

Place

Emotional practices / geographical perspectives

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This special double issue of *PAN: Philosophy, Activism, Nature* invited authors to curate an essay on the theme of place. The aim was to open up a dialogue between contributors from a multitude of disciplines, making space for analytical, creative, structured, argumentative, open, discursive and ruminative reflections fuelled by creativity and lived experiences. To curate is to take care (*L. curare*). In our view, the coming together of the manifold kinds of biotic and abiotic existence that are familiar through the medium of subjective human experience—and its literary and essayistic modes of representation—collectively produces notions of the ever-unfolding and plural becomings of ‘place’. Place is both the site *of* and active agent *in* diverse subjective experience of space, which we have brought into conversation in *PAN*12. Locating residual ethical contours in the essayistic, photographic, lyrical and narrative modes, and disclosing affective insights in their analysis and critique, these essays of caring can be understood as forms of emotional practice, which we have brought together into three loose clusters, named ‘dialogue’, ‘response’ and ‘exegesis’.

To posit emotions as a practice is to entertain feeling as something that is habituated, and it is to argue that contextualised emotions are not only generated by practices but they are also practical engagements with the world themselves, bridging persistent dichotomies of expression and experience, structure and agency.¹ These essays are to be understood in this context. Places are habitats for non-humans and humans and thus give rise to and are shaped by particular emotional experiences. Far from being singularly a social construction, the popular notion of a *sense of place* is shaped by the physical environment; place-making, likewise, is an assemblage of human and non-human events.² Thus our emotional comportment to the world, at a specific moment in time, is formed through and carried to the places of our experiences. What would we witness if we fully embraced this very bi-directionality and simultaneity, and if we took this complex agency—or polyphony—to the question of geography? Might fresh insights on place suggest ways to combine actor and setting, and sustain these elements in the present participle of *being*?

Within this question lies an awkward youthful attempt to open up to ancient ontologies that exist before, during and after limited Western colonial perspectives on place. To enrich reflections on *being in place* and to embrace this complex agency our task becomes undeniably political and ethical. To ask this question in the face of rapid social, cultural and environmental change invites us to meditate on a suite of emotions that emerge from within our material environments. Changes to species and ecosystems, to seasons and cycles will soon—if they have not already—contort our relationships with place, requiring us to rethink notions of belonging in order to guide ethically responsible, affectively informed actions that account for humans, non-humans and future generations.³ The diverse and intersecting scales, methods and techniques of enquiry represented in *PAN*12 allow these radically new relationships in place to be *performed*. And what new voices do we hear in the seams that divide and yet bind the eclectic contributions in this collection? Readers are invited to explore the modes and registers of place scholarship speaking to environmental change, global capitalism and the Anthropocene.

With the human medium in mind, we are speaking of philosophy and nature but we are also looking to a particularly vibrant connector between these two worlds: activism. As Monique Scheer has noted, activism relies on the practice of negative feelings: conceptual knowledge of morally wrong actions (war crimes, labour exploitation, racism and sexism for example) may only lead to feelings of disgust and anger, yet this knowledge can be ‘transformed’ into ‘bodily knowledge’ and thus ‘be buttressed by reading or hearing of concrete details, viewing photographs, discussing with others in shared outrage, marching and chanting at demonstrations, or watching others do so’.⁴ Each contribution to *PAN12* furthers this very transformation.

Dialogue

The British anthropologist Tim Ingold is much cited in the essays and critical-creative pieces of this issue. In his short essay that opens our collection, ‘On Place and the Atmosphere’, Ingold reminds us that to perceive things ‘is simultaneously to be perceived *by* them: to see is to be seen, to hear is to be heard, and so on.’ This reversibility speaks to radical non-duality or phenomenological sensitivity; it is counterpoint to conventional senses of agency and materiality, which are explicitly addressed by many of our writers aiming to project and protect such a sensibility in their contributions. For Ingold, a ‘luminosity from within’ unites us with the cosmos. Our writers intuitively feel this very affectation of being that Ingold delicately points to. Without seizing, and while drawing out a political set of coordinates to map their specific place under consideration, this technique or writerly illumination—notable across the essay proper, creative writing, and sketches of locales and localised affect—allows the space to map itself, disclose itself, inhabit its own presencing. Perhaps this is when space truly becomes place?

Scott Slovic elegantly discusses a specific attribute of place through an environmental lens: ‘treeptych’ is a lively engagement with the self’s relation to Reno, Nevada, and its various modes of inhabitation and exchange. In addition to the lively instances of ‘flash non-fiction,’ Slovic offers a contextual statement clarifying the pedagogical and writerly challenges that reside in the domain of place imagining, which helps us locate deep and prescient metaphors in his work. Putting down roots in Slovic’s world is to clearly refine one’s moral compass, one’s sense of appreciation of others, and one’s sensitivity to the need to plant (for all that might mean) while keeping open to encounters and the sensual world. While Slovic demonstrates the frustrations and joys that come to light when we extend our thoughts into the places where we live with others, Richard Cavell conceives the mediascape as a place where our relational sense of being emerges. Taking Marshall McLuhan’s sense of media as embodied, Cavell draws on theories of technologies of mediation, and suggests that these breach the sovereign self and raise significant challenges about materiality and worldliness that are central to this issue of *PAN*. Cavell’s reading of McLuhan extends the sociology of knowledge into the domains of social media. In his examination of a number of theorists of the brain and its environmentalization, Cavell’s own theory of an extended self reminds us that social media is ‘experienced externally to ourselves, via our technologies’. Ingold’s ontology—that being, or self-cultivation is achieved in the cosmic awareness of subjectivity in relationship to the world around us—concorde with Cavell’s sense of media as an extension of ourselves; both models owe a great deal to the process of decentring the human, which place—natural or technological, material or virtual—teaches us.

Modulating the themes of these opening contributions, we then move to an in-the-world battle for a place that is the product of layered meaning, collective experience, mutual affection and conservative activism. Amanda Kennedy interrogates a power struggle between a local community’s love for its place and external interest in its fiscal geological formations. She draws on the case of *Bulga Milbrodale Progress Association Inc. v Minister for Planning and Infrastructure and Warkworth Mining Limited*, to explore how Glenn Albrecht’s notion of solastalgia⁵ holds up in a court of law. Solastalgia—the great distress and suffering experienced when a person’s place of residence is subject to significant environmental transformation—is central to Kennedy’s poignant bearing of witness to environmental and place-based activism in eastern New South Wales. This is critical to knowing place and to acknowledging layered histories, as Kennedy highlights one of the most pressing

issues of our time for 'place': the emotional trauma associated with the loss of it speaks to ongoing issues of dispossession and genocide in colonial lands, the roles of local protest in the face of multinational primary resource giants, and uncertain futures in the face of environmental change.

Reiko Goto Collins adopts Edith Stein's approach to phenomenology to reflect on empathy through her dialogue with horses in Aberdeen and Glasgow. She builds on more-than-human agency to critically shift western-anthropocentric notions of place. Beginning from the paddock fence, 'the habitus between the horse and me', Goto Collins walks us through establishing caring relationships with the individual horses. Drawing on Bruno Latour's idea of the actant, she dwells in her relationships with the horses and considers the lived, and sometimes performed experiences that occur between 'embodied-minds and environment'. *A la Ingold*, place here is constantly formed and reformed at the point of the intersection of bodies, where affective encounter leads to empathic projection through bodily and inner perception. From this integrated empathetic position, Goto Collins arrives at a point of political action emerging from the 'call and response' that is embedded in place.

Michael Allen Fox responds to the question of place through ideas of 'home'. Fox presents home in literal, metaphorical, normative and parochial guises to ask: 'to what extent there is a need for a cultural and/or individual project of recovering a larger sense of home in a postmodern and materialistic age?' Such a question alerts us to more complex histories and inclusive presents than a term such as *recovery* might achieve. As we learn from contributions in this special edition, place is experienced *through* motion and receptivity experienced in emotional practices that transcend fixed and limited views of home.

The place of shepherds in literary history is taken up in Deborah Lilley's analysis of contemporary British writing and its understanding of place. Pastoral is predicated on the nature of human interactions with the non-human world; pastoral as a genre marks historical transformations in human values with respect to our relationship with the environment. For Lilley, pastoral has the potential 'to both enact and expose the subjectivity of the perception and experience of place'. Pastoral is a simple reduction of the complex relations between imagination and materiality. It is apposite that Lilley's understanding of 'the ways that places are made and interpreted' circuitously returns us to Ingold, disclosing access points between different versions of a place, between past and present, and between different ways of looking. Bridging this section and the next, while also pointing to a poetics and politics of walking in our final section, Fiannuala Morgan's exegesis of memory, history and erasure as expressed through the framework of the Another View Walking Trail (located in and around the CBD of Melbourne, Victoria) offers an alternative history of this heritage space. Here, Aboriginal resistance, spirituality and history are exhumed from the aestheticized streets and parks of Victoria's capital as Morgan uncovers the politics of deterioration and neglect. She not only outlines a critical geography of the trail but undertakes a critical walk—or reading—of the space to understand how such active engagement alters the politics of the site, producing 'an heuristic experience' in which the logic of the colonial city is interrogated and its plausibility or normative status is undermined. We hope that in providing an opportunity for our contributors to be in dialogue with place and with each other, uncomfortable, messy and multifaceted narratives on place and home might be welcomed.

Exegesis

Excitingly, a small block in downtown Toronto can speak with meaning to a nation at large, and to the spiritual history of Canada. Dennis Lee's poetry, written close by the home of civic thinker and activist Jane Jacobs, rubs up against the concept of 'interbeing': an ecology of dwelling, in Mark Dickinson's analysis, that combines being and nothingness. Lee, for Dickinson, dismantles the natural resources paradigm (upon which the Canadian economy has been built) and dismisses the spatial logic inherent in the civilisation/nature binary that assigns meaning and value only to certain specific places. Taking the vitality of the city as a metaphor of our mind, and how it can be 'continually charged and re-directed by what it encounters', Dickinson finds in Lee an understanding of place that recovers presences of the land 'so completely buried beneath an avalanche of human

effort' and thus assists anyone feeling despair at contemporary politics and wishing to recover the means by which to 'be able to think the holy and be nourished by it.'

The poetics of ecological consciousness, so deftly examined through Dickinson's literary criticism, is fully embodied in the work of John Kinsella and Tracy Ryan, Luke Fischer, Ian Wedde and Pete Hay. Kinsella provides us with a triptych specially compiled for PAN. In the first piece, a locally illustrated understanding of 'Agoras' as the 'meeting place of humans' and 'a place of non-human interaction and consultation' acts as prose introduction to the psychotopology of the biosphere in microcosm. This is taken to an acknowledgement of *thanatos* in the world, rather than being overcome by anger or anxiety, in a cluster of *in situ* poems of Western Australia in the middle section. This cluster draws from Kinsella's earliest and most recent 'place' poems, and includes a dialogue with Tracy Ryan's 'Winch-Bird' poem that encapsulates the politics of naming, especially heightened in the Anthropocene. In this selection, Kinsella appears more indebted to critical pastoral (as outlined by Lilley) than a mode of feeling that belies the Romanticism of other poets in this issue. Doreen Massey is interested in 'place' as a 'point of intersection', a 'meeting place' (a place of companionship) looking both inward and outward: 'which is extroverted' and 'includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world' (155).⁶ Here, Kinsella and Ryan locate kinship with the more-than-human world and human history through their sensitive examination of place as meeting point and fraught site of cultural and natural intersection. Lastly, an interview with Tom Bristow on the poetics and politics of place addresses decades of place-based writing and reflection, crystallised with magnificent brevity and depth; it is an exciting contribution to Kinsella's oeuvre that we are pleased to present in PAN12.

Hay's three poems, 'Presence', 'Goethe, by Sea', and 'The Real Island' preserve the relationships, forms and dreamings of ecologically rich encounters with place. Hay's phenomenological poetics attends to landscapes in which he belongs: those of the great southern Isle of Tasmania. With acute precision of the likes of Barry Lopez, Mary Oliver, Judith Wright and other prominent place writers, Hay pays homage to the ever-shifting relationships in place. Manifesting Albrecht's notion of Solastalgia introduced above, Hay's poems invite us to discern the place between world and self, the bridge between object and subject. Through his poetry, reverence and love is brought into dialogue with irrevocable change; grief of the impending loss of the individual and the collective as it is increasingly confronted in times of accelerated environmental change. Change over time and layered histories are something brought into view in Luria's creative piece 'Double Vision'. Her work, this time in the urban context, highlights the constant flux of this 'typical American suburb' in the face of development and the comings and goings of trees, tar, people, and bold structures. Playing with focus and colour, Luria draws our attention to different elements of the shifting suburb and to co-existing perspectives on place. This is a poignant example of chronological troubling demonstrating how the visual arts can expand environmental thought. These two pieces, on landscapes, multiple layers of experience and relationships over time, seem to indicate a vibrant colour and ethical hue to the forms of exegesis in PAN12.

Fischer's lyricism delineates fresh and sensitive reckoning of the value of human and non-human places. Yet philosophically informed, Fischer's deft touch is coloured by wit, deep ecological symbolism and cherished observations of specific places throughout Europe — a city, a cemetery for example — drawing out his unique scales of connection to the frequencies of the environment through which he moves. The autobiographical train of thought in Kinsella and Hay combines with Fischer's neo-Romanticism in Ian Wedde's German Notebook poems. A delightful array of disconnected yet related stanzas selected specifically for this issue showcases the ways that particular places — cities, homes, rooms — reside in our memory: affective spaces of personal historical importance are nuanced by grander intertextual references to European philosophy. Wedde's weaving together of enlightenment thought, continental philosophy and historical materialism, while recovering historical threads that connect his New Zealand identity to his German forebears, extends an understanding of the nature of the relationship between literature and the environment into an examination of the dialogue between particular and universal: a dialogue that is framed by each of the cultural places that are the fabric of our very being. In the spirit of PAN, Wedde achieves this nuanced tex-

tuality while alluding to European colonisation and migration. The Romantic vein to this section continues in Anne Collett's personal response to the painting and writing of the self-taught botanical artist, Kathleen McArthur. While the Australian-based anthropologist, Deborah Bird Rose, and the British poet, William Blake, help Collett configure an expansive and unchained mind seeing beyond our reasoned frameworks to care for small, local details of the Australian places that McArthur drew from, Collett's own gentle tenacity discovers the sense that devotion to particular places springs upon us: an entanglement of embodied experience and passionate reflection that is place might be known as 'wildflowering' itself.

Response

The contributions sitting in the cluster 'Dialogues' speak to and from places, sometimes within and sometimes from outside the places of observation and experiences. 'Exegesis' appears to bring together a range of interpretations of places and of various meanings of place, speaking both of metaphysical subjectivity and openness to the world. Selections placed under the heading 'Response' are quite different altogether — on one hand they are less perspectival, and on the other they are more material and active. These contributions play with perspectives from multiple vantage points on place: outside and in, then and now. All authors in this section conduct some kind of movement, and through dialogue with different material tools of their trade, they yield creative encounters that question representation, orientation and understanding of place. This is the very intention behind curating *PAN12*. By 'Reading Walkabout in Osaka...' Anna Johnston begins our exploration of place from the outside; this time, through the mid-twentieth-century tourism magazine that encouraged Australians 'to develop a sense of belonging and place' through travel. From a geographically and temporally removed perspective, Johnston reflects on nationalism, colonial imaginaries, and the 'modernist celebration of development' of the time. This contribution offers insights into literal and emotional relationships between White Australia and place over time. Maintaining a view from outside, Heather Kerr takes us on a journey through the moods of the Santos Museum of Economic Botany. Here, nature is presented out of place, preserved behind glass, depicted through binomial classification and economic value. Kerr opens up to the rhythms of the museum that conserves narratives of nature and belonging through a reductionist Western-science paradigm: this leads to a neologism, 'eco-melancholy'. Playing with subject/object binaries, she considers the affective capacities of the collection, contrasting a 19th century wax pomegranate and a 21st century installation; a dialogue emerges between moods of 'wonder and melancholy' that is apposite for the Anthropocene and any curatorial project wishing to extend beyond notions of the sublime experienced by the naked eye.

Perambulations of the Bowra Conservation Sanctuary expose perspectives from binoculars and DNA sequencing, taxidermy specimens and species lists, and a growing understanding of nineteenth-century ornithological illustrator, Elizabeth Gould. Like Johnston and Kerr, Melissa Ashley explores the here and there, then and now of place. Echoing phenomenological encounters of Hay and Goto-Collins, Ashley walks us to a view from the inside, where, through the practice of bird watching, a 'deep immersion in the specifics and particularities of place', emerges. We are presented with poetic perspectives into the 'sunburnt shoulders' of this place where 'nomadic migratory patterns' and colourful plumage mimic the unique landscapes and their boom and bust climatic cycle. Continuing with the practice of walking, Justin Carter takes to the road in a tailored suit printed with a camouflage pattern based on a specific English painting ('Autumn' 1833). His footwork intentionally bridges the gap between the real woods depicted in W.J. Muller's painting which his body bears, and the Bristol gallery where the painting hangs. The combination of object (suit) and action (walking) at once brings consumerism and the body into conversation. Carter's piece records a situationist intervention in a physical space and in the history of Leigh Woods, which Muller and other members of the Bristol School took as an object of contemplation to bring nature into focus. The site has been a cultural construction, a 'Nature Reserve' for some time, which for Carter 'reinforces the trope of nature as wilderness' that fragments our sense of connection with things, once again reified in the gallery's aim to conserve, preserve and display.

With tropes and inflections very much in view, the complex discourse of 'green-space' is the focus of John Miller's excursion into North Kelvin Meadow in Glasgow. Miller's reading of this contested space that is at once a meadow, a sports pitch, and potential site for development, discloses the ideology of 'natural capital' which inherently 'subordinates the ecological to the economic.' Coursing through the lexical fields that determine the space's 'use-value' for its many stakeholders, Miller clarifies the crude logic of biodiversity offsets, and the means by which government measures a place's purpose and fitness. Like Kennedy, Miller examines the 'relationship to land and the language used to describe it', particularly as it is concerned with the dematerialisation of these spaces through these shorthand frameworks. Part field guide, part community representation, this foray into the local turf turns the genre of short essay into a striking new form of cultural orienteering that we are delighted to present in PAN12.

By taking their ideas to the ground and moving on foot, our authors connect emotions to locomotion. Mindful of the idea that stable features in our worlds 'remain imperceptible unless we move in relation to them' (Ingold), Pamela Banting's experiment in bioregional reading practices is a response to the very same cue that underpins Carter in Bristol and Miller in Glasgow: transport as a method for uncovering attributes both of places and of our ways of knowing (or constructing) a place. Discovering the sites, sounds, smells and scenes (including bear shit, grasshoppers, the invasive species 'hounds tongue', the wake of pastoralism) of western Canada that are central to the novel, *Lightning*, Banting integrates her observations into the material place. Rather than attempt to recreate the experience of the text, this essay offers an example of a 'more corporeally active kind of reading'. Such a digressive and 'emplaced reading' elasticates the mental horizon of reading at home, for being *in situ* in this manner portends fidelity with non-linear ontologies that are often not so readily present in a domesticated space.

Carter, Miller and Banting help to bring philosophy, activism and nature into conversation. Moreover, if we look to the increase in anti-protest laws (particularly in sites of environmental significance) in the light of these essays, then we might acknowledge walking as not only an intimacy with landscape, but also a circumambulatory mode of activism. This brings us neatly to the final contribution to this issue by New Zealand filmmaker Andrew Denton. In the same manner that John Kinsella can ecocritically reflect on his poetic practice, Denton's photo-essay invites us to take a step inside the processes of film-making as activism, which, like the work of his Australian counterpart, looks within and beyond for 'the elusive signs of anthropogenic climate change.' Denton nimbly works through Timothy Morton's ecological thought and leads us towards an excitingly illustrated articulation of the affective mode of cinematic inquiry. The essay takes us through a range of filmic moments that distil Denton's art into meditative and poetic realisations of our implications of global environmental crises anchored in real, grounded places ironically shot through with the flat affect of globalization and toxic late capitalism. Mark Dickinson writes of the power of wisdom traditions 'to illuminate our lives with the tang of firsthand meaning'; Denton's imagery and theoretically informed discursive practice captures the petrochemical industry in North America, situates the reader somewhere between contemplation and provocation. This is precisely the mode of 'response' that an active and activist engagement with the world seeks to embody in our times of discontent. While Dickinson laments the loss of, and understands the cultural potential for, igniting a 'primal encounter with the land beyond colonial and technological distortions', Denton faces this crucial geopolitical and ethical problem head on, with the same 'political courage' that Dickinson rightly asserts that we need to address today's challenges and misplaced faiths. In PAN12, Denton, and Dickinson before him, take the physical form of place, of body, of mind crystallised as poem or photograph, and place these within essays and observations that respond to both love and crisis. Ensuring fresh engagements with the philosophy of our times, these contributions disclose difficult dialogues with place.

Post-script

Finally, this double special edition finishes with a review of Claire Nettle's book *Community Gardening as Social Action* by Aisling Bailey. It seems fitting that we end with the grounded and meaning-making practice of establishing roots and growing food. One

of the editors' dear friends has painted the following words on a colourful post holding up pea tendrils in her garden: '*subvert the dominant paradigm*'. Sometimes our day-to-day activities in our local places are powerful forms of social action, bringing back home a number of ideas we wish you to explore in *PAN12*.

PAN12 is something of a kaleidoscope. For that we make no apology. We have curated a wide range of perspectives on a diverse set of places, from memorised street scenes in Germany to the birdlife of South Australia; from phenomenology to walking; from the courtroom to urban green spaces. This collection allows us to experience many places unknown to us, and to temporarily inhabit these places in the ways that our writers suggest to us. *PAN12* looks at epistemologies of place, it offers careful understandings of places. While there are various allusions to contemporary thinking on the more-than-human world, morally-bankrupt capitalism, new materialism, affect theory and other fashions of this second decade of our as yet unbrave century, it is clear that our thoughts on place speak to the human subject. Perhaps this presents a problem as we wish to decentre our species? In running that risk, we present a body of scholarship that traverses disciplines and oceans, yet stems from predominantly Western, English-speaking colonizing or colonized views. We recognize that when brought into dialogue, the places, perspectives, beings and abiotic ingredients of place that are absent from these pages would enrich thought and action in untold ways. And yet, even from a limited perspective, the contents of this edition demonstrate diverse techniques that represent, shape and respond to place in creative and arousing ways germane to our dark times.

Notes

1. Monique Scheer, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and is that what makes them have a history)? A Bourdieuan approach to understanding emotion,' *History and Theory* 51.2 (2012): 193-220.
2. Richard C. Stedman, 'Is It Really Just a Social Construction?: The Contribution of the Physical Environment to Sense of Place,' *Society and Natural Resources* 16:8 (2003): 671-685
3. Haraway D (2008) *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
4. Scheer, op. cit., 211.
5. G. Albrecht (2005), "Solastalgia": A New Concept in Health and Identity', *Philosophy Activism Nature* 3, (1) pp. 41-55.
6. Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994.

