Complete Issue 1, Volume 10

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Contents

Landscape Theology: Exploring the Outfields of the Telemarkian *Dream Song*

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During Christmas Eve a young man named Olaf fell asleep and did not wake up. For thirteen days he was lost in the obscure corridors between life and lifelessness. He slept through one of the holiest periods of the calendar; across dark and dangerous times he slumbered. According to popular belief, the wild undead hunt of *Oskoreia* would roam the earth and the air during these days. Almost like a bear in hibernation, Olaf was cut off from the outside winter world. While he slept out of time, he slipped into a new space. And while he was absent from the cultural realm of humans, he became a wanderer in the landscapes of dreams.

Dream landscapes feed on the wakeful ones. If you are used to rowing, you may find your otherworld on an island (see, for instance, Siewers). If you spend your time thirsting in a desert, chances are you will fantasize about an oasis. Olaf learned his religious lessons from a dreamed-up landscape, a landscape that resembled his own and emerged from the outskirts of his local terrains. Not necessarily unlike other visionary literature, the Norwegian *Dream Song* or *Dream Verses* (*Draumkvæde, TSB* B 31) suggests that a corporeal encounter with the native rural land – if in the guise of a dream – yields religious insights superior to those of religious texts; an almost shamanic Christian knowledge has been taught to Olaf by the kneading, scraping terrain; the land has carved itself into his disintegrating body. In the following I study the dreamer's journey through these parts and the terrains in which he moves.

Discussing the 'place-corrosive process' of the twentieth century, Arne Næss once emphasized 'the interrelation between the self and the environment' for the

'development of a sense of place' (45).[1] The Telemarkian *Draumkvæde* does not describe a scenic panorama, but, I argue, it speaks theologically of place, conveying a theology situated in the local. As Simon Schama puts it, the 'scenery [of a landscape] is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock' (Schama, 7), and 'once a certain idea of landscape, a myth or vision, establishes itself in an actual place, it has a peculiar way of muddling categories' (Schama, 61). Landscape, then, is a hermeneutical process of dwelling in the land. 'Landscape is not merely the world we see, it is a construction, a composition of that world. Landscape is a way of seeing the world,' Denis Cosgrove insists (13). Landscapes are not only seen, we might add, but also imagined, and experienced – aspects that come to the fore in *Draumkvæde* specifically, since the song describes landscapes that have not been witnessed by eyes but grasped in a dream. *Draumkvæde* participated in the muddling of categories by speaking theologically with the land; it contributed both to a theological landscape and a landscape theology. Lacking chronological markers, Olaf's dream abounds with spatial markers, taking its audience from realm to realm, from place to place. In this study, then, I do not interpret 'landscape' as an objectified magnitude that can be cartographically transferred onto a map, but rather as terrain as it may be engaged with. At the expense of characterization and character interaction, I explore the religious expression of the landscape. Although vague in its accounts of location, *Draumkvæde* emerges from a sense of place which permits the local terrain to speak mythologically. The landscape is embedded in the lore as the lore in the land.

After the Urtext: An Introduction

Draumkvæde has long retained its place in the canon of Norwegian literature and is generally considered a kind of 'national ballad' (Espeland, Prøysen & Ressem, *30 ballader*; Sørensen). No fictitious dreamer in the country can compare his or her

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[1] The bibliography on *place* in ecocriticism, and ecologically oriented humanities more broadly, is vast. Since Næss published his essay in 1992, it has grown considerably. For three quite different perspectives, see Buell, 252–79; Christie, 102–140; Heise. For a more anthropological approach, see Ingold.

fame to that of Olaf. Many nineteenth-century collectors of folklore took an interest in the folksong.[2] In the form that we know it, *Draumkvæde* is a ballad tradition from the region of Upper Telemark. Almost two centuries ago, Anne Lillegård, Maren Ramskeid, Anne Skålen and other traditionists performed it in their local communities. We know that they had heard it from older generations and transmitted the oral lore handed down to them. A conglomerate of stanzas, *Draumkvæde*'s shape varied a great deal. Nobody, said the locals, is so ignorant that he does not know some stanzas of *Draumkvæde*, but nobody is so wise that he knows it all (Espeland, Prøysen & Ressem, *30 ballader*). Authors like Moltke Moe (1859–1913) tried to 'reconstruct' a lost *Urtext* among the miscellaneous *Dream Songs* (see Strömbäck; Alver, 9–39; Johannesen, 7–44), but, of course, the performed versions recounted quite different dreams, and what the tradition provided was merely a core story around which traditionists could spin their own narratives freely and creatively. This variety, the riff on a standard, stories' ability to serve as base for endless artistic improvisation, is at the heart of traditional storytelling, and today a search for the lost 'original' would seem less attractive to most scholars. Indeed, it was the performed versions – rather than the later 'reconstructed' ones – that people in the early nineteenth century heard and cherished.

The housemaid Maren Olavsdotter Ramskeid was born at the Heggtveit farm in Åsgrend in 1817; she lived and grew up in the mountainous inland area between Brunkeberg and Seljord (Kviteseid municipality) before she immigrated to America in the 1850s. She had learned *Draumkvæde* from her father, who had learned it from his father (Landstad, 66). This article studies the version that Ramskeid sang to Magnus Brostrup Landstad in Kviteseid.

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[2] Nils Sveinungsson is the first person known to have recorded parts of the song corpus in writing in 1842, on behalf of Olea Crøger (1801–1855), a priest's daughter from Telemark. Based on his notes from Vinje, she wrote down the *Dream Song* towards the middle of the century. Around the same time, Magnus Brostrup Landstad (1802–1880) and Jørgen Moe (1813–1882) – both priests and poets – collected variants in the area. Several singers in the region of Upper Telemark knew a version of this dream vision, and the ballad collectors gathered the diverse renderings that they came across.

Previous scholarship has attempted to identify and interpret the characters of the ballad: Should Olaf's last name be the matronym 'Åsteson' rather than 'Åkneson'? Could this mean that the protagonist of *Draumkvæde* is none but the famous medieval St. Olav Haraldsson, whose mother's name was Åste? Perhaps these pieces of poetry even preserved fragments of an ancient pre-Christian worldview? Could not the enigmatic Grutte Greybeard hide a reference to the Norse god Odin? (Bø, 40). Was the song itself – not unlike its main character – a sleeper that originated in the Scandinavian Viking past and that only reawakened in modernity when enlightened women and men started to shake it? One might see in the visionary poem a remnant of the European tradition of otherworldly travels in the Middle Ages (Johannesen, 70–75); like the heroes in the *Vision of Tundale* or Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, Olaf was granted a glimpse of a world inaccessible to most living mortals. Both Moe and Landstad thought that *Draumkvæde* was a reworked version of the presumably medieval Icelandic *Sólarljóð* or *Sun Song* (e.g., Landstad, 65). As Christian Carlsen remarks, 'Questions of dating and authorship were long the chief subject of critical engagements with the poem, and suggestions ranged anywhere between the turn of the fifth to the eighteenth centuries' (Carlsen, 58–59). Instead of reviewing the pedigrees sketched by earlier scholarship, however, I shall turn to the song's immediate historical setting.

Any terrain shapes its people and the folklore which they produce, as well as the religion they practice. *Draumkvæde* reflects the land of the particular place that formed it. What is more, the song itself is the story of a landscape dream; Olaf's adventures amount to harsh encounters with a dreamed-up landscape. While the terrain he walks into is not the familiar hummocks of home, it is not an entirely other, either, for it lies just beyond. Emerging on the other side of the fences, one might say, is what Timothy Morton calls a 'strange stranger', a 'strange stranger' of landscapes, the familiar made uncanny (Morton, 275–77).[3] Maren Ramskeid

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[3] Morton explains that 'the strange stranger is not only strange, but strangely so. They could be us. They are us … Strange strangers are uncanny in the precise Freudian sense that they are familiar and strange simultaneously. Indeed, their familiarity is strange, and their strangeness is familiar.'

presents no exotic terrain in her version, but an uncharted place just beyond the well-known.

As fascinating as the Dante parallel may be, it suppresses vital differences between the *Divine Comedy* and *Draumkvæde*. Literature about the otherworld constitutes a vast body of text, and Dante's work shares relatively few features with the Norwegian song (regarding Dante and Medieval landscapes, see Fitter, 218–32). They emerge from dissimilar historical landscapes, but they also treat humans in contrasting manners: Dante's poetic I travels through a funnel packed with human bodies in all kinds of poses and positions. Wherever he goes, he finds sinners or saints, as he journeys firmly towards his heavenly goal. Beatrice leads him on his way. In the *Vision of Tundale* – a story that was translated into Old Norse under the title *Duggáls leizla* and arguably resembles the Telemarkian ballad more than Dante's work does – the knight is similarly escorted by an angel (cf. Wellendorf, 'Apocalypse', 137–40, for more visionary guides). Olaf, on the other hand, has no human guide, and his encounters are few; neither angels nor demons come his way, and the landscape is barely populated by any people. Only at the very end, just before the dream land loosens its grip, does he meet a group of beings that may be taken to resemble people and demons. And here St Såle Michael appears, a character who seems to be the archangel. Yet Olaf never goes to Hell; nor does he travel through Purgatory or Paradise – at least not in any form similar to how these three places are imagined in Dante. (For a broader view of relevant vision literature in the medieval Latin west, however, see Carlsen; Wellendorf, *Kristelig*.) In this article, therefore, I bracket the literary-genealogical considerations and explore instead how the song, in interacting with the natural environment where we know it was once sung, moulds an imaginary landscape from the land.

Ideologically speaking, *Draumkvæde* aims not to create clear distinctions between the sinners and the just in the otherworldly landscape. While Dante made a projection of his own social world (as he saw it) in an 'otherworld', *Draumkvæde* completely lacks a sociology, for, as already mentioned, the dream hardly features

any people at all. It is the encounter with the land itself that interests the singer.[4] Even the animals that appear in the song play an instrumental role and seem only, in effect, to be inhabited by (more than they inhabit) the uncanny landscape.

As dreams often do, Olaf's story lacks a clear chronology – and even, one might say, a geography. Veronica della Dora has shown how, in realms uninfluenced by the objectifying principles of linear perspective of the Renaissance, seeing land generated a more place-oriented literature, exemplified in Odysseus' travels, where the experience of the particular places attracts the narrator's attention, while the eventless parts of the journey are eclipsed (della Dora, 1–29; cf. even Casey's notion of 'place-world', 7–9). In this manner, Olaf (helped by the stanzaic form of the song) moves from *topos* to *topos*, from one thematically pregnant place to another. Although the poem itself post-dates the Renaissance, it emerges from an environment where the land amounts to anything but an open field of laid-out spatial possibilities or an aesthetic pleasure for the urban eye. The song tells of a landscape that is hard for a listener to map, but which is felt, painfully, by and through Olaf's body.

One might expect, perhaps, that a religious landscape yields contemplation. Deserts and mountains, for instance, have long been places of contemplative encounters with the divine in Christian and other traditions. Maren Ramskeid's land is different. As opposed to great oceans and endless deserts, it is a place of few extremes, but many hindrances: the wet bogs are as hard to cross as the thorny thickets and plains. Rather than thick dark forests, Olaf walks into an open landscape typical of more mountainous parts of Telemark.

Draumkvæde represents a period when the mechanistic worldview had not yet penetrated the Norwegian countryside, nor had modern romantic ideas about wild nature as a sublime locus of emotions and insights caught on in the agricultural milieus of Upper Telemark (Mæland). While rationalist priests might be preaching

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[4] Although amusing, Georg Johannesen's post-colonial whirlwind of a reading (*Draumkvede 1993*) fails to address the fact that Olaf's story is not primarily about other human beings.

an enlightened gospel, most laypeople still negotiated with the various forces and spirits in the world around them; forests, creeks and other parts of the landscape were alive with complex powers and potentially dangerous beings in this traditional worldview of pre-rationalist Christianity (cf. Amundsen, 269–74). As Chris Fitter has noted regarding the landscape perspective of various classes in society in general, 'the farmer and field worker survey a realm of named boundary landmarks [and] experience the "close-to" perception of worked growth.' (18). Urban National Romantics once envisioned the inland districts of Telemark as the typical Norwegian scenery, but for them it was far from a lived terrain (for a discussion, see Nordenhaug, 411–13; for the idea that there is a modern crisis of imagination regarding the environment, see Buell). The *Draumkvæde* traditionists from Telemark, on the other hand, knew hilly and rugged places, lakes and bogs, in challenging agropastoral valleys where humans and animals of the farms struggled to make a living. Compared to the rich agricultural soil of the Innlandet region north of Oslo, the land in western Telemark is meagre. There is nothing idyllically pastoral about the world that Maren Ramskeid imagines (for literary pastoral, see Gifford). While Anglophone ecocriticism with a romantic inclination has paid much attention to wildernesses (see, Garrard, 66–92), traditional pre-Romantic cosmologies in Norway did not share that interest. There lay no Arcadia beyond the cultivated land. This does not imply a disregard for what is more than human but emerged from an experience of vulnerability. Around their houses people demarcated a zone of relative safety for humans and animals – not a zone detached from the natural world, but within it. The fence did not, in other words, separate culture from nature. Venturing beyond these fences (which people surely did, and Olaf dreamed he did) meant stepping out into a realm wrought with danger, where predators and trolls roamed, where humans were constantly at risk. It did not, however, mean walking out of one's own self. Maren Ramskeid is never tempted to idealize her terrain.

The terrain that appears in *Draumkvæde* may be described as *utmark* ('outfields'):

> the Scandinavian concept 'utmark' lacks a corresponding denotation in English terminology. The term denotes natural-geographical environments such as forests, moorland, mountains and coastal areas, and economic, social and cultural aspects of these landscapes as parts of agricultural systems, as a complementary component to the infield. [...] 'utmark' may perhaps best be translated with the terms outfield or wasteland [...] In Norway, the areas covered by grazing land, forests, moors, rivers, tarns and lakes are extensive, and less than three per cent of the total land mass has ever been under cultivation (Øye, 9–11).

In this article, I follow Ingvild Øye's relatively broad definition, where 'outfields' does not merely denote the fields on the outside of the fence, but a wider area of grazing land.

As people in the Upper Telemark region tended to rely on animal husbandry, the infields there were generally small with larger outfields and shieling areas (Nordenhaug). Even houses were small, and people were relatively few; whereas the world seen from the Anthropocene may look densely populated and crowded with humans, Ramskeid would probably have sensed that the terrain was overwhelmingly powerful, as her song suggests. Just beyond the fences of the farms, wolves and bears might roam, and unwelcoming plants grew uncontrolled. Nevertheless, *Draumkvæde* says, these landscapes could speak theology. In negotiating the outer borders of the 'close-to' terrain, Olaf's point-of-view travel through the topography makes him vulnerable to the landscape, almost incorporated into it; the song renders the land a set of places that come to life in their encounters with Olaf.

Draumkvæde falls into three main sections: The beginning has an omniscient narrator that introduces Olaf and sets the scene (1–6); this section employs the refrain 'that was Olaf Aakneson, who had been asleep for so long'.[5] The second section describes his journey (7–20/22) with the refrain 'for the moon shines, and the roads disperse so wide'.[6] The landscape is witnessed from within. From this moment on, Olaf tells the story; the reader/listener is given a first-person viewpoint narration. Such subjective storytelling, which foregrounds the experiential element of the story, is unusual in older vision literature (Carlsen, 90), while it may be said to echo trends in European landscape writing of the early modern era.[7] The final section, also included in Olaf's monologue, consists of the Judgment. It starts with stanza 23, but Ramskeid introduced the refrain 'in Broksvalin – that's where Judgment shall be passed' already in stanza 21.[8]

Like a later addition to an old church building, the two final stanzas represent a different voice within the text. The words are ascribed to Olaf, but since they were performed in the official written language (Danish) and almost seem to undermine the content of the song, they appear as an anti-voice in the song, as if echoing an educated theologian who does not speak the local dialect. They may well have been composed by an eighteenth-century priest of a rationalist bent, as has been suggested (Espeland et al, *Legendeballadar*). Instead of censoring, however, Maren Ramskeid integrated this anti-voice and included it in her composition but chose to pronounce it in a markedly foreign accent from which she and the local audience could distance themselves.

The text was first published by Landstad (84–89). I follow the version recently printed in *Norske mellomalderballadar: Legendeballadar* (Espeland et al). All English translations of the song are my own.

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[5] 'dæ va Olaf Aaknesonen som sovi hæve saa længje'.

[6] 'for Maanen skjine aa Vægjene fadde saa vie'; another translation of the last part might be 'and the roads seem so long'.

[7] For instance, the influential writers John Denham and William Gilpin shared the 'sense that point of view [narration] enables the viewer to construct landscape from physical terrain … They insist, that is, that landscape is moral and political' (Bending, 3).

[8] 'i Broksvalin dær sko Domen stande'.

In the Door

When the sun rises on the thirteenth day, it finally wakes Olaf from his dream; on the Thirteenth day of Christmas he rises. Since 1771, Denmark-Norway no longer commemorated Epiphany as a public holiday, and yet nineteenth-century people would still observe Epiphany. At the same time, many celebrated, on this very same day, the old-style Christmas day according to the abandoned Julian (Old Style) calendar. The date itself was, as it were, torn between the present and the past, between official and private. From a certain perspective, young Olaf has slept backwards in time; he fell into his slumber during 'New Christmas' and arose in the 'Old'. His dream transcends temporal categories, in a time gap; from this temporal void, he falls into a new space.

Olaf was in his youth; he is called a bud or branch from a willow tree (1–2), which is the tender material used for making willow flutes. This instrument has been filling rural landscapes with tunes just as Olaf fills it now with song.

The *Draumkvæde* narrative starts with the holiday, as people are making their way to church. Olaf, too, saddles his horse and rides off. He heads for the site where preaching is being done, for he wants to relate his dream and describe what he has experienced. Where might one do that on such a day if not in church? Olaf halts at the entrance. Rhetorically he addresses the priest:

> [6] Now you are standing before the altar
> and expounding your text
> as I am standing in the church door
> about to relate my dream.

> [6] No stænde du før Altraren
> aa læg ut Texten din
> saa stænde æg i Kjyrkjedynni

fortællje vil æg Draumen min.

The parallel is clear: whereas the priest stands and preaches at the altar, the holiest place in a church, Olaf remains in the door. Thus the poem places the priest indoors, where cold winds cannot reach him; staying there in the front of the human congregation, in the middle of culture, he interprets text. Olaf's position contrasts that of the priest, in the spatial domain of the laity (cf., e.g., Diesen, 11). He lingers in the draft, cast in the outskirts of human community, almost like a shaman communicating between the human and more-than-human realm (cf. Abram, 6). Olaf is preaching to nobody – or at least we are not told that anyone actually draws near to listen. He speaks to trees and stones and the occasional rat, we may imagine. The young man does not, like the priest, read from Scripture; his is a remarkable oral story of a dreamed-up world that he himself has experienced first-hand. His gospel can only be hurled out into the cold winter air; the dead may be listening with half an ear. Who actually listens, however, is really beside the point, for the audience is eventually to be found beyond the text. *We* – who read or listen to *Draumkvæde* – make up his audience. *We* are all there, in the imaginary churchyard where he delivers his address. By implication, the poem positions *us* outside, between the altar and the unsanctified ground beyond the cemetery, between the wilderness and cultured space, learning of his adventures in the outer landscapes.

For Georg Johannesen, the placing of the protagonist by the church door and the pastor by the altar signifies direct antagonism between the two (44). This does not necessarily have to be the case, for some 110 km as the crow flies south of Maren's Kviteseid, the medieval Øyestad Church features a bishop's head in stone precisely over the church door, which is to say that such a position needs not be the locus of anti-theology. *Draumkvæde* does, however, suggest a certain complementarity; perhaps one might say that the priest and the visionary represent different modes of theologizing and different kinds of authority. Differences aside, Olaf and the

priest are both facing west.[9] They speak their parallel gospels, where the former's delivery presupposes the latter's, according to the poem itself. Olaf chooses the church as his stage, so that his message vibrates – perhaps dissonantly – with the words of the priest. Yet placing Olaf on the threshold between the hallowed room and the outdoors serves to give his gospel a more ambiguous role. He negotiates between the well-dressed and the wild, between the regulated and the forces beyond human control, the safe and the uncanny. He is about to speak landscape theology.

Out into *Uttexti*

> [6] Now you are standing before the Altar
>
> and expounding your text …
>
> [7] First I was in *Uttexti*;
>
> I traversed a circle of thorns …

> [6] No stænde du før Altraren
>
> aa læg ut Texten din …
>
> [7] Fyst va æg i Uttexti
>
> æg for ivi Dyrering …

From the seventh stanza, Olaf starts telling about his dream. He draws up a gloomy and slightly mysterious landscape before the inner eyes of his listeners; even though he is celebrating Epiphany/Christmas, he describes a summer scene of adders and wet bogs. Already the first line confronts at least the modern reader with obscurity – and probably also to Ramskeid's contemporaries: 'At first I was in *Uttexti*'. What does this mean? Where did he go? Few *Draumkvæde* words have provoked more discussion than *Uttexti*, and I will eschew a review of those debates here. Suffice it to say that while Moltke Moe construed the term as a Norwegian corruption of the

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[9] Or, Olaf could be imagined as facing south, like the door in the old church in Kviteseid for instance.

Latin words *extasis* and *exitus* (260), Jon Haukaas has suggested that the word means an infertile or unsown place in the outskirts of or beyond the farmed fields, a rugged or less accessible terrain (123–25), and Magne Myhren similarly has: 'First I was in an outlying place' (as translated in Barnes, 212, cf. Myhren, 'I uteksti').[10]

Yet the storyteller seems to be playing with words, highlighting the contrast between the dreamer and the priest: inside the church the *Text* (6) is being preached; closer to the doorway one approaches the *Uttext* (7). Thus read, *U[t]texti* may be taken to denote the 'un-text' or the 'out-text', the theology which does not issue from the text but arises from the natural landscape. It is true that in Norwegian, as in English, words such as 'un-text' or 'out-text' do not feature in dictionaries, but it is also true that such prefixes can be added relatively freely, so that for instance a word like 'unthirsty' would be easily understood by English speakers even if the *Merriam-Webster* has yet to include it. The noun 'text/tekst' is masculine in most Norwegian dialects. If we take 'i *Uttexti*' to be a dative phrase, however, that would explain the -i ending, and dative is still active in the nineteenth-century dialects of western Telemark (for inflections, see Barnes, 192, cf. also 238). We shall never know what Ramskeid's local audiences heard, and what semantics she herself assumed – it may have been an archaic word that was inherited through the tradition or a dialectical term that is currently unidentifiable – but the wider meaning is clearly the opposite of the indoor realm of the ecclesiastical text. Somewhere beyond the text, then, Olaf journeys to a sort of wilderness, a rough terrain outside the cultivated land, the rather unsafe outfields (7–8):

> [7] First I was in *Uttexti*;
> I traversed a circle of thorns;
> torn were both my scarlet cloak
> and all of my fingernails,
> *for the moon shines and the roads disperse so wide.*

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[10] See also *Norsk ordbok: Ordbok over det norske folkemålet og det nynorske skriftmålet*, s.v. *utekst* I.

[7] Fyst va æg i Uttexti

æg for ivi Dyrering

sonde va mi Skarlakens kaape

aa Neglan a kvor min Fing

– *For Maanen skjine aa Væegjene fadde saa vie* –

Generally speaking, Norwegian folklore tends to reflect a fundamental cosmological divide between the safe – and at times even sacred – cultivated land on one hand and the dangerous and uncultivated world beyond the ploughed fields on the other (Hodne, 19–24). Like other works of traditional storytelling, *Draumkvæde* imagines the phenomenon of human exposure to danger in terms of venturing outside the boundaries of the farmed landscape. While peaceful powers reigned around houses and homes so that humans, plants, animals, and other non-human beings were mostly on friendly terms, unbefriended forces that were dangerous to people and to the livestock ruled on the other side of the fence. *There*, domestic animals and humans appeared merely as foreign guests and had to be utterly careful not to upset the predators and powers who lived among trees and rocks (Steinsland, 143–44; Hodne, 26–30; Asheim, 26). Fairy tale heroes encounter trolls in such terrains.

This is the kind of landscape Olaf's dream has taken him into: Wild animals are circling ('Dyrering') and the young man is crossing their track ('Dyretraa', 8). A possible interpretation of the first part of these words 'dyre-' – which I follow in my translation here – is that it is a corruption of 'tyrner-/tynnir-', meaning 'thorn' (Myhren 'Draumkvædet', 80; Barnes, 205–6 n. 10; cf. Blom, 11). From a literary point of view, such a reading seems plausible. Landstad himself apparently heard 'dyre-', but we cannot know to what degree he recorded every word of the song precisely; Ramskeid spoke a dialect which lacked orthographic rules (Barnes, 189–95). In any case, Olaf's scarlet cloak is shredded, by thorns or by the wildlife – possibly predators. His fingernails and his toenails (8) are ragged. The scene portrays him

intruding in a violent faunal or vegetal landscape. The red scraps of the cloak hang from his body as if imitating blood dripping from a wounded figure. In a Christian context, the scarlet colour conveys rich connotations of power, sin, martyrdom and death. The prophet Isaiah says, for instance, that 'though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow' (1.18), and in the Danish ballad *Elverskud*, blood from a blow flows on a scarlet cloak. Does *Draumkvæde*'s scarlet cloak signify Olaf's own bloody skin? This question is left to the audience's interpretation, but his groomed self is clearly being ripped and mangled; the outer land and its creatures are clawing Olaf, scratching at his corporeal presence. Apparently, they try to scare him away from the dangerous terrain; ironically, though, they are scratching his body down until it almost dissolves into the landscape itself, transforming him from an infield being with a cloak into a wild outfield being. The whole scene is described in strikingly tangible ways; yet there is no visual ekphrasis of these regions. Olaf does not so much see and observe the landscape as he experiences it, is made to feel it. He later relates how mud fills his mouth (11). The mud is said to be *rapa*, which can mean both 'slid' and 'belched'. Olaf is, as it were, gulping the soil and becoming a part of it, like a living corpse. The landscape does not lie before him passively; it eats itself into his body.

Crossing the Bridge

Yet the young man moves on, under an ominous moon. As the refrain maintains, the roads disperse so utterly far and wide. Although these words do not translate easily, they contribute to the indication of a gloomy and unwelcoming landscape where the dreaming wanderer is given over to a harsh loneliness. Christian Scripture says that '*narrow* is the road that leads to life' (Matthew 7.14). Olaf appears to be heading in a different direction. And while the verb 'fall' (*fadde*) here primarily means simply 'seem' – the roads 'appear so wide' – it does at the same time suggest a vertiginous landscape where the roads are falling away underneath Olaf's feet.

After the violent animals or thorns, Olaf sets out to cross a bridge. As early runic inscriptions attest, bridges had had a positive reputation in Scandinavia ever

since the emergence of Christianity, not only in the symbolic landscape, but also in the physical landscape of rivers and roads (Gräslund, 490–92). The Dynna stone (ca. AD 1050), for instance, reads 'Gunvor Thrydriksdaughter made a bridge in memory of her daughter Astrid.'[11] Building bridges counted as a good deed. Olaf's bridge is not so good. He is not about to cross an ordinary bridge. Ahead lies the Gjallar Bridge (*Gjallarbru*), which in Norse mythology was known to span the river Gjǫll, separating the living from the dead. As Michael Barnes has pointed out, Gjallarbru – with a rich field of connotations – remained a part of Christian language in Scandinavia throughout the Catholic period and beyond (Barnes, 43; cf. Carlsen, 165–70). *Draumkvæde* mentions no river, yet even for Olaf traversing the bridge means entering deeper into the landscapes of death:

> [9] And the Gjallar Bridge is awful
> and not good to walk upon,
> The hounds they bite, the adders sting
> and the bulls there are a-butting,
> *for the moon shines and the roads disperse so wide.*

> [9] Aa Gjeddarbroi den æ vond
> aa inkje go aa gange
> Bekkjune bite aa Ormane sting
> aa Stutæne stænd aa stangar.
> *– For Maanen skjine aa Væegjene fadde saa vie –*

The three Billy-Goats Gruff of the fairy tale had to face up to a troll in order to make their way across a bridge, from the infield to the outfields. Whereas bridges form parts of the landscape, as already noted, they also constitute points of transition in the landscape. Giving admittance to new areas, they simultaneously appear as

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[11] kunuur × kirþi × bru × þririks tutir × iftir osriþi × tutur × sina

obstacles. The passage from one place to the other can only be achieved through pain and struggle; bridges represent the sting of change. Whoever crosses a bridge – especially in literature – enters a new field or a new realm. Transition may imply danger.

To Olaf, the bridge offers harsh resistance as he ventures into unknown territories. All the actors in the landscape are trying to push the wanderer away from the lands to which he is foreign, a place where nature turns on itself, the dogs and the snakes biting and the bulls butting their heads, perhaps goring Olaf. The animals are nervous and overstrung. Nonetheless, the protagonist's experience does not amount to an exotic hell vision of burning flames and dragons – nor a troll-encounter for that matter. His crossing of the bridge includes cattle, hounds, and adders. None of these were unfamiliar in the rural life of Upper Telemark. Olaf still roams in the outskirts of his own local landscape; his mythical terrain stretches out from the fields that Ramskeid's listeners knew. Rather than dualistically divided into good and evil, the land presents dangers and challenges of various sorts. The animals are nervous out here; they are turning on Olaf, and apparently on each other. Olaf has stridden across deep bogs, he reports, he has waded the bottomless wetlands that he calls *Voxmyren* (11).[12] The landscape threatens to swallow him.

Landscape Learning

As the outfield landscape offers Olaf resistance, it simultaneously teaches him wisdom. Once he has made his way across the bridge, the dreamer starts to understand what the land and its elements are instructing him about. First, he observes two adders biting each other (10). This was, he says, cousins who marry in *this realm* (*denni Heimen*) – that is, in the infields where Olaf stands as he is relating his story. Through their confused yet violent behaviour, the animals warn him not to engage in relationships that contradict Christian ethics. In such marriages, nature turns on itself. Animal activities in this land beyond the Gjallarbru (as animal

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[12] The name seems to be a corruption of *våsemyran(e)*, meaning bogs that are hard to wade through or which one will easily sink down in (Myhren, 'Draumkvædet', 81; cf. also Barnes, 216).

activities in the more familiar infields of Telemark, we may assume) make up signs or allegories that Olaf needs to interpret and make sense of. If he does, the landscape and those who dwell in it communicate with him and reveal insights.

Next, in a language clearly reminiscent of the New Testament Beatitudes (Matthew 5.3–12; Luke 6.20–22), the dreamer reveals what he has learned about charity. The one who gives shoes to the poor in the more well-known everyday realm (*Føesheimen*) does not have to walk barefoot on the thorny plains of the *Heklemoe* (12). He who has fed the hungry need not feel faint on the chilling Gjallarbru, nor fear the horns of the bulls (13–14). Those who have given bread and clothes to the needy will not themselves be destitute here in the landscape that Olaf is discovering (15–16). As morally righteous behaviour never contradicts nature, a person who has acted in an ethical way does not upset the species in the landscape; being charitable protects people from the dangers of these outfields. This is hardly the kind of literature that gives all sorts of narrative minutiae, and we are not told how Olaf reaches his conclusions, but his engagement with the landscape itself, his corporeal experience of these painful places, seems to have given him a very tangible knowledge. The stanzas suggest, moreover, that Olaf himself does not belong to the group of people blessed for their compassion, for he has suffered much along the way, and the Gjallarbru confronted him with painful resistance (9). The journey grants him, nonetheless, discernment regarding his own deficiencies.

The Trail of Insight

Eventually Olaf's luck turns as he proceeds to the *Vetters Ti* (17–20). It is possible that Landstad misunderstood this phrase, for while it may sound like 'winter time', it makes more sense if the phrase is interpreted as 'Vitersti', meaning a trail of insight or knowledge (Myhren, 'Draumkvædet', 85–86). It may also, according to Knut Liestøl, mean the trail the dead have to walk (Liestøl & Moe, 195). In any case, it is true that this road leads to winter; by choosing it Olaf would come upon a freezing landscape of blue ice. He avoids it (17), however, and instead he beholds Paradise to his right.

Giving no description of Paradise as a place, Olaf relates how this blessed realm shines from its location down below and appears to emit rays over fields and lands, as if it were a sun rising in the lunar landscape (18). According to conventional Christian cosmology, *up* is good while *down* is bad; heaven is above and hell below. *Draumkvæde* turns this cosmology upside down as the protagonist finds himself situated higher up than Paradise, implying that a good place can be somewhere low in the terrain. Mountains and high hills might be places of vulnerability to Ramskeid and her contemporary animals, whereas valleys and hillsides provided heat and shelter and fertility. Paradise shimmers from a low place. The most striking aspect, however, is not that the levels switch places; on the contrary, the levels themselves collapse in the poem, and the significance of up and down are downplayed to the advantage of various places on the same plane.

After his gloomy drifting, Olaf's path is now filled with excitement. He walks downwards, as from a hill and down in the valley. In or by Paradise he distinguishes someone familiar and exclaims with joy:

[19] Then I caught sight of Paradise;
it couldn't have befallen me better;
I recognised my Godmother there
with red gold on her hands.

[19] Saa saag æg mæg te Paradiis
dæ mone mæg inkje bære hænde
der kjænde æg atte Gudmo mi
mæ røde Gul paa Hænde

For the first time, Olaf encounters another human being, his *Gudmo/Gulmo*. We might ask, however, whether she can be regarded as a regular human being. Although the word may simply mean 'godmother' or 'golden mother', in this song it

can hardly connote anyone but the Mother of God. Alone the facts that her hands are covered in gold and that she dwells in Paradise suggest as much.[13] She is, in other words, no ordinary human, but the Mother of God herself, wretched creatures' most sanctified helper in the divine realm. Here she resides in Paradise, and to Olaf she represents a joyful turn of events, a salvation from the landscapes of death that surround him.

This could have been the end of his travel, but it is not. The Virgin Mary urges him on to a different place. 'Go to *Broksvalin*,' she says, because that is the place of the judgment.

Broksvalin

Scholars have given no good explanation for the word/name *Broksvalin*, and the performers may not have known exactly either. Some suggestions include 'halls of the clouds' or 'halls in the hills', and even 'vestibule of misery' (Barnes, 214; Myhren, 'Draumkvædet', 87–88). Although possible, none of these definitions succeeds in convincing entirely; they all basically amount to scholarly guesses based on what the two parts of the word might mean according to various dictionaries. Yet there is nothing in Ramskeid's version to suggest misery, and the etymological reference to the Icelandic *brok* (Myhren, 'Draumkvædet', 87) seems intrinsically tied to ideas about the Norse provenance of the song, unless one thinks a related word was in use in the Kviteseid dialect. If we assume that people in the beginning of the nineteenth century did not understand this name to signify anything specific, one could also read it as an evocative name. For instance, as adjective *sval* can mean 'cool' (not too hot), while the verb *hugsvale*, which assonates with *Broksvalin*, means to comfort or relieve. *Brok* can be heard as related to words for being broken or perhaps the word for commotion (*bråk*); a *val* is a battleground (cf. even Valhalla). These possible allusions may add some hue to the otherwise quite enigmatic and lofty halls. Olaf

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[13] Furthermore, a well-known folktale tradition (first recorded in Norway by Jørgen Moe west of Oslo in the nineteenth century) tells of the Virgin Mary as godmother to a poor girl (AT 710, known in English as 'The Lassie and Her Godmother'; see Solberg).

avoids describing the place at all. Escaping secure description, the location does, nonetheless, play a major role in the story, for this is where the Judgment is going to take place. It looms at the end of the visionary landscape, the end of the long and thorny road.

Broksvalin comes with a few peculiar figures who are assembling in this mysterious terrain. First Olaf meets a man:

[21] Then met I the man,
and blood was [his] cloak;
under his arm he carried a child,
in the soil he waded knee deep.
In Broksvalin – that's where Judgment shall be passed.

[21] Saa mødte æg Mannen,
aa Kaapa den va Blo
han bar eit Barn onde sin Arm
i Jori han gjek te Knæ
– I Broksvalin dær sko Domen stande. –

Olaf here tells of the only ordinary – albeit unfortunate – human beings that he comes across, yet not even this man is necessarily a regular person. His cloak is blood. As we have already seen, Olaf's cloak was scarlet, a colour generally associated with (Christ's) blood. Olaf's cloak was torn asunder, along with his nails, by the landscape's thorns or clawing animals (7–8). Through this process, we must imagine, the distinction between cloak and blood was diminishing even further. It is difficult not to interpret the man in the cloak of blood, then, as Olaf himself. Olaf also waded through deep bogs and sank down in the dangerous Voxmyren (11), resembling this fellow who is sinking down in the soil to his knees. Stanza 22 talks about a man – apparently the same man – whose cloak is heavy as lead, and the baby

that he is carrying under his arm (21) represents his rigid soul in *this realm* (22). On the verge of the Judgment, the landscape shows Olaf himself in a mirror.

Simultaneously, a terrifying parade arrives from the north. This cardinal direction signals chilling cold, not least in Nordic countries where the winter cold can be fatal. A rider on a black horse heads the procession (23). Grutte Greybeard on the black horse has often been identified as the Devil, but in the song, he is simply known as Grutte, a name which may mean 'gruff', 'grouchy' or 'furious'. Black and grey come riding through the landscape. Frightening as his pack may seem, they are not allowed much space in the story, for from the temperate south enters a good procession, led by St Såle Michael and Jesus Christ (24–25).[14]

St Såle Michael blows his *lur*, calling all the souls to come forward (26).[15] They are shaking like aspen leaves in the wind, aware of their sinfulness. The idiom of leaves ironically reveals the sinners as both fearful and light at the same time, for do not aspen leaves perform a featherlike dance in the wind? Hence their penitent shaking appears to lighten the weight of their sins which are about to be measured. When St Såle Michael finally uses his scale to weigh them, it does not determine whether the evil deeds or the good deeds are heavier; he simply – as if in a light breeze – 'weighed all of the sinful souls over to Jesus Christ' (28). Thus the song ends with the joy of redemption when all the sinners are saved by St Såle Michael and Christ. Even as Ramskeid's song places Christ in the story, he remains in the outskirts of it, in the distance, decentred; he rides behind the angel, and the latter takes charge of the judgment. Merely a receiver of souls that flutter over to him, Jesus appears present but passive.

According to Sigurd Bergmann, Nordic churches 'avoid locating God – the suffering as well as the resurrected – directly in the Nordic landscape' (237). Even if

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[14] 'Sål(e)' may mean 'soul', but Ramskeid actually uses another word ('Sjæl') for soul in the same stanzas, and thus 'St Såle Michael' appears to be a set phrase for her. This is supported by the fact that other versions of *Draumkvæde* also call him 'St Såle Michael'.

[15] A *lur* is a traditional Scandinavian wooden trumpet instrument; it works here as a local variant of the Biblical idea about a trumpet announcing God's final reign: 'Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever cond ever."' (Rev 11.15).

this may be correct for church imagery, it does not hold true for *Draumkvæde*, where Christ rides – presumably a horse from the warmer south – through the terrain. Admittedly, the landscape of judgment bears no explicit Telemarkian markers (while aspen is native to Telemark, it is also found elsewhere in Europe and Asia), but there is no reason to imagine that Olaf ever abandons the locally informed land, even as he steers clear of the icy trail (17); thus the judgement scene allows the reader or listener to visualize Christ in a 'Nordic landscape'. In *Broksvalin*, the divine and the local intersect.

The dangerous wilderness beyond the Gjallarbru has eventually shown itself to be fields of salvation, where Christ visits, out in its extremities. Maren Ramskeid does not provide an infernal territory of punishment, but a landscape where those who have upset nature suffer according to nature before the salvific judgment (cf. Hellemo, 86; Johannesen, 57–59).

Eventually, the song, in a dream-like manner, has returned to where it started, to the horse(s) carrying the character(s) onto the scene. As Olaf's entrance discreetly foreshadowed the judgment, the judgment now takes us back to his place in the church door, where aspen leaves – more or less figurative – may listen to his words, and his proclamation resounds with the *lur*.

After Judgment

In an era when topographic poetry grew in popularity in Europe – as did landscape painting – the *Dream Song* of Telemark spoke religiously with the landscape and told of dangerous, painful places. It is a song about a man who relates his dream, and the dream concerns a journey through a landscape which teaches him theological insights. Ramskeid's Olaf neither ventures into a different dimension nor is he taken up to a heaven above or a hell below. In fact, above and below hardly apply here. Olaf simply wanders out into the outskirts of familiar terrains. If it is likely, as David Abram assumes, that 'the supernatural heaven of Christian belief, originates in the loss of our ancestral reciprocity with the animate earth' (Abram, 10), then Maren Ramskeid exemplifies a more intimate relation with the animate

earth when she participates in the modelling of a dreamscape devoid of celestial supernaturality, a dreamscape formed from the dust of the local ground. Reading Christian ideas about judgment and morality in the regional terrain, Ramskeid conveyed an imaginary topography, a mythological landscape that stretched out as a rustic alternative to the indoor gospel. With the other traditionists, she consulted her own geography and fauna when she spoke theology; they found in their local environment a mythological potential as they were conversing theologically with roads and fields and marshland. The various formations, places, and creatures that Olaf encounters instruct him about life and death, about the consequences of immoral behaviour, about Judgment and Salvation. Other versions of *Draumkvæde* render different topographical encounters (for a list of place names in all the various *Draumkvæde*, see Barnes, 214–17), but they all share the idea that the otherworld stretches out as a terrain extending beyond the fences of this world.

There is nothing picturesque about the landscape of *Draumkvæde*, however, for the terrain commands; it wrestles with and tackles the one who traverses it. Instead of lying there as a passive resource for farmers or others to develop, it teaches and instructs, it grasps and tears, and it interacts with Olaf throughout the whole song. Animals and plants undress the protagonist, shred his skin and grind him down to mud; the landscape scares him and hurts him with its animals and exhausts him with its plants. The agency of the land itself creates the dynamics of the narrative; the dreamer and the terrain have struggled with each other in a battle of life and death. Although Ramskeid's landscape comes with a happy end, she is never tempted to create delightful pastoral scenes, as opposed to her contemporary Romantics, who strolled out into nature's immaculacy for inspiration. For them the wild and natural space formed an open realm where sublime creativity and insight might be bestowed upon the enthused genius, the landscape itself merely representing a spiritless and material world (see Dvergsdal for a study of Norwegian examples). In its dreamy dimness, Ramskeid's landscape has nothing ethereally spiritual to it; on the contrary, it appears almost frightfully tangible.

Those who were lucky enough to hear Maren Ramskeid perform, would have been led to imagine that the terrain – somewhere out there – communicated insights about ethics and ultimately also about the immanent presence of the holy and divine in the outskirts of the local. To us, as twenty-first-century readers of *Draumkvæde*, who are (to return to Næss' terminology) victims of place-corrosion, it speaks in another register. The song confronts us with a less anthropocentric view of agency in the world than we are used to. This historical source imagines me, as human, differently in relation to the more-than-human world, which is here, around me. Without eclipsing the church building, or the Christian text, or the infield – or Jesus Christ for that matter – the *Dream Song* decentres them, demonstrating that the landscape outside can teach us other religious lessons, about the embodied self as a part of the local place. Olaf returns as a transformed person, who now belongs in the doorway, and who has seen past the delocalizing text. For out yonder, beyond the text, lies *Uttexti*.

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The *Dancing Between Two Worlds* Project: Background, Methodology and Learning to Approach Community in Place

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Introduction

Australia's Deakin University has auspiced various enterprises aimed at contributing to the well-being of targeted communities through scholarly and practice-based activities reified at the intersection of the creative arts and various versions of place. The host element for most of these projects has been Deakin's School of Communication and Creative Arts (SCCA). The locations of Deakin's campuses have to a large extent determined which communities have been approached with a view to forming a partnership. Besides its virtual or Cloud-based campus, Deakin has four on-the-ground Victorian campuses: Melbourne Burwood Campus, Geelong Waurn Ponds Campus, Geelong Waterfront Campus and Warrnambool Campus. Three Deakin Learning Centres are located at Craigieburn, Dandenong and Werribee.

Deakin's geographical spread extends from Melbourne, westwards via Geelong, to Warrnambool. Geelong is approximately 75 kilometres west of Melbourne and Warrnambool is a little under 200 kilometres westwards past Geelong. Deakin's physical footprint is capital-city focused (Burwood, in Melbourne, is the largest campus by student numbers), urban concentrated (in Melbourne and Geelong) and water hugging (around Port Phillip Bay and along the Bass Strait coastline).

> ## Locations
>
> Deakin has five campuses in Melbourne, Geelong and Warrnambool, which feature world-class facilities and a friendly, welcoming atmosphere. Our Cloud Campus is an innovative online learning environment offering a premium study experience. We also have corporate and learning centres that provide meeting, study and event spaces. Explore our locations in more detail and make the most of what we can offer you.

Figure 1: Map of Deakin locations courtesy of Deakin University Website.

The *Dancing Between Two Worlds* (*DBTW*) project that is the subject of this paper involved Indian-Australian artists in a series of workshops that culminated in a site-specific performance along a riverside path and the main street of Werribee, in the vicinity of Deakin's Werribee Learning Centre. Werribee sits on the outer western fringe of suburban Melbourne and is just under halfway to Geelong from the centre of Melbourne. Werribee is the original suburb of the City of Wyndham Local Government Area (LGA).

Contextualizing *DBTW* in relation to similar SCCA creative-research enterprises is useful for several reasons. It underscores how geographically overlapping projects may engage with the same general community in different

ways. There are many vectors of approach to the same community and any community is never just a single community. Furthermore, communities may have intensive and complex relationships with other geographical places—either locally, nationally or internationally. This is especially pertinent to the local Indian community at the heart of *DBTW*. Finally, the comparison in the following section of this article between *DBTW* and two other creative-research enterprises with a similar remit helps in drawing out how SCCA researchers have become more nuanced in their activation of enterprises that combine (qualitatively measured) well-being, the creative arts, and place. One aspect of this, to be considered later on in this article, is the choice research enterprises may (choose to) make between constructing themselves as a project or as a group. A group will, of course, carry out projects, but projects do not need to be carried out by a group. There is a discursive tension between the terms 'project' and 'group' that rewards consideration. More immediately, the two enterprises to be looked at before moving to a closer engagement with *DBTW* are the *Flows & Catchments* group and the *Treatment* project.

The *Flows & Catchments* Group and the *Treatment* Project

The *Flows & Catchments* group emerged in 2011 with a cluster of SCCA staff at its core. Its geographical area of concern was the Volcanic Plains Region of Western Victoria, which the group understood to extend from the western fringe of Melbourne, where the Maribyrnong River runs, deep into Western Victoria. Deakin's Warrnambool campus approximately marked the western boundary of the group's activities. The chapbook *Flows & Catchments: Place* is a comprehensive introduction to the group:

> *Flows & Catchments* is an experiment in comprehending our global state
> from the ground up rather than from the top, or sky, down. It's a matter of

the systemic and what feeds it, which means thinking and acting in the smallest and deftest of ways while, at the same time, also seeing the planet from afar. (Perazzo 2014: 5)

Flows & Catchments was most active in the period 2011 to 2015. In 2012 and 2013 members of *Flows & Catchments* were heavily involved with the Lake Bolac Eel Festival. The Creative Partnerships Australia (formerly the Australia Business Arts Foundation) 2012 and 2013 Creative Partnerships Regional Awards were won jointly by Deakin University and the Lake Bolac Eel Festival. Since 2015 the group has been less active. However, the sort of work originally attached to *Flows & Catchments* has always been available for re-activation, either under the same banner or another. Some *Flows & Catchments* members are now *DBTW* members. *Flows & Catchments* is a part of Deakin's institutional memory—and thus also of its present—in the space of creative research with a community, place-based inflection.
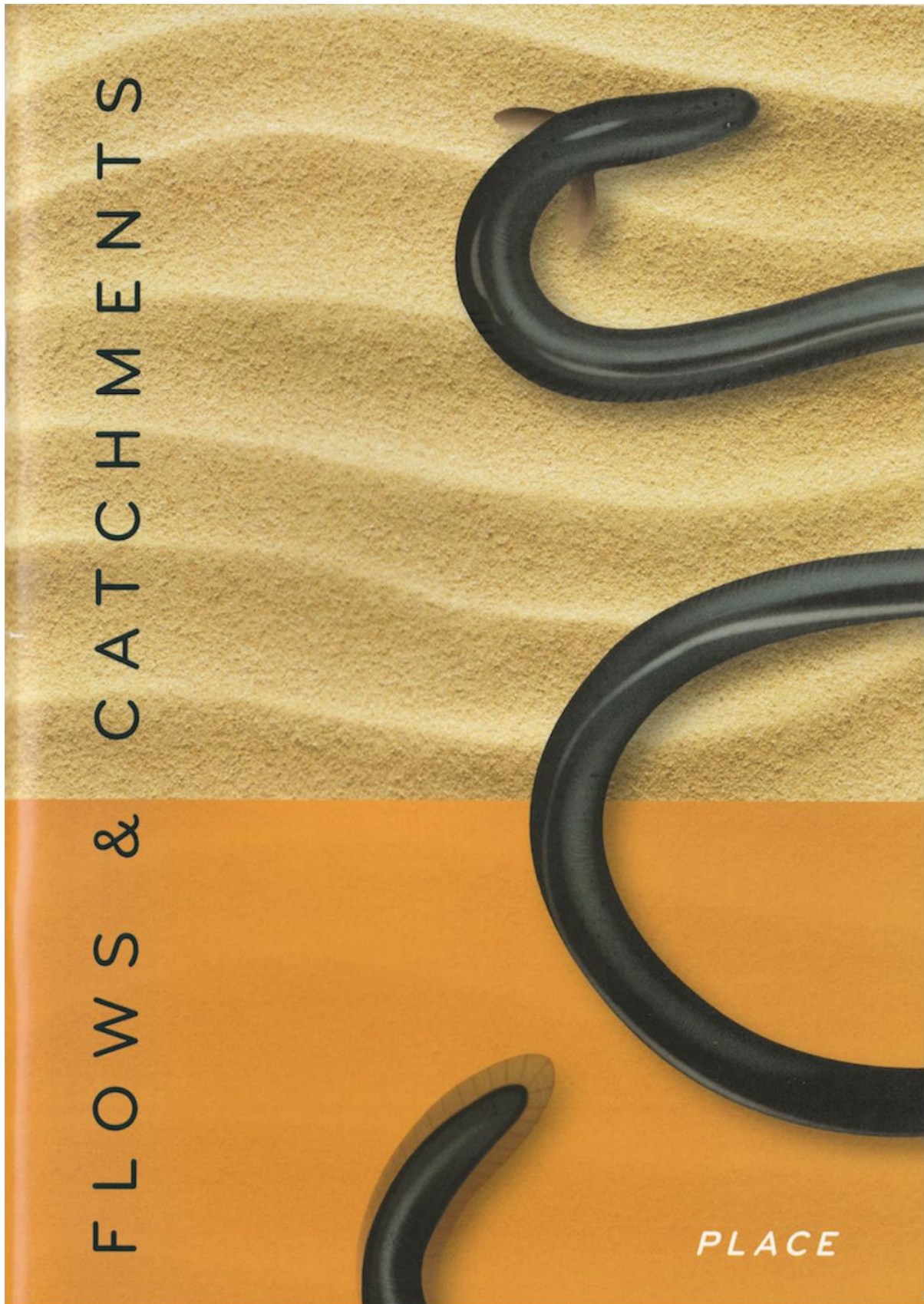
FLOWS & CATCHMENTS

PLACE

Figure 2: Front cover image of *Flows & Catchments: Place*.

The *Treatment* project is a more recently developed enterprise than the *Flows & Catchments* group. *Treatment* is a public art event held at the Western Treatment Plant, which is where Melbourne Water treats 50% of Melbourne's sewage. The Western Treatment Plant is located in the semi-rural locality of Cocoroc, which adjoins Werribee South and is part of the City of Wyndham LGA. *Treatment* was first held in 2015 (the year that *Flows & Catchments* wound back its activities) and then again in 2017. Unlike *Flows & Catchments*, *Treatment* has, as a project, thus far been a curated two-day event. Different versions of *Treatment* are planned. *Treatment* is run in close collaboration with one of Deakin's industry partners: Melbourne Water. In 2015 and 2017, *Treatment* consisted of a number of public art events and performances, all held on the grounds of the Western Treatment Plant. The lineage of *Treatment* may be traced back to *Flows & Catchments* and there is membership cross-over spanning *Treatment*, *Flows & Catchments* and *DBTW*. Unlike *Flows & Catchments*, *Treatment* is an actively ongoing Deakin enterprise, taking place just a few kilometres from the focus site of *DBTW* in downtown Werribee. Both enterprises energetically situate themselves within the City of Wyndham LGA. Further information on *Treatment* may be found in the limited edition book (600 copies) *Treatment: Six Public Artworks at the Western Treatment Plant*.

No doubt there are people who have pondered on the mysterious process of human waste removal set in train by the pressing of the toilet button. Yet, up until recently, I was not one of them.
—David Cross (editor)
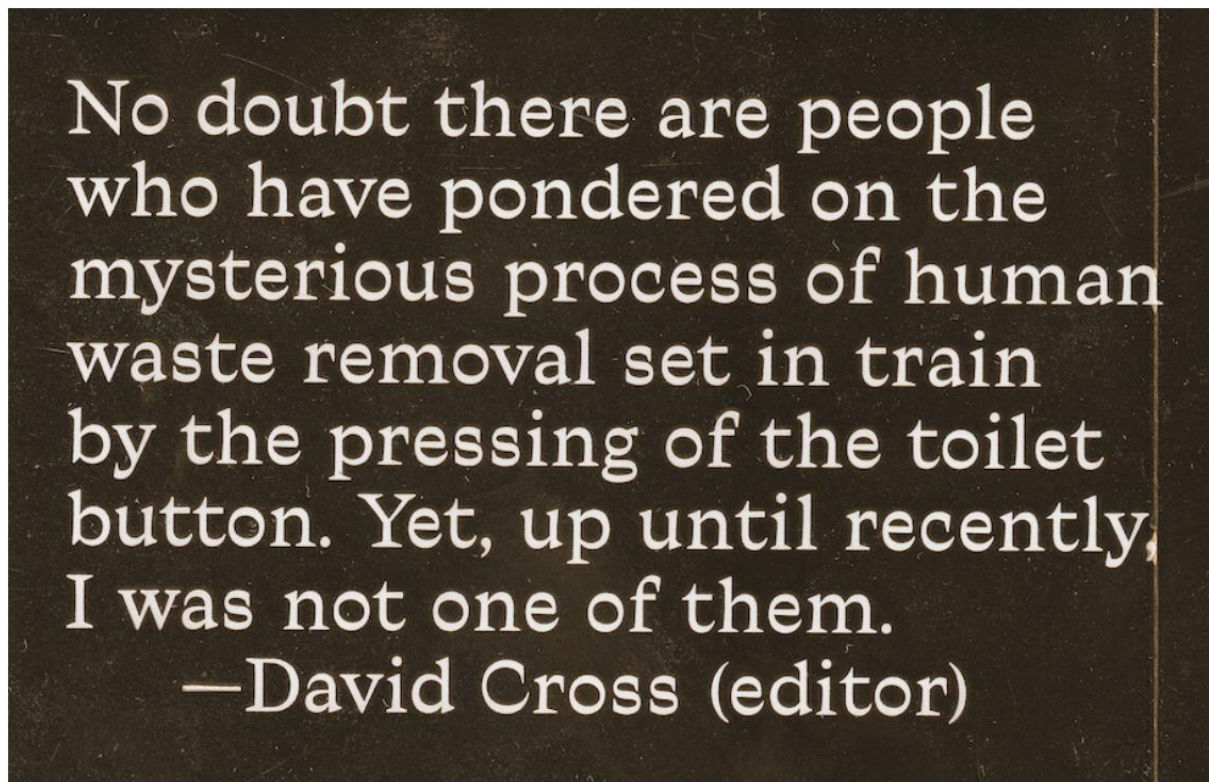
Figure 3: Back cover image of *Treatment: Six Public Artworks at the Western Treatment Plant*.

Flows & Catchments and *Treatment* are just two of a number of multi-person creative-research enterprises, involving Deakin academics and people external to Deakin, operating in the same space: that is, at the juncture of well-being, the creative arts, and place. We have chosen to highlight these enterprises because they also tick the box of sitting within Deakin's geographical footprint.

The *Dancing Between Two Worlds* Community Project: Space, Place and Site

The *DBTW* project was initiated in 2018 by two ongoing Deakin academics, a research fellow, and a PhD candidate (the authors of this article). The predominant artform represented in the group, at its inception, was dance. In effect, we came together around a shared interest in the creative arts (broadly speaking), communities of place, and relationships with India. Shaun, now resident in Melbourne, was born in India and cites a long association with that country, while

Anindita had, in 2018, been living in Wyndham, as part of its prominent Indian community, for over five years. A notable difference between the *DBTW* project and previous Deakin enterprises is that the former is place defined *and* defined through our intention to work with a certain culturally and linguistically diverse community (the Indian community in Werribee).

Seed funding for *DBTW* came from Deakin, whose research leadership is appropriately careful in how it administers public funds, promulgating the expectation that internal funding will lead to successful external funding applications. Across 2018 and 2019, the City of Wyndham Council provided additional funding to the project, and in 2019 the group also received small grants from Wyndham Community Cultural Foundation (Arts Assist) and Multicultural Festivals and Events through the Victorian Government.

The title *Dancing Between Two Worlds* immediately signifies one mode of dual spatiality: that is, the two 'worlds' of India and Australia. Complementing and overlapping this doubleness, in the early days of the project's existence, were two other spatialities of our thinking. One of these was the desire to bring an internationally renowned dance group from India to Victoria for a series of high profile performances, which would be associated with some more community-based events involving the local Indian-Australian, and more broadly Australian, communities. The other spatiality consisted in the development of more locally focused activities, conducted exclusively with and within various Melbourne communities. Werribee in Wyndham, with its large Indian population, was an obvious geographical fit with both these project spatialities. (Unfortunately, we have not, yet, sourced sufficient funding to enact the international element of our project, an ambition further complicated, in 2020 and possibly beyond, by COVID-19.)

In Australian academic and creative arts discourses, 'place' has come to pertain to a whole gamut of complex identity relations to do with belonging, ownership, history, politics and experience, and has become a major field of interdisciplinary inquiry. Geographer Linda McDowell notes that the extensive movement of peoples from their places of birth and ancestry, through imperialism, immigration, refuge and simply through travel, has created a globalised sense of place, changing the notion of place as 'authentic' and 'rooted in tradition.' According to McDowell, place is now defined by the intersection of particular socio-spatial relations that create a place's distinguishing qualities (4). She writes:

> [following the enormous changes of the twentieth century] ...the commonsense geographical notion of a place as a set of coordinates on a map that fix a defined and bounded piece of territory has been challenged...[and now] places are contested, fluid and uncertain. It is socio-spatial practices that define places and these practices result in overlapping and intersecting places with multiple and changing boundaries... (3-4)

The new authenticity of place McDowell describes is 'made up from flows and movements, from intersecting social relations rather than stability and rootedness' (5). That place is characterised by greater fluidity and instability now than in the past represents a major shift in the organisation of people's lives and as such is the impetus for the sizeable body of work being produced across a broad range of fields of knowledge on the subject of place.

Also recognising the changing conditions of place in the contemporary world, art historian Miwon Kwon in *One Place after Another* identified a contradiction between 'the nostalgic desire for a retrieval of rooted, place-bound identities on the one hand and the anti-nostalgic embrace of a nomadic fluidity of

subjectivity, identity and spatiality on the other' (8). Kwon commented upon shifts in site-based art practices at the turn of the millennium, which reflect the global destabilising of place, and that encompass a new notion of site as an 'intertextually coordinated, multiply located, discursive field of operation' (159). Kwon suggested finding a terrain between this trend of deterritorialised mobilisation and a more traditional, grounded site-specificity, and imagines a new model of 'belonging-in-transience' (166). A clue to this model might lie in considering the range of seeming contradictions *together*, to inhabit them at once and find a sense of belonging with the instabilities: 'to understand seeming oppositions as *sustaining relations*' (166). Kwon advocates 'relational sensibilities', emphasising relationships between things, people and places. *DBTW* shares some of this sense of inhabiting transience. Kwon extends the possibilities of 'site' to encompass a network of social relations (5): a community, which has propelled the emergent field of site-based performance as community cultural development (Taylor, 2017).

Diasporic communities have a potentially more open relationship to place as a dimension of their citizenship than dominant cultures. As much as cultures are re-cast in their relationship to new places, specific sites are reimagined through performance. The site in site-specific performance, says Victoria Hunter, '...is metaphorically freed from its everyday, normative meanings and associations and its identity becomes mobilised through the individual's processes of experiencing and perceiving the site in a different manner' (259). Performance has the capacity to enact the embodied potentials, dynamics and movements of '...people migrating countries or crossing a city; the movement of cultural ideas and social practices' (Douglas 7). Yet despite all the possible fluid and open-ended responses to site-based performance, the context is an accessible one for the communities in which the performances take place. In this sense, '...site art is above all, a means to create and affect communities and their quality of life' (Kloetzel & Pavlik 233).

Working With/Out Landscape

Our commitment to site based performance is accompanied by a wariness of the term 'landscape', which is often used in conjunction with projects like ours. While the *DBTW* project is consciously set in the Deakin University footprint or 'landscape', we situate our place-based project at Werribee at a conceptual distance from the term 'landscape'.

The definition of 'landscape' limits experience of place to the visual sense: '...scenery, as seen in a broad view' (Moore, 2008). Site-specific performance in relation to place engages all of the senses, including the visual sense, in not only a 'broad view' but also the close range, in a relation of surrounded-ness, immersion and inter-relation. This multi-sensory immersion posits the body within the place, whilst *landscape* connotes (and we would suggest, promotes) the observation of an exterior point of view, placed at a distance from the body (Taylor, 2009).

The term 'landscape' is homologous with the distanced approach to viewing/knowing/mastering of a place critiqued by Michel de Certeau in 'Walking in the City' (in *The Practice of Everyday Life*) and is also reminiscent of colonial forms of vision. Stephen Muecke in *Textual Spaces* notices about Aboriginal narratives 'the complete absence of a *specular* version of the landscape' (167). The metaphor of walking the city streets as an epistemology of embodied immersion in or amongst the world (in contrast to the disembodied aerial view) could be compared to the experience of Aboriginal Australians' knowing of country via walking and singing its ancestral tracks. In a later work, Muecke observes that the tradition of landscape painting in Australia reinforced the colonial gaze that 'captures' and claims ownership; he asserts that 'framing Land as pictures of landscape [makes] possible the recontextualisation of the environment at a distance from ourselves and, by implication, under our control' (2004 75).

Thus, in the Indian artists' performed interaction with sites of Werribee, we suggest the emphasis was on participation in place, with consciousness as recently arrived residents on ancient Indigenous Country—within the complexities of a colonised society—rather than on a positioning of themselves/ourselves in relation to the *landscape*.

Reaching Out to the Local Indian Community in the City of Wyndham

In these early stages of *DBTW*, which involved the development of its identity and sense of its own future as a multi-person project, *DBTW* aspired to bring into collaboration—or better yet, to weave together—international and local Indian elements and personnel. The long-term, funding-dependent goal was to bring renowned Indian dance artists, Mallika Sarabhai and Revanta Sarabhai, to Victoria for a large-scale performance. However, this performance, we hoped, would be preceded by, and grounded in, creative-arts activities developed in association with the local Indian population in Wyndham. So it was that, with Deakin ethics clearance in hand, we composed the following single-page communication (reproduced here with its original formatting):

Call out to Wyndham-based artists of Indian origin

Dancing Between Two Worlds

Are you a dancer, performer, musician or artist who comes from an Indian background?

Would you like to participate in a series of creative exchanges in Werribee exploring experiences of place and culture through contemporary performance practices?

Dancing Between Two Worlds is an artistic and research partnership between Wyndham Council and Deakin University that hopes to engage the participation of local Indian-Australian artists. Initiated by Australian artists with a strong empathy for Indian culture, this project invites Indian artists living in Wyndham to participate in a series of workshop-based exchanges to share arts practices and experiences.

We are interested to explore these kinds of questions and themes through dance, sound, text, video and site-specific performance:

What if home is not only the place where you were born or the culture you were raised in?
What if home is a reimagining of the old culture mingling with the new?
What is it like to be Indian-Australian?
What do you miss and what do you bring with you, to overlay or merge with this new place?
What challenges have you faced gaining acceptance or being heard as a new citizen?
How do you feel you can contribute, and how might you imagine the country's future?

Creative exchanges will take place from July to September 2018 at a community venue in Werribee. There is no payment available for your participation, but the exchanges are free of charge.
This is the first stage in the development of what we hope will become a major contemporary performance work about place, connection and citizenship, led by choreographers Shaun McLeod, Dianne Reid and Gretel Taylor, and renowned Indian dance artists, Mallika Sarabhai and Revanta Sarabhai, for which we are currently seeking funding. We hope to involve some local Indian artists in this project in 2019.

Expressions of interest:
You must be 18 or over, come from an Indian background and be available on the following dates:
Creative exchanges: Saturdays 21st July, 4th August, 18th August, 1st September and 15th September, 2-5pm
Venue: To be confirmed (Werribee or nearby)
Register your interest by sending your name, phone number, email address and a brief artist's biography or a few lines describing: what kind of artist you are (or were, back in India) and any of your artwork or projects you would like to show us.
Enquiries and EOI's: Greteltaylor@gmail.com or shaun.mcleod@deakin.edu.au

Figure 4: The artists callout.

This call for Expressions of Interest resulted in a significant and pleasing response from our target community, but before developing this chapter of the *DBTW* story, it is appropriate to pause in order to further consider the methodology and approach for the *DBTW* project.

Methodology and Approach to Data Set Analysis for the *Dancing Between Two Worlds* Project

At the most general level, the *DBTW*'s methodology is artform practice-based and almost exclusively qualitative. Within the broader category of qualitative methodology, we worked mainly with a Practice-Led Research (PLR) approach.

Research linked to creative-arts practice is not yet as well established in the university research ecology as other methodologies, and to this extent the definition of PLR, as well as its relationship (or lack thereof) to allied methodologies, is yet to be fully pinned down. Writing in 2007, Brad Haseman refers to how PLR is caught up in what he calls "'methodological churn'" (4). Within this so-called 'methodological churn', we suggest, there is a significant cross-fertilization between, and overlapping of, PLR and its inverse: Research-Led Practice (RLP). This is no bad thing. Research may well be led by practice within PLR, but it would be foolish and dogmatic to hold to the position that practice, within PLR, is not substantially if not equally well informed by research. Within both PLR and RLP, practice and research circulate promiscuously. One might say that PLR and RLP do not represent distinctly different methodologies within the broader ambit of the research-creative-arts practice constellation. Rather, the existence of both PLR and RLP in the discourse of research fundamentally underscores the two-way movement of

research and practice within the research-creative-arts practice constellation. PLR and RLP might be glossed as tendencies or opportunities of practice and research within their ongoing churn.

All this said, we employ the term PLR for *DBTW* because the research is, at this stage of the project's life at least, very clearly being led by the practice. This is evident even in the call out to Wyndham-based artists of Indian origin, as copied above. This piece contains a series of loosely associated questions—fully six of them—rather than what one might expect in a RLP project, not to mention in any project lodged within a more conventional or traditional qualitative or quantitative methodology. A single, tightly expressed research question is a marked absence. Haseman has something to offer on this too: 'many practice-led researchers do not commence a research project with a sense of "a problem" that has to be answered. […] Many are led by what is best described as "an enthusiasm of practice": something that is exciting, something that may be unruly, unmanageable or mysterious' (5). In a sense, the six call-out questions stood in, and continue to stand in to some extent, for the single, more formal research question still in development.

Thus, the *DBTW* project currently lacks a conventionally or traditionally constructed research question as such, but that does not mean one is never going to emerge. One of this article's authors, Patrick, in his article 'Practice-Led Research: Wandering from "Nhill" to "Nil" to "36.3328°S, 141.6503°E"' notes that: 'To the extent that the creative arts does not operate along a linear question-answer continuum, questions and answers dance with each other, for a while, before resolving into a more conventional research shape.' In a similar vein, Graeme Sullivan observes that PLR reverses the traditional ordering of the methodological research question and answer, to the extent that it travels from the 'unknown to the known,' through which 'imaginative leaps are made into what we don't know,' which leads to 'critical insights that can change what we do know' (48).

We anticipate the ultimate development of a research question, achieved through the specific means of creative-arts practice, that will have tucked away within it the answer to that question by virtue of its (the research question's) built-in richness and complexity. We further anticipate that, given the long-term nature of *DBTW*, this cycle will repeat, as new iterations of the project suggest new calls and response of question and answer.

The social justice aspect of PLR is another element of the *DBTW* methodology we want to highlight. Wyndham experiences high levels of socio-economic disadvantage: 'There are concerning indicators that some of the Wyndham population is not fairing [sic] well socio-economically; unemployment is higher than Greater Melbourne and Victoria and there are high levels of rental evictions and mortgage delinquency, and [sic] as well as growing levels of family violence' (Wyndham City 2). The Indian community is, however, among the most successful diasporic group in Australia, and many of the artists in *DBTW* came to Australia for postgraduate study and are from high socio-economic situations. Their concerns were more about the dearth of opportunities to practice their arts and to connect with other artists in the area. In any event, *DBTW* allies itself with the definition of PLR advanced by Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, which places a high premium on the social justice value of PLR, and how it privileges the interests of marginal political, historical and social actors: 'An innovative dimension of this subjective approach to research lies in its capacity to bring into view, particularities that reflect new social and other realities either marginalized or not yet recognized in established social practices and discourses' (4). By visually activating public sites with the cultural arts of a marginalized group, we aimed to give positive and nuanced presence to this group (Taylor 2017).

Figure 5: *Dancing Between 2 Worlds* in Watton Street, Werribee (Artist: Joshinder Kaur Chaggar, photo credit: Laki Sideris).

The artforms with the greatest presence in *DBTW* are dance and music, with additional representation of film-making, screen arts, creative writing, installation art and public art. We welcome the multi-artform and/or interdisciplinary labels. In this sense, *DBTW* is indebted, technically speaking, to a multi-method methodology. As membership of the group grows and fluctuates the constellation of its artforms will change too. We welcome this also. To draw Haseman's notion of 'methodological churn' across to a related space of practice and thinking, the 'artform churn' of our project can only accelerate and intensify its capacity, as PLR, to generate a string of research questions—and ultimately a string of research answers—framed by the thematic preoccupations of our ever-evolving group (4). Furthermore, and very significantly, our Indian community (non-Deakin) collaborators for our first major project—*Dancing Between 2 Worlds*—added further artform-specific practices to the pre-existing mix of artforms represented by the

Deakin members of *DBTW*. The near identity of the name of the overall project—*Dancing Between Two Worlds*—with the performance project name—*Dancing Between 2 Worlds*—underscores just how much *DBTW* is fundamentally a project rather than a group. We will return to this point shortly.

Five semi-structured interviews with members of this local Indian community cohort gave them a voice to supplement their performance contribution to *Dancing Between 2 Worlds*. These interviews have proven to be an incredibly rich data set, and in this article we will only scratch the surface of their potential for shedding light on the developing themes of *DBTW*. The present article is designed to provide the foundation for subsequent, more thematically focused research and associated publication outcomes.

Interviewees were asked questions from this list, which we created under three sub-headings:

1.) Background
    What part of India are you from and when did you come to Australia?
    Why did you move here?

2.) Art
    What sort of art do you do / did you do?
    How has your practice of art changed here in Australia?
    How did you find the artistic exchanges?
    What were some new experiences or ideas that arose for you from this project?
    Was there anything that arose that you might explore further beyond the project in your own art or life?

3.) Identity & Citizenship

Do you have a sense that there is such thing as being Indian-Australian? If so, what is it like?

What do you miss about India?

What do you bring with you from India, to overlay or merge with this new place?

What challenges have you faced gaining acceptance or being heard as a new citizen?

How do you feel you can contribute to, and how might you imagine, Australia's future?

As with the six call-out questions, these interview questions, to some extent, occupy the place of the currently absent, single, formal research question. Not all questions were necessarily used in every interview, depending on time factors, the direction of the interview, and other such circumstances. Many of the questions asked were generated on the spot, for one-time-only use, in response to the responses of the interviewees. Thematic coding of the interviews will commence at a later stage of our project, when we plan to use the NVivo qualitative analysis software package for coding purposes. In this, we will be following in the footsteps of the data-analysis approach employed by the *Flows & Catchments* group. NVivo is useful, in particular, for gathering together, and making sense of, different *forms* of data (Warren and West).

Dancing Between 2 Worlds: Creative Exchanges, Interviews, and First Performance

DBTW's first major project—*Dancing Between 2 Worlds*—took place in November 2019 at downtown Werribee in Wyndham. The performance was the culmination of a series of so-called creative exchanges and, positioned between these and the performance, as noted above, were five semi-structured interviews with some of the

Indian community members involved in the performance. The combination of the creative exchanges, interviews and the performance itself offers a multi-faceted mode of engagement with the central themes of this article—not to mention the developing themes of *DBTW* in general.

In this section, we will briefly describe the creative exchanges and the performance, concluding with a lightly curated list of extracts from the interviews with local Indian artists related to our project's developing themes of civic belonging, cross-cultural artistic identity and the performance of Indian diaspora in outer suburban Melbourne. The intention here is to let the voices of the interviewees infuse and give life to the thematic preoccupations of *DBTW*.

The creative exchanges were held across five Saturday afternoons during the period July to September 2018, at various community venues and other locations in the City of Wyndham LGA. Seventeen members of the local Indian community signed up: most self-identified as either dancers (almost 50% overall), musicians or theatre makers, while a few situated themselves in relationship to film or the visual arts. The first creative exchange involved a 'meet and greet', with many of the participants meeting each other for the first time, in person at least. An initial discussion of the project was followed by a Welcome to Country and short walk along the Werribee River led by Indigenous leader, and Bunurong elder, Aunty Fay Stewart-Muir. Aunty Fay contributed a great deal to the atmosphere of that first meeting. It was observed by the participants that respect for elders is as important in Indian culture as it is in Australian Indigenous culture (This Indigenous underpinning of our place-based performance-making was later followed through by Anindita's Acknowledgement of Country in her *DBTW* performance, which included a participatory ritual element). The next four creative exchanges included a screen-dance (movement and video) workshop, a creative-writing storytelling workshop, a sound and music workshop, and lastly, a site-focused movement

workshop. These final four creative exchanges were all led by members of the *DBTW* group, with occasional involvement from invited guest artists, such as composer Myfanwy Hunter (Min), who led the penultimate gathering (the sound and music workshop).

Figure 6: Screen-dance (movement and video) workshop (artist: Janani Venkatachalam, photo credit: Dianne Reid).

There were four evening performances of *Dancing Between 2 Worlds* across one weekend in late 2019. Each performance lasted approximately 45 minutes. Audiences were guided on a brief walk through Werribee: the first half of the performance took place alongside a short stretch of the Werribee River and the second half comprised a stroll down Watton Street. The seven local Indian artists involved, all of whom had responded to the initial Expression of Interest communication, were Madhuri Vasa (and her son), Janani Venkatachalam, Zankhna Bhatt, Writabrata Banerjee, Nayana Panchal, Joshinder Chaggar and Divya Jayam (these were all named as 'Local artists' in the programme). Deakin-affiliated

members of *DBTW* were credited in the programme as follows: Shaun McLeod and Gretel Taylor as the 'Directors/Curators', Anindita Banerjee as the 'Installation artist', and Dianne Reid as 'Screen-dance artist'. Bringing together diverse contemporary and traditional Indian arts, the genre of these works included folk dances, performance art, screen-dance, installation art, tabla drumming and classical singing.
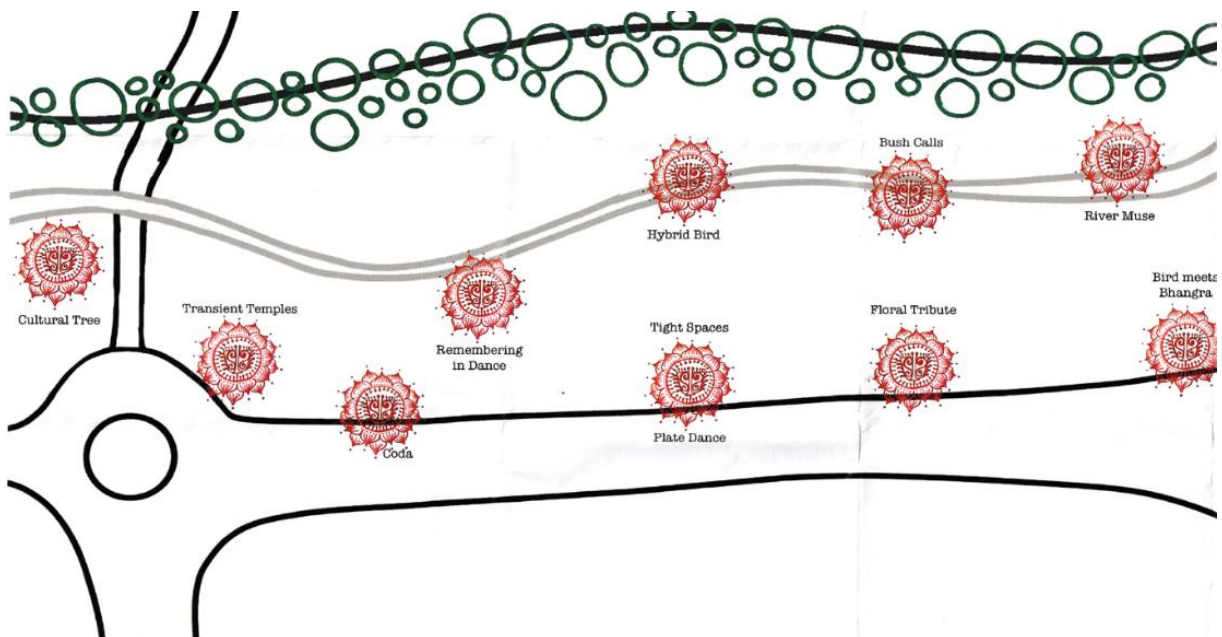
Figure 7: Dancing Between 2 Worlds programme of events.

Figure 8: *Dancing Between 2 Worlds* in Watton Street, Werribee (artists from the front: Shweta Pandya, Pushpa Vanere Manwaktar and Naveen Kumar Kasa, photo credit: Laki Sideris).

The interviews brought out responses linked to the central interests of *DBTW*. Here is a preliminary taster of these responses, categorized according to some developing themes, and appended by some of our early-stage, thematic research observations:

1.) Civic Belonging

'So, I will tell you, for every, single Indian who is born in India, every single person feels you're Indian-Australian... and there is a most important reason for that. The reason is we live in Australia, we work in Australia, we think like Australian, our lifestyle is like Australian, but, still, the spiritual, religious, and cultural beliefs, and food taste, it's all Indian, and it will always be. It will always be like that, because, any, and it's not only

regarding Indian. If you have got any other country's person who is, whose roots… when I say roots, the hereditary roots, from their parents, whose roots are non-Australian, they will always be that country, and Australian.' [Arati]

The question of civic belonging is clearly complicated by the dual allegiances, and consequent uncertainties, that many Indian-Australians feel when faced with a *choice* between Indian and Australian cultural values. One of the aspirations of the performance of *DBTW* was to foster an artistic dialogue—an openness to the differences in cultural value embedded in the processes of choreography and performance making. When making the performance, this dual allegiance emerged when considering decisions about the form, tradition or aesthetic convention of performance images, motifs and activities. In fact, this 'tossing up' between the different cultural possibilities was felt by all of us involved in the performance making. But for the Indian-Australian artists these decisions were complicated by a need on their part for what they were doing to be deemed as acceptable, or even sensational, to an audience that included 'established' Australians. They wanted their work to *belong*, and consequently any hint of 'strangeness' was to be avoided. This raised the stakes for them when considering the less conventional framing of their work that site-specific performance facilitates. For the white Australians in the artistic team, an Indian musician playing tablas, placed in a Coles shopping trolley (see Figure 9), was a playful and ironic juxtaposition. For the Indian musician it presented a complicated dilemma. Was this staging an affront to the traditions in which his music was steeped? Or was it merely odd? For the Indian artists, reading the cultural signals inherent in the shopping trolley image, was not straightforward. This challenge occurred in the opposite direction as well. One of the Indian musicians wanted to sing 'Waltzing Matilda' in Hindi (without any accompanying irony), a scenario that challenged the 'Anglos' in the group. This was seen as being too corny—too cliched—to be acceptable in an art-conscious context. Yet the Indian

musician saw this as a way for her to display the merging of her dual cultural allegiances.

2.) Cross-Cultural Artistic Identity

'I think I miss the abundance of musicians, Indian musicians, if I needed them. Not Indian musicians, probably the wrong word, musicians with an expertise in playing an Indian instrument, is what I miss. So, I will still find them, but I'd probably find ten if I look for six months, right? Whereas, in India, I could just go to the third house, every third house and I'll find a musician in there, 'cause that was the culture, right? I do miss that, massively... yeah, it takes a lot more effort to collaborate here with artists with expertise in playing Indian instruments than it did back there. But that's expected, right?... it's such a specific style of music, it's hard... to find everywhere. But, music is music, I guess.' [Bana]

Interviews with participating artists revealed that, for many of them, practising (performing and/or teaching) their Indian art in Australia not only maintains, but actually enhances, their sense of cultural identity, intensifying their feelings of belonging and the responsibilities and attachments of citizenship, to *both* India and Australia. Through their practice of their cultural artform they were constantly reinforcing the strength of their ties to India—maintaining that sense of place identity; yet sharing it with people in Australia was their way of becoming present, of etching a place for themselves, here, with the accompanying satisfaction of being valued, here, as having something unusual and of significance to offer. Madhuri recalls:

'... when I came to Wyndham when I read my first performance, not many people know about this art form at all. So when they heard, they really liked

it and they said we will definitely come every year to your concert, we will definitely support you. I was very much happy—the supporting aspect was that way is really good.' [Madhuri]

Now, having run her classical Indian music school for fifteen years in the City of Wyndham LGA, witnessing the community that has developed around the school, and performing professionally at venues and events across Melbourne, Madhuri reflects how this has reinforced her sense of belonging here, and her sense of self-identity as an artist:

'I'm have grown as a person yeah, that's what I feel. As a personality. I had my own personality, okay as a person I might be good in some ways and I might not be good in one way, but the music has changed to my life.' [Madhuri]

She recounted also how she continues to return to her mentors in India and intends to research some rare ancient compositions next time she visits, exhibiting a reflexive process of continual learning and integration of Indian knowledge into her Australian-based practice. Whilst this could also be simply an expression of artistic maturation, several of the interviewees claimed they had a more total and consolidated sense of self-identity, of being and becoming themselves, from teaching and performing in Australia than back in India. In this sense, the evolving mobile identities that these artists embody are borne, woven, enacted and perpetuated by their creative practice. Dancer and dance teacher Zannie explained that, after an unsettled first few years in Australia, she established her own dance school and is performing regularly now:

'I'm back to what I was in my school and the uni life and... I'm back to that person that I was. Even more so because you made it happen here exactly by yourself.' [Zannie]

There is also a strong sense of responsibility to authentically and rigorously pass on artistic and cultural knowledge to the next generations of Indian-Australian children:

'To the kids, because kids here won't have the exposure to their own... culture or the tradition that we learned.... So then when I do my Bollywood classes, I teach them all this Indian folk as well, so it's just not that; it's everything. I do elements of all these different variety of folkdances that come from India... When they come to my school and I what I do that parents really love is when I play a song or something. They play in Hindi the Bollywood song, we're learning Hindi so then kids here, they don't learn that language in school, they only know English, so then I explain them these words and meaning of the words so that's how they can express themselves better when they do dance and when they perform. Yes, teaching is teaching them the culture and why they're doing through all these words.' [Zannie]

Similarly, Janani was considering setting up a dance school, motivated by her son's grappling with his identity:

'Our children growing up here don't have same access to music and dance traditions as in India. Every second house there is a music teacher a dance teacher...

Educating our kids here about identity and culture — our kids really struggle — my son asks me 'am I Indian or am I Australian?' He's struggling with his own identity.

It is important for us to give them that exposure so that they can form that identity for themselves.' [Janani]

She also saw value in sharing her cultural form with Australians and other immigrants:

'To me it's not just about Indian dance is for Indians, I would love to open it up for anyone who wants to learn from other cultures. It's all about learning from each other. It's a nation of immigrants. Let's learn from each other.' [Janani]

And so, it continues. It will be interesting to observe second, third, fourth generation Indian-Australians and the rich artistic forms that they contribute to Australia's cultural landscape.

3.) The Performance of Indian Diaspora in Outer Suburban Melbourne

'It's community and growing up here and maybe my life started here. Only majority—that's what I feel. My life started here, why? Because my passions. Even though I did my music studies back home, I was always a student, but here I as a teacher, as a professional adult, you know, as a real adult I'm doing my own research and I'm getting a lot of information and I really worked hard in my passion. I think that's why I feel like I've grown up, yes both ways—back home in India, of course without learning this wouldn't have come into play.' [Madhuri]

Finding a balance between 'here' and 'there' is like a life-skill that migrant artists (like Madhuri) develop unconsciously but definitively. This was a recurring discussion that Indian-Australian artists in *DBTW* got into during the workshops, the rehearsals and during the breaks even in the final performance. They fondly remembered how the part of their life that they spent in India gave them a cultural foundation that they built on through the experiences and opportunities they found in Australia. This blended construction often results in a unique outcome that underlines the very nature of a diaspora. And when, as the audience, we step out of the diaspora and look at these compositions, performances and/or artworks from the outside, one cannot help but question what the artist is really offering through her performance? Is she performing her Indian-ness as a spectacle to wow the White Australian audience (or the non-Indian-Australian audience)? Is this exercise her way of holding onto what she has lost by moving countries? Or, is this performance an emergence of an authentic melded Indian-Australian identity through making?

Represented here is only a tiny percentage of the material harvested from the interviews. Once coding is completed, a fuller engagement with this material will prove productive.

Conclusion: The *DBTW* Projection of Projects

The *DBTW* project has been active for over two years at the time of writing this article. It has been a project with a single main performance at its heart: *Dancing Between 2 Worlds*. We are currently scoping opportunities for further projects. We have begun investigating the possibility of creating a performance with Indian office workers in Melbourne's Central Business District, specifically in the Docklands precinct, which is both the site of another Deakin University location (Deakin Downtown Corporate Centre), and the point of landing in Melbourne for many immigrants, including Indians. This would be a new work spring-boarding

conceptually and structurally from the Wyndham *DBTW* project, bringing visual presence to the other 'world' of many of Melbourne's Indian IT professionals: their rich cultural life and highly developed artistic skills, which we/they practice outside of corporate life. While *DBTW* is very much a place-based project, its attachment to place is sufficiently flexible to allow migration to different places in the footsteps of Indian communities.

As alluded to above, we are also considering our options, at this significant stage of our project's history, for formalizing our existence as a research group. Meanwhile, for the purposes of this particular article, we have consistently referred to *DBTW* as a project.

This distinction between project and group may seem pedantic—even trivial. Still, it speaks to the issue raised earlier in this article regarding what community engagement by a university like Deakin means, or should mean. *DBTW* sits within a tradition of community engagement by Deakin enterprises operating at the intersection of well-being, the creative arts, and place. Reflecting on this tradition brings out how Deakin's community engagement (or that of any university) is always already a relationship of (at least) two complex and constantly mutating (broader and more delimited) communities. *DBTW*'s engagement with the local Indian community around Werribee is inevitably inflected by the influences operating upon it from such other enterprises as *Flows & Catchments* and *Treatment*.

Enterprises such as *DBTW* are always susceptible to the charge of parachuting themselves into their community of choice, with all the problems this brings, to do with the operations of knowledge as power. We have attempted to defuse this charge by very deliberately and slowly integrating ourselves with the local Indian community—and the community more generally—in and around

Werribee. Much depends on the ability to listen and respond, rather than to colonize through understandings and actions imposed from outside... and as if from above. The wariness we expressed above around the term 'landscape' repays value in this context; an immersive relationship to place, such as dancers express (in contrast, say, to the stereotype of film-makers peering down their camera lenses) strongly resists the parachuting charge. Moreover, the constant tension of being *here* and *there* was a further driver of our immersive relation to place. The spatial tension between *here* and *there* transformed into a certain form of temporality of working. We found ourselves operating intuitively over a prolonged period of time with the community, rather than working in a rapid-fire fashion (as might be imposed by an outsider). This expenditure of time expressed our commitment to working with the grassroots Indian community.

Despite sincere efforts to situate ourselves within the community, *DBTW* has raised further questions about the dynamics of exchange in intercultural creative projects such as this. The learning curve we have encountered has been about how to enable an equality of creative exchange such that we, as artist/academics (most of whom live and work outside the area), do not wield dominance in this process. In this instance, it would be true to say that, although we did not control the artistic content, to an extent we did control the objectives and format of the performance. We decided upon the idea of a site-specific performance, and the route this took; we chose the placement of the dancing vignettes and made suggestions about how the artists might engage with the site. Our values and positions were evident in these choices. Even though these choices were often negotiated with the Indian artists, our roles as 'directors' gave our perspective extra weight. This imbalance is a feature which we wish to address in a future iteration of this project in which the sometimes difficult conversations between White-Australian and Indian-Australian artists become the substance of the performance itself. Sticky, uncertain conversations about how aesthetic, cultural and ethical choices get made, and especially as they

implicate a sense of place, will be the starting point for another site-specific dance and movement performance in which we attempt a more equitable procedural dynamic from which to generate the work.

Similarly, the decision to become a research group or not—as opposed to remaining an enterprise defined more directly by its engagement with, and movement between, an (ongoing) series of projects—has significant implications for the nature of *DBTW's* engagement with the local Indian and broader community in the Wyndham LGA. Such issues have been written about before. Paul Carter, speaking with collaborator Charles Anderson, writes that

> this willingness to allow a certain spaciousness in the image text collaboration allowed us to articulate our scepticism about art practices which, despite their vociferous critique of representational conventions and bourgeois taste, continue to narrate what they do in terms of one 'project' after another. In an article called 'Against Projects', we argued that the rhetoric of projects repressed the spaces and times in-between acts of making. It treated as nothing those times (and places) of waiting, idling and dissipation in which what was usually overlooked as formless began to take form. Creative research which, under the influence of gallery schedules, publication opportunities or commissioning criteria, packaged its process, abruptly truncating the flow of material thinking, bracketed off the environment of making. (47)

We welcome Carter's thesis of the importance of the places, spaces and times that lie between projects, while simultaneously rejecting his analysis of how the project-to-project discourse works—at least insofar as *DBTW* is concerned. *Our* 'rhetoric of projects' allows us to emphasize, and draw energies and inspiration from, the 'material thinking' that will come in-between the project completed so far and the

ones to follow. Becoming a group would, possibly, improve our visibility as a research enterprise inside and outside of Deakin, and may improve our opportunities for obtaining funding—again, possibly. However, it would, potentially at least, come at the cost of introducing a certain 'landscaping' distance from the local Indian community, and associated communities, with which *DBTW* seeks to work and engage.

Another way of thinking about Carter's 'material thinking'—involving 'those times (and places) of waiting, idling and dissipation in which what was usually overlooked as formless began to take form'—might be to see them as opportunities for immersing ourselves within community (47). The times and places between projects are possibly the times and places of immersion. Far from allowing such immersion, what we would like to call, at least temporarily, the 'rhetoric of groups'— especially of those groups inevitably formed within the research, managerial and administrative ecology of a university, like Deakin—might involve a retreat and distancing (a 'landscaping', as it were). We seek, in other words, a refreshed remit for Carter's 'rhetoric of projects', which highlights, not underplays, the 'material thinking' of PLR. By extension, by staying as it is, *DBTW* may remain an evolving community—one excitingly, responsively and mercurially in immersive contact with the Indian community it seeks to work with and research in an ongoing fashion. It is likely, we think, that we will decide *not* to become an officially defined Deakin research group.

The focus of this article has been the learning curve at Deakin University that indexes the development of its approach to community in place. *DBTW* is the latest in a series of Deakin enterprises seeking to work with community in place. By projecting ourselves into the future as an enterprise of projects (not a group), we hope to create a strong and enduring (immersive) ethics of engagement, which we see as essential to the production of academic scholarship about our developing

thematic preoccupations: civic belonging, cross-cultural artistic identity, and the performance of Indian diaspora in outer suburban Melbourne. The present article sets the scene for further *DBTW* publications with a more thematic focus.

Figure 9: *Dancing Between 2 Worlds* in Watton Street, Werribee (artist: Bana, photo credit: Laki Sideris).

Acknowledgement

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Critically Imagining a Decolonised Vision in Australian Poetry

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Critically imagining a new aesthetic for a decolonised vision in Australian poetry, one that overrides the notion of Western supremacy and requires a shift from an anthropocentric position to one that is ecocentric, may provide our best hope of sustaining a positive social role for poetics in this country. Locating the self towards nature and realising a profound sense of immanence in all natural things, will hopefully lead to a humble and more ethical attitude. This article identifies Western decolonised poetry in Australia and finds a correlation, or an aesthetic and conceptual interface, between it and Aboriginal aural and literary representations of Country.

Humility is the key to the type of poetry envisioned here: it is a way of understanding, of interpreting, and of speaking about this country that accepts our vulnerabilities and connectivities to life and death processes. Decolonised poetry relates ethically to cultural differences and to the other-than-human world. It promotes moral accountability by avoiding racist and bigoted language. It claims a deeply felt kinship with the land. The type of poetry identified here accepts that all humanity is subject to ecological relationships and biological processes, and ensures that one culture or life form is not privileged above another.

This article acknowledges a significant Indigenous cultural heritage of communicative engagement with Country. Country in this sense is traditional land with its embedded cultural values related to Dreamtime. Peter Minter reminds us of the classic definitions of Country written by scholars such as Deborah Bird Rose, Peter Read, Peter Sutton and others who speak about "reciprocity, kinship, equivalence, autonomy and balance" ("Writing Country" 4). In his article, however,

Minter focuses on what he terms Country's "poetical *muthologos* as a law/lore-full entity; indeed, its Dreaming" (4). He quotes the anthropologist William Stanner: Dreaming is the "poetic key to reality" (4). He concludes his article with: "Country has always been a 'legal' person, and has always made poiesis without the aid of the extractive aesthetics of the capitalist romantic sublime" (6). Readings of country are diverse, and, according to Krim Benterrack *et al.*, "the country does not offer up the fullness of its meaning to the receptive individual as some romantics and spiritualists would have us believe" (*Reading the Country* 76). In the type of poetry encouraged here, there is acceptance that the entire richness of meaning in the natural world for the observer may not be available.

Anti-pastoral/oppositional poetry, such as that written by John Kinsella, for instance, could be considered as having a decolonising purpose. His work has the capacity to be politically persuasive, but one must question how it presents us with a vision of how to live sustainably with the land or as a poetics of place that can be thought of as nurturing. In one of his poems in "Codex for a Protest" in *Redstart*, for example, it is as if the poet randomly plucks nature (in the form of a wedge-tailed eagle) out of the air and thrusts it into a confusing, chaotic and menacing cultural landscape. The bird appears amidst "punked-out headjob, smack dealers and submachine guns / shooting up their own night clubs" (Gander 27). Kinsella does, however, have an instinctive sense of connection to place and is acutely aware of the inequity between the colonist and the "Other" due to unsustainable engagement with the resources of human progress.

A particular type of post-pastoral poetry, as identified below, has a more sustainable and positive outlook for decolonised poetry in Australia. In his attempt to identify post-pastoral poetry, Terry Gifford, claims, among other things, that there should be "a deep sense of the immanence in all natural things" (*Pastoral* 152). In a later article, "Pastoral, Anti-Pastoral, and Post-Pastoral", he updates his conceptualisation and raises several questions, one of which is: "Can awe in the face of natural phenomena, such as landscapes, lead to humility in our species?" (27).

Being aware of the wonders of the natural world of which we are a part could mean we understand and accept that it pervades and sustains all things, including humanity. In this sense, the type of post-pastoral poetry that is "best used to describe works that successfully suggest a collapse of the human/nature divide while being aware of the problematics involved", which Gifford clarifies ("Pastoral, Anti-Pastoral, and Post-Pastoral" 26), recognises the primacy of the natural world and the relatedness of thriving and resilient life processes outside of human control or comprehension.

The task of decolonised poetry is to promote ethics that acknowledge the claims of others, not only that of the non-human, but especially in this instance for the Indigenous peoples. Rose suggests what she calls a "recuperative" decolonised vision (*Reports from a Wild Country* 11-33). In contemplating the potential of ethical action concerning decolonisation, she signifies "the unmaking of the regimes of violence that promote the disconnection of moral accountability from time and place" (*Reports* 214). Post-pastoral poetry of the type encouraged here disempowers racist and prejudiced points of view and questions all hierarchical systems that basically privilege the concept of colonial superiority *and* human domination over all other lifeforms.

In *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Jane Bennett proposes to resituate humans in the world rather than outside of it. This is her attempt to censure her illusion of human mastery, to "highlight the common materiality of all that is, expose a wider distribution of agency, and reshape the self and its interests" (122). To counter "the narcissism of humans in charge of the world" and to emphasise the vitality of non-human bodies, forces, and forms, she suggests cultivating "anthropomorphism" (xvi, 122). Anthropomorphising the non-human and suggesting that "human agency has some echoes in non-human nature", as she does, could be interpreted, however, as compromising the decolonising task by having the non-human accommodate our needs – another form of colonial control.

This perpetuates the colonising refusal to recognise the prior presence and agency of non-humans.

Some Western ecocentric theorists have in recent decades developed approaches that set their theories apart from other main issues of modern environmentalism. Among other things, they look to the sciences for answers concerning human embeddedness in ecological relationships and biological processes that could help to re-theorise Australian decolonised poetry. In *Environmentalism and Political Theory,* Robyn Eckersley, for example, claims that "ecocentric theorists [. . .] often *enlist* [her emphasis] science to help undermine deeply ingrained anthropocentric assumptions that have found their way into many branches of social sciences and humanities, including modern political theory" (51). Anthropocentric assumptions such as "the confident belief that with further scientific research we can rationally manage (i.e., predict, manipulate, and control) all the negative unintentional consequences of large-scale human interventions in nature" (Eckersley 51). For Karen Barad, who is known for her theory of "agential realism", "the nature of the production of bodily boundaries is not merely experiential, or merely epistemological, but ontological" – the nature of reality (*Meeting the Universe Halfway* 160). Barad, whose work is inspired by the physicist Niels Bohr, one of the founders of quantum physics, introduces the term "intra-action" in acknowledgment of the ontological inseparability of entities, which, according to Barad, is consistent with recent experimental and theoretical developments in quantum physics (128). Serpil Oppermann claims quantum physics "has predicted a new field of reality where everything is inextricably interconnected", thus providing a means by which the ontological divide between nature and culture can be closed ("Ecocentric Postmodern Theory" 234). The principle of interconnectedness as it is characterised by ecological quantum principles, according to Oppermann, "is a key feature on which there seems to be a general agreement among physicists" (235). Concerning what she calls the "interrelational nature of reality", she quotes Werner Heisenberg, one of the major

pioneers of quantum mechanics, who says: "The world thus appears as a complicated tissue of events, in which connections of different kinds alternate or overlap or combine and thereby determine the texture of the whole" (235). With these insights we could conclude that we are not only made up of non-human biota and other elements but we influence and are influenced by them. Under this scenario, the claims and pretentions of colonial domination and anthropocentric notions are debunked.

Science alone, however, does not address all aspects of our being. The integral theorist, Michael Zimmerman, in "Quantum Theory, Intrinsic Value, and Panentheism", for instance, suggests that "scientific understanding alone cannot produce the needed change of consciousness" (5). When questioning whether quantum theory can lead us towards a more inclusive, less dualistic mode of consciousness, he states that "To move beyond this dualistic mode, an experiential insight is required that is not available from quantum theory" (12). His main reason for this latter statement is that the practitioners of quantum physics continue to experience themselves dualistically: their everyday "experience" of the world is inconsistent with their theoretical findings because the everyday experience is not influenced by those insights.

Consideration of experiential insight and the fundamental ecological intuition that we are in a real sense connected with the earth, along with the rationality of quantum principles, goes partway to appropriately addressing the multifaceted complexity of societal and ecological reality. The surfacing of scientific theories that speak of internal relatedness might however propel the development of a more inclusive consciousness in relation to our sense of embeddedness in ecological relationships in this country and inspire the much needed change in colonial consciousness concerning our relationship with each other and with the natural environment.

Specific examples of Indigenous and non-Indigenous poetry are presented here for consideration. They range historically from a translation of a secular version

of a sacred Indigenous song, "A 'Wɔnguri- 'Mandʒikai Song Cycle of the Moon-Bone" in 1948 to the present day, including the work of Indigenous poets Lionel Fogarty, Lisa Bellear, Hyllus Maris, and the late Bill Neidjie (1920-2002). The work of Judith Wright and Robert Gray are included primarily to demonstrate the seemingly problematic transition from pastoral poetry to a decolonised poetic vision in this country for Western writers. It is argued that the poems written by Bonny Cassidy, Peter Minter and Martin Harrison included in this article have achieved the desired outcome. The concepts of interdependency and embeddedness in ecological relationships are approached differently by the individual poets generally, regardless of culture, race, or ethnic background.

Feeling an attachment to earth from an Indigenous perspective

Mary Graham, an Indigenous Elder and a Kombumerri person through her father's heritage and affiliated with Wakka Wakka through her mother's people, states that "every Aboriginal person has a part of the essence of one of the original creative spirits who formed the Australian landscape" and "each human bears a creative and spiritual identity which still resides in the land itself" ("Some Thoughts about the Philosophical Underpinnings of Aboriginal Worldviews" 183). In Graham's opinion, "each person has a charter of custodianship empowering them and making them responsible for renewing that part of the flora and its fauna" (183). She goes on to say that "Aboriginal Law is grounded in the perception of a psychic level of natural behaviour, the behaviour of natural entities" (187). Connectivity with the land is implicit in her statements, but ideological and cultural homogeneity should not be assumed. Although there are various creative mediums that portray attachment entailed in Indigenous perceptions of Country that involve connectivities, the focus here is on poetics.

To reach further towards an Indigenous understanding of communicative engagement and physical enmeshment with nature it is necessary to research the work of others who have made advances in this area of study. The anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt studied and recorded Aboriginal life in Western

Australia and translated "A 'Wɔnguri- 'Mandʒikai Song Cycle of the Moon-Bone". The following short excerpt shows how Indigenous aural poetry opens to a sense of a cultural embeddedness in the environment and in a spiritual otherness.

Song I.

Synopsis.—People of the *'Wɔnguri-' Mandʒikai* make their camp in the country associated with the Dugong and Moon People. They are preparing for the coming of the First Rains, which will herald the Wet Season ; and they store their clubs in readiness for battle, for it was here that extensive fighting took place in the Dreaming Period. They construct their shade with great care, for it is the camp of important headmen who are themselves related to the great Beings of the past (sic). (22)

Part of the general translation is:

. . . for this is the camp of the Morning-Pigeon man, /

And of the Middle-of-the-Camp man ; of the Mangrove-Fish man ; of two other / head-men,

And of the Clay-pan man ; of the *'Baijini*-Anchor man, and of the Arnhem Bay / country man ;

Of the Whale man and of another head-man ; of the Arnhem Bay Creek man ;

Of the Scales-of-the-Rock-Cod man ; of the Rock Cod man, and of the Place-of-the-Water man (sic). (24)

As Berndt explains:

These people are of the *'jiritʃa* moity, and the dialect of the songs is '*Wɔnguri'* *mata*. Their culture conforms to the general pattern of what is known locally as the Wulamba tribe. Although this country is associated with a wealth of mythology, it is outstandingly related to the Moon, his death and his subsequent rebirth. The cycle itself is called *The Moon-Bone* ('*wirmu-'* *manikai*, moon-bone song), for the Moon, then a man, lived near the clay pan of the Moonlight at the place of the Dugong by Arnhem Bay, and when he

died he went down to the sea, where his bones became the nautilus shell. Ever since this mythological event took place, the Moon repeats his death, with the casting away of his bone, and is reborn. (19)

Indigenous poetry and songs such as this can help others to appreciate their profound connection with a traditional past, their living in harmony with the natural environment and their sense of embeddedness within habitats. The stories, poetry and songs of some Indigenous people also bring into perspective the Eternal Dreamtime. "A 'WƆnguri-' Mandʒikai Song Cycle of the Moon-Bone" shows that the people are identified by a physical place that is encompassed within the dynamic tension of the creative-destructive elemental forces. The parts of nature belong to a functioning whole in which each is granted active participation. These people are not observers of nature only but are committed participants with it. When referring to Indigenous understanding of living in harmony with their traditional land with its embedded cultural values related to the Dreamtime, Rose states in *Nourishing Terrains*: "There is no place without a history; there is no place that has not been imaginatively grasped through song, dance and design, no place where traditional owners cannot see the imprint of sacred creation" (18).

In *Story About Feeling*, published in 1989, the late Bill Neidjie, a senior Indigenous Elder who was born into the Bunitj clan of the Gagudju people of northern Kakadu, gives us examples of poetic expression concerning attachment to the Country:

> This story e can listen careful
> and how you want to feel on your feeling.
> This story e coming through your body
> e go right down foot and head
> fingernail and blood . . . through the heart
> and e can feel it because e'll come right through. (1)

This poem expresses how the phenomenological experience makes him feel, but, as is the case with all poetry that appeals to the senses, it also generates feelings in the

reader. In their proximity, we can also learn that living, non-human entities are not unreceptive objects of human perception and exploitation; they too present through experiencing bodily sensory existence. To be sensitive to the needs of others, and to create meaning-filled words, the poet is required to be present intellectually, spiritually and sensorially. Being present means to give one's whole self to the lived moment. Proximity with the natural world allows for particular places, humans, and the other-than-human to share in one another's existence, to affect and be affected by each other. It also helps us remember our carnal inherence in a milieu of sensations and sensibilities. Indigenous people, such as Neidjie, believe their experience *is* of embeddedness with earth; there is a *feeling* of attachment to earth. As expressed by Neidjie:

> Earth . . . exactly like your father or brother or mother
>
> because you got to go to earth,
>
> you got to be come to earth,
>
> your bone . . . because your blood in this earth here. (22)

Neidjie insists that his story/poem comes from the body and through the body: plainly through the heart. As expressed by Michael Farrell in "The Geopoetics of Affect: Bill Neidjie's Story About Feeling": "The story is itself felt, is (told with) feeling. Feeling is the telling and the listening, feeling is the state of reception" (7). It is a story about "feeling" an attachment to Country. There is validity ascribed to the notion of voice in this case as an explicit expression of Aboriginal feeling by an Indigenous person.

By comparison, the direct transcription and metered adaptation of the Indigenous song "A 'WƆnguri-' Mandʒikai Song Cycle of the Moon-Bone'" published in *Oceania* in 1948, presents the problem of translation. According to Ronald and Catherine Berndt in *The Speaking Land*, "No story goes through that process completely unchanged. Something happens to it in the course of transmission" (415). According to them, the problem is primarily due to lack of aspects such as body movements that accompany speech as well as the differences between

languages and even dialects (414). There is a risk of imperial dominance of thought when locating and producing an accurate transcription of something that is typically sung or spoken.

The use of Indigenous style and subject matter by settler cultures can be seen as acts of cultural appropriation. It could be argued that Les Murray's "The Buladelah-Taree Holiday Song Cycle", which is modelled on the style and metre of Berndt's translation of the Moon-Bone song, could be labelled as such. Martin Leer, however, argues that it

> is in a very precise sense not an act of cultural appropriation, but an embodiment in toponymic art of the temporo-spatial differences between cultures in that creative cognitive mapping, whereby the world – and especially the home world – is known, perceived and committed to memory […] ("This Country Is My Mind" 33).

Richard Martin puts forward a similar argument. He says that: "such texts offer intriguing insights into the politics of voice in Australia and the broader intercultural zone within which cultural difference is produced" ("The Politics of Voice" 10).

The sense of connection to the natural world in Murray's song cycle is temporary and unstable: the people identify with place and are part of a recurrent, rhythmical pattern but one that is tied to a Western cultural perspective; they do not function as an integrated whole with the happenings of the other-than-human world. There is no impression of permeability or reciprocal interaction. As Leer suggests, "From the outset 'The Buladelah-Taree Holiday Song Cycle' works by tension, antithesis and reconnection, whereas the 'Moon-Bone' cycle is cumulative, enacting a complex pattern of accretion" (33).

Indigenous people inculcate belief systems through myths, stories, dance and design. It is worth noting here the extreme burden placed upon some Indigenous people, those whose natural expression is via an oral tradition in their own language,

some not having a formal education in Western language. Kinsella briefly discusses the problematics of language and the creative impulse in *Spatial Relations* (16-19).

Lionel Fogarty (of the Murri people and born in 1958 at Barambah, now the Cherbourg Aboriginal Reserve in Queensland) is a leading spokesman for Indigenous rights in Australia. According to Kinsella, Fogarty uses the problem of language to his advantage (*Spatial Relations*). In Kinsella's opinion, "Fogarty has de-hybridized his own language by hybridizing English with his people's language" (191). Not only does this appear to strengthen his political argument concerning the wrongs done to his people, but his poetry stands up against the expectations of the language of the colonists. Kinsella adds: "While reacting to the colonizing of his Murri tongue by English, he in effect colonizes *English*, rendering it subservient to his inheritance, to his spatiality (time/space)" (191). Fogarty's poem in *Kargun*, "Wake up Black Population – Mapoon is Awake", serves to identify his defiant deconstruction of English language as well as his sense of enmeshment with the natural world:

> *Black population*
>
> > *I'm sad to say*
>
> *You don't see Mapoon people*
>
> > *are near the sea.*
>
> *Black people you must not forget the reasons*
>
> > *Mapoon revived respect.*
>
> *Amongst mangrove swamp*
>
> > *around bush land*
>
> *Mapoon blacks re-lived different cooking methods*
>
> *Kangaroo   Birds   Fish*
>
> > *gave living life*
>
> > > *in needs of spiritual love.*
>
> *Nature*
>
> > *Culture*

Mapoon people know this well.

It's no new news to Mapoon people.

Black people

　　Mapoon people need no mining

　　　Mapoon people have their minds and bodies

　　　　that's why the lands aflow

　　　　　streams, seas, soil, rocks,

　　　　　　wells, swamps, lagoons, vegetables

　　　　　　rivers, animals –

　ALL ....

　BROTHERS AND SISTERS. (9)

This poem, and that of Neidjie, seem not far removed from the aural poems that perpetuate anciently practiced themes and embrace not only the idea of communicative exchange with nature, but also that of the permeability of all things.

The idea of the permeability of all things is perpetuated by another contemporary Indigenous poet, Lisa Bellear, a Goernpil woman of the Noonuccal people. She wrote the poem "Beautiful Yuroke River Gum". It can serve as an example of the sense of ancestral presence in the clay:

Sometimes the red river gums rustled

in the beginning of colonisation when

Wurundjeri,

Bunnerong,

Wathauring

and other Kulin nations

Sang and danced

　　　　and

　　　　　laughed

　　　　　　aloud

> Not too long and there are
>
> fewer red river gums, the
>
> Yarra Yarra tribe's blood becomes
>
> the river's rich red clay
>
> [. . .]   (41)

In this poem there is a sense that the red river gums have witnessed generations of people coming and going within her ancestral land. Populations of people and trees have lived and died together; the life force of past generations is laid down in the clay. This is a reminder of what Rose says about the "third life" as "the one we bequeath to others"; the other two lives, she argues, are "the given" and "the lived" ("what if the angel of history were a dog?" 74). In Indigenous understanding, the body is given back to the earth as a gift for others.

Hyllus Maris, a Yorta Yorta woman from Echuca, reveals in the poem "Spiritual Song of the Aborigine", that the essence of being, or existence, enters into the subjectivity of the world; the feeling within the person links them to the inside of country:

> I am a child of the Dreamtime People
>
> Part of this land. Like the gnarled gumtree
>
> I am the river, softly singing
>
> Chanting our songs on my way to the sea
>
> [. . .]
>
> I am this land
>
> And this land is me
>
> I am Australia. (60)

Indigenous poets such as Neidjie, Fogarty, Bellear and Maris experience the earth's poetic responsiveness. They have grasped sacred creation through song. Given added insights from the scholars such as Mary Graham and Deborah Bird Rose, we can better understand Indigenous poetry and its expression of human interconnectedness with the earth.

A Western decolonised poetic vision in Australia

Minter reminds us that "the decolonisation of Australian poetry and poetics [. . .] has been underway since at least the time of the Jindyworobaks", (an Australian literary movement of the 1930s and 1940s) ("Archipelagos 158-9). He argues for "An archipelagic model" that he claims "upsets normative ideas about nation, cultural and ideological homogeneity" (160) in order to develop a decolonised poetic in Australia. The mode of thought presented in this article, however, is one of understanding an inclusive and intimate connection with the earth as a means of proposing new and decolonising poetic vision that go beyond aesthetics that are restricted by English Romanticism or Euro-American modernism.

Judith Wright, whose heritage is of colonial pastoralism, presents a sense of human integration with the earth albeit tentatively. The narrator in her poem "The Forest Path", for example, is drawn into a sense of oneness with the earth, a union that is, however, contingent upon death. She says: "We were afraid, straining in the bond of earth" (111-2). Putting the fear of death aside, however, generates positive affirmations that are "familiar as though remembered before birth / or expected dumbly after death"; "underfoot the quiet corpse and seed / each strive to their own invisible consummation" (112). Animal, vegetable and mineral marry. Nature, in all its forms, human and non-human, exists in its own perpetuity. Only after the narrator realises "the loss of self" (maybe the anthropocentric self) does she begin the process of becoming one with the earth (111).

Robert Gray's poetry is predominantly consistent with pastoral elements; his narrators usually stand as if outside of nature, as observers of the natural world. In his poem "A Garden Shed", however, we are drawn to a deeper level of meaning that is akin, perhaps, to the philosophy of integration:

> [. . .]
> In the secret noise of such turmoil
> and spray, I was somehow looking back—
>
> or being looked through, about to be lost—

to my grandfather and I, who were only

bubbles of a moment, amid this whirling

away. I first recognized the frankness

of nature's appropriations there:

that it's all effectiveness, inter-response;

all mutuality and possibilities;

just things happening among themselves,

things creating each other. And we

are only the expressions of circumstance,

of its tensions. Nothing belongs to any

separate thing. [. . .] (164-5)

In this poem the human is relegated to the background in relation to the natural world. Nature is self-regulating and creative: "things happening among themselves." There is the vague suggestion of integration with nature, "amid this whirling / away" of our being, but as with Wright's poem, the tone still asserts anthropocentric assumptions and lacks the decolonising vision.

Some contemporary Australian poets who are influenced by Western philosophies are more in concert with the idea of unwrapping cultural decolonisation. Minter's poems in *Bluegrass* offer some examples. In part *v* of his poem "is it is", for instance, the narrator says: "Cumuli hoist and the sky leans / fast, traces over countries / Loded deep with marrow, crescent spines / & ruins made fecund" (39). Presumably humans are part of this process. Likewise, in Bonny Cassidy's long poem *Final Theory*, the narrator claims:

If we lay

beneath that rubble

we'd see how we were built for ruin

like sand for glass.

> For in some future ocean our beloved proteins will
>
> roll, perhaps finding one another, linked
>
> by a theoretical wave
>
> like voices sent through cans and string. (18)

This is to do with the realisation that we are subject to the cyclical patterns of bodily existence that are not only influenced by local weather and geography but also the creative and destructive elements of the universe. It questions hierarchical systems that basically privilege the concept of domination.

Martin Harrison's poem "White Flowers", in his book *Happiness*, is, arguably, one of the best examples of a poem that not only projects his personae beyond the periphery of the self into the environment but they appear to become part of the flesh of the world, as if immersed and in harmony with it. There is a sense of a metaphysical otherness that draws the imagination outside of the self. In this poem nature is identified with its own breathtaking interactive dynamics, particularly between the sideways swerving crimson rosellas in "cascades of down-hanging white flowers", "where humanness itself is flowering light / ecstatic with joy in the act of love" (3). The narrator expresses an intense, "invisible, unthought" awareness and "naked revealedness" of the present moment, not just in a temporal sense but also in a spatial relationship to the world and its objects and inhabitants. Rose's comments reinforce the relevance of this statement:

> The ethical challenge of decolonisation illuminates a ground for powerful presence. Against domination it asserts relationality, against control it asserts mutuality, against hyperseparation it asserts connectivity, and against claims that rely on an imagined future it asserts engaged responsiveness in the present. (*Reports* 213)

This feeling of presence, one of the challenges for decolonising poetry, is akin to realising the "connectivities of flourishing and resilient life processes" (Rose *Reports* 214).

When discussing what he terms the "presence phenomena" and his analysis of the present cultural situation in the West, Hans Gumbrecht says: "on a primary level, presence effects have so completely vanished that they now come back in the form of an intense desire for presence—one reinforced or even triggered by many of our contemporary communication media" (*Production of Presence* 20). Perhaps if we consider our bodies to be part of the cosmos we might identify with the Indigenous people of which Gumbrecht speaks when he refers to them as being "presence" cultures (80). He contrasts them with "meaning" cultures of which the West is a part (79-86).

In Harrison's poem, the theme of love is significant. Perhaps *love* and respect for each other and for the natural world is fundamental for imagining a decolonised Australian poetics. As would be expected in decolonised poetics, exploitation of fellow beings and other entities is absent in Harrison's poem. The entities in the nonhuman world are, as Eckersley might ascertain:

> no longer posited simply as the background or means to the self-determination of individuals or political communities [. . .]. Rather, the different members of the nonhuman community are appreciated as important in their own terms, as having their own (varying degrees of) relative autonomy and their own modes of being. (*Environmentalism and Political Theory* 55).

Perhaps we might recognize what we *feel* during the event of sensorially experiencing the natural world as being the revelation of the presence of what William Rueckert in "Literature and Ecology" speaks about as energy pathways. He says: "A poem is stored energy, a formal turbulence, a living thing, a swirl in the flow" (108) and, in another place, "the stored energy of poetry can be released to carry on its work of creation and community" (111). If this is so, then contributors are not merely external observers of the natural world but active participants with it. Western decolonising aesthetics, mindfully present in the world and having

primitive collusions with it, illustrate a terrain against domination, affirms relationality and asserts committed, humble receptiveness in the present.

Conclusion

Respecting the earth and its inhabitants, its functions and integrity, and accepting human embeddedness in ecological relationships presents an ethical mode of decolonised poetry for Australia. The type of poetics suggested here is informed by the philosophical premise of ecocentrism, which argues for humbleness and benevolence in our dealings with others of our species, and of the non-human world. On this basis there is a turning away from cultural imperialism and colonial romantic ego (as found in pastoral poetry, for instance), and a denial of hubristic and anthropocentric notions. Patterns of colonial appropriation of Indigenous knowledge, belief systems, motifs and languages are undesirable and unjustifiable. Decolonised poetry acknowledges and respects a rich Indigenous cultural heritage of communicative engagement with Country.

An earth-centred consciousness decolonises the aesthetics of how we perceive Australia, heralding an aesthetic renewal following a history of colonial domination, manipulation and dispossession. A renewed ethical and aesthetic decolonising vision in Australian poetry has the potential to set Australia's poetic output apart in its uniqueness.

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Landscapes of connection[1]

Eloise Biggs (University of Western Australia), Jennifer Bond (Charles Sturt University)

Identity. Emotion. Imagination.
Defining character. Shaping personality.

Iceland, an island of wilderness intersecting with lives of rurality and agrarianism. Multiple palettes of place provide therapeutic landscapes immortalised within literary histories. Glaciers, lagoons and oceans surround farmsteads – dwellings of traditional sociality, with strong bonds tying family, religion and health. Personalities of the living are treated with utmost respect and a certain sense of spirituality extends to inanimate objects and mystical beings. Landscapes deliver therapy to the wellbeing of inhabitants; wildlands of importance and ubiquitous excitement provide emotional normality and scope for meaningful reflection and healing.

… Landscapes of therapy.

Relations are essential to understanding the nature of place. In Indonesia, digital connections are facilitating landscape connectivity for heritage movements, whereby a changing political climate has advocated increased value to history and

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[1] *This piece provides the authors' insights into the diverse narratives shared by researchers at the Landscape Narratives session of the Institute of Australian Geographers 2019 conference. The meeting was hosted upon the lands of the Palawa and Pakana peoples in Hobart, Tasmania. The authors thank those who contributed to the session: Alison Williams, McMaster University; Tod Jones, Curtin University; Emma Sheppard-Simms, University of Tasmania; Helena Shojaei, University of the South Pacific; Alexander Cullen, University of Cambridge; Malcolm Johnson, Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality USA; Cara Stitzlein, CSIRO; Scott McKinnon, University of Wollongong; Aysha Fleming, CSIRO.*

memory within the landscape. The Bol Brutu, a diverse group of archaeology devotees, engage in strategic action via extensive social media networks for active cultural protection. They peacefully seek inspiration from poetry, film, paintings and photography, from rare sites across the island province of Java, curating a nouveau cosmopolitan engagement with heritage. Sharing cuisine, celebrating culture.

... Landscapes of sociality.

Burial islands portray traumatic landscape narratives. Often spaces of past colonial governmentality, products of troubled repression which evoke ghostly reminders of history gone. Convict or Aboriginal prisons and burial grounds, Indigenous internment camps, leprosariums, asylums, quarantine stations, reformatories. Places which signify a geography of exclusion, where social death precedes physical death. How do we sensitively memorialise these landscapes, to prevent a loss of history at the expense of commercial gain and empty reductions of commemoration to technocratic representation; memory reduced to a map symbol?

... Landscapes of memory.

A shift to participatory action research is improving the sustainability and efficiency of development interventions to engage and empower local actors, particularly those more marginalised, for co-production of knowledge. Inhabitants of the Kingdom of Tonga are eager to participate and be heard by landscape researchers, yet it is notable that a history of adverse power-dynamics and engagement apathy have potential to mar contributions. Cultural awareness and cognitive bias are important for researchers to acknowledge, ensuring that grassroots participation can be successfully fostered and reflects a lasting connectivity to land.

... Landscape of participation.

Sites of ontological frictions are emerging in Timor-Leste in response to climatic challenges. The landscape provides a place for managing, identity and knowledge, yet who is responsible for emergent climate impacts and associated socio-cultural costs? When central governing scientific knowledge is weak, climate change assumes political power, often viewed too simplistically, such as 'bad weather caused by tree cutting'. Careful consideration of complex customary epistemologies and the relations to the land-weather-scape is necessary to avoid language miscommunications and localised environmental conflict.

… Landscapes of custom.

The Talakhaya watershed nestles the southside of Rota, an island of the Mariana archipelago. A clandestine catchment with a degenerating economy; narratives of land leaving alongside emigration. Landscape management practices heighten threats from native land clearance, invasive species, over-harvesting, storms, drought and burning. Elders note disconnect of today's youth to knowledge of the water-stressed jungle ecosystem, a cultural shift, a disconnection to landscape. Environmental policy needs enforcement to improve protection. Successful landscape restoration comes through support and cooperation.

… Landscapes of threat.

Conversation is a necessary tool for promoting a low carbon future in Australia. Understanding landscape user needs is essential for adopting carbon farming. Participatory research provides a mechanism to translate and reframe practice for the emergence of viable long-term sustainable solutions. Open dialogue is critical. Capturing the personas of stakeholders improves understanding of attitudes and motivations, identifies capacity for change, and is integral for realising innovation. Landscape managers can benefit from digital tools and integrated decision support to successfully assist land management.

… Landscapes of personality.

Bushfire, a pervasive threat in Australia; vital for ecological rejuvenation, destructive for property, devastating for life. Fire trauma eventuates a loss of belongings. Navigating ruinous landscapes evokes an inevitable sense of loss, sadness, nothingness. Lost objects carry heart-breaking materialised memories; reminiscences of what has past, reminders from the past yet to come. Pragmatic reflections suggest only life is irreplaceable. Assets which survive become treasured items, conjuring a future of untold stories. Lost belongings unite dwellers, strong familial connections emerge, and charred communities are fortified through what remains.

… Landscapes of belonging.

Now is the time to reflect. Connect.

Time to nurture the significance and worth of land.

Looking for Marianne North*

John Charles Ryan (Southern Cross University, Australia)

this grotesque burl absorbed

      you, but obsession came easily,

    propelled you to Japan, Sicily, Borneo

your portrait from Ceylon—

      a shawl-wrapped saint, cherubic

    aura and flushed cheeks framed

        by palm fronds

more restless and further

      flung you became after

    your father passed away

        your love transposed

          to pitcher-plants,

        tree-ferns, bael fruits

now the same dirt track you took

      from Pemberton jars me,

    corrugations made more extreme

        by four-wheel tyre tread

than your trundling by horse-drawn

      wagon: easel, oils and implements

of exile in tow to paint an aberration—

a bearded gargoyle interrupting

pure ascension

your rendering is faithful

to forest spirits and to banksias grasping

with light-thirsty fingertips

by midday, septa

partition growth into gnomish faces, perfumed

bark below and above

shreds off in the sear

peering up unexpectedly—*Creation of Adam*,

Michelangelo in crevices, or, at least, seraphs

and sprites cavorting

you and I limber to the shaded

moss-strewn side   close our eyes   cling to cool

resilience, which is a karri

which is a tree.

*Marianne North (1830–1890) was an English botanical illustrator who travelled to Southwest Australia in 1880.

After Rain

Louise Boscacci (University of Wollongong, Australia)

I

When it rains
the smell is not
petrichor but
charcoal,

a musty sickness stuck
to brittle
ground.

Underfoot and patient
after that long trace
Saturday
calling up the blood
moon, mobile

networked ahead of all hotspot maps
and embers of rage, your damp ghost,
Fire, candles our shaky
after-calm.

II

Shiver.

III

I heard the cuckoo-shrike
Sunday,
afternoon cloud
sousing
the scarp
flat, black-faced

at birth, no silent
evacuee smudged
by carbon's
terror plume.

Good Luck Bird,
Molly Aura, Fortune-sifter,
Greyscale Glider,
Canopy Seer. Good
luck, bird.

IV

Behind the over-cooked
pot, umber water jar
rent by heat
in those early
hours you slept unbroken
with kiln free to run,
leaf shards
huddle where
they dropped the night
we ran once,
twice, three times
from fire's arc.

V

Country of the faeries
no more, flammagenitus
bears dry dead
thunder.[i] Pyro-crickets
underground queue after
rain to resurface.

—January 7, 2020.

Figure 1. The approaching Currowan-Morton fire front, as it crossed the Shoalhaven River to enter the Wingecaribbee district of the Illawarra (Southern) Highlands of New South Wales, 4 January 2020. This vantage point of watch and act was above the village of Fitzroy Falls, just out of sight below the water reservoir in the middle ground, in Wodi Wodi and Yuin country. (Photograph: Louise Boscacci).

A flammagenitus, from *Cumulus flammagenitus*, is a fire cloud commonly known as a pyrocumulus. The most intense version is a pyrocumulonimbus, capable of generating its own thunderstorm of lightning and black hail, and casting embers kilometres ahead to spark new blazes. (WMO, International Cloud Atlas, n.d., https://cloudatlas.wmo.int/en/flammagenitus.html).

Summer on The Swan River, 1953

Lawrence A. Smith (Western Australian Museum)

I'm sitting on the deck of a sprawling riverside home

bolstered by a limestone cliff and terraced gardens.

Four grassed levels, lowest the breakwater, wriggling its toes in the water.

Vista over Melville Water views to Blackwall Reach and Point Walter.

Always something to watch from my armchair front verandah,

kids doing "bombies" off the reach, stick-men digging bait on the spit,

people, dolphins, shags, fishing.

I watch "Islander" slide by, Rottnest bound,

scalloped canvass awning rippling in a pesky easterly breeze;

old "Zephyr" just behind, puffing, *her* goal, Garden Island.

From the spit, a dog-startled Pelican levitates, elevates,

climbs the easterly breeze, assumes its imperious air

while I heave flabbergasted fish up to "our" jetty with splintered planks.

Flappy, slippy, blue gills dilated, gasping for water.

Every day explore the boat shed.

Peeling paint, jumbled rope, block and tackle, gaffs, lumps of cork,

mouldy canvas, smell of seagull shit hanging like icing from the rafters.

Slosh, slap gurgle, I practise single rollick sculling from the dinghy's transom.

From the window of the boatshed a view of Greenplace: my vision of Arcadia.

Mystic columned house half hidden by weeping willows.

Stern order: *don't talk to anyone there.*

When the tide is low we putter down to the sugar works and plumb mussels with

our feet, a bucket of fruit, to take home and pickle for that special treat.

In the cool of the evening we troll for Tailor and after sundown,

from the verandah, watch prawners on the spit at Point Walter, the

processional pairs of synchronised tilly lamps occasionally interrupted by a

muffled kerfuffle as a light vanishes and inaudible expletives reach our ears.

We suspect they now have a prawnless bucket.

What an idyll.

I've studied clouds, terns sitting on the wind, eyes down, alert,

pods of dolphins, backs arcing waves,

found and cleaned tiny fossil shells

from the cliff behind the house

and wondered why the shag takes so long to dry its wings.

Mount Keira by night[ii]

Frank Russo (University of Sydney, Australia)

The smell of post-rain ozone and forest spores
sharpen air as we make our way past Mount Keira.
Escarpment climbs and plunges either side.
By the highway's edge three Rusa deer
appear through evening's fog,
headlights reveal their grey-brown forms.

Unfazed by the winding cars, a pair of hinds
flank a stretch of road, browsing veldt grass
by the verge. Soon what began as a vigilant watch
for stray deer, becomes a game of spot the herd
as it emerges through stands of ironbark.

At the next bend a buck chews, scornful
of the fabled deer of poetry and story—
                        always a switch of tail,
an apparition by a lake, a sudden flash
observed through a kitchen window—
                but not these,
moored to the grassy ledges
like nesting island birds.
        It's us, hurtling past,
that are the sudden flicker,
the glint and spark
that quickly fades.

Tonight they forage quietly,

belying their image as the jumpy patrons

of accidents, of unexpected things,

though last week, one was hauled

fifty metres by a truck's cab—

                                    fur and bones shed

like October antlers on the forest floor,

and the heft and bulk of a nervous buck

has sent more than one of us

to oblivion or nirvana.

Ascending Mount Ousley, headlights pan

like spotlights. A giant stag peers out

as we steer the bend—

         neck extended, its spiky crown

unfurled like a skeletal fern,

and beyond this, the chain of fog lights

ignite the forest like a lantern-string trail,

a path of luminescent crumbs

to guide us back towards the city.

[ii] Mount Keira is part of the Illawarra Escarpment State Conservation Area of New South Wales. Rusa Deer were introduced into nearby Royal National Park in 1906 as an attraction for visitors, and spread to the escarpment.

Eggs, Hair, Seeds, Milk

Patrick West (Deakin University, Australia)

Elizabeth found it hard to believe there had ever been a time when she wasn't waiting. She was even further from remembering that period when no desires had been denied her. Ages the delay had lasted, and for what? For this? She scanned the prospects before her. Nothing to comfort a maidenly woman. The cruel world, the same as it ever was. If this kept up, she swore to herself she'd do it, she'd turn her heart into unshakable stone out of spite.

Of the sundry lookouts scattered through the blossoming canopy, Elizabeth had the extra misfortune of occupying that spot commanding the greatest view. A whisper issued from the next tree. "Any sign of them yet?" Her ears thought to detect, in the tone of voice, the least portion of an accusation. How dare anyone hold her—innocent, pure, put-upon Elizabeth—responsible for this state of affairs? She fixed her mouth into a tight, thin line.

"Did you hear me? Did you hear me, Liz?" The watching woman hated, besides all else, this address of such intimate mode. "Liz, Liz, Liz." Only Ted, once upon a time, had been welcome to call her that. Dear Liz, he'd started—and told her it was the end.

"Liz, Liz, tell me, please, what can you see?" Not to be denied, the plant's whining. . . .

"If I could see anything at all, don't you think I would have spread the word by now?" Elizabeth's utterance suggested the hiss of a snake disturbed from winter hibernation. The tree, wisely, desisted. A draught of cold air produced a rustle of leaves, a sashaying of flowers—undefinable stirrings on all sides. Still, neither head nor tail of those she longed for. In the offing, only gloom. In the black sky, the moon had wandered who knows where.

Elizabeth was familiar with its plight: reflecting, neglected, genuflecting relation of the solar sovereign. No worse hell than to shine by the light of another. Every month, she observed it diet down to a sliver in the heavens. "The sun grows fat on the moon's green cheese," her mother had told her once. "Don't trust your happiness to last," she might have added—for Elizabeth knew this much to be true, and truth always outs, even if little else her mother said had gospel's eternal perfection.

She frowned into the dimness at the image of the woman with a gaggle of infants on her lap—a litter of crepuscular memories.

Elizabeth's whereabouts was scattered with the seeds she had released while waiting. The floor of this patch of world: sterile, inert, infertile. How vitality was denied before it had even the chance to become vital—resistance of the living to what grows betwixt death's crevices. Oddest of magic. Certainly the forest sheltering this company of men and women, Edward (no more to be favoured with Ted) among them in his barrenness, was not of the usual sort. This wooden woodland, miserable abortion of existence: Elizabeth's solitary confinement.

Or so it was, until the probing feelers of the world infiltrated her cocoon. If she swooned, didn't others swoon with her? In the lulls of Elizabeth's sighs, weren't the strains of a whole forest to be heard? Blood no longer scurrying through spines; bones as heavy as convict shackles; lockjaw; hearts flayed and scourged. Thoughts of release, running to seed.

Which didn't mean that her companions had any greater billing than extras in suffering. Elizabeth concerned herself exclusively with herself. She wanted to sneeze. She sniffed once. (She glimpsed the moon from one eye's corner.) She stifled it. Her snorting, unexpectedly loud, must have sounded like a response to expectations fulfilled—echoing through these leafy arbours.

"Liz, Liz, Liz, you simply must be able to see them by now. Tell me you can."

She felt like taking an axe to that insolent tree, importunate colleen, cat with a cat's tongue. Mentally, Elizabeth consulted her street-taught Cockney vocabulary of insults and slurs. She parted her lips, breathed in—prepared to let fly. Except just then, at their own slow pace, those they awaited, began to make themselves known; she could prune that stupid sapling later on, make her shake and shudder to an autumn shedding.

Elizabeth heard them before she saw them: crescendo cries of the children—reverberations in the gloaming. Most cruel, most unfathomable, their tediously prolonged arrival at forest's margin. The trap, at least, was set. Innocent of the ways of the world as they might have been, like all those who'd come before, Elizabeth wanted these infant souls captured. Let the business of mid-winter begin. Now the snare could be sprung.

"Liz, Liz, Liz. Is that them? Say we can start soon. Say we can."

"You have to keep your mouth shut. We can't risk them hearing us now." Elizabeth spoke more harshly than she intended to. If only her pollarded petitioner would stop getting on her nerves so irritatingly. "I'm sorry", she added, gently. "It's just that they're almost here."

"But why have they tortured us by leaving it this long? My back's splitting in two. I need to take a pee. Liz, Liz, Liz. Have they travelled halfway across London to get here?"

The voice died down to nothing in the greenery. Years of training are only good for so many minutes of endurable confinement. Encased in a wood that was unchanging from autumn to spring, from winter to summer, Elizabeth felt—if not sympathy exactly, then sorrow of a sort—for Edward, all alone with his troubles, in some other part of the forest. If he were even now stumped in a stump, with no green, glistening shoots to console him, then perhaps that very intimation of death would invade him, as it had her.

Feeling hollow inside, within her own hollow, Elizabeth sought relief and distraction from these thoughts of Edward. All the events leading up to this tantalizing duration, when the children could be heard and not seen, what of them? The most eager of the boys and girls would soon be arrayed before her—observers not believing themselves observed.

From too much time, to too little. As was her habit, now she'd begun, she'd have to finish. Elizabeth sought to hurry her recollections through her mind, and be rid of them at last, the way she'd once seen her mother brush spilt milk off a table, lovingly laid for some long-forgotten special occasion, without causing any of the fatty, white globules to split asunder. Yolks of milk, they'd been—perfect in their quavering primness.

They'd chased after each other, she remembered, many in a row, into her mother's embrace.

So Elizabeth began to sweep into the draughty corridors of time these memories of this morning, careful not to puncture their skin, letting loose a flooding, a seeping in, a staining that could never be unstained, even by the ferocious scrubbing of eternity. Wasn't Cinderella scolded each evening for the laziness of her sweeping, her inability to tidy the mess of the day? No matter how carefully she cleaned, invariably, a spot would be missed—a bit of something or other. A speck of malicious time, unaccounted for.

Elizabeth couldn't stand this notion of herself always being late, a truant from vital happenings. Was she doomed to be the tortoise that never quite caught the hare?

She wanted to remember, in a forgetful way, as brush or broom gathers up all that it desires actually to dispense with, capturing the unwanted, wishing it far away.

The stage door attendant should have known better, observing Elizabeth's face, than to attempt a conversation. "Time wasted is time never regained," he'd remarked, and then, at her response, blushed red as a tomato crushed in the snow, near the marketplace, by the wheels of a carriage taking gentlewomen to elevenses. He'd swung the door open. She entered into that lair of theatrics, illusions, deceptions. Down three steps at once in the darkness (the theatre manager was a cheese-parer) but Elizabeth knew her passage as well as the moon knows its task of reflecting the glory of the sun. Into the pit she descended.

The town hall clock was booming a quarter past the hour. A fifteen-minute segment of her life had proved Elizabeth's undoing. It was madness to think of it: the countless opportunities since her birth to make up for this lost time; then, the loss of each one of these opportunities, also to time, which force eternally sweeps forward from the past towards a future unknown. (At school, she'd always had trouble with her tenses, condemning all acts to the present. "Stop conjugating like an idiot," said the master, before raising his cane.)

The property man gave thanks for Elizabeth's eventual arrival—another of those actresses with the tresses like swathes of flowing ivy—without a flicker of emotion affecting his visage. Old hands of the troupe enjoyed telling newcomers (those yet, perhaps never, to play the Dane) that the grumpy stockist had smiled only once in his life. "Probably before you were even born, when we performed for Queen Victoria in 1879. You think I'm joking? Just wait a bit. You'll see." Usually, they refused to believe it on the first day, had their doubts on the second, were blank slates for persuasion by the third.

No doubt at all, the property man was a grouch. In bed, before dreaming, he poured scorn on himself. Permanent as his own props, he'd observed many directors come and go over the years, seen them succumb to inevitable pride, thought of them as worse men than himself (then even worse of himself for thinking it).

Elizabeth surveyed the developing scene from the edge of the stage; they must only have started the operation a few moments before—except those moments were vital. Once again, she cursed under her breath at the source of her delay. It always seemed to happen to Elizabeth, the interruption to life, and then: the 'sold out' sign would go up in her face; the ferry would blow its whistle for the third and final time; the last ticket to the circus, passport to tigers and clowns, would be sold to the man one ahead in the queue. Most trivial delay.

Then trouble everlasting.

There were footsteps behind Elizabeth: frantic sounds of others, similarly outwitted by the clock. They knew each other's parts; you played what you wore. (Men were flowers and women were rocks.) Edward must already have been disguised. She needed to grab something, anything, fast. Knowing, besides, that not all choices were equal. And of human selfishness.

Upon a battlefield of all the paraphernalia of preparation for a role, of costumes and props, of guises and disguises—of fantastical, flummoxing flux—she looked for what she might not mind to become. Predictably, the dandelions and the will-o'-the-wisp had been claimed, mere pieces of fluff in the arms of the property man. They pinched his sides most cruelly in possessing themselves of such roles. While those to miss out pinched harder and double.

Now the windmill is taken. A man has popped his top through its top. Even now, the vanes are turning: one way, then the other, upon the breeze-less stage! Some have no talent for realism: the very least a fictional wind should do is to blow like its relations of the weather.

Next to go, the mushroom. If she weren't careful, Elizabeth would end up as a log on the forest floor—even worse, as the scarecrow. She shuddered. Now the moon is gone. The stars and the sun also. The last of the trees waddles into a coppice of its companions.

Elizabeth regarded the rock pile once more. Best resign herself at once to spending the following hour, crouched as if in an acorn or woody womb, at the feet of the dandelions.

She hurried across the boards. The white stains, Elizabeth saw, had not been wiped off. Yesterday's performance had benefited from the injection of a realistic element no director could ever have choreographed. Having made it into the bowels of the auditorium, who knows how, a pigeon had commenced building a nest upon one of the performers. "I half expected to have an egg laid on my head," the unfortunate tree had said in the green-room.

"At least it didn't shit on you," said another, busy unbending his body into human form once more. (Matinée Matthew, the children had dubbed the dove—direct from Trafalgar Square.)

And now, for the first time today, Elizabeth is lucky. ("Lucky Liz," Edward said to himself from his hide—and smiled—and was sad.) Apart from the remains of a nest in its upper branches, it was perfect: a tree that everyone else had happened to overlook. A heartbeat more and her costume would have been snatched away, by another of those to miss out on the most prized parts of the forest. Let that other latecomer suffer the fate of the scarecrow; the tardy tree allowed itself a little gloating.

Elizabeth dragged herself inside the previously unnoticed conifer. Its trunk moulded firmly to hers. She pushed winter-pale arms into branches shaped like a 'V'. Hands entered gloves sewn to frondescence a little the worse for wear (built in 1871, this splendid spinney, this thicket of thickets, was getting on in years). Each of Elizabeth's fingers controlled its own thumbnail forest of tendril, stem and leaf. She could tickle the clouds, signal to the moon.

Peepholes at various levels were suited to actors of almost all dimensions. Elizabeth towered over most of her fellow thespians. To the casual, external observer, her eyes

were like buds—of a catching uncertainty of colour between blue and green—high up on the tree's surface (sure you had to know just where to look). Elizabeth gazed upon the outside world.

Staring at her, from where it had planted itself temporarily in the front row of seats, was the sulky mushroom. Elizabeth eyeballed it without meaning to. Tree and truffle regarded each other for a moment; a vegetable communication ensued: poor puffball, bilious boletus, why was she the frumpy fungus, and this late arrival a most respectable icon of the forest? The mushroom tossed her pink- and blue-gilled cap: beware my power, toadstool with a toadstool's malice. . . .

But let the pantomime commence. Elizabeth, at least, was ready. The director stalked through the forest, clad in the day's fashion, making final adjustments to his wood's artifice. He tucked a leaf in here; smoothed the forehead of a quivering stone; stroked the petals of the girlish dandelions; signalled to the mushroom to shift itself. A construction of bucolic genius, he said to himself, too good for unappreciative children. How dare that pitiful cheese-parer pay a man of his talents so miserably?

He was God on the seventh day!

Immediately, he was sorry for suggesting it; the director repented in the shadow of the scarecrow, suffering within certain livery almost suitable for a mortal—almost—but which, in this slight difference, was far less agreeable an outfit than flower or tree, even rock. The actor hung from his pole as if upon a cross. The director shuddered: it was as if they had crucified a man for the foolishness of art. Hurrying off stage, he brushed past Elizabeth. Poor woman, his mind whispered to itself, all that fuss and nonsense involving Edward (a reliable although certainly far from exceptional actor).

Elizabeth suffered his presence. The half-constructed pigeon's nest was cradled in her arms, at heaven's floor. The bird had spent the first act gathering materials. Cross-eyed attention revealed: an ancient ribbon from some audience member of yesteryear; a counterfoil from the ticket to a show panned by every critic bar one, who had loved it;

and—yes, she was quite sure of this—a few red hairs from the head of Edward. Edward, who had let her down at the last.

He could be breathing down her neck in this hideaway forest, watching her even now. Elizabeth felt herself cast upon the ground like a shadow. Red—colour of too many things. Red of fruit pressed into fresh snow; red spilling over temples; red of the blood flowing in every heart; seeing red; the red stain across her soul of the one she had abandoned.

Elizabeth watched the carroty hairs dance in the breeze created by the windmill. They gambolled now this way, now that—children at play, almost without cares. There was the special smell of Edward as well. Exquisite stink of his redness. Was he closer than she knew, hidden inside the moon or the sun? Knowing him, either lunar sulking or sun somersaulting.

The waiting really and truly begins now.

Elizabeth found it hard even to believe there was ever a time when she hadn't been anxious for the children to arrive.

(Edward, the bastard.)

And now their cries are loud in her ears. But still they haven't arrived. How much longer might she remain so painfully positioned? When might a tree commence its dancing?

Elizabeth envied those granted the freedom of unrestrained, fictional movement: the windmill of swirling scimitars; the sun; the moon. Even the fallen log, moss-infested branch, which had fallen perchance—legion the inevitable ambiguities of back-story— to the ground in a storm. Slyly part of its act, even now it was rolling across the stage, without a care for ankles or shins—sweet revenge on those to have duped it out of less crestfallen roles. Cast-off cast member—a dizzy 'memento mori' for the trees.

Still, Elizabeth continues to wait—as if endlessly—as if for the Christmas after this one, and for the one after that. . . .

1901 and 1902 and 1903. . . .

And still the children haven't arrived.

And still they're crying, laughing, carolling into her ears.

Yet no sight of them.

Outside, even the snow knows that it's winter, and of spring's grave too.

Review of *The Wood: the Life and Times of Cockshutt Wood*, by John Lewis-Stempel, Published by Doubleday, 2018. Cover price (Hardback) UK £14.99.

Patrick Armstrong (Edith Cowan University and University of Western Australia)

John Lewis-Stempel has received several awards for 'Nature writing', including the prestigious Wainwright Prize, twice. But he describes himself as a 'countryside writer' and *The Wood* is very much of this genre.

Cockshutt Wood is a small area (about three acres) of mixed woodland in the hills of Herefordshire in the border country between England and Wales. The book is a beautifully written diary of a year in the life of this woodland, 'a place of ceaseless wonder', as the author describes it. A woodland landscape comprises the trees (of course), but also the ups and downs of the land, the soil, the insects, mammals and birds, and all these, and the manner in which they interact as the seasons pass, the author describes well. But woodland has a language that 'locks on' to that landscape, and is almost inseparable from it. The name of the wood itself is significant: 'cock' is from 'woodcock', traditionally a small game bird: 'shutt' is mediaeval English for 'trapped' (as in 'shut in'), so Cockshutt Wood is the wood where, long ago, woodcock were netted. Woodland management has its own phraseology: trees are (or were) 'coppiced' or 'pollarded'. Lewis-Stempel's great-grandfather, he tells us, was a 'reeve' or manager of woodland. A 'copse' is a small woodland, of half an acre or less, a 'covert' is a dense group of trees and shrubs' used for game rearing or shooting, a 'hanger' is a wood on the summit of a rise, while a 'dingle' is a wooded valley. 'Pannage' is the traditional practice of releasing pigs to feed in woodland, often on beech 'mast' – the nuts from beech trees. The author explains how he attempted to resurrect this practice. Some of the species of tree have a host of evocative local names: crab apple (the wild apple tree) is referred to as: sour grabs, scarb, scrab, bittersgall, gribble or scrogg.

Of these matters, and the butterflies, the plants of the undergrowth, the spiders, the foxes, of 'Old Brown' the tawny owl and the fungi of his woodland, the author writes perceptively and economically: sometimes he uses an unusual word that the reader may need to look up: the bluebells of the wood are describes as a British 'quiddity'. He gives his current favourite word as 'psithurism' meaning the sound of rustling leaves on trees. And he has occasionally an elegant turn of phrase; late in the autumn, he notes, there remain

> ... a few leaves still on the sallow wands, quite like pennants on a cavalryman's lance, shredded in the wars of the winds.

And in high summer:

> The aniseed aroma of ground elder fills the air. Purple loosestrife bows in the heat. The peace is heavenly.

As if to emphasize the way in which humanity has depended on woodland for centuries, the text is lighted here and there by a recipe for utilizing of wood's produce – crab apples, chestnuts, elderberries, and even acorns.

But the author knows his poets as well as his plants and animals. Tennyson and Kipling, Shakespeare and the Browning are quoted in an entirely apposite manner. So too John Clare. Music is not forgotten: 'Elgar made music of England's landscape' he declaims: 'The trees are singing my music – or have I sung theirs?' Elgar is quoted as saying. A longish poem by Edward Elgar is quoted, and a list of 'Wood music' is appended to the 'Woodland Reading List' at the end of the work.

John Lewis-Stempel also clearly understands the notion and the language of sustainability – the idea that a landscape or ecosystem can, if properly managed, provide a yield or crop indefinitely. He describes how he uses his few acres of woodland to provide a supply of timber, of game, of pig-meat (through the pannage), of berries and wild fruits in a sustainable manner. He several times refers back to John Evelyn (1620–

1706), the English landscape architect and author, who warned that even in his day, in his book *Sylva, or a Discourse of Forest Trees,* continued growth of industry would have dramatic consequences for timber resources.   Evelyn argued for the establishment and conservation of forests and woodlands in England: his writings reflected the sense of responsibility he had for future generations, and he is now understood to have been one of the antecedents of the doctrine of sustainability.

In his discussion of the natural history, ecology and conservation of a tiny area of woodland landscape in Herefordshire, John Lewis-Stempel provides an elegant example of the essential unity of landscape and the language that describes it. And he does with real panache.