

Editor's Note

AJE, the Australasian Journal of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology, is the peer-reviewed journal of the Association for the Study of Literature, Environment and Culture – Australia and New Zealand (ASLEC – ANZ). It is an affiliate of ASLE (USA) and its global partners ASLE-UKI (UK and Ireland); ALECC (Canada); EASLCE (Europe); OSLE–India; ASLE–India; ASLE–Japan; ASLE–Korea, and ASLE–Taiwan. *AJE* therefore extends beyond its geographical boundaries in being part of an extensive network of journals that are of interest to ecocritics. ASLEC–ANZ members are scholars, teachers, writers, and practitioners who seek to increase their knowledge of literature, culture and the environment; who seek to promote the creation, appreciation, understanding, and teaching of the human sciences from ecological perspectives; and who seek to share their knowledge for the benefit of all interested in research, reading, writing, media, teaching, and so on, in its engagement with place, ecology and the environment. *AJE* affiliate journals include the open publish *Journal of Ecocriticism* (JoE in Canada ojs.unbc.ca/index.php/joe); the subscription journal, *Green Letters*, in the UK and Ireland; and the print journal *ISLE*, of the USA. The community of interest for the Australasian ecocritic (scholar, writer, artist) is trans-national in its outreach.

This first volume of *AJE* comes out of the ‘Sounding the Earth: Music, Language and Acoustic Ecology’ conference held in Launceston, Tasmania, in 2010. While the essays in this volume all touch, in some way, the ideas of music, language, and acoustic ecology, the ‘place’ of human-made music occupies the work of Bruce Watson, and John Parham. Language, specifically the language of Nature Writing, is historicised in Noelene Kelly’s work; the non-human music and language of trees (Barbara Holloway) and birds (Hollis Taylor) shift the focus to acts of listening, seeing, and representation. Isabelle Delmotte explores the sounds of silence in filmic media, and provides examples and an overview of what is meant by ‘acoustic ecology’.

The image that greets the reader on the *AJE* home page is that of Tasmanian indigene, Fanny Cochrane Smith, singing Tasmanian songs onto the wax cylinder of an Edison phonograph. It is an image both powerful and poignant, one that articulates the nuances of ‘Sounding the Earth’ with its complexities of race, sex, colonisation, land rights, tradition, and technology, framed in sepia against the leafy background of Man Ferns (*Dicksonia Antarctica*). The dapper gentleman in the photo is Horace Watson. His descendent, Bruce Watson, writes the story behind the image in his nonfiction article ‘The Man and the Woman and the Edison Phonograph’. Bruce, together with one of Fanny’s descendents, songman Ronnie Summers, opened the ASLEC-ANZ conference. For delegates to witness these descendents of a ragged and wretched history sing together beneath the image of Fanny’s and Horace’s cordial exchange was to experience nothing less than *hope* — described by Emily Dickinson as that ‘thing with feathers / that perches in the soul, / and sings the tune without the words, / and never stops at all’. In line with ASLEC-ANZ’s mandate ‘to promote the creation, appreciation, understanding, and teaching of the human sciences from ecological perspectives’; and ‘to share their knowledge for the benefit of all interested in research, reading, writing, media, teaching, and so on’, *AJE* contains a Niche section for empirical narratives from cultural creators whose work gives rise to scholarly investigation. In this first volume on ‘Sound’ the Niche contains an audio file of the 1903 Cochrane and Watson recording.

The first essay in the Scholarly Articles section is John Parham's 'Stranded out of Place: Alienation in Australian Punk'. Parham continues the theme of music and takes up the issue of technology, authenticity, and alienation—a century after Fanny's recording—and theorises about the 'different urban places often articulated in popular music'. While acknowledging the validity of David Abram's comment that 'ecological sensibility can only be located within indigenous, pre-modern cultures' Parham examines the ruptural quality of Brisbane's 'first wave' punk group, The Saints, in which sonic amplification, technology, and oral/aural indecipherability project a 'modern toxic feeling of placelessness'. His argument is, then, 'that The Saints' music constitutes an "ecological thought" albeit one related, in [Timothy] Morton's sense, to a now pervasive, darkened "environmental aesthetic"'. Parham's paper is a call for inclusiveness; it acknowledges the importance of attachment to the land but urges the need 'to reach out also to those contemporary citizens, who, for whatever reason feel homeless, "stranded", and caught in a cultural crisis reflective, indeed symptomatic of the probable ecological one'.

Standing in contrast to Parham's essay in her pronounced affirmation of Abram's ideas is Noelene Kelly's "'Singing Up" the Silences: Australian nature writing as Disruption and Invocation'. Where Parham's concern is with contemporary urban dislocation Kelly reflects on current settler dislocation in Australia as a result of 19th century '[t]ropes of age, of barrenness and foreboding, of timelessness and aridity'. She suggests that '[b]y writing Aboriginal place-making into the text, and by acknowledging the agential and psychic dimensions of matter itself, nature writing has the potential to [...] reposition the human within a network of interdependent relationships'. Parham's work and Kelly's work are situated on either side of a discourse distinguishable by the absence or presence of reference to the 'spiritual'. Kelly's understanding of 'nature writing' privileges it with nuances and possibilities beyond the purview of 'environmental' and 'ecological' literature. For her, nature writing has the capacity to disrupt discourses that 'subtly perpetuate the concept of *terra nullius*'. Its politicism is made possible through phenomenological engagement with land, as urged by the theoretical underpinnings of writers such as Abram, Val Plumwood, Kate Rigby, and Freya Mathews. Nicolas Rothwell and Mark Tredinnick are the exemplars of the type of invocative nature writing that 'serves the land' and seeks to engage settlers in the 'communicativeness of world'.

The following two essays investigate human representations of non-human sounds along with the process of listening, and observing. 'Communicativeness of world' through sensuous experience is what Barbara Holloway explores in 'The Tree and Its Voices: What the Casuarina Says'. Holloway moves on from her earlier research into European responses to the unscripted Australian space to cite Mandy Thomas's interviews with recent Vietnam refugees. Thomas's research 'showed they had a similar perception' of the natural world where '[a]ll they heard was uncanny silence or harsh, disturbing noises'. She examines the art of 'listening to listening', through the work of Henry Kendall and David Unaipon, and their responses to the sounds of casuarinas. Kendall, a second-generation immigrant, proclaimed himself a N.A.P. (Native Australian Poet) thus signalling 'his first priority – to inscribe the natural world specific to Australia, with its society and culture, using classical European poetic forms and technique'. His use of sounds made by the casuarina is placed in the

context of the making of those sounds, the many ways they have been singled out to identify place, and particularly their role in Indigenous culture across the continent. (An Audio File of Anthony Magan's recording, 'Wind in Desert Oaks', is available for this essay, on this site).

From listening to wind in the trees to listening and observing their occupants: scholar and music practitioner, Hollis Taylor, presents 'Anecdote and Anthropomorphism: Writing the Australian Pied Butcherbird'. Taylor sets about foregrounding the musical range of this negatively marked carnivorous avian which 'is assumed to considerably pre-date the human species in Australia'. While Marcus Clarke's comment concerning Australia's supposed lack of birdsong was taken to task in two of the preceding essays, Taylor's zoomusicological approach signals the final *morendo* for Marcus on the topic. Citing 23 composers 'who credit the phrases of the pied butcherbird as the source of inspiration'; notating the birds' 'choice of notes, rhythms, and phrasing' their 'syncopated chimes, hip riffs, and blue notes' Taylor dubs them 'Jazz birds'. And in noting the mimicry brilliance of the bird singing up 'human 'readymades' such as a siren, a car burglar alarm, and a mobile phone ring' she raises the question of who is listening to whom. Taylor's essay foregrounds musical aesthetics over hunting prowess; she investigates butcherbird representations as her line of cultural narrativity in work by indigenous Australians, lay people, periodicals, Australian children's literature, Australian poetry and prose, and composers' texts.

In 'Environmental Silence and its Renditions in a Movie Soundtrack', Isabelle Delmotte explores sonic *space* within film, and its *place* within the cinema experience. In the hands of a sound designer, the (perception of) expressions of silence and the use of asynchronicity between sounds and images, can convey 'pathos and intimacy in audio-visual narratives'. With reference to research on the effect of high and low frequencies, Delmotte demonstrates that we not only lend an ear to sound, but also a body – one that is aquiver with sonic resonances: where the 'sensorial qualities of sound reach all parts of our vibrating envelope to indiscriminately infiltrate our consciousness and influence our perception of the world'. With this paper, we witness the astounding advancement in technology since Fanny Cochrane Smith bent over the Edison; we witness the leap into hyper-realities crafted by sound engineers and filmographers who mediate the phenomenological world, and who create sound and landscapes independent of origin or reference to the sensorial organic world.

We hope Readers enjoy the work presented here and we invite submissions on a continuing basis.

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