

Locations and Re-locations

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This issue of *JASAL* consists of five new essays offering fresh perspectives on how we locate Australian literature both geographically and conceptually.

The opening essay in this collection was first delivered by Brigitta Olubas as the Dorothy Green Lecture at the 2018 ASAL conference. In “‘Where We Are Is Too Hard’: Refugee Writing and the Australian Border as Literary Interface,’ Olubas revisits debates about the value of the literary and the category of Australian literature through a discussion of the work of Kurdish–Iranian journalist and novelist Behrouz Boochani. Her essay, she tells us, is informed by the aesthetic and conceptual frameworks provided by Indigenous writers and artists, specifically the critic Victoria Grieves and the artist Tracy Moffatt but it also makes productive comparative reference to the work of settler artist Ian Howard who has produced rubbings of military machinery and border walls. This wide-reaching set of conceptual and aesthetic thinking points allows Olubas to ask what it means to think about Boochani as an Australian writer. As she puts it: ‘Boochani’s status as an Australian writer ... is fraught and complex, and necessary. It demands of his readers that they engage not simply with his work but with the idea of him as an Australian writer, and with the cognate locution of Australian Literature. This essay aims to take some first steps toward that engagement, to set out some of its imperatives, and to propose some larger aesthetic contexts within which it might be staged. More broadly, it aims to open out the question of refugee and asylum-seeker literature as a compelling and necessary dimension of Australian literature.’

In his essay, Ryan Delaney proposes a new conceptual framework for reading one of Australia’s most popular and successful novelists, Tim Winton. In ‘Tim Winton’s *The Shepherd’s Hut*: A Post-Pastoral Vision of Nature’ Delaney argues that while Winton has often been read in relation to Australian masculinities, his latest novel *The Shepherd’s Hut* should also be read as a critical engagement with the European pastoral tradition. His detailed analysis of the novel demonstrates Winton’s allusions to Greek mythologies as well as the way the novel revises the anthropocentric vision of the human subject. Delaney argues that Winton’s novel is ‘post-pastoral,’ a term that, as he puts it, ‘encompasses the pejorative limitations of the pastoral and critiques them alongside a renewed use of the trope.’ As he shows, Winton’s novel moves us towards a disruption of the human/animal binary as well as providing a multi-focal and immediate imaginative vision of nature.

An interest in the way the classical tradition informs Australian works also emerges in Phil Butterss’s contribution to this issue, ‘The Making of “A Poet of Adelaide”: Charles Jury and Literary Adelaide, 1893–1919.’ As Butterss shows us, Charles Jury sought to link classical Greece with the local culture of Adelaide and he proposes therefore that Jury’s ‘frames of reference are at once transnational and local.’ Butterss’s discussion highlights Jury’s fraught relationship with Australia as (post)colony, notably through his education at the University of Oxford and extended periods away from Australia. But the essay is most centrally concerned with attempting to locate Jury in relation to the specific world of Adelaide in the early and mid twentieth century. The essay ‘asks whether Jury might be seen as a poet “of Adelaide” in the sense of being shaped by the city and its literary culture during the period in which he was developing his particular poetics.’ Through a careful reading of historical sources, including Jury’s own writing, Butterss sets out the poet’s emergence as ‘an embodiment of Adelaide’s culture ... generously and urbanely supporting and encouraging students of literature, poets, playwrights, novelists, and artists.’

Anna Dimitriou’s essay ‘Reading Helen Koukoutsis’s *Cicada Chimes*’ is a close and sensitive reading of this recent collection from Koukoutsis, one of the most important voices in contemporary Australian poetry. Dimitriou reads *Cicada Chimes* as an elegy for Koukoutsis’s father and explores the poet’s

ambivalent relationship to Greek Orthodoxy. For the poem's speaker, Greek Orthodoxy is an object of secular feminist critique. However it is also intimately linked to the located traditions of her family and a space of consolation in a time of grief. By tracing the way that Koukoutsis gives poetic shape to fraught local traditions and ambivalent personal attachments, Dimitriou's essay also opens up larger questions about what place ritual mourning might have for the modern secular feminist. Ultimately, she argues that 'Koukoutsis asserts an anti-traditional spirituality that merges ritual expressions with modern sensibilities.'

Finally, Xu Daozhi's essay, "'That Old Man Making Fun of Me?": Humour in the Writings of Aboriginal and Asian Relationships' takes up two topics that have been neglected in Australian literary scholarship: humour in Indigenous writing and Aboriginal–Asian relationships and intimacies. In Xu's readings of Alexis Wright, Anita Heiss and Tex and Nelly Camfoo, humour emerges as a local and everyday practice that negotiates and speaks back to colonial regimes of power and articulates the intersecting histories of Aboriginal and Asian people in Australia. Humour, Xu argues, functions as a 'textual device that transmits subversive ideas contesting stigma and stereotypes of Aboriginal and Asian peoples regarding their identities, bodies, and inter-racial intimacies.'

The issue also includes a number of important critical assessments of scholarly work published in the last couple of years. We hope you will enjoy *JASAL* 19.2.