

**International Regionalism as American – Australian Dialogue: the
literary and psychological terrains of William James and Henry David
Thoreau in John Kinsella’s *Jam Tree Gully: Poems***

TOM BRISTOW
University of New England

We wade through senses

*we can't name but know are there,
bothering blood.*

John Kinsella, 'Spring Pollen'

Ecocriticism is engaged with the ideas of bioregional literature, an international response to common concerns of depleted biodiversity, the rate of species loss and anthropogenic climate change. Issues with respect to viewing the environment from multiple vantage points, with discrete emphases on values located within each perspective, are amplified when text and world are framed in terms of scale. The paradigm of the ecosystem and the emphasis this places on interconnection and interdependency can be neither conceptually fixed nor reduced to one vantage point that runs across all these acute architectonics of understanding and representation of human to non-human relations; these 'situated microknowledges'—or locally anchored events in specific spaces and times—give rise to discrete ethical orientations, and rhetorical and poetic formulations in each instance.

In this light, the European pastoral of the idealised life of the shepherd appears antiquated if it were to be employed to fit the human expression of the rural environment to local-global issues beyond the vantage point of the human scale, as identified above. Practical aspects of agriculture within the georgic tradition exhibit expressions of human labour in the world that are not reduced to viewing nature as simply enriching; modes can be read as shifting from peaceful repose to the depiction of the opposition of violence and care, and pleasure and pain. Writers responding to advances in literary criticism wherein a 'newer historicism' has broken through the barriers of a romantic ideology to secure a view on 'the anthropocentric bias of a certain distinctive construction of history' assist an academic reclaiming of literary genres'. This 'new' interest in non-human nature is not 'an evasion of any kind' but a 'sincere interest in the economy of nature' (Garrard 183).¹ John Kinsella might not wish to be aligned with this recuperative project as his pastoral is activism, a performative poetics of a custodian of the land; and yet this makes it radical: going back to roots.

Kinsella attempts to move beyond the pastoral and the georgic in his activist lyricism. In *Jam Tree Gully: Poems* (2011; hereafter *JTG*) lyricism combines the microcosmic world of his settlement in the land of the Bullardong Nyungar people in western Australia to an American line of thought. What Kinsella has elsewhere termed 'intensivism', micro scale poetics indicates how a small place can act as an 'anchor point' in international communications (*Disclosed Poetics* 2007: 137-8). For Kinsella the WA site is representative both of the realism of the post-colonial labourer surveying the block, and of the post-Emersonian American line of literature that established a syncretic and embodied sensuality (Ryan 44-45) at the heart of environmentalist ways of knowing

one's dwelling place. Here, intellectual traditions and scientific knowledge are combined with the sensuous experience of the environment; in this model—as with the example of William Wordsworth and Henry David Thoreau—attention is stitched into the fabric of the localised physical geography where the history, politics and responsibilities that underpin subject / object relations are amplified so that the relations are diluted if not collapsed. By drawing from American models of literature and psychology, specifically Thoreau and Wordsworth, Kinsella extends his focused articulation of small events in 'Jam Tree Gully' into an example of the commonality of literatures that are connected to an ecological account of nature where mind does not dominate the world through epistemological grids but instead endeavours to translate human experience into one of many interconnected nodes of experience in a shared space. This, at once an intertextual 'transhemispherical' move and 'communication between regions through international dialogue' (*Disclosed Poetics* 119), is specifically connected to Thoreau's ideas that have impacted on the anarchist movement while also instancing what Kinsella has called 'international regionalism': the opportunity to see literary connections across separate and unique physical geographies as a dialogue, 'an anchor point for a continuously expanding argument' (*Contrary Rhetoric* 2008: 137). This paper examines this very dialogue within a collection of poems that revisits and upgrades an American classic.

1. Lines of Literature: Deliberate Living and then Radical Pastoral Poetics

The Thoreauvian Experiment:

Henry David Thoreau's *Walden; or Life in the Woods* (1854) is America's nineteenth century scriptural call to establish the foundations of nationhood. The epic world event of America, and the establishment of American literature, underwritten by English literature, politics and economics, alongside the idea to self-realise anew and afresh, is pregnant with Transcendentalist notions of self-reliance: the triumph of principles and implicit (latent) convictions that constitute enlightenment within the self. For Emerson this particular mode of self-assurance is at one a rejection of 'names and customs', and an endorsement of 'realities and creators' ('Self-Reliance' 261). While his predecessor envisioned this project as the clarification of the ways in which the soul is linked to the divine spirit, Thoreau applies a principled and more practical sense of selfhood to his reading of the environment. His dwelling project, to leave society and experiment with living in the woods near Walden Pond in the temperate region of Concord, Massachusetts, commenced on the fourth of July, 1845. It was and is a defiant act in response to contemporary culture (and the ensuing identity politics of American modernism) that is inseparable from his prose project dedicated to the principles of the operations of nature. Thus it was an idealised position, lived out through practical engagement with the world that is animated by radical sensuality, stands as the founding formulation for American wilderness writing. Walden, therefore, lives somewhat 'pressed between history and heaven' (Cavell 9) between the ideal and the real, between the transcendent and the imminent, the ethical and the environmental.

Thoreau's text is significantly attuned to winter and spring. Subjective, localised responses to seasonal markers act as intellectual counters by which Thoreau measures the material world before his eyes; for example, labouring in the garden, counting his vegetables, noting the depth of ice on nearby ponds, watching the passing birdlife and noticing fluctuations in birdsong while remaining attuned to broad divisions of the year that register climate. For the Transcendentalists, humans live in two worlds: one that

determines human subjectivity, and the other in which humans are transcendently free. References to seasons and change within seasons, therefore, underline the examination of self-reliance within a context of clear patterns of repetition, and remarkable moments of difference or innovation within the parameters of repetition. The text thus inscribes sites of action both within and beyond the human scale. For Thoreau, this spatialised dynamic offers the potential for Walden Pond to symbolise the idea of Reason in relation to Materialism founded on lived experience and the representation of the world through multiple senses. In his innovative text, experience anchored by labour—or home making—ignites the potential within the sense faculty to acknowledge the creative initiation of an embryonic identity: a fledgling higher self that surpasses others in that it exists with other things beyond the ordinary range of perception to be discovered in nature and in humans, or throughout the world.²

Thoreau has read Emerson's sense of understanding and the soul, viz. discerning the limits to human comprehension by partly glimpsing and imagining the circumambient world or the equilibrium of nature. Following a Kantian line of thought where things are as the senses represent them, Thoreau embodies a mind—or intellectual and political stance—in which the world is open to sense. This objective position on sense experience, however, depends upon the phenomenological preparation of the senses, viz. the senses being prepared in an interactive way. Thus, physical disposition to nature in Walden is key; the marriage between external season and internal mood is of great importance, too. As a response to skepticism, the shifting seasons, distinct birdcalls, and the growing of vegetables, are considered as complete and discrete things in themselves that indicate movements in time that can be written down in concordance with the sensitive subject who labours amidst nature. These 'things' operate to elevate consciousness within a prose style that distils the relation between the subject of knowledge (the human being 'living deliberately') and its object (the operations, provisions and difficulties of nature). In Thoreau's hands this concrete metaphysics suggest the Transcendentalist a priori condition of knowing the world as a site of things that can be discovered experimentally.

In *Jam Tree Gully Poems*³ Kinsella mimics this experimental consciousness to outline degrees of freedom that are yoked to a satirical position on the extent that nature (or humans for that matter) can be autonomous. In Thoreau, free will is answered in terms of improvement—to environment and to the spirit. Improvements are accounted for by philosophically framing action and events over time. There is an issue at stake here: to what extent does Thoreau's desire to project a Protestant sense of improvement rely upon an externality operating on micro and macro scales that is subservient to human experience? In Walden, seasons do not come first; human emotion and intellect precede chronotopic and atmospheric abstractions. Human autonomy achieved, experienced and conceived within the midst of nature—the central focus of Kinsella's and Thoreau's experiment—offers a form of Romanticism, a mode of feeling rather than a choice of subject.

In any weather, at any hour of the day or night, I have been anxious to improve the nick of time, and notch it on my stick too; to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and the future, which is precisely the present moment; to toe that line. (*Walden* 1:23)

At a glance one might be mistaken for reading an eastern mystical version of Robinson Crusoe. To write down the passing of time and to mark its improvements in 'any weather' is to extend consciousness to all seasons regardless of any particular opportunities or difficulties they might present to the human and the environment. This is interestingly ambiguous for it is a playful ritual and it is an instance of seeking control. Placed together these intentions with marked degrees of human centeredness effect a re-centering of cosmic and natural reality at least in this moment in the text, if not in the world. This Emersonian compression belies a moral, attentive 'line' that admits eternity within a presentness. Crudely put this can be described as a paradoxically eternal now. The literal alignment between the history of events in Concord, Massachusetts and their relation to the construction of—or claim to an— American national identity, reaches beyond a claim for a new literature; it offers the grist of dialectic, self-placement and identification. To an ecocritic, this is bioregional in inference; it is a cultural mode that extends to the furthest meaning of climate and season. 'In any weather' is a subjective interpretation that is a novel perception; it appears to be universal, too, or part of an original intelligence that lies beyond the subject and yet within the subject's grasp once attuned to circumstance without obeying all its laws.

This is replayed in Thoreau's understanding of Emerson's project to redeem the human voice; for the wood dweller this idea marks an end-point in American cultural history, and thus a departure point for a new beginning. Kinsella extends this beyond the pastoral frame. In the twenty-first century, in Australia, circumstances are quite different as, for example: ownership of land, with respect to mining and indigenous cultures; environmental impacts of humans in ecological hotspots; climate change, species extinction rates and so on. Historically and geo-culturally Kinsella is in another world, and yet the American legacy is useful context for an ecocritical examination of his work.

Labour and Geodyplasia

JTG is the latest installment of activist poetry from the pre-eminent Australian environmental poet. It instances what John Kinsella views as poetry's contribution to the process of direct political action, 'being part of a mantra of witness and empowerment' that motivates inquiry and investigation in the reader ('Geodyplasia: Geographical Abnormalities and Anomalies of an Activist Poetics' *Activist Poetics* 2010: 3). To live in and by the land; to write from within a place; these actions] arise simultaneously, and thus present a uniform project for Kinsella. I cite an anarchist alignment between *Walden* and *JTG*, wherein the location for each serves as a means to think through the question of property and ownership that can only arise after conjoining word and world. I wish to emphasise that *Walden* and *JTG* are rendered simultaneous because of congruity of theme. On the American text, Cavell argues that it is not possible, nor is it valuable to discriminate between the experiment in dwelling and the innovation in language, for the building of habitation equates to the writing of the book (Cavell 13; 17; 99). The parallel is clear, and yet Kinsella is clearer 'environmentalism ... is what I do in my life and in my writing' (*Activist Poetics* 1). Linked at such a deep level, the bond between texts illustrates what Kinsella means by 'international regionalism': to open the bond between different geographies and cultures, while, to my mind, retaining a respect for the cultural and regional integrity of those points of participation (*Regional* 7).⁴

The Australian critic Bruce Bennett endorsed an academic project to study 'the biographical connections of writers with ... places and their literary references to, or

recreations of these places, together with a study of their intellectual and cultural milieux' (qtd. in Henningsgard 2007: 13). For Kinsella, an acute emphasis on the exceptionalism of a region, in the political and cultural sense, can be negated by a democratic expansiveness—or internationalist parallel—within a voice generated by geographical specificity that refuses to voice a riposte to the identity politics of late Capitalism: 'Our nation is just a personification of the Australian bureaucracy and its inextricable drive towards a universal cliché of exclusiveness' (*Disclosed Poetics* 114-5). Resistance is one thing, expression another. It appears unclear where a literary international regionalism might turn next.

Over the past two centuries, however, literary studies has pioneered a cultural history of, and developed a theoretical toolkit for, awareness of ways of life and landscapes. The last two decades of social science research—particularly in Marxist geography—has clarified power geometries of globalisation that underline an urgent understanding of 'difference' as disclosed by European continental philosophy: despite the consolidation of hegemonic power, the resultant drive towards homogenisation has given rise to an increased consciousness that identities are inevitably unfixed.⁵ In place of regionalism, loose connections to earth with intellectual bonds of similar human experiences of bioregions might suggest an interactive space that would challenge both blood and soil politics or the clichés of regionalist rhetoric; however, this partly imagined, partly virtual and partly transcendental perspective could give rise to schizophrenia or politically juvenile cultural assimilation.

Conversely, the 'transhemispherical dialogue' between Thoreau and Australia, which can be traced back to the early twentieth century (Ryan 43), assesses the cultural value and focal points of literary inquiries into physical and human geography. The inheritance from America informs a non-national sense of place as 'the intricate amalgamation of its natural history, human cultural significance, and philological resonance' (Ryan 54). In this particular intertextual 'tradition' Kinsella's *JTG* is unique in its anti-ecopoetic sense of struggle, dispossession and disequilibrium. Polemic, rhetoric and lyric are three impulses that Kinsella attends to while offering a deep response to Thoreau's regional project, albeit (to some minds) on a different political scale. *JTG* spells out this plenum in each stanza and chamber of verse that constitute a radical ecopoetic trinity: body, nature, history.

Kinsella's settlement at 'Jam Tree Gully' in the western Australian wheatbelt is born from labour. It is the craftwork of both physical labour from the situated knowledge of a late pastoral surveyor attending to indigenous plants, de-fencing the block to allow kangaroos to roam free, and the lyrical labour of a partial perspective on the individual that rejects pastoral and yearns for political attunement to the seasons.⁶ These impulses assist the poet to imagine the self in relational terms, not autonomous. They constitute a mode of human relinquishment of power and centrality but not appeasement of subjectivity that is an ecopoetic allegory for consciously stepping back from the world and form the self as a means to resist reading the earth's attributes as resources for our instrumental gain.⁷ This is a discrete sense of world events: 'We locate history in the realm of happening, instead of thinking history in accordance with its essential origin from out of destining [sic]' (Heidegger 38).

In other words, there is an increased emphasis on humans acting within nature. The realm of occurrence in location—or 'happening'—for Kinsella relates to his anti-ecopoetic

understanding of Australian pastoral, which 'is not pastoral in aesthetic terms' i.e., an art form confident in its relation to European models, but a mode of writing 'that offers consciousness, even paranoia, that such a pastoral should exist' (*Disclosed Poetics* 135):

The prime reason for a sub-pastoral or displaced pastoral relates to the presence of indigenous peoples in the place of occupation / settlement. The desire to correlate people with flora is the subtext—the strangeness of the landscape and the strangeness of its inhabitants. (136)

Pastoral as a problem of style leads Kinsella to consider the 'mediation of nature through interference and control' (*Contrary Rhetoric* 132). The binary of European literary models and the alien 'other' is collapsed in *JTG's* transference of Thoreau's anarchism from the domain of liberty to the discourse of environmental consciousness. This transference enacts pastoral (or anti-pastoral) as a movement away from concepts of freedom and autonomy to activist thinking about being and being in ecology. Here, 'radical pastoral' translates idyll from idealised rusticity to a mode 'reflective of a corruption of nature' (*Disclosed Poetics* 6).

This is traceable through the spatial arrangement of objects in the location, Jam Tree, as an 'affordance' for life, viz.: 'the 'complementarity of the animal and the environment' (Gibson 127). Here the world is perceived in terms of the shapes and spatial relationships between objects but also in terms of object possibilities: eucalypt as temporary home for the hawk, sapling as a host for fungal parasites and phytophagous insects. These are most legible during the collections' acute depiction of heat.

In this mode, as Kinsella has written, nature works like group membership: the events and things that indicate nature's operations do not take the same form of contemplation or representation as when you are 'inside' it. Seasons and climate are accessible envelopes for subjectivity inside destabilised nature that is not yoked to a human concern for authenticity or the postponement of meaning. Once inside, things open up (or disclose themselves to others) in the simplest terms: 'referents are realities and have real implications in terms of survival' (*Disclosed Poetics* 147). It portends a space where the mediating role of language is dissolved.

Kinsella, however, is particularly keen to underline the impossibility of this, as we will see later. The emphasis on real implications of referents within a lyrical space can be clearly seen in the slice of the dwelling place's ecosystem or contingent 'arrangement' that speaks to the constructed realm and to the affordance for life within nature's operations, which attends to a cultural ecological insight as it includes human's impact on the land:



The crack in the curve
of the great rainwater tank
brews algae and crusts
of calcium that foothold
brown-headed honeyeaters

tonguing cool water
up where water shouldn't be;
not taxidermy,
nor the dry arrangement
they're set against: branch, leaves,

an entire stunted tree under a dusty glass
dome: an arrangement
for future generations
to wonder at.

(‘Arrangement’ from sequence
‘A Jam Tree Gully Sheaf’).

Fig. 1 Rainwater Tank. ‘White-chinned [sic.] honey eaters gathered around a hairline fracture on the twenty-thousand gallon rainwater tank, gripping the oxidation and lime extrusion to drink, in the hot, dry atmosphere of the place.’ (Source: ‘Mutually Said: Poets Vegan Anarchist Pacifist’ blog, 18 April 2009)

A problem for one species enables a ‘foothold’ for another. This brief moment in *JTG* instances what Kinsella names anti-pastoral, a genre ‘situated in the inability to celebrate without negativity’ (*Contrary Rhetoric* 153). Contrast this to pastoral as the control or denial of nature we make for ourselves wherein the nature of good husbandry is defined by preserving things, keeping land intact. This little poem is at the heart of Kinsella’s exploration of the troubled connections between human impact, human craft and the natural world that generates a microclimate that is expressive of location. Rather than ‘world-making’ the poet has added emphasis on ‘implications’ that come into light from background ‘arrangements’. Here, the technique to isolate the subject—what the honeyeaters are not—comes from a very small lyrical aperture, a maximum depth of field that extends beyond the environment to our historical imagination. It ends with an idea of the world of the poem as a cultural artefact or museological arrangement.⁸

‘Dry’ and ‘dusty’ are set against the brewing algae; process and adaptation are notable as animating devices—attention is drawn to the verbs that blur strict divisions between language animals while indicating response to climate (the birds are seen ‘tonguing’). In *JTG* Kinsella scrutinises landscape with a painterly keenness that imbues each stanza with pictorial clarity that resists sentimentalised or stale images. Here the referent—the water tank—affords life for the honeyeaters. The summer climate is a subtle thread that performs the temporal and spatial dispersion of elements in the poem. The birds in the foreground on the tank in the present moment are set against both the dry landscape and the equally arid historiography of the future; heat conditions the poem to prevent any simple unification of diverse and disparate things. Season, thus, is a deconstructive texture in that it demonstrates the poem’s hidden dependence on the terms (water, refreshment, sustenance) it purports to exclude. The lineation and generative lines react to

a sense of tidiness and order that results in a sense of 'arrangement' as a highly contingent meeting or contract. Rather than a two-dimensional landscape, 'Arrangement' suggests a theatre of images not unlike a nineteenth century diorama. This is an example from a series of place-based poems of experimental dwelling; *JTG* embodies a regionalism that is not an imagined community of poet, birds, and kangaroo cradled within a poetico-philosophical landscape of representation and reflection, but as instanced here, the lyrical lens shoots a material existence that is independent of our thoughts about it. I anticipate that some readers will be conflicted as to whether this exemplifies clear objectivity that can be distinguished from 'perceptual subjectivity' wherein the world is open to particular models of sense.

2. Australian Topos and American Intellect

Self-reliance is partly self-discovery. To experiment is to place oneself and one's knowledge under new conditions. This has been realised by seizing nature as open to our (prepared and intuitive) encounters with it, as indicated by the poetic temperament outlined above. It is where one realises the environment as home, as *oikos*. Thoreau writes 'At a certain season of our life we are accustomed to consider every spot as the possible site of a house' (*Walden* 125). This version of anthropocentric intentionality that ironically foregrounds a diluted (relinquished) ego depends upon the enduring mood, or season of the mind.

Conversely, Cavell has argued that *Walden* depends on the tradition of topographical poetry; 'nothing can outdo its obsession with the seasons of a real place' (21). Seasons dictate the dweller's attitude to planting, growing, and harvesting. Thoreau, however, reads them as acts of nature—nature confiding in us, in its largest moments, and most significant arrangements. However, while clarifying seasonal and resource-based challenges to his home economics, Thoreau writes 'Man is an animal who more than any other can adapt himself to all climates and circumstances' (*Walden* 106). While the inclination to attempt unorthodox bread making without yeast might indicate his forgetfulness of rules, Thoreau's argument is not one of individualised, liberated self-reliance but of adaptability to the environment that operates beyond the locus of his consciousness. Rain might prevent him from hoeing in the lowlands yet it would be valuable for the uplands. A lack of ingredients or a memory failure might afford new culinary practices that are no less valuable than earlier practices. All events offer surety rather than discord. In 'Solitude' this is understood as a bond: 'While I enjoy the friendship of the seasons I trust that nothing can make life a burden to me' (176). Self-assurance here is scaffolded by a world operating beyond doubt, a world underwritten by changes in weather, ecology and daylight hours. In this sense the self is seasonal. Fluctuating, responsive to dry and wet seasons—rather than named periods—the embodied subject is befriended by nature'.

JTG is indebted to Thoreau's *Walden*. Twenty of one hundred poems use the North American text for an epigraph with another twenty either taking a quotation for a title or paraphrasing Thoreau. Several others demonstrate deep learning from the text and / or mimicry of Thoreau's Emersonian compression of ideas. Not only does *JTG* take note of the anarchist inflections of place (with respect to ownership, institutionalised relationships and husbandry practices) but also it promotes solitude and disconnection from society. For Kinsella this is a direct dialogue with Thoreau:

I have chose *Walden* for a lot of reasons, not least because despite his limitations in appreciating the impacts of theft of land that belonged to others, and the implications of the rhizomes of an earlier (and ongoing, of course) relationship to the land by indigenous peoples, Thoreau knew what it was to step consciously outside society. ('Visitors' 2009)

The solitary figure in the landscape places an emphasises the processing of sense experience and the lyrical measurement of location via walking and cognition of the environment on the human scale. The remove from society and its distractions is a genuine attempt to retune the senses to things in the world. The politics of 'Survey' is at once a fusion of philosophical internalism (where the justification of knowledge is solely based upon factors internal to a person) and Romantic solipsism, and it engenders a riposte to late Capitalist identity formation, as indicated above. This combination foregrounds an internationalist flavour to the poem, which I will come to shortly (and it relates to Kinsella's use of the word 'rhizome' here). First the American dialogue must be clarified.

It's been too hot during the day to survey
the block – ornate language doesn't do the trick,
it's a physical, material and pragmatic performance...
not 'radical empiricism', but an act of preservation.

The difference here; the difference elsewhere. ('Survey' 1-5)

This is a poem that maps a figure in a landscape, tending his block, providing water for animal sustenance and measuring its illusion or delusion of interactivity between human and non-human worlds. It ends with the poem's voice dissipating into an indirect apostrophe to relinquish the lyrical 'I's approximate anthropocentrism, stepping back from any further acts of 'preservation' and leaving the scene to itself and the climate to its own calculation. Here, the opening quatrain is playful and difficult. It begins with a prosaic line that breaks to crude simplicity and self-reflection in line 2, which moves the stanza towards philosophical discourse, particularly the psychological theories of the east coast North American, William James. This indication that a precision with language betokens a thickness and concreteness to the individuality of experience is ironically withdrawn from the moment of surveying. Despite the 'physical, material and pragmatic' action suggesting an array of plural facts that emphasise particular experience of the moment, the line is not at all Jamesian in that it is far from the immediate and relatively unnamed stages of experience (see James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909)) I find this moment quite telling; the poem has become the performance of the settling of 'Jam Tree'.

I work this over as I note the fast, hot winds
have brought down two great limbs from the eucalypt
by the tank, the green leaves already seared[.] (6-8)

From its opening declaration the poem is always already reflective, intellectual and abstracted, and yet it is also tactile in the way it conveys impressions through labour: 'I work this over' is an abstraction that is pinned down by the environmental physical facts impressing themselves with immediacy, 'as I note the fast, not winds'. The tactile impression caught by the phenomenological impulse in *JTG* often withholds its reflective counterpoint; that is to say the use of philosophical reflection and erudite

intertext does not adumbrate subjective experience as a subordinate mode to an energised and elevated rational thought process.

Writing the poem *in situ* provides both the local stimulation of senses and triggers intellectual curiosity with respect to particularity or universality. The emphasis on labour is an emphasis on writing the poem, not walking the block. Radical empiricism—James' shorthand for American Pragmatism—is a philosophy that places explanatory stress upon the part (the individual) while it treats the whole as a collection or a being of the second order, the universal as an abstraction.⁹ Kinsella is locating his world in-between these two paradigms while enfolding Thoreau's version of pastoral to colour his Australian wheatbelt poem.

The leaves are 'already seared' and the dead limbs are envisioned as 'probably dead before they hit the ground'; the temporal witness is conflicted in (his?) imagining a future on one hand, and inheriting a past on the other. Numerous abstractions are possible in this compression of ethics, concepts, and places, which 'rhizomically connect' (*Disclosed Poetics* 134)—a form of 'international regionalism' (above). For now, the poem's speaker is seen working through the impact of his actions and the subsequent relations that develop from within his survey of the site i.e. making a human space that respects indigenous culture and non-human worlds undeniably alters that which he is 'preserving'. With exception of the first quatrain that is the sole example of an enclosed sense unit that is syntactically isolated. Discrete units in 'Survey' are modelled in stanzas that are meshed through form and interlaced through content.

A quick glance at the poem will reveal connected sense units via lineation and enjambment that portend a sophisticated understanding of the legacy and ecology of human impact within the context of interactions that afford life (see Gibson, above). I claim this as a micro-moment where complementarity between human and non-human worlds can be detected in the poem's foreground. Knowledge that the dead tree limbs cleared by the surveyor will provide an enclave for ground insects, perches for birds supports a mind that connects both to the geographical specificity and the literary heritage.

The water-trough I fill for kangaroos and other
wildlife in this desiccated habitat is almost
dry and what moisture remains informs of bloom

of algae. ('Survey' 13-16)

The climatic pastoral of the vacant block invokes a mental season where temporality is emphasised by the present participle and the recourse to verbs: 'I work'; 'I note'; 'I carefully brush'. These are self-centred moments within the nexus of fragility and endurance registered in the seasonal conditions, wherein enjambment illustrates the kinetic potential of the cusp (running across the third and fourth stanzas at lines 15-16, above), a structure underlined by vocabulary, the 'bloom / of algae'. Abstract seasons in *JTG* are quashed by metonyms for 'the circumvention of quarantine' (*Disclosed Poetics* 135). Heat in 'Survey' is linked to Kinsella's hot summer surveying of the land at Jam Tree, but it also signifies the parasitic and symbiotic poem itself, foregrounding its textures and intellectual contexts as one part of an intertextual soup, in itself it instances the 'rhizomatic' nature of international regionalism.

Red ants bite my feet
and I carefully brush them away. A hawk
looks for a safe perch to settle for the night.
Each substance ‘inheres’, or is it ‘in which

they inhere’? as William James might attribute
to this wood from the fallen tree, questioning its quality
of ‘combustibility and fibrous structure’.
I – we – manage our days because of those

attributes, those qualities of burn. (12-20)

The surveyor brushing off the biting ants from his feet signifies the human response to the environment (in the present tense). This extends to the tentatively anthropomorphic description of the hawk. Both lines gesture to human emotion and mood in its absence, but this is sufficiently quashed by the shift to philosophical intertextuality and a controlling ambiguity that denotes precision, both in the reference to James and the poet’s modification of personal pronoun from singular to plural. The allusion does not detract from the poem’s sense of the heat and the survey site as a home for the kangaroo as an event in the world, but it does underplay the assertion of an event—‘the wording of the world’ (Cavell 43). The quotation the speaker is looking for arrives in the second sense—‘in which they inhere’ is correct James—emphasising participation. It is complex and significant for the Kinsella reader who is keen to measure this against the ideas of impact and protection around which *JTG* orbits.

‘Inhere’ in *JTG* is a literary critical object in itself: it is the present, active infinitive for ‘stick in / stick to’; and is commonly used as a verb to exist permanently (or essentially) in something. It is a predicate that requires a subject and an object. Facts inhere in substances: the attribute ‘a safe home’ inheres in the hawk while the hawk is said to participate in the attribute, ‘a safe home’. Storms inhere in winds that move the branches of trees when caught in leaves; ‘combustibility and fibrous structure’ both inhere in the fallen eucalypt branches in ‘Survey’ denoting form and content, respective metonyms of potential climate futures and historical genetic makeup. Kinsella quotes James’s reading of the qualities of wood from the essay ‘On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings’ (*Talks* 1899), which illustrates substance through particulars, ‘local’ manifestations of something deeper and larger. ‘[C]ombustibility’ and ‘fibrous structure’ are predicates and attributes (or affections or accidents in James’s lexicon). They are related to the subject and substance ‘wood’ in the same manner that ‘whiteness’ and ‘insolubility’ are predicates and attributes of the substance ‘chalk’.

For James, all we can know of things are the groups of attributes by which substance is known.¹⁰ Moreover, we can detect these substances due to the fact that they are changing in different ways—like degrees of heat throughout the seasons; if they did not, we would struggle in detecting them as humans. ‘Survey’ acknowledges these ideas and pushes through to suggest that these unfixed attributes determine how we live (how we ‘manage our days’). For James, life is dynamically hard-wired to qualities of things in the world and not to static situations. Moreover, we make abstractions in language both as entry points to our environment and as non-relations to a richer other-than-human world (e.g. names for flora, fauna and climate. In other words, seasons). Kinsella accepts the second

preposition as an Adamic problem of representation even though he seems dismissive of the first preposition.

The lack of precision with references in 'Survey' suggests disinterest, and yet the particular selections from significant moments in North American culture belie this fact. Additionally, in taking his cue from Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1988), Kinsella is indicating something quite specific with respect to identity.¹¹ The intertextual references in 'Survey' do not suggest lineage, or the anxiety of influence despite the reworking of the pastoral genre, but a move towards the deterritorialization (of the control and order of the literary terrains) of pastoral and philosophy. Here, a number of multiplicities are laid out and are able to connect to each other despite their distinct disciplines, geographies and histories: Kinsella to James; Kinsella to Thoreau; Thoreau to James etc. The non-hierarchical conglomeration without structure—as embodied by Kinsella's acute sense of inherence—is irreducible to a singularity or an array of multiple events. This is a context in which to read the poem's final act of 'overbelief' towards the season alluded to in the final line (below).

I survey
The block in the relative cool of evening
While there's still enough light to make things out:
Shape them individually and as an entirety,

Into a whole that adds up, is as good as might be,
Kept from larger harm, grouped in those days
James lectures us about, phenomena of climate
And gumption to resolve as much as possible.

I entrust to the relative cool of night. (24-32)

Overbelief is to give one's mind or reasoning to uncertainty, or uncertain light; to show that we can have faith in a position that is without knowledge, without evidence, or is to be envisioned in the present, albeit something beyond us in space and / or time. For James' project, it is where knowledge is justified on emotional need or faith rather than evidence.

Lyricism in the closing lines is held at gunpoint and wracked with allusions to William James and to Kinsella's sense of 'anti' or 'poison pastoral', where 'the destruction of environments is recognised, as well as the fact that the hierarchy of land ownership ... has meant that no nostalgia, no return to Eden, is possible' (*Contrary Rhetoric* 132). Kinsella's ironic move here to that enlightened literary craft is transparent in its shaping of things to fit into patterns. Here, a metaphorical allusion to Wordsworth's pastoral inflection of German Idealism in 'Tintern Abbey' helps the Australian move away from James's insistence that unity is of a second order, to challenge the reader to think of the singular fiction of a 'whole that adds up':

With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity

we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world

Of eye, and ear – both what half create,
And what perceive;’ (Wordsworth 59-60; 104-107)

To resolve in Kinsella’s work is to entertain a Thoreauvian seasonal mind (disposition) that entertains openness and change, thus an epistemological blindness or underplayed trust in the validity of one’s abilities to perceive the world. Much earlier in Britain, beyond the instructive measure of things from the perspective of a human in the environment (projecting ideals and categories onto the world), there lies resident in the memory-laden, Romantic mood a version of presuppositions about the world that remains attentive and responsive to nature’s own systems.

Wordsworth’s engagement with the elegy and a lyrical position of loss is instilled in the view on declined human culture (the abbey) from within the shelter of the nearby woods. The counter-lament—the celebration of life with a view on the past and future—is replayed in Kinsella’s negative slant on pastoral as the ‘control or denial of nature we make for ourselves, not nature’. The cultural mode for Kinsella rejects nature as ‘wild nature’ and displays only the nature of good husbandry, ‘the preservation of nature, of intact environments’ (*Contrary Rhetoric* 159). Thoreauvian utility, therefore, is negated in ‘Survey’ as the speaker relinquishes the reparation of land to a neat pastoral zone while he simultaneously rejects any need for confusion to determine his disposition. The figure walks off the page with a single line cushioned by white space. This dramatic close acts as a riposte to forms of preservation and / or conservatism (in a general sense) and to control in a mood that gives over to nature by offering it the final word on a sense of the block being intricate or complicated (perplexity). It is worth a little more thought.

The late walk in ‘the relative cool of evening’ leads the figure to claim that he ‘entrust[s]’ to the forthcoming ‘relative cool of night’ (‘Survey’ 29). This follows a leap of faith in the ‘entirety’ that the poem has constructed, a projection of nothing more than the total sum of experience encountered by the speaker and rendered in structured language. It is interesting to note that this fiction is ‘kept from [larger] harm’. The author is tempted to mention the potential link to climate change and its contemporary anthropogenic formations. At this moment, however, the poem is drawing from James’s Edinburgh lectures ‘Varieties of Religious Experience’ (1902) while the speaker has the blindness essay in mind. James notes that a common human disposition is to speak of climate as the name for a group of days; furthermore, our failure in this abstraction from material events is to treat it as if it lay behind the day (the mosaic glue!)—we place the name as if it were a being: we put it behind the fact it is a name of a season.

As an adjunct statement to this psychological insight into a modern epistemological fallacy, here: the transhemisphere reader cannot but note that the ‘relative cool’ is an inference drawn from Thoreau’s metaphoric sense of a season, as spiritual and ethical comportment, as suggested above. However, this can only be enriched by the sense of trust—or complementarity between worlds—that Thoreau understands in his version of wilderness as ‘the bog in our brain and bowels’. Such a disposition as indicated in a journal entry of 1856 denotes ‘the primitive vigor of Nature in us, that inspires the dream’ (*Journal* Vol. 2: 1063). The dream for Kinsella is scaffolded by Jamesian overbelief; entrusting sense faculties to the night places ‘Survey’ and Thoreau as consanguineous, literary cousins.¹² The father or cultural progenitor, James, has suggested that this type of belief or dream requires more evidence than one has presently. In the final analysis, the close to ‘Survey’ displays a moment of intuition that trumps any ironic attempt to

conclude from either data gathered during the survey of the block, or from abstractions that over-estimate conditions that precede action in location. If this holds throughout the poem, it can be argued that seasons are not logically a priori to our actions.

The playfulness of the twice written 'relative cool' (22, 29)—once for evening, once for night—denies an absolute and secure climate as an emblem of a consistent mind. It is located close to a resistance to a simple unity and an emphasis on human action within changing seasons. More than an image of networked agents within a field of operation that is threaded with images of nature, the poem is always already at a distance from action: it surveys the angle at which we stand to the world. This meta-stance, if you will, discloses that which is unique and that which is shared. For Cavell it promotes 'our outsideness and, hence, the worlds' presence to us' (60).

To emphasise the world and its attributes related to conditions that are realised within a field of action or labour, is nothing short of a vocational calling for the literary cousins. Thoreau's nature-writing ur-text suggests to the critic that each single event of labour (including the writing of the text) is 'isomorphic' with every other. Building a house, hoeing, watering a trough, clearing a fence for Roo—they are allegories and measures of one another. In the final analysis, Kinsella's allusions negate any tendency towards a polemical subtext of occupation and settlement, in turn moving his poetics towards post-pastoral in what he calls 'a term of investigation' (*Contrary Rhetoric* 131). For this, his work is more remarkable for his faithfulness to these conditions as contexts for human and non-human presences.

JTG is a rich and complicated volume that combines high culture with pragmatic husbandry. In itself this move is an honest outline of the faith in and experience of things as humans; the intertextual parameters in which 'Survey' operates suggest that the poem is interested in the interpretation of the realm of common, shared experience and history—a seasonal roaming around an environment, picking out things in the dusk. The impossibility of completing the task in an enlightened state is destroyed by the actual referent, the literal heat of the WA summer. This impasse is driven by the climate of the poem: dryness, death, decay and combustibility that is in concordance with the 'paranoia' of Australian pastoral' and the 'absurdity of idyllicising things' (*Contrary Rhetoric* 131). The heat combines with an intellectualised season, to place 'the qualities of burn' within a metacritical awareness of restlessness, the pressing metaphorical heat of stopping at the physical level of things while finding the appropriate outlook that stabilises content and reference point.

The concern for relations between particulars (James) goes beyond seeing objects in terms of what they mean for us. Climate in this poem, exists essentially or permanently, over and above our relation to things that [inhere] within the poem. Kinsella is working at the primal substance—matter—and appears to accept a moment of withdrawal, or quietude over and above a moment of transcendence in which things inhere in the larger grouping that James' states as a fiction. In these 'days' climate is communal, as indicated by the deeper ecological view where the 'I' slips to 'we' as in the expansive [rhizome like] fifth quatrain.

One final comment. The poem moves from the landscape scale of the block under survey, to the human scale of attending the water-trough. The spatial dimension offers the 'physical world' as a site of a multitude of potential relations and layers of thickness,

while the interiority and act of faith in the final two stanzas comes from an objective panning back of the scene to witness the hawk looking for a safe place to settle.¹³ The line here anticipates the echo of the phrase ‘relative cool’ as it indicates the potential for the poem to shift to pathetic fallacy as performative irony: it instances Kinsella’s own ecocritical fallacy, ‘a self-conscious critique of anthropomorphising of place and nature’ (*Disclosed Poetics* 2). This version of the poem that is equally about the language of presentation as it is about the language of place, was indicated early on with the use of an anatomical trope—eucalypt branches denoted as ‘limbs’ (‘Survey’ 7). ‘Survey’, however, is straddled between noun and verb that exerts self-reflexivity in its transparent intertextuality. The dominant sense to the poem, therefore, promotes the written record itself as a lived perceptual and interpretive framework, operating in relation with changes in weather, ecology and daylight (the definition of a season). These are inherent in the physical geography as surveyed. Climate thus understood appears to commute between a coordinate on the map of the public–private worlds that ironises experience and an aesthetic modality that critiques moralised human-nature interplay.

Conclusions

As one small example of Australian–American literary relations, Kinsella’s philosophical use of Thoreau’s experiment in dwelling exemplifies an internationalism of great import to the ecocritical project. My analysis points to Kinsella’s use of radical pastoral as a means of articulating this internationalism, which appears to offer a qualification to ecocriticism as Kinsella understands it. To move away from cultural codes of husbandry as accountability, and away from models of unity and harmony as iconic signs of interdependency towards a negative poetics of survival, impossibility, reluctance, struggle and relinquishment not only instances an edgy, negative and counter-cultural humanistic geography, but—at least in *JTG*—it offers little or no conciliatory gestures to ecocriticism. I cannot locate any clear placation wherein an ecocritical impulse to clarify the shaping of place in terms of responsibility and care is offered clear critical space; realities of the location simply outweigh the idealism. The impulse to negate such academic preoccupations evades empty gestures to ideas of interconnectedness and holism. By attending to referents, climate and qualities of events within the specific geography, *JTG* situates its reader within a meshed, rhizomatic and animated intellectual context. Such an embodied poetics is pitched for our sensitive readings of the uniqueness of each locale in which we humans and others inhere.

NOTES

This paper is dedicated to Professor Susan Manning (1953-2013).

1. Garrard outlines the disciplinary evolution of ecocriticism in Britain as an extension of Marxist methodology.
2. Buell outlines the various modes of pastoral and its relations to human culture, including the fusion with georgic poetics of labour (144-145).
3. *JTG* was first published in America by W.W. Norton in 2011, with an Australian launch in 2013.
4. See also: *Salt 11* (In the Mix: International Regionalism and Hypermodernism 1) edited by John Kinsella, Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2000.

5. I am thinking of the work of Doreen Massey, David Harvey, Jane M. Jacobs and Elizabeth Grosz.
6. *JTG* Poems is supported by a weblog on Kinsella's projects, including great detail on the settlement in Western Australia. See Kinsella and Ryan.
7. This position is outlined by Martin Heidegger's definition of responsible action. In his late metaphysics, Heidegger understands 'ver-an-gassen' (9) as a subject position that lets loose the world, and its events and attributes; the world that can disclose itself in its own terms informs the measurement of freedom in terms of 'presencing', which unlocks 'resources' from the conceptual, rational, abstract and instrumental model of the world (the 'standing reserve') See Heidegger 9, 2, 37; also Marx 230, 231.
8. See Bate and Marx for contrasting ideas regarding the Pastoral.
9. The epithet 'radical' makes the distinction from the Humean British school of empiricists. See Shouse.
10. James calls this the 'cash-value' of our actual experience.
11. The use of the botanical term, rhizome ('mass of roots' Gk), explicitly refers to sending out roots from nodes, a paradigm that is opposed to an aborescent conception of the root/tree dualism and binary.
12. For a precursor to overbelief, Thoreau's most Emersonian moment in *Walden* suggests an acceptance of darkness: 'The light which puts out our eyes is darkness to us. Only that day dawns to which we are awake' (382).

 WORKS CITED

- Bate, Jonathan. *The Song of the Earth*. London: Picador, 2000. Print.
- Buell, Lawrence. *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 2005. Print.
- Cavell, Stanley. *The Senses of Walden*. New York: Viking, 1972. Print.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: Continuum, 1988. Print.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Essays: First Series* [1841] reprinted in *Selected Essays and Lectures*, Ed. Joel Porte. New York: Viking, 1983. Print.
- Garrard, Greg. 'Radical Pastoral?' *Studies in Romanticism* 35.3 (1996): 449-465.
- Gifford, Terry. *Pastoral*. London: Routledge, 1999. Print.
- Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. Trans. William Lovitt. New York: Harper and Row, 1977. Print.
- Henningsgaard, Per. 'Regional Literature and "The Liminal": Exploring the Spaces In-Between National and International Literatures.' *Limina: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies* 13 (2007): 12-19. Print.
- Kinsella, John. *Activist Poetics: Anarchy in the Avon Valley*. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2010. Print.
- . *Contrary Rhetoric: Lectures on Landscape and Language*. Ed. Glen Phillips and Andrew Taylor. Fremantle: Fremantle Press/Edith Cowan UP, 2008. Print.
- . *Disclosed Poetics: Beyond Landscape and Lyricism*. Manchester: MUP, 2007. Print.
- . 'From Regional to International: The Story of Salt: An International Journal of Poetry and Poetics.' *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 38.2 (2003): 5-18. Print.
- . *Jam Tree Gully: Poems*. New York: Norton, 2011. Print.
- . 'Visitors.' Internet, April 2009. 10 January 2013 http://poemsoutloud.net/columns/archive/visitors_kinsella/.
- . and Tracy Ryan, 'Mutually Said: Poets Vegan Anarchist Pacifist.' Internet, 11 July 2012. 10 January 2013 <http://poetsvegananarchistpacifist.blogspot.com.au/>.
- James, William. *A Pluralistic Universe* [1909]. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1977. Print.
- . 'Pragmatism's Conception of Truth.' Lecture (6) of 'Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking' [1907]. Reprinted in *Essays in Pragmatism*, Ed. Alburey Estell. New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1948. Print.
- . *Principles of Psychology*. London: Dover, 1890. Print.
- . *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals*. New York: Henry Holt, 1899. Print.
- . *Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* [1902]. Oxford: OUP, 2012. Print.
- Marx, Leo. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. Oxford: OUP, 1964. Print.
- Poirier, Richard. *Poetry and Pragmatism*. London: Faber, 1992. Print.
- Ryan, John. 'Recalling Walden: Thoreau's Embodied Aesthetics and Australian Writings on Place.' *Journal of Ecocriticism* 3.2 (2011): 43-57. Print.
- Shouse, J. B. 'David Hume and William James: A Comparison.' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 13.4 (1952): 514-527. Print.

Thoreau, Henry David. *The Journal of Henry David Thoreau*. Vol. 2 (Vols. 8-14, 1855-1861). Edinburgh: Constable and Company; New York: Dover: 1962. Print.

—. *Walden; or Life in the Woods* [1854]. London: Penguin: 1984. Print.

Wordsworth, William. 'Lines. Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13 1798.' *The Poetical Works*, Ed. Ernest de Selincourt. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949. Print.