadler and Carlson iv). This call for expanded research resulted in an increase in cross-disciplinary study of the aesthetics of place, space and landscape, a new emphasis which has brought cultural geographers closer to the fields of philosophy, humanities and art. The result has been a broader geographic enquiry, a renewed interest in human experience and emotion, and integrated perspectives on the aesthetic relationship between humans and the natural environment (Sadler and Carlson iv).

A major focus of landscape aesthetic scholars is the human experience of landscape and how art is able to represent that experience. Like many researchers in this area,

Yi-Fu Tuan crossed over from other fields of geographic thought to concentrate on the new discipline of landscape aesthetics. At the heart of his 1977 book, Space and Place, is the question, “what is the nature of experience and of the experiential perspective?” (Tuan 7). Directing his attention towards experiences in landscape and the problem of effectively communicating them to others, Tuan argued that art was an appropriate means of communicating landscape research because artists are able to supplement language by depicting areas of experience that words might be unable to describe. Art turns feeling, emotion and experience into images, making more accessible to the larger public and, importantly, more tangible to scholars and researchers (Tuan 148; Howard 1-2). John Jakle’s 1987 book, The Visual Elements of the Landscape, also addresses the necessity of communication between humans and landscape, but suggests that landscapes communicate visually to individuals. He seeks to amplify the functional interpretation of the cultural landscape with a clear visual and aesthetic dimension. Jakle relates the key notions of place and space to the act of viewing the environment. He suggests that place and space are affected by images created by an individual’s personal experiences in landscape. The interpretation of landscape is the result not only of the reality of the physical environment, but also of the images derived as repositories of place meaning, formed and interpreted in the mind (Jakle 4). Jay Appleton concurs with this emphasis on the subjective experience of landscape. Focusing on how landscape

affects the individual, Appleton suggests that behaviour is influenced by a person's attitude toward the environment; what matters is not so much by what the environment actually is, but by what an individual thinks about the environment (53). Appleton's 1986 book, The Experience of Landscape, attempts to understand landscape in terms of the ways people look at it, what they see in it, how they present that perception to others and how the components of landscape combine to stimulate emotional responses (54).

Overall, then, it is possible to trace an evolution in the concept of landscape, in the cultural practices used to represent it, and the theoretical methodologies used to analyse it. Over the last hundred or more years, what began as a colonial urge to conquer, tame, transform or beautify the landscape — to make the wilderness into a garden — evolved into an interest in the objective features of landscape and an attendant desire to accurately represent those features. Current research understands that landscapes are at once natural and cultural, objective and subjective. Once it is understood that landscapes *signify*, that is, that they are meaningful for cultures and individuals, the theoretical doors open to a wide range of research methodologies, including sociological, cognitive, psychological, symbolic, and aesthetic approaches to landscape.

In this chapter, I have offered a brief, schematic history of the ways in which ideas about landscape have been constructed and contested by geographers and artists. The discussion culminates with issues raised by cultural geographers Tuan, Jakle and Appleton, whose landscape research developed between the 1970s and the 1990s, when Monk, Thompson and Schafer undertook their landscape work. Tuan, Jakle and Appleton, Monk, Thompson and Schafer examine the experience of humans in the landscape and focus on issues of place and space, homeland, and the interpretation and meaning of landscape. Monk's choreography, Thompson's collective creation plays, and Schafer's musical and theatrical pieces contribute to the field of landscape research by exploring personal and collective experiences in the landscape through performance. The geographers look to theory, science and history to form their hypotheses about landscape. In contrast, Monk, Thompson and Schafer examine human feelings and emotion that arise from the experience of landscape, and they make a case for the use of intuition when analysing these experiences. Although feelings, emotion and intuition are not typically thought of as tools for research in the sciences and social sciences, since both Tuan and Appleton have suggested that since landscape experience stimulates emotional responses, it is only fitting that landscape research should account for those responses. I will now suggest that Monk, Thompson and Schafer undertake this type of research, that is, they seek to understand landscape by rational as well as intuitive

Chapter One: The Relation of Landscape and the Arts

means, to measure its affective powers as well as its concrete dimensions through their landscape performance works.

Chapter Two:
Moving the Land: Experiences of the Prairies in the Choreography of Davida Monk

"People are attracted to certain landscapes. The prairies are mine. I know that. It's empowering to know what feeds you." (Davida Monk)

Landscapes can be much more than a backdrop or "stage" for all of human activity; they can be profound centres of meanings that have been created out of humans' experiences within them. For choreographer Davida Monk, the Cypress Hills coulees of southwestern Saskatchewan and the foothills of Alberta are two such landscapes. Known primarily for "dancing outdoors," Monk goes beyond simply incorporating landscape into her choreography. Her artistic style and use of movement to express the folds of a Cypress Hills coulee, a set of antlers to represent the desire to transform, understand and be one with a deer, or a spiral gesture that brings a prairie dust storm to the stage, offer a kind of mapping out of her experience in the landscape.

I suggest that Monk's attempts to communicate her personal experience with the land through performance can be productively examined in relation in the context of the arguments made by cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan. Tuan argues that in order to have a full understanding of environmental place, geographers need to look to the

experiences of artists in the landscape. He suggests that artists are able to turn the feelings and emotions associated with landscape into images, making landscape more accessible to the larger public and more tangible to scholars and researchers (Tuan 148). Monk implicitly demonstrates the importance of feelings and emotion associated with landscape experience in her performances and in so doing, makes a significant contribution to landscape research. This chapter examines Monk's experiences in the prairie landscapes of Canada and the dance techniques she has used in communicating these experiences to audiences.

Landscape has played an important role in Monk's creative and personal life, inspiring her to leave Eastern Canada and, since 1988, to make the prairies her home. In an interview with Melanie Jones in December 2001, Monk explains, "people are attracted to certain landscapes. This is mine, I know that. It's empowering to know what feeds you" (Jones). Born near the dramatic seascapes of Victoria, British Columbia, Monk spent much of her early life in Ottawa, Ontario and began her dance career with Le Groupe de la Place Royale. Landscape first became a part of Monk's work during the summer of 1988, when she taught in Regina, Saskatchewan with New Dance Horizons. Her personal and artistic life was forever changed during a trip she made one weekend to the Cypress Hills in Southwestern Saskatchewan with New Dance Horizons' Artistic Director Robin

Poitras. It was August and, according to Monk,

a golden time of harvest, a winsome time of drifting hordes of flat-bottomed cumulus clouds, and of gathering crows We camped at Cypress Hills Provincial Park and I lay awake the whole night listening to wind singing in the pines. Sleep-deprived and drifting we left the park the next morning and emerged from under the weight of a sopping thunder storm to the open plains and their pyramid hills, to the blue sky and iconic clouds, to the quiet pebbly tarmac and its endless border of yellow flowers. (Monk, "Adventures" 1)

Here, Monk was reborn. The limitless space on the prairie made an immediate, visceral impact, and while she felt empowered by the space, Monk also experienced fear. Monk remembers feeling by the expansive landscape. She explains:

You stand against a wall or amongst a bunch of buildings and you feel you know where boundaries are, but when you are out on the prairies there are no boundaries and that makes me feel like a rodent running across the desert, very exposed. (Monk, Personal Interview)

Her experience on the prairies awakened her awareness of space. From deep within, she felt vulnerable, as if she were sticking out from the earth. She felt reassured, however, by a sense of limitless possibility that affected her physically, intellectually and emotionally. Monk felt as though she could fly or that she could walk forever. Since first experiencing the prairies, Monk has a recurring daydream of one day getting off a Greyhound bus in the middle of nowhere on one of her trips from Winnipeg to Regina or Edmonton. She walks down the steps of the bus, across a ditch, over a fence, and just keeps on walking. This fantasy provides her with great solace, a sense of leaving everything behind and going out into the wilderness with

nothing but her instincts. She also imagines herself so dry that she begins to flake and turns to dust. She loses her substance and turns into a corpse that has lost all of its flesh. Touch reduces her to powder, sending her back to the land from which she came. She has recurring desires to give herself up to the land and the sky and to lose herself in them.

One of the first things Monk noticed about the prairie was the light. On the prairie the light appears to come not only from the sun but from the entire sky. She describes this phenomenon:

You feel like you are in the light, not that the light is shining on you, but that you are surrounded by the light. The light comes up from the ground, it is being reflected off the ground back to you. The whole sky is reflecting the light, it is like being in a great ball of light. (Monk, Personal Interview)

Monk associates light with the divine and sees prairie light as having a spiritual connection; spirits are light, god is light. Light is a metaphor for love, energy, warmth, goodness and on the prairie light is no longer a metaphor but a transcription. Taking a metaphysical and spiritual approach to landscape, she suggests that landscape can be seen as “a combination of the light and the expanse of space, of limitless space, and the lack of human intrusion, a lack of human impact” (Monk, Personal Interview). Her comment that one can look forever on the prairie and not see a house, a car, a road or a fence for miles and her vision of

landscape — this combination of light and space in which the human element is marked by absence — connect with existentialist questions about being and nothingness. On the prairie, however, there is no anxiety; the prairie “nurtures you,” Monk says, “you become porous and the landscape enters you” (Monk, Personal Interview).

Landscape also prompts her to ponder questions of culture and nation. Her intense experience of the prairie landscape urged Monk to alter her sense of place. Although this was her first visit to the prairies, Monk had previously been exposed to similar landscapes while watching cowboy western movies as a child. Growing up in the urban environment of Ottawa, Ontario, Monk perceived of the western plains as foreign land, and was unaware that Canada contained so much open space. When Monk first went into the Cypress Hills she realized that “there were places you could be in Canada where you don’t see fences and where you see wild creatures all of the time” (Monk, Personal Interview).

As a dance artist, Monk’s response to this overly stimulating landscape was to dance it on its own terms, in its own environment. In a description of her first outdoors dance that is typical of the lyrical way she talks about landscape, Monk stresses emotion and feeling. The experience of beholding and moving through a landscape

prompts a visionary response, and intriguingly, in describing the way landscape “speaks” to her, Monk refers to how she suddenly is able to see landscape as an intelligible, spatial *language*:

We danced outdoors, walked out amongst the range horses, entered a realm of complete liberty of movement. I felt myself slipping – shocked, then seduced, losing myself to this place and full of apprehension. An instinctive fear of exposure prickled the back of my neck. Where were the signs? Where could I hide from danger? But instead of giving in to fear, I broke out into a strangely familiar vision of spatial freedom and divine light. I became a child again in this antelope vastness. I knew I was bound to return forever. I knew I could never die. I cracked open. And the land rushed in, touching, moving and leading me. My assumptions about the natural world simply crumbled before the prairie wilderness The abundant grasses and wildflowers whispered secrets detailed and subtle, delicate and strong. I responded to the sweep of the coulees folds with unaccountable tenderness and gratitude. Shape, form and line became an intelligible language to me. The sight of wild creatures, deer, antelope and coyote thrilled my spirit, their presence grounded my body. (Monk, “Adventures” 1)

Monk’s performance and her written account of it document her experience in the prairie landscape. By drawing attention to the embodied aspects or experience of landscape, Monk privileges feeling and emotion. Her pleasures are not those of conquest; she does not seek to control the landscape and, transform the wilderness into a garden. Rather, she is “tender” and “grateful,” “thrilled,” and “grounded.” Instead of speaking for the landscape, naming and claiming it, she listens to it. She thinks of landscape as a spatial and visual medium, and adapts an artistic vocabulary rooted in Romanticism. This is not the vocabulary of the cultural

geographers, but it is an appropriate vocabulary for landscape research that focuses on human experience.

Returning home to Ottawa after her first summer on the prairies proved to be difficult for Monk. She had discovered a relationship between herself and the prairie environment and wanted to explore it further. Unable, however, to remain on the prairies due to her dancing commitments, Monk decided to explore this relationship through dance. Upon returning to Le Groupe de la Place Royale, Monk created two group works titled On the Horizon (1989) and The Path of Curious Flight (1990), both touching on themes she had experienced in the West. Still based in Ottawa, Monk spent the next three years creating works on land-based themes, devouring western literature by Wallace Stegner, William Least Heat Moon and Cormac McCarthy, and returning to the Cypress Hills whenever she needed inspiration or additional subject material. During her visits to Saskatchewan, Monk lived in rural communities, adopting a rural lifestyle and talking to prairie artists about their experiences with the landscape. Monk embraced everything about prairie life – the people, the community, the land, the climate: “the embrace was mutual. I loved the prairie and the prairie loved me. I was taken and happy to be taken. It felt peaceful, like I was coming home” (Monk, “Adventures” 3). Monk’s attachment to the prairies as “home” suggests that homeland is rooted in experience and emotional ties to a

particular location. Soon Monk would call the prairies home, for in spring 1992, while she was at the Banff Artist's Colony creating a solo work titled Buffalo Girls, she made the important decision to relocate to Alberta.

Certain that artists have a unique ability to communicate feelings and emotion, Monk began exploring other people's experiences with landscape and relating them to her own experiences. She already was able to communicate her experiences effectively through dance, but she wondered how the literary arts, such as poetry and prose would respond to the prairie landscape. Monk found that many writers who took the land as their subject matter were able to express in words what she was trying to express through movement. Although Monk and the writers she read did not share the same experiences, they shared the feelings evoked by the open space of the prairie. According to Monk, Cormac McCarthy's novel Blood Meridian expressed ideas similar to her own about a certain rhythm that inhabited the landscape of the plains. Although not an easy idea to communicate effectively, it was one that Monk had experienced in Saskatchewan and was eager to explore on the stage. Titling her piece after McCarthy's work, Monk brought this rhythm to the stage using a metaphor established by McCarthy of a horse galloping through an open landscape. McCarthy's writing style employs repetitive rhythm: "he will write a page with no punctuation which gives the sense of continuity, of nothing ever

stopping of inevitability and of flow” (Monk, Personal Interview). McCarthy’s words and rhythms resonated with Monk’s view that space and time are affected by the wide open prairie: “we sense it differently and McCarthy has a great take on that” (Monk, Personal Interview). Rhythm and time play a role in experiential perspective, since every experience has its own time and space and this contributes to a feeling of belonging and a sense of place.

In 1996, Monk worked with a group of dancers from the University of Calgary to create Still Deer which documents the movement of deer in the open landscape. The costumes were flesh-like and transparent so as not to distract the audience from the movement of the dancers’ bodies on the stage. The dancers were uninhibited in their costumes just as in the landscape animals are uninhibited in their own skin. While in the Cypress Hills, Monk spent one morning watching a herd of grazing deer and was intrigued by their choreographed-like movements as they crossed a field. Hoping to capture the natural movement she had witnessed, Monk explored with her dancers the action of deer as they gather together and disperse, depending on the obstacle they faced. Through guided improvisations, Monk encouraged the dancers to recreate on stage the movement of the deer. Although the piece was performed successfully, Monk was frustrated by the dancers’ inability to mimic the deer movement so she next decided to create a piece that would address the

inability of a human dancer to transform into an animal in landscape. The title of this piece, What Their Goldenness Peers into Us, Let it Hover ... Let it Find Us ... Let it Come, was created using words from Tim Wilborn's poem Deer. In the work, the dancer is drawn to enter and explore the world of animals in the landscape but is unable to do so. A separation between the human and the natural world is suggested as the piece explores the double-edged poignancy of wanting the impossible: to transform from human to animal in the landscape. Monk seeks to experience landscape from the animal's perspective, beyond the trope that animals are closer to the land than humans. In doing so, she brings insight to the importance of perspective in experience. Experiences are always first-hand, and this poses a dilemma for their communicability. Just as humans cannot experience landscape the way animals do, is it impossible for one person to share another person's experience of landscape. Experience, in other words, is an embodied and situated form of knowing. Monk explores this paradox in her dance which

looks at the desire to transform, to understand the animal, to enter the animal, to be one with the animal and the flip side of that which is that it is impossible to do because you are a human being. As a dancer, I am not able to transform into a deer, but I can sure try. And I sure have the desire to do that, but I can never leave my intellect behind. (Monk, Personal Interview)

Monk's landscape based work has expanded beyond simply trying to recreate natural objects and experiences on stage. Recognizing that the prairie landscape

contains more than open space and animals, Monk recently has begun to explore other characteristics that create the prairie experience. Drawing directly on her experiences near her home in Carseland, Alberta, Monk undertook the task of communicating the vital importance of the train to the prairies, capturing the sights and sounds of a train moving across the flat prairie. Transcontinental Momentum focuses on the image of the train, as well as the experience of seeing, hearing and feeling a train pass by. Monk defines landscape as a natural environment that includes human-built objects. The train is not moving through a prairie landscape, it is part of the landscape:

When the trains pass by you feel so much like you have been left on the spot. You sense the vastness of the prairie when the trains go through it. First you see them from a long way off, diminished so much by the size of the sky. The train is so much a part of prairie culture. (Monk, Personal Interview)

The soundscape for this piece was created by composer Don Stein, who traveled to Carseland in order to record the trains that were going by, incorporating the sounds into the soundtrack for the dance. The sight and sound of the Carseland train is part of Monk's sense of place; since Transcontinental Momentum was based on her experience, the train sounds needed to be the same sounds she heard each day.

By 2000, Monk had created a number of works based on her experiences in the landscape, but she had yet to use landscape as her stage. The problem, of course,

with dancing outdoors is the absence of an audience, but this was overcome during the summer of 2000 when Monk created Coulee: A Landscape Dance Video, the final result of an interdisciplinary dance based research project sponsored by the University of Calgary. This thirteen-minute video features three dancers in a coulee southwest of Calgary, Alberta. Rehearsals began in the studio to build a movement vocabulary and draw each of the dancers into the creative vision. The onsite work involved “the building of new material from the spatial and sensual suggestion of eleven specific locations” in the coulee (Monk, *The Choreographic* 1). Dancing outdoors brought new obstacles not experienced in the studio or on the stage. In the bed of the coulee lay a haphazard dispersal of partially buried rocks covered in lichen which had to be navigated by the dancers. The sides of the coulee shaped the improvised movements as the dancers’ bodies compensated for the incline. As the dancers ascended the coulee sides, their movements were slow and difficult; when they descended, the movements consisted of giddy leaps and bounds (Monk, “Dancing Outdoors” 237). The dancers, usually accustomed to flat, springboard floors, were unfamiliar with the changes in movement that resulted from the uneven ground. Monk describes the importance of the body in experiencing landscape:

Simply walking the ground and heeding the irregularities of the surface with the pliability of the feet, ankle, knees and hips translates emanations through the spine. The more pliable and responsive the body, the more full the physical and related experiences, making for a continuous ride of subtlety and detail. The entire form of the body

negotiates the unevenness as it travels, like a surfer negotiating a wave. (Monk, "Dancing Outdoors" 235)

The natural curves and angles of the coulee became the "set design" while dancers, dressed in white, performed against the natural tones of earth and grass beneath a brilliant blue sky. The natural sounds of birds, insects and even the dancers' footsteps provided the soundtrack (Dance). Although the end result of Coulee was determined largely by technological aspects such as the camera angle and focus, the editing process, the choreography, the resulting performance expressed the collective experiences of all the dancers. The video has since been presented at a number of dance performances and seminars across the prairies.

Although Monk has incorporated landscape into her work for over 13 years, she still feels that her performances fall short of completion. In fact, she suggests that any work involving landscape lacks immediacy and is unfinished. Representing a landscape experience is problematic, she claims:

You put something on stage and you immediately take it out of its natural environment. And then how do you infer the natural environment without feeling kind of fake since what you are doing is pretending to create something? The most effective kind of dance is the kind that is actually about the moment. It doesn't belong anywhere else. It belongs exactly where you see it. It is not interpreting anything, but it is being what it is. (Monk, Personal Interview)

Despite the difficulties Monk identifies, the performing arts provide the closest thing

to the actual experience of landscape. Performing art allows for communication through physical, verbal, aural and musical means and through the elements of setting, props and costume design. A performance is able to change and adapt to the moment, to respond to the audience or the environment. Nevertheless, Monk has remained set in her view that landscape experience essentially is incommunicable. As a result, in her recent work she has begun to move away from direct landscape representation. She has spent enough time dancing outdoors for the experience to have become ingrained in her body, mind and aesthetic and she realizes that “no matter what direction I choose to go, there is going to be residue of the impact of the land on whatever I do” (Monk, Personal Interview).

Her current work, Lyric, is influenced by Lyric Philosophy, a literary piece by Jan Zwicky, a philosopher, musician and poet who currently teaches at the University of Victoria. Monk was able to find her way back to landscape through Zwicky’s writing by addressing certain connections between art, humans and nature, such as the link between human intuition and the human response to the natural world. For example, in the last scene of Monk’s Lyric, a dancer tells her personal story about her first visit to the Cypress Hills. The story developed during the rehearsal process without the dancer being aware of Monk’s own experience in the same prairie landscape. Ask Monk if this is a coincidence and she will respond, “there are no

coincidences when it comes to the landscape, only nature playing out its course” (Monk, Personal Interview). In the scene, as the dancer describes her experience, she balances rocks on various parts of her body. As she tells part of the story, she removes one rock and places another in a different location. Monk suggests that the rock is telling the story through the dancer, that without the rock the dancer would not be able to verbalize the story and without the rock she would not have had the experience she is describing.

Lyric is choreographed for two dancers, one representing intuition and emotion, the other representing the rational and controlled aspect of human behaviour. The piece explores the relationship between humans and the natural environment, seeing it as intuitive rather than constructed by an external force. Monk makes the case for using intuition when researching the landscape experience:

We connect to the landscape intuitively. It is the sense that when we walk along the trees we can almost hear them speaking to us. If we look at a rock, if we open ourselves up to the rock, there is something in the shape and the form of the rock that suggests something to us. This calls up our intuitive response. This is a gift from the natural world to us as human beings because it is our home (Monk, Personal Interview).

By arguing that humans are intuitively connected to the land, Monk posits intuition as one of the epistemological foundations for looking at landscape. She implies, moreover, that to omit intuition from landscape research is to deny an essential

element of the experience of the body in the landscape. Monk's work suggests that the human experience of landscape is embodied. She reaches an audience through movements of the body. She wants her audience to have a visceral experience so that when she jumps, they feel it, when she lands, they feel it, when she gestures, they feel their own hands gesturing. This is body-to-body sympathy as the audience experiences the dance along with Monk.

Monk uses spatial and embodied art to construct knowledge about lived space and experience. The dance environment always is spatial and the nature of that space determines the way the dancer moves. If dancers are confined to a small studio space with four walls and a low ceiling, their movements might be tight and constricted. If they are performing out of doors in the open prairie, as Monk's dancers have in the past, the corresponding movements might be broad and sweeping to cover a lot of ground.

Monk expands the notion of space as "the energetic canvas for motion." As she explains, "There is no dance without space" (Monk, "Dancing Outdoors" 232).

Monk's performances display her experiences of a particular space — the prairies. More important, however, is how she has created a sense of place out of this space. Tuan defines place as a pause in one's movement in space, which makes it possible

for a particular locality to become the centre of a felt value or belonging (136-144). By adapting a Romantic perspective on her locality, she idealizes the landscape itself and the relationship between the landscape and the individual, but she does so without adopting a “prospect” view. Monk experiences landscape by looking out, not down, at her surroundings. In her response to landscape, she does not claim a position of power. Emotion and intuition are important to her multi-sensory approach that uses all the senses as well as the active and reflective mind. It is this “total” experience that causes a place to become a reality (Tuan 18).

Monk has become known for her ability to communicate her intimate experiences with the physical environment to audiences across the country. Through her choreography which documents the prairie landscape, Monk provides detailed studies of the nature of human experience in the landscape and of the experiential perspective. According to geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, experience is how an individual knows and constructs a reality and it is affected by emotion and feeling about a particular place. Intimate or personal experiences — with people, objects or landscape — are difficult to explain, for words are often elusive and pictures or diagrams do not adequately express emotions (Tuan 147). Monk has at her disposal a supplemental method of expression. As an artist, she overcomes the restrictions of language and other traditional methods of communication and creates images out of

her feelings, as well as those of her performers. In her focus on feelings, and her ability to turn feelings into tangible images and movements for the stage, Monk goes further than cultural geographers in researching human landscape experience. She suggests a way of thinking about landscape as a subjective and embodied spatial form and analyses her experience from metaphysical and spiritual perspective

Chapter Three:

Collectively Experiencing the Land: Paul Thompson and Theatre Passe Muraille

The popularity of documentary and regionalist theatre in Canada since the early 1970s is linked inextricably to the rise of the alternative theatre movement, including the rurally-based collective creations made possible by Paul Thompson and his ensemble of co-creators at Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille. It is commonly argued that Canada has "an inherent cultural predisposition to the documentary as an artistic mode" which is "generally ascribed to the determining influences of the ... environment" (Filewod 30). These ideas first were suggested by Dorothy Livesay in her influential essay "The Documentary Poem: A Canadian Genre." Livesay suggests that documentary is as old as Canadian literature, but she emphasizes that the historical documentary trend in Canada originated with John Grierson of the National Film Board and his notion of the "creative treatment of actuality" (Livesay 267).

More than any other individual, Paul Thompson has contributed to the development of documentary theatre in Canada. In an interview in 1973, Thompson commented on the relationship between his work and that of other documentary forms:

In The Farm Show and Under Greywacke we went out into a community and tried to bring back a kind of living community portrait or photograph, filled with things that we observed and that they would like to say about themselves. I suppose that's based on all sorts of

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traditions of documentary that we have in this country, like the work of the CBC and the NFB. (Johns 1973, 30)

This chapter will examine Thompson's evocations of rural Canada through his documentary collective creation method of directing. Thompson's performances and techniques are central to this discussion of the development of regional landscape research and communal experience as it relates to the rural environment.

It was in August 1972, in an unused barn in the town of Clinton, Ontario, that landscape documentary theatre made its prominent Canadian debut. The play was The Farm Show, the director was Paul Thompson, and even today, thirty-one years after the first performance, it is considered one of the finest works in the Canadian theatrical canon. Thompson, a director and a collaborator, is one of the most influential figures in Canadian theatre. His trademark of bringing local and cultural landscapes to the stage has influenced the direction of prominent theatre companies across the country, including 25th Street Theatre in Saskatoon Saskatchewan, The Blyth Festival in Blyth, Ontario and, most significantly, Theatre Passe Muraille in Toronto, Ontario. In Thompson's decade as Artistic Director at Theatre Passe Muraille, he developed and refined the practice of collective creation. Collective creation requires actors to participate in original research, to expose themselves to new environments, experiences and people, and to transform their communal

experience into a performance text. This style of theatre has prompted the development of regional and local plays across the country, many of which draw their subject matter from the surrounding natural environment. In this chapter I will examine several of Thompson's plays that utilize the documentary collective creation technique to bring images of the rural landscape to the stage.

Founded in 1968 as an alternative to the traditional theatre experience then available in Canada, Theatre Passe Muraille sought to foster an intimate experience between audience and actor. Theatre Passe Muraille – “theatre beyond walls” – did not start out with a distinctively Canadian mandate, but when Paul Thompson took over the position of Artistic Director in 1971, he shifted the company's focus towards nationalistic values. This nationalism soon led to Passe Muraille's commitment to produce plays about the history, politics, social issues and daily life of Canadians in various communities. In an interview following the first production of The Farm Show in 1972, Thompson described the Canadian focus of Theatre Passe Muraille:

For a long time now, Canada has looked elsewhere for dramatic material. Our training was towards an international outlook. We studied other countries' material - England, the United States. But it can be exciting, [satisfying and much more immediate] to deal with what's around us. (Williams)

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Thompson was surrounded by the rural landscape of southern Ontario. Born in Prince Edward Island in 1940, at an early age he moved to the farming community of Listowel, Ontario where he spent the majority of his childhood years. After graduating from the local high school, Thompson relocated to London, Ontario in order to study French and theatre at the University of Western Ontario. After completing a Bachelor of Arts degree, Thompson moved to France in order to continue his theatrical work. His experience in France heightened his appreciation for his native country, fostered his sense of homeland and stimulated a desire to create theatre that would represent and celebrate the landscapes, communities and way of life in Canada (Hymers 4). Thompson suggests that an appreciation for home comes from being away for a period of time:

For a lot of people my age, it was necessary to go away in order to come home. You went away and saw all of these wonderful things that triggered the question, what has that got to do with me back where I live? There was a real temptation for me to stay in Europe where I didn't have much responsibility for the problems that existed, rather than come back and work here. But in the end ... my choice was to come back and try something here. (Wallace and Zimmerman 240)

Thompson articulates a sense of responsibility to his homeland, a desire to return to Canada and improve it somehow. Upon returning to his Canadian homeland, Thompson realized that few scripts were written by Canadians for Canadians. He began creating collective plays based on real experiences in Canadian communities and landscapes.

In his second season at Passe Muraille, Thompson's collective creation technique began to take shape. Raised in a rural community, Thompson understood the farming life. During a teaching stint at Brock University in 1972, he was inspired to explore this vital part of Canada's economic and social life from a theatrical point of view. With fellow instructor Ted Johns, Thompson conceived the idea of going into a rural community and developing a play based on farming. Johns had a relative who owned an empty farmhouse in Clinton, Ontario, near Listowel where Thompson had grown up. Familiar with the community and the landscape of the area, Thompson saw great potential for theatrical exploration in a rural community. His identification of farmers as a valuable source of landscape experience reveals the inaccuracies of cultural geographer Brian Goodey's 1986 thoughts on farmers. Goodey states that the "economics of agriculture have ... prised the farmer from his close relationship with the land. Personal experience has been replaced by meters and planting decisions imposed from monitored contracts" (94-95). Determined to examine the experiences of this farming community, Thompson assembled a group of actors and offered them \$35 dollars a week plus free accommodation at the farmhouse. The cast included Anne Anglin (Thompson's wife), Fiona MacDonell, Janet Amos, Miles Potter and David Fox. A sixth actor, Alan Jones quit the show after the first performance. Jones refused to comply with Thompson's requirement that the actors do research by

assisting on the farm. Jones, who had grown up on a farm and knew the effort it took to work the land, balked at Thompson's request. But Thompson held his ground; he believed the participatory method was necessary if Canadian content were to be presented in a truthful manner. After Jones left show, Thompson took over his role for the rest of the run; in the revival the following year, Ted Johns took over the part.

In early August, the official research began. Every day the actors were directed to meet and talk with the local residents, participate in the daily farm activities and spend time exploring the rural environment. Every night, the actors gathered to share ideas. The play was to develop from the ground up, literally out of the experiences and emotions of the actors during the research period. In the introduction to the published script, Thompson explains the research process and how the actors integrated themselves into the community:

The play was not written down; it was developed out of interviews, visits, and improvisations. Most of the words used were given to us by the community along with their stories. We spent a great deal of time trying to imitate these people both in the way they move and the way they speak. We wanted to capture the fibre of what they were and this seemed the best way to do it. In any case, it taught us to watch and listen. The actor had to do the research for the play not through dusty documentation but through personal relationships with the community to be portrayed. He had to make contact in that community, enter its life, earn its trust. (Thompson 1976, 9)

By relocating to farm show territory, the actors hoped to learn about a community and

its people but they soon were engulfed by the physical landscape. Thompson's wife, an actor in the show, has a vivid memory of an exercise that by the end of the run, had imposed itself on the cast. Thompson was moved to incorporate the hilly landscape around Clinton into the play. The exercise, conducted initially as an experiment in form, consisted of the actors lying down and "painting" the landscape with parts of their bodies. Onstage, the actors sought to physically represent the landscape through the use of their bodies and words and used the movements that had originated from the exercise.

Thompson's company developed its dramatic material by working through subjective and objective responses to the environment, by participating in farm labour, meeting local residents, and listening to their stories. Their project culminated on a hot Sunday afternoon in an unused barn on the Bird farm where over two hundred members of the rural community gathered to see themselves represented on stage. Instantly, the audience's attention was drawn to the stage which was laid out as a map of the farming district, complete with the names of local residents mentioned in the play. With only a barn-board backing and a few bails of hay, the performers succeeded with great accuracy in recreating this rural community. The actors conveyed the distinctiveness of Huron country and transformed themselves through detailed pantomime into tractors, water wheels, ducks, trees and hay bails ("Memories").

Although the dramatic form was unfamiliar to many audience members, many images in the play such as tractor models or combine parts were almost universally recognized by farmers. By bringing together farmers, their communities, and theatre, Thompson captured images of the rural environment for audiences across the country.

Robert Nunn discusses the innovative way the The Farm Show re-spatializes an experience of landscape and place:

The stage itself has a dual identity as a non-representational playing space. It is capable of being transformed into barns, fields, homes, the town square of Goderich, and so on. Yet through all these transformations it maintains its relation to fact, as a map. (Nunn 43)

The non-representational playing space was adapted to whatever environment was needed for the scene. The stage props had a “dual identity” as well. Props underwent multiple transformations. For example, crates were covered with white cloth to represent a winter landscape or a mailbox became a snowmobile. Throughout these transformations in which things refer to other things, the props remain what they actually are, authentic objects from rural Ontario.

That first audience responded positively to the locally-originating props in the show, pushing the actors to continue their work of depicting these rural places:

The farming audience ... was a very exciting audience ... it was open, it was direct, it recognized certain things very quickly; and therefore it really challenged the actor in terms of his performance — because he wanted to go higher, farther. (Wallace “Paul Thompson,” 63)

With understanding and compassion, the actors had captured the local community and surrounding landscape of rural Ontario. Following a successful run in rural Ontario, Thompson decided to take his rural images to the urbanites of Toronto. In the fall of 1972, The Farm Show opened at Theatre Passe Muraille where it was an instant hit. Reviewers praised Thompson and his cast for helping Torontonians “to know, understand and love a community of people beyond our sphere of familiarity” (Kareda). When images of farming move from the rural stage to the urban stage and back again, what is interesting to note is the way the setting of the performance transforms the reception of the play. Farming communities saw their own experiences represented on stage and could identify with the characters and their situations. Urban audiences also identified with the farming images, but not at the same experiential level. The performances invoked an “other” way of life that they may never experience.

In the spring of 1973, The Farm Show went on tour across south-western Ontario, filling barns, old halls and school gyms in rural communities not usually exposed to theatre. After almost one year of touring — and before going on in August 1973 to its

largest stage, Ottawa's National Arts Centre — the company was in need of renewed inspiration. The actors returned to the show's birthplace, and rehearsed again in Ray Bird's barn. Rejuvenated by the community and the rural environment, the company moved on to Ottawa for a two-week run of The Farm Show. Following a film version of The Farm Show, directed by Michael Ondaatje in 1974, the show moved West, bringing its images and stories to audiences in such diverse landscapes as the flat plains of Saskatchewan, the mountainous terrain of Vancouver and finally, on a five-week tour in 1979, to rural communities in England and Wales ("Farm Show Programme and promotional brochure").

While The Farm Show had an impact from coast to coast and from one continent to another, its greatest impact was felt closest to home. Inspired by the success of The Farm Show, Blyth, Ontario, a small rural town of one thousand people, soon became one of the most successful centres for new Canadian theatre. As a result of the efforts of Thompson and his company, since 1975, the Blyth Festival has been committed to developing new Canadian plays, especially those with a focus on the rural community.

Around 1975, Thomson undertook work on a play set in the West that eventually would become Buffalo Jump. Buffalo Jump, which began as a collective and later was

scripted by playwright Carole Bolt, focuses on mythologies of the prairies. John Boyle was commissioned to design the set — a series of watercolours which were blown up and painted over with pop art imagery. The images consisted of Wolf Carter, horses and trains in the prairie landscape. These landscape paintings brought the flat, open fields and hilly riverbanks to the stage. Thompson describes the landscape imagery in the paintings in terms similar to those Monk uses to describe Saskatchewan — all open sky and freedom:

Perhaps the big sky of the prairie opens a certain amount to dreaming. Prairie folk are people who are threatened by severe weather and climate conditions, and it takes someone who is driven within the depths of the cold winter to fantasize, dream and expand beyond their local circles. (Thompson, Personal Interview)

Thompson spent time out West and he found Saskatchewan an interesting mix of open prairie and strong people of various immigrant communities influenced by Methodism and the United Church. Like Monk, Thompson found the prairie mix of idealism and practicality a fertile ground for creativity and theatrical exploration. The open sky, severe weather, and seemingly endless fields of colour kept bringing Thompson back to the West.

Thompson's first show set in the West, The Doukhobors, was created in 1970.

Thompson and his ensemble travelled to Saskatchewan to work alongside case workers in Doukhobor communities. Landscape is important in the plot and as a

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setting. In one particularly compelling scene, a team of twenty women are hooked up to a plough and are pulling it across a field. Although Thompson did not attempt to recreate the landscape on stage, it was felt as a constant force since each scene was pictured across an open field.

Canadian Heroes Series #1: Gabriel Dumont was an experimental piece created in 1974, produced under the agency of Theatre Passe Muraille, mounted in a small social space at the back of a church located at the corner of Dundas and Sherbourne streets in Toronto. Set designer John Boyle was commissioned to paint ten images that were used for inspiration during rehearsal and later formed part of the set. Following the run, the paintings were sold, and are now regarded as significant works of art. Thompson himself purchased one of Boyle's paintings. It still hangs in the entry way to his home, despite comments made by Michael Greenwood of artscanada:

In every sense a landmark in Canadian painting, the Batoche Series should be acquired in its entirety by the national gallery and on no account be separated and dispersed as individual paintings. Apart from its theme, it is a unique and momentous achievement in rehabilitating a moribund tradition and as such alone should be kept intact. (Johns "Production Notes," 1)

In the same year, The Farm Show toured Saskatchewan, which suggested that the cast wanted to return West to develop another show. This show later would become The West Show.

In 1975, Thompson and his ensemble of actors, many of whom had worked on The Farm Show, travelled to Saskatchewan to conduct research for a new show. The eight member cast, consisting of Janet Amos, Anne Anglin, David Fox, Pauly Jardine, Ted Johns, Connie Kaldor, Eric Peterson and Miles Potter, piled into a pickup truck and spent weeks travelling through the western provinces, stopping in towns or wherever people agreed to chat. Following an exploration of the prairie landscape and visits to various communities, the cast settled in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan to begin the rehearsal period. Unlike The Farm Show, which concentrates on the fabric of community life, The West Show offers a social history of the prairies and treats landscape as continually evolving in response to the contingencies of place and history.

Thompson understood the West as a number of small communities connected but separated by the same land that prevents communication: “You would have a very strong Mennonite community right next to a Métis community, yet they could have been 1,000 kilometers apart and they could not have been farther removed from one another” (Thompson, Personal Interview). The performances of The West Show assisted in bridging these kinds of distances. By bringing these communities together in one place to contemplate the images of the landscape they shared, the Theatre Passe

Muraille affirmed existing connections among communities.

The reception to The West Show was positive, both in the West and in Toronto, although it did not have the universal appeal of The Farm Show. The western landscape felt foreign to an eastern audience which had trouble connecting with the material presented in The West Show. While audiences across Canada, both urban and rural, responded to images of the farming landscape in The Farm Show, the open and barren prairie landscape of The West Show appealed primarily to western audiences.

Although he never lived on the prairie, Thompson, like Monk found it a place of inspiration. He stresses the advantages of the open landscape for artistic exploration:

the prairies leave a lot of room for the imagination to fill in. It fosters original work well because there is so much space and openness which translates well into the creative process. Saskatchewan and Saskatoon specifically has a great capacity for mythologizing, for connecting all segments of society together. This is a very attractive quality of the West. (Thompson, Personal Interview)

Wanting to continue using the prairie landscape as inspiration, Thompson collaborated with prairie writer Rudy Wiebe to produce Far as the Eye Can See in Edmonton, Alberta. This play posed the question “What is the land about?” and considered how land is used by human beings. A hard-hitting script about the

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successful attempt of a group of Alberta farmers to stop a strip mining operation from destroying their farms, Far as the Eye Can See centres around the rapid urbanization crisis affecting rural Alberta communities. The play pits the farmer against the industrialist and traditional wheat growing against the need for energy. It dramatizes

a picture of two forces, two good forces colliding with each other; one is the need for resource development and the other is for people not to have their life and livelihood destroyed. (Wiebe 90)

In an effort to document the hopes and fears of audience members, Thompson and Wiebe visited power officials and individual farmers active in The Agricultural Protective Society, as well as the sites in question. After weeks of conversation, interviews and archival research, the eight-member cast produced a show that would present both sides of the issue. In April 1977, Far as the Eye Can See tried to “tell a story that’s being lived here right now ... people like to see themselves reflected, and that happens so rarely in drama staged in Alberta” (Wiebe 89). Thompson’s success with this show was the result of a collaborative process that evolved from the affective responses of communities to a difficult subject.

Thompson’s shows always make their way back to the rural landscape for inspiration, even when they start out as urban-based shows. Consider for example, 1837. Utilizing the same collective creation process that had proven successful with The Farm Show, and combining the creative talents of Thompson, writer Rick Salutin and a cast that

included Janet Amos, David Fox and Miles Potter, 1837 was undertaken to give theatrical expression to a key event in Toronto's history. The play recreates the armed uprising of 1837 in Upper Canada that was led by newspaper publisher William Lyon MacKenzie. The revolt aimed to topple the colonial government known as the Family Compact. Central to the play was the urban landscape of Toronto where it was rehearsed. But the work was slow and with only a week and a half before the scheduled opening, Salutin feared there would be no play. Salutin outlines his distress over the collective process:

Awful. Just awful. I can't say how bad. There is nothing there. And [the actors] will not work, will not give. The Family Compact is a horror; we haven't dared touch it in five days ... We are at a dead halt – no, we are hurtling backwards. There is no giving, no expansiveness – and no script to fall back on!

Christ, I said to Paul, is it this way every time?

I don't know, he sighed. I can't remember. I guess so. (Salutin 44-45)

Thompson's recollection was not entirely accurate; the collective creation method had only ever been used by Thompson on rural landscape based shows. 1837 did open on schedule but it survived only a brief run in Toronto. After its closing night, Thompson reflected on the process of creation. What had gone wrong this time? The answer was in the lack of expansiveness that Salutin had recognized. Plays like The Farm Show had been created in an open, rural landscape, rich in inspiration. In the rural landscape, actors were able to participate in a community and build a script based, in part, on first hand experience. The cast could create and rehearse the scenes outdoors

or in large, open spaces such as abandoned barns and sheds, which contrasted the cramped rehearsal space of Toronto.

Shortly after this discovery, Thompson and his troupe relocated to Ray Bird's farmhouse in order to rework 1837 as a rural collective. Additional research conducted in the farming community revealed an interesting phenomenon. Although traditionally conservative and timid in their politics, farmers had formed the backbone of the rebellion of 1837. Pursuing this new direction for the play and allowing the surrounding environment to influence and inspire their work, the ensemble focused on the individual motivations of members of the rural revolutionary movement. The second version of the play, titled 1837: The Farmer's Revolt, celebrated the farmers who had marched in the battle — loyal to William Lyon MacKenzie — to defend their beliefs. The play was favourably received during its south-western Ontario tour (Hymers 18).

Although the play centred around historical events, landscape was an important element of the show and helped establish the rural location. Paul Williams, set designer for 1837: The Farmer's Revolt brought the wooded world of early Upper Canada to the city of Toronto:

He did it very simply and very beautifully by finding a bunch of first

cuts with the bark still on it. He then constructed a series of stages connected by wooden pathways. The pathways were like the old corduroy roads with the bends in them. (Thompson, Personal Interview)

Several giant trees, constructed by Williams out of natural tree parts, were placed on the set. On tour, a smaller version of the set (without the trees) was used but, according to Thompson, rural audiences “knew about trees because they had them all around them, so they did not need them as much as the people in [Toronto]” (Thompson, Personal Interview). Here Thompson is commenting on the human experience of landscape. Like Monk, Thompson suggests that humans need to have first hand knowledge of landscape in order to have a landscape experience. Unlike Monk, however, Thompson does not seek to provide audience members with that landscape experience; rather, he wishes to draw upon an audience’s previous experience of place.

In 1976 at Theatre Passe Muraille, Thompson created He Won’t Come in from the Barn with the cast of David Fox, Claire Coulter and Ted Johns. The performance marked the first of several links between Theatre Passe Muraille and the Blyth Festival, companies that encourage the development of new Canadian works. The play was inspired by the rural environment and included “two Jersey cows, a strutting rooster and a pen of rooting, grunting squealing pigs” (Duke). The show premiered in Toronto in 1977, but it was received poorly, regarded as obscene by

members of the press. Later it was mounted at the Blyth Festival, where the “smell of live cattle” in the theatre received a warm reception. The community of Blyth was more exposed to barnyard animals than were Toronto audiences and the past experiences of the audience and the reviewers contributed to the success of the show.

During the mid-nineties, Thompson worked in remote Native communities on Manitoulin Island where he directed Alannis King’s The Manitoulin Incident. The play was performed outdoors on the site of ruins, a former residence for priests, within one hundred feet of the historic protest it commemorates, and focuses on a protest over fishing rights. It begins in full daylight and concludes with stunning lighting effects as the sun sets. It brings in all the elements, including the wind, earth and fire. It ran for two consecutive summers. The show’s success, was due, in part, to the community around Manitoulin Island who provided various insights into the historic protest and were involved in the rehearsal process.

Thompson believes that his work in landscape is important as it provides “an ongoing dialogue with the community” (Thompson, Personal Interview). Early in his career, when he was training at the University of Western Ontario and in France, Thompson focused on classical theatre. He saw that Molière and Shakespeare “had an ongoing debate with their world” (Thompson, Personal Interview). If you look at

Shakespeare's plays you can see England defining itself, its language and reinventing its history and its politics through his writing. The plays provide a sense of place and belonging to its audience. Molière's plays did the same thing with French society at that time. For Thompson, theatre articulates how people see themselves, how they relate to one another and their surroundings. His work focuses on Canadians and how they are shaped by landscape. Thompson shows how insignificant human beings can seem in the middle of the prairies or in northern Ontario, unless they undertake something significant. The actions and individual characteristics of people are defined by their ongoing dialogue with the natural environment.

According to Edward Relph, the idea of place is created and known through common experiences and involvement in common symbols and meanings often involving the surrounding environment (34). While rural community members have individual differences, many people living in rural environments share the experience of working the land. Up until now, little landscape research has been conducted on the particular experiences of rural life and the relationship that farmers have to the landscape. Thompson's collective creation plays evoke these communal experiences with the land and belong to a long tradition of documentary films, poetry and literature about rural life.

This chapter has shown that Thompson's praxis works to understand the communal landscape experience, in a way, to theorize a sense of place and homeland. Tuan states that experience is a term for the various modes by which a person knows and constructs a reality (8). In his plays, Thompson is trying to construct a reality of rural life based on the experiences of the individuals who live in rural communities. Thompson's use of the documentary collective creation method of directing has given him access to as many experiences as there are people in the rural communities of Saskatchewan and Ontario. This too is of interest when we consider him as a landscape researcher. While Monk focuses on personal experience and the importance of landscape to the self, Thompson adopts an approach that is collaborative and evolves out of the affective responses to and from rural communities. Thompson also makes an argument in favour of a landscape approach that is continually evolving and responsive to the contingencies of place and history. Geographer Peter Howard reminds us that a single picture will not always tell the truth about the landscape because it does not capture the multiple perspectives and experiences of a place (Howard 1). Thompson creates powerful rural narratives by combining the experiences of actors and the members of farming communities. Canadian audiences have welcomed his performances, spoken in their own idiom about recognizable communal issues. Through his landscape documentaries which visualize the land and stage its histories, Thompson has been able to create a regional sense of place and

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attachment, as well as a vital sense of community and belonging in communities across Canada.

Chapter Four:
Wilderness Sounds: From Landscape to Soundscape in the Compositions of
R. Murray Schafer

Much has been written about the attempts of visual art, literature, and film to represent and construct Canada's landscape. Little critical attention has been paid, however, to music — especially orchestral composition — and its representation of Canada's landscapes. In their recent publication, Canadian Music: Issues of Hegemony and Identity, Canadian musicologists Beverley Diamond and Robert Witner argue that "music has a role to play in the new discourse about the meaning of place / space" (Diamond 16). Diamond and Witner encourage other musicians and critics to explore music as a way of representing and theorizing nation (Grace 101-122). This chapter considers how the orchestral and theatrical compositions of R. Murray Schafer have represented the Canadian landscape in an effort to create a sense of place in the Canadian wilderness.

Schafer, the Canadian avant-garde composer, scholar, writer and educator, has dedicated his life to researching and defining Canadian culture and nature. This is evident in his scholarly work, soundscape research, and his many compositions that take the Canadian wilderness as inspiration and theme. Schafer's first experience with landscape-based work came as a result of his ongoing research on noise pollution and

soundscapes. This translated into an international project, the "World Soundscape Project", which he founded in 1965 at Simon Fraser University. The innovative study of the sonic environment gave Schafer an enhanced awareness of the acoustical properties of the Canadian landscape. Schafer defines soundscape broadly as "any acoustic field of study" (1977, 7), fields that range widely from musical compositions to radio broadcasts. Geographers, however, use a more precise definition of soundscape as a listener-centred sonic environment (Porteous 1990, 50). This definition establishes the human listener as the most important component in the soundscape.

In a 1999 interview for the CBC radio program Canadian Currents, Schafer was asked how soundscape research might relate to his own music. He replied, "I think we can learn a lot from the natural soundscape and perhaps incorporate it into art. Perhaps save some of that natural soundscape before it's completely destroyed" (Schafer, Canadian Currents 13). It was not until 1975, however, following a move from the urban environment of Vancouver to an isolated farm near Algonquin Park in south-central Ontario — the same landscape, in fact, that inspired Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven — that landscape would figure prominently in Schafer's research and musical compositions. Instantly, the natural and social environment of his life changed completely.

Schafer describes the rhythms of the natural soundscape which surrounded his new home in rural Ontario:

We began to raise a garden, failing the first year, but gradually becoming experienced enough to become almost completely self-sufficient in vegetables. We heated with wood, much of which we cut ourselves. We shared the fields and forest around the house with birds and wild animals, often not seeing people for days. The soundscape was ideal. The rhythms of this life were beginning to affect my musical thinking... Music in the Cold was written as a kind of manifesto in advance of the work I knew would follow. (Schafer, On Canadian Music 64)

In Music in the Cold, Schafer argues that Canadian culture is shaped by our country's climate and geography. The "product of a northern territory, Canadian art has a wildness and vigour not evident in the hot-house effusions of more civilized centres" (Schafer, On Canadian Music 78). Echoing Margaret Atwood's thesis in Survival and Frye's notion of the garrison mentality, Schafer notes that Canadian landscapes are not "peoplescapes," that "a Canadian landscape suggests hardship (cold, rough terrain, black flies, etc.)" (Schafer, On Canadian Music 78). His sense of Canadian landscape and the sensations it evokes differs markedly from Thompson's gentle farming communities and Monk's transcendent coulees. Schafer's speculations in "Music in the Cold" eventually took form in two of his later works, "Music for Wilderness Lake" and "The Princess of the Stars" from The Patria Cycle. According to

Schafer, these are the most authentically Canadian pieces he has written; they are rooted in the environment and evoke Canadian mythologies (Schafer, *On Canadian Music* 79). As he had predicted, during the first years of his residency in Algonquin Park, Schafer found that the context of his music had changed dramatically. Schafer recognizes that art changes when it is removed from its usual environment and placed anew. The relationship between the composer and the composition, the composition and the performer, and finally the performer and the audience also changes dramatically.

Inspiration for Schafer's famous piece, "Music for Wilderness Lake," came one morning while he was sitting on a raft in the middle of an uninhibited lake near his farm. Overtaken by the vast wilderness, he became acutely aware of the acoustic sounds that surrounded him. Schafer began imagining instruments spread out around the edge of the lake, playing across the water in musical dialogue. Schafer was interested in the interaction between the natural world, its sounds, sights, smells and colours, and the musicians who would come to the lake as intruders, hoping to stimulate and draw out the environment's natural sounds. He wanted to experiment with musicians who would play to the trees and the water and then listen to the sounds of the trees and water return. Schafer soon initiated this project with a group of twelve trombonists who agreed to relocate to a nearby hunting camp for the

duration of the project. The musicians were selected primarily for their talent, but also for their youthfulness which Schafer believed could translate into flexibility and a willingness to experiment with new ideas, a quality that older musicians might not possess. For this young group, flexibility meant getting up at five o'clock in the morning, going out to the water, being dropped off at various points along the edge of the lake and staying there for hours of rehearsal. On the first day out on the lake, Schafer knew the piece was going to be a success. He explains nature's involvement in the piece during the rehearsal process:

We found when we were doing tests earlier that as soon as the musicians started to play there was a lot more bird activity. [The birds] were definitely responding to the sounds that were being placed in the environment. (Schafer, "Music for Wilderness Lake")

Even in rehearsal, "Music for Wilderness Lake" was a dialogue between the musicians and the natural environment. The first half of the work was performed at dawn and the other half at dusk; there was usually less wind at dawn and dusk which facilitated sound travel across water. The temperature of the air was also significant. The air high above the water was cool while the air currents directly above the water were warm which caused diffraction of sound waves. The sound from the trombones came up and out of the instruments and the sound waves bent back towards the water as they hit the cooler air above. This diffraction caused the sounds to be heard clearly across the water. Moreover, the many hardwood trees surrounding the lake caused an

echoing effect which was further enhanced by the nearby hills and valleys. Schafer has noted that “Music for Wilderness Lake” always should be performed at a site where natural sounds can dominate the landscape. In Schafer’s recording of the piece, birds, loons and wind compliment the music of the trombones (Schafer 1984, 97-98).

The natural environment affected Schafer’s musical score and his conducting as well as the soundscape of “Music for Wilderness Lake.” Originally, Schafer composed the piece with particular sequences and timing in mind, but once the ensemble was out on the lake, everything changed. Unable to conduct in a traditional manner, Schafer decided that the best way to communicate with his musicians was to situate himself at the lake’s centre and to wave large coloured flags. The performers responded to the serene environment. Musical bars were slow and phrasing lingered, which reflected the performers’ state of mind while they were playing outdoors.

The lake provided much more than a peaceful atmosphere, however. In addition to the sound of water washing up on shore and the sound of splashing loons as they landed and took off, the lake was a constant force in the production of the piece.

“Music for Wilderness Lake” was recorded from canoes and a raft in the centre of the lake. The water surrounded and supported the piece. Schafer explains: “the water is

always present, the lake is the soloist, the trombones are simply accompanying the water which starts the piece off and continues throughout" (Schafer, "Music for Wilderness Lake").

"Music for Wilderness Lake" balances the natural and wild ambiance of the trees, the lake and the animals while it addresses the collision between humans and nature. To some degree, the piece comments on the imposition of urban characteristics on the natural landscape. In fact, several human-made, foreign sounds were incorporated into the work in order to address this conflict. Schafer makes it possible to examine the conflict between humans and nature:

We come to this place and we disturb it. We always do. You go into an environment and you disturb it. It is no longer a wilderness lake, as someone said one morning as they were collecting all of the dirty coffee cups. We are the intruders. We can't behave any other way. (Schafer, "Music for Wilderness Lake")

It is clear from his discussion that Schafer sees humans as intruders to the natural landscape, and not as a part of it. He adopts a similar view to other Canadian artists such as the Group of Seven who eliminate the human figure from the landscape, trying to maintain the mythology of Canada as primarily a pure and untouched wilderness or natural environment.

"Music for Wilderness Lake" is nostalgic; it returns to a time when music was

performed outdoors, in pastures, gardens and on the streets, but also to a more remote time when music derived from the natural environment. Schafer is aware, however, that his longing to connect with times past rests is paradoxical:

I don't know to what extent it is possible to recover this ancient harmony, for then the performer recognized himself as one with the animals and trees and winds. It was a miraculous era which anthropologists have told us much about and "Wilderness Lake" angles in that direction. (Schafer, On Canadian Music 96)

Schafer's difficulty in connecting to the past mirrors Monk's unrealized desire to transform into an animal. Thompson and Schafer suggest that a certain kind of interaction with the landscape that connects humans to their history and ancestors, but that connection always is limited and imperfect. At best, place and space can make humans aware of history and time.

Schafer suggests that it is in the natural environment that music may have begun. Initially, humans may have tried to imitate the sounds of water, wind, birds or other environmental sounds. Soon, they would begin imitating the sounds in a more artificial way which would eventually become a melody. Over time, music has moved from the outdoor environment into the concert hall. Schafer has taken the concert hall ensemble back to the natural environment as its first and "natural" home. Schafer explains his move back to nature and identifies his ideal performance space as a

wilderness lake:

People are just becoming more aware of the beauty of the environment and how music can emulate or be a part of that. The best thing, of course, would be if hundreds of people would come here and sit quietly around the lake and just listen for themselves. We are transporting the lake, and the dawn, and the mist, and the birds, to them in cinemas and living rooms, which is not as good, but it might be a start. (Schafer, "Music for Wilderness Lake")

Like Monk and Thompson, Schafer identifies a certain appeal to performing landscape-based works outdoors. He sees potential for pieces that are able to stimulate multiple senses simultaneously. Although music is traditionally an aural medium, Schafer sees humans as primarily visual creatures and landscape as a primarily visual concept. In order to bring audiences into the full landscape experience, Schafer seeks to seduce audiences into opening their ears by providing them with natural and appealing visual images. It was this idea that led to Schafer's theories on what he calls the Theatre of Confluence. In a 1966 essay entitled, "The Theatre and Confluence I," Schafer describes a new genre of theatre that bridges all of the artistic forms:

All the arts would meet, court and fall in love. Love implies the sharing of experience; it should never mean the negation of personalities. This is the first task: to fashion a theatre in which all of the arts are fused together, but without negating the strong and healthy character of each. I am calling this the Theatre of Confluence because confluence means a flowing together that is not forced, but is nevertheless inevitable — like the tributaries of a river at the precise moment of interception. (Schafer, "Patria" 28)

While Monk and Thompson use performing arts techniques such as acting, movement, language, costume, scenery and music in their landscape pieces, Schafer fuses various arts. In his *Theatre of Confluence*, Schafer does not privilege one technique over another, rather he regards all techniques as equally important to the performance. “The Theatre of Confluence I” focuses on bringing together several fine and performing art disciplines in order to produce work that stimulates all the senses.

Of particular interest to Schafer is the environment in which the Theatre of Confluence must operate. Schafer rejects multi-purpose spaces such as theatres or concert halls and prefers to create site specific work in landscape. This has led Schafer to present his musical documentaries on wilderness lakes, in urban parks, on city streets and in rural communities and allow his audiences to experience landscape along with him. In 1991, Schafer wrote a second essay entitled “The Theatre of Confluence II,” which revealed his increasing passion for art based in the natural environment and rooted in ritual and myth. Rituals have a timeless quality and elicit an awareness of the “profound mysteries of the simplest natural phenomenon” (Schafer, “Patria” 100). In this follow-up essay, Schafer expands his thoughts on the sensory experience, seeing it as inextricably linked to the natural environment:

To accomplish an art that engages all forms of perception, we need not

only to strip down the walls of our theatres and recording studios, but also the walls of our senses. We need to breathe clean air again; we need to touch the mysteries of the world in the little places and the great wide places; in sunrises, forests, mountains and caves and if need be snowfields or tropical jungles. For too long the clement temperatures of our theatres have neutralized our thematic sensibilities. Why not a concert under a waterfall or a dramatic presentation in a blizzard? And why should we not feel the rain on our faces when we sing or a distant mountain throw back to us the voice we have just sent out to it? Why do we fail to notice the grass at our feet, the darkening of the sky or the sharp green eyes in the night air? Here are the divinities of our holy theatre, now so exceptional for having so long as to be overpoweringly real. (Schafer, "Patria" 97-98)

Schafer treats landscape as a spatial form that needs to be represented outside of the traditional performance space so it can fully be apprehended by the senses. He suggests that the traditional theatre or concert hall has numbed artists and performers. He calls for a return of the performing arts to the natural environment which will reawaken the senses.

In an effort to explore The Theatre of Confluence and its relation to the natural environment, Schafer created Patria (Latin for "homeland"), a series of large-scale music dramas. Written over the past 35 years, the series began as a trilogy that addressed themes and social issues specific to Canada. Currently, the cycle consists of twelve works, some still in progress, including a prologue, epilogue and ten interior works. The cycle has no linear progression and the works have not been written in

order, or performed together. The works are connected, however, in key ways: they use ritual and mythology and they blur the lines between performer and audience. The works flow together in confluence. Most have been created for performance in a special environment, such as a lakeside, a forest, a rural community or a deserted mine. Many begin at unusual times of the day or night (dawn, sunset, midnight) or extend far beyond the usual ninety-minute duration for theatrical work. "The Princess of the Stars," for example, takes place on a wilderness lake. RA, conceived for a set of indoor and outdoor spaces, lasts eleven hours. The epilogue to the cycle, "And Wolf Shall Inherit the Moon," lasts for a week in a northern forest (The Patria Cycle). By refusing to adopt the usual performance conventions, Schafer suggests that landscape must be experienced from multiple, polymorphous perspectives. He believes that landscape experience occurs in various forms and styles, at different times and locations and that landscape research should reflect that variety.

Patria's prologue, "The Princess of the Stars," and epilogue, "And Wolf Shall Inherit the Moon," are heavily inspired by the natural environment. "The Princess of the Stars" is intended to be performed on a northern wilderness lake, similar to the environment where "Music for Wilderness Lake" was performed several years earlier. Taking place before dawn, this ritualistic piece tells the story of the "Princess of the Stars" who falls to earth one night in a blaze of light. Frightened, the Wolf lashes out

in fear and wounds the Princess. Running into the lake for safety, the Princess is dragged under water by the Three-Horned Enemy. The Wolf tries unsuccessfully to locate the Princess. At sunrise, the Sun Disk arrives on earth to try and settle the dispute. He tells the Three-Horned Enemy to return the Crown of the Stars to the heavens, but the Princess must remain on earth and assume the name Ariadne. With the help of the Dawn Birds, the Wolf searches for the Princess, a search that will take many centuries and cover many lands. The Dawn Birds are instructed to cover the lake with ice and snow until the search is complete (The Patria Cycle).

Arriving before dawn, the audience is positioned on the lakeshore. The voice of the Princess can be heard from across the water. Unable to see the Princess, the audience's attention is drawn to a light in the distance that slowly moves across the lake. As the dawn light reaches the shore, the audience can see an old man in a canoe, the presenter who is telling the story. Although an original tale, "The Princess of the Stars" is related to Indian legend and it seeks to account for various natural phenomena such as the morning dew, the shedding of leaves, mist on the water, sunrise, migration, and the freezing of water. The work is to be performed as a ritual in canoes situated at the centre of a lake, some distance from the audience seated on the shore (Schafer, On Canadian Music 102).

“The Princess of the Stars” premiered at Heart Lake, near Brampton Ontario, in 1981. The piece was performed by musicians positioned lakeside and costumed actors and dancers in canoes in the centre of the lake. Birds intersected with singers and dancers and the Sun-God appeared at the precise moment of sunrise. The piece sought to “unite the fate of the characters in the drama with environmental changes in and around the water on a late-September morning” (Schafer, On Canadian Music 79).

The Patria Cycle’s epilogue, “And the Wolf Shall Inherit the Moon,” takes the form of a week-long ritualistic drama that employs a variety of musical, visual and theatrical elements. Set simultaneously in the present and mythical past, the event takes place in a large, northern wilderness area of forests, lakes, meadows and gorges. Artists from all disciplines participate in the experiment of the Theatre of Confluence. The epilogue returns to the setting and themes of the prologue and culminates with the return of the Princess to the stars and the Sun Father awarding Wolf the moon. The same participants return each year. They are divided into four clans that work independently over the week to create masks and costumes, learn clan legends and chants and prepare each part of the ritual which is enacted on the final day (Waterman, 55). “And the Wolf Shall Inherit the Moon” draws attention to Canada’s

northern regions and Schafer explains this importance:

certain things are happening in Canadian culture ... there is a consciousness that's growing, the destruction of a concept which was very much Canadian, of the North as a barren space of land which was pure, which was uncontaminated and this corresponded to something in our minds that was also pure and uncontaminated. A kind of a metaphysical space if you want. We are corresponding to that physical space in the North and that makes us Canadians. (Schafer, "Music and the Arts in Canada")

Here, Schafer uses the example of the Canadian North to suggest two complementary methodological positions for understanding landscape. On the one hand, you know the landscape through metaphysics, through a discipline that is cognitive and attempts to understand the fundamental nature of all reality; on the other hand, you know the landscape and its physicality by being physical suggesting that landscape experience is embodied .

Schafer is appalled by "the rape of the North" (Schafer, "Music and the Arts in Canada"). He believes that we are systematically destroying the North, a place that nurtures our sense of national identity. In so doing, we are crossing a frontier that Schafer thinks many Canadians secretly do not want to cross. He claims that Canadians want to keep the North a pure place: "we are retaining a certain innocence about ourselves and a certain virginity and those were very beautiful things to retain and as we destroy them we are becoming more brazen. We are losing something"

(Schafer, "Music and the Arts in Canada"). Schafer sees it as the artist's job to record the destruction of the North, an issue that is galvanizing arts communities across the country, but claims that the public is beginning to listen:

If the public pays attention to [the artists] enough, like they do in Russia, then artists will begin to be feared and perhaps [the artists] will be thrown in prison and perhaps they will be tortured or killed. But this is preferable to simply being what one has traditionally been in this country, and that is a freak on some lunatic fringe that does not matter. And I really want to matter as an artist. I want to matter in this society. (Schafer, "Music and the Arts in Canada")

Schafer takes a political approach to landscape research, proposing that artists who relate to nature in its pure form, abstracted from people, are socially conscious.

Schafer suggests that artists play a role in landscape research by critiquing the human use of the environment and he is not alone in his thinking. Thompson's piece, Far as the Eye Can See, adopted similar values and provided a social comment on the rapid urbanization affecting rural Alberta.

In 1973, Schafer created a piece entitled "North/White" that examined the ravaging of Canadian space. The piece is based on the image of an absolutely still environment punctuated by the relentless sound of a snowmobile that ravages the Canadian ideal of silent winter space. Drawn to the natural sounds of the northern landscape, Schafer has sought to preserve them by appealing to the public and drawing their attention to

landscape experience that they may be unfamiliar with:

The sounds of those very cold mornings in the winter time when it is not absolutely still – it's never absolutely still – the very cold morning just as the sun comes up, there is a cracking in the forests. The trees will crack and sometimes, very loudly, like a rifle shot ... quiet ones then loud ones again. It is a very interesting sound that is quite unique and one which you would not hear anywhere else in the world. (Schafer, "Music in the Cold")

Schafer points out that sounds can convey double meanings of nature and culture and "North/White" provides a perfect example of this duality. "North/White" evokes the destruction of the North by pipelines, airstrips, highways and snowmobiles. Not only is the environment being destroyed; Canadians are being deprived of the "Idea of the North" which Schafer affirms is at the core of the "Canadian identity." He suggests Canadians look toward myth to build a sense of place in the Canadian wilderness:

The idea of North is a Canadian myth. Without a myth a nation dies. The North is a place of austerity, of spaciousness and loneliness; the North is pure; the North is temptationless. These qualities are forged into the mind of the Northerner; his temperament is synonymous with them. (Schafer, On Canadian Music 62-63)

Schafer identifies the North as a unique acoustical environment characterized by its spatial qualities and its relative silence.

Although it has been a primary source of inquiry for Schafer, the acoustical environment has been the subject of study for only a small group of geographical

researchers. Unlike visual space that is the primary site of study for cultural geographers, sound, according to Douglas Porteous, is “non-locational, spherical and all-surrounding” (1996, 33). Sound has no obvious boundaries and emphasizes space itself rather than objects in space. Perhaps reason for the limited amount of environmental acoustical research relates to the belief that the human sense of hearing is not acute. Although human sound perception might be information-poor, Porteous suggests that, in fact, it is emotion-rich:

Humans are aroused by screams, music, thunder; we are soothed by the sounds of water, leaves, wind in the grass. Infants are especially sensitive to the pleasant-unpleasant range of sounds, and the development of deafness in adults may lead to loneliness, depression, and paranoia. Loss of hearing reduces our sense of the progression of time, and contracts our sense of space. (Porteous 1996, 35)

Through sound, Schafer stimulates an audience’s emotional responses to landscape.

Both Edmund Carpenter and Porteous suggest that the sonic environment is universal and therefore an effective communication tool because

Auditory space has no favoured focus. It is a sphere without fixed boundaries, space made by the thing itself, not space containing the thing. It is not pictorial space, boxed in, but dynamic, always in flux, creating its own dimensions moment by moment. It has no fixed boundaries; it is indifferent to background. The eye focuses, pinpoints, abstracts, locating each object in physical space, against a backdrop; the ear however, favours a sound from any direction. (Carpenter 36)

Schafer adopts the characteristics of auditory space and as result his performances are

in constant motion, changing as the environment changes. Wind may blow, or stop blowing, a loon may call to another loon across the lake or it may stay silent, rain may fall or the sun might shine, but the performance must adapt to its surroundings.

Schafer's performances are in a constant state of flux. Unlike many geographers, he adopts an approach to landscape that refuses to make statements, posit absolutes or quantify landscape like many of the geographers do. Instead, Schafer allows for multiple and evolving points of view and understandings in order to maximize the audiences' landscape experience and contributes a new perspective to the field of landscape research. Schafer adopts an approach to landscape that considers not only the objective, cultural and political worlds but also the metaphysical, mythological and spiritual ones. He is not attempting to represent in performance his personal experience with landscape as Monk did, or a communal experience as Thompson did, but rather, Schafer is creating landscape experience with each performance he creates.

Schafer, like Monk and Thompson, uses a multi-sensory approach in his performances. If sound is information-poor and emotion-rich, then Schafer uses visual stimulation to provide the details that may be lacking in music alone. Geographer Edmund Penning-Rowsell suggests that language is problematic in landscape research: "not only is it difficult to verbalise what we see, but in doing do we ossify images which in reality change over time" (119). Words do not accurately convey a

sense of place, an experience or the feel of landscape. Schafer attempts to provide a more comprehensive view of the landscape experience through a method of interdisciplinary performance that combines music, movement and performance and addresses personal, mythical, social and political ideas that relate to landscape and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the landscape experience.

Concluding Remarks

In this thesis I have sought to examine or “map out” the landscape experiences of Davida Monk, Paul Thompson and R. Murray Schafer, and the way these experiences are represented to an audience through performance. My approach has crossed disciplines and has bridged the fields of environmental science, social science and the performing arts. This cross-disciplinary technique has allowed me to focus on issues identified by Barry Sadler and Allen Carlson as essential to an understanding of human/landscape experience, which include setting, scenery and symbolism, the construction of images and the theoretical, historical, national, regional and local contexts of a work of art (Sadler and Carlson 2). Sadler and Carlson urge cultural geographers to adopt techniques from the visual arts to further their study of landscape. In this thesis, I have taken a step further by examining the significant contribution of these performing artists to landscape research. This establishment of a relationship between the arts and geography is beneficial not only to landscape research but to the fields of art and geography in general.

By considering the work of Monk, Thompson and Schafer within the framework of cultural geography and landscape aesthetics, I have drawn attention to aspects of the performing arts that often are overlooked — their unique ability, for example, to exist

Concluding Remarks

in space and time simultaneously, their historical and theoretical connection to the land and their ability to create a sense of place or belonging. I also have sought to advance the fields of cultural geography and landscape aesthetics by suggesting that the performing arts can assist in the development of landscape theory, elucidating the human/landscape experience through the use of verbal and nonverbal expression, sound, music, movement, setting, props, lights and costume. These multi-sensory techniques allow artists to explore the landscape experience more fully than text alone, and provides other landscape researchers with a powerful means of understanding the inherent and constructed meanings of various landscapes.

In cultural geography, landscape has traditionally been regarded as separate and distinct from the human body and this has resulted in research that emphasizes the perception of landscapes rather than the experiences in landscapes. Experience is how humans know and construct reality and, according to Yi-Fu Tuan, experience is affected by emotion and feelings about a particular place (147). Davida Monk, Paul Thompson and R. Murray Schafer provide detailed studies of the nature of human experience in the landscape and of the experiential perspective. Their performances display experiences within a particular space — a prairie coulee, a wilderness lake or a farmer's field — and create a sense of place out of the space through common experiences, shared symbols and meanings (Relph 34).

The performances of Monk, Thompson and Schafer provide insight into the ways the performing arts think about landscape. They call for an approach that suggests landscape experience is embodied and subjective, continually evolving in response to social, political and historical events. They tell us that landscape experience is collaborative and emerges out of the affective responses of and to individuals and communities. They tell us to consider not only the objective and cultural worlds but also the metaphysical, spiritual and mythological worlds. They tell us that landscape, as well as culture, is inherently spatial. As they reveal the way point of view alters both the experience and meaning of landscape, they carve a space for multiple flexible perspectives and understandings. The type of landscape research the performing arts undertake depends upon conscious insight into, but also feeling and intuition about the landscape experience. Monk, Thompson and Schafer attempt to supplement the traditional verbal means of expression with nonverbal techniques such as movement, music, sound, costume, setting and props in order to provide a more comprehensive view of the landscape experience. They show that landscape cannot only be understood as the mere assemblage of structures, objects and land forms; landscapes have meanings for the individuals or groups who experience them.

Concluding Remarks

It is my hope that I have paved the road for many other landscape researchers to bring the discipline of cultural geography into contact with the performing arts. My research has only begun to scratch the surface of the insight the performing arts provide on the human experience of landscape and the integrated perspectives on the relationship between humans, art and the natural environment. Further research is still needed to uncover the wealth of knowledge still buried in the performing arts in Canada.

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