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Just coasting: the confluence of space, place and ecology

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Just coasting:
The confluence of space, place
and ecology

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Bachelor of Social Science (MA qual.)

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Arts and Social Sciences
Southern Cross University, 2018
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Abstract:

Human assaults on the environment are now the looming issues of the 21st Century. The exponential forces of population and technology are the epicentres of unprecedented historical advents that are occurring in the swelter of simultaneity and the emergence of the Anthropocene. The deeper concerns of biological diversity and environmental integrity seem to languish in the aftermath of a brutal and malignant efficiency bent on exploitation and vested interests. The work of this thesis unfolds providing potent metaphors and cogent perspectives to think through life-affirming responses to ecological crisis. The chapters respond to the critical questions of existence as meditations on air, water, food, shelter, recreation, outdoor living and multi-species relationships. What are the crucial practices appropriate for place-making / place-writing at this time? Can these creative non-fictions support shifts in consciousness and better treatment of the environment? What role might the environmental humanities play in communities of environmental practice? The specific context of living on the coast, amid surfing culture, situates this thesis at the confluence of space, place and ecology, as a speculative work of multi-species ethnography and coastal philosophy. The urgency for human responsibility requires significant transformations that connect creative practices with the everyday to promote a plausible environmental culture of the future. The purpose of new ecologies of living are to utilise the care-of-the-self to realise a broader place-sensitive ecology-of-care. On the edge of these folds still shimmer possibilities rising on the horizon of an awakening.
Statement of the Candidate

This work has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution. This is the sole work of the candidate comprised of the original work not published in any other form unless cited. There is no conflict of interest or nor have there been any financial benefits accrued in the process of this work. The intention of the language is predicated upon a fundamental assumption upon gender neutrality although not always reflected in the literature.
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You touch one thing deeply and everything is there

Thich Nhat Hahn
Prologue: Love in a changing climate

Once in his life a man ought to give himself up to a particular landscape in his experience, to look at it from as many angles as he can, to wonder about it, to dwell upon it. He ought to imagine that he touches it with his hands at every season and listen to the sounds made upon it. He ought to imagine the creatures there and all the faintest motions of the wind. He ought to recollect the glare of the noon and all the colours of the dawn and dusk.

(Momaday1969: 8)

As a young boy I grew to love the coast of New South Wales in Australia, spending much of my life enamoured by its charms. Numerous encounters with the sea have given shape to the intricacy of my inner coastline, comprised of a range of lived experiences, values and perspectives. To recollect them is to appreciate their worth: my earliest memory is steeped in oceanic consciousness etched in my being with vivid detail. Something strange and yet wonderful happened when I fell overboard as a toddler, while my Grandfather’s boat the Oceanus refuelled at the wharf at Church Point, in Pittwater, at the northern reaches of Sydney. I plunged into the water through what seemed to be a silvery shoot, before being suspended in animation underwater—there I glimpsed astonishing beauty while seized in profound wonder, immersed in the ambience of aquatic splendour. I took note with complete clarity and vividly recall tiny silver bubbles rising to the surface, merging with the shimmering backlit meniscus, the crystal-glass surface of an undulating seal upon the surrounding iridescent blue. This is the self-same oxygen, water-tension and blue ontology I will rely on throughout this thesis. For within the ambit of their meaning, the ocean and water remain mystical and alluring, intrinsic to the formulation and sustenance of the life-worlding of us all.

These fleeting moments at such a tender age took on significance later through the recuperation of contemplation and writing exercises, in a series of turning points, orientating the course of my life toward the coast as a place of belonging. What became for me a learning process through the care of the self and the study of nature, turned my lessons into a broader ecology of care. A sense of purpose developed, predicated on a coastal way of life, wedded by determination and fate pinned on the ocean. Each decision brought me unerringly closer. Over time, an affinity grew with experience and satisfaction, accompanied in many respects by a sense of vocation in response to the intimacy of my calling. A foretaste I recognise in this formative memory as an oracle, where my life flashed forward in the space of moments to become based on oceanic intuitions and endeavours. Soon after I fell overboard, my father dove in fully clothed, scooping me up in his embrace to the safety of the boat. The instinct to hold my breath seems to have come to me naturally without any panic. The distaste for motor-
powered vessels did not come until much later, as I have come to understand the impacts of fossil fuels on the atmosphere and the ocean. What still lingers in my heart of hearts is a liquid sense of love in the bracing arms of my father and the wonder of the subtle motion and beauty of the lifeworld that remains with me as a blue ontology.

![A babe in arms Oceanus Church Point 1961](image)

*photo: Arthur Satchell*

In my teenage years, I was disturbed by the stark contrast in the environment between much of the human impacts and the natural elements. My daily commute took me from Bardwell Park to Stanmore via Tempe and Redfern Station. Each school day the train route would follow the wooded stretch of Girraween Park (the largest tract of green space in south-western Sydney) and emerge between Turrella and Tempe stations, crossing the fork where Girraween Creek meets the Cooks River to flow into Botany Bay. The repetitive shock of seeing the polluted river became an emblematic reminder of feeling at odds with metropolitan culture. This was a period where mass fish kills were not uncommon, caused by factories releasing industrial waste and sewerage directly into the waterway, often non-biodegradable and extremely toxic (Walker 2006). I would later discover there had been a long history of this practice all over Sydney, eventually leading to bans on fishing in various places because of the high levels of toxicity (notably Sydney Harbour itself and the toxic bloom in the water table of Botany Bay) (Montoya 2015). The historical evidence of the dispossession of Aboriginal homelands, the consequences of colonisation and industrialisation, were plain for me to see in anticipation of more truthful accounts of the exploitation and degradation of environments first peoples knew as home. Consequently, through surf culture I developed strong bonds with the environmental movement and became interested in the prospects of
alternate living.

The potent forces people encounter at critical points in their life often become the substance of their future, according to the measure of their response, drawing them inexorably into the realm of a working hypothesis of how to live. A love for the ocean, tempered by the issues of pollution and environmental degradation, resonated with my formative concerns and forged bedrock values I shared with the rising social movements and environmental activists emerging in the mid twentieth-century, into the decades of the 1960s and 1970s when I attended primary and high school. Although my main ambition upon leaving school turned on the simple aims of living near the ocean and becoming a lifelong surfer, these were germane to a deeper longing to become more attuned to the world in which I sought to live in harmony. The tentative map I formed as a lived cartography developed steadily from snatched hours, day-tripping, holidays and road trips, with family, buddies, strangers and eventually alone both north and south. I already realised many of the existing maps were misleading and value-laden, not suited to the journey I had in mind, seeking an unconventional way of life in contradistinction to the conservative mainstream. There were certainly elements of routine, chance and scheming involved, in an uneven but determined endeavour to learn something I needed to know of surf culture and the coast—and the possibilities they held to enchant everyday life. In the context of my strict protestant upbringing in the Salvation Army in Sydney, my yearning for spirituality, philosophy and a coastal way of life, required some distance to make my own mistakes.

In rejection of the standard pathways and absence of any other discernible rites of passage for young people, leaving school and the family home often seem to stand in as an alternate means to seek adulthood. For me these events coincided with a deeper immersion in the surfing underground of Cronulla, after having followed a period of apprenticeship as a grommet leaving my board underneath a house behind the point with my peers. What this meant at the time was learning the ropes, so to speak, to become proficient in the line-up and adept in the milieu. However, the pinnacle of these efforts (proficiency and acceptance) led to other excesses with drugs and alcohol that ultimately ended in dissatisfaction becoming a cul-de-sac (not the first or last)—eroding some of the former joys surf culture had freely bestowed. The watershed moment arrived having made a clean break, a renewal of my Christian faith and the decision to move to Coffs Harbour, following a short holiday. There are two significant events that accompanied these transitions into early adulthood worth recounting. Firstly, arriving in the Coffs Harbour surfing community, where I met and became close friends with Aboriginal people for the first time in my life. My sympathies for the
injustices done to them and the role of the culture of my own upbringing were made acute, necessitating a more searching appraisal. These feelings matched the concerns and values shared about the treatment of the environment. Moreover, through the notion of a ‘welcome to country’ (that I needed to respect and gratefully receive), acknowledgment of custodianship and the implications of care for country resulted in an ethical intervention I had unwittingly yearned for. The second momentous event concerned getting married and starting a family in the ensuing years, setting up our home and becoming grounded in the local community, first at Coffs Harbour but later in Sandy Beach and Emerald Beach, north of Coffs Harbour. Consequently, having children growing up in the area and being nurtured with a coastal way of life became intrinsic to my continuing pursuits. In the sleepy little villages of the time, adjacent to the coast and the magnificent Pacific Ocean, I recognised something I had always longed for and indeed dreamt.

These formative aspects of my life were accompanied by further generative influences. A decades-long protracted protest ensued between the Coffs Harbour Council, developers and residents concerning the building of an Ocean Outfall for sewerage on the northern beaches of Coffs Harbour (Cooke et al 2000). In this period, I had moved to Sandy Beach and was swept up in the protest taking place in the nearby village of Emerald Beach. Look-At-Me-Now Headland was the key site of this struggle and had also become my favourite location to surf. On the 16th of October 1991, 26 people were arrested when contractors brought bulldozers onto the site of Crown Land to begin construction (Cooke et al 2000). I happened to be one of those protestors and by this time had become passionately embroiled in what became known as ‘the siege of Emerald Beach’. The so-called battle involving the community, activists, politicians and legal representatives was not resolved until 1995, when the Labour government under the newly elected Premier of NSW Bob Carr and the long-time supporter against the outfall, Pam Allan, who came to power, as the Minister for the Environment, moved against the construction (Cohen 1997). Subsequently, the new government also created the Solitary Islands Marine Park and the Moonee Nature Reserve, along the coastal foreshore including Look-At-Me-Now Headland. This marked somewhat of a watershed in political thinking on environmental issues at the time, and in 1998 the Solitary Islands Marine Park became the first of its kind in New South Wales (DoPI 2018). These events galvanised my strong feelings for the environmental movement, but also prompted a desire for deeper understandings from philosophical perspectives, feeling confounded as I was by the dominant culture.

These desires simmered for some time before they were given the opportunity to vent
themselves. For a number of years my family became involved in a Pentecostal church, eventually leading to me becoming the Pastor of a small congregation. This as a consequence took a toll on the young family and I withdrew completely from organised religion to seek out my own spirituality. In the course of these years I had begun study outside of the religious arena motivated by communication and leadership development. This resulted in a degree at Southern Cross University, graduating with a Bachelor of Social Science, commencing a career in teaching, first with the North Coast Institute of TAFE and then enrolled in a Master of Arts at Southern Cross University, teaching Cultural Studies in the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education with Baden Offord alongside like-minded scholars. In the process of qualifying for the Masters, I converted my thesis by research into a PhD. The area of interest my studies led me into was the emerging area of the environmental humanities. This in turn enabled a widening of religious studies to do with cosmolology and ecology. Through contact with Deborah Bird Rose, I was invited to an inaugural Environmental Humanities Summit and eventually became a founding member of a group of Australia’s leading environmental scholars, artists and poets called Kangaloon: Creative Ecologies, whose ethos is summarised here as a result of early discussions (Rose 2009).

Kangaloon: Creative Ecologies is a fellowship of poets, scholars, artists and activists in dialogue with the current cascade of ecological degradation and diminishment of life. Through our creative endeavours we pose some key questions. How are we to respond with vision, love and hope? How may we promote health, life and beauty in an era of unfathomable loss? How are we and other species to live and live well? Our commitments are to the beauty and practicality of ecological systems. This is predicated upon a philosophy at one with the environment and a simple poetic life in the presence of earth’s creatures. The work of the fellowship is to create art, writing and scholarship from the depth of nature, to promote balance and sustainability in design, and to rethink economy as ecology.

(Satchell and Shannon 2013)

The project I embarked upon stemmed from the influences of this background I have outlined and from the very thickness of the place where I sought to learn to live. The ideas that informed me from the eclectic and wide-ranging literature I reviewed are tested against my own intuitions and further observations in the field—in the delimited locations and sites where I still live and the overarching interconnectedness of the lifeworld of the planet. Over time a coastal philosophy developed from studies in creativity, everyday life and attention to place, as a means of place-making and place-writing. This was set against the overwhelming reality of the ecological crisis that has in my own lifetime become a phenomenon of hitherto unimaginable scale, where human activity is thought to have taken on geological proportions, impacting dramatically upon the climate for the first time in human history—a period now
often referred to as the Anthropocene (Steffan et al 2015). The stark reality of these events has sorely tested me, challenging me in terms of a plausible ethical response, one where darkness and despair is met with a stronger means to affirm life, amid the far-reaching implications that are increasingly becoming evident.

Figure 3
Beside restful waters

This I have managed to do, not without a struggle and a long dark night of the soul—emerging with a resolve to work towards an environmental culture of the future, in the here and now. Let me repeat for within the ambit of their meaning, the ocean and water remain mystical and alluring, intrinsic to the formulation and sustenance of the life-worlding of us all. The value of love in a changing climate is inviolable to any ethical response that still depends upon the ocean and water—you and I—and the more-than human us.
Section 1. Coasting: On the edge of the fold

Timothy Leary: But it's perfectly logical to me that surfing is the spiritual aesthetic style of the liberated self. And that's the model for the future. And now coming back to my original statement; the reason that I define myself as an evolutionary surfer is because surfers have taught me the way you relate to the basic energies, and develop your individual sense of freedom, self-definition, style, beauty, control... 

Surfer Magazine: ... and that's surfing.

Timothy Leary: (Laughing) Yeah! Yeah!

Timothy Leary (cited in Pezman 1978 np)

There are dynamic features: if moving forward, climbing and descending are dynamism of conceptual personae, then leaping like Kierkegaard, dancing like Nietzsche, and diving like Melville are others of philosophical athletes irreducible of one another. And if today our sports are really changing, if the old energy producing activities are giving way to exercises that, on the contrary, insert themselves on existing energetic networks, this is not just a change in type but yet other dynamic features that enter a thought that ‘slides’ with new substances of being, with wave or snow, and turn the thinker into a sort of surfer as a conceptual persona: we renounce the energetic value of the sporting type in order to pick out the pure dynamic difference expressed in a new conceptual persona.

(Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 71)

After all, what would be the value of a passion for knowledge if it resulted only in a certain amount of knowledgeableness and not in one way or another and to the extent possible, in the knower straying afield of himself.

(Foucault 1990b: 8)

Coasting

1. a. To slide down an incline through the effect of gravity.
   b. To move without use of propelling power.

2. To act or move aimlessly or with little effort.

3. Nautical To sail near or along a coast.

(Free Dictionary 2018 np)

The sense of ‘coasting’ I am seeking to invoke certainly comes from the fluid motion of riding an ocean wave, applied to the broader notion of a way of life attuned to the elements of a relational ontology. The life-worlds living organisms share are all coasting on the edge of the fold of the earth and the cosmos, whose motions constitute the possibilities for life in the confluence of space, place and ecology. In What is Philosophy? Deleuze and Guattari (1994) refer to crazy etymological exercises and conceptual personas as philosophical athleticism.
They posit the thinker in the conceptual persona of a surfer and then renounce the sporting figure to emphasise the ‘pure dynamic difference expressed in a new conceptual persona’—I too prefer not to see surfing as a sport more generally (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 71). This difference that relies on a new conceptual persona is what I want to seize upon in coastal philosophy for just coasting. However, as a thinker and surfer, the need to disavow the sporting type may hold, but only to affirm the connection between performative embodiment and conceptual personas, as a way of thinking in unity with modes of existence that are not as exclusionary. This is vis-à-vis a way of life or even more an art of living experimentally, in search of more effective means with more satisfying results, indeed, a coastal philosophy born from surf culture in the context of eco-politics (Conley 1997). Coasting therefore is a provisional measure that allows for a process to actualise and embody its ideals. As Lao Tzu (1997: 48) would have it—‘the way never does anything, and everything gets done’. My coasting aspires to a harmony of slow movement within the environs as a graceful means of inhabitation.

Coasting relates directly to surfing as a modality of experience and as an approach to life. The idea of surfing has been appropriated par excellence not just by psychedelic gurus and uber-continental philosophers—think of cyberspace, to ‘surf the web’ has become *de rigeur* for everyday life (Turkle 1997). In the more prosaic sense, people channel-surf television, couch-surf temporary accommodation or in a nuttier version they even train-surf for kicks without the charisma of being dharma bums (Kerouac 1974). The metaphoric use of the term—surfing, as in through life is commonly understood (Owen 2008). They each reference situations akin to the technique of riding a surfboard skilfully through the difficult sections of a wave, or the dynamism of waves and the ocean requiring their successful negotiation amid the complexities of the day-to-day modern world.

What might then be the value of re-appropriating the term and giving it further nuance? The appeal of nesting the concept of surfing in the broader context of another term such as *coasting*, is in acknowledging the valence of the richer textures and contexts of peak experiences drawn into extended lifeways or the even more understated elegance of the movement free of effort applied to living (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). I make such a move in order to consider the vicinity of the littoral zone as still fecund with possibility, both literally and philosophically (Warshaw 2010; Hau‘ofa 2008). For me the suite of associated terms, in turn provide a way through the impasse of the sporting type, toward an ethos for living mutually with the ocean. The Hawaiians themselves have a plethora of terms associated with the ocean and specifically for surfing at the fountainhead of coastal lifeways (Okihiro 2008;
Pukui and Elbert 1986). Something I am keen to commit to in this thesis with the subtlety and fidelity, which the sea beckons me—frankly through love for the coast as an oceanic life-world. The sea and coast woo me—as a cosmic entity and as a mythical topos, even so, as a *chora*, the term the Greeks used to suggest a potent space of multi-faceted experience that triggers the imagination and births a reinvigorated sense of place in the numinous (Satchell 2012; Devereux 1996). Coasting in a lively way draws upon the wealth of oceanic consciousness developed over the centuries and across various cultural experiences and practices.

A fitting realisation of coasting occurs in the contemporary relevance of the ocean emanating from the matrix of oceanic cultures in planetary solidarity. The term surfing and coasting might serve in a multifaceted manner to tease out these ‘existing energetic networks’ of thermal, aquatic, terrestrial and celestial interaction, as a means of responding to the weather conditions of climate and further to those of climate change (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 71). The associated terms I suggest (as a crazy etymological exercise) articulate surfing (surf) with coasting (coast), as a point of departure, before considering coasting more directly, as follows; paddle(ing), position(ing), trim(ming), flow(ing), slide(ing), drift(ing), glide(ing), plane(ing), turn(ing), fade(ing), swerve(ing), drive(ing), fly(ing), sail(ing), moor(ing) and cruise(ing). They imply numerous aspects, such as, motion, dynamics, body-language, performance, technique, equipment, location, design, craft, skill, conditions and ontology. What I am seeking to do is bring this symbolic creativity into a framing ethos, as a mode of existence in harmony with ecological conditions.

Coast and by extension coasting have twin meanings that fold (by implication) into one another in significant ways that I seek to elucidate and play on. The 15th Century Middle English word *coast*, has the sense of the side of the body, the Old French *coste* (noun), *costeier* (verb), from the Latin *costa* meaning, rib, flank, and side, reading either as, beside the sea or side of the sea. The verb *coast*, in current usage, means to move effortlessly, to move without expending energy by tapping available networks of energy, momentum, gravity, thermodynamics and hydrodynamics (Coast 2017). Coasting also means to follow the coast, to move about from one location to another, either by land or sea. A coaster is often considered as a small sea-going vessel equipped for such journeys, as is the land-borne equivalent of the van (without the eco-credentials of being powered by sail). In the vernacular, a coaster is someone who takes it easy and by implication, we might add lives on the coast. The *coaster* I am suggesting lives on the coast attuned to the natural rhythms of the life-world with a multi-species sense of place.
Coasting perhaps then carries the same sort of stigma surfing has long held, in terms of a hedonistic lifestyle and a seemingly shallow work-ethic. This refers to the treatment of Hawaiians whose subsistence way of life allowed them to beg off work in the garden and even devote whole seasons to surfing (Okihiro 2008; Warshaw 2010; Warren and Gibson 2014). These native lifeways were challenged in Hawaii by the early missionaries who scorned what they saw as a blithe disregard for industry (Daws 1968). Despite the impost of outsiders, resistance by Hawaiian people (surfers) maintained their birthright and aquatic autonomy against all odds (Margan and Finney 1970; Warshaw 2010; Walker 2008). The false moral superiority and ethnocentrism enforced by the missionaries and early traders (akin to many moderns) is now patently obvious. Their assumptions contributed directly to the calamities of colonisation, industrialisation and capitalism, specifically to the despoliation of land, water and multi-species communities from the 18th Century to the 20th Century into the 21st Century, which have brought catastrophe to the earth community. Thankfully, a well-documented Hawaiian Renaissance is gathering strength, reclaiming the language, cultural practices and many of the former lifeways of their enduring inheritance (Kanahele 1986). The same stigma still attends those surfers whose coastal way of life prefers a modest livelihood based on frugality and quality of life in keeping with the cycles of the natural world (Satchell
2008c). This is something the global surf community has been slower to recognise and acknowledge, compromised in terms of reliance on corporate models, commercial interests and aspirations of normative success (Chouinard 2016). Therefore, my use of coasting is not glib, but rather attendant to a ‘conscious-mapping’ of a way to live in direct opposition to or if not direct, seeking to obviate the tomfoolery of the dominant economic dogma, predicated as it is on unlimited economic growth and development that is in so many respects deleterious to the environment that supports all life (Offord 2003: 44; Harding 2006). The coast as side, as rib offers the imagery of intimacy with those whose hearts are wed to the sea and whose coasting remains afloat with possibility.

Coasting has its origins in indigeneity (saltwater people), piracy (pirate utopias), and alternate social movements (surfers, beats, hippies, greens, deep ecologists) that still exist in various forms. However, the coaster as a conceptual persona is not a throwback but a ‘throw forward’ in Leary’s (cited in Pezman 1978 np) lexicon speaking of the evolutionary surfer intent on out of space—where he misses the mark concerning the throw-forward of an environmental culture now building community, deeply committed to place as a life-world, as opposed to those committed to global economics and fantasy worlds. The idea of coasting, both ontologically and ethically, is the call to instantiate a multi-species community from within the ruins of late capitalism and the farce of the global economy, in the specifics of community and place, in the broadest more-than human sense (Tsing 2015). In the 18th Century advances in human population and technology (industrial) began a trajectory under aegis of a mechanistic worldview that gathered pace toward a definitive ‘great acceleration’ that occurred in the mid twentieth-century as a spike in the impact of human activity upon the earth (Steffan et al. 2015 see title). The advent of the consumer society contributed to this period of human profligacy, and continues to do so, with ramifications that are far-reaching and volatile beyond any accurate modelling. There remains a pervasive need for people to adopt a responsive turn to basic ecological literacy (earth-dependence) at every level—by necessity all education is now environmental (Assadourian 2017). Despite the widespread uncertainty and disagreement among various interests, the most fundamental and realistic principles still apply in regard to the nourishment of life and the restorative conditions of a flourishing environment (Capra and Luisi 2014). The broader challenge of the 21st Century stands out as an imperative to rethink, redesign and re-enact the way people live and support themselves (McDonough and Braungart 2002). This challenge encompasses all facets of everyday life and by necessity must take place in the face of ignorance, opposition and confusion. Moreover, as such is a rejection of the normative conventions and values of
developed economies and representative democracy as it currently stands (Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua et al. 2014). Just as many indigenous cultures have struggled to survive and keep their cultural practices alive, all cultures should now join with them to implement a cohesive environmental culture that supports multi-species life on earth.

Where does the epic journey to this unmapped future begin? The short response is it must begin right where you are. Geographically, I have located my concerns specifically on the coast (personally on the Mid North Coast of New South Wales, Australia). While this is not the only place to begin, the coast has some strategic relevance given two-thirds of the surface area of the earth is ocean (in Australia inhabitants reside on the largest island and smallest continent) and literally no matter whereever you are, the sea surrounds us (Carson 1951). The current estimate is by 2020 three-quarters of the earth’s population will live within 150 kilometres of the coast, only 10 percent of the earth’s surface. In Australia 85 percent of the population now live within 50 kilometres of the coast (Green 2010). The coast, in terms of the watershed of a bio-region, is the significant juncture between the height of the land, sea-level and the depth of the ocean, and intimately implicated in the hydrological cycle and the coastal geomorphology that occurs along the edge of the land and sea (Suzuki and MaConnell 1997; Snyder 1990). While these notions have significance that I will explore, I am considering the question—Where do we begin?—as an existential one. Therefore, the journey begins with us and is inward, folding and unfolding in a temporal and spatial sense (Devereux 1996). So, paradoxically, the journey inward is also a journey outward and through life, a point I will clarify over the course of this project.

I am following certain aspects of Western philosophical traditions, with pre-philosophical roots and Non-Western equivalences, in an eclectic framework intended to shift registers ontologically across a diverse range of epistemologies (Rose 2007). Taking ‘care of the self’ or ‘care of the soul’, as Foucault (2005) considers to be art de la connaissance de soi the art of self-knowledge, as one point of departure, involving three key aspects; first, attention to the relations with one’s self, second, exercises or practices to develop a manner of person and life, and third, mastery of the self that shifts an aesthetics of existence into a modality of creative and therapeutic responses to the rigours of everyday life and mortality that I associate with ecological crisis (Deleuze 1988b; Foucault 2011a; 1983). This concern for the self, as a journey inward, is seen as a means for the emergence of the ethical subject that turns upon the notion of an inversion that is transformative, resulting in a care for others and the larger world—the journey outward.

It is what one might call an ascetical practice, giving the ‘ascetical’; a very general meaning, that is to
say, not in the sense of abnegation but that of an exercise of self upon self by which one tries to work out, to transform one’s self and to attain a certain mode of being.

(Foucault cited in Fornet-Betancourt et al. 1987: 113)

Foucault’s (1990a; 1990b; 1990c) accelerated inquiry into the care of the self, precipitated and ultimately curtailed by the end of his life, became the figurative consummation of his project, recasting his former work. His ‘research into the subject’s forms of immanence’ is a project with renewed relevance into the spectre of Anthropocene, anthropogenic climate change and eco-politics, and one of relational significance with respect to any concerted action of eco-political kind (Foucault 1997; Foucault 2005: 525; Foucault 2011b).

The target today is not to discover who we are, but to refuse who we are…the political, ethical, social and philosophical problem of our days is not to liberate the individual from the State and the State’s institutions, but to liberate us from both the State and from the type of individualisation linked to the State. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed upon us for several centuries.

(Foucault 1983: 216)

Paradoxically, new forms of subjectivity and the refusal of a certain form of individuality (I would emphasise under industrial, technological and consumer capitalism) does not mean that experimentation with possible futures do not have antecedents or lessons from the past. Foucault (2005) manages to develop this from his reading and selective thematic, in the focus on the care of the self from Greek, Roman and Christian texts. But his elaboration and elucidation of the iterations and spectrum of practices, folded into the culture of the self and the techniques of the self, do manage to formulate distinct possibilities and practices for the ethical subject to emerge in the current milieu (my emphasis) (Foucault 2005; 2011b). The care of the self is certainly a matter for philosophy, but Foucault (2005) also makes clear that while its claim on philosophers may be more searching, as an orientation toward life, this means of engagement with the self has a broader purchase on the relational community, as an aesthetics of existence for all to pursue.

The challenge for any approach to these questions is to make them viable for anyone who may choose to pursue them. In the course of Foucault’s (2005) inquiry, the term ‘care of the self’ at times becomes nuanced with the term ‘care of the soul’ with some distinctions that are useful for my purpose, considering various aspects of the inner and outward life. The subtle shift from ‘self’ to ‘soul’ is a useful one explored elegantly by Moore (1992; 1994; 1996) bringing the term self to soul with my sought-after emphasis upon notions of soulfulness. He suggests that the soul is an intimate mystery somewhere ‘between understanding and unconsciousness’, that defies definition, while offering a resonant presence
or indeed registering a sense of absence in lived experience, both in the interior of private lives, the public sphere and in the world at large (Moore 1992: xi). To be soulful is to turn inward. People seem to register an innate appreciation of soulfulness or awareness of a loss of soul as lack. Too often, concern for the soul or souls has been abandoned to the domain of zealous evangelists or religious platitudes. The care of the soul I am taking up (after Foucault and Moore) is not primarily focused on the afterlife, but rather concerned with the poetics of the everyday, and bringing the sacred into the realm of the ordinary and commonplace, wresting these from the domain of elitist and fundamentalist exclusion (Eliade 1958; my emphasis). Therefore, a program of exercises and practices, to develop exemplary qualities and skills, along with approaches to soul-work, both as care of the soul and an ecology of care, are seen to be existing within the sphere of the practices of everyday life, incumbent upon learning to live with one another and all living things (De Certeau 1984). The framework I am adopting as a soul-surfer for the coastal philosophy of coasting is in keeping with the diverse epistemologies of pagan, polytheistic and philosophical lifeways, stripped back to day-to-day existence. These diverse and rich traditions whose mytho-poetics offer a heritage and background for my pursuit of the care of the soul, also serve for theorising everyday practices as an embodied spirituality that are in keeping with an alternate modernity, fit for the 21st Century (Grossberg 2010; Mathews 2005). Indeed, a key to this approach is to connect with aspects of life people already hold dear by experience, but without the burden of a specific spiritual or religious justification to do so.

In the delimited place of my own coasting and creative research for this thesis, the context of the Solitary Islands around Emerald Beach formulates the field of the work. I am interested in the confluence of space, place and ecology in the context of my own endeavours as a formative weigh-station to theorise more expansive claims where possible. The inter-relationship and dynamic synergy implied in the matrix of these terms, signified as confluence, provides the sphere to think and act in the realm of a vernacular environment, as a laboratory for an experimental philosophy and for ways to live. This is in keeping with the advances and fresh understandings of temporality and spatiality—of thinking and acting, time and space together, as a means of well-being and place-making, attuned to the more-than human world (Serres 1995c; Bennett and Connolly 2012). At heart, I have a concern for an idiomatic and paradigmatic shift toward the life-world as the potentiation of a sentient web of relationship and community—ergo the kinship and home for a multi-species sense of place that I recognise and seek to make manifest—even amid pervasive experience of extinctions (Capra and Luisi 2014; Rose 2011; Kolbert 2014; Heise 2016). The language of space, place
and ecology translates across the diversity of climate, topography and temporality, providing a compelling kinship to discover and maintain wherever you are.

A basic premise of this thesis is to maintain there are still available, viable lifeways to address both the current and future challenges of anthropogenic climate change, in an ethical and imaginative manner. The three chapters of this first section find a way into the ecological crisis, tracing some of the processes manifesting themselves in the longer sweep of environmental histories linking colonisation in Europe, Africa, India, Asia, the Americas and the Pacific including Australia.

Chapter 1 *Oceania rising* outlines emergent inter-related themes in eco-poetics and eco-politics from the immediate evidence of climate change in the rise of sea-levels, to indigenous and environmental solidarity across the Pacific envisioned in the notion of a new Oceania, and the imagining of planetary belonging based upon the ocean and water throughout the earth.

Chapter 2 *Inside-out* considers critical shifts in perspectives and perceptions that open possibilities for broadening environmental awareness and raising-consciousness for an ontological approach to seeding a new ecology with practical means.

Chapter 3 *Auto-choreography* considers the experiential dimension of flow-states and peak-experiences stemming from cultural practices, to articulate deliberative approaches to living-well through creative practice in the everyday that matter for the planet.

*There is no Frigate like a Book*
To take us Lands away
Nor Coursers like a Page
Of prancing Poetry—
This Traverse may the poorest take
Without oppress of Toll—
How frugal is the Chariot
That bears the human soul

Emily Dickinson (cited in Moore 1996: 52)

A soulful approach to the Anthropocene is my intention relying upon heartfelt poetries to support the logic of my argument and convey its message.
The woven fabric of the foreshore entangles the imagination in its clever designs

The means of my coasting are ordinary, and I am bound to their immediacy and simplicity as an indication of their effectiveness. Nonetheless, with these modest aims I aspire to find a way to express some deep concerns through the wildest joys and deepest loves of a way of living or a style of existence in keeping with what I have come to know intimately from where I live. The genius of place solicits inquiry, then gently tugs on the heart strings as the acquaintance deepens through immersion to become a relationship of heightened affections. The day-to-day is the scene of an alchemy of the heart transforming everyday life, a home-place whose source of bewitchment becomes an abiding enchantment, even while haunted by the past and more imminent threats. These entangling narratives hallowed in place have a warp and weft of scale, bone, rock and mist, rolling waves, stormy seas, howling cries, body, soul, feather, fragrance and flowers. They are threaded in the paths that cut, carve and smooth into the feet, and are borne up by weather that fly over and settle in, still blanketed in the seasons that come and go. In the space of onto-poetic encounter, they know us. We breathe and become them. At night they return, lingering in the vision of dreams, twitching muscles, waking sleep. In the oceanic night, an unceasing rumble calls from the sea of voices; ‘Come hither’.
Chapter 1 Oceania rising: A new ecology

The breeze howled, then, with menace. It’s crying today in supplication. We sent out distress calls in the days when the sea dominated us. The game has turned. The wind now calls for help. I can no longer hear the surf or the hurricane without deciphering those canon calls: mayday, help me, come help me!

[…] Yes, the sea is dying, the sea is dead! Do you want to wander tomorrow on dead oceans? Make the sea be reborn.

(Serres 2012: 89)

1.1 Rebirthing an oceanic sense of place

There is no question about the situation—all life on planet earth is faced with a crisis of unprecedented proportion. There are those who would, of course, exclude bacteria, certain microscopic organisms and fungi maintaining that without humans, the planet would in all likelihood become a wilderness in recovery (Weisman in Earle 2010). While there may be some conjecture over when the Anthropocene commenced, rooted long ago in the advent of agriculture only to become evident in industrialisation at the turn of the 18th Century—the general background is clear (Morton 2018). The shoots of this human phenomenon have clearly manifested and proliferated in an unequivocal spike in consumption, amid the ramifications of toxic waste from the mid-20th Century (Steffan et al. 2015; Carson 1962). The scale of environmental destruction, then and now is also beginning to be understood in the terms of the dramatic long-term consequences for biological diversity associated with the sixth extinction event (Kolbert 2014). Only the most ardent deniers and die-hard sceptics tasting the fruits of the early-21st Century refuse to acknowledge that anthropogenic climate change is induced by the combined effect of human activity (Gibson et al. 2015; Hawken 2017). Whether or not Anthropocene is an adequate term remains contested for various associated reasons, with the emergence of a fraught climate-change discourse as a factor impinging on co-operative communication and action (Wilson 2016; Haraway 2016; Farbotko 2010). The ecological crisis of modernity has a background trajectory that has gathered momentum (fuelled by population and technology at the expense of biological diversity) particularly in the last two centuries with more acute impacts in the last several decades (Berry 1999; Lent 2017). There is a growing consensus around the significance of the threat (Wilson 2016; Hawken 2017). A multi-faceted and meaningful response languishes on two fronts: the necessary innovation of thinking required to engage collective collaboration, and the form of effective everyday creative practices that are sufficiently cross-cultural in their ability to achieve participation and bipartisanship in a hostile political milieu. The stakes could not be higher, nor the situation more desperate for practical means to serve the common cause for all life on earth.
The situation people now face has not arisen from a vacuum. The environmental message delivered again and again by various spokespersons from diverse backgrounds, to date, have fared no better than fairy-tale warnings that go unheeded. In part the warnings have been ineffectual because of the complexity and scale of the problems, accompanied by the slow onset of the ramifications that are significantly hindered through the wilful ignorance of a blind faith in the importance of human interests—too long been considered to be sacrosanct (Wilson 2016). The value of these earlier messengers (and those who preceded them in lineage) remains in what they made known and alluded to as fundamental, concerning human existence and the environment (Thoreau 1987; Leopold 1982; Carson 1962; Glacken 1976; 2017). In the controversy between the wisdom of the ancients and the relative laxness of moderns in terms of intellect, there have been warnings and antecedents foretelling a time when human and planetary scale would become more delicately balanced with severe consequences (Merton 1965; Serres 1995b). There are a number of key indicators and disturbing signs that illustrate the growing awareness of the predicament cogent to any discussion either formal or informal—for example, the level of carbon CO₂ in the atmosphere, the rise in surface temperature of the earth and the oceans, the change in the pH level of the ocean pushing towards acidification, the melting of polar ice caps and glaciers, loss of habitat and rapid decline in biological diversity of plant and animal species, the degradation and decline of available drinking water and, finally, the frequency of extreme weather events across the spectrum (McKibben 2010; Roberts 2012). The acuteness of vulnerability for humans and the biological diversity they unwittingly rely upon is increasing through more frequent extreme and unpredictable weather events, resulting in radically altered climates, again causing the diminishment of key resources such as food, adequate shelter, reliable and benign forms of transport, further exacerbated by the escalating over-reliance upon technology to maintain vital supports and services (Suzuki and MacConnell 1999; Capra and Luisi 2014). The vulnerabilities for people are unevenly dispersed, as are the means to mitigate their immediate effects, while the basic principles that enable life to endure setbacks and to flourish still appear to remain within our collective grasp—although this is debatable (Macy and Brown 2016). What remains unclear is whether humans can effectively meet these challenges by co-operating with the environment that for so long has been taken for granted and treated with disdain—including the marginalisation of those who address these concerns.

Despite what would then appear to be a spectacular failure to raise environmental awareness and activate community engagement with a broader environmental imagination, the situation demands further attempts and a refusal to quit. There remains an opportunity to join those environmental thinkers and cultures of the past (and present) to build on their
legacy, particularly acknowledging the unequivocal diversity within their number (Berry 1988; Devereaux 1996; Stone and Barlow 2005; Serres 2012; Macy and Brown 2014; Stengers 2004; Hawken 2008).

Let us begin, firstly, questioning the stubborn insistence on maintaining industrialisation and capitalism at the core of the ecological crisis, in spite of the warnings and analysis, and secondly, consequently, questioning the meagre efforts to begin the work of adaptation (renewable energy just one case in point), rather than the insistence on maintaining the status quo against the interests of the greater good. Finally, challenging the alarming ignorance and desensitisation to the gravity of the situation, analogous to the unsinkable Titanic, although not even comparable in terms of the scale and consequences (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011; Gibson et al. 2015). The aims of this thesis turn on overcoming these problematics with imagination and creative practice by promoting integrity and adaptation based on symbiotic relations with the natural world, even as it goes through radical changes and upheaval, as well as to foster environmental awareness and place-sensitivity grounded in practical action that produces greater confidence by facilitating an ecology of care (Berry 1999; Satchell 2013). The success of those environmental predecessors’ warnings rests in their prescience and the determination of those who follow them not to allow their efforts to be in vain.

The rebirth of the ocean depends upon the emergence of an oceanic sense of place; this, for me, acknowledges a fundamental truth about the dependence of all life on earth linked to the ocean and water. Ocean rebirth necessitates the renewal of a commitment to engage with the living world as imbued with a shared significance predicated on inter-connectedness and wholeness (Satchell 2013). The focus on oceanic and coastal cultures has the strategic imperative of promoting a dynamic worldview, based upon an oceanic sense of place as a planetary lifeworld (Earle 2010; Wilson 2017). The ecological crisis must be faced, and the fuller extent of its implications painstakingly worked through as a meaningful response, with the sort of propositions that turn upon the fundamental questions of any philosophy. How do people live? How do people live well in kinship with all living organisms, as a legacy to their descendants and all life on the planet? What justifications may people pass on as their principled responses to the challenges of their time? (Shannon and Satchell 2013). These questions guide the inquiry towards greater self-awareness, in terms of a sense of self and of a sense of place, and a broader awareness of the more-than human in terms of a sense of place and a sense of planet.

In this chapter I take my cue from the nightmarish scenario of my own adolescent fears to see them play out in various challenging circumstances that have since occurred. The rallying cry of Oceania rising seeks to bring three facets of the immediate, the short-term and the
longer-term realities into play with ideas and actions, as principled responses to the range of challenges. These include firstly the rise of sea-levels directly related to the changing atmosphere and higher temperatures that are affecting people through inundation, violent weather events and the resultant devastation impacting upon food, water, shelter and safety. Secondly, in the face of long-term oppression and exploitation the need for indigenous and environmental justice that has been exacerbated and stirred in the Pacific, based upon the notion of a new Oceania as a cultural renaissance and as decolonising ethic for a future environmental culture. Finally, the compelling vision of Oceania brings together a multi-scalar sense of place and sense of planet that is ocean-and-water dependent, encapsulating a sorely needed, enlarged and multi-layered sense of belonging. The vision of planetary belonging stemming from Oceania, centrally locates the more-than human world in the broader sweep of diverse epistemological and ontological heritages, based on a cosmological and earth-based kinship among multi-species lifeforms in their multi-faceted habitats. Facing these fears with imagination and creativity is imperative for the type of courage necessary in the future.

Figure 6  A pied oyster catcher warily regards an interruption to the daily round
1.2 A nightmarish scenario

One of my earliest attempts to express the concerns I held about environmental destruction were made when I was barely into High School and came in the form of a short autobiographical story. The scene, set in the future sketched a dystopian coast, manacled with barbwire along the foreshore, not against the threat of invasion but as a necessary protection to prevent people from the toxicity of pollution. Perhaps the threat of invasion now seems more plausible, while the insidious despoliation of air, water and land has become the reality of an on-going disaster just waiting for another accident and so on (Suzuki and MacConnell 1997). Surfing thus outlawed could only be done in a clandestine manner in the dead of night, with the aid of high-tech protective clothing, sophisticated breathing apparatus and ingenious surf-craft (in hindsight a flawed form of techno-determinism). The identity I assumed suggested the complete erosion of privacy and the consummation of what I now know as the control society, achieved through information technology and environmental degradation (Deleuze 2007). The piece struck a haunting tone with a threatening premonition that concurs with degraded land and seascapes spread throughout the earth. When you read the poem ‘Midnight Oil’ by Sheryl St. Germain (cited in Morton 2013: 177-178), concerning the oil spill in the Gulf of New Mexico 2010 or consider the implications for a Japanese stretch of surfing coast and the wider oceanic space because of the events precipitated by a tsunami at Fukushima 2011 or the coastline at the retired iron smelter at mouth of the Tees River northeast England and so on and so on, place after degraded place—the point becomes clear (Evers and Davoll 2017; Neimanis et al. 2017). Given, then, the suppression of reliable reporting on political and environmental matters, the dangers come sharply into focus as a critical state of emergency (Benjamin 2007). I find a disturbing resonance with my earlier tropes and the contemporary malaise.

**Midnight Oil**

how to speak

of it

this thing doesn’t

rhyme

or pulse in iambics or move in predictable

ways

like lines
sentences

syntax

thing

the tides

the tides

the tides

and wide

powerful lights

full body

shadow

cannot own

cannot name

at night

can feel

entering eyes

don’t want

giving birth

or

how to find the

of this

that rides

and moves with the tides and under

and through

and has an underbelly deep

even our most

cannot illuminate its

this is our soul

that darkness we

the form we

and I can only write about it

when my own shadow wakes me, when I

can feel

night covering every pore and hair follicle,

and ears, entering me like Zeus, a night I

on me or in me, and I dream of
to a rusty blob of a child who slithers out of me
to come upon this black bile a kind of a thing that looks
out and out and won’t stop slithering, growing and
like a jellyfish, so you dive in and try
what might it feel like to be a swimming in the only waters you have ever
but it covers your fins so they can’t move as
swimming because it is the only way you move through the
and there is heaviness on your carapace
and head
that wasn’t there before, and you
are blind
in the waters of
your birth.

The difficulty of coming to terms with an environmental disaster such as the oil spill referred to in the poem is rendered convincingly in the tragic eco-poetics. A contrast to the pervasive indifference of mainstream society fatigued by competing events. The plight of a turtle swamped in oil should register on a visceral level. What of birthing a rusty blob of a child? A similar trouble Oliver (2014: 43) struggles with musing on the Franz Marc painting Blue Horses that she inhabits in her poem (in the collection of the same name), saying ‘I would rather die than explain to the blue horses’ about the war that cut down their creator, assuming these horses would not believe such cruelty possible. However, the extent of human malevolence I would counter is painfully evident, even more so to the more-than human world (Abram 1996). The litany of human-induced disasters in the modern era alone, some intentional under the aegis of war (the nuclear bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki or the nuclear
testing at Maralinga and Moruroa), others unintended in the quest of endeavour (fatal space missions Apollo and Challenger), some misguided and unconscionable (industrial espionage and misadventure in the Gulf States and Bhopal India) are symptomatic of the deep-seated underlying issues, inflicting grievous wounds on the earth and on one another, all at the hands of humans (Deleuze and Guattari 1994; Serres 2011b; Vaughan-Lee 2014; Satchell 2008d; Muecke 2015). The so-called collateral damage is inflicted upon the web of life and in the abject horror of the human inability to face the problem.

Eliding responsibility for human error has become something of an unintended art, only matched in perversity by organisations claiming responsibility for heinous acts as a means of bolstering their bloody capital. Sylvia Earle’s (2010) congressional testimony conducted into the Gulf of Mexico BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill, confronts the horror of her firsthand witnessing of the apparent ineptitude of the response, aiming at the deceitful logic the extractive resources industry peddles concerning their own culpability, while the corporation project their responsibility on to society at large based on market demand and the necessity of doing the dirty work. The inadequate safety provisions coupled with a wilful naivety concerning the assessment of risk and provision of response options, were all instrumental in allowing the disaster to escalate to epic proportions (Chandler and Neimanis 2013). There are the sweeping ramifications for numerous species and their habitats, caught unaware as disaster struck and then unfolded, exacting some inestimable toll on ecologies supposedly under the care of preservation. Witnesses aghast, caught in the grip of a system that does not care or at best does not care in an effective manner (Taussig 2004 see Afterword). This is the self-same difficulty I have faced trying to address the questions I have posed concerning the Anthropocene, the struggle of overcoming the grief and loss associated with the ecological crisis, of being overwhelmed by the enormity, and the seeming futility of addressing my concerns in any effective manner (Satchell 2008d). I have been aghast at the blithe disregard mainstream society, corporations and governments continue to display toward environmental exploitation and degradation, exhibiting murderous and suicidal tendencies.

Eventually, I have begun to piece together a range of ideas that allowed for a shift in my worldview, resonant with my values and ecological citizenship. These ideas came as a plausible personal response in line with an enlarged view of the earth and the cosmos, despite the proliferation of the aforementioned difficulties, based on emerging evolutionary biology, studies in creativity, studies in everyday life and decolonising ethics (Sahtouris 1989; Merton and Barber 2006; Rose 2004; Hau'ofa 2008; Serres 2014). Consequently, here is a philosophy as a way of life, committed to the wonder and integrity of the earth and the cosmos, still at
odds with the dominant culture of our time. The appeal of this oceanic sense of place is maintained in planetary solidarity and kinship that is shared with significant others, and an abiding concern for the ocean whose peril is becoming all too real (Carson 1962; Plumwood 2002; Haraway 2008; Rose 2011; Grossberg 2013). As Earle (2010: 259) suggests poignantly for those who feel ‘the blue heart of the planet’ beating within their own heart, pulsing in their own blood, every effort must be made to hold on to biological diversity for future evolutions (Wilson 2016). These are the difficulties both now and for the future, dependent upon birthing an oceanic sense of place in its wider implications.

1.3 Oceania is rising

One day when the wind is just perfect,
the sail just needs to open, then love begins.
Today is such a day.

Rumi (cited in THoY 2018 np)

In this chapter the call goes out ‘Oceania is rising…’ a rallying cry in the face of adversity that speaks from an affirmation of love, and cries for a commitment to a primordial environmental heritage and its vestiges. The invocation of Oceania is a conceptual paradox encompassing ordinary people in their dreams to pursue creative approaches that are culturally appropriate and commiserate with their struggles for existence—and the cry for help (Mavor 2013). The artistic efforts of communal networks must respond to complex and difficult environmental questions by providing hope and direction to meet the challenges. A distinctive oceanic sense of place and a sense of planet joins together various groups in a decolonising ethos, historicising human endeavour in the environment by reappraising domination and exploitation with a critical consciousness committed to a new ecology (Rose and Robin 2004; Hau'ofa 2008; hooks 1990; Muecke 2014). Moreover, entails the promotion of an ecological vision for a more sustainable planetary reality in the future, based on courage and co-operation in the current circumstances, towards a more expansive worldview with a defter touch on the surrounds (Wilson 2017). The sort of people who rise to these challenges and take their chances amid the uncertainty, beckon others to embrace the change proactively with them (Klee in Deleuze and Guattarri 1994). These people are emerging from the genetic and cultural inheritance passed on from generation to generation, of a multi-species community in a more-than human world, drawn by the ineluctable pull of the imagination. The call rises not just with the sea-level, but in the flow of blood that life-giving water
maintains, bearing the saline stamp of the very ocean itself.

The ocean offers an originary site for the emergence of life and a touchstone for its renewal and continuance. The contested history and reclamation of Oceania has become even more compelling in the contemporary immediacy of the impacts of climate change (McNamara and Farbotko 2017). The reversal in thinking that has opened fresh perspectives on the world through cultural and environmental heritage, also re-invigorates resistance and courage (Earle 2010; Bateson 1994; Hau‘ofa 2008). On the edge of a dramatic fold that quivers with uncertainty, a sense of purpose in environmental action is mounting. A series of productive interventions driven by Oceanian scholars, artists and activists has gathered momentum over time, formulating a sophisticated oceanic imaginary based upon self-determination and self-reliance among a diverse group of people committed to the environment, their first people counterparts and supporters elsewhere (Wendt 1976; Hereniko and Wilson 1999; Teaiwa and Marsh 2010). Hau‘ofa (2008: 51) emphatically maintains: ‘as far as I am concerned anyone who has lived in our region and commits to Oceania is Oceanian. This view opens the possibility of expanding Oceania to cover larger areas and more people’ (Wendt 1976; Waddell et al. 1993; Hereniko and Wilson 1999; Hau ‘ofa 2008; Teaiwa and Marsh 2010; Wilson 2017). The rationale of these interventions holds true for all people who have suffered exploitation at the behest of foreign powers through the unfairness of hierarchical institutions and their oppressive machinations, to restore faith in the power of ordinary people (De Certeau 1984; Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Foucault 2011a; Stengers 2015; Steiner 2015; Lent 2017). Therefore, it is fitting the work of creative and cultural production to be placed at the forefront of practical measures to meet the demands of everyday life in a changing climate, coupled with the reparative work remaining unresolved from the colonial era and exacerbated by the ramified infrastructure of techno-capitalism and the military-industrial complex throughout the world (Haebich and Offord 2008; Rose 2004; Waddell et al. 1993). The ocean in this context becomes the referent for the aspirations of people everywhere committing to a new ecology rather than choosing to deny a changing one.

In support of the new ecology, people find themselves in the struggle for life on earth, enmeshed in the machinations of exploitative economics, over-reliance upon information technology and the growing impacts of climate change. The critical insights into the geopolitical hegemony encapsulated in the tensions of Oceania are the impetus for an expansive environmental politics (Hereniko and Wilson 1999; Wilson 2017). In the midst of these complex power-geometries of a world gone mad, imaginative place-making is imperative with-and-against the grain of formal politics (De Certeau 1984; Featherstone and Painter
2013; Stengers 2014). Moreover, to take the approach of coasting is an exercise in peripheral thinking that turns and folds perspectives inside-out, upside down and out-of-joint from the dominant hegemony (Bateson 1994; Deleuze 1988a; 1988b; 1993; Hereniko and Wilson 1999). These perspectives and ideas are suggestive of ways of seeing and knowing that are so often lost on the dominant cultures of developed economies, so beholden as they are to their own interests and ideas (Hau'ofa 2008; Muecke 2015). Therefore, harnessing the enlightened self-interest of a broader constituency must at some point be brought to bear on the life-threatening consequences of the current economic model, forestalling adaptive measures responding to change.

The notion ‘Oceania is rising’ is an intentional provocation that is multi-faceted and contradictory, holding promise and threat. Oceania is literally ‘rising’ as the sea-levels alter in respect to climate change through thermal expansion and ice-melt (Farbotko 2010). But Oceania is also rising as a means of indigenous solidarity in the Pacific, with all first peoples around the planet and their affiliates who recognise an unresolved injustice and an enduring wisdom (Steiner 2015). Oceania is also rising for humanity with a new vision for planetary belonging encompassing the more-than human earth, sufficient for a blue ontology and a fresh flourishing of the environmental movement as a broader church (Wendt 1976; Hau ‘ofa 2008; Adger et al 2011; Farbotko 2010; Low 2014; Hermann et al. 2014, Kempf and Hermann 2014; Schorch and Patsch 2017; Wilson 2017; Conley 1997; Plumwood 2002; Serres 1995b). The ebb and flow of currents swirling around Oceania’s rising, are uneven, volatile and far-reaching, echoing in the constant sound of the rote that issues from the unceasing sound of the sea at the shore.

The idea of Oceania speaks so persuasively to the heart because within its conceptual reach of planetary scale and fractal complexity are critical factors pertaining to the biosphere and biological diversity. ‘Becoming-Oceania’, as Wilson (2017 see title) asserts, has merits because of the possibilities for seeing life in the eco-poetics of the earth as intrinsically ocean-dependent. A blue eco-poetics provides an imaginative means of connectivity among disparate groups to play a key role in shifting environmental awareness from previous stalled surges and the impasse between disconsolate heritages (Campbell 2017; Wilson 2017). To posit life revolving around being ocean-dependent is a compelling thought that looms in the imagination, encompassing the earth in its larger embrace and capacity to enrich a meaningful response to the fundamental requirements of life—based upon an appreciation for the value of water and the ocean (Melville 1992; Dening 1998; Carson 1951; Muntenau 2016). This opening of oceanic space allows for the re-negotiation of identity, culture, economy and
ecology, among other things, becoming an instance where ‘things are seen in the totality of their relationships’ (Steiner 2015; Hau’ofa 2008: 31). This kind of ‘longitudinal epiphany’ of the ‘oceanic feeling’ Freud (1930: 1 my emphasis) dismissed on the basis of its absence in his own experience and attitude toward religion, while conceding its commonality in the subjective experience of others, which can now be understood as inherent with possibility in relation to the interconnectedness of the new physics and new ecology: consonant with indigenous ways of knowing, the breadth of women’s movements, various aesthetic and spiritual traditions and the genuine scientific inquiry harking back to natural philosophy (Bateson 1994: 111; Capra and Luisi 2014; Berry 1999; Merton and Barber 2006; Stengers 2014). In this way, engaging the heart and imagination in the context of Oceania, allows the affective relationships people experience as intimacy and kinship, to be woven more delicately in an expansive cosmology entangled in the web of life—than are ever afforded in modern rational terms.

Figure 7
The folds of the soul illuminated by water if you look long enough

To take Oceania rising further would be to see the sense in renaming the Earth as Oceania. Ocean has already been suggested as a more appropriate appellation in some quarters, Lovelock (1979: 84) and science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke both are attributed this quote, although Lovelock first: ‘How inappropriate to call this planet earth when its clearly ocean’. Even if only as a jibe to make a point, it bears recognition. Oceania stirs a
deeper identification with a way of life and mythology, which conflates home-making, place-making and travel, plying or folding, the space-between or in-betweenness that connects—as Wendt (1999: 402) speaks of Samoan Va and the Maori Wa ‘the space that relates’ (Lilomaiava-Doktor 2009). Hau’ofa (2008: 50) sees Oceania as, a ‘world of people connected to each other’ and, from within this grasp of a shared heritage, articulates an expansive vision for Oceanians.

Our most important role should be that of custodians of the ocean; as such we must reach out to similar people elsewhere in the common task of protecting the seas for the general welfare of all living things.

(Hau'ofa 2008: 55)

Kabutaulaka (cited in Wesley-Smith 2010) speculates whether such an overarching oceanic imaginary disenfranchises people who live away from the coast. However, in the scheme of larger universal processes (of the hydrological cycle including the intimate relationship between the oxygen and water of the atmosphere, the watershed and the water-table) water joins everyone on earth in their own ocean and water dependency (Suzuki and MacConnell 1997; Jha 2015; Munteanu 2016; Neimanis 2017). Furthermore, Earle (2010) highlights in an emphatic manner the utter dependency of all life on earth upon the ocean.

The ocean drives climate and weather, regulates temperature, absorbs much of the carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, holds 97 percent of Earth’s water, and embraces 97 percent of the biosphere. Far and away the greatest abundance and diversity of life occurs in the ocean, occupying liquid space from the sunlit surface to the greatest depths.

(Earle 2010: 17)

These statistics give weight to the argument about the importance of the oceans that is also supported by a rich legacy of oceanic cultures throughout human history who testify to the overwhelming succour the ocean offers (Raban 1992; Steinberg 2001; Isham 2004; De Loughrey 2007; Mack 2011). Whether Earth or Eaarth according to McKibben (2010), trying to make the suggestion things have unalterably changed in the current era or Oceania is a moot point. The real aim is altering the relationship dynamic that people share with the environment through imaginative means that translate into everyday practices. As Merton and Barber (2006: 257) delightfully unpack in the lengthy adventure of the term serendipity, idiomatic shifts are critical to finer-grained understandings but often follow a ‘paradoxical semantic process in the course of accelerated diffusion’, paradoxical in the sense of going through reductive stages of meaning before achieving the enlargement of significance indicative of the complexity that the phenomena gives rise to in the value of its usage. It is worthwhile noting the risk of a word becoming a ‘vogue word in the vernacular’ or simply
vulgar, exhausting its meaning like a song whose secrets are hollowed out through careless repetition, rather than savoured through thoughtful appreciation (Merton and Barber 2006: 257; De Certeau in De Certeau et al. 1998). In terms of coinage, Oceania too has a background adventure, while in more recent currency flourishes as a signifier for environmental identity, environmental heritage and more broadly for environmental philosophy and action.

The trajectory of the term Oceania, designating a geographical location imposed from the colonial era has been transformed in a clever appropriation from within the region in the postcolonial era. The appeal of the term Oceania, arguably, derives from the manner it serves the complex and heterogenous terrain of the historical, cultural, geographic and ecological background, and at the same time galvanises a compelling identification without diminishing differences among Oceanians (Hau’ofa 2008; Lazrus 2012). The sheer scale of the Pacific is impressive, by far the largest (and deepest) of the oceans bordering the continents of Australia, a significant part of Asia, North and South America, as well as, adjoining the Southern and Arctic Oceans (Earle 2010). The name for the Pacific Ocean given by the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan came from the stormy ordeal of sailing around the lower latitudes and Cape Horn to arrive in calmer waters that were pacífico, meaning peaceful on a voyage in the 16th Century (NOS 2018). The term Océanie, coined by a Danish-French geographer Conrad Malte-Brun in 1812, initially played a modest role referring to the expansiveness of the ocean surpassing previous experiences for Europeans of other stretches of water—the French word derived from the Latin Oceanus, and from the Greek ὀκεανός (ōkeanós) (Oceania 2005). The notion of these islands in a faraway sea comes from a distinctively Western perspective borne of a process of colonial exploration and expansion.

These are the furthermost reaches of European imperialism and global capitalism, colonised by various powers including the Spanish, Portuguese, French and British, while later the Americans and Australians (a large representation of the so-called developed world). Rivalled in early usage in the colonial imagination by referring to the South Seas, then later the South Pacific (despite their northern reaches) and the Pacific Islands, long associated and exoticised as a utopian Paradise, understandably based on the contrasting climate and stories relating to the vibrant water-based people and their culture. The stories preceding and following written accounts proving to surpass in colour and detail the prior outlandish imaginings of an antipodes from antiquity with something far more alluring in contradictory appeal and mystique (Okihiro 2008; Hau’ofa 2008). The accounts of these exotic locales grew in volume over time becoming popularised in books, magazines, journals, movies and later
television—packaged as adventure then tourism and development, particularly as an adjunct to military personnel based around the Pacific Ocean in strategic island locations—in Hawaii the pretext to a larger scale occupation (Okihiro 2008; Wilson 1999). In many respects the geo-politics of the region are steeped in the interests of economics and the military with the human and environmental subsumed under the specious dictates of Empire and so-called free enterprise in one form or another (Teaiwa 1999; Lent 2017). The strategic geo-political roles these locations serve for the industrial-military complex of capitalism are set amid heterogeneous sovereignties and on-going struggles for self-determination—even the undersea cable hardwiring the world traverses these ambiguities in an awkward manner (Hermann et al. 2014; Teaiwa 1999; Starosielski 2015). In the aftermath of the colonial legacy and the outworking of the post-colonial period, one of the features emerging is the importance and value of language to indigeneity that provides a protean thread woven in the lives of people and their places.

The signifying practices of naming and geography are indicative of these competing interests, but for their poetics indigenous place names and languages are far more intimate and lyrical. The naming of places plays a significant role in the manner they are imagined and lived, rightly so are they contested (Hau‘ofa 2008). The proliferation of shorthand/hybrid monikers are indicative of on-going territorial aspirations such as Pacific Rim, Pacific Basin, Asia-Pacific, Australasia and a rash of acronyms such as APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Forum), PRIF (Pacific Region Infrastructure Facility), PIAC (Pacific International Arbitration Centre) to name a few, standing in for various forums, commissions, non-government agencies, groups and so on (Wilson 1999; Hau ‘ofa 2008). The acronymic excesses occur across the developed world as a bureaucratic aberration demeaning the significance of actual place names and so often obfuscating the activities perpetrated under them (Merton 1979). While in recent decades Oceania has become so freighted with meaning from within the region and among various peoples that its vision and influence promises to extend beyond the ordinary bounds synonymous with its vast territory (Wendt 1976; Hau ‘ofa 2008; Wesley-Smith 2010). Cook in one of the earliest accounts recognised one aspect of this profound truth.

How shall we account for this nation’s having spread itself to so many detached islands, so widely disjoined from each other, in every quarter of the Pacific Ocean? […] what we know already, in consequence of this and our former voyage, warrants our pronouncing it to be, though perhaps not the most numerous, certainly by far the most extensive nation upon earth.

The Voyages of Captain James Cook Round the World, vol. 2, 256
(cited in Okihiro 2008: 43)
There are numerous other terms Pacific Islanders use under the umbrella of Oceania to identify specificities concerning the ocean, people and place such as ‘Pasifka, Moanna, Solwara’ belonging to various groups, with names that speak to their specific experiences (Teaiwa 2008: 111 original emphasis). These are shorthand for protocols such as sharing your family lineage when first meeting ‘Polynesian cousins’ enabled through the remembrance of chants such as ‘ohana ku’auhau, for a family heritage or kumu a’o ku’auhau, for a teaching lineage—to pay the debt of respect and to locate yourself (Yates 2014: xvii; Rich 1985). The Hawaiian word kaona, referring to the layering of hidden meaning is instructive here, allowing for multiple layers of meaning to fold into words according to their use and inflection, awaiting the intention or the interpretation given in the process of talking story (Teaiwa 2008; Pukui and Elbert 1986). The reversal of the outside Western perspective to one from the inside gives Oceania meaning that unfolds from the heart and is at home in the wide-open sea.

Oceania is by far the most prodigious expanse of area on the face of the earth. The original habitation by humans of the Pacific Islands occurred through on-going migration, adaptation and encounter between oceanic cultures known as ‘proto-Polynesians’ who were ‘skilled seafarers and horticulturists’, moving from Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia, often referred to within and bordering the Polynesian triangle, which stretches from New Zealand in the south, Easter Island in the east and Hawaii in the north (Okihiro 2008: 45). Hau’ofa (2008: 77) offers a sympathetic revision of these lineages of the region under the umbrella term of Oceania aiming to address any divisive racial/cultural connotative values imposed from the colonial era for a more cohesive and unified sense of common purpose.

West Oceania (the islands of New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia; North Oceania (Belau, the Marianas, Guam, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands); Central Oceania (Nauru, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Uvea [Wallis] and Futuna, Fiji, Tokelau, Samoa, American Samoa, Niue); East Oceania (Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Pitcairn Island, Rapanui, Hawai‘i, Aoteara New Zealand. Central Oceania is the region of the greatest overlapping and mingling of populations and cultures.

(Hau’ofa 2008: 77)

The shared characteristics and traits of language, arts and culture are also accompanied by distinctive variations according to their own developments in the particularity of their places (Hau’ofa 2008). These distinctions and their geographic separations have played a role in the complex arrangements evolving through the processes of migration, colonisation and various forms of independence and sovereignty (Okihiro 2008; Hereniko and Wilson 1999; Low 2014). Oceania gives rise to a way of honouring a deeper heritage without eliding intervening
periods or becoming stymied in the cross purposes of outside interests.

The sense of unity and purpose Oceania enables derives from a deeply held yearning to reconcile the past and provide viable futures, both in terms of culture and ecology. The similarity and diversity of these oceanic cultures were noted unequivocally by the earliest of Western explorers who relied on the extensive oceanic knowledge of island people to gain their bearings in many cases (Dening 1998; 2004ab). The subsequent histories of colonisation produced a cascade of unfortunate disasters based on the colonisers assumption of cultural superiority, reckoning their technology more advanced particularly regarding industry and military power, supposedly warranting control of the situation in their own favour (Daws 1968; Moorehead 1990; Hereniko and Wilson 1999). Despite the gross misconduct of the colonisers and indifference to the calamity of encounter, Indigenous cultures have shown themselves to be far more resilient over time, adapting to the impost of foreigners and modernity by maintaining ties with heritage and realising the extraordinary wealth of their ancestral bequest (Waddel et al. 1993; Teawia and Marsh 2010; Wesley-Smith 2010; Goodyear-Ka'pōpua et al. 2014). In many respects Indigenous cultures translated outside influences, eventually on their own terms, evident in the influence of Christianity and the renaissance of Indigenous spirituality (Hau'ofa 2008; Wilson 2009). There is no question for Oceanians the process of reclaiming dignity and regaining the momentum in respect to decolonisation has been arduous but also rewarding (Wendt 1976; Goodyear-Ka'pōpua et al. 2014). The stubborn refusal of reparative justice on behalf of settler-cultures is maintained by reluctant admissions of guilt, piecemeal concessions and a recurrent amnesia that acts to quarantine the past from the present (Rose 2004; Muecke 2004). Nonetheless, the valid claims of first people to self-determination and land rights have endured the genocidal impulses of the colonisers towards them and the blatant attempts to suppress their cause that continue to be met with reasoned appeals, demonstrating a dignity and resolve of a different ilk.

The significance of such a claim stems from the difficult circumstances of colonialism Oceanians have had to withstand, in a process betwixt subjection and self-determination. Suffice to say the impact of encounter with Europeans and the vulnerability of Indigenous groups to their diseases only became apparent after the damage was already done. As an added burden the literary and anthropological endeavours of outsiders for a considerable period contributed either directly or indirectly to further the ‘belittlement’ of Islanders throughout the archipelagos (Dirilik 1998; Hau’ofa 2008: 30). However, the emergence of scholarship, literature, arts and crafts arising from the cultural roots of those who had either trained in the Western-style academy or reclaimed their cultural heritage has become a
meaningful turn of fortunes from these wider discursive contexts to the communities and places they give voice to—underlining the value of telling their own stories and beginning to write their own histories steeped as they are in the oral tradition (Waddel et al. 1993; Wilson and Hereniko 1999; Goodyear-Ka'pōpua et al. 2014). In this context the appropriation and creative re-imaginings of the term Oceania has proved to be extremely significant, displaying resilience in its still burgeoning usefulness.

1.4 The new Oceania

*These islands rising from wave’s edge –*

*blue myth brooding in orchid,*

*fern and banyan, fearful gods*

*awaiting birth from blood clot*

*into stone image and chant –*

*to bind their wounds, bury*

*their journeys dead, as I*
A significant turn in the reinvigorated use of Oceania as an idea came as a literary intervention celebrating a burgeoning efflorescence of vernacular creative practice. Wendt’s (1976) influential essay ‘Towards a New Oceania’ in the ground-breaking Mana Review, channelled the zeitgeist of an emergent renaissance, which while steeped in the past, yearned for an enactment of alternate futures (Grossberg 2010). The decolonising impulse was redolent with a myriad of earlier resistances embedded in on-going struggles and astutely based on the bitter experiences of colonial follies. The evidence remains that the assumptions of Western cultural superiority proved over time, to be completely unfounded and profoundly wrong in every measure (Hau’ofa 2008). The searching critique Wendt (1976) offers is matched by incisive wit and potent creativity, matching his own ideas with those of a cohort of Oceanian writers and artists whose own voices provide the article with a multi-voiced and multi-sited oceanic imaginary (Saukko 1998). There is a sense of imaginative magic, as if a spell is being broken: ‘in a flash he saw in front of his eyes all the wasted years of carrying the whiteman’s cargo’ (Taussig 2004; Eri cited in Wendt 1976:51). By talking back and calling forth, Wendt’s (1976) call-and-response dialogue gathers momentum building upon critical reflection (hooks 1989). His use of poetics and myth activates ancestral spirituality and cosmology, tempered with an offhand conversational narrative threaded together with critical insight and eloquence. Wendt’s (1976: 60) invocation of ‘genuine decolonisation’ is an appeal to a further oceanic imaginary with creativity, ingenuity and self-reliance at its core. This has proven once again over time to have been both an insightful and a prescient bequest to successive waves of scholars, artists and activists who found hope and solace as Oceanians (Teaiwa and Marsh 2010). The output that follows this personal and cultural manifesto attests to its efficacious and stimulating ointment. A fuller appreciation of Wendt’s oeuvre is beyond the ambit of this present study; suffice to say, the philosophical ramifications of the Oceania of his thoughts, activated together with a commensurate decolonising ethos continues to deserve attention from its influence.

There are several ideas from his original essay that bear repeating in the present atmosphere of climate change and environmental politics. ‘I belong to Oceania – or, at least, I am rooted in a fertile portion of it – and it nourishes my spirit, helps define me, and feeds my imagination’ (Wendt 1976: 49). Locating himself in this way at the beginning of the essay
fulfils a critical aspect of an allegiance to the broader notion of an ecological citizenship reliant upon the mysterious workings of the earth and cosmos (Berry 1988). The role of the imagination is foregrounded as a pivotal aspect of existence and the way people manage to live (Taussig 2004). ‘In the final instance, our countries, cultures, nations, planets are what we imagine them to be’, not just as a speculative fiction but to the extent they can be envisioned and actualised amid the constraints and limitations (Wendt 1976: 49 my emphasis; Haraway 2016). The rise of the postcolonial Pacific literature Wendt (1976) maps, in its heterogeneity comes as a corrective to the pedagogy of colonial oppression and opens a space for counter-discourses and counter-memories (Foucault 1997; St. Pierre and Pillow 2000). He uses Petaia’s (cited in Wendt 1976: 54, 55) auto-biographical poem ‘Education’ to great effect to delegitimise the assumed authority perpetrated under the banner of the civilising mission. Coming under the sub-title ‘Colonialism: The Wounds’, he takes issue with the pervasive ‘whitefication’ of Western education exacted upon vulnerable Oceanians (Wendt 1976: 55 original emphasis).

[a] Education

Kidnapped

I was six when

Mama was careless

She sent me to school

Alone

Five days a week

One day I was kidnapped

By a band of Western philosophers

Armed with glossy picture

textbooks and reputations

‘Holder of B.A.

And M.A. degrees’

I was held in a classroom

guarded by Churchill and Garibaldi

pinned up on one wall

and
Hitler and Mao dictating
from the other

Guevara pointed a revolution
At my brains
from his ‘Guerilla Warfare’

Each three-month term
they sent threats to
my Mama and Papa

Mama and Papa loved
their son and
paid ransom fees
each time

Each time
Mama Papa and grew
poorer and poorer
and my kidnappers grew
richer and richer
I grew whiter and
whiter

On my release
fifteen years after
I was handed
[among loud applause
from fellow victims]
a piece of paper
to decorate my walls
certifying my release

by Ruperake Petaia

(cited in Wendt 1976: 55 original emphasis)

The poem makes clear the lack of cultural sensitivity exercised by promulgating a curriculum devoid of relevance to its context and wedded to its own ideologies. The second aspect of colonial wounding Wendt (1976) discusses is the imposition and effect of colonial architecture. Wendt’s (1976: 56) description takes aim at the ‘super-stainless/super-plastic/super-hygienic/super-souless’ constructions that are in the verisimilitude of the modern hospital and at its worst in the ubiquity of the tourist resort—compared to animal enclosures sucking the lifeblood from Oceanian vernacular styles suited to their coastal environs. The essay turns on accurate critique to recuperate the wealth of a cultural heritage undergoing various stages of decolonisation, with the intent to provide a vision for the new Oceania as becoming an artistic epicentre with planetary consequence. The final thoughts are given over to recognising the stirring though nascent renaissance underway at the time of his writing.

Central, thematically to the essay, is a dynamic still as fresh as when originally published that I find compelling toward a sense of Oceania rising. Wendt (1976: 49, 50) links the culturally significant idea of Hawaiki—the home of the ancestors and the discovery of new lands for the descendants—saying to ‘where our heart finds meaning […] At this stage of my life I have found it in Oceania’. This is in keeping with traditional mytho-praxis at the core of ancestral voyaging and cultural life, whereby deep connections to mythos and an on-going sense of place becomes actualised in the present—as habitus, ergo with an Oceanian sensibility (Sahlins in Richards 2008 my emphasis). Critical to the alignment of spirituality and place, is the inter-generational bond that ensures cultural continuity and respect for unbroken heritage, so fundamental to the oral tradition found in genealogical chants that have been a significant factor in cultural renewal (Harden 1999). Wendt (1976: 50) asserts ‘Our dead are woven into our souls […] If we let them they can help illuminate us to ourselves and to one another’ by positioning this possibility as a spiritual potential of illumination or omission through blindness referring to aitu, the spirits of the dead. The point Wendt (1976) maintains is to learn from the hereditary flaws and mistakes of the past (both ancient and modern) or at least to live with them productively rather than in denial. Key to this thesis as it were, he states ‘the quest should be for a New Oceania’ not as a return to the past but as a creation of new cultures embedded in the richness of the past and emergent from the stain of colonial oppression including despotism of any ilk steeped as it is in malevolence and
violence (Wendt 1976: 53). For Oceanians, the importance of applying the lessons they have learned to the contemporary moment provides a foundation for continuity and innovation in the work of cultural reproduction and ecology.

1.5 An Oceanian consciousness

The kava has risen, my brother,
drink this cup of the soul and the sweat of our people,
and pass me three more mushrooms which grew in Mururoa
on the shit of the cows Captain Cook brought
from the Kings of England and France!

(excerpt from Blood in the Kava Bowl)

(Hau’ofa 2008: 181)

An Oceanian consciousness comes as a welcome corrective to the standard outsider narratives about Pacific Island people based on the assumption of cultural superiority. The poetics of Hau’ofa’s (2008) wry sense of humour and sophisticated historicism, displays unequivocally the wiles of a clever and culturally literate Oceanian, intent on expressing freedom and autonomy, offering an exemplar for all Oceanians. The influence he holds over the way people understand Oceania, stated as a burgeoning Oceanian consciousness, is both telling and in keeping with the abiding tenets of his own words seeking empowerment. The evolution and travels he undergoes from studies abroad and experiences living in various place across the archipelago are the accumulative substance of his own wider imaginative quest for a new Oceania. This is illustrated in his personal and professional biography in a complimentary manner to the coming of age of his own ethical and philosophical stance from social scientist to environmental philosopher and creative writer. Hau’ofa (2008: xxi) refers to the collection of his selected works as a ‘miniature tome’ quipping ‘rather more like a stunted bonsai’ citing four key chapters—‘Our Sea of Islands’, ‘The Ocean in Us’, ‘Pasts to Remember’ and ‘Our Place Within’ that ‘represent the route that I have travelled in the past fifteen years’ (Hau’ofa 2008: xxi). The bequest these ideas represent is an enduring and compelling one, given the scope of their ambition and the forces they entwine.

There is a disarming quality about his written expression, much of which derives from public oration and everyday story-telling. At the heart of Hau’ofa’s (2008) engaging style is an expansive vision and thoughtfully considered philosophy. The transparency of the searching personal and cultural examination he achieves is indicative of the type of
intellectual grappling, Haraway (2016) calls ‘staying with the trouble’ or Deleuze (1993; 1997) might say is the symptomology of the affected writer and indeed the work of the cryptographer. In the overtly satirical work *Tales of the Tikongs* and *Kisses in the Nederends*, as well as in the selected works, he meets the threefold criteria of a minor literature, namely; ‘a high co-efficient of deterritorialisation’, ‘everything in them is political’ and ‘everything takes on a collective value’ (Hau’ofa 1994; 1995; Deleuze and Guattari 1986:16, 17). These writings and their aims are in keeping with the philosophical values of his cultural ecology and spirituality, outlined so clearly in the selected works (Hau’ofa 2008). In respect to the trajectory of his background and education, he maintains an abiding commitment to the value of ordinary culture. His treatment of the everyday is a repudiation of a sense of lack, rather finding to the contrary something so often overlooked and falsely handled as in no way inferior; indeed recognising that the site of the everyday for Oceanians is one of abiding value, both for the ancients and their contemporaries (Hau’ofa 2008). The contradictions within the education and values he encountered in Western academic circles provided an impetus for him to seek out and embody the finer points languishing in his own native cosmologies and lifeways (Hau’ofa 2008). The comparative value of being able to traverse these cultural differences gave him a firmer grasp of universal environmental values, applicable in kinship, co-operation and care for the environment (Wilson 2009). The apotheosis of this ecological sensibility is evident in his becoming so attuned to the wider significance of the ocean as the source of life, creativity, culture and identity.

The metamorphosis of his thought comes about as a series of folds and turnabouts that are self-reflexive and critically focused upon transformative change. The dramatic inversions these perspectives undergo involve a process that changes his perceptions of the world, consequently raising an awareness that forms into an oceanic-consciousness with wider implications (Deleuze 1993). His travels and early experiences are formative for language, identity and character (both as personal development and to hone his astute observation of life), while the changes come about in generative ways, qualifying his own mature voice with wisdom and the resonance of values that hold to the integrity of the environment. Identifying just a few of these momentous turns may serve as prompts toward, in his own words, the ‘constellations that we use to guide us on our journey towards an ever creative and free Oceania’ (Hau'oťa 2008: 93). The beginning of these pivotal moments from a reader’s perspective for me are the questions raised concerning the role of Anthropology and the Social Sciences particularly concerning the orthodoxy of globalisation and development. The questioning of the role of colonial history applies to a new historicism promoting histories
written from oral tradition and local perspectives. The role of self-esteem for culturally appropriate arts and crafts pertain to livelihood and ecology, heritage and custodianship enabling initiative rather than debilitating dependence (Hau'ofa 2008). In the process of these turnabouts, the ideas are developed into a complimentary and coherent framework for self-determination, cultural renewal and an environmental culture of the future.

The most critical turning point coalesces these growing concerns with a sought-after change in perspective that becomes a transformative moment of great import. Hau'ofa’s (2008) own demoralising frustration becomes apparent to him in the faces of his students who are subject to the colonising discourse of economic development and belittlement, bound up in the guise of civilising modernity as the pretence for foreign exploitation. Upon critical reflection, he becomes aware of the debilitating effect of adopting the western perspective of a sea of small faraway islands. On the big island of Hawaii while on ‘the road to Kona to Hilo’, he states ‘was my “road to Damascus”’ where the expansive nature of Oceania came into view as a ‘sea of islands’, the prodigious home-place of Oceanians (Hau'ofa 2008: 30). The landmark essay ‘Our Sea of Islands’ concludes with this summary that takes on the tenor of a persuasive manifesto, outlining an unshakeable cause for optimism and reclamatio

Oceania is vast, Oceania is expanding, Oceania is hospitable and generous, Oceania is humanity rising from the depths of brine and regions of fire deeper still, Oceania is us. We are the sea, we are the ocean, we must wake up to this ancient truth and together use it to overturn all hegemonic views that aim ultimately to confine us again, physically and psychologically, in the tiny spaces that we have resisted accepting as our sole appointed places and from within which we have liberated ourselves. We must not allow anyone to belittle us again, and take away our freedom.

(Hau'ofa 2008: 39 my emphasis)

Hau'ofa (2008: 41, 55) continued to articulate this vision and the outworking of these ideas in the essay ‘The Ocean in Us’ linking ‘regional identity’ to a ‘common inheritance’ and an oceanic ‘kind of consciousness’ as a means to take responsibility as custodians of the ocean ‘for the general welfare of all living things’. The ocean and indeed Oceania becomes the viable basis for an inclusive environmental philosophy embracing the particularity of a sense of place and the universality of a sense of planet (Hiese 2008). The sea according to Hau'ofa (2008) encompasses a totality of relations, amounting to an environmental culture for the future. The concluding thought of the essay captures this in essence ‘the sea is our pathway to each other and to everyone else, the sea is our endless saga, the sea is our most powerful metaphor, the ocean is in us’ (Hau'ofa 2008: 58). The integrity of these ideas bears witness to
their practicality in the way they operate in a synchronistic and synergetic manner as a relational complex. Offering a cosmology for an ecological reading of time reconciling people and the more-than human, while reconciling the past with the present for alternate futures.

The evidence of his theoretical sophistication is manifest in the culturally appropriate perspectives employed in a pragmatic and common-sense manner to address common problems in modern cultural encounters. Hau‘ofa’s (2008) ecological reading of time offers some critical considerations that salvage regional concerns in the context of global machinations. He promotes a regional identity by applying an ecological reading of time in keeping with cultural heritage, differentiating the interests of modernity and globalisation from longer term initiatives concerned with the well-being of place (Ashcroft 2017). In the essay ‘Pasts to Remember’ he outlines the difference between a lineal conceptualisation of time linked to notions of progress, dependent upon development and serving globalisation, and non-lineal conceptualisations of time that are circular and based upon natural cycles and the seasonal changes in the environment that as a consequence spiral forward (Hau‘ofa 2008). There are two significant consequences of this distinction that he highlights.

The first is historical and the second philosophical, each predicated upon environmental aims and values. The insightful critique and analysis of colonial discourse and histories of the region maintained by outsiders, makes visible their spurious claims and thus opens the way for thoughtful re-visioning (Davis 2000). Hau‘ofa (2008) calls Oceanians to reclaim a longer-term view of their own past by overturning the disingenuous and debilitating effect of cultural bias toward them and their environment. He emphasises the importance of writing their own histories by drawing on culturally appropriate and environmentally sound approaches that support flourishing livelihoods and greater autonomy in the face of global influences. Hau‘ofa (2008) makes clear the difference between using technology that is sensitive to the rhythms and needs of natural cycles, and technologies that sacrifice livelihoods and cause environmental degradation for the sake of globalisation. Moreover, Hau‘ofa (2008) recognises the value of an environmental philosophy ensuring greater care and respect for the environment, while being cognisant of the need for technology to be attuned to the well-being of the ecology. This confronts the exploitation of outside interests with a measured remonstration of kinfolk/elites who seek personal gain at the expense of the common good. The ethics of a ‘shared ancestral homeland that exists hazily in the primordial memory’ and encompasses a sea of islands, remains paramount to these concerns (Hau‘ofa 2008: 77). The ecological reading of time as circular and passing through the natural world as going forward like a spiral, bequeathed from generation to generation, is based upon the view
of homeland as heritage and commons, not as property for short-term exploitation.

Despite the ravages of colonial and capitalist exploitation, the Oceanian consciousness has its foundations in creativity and the call for environmental action to protect the oceanic environment. Reflecting upon the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture in the essay ‘Our Place Within’, Hau’ofa (2008) provides a compelling vision for the freedom and cultural autonomy of Oceania within a global system that although antagonistic, is a world itself in desperate need of these aims. He builds again upon the theme of regional identity and common heritage in the midst of diversity, championing creative and cultural production as the most reliable way to hold on to cultural and environmental values to contribute to ‘the most important global environmental agenda: the protection of the ozone layer, the forests, and the oceans for all life on earth’ (Dirlik 1998; Hau’ofa 2008: 87). The modest story of the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture under Hau‘ofa’s (2008) direction, as a freestanding unit within the University of the South Pacific, provides an engaging account of key principles and tenets for sustaining identity and culture without compromise in the era of globalisation. The conclusion of the essay reiterates the thematic concept used as a guide to unify all efforts from the beginning.
The theme for the centre and for us to pursue is the ocean and, as well the interactions between us and the sea that have shaped and are shaping so much of our cultures. We begin with what we have in common and draw inspiration from the diverse patterns that have emerged from the successes and failures of our adaptation to the influences of the sea. [...] We will talk about the good things the ocean has bestowed on us, the damaging things we have done to them, and how we must together try to heal their wounds and protect them forever. We still hold on to these sentiments. They belong to the constellations that we use to guide us on our journey towards an ever creative and free Oceania.

(Hau'ofa 2008: 92, 93)

The Oceanian consciousness draws deeply and widely on oceanic culture and the expanses of ocean that not only encircle its many islands but also encompass all continental landmasses. Given the affordance of time, I see Wendt’s and Hau’ofa’s cultural criticism more as eco-poetics (operating like Deleuzean-Guattarian minor literatures), whose new Oceania invokes a multi-species sense of place in an relational ontology. Hau’ofa’s (2008) eco-poetics not only shows and tells, but also ‘teaches and delights’, in defence of an everyday poetics attuned to the environment (Sidney cited in Abrams 1993: 483, Shelley in Abrams 1993). The quiet unassuming statesmanship (Zen-like as a true man of no rank) brings into focus an appreciation for ‘what it means to be free in an increasingly managed and controlled world’ (Hau’ofa 2008: 92, Loori 2005). The notion of ‘enlarging their world’ offered as an encouragement and affirmation of kinship toward diasporic Oceanians, serves also as a watershed for aspirational environmentalism to engage in a sense of planetary belonging predicated upon ocean-dependence and the intrinsic value of water (Hau’ofa 2008: 34; Wilson 2017). ‘Conquerors come, conquerors go, the ocean remains, mother only to her children. This mother has a big heart though; she adopts anyone who loves her’ (Hau‘ofa 2008: 34). The new Oceania relies on a deep mytho-poetics and a common spirituality embedded within the natural elements but above all a profound appreciation and love of life

1.6 A climate of change

Directly relevant to these aspects of Oceania are the rises in sea-level linked to the emission of greenhouse gases and the over-exploitation of the land and sea habitat. Climate change is already making temperatures rise worldwide, thus contributing to sea-level rise in several significant ways that are transforming land and seascapes, while troubling contradictory views upon the world (Adger et al. 2011). The rise in atmosphere and sea temperature causes thermal expansion leading to immediate sea-levels rises (Steffen et al. 2015). While the rise in atmosphere and land temperatures also causes ice-melt in polar and sub-polar regions directly into the ocean, as well as from mountains and glaciers, flushing into river systems, now
occurring at an alarming and unprecedented rate (Kempf and Hermann 2014). Although, dire, the situation does offer a catalyst for meaningful cultural and environmental dialogue toward action (McNamara and Farbotko 2017). Identifying and engaging with some of the immediate threats and consequences of climate change are moral and existential imperatives, tied to the discursive aspects of competing climate-change discourses continuing as postcolonial issues of globalisation (Wilson and Dirlik 1994; Kempf and Hermann 2014). Australia, Britain, France and the United States are prime examples of the tension around globalisation indicative of differing worldviews and the tendency of hegemonic powers assuming paternalistic and rationalistic perspectives, while eliding their own actual responsibility (Hau’ofa 2008; Hereniko and Wilson 1999). A case in point is where some the largest emitters and contributors (through mining) to greenhouse gases in the developed world pontificate, while the smallest emitters from subsistence backgrounds and with disrupted histories of colonisation, capitalist and military exploitation are shouldering the larger burden (Adger et al. 2011; Hereniko and Wilson 1999). The immediacy of climate change impacts in the Pacific Ocean are a cause for concern that deserves attention, offering what Schorch and Pascht (2017) have theorised as ‘critical junctures’ that might build upon transformative reconfigurations to people’s way of life. The issue of climate change highlights problematics that might become opportunities to address already existing unresolved issues, along with the emerging new ones.

There are long histories of governments and people from outside the region dictating to Pacific Island groups what they need to do to improve their lot. As Hau’ofa (2008) makes plain, Australia’s role in the region for all its supposed goodwill has often kept their own interests at the forefront of any involvement (Steiner 2015). This has often taken the form of government reports and policy development from neo-liberal and economic rationalist perspectives, providing a flawed independence, favouring business interests (of a parochial kind) and showing a lack of insight into the meaning and value people put on the places where they have lived for generations (Rodman 1992; Adger et al. 2011). This is indicative of Australia’s homegrown denial of Indigenous sovereignty and the maintenance of a collective amnesia synonymous with what is known as the white-blindfold view of history, as distinct from the conservative apologists who critique what they call the black-armband view (Ferrier 1999). Australia’s interventions in the Pacific bemoan the lack of economic development with a view to resource exploitation, they garner local support at the prospect of foreign aid and investment by establishing unrealistic goals for development and setting up a parasitic bureaucracy (Hau’ofa 2008). In many instances government reports and independent
consultancies reinforce feelings of hopelessness and self-deprecation against the backdrop of wealthy foreigners and the materialism of developed economies (Hau‘ofa 2008). This is the background to current initiatives seeking co-operation and solidarity around issues directly related to climate impacts and responses to mitigate the effects (Schorch and Pascht 2017). Yet there is a growing consensus that there should be stronger engagement with specific communities to assist them in coming to terms with and responding to the various challenges climate change poses (Kempf and Herman 2014). There has been little recognition of the extreme uncertainty and distress people face in the psycho-climatology of the situation, which has not been understood or handled particularly well (Teodoreanu 2010). Despite the history and background evidence that points to the incredible strength and resilience of Oceanians, particularly in recent decades, the international community have been slow to respond in meaningful ways (McNamara and Farbotko 2017). The sad old trope of ‘basket cases’ in terms of their economics has been levelled at Pacific Atolls once again in regard to sea level rise given the seemingly intractable situation—on the contrary prompting local responses of determination to not just sit idly by and wait for inundation or outside support (D’arcy 2006: 7; Hau‘ofa 2008; Steiner 2015). There is now an impetus to reframe the scenario in some significant ways; challenging the status quo and drawing upon discourses of empowerment, self-determination and genuine co-operation to act.

One of the aspects of climate change troubling scientists and environmentalist alike has been the challenge to communicate issues without sugar-coating the severity but also not overplaying the catastrophe in a manner to dampen any individual and collective responses to the crisis. This too has been apparent in regard to various threatened Pacific Islands and in respect to the way continental perspectives adopt a false sense of distancing from their own developed economies to particular geographic locations. Farbotko (2010: 47) uses the idea of ‘wishful sinking’ to challenge the use of threatened islands such as Tuvalu, as the proverbial ‘canary in the coalmine’ euphemistically to promote an environmental agenda for the world. Backgrounding her argument with an allusion to the prior use by Western powers of these island as quasi-laboratories, framing them as places of experimentation and ergo of expendable importance (Farbotko 2010; Lazrus 2012). Disingenuous politicisation of Tuvalu’s citizens as the first climate refugees is rendered as the projection of continental anxieties that fall short of meaningful dialogue and support for endeavours to secure self-determination and environmental heritage (Stiener 2015; Farbotko 2010; McNamara and Farbotko 2017). The tired trope of Pacific Islanders being the passive victims of their own lassitude is meeting resistance from an intergenerational and gender-neutral solidarity of
people whose background bespeaks an ‘environmental identity’ and ‘environment heritage’
seeking to build the adaptive capacity and resilience of the past in the current scenario
(Figueroa cited in Stiener 2015: 168). This also displays leadership and creativity in
communicating about environmental risk by articulating a self-empowered climate-change
discourse along with environmental action in various forms.

The challenge of climate-change resonates profoundly with the struggles waged over a
longer period concerning Indigenous critiques of Western exploitation of the environment, at
odds with cultural heritages that value and care for the land and sea. Thus, the arena of
climate-change in the colonial and postcolonial backwash gives further gravity to burgeoning
Indigenous sovereignty movements, amid the heterogenous political realities of Oceania
(McNamara and Farbotko 2017). The enormity of sea-level rise and ocean acidification
connects directly to the everyday use of fossil fuels that become greenhouse gas (carbon in the
air) that bring the abstract projections from the atmosphere on the horizon to the realities of
the shoreline (McKibben 2010). The challenges directly link to the broader Pacific region
including Australia, Asia and the Americas who must begin to take more direct responsibility
for allowing business as usual, as a means of fuelling their economies and lifestyles (Steiner
2015). Therefore, the issues of decolonisation and the impacts of climate change must be seen
to be inextricably linked, requiring a more principled and informed environmental debate and
politics.

The gravity of the situation for many of these vulnerable places too often allows longer
term injustices to be sidelined and the obvious causes to be decoupled from a more
comprehensive and reasoned view. The immediate effects of these changes are being felt
acutely by people who have lived for generations in these regions, the changing ecology in
locations that make them particularly vulnerable, such as various Pacific Atolls and the Artic
region more broadly (Nurse et al. 2014). While there are also other notable cases of extreme
risk around the world, the instability of these changes is producing uncertainty everywhere for
various reasons (Hess et al. 2008; Adger et al. 2011). Furthermore, extreme weather events
are becoming increasingly severe, ranging from wildfire, droughts to flooding and the volatile
weather of cyclones, typhoons and hurricanes that contribute to coastal erosion and
inundation. These factors place stress on existing infrastructure, further exacerbating public
health risks such as physical harm, exposure to weather and pollution, drowning, smoke
inhalation and so on with diseases that may be airborne, waterborne and foodborne (Hess et
al. 2008). In the case of Pacific Atolls and Pacific Islands the pressure placed upon social and
ecological systems is pronounced, straining marine resources, agriculture, tourism and
economic production (Kempf and Hermann 2014). These difficulties and the challenges they pose seem to stymie the political process in favour of inaction or at best reactive measures that are piecemeal.

The most productive approaches still lie in the adaptation communities make within their own locality, coupled with wider associational networks of people holding values aligned with their ecological sensibilities. The threat of a new form of neo-colonialism remains embedded in the hegemony of developed economies whose own decolonisation in terms of ecological citizenship and sustainability languishes in parochialism (Farbotko 2010). The current climate induced crisis has given rise to ad-hoc approaches that vary from immediate disaster scenarios, to ill-considered strategic responses (eliding long-term responsibility or involvement) to cyclic weather events and long-term considerations that forgo defensive or adaptive measures assuming the worst-case scenarios of a complete loss of land and forced migration (McNamara and Farbotko 2017). This form of neo-colonialism exhibits a wilful disengagement from a more genuine co-operation with people on the ground. Alternatively, as the realities of climate-change are becoming more apparent, they are also gaining traction at a grassroots level with a fresh sense of ecological citizenship informed by identity, culture and in place, each demanding attention and engagement, at the nexus of the particularity of place and notions of world enlargement.

Oceania offers an alternative way to think and act that correlates with the raising of consciousness and responsibility toward the more-than human condition of the biosphere that supports all life. The response of Oceanians is instructive concerning the urgency and agency required to harness collective efforts (Steiner 2015). A salient feature emerging are the inadequate responses that stem from governments and the corporate sector still wedded to the fossil fuel industry and unsustainable development (Klein 2014; Farbotko 2010). The importance of people and place to the type of adaptation and resilience required to arrest greenhouse gas emissions, and to transform land and sea-use is key to maintaining a viable ecology in the changing climate (Adger et al 2010). The rise of Oceania as a philosophical and practical view of the world keeps faith with the importance of people and place, as an ethical response to the challenges the world faces from within the sphere of place-contexts that still maintain a reach toward a sense of planet.

The imperative of becoming proactive and creative allows people to exercise agency toward substantive responses, rather than being lulled into a false hope of the government or scientific experts providing a solution. Delueze (1997) and Haraway (2016), each in their own way, discuss three strands of thinking that seem to translate to sentiments often expressed on
the ground, which are worth noting at this juncture; the false hope of a techno or miraculous fix that supports complacency and denial, the ‘doomed fate’ that drains action through the fatigue caused from living in the shadow of catastrophe, and the final strand after Haraway (2016: 4) to keep on ‘staying with the trouble requiring making oddkin’. The co-evolution of oddball inventiveness in a multi-species world of companionship, adventure and story-telling, although seemingly quixotic, has valence, given the unreliability of the preceding options (Haraway 2016; Tsing 2015). The Pacific Island Warriors provide a compelling example of creative practice and environmental action that mixes mythology, cosmology and ecology in effective everyday poetics (Steiner 2015). The Pacific Islanders Warriors ‘is a youth led grassroots network working with communities to fight climate change from the Pacific Islands’ (Pacific Warrior 2017 np). Their slogan ‘we are not drowning, we are fighting’ acknowledges their vulnerability but speaks to a stronger determination for action on the environment. A branch of the international environmental organisation 350.org established by Bill McKibben, uses the name to draw attention to the acceptable level of carbon in the atmosphere considered safe (current levels are now exceeding beyond 400 parts) and the need to curb greenhouse gas emissions (Pacific Warrior 2017, McKibben 2010). The Pacific Warriors are drawn from 15 different nations across the Pacific and are employing art and culture to raise environmental awareness and promote action (Steiner 2015). The impact of their activities is underpinned by the integrity of their process and the values they share, forging new subjectivities in keeping with their heritage.

Another important feature of their movement emanates from the cultural base of Oceania that reaches out seeking solidarity with people around the world, asking others to stand with them based on ecological citizenship. They have reconfigured the ‘Pacific Warrior’ identity around courage and non-violent protest. While young people form the leadership, they are an inter-generational organisation that acknowledges the spiritual birthright passed on from their ancestors (McNamara and Farobotko 2017). The membership places an emphasis upon gender-equity through the Pacific Warrior identity that includes men and women working together based in communal networking, using the culturally appropriate analogy and practice of canoe building. The communal effort involves the men working on the hull, the women on the sails, while young and old, men and women alike, work together to make the cord that brings the whole construction together (Steiner 2015). The Canoe Day of Action and Warrior Day of Action saw the group build canoes to stage a protest directly confronting the fossil fuel industry through peaceful protest at the coal port in Newcastle, Australia (Steiner 2015). The supporters gathered on the shore for songs, prayers and speeches, while members of the
Pacific Warriors in full traditional costume paddled their canoes into the shipping lanes. This also highlighted Australia’s ambiguous role in the region as the largest neighbour and historic supporter of the Pacific region, but also as one of the largest coal exporters and greenhouse gas-emitters (Pacific Warrior 2017). The protest involved a tour of performances and speaking engagements seeking to promote environmental awareness and garner solidarity with Oceanians facing the direct impacts of climate change (Steiner 2015). They followed Hau’ofa’s (2008: 32) refiguring of ‘islands in the sea’ to ‘sea of islands’ for an expansive vision of seafaring people at home on the sea, as a ‘sea of warriors’ not drowning because of sea-level rise but fighting climate-change in the continuity of a resilient heritage (McNamara and Farbotko 2017). The reconstruction of identity and culture in a savvy environmental action provides a compelling example of symbolic creativity that is both an effective means of building grassroots solidarity that is cross-cultural, and as an ethical intervention to support place-based initiatives to build capacity and resilience.

1.7 Oceanian eco-poetics: Towards a new ecology

The new ecology starts with this fundamental assertion: that the unit of survival is not the individual or the species, but is the organism-and-its-environment. It follows from this that an organism that deteriorates its environment commits suicide.

(Rose and Robin 2004 np)

Oceanian eco-poetics has been employed to think through the creative and imaginative responses required to rebirth an oceanic sense of place, with a genuine custodianship of a planetary lifeworld. As a response to the nightmarish scenarios of a changing climate and environmental crisis, the unity and common heritage of diverse cultures, multi-species ecologies and the sense of belonging to a planetary lifeworld promotes the new ecology as an ameliorative project of the highest order. The new Oceania draws imaginatively on the mytho-poetics of the past, story-telling and contemporary creative and cultural production, as a means of eco-cultural autonomy and agency. The expression of eco-poetics provides the sort of creative communication necessary to articulate multi-species kinship with a respect for a sense of place and a sense of planet. In this climate of change creative and cultural practices are at the forefront of environmental action leading the way for the emergence of a new environmental culture of the future.
Chapter 2 Inside-out: An ontology of blue

Blue in particular takes on the infinite and turns the percept into a “cosmic sensibility” or into that which is most conceptual or propositional in nature—colour in the absence of man, man who has passed into colour.

(Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 181)

2.1 Cosmic sensibility: Colouring inside-out

What school-age surfer has not at some point been distracted in class thinking about the ocean? I confess the oceanic memories that moistened the arid present of my high-school days intoxicated self-directed studies. The remedy I adopted to alleviate the lethargy induced by involuntary confinement was to draw waves in the margins of my books, filling whole folios with swirls and scribbles, intent on expressing the bewitching broken symmetries of waves that throw rides in the fluidity of thought and the turn of the page (Satchell 2008b). In the process hand, eye and body acquiesce to muscle twitching, the flow of ink or graphite in concert with the mind’s eye leaving an indelible trail across subjects such as Science, Maths, Geography, Economics, English, Religious Studies, coming to rest in the broad domain of Art with the appeal of the aesthetics of existence. The validity of a response ‘embodied in it by constituting living sensations’ from the seaside playground to the furtive imagination of adolescence (Foucault 2005; Deleuze and Guattari 1994:178). The pull of the ocean upon the trace of these oceanic reveries constitutes a strange attractor, whose chaotic behaviour stirred curiosity from within the ambit of its tempests.

The enigmatic mysteries of the ocean are a cause for inquiry predicated upon the aesthetic charm festooning the everyday shoreline. A classical education in art should proceed, according to Ruskin (cited in Gage 1995: 8), ‘only after a thorough grounding in chiaroscuro’, the treatment of light and shade in black and white. This serves as a precursor to studies in colour, the rationale underpinned by notions of the importance of first learning ‘value (light and dark content)’, in form, structure, perspective and so on, along with the utility of developing the skill of drawing or following Klee (1968: 16) taking ‘an active line on a walk, moving freely, without a goal. A walk for walk’s sake’ guided by hand-eye co-ordination and a peripatetic inclination (Deleuze and Guattari 1994; Gage 1995: 8). These preparatory exercises are often accompanied by painstaking studies of the old masters, the natural world, human figures and of movement that begins with paying attention and results in mark-making (Klee 1992a). These formal approaches seem to match remarkably with the intuitive application the unruly student-surfer presses into service, for loitering around surf spots and producing a prodigious number of feverish etchings.
The mapping of my lived cartography and affective body awakened the mimetic faculty through immersion and study of the natural world. I tried to flesh out on paper the onslaught of what Cezanne (cited in Read 1972: 17) deems are ‘those confused sensations we bring with us at birth’, experienced by myself as a young surfer and artist through a series of initiations into the deeper oceanic realm that became the subject of further researches (Evers 2010). A threshold experience between performance and practice where I was seeking to unravel the necessary balance and skill for a modest mastery of the elements, applicable in equal measure to both art and surfing (Cezanne in Read 1972). This cryptographic writing of the self—became entangled with learning and the sea. Clandestine moments stolen with head down in a studious position beneath the radar of the formal pedagogic gaze, allowed for imaginative leaps in scale to approximate gigantic waves with diminutive forms in self-styled hieroglyphics. In this manner performing my haptic experiments without the strictures of supervision, turning spatiality inside-out and expanding time by slowing it down, folding micro-bodies into swirling labyrinths, rehearsing confrontations with monsters and clever escapes for personal satisfaction (Deleuze and Guattari 1994; Deleuze 1993; Serres 2011a; Satchell 2016). To push this line of thinking still further in my own experience—these are some of the micro-skills and processes, critical to developing a disposition for the attentiveness to ecology of the geo-philosopher and cryptographer.

Beyond the black and white of these elementary lessons, the whole world seemed to open to enchantment. In the day-to-day of oceanic experience, the aficionado becomes attuned to the efflorescence of colour-sense, its notes, frequencies and textures. The affective body shifts with the clouds, the wind and filtration of light, dancing in an auto-choreography with the ceaseless play of the elements and the metamorphosis of appearances (Klee 1992b; Gregg and Seigworth 2010). These happenstance exercises conducted in morning and afternoon light, following the rise and fall of the day, only to be shrouded again at night are revealed anew at dawn. The dedicated follower offers obedience and application to the unfolding of lunar cycles, the ebb and flow of the tide, melding decisions in response to the various solar angulations from the ellipsis of the seasons (Duane 1996). Showing an animal curiosity alert to the play of mist, shadows and shade, even darkening and darkness, to be a person who sniffs the wind with a studious attention to the bending and shifting, softening and intensity of atmospheric alterations (Robertson 2003). There are also the affective permutations in the ambience around monumental coastal forms, metamorphic waves and clouds that punctuate the curvilinear horizon, appearing and disappearing as though by magic, illuminating lived experiences at favoured haunts and fields (Berger 1991; Thoreau in
Bachelard 1994). The idiosyncrasies of a human heart alert to the spark of difference felt at a visceral level emanating from the sketchy outline of grey-muted tones on an overcast day, then manifest to the eye, as the sky unfolds—flooded in the lush extravagance of light breaking into colour, the blue of the sky redoubled in the depth of the ocean with laser shades and tints of blues and greens (Satchell 2010a). Reading the ocean this way becomes the grammar of everyday life. This is the training ground to move back-and-forth—then beyond what is visible to the myriad of subtle connections not always apparent to the naked eye from which life is spun.

Figure 10  
Sky bottle blue greens and cat’s paws

Immersion in water and the life-world becomes co-extensive and mutually constitutive of a surfing life—an art associated with living, inextricably bound together as a way of life. The pigmentation of colour registers with the wealth of the surrounds and translates vice versa. When you are in the ocean, light offers the perception of swimming among and surfing upon coloured surfaces, in the immediacy and intensity of affect that is both absorbent and exorbitant (Isham 2004). Toying with colour and form in various mediums offers a quiet meditation on the marvels and mysteries shrouded in the living world, whose secrets seem to unlock a reverence for their wonder. There is an ecstasy I find in blue, of bathing in blue and green, with the joy of heightened vision and sensation, extending from the thrill of pure mobility on a wave, gathered over time as muscle memory, fragmented thought and the substance of culture (Mavor 2013; Evers 2004; Satchell 2008b). Of course, there are the listless and contrary days of no consequence that are akin to a rehearsal more than a
performance, where practice requires persistence and application for skills to mature. While speaking of an ontology of blue associated with water, the ocean and all life on the planet, I am addressing a life’s work dedicated to immersion, whose fruit of consciousness is manifest in care (Earle 2010). The proposition of learning from immersion in a life-world relies on everyday practice, reflexive contemplation and some means to document the intimacy with place, even if only for the pleasure of personal satisfaction, as with poetry according to Wordsworth (in Abrams 1993). As a philosophical stance toward life, I found the means for coasting formulated organically through a series of events, each contributing to a deepening personal conviction (Deleuze and Guattari 1994). The recurring theme of blue, the water, the ocean and the planet, mark my imagination and body with the tattoo of age and experience.

The use of blue in this way is not arbitrary; more importantly, blue becomes emblematic as the substance and signifier of Oceania entangling the planet through water and its flows. The passage into colour I have described derives from an immersion in the ocean as a primordial return and the intuitive outworking of an eco-poetics that laid hold of me, resulting in a ‘cosmic sensibility’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 18; Ferenczi 1989). Turning my life inside-out in this way seemed instinctive, if not inevitable, only becoming more significant over time with deeper contemplation, finding the inside and then working out from the dream and imagination into a responsive life-world (Jung in Nin 1974). In brief I will recount some of what I mean by turning myself inside-out: firstly, living/residing close to the coast turning towards the inside of that oceanic life-world; secondly, life revolving around the ocean, in the water surfing, turning towards the inside of that way of life, thirdly, the care of the self, turning inside within myself to evolve as a person equipped for the wounded world; and finally turning to the firsthand study of nature to develop a broader ocean and water-dependent environmental philosophy (Schwenk 1990; Neimanis 2017). The way these aspects overlap and come into alignment, consequently, could be thought of as turning the care of the soul, inside-out into an ecology of care (Abrams 1996). This too is consonant with holistic thinking that considers that the microcosm and the macrocosm are contained within one another, according to an integral make-up—such as water in the body and water in the earth (Muteanu 2016).

This chapter delineates a passage into colour and cosmic sensibility that considers onto-poetics as a communicative dialogue of intimate knowing (knowing and being known) between the world and the self, self and the world, as a form of witness and presence that is too often lost in the way significant dreams are forgotten the morning after. The discussion moves on to consider the way altered perspectives can be transformative and consciousness-
raising in an anticipated or unexpected reversal that produces defamiliarity and or heightens awareness. Then I turn to the implications of the polysemy of colour, which are introduced to foreground its uses and effects. This is followed by a short background to the substrata of globalisation in the territorialising of maps to historicise some of the taken-for-granted aspects of the earth as globe, highlighting the way these ideas have come to be so pervasive (Cosgrove 2001). This then leads on to what astronauts’ experience as the ‘overview effect’ and its precedents, particularly focusing upon the descriptor of the earth as a ‘blue marble’, an instructive lesson whose truth is tenuous in the 21st Century (Poole 2008). The conclusion rests on framing what the purpose and meaning of an ontology of blue quintessentially means, turned inside-out as a way of being mindfully blue to identify with the coming environmental movement and culture.

2.2 Onto-poetics: encounter and communicative dialogue

Thinking through the emergent possibilities of Oceanian blue eco-poetics and the challenges of a new ecology for climate change brings together my formative passions with generative approaches to the more-than human world. The notion of inside-out concerns the responsive processes of living more intimately with water, the coast and the ocean (Satchell 2006). The aim is to appreciate the intrinsic value these elements hold, at the confluence of space, place and ecology, which beckons me to dig deeper within myself and into the fundamental matrix of my sense of place and sense of planet (Heise 2008). I want to bear in mind the inherent challenge of what Danish polymath Piet Hen (cited in Merton 1979: 3) addresses as the elegant sufficiency of an effective creative process, ‘art is the solving of problems that cannot be expressed until they are solved’. While the positing of any so-called solutions in the context of environmental politics is fraught particularly because each layer of the problems reveals the further extent of the difficulties, nonetheless this process may allow the broader field of inquiry in all its knotted problematics to come into view (Merton 1979; Probyn 2016). Following Mandelbrot (1982) I allow for optics that zoom in-and-out of microscopic and macro-cosmic scale, to gain the depth and breadth to compliment the embodied proximity and ‘friction’ of encounters with people and things (Tsing 2004: 4). The raw physics implies that everything known is made of matter and energy that are all of a piece, ‘quantum stuff […] as process’, while a more refined biology, following von Uexküll (cited in Buchanan 2008: 21) suggests there is an ‘all-embracing interweaving’ of living organisms within their environment (Ehlich 1991: 165; Serres 2006; 2011a). Furthermore, Katz (cited in Harvey 2009: 191) inspires the type of creative and dexterous analysis that requires ‘a different kind
of politics, one in which crossing space and ‘jumping scale’ are obligatory rather than overlooked’. Note that the onto-poetics of blue encompasses the metaphoric (standing in for), the metonymic (alongside of) and the material (in connection with), playfully folding in and out of the actual phenomenon in which the participant-observer lives, moves and breathes (Mavor 2013). Therefore, the beguiling strength of blue eco-poetics in the manifestation of its expressions, diving, swimming, surfing, leaping, dancing and flying takes hold of a dispensation of thought where no gift is withheld.

Onto-poetics can be stripped down, in short-hand terms, to acknowledge the communicative phenomenon of dialogue with the world, between the world and the self, self and the world. Thoreau (1987: 602) suggest as much, ‘I believe that there is a subtle magnetism in Nature, which, if we unconsciously yield to it, will direct us aright. It is not indifferent to which way we walk’. In effect this subtle force is dialogic and at times provides lessons that are even franker in their persuasiveness and more direct in their mode of address (Bakhtin 1981; Satchell 2013). This presupposes forms of communication that stretch beyond the bounds of language that are increasingly being recognised as valid, in more holistic explications of the web of life, for example in terms of intrapersonal communication (within ourselves), interpersonal communication (with one another) and more-than human communication (with other species and among other species) (Jung 1983; Haraway 2008; Wohlleben 2015; Tsing 2015). As Mathews (2007 np) suggests, the responsiveness of the world and the responsiveness to the world on our own behalf, relies upon what she terms as a ‘poetic order’ or ‘implicate order’ according Bohm (cited in Munteau 2016: 199) within energy and matter allowing for a recursive ‘coherence’ (Angle 2009: 31). One example she offers refers to the Daoist sense of being in the flow of events, likened unto riding a dragon or great serpent, the way one would ride a field of energy, not unlike riding a surfboard or navigating a sailing boat (Mathews 2007; Moitessier 1995). The same sense of interconnectedness and being in the present moment has been extensively theorised, across a range of studies in the human and social sciences, albeit from more prosaic cognitive and embodied/affective positions, that nonetheless allow for these momentary confluences, where people get the sense of being in the right place, at the right time or even just that sense of harmony in the scheme of a larger world opening or unfolding (Csíkszentmihályi 1990; Game 2001; Muecke 2010a; Deleuze 1993; Deleuze 1995; Woolf 2016). There is some cause for confidence to suggest anecdotally that alignment and attunement to the world is desirable and possible. Conceptually this offers some interesting possibilities in terms of ontology.

There are obvious examples where people align and attune their lives to the natural
cycles of the earth and cosmos because their livelihood depends upon such attentiveness. My argument follows that the sort of rhythmicity fundamental to individual well-being are also socially and culturally important keys to more productive and ethical relations in the process of climate adaptation and change (Lefebvre 2004; Yates 2014; Ingold 2013). Therefore, the sense of ontology I am reaching for is based on a range of affects encompassing ambiguity in our lives, while proffering a harmonious way to live within the dynamics of constant change (von Uexküll 2010; Deleuze 1993; Angle 2009). As Thoreau (1987: 563) has stated: ‘as if nature could but support one order of understandings’ or that one order would be sufficient for the multiplicities of worlds from different perspectives (von Uexküll 2010). There is a critical aspect of an ontology of blue that I am staking upon its articulation as a mutuality with others, where people through their interaction with one another can also become more sensitive to the imperceptible flux inherent in the movement of the earth and the cosmogenesis of the universe (Haraway 1988; Grossberg 1997; Massey 2006; Klee 1992c). The benefits of harnessing these forces for living-well at a communal level must not be underestimated.

The emphasis of capitalist society so often errs toward competition, whereas co-operative effort could be so much more effective as a catalyst for change engaged with climate change. The complexity of the factors subtly woven into the fabric of everyday life and experience often becomes opaque in the vagaries of existence, only to be recuperated with focused attention (such as mindfulness, breathwork, attention to the consumption of water and food, application to forms of exercise, rest, sleep and dreamwork) (Plotkin 2003). The connective threads people experience with the surrounds and their impacts on well-being, often register unawares at various scales of bodily function and human development, which may surface ironically in speech; you would be familiar with or even have uttered yourself—statements such as: I am feeling old or You’re looking young again; I think I am dying; today’s my lucky day; this weather’s depressing; my life has just turned a corner; I cannot see an end in sight; this is the beginning of a new chapter; the moon’s making me manic; I slept peacefully to the sound of rain and I just cannot eat enough oranges (my emphasis). These mundane human examples are indicative of what people feel: a sense of well-being, being in an existential quandary, the influence of circadian rhythms, the impact of psycho-climatology or an active immune system and so on. Being in-or-out of sync is predicated on being more conscious or mindful with a sense of balance/alignment/attunement at various levels (Yates 2014; Ingold 2013; Vaughan-Lee 2013). Therefore, by drawing attention to some of these phenomena within our own experience or thought, there are distinct possibilities for working with them. Consequently, opening wider the implications for health and wellness (Bateson
1994). The wider applications are also consonant with health and wellness as propositions that are social, cultural and environmental.

The contention here is that there are inklings in the layers of everyday experience that may be brought to the surface as an optic to see health and ecology in a different light as balanced through relationships. Linking the care of the self as an exploration of who you are as a person with the way you live is complimentary to an ecology of care, promoting explorations of living in relationship where including the more-than human is paramount (Næss 1989; Moore 1996). This offers us a politics of location matched to identity politics as the means of enacting substantive forms of ecologically based citizenship as a focus for environmental action (Rich 1985; McKinley 2009; hooks 1990; Satchell 2016). The traction creative expression offers proponents of such an environmental philosophy through blue eco-poetics is a means to circumvent the propensity to become debilitated by the serious devastation and consequences already in play. As an environmental cultural producer not solely reliant on rational explanation to offer compelling arguments or the recourse to use reams of statistics as blunt tools, one is instead able to concentrate on the aim of meaningful engagement in complex forms of personhood (Lorimer 2007; Morton 2018). The conviviality of story-telling warms the distillation of wisdom in ordinary experiences as ecological touchstones unfolded with the significance of mysteries that awaken and shift consciousness in ways directly relevant to the conduct of everyday life (Berry 1999; Abrams 1996; Serres 2007). This supports the societal shift to ecological literacy, not as a utopian ideal or counter-cultural alternative, but as a genuine ethos reorienting the anthropocentrism of the past toward an eco-centrism with an ontological approach to a wider responsibility, concerned for the general welfare of the planet (Stone and Barlow 2004; de Botton and Armstrong 2013; Satchell 2008d). The imaginative recognition of the value of health, wellness and ecology in these narratives is an important move to bring relationships and the environment into a recursive configuration.

An ontology of blue brings together critical orientations to existence that are fundamental to responses to climate change and ecological crisis. Ocean dependence is a recognition of the role oxygen and water play in relation to the hydrological cycle as an all-encompassing earth-system supporting life (Munteanu 2016; Jha 2015; Consigli 2017; Schwenk 1990). Oceanic consciousness is the sense people experience of the interconnectedness and wonder towards the larger complexity of—earth systems, the solar system and the expanding universe (Hau'ofa 2008; Sahtouris 1989). An ecological sensibility concerns the sensate relations within an all-encompassing interwoven web of life encountered
in the day-to-day world as a synergy between the self and the world (Satchell 2008a; Mathews 2007). Therefore, there are fresh ways to imagine, understand and pursue environmental philosophy that are emerging in response to the ecological crisis and the call for a new ecology of planetary belonging (White 2003; Earle 2010; Satchell 2008a; 2016; Wilson 2017). The multi-faceted character of such an approach allows for shifts of thought and creative reversals of perspective, as responses to the current suite of problematic assumptions and directions of the dominant political agendas, steeped in anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism (Haraway 2008; Satchell 2008a). These self-conscious and critical perspectives, open-up a communicative dialogue with the world in the form of onto-poetics that affirm ecological literacy as a fundamental skill for living.

2.3 Transformative perspectives on the world

In the burgeoning space of the environmental humanities there has been an oceanic turn that supports the proposition of an ontology of blue for environmental philosophy. The increase of studies with an oceanic character entangled in dynamic and overlapping fields is converging around concerns for the environment that are a testament to their current relevance. Various aspects of academic work emerging as oceanic studies have been theorised as blue eco-poetics, blue cultural studies, the blue humanities and even blue theology, each offering different foci from postcolonial, ethnographic, ethological, epistemological, spiritual and ontological perspectives (Ghosh and Muecke 2007; Mentz 2009; Gillis 2013; Probyn 2016; Wilson 2017; Ferris 2008; Steinberg 2013). The play of these factors for researchers in a field of inquiry characterised by the fluidity and dynamism of the ocean, climate change and globalisation, raise the stakes not just to provide ‘critical junctures’ but to articulate them with courses of action (Schorch and Pascht 2017).

Looking at the world from an ocean-region-based perspective thus becomes the means not just for highlighting a new series of global processes and connections, but a means for transforming the way we view the world as a whole.

(Steinberg 2013: 163 my emphasis)

A comprehensive view of the world remains a work-in-progress given the range of perspectives and variables that such a suggestion entertains, although the ocean and water are key to such a transformation. One of the most significant shifts in the way people view the world came as a surprise from the space program, whose main focus at the time concerned the race to land a human being on the moon. Numerous people cite the dramatic influence of the shock realisation the images of the earth from the Apollo spacecraft prompted when they
beamed back to earth and then later became photographic images for further contemplation (Poole 2008; Earle 2010; Cousteau 1985). Central to this are the eye-witness accounts of the astronauts themselves, who have been privy to what has been coined the ‘overview effect or experience of seeing the Earth from space and in space’ (White 2012: 1 original emphasis). These on-going reflections from successive astronauts have been insightful in many ways that still deserve analysis. The profound realisation that dawned upon the astronauts and engaged onlookers is quite ironic, as well as instructive. The focus of the space race intent on the moon had produced a blind spot toward the earth, laying the groundwork for an epiphany whose depth and breadth remains to be fathomed in the transformative possibilities of an ontology of blue.

The quest to understand the wider universe, is inextricably linked to the proposition of having a clearer understanding of the world and the place (role) humans play in the scheme of things. The chequered history of these endeavours are at root part of the existential endeavour to ascertain meaning in life, where turning within offers the preferred route for individuals and the focus for turning out becomes the requisite for a collective grasp of the possible parameters for co-existence (Moore 2014; Capra and Luisi 2014). Think of the vision-quest of shamanic traditions or rites of passage as initiations into adulthood, or of the various forms of retreat in contemplation absorbing silence and solitude—the turn inward becomes pivotal to a stronger connection to the world within the complexity of a larger panorama (Eliade 1972; Housden 1995). These quests are riven with different motivations caught between what might appear as self-gratification or self-realisation—toward the on-going collective-awareness of human consciousness that is the search for a more comprehensive grasp of existence and the more-than human world (Ehrlrich 1991; Abram 1996). Alternatively, venturing out into the world has also played a role, climbing mountains to gain a better view of the lay of the land or even for getting closer to God, also the exploration of oceans in search of new lands, then of course flying and eventually launching into space (Cosgrove 2001). At times this has involved feats of co-operation and collective effort that may well prove to have been the precursors to the even greater challenges that lie ahead. Exploring the self, understanding one another and comprehending the wider world appear to be complimentary impulses that to some extent support one another.

The view from space, in classic philosophy of various strains provided thought experiments and spiritual exercises, as a means for expanding perspectives desirous of a more comprehensive understanding of the human condition. The sense of proportion in terms of human smallness on the earth is comparative with the earth’s relative smallness against the
backdrop of the solar system and the wider universe (Hadot 1995; Cicero in Fuller 1959). Furthermore, following Seneca (in Foucault 2005), such a view might inculcate humility and gratitude in the realisation of a fleeting existence that relies upon such wondrous means of support for life (Cosgrove 2001; Hadot 1995). Hadot’s (1995) discussion of the ‘View from Above’ provides numerous examples from philosophy and literature, such as Geothe’s (cited in Hadot 1995: 239) true poetry that liberates, unburdens and lifts, likened unto a ride in a hot-air balloon: that ‘lets us see, from a bird’s eye view, the mad labyrinths of the world spread out before us’. These spiritual exercises were deemed to enable and support the power of enlarged thought and the flight of the soul (Hadot 1995). Thinkers such as these often resorted to using metaphors relevant to the time, such as Proust (2017 np) who links beautifully the process of writing to thought and memory ‘like an aviator who rolls painfully along the ground until, abruptly, he breaks away from it, I felt myself being slowly lifted towards the silent peaks of memory’. The self-reflexive process people experience allows for critical reflection that coheres with the attempt to make sense of life and the broader world to the extent one is able.

In the context of memory and thought experiments, the confrontation of death intrinsic to so many philosophies provide a productive foil for the flight of the soul. The process of confronting death offers a person a possible means where they are able to shed their fears and anxieties around the uncertainty of the future, to become aware of the generosity of the present moment where life is lived, and where death marks the transition into an inevitable but anticipated unknown (Dispenza 2017; Plotkin 2003; Khan 2003). The contemplation of the view from above contextualises human activity in the unfolding of the natural world, and in so doing provides a perspective that is transformative, associated with cosmic flight, thus tempering human achievement with the greatness of the cosmos and earth’s intricate workings (Hadot 1995). As an exercise contributing to self-examination the view from above remains potent by providing the imaginative means of contrasting perspectives. Although this perspective has been associated with male prerogatives that have been critiqued emphatically by Haraway (1988), as a God-trick in need of situating through recognition of partiality, the need for associational networking and an openness to ambiguity. These provisos rather than negating the view from above give the exercise even greater substance particularly when turned inside-out (Klee 1992a; hooks 1990). In various ways the study of cosmology and the earlier developments contributing to mapping the earth, each provide further detail orienting the empirical development of self-understanding, the earth and the cosmos.

Confrontation with the vastness of space is deeply embedded in the human psyche and
the repository of cultural tradition. Fundamental to an observational history that began projecting itself outwards by means of architecture (building specifically designed to observe aspects of the sky) and apparatus (telescopes, electronic receivers and the like) that slowly progressed in the accumulation of the knowledge of heavenly bodies (Robertson 2013). Evident in the development of various models such as, the ‘geocentric model’, where sun, moon and stars were thought to revolve around the earth, later superseded in time by the Copernican ‘heliocentric model’ where the sun was thought to be at the centre of the universe. The sun is currently is understood as the focal point of earth’s solar system, in a much larger field that astro-physicists later surmised, as confirmed by Edwin Hubble, as an expanding universe, therefore by inference, istropic without a centre, equidistant from any point but emanating from the so-called Big Bang (Christianson 1995). The holy grail of astro-futurists and astronomers these days is the search for life on other planets, the quest for earth-like planets to support life and a comprehensive theory to explain everything that remains elusive at every turn (Poole 2008; Cohen and Elkins-Tanton 2017; Rovelli 2018). The experience of human frailty in the wide-open sea with no land in sight is compatible with further celestial observation to contemplate the extent of the cosmos (Low 2014). This plotting of a course by the stars through navigation or way-finding provides some cause for the celebration of learning that is transformative and environmentally sound.

Figure 11

Fishing in the shade of the moon
The pretext for Cook’s first journey across the world in search of the southern continent was to observe the transit of Venus in the pursuit (at the time) of ascertaining the earth’s distance from the sun. In the culmination of his three voyages in the Pacific, Cook charted his extensive investigations with an astonishingly accurate cartographic record providing a more definitive reckoning of the extent of the earth than ever before (Horwitz 2003). While voyaging to discover or rediscover new lands as Dening (1996: 212) remind us, they were ‘teased by the fact that their most brilliant discoveries were really only rediscoveries’. These maps ostensibly encompassing a third of the earth’s sphere recorded the expanse of the Pacific Ocean and the surrounding continental islands providing a telling blow to the former isolation of the original inhabitants and the earlier migrants of Polynesia (Horwitz 2003; Okihiro 2008). This also fed into the cult of the globe that evolved various strains of globalism that eventuated into globalisation, evident in European expansion from the apotheosis of Rome to the colonial race around the world to map and possess territories. The global perspective iterated in the globalisation of such things as shipping, flight, trade, media, communication and the connectivity of information technology continued the extensive mapping of the earth precipitated from the use of latitude and longitude (Cosgrove 2001; Sloterdijk 2014). The value of the view from space, though commodified by Google and attenuated by GIS (Geographic Information Systems) in recent times, still remains protean for purposes other than geo-politics, economics and control. Given the suite of challenges facing humankind, sadly, the use of this technology too often seems to have been co-opted for exploitative and unsavoury pursuits (Heise 2008). Further consideration of the development of globalisation as a substratum of networks, borders and competing interests will be the subject of a later section (Cosgrove 2001). The transformative aspects of these perspectives must also be acknowledged as contested, not just as gaining a comprehensive or more detailed view, rather seeking to promote goodwill and a higher purpose for living on earth.

Transformative perspectives that support experiments and developments of thought are vital to critical and emerging understandings of a world overrun by capitalist development and threatened environmentally in every quarter of the globe. Perceptual breakthroughs are a means of engaging in the communicative dialogue concerning the integrity of the life-world, between the world and self, living organisms and their environment (Mathews 2003; Rose and Robin 2004). A consideration of colour and various colour theories has long been an area that serves interdisciplinary purposes across varied fields of knowledge (Gage 1995). They reference the primordial impulse for survival and reproduction in the natural world and are
wedded to vibrant motifs from antiquity interwoven in the complexity of the more-than human world (De Certeau 1984; Capra 2013). These remain operative at the fundamental level of biology and culture but also deserve a sophisticated articulation with environmental philosophy to think about how a new ecology might emerge by a transformation of human consciousness and behaviour (Morton 2018; Stengers 2005). What is the subtle magnetism pulling us in a certain direction toward the need for harmony, balance and a higher purpose to support co-existence? There is a danger in the cult of facile knowledge production when what is thought to be known lacks practical application or imaginative use, in the midst of such obvious peril and pressing need such intellectual belligerence is folly.

2.4 The polysemy of colour

Colour holds a paradoxical mystique for the imagination emanating as a phenomenon with material effects, complex associations and shape-shifting meanings. The etymology of the word colour suggests an association with guile and magic with connotations of falsity and trickery—hence, to whitewash or in contemporary parlance greenwash (Gibson and Stanes 2011). Think, then, of colour as in the hue or dye of hair-colour, associated with changing the natural look, covering-up aging or disguising one’s identity, stemming from the Old Latin color cover, conceal or hide, in the manner of deceptive appearances and misleading impressions (Robertson 2003). In the Old French color is a referent for the quality of complexion associated with the state of a persons’ health, also concerned with mood, personality, character, or general appearance (Nichols 2014). In the Old English, the qualitative property of things take-on a certain hue that hints at ‘colouring’ something a certain way, as a gloss or point of a view, the expression of sensations or type of appearance, subject to interpretation and nuance (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 167). In this sense the use of colour can be thought of as polymorphic, as though passing through many mutative possibilities, as is true for the ruses and plays various living organisms employ in their interactions and on-going evolutions (Varley 1980; De Certeau 1984). Lefebrve (1991) maintains ambiguity is a distinctive characteristic of everyday life, this may then be applied to the utility of colour to connote different meanings and subjective viewpoints. Even the simplicity of matching colours or contrasting them has a myriad of implications in terms of affect, symbolic creativity and or the significance that engages a further complexity according to the intent of the use.

The cunning deployment of colour is often used commercially to prey upon the naïve, innocent or unwitting whose ignorance is brooked only through hard-won experience. Plato
and Aristotle (in Robertson 2003 my emphasis) both associated paint and pigment as a derivative of \textit{pharmakon} with the potency of a drug or poison, whose intensity and dosage elicited unpredictable responses of altered states, moods and emotions. This strikes a chord with high-end fashion where colour is employed both as an \textit{agent-provocateur} or as a subtle influence upon taste and status. In spiritual traditions the symbolism of colour is often matched to the therapeutics of certain virtues and graces (Freke and Gandy 1977). Alternatively, colour can be thought in the abject sense to promote disgust, horror and transgression (Maver 2013; Bucklow 2016). There are no absolute categories or definitive meanings to support contrary interpretations or cultural bias such are the stakes of appropriation and re-appropriation (hooks 1990). The point being, not merely to accept the inferences of colour as natural, social, cultural, religious or economic but to be alert to their uses in various contexts and the motivations underlying the specific usage.

The influence of colour is pervasive to such an extent the effects can often go unnoticed or seem unremarkable, whereas, they are so imbued with power over people and their experience of life that they deserve closer attention. For some people colour or even particular colours can evoke life-long fascinations or obsessions. Yves Klein (in Mavor 2013) was completely besotted by blue and the quest for supernatural flight. Benjamin (2006: 134) refers to the special power conferred by colour in reference to mixing paint as a child, ‘the colours I mixed would colour me […] I found myself disguised by them’, going on to reference the story of the old Chinese painter who while exhibiting his painting suddenly disappears into the picture. Hesse (1979: 25) recounts the ‘Chinese formula’ from the confines of imprisonment, concluding an auto-biographical essay where he makes himself small and disappears into the picture to the freedom from reality. On the practical magic of painting and colour, he recalls with pleasure ‘the bright, happy sound of cinnabar, the full, clear note of yellow, the deep, moving tone of blue, and the music of their mixture out to the furtherest, palest gray’ while repurposing his cell as a space of freedom for thought (Hesse 1979a: 24, 25). Aristotle (in Robertson 2003) makes three distinctions concerning colour: firstly, as light, secondly, as the medium through which light appears (water, air, space) and finally, the property of material as the basis or ground from which light is reflected as colour. What then might colour be able to do when rightly understood, as a means of self-actualisation, self-preservation and mutual appreciation—perhaps lays more open to innovation and development than is commonly understood. The play of light that colours the world offers a medium of potent identification and fabrication concerning for example the quality of produce, the time of year, the time of life, the particularities of a place and so on.
(Nichols 2014; Serres 2015b). Therefore, the way the eye may or may not become trained to colour, sharpened or dulled becomes of considerable interest. The ‘deceptive picture presented by the kaleidoscope of the senses’ calls for finely honed sensory perception for deft readings of colour that might better nourish the soul and become integrated into everyday life through experience and practice (Read 1972: 13; Vaughan-Lee 2013). Coming full circle with colour invokes all the seasons and stages of life from birth to death, while the enlightened use of colour stems from the lexicon of the natural world that is learned gainfully through attention to the patterns of its movement (Moore 1998; Lent 2017). People who develop an awareness of the influence of colour in their lives, can bring this to bear on their quality of life and the integrity of the surrounds.

Colour in the political sense of identification and public relations, displays an ambiguity that often fosters ambivalence, contrary to the hopes of the proponents. The growth of environmental awareness has for some time been associated with the colour green, attention to the weather, the pastoral idyll and romanticism (Harris 2017). Although, green politics concerned with what now is understood to be environmental awareness as a social movement, did not really come to the fore until the mid-20th Century. From that time, in Australia the greens party has evolved from a mass protest movement, to a more policy-driven political party and somewhere between grassroots and third-sector activism, wedged between governments and private enterprise (Doyle 2000). By and large, environmental awareness has endured with growing evidence that the earlier concerns about environmental degradation and pollution have been borne out emphatically (Potter et al. 2007; Lewis and Potter 2011). A further shade of meaning and colour is afforded in the contrast between shallow and deep ecology with the distinction of light and dark green respectively (Fox 1990). The term ‘greenies’ is often used in a derogatory manner by people who do not share the same values or worldviews as those of environmentalists. Still further ‘grey literature’ refers to older educated tastes for creative non-fiction interested in the verities of reality that render green concerns believable according to the state of the world (De Certeau 1984; Gibson and Stanes 2011). Greenwash has come under critique concerning populist rhetoric, mainstream discourse and the blatant appropriation of the green agenda, most evident in the co-option of ‘sustainable development’ as an idea, highlighting ‘green as the new black’ in terms of a quasi-fashionable environmentalism (Gibson and Stanes 2011: 176 my emphasis). Moreover, as blue stocks have risen in regard to water-discourse, ‘bluewashing’, has also been called-out as a corporate con-job through posthuman feminist critique (Neimanis 2017 my emphasis). Traditional political striping in Western democracies contrasts red (socialism) against blue
(conservatism), although this too is contextual in the vernacular, when considering discussions around white collar workers (office work or crime), blue collar workers (manual labour or unions) and the grey army (the skills of people working after retirement age), all subject to terminological shift and the hollowing out of meaning (Doyle 2001; Greenfield and Williams 2011). Aligning colour with formal political aspirations so often runs the risk of being diluted or muddied in the banality of politicking.

Genuine encounters with colour in lived experience brings cosmology and awareness to the threshold of consciousness and perception in the apprehension of the world. Cezanne (cited in Berger 2011 np) exclaims ‘colour is where the brain and universe meet’ such is the immediacy and enormity colour opens on to as a gateway to conscious awareness. The shifts that perceptual awareness enables may then be left to chance or pursued by more rigorous methods. Serres (2015b: 79) alludes to the education of the senses one may undergo (particularly those senses that may lag behind the favoured ones), discussing the profusion of colour (comparative to the perfection of music and mathematics) as ‘the world’s unique gesture’ that people imitate as a dialogue from the vocabulary of their own existence, recognising that colour is a unique gift of the expression of life. In terms of onto-poetics this presents certain possibilities despite the evidence of cultural conditioning and the necessity of a thorough-going reeducation concerning colour appreciation. By facing the world of colour
and form (seeing and being seen), you may think of the production and reproduction of colour, as an encounter with a lively intelligence (consciousness) that resonates deeply within (at the depths) and among the senses at their extremities and connections (at the edges)—for example waking to the soft light of the setting moon preceding an early morning storm subtly colours a reflective meditation (Solnit 2005). Often such encounters with the world shade a yearning response that promulgates the art of living mindfully, through a close attention even delighted onto-poetic curiosity (hooks 1990; Foucault 2005; Serres 2012; Solnit 2005). Colour, taken for granted or neglected in these terms lays dormant in the wings of the imagination awaiting a shift in awareness and enlivened encounter.

The blue I am invoking for ontology is not a mere pigment, dye or the solution garnered from a precious stone—this is the colour I associate with the intimation of life itself that encompasses me. Goethe (cited in Robertson 2003: 140) asserts ‘we love to contemplate blue, not because it advances towards us, but because it draws us after it’. Blue has become synonymous with the evolution of perception referencing the development of a colour-vocabulary that has changed over time. The leap in expression rendered the differentiation between varied colours as the appreciation and advance of a keenness of perception (Bateson 1994; Varley 1980). Bacon’s (in Merton 1965) paradox concerns the idea that the ancients were in the scheme of time, the cleverer children and the moderns the more mature adults based on the number of succeeding generations. In one sense this runs contrary to the idea that the moderns are mere dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants in terms of intellectual capacity, although suggests the supposed advantage of drawing on the accumulation of intellectual capital (Merton 1965). The achievements of the moderns in the past few centuries of modernity, might then be called into question in terms of perception and their treatment of the earth (Serres 1995b). The collective imprint of the thoughtless exploitation of the earth’s beauty and seamless working has stained much of the achievement and appreciation for what colour might ultimately represent in the natural world to belatedly serve as a warning (Fox 1990; Serres 2012). The imaginative use of blue as an ontological expression seeks to articulate better ways to live in keeping with certain priorities and fundamental principles associated with the ocean and water.

There are numerous anomalous references to blue, employed rhetorically to make affective, spiritual and mystical claims on the theatre of the imagination. Kumar (2009) recounts the story of Shiva the creator and destroyer of Indian mythology having drunk all the poison of the world whose body then consequently turns suggestively blue. Durga Master’s (cited in Mavor 2013: 32) ‘Reclining Krishna from Sage Markandey’s Ashram and the Milky
Ocean' floats on a vessel made of serpents where deathly blue becomes the signifier anticipating metamorphosis to recommence the cycle of birth and death. A more threatening vision of embodied blue comes from Sioux Native American, Black Elk, whose vision containing a blue man of destruction represents the ignorance and greed of those who destroy the earth, whereas in the same cosmology blue is identified with sky power and the speculative inference of otherworldly communication (McGaa 2004). Connolly (2002) uses colour theory as an extended meditation upon otherwise inexplicable feelings surrounding an instance of civil disobedience, referring to the thoughts of Kandinsky (cited in Connolly 2002: 31) relating ‘blue on the other hand, moves into itself, like a snail retreating into its shell, and draws away from the spectator’. Going on to claim, ‘my perception of the Baltimore police force is coloured blue’ (Connolly 2002: 31). The extraordinary range the polysemy of colour offers, rather than diminishing meaning, amplifies the complexity of possible meanings to enrich experience. Colour, in this instance blue becomes a suggestive aid to express the depth meaning can take and the degree with which it is felt (Solnit 2005). At this juncture it would be remiss not mention the affinity of colour with sound particularly in reference to blue. The blues as a genre of music embodies the profound struggles of displaced African peoples oppressed and exploited in slavery, showcasing their ability to translate their experience as a source of expression as a site of recovery and as the ground for ‘communities of resistance’ (Nhat Hahn in hooks 1990: 43; Nhat Hahn 1993). The blue of eco-poetics too has this redemptive element of recuperating the relationship of community with living organisms and the environment. The poetics or musicality connotes the listening experience for people whereby by inference there are those moments where connections are made. As Mavor (2013: 64) recounts: ‘blue is the perfect colour for listening beyond meaning’ suggesting the kind of solidarity and storytelling that does not rely merely upon the strength of explanation but seeks to appeal to elevated emotions that know from the heart (Benjamin 2007; Dispenza 2017). This is indicative of blue as a sound, as a colour and as an ontology that resonates with the precarity
of earthly existence, while at the same time reaches for the majesty of the ocean and sky—and toward the divine of the cosmos.

To invoke blue is not just to refer to its phenomenal existence; instead, one seeks through invocation to stir its powers to provoke consciousness. By far the strongest associations with blue are the sky (light particles suspended in the atmosphere that do not quite reach us), the ocean (light reflecting the sky in the depth of water) and water (which is actually clear, although reflecting colour predominantly of the sky and the ocean). The earth itself is shot through with reflective strains of blue as a circulatory system, flush with water in the veins of rivers, lakes, swamps and ponds (Shaw and Francis 2008). Solnit (2005: 31) speaks of the blue of distance referencing the spatial dimensions of edges and depths that introduce longing into a process of a burgeoning awareness (Thoreau in Solnit 2005; Foucault 1984). The 15th Century European painters were the first to use blue to paint distance. Leonardo himself worked with a formula of five grades that drew the viewer into the depth of an extended field of vision, provoking longing through a horizon that leads the vision away, tugging on heart strings that are resonant of deeper mysteries beyond (Robertson 2003; Capra 2013). Benjamin (2007) is insightful in regard to the effect of blue and the ploys of its use.

The blue of distance that never gives way to foreground or dissolves at our approach, which is not revealed spread-eagled and long-winded when reached but only looms more compact and threatening, is the painted distance of a backdrop. It is what gives stage sets their incomparable atmosphere. (Benjamin 2007: 83)

Upon contemplation of the blue of distance, one finds the space that allows a process of turning back upon ourselves that folds inward and then outward, allowing for a broader margin at the threshold of self-awareness and the world around us (Deleuze 1993; 1995). These efforts and explications each express the deeper latent yearning for a cosmic sensibility to precipitate a human awakening.

The faciality of the earth’s complexion strikes me as incomparable on a blue day, only matched in contrast with the suggestion of deep blue bordering inky blackness (a point of some debate) of a star encrusted night whose depth and mystery remains inviolable. I am motivated from within the polysemy of colour to theorise blue from lived experience as emblematic of the preciousness of life on earth as a planet. The heightened experience I associate with blue contributes to the self-realisation of being a part of a larger living entity that encompasses living organisms in a benign atmosphere that preserves life in a larger regenerative cycle. The elegance of life’s complexity and beauty deserves the mutual
appreciation expressed in nature-based cultures and earth-based spirituality (de Chardin in Cousteau 1985; Berry 1999). The depth and feeling of this affective truth amount to an ontological expression that might serve to guide the human endeavour toward an environmental culture committed to honour this sacred trust for future generations.

2.5 The substrata of globalisation

The background to the watershed moment of viewing the whole earth from space bears a brief outline for the purpose of teasing out a few of the salient features pertinent to this study. Cosgrove’s (2001) ‘cartographic genealogy of the earth in the Western imagination’ supports such a sketch. Ideas about the cosmos drawn from astronomy and geometry postulated the spherical nature of the earth and conceptualisation of the globe. The merging of the cartographic imperative to map the world gradually morphed into the global form which became an object of considerable significance, attracting various aspirations, while assisting thought and action for more accurate readings (Sloterdijk 2014). The outworking of the conceptual globalism in Europe arose out of the expansion of the known world in antiquity, buoyed by advances in maritime exploration to ascertain the full extent of land and sea with detailed mapping (Horwitz 2002). The process of globalisation, as the spread of cultural, political and economic relations through the world, intensified dramatically from European expansion. This decisive change began as early as the 14th Century slowly until the 16th Century, then gathering pace in the 1800s and a further acceleration from the 1950s (Steffen et al. 2015; Sloterdijk 2014). The networks established through shipping, underwrote trade and colonisation, fuelling European Empires and firing the engines of industrialisation with primary resources and manufacturing, concentrating power and wealth in the European metropoles, thus extending their influence, to the so-called ends of the earth and back particularly from London and Paris (De Certeau 1986). The creative tension between the known and unknown world from a European perspective, offering the prospect of discovery in every sphere of knowledge in the Age of the Enlightenment.

The emergence of a swarm of fresh ideas, previously in the domain of mythology, philosophy and religion, surfaced through scientific inquiry and artistic endeavour, providing imaginative thought for a new impetus to advance a comprehensive grasp of the complete geography of earth. The flourishing experimentation in thought and practical experience contributed to the accumulation of knowledge that was accompanied by the rise of the printing press to support its further dissemination (Solterdijk 2014; Serres 2014; Serres 2015a). Although the processes were uneven, the teleological view of progress gathered
momentum, supported by various advances becoming embedded with notions of a civilising mission of Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian origins, predicated on ideas conflated around, on the one hand, the cultivation of ‘man’ and on the other the salvation of humanity (Cosgrove 2001). The matrix of these relations remained patriarchal and hierarchical, while institutional organisations and forms of government gradually coalesced and developed into wider societies based on democratic forms and social impulses for fairer relations, in the spectre of the French and American revolutions against the divine right of the monarchy (Solterdijk 2014). These fundamental characteristics accreting over time, while much of the impetus derived from competing interests seeking advantages of power, wealth, status and security, forged either through militarily prowess or mercantile acumen as well as enlightened self-interest. The relinquishing of power from the top allowed the bubbling up of democratisation producing a broader base, albeit through structured inequality based on an unabashed confidence in the mandate of so-called civilisation and the mythos of an elite whose responsibility to rule over others nevertheless remained (Lent 2017). According to Ashcroft (2017: 31), at the height of classic imperialism the USA assumed the ‘mantle of empire’ from Britain, in a decisive manner influencing the 20th Century to this day in policy and premise.

It is our duty toward the people living in barbarism to see they are freed from their chains…and we can free them only by destroying barbarism itself. Exactly as it is the duty of a civilized power […] so it is our duty to put down savagery and barbarism.

Roosevelt campaign speech eve of his election 1901 (cited in Ashcroft 2017: 31)

In another context related to the space race, the following comment by Senator Lyndon Johnson is instructive of the way these attitudes had been perpetuated. At a Senate debate to consider the establishment of National Aeronautic Space Agency (NASA), the future President highlights the unapologetic American mythos, steeped in a sense of mission galvanised by the Western humanist cultural tradition that can be read as an unshakeable belief in a mandate (sacred, secular and megalomaniac) built on a distinctive American national story.

The Roman Empire controlled the world because it built roads…the British Empire was dominant because it had ships. In the air age of the airplanes we were powerful because we had airplanes. Now the Communists have established a foothold in outer space.

Lyndon. B. Johnson (cited in Cosgrove 2001: 256)

This rationale for assuming and vying for world dominance, politically, economically and culturally, is the result of a belief in the Anglo-American inheritance of Enlightenment
humanism and an evangelical sense of mission, passed on from Europe prior to and definitively after the conflagrations of World War II having confronted the totalitarianism of fascism on one hand and on the other the communist State (Cosgrove 2001). The two emerging so-called superpowers (one a liberal-democratic capitalist nation-state, the other a confederation formed into communist-socialist economy and political bloc), the USA and USSR, embarked upon a Cold War based on mutual distrust of one another’s growing power, the escalation of espionage, a nuclear arms race and opposing ideological differences that found some common ground and less antagonistic expression in the space race (Poole 2008). The imperialism Johnson refers to in his appeal to the Senate committee is foundational to the colonialism and then capitalism of the modern era, setting the world stage for the ideas of globalism to take shape through further globalisation (Cosgrove 2001; Sloterdijk 2014). There are some key aspects of globalisation that are critical to grasping the embedded nature of structured inequality, exploitation of the majority of the human population and degradation of the environment.

The complexity of the factors supporting globalisation found coherence in the manner they spread and became adopted as consequential innovations. The background to the space race can be set against the advances of civilisation and so-called progress through forces that are at best seen as contradictory, uneven and diffuse, with a range of factors influencing their promotion and resistance, in boom and bust cycles of volatility, surges of growth and stagnation (Harvey 2009; Stewart 1996; Taussig 2004). The intensification of these globalising forces was given further dynamism through an exponential growth in population and technological breakthroughs; in building, manufacturing, transport and communication, paradoxically driven in the first half of the 20th Century by two world wars and the great depression (Solterdijk 2016; Serres 2014). The advent of these innovations in many respects converged in a spectacular fashion including the internal-combustion engine (the car and aeroplane), petroleum, electricity, atomic power, industrial scale metallurgy, chemicals, plastic, synthetics, pharmaceuticals, radio, photography, motion pictures, television and information technology (Williams 1987). A critical transition from Fordist mass production to Post-Fordist approaches, bookended by the two world wars, culminated in mass consumption and the rise of the consumer society in the mid-20th Century that propelled a post-war boom (Lent 2017). A decisive shift in perceptual terms of the globe occurred through a more closely interconnected world galvanised through advances in technology of every kind.

The changes in transport and communication served to ramify existing arrangements by extending their speed and reach. Networks of travel, trade and communication, built upon
the established routes of the colonial era by sea and then rail that saw the centre of gravity shifting from an Anglo-European to Anglo-American sphere of influence, with key advances in aeronautics and communications that took advantage of the new perspective of imagery as a result of being airborne (Cosgrove 2001; Solterdijk 2016). In contrast to previous mapping achieved through maritime efforts, aeronautic surveys became critical aspects of military warfare and the ‘ground truthing’ of aerial photography, which became an essential component of a more comprehensive mapping—the precursor to geographic information systems (GIS), supported by global information infrastructure (GII) (Cosgrove 2001: 242; Heise 2008). Advances in rocket engines developed in wartime (including nuclear arms) led to further breakthrough technologies inaugurating the space age in the form of satellites, unmanned rockets and the era of the cosmonaut and astronaut (Russian and American respectively) (Poole 2008). The dramatic modernisation of this period came through a succession of upheavals and surges—accompanying these were equally dramatic social and cultural changes.

The breadth, depth and pace of these changes has become a defining feature of the 20th Century legacy to the 21st Century, characterised by an acceleration of pace and the compression of distance. There are four aspects of these developments that warrant identification at this juncture to conclude this brief background. Firstly, the development and progress came at an enormous cost to biological diversity that relied on a wholesale dispossession of first peoples and undeveloped economies (Leopold 1982; Wilson 2016). Secondly, globalisation took on a new form based on the previous iteration of colonialism, in the guise of broadly democratic-capitalist economies and communist-socialist economies (developed and developing world), over time becoming the conglomeration of a fledgling global economy and international community, underwritten by corporate liberalism eventuating into neo-liberalism and neo-liberal socialism (Merchant 1980; Serres 2014; White 1987). Thirdly, the new frontier of space took on significance as the aspiration of the global super powers and as a perceived achievement for all humanity, who were now encompassed in the technological advances combining space and the nascent beginnings of cyberspace (Poole 2008). Finally, the processes of democratisation throughout modernity has been gradual and uneven, given the embedded white supremacist, patriarchal and hierarchal institutions across the political spectrum, ultimately giving rise to an impetus for a transnational civil rights movement (Lent 2017; Shiva 2016; hooks 1990). While the contention here is that these events take on greater significance (deserving renewed engagement) in the spectre of considerations of climate change and the Anthropocene.
The speculation surrounding the value and meaning of the view of the whole earth had long been considered. Nonetheless, when it eventuated the poignancy of the moment took immediate effect in the hearts and minds of people all around the world (Poole 2008). Reinforcing the initial sensation, the firsthand testimony of the astronauts and commentary by the pundits, elaborated moves to understand and process the implications of what had been both witnessed and deeply felt by a collective core of humankind (Poole 2008). The shift to a deeper perspective had been encapsulated in the celebrated image of ‘Earthrise’ and the ‘Blue Marble’ photographs that seemed to heighten the ability to grasp the wholeness of the earth and the dynamics of interconnectedness, in a manner supporting notions of the earth as a living organism (Poole 2008; Cohen and Elkins-Tanton 2017). This also led to a convergence of thought supporting the wider acceptance of Lovelock’s (1990) hypothesis of the earth as Gaia, seen as a living organism maintaining life through self-regulation. An idea formulated over a period of time working on scientific apparatus to assess the fundamental requirements for life on other planets in particular Mars, through the analysis of the atmosphere or moreover in Earth’s case the biosphere (Harding 2006).

It took the view of Earth from space, either directly through the eyes of an astronaut, or directly through the visual media, to give us the personal sense of a real live planet on which the living things, the air, the oceans, and the rocks all combine in one as Gaia.

(Lovelock 1990:90 my emphasis)

The personal took on political significance but more far-reaching ecological significance—not as a given, but as a constantly evolving process according to the changing needs of the myriad of living organisms and the eco-systems in which they find support (Lovelock 1990). The upshot of this delicate dance and sacred balance comes into sharp focus, in a period where it is now clear human activity is ostensibly out of step with the synchrony between earth and the cosmos, required for the creative evolution that a broad spectrum of life relies upon to flourish (Suzuki and MacConnell 1997; Sahtouris 1989). The human population has proliferated exponentially at the expense of biological diversity and multi-species habitat, while the biosphere has suffered because of the exploitation of energy sources to do with fossil fuels and the degradation of large-scale eco-systems (Harding 2006; Serres 1995b). The view from space, places these emergent truths entangled in our lives into the context of an awareness that must be fathomed and more widely understood as a catalyst for adaptation and responsive change.

Notions long purported in mythology, art and philosophy are given greater authority for the general populace by science and tangible photographic evidence. There have been
strident critiques aimed at different aspects of the phenomenon and the euphoria, particularly the hype around the Earthrise and Blue Marble images, along with the claims they are believed to support, from charges of new-age romanticism, psychedelic hysteria, the commodification of environmental awareness, bourgeois sentimentalism, technocratic utopianism, military-industrial triumphalism and environmental idealism (Haraway 1992; Poole 2008). Spahr (2001) teases this irony out in respect to vernacular Hawaiian creole, in the poem entitled Things.

Da Kine.

Like the claim made by astronauts
that when they see the world from
space perspective shifts

There are these things and they are
Da kine, they are the world seen from
space as whole yet complex

The astronauts realizing da
kine, overwhelmed by emotion,
an epiphany that things are fragile
from far away and thus all the more
sweet.
Da kine. Things.

(Spahr 2001:9)

Such an epiphany following Bateson (1994:111) might best be understood as ‘longitudinal’, although this may seem oxymoronic, where the profundity of a truth has a continuity or life of its own. My sense of an ontology of blue calls for ecological ‘communities of practice’ where ‘learning can link rare moments of sudden understanding with gradual change through practice’ as longitudinal epiphanies that are meant to have lasting significance (Bateson 1994:115). Longitudinal epiphanies in communities of practice as experimentation, spiritual exercise and everyday practice are the projected images built in the clouds (Thoreau 1987). These are dreams of a more cohesive and peaceful world that need not be lost on substantive ecological citizenship, but rather become more secure in the day-to-day world through on-
going practice that puts the requisite foundations under them (Thoreau 1987; Bateson 1994). Spahr’s (2001: 9 my emphasis) provocatively entitled *Fuck-You-Aloha-I Love You*, using the umbrella pidgin term ‘da kine’ draws attention to the irony of such an epiphany coming into view on the basis of such self-congratulatory aggrandisement, in the full poem highlighting the paradox of something that already exists in another cosmology—as common understanding the intimacy of closeness not distance. Nature-based cultures and sacred traditions having long understood the fragility of earth’s eco-systems, whose flourishing relies upon care and responsibility.

These are the things that are
important to me and they speak of
how all is not right with the world
yet still all is right.

(Spahr 2001:11)

The potent effects of perceptual shifts changing stubborn orthodoxies and calcified perspectives, must then be realised to inform everyday practices, in the ordinary and ecstatic manifestations of longitudinal epiphanies. The reclamation of the earth as a shared homeplace from the inside–out, with a multiplicity of vantage points for the rising and setting sun, the courses of the moon and tides, weather and climate, air, food, water, clothing, shelter, security, family, friendship, livelihood and love—need not wait and has no time to waste. No point in waiting for official permission, validation or support, given the lengthy history of exploitation and the accumulation of wealth under the aegis of civilisation and the false promise called globalisation. The environmental culture of the future will emerge from the quiet corners of individual decision-making and the fertile ground of grassroots action.

2.6 Blue marble: a marvel of air and water

I have tempered the astronauts’ perspective to prepare the way for a closer examination of their testimony eager to recuperate what might still be a valid process of thought from within their experience. A significant aspect to note as a point of entry is the way the view of earth as Earthrise or the Blue Marble can be contrasted with the extensive mapping of globalisation, both in terms of representation and the material impacts of these processes. The earth appears to the astronaut’s gaze as unearthing itself from the cartographic imposition of human design with only natural borders, enmeshed in complex and interlocking systems of weather contained in the biosphere (Cosgrove 2001). The luminous blue marbling with tints of white,
brown and a smidgin of green is dramatically contrasted with the vast expanse of the inky-black space of the universe. The earth appears blue from space because of light particles stalled in the biosphere and the reflection of light from the expansive area of the ocean (Cohen and Elkins-Tanton 2017). From a quarter of a million miles in space the rotating, revolving luminous blue marble seems to float purposefully on its course through space amid the speckled darkness of an expanding universe (White 1987). There appears to be no apparent borders, divisions or conflicts beneath the swirling weather masses and the framing of the coasts—all life encompassed in the expansive surrounds appears to be joined together in the odyssey of one planet and its solar system. A deceptive calm accompanies the circuit of its magnificent orbit around the sun and the interplay with the moon. The commonality and kinship of inhabitants appear to be beyond question, such is the evocative wonder of the resplendent spectacle. Astronauts become ecologists, military men become humanitarians, mere earthlings become citizens of the world—the domain of theologians, poets and philosophers seems for once to be more plausible than they do from within the struggles of earthly existence (Poole 2008). In their own words as representatives of humanity, they are disarmed and overwhelmed by their own admission, as if speaking from a night vision (my emphasis).

We were the first humans to see the world in its majestic totality, an intensely emotional experience for each of us. We said nothing to each other, but I was sure our thoughts were identical – of our families on that spinning globe. And maybe we shared another thought I had….This must be what God sees.

James Lovell (cited in Poole 2008: 20)

It is when you see the Earth first hand from space that the concept of the Earth and its place in the solar system is apparent.

James Lovell (cited in Poole 2008: 22)

The loneliness out here is awe-inspiring. It makes you realise what you have back on Earth. The Earth is a grand oasis in the vastness of space.

James Lovell (cited in Poole 2008: 25)

The little planet is so small in the vastness out there that at first I couldn’t even locate it. And when I did, a tingling of awe spread over me. There it was, shining like a jewel in a black sky. I looked at it in wonderment, suddenly aware of how its uniqueness is stamped in every atom of my body…. I looked away for a moment and, poof, it was gone. I couldn’t find it again without searching closely.

At that point I made my discovery. Suddenly I knew what a tiny, fragile thing Earth is.

Michael Collins (cited in Poole 2008: 99)

The most beautiful marble you could imagine

James Irwin James (cited in Poole 2008: 99)
Like a Christmas tree ornament

Bill Anders (cited in Poole 2008: 99)

And the contrast between that bright blue and white Christmas tree ornament and the black sky, that infinite universe, really comes through. It is so small and fragile and such a precious little spot in that universe that you can block out with your thumb, and you realise that on that small spot, that little blue and white thing, is everything that means anything to you – all of history and music and poetry and art and death and birth and love, tears, joy, games, all of it on that little spot out there you can cover with your thumb. And you realise from that perspective you have changed.

Russell Schweickart (cited in Poole 2008: 103)

As we reached out in a physical way into the heavens, we were moved spiritually. As we flew into space we had a new sense of ourselves, of the Earth, and of the nearness of God.

James Irwin (cited in Poole 2008: 105)

Something happened to me during the flight that I didn’t even recognise at the time. I would say it was an altered state of consciousness, a peak experience if you will. I flipped out…. What is it that caused this? It was the view of the Earth.

Edgar Mitchell (cited in Poole 2008: 105)

I determined in that moment that I would do all I could do to let people know what a wonderful home we have – before it’s too late. So I have a simple personal message to pass on: There is only one Earth. It is a tiny precious stone. Let us treasure it; there is not another one.

Michael Collins (cited in Poole 2008: 107)

Anyone who has viewed our planet from afar can only cry out in pain at the knowledge that the pristine blue and whiteness that he can still close his eyes and see is an illusion masking an ever more senseless ugliness below.

Michael Collins (cited in Poole 2008: 109)

My mental boundaries expanded when I viewed the Earth against a black and uninviting vacuum, yet my country’s rich traditions had conditioned me to look beyond manmade boundaries and prejudices. One does not have to undertake a space flight to come by this feeling.

Rakesh Sharma (cited in Poole 2008: 111)

The blue marble as a moniker for earth is a compelling one, invoking the relative smallness in the vastness of space. Seen from one million miles away our home appears as the size of a marble and from one hundred million miles away a mere blue dot (Nichols 2014). All traces of human activity deceptively are absent, none of the territorial markers and divisions that keep people apart are visible. None of the networks and channels that connect people through communication and trade are apparent (Lent 2017). The most startling feature is the luminosity of the atmosphere underpinned by the reflective surface of the ocean and
overlayed with the swirling mass of weather systems in the formation of clouds—the literal life support system of air and water in the constant motion of the hydrological cycle (Munteanu 2016). The living watery earth spins effortlessly under its own power—just coasting in the confluence of space, place and ecology. The perspective of the whole earth demonstrates how intimately connected the web of life is woven with the planet through water (Consigli 2017). The vitality that gives the earth life is the same vitality that gives each living organism life. The delicate and intricate weaving together of forces that provide the conditions that make life possible, also offer the possibility for life to be meaningful in the changing equilibrium of motion, harmony and balance that gives coherence and purpose to our conscious existence (Macy and Brown 2016; Angle 2009). The relative isolation and incomprehensible singularity of life contained thereon is staggering, a revelatory truth that engenders an emotional reverence for its mystery (Poole 2008). The blue marble provides the people of earth a vibrant image of holistic clarity that despite the struggles for existence they know, might find an even more compelling and deeper cosmic sensibility to share.

Figure 13 Afternoon delight in blue

2.7 Blue life-worlding: ‘unearthing’ the more-than human

Astronauts return from space transformed by seeing the Earth glowing blue against the infinity of the universe. Similarly, I have been transformed through years of seeing the world from the inside out, first by diving in the rivers and inshore waters of the Gulf of Mexico; later, by leading global expeditions and experiencing thousands of dives into previously unexplored waters.
The great transformation underway in the 21st century is taking place from within the deep-seated problems and failures unleashed in recent times by humanity. In contrast to millennia that constituted and maintained the necessary conditions for living on earth, anthropogenic climate change has shifted the ground in significant ways beyond denial or viable excuses. While humans are inextricably bound to the issues it would be complete folly to rely solely on human means or human ingenuity alone for solutions, which to date have only served to exacerbate the challenges. The mindful passage into blue as a cosmic sensibility holds the promise of turning the situation inside-out into its transformative possibilities, to rely on the forces of the earth and cosmos through more pliant relations. This necessitates a dialogic process between the world and the self, the self and the world that I have indicated as an ontopoetics, which may hold an even larger purchase on collective thought, as the embodiment of an eco-poetics in the everyday life of the more-than human world. By unearthing ourselves from the human domination, anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism represented as an objective form of globalisation and rationalism, the opportunity for more expansive sense of shared life-world comes into view. The use of the colour blue as an ontological expression may be applied to transformative perspectives of the earth particularly in association with the hydrological cycle, bioregional watersheds and the ocean. The iconography and material reality of the blue marble demands holistic thinking, re-prioritising the natural elements and celestial motions in their intrinsic connection to living organisms. By thinking of the earth in this manner from the inside-out, possibilities emerge for turning the destructive trajectory of human activity to more ameliorative processes and ends.

The reversal of globalisation as some definitive unearthing promises to bring reconnection between multi-species communities, the forces of the earth and cosmos. Such a reversal allows for strong identification with a sense of place and a sense of planet in a simultaneous confluence between space, place and ecology. People must become convinced that each locality is a distinctive and important aspect of the priceless whole. Attention to the detail of each watershed, food-bowl and bio-region compliments larger regional entities in their complexities, while taking account of their specific need for care and protection, enlarging a place-sensitive engagement with the earth and cosmos. Wholesale exploitation and mass degradation can no longer be countenanced, neither for expediency, economics or solely human interests. This stands at odds with large-scale infrastructure, on-going urban development and global economics. While the critical factors driving current developments
will not magically disappear, they are not immune to change and even to wholesale 
transformation. In what appears to be a political vacuum for such leadership and vision, the 
only option is grassroots community action practicing an environmental ethos at the human 
scale of the individual and associational networks, welcoming any support without 
compromising the values in keeping with wholeness, harmony and balance, through the 
simple means of living.
Chapter 3 Auto-choreography: Confessions of a soul-surfer

Creativity is our birthright. It is an integral part of being human, as basic as walking, talking, and thinking. Throughout our evolution as a species, it has sparked innovations in science, beauty in the arts, and revelation in religion. Every human life contains its seeds and is constantly manifesting it, whether we’re building a sand castle, preparing Sunday dinner, painting a canvas, walking through the woods, or programming a computer.

The creative process, like a spiritual journey, is intuitive, non-linear, and experiential. It points toward our essential nature, which is a reflection of the boundless creativity of the universe.

(Loori 2005: 1)

3.1 Unbounding creativity through auto-choreography

Any heartfelt consideration of coastal philosophy for my way of thinking would be incomplete without the surfing imaginary—quintessentially the quest of riding ocean waves associated with a coastal way of life. As previously noted, surfing as a signifier has become an apt descriptor for the pace of life, evident in the information-savvy idea of ‘surfing the net’ amid the exponential waves of change in the 21st Century that readily equates with surfing through the complexities of life (Bateson 1994). I use the term auto-choreography as a key term to encompass the specific act of riding a wave but more broadly to connect with the wave-like motions of the everyday, using surfing as a wave-riding sensibility seeking various lifeways that are fulfilling in their pursuit and benign in their impact (Flynn 1987; Owen 2008 my emphasis). Auto-choreography in the broadest sense, then, is a response to the ‘boundless creativity of the universe’, attuning and aligning creative practices with dynamic processes as they unfold and fold through the sections of a wave and the stages of life (Loori 2005: 1; Satchell 2010a). There are characteristics that register the equivalent dynamics of the auto-choreography of surfing—with waves, flow-states and performativity, correlative with creative practices in the art of life—incumbent upon harnessing the forces that propel us in the day-to-day world (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). The singular performance of riding the energy of an ocean swell as it finds the shoreline and breaks becomes synonymous and co-extensive with an approach to life and the unfolding world (Satchell 2008a). The intention is to pick up the core themes of creativity, ethics and ecology within surfing, to make them count for coastal philosophy, to compel a more creative and satisfying life, furthermore to multiply ecological readings of the confluence of space, place and ecology. My own auto-choreography in life has come about by seeking to come to terms with a sense of self and all that is going on around me in the world, not to fight or to master the conditions, but rather becoming co-creative with them.
I looked for myself, but myself was gone.
The boundaries of my being
had disappeared in the sea.
Waves broke. Awareness rose again.
And a voice returned me to myself.
It always happens like this.
Sea turns on itself and foams,
and with every foaming bit
another body, another being takes form.
And when the sea sends word,
each foaming body
melts back to ocean-breath

Rumi (cited in Douglas-Klotz 2005: 4-5)

The journey from a sense of self to oneness with the ocean as a soul-surfer revolves around riding waves—although this also leads down the many paths to and from the coast. In terms of surf culture, surfing has often been defined, from both within and without, as either pure hedonism or an extravagant waste of time and energy—in an ironic disavowal of meaning or just being caught in the fractious assumptions of cultural superiority and condescendence (Flynn 1987; Walker 2008; Warshaw 2010). Alternatively, there are the romantic and mythic visions of the surfing life that span subcultural and popular cultural fields, invested with meaning that is not always reliable or applicable but remaining suggestive of something deeper that might be more sustaining.

Among various perspectives on surfing there may still be ideas that are generative enough for something more satisfying about the surfing life to emerge. I am convinced there are some valuable considerations worth taking up and holding as core values, my hope is to illuminate some of the worthwhile perspectives germane to living (Chouinard 2016; King 1985). I reject reductionist claims of surfing as merely a novelty or just a sport, to posit surfing as a cultural practice par excellence, as one among many complementary creative and spiritual practices, nourishing self-awareness, personal development and an ecological sensibility, in the affirmation of a place-sensitive and rounded life (Lopez 2008; Plumwood 2003; Satchell 2008a). Spirituality exceeds the narrow bounds of any particular religion, entertaining a range of different possibilities, despite the aversion some people have for the type of religious practice they often associate with spirituality (Say 2016; Housden 1995). The
practice of surfing spirituality is an intrinsic aspect of inhabitation and is an ontological adjunct to residence in the biotic neighbourhood and membership of the more-than human community—more animistic and polytheistic than strict readings of any monotheism (Skellern et al 2013; Mathews 2003; Freke 2001). Surfers are among those whose fascination with the ocean complies with the beat, rhythm and hum of the coastal ribbon winding along the seaboard and stretching all the way around the planet as it swirls.

The confessions here are not of a religious kind but are rather an admission to the claim of considering myself to be a soul-surfer, owning up to the ambiguities, while working with the implications of reverence and respect for an oceanic sense of place. This chapter outlines the link between surfing as a cultural practice based on a way of life and an ecological view of the world. I make the co-extensive connection between spirituality and a lively sense of place as a more-than human life-world (Satchell 2006; 2010b). The basis of this connection is in deference to keeping a Hawaiian legacy alive as discussed previously in
regard to Oceania, as a deep affinity and immersion in the life-world, despite the impacts of colonisation, capitalism and globalisation. The aim of contesting the myths and realities of cultural appropriation that usurp Hawaiian links to surfing origins (or move surfing away from Indigenous ontology) is to restore and maintain the richness of surfing’s basis, enmeshed in a nature-based environmental culture across Oceania and indeed with an affinity for first peoples all across the world (De Loughrey 2007; McGloin 2007; Walker 2017). In the delicacy of these matters I am striving to learn better ways to contribute to an on-going conversation—not to have the final word.

The dramatic rise and rise of surfing’s popularity in modernity has produced a global surf culture and accompanying surfing industry that so often eludes productive analysis in regard to the environment. The central paradox is the contradictory attitudes surfers exhibit in relation to the environment and the ambiguity toward the purpose of surfing coupled with the means of financial gain rather than a priceless quality of life. The notion of soul-surfing is of critical importance in maintaining the spiritual and ecological connection to place, in a manner predicated upon a necessary alignment between *habitus* (as embodied dispositions), living organisms and their environment (Bourdieu 1980; 1985; Warren and Gibson 2014). The art of auto-choreography extends the synchronous performance of riding a wave to include everyday aesthetics as an art of existence, attuned to the natural world and appreciative of a deeper sense of material existence as something numinous (Satchell 2010a). The surfing experience for me has become the interpretive prism for a holistic outlook on Oceania, life and the planet, a sense of place and a sense of planet associated with an ontology of blue played out as an auto-choreography.

To be a soul-surfer in the truest sense is to participate in the spiritual practice and path of the ancient Hawaiians and their descendants, in love and respect for an oceanic sense of place.

Surfing has been a part of our history for thousands of years, and when you surf you have that connection, you connect spiritually and physically to all the elements around you, this is a part of you, it’s a Hawaiian thing.

Chuck Waipā Andrus, descendant of King Kamehameha I (cited in Walker 2005: 581)

It’s our way of life. It’s who we are. We live to surf. To everybody else today who embraces surfing it’s more like a means for them to become wealthy . . . we were wealthy already because of surfing.

Tom Pahaku Stone (cited in Walker 2005: 581)
So, the spiritual practice of surfing can clearly be seen to be a Hawaiian thing, in keeping with the heritage of an enduring past, although not beyond the initiation and appreciation of guests and dutiful respect. The spirit of soul-surfing Hawaiians mindfully embody is exemplary and companionable to anyone serious about nature-based cultures and Indigenous cosmologies, committed to connection and care for specific places and broadening the notions of planetary ecologies (Morrell 2005; Warshaw 2010; Wilson 2017). Therefore, to embrace surfing culture it is critical to acknowledge the Hawaiian heritage out of respect, maintaining a protocol that does not violate or demean the legacy through careless cultural appropriation or premeditated financial exploitation with no intention of sharing the wealth.

The keeping of such protocols have become key to the longer-term recognition of the Hawaiian legacy. The full spectrum of surf culture does not always adhere to these principles, either out of ignorance or wilful determination (Walker 2017). However, through these protocols, there are some distinct possibilities for bringing Hawaiian surf culture together in compelling ways with multi-ethnic forms of surf culture, moreover, to serve the combined purpose of creativity, ethics and ecology (Walker 2017; Chouinard 2016). This line of inquiry suggests there are possibilities for the embodied practice of surfing to serve higher purposes beyond merely selfish ones, committed to everyday practices that are culturally and environmentally sensitive. This is to recognise an existing network within surf culture aspiring to see Hawaiian sovereignty restored and responsible citizenship toward a world in need of an ecological cosmopolitan ethos, encompassing both universal values and cultural incommensurability (Heise 2008; Appiah 2006; Goodyear-Ka’pōpua et al. 2014). By identifying some of these responsibilities, an outline emerges around the key concerns, debates and tensions riven within surf culture and its research (Ford and Brown 2006). A narrative history is not my intended focus, other than as a critical consideration to tease out some key problematics at work as incongruities, to use them here strategically in a way relevant to my purpose of blue eco-poetics and environmental philosophy (Ford and Brown 2006). A sketch of a thematic horizon compiled of historical processes and their effects offers a shorthand way to consider their significance, as a step towards a more specific focus upon the inherent potentiality within surfing spirituality encompassed by notions of identity, values and worldviews (Sarap 1996; Castells 2010). The Hawaiian legacy of surf culture is maintained by the acknowledgment of the gift of surfing to the world and respects the rights of the giver to enjoy an enduring surf culture in the freedom of Hawai‘i as part of the greater Oceania (Mauss 1990; Dye 2011; Serres in Yates 2005). Grafted into such auspicious roots
surf culture around the world should then serve the higher purpose of engendering planetary belonging to an environmental culture of the future.

3.2 A Hawaiian legacy: Making the connection

Let us then respond to the present moment and atmosphere of the early 21st Century, within its unfolding, emblematic of the surfing experience and the surfing life, where stormy weather and turbulence are endured wisely, awaiting more amenable conditions to continue in the on-going cycles of lived experience. In terms of histories, these conflagrations then are also emblematic of various enduring cultural themes, their ruptures and the conditions placed on on-going survival. The longue durée, long term approach to any history takes the broader sweep of events as indicative of various structuring processes and serves here as a foil for the more extended focus on the everyday (Ford and Brown 2006). The key tension to any historical inquiry into the complexity of culture, in the contemporary context, is the duration of the past (as structuring processes) and the dynamism of the present with elements that are ‘dominant, residual and emergent’, particularly using the mid-20th Century known as the ‘great acceleration’ employed as a pivot point (Williams 1977: 1; Steffen 2015 et al my emphasis). Bauman (2000) coined the term ‘liquid modernity’ referring to the speed of change in the era of global spatial simultaneity that is impacting upon the human condition and the conditions for all life (Foucault 1984). Applied to surfing, the origins of surfing as a set of Hawaiian cultural practices are well documented, however mainly from Western perspectives. Therefore, a necessary critique is imperative to challenge the proliferation of surfing histories and biographies who employ or elide Indigenous roots ambiguously usurping their authority, to reclaim an unbroken lineage of Indigenous participation and agency (Margan and Finney 1970; Warshaw 2010; Walker 2011). Hawaiian histories of surfing that refute Western myths and fallacies are critical toward an effective surfing imaginary that remains a nature-based spirituality with a plausible oceanic sense of place.

The grand narratives of Western hegemony and global supremacy run along the seams of domination and exploitation, from the earliest assumptions of cultural superiority to the folly evident in the swathe of environmental destruction that follow them. The development and impact of colonisation, capitalism and globalisation continue to shape the world bent on the idea of economic growth as progress, producing a so-called global culture profoundly at odds with the environment (Hau‘ofa 2008). Hawaii‘i is a living example of the devastating consequences nature-based cultures suffer at the hands of so-called global powers, but also
serves as a testament to the survival and resilience of native peoples and their cultural practices including surfing (Goodyear-Kaʻōpua et al. 2014). Cook could only rue the havoc caused by the spread of disease his men unleashed in their first encounter with the Kanaka Maoli Native Hawaiians, although blithely unaware of the far-reaching and personal consequences that would follow (Horwitz 2002; Okihiro 2008). This encounter amounted to biological and ecological imperialism in the form of virulent disease through cross-cultural relations that were the catalyst that precipitated the decline in native populations tearing at the fabric of a whole way of life and aeons of unborken heritage (Crosby 1993; Daws 1968). The initial impact upon island populations gave way to settler cultures in the longer-term assault, which concerned the overt and surreptitious dispossession of the language, land and waters.

The strategic location of Hawaiʻi in terms of trading routes and as a port of call in the extensive expanse of the Pacific Ocean meant that once on the western map, the islands became a magnet for foreign interests. The gradual but steady increase of mercantile interests that followed led to the illegal annexation of the Islands in 1898 by the United States of America, since recognised by the US administration in 1993 as an unlawful act (Harden 1999). This illegal annexation was pre-empted by the effects of an associated civilising missionary effort, opposed to pagan and animist observances and to surfing on the grounds of an apparent immodesty and sexual license, including demonising surfing, the beach and the waves, as the cultural site of erotic entanglements and a more pervasive laxity. In the period before first encounters in 1778, most Hawaiian Islanders surfed, including women, children and elders, as a complete coastal way of life (Morell 2005). Most Hawaiians lived and spent their days in close proximity to the beaches and their extensive gardens in the hinterlands.

Not only did they surf, they enjoyed a four-month period of the year that was devoted to the celebration of the surfing way of life. There is evidence of this in the Kumulipo, the Hawaiian creation and genealogy chant, including the Makahiki Festivals, a four-month annual communal celebration with a key focus on surfing events from October to January, with sports and religious festivities including a release from other prohibitions that included a ban on war, such was the integral importance of surfing to cultural life (Kupihea 2005; Okihiro 2008; Yates 2014). When the surf broke of an exceptional quality surfing kahuna (masters and priests of the art) would fly kites as a sign from heiau, temples adjacent to premiere spots equipped for the enjoyment of surfing as a report to the wider community (with areas to rinse and bathe in fresh water, view the waves and to participate in celebration and ceremony) (Okihiro 2008; Kupihea 2001). In 1900, a century and a quarter later, the once noble and ancient art of Hawaiian surfing with its festivals, temples and master board-makers,
had experienced a significant upheaval, only maintained in practice by the surviving remnant who were still wed to the coastal pastime and committed to retaining an enduring cultural practice (Walker 2011). This also could be said for many Hawaiian cultural practices that remained low-key as a matter of survival and prudence (Harden 1999). This in no way reflects a waning enthusiasm for surfing on the part of Hawaiians but is understandable given the impact and extent of the various forms of imperialism, estimated to have reduced a population spread among the islands from 400,000 to 40,000 with ensuing further reductions of original Hawaiians as a result of colonisation and dispossession (Westwick and Neushul 2013; Yates 2014). Nonetheless, these histories become inextricably linked together in ways that continue to offer possibilities for mutual concern about embedded injustices that coincide with broader possibilities of emerging environmental cultures and environmental justice.

There are a number of critical and contradictory moments preceding a perceived resurgence of surfing culture in Hawai‘i in the early 1900s that leave competing versions of surf culture in play. In the upheavals of encounters with Europeans, a high chief and surfer from Hawai‘i, (the Big Island) Kamehameha the Great, employed European weapons and military strategy to conquer the main islands in the chain known as the Hawaiian Islands (Hawaii, Oahu, Molokai, Lanai, Kahoolawe, notably Kauai and Niihau by a peaceful truce) in 1810, to found the Kingdom of Hawai‘i. This fulfilled a prophecy that foretold of a future unity, succeeding a system based on many chiefs (Lueras et al. 1992). Kamehameha matched a desire for complete power with greater trading clout, according to his intention to protect the Islanders in the changing political realities produced by contact with the outside world.

There is a story associated with Kamehameha that provides a contrast to his militant aspirations with those of a caring monarch through the Kānāwai Māmalahoe ‘The Law of the Splintered Paddle’. Kamehameha, an ali‘a, (Hawaiian royalty) showed magnanimity towards two fisherman maka‘āinana, (common citizen/subjects) who had defended themselves from the young chief’s raid on their island, by striking him on the head with a paddle, leaving him unconscious rather than killing him. When Kamehameha came to power over this particular island he offered the fisherman a pardon, instituting the law of the broken paddle, consequently enshrining the rights of ordinary people (young and old) to be able to move about freely with an overriding edict for their personal protection (HLA 2018). His actions invoke the sentiment of an Indigenous Hawaiian system that existed before divine kingship related taboos and the cycles of violence brought by Samoan invaders, around the fourth Century (referring to a pre-warrior culture), values preserved in Hawaiian mysticism and spirituality that still remain hidden within the oral traditions of Hawaiian language springing
from *Aloha*, unconditional love and care for the stranger (Morrell 2005; Say 2016; Yates 2014). Kanahele’s (cited in Say 2016: 186) research into Hawaiian values in the effervescence of the 1970s Hawaiian Renaissance movement claimed Kamehameha chose these core values to guide his leadership; ‘Mālama, caring; Ha’aha’a, humility; Kūpono; integrity; Na’auao, wisdom; and Koa, courage’. These are core values indicative of an enduring wealth of character and wisdom concealed in the Hawaiian language *kaona*, the hidden message that has enabled the culture to endure and overcome outside pressure against significant odds, maintaining a compelling sense of place and sovereign heritage (Kupihea 2005). Kamehameha proved an astute trader and under his auspices the people managed to still prosper on ancestral lands providing for the kingdom by tribute and trade, producing material wealth up until his death (Daws 1968). While the kingdom of Kamehameha may have seemingly crumbled away following his departure, the current renewed sense of Indigenous Hawaiian nationalism and the values they uphold are beginning to realise the cultural legacy and its significance in the contemporary context.

The injustice perpetrated in Hawaii by foreign interests can be traced to certain pivotal events—while the legitimacy of their claims and actions must be seen in the light of resistance and contestation that remain potent still today. One early significant event that dramatically altered social and cultural life occurred when the young heir of Kamehameha, Liholiho, proclaimed an edict in 1819 to end of the *kapu*, system of taboo that regulated Hawaiian social and religious life—opening the way for foreigners and missionaries to exert a greater influence. Consequently, the Makahiki Festival along with the Hawaiian calendar came to an end, impacting in a marked way on the role of sports and games in social life including the high visibility of surfing (Okihiro 2008). Liholiho’s reign marks the struggle between competing Western interests of religion and commerce, with the old way of life and an ambiguous hybrid culture. Ironically, Liholiho and his queen Kamamalu died ignominiously in London of the measles having been spurned for the most part by so-called polite society including King George (Daws 1968). In their absence influential chiefs allowed the puritanical religious sentiment of the missionaries to guide their political obligations to the Hawaiian peoples. The circumstances of cultural encounter between the Europeans, Americans and Hawaiians set up an inevitable conflict derived from the impost of an outside religious order upon the vestiges of the pre-contact culture, merging with the commerce and licentiousness of the mainly male trading parties from around the globe at the mid-Pacific crossroads (Daws 1968). Beneath these machinations, Western education and materialism gained some ground, while traditional practices remained in the oral tradition, privacy and
secrecy (Kupihea 2005). The clash between religion and trade eventually reached boiling point. In this context, surfing culture understandably appeared to languish, becoming the pursuit of a more limited cohort than at any time for thousands of years.

The Kingdom of Hawai‘i said to have united the islands did not prove to be sufficient safeguard against the incursion of outsiders but provides an ethical injunction that still remains. Another dramatic turn with far reaching consequences revolved around land tenure in 1848, known as the *Great Mahele*, a division of land instituting private ownership of property once sacrosanct as traditional land (Kanahele 1986). The quasi-feudal system ruled by chiefs *ali’a*, from the royal line, and served by *maka‘āina* the majority of commoners, were living in *ohana* family-based, *ahu‘ua* land holdings that joined the mountains, the valley and sea in communal co-operatives that operated on a barter and tribute system. Thereby the people were able to maintain self-sufficiency enjoying a large degree of autonomy through subsistence, consequently interfering with this system had a grave impact (Kupihea 2001). The encounter with the outside world caused dramatic changes with on-going ramifications. In 1837 an early Hawaiian scholar David Malo (cited in Daws 1968: 106) sensed the groundswell of change, stating that ‘if a big wave comes in, large and unfamiliar fishes will come from the dark ocean, and when they see the small fishes will swallow them up.’ The chiefs had used their hold over the land in various ways as payment for foreign goods, using both produce and the land itself as security for their extravagant impulses. The inadequacy of these lease arrangements and payments for goods and services mounted pressure upon the *ali‘a*, ruling class, to negotiate property rights for foreigners, from which a complicated drawn-out process ensued. The different perspectives on land holding highlighted stark differences between Hawaiian land-use systems and their sense of place, with the Western-Cartesian approach adopted by surveying and geometric boundary-making to apportion designated parcels. In theory, the chiefs and the commoners were given the opportunity to secure the land that in the past they had unequivocally held. In many respects, the chiefs squandered their opportunities under the influence of the coloniser’s material trappings, and the commoners misunderstood the ramifications of theirs (Kanahele 1986). The consequences were to be a large dispossession of ancestral holdings and rights, exploitation and ruin of natural resources including oppressive conditions for Hawaiians under the sway of colonial and capitalist interests (Daws 1968). This also put in jeopardy the underlying values of the social system of *ohana ho‘oponopono* families living in balance, and while *mālama* and *aloha aina moana*, caring for and loving the land and sea remained at heart, the land division usurped their previous unquestioned possession (Kanahele 1986; Kupihea 2001;
Despite the calamitous outcome there is evidence of an enduring legacy of resistance and unequivocal sense of sovereignty that has arisen as a reclamation of dignity and Hawaiian sovereignty, challenging the basis of ill-gotten gains of mercantile and governmental interests.

The conventional histories from Western perspectives reify their own interests deceptively eliding the truth of the past and ramifying the injustice in the present. Challenges to these have arisen in some interesting ways that are both cultural and political. Two significant aspects deserve mention at this juncture. Firstly, encapsulated in the slogan ‘our history, our way!’ signalling the rise of ethnic studies for Hawaiian people becoming pivotal in challenging US hegemony (McGregor and Aoude 2014 see title). Secondly, through the revival of ʻŌlelo noʻeau’, Hawaiian language as a decolonising ethic of the Hawaiian renaissance (Oliveria 2014). The importance of these enduring values, the language and cultural practices they represent, must not be underestimated because they are fundamental to Hawaiian cultural identity, restoration of their self-image and the lessons this distinctive culture still hold for the world (Say 2016; Yates 2014). The dynamics of living with one another—the cosmos and the natural world are embedded in their past, still active in the present as spiritual and ancestral claims that bring into sharp relief the limitations of legal and commercial rationales (Kanahele 1986). In the contemporary Hawaiian sovereignty movement, wider spheres of struggle link together with critical instances particularly over land and water such as those in the Waiāhole-Waikāne Valley from the 1970s and still ongoing. Resistance to eviction from small plot leases in rural enclaves has been critical to these ongoing struggles. Slated for suburban and tourist development the revitalised ohana family-based, ahupuaʻa land holding that join the mountains, the valley and sea are based on taro cultivation ‘that involves practices of sustenance, sustainability, and spirituality’ that remain a source of steadfast opposition to development (Lasky 2014: 52). These struggles have given rise to a resurgent taro movement—a plant seen in terms of kinship as an elder sibling from ancient times. As taro farmer Liko Hoe states;

Displacement is probably one of the main [problems or issues]. It starts with the Mahele [1840s land division] and doesn’t end until—well, it doesn’t end actually…This has profound effects on families. I think the effect of it has been separation from the ‘āina [land] and for people whose culture that is directly connected to the ‘āina that is devastating…[We try to meet this challenge] by reconnecting ourselves, our fam[i]lies, to the place, to the ahupuaʻa

Liko Hoe (cited in Lasky 2014: 60)
The island-wide taro network and the struggles in Waiāhole-Waikāne were also a catalyst for water in Hawai‘i to become protected ‘as a public trust’ (Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua et al. 2014: 1).

Water is [such] a huge issue that is kind of mind-boggling to me that we have been able to do what we have been able to do…This competition for water is a forever thing…I think we were fortunate to get the constitution amended so that we can rely on that to always go back to— “It’s in the constitution!” All the rights and stuff like that were in place already [for the 2000 Waiāhole Ditch Contested Case]—it was just a reaffirmation.

Calvin Hoe (cited in Lasky 2014: 61)

The case of the Waiāhole Ditch struggle concerns the challenge taro farmers made to the redistribution of water to support sugar plantations back to the original ecology, which tells a story with wider application. As William Tam (cited in Lasky 2014: 62) says: ‘Understanding water is a complex thing […] you start to see water is the link between all these things’ [land use, social well-being, fisheries, the ocean, all the environmental issues]. The reliance of taro cultivation on water linked the issue to the well-being of streams, which rely on the biological diversity of endemic species, which in turn rely on the vitality of the estuary that leads back to a vibrant coastal ecology, holistically to the overall health of the watershed based on generations of careful cultivation and mutual co-existence. Western-style development takes none of these environmental values and costs into account, bent on development, from a Cartesian perspective that rationalises the exploitation of natural reserves for short-term gains (Harden 1999; Kupihea 2001). Restoration of ahupua’a systems of management supported by ohana family-based collectives are restoring traditional lifeways and livelihoods that not only care for people but renew a connection to a sense of place and sense of planet in a flourishing ecology (Lasky 2014). This is testament not just to Hawaiian solidarity but a sense of Hawaiian sovereignty able to operate inclusively as these are now multi-ethnic communities committed to an ecology of care. Challenging these historical injustices is vital to renewing the contemporary culture with the former legacy.

3.3 White fella myths: Contesting haoles

While surfing may have seemed peripheral and novel to the concerns of outside interests, the embers of the noble tradition remained potent. In 1893, the deposition of Queen Lili‘uokalani (also an active surfer) by military force, at the behest of a cabal of haole, (white) businessmen, led to the consequent 1894 republic and annexation of Hawai‘i on the 12th of August 1898, making way for the islands to become included in the United States of America, officially made a state of the union in 1959 (Walker 2008). In the resultant ruins of the ancient
culture, decimated population and with much of the land in the hands of outsiders, Hawaiians tenaciously hung on to their heritage through an innate sense of self-worth and a deeply embedded sense of place (Harden 1999). The solace of surfing in ocean-based communities such as Waikīkī marked a seeming rise in popularity at the turn of the century, with great pride in heʻe nalu, wave-sliding that still maintained close ties as a genuine Hawaiian art and way of living close to the ocean (Warren and Gibson 2014). A period of political, agricultural and economic stability also allowed a boom in tourism, supplanting the missionary strictures, with new demographic factors enabling cross-cultural dynamics to give vent to the staples of Polynesian life, based around the ocean and the islands themselves. The standard accounts of surfing resurgence in the early 1900s attribute the uptake of the sport to outsiders, Haoles non-Hawaiians. This is misleading in two respects; first, Hawaiian surfing culture proved to have far more resilience than given credit for and secondly, Hawaiʻi and its people were and still remain the epicentre of surf culture and their own sovereign interests (even in the current era of mainland US domination in the form of the WSL World Surf League). The Hawaiian influence remains unequivocal as the spiritual home of surfing, despite on-going changes in the professional era of surfing as a sport and the unprecedented global reach of surf culture in terms of commercial interests and its widespread popularisation throughout the world (Walker 2017; Warshaw 2010). These varied processes and acts of participation represent competing interests including the spread of media and technology, particularly in the growth of surfing-related tourism, surf-forecasting and surf-broadcasting (Ford and Brown 2006). At stake in the midst of these competing interests and discourses are the core values and the enduring ethos in regard to Hawaiian philosophy and the environment that should remain at the heart of surf culture.

*Kānaka Maoli*, native Hawaiians maintained their autonomy on the beach and in the surf zone, despite the anomalous dispossession of the island through economic development that continues in the current milieu. Walker (2011) maintains ‘the boarder-lands’ of the *Ka po ʻina nalu*, surf zone are critical as a place of refuge and resistance for generations of *Kānaka Maoli*, native Hawaiians forging their own belonging and environmental heritage in the day-to-day world. These enduring bonds have allowed the descendants of the ancient Hawaiians to forge contemporary identities, against the largely white military-industrial hegemony, by maintaining links to their pre-colonial heritage and a growing post-colonial understanding of their inalienable rights. The Hawaiian renaissance is indicative of a contemporary realisation for island people of their unequivocal right to sovereignty of the *aina* land and *moanna* sea (Walker 2017). As Wyona Beamer emphatically declares:
But now the pendulum has swung—things are going to happen for the good. Sovereignty will happen, self-governance will happen. We don’t know how it will happen, but it’s inevitable, with all indigenous people the world over.

(cited in Harden 1999 np)

In the context of land-rights, the significance of surfing should not be underestimated as a sport, but seen rather, as a cultural practice maintaining a way of life. However, when haole (white fellas) began to surf, many brought their colonial and racist dispositions with them, traits that remain stubbornly embedded in the cultural production and reproduction of surfing that warrant contestation (Laderman 2014). In the early revival of surfing an intense rivalry developed between the Outrigger Canoe Club (made up of haole elites) and the Hui Nalu, Club of the Waves (whose members were Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian and some haoles recognised by their respect for Hawaiians). While the outsiders improved with perseverance, the Hawaiians maintained their supremacy in the surf with understated elegance (Walker 2008).

Kanaka Maoli surfers found strength in a living Hawaiian art and tradition that was celebrated by Hawaiians from ancient times, through the annexation of Hawai’i and down to the present.

(Walker 2008: 93)

The tensions of the former protagonists have interesting parallels with the attitudes of wider society that continue today among those who remain ignorant to the gross injustice by continuing to display extraordinary cultural insensitivity.

These enduring cultural practices remain and those once dormant, hold immense potential for Hawaiian autonomy and heritage. A key figure among the Kanaka Maoli, who managed to bridge the gap to forge a legend of impeccable renown is Duke Paoa Kahanamoku, considered the father of modern surfing, co-founder of the Hui Nalu Club of the Waves (with Ken Winter and Knut Cottrel), honorary Sheriff of Honolulu and official Ambassador of Aloha (Warshaw 2010). As a swimmer, the Duke amassed a number of phenomenal records and a slew of Olympic Gold medals, as well as feats as a waterman such as averting the tragedy of eight fishermen in hazardous weather, leading an extraordinary rescue effort at Newport Beach, California (Baker 2007). Members of the Hui Nalu including the Duke defied the discourse of colonial categorisation. According to people of the era, Hui Nalu surfers John Kaupiko and Kahanamoku ‘controlled Waikīkī’ in their own way’ (Walker 2008: 97). Lind (cited in Walker 2008: 97) clearly recalled, ‘there was a pecking order, like the chiefs of old…Everyone did what they said’. The Hawaiian surfers of that era subverted the boundaries in every respect. Known as ‘Beach Boys’ they displayed prowess in and out of
the water, running their own fee-based businesses, providing entertainment, music and comedy—even with the glamourous haole, Non-Hawaiian women who were part of the burgeoning Honolulu scene (Walker 2008). Contrary to the stereotype of backward, submissive Natives given to passivity, these figures maintained their ocean-based way of life as larger-than-life characters, unsurpassed in their knowledge and skill in and around the aquatic domain, while in touch with their ancestral roots on the land (Walker 2011; 2017). They laid a modern foundation of creative leadership still connected to the past while demonstrating the characteristic Island creativity to forge the future.

3.4 Surfing down the ancestral line

‘A ‘ohe pau ka ‘ike i ka hālau ho ‘okāh.
All knowledge is not taught in the same school.
Hawaiian Proverb
(cited in Morrell 2005: 27)

There are various spiritual aspects of surfing that continue to apply to cultural practices and the way of life based on Hawaiian heritage that are deeply embedded in care for the environment. This is evident in the richness of the Hawaiian language that provides a cosmological framework for coastal ecology and its care (Kanahele 1986). There are three important Hawaiian terms that can be applied to Kahanamoku as an exemplar, in the pivotal role of maintaining Hawaiian cultural practices and representing Hawai‘i—also importantly by bringing this heritage to the wider world. The exchange of such a gift as surfing and surf culture among people of different ethnicities and locations, places a broader responsibility on those who receive such a gift as the surfing way of life to maintain the basic principles and attitudes particularly in regard to the environment (Mauss 1990). This critical understanding of cultural protocol for one reason or another has been poorly understood, therefore it is imperative for this error to be redressed. The first word kupuna, applies to those elders (grandparents or adopted grandparents) in the community who are concerned with the welfare of people and the integrity of place, their experience and wisdom is sorely needed as a source and connection to heritage (Say 2016; Pukui and Elbert 1986). The second term relates to those who take the role of kahu, the ‘spirit’s keeper’, as ‘a guardian’, that ‘implies the most intimate and confidential relations between god and its guardian or keeper,’ often applied in a contemporary context to a pastoral role for the soul of the people, but also can be seen to include the cultural practice of surfing, the coastal community and amenity of the beach.
The third term has been appropriated in popular culture and applied euphemistically referring to entrepreneurs or con-artists as big-shots or smooth-operators, although in Hawaiian antiquity (and still) speaks of someone revered for their power, kahuna, who play the role of a ‘priest who was a repository of science, art, and knowledge in ancient Hawaiian culture; [also] teacher’ the term applies to someone who is an ‘expert in any profession’ considered to have mastered an art, whether healing, boat-building, herbalism, surfing and so on (Kupihea 2001: 258; Pukui and Elbert 1986: 114; King 1985). In the domain of surfing, care for the coastal environment is considered to be intrinsic to the cultural practice and these roles played in their community are fitting for accomplished surfers who are ecologically-minded.

Kahanamoku and others embodied this rich legacy in regard to surfing lore and its mythology, handed down from the ancients and embedded in instructive story-telling about the role of surfing in ceremonial and everyday life. As a kapuna elder, the Duke maintained a vital link between the ancestral roots and the evolving Hawaiian legacy, grafting in two significant strains of surfing futures (California and Australia in the wider sense of Oceania) that would become inextricably bound to advanced forms of wave riding in the modern global
surf culture, leading further to surfing nations around the world in Europe, South Africa, South America, Japan and Indonesia (Laderman 2014). Kahanamoku’s bequest is deserving of greater respect and support concerning the issues around the Hawaiian sovereignty movement and towards pursuing the integrity of the environmental culture of the future. Contrary to the Western surfing canon, while the Californians and Australians figured in some of the advances, Hawai‘i remains the spiritual and performance home of surfing throughout its evolution unto this day (Walker 2011). Notably as a kupuna, elder Kahanamoku endorsed the performances of Eddie Aikau and Ben Aipa in the 1966 invitational named in his honour—Aikau placing sixth and Aipa seventh.

Duke shook hands with the young man, looked into his eyes and smiled, and then put his arm around Eddie’s shoulders, embracing him like a son. Two proud Hawaiians, bridging different generations. Duke represented the glory of the past and Eddie the hope of their future.

(Coleman cited in Walker 2011: 36)

Kahanomoku became the model of surfing instruction, whose feats are embraced in emulation and practice, while consequently furthering a generational and communal solidarity. Drawing parallels between Zen and surfing, this could be equated with the Dharma transmission within the teachings of Buddhism, translating cosmic law and order, to underpin an unbroken lineage of teachers and students through direct contact with an experienced practitioner and practice (Loori 2005). Kahanamoku’s 1912 Olympic successes provided the platform for swimming (in Europe) and surfing exhibitions in mainland USA, bodysurfing on the East Coast and at Atlantic City and Long Beach in California (complementing the work of another Hawaiian George Firth who remained as a lifeguard and surf coach, previously mentoring Kahanamoku in Waikīkī) (Warshaw 2004). After a brief stint in Hawai‘i, the Duke headed to Australia for several months giving swimming demonstrations, and, as a result of his own request for the necessary material, crafted a surfboard (one of a number he made while in Australia) out of local sugar pine, leading to a surfing demonstration at Freshwater Beach (Warren and Gibson 2014). Hundreds of spectators marvelled at the Hawaiian’s skill and the sheer splendour of wave-riding, notably this included taking a fifteen-year-old Isabel Letham tandem surfing affording an experience that led her to adopt surfing as a passion for many years (Warshaw 2010). On exiting the water Kahanamoku gifted the board to a ten-year-old Claude West who later become Australia’s first surfing champion (Westwick and Neusal 2013 my emphasis). As kahu, spirit’s keeper and guardian, Duke imparted the gift of surfing, igniting the imagination of both sides of the Pacific, contributing to a new sense of oceanic consciousness already underway in the expansion of Western culture and modernity, evident in art and
literature, embodied ostensibly by the Hawaiians and those who followed their lead (Isham 2004). Kahanamoku’s role in the final aspect deserves closer treatment, as a *kahuna*, priest who was a repository of science, art, and knowledge in ancient Hawaiian culture. As teachers, these kahunas were the cornerstone of enduring cultural practices that spanned generations prior to contact and still remained influential culturally, even while suppressed by foreign religion and colonialism. In the suppression of Hawaiian culture, those steeped in ancient practices had to be wary of being completely misunderstood, resulting in many instances of circumspection and withdrawal.

For Kahanamoku, surfing held the secrets of a far-reaching philosophical approach to life. In the main, the great waterman let his feats speak for themselves but once challenged ‘We know all the herbs, their intricacies, and myriad applications. What do you know?’ He replied emphatically about what he knew of surfing (Kahanamoku cited Chiles 1995: 229).

*Some things you don’t. Even things kahuna Pu’ali and Kipu’upu’u (martial artists) don’t know. For all the mastery can be learned in the wave [...] Life is like a wave. If you are arrogant and try to control, it will crush you. If you are too late, too lazy, and do not hear its call, you will suffer a worse fate still, that of being left behind. But, the one who learns to ride the wave in balanced bliss experiences the power and exaltation known only to the gods.*

Duke Kahanamoku (cited in Chiles 1995: 229 original emphasis)

The domains of cultural life this expertise represents and the values they enshrine speak volumes about a deeply spiritual and advanced environmental culture. The knowledge of these revered individuals, the *kahunas*, related to numerous spheres of cultural life and were so deeply embedded in Hawaiian culture they were able to ultimately endure the onslaught of change brought about by outside influence through critical aspects such as language, embodied practice and selective transmission (Yates 2014). In light of Western culture’s monumental failure to treat the environment with respect and wisdom, it seems apposite to consider then how this respect and wisdom may be revived from where it previously existed unchallenged (Chouinard 2016). The old ways of the *kahuna* and their cross-cultural equivalents resonate with possibilities to avert the consequences of a blatant disregard and wilful ignorance that significantly mars 21st Century in terms of governance and policy that are acutely at odds with any sort of viable environmental culture (Klein 2014). The Hawaiians were and still are in principle a nature-based culture, with a fundamental link to caring for country (the Australian Aboriginal practice) or *Aloha ʻāina*, the ancient concept meaning love of the land, including the whole environment, land, ocean, atmosphere and sentient beings. The environmental cultures of the future must renew and forge these connections in complete
integrity, where there is an imperative to seek, follow and learn anew from the earth and the cosmos (Kanahele 1986). I reject the premise these cultural practices are antiquated in the sense of being outmoded and that there is no economic system alternate to advanced capitalism or that advanced capitalism cannot become adaptive to the necessary changes required (particularly for those who are excluded and exploited by capitalist systems) (Wark 2015). *Kahuna*, as priests and teachers, were involved intimately with the enrichment and maintenance of their environmental culture. While the negative connotations associated with kahunas as sorcerers and magicians lingers on from the days of prohibition, in recent times these concerns have been dispelled, fostering a renewed appreciation underway for their value as guides and teachers (Chiles 1995; Kupihea 2005; King 1985; Plotkin 2003). *Kahuna* is a Hawaiian word also meaning master that does equate in some respects with the role of the shaman in many cultures around the world, sensitive about every aspect of the ecology of place and jealous to protect the environmental culture to which they belong as a gift to the community (King 1990; Schipper 1993). The value of and need for a collective stewardship of the environment that goes beyond individualistic and economic concerns is apparent, where the rationalism of technical expertise is deficient and often serves to prolong the neglect.

There are the interlocking aspects of colonialism, capitalism and globalisation that so often assume authority over unwilling subjects whose resistance sustains their autonomy. In the 1970s following a surfing example, *Kānaka Maoli*, native Hawaiians protested against the colonialism and neo-colonialism of the professional surfing industry on what they considered their cultural sanctuary—the surf zone of O‘ahu’s North Shore (Walker 2008). The *Hui ‘O He‘E Nalu* wave-sliding club provided these *Kānaka Maoli*, native Hawaiians an activist organisation to assert themselves in terms of their cultural traditions and Hawaiian identity in the face of the encroaching professionalisation of surfing. The International Professional Surfing (ISP) association formed in 1976, were becoming increasingly intrusive from local perspectives, backed with legal permits to sanction their events at the premiere surf spots in the height of the winter surf season (Walker 2008). The controversy went right to its inception through the brash antics of Australians among other budding professionals, boasting outrageously in the media and adopting an aggressive style of surfing that brought things to a head with intense hostility from angry locals (Coleman 2001). Only after a confronting intervention at a public meeting with locals, mediated through the influence of Eddie Aikau a Hawaiian lifeguard and respected big wave surfer, did things initially settle down. In hindsight, ‘Rabbit’ Bartholomew, having been grilled by locals and counselled by Aikau was able to admit to the error of his approach in a revealing attitude.
I had no idea of the history and heritage of Hawai‘i and how everyone—from the early traders, to the missionaries, to the modern day real-estate developers—had always come and taken from them. But I must have appeared as the absolute enemy trying to steal the last vestige of their heritage—surfing.


This testimony hardly seems plausible for a person who had grown up in Australia in the 60s and 70s and travelled to Hawaii on previous occasions. Aikau, showed astute diplomacy in this situation using his influence to broker a peaceful resolution, known among locals as the King of Waimea, his ancestral line came from *kahunas*, whereas he personally had distinguished himself on the North Shore with a fearless reputation as a big wave rider and as a courageous lifeguard at Waimea Bay (Coleman 2001). The dream of a professional surfing circuit, allowing some surfers to get paid for something they love doing, evolved and is still evolving with an anomalous relationship to the surfing industry, surf culture and the mainstream (Jarratt 2010). In the early days of professionalism, building upon the legacy of the Hawaiian surfing tradition and the growth of a global surfing industry meant competing interests were fraught with tensions and vested interests that still, by and large, remain.

Hawaiian surfers themselves often crossed over between the vague distinctions of amateur, professional, free surfer or soul-surfer, definitions which are often overlapping, murky and blurred. The misguided sense of entitlement derived from recognition and financial reward are a heady mix particularly where commercial interests are seen to underwrite professional standing in an enlightened self-interest (Jarratt 1997). A bitter media campaign to discredit the *Hui*, known as the black shorts, worn in a sign of Hawaiian solidarity and protest, represented them as terrorists and petty criminals not only threatening the peace but upsetting the image of the Hawaiian tourist industry based on the promotion of *Aloha* in terms of perceived hospitality. The organisation defended themselves against these allegations and went through a time of circumspection serving to refine their motivation and actions, carefully considering the way there were being represented and perceived. The group renewed their resistance as Kānaka Maoli, native Hawaiians and in the process re-affirmed their protest and image as custodians of an enduring cultural tradition (Walker 2008). What eventuated as a compromise became the opportunity for sanctioning professional lifeguards and official water patrol self-determined by Kānaka Maoli, native Hawaiians who channelled their successes into community projects. These fraught relations were both robust and delicate, moving from outright hostility and frustration to validation, effective communication, understanding and on-going negotiation.
The resistance that was staged on the celebrated North Shore of Oahu by Hawaiian surfers, once again provided a challenge to the wider surfing community concerning the ethical responsibility to pay respect to the birthright and environmental heritage of surfing. As Walker’s (2011) analysis affirms, the Hui’s struggles emerged out of the wider historical conditions of blatant injustice and resistance from before and after the 1890s coup, such as the on-going activism of like-minded groups in the 1970s. John Kelly’s Save Our Surf (SOS) was opposed to merciless coastal development, Protect Kahoʻolawe Ohana (PKO) movement opposed the destruction of island ecology on Kahoʻolawe from military bomb testing and so on concerning land and water (Goodyear-Kaʻōpua et al. 2014). There are also connections between the achievements of the Hui on the North Shore and the tremendous impetus of cultural renewal brought about in the voyages of Hōkūleʻa, whose name means the star of joy (the zenith star of the Hawaiian Islands) that recreated Polynesian sailing and revitalised way-finding to become an outstanding cultural symbol of environmental heritage challenging the world to take greater care and responsibility for ecology (Low 2014). In the broader context of Oceania these actions are commensurate with a determined and unrepentant worldview at odds with the orthodoxy of the dominant world order.

The connection between Hōkūleʻa and surfing has become the stuff of legend through the enduring legacy of Eddie Aikau’s heroism and memory. Hōkūleʻa, the double-hulled ocean voyaging canoe modelled on ancient principles is a potent symbol of Polynesian heritage that produced a groundswell of renewed self-respect across Oceania and fed into rekindled Hawaiian aspirations for self-determination (Low 2014). The construction came in the fledgling stirrings of the Hawaiian renaissance as an experimental archaeological project intent on proving the prowess of the early Polynesian mariners spreading themselves throughout the Pacific to refute the claims the early migrations resulted from accidental drift (Finney 1979). In the process the vestiges of ancient navigation would be passed on and revived from the Micronesian Mau Pialug to a group of Hawaiians including Nainoa Thompson. The tragic loss of Eddie Aikau in 1978 to treacherous seas occurred when the canoe became disabled in the straits of Molokai off Oahu, taking on water and eventually flipping over (Low 2014). In the melee of that stormy night Eddie pleaded with Nainoa to give him his blessing to paddle for help, which proved to be a tragic act of sacrifice motivated by noble intent to rescue both the crew and the vessel. The canoe and the rest of the crew were eventually rescued whereas Aikau was never seen again.

In the background to this event Aikau had shown a growing interest in his Hawaiian heritage at the time and became swept up in the fervour surrounding the Hōkūleʻa. He had
achieved a personal milestone taking out the Duke Classic in 1977 in big Sunset waves with an emphatic victory. His acceptance speech struck a chord with the garrulous audience who fell under the spell of his spontaneous outpouring of emotion, offering an almost prophetic premonition of his own departure.

None of us know how long we are going to be on this earth. We have to love each other and take care of each other ‘cause you never know when you time is going to come.

Eddie Aikau (cited in Coleman 2001: 206)

This watershed moment led to a time of introspection precipitated by further personal turmoil and family tragedy. Eddie seemed from then on, according to those close to him at the time, to take a profound interest in his own Hawaiian heritage and culture (Coleman 2001). In an intimate moment with Nainoa, while training as a crew member, Eddie shared his motivation to sail on Hōkūle‘a, explaining the significance of seeing Tahiti rise out of the water like his voyaging ancestors in the poignancy of Hawai‘i Rising, seeking to return him to his most ancient roots (Low 2014 my emphasis; Coleman 2001). For Thompson and crew, who would later fulfil this dream on behalf of Eddie—the triumph was tinged with sadness and joy. Aikau fulfilled his own destiny in a manner befitting of his bravery and dedication to the sea, in an attempt to provide a means of rescue for crewmembers and the canoe (Low 2014). As in the solemn words of one kahu presiding at Eddie’s memorial funeral.

The open sea is to the Hawaiian people as the desert was to Moses and his people…a place where people go to meet God.

Reverend Abraham Akaka (cited in Carroll 2014: 72)

The selfless act of paddling into the night in such inclement weather has become a touchstone of commitment and determination enshrined in Hawaiian aspirations for self-determination and as a model of character for surfers all around the world. In recent times Hōkūle‘a has gone on to become the Hawaiian symbol for environmental awareness around the world through the Malama Honua (care for our earth) worldwide voyages (PVS 2018). The challenge to change the way people live on earth begins with individuals who commit themselves to join collective efforts to become symbionts with the environment—more attuned to the steady turning of the earth and the splendour of the cosmos that allows life to flourish.
3.5 Rise and rise of global surf culture

The flourishing of surf culture from Hawaii in the early 20th Century to California, Australia and the rest of the world has many parallels with the transition from colonialism to capitalism and the advent of the developed world. The irony of this taking place as a result of war and the technological advances of the military is indicative of the pervasive influence of geopolitics upon everyday life and can be extrapolated from any number of ordinary examples (Lent 2017). In terms of surfing design and materials, the impact is undeniable from surfboards and wetsuits, to numerous other technological aspects (Westwick and Neushul 2013). The post-war boom and social changes of the mid-20th Century coupled with advances in communication, transportation and information technology contributed to the eventual commercialisation, professionalisation and popularisation of surfing. As previously stated, the new world order formulated around global super-powers and Cold War politics saw the makings of a global economy becoming a reality with the rise of information technology (Laderman 2014). The democratisation of transportation took two key forms: the automobile and the aeroplane, each based on affordability, profit and the insatiable reliance on the fossil fuel industry (Cosgrove 2001). These factors coupled for surfers with the search for waves that fuelled their wanderlust with a penchant for opening new locations to exploration away from the metropoles.

The drive of the extractive economy fuelled unprecedented economic growth and development that matched scale, demography and technology to herald the new age of mass consumption of leisure and goods. Surfing became directly associated with ease of world travel and the attraction of coastal development, domestically spawning surfing communities from holiday-makers to residents, from travellers to tourists (Huntsman 2001; Smith and Doherty 2006). Surfers themselves too have become the anomalous captains of their own industry providing the essential and peripheral equipment tailored to the burgeoning needs of growing tribes of consumers (Jarratt 2010). The fledgling discoveries of exotic playgrounds valorised a new breed of mythic explorer who over time fell prey to show and tell, promulgating new legends and myth-making from the underground to the burgeoning surf-media industry (Laderman 2014). The stuff of dreams and entrepreneurship quickly turned into global branding, while surf travel morphed into tourism writ large, whereas sea-change from major cities became the suburbanisation of the coast (Ford and Brown 2006; Smith and Doherty 2006). Developing economies welcomed the rag-tag band of surfers and hippies as the early adopters of exotic locales to seize the opportunity to leverage immediate cash flows and garner foreign investment from developed economies to seed fully-fledged tourism.
industries. Domestically in Australia the ‘sea-change’ amounted to a Californication of the eastern and south-western seaboard, spawning tourism and development through a bricks-and-mortar led boom (Smith and Doherty 2006). Surfers are implicated in these developments where their pursuits have become mainstreamed and co-opted for real estate and the speculative capitalism of financial services.

People marvel at the ubiquity of dramatic changes to the world privy to changes at home and abroad. In spite of long held concerns for the environment and misgivings about the benefits and risks of advanced technology a pervasive diminishment to biological diversity has occurred (Bauman 2000). As the decades of the last half of the 20th Century flew by on a collision course with the 21st Century, exponential forces have been unleashed between the effects of population and technology (Castells 2009; Lent 2017). The early 21st Century risks are proving to have far graver consequences to such an extent that predictions based on modelling for fifty years in the future are already exceeding their limits (Steffen 2015 et al).

The ocean bears a considerable amount of the brunt of increased human activity, higher temperatures generated by the sun and the change in earth’s atmosphere with higher levels of carbon (Roberts 2012; Scales 2016). The full extent of the voracious outworking of population, technology and development remains to be seen, while nothing short of creative evolution will succeed to provide a viable future.

The confidence associated with the teleological progress of human history attached to development has lost much of the earlier lustre because of the monstrous scale producing flashpoints from crisis to crisis that have become a general state of emergency. The assumption of superiority maintained on the basis of cultural, scientific and economic advance, underpinned by military might, can no longer defy serious and reasoned critique—but nevertheless carries on apace (Laderman 2014). The Hawaiian renaissance from the 1970s to the recasting of the Sea of Islands as Oceania, as a matter of cultural survival and renewal, provides a relevant context to consider the world, global surf culture, environmental crisis and environmental philosophy (Waddell et al. 1993; Hau‘ofa 2008; Westwick and Neushul 2013; Laderman 2014). This can also be said of the situation of many first peoples whose protest and resistance to colonisers fell on deaf ears and were too often silenced by violent reprisals.

In the 21st Century, these aberrations have become glaring landmarks of hubris and folly, prised from a wilful cultural amnesia and a hermeneutically sealed practice of history-making that seeks to freeze ignorance and cowardice in the past in order to maintain the status quo and ill-gotten privilege (Goodyear-Kaʻōpua et al. 2014; Hage 1998; 2003). The new ecology demands connected, interlocking, holistic systems of living organisms in their environment
with the values of environmental cultures of sustainability, in a recognition of the suicidal
tendencies of human cultures who exploit the natural world, as destructive and inherently
dangerous (Rose and Robin 2004; Plumwood 2008; Capra and Luis 2014). The perspective of
the political class and the internet-fuelled media provides a surfeit of information that assaults
and fatigues any sense of day-to-day equilibrium or underlying concern for environmental
welfare as a serious global issue.

The inherent assumptions of the global hegemony of capitalism, and the reliance
individuals, communities, governments and corporations have upon supporting its underlying
premises, should not be used to silence criticism, but more desperately to allow for creative
responses at all levels. The dubious triumph of the neo-liberalist and economic rationalist
agenda is incomplete but unrepentant toward environmental abuse and neglect, where it seems
grassroots action might become the only legitimate sphere for integrity (Satchell 2008d).
Oceania is an idea both small and large enough as a lens to reconsider planetary ecology from
a cosmopolitan ethos in the era of the Anthropocene, promoting the necessity for
environmental cultures to spring up everywhere (Hau'ofa 2008; Plumwood 2002; Wilson
2017). The appeal of the ordinary, marginal and disenfranchised are found in the vestiges of
soul at their heart—amid the soulless enterprises of moguls, vice-chancellors, chief executive
officers and heads of state. The question of sustainability in the 21st Century is one that poses
a vexing degree of ambiguity, given the dubious association with the term ‘development’ in
recent versions and iterations of sustainable development (Chouinard 2016; Shiva 2016).
Crafting responses to the ecological crisis in the midst of the mounting environmental threats
surely must reach beyond a better business model that merely maintains the status quo and
revises millennial goals.

In the realm of global surfing, this crisis and these threats are not something removed
and distant, as if an industrial area, mining facility, landfill and sewerage outfall could
demarcate an area where pollution and devastation must come but go no further. Given the
broader consensus and concern attributed to the term Anthropocene with its roots in
industrialisation and its true venom in the mid-20th Century spike of the great acceleration—
action is imperative (Steffen 2015 et al.). This spike in consumerism and waste, at the
inauguration of the atomic age, rode on the wave of the post-war boom in developed
economies in this period, as a consequence the rise and rise of surfing is implicated in some
telling ways to the fallout of pollution (Laderman 2014; Haraway 2016). These critical issues
warrant considered responses; firstly, mitigating to whatever extent available the myriad of
practices that violate the earth’s integrity. Second taking a more active ethical and ecological
stance towards one another and the more-than human world (Chouinard 2016; Rose 2015; Satchell 2008d; 2010b). The issue of complicity particularly for those privileged by capitalism and development is often cited against surfers whose claims of connection with the natural world are countered by drawing attention to the reliance among other things upon petro-chemicals, more generally resource exploitation and the developing world in terms of low-wage labour (Westwick and Nehusal 2013, Laderman 2014, Chouinard 2016). This also recognises the current complexities and monumentality of the challenges facing human existence so inextricably caught within exploitative systems in the immediate, short and longer term. While surf culture continues to be framed as a diversion or escape, might however surf culture become part of the vanguard for a new ethos of environmental cultures.

3.6 The soul-surfer’s shibboleth

I paddled fast to my left, angling toward the next wave, stroked and stood and felt the board accelerate and pumped once and into my bottom turn, and then the world vanished. There was no self, no other, For an instant, I didn’t know where I ended and the wave began.

Steve Kotler (cited in Nichols 2014: 218)

Identity figures in people’s lives in multiple ways as a multi-dimensional construct for negotiating the world, in an active process of formation and maturation where a person comes to terms with their sense of self and the way they relate to the world. According to Sarap (1996) narrative identity is a useful way to both consider and examine a sense of self (both psychological and sociological) that offers the storyteller a degree of agency. The stories people tell and the narratives they follow are key to the ‘situated knowledges’ that develop in their everyday life and their interaction with significant others in the world (Satchell 2010a; Haraway 1988 see title). Gordon (1997: 4) suggests that for most people ‘complex personhood […] weave between what is immediately available as a story and what their imaginations are reaching toward’. This is a useful idea as a means to consider the imagination as a key tool for self-examination (and self-reflexivity), supporting strategies of communication that contribute to self-awareness, cultural literacy and environmental philosophy. This play between the imagined and lived, in the stream of moments people experience as life, also opens possibilities for different selves and becoming, as a creative act contributing to cultural reproduction (Lefebvre 2008c; Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Given the complexity and implications of the identity politics that feature in people's everyday life, careful consideration and sensitivity should be afforded to the claims arising from people’s
sense of self and the world in which they seek to find belonging (Rich 1985). There has been much talk over the years of what it means to be a soul-surfer. The volatile currency of the appellation has come in and out of fashion many times. I want to take up the term once again and extend it to encompass spiritual practice and environmental philosophy.

There are a number of ways the idea of being a soul-surfer is employed in surf culture. These ways are not necessarily mutually exclusive: by prioritising the soul in surfing there might be possibilities for attaching meaning to the lived experience, with commitment and conduct toward the environment (Satchell 2008d). The professional surfer, the so-called free surfer, the weekend-warrior, the learn-to-surfer, the experienced surfer, the lifelong surfer and the retired surfer all experience the soul dimension of surfing at some point—it is arguably the most enduring aspect of ocean encounter and environmental connection. To what extent this notion of soul-surfing can be valorised for commitment to environmental philosophy is worthy of due consideration because it reflects fundamental values and views of the world as ecological (Kanahele 1986; Morton 2018). There is certainly an element of perceived purity associated with the term that is more often invoked by negation, disqualifying someone’s credentials as a soul-surfer because of wrong motives such as financial reward, a conflict of

![Figure 16](image.png)

More than one way to get hooked
interests, the inflated ego, enforcing territorial entitlement through abusive behaviour and what amounts to a perceived selling out (Westwick and Neushul 2013). There is an unspoken sense of a sacred trust of what might be seen as whether something is in keeping with the spirit of surfing or not. The purist element certainly harks back to notions of the pre-colonial cultural practices of Hawaiians and is maintained in keeping with the spirit of Aloha, despite the contradictions and misappropriations (Walker 2011). This also links the idea of a surfing way of life being oppositional or alternative to more normative views of society and culture—from the era of the hippy and country soul to later hipster and even punk reinventions and the continuation of an unbroken line who adopt a coastal way of life governed more by the ocean than anything or anyone else (Warshaw 2010). The rise of commercial interests associated with surfing is another aspect fraught with these dilemmas from the earliest cottage craft stage to the eventual industrialisation of manufactured surf products (Kenvin 2014; Warren and Gibson 2014). The professionalisation of surfing as a sport also carries the burden of the loss of a perceived innocence from where the reward is seen to be the intrinsic value of the thing in itself, rather than any other gain (Finnegan 2015). Of course, such purity and idealism only exist in relative terms, while the value of soul-surfing remains an enduring prism through which to experience surfing and view the world.

There are rational and mystical qualities about something having soul or being soulful. The soul is intimately associated with the breath (life-force and energy) and the inner dimension of a person’s life. The soul connects the spiritual aspects of life with material reality, in ways that animate the affective and aesthetic character of a soul in the world, its life-force and energy (Jim and Arledge 2007). The delicate link between breathing and living is illustrated in dying, where breathing ceases and what is left are the mortal remains of a human being or indeed the myriad of living creatures, suggesting an enduring aspect of life that goes beyond or more likely into a deeper dimension of existence from those formerly experienced in the process of living (Maharaj 1977; Seneca in Foucault 2005). In Hawaiian spirituality, the life-force is known as "mana," a creative power or energy that is associated with people but also objects, animals, plants and places, notably something that can be built up, passed on and even communicated (Morrell 2005; Yates 2014). Although the concern here is with aspects of the soul in the here-and-now. Stephanie Gilmore touches on this mystical quality when explaining her enthusiasm for riding waves:

The ocean has to be the strongest natural force on the planet, right? You’re recharging your batteries. We’re all solar powered and when you put sunlight on top of all the motion you get in the ocean, it feels like you’re having as beautiful spiritual moment as a human being can have.
The wonder of such spiritual moments among surfers is by no means isolated or scarce. The prevalence of surfing spirituality, acknowledged by surfers or not, can be seen as an aspect of human experience—although is more apt as an experience of the more-than-human. Gilmore’s (cited in Swanton 2017:1) front page admission is not just predicated on momentary transience, when she states: ‘I think for the most part it [surfing] actually does define who I am. I don’t feel like myself without it.’ Therefore, standing in as identity but also going much deeper as a sense of self and, by inference soul, not as an isolated individual, but rather as a transpersonal connection with larger entities such as a sense of place, a region, the ocean, the earth and the cosmos. In a similar vein surpassing a sense of self can be a ‘self-realisation’ in the manner Næss (1989 my emphasis) uses the term. As a consequence, while slippery, it is noteworthy that the connection between the inner person and the expansive sense of place includes oneness with a myriad of sentient beings and the life-giving phenomenon that sustains them.

The soul-surfer finds an affinity, why not call it a spiritual connection, to all the elements that support the coastal life, the conditions that allow someone to flourish or their soul to prosper in creative pursuits. The soul-surfer finds in the union with themselves and among the sentient life of the coastal sphere of the planet, a deep sense of wonder and love for life. Every aspect of daily living therefore becomes the preserve of this union and the motivation to maintain and enhance the aesthetics of existence through creative practice.

The inner self is a great place. It’s closer than most people think and it is nearly perfect. When a person can find the way to access this wonderful state at will, there is no worry about being caught inside again. Surfing has an endless supply of lessons to teach us. Surf Realisation is about believing those lessons can and should, be applied to life.

I’ve come to believe that surfing is as deep and meaningful as one wants to make it. At the same time, surfing is as shallow and light as pure fun can be. Do it for whatever reasons a person can want, but keep doing it.

(Lopez 2008: 246)

The folding of the inner self with a larger unfolding universe seems so wonderfully prosaic in such everyday terms, while so incredibly meaningful to lived experience. The redeeming feature may well be the sense of having shared the life of a much larger oceanic entity than you could ever have strictly of your own accord. These thoughts and feelings are what make spirituality wherever you may experience its touch (within the ocean or anywhere else) a
compelling feature of life that seems to hold the flame of the divine, even as a spark in the soul of those who deny its existence.

3.7 The art of auto-choreography

The soul-surfer’s life plays upon the fluidity and motion of an aesthetic and an affect that calls forth an auto-choreography. Sitting just beyond the break in those blue, green moments of anticipation, caught in the play of light I am often struck by wonder and bliss. The atmosphere seems enchanted by the crystallisation of days, months, years where an altered state morphs into an altered life. To live in an animated way through these cycles and surges allows the coastal inhabitant to piece together a deep recognition of the majesty of life unfolding alongshore. The unfurling of clouds in the subtle change of weather or the familiar outline of the surrounds altering hue, just being alert to the stirring of all manner of creatures—one marvels at the seamless logic of such beauty that includes you. The invitation to play with such a lively intelligence flashes all around the edges of consciousness with no thought of cost or entry. There comes a point when you realise surfing does not just start when you paddle out or finish when you paddle in—that feel for the surroundings gets to a point where it never leaves—it becomes you.
The art of auto-choreography I am proposing for soul-surfers is not only performed on an ocean wave but encompasses every aspect of life in the fullness of all its cycles, seasons and stages. Mine is informed by my own experience and circumstances, drawing selectively upon a range of spiritual, cultural and environmental practices, seeking to respect and honour them through their use. These ideas are then adaptable to the fundamental principles for living-well at the core of existence: breathing, eating, exercise, livelihood, inhabiting a dwelling, sleep, thought, speech and relationships. This for me as a soul-surfer has become the meaningful ground to respond to the world from the standpoint of creativity, ethics and ecology, as a modest proposal for counter-hegemonic cultural practices, but also as a means of sustenance and nourishment in the midst of the troubling aspects of the world.

In an auto-choreography you seek to align and attune daily life with the rhythms and patterns of the earth and cosmos, matching a simplicity of being with a concern for the overall state of affairs. The rationale is to make creative practice and everyday life complimentary to one another, integral to a purposeful existence. As a matter of appreciation and gratitude, the joy of such living coheres with the cultivation of the soul and the love of a place that extends to an imagined sense of planet. In surfing the synchronicity of coalescing with the energy coursing through the water allows for moments of bliss, expression, decision-making and challenge that have wider application. These are emblematic of the type of connection people seek with even larger processes and their phenomenon in the context of the place they live, predicated upon the possibility that life is as much a wave, as the waves surfers’ ride. What then is auto-choreography if not the performativity of life that folds and unfolds in the vagaries of the conditions that allow and constrain its elusive purpose.
Section 2 Shrine: The place of perpetuity

To some I was acquiring a property, disposable at a good profit at some future date; any improvement I might make on it would enhance its sale value. To others I was establishing a home that would tie me to it forever; any improvement on it would be a further contribution for the benefit of my family and future generations. In saying that I was going to live here forever, my friends meant not just me but also my descendants. There is a vast difference here that shows diametrically opposed perceptions of our relationship with the world: world as property versus world as lasting home—home as a heritage, a shrine for those who have cared for it and passed it on to us, their descendants. For those who hold this view, our relationship with our Earth is indeed spiritual.

(Hau'ofa 2008: 74, 75)

These diametrically opposed views, ‘world as property’ and the ‘world as lasting home’ are at the critical juncture of efforts to move from a competitive model of market economics to a cooperative model of creative and soulful adaptation. The difference of these perspectives has all sorts of significant ramifications for the way people treat one another and the environment in which they live (Macy and Brown 2014; Turpin 2013). There are no easy solutions to reconcile the apparent and subtle differences that play out over time, across cultures and geographies. However, the benefits of contributing to the world by caring for a home-place, and gratefully receiving its care, do enshrine certain values and imbue various habitations, haunts and landmarks with a sense of being hallowed. The intention of maintaining the integrity of a place through veneration is worth holding on to and indeed passing on (Moore 1996). This is acutely apparent in the commons of the environment and the natural elements still beyond human control, even those subject to the accumulated impact of collective human activity (Serres 1995b; Morton 2016). While the claim of ownership is one form of belonging—after some consideration it may indeed be the crudest.

The depth of belonging people may experience as a sense of place they come to know as home in many ways are subjective and circumstantial but not without validity. The spiritual connections people develop with the earth are less visible but no less tangible in one’s own experience, particularly when it is shared (Berry 1988). Grave problems arise when the depth of feeling is not respected, acknowledged or when it becomes conflicted for whatever reason (Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua et al. 2014; Walker 2008; Somerville and Perkins 2010). Nonetheless, there are still ways to nourish and share these feelings, even nurture the distinctive characteristics of a home-place through care and appreciation that is practical, as well as, aesthetic, contemplative or pedagogic (Alexander 1977 et al.; Satchell 2016). In this respect, home-making is recursive and co-extensive in a process of making and being made, extending from a small place in the world to a sense of planetary belonging in the vast cosmos (Berry 1988).
An active application of these values and principles is mindful of inhabitation, attendant to learning about the relationships that binds one to a range of significant others and ostensibly outlives one.

Home is an interesting and complex idea to work with in relation to the confluence of space, place and ecology. The word ecology comes from the Greek oikos, which means home, household, even temple, as in shared arrangements that may also concern the astrological housing of planets as they come into various alignments (Moore 1996). The inference at the heart of this mystery is that ecology is about making a home for the soul that overlaps the more-than human and the earth in all manner of sanctuaries and sanctities (Moore 2014). Ecology in modern parlance concerns the overlapping inter-relationship of living organisms in their environment, encompassing habitat with inhabitation in all manner of complex arrangements (Rose and Robin 2004). A holistic approach to inhabitation therefore turns upon an appropriate appraisal of site-suitability and site-specificity, mindful of purpose, placement, orientation, construction and the possibility of use that includes relationships within a household and relationships in a biotic neighbourhood with the weather, climate, the seasons, and the forces of the earth and cosmos (Harrison 2008; Deleuze and Guattari 1994). Inhabitation in respect to home-making is a soulful enterprise, balancing practicality with the deeper rhythms of creative practice, requiring the habitation to be lived in, maintained and cared for, while also weathered and worn through the tests of time and place.

A place of habitation for humans offers numerous benefits that ease and organise existence, allowing coherence and meaning to develop in a balanced and enduring manner. The process of living purposefully in conscious awareness and intuitive openness, provides a range of creative potentials (Devereaux 1996; Moore 1996). The effective production of lived space relies upon the use of light, water, airflow, temperature, the partition and portioning of the flow and containment of space—for such things as food, storage, comfort and so on; these are embedded in the design but also may depend upon clever adaptations over time and through use (Alexander 1979; Steiner 2016). These factors are also supported by an attention-to and synchronicity-with temporal, solar and lunar cycles, with their seasonal fluctuations and variations, underpinning the stages of life-development in the more-than human community (Plotkin 2008). The elementary principles of architecture according to Semper (in Hale 2006) alert us to certain key attributes beginning with the hearth (ceramics and metal work) at the heart of the home, evoking the circularity of gathering, while embracing safety, conviviality and love. The Latin for hearth, means focus, centrality that locates or concentrates the sacred, the social and the intimate, within its atmosphere evoked by the
image of fire and warmth (not dependent on actually having one) (Devereux 1996). The remaining three elements play a more protective and defensive role for the hearth, against the elements as follows; the roof (carpentry), the mound (water and masonry works) and enclosure (woven material and textiles). Although arguably these aspects employ far more productive roles in vernacular architecture, using the play of elements gainfully through the changing seasons and stages of life (Hale 2006; Weber and Yannas 2013). The extremes of climate and their variations should (in productive and ingenious ways) bring together the geographical and the architectural with the ecological.

The fold implied in framing and apportioning space also offers the idea of home with the political dimension of privacy and security as a buffer against the wider socio-cultural realities of the public sphere, as a site for rest, renewal, recuperation and even resistance. The space(s) this affords for the inhabitant, of even the most modest means in everyday life, allow for a range of modalities according to their use, which are productive, instructive, creative, devotional and restorative after their kind—the convenience of an area to cook provides nourishment, to bathe refreshment, to recline peace of mind and to gather—conviviality (hooks 1995; Alexander 1979). Notwithstanding, the fold inside also links the outside and allows for a more expansive inhabitation from the house or home to the home-place including gardens, greenery and water features, as simple as a bowl filled with water or a birdbath (Shurety 1998). The pivotal role of the house to the art of living must not be underestimated particularly pertaining to bringing together the forces of the earth and cosmos in a benevolent influence that allows life to blossom (Deleuze and Guattari 1994). Hale (2006: 62, 61) makes an argument for home-making by employing ‘creative inhabitation’ as an ethos in the sense of the Greek notion of poiesis, ‘the art of making’, as an expression of becoming that contributes to self-awareness and self-realisation. hooks (1990: 104) also makes a similar point from the lessons about the productive use of space gleaned while growing up. She learns from her grandmother a black vernacular aesthetics where living ‘is a way of inhabiting space, a particular location, a way of looking and becoming’ flush with possibilities for self-expression (hooks 1995; Lefebvre 1991). The process of home-making may then allow much-needed sanctuary for the soul, while also furnishing the creative space for the co-existence and co-evolution with its other inhabitants, including the more-than human in the context of a multi-species sense of place.

Finding your place in the world as a general statement is open to interpretation and the breadth of experience. Nonetheless, an affinity with a home-place provides people with solace and a stability for living. For many people this can be associated with family or culture or a
specific way of life or vocation that might be pursued in a range of locations urban, rural, coastal, mountains, rivers, deserts, plains and so on (Nelson 1991; Oliver 2016). But set against the pressures people face supporting themselves and finding fulfilment amid the machinations of the so-called modern world, these aspirations are fraught with all sorts of unreasonable expectations; therefore, it is imperative for more generative forms of livelihood and habitation to emerge and remain as ethical and self-determining interventions (Haebich and Offord 2008; Gibson et al. 2015). When these are boiled down in terms of the end of life—the strong pull to die in your own place, among your own people, is instructive as a definitive conclusion illumined by the shrine of your own making. There are countless stories of people who tell of finding their place in the world in a manner that provides purpose and meaning, even if after an arduous process or appearing right under their noses so to speak, to find their *oikeios topos*, the ‘favourable place’ that becomes somewhere to expand their sense of self and compatibility with significant others, into a lively, dynamic and interconnected world (Devereaux 1996: 80). There are not often guarantees about these circumstances and some people’s journeys in life are more extensive, tumultuous and travel worn (Kumar 2009). Nonetheless, making a home, whether short term or long term, provides the opportunity to learn to care for yourself, support others and engage with community in a manner that may lead to an enriched sense of place and broader planetary sense of belonging (Moore 1996; Cameron 2003). A connection to the earth as a relationship embedded in specific places gives them a different hue, where a sense of the sacred becomes entangled in the ordinary day-to-day appreciation of life as manifest all around.

There are the delicate relations between the material conditions of living somewhere and the manner in which the use of the space supports self-cultivation, therefore making inhabitation ontological. The normative assumptions of a modern lifestyle predicated upon ‘programmed consumption’ deserves critical attention, both as a matter of collective responsibility for materialism and as a genuine concern for quality of life and well-being (Lefebrve 1991: 89). The practice of everyday life stands at the threshold of protective and productive measures to navigate life’s challenges that sustain a planet-wide space of possibilities (De Certeau 1984; Lefebvre 1991; 2008abc). The dramatic changes brought about by media and information technology are a case in point, advancing in every sphere driven by and large by profit and cost-cutting, despite other obvious benefits, with little or no regard for human, social, cultural and environmental consequences. In light of the neo-liberal economic growth and development agenda, this is divisive and corrosive, antagonistic to long-term communal values and ecologically grounded lives that deserve support by any
means available (Patel and Moore 2017). The political rhetoric around family, community and jobs to garner votes is so often at odds with policy-settings and programs that pander to the corporate sector, obfuscating the conflict of interests between polity and private enterprise. As a consequence, creative and cultural production must constitute the sort of new publics that embed grassroots commitments to a home-place, as communities of resistance and environmental cultures that are place-sensitive witnesses for protection and perpetuity (Berry 1999). The humble means of living somewhere in a demonstration of frugality, creativity and care, perhaps is the most necessary manner of home-making required to ensure the sanctity of home-place for the more-than human community.

The recursive character of a more deliberative living over time weaves together a sense of belonging through creative and everyday practices that articulate the heightened awareness of an ecological sensibility. The everyday practice of walking contributes to a more extensive sense of home-place, at the nexus of ‘inter-species junction points’, where encounters with all manner of sentient beings jolts the reckoning of the diffuse and complex
intelligence of the biotic community, of whom we are a part, as mere babes in the woods (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 185; Mathews 2003). The trail of wind, water and terrain unfolds in discernible patterns and ley lines, crossing paths beaten by all manner of terrestrials (Devereaux 1996). The inhabitant becomes acquainted with varied landforms and benevolent tree forms, forests and bushlands whose sentience offer familiarity and repose, in spoken and unspoken correspondence and poetries. These are our benevolent ancestors that lift us up in their arms and upon their shoulders, providing the best seats in those ancient houses of perennial geographies (Macfarlane 2015). In their temples freed to roam our thoughts take flight and soar with feathered others, upon the wings of the winds whose qualities are learnt by and large from the strength of acquaintance. On such occasions, coming back to ourselves, there seems no great difference between these earthly cousins or elder siblings, and the islands, and those brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles who roam the sea (Andrade in Medeiros 2004). On walks such as these, the vestiges of former selves glimpse the future in rapprochement, denied us by scoffing and brutal humans who would be kings of the earth in their violent shame—where for us life itself looms larger with possibility (Hau’ofa 2008). Each step taken brings peace and rest to our souls in unbroken communion with the earth and cosmos.

These are the intentions and conversations I set about awakening even on a modest stroll. In the next three chapters of this section the themes are drawn out from our belonging in Oceania, the ontology of blue and the art of auto-choreography.

Beginning with chapter 4 Shacking-up, a discussion of the tenuous task of living in an ethical manner adjacent to the coast, to consider the possibilities such space(s) offer creative practice.

In chapter 5 Beach-combing, everyday considerations of blue eco-poetics are employed as a heuristic device and method, to bring together the imaginative immersion of living in the coastal milieu as a means of encounter, engagement and composition toward place-sensitivity and place-writing.

Finally, chapter 6 A field guide document and develops an appreciation of place in an affective register as an act of love and care—mindful of the delicate correspondence of caring and being cared for.

While the emphasis on soul, spirituality and contemplation is evident, these are also accompanied by other elevated states such as conviviality, humour and joy in a celebration of what is intended as life well-lived.
Chapter 4 Shacking-up: The poetics of a vernacular ecology

What of architectural beauty I now see, I know has gradually grown from within outward, out of the necessities and character of the indweller, who is the only builder,—out of some unconscious truthfulness, and nobleness, without ever a thought for appearance; and whatever additional beauty of this kind is destined to be produced will be preceded by a like unconscious beauty of life. The most interesting dwellings in this country, as the painter knows, are the most unpretending, humble log huts and cottages of the poor commonly; it is the life of the inhabitants whose shells they are, and not any peculiarity in their surfaces merely, which make them picturesque; and equally interesting will be the citizen’s suburban box, when his life is simple and as agreeable to the imagination, and there is little straining after effect in the style of his dwelling.

(Thoreau 1983: 90 original emphasis)

4.1 Inside a complex lifeworld

In the vernacular of surf culture, to get shacked speaks of the transitory inhabitation of the inside of a breaking wave, arguably at the core of the surfing experience. Surfers often refer to getting barrelled or tubed as the focus of an active pursuit whose goal is clear. In architectural terms, surfers sometimes talk of getting pitted or even entombed, while tipis sound cute as signifiers of a snug fit with the easy entries and exits, comparative to just spending time inside the green-room or rocking up to A-frames all alongshore (Satchell 2008c; Flynn 1987). The appeal for me of getting shacked and by extension shacking-up is the way these heightened experiences though transitory, can be thought of as co-extensive with the more substantive rhythmicity of lifeways couched in a myriad of folds at the coastal fringe (Lefebrve 2004; Deleuze 1993). There are resonances in the term shacking-up with the cultural memory and practice of the cultures of Oceania, the saltwater cultures of Aboriginal Australia, those of the Caribbean, the eighteenth and nineteenth-century beachcombers, as well as twentieth-century settler Australian beach cultures, pertaining to the form of a temporary dwelling, a beachside or holiday residence of minimal construction and cost (Wendt 1976; Holder 1984; Somerville and Perkins 2010; McGloin 2007; Huntsman 2001; Drewe 2015). The sense of resonance inferred here means ‘productive tensions’, not complete accord as Nalbantoglu and Wong (1997:8) contend; ‘postcolonial positions, on the other hand, are interested in productive tensions arising from incommensurable differences rather than deceptive reconciliations’. These tensions are at the core of lived experiences and cultural encounters.

The interpretation of coastal amenity provides a cue for the sort of intent people display underlying their feel for a place. In Freycinet’s (cited in Margan and Finney 1970: 19) ‘Voyage Around the World’, a detailed engraving depicts the impressive thatched houses of Hawaiian royalty, namely Chieftain Kalaimoku, including a handcrafted surfboard pride of
place in the front yard adjacent to the beach, indicative of a lifeway steeped in surfing and revolving around the ocean. Matthew Flinders (in Purcell 2002) commented favourably upon the design of the large huts of the Yaegl people, on the headland at the mouth of the Clarence River in northern NSW, with rounded passageways either end providing a breezeway for fire and protection from the sun, wind and rain. Wendt (1976) as stated previously castigates the soulless construction of colonial and modern architecture, out of keeping with the vernacular traditions of Oceania, as an imposition on an otherwise free-and-easy style of existence that knew only too well the delights of coastal amenity (Deleuze and Guattari 1994; Hau’ofa 2008). I consider *shacking-up* as indicative of a simple approach to life and a clever means to enjoy the choicest marrow of the coastline.

Along the coast of New South Wales in the latter period of first colonisation and Federation, Indigenous and Non-Indigenous dwellers alike, and often together, produced a colourful tradition of the beach-shack and shanty-town. These were often related to fishing and coastal amenity on the periphery of metropolitan growth, eventually entering the domain of surfers and holiday-makers that endures as a crafty frugality. The more recent appropriation and exploitation of the beach-shack sold as the coastal chic of sea-changers and real estate agents misses the point both in terms of ethos and style (Hoskins 2013). To *shack-up* connotes the type of conviviality shared amongst extended family and friends, as well as the allusion to the modest arrangements of a burgeoning sexual intimacy or liaison. The intimacy and attachment I am seeking to invoke here is woven of the spatiality and vivacity of
an affective embodiment. The type of place attachment a person develops by moving in and about the animate environment with a deft touch (Robertson 2003; Serres 2011a). Therefore *shacking-up* is meant in a literal sense as a lived process of habitation, and as a heuristic device of a type of home-making, considering the imaginary and material geographies, enmeshed with imaginative and material architectures, of a soulful means to inhabit, as in keeping and good faith with the more-than human world (Satchell 2008b).

Now we are at home. But home does not pre-exist: it was necessary to draw a circle around that uncertain and fragile centre, to organise a limited space. Many, very diverse components have a part in this, landmarks and marks of all kind.

(Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 311)

The matrix of relations this implies among the varied components, interactions and encounters becomes evident in the emergence of a fleshed out ‘poetic geography’ and ‘vernacular ecology’ (De Certeau 1984: 105; Whatmore et al. 2003: 1). A manner of living made eco-poetic (as a making) at the intersection of architecture and geography, specific to the practice of surfing and living on the coast—by *just coasting* along in life (Wright 1995; Hale 2006; Vesely 2004 my emphasis). Such theorising is working toward a composition of home and home-place as a fluid assemblage, in which belonging becomes manifest, creativity flourishes and the sentience of place imbues the complex life-world of the inhabitant.

In this chapter, architecture is taken as a strategic location to consider the philosophy of *just coasting*, as a means and response to social and ecological challenges. As a focal point habitation appears deceptively natural; beginning from birth, developing through infancy in a cloistered manner, then followed in childhood development as what might be thought of as sheltered, each stage ventures outward from ground-zero—the cradle, bed and room (Deleuze and Guattarri 1994; Bachelard 1994; Perec 1997; hooks 1995). These early shrouded moments transition into the exploratory investigations of affordance from indoor to outdoor spatiality, in the context of early learning and the heady days of adolescence (Gibson in Ingold 2000). These formative moments and experiences inform a lifelong pursuit torn between a desire for comfort and a more comprehensive purchase on the purpose of life.

Childhood memories furnish informal site reports. The recollection of affect logged inwardly extends from our own backyards and cubby-houses to the residences of extended family and the neighbourhood, at the place of friends and from holiday houses, verandas, sheds, garages, tents, lounges, underneath tables and so on, drawing comparisons from television, radio, newspapers, magazines and the internet, as much as from the facades and
layouts grokked from the footpath, cars, trains, boats and airplanes accumulating through happenstance (Robertson 2003; Muecke 1999; Abraham 1994). Among the myriad of impressions there are the fragmentary and wistful encounters referencing darkness and intimacy, the press of light on veiled windows, pungent smells and striking premonitions of futures interrupted by creaking floors or the moaning of the wind (Polikoff 2011; Eiland and Jennings 2014). Then there are the impressive austerities of older people’s (grandparents) homes, whose sense of order and worn patina rings like crystal with otherworldly atmospheres, evoking different times and places, folded and then unfurling at the command of their story-telling and use of artefact (Benjamin 2006; Kupihea 2005). However, I think the most potent of all my childhood memories of evocative interiors (not even in houses) are encapsulated in two instances that were reinforced gleefully upon repetition. Firstly, of me lying on the back seat of my grandfather’s car driving through bushland, viewing the starry firmament through the rear window as a blur bleeding into the anticipation of a weekend or holiday with my grandparents on the water. The other derives from waking up on a boat with the thrum of water lapping at my consciousness to the dreamy accompaniment of coastal birdsong (Satchell 2008b). These offered a foretaste of just coasting I could feel almost direct into my bloodstream through lived experience that remained alive in the memory as embodied affect.

This chapter proceeds playfully as follows from the cultural practice of shacking-up associated with surf culture, to consider applications in the context of everyday life and environmental philosophy. Architecture offers a critical focus as a point of departure to theorise the soft architecture of habitation, as a possible locus to engage environmental awareness committed to quality of life and ethical interventions, in the context of climate change and adaptation. I consider the delicate balance between indoors and outdoors that is predicated upon finding a sweet spot as a creative tension and possibility. In the ferment of this imagined location, creative practice and everyday life contribute to cosmic and ecological sensibilities. Further to these elements, spaces of intimacy with the life-world develop, even from the most mundane aspects of house-holding. The creativity engendered through the significance attributed to inhabitation, offers people transformative thresholds into more meaningful modes of existence. The intention of these deliberative strategies finds culminative meaning in the notion of co-creativity through inhabitation, instantiated through daily living and relationship with the more-than human world.
4.2 Architecture as a strategic locus

The kaleidoscope of spatial affects people carry within them should be more readily recognised as puzzle pieces indicative of a blueprint for life. These lived experiences in the stew of memory are open-ended affairs of meaning-making with so many ideas and philosophies vying for attention (Rovelli 2018). The background of our adult lives consists of life-chances and life-choices akin to a shuffled deck of cards inherited in the sort of contingency that remains shrouded in purpose requiring reflexive investigation (Plotkin 2003). The implications of what life has dealt out to people is only fleshed out from within the indeterminacy of these spaces in a process of self-discovery and lived experience (Rich 1985; Haraway 1988; hooks 1990). There are clues that surface in one’s awareness mysteriously through synchronicity and co-incidence, as traces illuminated for example in the narratives of books or the sort of unscheduled personal newsflashes that come from the lyrics of a song or likewise you may find intimations of belonging after a passing storm or the play of images flashing on the sodden bitumen triggering associative memory that offers direction; among the collection of these cryptic pieces—one learns to turn them to generative advantage or continues to fumble along in the confusion of what appears to be fragmentary an unrelated elements (Muecke and Pam 2012; von Franz 1980; Rilke 2009; Benjamin 2007; Proust 2017; Nin 1974). Accordingly, there are a range of possibilities associated with housing that are the back-catalogue of lessons in spatial awareness; from the family home, public housing, shared accommodation, temporary accommodation, renting, buying, building, as well as the influence of a myriad of other spaces such as the library, hospital, the church, graveyard, war memorial, supermarket, airport, railway station and so on (Allon 2008; Auge 1995; Foucault 1984; Bachelard 1994). Making sense of these lived experiences may begin early in life or come much later, for some they may never come at all because they hold no tangible meaning to them—I am not sure why because they have been so influential upon me.

There are the normative assumptions associated with capitalist logic—taking on a loan to enter the property market or renting someone else’s investment property. The alternatives to this straightforward ‘programmed consumption’ are varied, trying to save for your own land by living in your car or van or living with family or friends, co-operatives, partnerships, exchanging labour and or skills, bartering, using second-hand materials as an owner-builder, make-shift camping out or just living rough (Lefebvre 1991: 89 my emphasis). In many respects, the hard aspects of architecture concern construction, whereas ‘soft architecture’ engages the tactile sense of daily living and a deliberative form of inhabitation (Robertson 2003: 16; Serres 2008). The place of architecture is bound to the specifics of geography and
the operative locus that living knots and affords, as a process that underlines the emphasis here upon the confluence of space, place and ecology. Therefore, taking up the idea of shacking-up provides the opportunity to consider some principles and ideas, as they relate to the site, the climate, the use of space, the pursuit of livelihood and mobility—in and around the neighbourhood, eco-tone and bio-region (Harrison 2008; Allon 2011; Mayol in De Certeau et al. 1998; Krall 1994; Lynch et al. 2012). There are historical factors with their models and examples to consider, but more importantly the way these ideas address the contemporary context of unaffordable housing and ecological crisis—that speak to the express need for agile and workable responses. Returning once again to the striking qualities of eco-poetics and the imagination that stand out conceptually as exemplary. I consider the value of using the humble means of living through creative practice to be counter-hegemonic, responding unflinchingly to materialism and excess, while seeking simpatico with the more-than human world.

The nature of modern life associated with notions of progress and development are increasingly becoming contested in the realm of ideas and material practices. Grossberg (2010) makes an astute point in regard to these debates, proposing thinking of alternative modernities, rather than taking an either-or approach toward modernity in the Anthropocene or becoming completely ambivalent toward the assumptions of progress (Gibson et al. 2015, Ashcroft 2017). However, Benjamin (2007) is unequivocal about the fallacy of progress and the trajectory of history associated with civilisation, which is marked by the transition from colonialism to capitalism, where materialism in the form of consumption is taken for granted as a better life. Progress in the current context relies on the overdetermination of infrastructure and development, whose homogenised features become ubiquitous with generic non-places from metropolis to urban and suburban outposts (Auge 1995). Where I live too many developments are produced off-the-plan with little or no regard for the topography, except to mitigate obstacles, maximise allotments and minimise the costs of on-selling to construction companies, whose bread-butter are financing and the construction of house-and-land packages. These come in the wings of highways and road developments, whose rationale revolves around heavy transport, traffic and speed, whose logistical aims have no truck with the character and perpetuity of place as a distinctive life-world (Virilio 2006). In modernity, economic growth from the normative view is seen as an imperative with little regard for the consequences.

The Cartesian neo-colonialism of urban development in Australia, particularly along the eastern seaboard is predicated upon the ability of metropolitan markets to consolidate and
expand through the contradictory forces of migration and gentrification. An internal contradiction to the successive moments of internal migration that are inflected by the impetus for alternative affordable and environmental sensitive livelihoods (sea-change and tree-change). The undulating waves of the property boom and bust cycles based upon metropolitan values and models, consequently force people to sell-up and go down market or just leave to look for cheaper alternatives (Kijas 2002; Griffin 2002; Cache 1995). While pressure is exerted from a range of seemingly intractable problems (the results of neo-liberal economic determinism and the ravaged environment) people opt for self-preservation and inertia (with regard to the pursuit of alternatives in some quarters), while nonetheless there remains some distinct possibilities among the self-limiting options (Braun and Whatmore 2010; Featherstone and Painter 2013). The relationship between housing, settlement and ecology in Australia registers the tension between colonial, post-colonial and capitalist modes of production and consumption, with a history of dominant and resistive exchanges still at work both socially and culturally (Ghandi 1998; Nalbantoğlu and Wong 1997; Barcan and Buchanan 1999; Haebich and Offord 2008; Rutherford and Holloway 2010). The fraught relationship between coloniser and colonised, consumer and capitalism, bears this out with a range of ordinary actors seeking some kind of ‘autonomous zone’ from hegemonic statecraft and party politics—the most obvious being Aboriginal people for whom the deeper recognition of Indigenous sovereignty remains unresolved (Rose 1996; Bey 1991 np). The counter-cultural internal migration from metropolitan areas to the coast, now mainstreamed as sea-change, and to the bush as tree-change, continues, ironically, to further sprawl, development and growth with gentrification and rising rents. Nonetheless the aspirations for alternatives people yearn for still hold some promising aspects worth pursuing (Kijas and Kijas 2001; Green 2010; Hoskins 2013). Notwithstanding many ordinary people are increasingly finding these alternatives subject to harsher economic realities that bind them in ineffective systems and circumstances. Environmentally sound approaches to housing and amenities seem to have been of no real interest to governments, beholden as they are to private enterprise and the market—philosophical approaches must strive to do better.

Place is a critical and porous conjunction between space and ecology, always in the throes of being torn down, re-imagined and constructed at various scales, amid the more primordial state of flux of the earth at every level. Moreover, ‘the idea that identification of place lies at the generative core of architecture can be explored and illustrated further’, which needs to be extended to include soft architecture and the amelioration of ecological living arrangements (Robertson 2003; Unwin 1997: 14 original emphasis). In his seminal book on
Forests, Harrison (Vico cited in Harrison 1992: 245), following Vico’s *New Science*, outlines the expansion of Western civilisation in the following sequence: ‘this was the order of human institutions: first the forests, after that the huts, then the village, next the cities, and finally the academies.’ To my way of thinking, the hut, the *domus* in Latin meaning ‘abode’, or tellingly an *ethos* in the Greek, as a ‘manner of dwelling’, connotes a model worth reviving for affordable living, style of existence, and even as an idea, the shack or small cottage, offers some salient features worth noting and returning to in the context of meeting housing needs and responding to the ecological crisis (Harrison 1992: 198; Rykwert 1981). Robertson’s (2003: 185) wry comment ‘the city is the shack inside out’ has a twist—although seems cheeky at first, referring to the pull of capitalism to the more populous and centralised arrangements of the metropolis and the burbs. In a counter-intuitive sense, the city turned inside-out—as the shack (and the shack is as much an idea, as a structuring principle of simplicity)—tends to allow for more self-reliance and self-sufficiency in the arrangements, sensitive to the site of the locale, with an impulse for frugality and autonomy. In a substantive way this makes the everyday practices of ordinary life operative, as a means of meeting new models of sustainability, promoting well-being and sensitive environmental stewardship—while still eschewing the gravitas of a political programme (Benitez 2011; Ashcroft 2017). This is not to elide politics *tout court*, as Guattari’s (2008: 35 my emphasis) critique implies, aimed at some quarters of the ecological movement, stating ‘the overall philosophical question is too important to be left to some of its usual *archaisers and folklorists*, who sometimes refuse any large-scale political involvement’, the point lost is the refusal of politics of a certain kind. Therefore, as a structuring principle of simplicity, *shacking-up* seeks the means for an intimate and procreative relationship with place and place-making—beyond the ken of party politics—through creative practice, thoughtful design and the canny use of materials.

The notion of intimate and procreative place-making addresses some significant trends for green architecture, and more broadly for ordinary house-holding. Turning things inside-out can be a useful strategy of de-familiarisation that enables thinking through various perspectives and animating habitation in the life-world.

By acknowledging links between the inner psychological world and the perceptual terrain that surrounds us, we begin to turn inside-out, loosening the psyche from its confinement within the strictly human sphere, freeing sentience to return to the sensible world that contain us.

(Abram 1996: 262)

Thoreau (1983) recounts a day when he removed all the items of his dwelling and placed
them on the clearing outside in order to clean the inside of his abode. This follows an earlier theme of his under the heading of ‘Economy’, making an inventory of materials, living costs and possessions, also offering a critique of the habitual accumulation of unnecessary items that as a result become devoid of meaning. While most people subscribe to a spring clean whose history relates to poorly ventilated common housing (Rybczynski 1987). There is evidence to suggest a significant number of households are weighed down with inordinate amounts of stuff that render the spaces ineffective and purposeless (Bennett 2010; Serres 2011b). While there are interesting examples of people shrouding their lives in the remains of broken down things for plausible reasons and even those using them productively, the logic to do so need not be conclusive (Stewart 1996; Nin 1979). In many ordinary instances people who hinder the productive use of space are missing out on what otherwise would contribute to their quality of life and a sense of vitality in the sensate terms of the environment. The value of thinking more clearly about possessions (one owns, buys or gives away) and their use is inestimable to environmental philosophy (Kondo 2014). Bringing things out into the light in this manner also supports better decision-making, care and appreciation (about power, water, bedding, food production and cost, clothing, transport, and entertainment and so on), a counter-logic to the assumptions of unfettered consumption. In the process, the internal space stripped bare, temporarily, opens fresh possibilities for them to become reactivated, as what Ross Gibson (2010: 31) has coined ‘changescapes’ that are ‘re-animated, poetic spaces’ whose life takes on fresh visceral dimensions. These days many sheds, huts, shacks and so on represent a wider trend back toward smaller and more effective architecture, as austere and clever green responses that enhance ecological sensitivity (Field-Lewis 2012; Allon 2011). Such creative attention and inversion may also be applied to reconfiguration, renovation and construction that uses less to greater effect (De Certeau 1984). This too applies to incorporating active and passive supplies of energy, recycling, repurposing and upcycling resources, supporting the gift economy, considering the connection between the inside and outside through open living, clever use of light and immersion in the surrounds seeking synergy including the use of indoor/outdoor garden options in modest spaces (Goldsworthy 2000; Manco 2012; Benitez 2011; Shafoe 2008; Baldwin 1995; McDonough and Brungart 2013). At the edge of folding inside and outside together, house-holding and place-making become less superficial, enabling aspects of communal living and responsible ecological citizenship that does not compromise privacy.

The idea of a shack in the context of home and home-place allows a compositional poetics to apply synergy to the site of building with a relational mode of existence oriented to
the more-than human world. Thus, the shack, following hooks (1990: 43) may include, firstly, ‘home-place as a site of resistance and liberation struggle’, a recovery from the ravages of the ecological crisis of white, supremacist-patriarchal (colonial) capitalism and escape from domestic discord and violence predicated upon an inherent exploitation and oppression. An ecology of experimentation offers forms that work around the fluid assemblages of locations, within a place, while these too are subject to the adaptations of circumstances, events, weathers and the myriad of arrangements to which creative practice holds the key, thus transforming everyday life (Satchell 2016). The spatial poetics such an approach provides offers productive architectural impulses that ‘plays house’ in a counter-disciplinary way, whose logic of economics runs against the grain of the market and real estate (Bachelard 1994; Thoreau cited in Robertson 2003:169). People might come to understand this holds true whether building, buying, renting or occupying a temporary space; shacking-up is never complete; seasonal adjustments are made in a contingent manner, and life follows the weather, day-to-day, the seasons year-in year-out, toward a life imagined and ultimately lived or not (Thoreau 1983; Stewart 2007; Robin 2012). The deliberate impulse to choose to shacking-up stands as an intention to come into a particular relationship with place, as a threshold experience on the cusp of a way of life predicated upon a viable and ethical future.

On the edge of the fold between the ocean and coast, at the overlap of home and home-place the coaster experiences inside and outside also as a complex threshold of an ecological sensibility. As Rodman (cited in Satchell 2008a: 110) maintains, ‘the term sensibility is chosen to suggest a complex pattern of perceptions, attitudes and judgements which, if fully developed, would constitute a disposition to appropriate conduct that would make talk of rights and duties unnecessary under normal conditions’. In the context of environmental worldviews, there is a stark contrast between the anthropocentrism (based on human exceptionalism) that sees fit to exploit the natural world indiscriminately and eco-centric perspectives that consider humans are only a part of a larger web of life, where all living organisms and eco-systems deserve reverence and restraint in the common order of a complex life-world with an overarching moral considerability for all forms of life and their systems (Haraway 2008; Satchell 2008a; Capra and Luisi 2014). Therefore, the modest impact and site-sensitive engagement with place of shacking-up encourages an ecological sensibility attuned to the vagaries of weather, climate and ecology rather than the mere imposition of a blunt form of reason, design and will, perpetrated on the earth and its creatures.
4.3 Finding the sweet spot

My initiations into the genius of shacks have been handed down to me from my forebears. This knack for construction and design has been recuperated for environmental philosophy in the process of reading, writing and experiments of living. The first shacks I built were miniature and located on beaches in isolated parts of Pittwater, adjacent to the National Park of Ku-ring-gai Chase. They were accessed by water and boats. At a tender age, some of my sweetest moments were in dinghies with oars in my hands. My father and I would gather driftwood along the foreshore and incorporate flotsam jetsam into the makeshift design of cubbies and hideaways, purposed to blend into the site with an air of secrecy and intrigue (Satchell 2008b; 2012). By so doing we were offering shelter as gifts to imaginary itinerants as much as to the possibility of entertaining kindred spirits. Bachelard (1994) asserts the house is the locus for daydreaming and memory, giving form and longevity to the imagination. The significance he attributes to the hermit’s hut is not isolation, but rather the ability to inhabit solitude in the intimacy of refuge. This places value on the immediacy and closeness of an animated lifeworld in a relationship that matures in mutuality (Satchell 2008c). Numerous examples of philosophers are also suggestive: Wittgenstein’s cabin in Skjolden, Heidegger’s hut at Todtnauberg, Jung’s tower at Bollingen and architects Le Corbusier, his cabanon at Cap Martin and Aalto’s ‘playhouse’ at Muuratsalo; each sought solitude for their relaxation and work, supported by the refuge of times of retreat from the pressures of social and professional life, even affording the therapeutic space to manage aging
and loss, bolstering their creativity and closeness to the more-than human lifeworld (Samuel and Menin 2006). My early lessons were just as elemental, akin to a young bird learning the value of nesting with the ability to construct refuge—to find intimacy and security at the most fundamental level (Satchell 2008c; 2012). The logic of do-it-yourself prototypical design and the work of make-believe made a mark upon my soul with aspirations for a manner of life (Armstrong 2010; Pollan 2008). There are qualities about these experiences that not only piqued my interest but became the gold standard for existence. What strikes me now is the way these elements and assemblages serve to heighten one’s perceptive powers.

Shacking-up suits the purpose of articulating an experimental philosophy with creative practices. I equate home as a site in the plural, writer’s retreat, study, studio/gallery, workshop and practice-space that melds seamlessly in the field of a home-place, ideal for activities concerning fieldwork and outdoor studies—this then allows for the confluence of space, place and ecology to be felt-and-practiced (Ingold 2011). By restoring the fundamental architectural principles of the primitive hut from the counter-cultural impulses in surf culture, art, greening architecture and environmental philosophy, an outline emerges concomitant with the principles for ecological place-making attuned to climatic changes and the integrity of viable eco-systems (Rykwert 1981; Satchell 2008b; Ford and Brown 2006). The value of recognising the mutually co-constituting inter-relationship between the way spaces are perceived, conceptualised and lived, offers people avenues for rethinking living arrangements and acting responsibly in the current situation of adaptation (Lefebvre 1991). The home and home-place as an ethos are inextricably linked to this endeavour, providing a means of actualising such a proposition explicitly with architecture and geography in the poetics of a vernacular ecology (Deleuze 1993; Deleuze and Guattari 1994). This also correlates with the intention of heightening perceptual powers calibrated to the forces of the earth and the cosmos, toward creativity and a quality of life within the available means to corroborate generative modes of existence.

The matrix of relations that allow creativity to flourish has its conduit par excellence in somewhere to live that allows for an attentiveness to everyday practice and the surrounding world. This makes plausible the suggestion that architecture is said to be the first or mother of all arts (Deleuze and Guattari 1994; Wright 1995). Deleuze and Guattari (1994: 183) discuss the ‘ambiguous house’ in the context of the earth and the territory of geo-philosophy, in the manner a house and the universe interact with the earth and cosmic forces (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). The combination of these forces and the elaboration of their possible constellations produce in sum an infinite chaos of forces brought into an alignment that
supports living (Groz 2008). The house stands tentatively between the body and the chaos of the universe, an achievement of some magnitude, although vulnerable to ruination and neglect that requires a compact with its inhabitant as a mutual exchange of care (Deleuze and Guattari 1994; Laughier 2009; Wilhelm 1985; Mostafavi and Leatherbarrow 1993). The house has the marvellous design potential to harness or compliment these forces in an effective manner through use. The play of these forces emanating from within or acting from without ‘renders their effect on the inhabitant perceptible’ offering place-specific insights that inform possible modes of existence in keeping with vernacular traditions and on-going adaptations (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 186). The implications for house-holding infer inexhaustible possibilities to enrich and enhance a meaningful life in ways that are far-reaching and fecund.

I am conceptualising architecture in this way to build upon existing traditions and practices, recognising that with some thought and concerted effort necessity matches with the generosity of the universe in productive ways. There is an attempt here to convert Bachelard’s (1994) idea of the house-as-a-tool for topo-analysis, into the shack as an instrument for composition for a vernacular ecology that allows the abode to become a lively means of creativity with a generative embrace of the surrounds (Kaufman and Sternberg 2010; Deleuze and Guattari 1987).

The matching of creativity with improvisation allows for the pursuit of the simple poetic life for whom living well becomes the process and product of co-creativity with the location. Following Thoreau (1983: 90) the process begins from the ‘character of the in-dweller’ and an ‘agreeable imagination’ whose practice of everyday life build ‘towards a metaphilosophy of daily life’ aimed to succeed in the good life (De Certeau 1984; Lefebvre 2008c subtitle). Such a poetics implies a micro-political dimension that responds to an existential challenge by confronting the self, taking up an ethical position both personal and civic by default (Hadot 1995; Allon 2011; Connolly 2002; 2013; 2017; Foucault 2005). A turn inward can be used as a fold to address the self (body and soul) and confront life, where the shelter (endoskeleton and exoskeleton) offers a connection that also may turn out toward the region, ecotone, the earth and the cosmos, following Serres (2008 subtitle) in ‘a philosophy of co-mingled bodies’ (Deleuze 1988ab; Deleuze and Guattari 1994). The recursive relations between living and inhabitation hold intrinsic value in and of themselves, at the same time as having generative
value in the process of realisation (Alexander 2003; Satchell 2016). These principles are considered in the combinatory logic of motion, generated by the earth and cosmos teaching the inhabitant to ‘face all directions and flow with tide of the seasons’ in their cycles of reproductive growth and organic development (Alexander 2003; Capra and Luisi 2014; Wilhem 1985; Ming-Dao 1992; Tzu 1997: 269, 270). The pace set for coasting through shacking-up allows the inhabitant to pay attention to themselves and to the solar and lunar cycles in the unfolding of the seasons (the mindful overlap of inner and outer worlds) in a similar manner of attention to the weather as a circumnavigation of the world by sail (Moitessier 1995). What is revealed in stages over the course of life is a sense of place and a sense of planet in relationship to one’s self that can be rightfully ascertained as belonging.

Using the shack as an instrument of composition requires tuning the purpose and manner of life of the inhabitant in synchronicity to the pitch of the confluence space, place and ecology. Kondo (2014: 217) makes an insightful connection between the psyche and the material circumstances of living arrangements when she says, ‘it is by putting one’s own house in order that one’s mindset is changed’. This principle provides a decisive opportunity to align your intentions for living and deliberate inhabitation, in a manner that releases the blockage of creative energy and sets the tone in your personal living space. In terms of shacking-up this may involve architectural adaptations, renovations and maintenance, while even more important adjustments can be made to the space by the inhabitant with a change of attitude and mental outlook. Everyone needs to consider periodically decluttering their possessions and become attentive to the thoughtful placement and artful use of furniture, as a means to reconfigure spaces in a manner that balances the use and aesthetics through the vibrancy of interior relations (Alexander 1979; Cache in Grosz 2008). Kondo (2014: 235) makes a bold claim based on her own experience and working with clients helping them begin to organise their own lives, ‘your real life begins after putting your house in order’. I am invoking the necessary poetics involved in bringing arrangements for life and intimacy with a place, into concert with the intentions of creative practice and well-being.

The intimacy with place under consideration here, also derives from the act of riding waves constituted from an on-going engagement with the particularities of a stretch of coast. This shacking-up is predicated upon proximity and access to surf spots, along with the fickle landforms, bottom contours, weathers, seasons and climatic conditions that turn these waters into waves. The manifest act of riding a wave, emblematic and indicative of a way of life that revolves around the pulse of the sea and the succour of the coast, notably for some against the pull of capitalism in so many ways (Evers 2004; Satchell 2008a; Satchell 2010a). A
‘topophilia’ people experience as embodied and affective, intuitive and even studied, lived contingently and played out from a limited scope of choices, chances and so often through a stubborn determination to make it happen (Bachelard 1994: 12; Evers 2010). The concentration of the coastal map I am speaking about is narrow, limited to a small stretch of coast and topographical features, nonetheless, from within the life-world opens out from the intricacy of fractal specificity alongshore, to the scale and dynamism of earth’s biosphere, as a planet in the swirling cosmos (Mandelbrot 1982; Satchell 2013; Ingold 2000; Stilgoe 1994). The particularities of a stretch of coast are traced from the place of habitation shacking-up affords to the surf spots one haunts.

The scope I have chosen is delimited by a mountain range, a group of islands, a series of headlands and beaches, and few small settlements, with a propitious and complex bio-climate. Remembering Nhat Hahn’s (2004: 89) penetrating thought, ‘you touch one thing deeply and everything is there’ in a manner that strikes a chord in my own experience. The place is steeped in the significance of thousands upon thousands of years of Aboriginal creation and care, although tarnished by two centuries of settler-cultures and their exploitation (Somerville and Perkins 2010). Against the critique of using such microscale, I contend the weather, climate, earth and cosmos inevitably opens any examination of place up to a sense of region and by extension planet, while there are also the cultural aspects that open on to wider considerations beyond the delimitation of place (Shaw 2013). The basic criteria for my interests revolve around; a place to surf, a place to live, a place to think, and a place to write as a means of documenting an ocean-based environmental philosophy.

The ambiguous house of my dreams came to me in the form of a long-term rental. The house (my part is the semi-attached hut above the roofline) goes by the name ‘Serenity’ situated on the northern beaches of Coffs Harbour, overlooking now as I write, the Moonee Nature Reserve, close to my favourite surf spot ‘Shelleys’. I am facing three key landmarks: Look-At-Me-Now Headland in the foreground, Mount Coramba on the south-western horizon, as Somerville and Perkins (2010) maintain in Gumbainggirr lore these are father and mother places respectively, and in the distance directly between, Split Solitary Island, the symbol and ground of a creation story binding all three with the Australian coastline (Somerville and Perkins 2010; Satchell 2013). The story is about two women who made the sea, they are two sisters who protest the advances and treatment of a fella who becomes jealous at a campfire dance, so the story goes. Using their yam digging-sticks to make sand and water one goes north and the other south tracing out the coastline until they meet together again where they began at Moonee Beach.
After they completed their circle of Australia, as we call it now, makin’ the sea and sand, they meet again at Moonee Beach and they swim out to the ocean and they crossed their yam sticks. An’ the place they cross them is called Split Solitary Island. If you look from a certain angle you’ll see it like crossed yam sticks. And from there, the sisters went up into the sky, up into a cluster we call Janagan. You’ll know it better as the Seven Sisters or Pleiades.


I am smitten with this storied place whose own mythology enshrines topographical writing with a creation cosmology of the sea and earth, joining place-making and place-writing. The story is deceptively sparse, although generates considerable substance upon contemplation. Lying awake in the soft morning light, I think about these two sisters, these two live-wires whose sketch of the coastline must overlap not unlike the outlines of the ebbing and flowing tides. Their mark-making set things in motion and brings things to life. The two yam sticks are crossed, doubling then as clap-sticks, brought together evoking sonorous incantation—in the manner of singing up the country (Rose 2011). Now from this certain angle that makes the island symbolic, the morphic resonance of their claps-sticks tunes into a frequency where the dreaming comes into focus and the coast into songlines (Sheldrake 1992; Somerville and Perkins 2010). Having used their sticks to shape an island-imaginary, they cross them and sign off. This too sparks their flight into the sky country, plugging themselves into the firmament of Pleiades—joining the earth and cosmos as points of origin and departure, with a cosmic sensibility to pass on in the story-telling.

Figure 21 A spell on Coramba

The power of these stories is the way they operate at the overlap between what appears
to us in existence and what is suggestive of the mysteries of our own consciousness and life. While some aspects do not make sense to the rational mind, the eco-poetics outflanks the science that now suggests the primordial elements of our origins are the remnants of forces furnaced in deep space that render us as the remains of evolved stardust (Kelly in Brockman 2013). This creation story is in keeping with the thought of a co-creative lifeworld, mine is a home-place for the activities of creative practice, a place devoted to reading, writing and art, as a space to think and observe that enjoys and builds upon a rich and colourful tradition. The story for me animates a lively and on-going engagement with place-making and place-writing (Somerville and Perkins 2010; Harrison 2013; Robertson 2013; Satchell 2010a). There is much to be gleaned at the intersection of the urge to inhabit and the one to find expression, in the combination of everyday and creative practices, particularly from those who have left their mark. It is an attractive notion locating yourself in a sweet-spot gained in the observance of a certain angle, with the intent purpose of paying attention to oneself and the surrounds, and in so doing becoming attuned to the character of the place infusing one’s broader sense of self and the world (Serres 2007).

I have found a spot where, give or take one vibration, moving a hair’s breadth in either direction causes the noises to become messages and the messages, noises. [...] I am on the saw’s teeth of the mountain, at the edges of noise. Not an echo, not at the centre of everything like a sonorous noise, but on the edges of messages, at the birth of noises. This erratic path follows the path of invention exactly. (Serres 2007: 67).

Serres’ (2007) erratic path of invention echoes the coastline of the creation story that loses none of its verve in the day to day world, where the commonplace and the ordinary instead yield wonder, ecstasy and intimacy with a life-world in all its richness. The appeal to an unconventional method imbues routine with improvisation and responsive experimentation, complimenting applied craft with artfulness and inspiration. The intention to read and write at the crossover between text and context is a deliberate attempt to fine-tune the faculties with living arrangements that breathe the lifeworld into the work. The work of the two sisters I see laid out before me along the beach, at the island and there in the firmament still shining makes my heart palpitate. The call to co-creation speaks to me of the work of eco-poetics, in dynamic and life affirming ways that remain as possibilities shimmering in the night.

4.4 The ferment of cosmic and ecological sensibilities

The dynamism of bringing the lifeworld into direct contact with creative practice relies on accessing the fertile matrix of relations that gives the work a life of its own. The corollary of
form and flow in interior spaces is evident when they operate effectively through the harmony of use and their usefulness to come to life in a palpable vibrancy (Unwin 1997). The affinity ‘diminutive spaces’ have with their setting can be affective and inspiring for expression when balanced with intent (Cline 1997: 99). I find a striking example in a photograph of the site location of the Boathouse residence of Dylan Thomas (cited in Field-Lewis 2012: 100; Thomas 2000) whose ‘wordsplashed hut’ is described in the ‘Poem on his Birthday’ as the ‘house on stilts high among the beaks and palaver birds’. Overlooking the Taf Estuary in South Wales, the modest space offers a widening vista that pours into the sea, anchoring a sensorium open to the kaleidoscopic nuance of changing weather patterns and atmospheres infused with coastal enchantment. The notion of words splashing off and onto the page, in an atmosphere so conducive to creative work becomes so much more plausible from within the ‘womb of space’ one has found to hold the chaos and volatility of the world at bay (Harris 1983: 28). In such a fold the writer finds as habitation, life is secure enough to allow the alchemy of creative work to ferment with cosmic and ecological sensibilities.

An underlying subtext to my work is to flesh-out connectedness with the more-than human world as a truce and tryst. I have come to understand that these deepest yearnings all existed in long-held traditions and practices that only necessitated me to seek to make them manifest in my own everyday life (Thoreau 1987; hooks 1990; Whyte 2003). Making the ecological connection between house-holding and getting a house in order, feeds into the broader meaning of the Greek oikos as the knowledge of house-holding and what a house is meant to do. By engaging in home-making one finds purpose in practicality and place (Moore 1996). The notion of caring and being cared for I find comes about in the dailiness of life as a reciprocation of belonging, attending to the details by noticing the little things in the manner of a grateful appreciation (hooks 1995). The elementary principles of the good life are all within the grasp of ordinary people, wherein the life-world responds to their honest labour of love (Serres 2012). Returning to the simplicity of home-making and house-holding provides a sanctuary at the threshold of the profound depth of the more-than human world.

The poetics of this vernacular ecology are ontological in design, relying upon the most basic means of keeping a roof over one’s head and to be able to walk freely in open spaces. The art of living according to Daumal (1992: 177) ‘is taken to mean knowledge realised in action’ that awakens a conversation and correspondence with the life-world through living. Simple measures such as walking, swimming, snorkelling and surfing each offer the space of encounter where ‘the soul prospers in an environment that is concrete, particular and vernacular. It feeds on the details of life, on its variety, its quirks and its idiosyncrasies’
In terms of a vernacular ecology this means becoming more aware of being in a more-than human world that is responsive and alive (Spretnak 1999; Brydon 2010; Bendiktsson and Lund 2010). A panoply of events, encounters, happenstances and incidences, attach themselves to that engagement between the world and self as the ecological dimension of time and space (Hau’ofa 2008). In the mutual causality of a life-world, a complex and enriching emplacement occurs within the day-to-day surrounds and the movement through the seasons, over a significant duration of time. Place attachments form in dynamic and ordinary ways, where these are maintained with care and sustained attention trained on the correspondence that transpires through a closer relationship (Mathews 2005; Moore 1996).

The potential stored in ordinary things is a network of transfers and relays. Fleeting and amorphous, it lives as a residue or resonance in an emergent assemblage of disparate forms and realms of life. Yet it can be as palpable as a physical trace. Potentiality is a thing immanent to fragments of sensory experience and dreams of presence. A layer, or layering to the ordinary, it engenders attachments or systems of investment in the unfolding of things. (Stewart 2007: 21)

These attachments cohere in a complex network of significance as the inflected prisms of experience crosshatched in the minutia of everyday life. I have come to understand that the daily round is latent with deeper mysteries and presences that call forth a heightened awareness with incidents akin to dreams that deserve further contemplation (King 1985). In the location around where you live, the ease of coming and going, is pared back comfortably to bring a sense of the journey and the destination into creative tension with a simple means of gratification.

The significance of home and home-place as a site for personal development and self-realisation is not often discussed. In the developed world people find somewhere to live through a range of situational and circumstantial aspects that often occur tangentially such as finding a job, going somewhere to study, meeting someone, finding a place to rent or somewhere affordable to purchase. To be drawn to a location or even a site within in an area can be thought of in rational terms but there are also the quirks of fate that are usually understood more clearly in hindsight (Moore 1996). Bode (1993: 5) provides this insight, ‘I suspect there are destinations that call to us from a secret place within ourselves and we head for them instinctively’. The secret place within us, not as a decision-making centre but as a yearning for a particular place, should ostensibly find a match somewhere in the lifeworld (hooks 1990; 1995). Imagine to what extent this yearning occurs for people tied to their ancestral lands (Somerville and Perkins 2010; Nelson 1983; Goodyear-Ka‘pōpua et al. 2014;
Kupihea 2005). There remains an ethical responsibility to find a place and live well, not just for our own sake but as a vital part of the broader more-than human world.

The experience of becoming adapted to a new place or finding a suitable climate (whether hot or cold) suggests something in terms of belonging evident in the robust ability people display to belong. This is not to say that all decision-making is suspended, or all habitation is fated by intuition, on the contrary efforts must be made to identify somewhere suited to the soulful act of inhabitation, with the necessary and desirable elements a person, group or family requires (despite all sorts of prohibitive factors and obstacles), acknowledging that a growing number of the world’s population are undergoing voluntary or forced migration in need of empathy and care (Hillman 1996; hooks 1995). As discussed previously throughout the world there are many people desperately trying to hold on to locations as they are being forced from them because of the pressure of economics, hardship and or blatant dispossession by military forces. I maintain the principles of frugality and skill in householding are valuable ways of overcoming hardship and impoverishment that may lead to a full and meaningful life—recognising this is no excuse for the brute ignorance and churlish disregard that is writ large in organised politics and economics toward the plight of many people (Cline 1997). Moreover, frugality and the simple means of living well do serve as an indictment on the extravagant displays of wealth and conspicuous consumption that have become synonymous with the modern world. A place where you can commit to your own self-development, community and the care of the surrounding environment is something to cherish.

These social, cultural and economic issues are indeed spatial problematics that require ingenious spatial practices. There is evidence of grassroots movements promoting both character and acuity—illustrated in the recent revival of phenomena such as the slow and small movements of ordinary culture (De Certeau 1984; Lefebvre 1991; Rose 2013; Schumacher 1993; Williams 1989). Bode (1993: 117) invokes this beautifully: ‘What matters at this precious moment is what always mattered: the dailiness of life. Everything significant is small and slow’. The challenge of giving place relations and place attachments the means of conveying an ecological sensibility remains in the form of encounter and engagement with the life-world, for example the affective dimension of a welcome to country and the appropriate response of respect and reverence displayed toward the living world. Making the claim of home-place is therefore a matter of some delicacy and responsibility, for those alert to the significance of the shared claims of diverse inhabitants including living organisms (Deleuze and Guattari 1994; hooks 1990; Hau’ofa 2008).
Furthermore, we must simultaneously take into account two aspects of the territory: it not only ensures and regulates the coexistence of its members of the same species by keeping them apart but makes the possible coexistence of a maximum number of different species in the same milieu by specialising them.

(Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 320)

The inclusive character of these affective bonds manifest in less possessive terms in accordance with protocols formulated for co-existence.

The notion of site sensitivity might be thought of at a multiscalar level that identifies place as multi-dimensional. Harrison (2008) poses the question ‘How do poets build houses?’ offering a thoughtful discussion considering the importance of site sensitivity, promoting philosophical insight concerning the siting of the building in the locale, including aesthetics, amenity, environmental and cybernetic issues, as well as those of permanence and transience.

Poetry builds a house out of consciousness. But clearly there is a tension between a deep-seated senses of residency and the presence of ruins. To understand the future poetics of a site will be to see it always in a state of ruin, whether abandoned, dismantled or unfinished—as a pile of tumbled stones, perhaps, or as an only partly historical awareness of originary being. There is no way through this antinomy.

Renewing the site does not finish it or complete it or elaborate a time-proof structure: rather, an act of renewal prepares the opening for other such acts which will be necessary over time.

Harrison (2008: 222)

The evocation of futurity and renewal is made delicate as an approach to place-making mindful of a legacy that remains incomplete and must be passed on. Although this touches on the matter of planning to some extent, the work of assiduous sensitivity is foregrounded, giving agency to the bio-climatic properties and how best to utilise the environmental affordances through position, the elaboration of structure and the use of appropriate sustainable technology, never entirely definitive remaining as an on-going work (Ingold 2000). Ironically to some degree vernacular architecture leads in these efforts, while the assumption associated with environmental design is that it is prohibitive in terms of cost (Alexander 1979; Coch 1998). There is an argument in the context of the severity of climate change for more agile and impermanent adaptations of site sensitivity, attuned to climatic patterns and variations. Robin (2012: 278) discusses the value of ‘seasonal thinking’ within the context of Australia, the tension between a changing climate (with unpredictability) and an established history of nomadic practice among Aboriginal people, displaying the resilience of transient responses to changing conditions. In the face of fire hazards, availability of water, extreme weather events, and unpredictable economic conditions, there is no choice but to begin to think them through and act in adaptive ways—for example, housing as semi-
permanent assemblages moves in this direction. Making housing with a smaller and softer ecological imprint, with a design ethos of mobility, may become a wise option that allows people to take advantage of hitherto unrealised opportunity to mitigate impending or future risk. For propertied classes and those with more modest land ownership and development credentials, thinking differently about inhabitation may include seeing their role in allowing for a more communal but elegant privacy, as people find and build modest dwellings by more effectively using space for quasi-kibbutzim (Hvattum 2006). The evaluation of a site that considers the range of factors impinging upon the design and impact of any construction is best seen in dialogical terms with the confluence of space, place and ecology.

There is a transformative moment that occurs in the act of location, whether in a temporary site for camping, or taking up residence somewhere permanently. Thoreau (1983: 125 my emphasis) makes this impressive point in the consideration of a site: ‘Wherever I sat, there I might live, and the landscape radiated from me accordingly’. The connection this implies is interesting in terms of the way the surrounds become charged to your senses and your imagination, as well as you becoming-receptive to the animation and sentience of the place. I take this to be onto-poetic and the formative beginning of a more summative poetics of a vernacular ecology (Satchell 2013). ‘In sensing, both self and world unfold simultaneously for the sensing subject; the sensing being experiences himself and the world, himself in the world, himself with the world’ (Straus cited in Grosz 2008: 8). In this manner the architecture and geography experienced affectively through the senses and by the act of attention allows the burgeoning of an ecological sensibility (Rodaway 2002; Abram 1996; Satchell 2008a; Serres 2008; 2011a; 2012; Harrison 2013). The connectivity of an affective engagement and identification with a place provides all manner of touchstones for place attachment—these too enacted across the solar and lunar rhythms of day and night, along with seasonal adjustments and changes of varied vibrancy and hue. You become aware of the location as a vibrant place of habitation of all manner of species. In the complex entanglements one experiences with significant others including landforms and significant sites, lived experience becomes archival enshrined in the imagination, memory and place (Van Dooren 2016; Satchell 2010a). The registration of more-than human lifeways enriches participation in the biotic neighbourhood contributing to a more-than human politics of location.

While in many respects a habitation offers a sense of stability, this might be more effectively conceptualised as a purchase upon the fluidity of the day-to-day, and the requisite agency and responsiveness of an investment bodily in place—by being able to focus on the
singularity of a peculiar life-world and even greater lucidity toward one’s own inner-world. There is a mindful and embodied awareness that develops from the whirling dervish of the atmosphere, the turn of the earth and its revolutions around the sun in relation to familiar and proximate landmarks, not in a giddying manner but a subtler sense of movement as flux and flow, of centripetal and centrifugal motions and tensions in the sphere of an unfolding life-world (Burroughs et al 2007; Ingold 2000). There are some obvious structures as previously mentioned devoted to such endeavours, such as observatories and famous astronomically inclined buildings, whose chief purpose is to map celestial wonders and enigmas, and many more of humbler but no more insincere desires (bird and animal hides, weather stations, artists and writer’s retreats, hermitages, monastic cells, shrines and so on)—and yet even each dreamer in their sleep is both astronomer and seer (Turner 1999; Lynes and Bowman 2001; Michaud 2004; Robertson 2003). While the surroundings of a place of habitation offer a complex web of passageways to-and-fro, in-and-between, they become thicker in texture and detail over time, this occurs in a personal but still social, cultural and ecological manner, as an interactive and interpretive mapping, moored contingently in a place to live or at least stay, in the temporary span of days, months, seasons, years and stages of life (Serres 2008; Alexander et al. 1977). So even though the landscape may radiate out, there is a sense of the earth and cosmos infusing the place of habitation, so secured (however contemporaneously), filtered in through the form and structure of the architecture. The deliberative act of inhabitation allows a person to activate visceral affordances in the fabric and form of the architecture resonant with the poetics of a vernacular ecology.

4.5 Spaces of ingenuity

“Inhabiting” does not only mean living within. It means occupying—infusing a particular site with our presence, and not only with our activities and physical possessions but also with our aspirations and dreams.

(Rybczynski 1989: 171)

For most people a house, home, albeit a shack meets certain necessities with ease, but some inhabitants discover the cherished space as being latent with creative power. The transformative potential of inhabitation relates to the embodiment of space and structure that exemplifies the indwelling qualities, with heightened perceptual powers and their deliberate use for explicit purposes (Unwin 1997; Deleuze and Guattari 1994; Serres 2008). This is not to anthropomorphise the house, but rather to consider the way the materiality and embodiment of inhabitation resonate and co-mingle (as energy and matter), to amplify the affective and
communicative engagement of ontopoetics, in co-mingled creativity that I claim to be genius or to at least qualify as ingenious (Bennett 2010; Serres 2008; 2011). The framing of the box-like multiplex structure, while cubical, is geometrically complex; even in the simplest forms there are multi-faceted and dynamic interactions between inside and outside and with energy and matter that invert exchanges through a range of design features and relationships, door/threshold, window/wall, roof-ceiling/foundation-floor/hallway-rooms and so on that may be managed and performed through a sensate and practical application (Cache 1995; Grosz 2008). This offers some truly marvellous qualities for those whose indwelling becomes a means of soulful inhabitation that I intend to elaborate upon, but by no means expect to exhaust in terms of possibility and cleverness of use.

In a companionable and symbiotic relationship, house and house-holder/shack and shack-dweller, become each reliant upon one another, to support and uphold a mutual vigour and well-being. The house is a vessel for the body that relies upon indwelling and maintenance to retain its integrity and usefulness for habitation. The most fundamental element of design for habitation is the shell that works at the intersection of inside and outside, specific to the needs and comforts of the body, within and without the structure and space of the building. Serres (2008: 148) refers to the house rhapsodically as constructing an ‘orthopaedic sensorium’, allowing consideration for the way the muscular-skeletal form of the body ostensibly luxuriates, dilates and contracts through the senses in the confines and space of flows a dwelling affords. The folding of outside and inside is most agreeable for the resident when realised through the modulation, filtration and the utility of air, light, shade, dark, heat, cold, noise and sound, attuned to various activities, moods, weathers and events (Coch 1998). The house, as skilfully handled as a boat, sails through the archipelagos of everyday life. What Serres (1995c: 70) deems as adventure in his exploration of the false separation of the sciences, applies to the in-dwelling of houses riding out the weathers of exposure.

This is why I have compared them to the Northwest Passage ... with shores, islands, and fractal ice floes. Between the hard sciences and the so-called human sciences the passage resembles a jagged shore, sprinkled with ice, and variable ... It’s more fractal than simple. Less a juncture under control than an adventure to be had. (Serres 1995c: 70)

This follows in an analogous way through the ‘Northwest Passage’ of life, ready at once to shelter in a quiet cove or take to the open sea, embarking upon adventures that are intellectual and literal, thus people may live purposefully constructing the creative life (Moitessier 1995).
As Bode (1993: 2) declares ‘to sail a boat is to negotiate life’ (not a matter at all reliant on ostentatiousness or size) as it is to possess a house through living. Done effectively a house too negotiates life, by providing a place of rest, gentle repose, recreation and creativity, acting both as exoskeleton and endoskeleton, an internal and external means of strength and support (Deleuze and Guattari 1994). The ‘natural contract’ between the house and home of vernacular ecology makes peace, providing a space of healing, recovery and recollection within and between, one’s ancestors, descendants, kinship networks and co-habiting species, enshrining an accord with the earth and the cosmos (Serres 1995b see title; hooks 1990; Harrison 2003; Eliade 1972). The indwelling qualities of reverence, respect and awe both quietly and steadily turn the place of residence into a shrine.

![Dreams linger in the shadow play where fabric and foliage overlap](image)

**Figure 22**

Veneration long lost returns in the Anthropocene and becomes a critical site for the space of healing, as one undergoes the work of witness and desires to be a healer of places. Such a ‘space of transformation’ in the hermetic tradition works upon the indweller but no less upon the place of dwelling, no matter how ordinary or humble it at first may appear (Serres 2007: 71; Ramey 2012). The genius of an effective shack for the shack-dweller is ‘that it can extract from the whirling and experientially overwhelming chaos that is nature, materiality, and their immanent forces those elements, substances or processes it requires’ from the basic necessities to the full range of psychic, spiritual and ecological comforts, all
the elements that amply provide for a life of devotion (Grosz 2008: 6). In Thoreau’s (1983) delimited endeavour the desire to confront life in its immediacy with the natural elements and the simplicity of living well relies upon a hut as a conduit between the earth and cosmos as well as to house his aspirations and dreams—he opines at one point on the height of the ceiling wondering whether it should have been higher to allow his thoughts more ample room to gather (Bachelard 1994). Cline (1997: 95 original emphasis) uses reflections on hut living to thoughtfully consider how to regain the ‘directly lived’ amidst the surfeit of mass culture. The primitive hut speaks to the origins of architecture whose basic elements and principles of truthfulness, simplicity and naturality are the touchstones of architectural renewal, necessary in the contemporary context as a reimagining of the demands of capitalism and the impost of the so-called advances of civilisation, in a society dominated by consumption and driven by information technology (Rykwert 1981). In the modest reclamation of cultural and vernacular responses to place-identification and existential and ecological crisis, people may find the requisite catalysts to restore creativity and joy to the core of their everyday life (Kluten-Ćulafić 2010; Jodidio 2012; Vesely 2006; Gibson et al. 2015). Again, Robertson (2003: 179) picks up on the thread pleasure weaves with inspiration, ‘we play house in shacks’, as return to the vestiges of animality and ludic delight—‘as well as horse, having an instinct for it’, thus beginning afresh a return to the poetics of vernacular ecology that flows from interaction with the life-world (Thoreau cited in Robertson 2003: 179; Game 2001; Nhat Hahn 1987). As these transformations occur in the burgeoning of complex forms of personhood, the healing integral to recovery mark these place-relations with a return to the spirit and redemptive healing of more-than human selves and places.

Even within the austerity of a shack the outer structure allows for the inner structure and furniture to be practical through literal and symbolic creativity that provide ingenious capabilities for the body and soul. Thoreau (1984: 125) equates his dwelling with a ‘seat’ […] ‘better if a country seat’ and Montaigne (1958: 263) describes his library and study as ‘my throne’. For the shack-dweller the more appropriate metaphor might be a cushion or for the solitary in retreat, a footstool in reverence for the divine presence sought-after and invoked. Moreover, there are strong links between modest dwelling and spirituality in various cultures and traditions that deserve mention. Rykwert’s (1981) study of architectural history illuminates the varied origins of the primitive hut and their connection to the larger more monumental structures of temples, to the humbler structures of spiritual exercises—from the perspectives of a range of traditions, both in the East and West. These show common ground in providing comfort and security, and the requisite privacy for sustained contemplation and
creative practice, along with the facility for modest social and communal participation. Cache (cited in Grosz 2008: 15) makes the point that furniture is the ‘architecture of architecture’. Therefore, the interior is a complex of spaces that provides people with the means of organisation, comfort and ambience to be themselves: for a family this means both co-operation and vulnerability (Rybczynski 1989). Thoughtful consideration of the interior is paramount if these spaces are to produce shelter, comfort, security, quiet, relaxation, contemplation and concentration—the body and senses need a certain ambience to be able to adequately soften and appear in their nakedness without fear of ridicule or the violation of privacy (Cache 1995). At this intersection the body connects the tactile and kinaesthetic elements with more visceral aspects of inhabitation that finds amplitude in the imagination through canny use.

The interior of these compact spaces relies upon a delicate balance of proportion, space and form that brings things to life for the inhabitant, as much as the inhabitant brings to life their habitation. Frank Lloyd-Wright (1995:127) citing Lao Tzu makes the point, ‘the reality of the room was to be found in the space enclosed by the roof and the walls, not in the roof and walls themselves’. Lao Tzu (1991) adds to the analogy the hub of a wheel as the space of a void to harness energy, inferring the usefulness of the hub of the interior around which existence and practice may turn. The floor space and the ceiling height, the number of light-bearing windows, entrances, passageways and the furniture, all integrated in a space adapted to their utility, amenity and aesthetic, sets the scene to play out and manage life’s vagaries with precious existence (Alexander et al. 1977; Wright 1995; Stewart 1996). The windows from the outside give a building faciality, while from the inside they offer the shack-dweller optical effects, these can be either microscopic or telescopic—nonetheless they are ‘phototropic’ providing a montage of snapshots, ideally of an organic character providing natural elements from water, plants, the sky and garden to the sought after panoramic views of land and seascapes, both promoting healing and well-being (Alexander cited in Pollan 2008: 261; Cline 1997; Mavor 2013; Sternberg 2009). In some sense then, the dweller becomes the ‘thinking eye’ of the place of habitation whose lenses illuminate and invite thought to wander by exploring detail and depth of field (Rybczynski 1989; Klee 1992b). The gaze trained both inwardly and outwardly as an extra-sensory register of colour, texture and affect, weighs the delicate balance of motion and stasis, of noise and sound, smell and touch, working contemplatively with memory, reverie and the imagination (Klee 1992c). The delicate balance of soulful inhabitation infers upon the ingenious use of space the signature of a distinctive art of living.
4.6 Transformative thresholds

‘Ike ‘ia no ka loea I ke kuahu
An expert is recognised by the altar he builds

(Provenzano 2001 np)

There is a wonderful process to becoming acquainted to a place through inhabitation that takes considerable time and focused attention. My shack sits on stilts facing south with east/west ends on the building. What this means is that the solar and lunar path arcs over the length of the building falling into the western horizon in a manner that proceeds back and forth in a specific range over the course of the year. Mount Coramba for me has become a pivotal point in witnessing this journey of both the afternoon sun where for a few short days of the year the paths align with its peak. The mountain stands out on the horizon in a manner soliciting dialogue, as do most solitary peaks whose presence are thought to speak of immortality, the kind of immortality that witnesses the passing generations linked together in its shadows, while my shack also speaks back from the fragility of mortality, keeping its inevitability temporarily in abeyance (Satchell and Shannon 2013; Somerville and Perkins 2010; Connolly 2013). Fujiwara no Teika (cited in Hirshfield 1998: 100) urges such resolve: ‘Look past the fragile blossoms, / past crimson leaves— / a thatched hut stands / by an inlet, / swallowed in autumn dusk’ composed in its simplicity. The setting of the western sun speaks of a preparedness for death, as a ‘leave-taking’ of this world, whose lessons are set out day-to-day, upon the change of seasons and stages of life (Marsden 2008, Hesse 1972: 414).
We must prepare for parting and leave-taking / Or else remain the slaves of permanence. Even the hour of death may send / Us speeding on to fresh and newer spaces, / And life may summon us to newer races. /So be it heart: bid farewell without end.

(Hesse1972: 414).

The process of inhabitation therefore not only enriches engagement to a place but also acts as the preparation for further contingency, other places, travels and metaphysical realisation.

The rising sun comes over the shoulder of the headland so to speak from the lee of the hill and the front foreshore. The orientation to the back-beach is consequently back-the-front from the much-vaulted real estate aspirations of the north-easterly aspect, although this suits my inclinations offering a sweeping view of the southern foreshore down the coastline heading south from this vantage point. Nestled over the back-end of a magnificent headland daylight comes creeping over the hill as a ‘precious gift’ to spend thoughtfully upon life itself (Nhat Hahn 1991: 5). The softness of the morning light tempered by the weather and the sound of the stirring world still waking, greets me in this sanctuary with good fortune. The bed, to my way of thinking, is the centre of gravity for the life of the mind, the wealth of the soul and the recuperation of the body. Mine acts as a refuge and still affords a vantage point, both day and night, for ascertaining the wind, the state of the ocean, the rise and fall of the clouds, the course of the moon, sun and even the stars, on the edge of a fold for turning inward or outward. Whether I am asleep or awake, reading, in quiet reverie or meditation, dreaming or unconscious, the bed serves to enable a restorative and therapeutic service at the bedrock of my life (Perec 1997). As a space housing such laudable aspirations the bedroom needs proportion, organisation and a comfortable flow of energy between light, air-flow, warmth and cool. I am able to delight in the pleasure of the view from my bed with the luxury of not needing any curtains, to even bathe in the comfort of the soft light of the waxing moon as it sinks behind the escarpment in the early morning hours.

My bed is the centrepiece of a personal library whose shelves line the walls, encompassing me in their quiet repose—each of whom I know personally, in varying degrees of grasp and familiarity, each book a vicarious means of acquaintance with personality, character and thought. The worth of the act of writing becomes evident in the appreciation of someone else whose thoughts have been carefully laid out awaiting the act of reading (Thoreau 1987; De Certeau 1984; Bachelard 1994). My working desk and dining table are at each end of an adjoining enclosed deck area facing the view with a row of four old cinema chairs that each offer a place for work and relaxation: drawing, painting, writing or playing an instrument. There is room enough to walk freely in the manner Montainge (1958) considered
as requisite for his own reclusive taste. A mat for yoga and meditation, with a central space of open timber floor for Tai Chi adjacent a mirror to study the poses and correct posture. It took some time to get things in their rightful place and order given my archival impulses—of knowing everything in its place, and the way each served one another’s purpose in the scheme of things (Derrida 1996). Getting the house in order worked wonders, as did adopting a Shinto etiquette of appreciation and dialogue with the modest dwelling and my possessions. I found that by honouring the life-force (energy) in every object and form that this brought the dwelling and my thoughts into a new realm of vitality I had hitherto not known but yearned for (Kondo 2014). The idea of a shack as a shrine points towards the relationship between the significance of place, textual endeavours, and those of the poetics of vernacular ecology.

The idea of the shrine is widespread and prevalent both in religious and secular contexts but remains enigmatic in the purposes of the everyday life of solitaries or adepts, who live ordinary lives without any outward show of spirituality. There are strong correlations with the collection of texts, often thought to be sacred or important writings to consider as spiritual instructions and exercises. Nonetheless, this also refers to the collection of objects or even a space for contemplation or votive ritual—this too could include reading, prayer or writing poetry (Kakuzo 2013). The shrine for veneration in the simplest form might be a box or case, in the Latin scrinium and Old French escrin, that may go beyond the keeping of books to the housing of the remains of venerated figures or family members, redolent with the thought of one’s own body housing the soul or the soul housing the body (Shrine 2016). In a broader sense, the cabinet of curiosities can be considered as enshrining (enclosing) unusual items of interest, an anticipation of the architectural development of museums (the shrine of the muses) and harking back to earlier keeping places, of shaman and animistic practice (Cline 1997; Griffiths 1996; Abraham et al. 2011). I have become aware these impulses take various forms across cultures that associate the place of veneration in the origins of architecture with strong ties with trees, forests and groves, even grottos, caves and other landforms such as mountains or lakes (Satchell 2013; Somerville and Perkins 2010). In these places various objects can be kept safe, rituals enacted, spirits entreated, or the qualities seen in the materiality of earthly forms such as a lake or a mountain can be embodied through veneration.

The shrine I am invoking as a shack is more akin to the makeshift tabernacle of the festival than the temple, more suited to personal devotion than communal worship, more often remote or secreted in a secluded place, even as arenas in the home discreetly kept and serviced. A kuahu, altar not unlike a what-not except for the express intention, incorporates
family heirlooms, photographs or items of special significance that provide a palpable connection to one’s ancestors, their practices and places of origin or the special meanings associated with the vernacular ecology of a chosen place (Kupihea 2001: 239). No matter to me whether they are simple or non-descript, what counts is the sentiment because they provide careful devotion a threshold between the earth and cosmos (Rykwert 1993; Deleuze 1993). The same reverence may be applied to specific working spaces devoted to thought, craft or prayerful application using artefacts with symbolic creativity for inspiration. The architecture within the architecture of a shrine and the altar can be seen to be a model whose elements may be incorporated into an existing structure or elaborated into a purpose-built space, as the site for reverence, contemplation and scholarship.

The notion of scholarship traces a link back to the medieval scriptorium, literally a place for writing usually envisaged in art history, as a room adjacent to the library. The monastic cell or hermitage for copying manuscripts provides a point of reference, as in the celebrated figurative depiction of ‘St. Jerome in his study’ by Albrecht Dürer (cited in Rybczynski 1987: 14). Some of these early acts of dedicated writing by monks were accepted as spiritual exercises, in and of themselves, while also contributing as service to the production of manuscripts and books for exchange. The dedication of their example speaks of the preparatory phase in the ambition of writing designed to inculcate the necessary labour and rigour expected of the vocation. Furthermore, the larger scriptoriums were often the site of communal endeavours and scriptoria were ostensibly publishing houses (Gameson 2012). These spaces were furnished with places for books and desks for both reading and writing, along with the supplementary equipment to undertake the work. The rooms and the fenestration of the windows were designed to provide adequate light in a time before electricity, within diminutive spaces in the sense of being cloistered.

This relationship between furniture and architecture also applies to more contemporary aspirations of a writing place. Pollan (2008) backgrounds his own quest for a place devoted to writing by making the connection between the bedroom furniture of the writing desk in the Renaissance. He draws attention to the evolution of the locked writing desk as a means of book-keeping and security for important documents that transitioned into a room styled on the writing desk writ large; the study (Italian studiolo) (Pollan 2008; Cline 1997). So, styled on the wooden box or the locked writing desk, the finished, wood-panelled, private study and library became synonymous with the cultivation of the self and the personal domain of the male (Pollan 2008). Virginia Woolf (1989) notably offered a telling rejoinder to this gender inequality with her own criteria for the profession of writing for women. In later
life, Woolf replaced her writing room in the residence of Monk’s House in Rodmell, East Essex, with a small purpose-built writing lodge, placed in a quiet place of the garden with a commanding view. She described the modest dwelling as ‘after the fashion of a mongrel who wins your heart’, both devoted to writing and on occasion as a place to relax with friends in the outdoors (Field-Lewis 2012: 108). A place devoted to spiritual purposes, study and writing is a compelling idea, particularly one that combines the personal library, the study and the bedroom with a reclusive hideaway, although one not adverse to conviviality with all manner of species that conjures up some distinct possibilities for environmental philosophy.

The brilliance of the shack as a thinking space for the inhabitant is experienced in the concentration of thought and feeling enacted by the imagination and the senses—that allows for focused reception and expression. The shell of the dwelling is not unlike the skull that houses and centralises the brain in connective openness with the forces of the earth and cosmos (Serres 2008).

The house functions as a space of transformation where forces are calmed, like a high energy filter or converter. […] In such a house, the philosopher writes and thinks and perceives. Inside. […] Second skin, enlarging our sensorium.

(Serres 2008: 146-147)

My one bedroom-shack is a wood-panelled library with the mystique of an enlarged Aeolian music box. The sound of the ocean brought by a violent wind can play upon the fenestration of the windows with slight adjustments to become like the celestial anthems of Sufi chants—in quieter moments the murmur of the sea just whispering the divine (Mahfouz 1997; Serres 1995a). Quietly reading at night or woken in a half-sleep, I hear the angels of the restless storm-tossed sea in the howling wind. Day-in-day-out, complex layers of birdsong surround me, while the ringing percussion of insects and the intermittent guttural articulation of frogs or from kangaroos punctuates the intensified silence that cannot be quieted except upon sleep. The book-lined shelves act as a pipe-organ for the imagination, each placed in an orchestration of ideas awaiting use, the return to familiar motifs or the revelatory wonder of new combinations from within timeworn refrains (Deleuze 1993; Deleuze and Guattari 1987). The distance between things (island, sea and mountain—self and world) is altered by the heightening of perceptual powers rendering things close or at a cool remove from a fabric woven of synaesthesia (Serres 1997; 2011a). Time loses the formality of lineal measurement by melding together moments of different origins into the simultaneous freshness of a revivified experience of a deeper permanence (Serres 1995d; Nhat Hahn 1991; Rovelli 2018). Touching upon the seamless fit between inhabitation and habitation, as tenuous as this may
seem amid the cycles of ceaseless change from day-to-day, a state of unassuming grace rests to such an extent that it only requires regaining consciousness each morning.

The illumination of thought that occurs at these transformative thresholds still requires the everyday practice of ordinary life that remains open to learning to live well. Frank Lloyd-Wright (1995) uses the notion of the house as a lantern illuminated by fenestration, this too extends to the fenestration of thought and to a broader sensorium and metaphysics conducted with materiality, space and inhabitation (Serres 1995d). Serres (1995d) discusses the metaphysics of noise as a new object of philosophy, here the lantern of the dwelling acts also as an instrument with enhanced scopic abilities and extra-sensory aurality—of illumination in the widest sense. These indwelling qualities are well-known to mystics and creatives down through the ages in the hermetic tradition and are not lost but rather await their owners awakening (Khan 1999). The poetics of trained thought derives from the depths of listening, of moments of onto-poetic waiting, accompanied also by responding with knowing intimations from one’s own hoard of inner mysteries (Mathews 2007). What compels this thinking? —the poetries of lives lived in their own immediacy and the immediacy of the world they inhabit. In some of the books that line my shelves the wisdom of the ages shines out from illuminating thought with examples of simple and efficacious life (Tzu 2006; Nelson 1991; Næss 1989; Moore 1996; Moitessier 1995; Low 2014 just a few). The multi-species inhabitants with whom I live show me the way into the more-than human world by example, going about their affairs in a play of existence that in most respects affirms the quiet and simple life (Rose 2007). At this threshold of transformation, the sort of person I aspire to become is less complicated and not as distant from my own experience.

4.7 Co-creation through inhabitation

By contemplating the forms existing in the heavens we come to understand time and its changing demands. Through contemplation of the forms existing in human society it becomes possible to shape the world.

(Wilhelm 1985: 91)

To conclude this chapter, I want to illustrate my final thought around what might be figured as the realisation of the imagination in the embodiment of the good life. The notion of shacking-up turns upon the way everyday practice through inhabitation offers people the straightforward entrance into the interiority of a complex lifeworld. Architecture contains a strategic location to think this through and act upon certain principles in a practical manner.
The effort of inhabitation, in a formative sense, is rewarded with the acquisition of the sweet spot, the certain angle and perspective on things that are alive to potential and fecund with imaginative lifeways. The ferment of cosmic and ecological sensibilities bubbles up through a thoughtful attention to the act of living that is engaged in the creative tension of indoors and outdoors. The spaces of intimacy enjoined by inhabitation provide a nourishing climate for creative practice and well-being. They open onto transformative thresholds between the earth and the cosmos, the self and the world that are co-extensive with the embodiment of a way of life that ostensibly contributes to self-realisation and the terms of peace with an otherwise troubled world. The intention of self-cultivation and the study of the natural elements as a way of life provide the fertile means to participate in co-creation through inhabitation.

Co-creation in this sense means a form of creativity in a recursive relationship to the natural elements that supports a more-than human life and promotes the poetics of a vernacular ecology. In this chapter the suite of ideas discussed have been presented as the prospect for transformation that proceeds through the stages of life to become a part of a more enduring legacy enshrined in place. The satisfaction a person derives from these deeper set of values in keeping with a peaceful co-existence is manifest in the intimate relations that transpire with a complex life-world. The accumulative effect of living well cannot be underestimated as a decisive factor once a certain momentum has accrued. The ecological principles offered at the level of everyday life have been shown to apply to the ordinary and commonplace of existence at the same time as being dedicated to their wider application. Shacking-up provides the basis to partake of numerous pleasurable and meaningful pursuits such as beachcombing offered here as a suggestive metaphor to consider blue eco-poetics and continue on.
Chapter 5 Beachcombing: Oceanic reverie and liminality

I saw the drifting cells of the early seas from which all life, including our own, has arisen. The salt of those ancient seas is in our blood, its lime is in our bones. Every time we walk along a beach some ancient urge disturbs us, so that we find ourselves shedding our shoes and garments or scavenging among seaweed and whitened timber like homesick refugees of a long war.

(Eisley 2016: 277)

The shelter of the shoreline and its isolated crags provides a complimentary extension of the sanctuary of the home, despite the fraught scenarios of the Anthropocene. The freedom the beachcomber enjoys wandering in an unencumbered, unprogrammed and random manner, offers the necessary ground for a particular brand of eco-cosmopolitanism to find immediate expression in a substantive form that is open to day-by-day development. As a means of self-cultivation and intellectual freedom, beachcombing entertains a rich palette of everyday practices. The form of these excursions is amenable to repetition, improvisation and contingency. They may be as brief or protracted as you please. The routine of the daily walk can be augmented with a range of interests, while the pace and duration of each are open to interpretation. The deceptive opacity of these associated activities gives the beachcomber anonymity and a playful arena for experimentation with thought and the imagination. Encounters with more-than human others advance a relation ontology that contributes to complex notions of personhood. This pairing of home and place, as home-place, relies upon the cultivation of multi-species kinship, where place-sensitivities attend to modes of existence empathic with co-habitation among more-than human others, in the vibrancy of an active life-world—a conviviality of trans-species networks if you will.

In this chapter, I take the rich potentiality of an oceanic consciousness as a point of departure to build upon creative practice and place-making toward a blue eco-poetics. This is aligned to the work of a cryptographer whose beachcombing seeks to work with the atmosphere and materiality of the coastline to tell stories and relate ideas about emergent modes of existence to counter ecological crisis, seeking ways to promote a flourishing life-world from the ravaged remains. The poetics are steeped in incantatory repetition and difference that formulate a heightened consciousness and a sense of the sacred from the self-similarity of the topography and weather, following a rhythmicity attuned to the ebb and flow of the tide, the phases of the moon, the turn of the seasons and the inter-related courses of planets in the cosmos. The engagement and encounter with the more-than human world informs aesthetic strategies for an ecology of care, venerating the fluid edge of the littoral zone.
There is a recognition that many of the strategies and tactics resulting from the simplicity and elegance of beachcombing involve walking as a laidback mobility in the acquisition of various skills. The quintessential products of early learning resulting from the use of gross and fine motor skills link to the development of oral and written language that find a dreamy sense of purpose in oceanic reverie and the circumambulation of liminal zones. The procurement of these skills extends further into the realm of mark-making and written expression to contribute to a much-needed articulation of a sense of place and a sense of planet. This leads into the subject of collecting, which has a strong association with creative practice, aesthetics and the canny practicality of beachcombing that finds both symbolic and practical application in the field, study and studio. Further, elucidation upon liminality as a site and as a cultural practice brings to the centrality of beachcombing an ethical location for environmental politics aligned with theorising eco-cosmopolitanism. The beachcomber’s art of living develops from an ecological sensibility worth pursuing in pedagogical terms that model a relational ontology, kinship networks and contribute to complex notions of personhood.
5.1 The undertow of an oceanic consciousness

In antiquity, Irish scholars were known…for their practice of ‘navigatio’…a journey undertaken by boat…a circular itinerary of exodus and return. The aim was to undergo an apprenticeship to signs of strangeness with a view to becoming more attentive to the meanings of one’s own time and place – geographical, spiritual, intellectual.

Richard Kearney (cited in Macfarlane 2013: 119)

At the edge of the sea I encounter the most wonderful paradox—coming to the end of myself and then beginning all over again in co-extensive with what is strictly speaking beyond me—thus turning inside-out the ocean as in me, while I am all a piece with the ocean on a terraqueous planet. The same feeling applies at the edge of blue eco-poetics writing environmental philosophy, concerned with ecology from within the ruins of colonisation, capitalism and globalisation—turning the poetics inside-out toward the more-than human world as an oceanic consciousness conversant with the forces of nature (Savory 2011; Lorimer 2010). Through beachcombing I find the thread of so many wonderful connections joining together with such delicacy that I am enamoured with the ocean all over again.

What distinguishes us from water and the ocean is a thin veil of complex biology but even that comprehensively re-joins us at every level, such as we are, saturated by the interlocking intricacies of liquid forms and flows. The breath, the brain, the larynx, the heart, the lungs, kidneys, liver, intestines, sexual organs, arms, hands, legs, feet, the tongue, the eyes, the nose, the cochlea, the ear, and the assemblage of bones more broadly and so on, all shaped by water, obeying its sophisticated rationale and constant caress to produce life buoyed by its innate worth and marvellous working (Schwenk 1976). The more I learn of water, of the ocean, and of the way blue eco-poetics provides a complimentary form of composition, the stronger the first impulses of instinct and intuition reverberates at the overlap with conscious thought as an oceanic feeling of wholeness and oneness (Bachelard 1987; Jung 1978). Alongshore all the wonderful rhythms of encounter register: light and colour, cloud and wind, waves and swell, time and tide, form and flow, pungency and salt spray, each corresponding with my own bio-rhythms (Stilgoe 1994). They speak to an inner longing to learn the language of the cosmos and forge a peace between humans and the more-than human world (Coleman 1988; Nhat Hanh 1991; Shiva 2013). The oceanic consciousness that flows through me likewise has me in its undertow, forever drawing back to the shore to reinvigorate its influence upon me.

The mystique of these primeval coasts whose fashioning and ageless beauty never ceases, is wrought as the wisdom of an ecological record of deep time that unfolds to the
witness poised on the cusp of the present. At the ocean’s skirt you encounter and engage with significant others who guard and guide the more-than-human world. The paths these creatures follow belong to habitats adapted from antiquity that are testament to fruitful co-existence despite human ignorance. In the labyrinth of these formations and patterns the cryptographer marvels at the ‘knowledge of things that are as nearly eternal as an earthly life can be’, certainly well beyond human scale (Carson cited in Lorimer 2010: 73). The coast is fringed with a myriad of ghostly narratives whose shadowy presence ‘encrypts an as yet unrecorded history’ that resounds in complexity (Patterson 2008: 134). These narratives are weathered into forms that reverberate with patterns that remain in constant flux, corresponding across the primordial gulf to ‘everywhen’ from everywhere, sometimes scratched into surfaces, whorled into patterns or just drifting by as spores producing thought that recognises a profound convolution (Bogue 2010: 217; Satchell 2013). They come to life for the alert beachcomber in the fugue illuminating the peripatetic shores with sensual plenitude, offering an alluring affirmation of life and oceanic reverie in their liminality (Rose 2017; Benjamin 2007; Deleuze 1997). The soft brush of the numinous at the water’s edge often brings people back to themselves, back to their souls in the afterglow of lucid reveries that leave traces and the desire to know more (Macfarlane 2013; Rousseau 2011). As Solnit (2001: 5) maintains there is a state of alignment produced by walking between the mind, body and world where ‘three notes suddenly make a chord’. When walking along the foreshore consistently one may become aware of a diaphanous music whose appreciation requires lingering presence. The potential for learning while wandering along the tideline appears to me now, as the beginning of coastal wisdom fit for the art of beachcombing.

Adrift on the notion of a beachcombing experience that sparkles before my eyes on the surface of the waters, then wafts in the sea mist to turn back on itself, I find an avenue of inquiry that eventually has become a way of life. In the intrinsic value of the life-world an inestimable wealth provides rapturous charms that mature with age and enjoyment. I have followed this glorious urge to understand the elegant threads of the storied lifeworld and speak of them (Van Dooren 2016; Van Doreen and Rose 2012). Melville (1992:4) sets the scene of the monumental Moby Dick in the introductory chapter ‘Looming’, using a nautical reference with ominous intention, discussing the subtle magnetism of the ocean that draws people under its sway to be ‘fixed in oceanic reveries’, convinced there are common bonds of affection for the ocean that we all share. I would agree that life seems to have left the vestiges of an oceanic affinity tugging at our hearts. The reason why people inadvertently search for the subtle illumination of the soul at the shoreline: ‘like nature’s patient, sleepless eremite /
The moving waters at their priestlike task / Of pure ablution round earth’s human shores’ provides testament that the ocean continues to draw them (Keats cited in Abrams 1993: 786). This tacit urge to gaze upon the restless waters of the sea seeks to assuage the unfathomable though bittersweet longing of kindred spirits. Therein lie the cryptic clues of untold beach crossings swirling in the brine, awaiting the augury of the ocean to penetrate the secrets hidden in the sunken wrecks of our collective memory and being. A plethora of strange encounters whose triumphs and tragedies join us together in shared responsibilities (Dening 2004a). The Guyanese poet Harris (1978) in the poem ‘Behring Straits’ provides the depth of vision and breadth of thought of an imaginative blue eco-poetics that encompasses the sort of beachcombing practice that addresses such mysteries:

The tremendous voyage between two worlds

is contained in every shell, in every name that echoes

a nameless bell,

in tree trunk or cave

or sound: in drowned Asia’s bones:

a log-book in the clouds

names the straits of eternity: the marbles

of ocean and indomitable tides.

So life discovers the remotest beaches in time

that are always present in action: the interior walls of being

open like a mirrorless pool, the ocean’s nostalgia

and the stormy communication of truth turn still deeply

in settlement and root.

Untangled the trees mount to the sky

and the silence is filled with a different wave like sound

that alters dimension. The cool cave of a ship

is sudden beached with sun

is drowned in a fluid ecstasy that devours and is devoured in
The voyage between two worlds
is fraught with this grandeur and this anonymity. Who blazes a trail
is overtaken by a labyrinth
leading to many conclusions.

The valleys of ocean
are spent
and the mountains stand cloudlike and august, solid and bent
to the sailor on his round. Until they figuratively drown
in an overwhelming sea or a spiritual mound. So the incomplete discovery of the world
in the blueness of its delicacy
is broken on the beach of its lofty ground
Like a wave that meets resistance and must rise unerringly
into an outline or alienation or history
into a bond that both strengthens and severs in the movement of life:

since heaven deepens the immortal sea
like eternity that disguises
a wound.

But earth waits for the continual voyager
who dances on mortal ground.

(Harris 1978: 11,12)

Harris’s (1978) philosophical blue eco-poetics displays an emphatic bond with the ocean that runs deep in the veins of his thought and pulses with the heartbeat of the sea (McGushin
2007; Hadot 1995). Following Melville’s (1992: 4) dictum: ‘yes, as every one knows, meditation and water are wedded for ever’—I find compelling cause to contemplate the connection with thought and the oceanic consciousness of blue eco-poetics. The oceanic reverie of the ‘New World’ poet offers a sophisticated evocation of the multi-layered and dynamic collision of worlds that defy definitive renderings and the hegemony of the dominant readings of history, demanding a far more tenuous divining of suggestive clues hinting at performative rapprochements with the mysteries of life (Patterson 2008: 133). As such Harris (cited in Patterson 2008: 138 original emphasis) seeks a ‘profound dialogue with the past’ in its critical and creative possibility for transformation in the present. The intuitive assessment of emergent possibilities he provides from the motifs left in the shadow of events, reinvigorate fresh perspectives on the contemporary milieu. His work ponders possible passages from within the ‘labyrinth leading to many conclusions’ to a deeper sense of awareness, such as in the poem ‘Trail’, ‘the stream of life swells or diminishes, cloaks its trail. Deep, intoxicating, is the valley of its awareness’ beneath the omission of unpalatable truths, he posits the restoration of an indominable dignity and courage amid life’s struggles with a depth of understanding he sees through them (Harris 1978: 43). To take this thread still further in the poem ‘Creation’ ‘…the world exists on different yet answering planes, / the solitary whispering abandoned strip of land where the sea / comes in’ suggests a place of such illuminating correspondence within the beachcomber’s ken (Harris 1978: 49). Reprising Keat’s moving waters in furtive intimations of oceanic reverie—from the liminality of the beach, his murmuring thoughts provide a consummate blue eco-poetics steeped in a beachcombing sensibility. In the closing lines of the poem from a series sub-titled ‘Spirit of Place’, the poet takes these themes still further in awakening an insight upon the realisation that anticipates meaning in death (Harris 1978).

creation’s extremes that exist everywhere
in the world and are here too on this distant strip of coast
in fashion and ghost. Here as everywhere
the celebration of spirit, the discriminate fashion and wake of survival,
the surrender of an indefinable strand of experience into or out of the sea,
into body and into mind, into feature and memory,
into life and into the strangest realisation of death.
By undertaking a beachcombing of ‘historical self-understanding’ strewn with the fragmented shards of causality, competing extremes and the vicissitudes of the Anthropocene, blue eco-poetics has taken on fuller meaning in regard to what I make of this oceanic consciousness (Patterson 2008: 131). I am seeking the sort of story-telling poetics that is the imaginative means of self-discovery and community that provides an ameliorative overlap with the surrounds, ecopolitics and the practice of everyday life. The cord of my experience reaches out to the blue eco-poetics of Harris (1978: 50) ‘on a distant strip of coast’. While Melville’s (1992: 3, 5) narrator attributes his oceanic wanderlust to a depressive ‘November’ of the soul whose remedy is the open sea, my therapeutics are found alongshore (Stilgoe 1994). These are not patchwork remedies or darks arts of defeated misgivings. They are rather the stirring in my longing heart of a blue eco-poetics derived from the common wealth of oceanic cultures.

5.2 The cryptography of a blue-eco-poetics

Figured thus a different order of persons and powers in the world does become palpable, taking place through fields of variations, relations, sensations and affects, life felt on the pulse, in the turning of seasons, in mass movements, of water and air, in the depths and surfaces, inhalations and exhalations, in the quickening and slackening of energies, in the pacing and duration of encounters, in the texture of moods and casts of light, in washes that are biochemical and tidal, and in currents that twine the personal and impersonal, substantial and immaterial, the perpetual and occasional, the territorial and transitory.

(Lorimer 2010: 73)

The margins of the sea-shore are a primordial and cosmic meeting place, where a little piece of everything remains in play, connecting the minute details of the earth’s story with the unfathomable tales of the cosmos. The stirring of the depths and the whirring of the heights meet in endless rounds of composition and subtle elucidation, resonant in the echo of this constant reconfiguration are clues to every question, at every level. Kahuna are notably renowned for only teaching according to the specific questions asked, only divulging knowledge that matches the quality of the inquiry (Morrell 2005). As Eisley (2016: 342) perceptively opines, after some time contemplating Conus spurius atlanticus, commonly known as the alphabet shell, ‘each man [sic] deciphers from the ancient alphabets of nature only those secrets that his [sic] own deeps possess the power to endow with meaning’. The beachcomber I have in mind practices their art beside the sea, scouring the shore, scanning the
horizon, moving about in a random auto-choreography that mirrors the inner journey of thought and self-exploration, towards an inevitable embodiment of a message steeped in oceanic mystery. My intention is to heighten the power with which to enrich meaning and confer its promise for more perceptive forms of knowing the life-world (Satchell 2013). The cryptographer’s beachcombing knows no bounds once turned inside-out, enveloped in spatially rich possibilities that surrender their secrets from the ‘crannies of matter’ divulging them from within ‘the folds of the soul’ and vice versa (Deleuze 1993:3). The pull of this wondrous gravity locates a lodestar for those who recognise within themselves no greater purpose than to speak of these mysteries.

Figure 25 Walking among the layering edges of fractal complexity

The self-discovery borne of solitude and extensive peregrinations leads invariably to identification with like-minded people and thought, focused upon the forces of nature as exemplars for creative and critical practice. Braithwaite’s (1983: 42) ‘tidalectics’ (a clever play on dialectics) brings nature-based indigeneity to bear on theory, following the rhythm and hum of circularity and ellipsis, where the ebb and flow of tides act on lived experience to shape the fortunes of a coastline as much as its inhabitants, attendant to the forces of the earth and cosmos guiding the more-than human world in the struggle of life (Patterson 2008: 131).
'Tidalectics foreground “alter/native” epistemologies of colonialism and capitalism with their linear and materialist biases [...] tidalectics reckons a space and time that requires an active and participatory engagement with the island seascape’ (Braithwaite cited in De Loughrey 2018: 94). In the wake of extreme weather events produced by climate change (carbon in the atmosphere) there are ambiguities that must be held open. De Loughrey (2018: 93) prefaces her essay on tidalectics in the context of hurricanes Irma, Jose and Maria, beginning by citing Braithwaite’s hurricane poem ‘Shar’ ‘For the stone of this island to be bombed / by all this wind & and all this, all this water’

…………………………

Wood

has become useless, stripped wet,

fragile, broken, totally uninhabitable

with what we must build.

Kamau Braithwaite (cited in De Loughrey 2018: 93)

De Loughrey (2018) argues that the politics of climate becomes evident in the ecological denialism and unconscionable meanness of spirit from the Trump administration, displaying deep-seated strains of eco-racism. Concluding the essay echoing Braithwaite’s (cited in De Loughrey 2018: 93) poetic response in the face of devastation, she returns to the evocative, ambiguous and resolute phrase ‘with what we must build’. Moving about all alongshore in that in-between space of liminality, I find common cause and ground, with the shipwrecked lives of colonisation, capitalism and globalisation, whose tempests (climate change) must now be weathered and whose coastlines must be loved with a steady resolve and the responsive attention of an ecology of care.

To evoke blue eco-poetics as a response to current dilemmas is not to elide the devastation and the mounting challenges people face in the Anthropocene. Rather, it is critical to continue to follow the wisdom of courageous forebears who time and time again faced what seemed to be insurmountable odds, nevertheless choosing to affirm life (Deleuze 1997; Rose 2017; Serres 2014). Among the voices resonant with blue eco-poetics there are a company whose affinity with a beachcombing sensibility focuses with intent on learning from the more-than human world (Wilson 2017). Glissant (2010: 122) displays the requisite poise for such endeavours: ‘the movement of the beach, this rhythmic rhetoric of a shore, do not seem to me gratuitous. They weave a circularity that draws me in’. Moreover, in terms of the creative practice and the cultural production of the blue eco-poetics I associate with
beachcombing, following Harris (1978: 35) still further, ‘freedom is the architecture of movement / down the river of ocean’. Therefore, between the wave-line and the tideline I ply the craft of poetry and art, as an environmental aesthetics in conversation with the living and the dead (Satchell 2014). While I also listen attentively to the voices whose poetics ring with lived experience, love and reverence for the more-than human world. Braithwaite (2005 np) speaks of ‘water & across its blue echo’, recognising the blessing water confers and the communicative powers it serves for the more-than human world.

glistening sunlight & listening rain & white streets
& houses & people walkin bout & talkn to each other on the water & across
its blue echo
& thinking of horses & houses & now soon after midday there are great orb

-long blotches like a stain
    of milk & a great spider spreading itself along the pale glazing bottom of
the water. and this great planet passing upwards towards us
out this silence & drifting & blessing of the water

(Braithwaite 2005 np)

There is a potency I find that lies alongshore at the intersection of oceanic reverie and liminality, a zone suffused with the polyphony of voices and cries (warnings and admonitions), whispers and murmurs (intimacy and love). Alongside the lengthening geological and biotic testament, whose exquisite remains have ridden out the upheavals and tumultuous events of ages past, there are ghostly reminders and living epistles (Stilgoe 1994; Carson 1951). Thus, continuing the more-than human world of the coast remains at the crossroads of the processes and forms of timeworn and creative evolution, teetering at the edge of human excess and destruction (Schorch and Patsch 2017; Satchell 2016 my emphasis). Along these auspicious and fine wrack lines, the beachcomber’s path wends in the obscurity of the ordinary—in the thin disguise of leisure and plain clothes—one confronts the spectre of horror even on a sunny day (Bode 1996). James (2001) asserts unequivocally from the standpoint of the 1950s, Melville’s (1992) 1850s prescience concerning the type of world *Moby Dick* foretold, one that alludes to the totalitarian personality produced by capitalism. On the verge of 2020 with 2050 in view, the resonance between the exploitation of whale oil, fossil fuel and human-induced climate-change is a frightening prefiguration of the monomaniacal will-to-power these world systems—colonial, capitalist and globalised—now constitute. Patterson (2008: 138) reads Harris’s (1978) tidalectical imagination, concerning tradition and creative re-interpretation, as ‘critical and creative potentialities’ going on to cite him requiring ‘re-creative rapport between old monuments and new windows on the cosmos’
(Harris cited in Patterson 2008: 138). The current situation requires critical work in the environmental humanities to provide these sorts of bridging and creative spaces from the academy to ordinary people in the community, whose lives are otherwise being gripped in a state of emergency (Benjamin 2007; Rose 2013). The coastal foreshore exposes a vulnerability and openness that tests a resolve to remain on the edge, working in this space requires people to question their motives in a manner involving a stringent process of self-examination to strip away the vestiges self-interest.

The challenge for scholarship to remain relevant yet manage to resist the overwhelming dictates of technological change is a double bind intellectuals and environmental activists find themselves facing—in the ecological crisis of the 21st Century. Benjamin (2006) refers allusively to his abode in the 19th Century, referring to a hollowed-out mollusc, wondering what he might evocatively hear, placing his ear to the shell through a sympathetic magic borne of erudition. In the age of globalisation, I turn to another New World poet to take my lead. Walcott (1972), writing the book-length poem Another Life, illustrates the incisive eloquence of blue eco-poetics for ethical intervention using the technology of the creative imagination:

That child who sets his half-shell afloat

in the brown creek that is Rampanalgas River-

my first son, then first two daughters-

towards the roar of waters,

towards the Atlantic with a dead almond leaf for a sail,

with a twig for a mast,

was like his father, this child,

a child without history, without knowledge of its pre-world,

only the knowledge of water runnelling rocks,

and the desperate whelk that grips the rock’s outcrop

like a man whom the waves can never wash overboard;

that child who puts the shell’s howl to his ear,

hears nothing, hears everything

that the historian cannot hear, the howls

of all the races that crossed the water,
the howls of the grandfathers drowned
in that intricately swivelled Babel,
hears the fellaheen, the Madrasi, the Mandingo, the Ashanti
yes, and hears also the echoing green fissures of Canton,
and thousands without longing for this other shore
by mud tablets of the Indian Provinces,
robed ghostly white and brown, the twigs of uplifted hands,
of manacles, mantras, of a thousand kaddishes,
whorled, drilling into the shell,
see, in the evening light by saffron, sacred Benares,
how they are lifting like herons,
robed ghostly white and brown,
and the crossing of water has erased their memories.
And the sea, which is always the same
accepts them.
And the shore, which is always the same,
accepts them

In the shallop of the shell,
in the round prayer,
in the palate, of the conch
in the dead sail of the almond leaf
are all of the voyages.

(Walcott 1972: 143, 144)

Walcott’s (1972) effortless demonstration of the superior value of poetry articulates the human silences in the bias of disciplinary scholarship and the complicity of wilful adult ignorance. By joining the polyphony of voices elided in so many accounts, he conceptually revives them from their immersion as witnesses whose testimony ‘resounds with echoes’ in the perpetual sound of the sea (Bachelard 1994: xvi). Walcott (1972) makes them alive to the
imagination by superb metatextual word choice and an ecological sensibility drawn from his own experience with the struggles of life (Patterson 2008). In a lecture on writing, the Nobel Laureate, Walcott (in Trott 2013) refers to his own poetic practice as that of a solitary beachcomber lighting a fire from the collected debris (Trott 2013). He claims the poetics derives from the accumulation of thoughts, recollections and the spent aspects of life, offering a beachcombing ingenuity suggesting there is nothing useless that cannot be brought to life once lit with an allusive intensity and expressive illumination (Walcott in Trott 2013). In the excerpt above, the richness of the everyday and natural elements, build upon symbolic capital through the amplification effect of coherent articulation (Walcott 1972). The clarity of the voice is sharpened by the atmosphere, woven around the shell and the connotations that swirl from the immersive sound of the sea, holding them together in the shroud of profound possibilities. This is creative practice as pedagogy and blue eco-poetics on par, if not outstripping the diagnostics of critical literature, exhibiting breathtaking brevity and force that moves the reader by the threads that unerringly joins us together in a ‘poetics of relation’ (Satchell 2016; Deleuze 1997; Glissant 2010 see title). The intrinsic value found in blue eco-poetics is evident in the cryptography of a beachcombing sensibility that turns on the timeworn processes of self-cultivation and the performativity of creative practice.

The mounting challenges of the 21st Century have become a quandary for ordinary people whose lives have been increasingly devalued by economic rationales, rather than valued in the poetics of their everyday struggles to sustain themselves. The most vulnerable people experience their privacy and dignity being compromised through data exploited by automated technology and the systemic oppression of their marginalisation based on demographic status (Eubanks 2017; Deleuze 2007). In this context the idea of a life (your own life) being a work of art appears futile and antiquated; however, for someone to appreciate their own existence and give their life value seems to bear witness to a deeper truth than to acquiesce to the fate of a corrupt system (Foucault 2005; Deleuze 1988b). As Bachelard (1969: 116, 10) asserts, ‘a beautiful poem makes us pardon an ancient grief’ answering his own question, ‘how can a man become a poet in spite of life?’. The wonder of the natural world remains a source of strength, even in the face of personal loss and the broader lacuna of clear-cut directions and options. Walcott (in Trott 2013) offers further blue eco-poetic inspiration, along these lines, responding to the loss of a stillborn child with this touching dedication that demonstrates the value of a life dedicated to the poetic imagination:

As for you, little star,
my lost daughter, you are
bent in the shape forever
of a curled seed sailing the earth,
in the shape of one question, a comma
that knows before us whether death
is another birth.

(Walcott cited in Trott 2013: 8)

Locked away in the vicissitudes of modern lives enmeshed in capitalist consumption and struggling subsistence there are still timeless lessons to meet the deepest yearnings of the soul. There in the simple joys that meet with pleasure in the existence of more-than human others, lies a heart-won reverence and respect for the mysteries of life the world can ill afford to do without. To unfold these in plain sight takes the utmost dedication and determination. Therewith to hold on with tenacity one must be prepared to gamble the heart on love, accepting the inevitability of death as a mystery awaiting to unfold. A blue eco-poetics that holds on to dignity with which to face that day.

5.3 Learning a page of beach

There will be none of that impatience, vast, cynical that awaits the real explorer, his every step a noun, a town, a spring, a milestone. As a matter of truth, I am not moving until I know why I have chosen to sit down on this page of a beach—as a matter of fact, I may not move at all. […] It has taken me over thirty years, and my race hundreds, to feel the fibers spread from the splayed toes and grip this earth, the arms knot into boles and put out leaves. When that begins, this is the beginning of season, cycle time. The noise my leaves make is my language. In it is tunnelled the roar of seas of a lost ocean. It is a fresh sound. Let me not be ashamed to write like this, because it supports this thesis, that our only true apprehensions are through metaphor, that the old botanical names, the old processes cannot work for us. Let’s walk.

(Walcott 2005: 52, 57)

Picking up the thread here offers a suggestive reminder as an invitation to walk on a page of beach that informs new approaches—a strategic moment to let go of the categorical strictures of oppressive dominant cultures. The whole idea of beachcombing turns on abandoning colonial and neo-colonial projects with a decolonising ethos, not reinscribing them selfishly or passively (Rose 2004). The idea of decolonisation strikes me as an on-going process, an ethical initiative with steps taken one foot after the other, enacting ‘the unmaking of regimes of violence that promote the disconnection of moral accountability from time and place’
Walking in the context of beachcombing offers a means of self-examination and circumspection, while promoting a necessary other-orientation for moral accountability to unmake the systemic violence of human exceptionalism, by promoting connections with indigeneity, hybridity, animality and vegetality (Ghandi in Gros 2014; Lorimer 2010; Rose 2017; Haraway 2008). As discussed previously the stigma often attributed to surfing applies to beachcombing with a long history associated with escapism, utopian romanticism, Christian masculinity, fear of miscegenation and sexual promiscuity, let alone populist and mainstream appropriations of the term, although, there are sufficient examples to provide models of alternate modernities, despite being flanked by capitalism, technology and globalisation (Weaver 2015; Dening 1992; Grossberg 2010; Glissant 2010). The same could be said of the way poetry is often ridiculed incredulously when proffered as an intimate way of knowing and a legitimate manner of intellectual labour (Harris 1983; Bachelard 1969; Serres 1991; Glissant 2010). Blue eco-poetics integrates aesthetics and ethics into an expressive web of relations along the edge, rather than policing the boundaries of disciplinariness (Wilson 2017). The freedom I associate with walking equates well with the invitation to think differently about the more-than human world and to find expression that allows relationships with people and place to flourish by learning from them.

The inference of the roar of the ocean coming alive in the language on the page of the beach is inspirational. Having chosen the beach and the ocean as a place of personal and profound philosophical interest, I find satisfaction in the resolution at the end of Walcott’s (2005) chapter cited here, titled ‘Isla Incognito’, based on a commitment to immersion, connection, inclusivity, unabashed expression and experimentation (Eisley 2016; Hau’ofa 2008). The linguistic metaphor—‘the noise my leaves makes is my language’ evokes speech that couples with ‘a tunnelled roar of the sea of a lost ocean’ as a coming to voice I consider to be blue eco-poetics (De Loughrey 2007; De Loughrey et al. 2005; Walcott 2005: 57). As Braithwaite (cited in Glissant 2010 frontispiece) suggests ‘our unity is submarine’ taken here as a possibility of eco-cosmopolitanism, whose ‘sea is history’ with waves and shores that roll down the annals of time leaving a composition of traces and layers that inexorably tell and retell, inflected with different meanings and with wider implications that are both lost and found in different places and times (Walcott cited in Glissant 2010 frontispiece). The invitation to walk at the end serves as another beginning and a new story. As Macfarlane (2013: 18) maintains ‘the compact between writing and walking is almost as old as literature – a walk is only a step away from a story, and every path tells’. At the seashore, generation upon generation of living organisms blend together in the fine and coarse grade of the sands,
on the stains on the rock, the wear on the stone, the conglomeration of a midden, the shape of
the pool, the curve of a beach, the multi-faceted profiles of headland or island, in stands of
timber and rotting debris, all but forgotten excepting to those who find their trace in one form
or another and follow their trail (Carson 1941; Harris 1978; McCann 2018). The poetics of
movement and deep contemplation tempers the imagination, strengthens its resolve for
expression and arouses in curiosity the room to play.

Figure 26  
Wading tentatively into the enchantment of another’s life-world

Again, even the solitary walker who begins their journey alone discovers
companionship all along the way. Moreover, along the drift line across the page of the beach
that overlaps with the pages of the waves, there ‘is a passage, not primarily spatial, that passes
itself off as passage and confronts the imaginary’ (Glissant 2010: 188). The lifeworld requires
the beachcomber’s imagination to engage in thinking differently about relationships in the
more-than human world before any headway can occur. The oceanic consciousness allows for
a myriad of connections with the transpersonal, ‘when you give yourself to places, they give
yourself back; the more one comes to know them’ the threads of intimacy bring you closer to
yourself and a multi-species sense of place (Solnit 2001: 13). The multiplicity of these threads
woven and entangled together draws you into the space of encounter, where happenstance
prepares the way for the unforeseen, where ‘outside lies unprogrammed awareness that at
times becomes serendipity’ (Bode 1996; Stilgoe 1998: 2).

For inhabitants walk; they thread their lines through the world rather than across its outer surface. […]
In reality, however, not only does the extended mind of the walker infiltrate the ground along myriad
pathways, but also, inevitably, it tangles with the mind of fellow inhabitants.

(Ingold 2015: 47, 49)

This moves the beachcomber a long way further into animist appreciation than the stasis of
the picturesque or the boredom of hyper-separation (Plumwood 2003; Harvey 2005). The
dynamism of the life-world and the vibrancy of multi-species conviviality orients learning
from significant others in an appropriate respect for a collective form of wisdom and attention
(Van Dooreen and Rose 2012; Nelson 1991). There are landmarks such as trees, rocks, caves,
hollows, sandspits, tidal variance in channels and on platforms, preferred routes, alternates,
resting places, lookouts, hideaways, any number of detours and switchbacks, the infinite
possibilities of entrances and exits—thresholds, where walking sets thought in motion and the
imagination takes flight in the company of a host of intelligences, all weaving their own way
in the scheme and skein of things entangled and open to connection (Stilgoe 1998; Serres
2012). Time folds and unfolds as a texture, as a fabric of temporal plenitude, where the
present dilates to entertain the pluralities of the past, as resonance, display and pattern. There
are those leaps and lags that come together, then pull apart as though returning to a materiality
that is multi-layered and then spacious (Benjamin 2007; Serres 1995c; Dening 2004b; Bennett
and Connolly 2012; Berressem 2012). Objects in their materiality and textuality become
potent touchstones and nodes for remembrances, recollections, premonitions and flashbacks,
sparking what Benjamin (2007) coined as ‘profane illuminations’ that are an aid for reading
hidden meaning prised open by the inquiring heart-mind, whose lingering in events
sometimes provoke the unravelling of a mystery in topographic encounter. I find that a host of
presences and absences come to life in the places beachcombing haunts, animating a
bewitching sentient archive through auto-choreography (Satchell 2010a). These places we
come to know, and their inhabitants continue to outstrip our knowing while some patterns and
repetitions strike us with evidence of an even greater wisdom to learn from, both about
ourselves and the world (Rose 2017; Stewart 1996, Rainer 1978). ‘All alongshore everyone
knows the rote, knows what knowing by rote means, getting something by heart, by heartbeat’
(Stilgoe 1994: 28). The pulse of life throbs all around and deep within, as if drawing one into
a closer orbit with the primordial rhythms and beats that rise and fall in ordinarily
imperceptible ebbs and flows—leading to the passages and lifeways cast from the net of
kinship. Following the phantom entities of a more comprehensive life-world on course toward place-sensitivity, you learn from those skilfully adapted to their habitat in a manner that reconnections with indigeneity, hybridity, animality and vegetality (Lorimer 2010; Ingold 2011; Deleuze and Guattari 1987).

To understand the shore, it is not enough to catalogue its life. Understanding comes only when standing on a beach, we can sense the long rhythms of earth and sea that sculpted land forms and produced the rock and sand of which it is composed; when we can sense with the eye and ear of the mind the surge of life beating at its shores—blindly, inexorably pressing for a foothold. True understanding demands intuitive comprehension of the whole.

(Carson 1973: 9)

Therein lies the possibility of coming into an affable, heart-felt relationship that goes to the integrity of a place and one’s affection for its perpetuity.

The subtleties of beachcombing a page lie in the intricacy of a winding path and the delicacy of oceanic reverie. Leaving the predetermined path, even on a familiar stretch, allows contingency to flush out hitherto, unknown hidden secrets and perspectives, the stuff of chance encounter that deepens the acquaintance with place (its folds, hues, fragrances and textures) and the entanglement with more-than human others in multi-species networks (Serres 2008; Muecke and Pam 2012; Ingold 2011; Nelson 1991). ‘What the earth reveals results from what should be called the reciprocal marquetry of things’ (Serres 2008: 275).

Alternatively, and no less marvellous, repetitions of spatial and temporal dimensions flush out differences that contribute to the storehouse of knowledge and details in terms of sensation, experience and memory (Deleuze 1994; Bode 1996; Macfarlane 2013). Serres (2008: 259, 271 original emphasis) prescribes ‘randonnée’ as a method for learning that wanders across the tired demarcations of the separation of knowledge systems to arrive at ‘the creation of unexpected places’.

Let us design an interesting itinerary, one that leaves its optimal talweg and begins to explore a place: one which does not reach a foreseeable resolution, but searches; seems to wander; not deliberate or sure of itself, but rather anxious, off balance and relentless; questing, on the watch, it moves over the whole space, probes, checks things out, reconnoitres, beats about the bush, skips all over the place; few things in the space escape its sweep; whoever follows or invents this itinerary runs the risk of losing everything or inventing; if he makes discoveries, it will be said of his route that he has left the talweg to follow strange attractors.

Serres (2008: 271)
The itinerary of beachcombing follows such a path in the confluence of space, place and ecology, intent on deepening the inhabitation of hitherto unknown realms of closeness and intimacy with multi-species communities in the biotic neighbourhood. Melville’s (cited in Eisley 2016: 343) oft cited remark on true places is insightful—‘they are never marked down on any map’, this recognises a certain proviso on their knowability that can only be overcome through engagement and encounter—in a provisional manner to the extent that a prolonged relationship may give rise to a plausible account of relations. I take this here as an injunction not to be able to speak on behalf of a place, rather to listen to and begin to express complex personhood with and through a place in its particularity (Nelson 1991). The enunciation that arrives from within both aspects of self and the place, place and the self—therefore has some aesthetic and ethical purchase on expression. The language arising in the acquisition of the gross and fine motors skills of walking a place, incorporates the kinaesthetic, aided through mobility and the use of multi-modal aspects of learning, considered here as critically important, indicative in the euphemisms for example to tread carefully and take bold steps (Bachelard 1994; Serres 1997, 2011a; De Certeau et al. 1998). The invitation to walk equates well with a responsiveness to learning that enjoins relationship in a vitality befitting the life-world. Moreover, teasing out these possibilities concerning learning to walk applied to beachcombing and the broader concerns of coasting should be sufficient to provide evidence of its unique value.

5.4 Collecting: Incidental findings

We walk along the beach. The gaze slides along and between strands of seaweed, lines of shells and pebbles, jumping over small items of detritus—all washed up along the tidelines. We sift the beach with our fingers, our toes. What shall we do with this abundance of cast-off things? To beachcomb is to become entangled with things incidentally, to become curious, to recollect. (Brewster 2009: 126)

The scope of material found strewn along the foreshore, rocky outliers and quiet coves, in varying states of preservation and decay is voluminous. These are the prodigious remains of ocean depths, mountainous heights, watercourses and different weather worlds, animal, mineral and vegetable including the stuff of human manufacture, disaster and waste (Ingold 2013; Satchell 2010b). Marine debris is often referred to in direct relation to human activity, as flotsam (related to marine wreckage) including the vessel, cargo and personal effects of sailors and jetsam (material jettisoned presumably from a sea-going vessel), although increasingly as a result of stormwater run-off, the stuff jettisoned from poor waste
management and wilful human ignorance (Coleman 1988). The issue of chemical waste and plastic in the ocean has become much more widely known in the last decade, unfortunately with only slow progress toward its mitigation, while it gathers pace into the food chain (Satchell 2010b; Moore 2012). Moreover, there are the untold fragmented histories of nuclear and chemical waste that have been unceremoniously dumped, interned or sequestered in other dubious ways, whose containment in the past is belied by activity seeping into the present (Neimans et al. 2017). The character of inter-connectedness coming to light highlights either the naivety or belligerence of the model of progress so ruthlessly pursued by western industrial technologies.

Running alongside each personal biography and the geographies they entangle in the modern era is a sinister thread of toxicity. In my own childhood experience the more insidious form of chemical waste in the Cooks River from factories in Sydney, reappears in my adulthood from the nearby banana and blue-berry farmers intensively spraying their crop, resulting in chemical waste in the watercourses of Moonee Creek and Hearnes Lake on the Mid-north coast of NSW, adjacent to the Solitary Island Marine Reserve (Neimans and Hamilton 2018; Satchell 2010a). The volume of material and its toxic content raises concerns right back to production and design regulations that underpin industries and corporations in the industrial-military complex of the global economy (McDonough and Brangart 2002). Meanwhile, hapless consumers and even ethically-minded ones invariably contribute daily to this fund of redundant material and its afterlife (Satchell 2010b). Croft (2018) thinks this through using her own daily ramble to work across an urban car-park to consider the far-reaching effects of mass consumption.

It becomes a terrain studded with constellations of things that remind me of other things ... a jelly-fish ... luminescent coral ... a sardine ... sea anemone ... a squid ... seaweed ... a fossil. And so, I start to reimagine this neglected interstitial zone as a site of psychic and material transformations: my litter-borne reverie connects one space with another space. Urban waste matter becomes entangled with far away plastic oceans. Car park becomes beach.

(Croft 2018 np)

The beachcomber confronted with urban waste matter is faced with a sense an obligation to fulfil the role of waste collector along beaches, in estuaries, among mangroves and so on. The proliferation of waste objects has seen a cadre of artists explore the counter-intuitive aesthetic of using the material to make eco-political statements to highlight pollution such as repurposed drift-nets woven into objet d’art, colourful displays of degraded plastic items and rusty junk cobbled sculptures from the ghostly remains of industrial ruins (Satchell 2010b). A
greater understanding of the dynamics of waste entangling the world connects both the near and the far of the littoral zone in greater obligation and responsibility (Hawkins and Muecke 2003). The sheer scale and complexity of matter and flux lends itself inadvertently to contingency and speculative thinking (Haraway 2016). The importance of thinking otherwise, therefore, goes against the grain of passive acceptance and fatigued avowal of the inescapability of programmed consumption.

![Figure 27](image)

Another fellow marooned by consumer culture to be repurposed as a witness

Non-biodegradable refuse items, of course, are not the only kinds of materials tossed up in the wrack-line and adorning the foreshore, whose circle of life encompasses the cradle and the grave of the biotic neighbourhood and multi-species community. The word ‘find’ does not necessarily always refer to what you might feel compelled to remove or keep, rather what might contribute to a burgeoning awareness as incidental to learning, pleasure and play, as much as a studied observation, sometimes more so than an object (Ingold 2011). Many scientists, scholars, artists and thinkers attribute their creative pursuits to childhood experiences fossicking alongshore (Stilgoe 1994; Brewster 2009). The eminent marine biologist Earle (1996) mentions her earliest encounters at the foreshore as those that earmarked her life for oceanic fascination and care. The deep ecologist Næss (1989) credits
hours as a child exploring at the beach and in rockpools, as the catalyst for his nascent interest in the workings of the environment leading to his own ecosophy. Carson (1973: 9) whose clarion call to environmentalism in the seminal book *Silent Spring*, found her early engagement with the environment precipitated from a passion for the ocean as ‘a fascination borne of inner meaning and significance’ beckoning her to write. The evidence of these threshold moments is undeniable, also suggesting there may be more profound depths to be plumbed along the foreshore than casual recreation affords but certainly does not deny. The practice of beachcombing and collecting has affinities with walking pastimes and to other outdoor contexts to such an extent that they too inform this delimited survey.

At the ocean’s edge, oceanic reverie and liminality are predicated upon the wishful thinking of being able to grasp something from what cannot ordinarily be fathomed. Benjamin (1999: 210) makes an acute observation stating, ‘collecting is a primal phenomenon of study’. To collect quintessentially comes from the stirrings of instinct and intuition to participate in the unknown world through inquiry. To be frank, who among us has never literally picked something up and been ‘struck’ by some quality or unbidden thought stirring the imagination to life (Benjamin 1999: 206 my emphasis). Deleuze (and Parnet 2007: 10) refers to the ‘pick-up’ method of collecting among other colourful metaphors, providing the alluring connotations of fooling around and enacting creative coups. The sparse and eclectic examples here are intended to be suggestive, not exhaustive, somewhat shambolic in form, akin to the practice and the finds.

Collecting so often associated with obsession is better served as an incidental activity within the more capacious pastime of wandering extolled here as beachcombing. Rousseau’s (2011: 51) luminous account of time spent on the Island of St Pierre, in the fifth walk of his *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*, displays the lucidity and verve of his own ‘botanising’. In keeping with his own design for a methodology of writing based on reverie, he supplemented tactile and sensuous means of contemplation with *far neinte* (doing nothing). In his newfound passion he left his books unpacked saying ‘I filled my room with flowers and grasses’ so taken with an enthusiasm for botany in the midst of his self-imposed exile on the island, wiling away the afternoons and rainy days studying their forms in contemplation of the seamless fecundity (Rousseau 2011: 51). The aim of these activities amounted to the collection of thoughts whose benign apotheosis was nothing more than an agreeable state of existence, very much in keeping with beachcombing (Satchell 2008b). The lassitude implied by such inquiry is worthwhile noting, in regard to the kind of freedom and amplitude that is
disinterested in serving any specific agenda, increasingly uncommon in contemporary academic work.

This is not to say beachcombing and collecting have no other aim than leisure, rather that they are conducive in so many respects to creative and critical thought relieved of undue pressure. I take the influence of Rousseau’s (2011) manner of botany as being significant on another passionate collector (among other things of postcards, toys, books and even citations). Benjamin (1983: 36), whose famous aphorism ‘botanising the asphalt’ refers to the flaneur, who strolls about aimlessly in anonymity observing the changing milieu, the model for his own cryptographic work in Paris, traversing the archive of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, along with the built and animate environment of the city. The incomplete archival opus of the Arcades project is an inquiry into the crisis of modernity, in the wake of World War I and the spectre of World War II (Buck-Morss 1989; Benjamin 1999). Returning to Croft’s (2018) notion of a car-park beach, the street via asphalt, stormwater-drain and run-off that comes full circle and fast-forward, with the metropole and modernity strewn along the beach in fragmented forms, jumbled together with the primordial remains of a current ecology. This dark ecology of an apocalypse already complete in terms of the Anthropocene, certainly acknowledges the gravity of the current situation and unsettles denial of irrevocable damage already done (Morton 2016). Erstwhile in the present, imaginative thinking and solidarity with the more-than human must continue to seek the ameliorative patterns for future continuity (Rose 2017). In this sense, the liminal zone is that threshold for me, where beachcombing recuperates a purchase on the numinous through the concatenation of ordinary and chance combinations of material fragments that elevate thought and affirm life in the beholder.

The offhand fragments people choose to regard as found objects abound in possible meaning from the mundane to the mystical including serious scholarship, creative practice and other genteel comforts without pretence. Macfarlane (2007) uses the motif of found objects to great effect in his inquiry into the existence of wild places, traversing England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. The frontispiece provides an elegant representation in a black and white sketch, the objects displayed around an upside-down map with two more-than human guides, the hare and the hawk, placed diagonally in the corners respectively contrasting sky and earth. They range in material from wood, feather, stone and plants, (some were worked as flints and arrowheads), while others were distinct in their colour or form including a piece of wood suggestive of a dolphin’s head, all of these pieces are redolent with complex associations. The objects collected on the journeys served as nodes, threading
together into knots of memory, place, character and critical reflection (Serres 2008; Macfarlane 2007). They were used as objects to support thought, vouchsafe memory and frame the narrative that he also brought to bear on the questions of the inquiry, concerning the fate of wild places and the viability of human habitation (Turkle 2011). Accumulated on his office shelf (a habit inherited and shared with his family and close friends) they factored into the final analysis and manuscript after toying with them on the desk—using the ‘humdrum, everyday rites’ of collecting to produce treasures, talismans, gifts, mementos, as well as a multi-faceted interpretive lens for the text (Macfarlane 2007: 87; Macfarlane 2013). The collector becomes aware of ‘the fractal habits of certain landscapes’, says Macfarlane (2007: 246) as they reveal a replication of ‘their own forms at different scales and in different contexts’ to provide a legible reading of their formation and unfolding in terms of the enduring character of a place. On one journey Macfarlane (2007) and friend Roger Deakin provide an insight into their collecting on a storm-beach of an exposed peninsula, walking the tideline collecting the odds and ends of driftwood and stone shards, discussing the finds in terms of type, substance and possible history in the watershed, in the like manner of master sommeliers discussing provenance and vintage. To the collector, avid naturalist, historian and so on, each fragment can be anything from a suggestive clue, a conundrum to ponder or provide a key unlocking a wealth of valuable insight casting new light or unearthing an illuminating presence of the past (Benjamin 1999). The value of small objects one can handle seems to be a combination of tactile apprehension that supports divinatory clarity and the possibilities of combinatory configurations of several objects that form a suggestive assemblage.

The paradox of an object in itself and the object in its context must be handled with care. Bode (1996) makes an astute observation concerning the casual beachcomber in comparison with one of more diligence—to neither be overwhelmed by the excess of stimulus (materials included) or be overcome by sterility of the appearance of sameness. Taussig (Benjamin cited in 2004) makes a similar point through citation in the frontispiece, ‘Right from the start, the great collector is struck by the confusion, by the scatter, in which the things in the world are found’. On the Columbian coast (a wild place of a different kind), the anthropologist-as-collector and story-teller accumulates his materials around a series of objects—critically examining the legacy of the slave trade and the fetishisation of gold and cocaine that continues in the era of globalisation—toward the underlying themes of climate change and the Anthropocene (Taussig 2004). The cover (Some substances and things by Jimmie Durham) illustrates the pick-up method of study through the juxtaposition of objects;
gold, bone (button), Coca leaf, toy hen, seed, little man figurine, shell, stone (arrowhead), wing (butterfly), tool (pocket knife), fish scales, feathers (ear-ring), pea and more gold (Benjamin 1999; Muecke 2010b). *My Cocaine Museum* is a figurative evocation and countermemory upon the Gold Museum of Columbia’s central bank in the Banco de al Republica, bringing the legacy of the past into proximity with the present (Taussig 2004). In the text images of small objects by themselves are found on various pages—shell, mineral, crystal, stone, wood, leaf, gems, flint—each punctuate the text every so often, seemingly as charms and symbols. Taussig (2004: 315) postulates from his own speculation of the work, ‘*My Cocaine Museum* made of spells, hundreds and thousands of spells, intended to break the catastrophic spell of things’ professing a sympathetic magic attributable to the power of intentional writing. The paradox of the object (for example in the fetishization of gold and cocaine including the associated items) in itself and its contexts provides discontinuities that serve to jolt the reader out of familiarity with such taken-for-granted subjects as money, goods and employment (slavery to slave labour) in the stupefying hegemony of modernity and capitalism, bringing into proximity the complicity developed economies share with far-away places as the sites of cruelty and violence underpinning wealth creation. The incidental findings of the story-teller take on new meaning as their juxtaposition and inter-relationships constellate different ways to understand their significance in the scheme of things.

![Crafted from driftwood, a dancing eagle totem](image)

*Figure 28*  Crafted from driftwood, a dancing eagle totem
What arrests the alert beachcomber’s thought, in the constant jumble of materials washed ashore (in a tidaletic sense in keeping with blue eco-poetics) are the makings of multiple readings of place and planet—adrift from normative views of progress. The array of puzzle pieces orchestrated by more-than human forces render the human a minor role (as witness and or culprit) exposing the grandiose aspirations and abominable attempts to control the natural world as futile. They are in effect *tidaletical images* building on Benjamin’s (1999) notion of the dialectical image as congruent with Braithwaite’s tidalectics (in Ashcroft 2017), which expose the catastrophe of progress as the continuum of a history of development—shedding light on the alter/native histories of the oppressed and the anguish of the more-than human world desirous of self-determination (Serres 1995b). The tokens scattered haphazardly on the beach belie a higher order of processes sifting the pieces together in a recognisable coastal geomorphology. Arendt’s (cited in Benjamin 2007: 11,12) insight into Benjamin’s approach is useful: ‘For him the size of an object was in an inverse ratio to its significance […] The smaller the object, the more likely it seemed that it could contain in the most concentrated form everything else…’. In that sense the detritus on the shore, as a means evoking tidaletical images, provoke a web of connections whose networks crystallise and encompass numerous temporal and spatial co-ordinates (Hessler 2018). The tell-tale signs of weather events, ocean currents, climatic changes, environmental stresses, the level of care and use are there among the more banal clues, such as the weekend misadventure of teenagers, various fishing practices, the burden of tourism, proximity to residential, commercial and industrial impacts of run-off and so on (Satchell 2010a). A tidalectic image does more than provide a recent snapshot or progress report—the depth and ignominy of past events may even flash up or flit by, given the right conditions and requisite form of attention (Benjamin 2007). In terms of blue eco-poetics, these vicissitudes are all the more compelling as Walcott (1998: 79) notes: ‘. . . the fate of poetry is to fall in love with the world, in spite of History’. These fragments and their images over time draw the beachcomber into a deeper experience of the coast, to sense the liminality of a shared more-than human community pushed to the edge of the fold.

5.5 A tidalectical imagination

In actual fact, the place is never chosen by man; it is merely discovered by him; in other words, the sacred place in some way or another reveals itself to him. The “revelation” is not necessarily effected by means of anything directly hierophantic in nature (this place, this spring, this tree); it is sometimes effected through the medium of a traditional technique originating out of and based upon a system of cosmology. One such process used to “discover” these sites was the orientation.
The process of orientation that draws someone into the liminality of the coastal zone is something for each person to discover. In nature-based cultures this may come through the social and cultural means of community, as prescribed by custodians and knowledge-holders informed by Indigenous ontology (Somerville and Perkins 2010). However, my grasp of this process relies empirically on my own lived experience and the relevant literature of like-minded people with an interest in environmental philosophy (Nelson 1999; Abrams 1996; Rose 2017). The orientation process for the solitary individual begins at a subliminal level through opportunities fortuitous to its development and gradual realisation (Satchell 2016). In this sense the initiate is not burdened by any expectation or requirement in the preliminary stages. These earliest inklings are pieced together retrospectively as their development and maturity become more pronounce, requiring a settling of accounts before a deeper more informed commitment can be contracted with oneself and the place (Nelson 1999). Again, here there are no hard and fast rules, rather a series of steps that lead to eventualities more often fathomed by hindsight than anything else (Bode 1996). As Shepherd (2011: 8) ponders: ‘place and mind may interpenetrate till the nature of both is altered. I cannot tell what this movement is except by recounting it’. There are parallels with other pursuits, lived experiences and the testimony of others that provide indications of an evolving vocation, with a set of skills, regular practices, dispositions, attitudes, obligations and negotiations, none of which are codified, rather for me, best thought out and journaled as a care of the self and the process of realising becoming, as a co-creative possibility (Foucault 2005; Rainer 1978). In my own circumstances, committing to somewhere such as the coast led on to wanting to learn from a particular place as a means of coming to terms with being in the world, under certain conditions, while reconciling my response to these circumstances by articulating a position from the basis of everyday practice and environmental philosophy (Satchell 2008a; Serres 2008). In this regard, liminality can be thought of not only as a state, but also as a site and a cultural practice, under the rubric of beachcombing, consequently becoming an ethical location for environmental politics.

It was a beachcomber’s discovery that there was more joy in being possessed than possessing. It was a sense of cultural relativism that not many could share from a ship. The beach was the only proper spot for such an exchange.

(Dening 1992: 258)

The break with the civilizing mission, anthropocentrism and ethnocentrism is fraught with misunderstanding and misinterpretation. The testimony of Peter Heywood (Mutiny on the
Bounty) as an earlier beachcomber in Tahiti speaks about his cultural encounter with
Oceanians at the time of early colonisation, providing a reference point if not exact
comparison (Dening 1992). The compelling idea of ‘more joy in being possessed than
possessing’ concerns in context, coming under the care of an Island community whom he
lived with until later being rescued/captured as a mutineer (convicted and later pardoned)
(Dening 1992). My positionality as the descendant of displaced British subjects who were
both colonised and colonisers, Protestant reformers and capitalist producers, has clarified over
time and is based personally on the values and principles I am able to hold. As a current
Australian citizen, I am exercising a democratic right, not satisfied with the resolution of past
and on-going injustices exacted upon Aboriginal peoples, and the on-going exploitation and
degradation of the land and sea—they care for as country. While on a personal level wherever
I am and with whomever I live, I remain committed to forging the peace (Satchell 2008d;
Shiva 2013). This positionality is set against the structured inequality of contemporary
Australia and the ‘logic of insularity’ that Perera (2009: 5) argues is deeply embedded in the
legacy from the colonial project that has been passed on to the nation-state in a geopolitical
imaginary steeped in the twin notions of a fortress mentality and of being a far-flung outpost
of Western civilization. Braithwaite’s (in Perera 2009) tidalectical imagination acts as a
corrective predicated upon turning this insularity inside-out, in ecological terms, daily
through revolutions of the earth, monthly attendant to the phases of the moon and syzygy with
the sun, and in the ebb and flow of tidal and seasonal variation year in year out, while in
cultural terms building upon ecological perspectives with an openness to oceanic cultures and
decolonising initiatives (Hau’ofa, 2008; Glissant 2010; Low 2014). Again, in regard to ‘more
joy in being possessed than possessing’, the so-called discovery had already been made,
where there are parallels with an Australian Aboriginal sense of belonging to country in a
relational ontology of connectivity and reciprocity that outlines a place-sensitivity predicated
on love, responsibility and communality (including kinship), as opposed to possession of land
and property (Dening 1992: 258; Rose 1996). Admittedly, the beach, as a site of encounter
and exchange, comes with considerable historical and contemporary baggage that I have
previously mentioned, nonetheless warrants further consideration once again.

The status of the beach in Australia remains ambiguous in social and cultural terms,
stripped of its trans-oceanic and ecological value, so often imbued with fear, insecurity and or
reckless pride. Conflicting notions of its meaning and use are at the core of questions
concerning sovereignty and territoriality, emblematic in the imbroglio over the relevance and
accuracy of Australia’s National Day celebrations (Australia Day or Invasion Day), the date
being a moot point (Morris 1992; Taussig 2000; Serres 2012; Perera 2009; Behrendt 2017). The abrasive attitude embedded in various approaches to the beach, whether they be the localism and the style of some surfers or the aggressive development of luxury residential and tourist accommodation by entrepreneurs and moguls, or even the attitude of corporations in regard to the mining industry and sites for export, each have their origins in a perceived threat and determination to dominate (colonise) by imposing a self-proclaimed order (Coleman 2001; Evers 2004; Moreton-Robinson 2003). The beach continues to stage an encounter that registers an attitude with resonances centripetal to settler insularity (Sheldrake 1992; Ashcroft 2017).

…the discoverers struggling through the surf were met on the beaches by other people looking at them from the edges of the trees. Thus, the same landscape perceived by the newcomers as alien, hostile or having no coherent form, was to the indigenous people their home a familiar place, the inspiration of dreams.

Rhys Jones (cited in Emmett 2000: 23)

These enduring attitudes have become increasingly apparent in the bipartisan political hard-line attitude toward border protection and the stubborn determination to fudge regional humanitarian responsibilities in a belligerent policing of the borders (Perera 2009). Likewise, these attitudes and worldviews parallel the indifference and shallow rhetoric concerning Aboriginal life-expectancy indicative of their treatment over two centuries (Behrendt 2017). The tidalistical imagination brings with it the forces of nature to confront paranoid nationalism and the insular imagination, endemic to Australian politics and culture, both as a post-colonial imaginary and a decolonising ethos (Perera 2009; Hage 2003; De Loughrey 2007; Rose 2004). As Glissant (cited in Ashcroft 2017: 147) argues, ‘the island embodies openness. The dialectic between inside and outside is reflected in the relationship between the land and sea’. The shifting tides and weather shaping the continent continue to inundate and expose, in a figurative sense, refuting the teleological version of progress, as a false premise for historical narratives that maintain a wilful ignorance toward exploitation and oppression, the benefits of which have been unevenly distributed and whose costs are borne by the first Australians, ordinary citizens and the environment (Rose 2004). The brash approach to political expediency is evident in the economic reliance upon exploitive and extractive industries at the expense of, in Aboriginal terms, care for country.

What then of the liminal zone of the beach as a site for common cause concerning indigeneity, hybridity, animality and vegetality, both as an intervention into human rights discourse and an elaboration of eco-cosmopolitanism. Van Dooren and Rose (2012),
promoting multi-species conviviality in the metropolitan area, make a point I would like to
take up in this context. They say: ‘like humans, penguins too experience the shoreline as a
liminal zone at the edge of comfort and daily experience—but for them unstable and exposed
on land, it is the water that dominates life’ (Van Dooren and Rose 2012: 17). Whereas for
humans unstable and exposed in the water, they are dominated on land (not in an enabling
way) by a ‘regime of violence’ known as capitalism, whose antecedents go back to
colonisation that to date have been hermeneutically sealed with impunity (Lent 2017; Rose
2004: 214). For all the apologists for development and the so-called achievements of
civilisation, how do you reconcile the genocide of innocent cultures and the current aftermath
of environmental recklessness leading to mass species extinctions (Plumwood 2002; Kolbert
2014)? This situation constitutes a conflict where human activity has become a pervasive
threat to the earth, to such an extent that efforts must be made to allow for peace with the
earth and a natural contract (Shiva 2013; Serres 1995b). Therefore, the beach as a literal
liminal zone of a terra and aqueous nature provides the entrance to a transitional state
reaching toward a relational ontology with a multi-species more-than human world.

5.6 Liminality: A relational ontology

But perhaps we may make our stand along the edge of civilisation, like a magician, or like a person who
having lived in another tribe, can no longer wholly return to his own. He lingers half within and half
outside of his community, open as well, then to the shifting voices and flapping forms that crawl and
hover beyond the mirrored walls of the city. And even there, moving along those walls, he may hope to
find the precise clues to the mystery of how those walls were erected, and how a simple boundary
became a barrier, only if the moment is timely—only, that is, if the margin he frequents is temporal as
well as a spatial edge, and the temporal structure that it bounds is about to dissolve, or metamorphose,
into something else.

(Abram 1996: 28, 29)

Despite the monumentality of the task and the imposing apparatus of empire, modest means
and circumspection seem a fitting rejoinder to the situation involving the necessity to initiate
personal and societal changes. Abram (1996: 27, 28) poses a useful question in this regard
‘How, that is, have we become so deaf and so blind to the vital existence of other species, and
to the animate landscapes they inhabit, that we now so casually bring about their destruction?’
This is naturally a question that implicates everyone but one to which the liminal figure of the
beachcomber is a response, both intuitively and deliberately. Abram’s (1996) own response to
the question above has bearing upon the liminal figure. The purpose of these ethical responses
and the practices they pursue equates to a shamanistic and animist coastal philosophy (Rose 2013; Plumwood 2002; Harvey 2005; Casey 2011b). The quest for a relational ontology supporting a blue eco-poetics requires the integration of certain philosophical premises with the practical application of establishing meaningful relationships that bear out their intention.

Ostensibly ostracising yourself from the human community seems counter-intuitive, although this begins a process where you are not completely cut-off, however, instead institutes new ways of relating in keeping with an ethics of care. What may come as a surprise to some are the shifts in consciousness resulting from a closer engagement with the more-than human and the confluence of space, place and ecology (Nelson 1991). This also involves finding common cause with a wider network, resulting in moving in different social and cultural circles of people who possess a kindred spirit (Casey 2011a). In the deepening relationship to place, as an ethic of care, the development of various skills gifts the person with responsibility to serve others as a means of fulfilling one’s own purpose (Turner 1966). Alternatively, significant others of the more-than human kind, with whom you share encounters and engagements in their storied life-worlds are the guides and confidants of a burgeoning awareness and sensibility (Van Dooren and Rose 2012). This kind of shift in relations represents a symbolic enactment not unlike a pilgrimage, where specific intentions are acted upon with a corresponding goal or destination—in this context a transition to a manner of life in keeping with certain convictions concerning environmental philosophy (Gros 2014). To apply these principles as previously stated is to make a fold around a mode of existence governed by self-imposed guidelines, in the manner of self-cultivation and the care of the self (Foucault 2005; Foucault in Deleuze 1988). Following such a course of action, it must be emphasised, does not diminish participation in society or display an apathetic stance toward national politics (Appiah 2006). On the contrary I am advocating for activating a form of citizenship that extends beyond national borders to wider responsibilities to the planet, while applying them to concrete local circumstances.

The focus of these critical aspects concerns a confrontation with the dominant worldview steeped in cultural superiority and human exceptionalism that needs to shift for a viable environmental culture to have a planetary scope. These aspects equate with the liminal zone between the ocean and earth, in their marginal status in the dominant discourses, politics and economics of what might be thought as the contemporary world (Serres 1995b; Casey 2011b). The issues and concerns they address are inter-related and crucial to any transformative potential of a breakthrough in the impasse at the conjunction between capitalism, globalisation, technology and environmental crisis (Satchell 2008d; Serres 2015a).
The relevance they hold pertains to the type of thinking and action required for mutual co-existence and co-operative initiatives to re-invigorate thriving communities and a flourishing life-world (Shiva 2013). The challenges facing the world are not going to disappear as a result of such an accord; they will only become more bearable as adaptive possibilities appear in the current conflagration towards longer term transformations (McKibben 2010; Stengers 2015). For an expansive eco-cosmopolitanism to take shape, as a more-than human earth community, rapprochement between indigeneity, hybridity, animality and vegetality must occur in thought and deed—even if complete agreement remains a work-in-progress.

![Image](image-url)

**Figure 29** A young Orca washed ashore in heavy seas touches these adolescents

The attitudes and worldviews of anthropocentrism and ethnocentrism that structure the contemporary world have historical injunctions that must be contested. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, so often lauded for its achievements, fundamentally frames the failings of the colonial period based on domination and human mastery of the natural world, translating the same modus operandi into economic terms of a protestant work-ethic underpinning capitalism (Ife 2007). The inadequacies of current human rights discourses and cosmopolitan aspirations displayed in the mainstream media have at their core the same issues as the ecological crisis, deeply ingrained attitudes of cultural superiority and human
exceptionalism (West 2001; Haraway 2008; Rose 2017). Ife’s (2007) evaluation of human rights discourse recognises the fundamental flaws that are inherent in its framing and their applicability to the issues they seek to address. Even a preliminary list will suffice to illustrate the thrust of the argument: Western cultural bias (as a view of race, gender and sexuality), the teleological fallacy of progress (development), colonial amnesia, capitalist assumptions, implicit religious preferences and anthropocentrism (Satchell 2008d). These same flaws also hinder theorisation of cosmopolitanism through anthropocentrism, rendering them impotent and out of touch with the decisive aspects of a viable planetary ethos for a new ecology (Rose and Robin 2004). I am prepared to concede that to overcome these significant deficiencies a compelling realisation of the state of emergency is imperative, ergo, accompanied by a humble recognition of the validity of an eco-cosmopolitanism involving the genuine concern that goes beyond human and national interests encompassing all life on earth (Benjamin 1999; Wilson 2016; Earle 2010; Roberts 2013). The decisive shift in the hegemonic worldview steeped in anthropocentric and ethnocentric orthodoxies—revolves around attitudes towards some critical aspects of the circumstances that must undergo a sea-change, in relation to indigeneity, hybridity, animality and vegetality.

The treatment of first peoples and nature-based cultures by imperial powers and their descendants, beginning from European expansion from the 14th Century to the present day, has been perpetuated by a fundamental error in thinking supported by the so-called civilising mission. The damning evidence of this error can be seen in the degradation of the environment, both land and sea, through exploitation, mismanagement and destruction (this is not to elide the unconscionable treatment of these people on the basis of an assumed superiority based on science and technology, which too are riven with fallacy and assumption) (Patel and Moore 2017; Pascoe 2014). Rose (2017) calls for truthful accounts of the exceptional damage humans, from a Western mechanistic worldview, have wreaked on the planet, by imposing a profligate system fuelled by industrialisation and self-aggrandisement, ultimately leading to the Anthropocene. The accounts of early cultural encounters with first peoples, time and again, provide testament to peoples with lively and regenerative relationship with the surrounding environment (among other cultures who had risen and fallen). The cosmology and relational ontology they maintained for thousands of years deserving of more respect and humility was treated with disdain, time and time again (Pascoe 2014; Nelson 1983; Rose 2004; Hau’ofa 2008; Scott 2010). In the current technologically driven world, a genuine re-engagement with indigeneity would appear to be counter-intuitive. However, there are both ethical and pedagogical reasons why this is appropriate—there is
much to learn from first nation peoples and their nature-based cultures of time-honoured ways towards a viable sense of eco-cosmopolitanism.

The value of cultural interaction and the cross-cultural integrity of hybridity that contributes to pluralist societies has too often been overshadowed by ethnocentric hubris, cultural clashes and xenophobia. Glissant (2010) makes a compelling case for worldwide entanglement through a poetics of relations, instantiating a plausible form of eco-cosmopolitanism. Based from the hard-won and complicated experience of the intermixed cultures of the Caribbean and their treatment from the West ensconced in developed and exploitative economies. He provides critical insight into the dynamism of heterogenous cultures and the politics of ecology required for a culturally diverse planet, patterned on communication and the poetics of the earth (living sustainably through forms of subsistence and exchange) (Glissant 2010; Lent 2017). Scott’s (2010) re-reading of first contact and the revitalisation of Noonygar language in south-western Australia is a literary example of how the poetics of hybrid relations might be rethought and the trauma of the past addressed, with counter-memories that reorient existing relations in non-essentialist identifications to an overarching reliance on a cared for place (Brewster 2015). This matches Glissant’s (2010) distinction between ‘rooted identity’ and ‘relational identity’ that requires negotiation and dialogue, premised on the problematics between the absolute and the relative in terms of cultural difference, preferring relational approaches premised on inclusion and the right to opacity. For Glissant (2010), the ‘poetics of relation’ of the world in its tout-monde, the world in its totality—turns upon the same uncertainty displayed in the dynamics of quantum physics and chaos theory. The echos-monde, the relativity of cultures in resonance through poetics, identifies processual approaches to hybridity evident in the ‘poetics of relation’, not defined by nations but enjoined by peoples and their intermixing. This recognises after Shiva (2016: xi) ‘interconnectedness and non-separability as the nature of nature’ that unequivocally joins us together, prompting her call for an earth democracy (Glissant 2010). For Glissant (2010: 138) the ‘chaos-monde’, the world in its dynamism always remains operative and defies complete control of the ‘(the immeasurable mixture of cultures)’ that are ‘unforeseeable and foretellable’ including the more-than human world (Muecke 2004; Muecke and Shoemaker 2001). The multi-species community requires this complex grasp of personhood allowing for kinship networks and open-ended ontologies that are relational—the war against these has been disastrous and suicidal (Rose and Robin 2004). There remain creative possibilities in the fluid dynamics produced by cross-cultural encounters, these are premised on transformative detournements of the current modes of existence.
The modes of existence contributing to a viable environmental culture in the
Anthropocene have as their fore-runners the traditions and philosophies of nature-based
cultures who practice kinship with animals and the vegetation they use to live. The turn
toward animality and vegetality is premised on two critical factors; recognising something
about humans that has been lost in the rationality of modernity and recollecting a sense of
respect for the intelligence and capabilities of the multi-species and biotic family evident in
nature-based cultures (Nelson 1983; Deleuze and Guatarri 1987). Despite the
anthropocentrism and ethnocentrism of Western culture and the treatment they have exacted
on innocent people, first peoples continue to cultivate their multi-species networks from
generations of animal and plant lore (Harden 1999). This demonstrates the superiority of
environmental cultures whose values and beliefs in the face of irrevocable loss, cruelty and
adversity remain resolute in their care for the earth (Nelson 1999; Somerville and Perkins
2010). In the Anthropocene, habitat loss and species extinction have redoubled the importance
of learning about effective inhabitation from the living world in its particularities and the
nuance of multi-species communities.

The resurgence of ethology, as well as the emergence of multi-species ethnography, in
part has been driven by researchers concerned with species driven towards extinction in the
spectre of so many species already lost in the past two centuries. In the context of this work,
of care and support, notions of regeneration for habitat and trans-species networks are
emerging. New and old forms of ‘inter-species sociality’ enable a multi-species conviviality
toward holistic approaches to kinship and country, recognising existing shortfalls in theorising
cosmopolitanism and multi-culturalism that do not include the more than-human (Lorimer
2010: 56; Van Dooren and Rose 2012; Mathews 2012). Mathews (2012) provides an
insightful case study of her own efforts to reconcile the tension between environmental ethics
and animal rights stances, in the further complications derived from introduced species,
degraded environments and competing interests. This too has produced an emerging sub-
genre of work building on Crosby’s (1986) landmark on ecological imperialism, dealing
specifically with the ecological legacies of settler-colonies (Taylor et al. 2015; Instone and
Taylor 2015; Zahara and Hird 2015). Haraway (2016) maintains that despite or even because
of these messy entanglements, there are causes worthy of redoubled efforts and with the
imperative to embrace the complications. The wealth of indigenous knowledges and the
principles they embody provide the necessity for on-going dialogue, mindful of the compass
points they provide to follow, particularly in regard to humility and respect to all living
organisms and their larger entities (Nelson 1991; Stengers 2015). The willingness to learn
seems to be a pivot point in the process, recognising there are no substitutes for direct experience (Nelson 1991; Abrams 1996). These direct experiences provide the substance of a story-telling and poetics so sorely needed to kindle hope in effective modes of existence in the Anthropocene.

5.7 The art of living: A blue eco-poetics

The highest form of knowledge is always a poetics.

(Glissant 2010: 140)

…but islands can only exist if we have loved them. I seek
As climate seeks its style, to write
Verse crisp as sand, clear as sunlight,
Cold as the curved wave, ordinary
As a tumbler of island water; […]
So, like a diarist in the sand I marked the peace with which you graced
Particular islands…

(Walcott 2014 np)

The intention of characterising the life of the beachcomber as a model for creative practice and environmental aesthetics, ergo, for a coastal philosophy is predicated upon an express interest to simplify a mode existence as the very life of blue eco-poetics. While this may not be suited to everyone, I have found solidarity across oceanic cultures from Oceania to the Caribbean and northern Atlantic, which have resonances across to the Indian Ocean and the settler-cultures of Australia including first peoples everywhere (Walcott 2014; Hau’ofa 2008; Glissant 2010; Perera 2009; Yates 2014; Ghosh and Muecke 2007). As Ashcroft (2017) asserts, post-colonial utopian thought finds its value in a critique of the current circumstances, with the purpose of working from the present to think through productive change toward the possibility of liveable futures. This provides exemplary examples of the type of character and imagination required for life in the Anthropocene (McKibben 2010; Macy and Brown 2014; Gibson et al. 2015). What amounts to a necessary transformation or ‘great turning’ back to the earth (blue ocean planet), in the reclamation of ordinary culture, the commons of a multi-species networks, the leadership and constituency of an earth democracy: as one that displays conviction, a sense of decorum and restraint toward a wounded earth (Macy and Brown 2014; Shiva 2016). Shiva (2013) reminds us that as far back as Aristotle the distinction between cold-blooded ‘chrematisitics’—the art of money-making and oikonomia—the art of living’ defined a critical juncture and admonition, regarding the dangers of rational economics and
the inherent values of the household economics of ecology, concerned about life and relationships. These ideas do not accord with current political thought, bald-faced reason or existing economic models. They work on the premise of more-than human life and love.

Little time that’s left for love
Between the poised and broken wave;
let us who hang like a wave on the sea,
praise all the dead and all who live.

(Wright 1984: 138)

No-one knows how much time there is left, either in the minuitia of personal struggles or even in the grander scheme of the mystery of things, whose vast panorama unfurls with the universe without pause for thought here on earth. In this chapter I have outlined a beachcombing experience drawing upon an oceanic consciousness whose curious inquiry searches the primordial edges that fold the farthest reaches of the outside together within. To walk such a path woven at the overlap of thought and practice, reading and writing, land and sea is made possible through the freedom and imaginative means of oceanic reverie and the unceasing sound of the shoreline as an expression of the beating heart of the ocean. In this liminal zone, a relational ontology becomes manifest in a delicate concord with indigeneity, hybridity, animality and vegetality. The beachcomber offers this benign practice of blue eco-poetics whose consummate performance is a life worth living.
Chapter Six A field guide: Seven walks toward the transformation of everyday life

There is in fact a sort of harmony discoverable between the capabilities of the landscape within a circle of a ten miles’ radius, or the limits of an afternoon walk, and the three score years and ten of human life.  

(Solnit 2001: 5 my emphasis)

Preamble

These walks began unassumingly as forays into the neighbourhood, then upon repeated excursions became walking meditations upon the place they encompassed…in due course they went on to be thought of as orientations toward a more expansive sense of place and complex personhood. The purpose of writing them turns upon a correspondence with the self and the world, the human and the more-than-human with whom they allow dialogue and intimacy (Abrams 1996). Right now, for example, four black cockatoos do a flyover, squawking the interplay of their scrambled flightpath whose prevarications sound a commonly held omen communicating the likelihood of rain. I baulk to write about them, then think of Mary Oliver (2014) whose hummingbirds fly through her pages or Deleuze and Guattari (1987) whose words become ants crawling off the pages—why not the sign of rain to warn the reader they may get wet, to bring an umbrella or a reminder to pack your goggles and swim fins. I hope these walks are both like walks you have had and not like any walk you ever have imagined, something you might find yourself inadvertently dreaming about and then in turn seeking.

The limitation of a narrow corridor of coast is in no way prohibitive of funding a wealth of material to work with—at least enough for a lifetime. The recursive distance between place-making and place-writing allows a leisured approach, where making and being-made alter the centre of gravity toward a poetics with a stamp one eventually bears as a signature. Just as in the stillness of a moment when pausing to ponder life your consciousness seems to adjust to the overarching benevolence of a familiar and much-loved character of place enjoined like a shared a nod. The smile you discern on the face of the world has become personal from an innate closeness to the scheme of things that speaks to the heart without speech. As in the epic and instructive tales where characters stumble upon enchanted caves, trees, forests, lakes, shorelines, islands and oceans, these walks awaken lessons in life through poignancy of experience and thoughtful reflection (Le Guin 2016; Cixous 1993; Haraway 2016). For me the lifeworld has become like a flower unfolding in a process of revelation that blossoms and wafts a distinctive scent. There are also those hidden bulbs who after seasons of slumber reappear again as flowers to awaken forgotten memories with their fragrance and
form. The longer my attention trained upon the subtlety of the living world, the caprice of its moods and nimbleness of appearances, the more these innate pleasures kept a comforting hold on me (Ingold 2011). Life indeed has been kind leading me this far, offering the portent of something accumulative in terms of significance and meaning. Ironically or not, I have come to accept that my response to the degradation of the environment at the hands of humans, has become some sort of attempt at self-realisation or at least as a witness to the elegant dynamism of the more-than human world left in the wake of the lunacy of human hubris (Loori 2005). As a heuristic device writing to you is a God-send, solving the problem of reticence and doubt in making these fanciful notions plain and open to closer scrutiny, as well as writing to you is a pleasure that makes the labour of thought even sweeter.

Although I do acknowledge the inseparability that joins everyone in deeper connections awaits a burgeoning awareness that may suffer lack through expression. However, not here by intent, where lives and worlds speak one another’s language (Hesse 1979b; Xingjian 2000). I am convinced the principles of creativity, ethics and ecology that underpin these seven orientations and the value of places as life-worlds, are not limited to this specific location but do hold wherever they are practiced in good faith such is the family motto. The orientations are as follows: ‘lathe bioasa’ (the hidden life), far niene (doing sweet nothing), reverie (daydreaming), curiosity (a piqued interest that does not tire of novelty or focused attention), perspicacity (insight into complex detail), pareidolia (multiple readings of random patterns and stimulus) and hierophony (manifestation of the sacred) (Satchell 2016). How pleasing for me as they appear here listed, filling me once again with anticipation and delight, seeking to entice you on these walks so dear to my heart. So, let us begin the walks by lighting a candle as it were invoking a creative life-force to lead the way.

**The first walk: Cave of the new birth**

Returning to the room that currently shelters my soul is the point of departure for the first walk. In the south-western aspect of the front window, I look out across the valley to the Mother Place of the Gumbaynggirr, Coramba (the local Aboriginal word for mountain), whose features act as a focal point on the escarpment running adjacent to the coast, reminding me each morning of ‘Mother Earth and Father All’ (Somerville and Perkins 2010; Jim and Arledge 2007: 61). My green Fuji is a living woodblock print, whose outline registers the setting sun and observes the earth’s turning throughout the year at various co-ordinates on the western horizon as it sets. Think of the beginning of the new year or the beginning of a new stage in life and the completion of a former one that has run its course (Lawler 2001; Hesse
Take another look from a different perspective at a course laid out from heaven where new light shimmers on the path of the earth, auspicious for beginning a walk mindful of the importance of first steps (Lawler 2001). Yet another aspect of the walk relates to the energy of the new moon rising from the quiet darkness of its void to relieve a turn inward with a fresh start (Ming-Dao 1992). Wherefore, thoughts turn to the coming cycle, in this instance of what can be achieved through the practice of these walks and environmental philosophy, setting the intention from a critique of the dominant culture to the transformation of everyday life that exercises freedom in the more-than human lifeworld (Satchell 2016; Lefebvre 2008 abc). Beginning a new venture and bringing it to completion requires purpose and tenacity, going out and coming in deserves careful consideration and execution, even the most mundane tasks demand mindfulness to ensure success (Wilhelm 1985). When you walk mindfully in the present, each footprint compliments the stream of thought, greeting the path by grasping each passing moment as the feel for a place (Nhat Hahn 1992). Imagine with me the key to life’s purpose rests in possession of the inquiring self and the door hitherto locked is opening beckoning an adventure. Follow me to the cave of the new birth; it is only a short walk but unforgettable.

The walk begins awakening from sleep early on the morning of a new moon just before dawn. I have decided to go to the cave and fetch some seawater to begin a course of saline cleansing, following the instructions gleaned from the Hawaiian healer Margaret Machado, a Lomilomi Massage Master (Harden 1999). The sea water drink (one third seawater, two-thirds water) is called ‘the universal remedy’ and works to flush the system, removing accumulated waste from the intestines, powerfully effective combined with fasting and the gradual reintroduction of juices and then whole food (Kamakau cited in Harden 1999 np). I am after a cleanse to recalibrate my diet and jolt my internal well-being for a new phase in life. While soul-making sounds esoteric, mine too is based on practical actions in the material world (Moore 1998; Klee 1992a). There is the type of sea mist today that gives the pre-dawn an ethereal presence. The track leading from the bottom of my driveway follows a path through Brigalow bush, regrowth coastal thicket leftover from littoral rainforest (DoE 2009). Aboriginal lore has this as a once lush rainforest and pivotal in the Dreaming, cleared by pioneers and settlers, further denuded by sand miners and a period of vehicular access championed by surfers to access the spot—it is now in a period of renewal. The place was given Nature Reserve status in 1995, as the result of community action in opposition to a Sewerage Outfall as previously mentioned (NSW NPWS 2012). The headland exposed by its south-facing location means the remaining casuarinas, paperbarks and assorted shrubs are in
stunted bonsai-like forms. The roadway at the front of the residence was once the pivotal location of confrontation between protesters and police (Cooke et al 2000). I go this way often to check the surf and whenever the conditions are suitable to go surfing. My first visit to the surf spot occurred in 1976 on a holiday, but through a series of moves I got closer over the years, eventually coming to live in its uninterrupted proximity to the shoreline, fulfilling the childhood dream of the surfside life in the quintessential beach-house. In the cool of the creeping first light I make my way along the path on my new moon mission, carrying a bag with some bottles to claim the prized seawater.

Figure 30 A banksia bends into the sort of thicket honey-eaters adore

In my quest to learn from this place, I will admit to consulting the genius loci, the spirit of place, yes, and I am prepared to follow unconventional methods. The motivation to have the water go through me and become part of me is accompanied by a leap of faith in the process and a sense of this process being pono. The concept of pono is a Hawaiian idea for doing things right and finding balance.

Pono is a concept that means being in balance with the self and all things related to it. It means living in harmony; being attentive to the intention at the inhale breath before exhaling the words from thought; it is taking responsibility with every action produced.

(Yates 2014: 13)

The word stems from the larger idea of Ho’oponopono meaning living in balance, referring also to a Hawaiian protocol for ohana, the family, used for mediation based on communication, dialogue and forgiveness fundamental for living in harmony among island
communities. The sound of the ocean grows as I emerge from the scrub to cross the small car-park made from the failed compound built to construct the Outfall (Cooke et al 2000). Kangaroos eye me off though remain undisturbed, eating the grass still glistening with dew. The reach of the headland eastward is roughly a kilometre from the adjacent beach to the south, forming a buffer from the summer north-easter, giving the northern corner protection from the wind. Today there is a pulse of mystery swell pulled by the new moon. The lines of swell squeeze into the cove at an angle from the south-east. The path undulates on the top of the cliff face offering periodic pathways down. The most familiar one is a makeshift track to the jump-off spot, one I have trodden so many times that my feet know individual stepping stones across the rocks, able to weave the softest and most direct course to allow the appropriate timing to launch into the break. The path I am heading for this morning is a little way further along and winds down from the circuit track to the rocky foreshore. In keeping with the spirit of place, my composure is calm, ready to perform the works accompanying my leap of faith.

There is a distinct feeling of entering a designated zone. At the bottom there is a hollow in the rock, an alcove I treat as an entrance altar allowing for a reminder of the reverence I wish to offer when going and coming from this sacred place. It is the haunt of solitaries—eagles, herons or pairs of pied oyster-catchers whose inimical alarm pipes out discontent at any encroachment on their secluded territory (Macfarlane 2013). To arrive here is also to approach somewhere hallowed for thousands of years, therefore, not to be done in a casual or disrespectful manner. I feel a welcoming presence and recognise this as a favourable time to have come. Approaching the cave takes great care for other reasons as well, threading the uneven surface of the rocks and crossing the tidal pools is a venture relying upon a combination of low tide and slight seas. Bordering the oceanside are various rocks protruding from large open rock pools, where the ocean seethes in and around them according to the size of the swell. On the left at the base of the cliff, the wash of the high tide mark is evident. Crossing over a shallow pool the path then skips over a smooth barrier rock where the cliff steepens all the way along toward the entrance.

The entrance is triple over my head with a roughly hewn oval shape. However, even when I approach the cave, the tunnel through the side of the headland is visible with a chamber at each end and a narrow tunnel between, whose crevice offers a raised alleyway joining them, toward the light of the eastern-entrance that likewise opens like a driveway. The western chamber follows a narrow path and then opens dome-like with a circular pool, that, at this tide, is waist deep. Water rushes through according to the swell and tide but is mainly
calm around the ebb with only a slight wash intermittently rippling through. If the sea is particularly calm, you can go right through, exiting the eastern chamber and swimming further round to an even larger cave facing south, shrouded in complete darkness and deeper mysteries, the sanctuary of a colony of small bats.

This morning I am glad to pay my respects, state my intentions for the water, fill my bottles and leave. The logic of choosing this place to secure the seawater is twofold, the oxygenation produced by the wave action in the tunnel and the esteem I hold of this as a sacred place. The magnificence of the cave surrounds me with a sense of its own presence related to the larger headland and the way the sound of the sea amplifies the solemn effect. Caves hold various symbolic properties, womb-like as Mother Earth they provide a potent context for the work of ‘transformation and rebirth’ with a long association attached to spiritual pursuits (Jacobi 1964: 348). On the return, I am always particularly cautious with my steps due to wet feet and mindful of a sacred trust that relies upon respect. I cap this at the altar with a small offering (a shell from the cave and a piece of apple) by way of recognition as a votive gift. On the return home marked again by thankfulness, I gaze towards Coramba in the distance she appears to me as a mother doting over a child. In case you are wondering the cleanse goes as planned, sharpening the palate and invigorating my passion for whole food.

The orientation: ‘lathe bioasa’ (the hidden life)

These orientations act as spatial senses, in this instance ‘lathe bioasa’ (the hidden life) an
Epicurean notion for living a quiet unassuming life in the context of personal sanctuary (Arendt 1987: 71). The cave represents this exquisite *hiddenness*, quietly tucked away in the larger presence of the headland, embedded in the surrounds of the sea and land as a majestic microcosm of marine lifeworld. To live in hiding suggests a certain withdrawal, the requisite for a hermit to remain undisturbed, to work away at inner qualities and character development in the transposition from awakening to illumination and enlightenment (Wilhelm 1985; Cline 1997). However, I have found the hidden life does not mean being completely cut-off from community or more-than human others; rather, to be removed periodically with the accompanying freedom of contemplation in the practice of everyday life, according to one’s own needs and proclivities providing the opportunity to turn inward in a process of clarity and transformation (De Certeau 1984; Housden 1995; Nelson 1991). The idea of being able to make yourself appear and disappear is a necessary requirement to guard one’s privacy in the process of developing certain skills. Such is the appeal of the hidden life in keeping with spiritual practices, as experimental modes of existence (Ramey 2012). By attending to the more-than human and becoming acquainted with place more intimately, the world takes on a different hue and all the elements become more potent forces.

The destinies of men are subject to immutable forces that must fulfil themselves. But man has it in his power to shape his fate, according as his behaviour exposes him to the influence of benevolent and destructive forces.

(Wilhelm 1985: 64)

The idea of being exposed to these forces includes an element of risk, while yet allows one to go about the business of transformation in private, an important thought upon which to conclude the first walk—you may be wondering what have got yourself into. Let me assure you these walks are a delight to the soul that lingers even after they are read.

*The second walk: The headland between three islands*

Stretching the legs on an extended walk expands the mind and lengthens your thinking along certain lines of inquiry. Out of my window there is a loop of beach unspooling the coastline to the next headland at Moonee 4.6 kilometres away and then further off in the distance. There are 22 kilometres of coastline visible to my eye but no bigger than my hand if I were to make a sketch to scale. The beach stretches away in the distance on a pleasant curve. Lines of whitewash approach the foreshore and bend to its contour depending on the tide, where accordingly the eggshell colouration of beach expands and contracts, as a ribbon diminishing in the distance. A path laid out alongshore with no reason to go there, except to walk its
length, a walk whose purpose lies strewn all along the path, only to be reassembled nearing the end of the return leg. Most of the time and depending on the weather the length of the beach is deserted. At each end, fisher folk will test its water with a line but fewer people make the trek. Nonetheless, there are those who do, some run or ride a bike, but the most common approach is a leisurely walk for exercise and peace of mind. For me, the short journey nourishes a southern perspective as a view back upon the secret of my own existence.

Figure 32

The closer you get the more detail becomes enlarged

The second walk is suited to the companionship of wide-open spaces entertaining the more-than human. Lovelock (1990: 9) maintains that “the simplest way to explore Gaia is on foot. How else can you so easily be part of her ambience? How else can you reach out to her with all your senses?” On a stretch like this, a round-trip can make for a lengthy conversation, an ideal way to conduct an unstructured interview or field trip (Ingold and Vergunst 2008). For a multi-species ethnographer and investigator of place, some of the most wonderful discoveries are sought by the improper design of happenstance (Van Dooreen 2016; Ingold 2004). As Stigloe (1998: 2) elegantly suggests: ‘outside lies magic’, a claim worth pursuing on foot. In the alignment between the sea and shore, one treads the unfolding harmony of movement and stasis that strikes the familiar chord of a coastal refrain (Solnit 2001; Bachelard 1994). Depending on the pace, anything from brisk to meandering, you need to allow a reasonable amount of time to ensure the welcome freedom for relaxing into a playful mood (Saint-Amand 2011). There are all sorts of leads to follow and fields to explore, be they with mental notes or systematic observations, where getting to know one another seems to be
going on all along the shoreline.

A walk like this can be easily construed as an act of giving and receiving. The more you lavish yourself on a place the more ravishing it becomes. As Solnit (2001: 13) lays out in her appreciation on the joys of wanderlust and a sense of place:

When you give yourself to places, they give yourself back; the more one comes to know them, the more one seeds them with the invisible crop of memories and associations that will be waiting for you when you come back, while new places offer up new thoughts, new possibilities. Exploring the world is one of the best ways of exploring the mind, walking travels both terrains.

In the freshness of a summer morning, the height of a clear winter’s day or alternatively the cooling embers of the afternoon, these are all suitable times to conduct such a venture, though best when the wind is calm. When I make this walk, I rely on contingency, like today when something inside seems to say go—and the threads of a conversation are picked up along the way (Ingold 2011; Benediktsson and Lund 2010). In a matter of minutes, I am indeed gone detouring as I bypass the car park and make my way down the ramp on to the beach. The chatter of a particularly articulate honey-eater confers a sense of grace with a ream of bird jokes about the oddities of human behaviour. Now is the opportunity to shed your footwear at the approach of sand, allowing the feet to breathe-easy so as to ground the body (Ingold 2011; Munteanu 2016). Breathing through the feet not only stimulates your life-force but serves as a perceptive point of contact with far greater receptivity in the delicate act of an auto-choreography, where the whole body embraces ecological sensibilities (Lui 1990; Satchell 2008a; 2010a). The first part of this walk can be like taxiing on the runway before take-off; soon the momentum of a steady pace becomes akin to a glide, where one hovers over the surface effortlessly. By developing your body awareness, the complimentary shift from geographic understandings into ecological sensibilities can be felt. Your senses begin to whir into a synergy that adds delight to the journey (Satchell 2008a; Mathews 2007). There is no out-giving a chosen place and its charms, only an on-going process of reciprocity that increases in wonder and gratitude.

Some way down the beach toward the middle there may be found a delicate balance between the sea and shore, the mountains and islands, going and coming, beginning and ending. The balance of these elements I weigh accordingly in a manner that gives substance to a symbolic harmony and unity. At the halfway mark along the beach, a pervading sense of being ‘in the right place and the right time’ impresses itself upon me, with a gentle reminder to keep on the present path to complete the cycle (Lawler 2001: 42 my emphasis). The harmony allows insight into the way all living things are joined in their inter-relationships and
non-separability at a quantum level with an ‘implicate order’ throughout the universe (Shiva 2016; Bohm cited in Munteanu 2016:199). Favour comes from discerning the presence of ‘Mother earth and Father all’ as seen in their compatibility to provide serenity underneath the turbulent maelstrom of constant change—revealing a deeper regularity (Jim and Arledge 2007: 61). Constant attentiveness to the surrounds in all weathers, times of day and their seasons is rewarded on these occasions, where the unity of the earth and cosmos unveils the munificence that bestows life-giving blessings on all through the necessity of a turning world of unerring cycles. The mid-point confers a recognisable marker, opportune for affirming the middle way after the manner of the sage.

The geographic features of the coastal foreshore also provide the symbolic material for the discerning reader of nature’s sacred manuscripts. Beyond the halfway mark all three islands come into view. When I look back the full outline of the headland is traced out in complete profile, stretching out like a hidden dragon lying full-length asleep (Walters 1991). On the beach, particularly when the tide is ebbing, the sprawling work of ghost crabs is scrawled alongshore, joining into a 1:1 scale map of crustacean society in primeval code written meticulously in free verse around their homes and meeting places (Carson 1973). There are several poles at various points set-up by the authorities marking the height of the tide in metres, to record any unusual inundation; invariably these are the perch of numerous sea-eagles and Brahminy Kites that roost along the creek and wetlands behind the dunes (NSW NPWS 2012). The piercing eyes of these creatures is felt, as they survey every movement in their field of vision, undaunted by the interruption to their silent reveries steeped in the murmuring ocean (Stilgoe 1994). Along this sandy stretch of beach is also the homeland of turtles who return to their place of birth to lay eggs, whose offspring repeat the cycle and carry on the story by returning to the ocean currents to be whisked away on their own precarious adventures (Van Doreen 2016). At the other end of the beach, each island offers a different profile than the accustomed one from home. South-Solitary faces more obviously South like a giant household god guarding the threshold of a temple. South-West Solitary becomes even more turtle-like in appearance, as a giant totem forever wading out to sea. While the gap in Split-Solitary Island can now be seen from a squarer angle in the symmetry of its two perfect and complimentary parts, yin / yang symbolism not lost on me, as claps sticks crossed or the two sisters that they immortalise here and, in the sky (Lui 1981; Somerville and Perkins 2010). The landmarks take on greater significance over time—their presence and the life they support serves the imagination as well as the ecology.

The walks provide opportunity to recognise and respect the features that give a place
its distinctive qualities and to read into them personal significance, as well as learn the cultural associations. The other end of the beach at the mouth of Moonee Creek is the true halfway mark of the walk. The creek joins the sea after having taken a winding root through wetlands behind the adjacent beach, whose ‘thalweg ([…] from German for “valley-way”)’ slowly turns westward ascending to the escarpment, where it begins its trickling descent only gaining momentum in heavy rain when thousands of rivulets join in its procession (Munteanu 2016: 142; Serres 2008). Through identification with the qualities and attributes seen within the environment and its features, one bonds to them and thus cultivates these inner qualities by paying attention to the surroundings and oneself (King 1985). Accompanying me on the return journey at about halfway home, dolphins surface in a pod along the wave zone, bobbing up and down, catching the odd wave, with a small new-born splashing about more vigorously—this is an escort who honour the most delightful oceanic order (Conner and Peterson 1994). On the return leg along Moonee Beach I become aware of the reverse angle upon home, now looming in the distance and growing with each step. Finally, at some magical moment I feel the discernible presence of my favoured place embrace me. Refreshed with dolphins in tow there is a flickering reverberation in my quickened soul.

Figure 33 Out and about polishing the silverware

The orientation: far niene (doing sweet nothing)

The idea of doing nothing is the antithesis of the systems and institutions of the networked society enmeshing the 21st Century. I first came across this Italian idea reading Rousseau (2011) whose penchant for doing nothing and descriptions of doing so, despite the inevitable
paradox, were alluring, such as floating in a small boat while laying prostrate lost in thought. My own experience as a young child and teenager matched those sentiments remarkably, even while still unaware of their significant purpose. I had spent inordinate amounts of time amusing myself with the luxury of pottering around investigating the contours of the everyday world on foot, and as a passenger in boats, trains and cars—under the impression of just being distracted. By relaxing the pressure on premeditated goals and allowing contingency to takeover, there is an illumination that seems to promote the kind of effortless effort Zen masters extol (Muecke and Pam 2012; Loori 2005). While doing sweet nothing may include a snooze under a tree, it is not about ceasing from activity per se, but loosening the bonds of expectation and constraint, to give a wider margin for chance, thought and experience. The inner composure becomes the perfect vantage point to observe the environment and the movements it contains, to read their portents and omens with clarity and sincerity (Lawler 2001). The free of heart are open to the manifestation of unadulterated truths, relaxed enough to be content with gentleness and joy in the absence of stress derived from events manufactured as news.

The third walk: The blue pool

The third walk is one I have done a number of times over the years, although it is usually reserved for the kind of day based on the right conditions for a swim in the blue pool. Following the coastal trail north to the adjacent village of Sandy Beach is a companion headland that reaches out directly facing Groper or South-West Solitary Island (NSW NPWS 2012). The island and tip of the headland form a corridor that whales enjoy following on their northern and southern runs (Connor and Peterson 1994). How do I know? Chuang Tzu (2006) explains this occurs through observation and fellow-feeling. In addition to notable sea creatures there is a Great White who seasonally haunts this area, putting the fear of God into anyone who crosses its path (Satchell 2008a). Although for as long as I have lived here the venerable fish has never caused harm to any human. The headland goes by the names of Green Bluff, Diamond Head and Sandy Headland (displayed proudly as the insignia of the local Primary School with the brilliant motto Learn to live), all descriptive of various aspects of its topos. The site of the headland is known as a place of increase and of power in Aboriginal custom, obviously suited as a vantage point to follow the weather and the seasonal migration of schools of fish including the mullet run in autumn at the turn of colder weather that flushes them out of the estuaries (Cooke et al 2000). There are approaches from both southern and northern sides, whereas access from the northern side is quite close to the village
and car-park, the southern approach involves a 3 kilometre walk just to get to the headland proper. The allure of the walk is the headland itself, whose southern and northern profile form the backdrop to many days of the year, depending on whether you live at Sandy or Emerald Beach—I have lived at both places for lengthy periods and never tired of the views. However, when walked upon, the features of the headland up close loom in the imagination as does the nearby island (Melville 1992; Dening 1998). The blue pool is located at the southern-most tip at the base of the headland’s southern profile with an intimidating incline. This craggy descent can be negotiated carefully but only at the base when the tide is low, and the swell is slight, likewise a longer southern approach along the bottom of the cliffs, winding around the outer cove, relies on favourable conditions, adding further gravitas to its mystique.

Figure 34 Looking back at Emerald from Diamond Head, Mt. Coramba in the furthest distance

The unique features exude meaning, although these are subtly woven into the monumentality of the imposing scale of the headland laid out horizontally. When approaching the headland from either side you can take two alternate paths, or both doing the walk in a loop spying the blue pool from a bird’s eye view without testing its waters (De Certeau 1984). However, if a swim in the iridescent pool is the goal, these two paths offer two distinct experiences as mentioned, each providing the wonderful feeling of getting away from everything in a relatively short space of time and entering a space whose features remain unchanged over aeons (Casey 1996). The northern approach winds up the side of the headland from front Sandy Beach, trailing its way out along Sandy Point, a fickle surf spot that breaks properly only a handful of times during a decade. Completely sheltered from the South and
with the buffer of Groper (South-West Solitary Island) means much of the time it is dead calm. Pandanus palms cluster in clumps providing shade in scattered nooks at varying strata that contour along its edge, out of the direct blast of southerly winds. Giving the appearance of a typical grassy headland endemic to this strip of coast (Kijas and Kijas 2001). The end of the point appears like the shape of a rhinoceros’s head with a short tusk (from further north along the beach), above where there is an interesting jump off spot for surfing or snorkelling (Bode 1996). You can clamber between an unusual cleft in the otherwise ragged volcanic rock and follow the cliff down the steep heft of a stony staircase, jumping into a deep hole at the base of the cliff depending on the tide and from what height you choose (Macfarlane 2013). An advantage for the willing risk-taker who then only has a short paddle or swim around to the point from behind. Walking out to the southern-most tip, you cannot help being impressed about how much larger and closer the island becomes. The track down to the blue pool from here is not clearly laid out as much as divined, one that is threaded step by step as you are able, prohibiting carrying too much gear, more of a climb than a walk (Stilgoe 2015). The height of the cliff and the southern aspect of its rocky face and cove are blasted from the southern exposure in nasty weather that provides the sense of its underlying character of being a bulwark, in turn offering shelter from both ways depending on the wind.

Figure 35 A silhouette provides sharp relief for Diamond Head
The sight of Diamond Head jutting out into the ocean when viewed from Emerald Beach is like a huge slender finger pointing to Groper Island, acting as a deceptive foil for its own brilliance. The southern side of the headland is longer, higher and with a steeper gradient than its frontside profile, shorn of all but the hardiest of vegetation and stunted forms, dominated by its volcanic rock forms in four distinct sections. The place exemplifies the Feng Shui of a creative dragon shown to be a strong feature over time and in all kinds of weather conditions (Walters 1991). Walking on the headland offers expansive views in every direction when standing aloft on this ocean bound escarpment.

The southern route, either from the beach or the car-park, begins on a path directly in line with the middle of the headland, the opening checkpoint for several stages of terrain. The narrow gap of sand covering over coffee-rock, skirts the back, adjoining north and south with the mainland giving the headland status as an isthmus (Stilgoe 2015). At the beginning of the track on the headland, the path leads through a small tract of shrubs with a tunnel that quickly opens out, although still having provided a gateway and threshold effect (Krall 1994). The first section gives way to the option to go straight ahead or divert to the right, having come to a huge cutting on the southern side. The cutting falls two hundred feet below and is about fifty feet across, offering the unsuspecting punter a steep path down and a quite difficult climb out. All manner of flotsam and jetsam gets washed into the gaping crevice and it is quite eerie down below with massive stone surfaces rising either side. Although an interesting diversion and a challenge that begs to be conquered by any self-respecting beachcomber, it is more often admired peering down from above (Bode 1996). Once the path goes passed the cutting in the headland, a divergent track leads down and away along a grassy slope that eventually comes to a craggier conclusion you must climb over and scramble down to reach sea-level. At this point a section of egg-shaped stones forms a small beach, then re-introduces a rocky way forward under the cliffs and along to the outside cove.

At various points along the way the headland morphs revealing aspects of its multi-faceted character and form. Landmarks, with the weathered imprints of the past, provide strange markers intoning ‘morphic resonance’ from their geological fields that flash mixed signals from the cacophony of jumbled forms and the quietness of their solitude (Sheldrake cited in Munteanu 2016: 194). At the base this cove runs the last-quarter of the headland’s length, only accessible at low tide requiring thoughtful planning around its slack to allow a reasonable amount of time to ensure safety. At sea-level a certain uniformity gives way to a complicated puzzle made out of what appears to be fallen stone under the cliff face. This part of the path also has a checkpoint—threshold-moment—of initiation and final crossing over
Among the jumble of large, imposing and sometime awkwardly strewn rocks, the way ahead leads any walking party surreptitiously to an impasse that can only be forded by climbing between several large boulders and through a small crypt large enough to crawl but not to walk. The effect reminds me of the ‘crawling entrance’ of a Japanese teahouse, ensuring humility and thoughtfulness, said to have derived from the thoughtful design of premiere Tea Master Rikyu, based on the impact he had experienced entering a boat on a trip from Osaka to Hirakata (Iguchi 1980: 16). Of course, this adds a certain rugged charm to the design not made by human hands produced as an affordance for way-finding hewn from the naturally occurring elements.

The blue pool is contained in a maze of rock pools at the southern tip, as the focal point of the north and south, as if the manifest remains of a whirlpool, contained in the field of its vortex. I surmise it to be the result of wind, sea and swell from weather going back and forth (north and south) incessantly, following the dictates of longer range circuits, cells, cycles and seasons (Duane 1999). The paradox of the blue pool, whose waters are thus laid bare to all the senses, relies on the conditions of chance, memory and imagination to work its magic (Mavor 2013). However, on the rare occasions when a day is all but still, the pool does offer a mirror surface to reflect the azure sky, which illumines the shallow crystal-clear waters cushioned by a layer of submerged sand. When surrounded by a benign sea, the blue pool becomes a rosette in the eye of the deeper blueness of the South Pacific Ocean, wedding sky and sea in complimentary harmony, as much a product of a perceptual vantage point as taking place in the world.

The alignment of all these elements, just like an alchemist’s recipe, presents the opportunity to swathe oneself in colour and bask in the effulgence of refracted light. These than can be thought of as sacred waters that revive the ‘seeker’ in choice moments and the appointment of its location (Bachelard 1987; Maharaj 1977; Bitkoff 2011: 38). The experience of such ephemeral aesthetics makes you rely on synchronicity where creative energy resonates with the distinctive aspects of a place that come to life in a notable way by observation and timing. The zenith of swimming in the blue pool perhaps for me is after all more perceptual and symbolic. Whereas in other respects many would be inclined to think it far simpler, amounting to making the trek on the right day and enjoying a feel for the water.

Either way I know these charms are short-lived and to be savoured as precious gifts for enjoyment. The extravagance of simply embracing the heightened beauty of the supermundane, while ever it lasts makes perfect sense to the beachcomber as much to the rishi, the inspired poet and the seer (Maharaj 1977 my emphasis). Although, the experience of
embodying these creative powers does linger in more palpable ways that can be re-ignited in other contexts through the mind’s eye and by the affective body through concentration (Klee 1992b). Joining these cycles through narrative and storying mutually reinforces the relevance of becoming immersed in the life-world by moving about in close relationship and care for a place. The close attention to place and the inward focus particularly on deliberate movements provides opportunity to consider thoughts and sensations in the body and its various parts, as aspects of awareness, learning and self-knowledge. The walk home is joyous. Having untied the knot of the labyrinth and passing through the respective thresholds, I experience a deeper respect for the sanctity of these special places that abides in the stillness and manner of heart they allow and protect.

The orientation: *reverie* (dreamy meditation)

The orientation I associate with the blue pool is *reverie*, the dreamy meditation that unfolds through the relaxation of the mind. Reverie in this instance, finds a way to light up the interior with a stream of thought at the crossroads of self and a beloved place through the cosmos of the imagination (Bachelard 1969). The length of the walk and the stimulus of all the detail along the way are compatible to such a state, where you become more aware and responsive to the conditions, surrounds and to the imagination and vice versa (Coverley 2012). The whole world seems to hatch and unfold before the mesmerised observer without any effort at all. In a spatial sense, reverie is a means of cosmic transport where one may follow unexpected paths as they unfold into secret passageways that in turn produce unplanned rendezvous with the more-than human and the sentience of place—these phenomena seem to occur in altogether mysterious ways (De Certeau 1984; Oliver 2016). In such a state you find it easy to slip into the life of another person, animal, plant or even a rock or a tin can, indeed as if you were meant to experience the life-cycle of other things through time lapses that speed up, slow down, jump and even jolt experiences, in their pure distillation of clarity (Serres 2008; Nhat Hahn 1991). Reverie it would seem produces a benevolent reciprocity for ‘inhabiting the happiness of the world’, where goodwill and pure communication invite a kind of telepathy that seems to be the order of the day, rather than anything strange or sinister (Bachelard 1969: 22). A return to the relaxation of reverie invigorates the heart, allowing the immediacy of the ensemble of forces that is a given moment some interpretive latitude to become co-creative, if not outright speculative of new ways to live (Govinda 1981). The poise of reverie allows otherwise ordinary events to unfold for the dreamy thinker from a quiet acuity into their lush details.
The fourth walk: The mirror maze and the island cave

How easy it becomes to fall into predictable patterns of routine behaviour. Walking is no different in that sense. There is no doubting the comfort of following a well-worn path. The fourth walk highlights that even within patterns of familiarity there lay infinite possibilities for variation and inventiveness. Even the happenstance of an unexpected stroke of good fortune can lead to lessons of a deeper nature. There is a short walk I developed a habit for as the owner of a small dog, Trixie, a pure-bred Maltese (named after a childhood pet of mine) who came into the family rescued from neglect. In her old age through various circumstances, the two of us spent several years sharing a beachside flat, at the front beach adjacent to Fiddamen’s Creek (named after an early prospector in the area) (Holder 1984). The creek flows towards the beach parallel to the main road, then does a hairpin bend for about a hundred metres to the north, emerging on the foreshore, before emptying into the sea just north of the southern corner of Emerald Beach. The flow of water is uneven, intermittently silting up according to the level of rainfall. On the beach front at this point there is an unusual clump of volcanic rocks that form a Zen-like garden, changing with the weather and seasons according to the build-up and dispersion of sand (Satchell 2013). The area of this unusual garden ranges to half the size of a football field when fully exposed and no bigger than a basketball court when sand covers the low-lying rocks in various configurations. The front edifice has an alcove with small rock pools ideally suited for a young child bathing in the right conditions. Every day Trixie and I would visit these rocks as part of her daily exercise
regime and my penchant for beachcombing. The predictability and repetition of these short jaunts to wander among the rocks, in nowise quenched one another’s curiosity for our favourite spot together, to the contrary this seemed to enhance our shared appreciation for its charms.

Figure 37  The front Emerald Beach Zen garden

In terms of design, these rocks offer a masterclass in harmony and balance. The positioning, proportion, detail, scale, variety and regularity, all contribute to seamless and unobtrusive features, complementing the exquisite, panoramic environmental aesthetic of the setting. The subtle magic of the setting also evokes the genius of place in the agreeable order of self-similarity at every level. Chinese scholars of the Song Dynasty at the peak of their cultural achievement were conversant with these organic principles, endeavouring to emulate them wherever possible (Xín 2007). In the earlier Tang Dynasty individual rocks sought for gardens and scholar’s studies were notably based upon some fourfold criteria: ‘thinness (shōu), openness (tōu), perforations (lōu), and wrinkling (zhōu)’ (The Met 2000 np). In addition, their similitude with mountains, caves, animals, birds, human-likeness and mythical creatures such as tortoise or dragons were highly sought after. The precept of ‘nature writ small’ retained the leitmotif of contemplation of the cosmos, as occurring from the microcosm
to the macrocosm, where art and nature instinctively overlap with environmental philosophy (Mendelsohn 1996 np). While realising these aesthetic principles in the everyday world brings the widely accepted aspects of perception and consciousness into the domain of spiritual capacity and the realm of the mystic (Bitkoff 2011; Freke 2001). The simplicity of these compositions is so wed with harmony and free of contrivance that they become disarmingly alluring to me, while they also can be read and intuited as the mirror for the soul or the ‘pathways of the heart’ (Moore 1998; Douglas-Koltz 2005: xxvi). Walking the patterned maze in its changing regularity begets the sense of the multi-level and multi-layered aspects of consciousness that find connecting passages that run from the internal to the external world and vice versa.

In the process of everyday studies such as these, conducted in the rarefied atmosphere of academic freedom, knowing flows from immediacy and wisdom arises through contemplation, to flourish organically contributing to holistic modalities for living. The idea of immersion is aided by phenomenon responding onto-poetically, while the seeker acts as both subject and participant (Sahtouris 1989). As Mandelbrot (1967; 1982) demonstrates there is a way to apply attention to natural elements that enlarges them without altering their form, not merely in scale, but also in the clarity and coherence of worlds that open to inquiry in the most detailed and accurate ways (Satchell 2013). In respect to the genius loci, the spirit of place, consultation (based on relationship) eventuates into an educative arrangement akin to teacher and pupil, such learning from place does not rely on the intelligence of the learner, but rather becomes the matter of receptiveness and perseverance stemming from seeking with the whole heart (Wilhelm 1985). Walking meditations can be an excellent preliminary exercise for deeper meditative states in the open air and under trees that are fitting settings to focus and expand the heart.

One auspicious day, having taken a short walk among the rocks, I sat beneath a Pandanus palm using Groper (South-west Solitary Island) as the subject of meditation. The clear autumn day matched the sky and sea in breathless calm. The quality of light I found as the result of previous stormy weather enriched the display of colour. The exercise began just sitting quietly breathing deeply in a yogic manner, beholding the outline of the island at the centre of my attention in the tranquillity accompanying the passing moments (Motoyama 1988). All remained still before a sprinkling of swimmers and the crumbling of tiny waves on the shore, whales migrating north breaking the surface intermittently with their hulking bodies and majestic plumes. Into my field of vision, from the middle distance between where I was sitting and the island, a figure on a stand-up paddle board steadily made progress towards the
shore. After a while I recognised my friend who then proceeded to arrive on the shore heading straight towards me. The meditation thus concluded having received an invitation on the spur of the moment to launch a small boat and go out among the whales.

Figure 38

On a sea so calm as this one

After some short preparation, wet-suit, snorkel, goggles, swim fins and launching of the boat, three of us were skimming across the surface on the calmest of seas, toward the island in an outboard powered skiff. The whales were equal to any attempts to get closer to them, outflanking us on every pass. The best method of greeting could only be achieved by floating in the stillness as they approached and patiently watching them glide past on their own terms. This was enough to satisfy my sense of a meaningful encounter. Then on closer investigation, doing a circumnavigation of the island (having been out there before but never so close), we saw the entrance to a majestic cave come into view running east-west down the southern rim. Astonished, then delighted in equal measure the opportunity to swim through this natural wonder presented itself immediately, realising such a feat would only possible on the rarest occasions when the sea is completely calm. So, without further ado and with some excitement, the skipper wheeled the boat around to the back of the island, where we found a suitable inlet curving back around the inside of a steep rocky foreshore. The island itself is forbidden territory carrying a hefty fine for anyone who so much as sets foot upon its hallowed turf, according to the Marine Authority edict. Accordingly, the plan was to swim through the back of the cave and return to the boat at the front entrance. In the water breathing through the snorkel returned me to my meditative state, in those moments of incredulity,
quietly considering the sequence of events as they were transpiring.

This encounter with the island and the manner of its unfolding are precious in ways that defy adequate description, and still hold a sense of awe for me—even in a matter-of-fact retelling of them. The short space of time from learning of the cave to having swum through the cave was instantly gratifying, while the lingering memory of the swim, and the faint notion of another opportunity to do so, shimmers in my hall of cherished memories. There is on closer inspection more caves at the southern end forming a magnificent rookery for birds, I assume gannets, terns and gulls. Swimming around the corner to find the cavern carved by the might of the ocean itself is breathtaking. Stretching out for at least 100 metres, the light from either end provides enough illumination to highlight the roughly hewn interior of an aquamarine marvel, whose width and depth vary as it narrows and then opens out (Rocca 2007). The oversized tunnel is quite spacious overhead (not difficult to touch bottom) and several swimming lanes wide all the way through. I pulled my mask back on my head and casually floated along wide-eyed in wonder, thinking ecstatically about being inside the island (Nelson 1991). There is one critical section to pass where a subterranean boulder blocks most of the passage underwater and the motion of the water passing back and forth makes it difficult to negotiate. It took me several attempts avoiding being squashed hard against it with the weight of the outflowing water. The moment the water turns either way is when to quickly slip around, from there the entrance opens out and the water deepens toward the open ocean, facing what I can only imagine would be the full force of the oncoming swell when a large sea is running. Returning to the boat and heading in, the outline of the foreshore took on a surreal beauty, awash with adrenalin and to-the-bone gratitude for what I had experienced as a gift that came seemingly from nowhere.

This hitherto hidden knowledge and experience swelled in grandeur considering I had never heard of this cave before that moment and then in such short order received an equally splendid initiation into its secrets. While I recount this now with some enthusiasm, at the time the experience had a quite a different impact. There came a deepening respect for the spirit of place and a recognition of becoming privy to a sacred trust, with an added cautionary note not to take these places lightly or be merely carried away by their novelty. In my search for clarity and purpose concerning my relationship to place, I began to understand that what I sought (and supposed as my will) at every turn seemed to have been matched by another force drawing me as it were into its own mystery—where there is no separation between living organisms and their environment.
The orientation: *curiosity* (unflagging interest, the combination of care and attention)

The orientation of curiosity in the spatial sense applies to these walks and thoughts as an open-ended exercise that continues to pursue greater awareness and expanded consciousness within a delimited geographical area. I am reminded of the masked philosopher who enjoins a form of caring that displays:

…a readiness to find what surrounds us strange and odd; a certain determination to throw off familiar ways of thought and to look at the same things in a different way; a passion for seizing what is happening now and what is disappearing;

(Foucault 1997: 325)

The whole point of such a curiosity is predicated upon the idea of transformation through participation in an on-going process of unfolding from unformed chaos to detailed complexity (Munteanu 2016). On these walks I find connections that are made between and among things in a myriad of possibilities as pathways in and through multi-level and multi-layered realities (Bitkoff 2011). This combination of care and attention produces creative possibilities born of encounter. I am engaged in an active pursuit wondering where things lead, doubling back, waiting, watching, setting out again, overturning rocks, flicking through books, putting questions to oneself, listening deeply for answers. Over time I have discovered a deepening mystery that clothes itself in beauty that increases according to the enlargement of capacity to
fathom its splendours, both before the eyes and beyond them (Eisley 2016). ‘Curiosity has its own reason for existing […] never lose a holy curiosity’ appears to be a splendid admonition (Einstein cited in Hermans 2013: 138). The idea of treading carefully gives pause for the examination of conduct, an opportunity to scrutinise the motivation behind curiosity. A holy curiosity comes from a thirst for learning not the accumulation of knowledge and never to show-off (Wilhelm 1985). Lao Tzu (1997: 61) in Le Guin’s translation offers an exquisite ballast for the enterprise of this orientation: ‘To know enough’s enough / is enough to know’. The sort of curiosity this concerns, tempers the insatiable with satisfaction at pivotal points to consolidate understanding with care. There will always be further mystery beyond the pleasures of knowing where lies the further unknown (Robson 2013). At this juncture in the walks and with the cycle moving toward deeper introspection. I am grateful for the recognition of the weights and balances of both walking and wisdom as a comforting reminder to tread lightly on the proceeding path.

Figure 40

A beachcomber’s conviviality

**The fifth walk: Serenity both ends and means**

This walk proceeds to the cove at the front side of Look-at-Me-Now Headland, the namesake of the house where I live called Serenity a short distance away. There are the ordinary delights associated with most foreshores in Nature Reserves and there are the deeper significances invested with lifetimes layered in successive hardships and joys (Williams 1989; Yeates 1993). A walk down the path leading to the middle of the beach encompasses a panorama that includes Back Sandy or Diamond Head, Groper (South-west Solitary Island) to the north-east
and almost directly opposite South Solitary Island, along the path kangaroos often gambol in the open grasses, numerous varieties of birds go about the business of their lives negotiating territory and their interactions with the accompanying complexity of sonority that serves sociality, politics and mating including interrupting the meandering thoughts of residents, tourists and continental philosophers (Kaplan 2016; Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Serenity (the beach) is a handy stomping ground nearby Serenity (my place) for my own serenity (the state of mind) whose invocation is a welcome reminder to remain calm.

This site offers itself as the sort of puzzle that can be completed in more than one way, such are the number of approaches, exits and internal switching points at various junctures. The short beachfront provides an air of seclusion with a couple of hundred yards of sand bookended by rocky foreshore north and south. The foreshore itself is backed by the Moonee Nature Reserve and incorporated into the Coffs Coastal Walk, a thin greenbelt just barely keeping developers at bay (Cooke et al 2000). There are excellent vantage points people can enjoy for a range of activities, great to view the sunrise, a lovely spot on a full moon or even in cooler seasons to light a small fire. While the beach lined with mature Pandanus palms provides welcome shade in the summer months. The background of deeper significance is that this is a site of Aboriginal gatherings and Dreaming still redolent in the middens in the southern corner. There is also the more recent mythos that tell of impromptu humpies, alongside ramshackle lean-tos and settler holidays that linger in a benign absence, one unmistakably senses from time to time, the way the sociological imagination becomes privy to ghostly hauntings through the means of investigation (Heron 1994; Holder 1984; Gordon 1997). These ‘profane illuminations’ are unavoidable to those inclined to amateur archaeology and peripatetic musing, earmarked by their clarity and consternation (Benjamin 2007: 179). On rare occasions there is reasonable surf, although mainly better suited as a place to take someone who wants to learn to surf in small waves. It is also a family-friendly venue, where I have spent considerable time with my own children and grandchildren. In terms of walking, whether accompanied or alone, each end offers suitable charms for the type of slow pilgrimage a beachcomber adopts while collecting oblations for the pleasure of household gods.

The shadow history casts over the scene is intermittent and shapeshifting with pulsations of affect from fragmentary remains. Dammerall Headland is so named after the Signal Master George Damerall who took up his post as a result of misadventure at sea when two vessels, the Keilawarra and the Helen Nichol, collided between South-West and South Solitary Islands. The Sydney Morning Herald, 10 December 1886, declared the event as ‘one
of the most dreadful marine disasters of this continent’, one of many that gave rise to the push for a ‘highway of lights’ along the eastern seaboard (cited in Satchell 2012: 253, 254). The Helen Nichol, the smaller of the vessels, ripped open Keilawarra’s (61 metres and 784 tons) hull broadside as a result of the panicked response of the captain. ‘In the course of approximately seven minutes the tragedy climaxed, the Keilawarra’s bow went under, the stern rose to the sky and the ship paused before plunging head long into the deep’ in the aftermath 41 lives were lost in total between the vessels and two of the bodies were washed ashore some time later with debris at Serenity, where they were buried at graves that remain today (Satchell 2012: 254). The northern end of the beach provides a towering backdrop to a secluded strip of sand nestled under the cliff. The NSW Marine Board Signal Station perched above the cliff in clear view of the lighthouse, complete with flagstaff, windvane, crow’s nest, flag house, signal flags, telescope, Morse lamp, code book, log book and assorted communications apparatus, is now long-gone but for the NPWS interpretive signage at the site of another memorial grave, that of the Signal Master and his wife (Yeates 1990). Set back from the Reserve the outskirts of the bustling upmarket village in a haphazard geometry of gentrification and residency press their own claims for observation and privacy (Kijas 2002). Down below, away from prying eyes, the approach at sea-level is bordered by a rocky platform with several sentinel rocks, definitive landmarks along a narrow entrance whose sandy strip is washed by the high tide and intermittent large seas, thus providing the ever-changing pattern of a garden bed made of sand, shell and stone. In the right conditions after heavy seas this is an ideal place to slowly sift through the debris of the wrack line in search of sea glass.

Sea glass is the name given to the fragmented remains of broken glass that have been sand blasted in the tide line to such an extent the edges are smoothed, and the surface becomes frosted. The harvest of these otherwise ordinary gems is haphazard and unpredictable, like their misshapen and asymmetrical form, these castaway survivors have a peculiar allure in their grounded surface. Moreover, in human terms the appeal of aimlessly wandering about in the suppositions of your own little world with eyes skimming the surface of the finely grained material, looking for sea-glass left in the remains of patterned motion and the ebb of the tide is a quirky enough undertaking—even just for developing keenness of sight and for relaxation (Satchell 2010b). The atmosphere plays on the senses, ears filled with the sound of the sea, eyes dazzled by the glint of the sun and moistened geology, the pungent smell and the aqua-infused air that can be breathed down deep leaving a residual tang lingering in the senses. Your bare feet crush shallow footprints, while hands and toes rifle
through bits and pieces to either pocket or toss back (Brewster 2009). The effect on the body is marvellous as the bracing atmosphere causes even the most reluctant beachcomber to bristle with well-being (Satchell 2008b). I admit it is difficult to estimate the value of traipsing through the subtle film of mist wafting around on the foreshore without a single care in the world except for the next wee piece—but it works for me. After all, this offers a metaphor for life where the fragmentary remains are never really removed from the intangible whole that encompasses them in a deeper process of beautification. As Walcott (1998: 65) explains using the poetic ‘fragments of epic memory’ to suggest it takes more love to reassemble those things that are broken carelessly than possessing them in a taken for granted manner. I think the love revealed as life slips through our lives even through brokeness becomes the stuff the soul transmogrifies as the substance of a more enduring wealth.

Figure 41

The entrance sentinel to the northern cove, ideal for collecting

Piecing together a vibrant and meaningful world from the surfeit of competing interests and diminishing options available, presents the fundamental challenge people face pursuing the timeworn notion of the good life. The practice of everyday life plays a role in selection, not strictly in the evolutionary sense of genetics, rather in the selection of complimentary and mutually reinforcing activities that sustain a life with meaning. To bring
your life to completion, according to the purpose one might choose along the way is therefore the culmination of a lifetime of effort (Brussant and Brussant 1996). If only someone had told me! Furthermore, it is my contention that the body, mind and soul so stirred in this sort of endeavour, not only receives an unction that performs a healing of sorts, but also sets about sharpening auxiliary faculties of discernment to help make better choices to complete the project as a sole responsibility (Lefebvre 2004; Deleuze 1997). Catherine Bateson (1994: 56) maintains people who meditate ‘are seeking therapy for a wounded capacity to attend’. What I have learned of meditation is that it acts as a therapeutic on the path to wholeness, supporting general well-being, while the chief benefit derives from being able to bridle and focus better thought as a gift that keeps giving. This then also allows for the necessary preparation for the inevitable challenges that arise requiring equanimity (composure under pressure) and quiescence (quietness and stillness) in course of a full life. Just as meditation contributes to greater awareness and agency in contemplation, likewise it serves for composure in action (Wilhelm 1985). Moreover, beachcombing as a form of meditation and teaching practice can be developed and passed on in the process of collecting—shells, driftwood, sea glass and the like. This way of life contributes to action and contemplation, not just sharpening the senses but also developing the quality and agility of thought, along with shared values that attune the whole body to the grain of the world in motion (Rowntree 1999; Bode 1996). Many artists display dexterity with the assemblage of disparate parts. This also is a plausible way to view the composition of your own life from various aspects that formulate a consummate sense of wholeness.

There is an interesting process attached to engaged participation bound up in these pastimes that allows time for connection with the natural elements. The vibrancy of the life-world unfolds inadvertently without pressure, fostering deeper encounters and excursions in an organic manner as stages of a developing relationship. Walking in what appears to be an aimless fashion combines a systematic survey of every inch of a chosen area, with a looping circuit as if tacking against the wind, constantly coming about. The aim is not so much to arrive as to maximise the journey, as if to shrink down in size and to adopt the pace of a snail or like Benjamin’s (1999) celebration of the Baudlearian flaneur, taking a tortoise for a walk to maintain a leisurely pace. Such a pace is relaxing and at any time the walk can become suspended, plunged into deeper thought, silence, or even stillness, lingering in a moment ballooning into an indeterminate passage of time (Rousseau 2011; Robertson 2004; Lefebvre 2004). The strategic withdrawal from busyness performed through beachcombing lavishes a string of moments upon an unencumbered self to walk in the exercise of personal freedom.
The opportunity to witness, in most instances nothing much happening, may seem banal, until you experience the common place become supermundane in unadulterated beauty. The searching gaze of the eagle also serves as a model for developing the type of foresight and insight these practices invoke on the wing—a feather found might become the talisman of the eagle’s prowess one seeks to emulate (Macfarlane 2013). The connection also takes on another tactile dimension worth noting. Even while wandering alongshore I often have a shell, rock or piece of sea-glass or driftwood to handle, getting a feel for the peculiarity that drew me to its form or surface (Stilgoe 1994; Bode 1996). These shards of beach are then touchstones that can evoke memory, mood and other matters that become translucent thoughts in distilled moments of inter-being, configuring protean connections with the more-than-human world (Nhat Hahn 1991). Sometimes in a completely different context I will grasp a piece from my pocket or off the shelf and conjure from the focus of touch, the atmosphere, light and season from the moment or a whole constellation of moments associated with a specific place like Serenity (Taussig 2004). Just as I found a literal interior for the island, these places have an inside that gets under the skin and deep into your heart, particularly if you allow the time and space to become open to them.

There are some aspects to places that command a certain presence and are wont to put you in a distinct mood or train of thought. The southern end of Serenity stretches out along the inside of the extended tip of the larger headland, sheltering the northern aspect, with the curve of a modest cove. Protected from a southerly by the headland itself, clumps of Pandanus palms line the cove where all along the high tide wash-zone is a midden of sea shells. The middens are the remains of thousands of years of Aboriginal saltwater harvesting, drawn from the abundance of the ocean including large schools of fish and shells (Cook et al 2000). Between the midden and the ocean is a barrier of volcanic rock with various rock pools and driveways that link the ocean with the foreshore, recommending itself as a site of obvious utility (Heron 1994; Scales 2016; Appleton 1990). There is evidence of these practices in various stones smoothed through use and among the shells are various tools made of stone and flint (Yeates 1982). The record of the early selectors and settlers also confirms the site being used periodically for camping and gathering food, noted for the abundance of marine life in former times (Holder 1984; Yeates 1990; Heron 1994). To know a place is to become familiar with the cycles and seasons that are the rhythm of its life. This also includes the less savoury details that make us mindful of redressing wrongs wherever possible and averting impending threats within our power.
The orientation: *perspicacity* (insight into complex detail)

These orientations concern a recursive creative process based on rehearsal and performance, as both means and ends, of personal and evolutionary development. Perspicacity as a spatial orientation recognises the productive link between creative and everyday practices, with creativity more broadly as a means to negotiate life (survival) and promote evolutionary advances (quality of life for all) (Runco and Albert 2010; Richards 2017). The underlying logic of this particular orientation is predicated upon the assertion that as a mode of thinking and skill for decision-making or choice, perspicacity can be and should be developed through deliberate exercise, applied in ordinary circumstances with the view to further application in more complex and dynamic situations. The *sin qua non* element of creativity is originality and divergent thinking that applies to both small-c creativity (individual) and big-C Creativity (social and cultural), through experimentation and play (Richards 2010). In respect to perspicacity as a demonstrable skill, the key is the ability to quickly sift through the myriad possibilities to realise critical connections and pivot points for decision-making using intuition, heightened discernment or extrasensory perception (Mathews 2005; Jung in Wilhelm 1985). Therefore, the aim of creative practice in ecology is to align synchronicities and synergies with ecological sensibilities to promote health and well-being for every facet of the environment.

The starting point is much closer and more achievable than most people suspect, although such a point does require a complete shift from the normative human perspective to a more integrated view of the earth and cosmos. The foundation for the Greek *oikos*, earth-household, home and the temple of the planets, belongs to a more sophisticated more-than-human network (Moore 1996). The model derives from many ancient and indigenous cultures based around Mother Earth and Father Sky, the primordial parents of all living things to which they all belong (Wilhelm 1985; Jim and Arledge 2007). As University of Hawaii, Professor Carlos Andrade (cited in Medeiros 2004: 66) suggests from a Hawaiian and eco-centric perspective:

> The islands are our elder siblings and we humans are the youngest in the family that binds together natural phenomena, all sentient beings and those that dwell in the realm that some call supernatural.

Returning to the supernatural order, in harmony with the more-than-human requires wisdom and insight (perspicacity as a spatial orientation) to make the vital connections between ourselves and the environment. This means taking care of living relations in the context of the places they occur.
The sixth walk: The Witch’s Hat

The rising and the setting sun, and its cyclical journey along the ala loa, establishes the framework for our conception of time as a continuum. Change upon the 'aina occurs in cycles—births and deaths—“but the sanctity left behind,” states Kalei Nu‘uhiwa, “is embedded in the land’s memory; waiting for the right one to come along and acknowledge its existence.”

(Peralto 2014: 240)

A wonderful thing about landmarks is the way their form becomes a living presence that seeps productively into the imagination through lived experiences garnered from an attention to place. The Witch’s Hat derives its name from the central feature rock at the top of a volcanic rock platform, encrusted with marine life and the distinctive signature of avian ablution denoting a well-worn perch. The surface and circumference of the platform are made up of a labyrinthine series of intertidal pools, revealed for inspection on the fall of the tide, commonly referred to simply as ‘Witches’ (Satchell 2008a). However, the same spot is also known as ‘the Submarine’ among fisher folk of a certain era, because of the similarity the central feature has with a conning tower and the exposed reef with the surfacing of an underwater vessel. At the meeting place of two distinct beaches, the rock platform juts out and is further ringed by submerged reef that appears azure beneath an emerald sea on a sunny winter’s day (Satchell 2008b). A short walk from the car-park at the north end of Sandy Beach to Witches can be achieved via tracks north and south of the location, the sort of place to get lost in...
thought without venturing too far into the unknown.

The small headland setback from the rock platform offers an excellent vantage accompanied by panoramic views of Flat Top to the north, South-West Solitary to the south-east and South-Solitary further out to sea. There is a spot on the path from the car-park to the beach, if you know the right place to slip through the fence; where you will find the remains of an overgrown track that winds up a small verge and out to a pinnacle with the views, I have mentioned that hold considerable charm. Nearby the remaining part of a restored sand hill on the southern side presents a steep incline that drops you a hop, skip and jump from the platform and its numerous rock pools. The platform affords the pursuit of fishing, snorkelling and beachcombing with a deceptive variety of nooks and crannies for all manner of explorations (Satchell 2008b). There is a distinct swimming lane at a certain tide that splits from the tip and runs all the way to shore, branching off with various tributaries that spread to the rim of haphazard rocks and rock pools providing ideal safety for children to swim or even to take-up snorkelling. There are rock pools of various sizes dotted everywhere, large enough to swim in, with some small enough to be the size of a facial mirror, on closer observation teeming with marine life adapted in various states of camouflage. Witches is the sort of place that breeds marine biologists, environmental philosophers, poets, artists and mystics.

From when I was about four years old until puberty, I could stand or sit for hours, days, weeks in shallow water on the coast, inspecting and marvelling at the overwhelming diversity and richness of life in the sea. The tiny beautiful forms which ‘nobody’ cared for, or were even unable to see, were part of an infinite world, but nevertheless my world. Feeling apart in human relations, I identified with ‘nature’.

(Næss1987: 2 original emphasis)

Identifications with nature such as this one match countless other childhood reflections where people testify to learning a more expansive view of the world beyond the ken of mere ownership. The value of intuiting shared existence is the priceless inkling of a sacred unity linking the earth and the cosmos, in the confines of mutual relations supporting all life (Berry 1999; Suzuki and MaConnell 1999; Douglas-Klotz 2005). To witness the biotic community flourish while going about their lives is to recognise not just an eco-system, but industrious makers of habitat and beauty, in whose secret lives these creatures share a birthright inherent within creation as an on-going process of cosmogenesis (White 2003; Scales 2016; Klee 1992b). Stumbling across these unassuming hotspots inevitably leads to more thoughtful inquiry, even if this too begins inadvertently from speculation as a fragment of more extensive studies that are open-ended, such as the rhythm-analysis of the coastal locale or marine conservation stemming from firsthand immersion in the ocean (Lefebrve 2004; Earle 2014).
The lessons offered in open-air classrooms such as these are numerous and varied, roving among fields and across disciplinary boundaries with no apparent call for censure (Klee 1992c). The study of nature, therefore, is proposed as a self-reflexive process, where sensuous apprehension provides embodied understandings as the basis to further develop ecological affinities (Rodaway 2002; Satchell 2008a). Invariably such a project relies upon immersion (hours, days, weeks, even years) proceeding beyond appearance (and givenness), following Klee (1992b: 63, 64), where appearance becomes multi-faceted, while through ‘amplification’ the studies intensify, to combine the inner aspects of the life-world that vary in accord with different actors, even in the process of maintaining a multi-faceted dialogue with the whole.

The artist of today is more than an improved camera; he is more complex, richer, and wider. He is a creature on the earth and a creature within the whole, that is to say, a creature on a star among stars.

(Klee 1992b: 63)

The finer-grain of details are further articulated by apprehension in multi-modal and combinatory forms of attention, conducted with the suppleness of movement within and around a location. These approaches are in line with the weave of complex rhythms that are biological, solar, lunar and so on. They focus upon subtle and more enduring connectivities and interactions, occurring at every level. Gregory Bateson (1980: 16) famously posed the question for seeking ‘the pattern which connects’ at the level of inter-being in the more-than human world (Nhat Hahn 1987). The critical juncture of such a pattern or principles support the notion of an implicate order, while considering the overlay of ones of a more fragile means, threaded from the obvious starting points of lifestyle, community and human ecology (Bohm in Munteanu 2016; Naess 1987; Steiner 2016). Klee (1992c) makes a useful distinction between construction and composition in regard to visual art. He draws attention to these differences as compositional in character with an organic approach that is attuned to the natural elements, contrasting them with that of construction that is mechanistic, resulting in the imposition of a strictly human order. The creative practice of field work, such as this, supports more thoughtful approaches to caring for places, with the natural elements key to garnering insight into dwelling more broadly (Nhat Hahn 1996; Alexander in Moore 1997). The empathic vigour derived from intense nature study allows aesthetics and ethics to mutually reinforce one another, in an exercise that develops place-sensitivity in a tangible appreciation of what is important and really matters concerning the well-being of the environment (Plumwood 2003; Satchell 2008a). There is a certain irony surrounding common sense environmental awareness that is largely ignored, when in the everyday domain the key insights are somehow elided based on the demands of human interests and a disregard for
longer-term consequences (Abrams 1996). While the evidence suggests that people may develop intimacies with places that become mutually coextensive, while for better or worse they are invariably entangled at all levels.

An interpretive aspect of topography I find fascinating is the thickness of coded language with which it can speak and be read. The deeply patterned rock with its intricately folded markings in frieze are provocative of thoughtful contemplation. These scripts are (‘geological writing’ […] ‘a sort of map of the labyrinth’ of sacred places) that offer a written record predating human forms of communication, whose aesthetics are referents for the divine (Jacobi 1964; Schipper 1993: 173; Bateson and Bateson 2004). The detailed records of a temporal, spatial and cosmic order (complexity derived from chaos) register the life and times of their archaic existence as witnesses of life unfolding, according to a coherent pattern of deep significance seemingly from an accident (Berry 1999). Caillois (1985) makes claims for the revelatory fecundity of the natural elements, discussing various rocks and their suggestive symbolic creativity for humans, whose own endeavours may compare but never hope to surpass:

Stones—not only they but also roots, shells, wings, and every other cipher and construction in nature—help to give us an idea of the proportions and laws of that general beauty about which we can only conjecture and in comparison with which human beauty must be merely one recipe among others, just
as Euclid’s theorems are but one set out of many possible in total geometry.

(Caillois 1985: 2)

While these sacred places appear ordinary and picturesque to the cursory glance, there are deeper layers that may open and lead to more profound secrets inside them. As complex and labyrinthine, the platform has many entrances and exits, whose mysterious paths give greater depth, while leading to meaningful encounters with the more-than-human woven seamlessly in the ‘self-expression’ of stone-symbolism from the wider universe (von Franz 1978; Freke and Gandy 1997; Jaffe 1978: 259). To wander the Witch’s Hat is to encounter a kaleidoscope of forms steeped in spatial hieroglyphics that render the coherent folds of matter visible as readable and suggestive surfaces (Schipper 1993; Deleuze 1993). The combination of originary forces with those of climatic and more persistent weathering processes only seems to further embellish the fine detail and exacting proportion of the natural features (Mostafavi and Leatherbarrow 1993; McCann 2018). The evidence of aging blends with the timeless qualities of organic cycles of growth and decay, of death and life that merge with vegetation and animal life, all threads of a whole fabric woven into place that thickness of description barely touches (Macfarlane 2015). Along the coastal foreshore the smoothing of stone, the undulation of weed, the work of molluscs, crustaceans and the myriad of sea life, the periodicity of weather events, of inundations, surges, the flushing of water courses, the shifting of sand with its removal and return, all manner of flotsam and jetsam awash in a soupy flux are gradually ordered through the topography, the irregularity and regularity of the seasons that retain a hold over entropy with a subtle negentropy (Scales 2016; Earle 2010; Glissant 2010). The many moods and faces these places retain in stoic resolve are telling. Moreover, within these various changes and guises the principal features remain unmoved and recognisable, providing a familiarity for those who learn to become conversant with them (Momaday 1969). The combination of these aspects (organic growth and intricate detail) offer the creative use of inquiry to develop multi-sensory perception and to exercise the imagination for the seeds of creative output (Klee 1992b). As an inner journey and quest for self-knowledge, these walks and places reveal a complimentary matrix between inner and outer worlds, loosed from the bonds of normative conditioning.

In many respects my thoughts and investigations began in earnest using the Witch’s Hat as the point of departure. Therefore, it is fitting having come so far to return to Witches as a completion of one journey and the beginning of a fresh one (Satchell 2008a). The central rock feature I consider to be a complex geological diary, with sculptural forms in addition to a Witch’s Hat and the Submarine, including among other figures lurking, a giant riddling
Sphinx, facing toward the islands in monumental relief. On reflection I return to Greek myths of family tragedy, whose stubborn protagonists took heed poorly of their chosen oracles, I am chastened to consider whether my own situation differs (Sharman-Burke and Greene 1999). Therefore, the Witch’s Hat becomes for me the potent symbol of my resolve to continue the walks as life’s journey, bound to the fate of the earth (ocean) and a commitment to thinking and acting with an ecological sensibility (Earle 2010; Berry 1999). I am renewing a sense of the earth-family beyond the bounds of human relations to encompass the more-than-human.

Figure 44

Sometimes things occur inexplicably and need further inquiry and study

The multidimensionality of lived experience too is swept up in the circularity of these processes. Learning to go with the changes is imperative to finding the regularity of their purpose. Some years ago, circumambulating the central rock with no apparent purpose other than curious exploration, I found an amber piece of sea-glass with the word THIS still visible on the otherwise grounded and frosted surface (Ingold and Vergunst 2008; Satchell 2010b). The afterlife of a beer bottle had become a puzzle piece waiting to be found and exuded the unusual savour of an ineluctable mystery, steeped in synchronicity with my line of inquiry—a place that speaks, that sometimes shouts THIS (Jung in Wilhelm 1985; von Franz 1980; Abram 1996). The stranger-than-fiction encounter makes perfect onto-poetic sense, where all it takes is one word to illuminate the imagination and cross the threshold of an unfolding
intimacy and connection, ramified in an unbidden phenomenon (Mathews 2007). After some years now in possession of THIS, in the depths of Taoist, Sufi and Christian thought, I find THIS is a key and a password into a deeper journey of ecological thought, in keeping with the primordial cosmos and the emergent dream of the new story (Berry 1988; 1999). I am finding creative ways to use my little piece of sea-glass as a ‘very famous and ancient talisman’ in keeping with the mystical tradition of perennial philosophy (Schipper 1993: 173). The script as a symbol, coupled with the properties of glass and the sea, operate as a wellspring of the imagination and symbolic creativity (Stengers 2014). The aim of working with earth and cosmic forces is to realise a new ecology by envisioning the mutualism of living organisms in their environment (Deleuze and Guatarri 1994; Rose and Robin 2004). Furthermore, my master-key unlocks concepts and forces to bring into resonance and harmony the transformations commiserate with the wonder and complexity of the starry night sky. The myriad of innumerable points of light converge in the unity of one light—the light that provides and sustains consciousness through the veil of the material world that holds things together (Khan 2003). Here then at the verge of the sacred is an appropriate place to prepare for the last walk.

Figure 45

The Sphinx
The orientation: pareidolia (multiple readings of random patterns and stimulus)

As a spatial orientation pareidolia, interpretive reading links the psyche and matter with details of the landscape, the active imagination and creative practice. The propensity to ‘see things’ is often given short shrift by some, in light of the novelty of their examples, such as the figure of Jesus in a piece of burnt toast, an angry handbag or the poltergeist appliance. In some instances, the attribute of pareidolia is given the status of pathology. However, this does not necessarily have to completely undermine claims supporting pareidolia for the development of creativity, perceptual awareness or spiritual attainment. Some of the more banal examples still do little to discredit the wealth of material that is so suggestive, while remaining steeped in mystique and the ineffable. There are examples of synchronicity where there is no causal explanation, whereby the meaning embedded in the appearance in an otherwise everyday object has significance in the eye of the beholder linked to an event impossible to contrive (Jung in Wilhelm 1985; von Franz 1980). One such instance in my own experience, occurred while my youngest daughter was advanced in her first pregnancy. On the beach close to Witches, I found a group of rocks on the tideline that appeared as a pregnant woman, a form that from various perspectives also looked like an embryo breeching the birth canal as a goddess.

I marvelled at these images, and photographed them, enjoying the profound mysteries surrounding motherhood and birth. In Jung’s (1978) discussion of the active imagination, such phenomenon allows for correspondences between the unconscious and conscious, thus contributing to the process of individuation indicative of aspects of maturation (becoming a grand-father for the first time—yes a girl) (Moore 1998; von Franz 1978). The evidence of nature’s handwriting surrounds us with numerous forms including clouds, flowers, animal
markings, geology, shells, driftwood, the patterns on the foreshore, the flight of birds and so on. In pareidolia these prompt interpretive readings that for me embrace the vitality and dynamism of phenomenon in a provocative correspondence that entreat us to become more alert to the unfolding mystery of life bursting from every corner and seam.

Coda

The final walk will now become a part of the final chapter and contribute to the consummation of the journey of the thesis. The sun is setting on the night of a dark moon, as the landscape cools in a brilliance of light now ebbing in colour that allows pause for such thought. The Witch’s Hat an inky velvet etched against the blue-pink horizon, thроbs as a dark presence, while three cormorants wait aloft as emissaries of the more-than human world. The thoughts so illumined in bringing these ideas alive find repose—please keep them in your heart because we will need them again soon. In a small rock pool nearby, a map of the universe flashes back at me as a world inside laid out waiting to be read.

This is a simple thing to say […] that all things are one thing and that one thing is all things—plankton, a shimmering phosphorescence on the sea and the spinning planets and an expanding universe, all bound together by the elastic string of time. It is advisable to look from the tide pool to the stars and then back to the tide pool again.

(Steinbeck 2001: 178)

Figure 47  A bowl of water in a rockpool becomes a portal for prayer

A tide pool offers up a secret in the map of the world overlain with the celestial universe revealing to me its heart and paternity. In the stillness of the moment, I pour myself out—
everything I am and can ever be, into the roughly hewn rock pool mixed with the content of a world within a world (White 2003; Munteanu 2016). The stone-symbolism, the circle form and the sea-water provide an impromptu but fitting altar to act out a ‘sympathetic magic’ linking the continuity of the swirling galaxy and the wholeness of the circular pool, joining the self and the world, with the self and the cosmos (Purce 1974; Jaffe 1978: 261; Serres 1995d). ‘This is the only way of giving expression to what the mystic vision commands’ (Jaffe 1978: 307). These are the simple means of a heart-felt offering embodying a prayer for all living things to find harmony and balance amid the ceaseless changes of the cosmos and earth. An unexpected reckoning helps me gain my bearings along the way, moving toward the seventh walk.
Chapter 7 Conclusion THIS: Oceanic life-worlding

Sacred places are the foundations of all other beliefs and practices because they represent the presence of the sacred in our lives. They properly inform us that we are not larger than nature and that we have responsibilities to the rest of the natural world that transcend our own personal desires and wishes. This lesson must be learned by each generation; unfortunately the technology of the industrialised world always leads us in the other direction. Yet it is certain that as we permanently foul our planetary nest, we shall learn a most bitter lesson.

Vine Deloria Jr. (cited in Peralto 2014: 239,240 my emphasis)

7.1 Remember THIS

The critical lessons facing any generation require a genuine interest in higher learning or at least the sort of learning at the forefront of human consciousness and environmental awareness. I am speaking of education in the truest sense as the attainment of virtue through a care of the soul and the study of the natural world, particularly now in regard to the planetary consequences of the way people live both as a personal and collective responsibility (Foucault 2005; Thoreau 1987). The key to a heightened awareness or any expansion of consciousness, turns upon the importance of integrating transformative experiences into longer-term significance. The ability to hold flowering realisations in remembrance is a critical faculty for maintaining focus upon on what really matters in terms of a sense of purpose as it unfolds (Helminski 2017). The significance of the piece of sea-glass containing the word THIS has grown on me as a metaphoric bell for remembrance and as a device to articulate ideas evident in the last chapter. THIS brings the thesis full circle to spiral forward to address the most salient ideas (Nhat Hahn 1987; Satchell 2010b; Hau’ofa 2008). There are some further aspects concerning my appreciation of what THIS might be taken to mean, so often used as a demonstrative focal point to underline importance and a device to give weight to an assertion such as ‘this lesson’ above concerning the value of sacred places. The sense of direction necessary for the 21st Century relies upon a wholesale change of heart toward the natural world—an education of the heart inclined toward the environment is emerging as perhaps one of the most pressing needs of our generation.

I am also privileging the piece of sea-glass as a talisman that is as an object with symbolic significance in my own medicine bag as a prospective guardian of the life-world. In Taoism fu symbols, are ‘those “passwords” in the form of talismans’ known also as ‘ling-pao, sacred jewels’—they are the tokens of messengers and envoys in the tradition of Shamanism, the Kahuna, the Aboriginal Lawman and the Prophet (Schipper 1993: 11 original emphasis; Freke 2001; King 1985; 1990; Rose 2011). The messages serve as ‘jewels of remembrance’
whose precious memory convey the deepest yearning of our souls and vouchsafe the passage toward maturation and divine appointment (Helmenski and Helmenski 1996 see title). In the hexagram 61 Chung Fu / Inner Truth the ‘character of fu, “truth” is actually the picture of a bird’s foot over a fledgling. It suggests the idea of brooding’ (Wilhelm 1985: 235). The fledgling ideas I have been brooding upon as my own inner truth have significance in the appreciation and reverence that stems from the oceanic life-world in which I live. The process of cultivation that leads to creative power goes by many names in various traditions, each involve spiritual exercises as everyday practices to integrate life-force with the confluence of space, place and ecology.

The lessons along the way in life provide the interesting prospect of learning the world at the same time as producing an emergent aspect of the self that is fit for a peculiar undertaking. The learning is in keeping with the cosmic calendar (one’s lifespan) that everyone potentially shares (with some obvious differences pertaining to when you are born and when you die), while a dedicated life seeks to compliment the shaping influence of the cycles and seasons with appropriate practices, until like sea-glass the jagged edges are smoothed, and the inconsistencies are worn away to produce a timeless character of composure and spontaneity, fit to face any given contingency with an appropriate response (Schipper 1993). The internal process for some has also been likened to the polishing of the inward mirror of the soul that becomes the reflective surface of the forces of the earth and cosmos as attributes of the human expression of the divine (Helminski 2017; Douglas-Koltz 2005). There is an interesting paradox in the manner Lao Tzu (in Schipper 1993) uses the term THIS as a self-evident truth, based upon the seamless logic exhibited in his pithy expression of thought (whether or not you think he is an actual person or a composite of Taoist myth) (Smart 1989). There are several examples in the Tao Te Ching corroborated in numerous translations, however I will refer specifically to two. The first in Chapter 21 with my own emphasis upon certain words to illustrate my point.

The appearance of grand integrity ['virtue’ individual or cosmic]

is that it follows the Way alone.

The way objectified

is blurred and nebulous.

How nebulous and blurred!

Yet within it there are images.
How nebulous and blurred!
Yet within it are objects.
How cavernous and dark!
Yet within it there is essence.
Its essence is quite real;
Within it there are tokens.

From present back to the past,
Its name is imperishable.
Through it we conform to the father of the masses [a process from the beginning]

How do I know what the father of masses is like [what the beginning and unfolding process entail]
Through this. [manifest integrity or virtue complimentary with the cosmos (my commentary)]

(Tzu 1990: 85 my emphasis throughout; [Tzu 1961: 43])

So, while definitive objectification of the unfolding mystery of life remains nebulous, blurred, dark and cavernous in the manner of a labyrinth, obscuring any thought from a conclusive answer or prescriptive injunction, there are images, objects, essences (life-forces within) and corresponding tokens that illuminate thresholds of awakening to the process of an inner/outer harmony and resolution (Khan 1999). These features and tokens are indicative (for those who become aware and attentive to each aspect of life unfolding) of movement toward wholeness in each stage of successive completion. THIS is revealed in the immediacy of stages of awareness from the seed, embryo, infant, adolescent, adult, elder and so on (as gifts at every level for their generations discerned in the context of community) that are each emblematic of stages of life and the preparation for death, whose potential in the clarity of lived experience likewise bears witness in our heart of a ‘grand integrity’ (as from the beginning) (Tzu 1990: 85 my emphasis; Schipper 1993; Plotkin 2008). The same way life is produced through stages unfolding from the mystery of complexity that operates discernibly within chaotic conditions as the cyclic outworking of the body, the earth and the cosmos (Wilhelm 1985; Deleuze and Guattari 1994). The second example is found in chapter 54 and reads now as if a manifesto for the Anthropocene. In Le Guin’s (cited in Tzu 1998: 69) translation she gives the euphemistic heading ‘Some rules’.

Well planted is not uprooted,
well kept is not lost.
The offering of the generations
to the ancestors will not cease.

To follow the way yourself is real power.
To follow it in the family is abundant power.
To follow it in the community is steady power.
To follow it in the whole country is lasting power.
To follow it in the world is universal power.

So in myself I see what is self,
in my household I see what family is,
in my town I see what community is,
in my nation I see what country is,
in the world I see what is under heaven.

How do I know the world is so ['as I see it in myself']?
By this. ['this here']

Lao Tzu (1998: 69; [cited in Schipper 1993: 189])

Schipper (1993: 189 original emphasis) draws attention to ‘this here’ as the ‘seat of an intuitive and inner perception’ at the foundation of a direct knowledge of the world. A knowledge of the world that connects the body as microcosm with the cosmos as macrocosm and vice versa, joined at the belly (inner knowing), which Hawaiian cosmology refers to as piko, the umbilical cord of connection to the energy centres of the body and the divine in the earth and cosmos (Yates 2014; Helmenski and Helmenski 1996). THIS is the referent to what is apparent in the operations of these forces (cosmic and ecological) and what is inferred by living in harmony with their dictates. I take THIS to apply even in the changing conditions of the Anthropocene that is affecting the weather and climate particularly in their extremities, although still exhibiting an underlying regularity of a higher order of cyclic elegance (Suzuki and MaConnell 1997). While THIS oceanic life is a mystery—the way that life unfolds is knowable as a journey, for those who dare follow the intimation of love at its core and purpose (that is manifest in the constitution of life and the consummation of death as a suggestive threshold), providing the opportunity to live as an affirmation of co-creation (Helmenski and Helmenski 1996). Following the heart is fundamental to discovering the
fuller expressions of an overarching munificence that reconciles the apparent contradictions, ultimately in an attitude of humility and trust in powers greater than one’s own (Moore 2014). Remember THIS.

THIS oceanic life is perceived as from cosmic and ecological awareness that brings together a sense of place and a sense of planet, in union with the earth and cosmos, as a mystery of unity and consciousness. I am referring to the oceanic character of life for the purpose of expressing a stronger identification with the possibility for co-creativity with the earth and cosmos that coheres in creative power and love through living. As a foundation for my coastal and environmental philosophy, the experience of the sacred as an abiding understanding and thought-provoking presence, has for me come to play a pivotal role in making sense of the world. The sanctity of the living world is a veritable touchstone for evaluating the precarity or the vitality of places and their eco-systems, in an attitude premised on an ecology of care. The presence of the sacred also registers at times as an absence, akin to ascertaining any wounding and trauma with the ‘negative capability’ for applying healing and restoration at every level (from thoughts and words to actions) (Rose 2004; Keats cited in Abrams 1993: 831). The journey I have undertaken in the thesis began with an inkling of the numinous through my own experience associated with specific everyday practices and common places, under the impression these experiences might just be attributed to an agreeable state of mind or sensations in the body. I then became ponderous of their efficacy articulating relations with the more-than human world (Satchell 2008a). The further I travelled with the notions of coasting and shrine as an environmental philosophy that provided a satisfying framework, the more I uncovered hidden destinations of thought, fresh perspectives, affinity with like-minded others and literally, places where I could find refuge and synergy with a way of life worth living (Satchell 2016; Deleuze 1997). The sense of sacred attributed to place most certainly derives as a perceptual apprehension of reality, although is likewise underpinned by sound reason that cannot be dismissed without compunction.

The process I have found is bittersweet because unearthing the sacred, as a fundamental possibility of life on earth, has made me more keenly aware of the extent of the violation and meanness of spirit perpetrated by people upon people (in their hubris and human frailty respectively), and upon more-than human others and living places. I want to reiterate the perennial philosophical stance toward religion, spirituality and mysticism, where at the core there are fundamental aspects of the more-than human and divine that are reconciled, while there are those that remain subject to unresolved mysteries (in the manner of quantum
physics and pyscho-analysis) and individual backgrounds, traditions and preferences (Rose 2011; Munteanu 2016; Capra and Luisi 2014). In this final chapter, there are three further sections that comprise a conclusion that affords the consummation of the walks and their orientations, a summation of the key ideas from each chapter discussed in an integrated framework and finally, consideration of the significance and implications that offer the impetus for on-going work and an intention, both as a personal reflection and as a parting gift. While the threat of bitter lessons is justified, there are also sweet lessons to learn for those who commit to securing a planetary nest—and to the womb of a new ecology for future generations of the more-than human world.

7.2 The seventh walk: Holding on to the sacred

All journeys have secret destinations of which the traveller is unaware.

(Buber 2002: 23)

The final walk also provides a summation of the previous walks, bringing them together into proximity with a holistic sense of place, as the inhabitation of an integrated oceanic life-world. There are several reasons for returning to Look-At-Me-Now Headland (Munim-Munim, Gumbaynggirr for rocky place important for axe-making) that suit my purpose as a guide, as an intimate participant-observer and as a co-creator seeking to write the place in a protean manner (NSW NPWS 2018). The walk to the end of the headland either as a circuit front-to-back or back-to-front or even up-and-back is one of the most popular for visitors, residents and former inhabitants alike. In some respects, the headland walk could be used as an introduction to all the other walks providing a survey of the whole terrain and various landmarks. In another sense the headland has become a proper walk with a clearly demarcated walking path, signage and management, paved some years ago as a Green corps project (a program run by the government in lieu of a social security benefit) that has become embedded into the landscape providing easier access for the infirmed, the aged and those with a disability who would otherwise find the going too difficult. Apart from the main concourse there are several tracks made in various parts by the surreptitious activity of fishers and surfers, while the most prodigious avenues subtly spread across the space are the crisscross of kangaroo trails that serve as internal markers for the encroachment upon their habitat. Nonetheless there is something democratising about the headland as a public space designated through the express wishes of a small community seeking to retain its inherent beauty through restrained use. Once a small community, now more an enlarged aggregate who are the unlikely hosts of an increasing popularity for visitors, prospective residents and transients due
to the visual amenity, abundant birdlife, the presence of kangaroos, the passing trade of whales and the endemic pods of dolphins that so often are found cruising these shores, each providing their own spectacle at any given moment. The plenitude of these aspects serves as a reminder of the open-ended nature of place-investigation that tends at best to be only provisional.

The character and charm of any headland has a distinctive quality one finds each after their own kind—do I talk as a dear friend, as a close family member or from the passion of a drawn-out love-affair. I will let you decide. The southern route proceeds along the outer rim of the promontory first above the beach and then adjacent to the curvature of the rocky foreshore. The highest point of the headland has been designated for the regeneration of the stunted, naturally occurring shrubbery, skirted by the trail and the barrier fencing that kangaroos can easily slip through. Many years ago, standing on the upmost rise of the headland before the days of the nature reserve, my eldest daughter as a toddler asked me with disarming charm ‘Dad is this the top of the world’ prompted by the commanding panorama of the ocean, coastline and adjacent range—I had to admit to her that for our family there indeed was no grander place to be. On the southern walk out, the track follows a natural wavering undulation that gradually proceeds into the level run down of a slight incline and then begins to rise up on a steeper gradient. When you look at the headland from northern end of Serenity

Figure 48  Dolphins are the undisputed masters of the wave zone photo: Tom Woods
(even more so when you surf right out at front Emerald) it appears in the shape of a sperm whale with the distinct outline that emerges as the head, a feature Melville (1992) labours successfully to imbue with a majestic quality. The reverse view from a certain angle from the south (where Groper Island remains just out of view), either from the water or along Moonee Beach, appears as a Snapper’s head with a distinctive knob on the brow. At the northern extremity a track winds down and then up a rocky goat trail to an additional extension that is slightly smaller, in the form of a perfectly grassed saddle like an exclusive picnic area. This is where I want to take you but am waiting for the advent of spring, so we can leave before first light and see the sunrise together. In the meantime, there are some additional remarks about walking and the headland itself.

A walk is so rich with connotative meaning that over time walking can offer the embellishment to an appreciation of place with so many different nuances without any risk of losing the simple pleasure of just taking leisurely steps. As noted previously walking has an affinity with thinking, reading and writing with a provenance that reaches back to oral storytelling, singing, dancing and songlines (Solnit 2001; Somerville and Perkins 2010; Rose 2011). Walking in the depths of my imagination is resonant as a creative act on par with some of the greatest exploits ever performed, no wonder there is such joy that surrounds infant mobility. This serves as a reminder for an acknowledgement of country, of elders’ past and present, of the Dreaming and sacred places, also in recognition of David Unaipon’s (cited in Muecke’s 2004: 60) teaching ‘a friend always leaves a footprint to follow’. I am following an
ancient protocol that has been updated in the *Uluru statement from the heart* (Referendum Council 2017 np original emphasis) that gives walking on country a deep and abiding sense of purpose in the modern era in Australia.

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from ‘time immemorial’, and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or ‘mother nature’, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown. […]

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

*Uluru statement from the heart* (Referendum Council 2017 np original emphasis)

The invitation to walk in solidarity with first peoples extends the acknowledgement of country into a deeper commitment to *Makarrata*, the Yolngu notion of justice and peace that follows a dispute in a process of truth-telling and agreement-making (Referendum Council 2017; Behrendt 2017; Rose 2017). While the Australian government has currently rejected the offer, many Australian citizens are aligning themselves with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples following their lead. Unaipon (in Muecke and Shoemaker 2001) makes the fascinating point concerning clan-members formerly living in the traditional manner, stating that each member of the tribe knew the footprint of every other member, as well as those of all the more-than human others in their area as an essential part of their up-bringing and development. Therefore, to follow in the footsteps of knowledge-holders, elders and those in specific kinship relations is to learn the ways of a more-than human community in that magnificent integrity of co-existence (Rose 2011; Tzu 1990). Learning the lay of the land according to such a rich cosmology should also be accompanied by learning the night sky, paying attention to the glimmer of the stars in their movement, complexity and the beauty of their configurations.

The walk out around Look-At-Me-Now Headland offers a stunning contrast produced by day and night. I have alluded to the panorama that allows at several junctures to be able to view the complete group of Solitary Islands including the five main islands (three near and a further two in the northern distance) (Satchell 2008a). These sweeping views incorporate the
escarpment of the Great Dividing Range in one of its most eastern reaches, the coastal foreshore to Coffs Harbour and the adjacent islands and ocean. However, I want to draw attention to another feature gained in the process of sauntering along. As I mentioned there is a slight incline, which aligns with the spine of the headland. At the rise on the way up you become aware of the end of the headland reaching out into the sky straight ahead with the sea momentarily lost from view. With focused concentration and creative imagination, you may experience a vertiginous feeling, an actual affective lifting of the spirit if you will, giving rise to making the climb as it were up into the midst of the sky, as if you could without thought just step off and onto a cloud.

The same stretch at night can be even more enchanting where the feeling of elevation projects you further into space among the stars floating on the deeper realisation of earthly buoyancy in the firmament. At night once you reach the end there is the intermittent flash (every seven seconds or so) of the South Solitary Island lighthouse, depending on the weather—on the horizontal plane defining the ocean from the sky can be seen on the occasion of a benign sea, the odd assemblage of lights from the prawn fleet heading out (Satchell 2012). The contrast with the night sky is pronounced, overshadowing the width of the ocean and these few flecks of light with the vastness of the cosmos as a dome of innumerable pinpricks spread in the celestial realm, to such an extent the eye and heart scramble to know every one of the them (Fu 1983). You can crane your neck every which way or lie on the ground, but the night sky outflanks the field of vision at every quarter—until at some point wisdom suggests to your heart to just focus on a portion in order savour any thoughts and feelings more comfortably. Over time one becomes accustomed to familiar groupings such as in these parts the Southern Cross, for whom the Gumbaynggirr drew strength and guidance, or of say Jupiter in relation to the new moon and the western skyline, or the paler yellow distinguishing of Mars overhead in the east and so on (Somerville and Perkins 2010; Rose 2008). A comparative equivalence might be made between individual consciousness and awareness of the wider unified field, as to a drop of water to the ocean or the planet earth to the cosmos, reconciling the smallest dimension of consciousness with a sense of unity in league with the infinite, as a feel for the oceanic mystery of life (Douglas-Koltz 2005; Bohm in Munteanu 2016). I think now everything is in place in anticipation for the coming of spring.

The dynamic forces of the earth and cosmos work in unison to produce and sustain life in a manner directly bearing upon the quality of life and meaning of existence, each deserving closer attention and thoughtful response. While knowledge of some of these key factors is nowadays more common as they were long ago, much of the wisdom of working with them is
lost to such an extent that to draw attention to them is met with incredulity (Capra and Luisi 2014). The appreciation of the seasons and their turning must follow the course of the earth around the sun as our lives do. The lessons they offer speak of the generation and regeneration of the life-world in patterns, cycles and stages including death, with each phase potent in life-forces and richly embedded with meaning (Wilhelm 1985). The lifespan can be thought of as a larger figuration of the seasons of life that turn in the accumulation of living and the process of growth and maturation with psychic, emotional, spiritual and physical consequences (Duane 1996; Ingold 2011). Learning to follow the motion of the earth and the cosmos, and as it were ride their forces, is another aspect of auto-choreography that I want to illustrate on this walk (Satchell 2010a; Ingold 2004). I am in the autumn of my own life, so each year seems to take on the weight of more meaning and deeper significance. The walk begins seeking the sunrise—the signal to wake-up or awaken, in a deeper sense of an expanding consciousness that each day offers as one arises from the cocoon of sleep or the little death (Thoreau 1987; Nin 1973). The aim is to synchronise with the advent of spring, a season associated with lightning, thunder and seasonal rain, in a relief of tension pent up over winter that leads to regenerative power (Wilhelm 1985). The resolution of such tension brings things to life, jolts growth, sparks development. To catch this wave of the season is to be alert to the opportunity of anticipating when spring is sprung.

The purpose of a walk is often open-ended, so to place deeper significance upon its enactment may serve to heighten anticipation and whet the appetite for focused attention. The preparation for this one has served me well, early on the second day of spring, Sunday morning on a Father’s Day, before first light I start off in the dimness of darkness losing its grip by swimming through the atmosphere (Ingold and Vergunst 2008). I decide to head up the verge adjacent to my place and the nature reserve to connect with the road leading to the car-park, then follow the grassy knoll down on to Serenity for a northern approach. On the cusp of first light my path toward the midden puts me in mind of the old people and the Dreaming, birdsong buoys the spirit in the gathering predawn light (Heron 1994). The air is cool not cold, and my hands clutch a flask of herbal tea to enjoy when I get to the saddle out on the end of the headland. This is the path fisherman follow, beating their way over the bed of shells, up the twisting track, across the ragged rocky outcrop to the outstretched finger of the point (Holder 1984). Blanketed by dim light the form of the headland appears as a beloved character in a book that has come to life as a shape-shifting demi-god of the oceanic life-world (Beckwith 1970; Loebel-Fried 2002; Somerville and Perkins 2010). I clamber up the twisted trail and onto the shoulder of the headland in the short space of ten minutes from home. The day has emerged, anticipating the dawn not unlike us. I am now standing on a
primordial piece of my own dreamworld that has come to life from my deepest longings—or so it would seem from this superlative perspective (Satchell 2008a). There is a small blanket of cloud running along the horizon out behind the islands that will extend the wait enough for some thoughtful meditation or a solemn chant.

I take a seat on the edge of the cliff high above a pebbled inlet to await the dawn. There is a familiar jumble of rocks at the end separated by a distinct channel. For many years there was sturdy pole that made for a precarious crossing to reach the very end for those fishers who were game enough to run the gauntlet with their gear strapped to them. Although now gone it must have been a tremendous feat to lug into position and a delicate dance to crossover (Holder 1984). There is a pyramid shaped rock at the end of the northern tip that is a favoured haunt of cormorants, who often sun themselves between their own manner of fishing endeavours. It is not long before an orange tinge becomes highlighted along the upper edge of the cloud bank with rays of light bending into various shades as a herald. The sound of the sea rising up from the fractal complexity of the rocky foreshore is a complex commodious composition, inflected with baroque intricacies weaving in and out of a constant rhythm and thumping beat, accompanied by trills and flourishes in-between the systole and diastole of the ocean’s beating heart (Serres 2008; 2011a; Deleuze 1993; Schwenk 1990).

Relaxation comes effortlessly into the four corners of my body and I notice a single cormorant on the southern aspect of the rocky outcrop (Tzu 2006). I begin to overtone my own melody to accompany the sea and the crescendo I am anticipating with the sun (Purce 1974). Within several moments a sizeable humpback breaks the surface directly in my line of sight, not more than twenty feet from the pointy end of the headland. The hulking body undulating with the rhythm of swell, heading north surfacing several times before I lose sight. The migration north is meant to have ended in August and the return to begin much further north now in September (OEH 2018). The appearance of unseasonal occurrences like these such as cold upwelling in the water that used to be at the end of spring, which now occurs at the beginning of the season are apparent to those who follow the signs—meaning the likelihood of an early bushfire season and the strengthening grip of drought. Learning the signs of the seasons is a demanding pastime in the larger field of nature study because of the endless variation and now of course factoring in the shifts of the Anthropocene. The rewards once seemed to revolve around pleasure, but I now understand there are more dramatic and serious reasons to seek such premonitory knowledge.

Along the rim of the cloud molten orange is thickening, intensifying in colour around the vicinity where the sun is ready to burst into the open sky. At this moment a Brahminy Kite or known as a Red-back Sea-Eagle exhibits impeccable timing by descending in a pirouette to
perch right on top of the small pyramid in readiness for the great orb to appear. The sort of
timing sought after in all manner of professions including the sciences and arts, where deft
touch is recognisable as virtuosity. Moreover, to appreciate the subtleties of auto-
choreography by way of aspiration one must learn from the masters particularly the more-than
human ones (Satchell 2010a). The sun rises like any other day, although today affords the
opportunity to receive something of its strength and constancy as an impetus to begin another
day and a new season with fresh resolve for the longer journey (Satchell 2016). I turn and
wander down the southern backside of the rockface, impressed by the clarity of light
illuminating the face of the headland proper—at sea-level I face a mighty edifice that stands
resolute and naked before the ocean and world. There is an eerie feeling wandering around at
the base of the cliffs where on most days the sea crashes against these rocks relentlessly and
many times violently with the full force of the oncoming swell. I imbibe a certain stoicism to
accompany my resolve and pick up the theme of my sharpened intuitions. To hold on to the
sacred of the earth and the cosmos requires a strength of purpose, as the Song of Songs
declares ‘love that is fiercer than death’, all the more so in the face of extinction events and
the unconscionable disregard for environmental integrity displayed by the mass of humanity
captured in the grip of world powers (Rose 2011: 130). The danger I sense in my gut derives
from having seen into the abyss where I am now casually fossicking around, the shape of the
basin here hewn from the constant assault of the sea and the ability of the rocks and sea life to
stand its ground—the very substance of the headland who sees not an adversary in the ocean
and weather but rather the robust interaction of the forces of nature as next of kin (Carson
1973). I have come to listen to the ‘language of the sea’ and ‘learn once more to be a child of
that hour where rock and ocean meet’ to bow the heart in reverence before the forces of the
earth and cosmos (Aiken cited in DP 2018 np). Will I learn to trust in the moment of piercing
truth and show the self-same endurance to hang on to life in its wondrous diversity? A quiet
resolve that must be both forged and passed on to the next generation and to the next and to
the next.

I struggle to climb out, taking a route that becomes more torturous at every turn asking
myself ‘Why did I take on this challenge and not just take the easy way out?’ At every turn
the stakes are higher, the fall longer and the way steeper, I dare not look back, I press on to
claw my way out, holding on to crumbling shards of loose stone amid even more jagged laval
drift. Then all at once I am free, free from my racing thoughts, invigorated and standing on
the other side in quieted repose, able to stare once again into the abyss from what appears as
the safe distance of a new-found height. The sun has burst into the day and I make my merry
way home around the southern rim, pondering what to make of the morning, which is becoming more apparent on reflection.

Figure 50

On another day I would not dare walk down in there

I follow the incline from the end of the headland back down with the world seemingly freshly laid out before me, again with my back to the sun and life in my sails. Kangaroos are lolling about grazing with studious aplomb. A huge flock of galahs fly back and forth in a swirling configuration, dominating a congested flight zone over the back of the headland with all manner of birds flying hither and thither, each adding to the frenzied orchestration stunned into realisation by a stellar day. By the time I reach the final bend in the track that will head me home, at the spot where people often go to view the surf (which today is nondescript), I come upon a small platoon of about thirty galahs tucking into grass roots making their way among themselves, each leaning forward strutting about with hands in pockets. On the fence adjacent another ten of their fellows watch over proceedings on their perch. In the middle of them stands a sleek black Raven with piercing grey-green luminous eyeballs that regards me warily and stops me in my tracks. In my head I try to adopt a prayerful attitude vaguely trying to remember the Koyukon protocol (Nelson 1983). However, it appears I am too eager to communicate, inquisitiveness with all legs and arms—the bird seems to try to tell me to wait my turn and get a feel for the conversation before just bursting in— a point well taken, although then all the galahs on the ground fly off spooked by my apparent enthusiasm. The Raven with one parting shot looks back from flying off to the effect, maybe next time, you still have many lessons to learn. Rose (2011) makes the astute point she learned from the Aboriginal Lawman Old Tim.
The dingo’s insistence if humans are to talk with other creatures they will have to understand and respond to creature languages can be understood as the move to curb the ever-present desire among humans to have it all their own way.

(Rose 2011: 140)

While not my intention it is worth noting and making the effort to proceed with more care. One by one the remaining galahs take their leave peeling off slowly, by now it seems they are making fun of me for being clumsy in the encounter. Finally, the last two hesitate, quivering, as if to say wait a minute, but then they too fly off before I even formulate a worthwhile comment or question. There is a particularly lovely banksia tree nearby I often visit that I have a strong attachment to, who has helped me enormously to understand what it means to eschew human ways of relating, steeped in the assumption of superiority, to just be together when sometimes waiting is all that is necessary for wisdom to drop softly like a sun shower (Muecke 2010a). I am at least grateful that the Raven recognised in me the willingness to learn—fitting notes to conclude the walk. There is also some compensation reminding me that for the more-than human spring has indeed sprung, and I am still holding on to the sacred.

Figure 51

The orientation: heirophony (a manifestation of the sacred)

The final orientation most definitely encompasses them all as the penultimate. Although the
successive way I have sought to unfold them allows each of them to fold neatly into one another and together—as well as pop up out of each other just the way seasons do irrespective of what season it is. As a hierophant applying myself to unravelling certain mysteries my intention has been to make them as accessible as possible without demeaning their value or sullying the directness of their own mode of address to the heart. Acutely aware of the derision and contempt many people exude as a personal affront as to any suggestion of the sacred and especially sacred places, which for me are one of the most tangible forms of evidence. On the other hand, I am not looking for affirmation or approval to convince myself or even to find validation—I am happy to defend my own claims and content with those significant others who have an affinity with me of a shared secret and joy to value what is in our care.

Figure 52
A mob of galahs flying in formation

What then is my motivation? I guess and what comes straight to mind is that to the extent people appreciate the value of the confluence of space, place and ecology, is the degree they will care and so support the flourishing of what remains of the sacred. By way of witness, the mystery of the sacred shrouded in the guise of place has been a stalwart in my own life for the pursuit of higher learning and reverence for the living world. I could go on
but feel as though these confessions are enough to satisfy whether or not my motivation is disingenuous or misguided. The manifestation of the sacred whether viewed from the perspective of one’s own life or the life-world one inhabits (and these are in so many ways inseparable) gives life a lustre I personally cannot do without. In the tragic sense of holding on to what remains I am in a company of kindred spirits whose pain and conviction I deeply share. The work of manifesting the sacred whether through art, craft, ritual, poetics, storytelling, music, retreat, quest or pilgrimage is undertaken as something entrusted with a deep sense of responsibility. A generational bequest to value as an endeavour and by all available means to pass on.

7.3 Way-finding in the Anthropocene

The Anthropocene in the 21st Century provides a critical point of reference and tension concerning what is still recognisable about the world, what has indeed become different and what must be reconciled as irrevocable loss amid emergent contingencies. Just two important aspects of weather phenomenon will suffice to make the point. The first is the diminishment and changing pattern of rainfall being experienced in various geographical locations across the world, certainly here in Australia, more particularly where I am on the eastern seaboard and more acutely on the other side of the range. The second is the increase and severity of extreme weather events (including dramatic rainfall), which also present a diversity of phenomenon and further extremes. In the shape of these changes and the emergent phenomenon that they give rise to, any reliable constants that can be factored in are becoming increasingly important for people and communities to gain their bearings. The notion of way-finding may be applied to the means of navigation whether by sea or on land, therefore applies to the Anthropocene in the type of world underway and the manner its vicissitudes are being navigated. For all the resources and technology developed economies bring to bear on these questions there is scant evidence of the necessary way-finding in the Anthropocene to mitigate the risks and come to terms with the new set of dynamics.

Way-finding provides a fitting metaphor and practice to join ancient lifeways with creative and everyday practices in the contemporary context—taking into consideration both the land and sea—for the environmental culture of the future. My response to the Anthropocene has developed slowly over time allowing for clarity of thought and strength of purpose to co-evolve into a deliberate way of life as a means of way-finding (Satchell 2006; 2016). The most valuable resources available to meet the challenge of the Anthropocene are to be found within the human soul dedicated to self-realisation and a higher purpose (Moore
I am convinced the appropriate wisdom of simplifying life to its most fundamental elements is the most direct route to finding personal direction and the ecological connection required to make a valuable contribution to a troubled world (Satchell and Shannon 2013). The current emphasis upon wealth and possessions evident in every facet of leadership and responsibility is unconscionable—conspicuous consumption, ostentatiousness and profligacy must be rejected and replaced with a more sensible approach to aesthetics and ethics (Rose 2017; Wilson 2017). Contrary to popular belief the poetics of living from within a vernacular ecology is satisfying and constitutes a quality of life and source of well-being that addresses many of the maladies of the modern world (Satchell 2013). The awakening of human potential relies upon a fresh appreciation and care for the conditions that make life possible on earth—air, water, food, clothing, shelter, security, purpose, meaning, belonging and love. These are not just individual pursuits, rather the inheritance of an unfathomable benevolence provided by the earth and cosmos that have been severely eroded in the past several generations. This is to affirm the conditions for life as they remain within our collective grasp, although acknowledging that what is required are a greater ingenuity and altruism than is presently being witnessed.

These chapters have provided excursions of thought, as explorations of my own life, mindful of the attempt to turn a personal care of the self into a broader ecology of care that engages with some of the key tenets of environmental philosophy. The intuition of just coasting in the fluidity of the confluence between space, place and ecology, comes as a deeper reverence for the ocean and seeks to emulate the exemplary properties of water and the revolution of the earth in its turning, including its passage around the sun and the phases of the moon around the earth. Taking as a point of departure my own lived experience as geographic understandings of the world, I have sought to grasp and refine both cosmic and ecological sensibilities. The range of concepts outlined throughout the chapters can be applied in the everyday world and have as their aim; personal development concomitant with finding meaning and purpose, the recognition of key attributes and the acquisition of skills for a meaningful life and contribution to community, and the appreciation and healthy connection with the more-than human life-world. I concede that some people may disagree with some of the beliefs and values as I have presented them, therefore be unwillingly to apply themselves to the process of self-examination and care. By all means let them choose alternate means to support their own leanings. Nonetheless, for those who are inclined they may find in various ways these ideas as complimentary to similar paths with compatible goals or lifeways that resonate with many of those presented.
The chapters fit together not only in a logical outline but also in an integrated framework that reinforce one another and nuance their emphasis. The first section posited the idea of *Coasting*, recognising the elegant energetics surfing and sailing demonstrate, propelled by the natural elements in the freedom of movement, design and technique. Catching a wave or riding on the edge of the fold of storms becomes emblematic of co-operative dynamics with purchase upon synergies that apply in other domains, even working with adversity and inclemency to ride out storms and difficulties can be seen as creative problem-solving and contingent planning. These modes of existence are in keeping with oceanic cultures and lifeways developed over many generations in an ecology of creative and everyday practices. The first chapter *Oceania Rising* draws on Hau‘ofa’s (2008) conceptualisation of Oceania as an enlarged figuration of a ‘sea of islands’ coasting in the most prodigious space on earth, therefore applicable to Polynesia, the Pacific region and to the wider ocean-planet. The notion of Oceania rising was applied to Indigenous and first peoples’ solidarity, planetary belonging and generative responses to sea-level rise as mitigation and adaptation. In the context of the Anthropocene the vision of a new Oceania applies to the necessity for a new ecology emerging from the ruins left in the wake of colonisation, capitalism and globalisation. Oceania also encompasses an enlarged sense of place and sense of responsibility exemplified in the value of water and the earth’s dependency upon the ocean as a means to support a vibrant biological diversity.

The second chapter *Inside–out* built upon the thematic importance of water and the ocean from an inside–out perspective on the earth as an ocean-planet, calling for an ontology of blue, as an expression of the fundamental truths of water and the biosphere. Following this theme by considering the process of contradictory perspectives and approaches synonymous with global perspectives, to valorise emerging efforts to imbue a more effective environmental awareness at a planetary scale. The value of colour as a unique expression of the earth was seen to open possibilities for inter-disciplinarity to support fresh articulations of environmental philosophy. The ontology of blue also was used to reassert the fundamental oneness and unity of life on earth as enjoined through interdependent agents, and as living organisms in a shared environment dependent upon a planetary life-world. The third chapter *Auto-choreography* contextualised surf culture as an Indigenous cultural practice with an enduring environmental heritage and the surfing experience as an interpretive lens to engage environmental philosophy. Reference to the gifting of surfing from Hawaii to the world, both as a cultural practice and a nature-based lifeway, enabled theorising certain fundamental understandings and responsibilities towards developing cultural and place-sensitive protocols.
The auto-choreography found in an individual’s performance in response to the rhythms of waves is seen as an approach that may inform the performance of living in response to the life-world as being oceanic-dependent at a planetary scale. The terms kapuna, elder, kahu, guardian and spirit keeper, and kahuna, spiritual master were considered as exemplary roles compatible with a vibrant surf culture to foster cosmic and ecological sensibilities in the more-than-human community. The larger framework for just coasting encompassed the new Oceania, the ontology of blue and the art of auto-choreography to provide a sense of historical, geographical and ecological background that coupled with planetary reach, as a compliment to the second section Shrine where the focus shifts to a sense of place and everyday life.

The notion of Shrine introduced the second section providing the sought-after depth of meaning associated with an existence that maintains a reverence toward the ancestral line with the heritage and perpetuity of the environment. The spiritual connection to the earth pertains to the lives people constitute in their dwellings and the kinship networks of the more-than human in the environment they inhabit and share as co-existence. The fourth chapter Shacking-up seized upon the transience of wave-riding and the larger rhythm of coastal life to articulate a more substantive inhabitation attuned to the earth and cosmos as an art of living over a lifespan. The poetics of a vernacular ecology derived from principles of simplicity, frugality and creativity were posited as an ecological response to the Anthropocene and as a means of self-realisation in the context of the more-than human community. The fifth chapter Beachcombing employed a philosophical poetics as a means of inquiry employing a range of methods for investigation and creative research toward creative output and ethical intervention. The recursive relationship between the place of residence and the surrounds allowed for theorisation of field-work of an oceanic character in the fertile space of blue eco-poetics. The theme of place-making and place-writing extended from the previous chapter revolved around the idea of inhabitation extending from the dwelling into the immediate surrounds of the liminal zone. Liminality served in a multi-faceted way as a location for the process of inner and outer work, in the context of the more-than human community and the life-world, seeking to develop knowledge and stewardship pertaining to the care and healing of places. The larger concern of a viable eco-cosmopolitanism was outlined in relation to the integration of indigeneity, the hybridity of multi-ethnic cultures, the kinship arrangements of animality and vegetility. The consummation of the second section occurred in the sixth chapter A field guide as an example of creative research supporting place-making and place-writing, also as an imaginative means of infusing spirituality into the concerns of the
environmental humanities. The chapter continued in the vein of blue eco-poetics exploring intuitive reading and self-reflexive explication through onto-poetic dialogue with place germane to the sort of conversations that promote self-awareness and environmental responsibility. The overlap of the final walk and the final chapter provided a fitting fold to turn things inside–out, both as a conclusion and the opening out of further inquiry, suggestively beckoning from where it counts most—the heart.

7.4 Look-At-Me-Now

If a surf break can be a Walden Pond, a material synecdoche of all one finds mysterious and delightful about the world, then I found mine…

(Duane 1992: 32)

The surf spot more commonly known as Shelleys (suggestive of the abundance of pipi shells in the sand used as food and bait before overharvesting by Europeans) is what initially drew my attention to Emerald Beach all those years ago. The inflections of various signifying practices synonymous with name of the headland provides a fitting prompt for my final thoughts. The story behind Rocky Bluff (designated on mapping) that leads to Look-At-Me-Now Headland comes from the early colonial era but really had not gained significance until over a hundred years later when under the auspice of the Coalition Against Outfalls and LAMN Arts Committee the name served as a signifier to lobby for nature reserve status (Cooke et al. 2000). In 1881, James and Eliza Skinner and members of their large and extended clan (including the Holders), selected over 1,300 acres of land, setting up a series of smaller farm holdings in the Emerald-Moonee area. They were beneficiaries of the Robertson Land Act of 1861, a reform designed to break the hold over land tenure enjoyed by squatters, and one which also impacted upon the local Aboriginal people of the Gumbaynggirr tribes still unencumbered at the time by encounters with Europeans. Land selection from the Crown came with the proviso of land clearance, chopping down trees, building dwellings, raising crops and erecting fences including the introduction of domesticate animals (Holder 1984). This form of colonisation emanated from the early colonies that became the larger metropoles and established itself in smaller pockets and their connective networks by sea and over land, here between Woolgoolga and Coffs Harbour and the larger network between Sydney and Brisbane (Yeates 1982; 1990; 1993). In the same manner as the current model of neo-colonialism underway with suburban housing development and the highway. The impact upon the semi-nomadic Gumbaynggirr and their homeland was pronounced and irrevocably changed their former existence. As previously mentioned the coloniser’s language and the
imposition of names is another form of the exercise of power and the will to dominate of imperialism.

Ironically, the story seems harmless and the name lifted from the family album has its own charm by drawing attention to itself as an exercise subject to repetition. An English gentleman goes for a ride on horseback with two spirited girls of the Skinner clan. The girls race off ahead and he follows in pursuit not to be left behind. In the vicinity of the headland, so the story goes they divert through a marsh giving him no choice but to do likewise. They take full advantage of their local knowledge and press home their head start leaving him straggling behind in their wake. The bedraggled English gentlemen eventually arrives back much to the amusement of the gathered clan—when he finally dismounts giving himself a good look up and down, he says in exasperation at his fine clothes splattered with mud ‘Look at me now!’ Not only did they regale with laughter, the association with the headland became fixed and dutifully reinforced with every retelling (Holder 1984). It would be remiss in this retelling not to see past the Englishmen and the European style of imposition including my own in search for the deeper significance of the rocky bluff.

As a dramatic contrast Aboriginal people are reluctant to talk about the headland because of its sacred status. A point where I am conflicted, reticent and at pains to show respect, taking my lead from the decision of the Garby elders who represent the Gumbaynggirr interests, who have decided to share their traditional knowledge in order to continue to care for country with a post-colonial vision for renewal, appreciation and respect (Somerville and Perkins 2010). In a report on the anthropological significance of the headland commissioned by Coffs City Council in the context of the Outfall proposal, Koori academic Ron Heron (1994) makes some interesting observations pertinent to my intentions for environmental philosophy in the Anthropocene.

The clever men of the Gumbaynggirr tribe were those who had been brought into full realisation of the tribe’s life force or Eternal Dreaming. The result of this full realisation is to share actively in that stream of life and power which is not handicapped by the limitation of time and space.

A ‘clever’ man was a tribal member who had reached the ‘pinnacle of male development’ and their role was to ‘preserve the sacred heritage and the future of the tribe’ (Heron 1994 np). Rose (2011) makes the point these roles also exist for women in various aspects and kinship arrangements as knowledge-holders and custodians. The headland is a Mirera, a place of power or site of increase, a secluded place to garner and use knowledge concerning rain increase, find the direction for food provision, seasonal changes and the welfare of the tribe.
(Heron 1994). The environmental heritage of this coastal strip includes a liminal zone that for thousands upon thousands of years was a site to ponder and to practice the use of cosmic and earth forces to care for country and sing it up as a flourishing life-world (Rose 2011). I am convinced these ancient lifeways shared by cultures and traditions around the world—despite all the odds hold the keys for the sort of integrity, wisdom and care necessary for the more-than human life-world to endure the changing climate of the Anthropocene and work toward a new ecology in the aftermath of human neglect (Abram 1996). In the liminal space at the edge of the fold of modern cultures, people and communities committed to environmental integrity will need to shelter and foster the initiation and development of young adult men and women, who in turn will grow to maturity and eldership, by lending their life force to the cosmos and the earth for the next generation. What is required is the wisdom of developing an enduring appreciation and respect for the living world in the form and alignment of thoughts, words and behaviour. Passing on a nature-based life to one’s descendants, relatives and community is the standard of moral obligation from antiquity that will always be relevant—even more so now.

When I Look-At-me-Now! I am no less marginalised than ever, on every front, in terms of the dominant culture (socially, economically and academically). Although I appreciate from appearance I enjoy much of the undeserved privilege of the Western world. However, my convictions have been thoroughly tempered, the principles I practice have been proven and the values I hold have stood the test of time. Through the process of this thesis and by a profound grace, the superfluous trappings of thoughtless consumption, the fear of being misunderstood, the allure of a myriad of addictions and the banality of existence have all been stripped away and replaced by a steady resolve to live well in the affirmation of life. In the process of recollection and the challenge to express my deepest longings, in and down through the torturous labyrinths of the relevant literature and the struggles of life, I have confronted myself and found something worthwhile. No less flawed than the next person perhaps more but reconciled to a purpose and meaning I will continue to pursue whenever and wherever the future deems I am able. In the shell of my softened heart an enduring pearl of wisdom has formed to such an extent that I can gladly offer it to you to remember me by. In the face of any challenge or difficulty the best approaches and resolutions will always be those steeped in a distinctive quality that only comes from a change of heart wrought by divine love. How do I know for sure? By THIS same love.
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