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Wandering

Kate Cantrell, Ariella Van Luyn, Emma Doolan

Wandering is an embodied movement through a landscape, cityscape, or soundscape; it is a venture that one may undertake voluntarily or reluctantly. It is similar to wayfaring and roaming, and different to walking. As a metaphor and as a figuration of subjectivity, wandering allows for a number of non-linear engagements: loitering, overhearing, wildflowering, meandering, even time travel. When coupled with an act of memory or imagination, wandering can instigate wondering, and vice versa. It can refer to the physical movement of the body through space or the abstract wandering of the mind through time; more often than not, it is both.

The contributions to this special issue on 'Wandering' take up the theme in ways that demonstrate how straying from prescribed pathways and patterns of movement can be a transformative experience: one that renders new ways of thinking, reading, gaming, communicating, and being. For the authors featured here, wandering is deeply affectual, at times intimate and empowering, at other times disorientating, melancholy, and compulsive. Wandering provokes an awareness of the ambiances of everyday life, a response to the repression of desire, trauma, and historical violence.

Wandering, of course, is traditionally associated with the city, and many of the articles here extend this scholarship, while others move the discussion of wandering to the natural environment. Historically, wandering has been connected to patriarchal, colonial modes of exploring and mapping, of claiming and naming places. Yet these articles suggest that wandering, as a mode of resistance—as a mobility that is ideologically charged—can provide new ways of being beyond heteronormativity and outside the hold of linear boundaries. In wandering rather than waiting, the wanderer inscribes opposing devices into her narrative: her movement is infused with gendered meaning and is well-equipped to reveal the relational, discursive operations of identity.

Indeed, in the feature article, **Ingrid Horrocks** challenges neo-liberal versions of travel through an account of her ongoing research into female wandering and travel writing; her most recent book *Women Wanderers and the Writing of Mobility, 1784-1814* presents an extensive consideration of the many complexities she outlines here, including the need to disentangle mobility from its frequent ideological equation with liberty. Horrocks explains, for example, how reluctant wandering in eighteenth and nineteenth century British literature requires a more flexible and nuanced understanding of wandering as a form of displacement. For Horrocks, the interdisciplinary field of mobilities studies is particularly illuminating. This framework allows for a tracing of the significance of both the symbolic representations of wandering in narrative and the historical conditions and lived experiences of the writers that produced wandering texts. Horrocks's work reveals that deeper investigation into the histories of different mobilities is significant for modern conceptualisations of travel that equate movement with freedom of choice; such neo-liberal ideologies of mobility elide the structural forces and inequalities that might compel one to move—to leave home in search of work, companionship, or food.

Kristina Deffenbacher also challenges conventional travel narratives—in this case, the road narrative—in her article, "Mapping Trans-Domesticity in Jordan's *Breakfast on Pluto*." Deffenbacher develops the term "trans-domesticity" to explain how the film challenges not only notions of home but also understandings of domestic spaces and practices. Specifically, Deffenbacher reads *Breakfast on Pluto* as a queer diaspora narrative that destabilises normative bonds and structures, and in doing so, transforms the traditional road story where the protagonist leaves home in search of autonomy and independence. Reading against earlier interpretations of the protagonist's behaviour as apolitical, Deffenbacher suggests that homemaking in public, transient spaces is a queer reclamation of domestic space through the act of wandering, which enables connection rather than dislocation.

The protagonist in *Breakfast in Pluto* creates a home in London, and global neo-liberal London is the site of investigation in "Wandering and Placemaking in London: Iain Sinclair's Literary Methodology." Here, **Kirsten Seale** and **Emily Potter** examine how psychogeographer **Iain Sinclair's** wandering moves beyond the chronicling of place to engage in placemaking that is materially entangled with the transformative conditions of place. Sinclair's wandering, as Seale and Potter demonstrate, acts upon the city as much as it is an act within the city. Sinclair's writing about London's decrepitude contributes to a contemporary aesthetic of urban decay that is cultivated and commodified in high-end locales—an extra-textual consequence that points to the position of Sinclair's wanderings as "more-than-literary." In other words, Sinclair's texts materialise versions of place

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kate Cantrell

Kate Cantrell is a Lecturer in Creative Writing and English Literature at the University of Southern Queensland. She is an award-winning writer, editor, and critic. Her short stories, poems, and essays have appeared in several magazines and journals, including *Meanjin*, *Island*, *Overland*, *Wet Ink*, *Kill Your Darlings*, and *The Lifted Brow*. Her journalism has been published internationally by *Bradt Travel Guides*, *Times Higher Education*, and *The Independent on Sunday*. She tweets @kate_cantrell.

Ariella Van Luyn

Dr Ariella Van Luyn is a Lecturer in Creative Writing at the University of New England, Australia, and Adjunct Lecturer at James Cook University, Townsville. She is the author of a novel, *Treading Air*, set in 1920s North Queensland, and several short stories that engage with little-known aspects of Queensland's past, published in magazines including *Island*, *Southerly*, and *Voiceworks*. Her research interests include historical fiction, regional writing practices, community narratives, and practice-led research.

Emma Doolan

Emma Doolan is a Lecturer in Creative Writing at Southern Cross University, New South Wales. Her research explores Gothic representations of place, particularly in writing about Australia's hinterland regions. She is also interested in modernism, feminism, ecocriticism, pop culture, and creative writing practice.

that operate outside the assemblage of literary production, thereby constituting spatial events.

Devin Proctor wanders in another quintessential city in "Wandering in the City: Time, Memory, and Experience in Digital Game Space." Proctor traverses the physical, the virtual, and the temporal in his exploration of downtown New York, as constructed in the videogame [Assassin's Creed: Rogue](#). Accompanying Proctor on his wanderings is the memory—or the future projection—of Michel de Certeau, whose musings from the top of the World Trade Center—not-yet-built in the time of the game, not-yet-destroyed in the time of de Certeau, existing only in memory in Proctor's own time—inform the exploration of space. Proctor wonders whether it is possible to truly wander in a controlled space, where even apparent acts of spatial disobedience—scaling buildings, running along walls—are within the "rules" of the game. For Proctor, disavowing the designed narrative of the game—ignoring quests, not seeking to progress or level up but instead simply wandering—allows the digital space to take on different meanings, and to become, in fact, another space: one that is a colourful vista of memory, fiction, and experience.

In "Adapting to Loiterly Reading: Agatha Christie's Original Adaptation of 'The Witness for the Prosecution'", **Alistair Rolls** takes up the theme of wandering by applying the notion to re-reading Christie's short story "The Witness for the Prosecution" in a way that is prompted by Sarah Phelps's [screen adaptation](#) for BBC One. Rolls applies Armelle Blin-Rolland's notion of "vortical" reading: a model of adaptation in which no version of a text is privileged as the correct one but instead part of a textual multiplicity. Through this lens, Rolls argues that Christie's short story can be appreciated by a wandering reader who undertakes loiterly reading, thereby moving against the grain of crime fiction: a genre, which, through its focus on the revelatory end, usually speeds a reader to a resolution. A wandering reader might see, for instance, the fetishistic narrative and partially-repressed pre-textual truths. Therefore, Phelps's adaptation, which uses a framing device by adding a new beginning and end to the narrative, complements, rather than undercuts, Christie's original. In this article, Rolls enacts his own form of loiterly reading.

Melanie Pryor examines the work of another well-known wanderer in "Dark Peripatetic Walking as Radical Wandering in Cheryl Strayed's Memoir *Wild*." Pryor adopts John Brabour's notion of the dark peripatetic, a kind of itinerant wandering often associated with isolation from society. Pryor transforms the notion's negative connotations, arguing instead that, in women's memoir, wandering in the wilderness is an act of "radical self-containment". Pryor draws attention to the way that [Strayed's memoir](#) offers a counterpoint to traditional patriarchal narratives of domination and colonisation of the natural world. Instead, Strayed's writing positions her as a witness to the natural world and her own physical and internal transformation. Pryor draws our attention to the way that even Strayed's name, changed after her divorce, suggests an empowered wandering from the traditional confines of domestic life.

Like Pryor, **Susan Davis** in "Wandering and Wildflowering: Walking with Women into Intimacy and Ecological Action" locates wandering, not as it traditionally has occurred in the city, but in a natural ecosystem: in this case, the wallum bushland behind the beaches of South East Queensland, Australia. This complex ecosystem, Davis explains, is at once resilient, thriving in soil corrosive as battery acid, but also fragile, unable to re-grow once destroyed; yet few pay attention to this landscape. Davis presents an historical account of Australian poet Judith Wright's and artist and writer Kathleen McArthur's relationship with each other and this coastal heathland, arguing that both wandering and "wildflowering" provoked in the women a new artistic and ecological vision. Attuning to the more-than-human world allowed these artists to value what still is, Davis argues, a largely invisible landscape; this new vision prompted ecological activism and conservation.

In "Wandering in and out of Place: Modes of Searching for the Past in Paris, Moscow, and St Petersburg", **Katherine Brabon** suggests that wandering in a place can also be a mode of wandering in the past. In her analysis of W.G. Sebald's, Patrick Modiano's, and her own work, Brabon points to the way that the narrator's embodied movement through place is haunted by traces of historical trauma and violence. Landscape, infused with memory and emotion, provokes a compulsive wandering; the narrators in the works Brabon describes appear almost doomed to wander in search of a past available only in fragments. These are themes Brabon also explores in her novel, [The Memory Artist](#), which won the Vogel Literary Award in 2016, and which complements the exegetical discussion presented here.

In "Wandering a Metro: Actor-Network Theory Research and Rapid Rail Infrastructure Communication", **Nicholas Richardson** wanders Montreal's underground [Métro](#), asking of the fifty-year-old train system the Latourian question, "What do you do for a city and its people?" By wandering the Métro and interviewing its other wanderers, commuters, and workers, Richardson is able to observe the actor-network within which the train operates. Through this process, he comes to understand what a train system like Montreal's might bring to a city such as Sydney. Richardson's wandering is as much methodological and metaphorical as it is physical, and he does not seek to end either aspect of his foray at a finish line. Instead of drawing us towards the finality of conclusions, Richardson's wandering opens up multiple avenues. The actor-network of the Métro is comprised not just of the train itself and its immediate users but also the artworks and

architecture that give character to its spaces. Ultimately, the influence of the Métro and its actor-network spread beyond the boundaries of the train system itself; the Métro functions—as one of Richardson’s respondents puts it—as the “connective tissue” of the city.

Whereas Richardson awaits an answer to his question, “What do you do for a city and its people?”, **Rowan Wilken**, in “Walkie-Talkies, Wandering, and Sonic Intimacy”, is concerned with the act of listening itself when urban wanderers come into contact with the sonic environments in which they live. Wilken extends the notion of wandering to the ambient soundscape by analysing two artworks, *Saturday* by [Sabrina Raff](#) and *Walk That Sound* by [Lukatoyboy](#). Wilken positions these artworks in an avant-garde artistic tradition, the Situationist International, which emerged in the 1960s, and which proposed the use of walkie-talkies to enable urban wandering, an act of engaging with place designed to create more authentic “situations” to counteract social alienation brought about by Capitalism. The more contemporary artworks at the heart of Wilken’s analysis extend this tradition by inviting the reader to attune to overheard conversations, and form what Wilken, in an application of Dominic Pettman’s notion, calls sonic intimacy. Wilken suggests that in these works the act of overhearing invites an aural connection with strangers. Yet, such acts also evoke a disturbing undercurrent of surveillance and the Panopticon.

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