Remembering and un-remembering a century of prairie settlement: community-triggered performance

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Abstract

This paper discusses *Windblown/Rafales*, a community-triggered performance produced by Knowhere Productions in Ponteix, Saskatchewan, Canada in 2007, to commemorate the town's centennial. As *lieu de mémoire,* Ponteix provided a rich site of investigation, discursive field and performative space for deconstructing/reconstructing identity. Site-specific performances used material traces and built heritage to investigate and interrogate the past. The result was fragmented and ambiguous, reflecting the environment's multiplicities. Ponteix provided a unique set of circumstances: a French-speaking, Marian community founded by immigrants from the Auvergne, the town is landlocked and time-locked, its language and culture challenged by pressures to change and assimilate. Now, at a crossroads, the community looked to Knowhere Productions to examine its collective memory and to illuminate options and new directions. Using the terms of place making and sustainability, this paper outlines the creative tensions that arose as artists and citizens collaborated on a performance that stretched and perforated the community's sense of itself.

Keywords: place-making, urban regeneration, site-specific performance, community interaction, performance collaboration, devised performance

Introduction

> *There is a tremendous complicity between the body and the environment and the two interpenetrate each other.*[1]

Since the 1970s, initiatives taken by urban planners and community activists have resulted in a plethora of rhetoric around *place making*, a term that links the building of new environments on which to focus public attention and the reclaiming of deteriorating heritage structures with the idea of understanding and celebrating local identity. In these terms, place making is about the materiality of places, the experiences they make possible and

the consequences they have in our lives. It is also about experiencing places through social encounters, through immersion in the sights, sounds and atmosphere of locales and in the traces of thought, memory and imagination that have guided their use over time.

Place making is frequently seen as a practical tool for addressing socio-economic issues and coalescing communities around development projects as a means of multi-levelled regeneration. The preservation and remediation of the historic, built environment, and the positive influence that place making may have on a range of local activities—including housing, education, economic development and community engagement, cohesion, inclusion and activism—is underscored by cultural workers, community development officers, academics and, of course, artists, who are frequently the foot soldiers and champions of place making.

Increasingly, local government evokes it as a panacea for an array of perceived social ills and a silver bullet for ensuring community wellbeing. Re-use of the historic environment with artistic involvement as an important supplement is seen to be at the heart of creating sustainable communities, adding abstract value as well as underpinning the local economy through spin-offs in employment in retail and tourism.

Grassroots involvement in such activity can be a vital medium for nourishing communities through simple acts of sharing memories around certain places. Frequently, urban theory refers to the built environment as a stage upon which individual identity and a community's sense of itself is acted out through quotidian activities and in periodic celebration or spectacle associated with acts of remembering. In this regard, place making is about reinforcing normative histories and building myths around places and events.

Memory links who we are to where we are and exemplifies how we identify ourselves through the experience of place. However, in the age of transnationalism, hyperconnectivity and global culture, the idea of articulating or performing one's place in the world—the idea of place making—may seem anachronistic when considered against the fractured reality, isolation and seclusion of the various communities that inhabit the twenty-first century. Yet place making or, more specifically, place stating is where we frequently begin when we want to articulate who we are and who we are not; who we were and who we desire to become.

Place making and play making

This brings me to the focus of this paper—*place making* in *play making*. Referencing *Windblown/Rafales*, the most recent event produced by Knowhere Productions Inc.—a company I co-founded in 2002 in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada[2]—I will provide a partial record of the process that informed and realised the event. Specifically, I will discuss the responsibility of artists in performing another's place in the world. Tangentially but

significantly, the paper will also address the role of watching in the site-specific, community-interactive process; indeed, how the nature and ethics of looking—what it means to watch well while being well-watched—is at the heart of place making.

It is, perhaps, noteworthy that I am writing from the perspective of a theatre artist: I am a scenographer, and in that role I help create the visual aesthetic of a given performance as a text that may reinforce or contrast with other texts, such as the play script. As such my analysis will, in some ways, veer away from the positivist language of creative community interaction and regeneration and towards an investigation of the nuances and specificities of that interaction: about what happens, metaphorically, in the space of the glance between the artist and the local teacher, business person or parent who is all things—co-creator, research subject and spectator in the site-specific undertaking.

While there has been much written about the gaze, in researching this paper, I was surprised at how little was written about the reflexivity of watching in the context of site-specific performance: how the exchange of the look within the theatrical experience alternates endlessly between subject and object, and how this relates to the creative dynamic when working within a discrete community.

In her book, *Visuality in the theatre*, Maaike Bleeker uses the word 'visuality' to discuss how the illusion of objectivity—the notion of vision as true and objective and the possibility of seeing someone or something 'as it is'—is the central paradox in theatre.[3] This observation provides me with a place to start my discussion of place making through the production referred to here, and the situation in which Knowhere Productions found ourselves when invited to produce an event commemorating the founding of Ponteix, a rural town of 329 French-speaking inhabitants in the remote southwest corner of what is now (although not historically) an English-speaking and under-populated province. The brief was to see the town 'as it is', to look beyond the stereotypical images of the place, and to perform 'what we saw' on the occasion of its centennial as a remedial strategy for a community stressed by the global economic downturn and climate change.[4]

Knowhere Production's mandate is to explore—through multi-performative means, media and installation—the relationship of a local and frequently marginalised population to a particular place and time. Our productions, typically site-specific and devised, emphasise themes, stories and events that reveal the complex relationship between our physical environment and ourselves. In Ponteix, the opportunity to consider place making through the lens of hegemonic and colonial practices and the urban/rural dichotomy was appealing and relevant. The issues that have marginalised this population resonate strongly within Canada and indeed the world, where the drift towards globalised agricultural networks and the rise of corporate farming have decimated local economies and dispersed rural populations

to urban centres. Those who remain struggle to reconstruct an identity from fragments of memory and nostalgic imagery premised on the way we perceive and represent our immediate surroundings and how we record them (for example in photographs) as sites we hold dear.

However, as cultural geographer Rob Shields suggests, the images and their stories are partial, piecemeal and able to be prised open. He writes, 'Place-images, and our views of them, are produced historically, and are actively contested. There is no whole picture that can be "filled in" since the perception and filling of a gap leads to the awareness of other gaps'.[5] Figuratively speaking, Knowhere Productions inserts its performances into these gaps.

How and when did this process begin? In the spring of 2006, the Catholic Diocese of Notre Dame d'Auvergne and the local Rural Municipality (RM) jointly commissioned the production. It is significant to note there is much overlap between these entities. Nothing is accomplished without the support of both, and the parish priest and the mayor bless and launch each community event. The RM does not have a systematic or policy-driven approach to funding the arts, rather it provides ad hoc support to initiatives that align with its intent to celebrate shared language and heritage.[6] While the diocese does not directly support artistic activity, it hosts concerts, performances and exhibitions. In this instance, parish priest Father Keith Heiberg, familiar with our earlier community-based work through extensive regional television coverage[7], approached the company proposing a mutually beneficial relationship. The town, he suggested, would gain insights into its own situation through the filter of Knowhere Productions' lens and we, he assured us, would gain access to a unique historic locale at a crucial and transitional moment. His goal was to focus attention on an under-represented, isolated but vital community through the generative force of the arts. Through his efforts, an information session was organised in July to bring together the community stakeholders in a discussion that weighed options, gathered input and assessed the relative pros and cons for Ponteix and for Knowhere Productions alike. At the end of that meeting, all agreed to move tentatively forward.

Memory and identity

In theoretical terms, as *lieu de mémoire*[8] Ponteix provided a rich site of investigation, a discursive field and performative space for deconstructing/reconstructing the town's identity. Significantly, it also provided a polyphony of voices—a rich counterpoint to the normative historical record. The texture was evident in the heritage buildings for which the town is known, particularly the impressive, well-proportioned Catholic church, built to accommodate a congregation three times larger than the current size of the town and still operating as the heart of the community. Re-erected first after being razed by fire set allegedly by members of the Ku Klux Klan (1923), and then by cyclone (1929), Notre Dame d'Auvergne is a synecdoche

for the town's century-long struggle to thrive despite the oppression of the dominant English Protestant culture. Adjacent to the elm-shaded church, the parish hall—designed to house the faithful while the church was under construction—is a proud, well-preserved building that symbolises a communal will to survive. On the west side of the church, the Convent of the Sisters of Notre Dame, a solid brick edifice, sits on a manicured property. Nearby is the oldest of the buildings, the Gabriel Hospital, erected in 1918, in time to treat homecoming World War 1 veterans and Spanish influenza victims. These historic sites represent the town, and their images are reproduced everywhere—on calendars, postcards, websites and brochures.

As the blueprint of the performance took shape, we determined that the performance would start at the church steps, move into the nave, then proceed to the hospital, through the convent orchard and next through the town (in a quasi-religious procession reminiscent of the congregation's annual Marian celebration[9]), before ending at the parish hall. Mapping this physical trajectory through the town's built environment represented our first response to the material environment, and from there we began to rough in the other details of the event. These included the integration of puppets, an epic poem written for the occasion, an original musical score, dance, and sound and sculpture installations.

It may be helpful here to describe how Knowhere Productions begins to interact with communities—a process sometime fraught with skirmishes and littered with red flags. Indeed, much of what is written on such creative collaborations focuses on the perceived binary of insider/outsider, and many artists and critics offer caveats in regards to the complexity of this relationship. In *One place after another: site specific art and locational identity* (2004), Miwon Kwon references art historian Hal Foster's critique of the interaction between artists and local communities: 'community-based artists may inadvertently aid in the colonization of difference … in which the targeting of marginalized community groups … leads to their becoming both subject and coproducer of their own self-appropriation in the name of self-affirmation'.[10]

In his essay 'Opponents, audiences and constituencies', Edward Said considers alternative and collectively imagined ways of approaching cultural work that avoid the inevitability of neutralising or misrepresenting the multiple voices of the community. He writes that his use of the terms employed in his title 'serves as a reminder that no one writes [or creates] simply for oneself. There is always an Other; and this other turns willy nilly into a social activity'.[11] Said further problematises the issue by calling into question the make-up of the constituency: namely who is excluded and what is claimed in their name. This argument, reductively evoked here, lies at the heart of the matter. In the end, difficult questions must be asked of those who work as artists under the banner of site-specific, community-based activity and place making: how does it get made; for whom, by whom, to

serve whose agenda; what are the intentions; are the intentions fulfilled; and, importantly, who is speaking? Finally, is it art?

An emphasis on art

While Knowhere Productions understands that the community work we do is frequently therapeutic and recuperative, our primary role is as artists rather than social workers or activists. Although sensitive to circumstances and histories, tensions and personalities, we avoid work that directly responds to the pressure of agendas that spring from local contingencies and politics. We do not typically produce shows that are narrative, linear or realistic. Rather, our method is to seek out a historically layered location, negotiate the terms of its engagement and use its material traces to explore the actualities of its past and present. In so doing, we provide occasions in which performers and spectators reflect, define and redefine themselves collectively and alone, engage myths and putative histories and consider alternatives. The results frequently replace a normative reading with a disjunctive representation of the pluralities that an environment provides. Here, we looked to the site itself and to the living members of the community for alternative narratives and tapped the collective memory for resources that might create options and new directions, might regenerate the struggling town.

Historically Ponteix provides a unique set of circumstances. It was founded in the early twentieth century by French-speaking Marian adherents from the Auvergne driven by economic necessity and a utopian desire to dedicate a new community. Situated on a rise overlooking a meandering river, the town is laid out in a small modernist grid with the church, the parish hall, the convent and the hospital forming an organic unity and a signifying centre. The core is flanked to the north by a spore-line and to the east by a main street that once flourished with stores and services. The facades of many of the buildings hide empty shells, thus rendering the town a fertile place to critique the terms of place making and question the promise of sustainable communities.

From its beginnings, Ponteix has withstood by dint of faith and hard work. However, Spanish influenza, prairie fires, bitter cold, drought, the Great Depression, isolation and parochialism have tested its endurance. Well-weathered, the town recognises that it is at a crossroads. Landlocked and time locked, in many ways the lifestyle it affirms is unaffected by the contingencies of the twenty-first century. However, its language and culture are increasingly pressured to change and assimilate. The invitation to us to craft an event was driven by the people's desire to hold up a mirror, to capture and record the town's so-called authenticity before technology and global trends flatten local particularities and cause intact customs to become meaningless.

We soon realised the extent to which the offer represented a bilateral commitment with reciprocal rights and responsibilities; by no means was it an example of *l'art pour l'art*. Assuredly, the integration of arts activity into the weave of public life is never merely an end in itself, although the result may be pleasurable, provocative and entertaining. Nor is it merely a measure of culture and an indicator of wellbeing, although it sometimes accomplishes this work as well. It is a subtle negotiation across a range of agendas and it is frequently an intervention between groups set at odds. It requires honest and transparent communication and a practiced ability to listen well and hear nuance. As a working methodology, Knowhere Productions has developed strategies to deflect any unrealistic expectations that may exist at the initial stages of a project and upon which we may run aground during the process. We are clear that we do not want to recreate, necessarily, an accurate historical moment or a series of costumed vignettes; we suggest counter-narratives that draw on half-memories and encourage a phenomenological and interactive relationship with the site through walking and looking. Ethically, we understand that this process cuts both ways. We watch and we let ourselves be watched. We gaze, scrutinise and glance.

A few thoughts on watching and being watched

In *The world at a glance* (2007), phenomenologist Edward S. Casey suggests that while the gaze is methodical, solitary and uni-directional, the glance rests lightly on surface detail. However, rather than being merely superficial, the minutiae of everyday life are fascinating and revealing. He writes:

> By glancing we investigate the layout of surfaces in our immediate environment; we get close to these surfaces, so close as to be virtually at one with them … Always taking in new surfaces, [the glance] discovers novel approaches and directions...[I]t sees ahead, albeit in a tentative and uncertain manner, by trying out new pathways.[12]

The glance, he suggests, darts out from the eye of the beholder and is reciprocated, is sent back, by the one who is glanced at. However, in that blink of an eye, the nature of the glance, the exchange itself, is transformed into something else; and it changes both parties. Likewise, community interaction is enacted through reciprocal looking—but, this is not as simple as it sounds. As Bleeker has said 'Seeing appears to alter the thing seen and to transform the one seeing, showing them to be profoundly intertwined in the event that is visuality'.[13]

Day by day, as we worked our way further into the community, the process presented modalities of watching. For example, our first step was to observe the community's sense of itself and its place in the world. This was bound up in the built environment, its isolation on the Canadian prairies, and a sense of its spatiality. Local lore has it that the ambit of the community is defined by the bells that ring the hours of daily worship from the tower of the church.[14] The circumference within which the chimes are audible

delineates the border between home and away/location and dislocation. The inhabitants have mythologised the notion of the town as a bastion of French culture, an island in a sea of rolling prairie. Thus bounded, however, the town appears, to outside eyes, insular and inward looking—a few square kilometres, a few hundred people, a few hundred miles from the next significant community.[15]

Understanding how Ponteix defined its own identity was not difficult. We were given access to the town's archives, replete with diaries of immigration and arduous homesteading. A local poet, novelist and playwright[16], a fiddle band, the Sisters of the convent and the parish Father provided us with the flavour of a rapidly disappearing way of life, an idea of the cycle of the church calendar and how its progression once marked time as surely as the church bells delineated space. The tourist centre provided brochures illustrating how Ponteix now markets itself as a retirement community using the terms of place making to describe its commodifiable assets—a friendly, well-serviced, historic community with strong values. Much of what we gleaned—the music, the bells, the traditions—was drawn into the performance as it slowly took shape.

However, as we watched, the greater the distance appeared between what we read and were told (in other words, the normative reading of the town's founding) and what we thought we saw. Holes in the mesh became apparent. As we worked in rehearsal, devising the event from the collected materials, the notion of subverting the accepted narrative compelled us and grew stronger as we went about the daily business of observation and research. Casey writes that—once the glance is cast—it goes out only to 'return to the subject who emits it, unsettling it in turn'.[17] This is the underlying paradox of its very subversiveness. He adds, 'the subversion effected by the glance is thus twofold: both by way of im-plication (that is, folding of the outgoing look into the object) and of the re-implication (re-enfolding the look back into the subject)'. The glance cast does not go back to the same but to a continually changing subject: the subject who once glanced is now changed.

During the four weeks that we were embedded in the community, our own lives became increasingly the lens through which we focused our observations. Reflexively, we wrote ourselves into the event. We were aware of watching ourselves watching—a phenomenon that produced an uneasy sense of *mise-en-abîme* that affected the process of constructing, or rather deconstructing, the performing of the town. We became unsettled, began to lose our bearings, to lose the sense of the town 'as it was'. We wondered if our watching was perhaps more voyeurism than research. Who was watching whom was unclear.

As newcomers, our daily comings and goings had been closely monitored. Within a week, however, the townspeople became accustomed to seeing the costumes, puppets and props as we introduced them into the rehearsals.

Friendships grew and we were encouraged to roam and ask questions. The parish priest provided meals at his home, and neighbours hosted barbecues where we gathered gossip and shared jokes. Indeed, a key element of the process was the incorporation of these anecdotes into the performance script. Details gathered from sidewalk conversations frequently contradicted the overarching narrative of the Catholic community suggested as our original focus—the hardworking, devout settlers, the pious, charitable Sisters; they supplied alternative stories. These accounts were of outsiders and outcasts whose lives were not always aligned with the majestic church, the historic convent and the Gabriel Hospital. Rather, they were set in the bar, the coffee shop, the bank, the now defunct businesses and deteriorating buildings on the main street; iconic sites seldom photographed and never reproduced on cards and calendars. We observed that the town's built environment, in all its facets, delineated, differentiated and was a metaphor for the social strata of the community. This was place making of another register and it fed the performance in interesting ways: the procession of actors through the town was amplified in scope as monologues were scripted for performances on street corners and in alleys. When these were performed on the day of the centennial celebration, the audience saw themselves reflected both in the store windows and through the actors' reiteration of their own stories, the representation of their own lives.

Conclusions: the limits of memory

In conclusion, I want to retreat to my position as a theatre practitioner and return to the nature of the interaction between community and artist in order to posit some ill-formed thoughts on ethical watching and how it is lodged within the performer-audience interaction, how it asserts itself in the practice of site-specific, community-based performance and how it is intrinsically tied to place making.

Philosopher Paul Woodruff writes:

> … the art of watching is as important in life as it is in theatres. Learning how to pay attention to others is basic to living ethically … A good audience is capable of doing this for themselves—to see themselves for the human beings they are and take responsibility for their part in the ongoing drama of being human.[18]

He makes the case for theatre as a unique form of expression that, at its most powerful, can change lives. He reminds us that 'we are all in this together'. When theatre is done well, when it accomplishes its purpose of making human action truly worth watching, we come to care about the characters. This is a good and worthy practice because it is not just a matter of theatre; we are better members of the human community if we know how to see other people as careable-about.[19]

Maaike Bleeker's understanding of *visuality* in the theatre is helpful here as well. The observer is embedded in a system of conventions and

limitations, but so too is the one who returns the gaze. Each is a product of cultural practices that condition how one sees, and these set up interesting oppositions and gaps. Hence, one will always see less than is there. At the same time there is always the potential for the seer to see more, to recognise his or her place in relation to what is seen.

What *Windblown/Rafales* gave us, as artists, was an opportunity to watch and be watched by a compact and functioning community such as is seldom open to scrutiny, at a time when the Internet has fundamentally redefined conventional social networks and occluded much face-to-face interaction. Before we journeyed back to our own lives, the community taught us lessons that challenged our notions of otherness, of how centres exist only in relationship to something else and of how margins speak. The process was not always smooth sailing—community interaction rarely is. We were mutually unsettled by it. It involved working out tensions as we met eye-to-eye with a tightly knit group of individuals defined in relationship to a language, a faith and the specific challenges of a unique place and time. While their experience was largely very different from our own—ours more fragmented, dispersed, defined by digital networks—we all participated in tangible acts of self-definition, place making and community building.

Woodruff writes: 'Theater is most theater … when it is not theater at all, when the arts of watching and being watched merge and give way to shared action, shared experience, a shared moment of transcendence, beyond theater'.[20]

Bleeker sums it up in this way: 'It is through looking that modern individuals are understood to gain insight into themselves and the world, to such an extent that the "I" of the looker and his or her eye almost become conflated'.[21]

We who were given the opportunity to collaborate with the citizens of Ponteix in reconsidering who they are and how 'it is' came to a better understanding of the importance of place making and play making in considering who we all are, where we come from and where we are going. It also underscored, I suggest, the importance of embedding the creative enterprise within municipal policy in order to reassert local identity, experience communal catharsis and begin to imagine new ways of being in the world—and to do this on a regular basis. Memory and how it is put to work is important here in fashioning futures. Rob Shields writes that space is critical in the process,

> … remembering that the spatial is more than the historically and spatially specific ontological arrangements through which we live our lives, and by paying attention to the specific technologies of manipulation and formation of everyday spatial notions and practices, we can build a base in theory from which to criticise these arrangements, other worlds, and even different experiences of the lived\body.[22]

This too is the foundation of good, critical art making.

The date the event was performed, 15 July 2007 (exactly one hundred years after the founding of the town site), was bright and clear. About two thirds of the community gathered at the front of the church at 2.00 pm to commence the journey that would lead them through their much-loved heritage buildings and down the main street. Despite the heat and the age of the audience (many were retired and some negotiated the route using canes and wheelchairs), all enthusiastically stuck with it and ended the day at the church hall in a reflective but celebratory mood. When the last fiddle tune ended and the dancers regained their seats, there was an understanding that they had been well seen and heard. Many such comments were relayed to us by word of mouth, email and letter.

On our part, despite a year of preparation and four weeks of living and working closely with members of the community of Ponteix, the members of Knowhere Productions came to few definitive conclusions about the creative process we shared with the town. It was clear, however, that by sometimes working at cross-purposes and sometimes to the same end we had stretched and perforated the community's sense of itself and inevitably tested our own eyesight. The event marked a moment in the town's development and will be introduced into the town's record as, if not a turning point, then as a significant act of remembering, sharing and creative place making.

Ephemeral observation, anthropologist Clifford Geertz writes, takes on new meaning through the very process of inscription and reinscription. This leads to the production of a new text or narrative, which can then be opened to examination, revision and interpretation.[23] Shields writes, 'In this manner, new experiences are aligned with past experiences and old, known verities'.[24] While place making is about recuperating pasts, it is also about looking carefully and critically, and its concern is with present contingencies and future considerations.

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Endnotes

1. R. Shields, *Places on the margin*, Routledge, London and New York, 1991, p. 14.

2. The company's founding members (2002) included Kathleen Irwin, Associate Professor in the Theatre Department, University of Regina; Andrew Houston, Associate Professor in the Department of Speech and Communication, University of Waterloo; and Richard Diener, 3rd Eye Media.

3. M. Bleeker, *Visuality in the theatre: the locus of looking*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York, 2008, pp. 2–3.

4. Studies done by H. W. Cutforth in 2000 suggest that climate change in the semi-arid prairie of southwestern Saskatchewan has accelerated in the past 50 years, with statistics showing an overall drop in annual precipitation. The study suggests that a further decrease in precipitation will occur if global warming continues. See H. W. Cutforth and D. Judiesch, 'Saskatchewan: temperature, precipitation, wind, and incoming solar energy', *Agricultural and Forest Meteorology*, vol. 145, no. 3–4, August 2007, pp. 167–175.

5. R. Shields, *Places on the margin*, p. 18.

6. Within the broader provincial picture, the Saskatchewan Arts Board funds community arts development initiatives and does so on a project-by-project basis—as it did with this project.

7. In 2002, Knowhere Productions Inc. produced *The Weyburn Project*, a large-scale, site-specific event in an abandoned mental hospital in Weyburn, Saskatchewan (http://uregina.ca/weyburn_project/). The event was captured in a video documentary entitled *Weyburn, Archaeology of Madness*, produced by 3rd Eye Media Productions in association with Wolf Sun Productions Ltd. and broadcast repeatedly on SCN (Saskatchewan Community Network). See *Weyburn, Archaeology of Madness*, 3rd Eye Media Productions in association with Wolf Sun Productions Ltd., 2008; *Weyburn Project: The Archaeology of Silence and the Discourse of Madness*, <http://uregina.ca/weyburn_project, accessed 3 March 2010.

8. *Lieu de mémoire* represents any significant entity, material or otherwise, which by human will or the work of time becomes a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community. The term is taken from P. Nora and L. D. Kritzman, eds., *Realms of memory: rethinking the french past. Vol. 1: Conflicts and divisions*, Columbia University Press, New York and Chichester, 1996, p. xvii.

9. The procession, a thanksgiving ritual initiated in the troubling years of the Great Depression, is staged annually on 16 July throughout the town of Ponteix. Led by the parish Father, it involves the entire population. Throughout the event the Sisters of the Convent of Notre Dame sing and the bells of the church are rung. A wooden sculpture of the Pieta (early eighteenth-century France), seated with a recumbent Christ across her lap, is carried by the church dignitaries. The sculpture, brought to Canada in 1907, has several apocryphal stories connected to it including the claim that when the church was razed in 1923 the fire stopped at the feet of Mary.

10. H. Foster quoted in M. Kwon, *One place after another: site specific art and locational identity*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2002, p. 139.

11. E. Said, 'Opponents, audiences and constituencies' in H. Foster, ed., *The anti-aesthetic: essays on postmodern culture*, The New Press, New York, 1998, p. 157.

12. E. S. Casey, *The world at a glance*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2007, p. 146.

13. M. Bleeker, *Visuality in the theatre*, p. 2.

14. The four bells were cast in Annecy-le-Vieux, Haute-Savoie, France by Paccard Foundries, known worldwide for the clarity of their bells. They were named to commemorate the first three parish priests: Albert (founder of the parish, 1903–22); Napoleon (second parish priest, 1922–41); Louis (third parish priest, 1941–60), and Gabriel (the Sisters of Notre Dame de Chambriac).

15. Citing modern measures of centres and margins, electricity arrived in Ponteix in the 1950s following the passing of the Saskatchewan Rural Electrification Act in 1949, and high-speed Internet arrived as recently as 2006.

16. Yvette Carignan, an eighty-five-year-old daughter of one of the original settlers, was a storehouse of information and provided a wealth of historical details. She generously gave us hours of interviews, some from her hospital bed.

17. E. S. Casey, *The world at a glance*, p. 147.

18. P. Woodruff, *The necessity of theatre: the art of watching and being watched*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2008, p. 142.

19. ibid., p. 105.

20. ibid., p. 229.

21. M. Bleeker, *Visuality in the theatre*, p. 114.

22. R. Shields, *Places on the margin*, p. 8.

23. Rob Shields cites Clifford Geertz (1973) as cited in Jackson and Smith (1984) in *Places on the Margin*, p. 21.

24. R. Shields, *Places on the margin*, p. 15.

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