

Vagabonding Slowly: Ecopedagogy, Metaphors, Figurations, and Nomadic Ethics

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Abstract

Critical environmental education promised a reconstructive critique of any education that reconstituted social and ecological injustices. Post-critical inquiry in environmental education research revitalizes that commitment. The “voices” of the researched and researcher are well represented in this empirical study of a radical curriculum praxis. The dark matter pursued in this study of an environmentally designed vagabonding curriculum and its slow ecopedagogy is the reconciliation of inner-social-outer “natures.” A related methodological challenge is to metaphorically and figuratively represent the ecologies of somaesthetics, ethics, and ecopolitics, as they are lived creatively by the subjects of research, including the researcher. This post-critical case study adds to that literature which reflexively addresses various ontology-epistemology tensions and their methodological implications as they are interpreted from within the ecocentric paradigm.

Résumé

Le discours critique de l'éducation environnementale promettait une reconstruction critique de toute éducation qui reconstituait les injustices sociales et écologiques. Les études post-critiques dans la recherche en éducation à l'environnement revitalisent cet engagement. Les « voix » des participants et des chercheurs sont bien représentées dans cette étude empirique sur la praxis d'une approche curriculaire radicale. La matière noire poursuivie dans cette étude d'un curriculum centré sur l'environnement et une éco-pédagogie ambulatoire et lente, est la réconciliation de nos ‘natures’ intérieures, sociales et extérieures. Le défi méthodologique est de représenter métaphoriquement et figurativement les écologies soma-esthétiques, éthiques et politiques, qui sont vécues par les acteurs de la recherche, incluant le chercheur. Cette étude de cas post-critique s'ajoute à la littérature qui s'intéresse aux diverses tensions ontologiques et épistémologiques ainsi qu'aux implications méthodologiques lorsque pensées à l'intérieur d'un paradigme écocentrique.

Keywords: experiential education, environmental design, body-time-space transpositions, metaphors, figurations

Lyrics

Inspired by his group's musical performance at the "gig at the gulli" held by a gaslight "campfire" on a dark and starry night, James wrote the following lyrics about his "experience" of a *vagabonding curriculum*.

*Step without the shoes, that carry us above,
Walking on my own, I can feel it.
Sleep without the bed, that shuts us up at night,
The cold that keeps me alive, I can feel it.
See without the screen, that keeps me occupied,
Open up my eyes, so I can feel it.
Stand outside the square, that keeps me locked inside,
Rain washes me dry, now I can feel it.*

*In the "gulli," stripped away we can stand "bare,"
On the edge of the world, but the middle of it all.*

*Now I see that I belonged here.
It's taken two years but now I feel it.
Last time that we belong here.
It's taken two years but now I feel it.
And I know the pause before the waves break upon the shore.
And I froze deciding how to move all to move at all.*

James/Jimmy, "Big Blue Waves" (2012)

These lyrics were born of a *slow ecopedagogy*: a highly resourceful, de-technologized, raw and "edgy" minimal (coastal) way of living over three days at the beach at Bear Gully campground in Cape Liptrap in Southeastern Australia, "designed" to unsettle Australian habits of excessive consumption.¹ Two such *experiential learning programs (elp)*, linked by a complementary *academic learning program (alp)*, make up a course offered to undergraduate students in the third year of their studies.² This paper offers an exploration of the "dark ecological thought" (Morton, 2010) such as uncertainty, negativity, irony, despair, longing, and thoughtfulness, evident in Jimmy's revelatory lyrics and in other reflections by participants. The purpose is to shed "ecologically revealing light" on how the practices of *vagabonding slowly* shaped nomadic subjectivities over the time-space of the curriculum intervention and its de-stabilizations of the normally given, or assumed. Theoretical and methodological explanations and asides are incorporated selectively into the text to constitute a parallel "story" about darker research "matters."³

Framings and Positionings

Vagabonding slowly constitutes a major metaphorical shift in the themes and practice of environmental outdoor and experiential education, with the intent of mirroring a “body-time-space” design for, and praxis of, critical curriculum theory (Huebner, 1967/1987). This design aimed ecopedagogically at imaginatively fostering the individual’s material resourcefulness and environmentally sustainable actions of collective *becoming* (Grosz, 1999). Through the “lived experiences” (embodied) of a “base camp” *elp* situation (emplaced), it aimed to “phenomenologically” deconstruct (Payne & Wattchow, 2009), as well as “textually/discursively” destabilize via its complementary *alp*, many of the “given” activities and practices of *being* outdoors and educated in and with it.⁴

This phenomenologically and textually deconstructive effort in experiential education aimed for participants to temporarily become *other* than what they had been positioned as “educationally.” Five years of data collected annually from this semester-long experience suggest that, at its outset, participants are typically “governed” by the vocational imperatives of the undergraduate program in which they are enrolled. Their learning identities have been reconstituted through shadowy power relations of the hidden curriculum operating invisibly in the structures, content, and outcomes/graduate competencies expected of the four-year double degree program. The dominant signs and codes students are schooled in include adventure, risk, challenge, safety, liability, leadership, expeditions, and travel/journeying. These codes unknowingly or unwittingly act as darker forces (or is it duller?) already “disciplining” the subjectivities of the researched about what it is to practically (and, inevitably, professionally) *be* in the outdoors.

The sensuous (inter)acting human body(ies) “moving” *in situ*, or on-site, in the slower times of various “natures”—inner, social and outer, or environmental—was a primary site and locus of this inquiry. For Jimmy (and the vast majority of the researched), the *elp* was a critical curriculum incident, an experience of “stripping bare” (culturally, linguistically-metaphorically, materially, and technologically), aimed at fostering a heightened sense of social and environmental *belonging* and *becoming*.

In what follows, the themes of “teasing,” “transitions,” “transformations,” “trans(pos)itions,” and “reconstitutions” are used to sequence this researcher-written narrative in which participant/researched voices are “re-presented” as a collective “story” about vagabonding slowly in the outdoors.

Teasing/Metaphor

In week 1, Bear Gully (BG) was de/reconstructively named *bare gulli (bg)*. Located on the traditional territory of the Boonwurrung peoples, BG is, on the surface, an urbanized, organized, and managed “state” park designed primarily for those

“escaping” the suburbs of the city and nearby rural towns so as to access the “beach” and “coast” for a few days “off” in “nature.” The renaming as “bare gulli” was one amongst many ecopedagogical “signs” aimed at “stripping off” as much (western/anglo) “culture” as Jimmy, Anne, and their vagabonding peers might (un)comfortably *be* without over those three days of initially “discovering” and, later, three days of “rediscovering” their selves and relations with peers and others, including “nature.” Metaphorically and bodily (re)positioning place in this potentially villainesque (Bauman, 1993, 1995) and nomadic (Braidotti, 2013) manner, we hoped to bring to vital life and light the somewhat elusive notion of *social ecology* often used “theoretically” in the discourse of environmental education.

Gary recorded this dark reaction:

My Bear Gully journey started off with anger. I was angry that respect wasn’t shown to the Boonwurrung people, I felt that this was their place and needed to be recognized by us, and our University. I felt that another Western institution had overlooked its responsibility to demonstrate the importance of belonging to place. At the time of writing my opening statement I felt that place was a shared area that belonged to the traditional owners as they are the custodians of the place. It wasn’t until I realized that there was no significant readings towards the settlement of Bear Gully that I became aware of my own sense of place at bare gulli. I realized that the unit was deliberately forcing me to research my own history of Bear Gully. It is a genius concept that allowed me to explore Bear Gully/bare gulli with no preconceived ideas of its historical context.

Steven recalled, darkly also, but in a different way.

Driving down to Bear Gully on that dreary Saturday morning, what I was craving and hoping for was that this *elp* would provide a place to slow down, stop, think and reflect. An opportunity that would render a much-needed escape from my modern world that spins at an ever increasing rate, where everything and everyone is reliant on the instant. I was carrying an increasing amount of baggage, filled with hurt, confusion, and dreariness. I hoped BG would be a place where I could understand myself and the world around me in a way that I had not been able to before. When I finally arrived, I was quite surprised at the urbanized landscape of Bear Gully. Having had preconceived notions that I was heading to a wilderness-like setting, I was soon confronted with the harsh reality that this modern world that I was desperate to escape from would still surround me throughout the three days. Hi-tech campervans, caravans, and a convoy of university buses acted like reminders that this fast-paced modernized world are impossible to escape.

Steven was locked into a particular logic and practice that some theorists of “nature” find very troubling (for example, Cronon, 1995; Vogel, 1996; Weiss & Haber, 1999). His presumed “escape” to the “wilderness” was a typical expectation of many in his and earlier cohorts of the researched. Acting within and against Timothy Morton’s “dark ecological thought,” the culturally constructed discourse of recreation and leisure escape shines brightly in the

lives of most affluent middle class “down under” Australians—often holidaying at the quintessential surf beach (Drew, 1994), journeying or touristing to the rugged bush or dusty outback and, increasingly for younger Australians such as these undergraduate students, taking “flight” to exotic places overseas. Such images and desires form an inescapable part of the (colonizing anglophile) “geo-epistemology” or cultural-historical “roots” of many Australians’ “locations of knowledge” (Canaparo, 2009). Steven expected to experience pristine nature in the wilderness raw; not the culture-nature “hybridity” and “fluidity/liquidity” (Nakagawa & Payne, 2014) he now confronted during and after vagabonding at Bear Gully.

Escaping to romanticized nature is increasingly caught up in (eco/nature) tourism as a globalized form of travel tourism and, inevitably, objectified and instrumentalized as a commodification of nature and cultures. Graduates of this program often travel after (and during) their four-year studies. Some gain employment in the (eco/adventure) tourist industry. On the metaphorical but also socially constructed desire and expectation for escape to the exotic “other,” the thoroughly “post” Lonely Planet Guide and “world travel” writer Rolf Potts (2004) defined his “vagabonding” approach as an “outlook on life” that involves the act of leaving behind the orderly world in a privately meaningful manner that emphasizes creativity, discovery, and realism, amongst other qualities he attributes to the “experience” of “travelling.” Citing well-known (North American) nature writers like Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and Annie Dillard, Potts invokes freedom of spirit, independence, and choice as vagabonding values, in contrast with those of “tourism” (an important idea to be developed later). With no elaboration of the meanings of humanity, place, ideology, or justice, Potts offers some broad tips about how his mobile vagabonds should meet the locals—including bridging the language gap, what pioneering women of vagabonding did/do, and how to deal with getting tired of meeting so many people during the travelling!¹⁵

Against Potts’ influential, privileged, and globalized conception of vagabonding, the *elp* drew on different and darker roots. In (anglo-white) Australia and New Zealand, the term vagabonding historically and culturally conjures notions like “wanderer on and of the margins,” “cageless,” “misfit,” “childlike/innocence,” “hermit like,” “marginal,” one who frequently “retreats to the bush” (Slattery et al., 2008).⁶ Following Robyn Davidson’s *Tracks* (1980/2012),⁷ the nomadic ethics configured into the *elp* conception of *vagabonding slowly* demands a certain flexibility or wildness in both embodying and interpreting the responsiveness of the wanderer as s/he is (also) re-positioned within the changing contexts of globalization and its cultural products and practices; a “feral rewilding” of human life that mirrors the ever-shifting relationships of species (Monbiot, 2013, also MacKinnon, 2013) as well as our accompanying “learning and its sociability” (Fawcett, 2009). For Davidson (2006), our “steps” into various cul-de-sacs need to be retraced to identify “where we went wrong”—socially and ecologically—in giving up “cultures of movement for cultures of

accumulation” (page vi). *Movement, physical*, is at the nomadic heart of this wandering ethics, and will be described in more detail shortly.

Vagabonding is practically intrinsic to, and embodied in, the structuration and style of this “post-critical” study (Hart, 2005). We have subjected the villainesque experiential education/curriculum and ecopedagogy outlined above to “restorying” (McKenzie et al., 2009) through a representational mix, or “assemblage” (Law, 2004) of researched/researcher autoethnographic voices, interpretations, and explanations in a manner resembling *bricolage* (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). The inadequacy of this text to adequately, ecologically, and “affectively” represent (Thrift, 2006) and story (somaesthetic meaning-making) the sensuous, perceptual, emotional, and ir/real experiences/voices of the “researched” and “researcher” is acknowledged (Payne, 2005a, b). The aim is to paint a partial picture of individual and collective movements, perceptions and meaning-making/interpreting of environments (Ingold, 2000), the embodied significance of the sensorium (Stoller, 1989) via its ecologies of affordances (Gibson, 1979), and the accompanying somaesthetics of the body consciousness (Shusterman, 2008) and its phenomenology (Sheets-Johnstone, 2009) within the aesthetics of human meaning-making and its interpretations (Johnson, 2007), epiphanies of nature (Cooper, 2006), and crafting of untimely ecopedagogical circumstances and encounters (Payne, 2010, 2013).

Researchers in the social sciences and humanities are only now methodologically arriving at the significant movement/mobility role of sensory and affective ethnographic research (for example, Pink, 2009; Thrift, 2006) that finds a compelling place in (auto)ethnographic work such as this.⁸ Easier to describe here (textually) in a *bricoleur-like* manner are the broader educational conditions and their mobile/fluid socio-cultural and ecological contexts in which the vagabonding curriculum “worked” as a form of phenomenological de- and reconstructions with an ethico-political warrant (but see also, Nakagawa & Payne, 2011, 2014; Payne, 2003/2006; Payne, 2005b, c; Payne & Wattchow, 2009).

Transitions

In *A Sand County Almanac*, a required text for the *alp*, Aldo Leopold (1966) observed: “...the disquieting thing in the modern picture is the trophy hunter who never grows up...He is the motorized ant who swarms the continent before learning to see his own backyard, who consumes but never creates outdoor satisfactions” (p. 294). Reflecting on her own previous outdoor/environmental “education” training in the first two years of her undergraduate degree studies in sport and outdoor recreation, Jenny noted wryly that “Many previous *elps* followed the motorized ant approach,” and after the *elp* at *bg*, she observed darkly:

... our vagabonding style of living opened my eyes to the spiritual danger Leopold discussed. Heat was no longer coming from the heater. It was coming from the

clothes we wore, our natural body heat and that of others. At night, under the tarp, I often found myself lying awake, unable to get back to sleep due to the uncomfortable feeling of being cold. It made me think about the nights at home, where I am rarely cold due to the insulated walls and roof that surround me and the ease of turning on the heating to achieve a comfortable temperature. I thought about each of these and the impact each one had on the environment and the land.

Such shifts in perspective echo Morton's encouragement of "*the*" ecological thought, where *the* represents the grounded and colder need for the development of a "mental ecology." Bec's comments on food also display a similar growth of awareness, grounded in the stripping away of otherwise daily routines:

Sourcing all our food locally was another aspect of the experience that really sunk in for me. I love food and cooking, and at *bg* those cherry tomatoes in particular were absolutely delicious. By knowing where the food came from, I found that I valued it a lot more and even the simplest of meals, such as cheese and tomato on bread, seemed to taste divine. This contrasted, for example, when I buy from my local grocer and for some reason feel the need to do something special to make the food taste better. Perhaps this need to complicate food occurs because of its source, coming from a complicated place rather than a natural, simple one. Obviously taste and appreciation for the food is not the only benefit of locally or home grown food. Food from supermarkets can travel hundreds of kilometres before making it to the shelf. This not only affects the freshness of the food, but also means it has required transport; ultimately resulting in increasing the amount of damaging emissions released into our environment.

The food industry emerged from the dark shadows of normal, everyday eating habits as a major concern for many in the group. The industrialization of eating and the need for escape from the western diet (Pollan, 2008) was clearly exposed through the bodied experiences at *bg* of eating in a different communal manner. Low cost, local menus were pre-planned in the *elp* (including information that the average Australian dinner meal travels 38,000 kilometres to the plate), the majority of (organic) ingredients were sourced locally, meals were prepared at *bg* in smaller groups for the "student body/community." Small group clean-ups did not use any chemicals. Cost per meal for each student was approximately \$4 AUS (2013). A café latte costs \$5 in most shops. Janna commented:

It was quite a pivotal moment for me at the end of the *elp* where all participants sat around in a circle to view the amount of rubbish that 60 people had created over three days of breakfasts, lunches, dinners, and snacks. Because of our local food collections on the way to bare gulli, the food we had all eaten was raw, meaning it was completely unprocessed and without packaging. The amount of rubbish for the three days was reduced to two small boxes. During this moment it occurred to me just how much waste I produce in my life, as do the majority of people living in affluent communities. I made a promise right there and then to keep my waste production down by eating as raw as possible and to also adapt this type of teaching to others in my life, friends, family and students alike.

Also of heightened “material” concern, for many but not all, was the outdoor/adventure recreation and “education” industry (Payne, 1997). One on-site *bg* experience for small groups was to find a quiet spot in the bush, reflect on the normal outdoor experience and activities, and estimate the financial cost, sources of all manufactured items found in their “backpack” (a colonizing term imported from North America in the past 10 years, even replacing *bushwalking*) and the total “equipment kilometres/miles” those items have travelled. Glyn critically noted in a post-*elp* elaboration of rough notes jotted into his “experiential diary”⁹ during the *bg* experience:

So it seems the modern-day trend is comfort at all costs—but is it really necessary to buy all the equipment on offer in the outdoor industry? Global modes of production and advancing technology are widely used by many, even though it takes manual labor to make these items, train people to use it and to pay their wage. The production mode or the product itself can sometimes be harmful to the environment. Therefore, adopting the vagabonding way of life, I packed minimally and adopted the use of a woolen blanket, a tarp, and cotton/woolen clothing as a substitute for expensive branded items, a tent, and a sleeping bag (Experiential log, 17/03/13).

Leopold poses the question of in the search for bigger and better things: do we go too far; just where is the line between legitimate and illegitimate gadgets? We also bought and ate organic foods from within the area actually giving back to the community, getting fresh food and producing minimal waste. Minus my phone, my iPod, and my watch, I really got lost inside the place with no sense of day, space, or time. I had nothing to distract me from the raw beauty that faced me (Experiential log, 17/03/13).

Upon further reflection, the following week, I attended another camp where I actually forgot to put my watch on which I had worn every day before bare gulli. I am proud to say that the camp has changed me. The entire experience made me wonder whether society has an influence on my choices of items, clothing, and food? In the past man and beast, plant and soil, have lived on in mutual toleration, to the mutual benefit of all (Leopold, 1949/1966). So ethically, the relationship between humans, animal and land may need to be reconsidered.

Transformations

The practice of vagabonding is a risky proposition for students, teachers, and curriculum theorists alike. Materially/artifactualy and technologically “stripping” of equipment, gear, and gadgets to the *bare* minimum of need and comfort guessed at in advance of arriving at *bg* is likewise risky and challenging at emotional and physical levels. Shelley acknowledged these risks and darker challenges with reference to Davidson’s *Tracks* (1980/2012), the self “story” (then autobiography) of her camel trek from central Australia to the west Australian coast. It is a story of resourcefulness, will, encounters about *being* and *becoming* and, inevitably, will and survival.

The “boring practical self-preserved” (Davidson) was me, afraid of the Bear Gully experience, afraid I wouldn’t enjoy myself without my phone and comforts of home. During the first day at *bg*, I was close-minded to the idea of the vagabond experience. I didn’t quite understand how to let go of the baggage. I experienced that feeling you get when you know you have tricked yourself into doing something difficult and you know there is no turning back.

There are significant difficulties for the researcher in accurately, adequately, and ethically re-presenting such darker risks confronted by the researched, and then claiming it here as textualized “evidence” of personal, social, and ecological transformations and nomadic transpositions (Payne, 2005a, b). This darker interpretive and methodological dilemma is acknowledged as a concern of “post-qualitative” inquiry in education (Lather & St Pierre, 2013). This “problem” is exacerbated by the difficulties of representing both the “ecocentric” and “embodied” turns while wrestling with an ontological (re)turn in philosophy and theory. Put simply, as unusual as it might seem, this researcher believes that the politics of the ontology of time, in relation to space, through bodies emplaced in different natures, lies most earnestly at the very heart of a renewed post-critical “educative” quest for social and environmental justices. Thus at this point, additional theoretical resources and explanations of the voices and stories of the researched are required.

My life was always fast moving, phone in one hand, breakfast in the other, late for important meetings, working long hours over the weekend but never quite feeling content. I felt all this rushing produced shallowness, because you never quite have time to sink your roots in, or dig beneath the surface. Its a paradox of our modern-day lives that while technology is continually invented that saves us time, we use that time to do more and more tasks, so our lives are more fast-paced and as hectic as ever. (Denise)

Over the five years in which data were collected from *bg elp* participants/students, none have been able to voluntarily express/voice a notion of *space*, let alone its connection or relation to time and body. This “non-representational” dilemma (Thrift, 2006) is not surprising, even if “bodily” responses like Denise’s intuit the (hyper)intensification/individualization of technically corrected, converted, and “ordered” body-time-space relations (for example, Payne, 2003, 2006). A new imagination and language is needed by many of us to move such pre-linguistic/rational intuitions and habits into critical forms of consciousness and praxis. When pushed to conceptualize space, students invariably use the word “place” and/or reduce it to “place pedagogy” as it has been uncritically popularized in other studies (conceptual and practical). It is deployed by many (as indicated in various extracts under the headings Teasing/Metaphor and Transitions), mostly in a still socially/culturally constructed escapist, neo-romantic, and colonizing manner that ignores the material and affective realities of fluidity, mobility, and liquidity of postmodernity in outdoor/nature “experiences.”¹⁰

Not unlike Jimmy's predicament, Fran's disclosure about the relationality of body-time-space of various positionings and their problematic—ontologically and epistemologically—as a tension, is revealing.¹¹

The fast was frustrating. The slow was calming—or perhaps the fast was calming? Because it was my addiction or habit which fed my craving for cognitive and bodily sensation and satisfaction. However, it is a short-lived satisfaction before I would feel that craving again. In contrast, embracing the slow and being calmed by knowing “there is no real timetable” that is overpowering of the body, spirit, and heart and instincts guiding my experience in THAT moment. Time is being my teacher and my essence within. (Fran)

Zygmunt Bauman (1997) has written extensively about “tourism” and “vagabonding” as global phenomena and functions of bodies moving in time-space. “The hub of postmodern life strategy,” he observes, “is not making identity stand—but the avoidance of being fixed” (p. 89). His normatively driven concerns about the transitions from modernity to postmodernity highlight the ordering, simplifying, and *detemporalizing of the social spaces* of our practical everyday modes of *being*. More recently, and pursuing related ideas, Paul Virilio (2007/2010) has elaborated on how the globalized “dromosphere” of the spatio-temporal “collapse” is linked not only to the “crush of instantaneity in the never ending present of person’s lives” (p. 3), but is also embodied globally within issues like the greenhouse effect and climate change. While tourists and vagabonds, in Bauman’s terms, connote certain personal, social, and cultural identities and globalizing trajectories, those identifications and accompanying subject formations are made available primarily in the ever-present present and its “amnesia of the moment” (Virilio, 2007/2010, p. 4). Living in the “now” is celebrated by many who can afford it and offered up by the constant unhinging of the self (and others) from most orthodox and fixed time-space structures. (Mobile phones, as we refer to them in Australia, nicely capture the ideas of [bodied/personal] speed, flexibility, and irrelevance of distance/space.) Such concepts help us reinterpret and represent how the “researched” at *bg* make some embodied and emplaced sense of the more differentiated, transient, or liquid/fluid time and space conditions of postmodernity they experience globally and locally, often invisibly or unknowingly, or in contradiction and, if so, are unable to rationally “voice.”

“I had no measure of time...it meant relying on other people.” (Cass)

“Slow time was good. It allowed time to reflect.” (Bob)

“Not bored, engaged. “It” passed subconsciously. I did not think about it consciously most of the time.” (Jack)

“Conflicting: a sense of timelessness in experiences.” (Ros)

“Was ok, mentally draining because of so much time to think.” (Betty)

“I lost track of time, totally.” (Bob)

“It was a good feeling to lose the constraint of time as it became irrelevant to the experience of nature.” (Sandy)

"I didn't bring a watch. It was amazing how you are more in tune and time with nature—getting up when it is light, walking in silence, eating when you are hungry, going to sleep when it is dark or you are tired." (Ian)

"I had my watch so always knew the time." (Ruth)

"A sense of calm." (Tricia)

"Passed by me." (Zack)

"Impeded learning. Would have preferred fast activities." (Rick)

"Can't compare fast and slow time." (Gary)

"Everyone's ideas about slow and fast are going to be different." (Bree)

"I liked slow learning." (Wendy)

"I enjoyed slowing down, and I'm still thinking how it affects my learning." (Estelle)

"I like to be moving fast rather than slow. I probably didn't take things in like I could have." (Fred)

The mix and spread of these short, voiced responses to time-space experience indirectly *bears/bares* further witness to the enigmatic and overlaying onto-epistemic "layerings" of time-space as it historically and culturally has been embodied (James, 2006). Here, those voices are highly suggestive of how environmental education in/with, about, or for/against can be reimagined through employing postmodern/global metaphors like fast and slow or as tourists, vagabonds, victims, heroes, and villains. This study of "local" participants, viewed through Bauman's account of the ubiquitous detemporalization of social space and the ecological consequences of the dromosphere, complements Yoshi Nakagawa and Phillip Payne's (2011, 2014) empirical study of internationally mobile and globally fluid students' experiences in outdoor/experiential education (in a parallel small-scale study). How, then, does the vagabonding re-positioning and slow ecopedagogy of it influence those darker questions about attaining and embodying those social and environmental justices introduced at the start through Anne and Gary, at least? If Bauman is correct about the dilemmas of postmodern morality and ethics being a consequence of the detemporalization of social space, what lessons can be learned from this study for environmental educators?

Trans[pos]itions

In outlining her "quest for a new global ethics," Rosa Braidotti's *Transpositions* (2006) and *The Posthuman* (2013) affirmatively extend Bauman's prescient concerns about the dilemmas surrounding morality and ethics in liquid postmodernity. Braidotti's feminist-inspired and self-confessed "anti humanism" immediately undercuts the illusions of moral universalism and man "as the measure of all things," lying as/at the centre of any adequate responses to a wide range of deepening social and environmental issues. Braidotti's (2006, 2013) "vitalistic" inspired formulation of *bios/zoe* power/politics and sketching of a post-anthropocentric "life beyond the species" will, therefore, be of interest to those environmental educators who more *ecocentrically* seek to incorporate

aspects of somaesthetics, ethics, and ecopolitics into their practices, languages, grammars, inquiries, and research efforts.

One point of Braidotti's (2006) departure from Bauman is her promotion of the more heteronomous "nomad" as a "figuration." *Figurations* are different to metaphors, with nomadicism deemed preferable by Braidotti to pilgrim and vagabond. Tellingly, Braidotti concluded that Bauman's metaphorical empiricism "...lacks a politics of location," doesn't account for sexual difference and ethnicity in "a rather abstract picture" and therefore, "...does not pay enough attention to situated perspectives and thus ends up over generalizing his important case" (pp. 89-90). Figurations, Braidotti argues, "... allow for a proliferation of *micro* narratives of self and others" that are "an expression of one's specific positioning in both space and time...including one's sense of historical inscription" (pp. 89-90). Thus, the prolific sampling in this text of participants' *circumstantially situated and located* micro-narrative "voices" represented, as best as possible, in using the first person singular (Lingis, 2007). Such localized utterances are central elements of Braidotti's (and others) "new materialisms" (e.g., Bennett, 2010, Coole & Frost, 2010; Grosz, 2004), critical realism (e.g., Archer, 2000, Sayer, 2000), speculative realisms (e.g., Bogust, 2012; Garcia, 2010/2014), aspects of "post qualitative" research in education (Lather & St Pierre, 2013), and undertakings in "post critical" environmental education research (for example, Hart, 2005, 2013; McKenzie et al., 2013; Reid & Payne, 2013; Russell, 2005).

Figurations work in different ways. In relation to the dark matter of intensified time, many of these young adult (21-30) undergraduate participants moved beyond the mere moment to appreciate the slow pace of, for example, their historically "embodied childlike" experiences (Griffiths, 2013).¹²

I'm a bit embarrassed by this but slowing down, playing around on the beach and in the dunes and having time on my side for a change made me feel like a kid again, on holidays at the beach with my family or friends. (Bill)

It's been a long time since I really wandered around the beach and had a good look, play and had sheer fun. (Wendy)

I was fascinated to watch how a young mother visiting the beach for the day allowed her two little kids to run in and out with the water as it rushed up and down the sand. They played and played. The mum let them. (Lynne)

The temporal nature of morality, environmental ethics, and ecopolitics, highlighted by the speculative but highly insightful theorizing of Bauman's vagabonding and Braidotti's nomadic "quests," sheds new light on participant comments such as this one from Chris:

Prior to this *elp* I was adamant that I had a predetermined set of morals, beliefs and practices that I assured myself were contributing to a positive sustainable and overall ecological way of life...My experience with *bg* was an internal struggle, a set of moral

dilemma after dilemma that challenged my worldview and caused me to rethink how I operate as a human being.

Such “emplaced” and transitory glimpses of the vagabonding positioning of the participants/researched beg the question of the “transferability” of the slow vagabonding *bg elp* experience “back into” the mundane, ordinary, normal and routine “living” in the everyday. This “new materialism” type question of transferability, action, and inaction, or “behavior” remains a chronic problem for environmental education (Payne, 1997). Some in the field are committed to “education” as a form of training for immediate “behavior change” through fast knowledge acquisitions and so-called attitudinal changes. The *bg elp* aimed, instead, to let participants “work it out” as an embodied and emplaced process—slowly, experientially, co-constructively, and democratically. As might be expected, the partial reconfiguration and reconciliation of inner, social, and outer natures this entails continued to unfold as a “self arising normatively” and *becoming* (Bonnett, 2013) in the months following the *elp*.

Inner Reconciliations?

When I returned home after camp and I went to make dinner, an interesting thought came into my head that I still struggle to comprehend. I wonder, not only how far has my food travelled to get to my cupboard, but what has happened to it along the way? How much has human existence impacted on this food in order to get it to my pantry? (Bess)

Inner and Social Reconciliations?

After three-day camping, the first thing I did back home was to dash in to shower and wash away dirt. But exactly what was I washing off? The “impurities” in its natural form of existence from *bare gulli*. And what was I putting on? Whole lots of chemicals. But if I did not do these, I would risk facing social rejection as it is a commonly-agreed social practice to keep tidy to please others on social occasions. This made me realize how heavily we are influenced by socially constructed ideas which have shaped our attitude and informed our action. (Zoe)

Now “here I am at the end of my trip, with everything just as fuzzy and unreal as the beginning,” as Davidson wrote in *Tracks*. It has been a few weeks since the *bg elp*, and by now I have come to realize the impact it has had on me. My friends have even acknowledged the influence this camp has had on my character. *bare gulli* has certainly been a turning point on my map of life, waking me up to the world, what it looks like and what impact we are having on it. It also enlightened me to my world, and what makes me. In everyday life there are so many conveniences and dependencies. Getting back to the basics requires a bit of creativity and resourcefulness. We already have a lot of possessions, so why not make more than one use for them? Focus on the essentials, disregard the excessive marketing of products, and then we should all be on a road to better health and a better environment. What we do really makes a difference! (Yvonne)

When I got back from camp I found myself more aware of the marketing and just questioning my items. I bought a pair of socks from Kmart. Actually, I bought 3 pairs for \$2. What a bargain I thought! Although when I was putting a pair on I was thinking about where are they from, and if I paid this much, how much were the people making the socks making? I felt bad. People shouldn't be treated like that. (Mary)

Inner, Social, and Outer “Nature” Reconciliations?

My third reflection is associated with the amount of transference of the skills/knowledge acquired during the *bg elp* and our personal lives. This pedagogy is especially important in this environment where students have a direct experience to empower them to transfer the knowledge acquired to elsewhere in their lives. This was a very symbolic and proud moment to have all students viewing the waste we had created, so much so that it motivated me to write about it in my *elp* logbook. I am now empowered to use this in my own personal life and in my future pedagogical practices and to not forget promptly the lessons I have learned. (Janna)

Reconstitutions

For the post-critical purposes of “how we see ourselves in our own terrain” (Hart, 2005, 2013), this illustrative “case study” of the vagabonding curriculum and its slow ecopedagogy has grappled with the very dark matter of how to conceive, implement, interpret, and adequately *represent* a radical form of education whose praxis highlights the desperately needed “ecologies” of somaesthetics, ethics, and ecopolitics. An equally dark problem is how to “ground” such a lofty philosophical, theoretical, and conceptual challenge in the practical interests of the researched and researched (Payne, 2005a, b). A particular challenge in *storying* this five-year-long study of many (participant) bodies and voices in variable time-space contexts has been how to adequately and accurately (or authentically) (non)represent and legitimize participants’ “experiences” of an education “intervention.”

Driven by the metaphorically empirical and figural purposes of this study, for (methodologically) “legitimizing” purposes of the “evidence” assembled *bricoleur-like* throughout this text, many participant voices are re/presented around a “storied” and “woven” sequence of thematic organizers/informants—teasing, transitions, transformations, trans(positions), and reconstitutions. These organizers are highly responsive to some of the major substantive and normative questions about how (environmental) education as an experiential, embodied, temporal process may (or may not) engender a form of *becoming* post-anthropocentrically “other”—that is, nomadically and normatively “more than” self/I in bodied relation to various “natures.” The sampling of researched voices can be read independently of the remainder of the text; it independently aims to capture some of the complexities of the darker matters participants encountered in making sense of their lives when prompted by a radically alternative critical curriculum experience.

At stake for this researcher, and the story I have sought to weave around and out of these figurations, is the aim of a partial reconciliation of inner, social, and outer natures, as an underlying ontological-epistemological problem and quest. Put sharply and in the light of Morton's ecological thought, how, and in what ways, are educators and researchers dealing critically and normatively with those largely invisible or elusive ontology-epistemology "tensions" in the framing of innovative/alternative curriculum, and its pedagogical enactments? Heila Lotz-Sisitka, John Fien and Mphephelang Kelthoilewe (2013) are very helpful in their recent development of Ian Robottom and Paul Hart's (1993) much earlier effort to engage the debate about the ontology-epistemology and methodology triad. How can this tension be represented in ways that are engaging, credible, relevant, and challenging to the reflexive reader of this text? These questions can equally be applied to different curriculum areas and efforts, not just environmental education and its research; however, the quest for paradigmatic *ecocentrism* and theorizing of social *ecologies* for environmental education make our particular venture unique. Progress is being made in different ways, however: conceptually, theoretically, and philosophically, and, possibly, practically (McKenzie et al., 2009; Stevenson et al., 2013, particularly in the critical chapters by Lotz-Sisitka, Bonnett, Davies, Fawcett, Haluza-DeLay, Hart, Lowan-Trudeau, and Peters).

More specifically:

(i) The acute challenge of framing radical/critical curriculum and ecopedagogical innovation cannot be severed from the broader educational problem posed by the acceleration of the global, techno-turbo neo-liberal imperative. For some, at its genesis in the 1970s environmental education historically was, and potentially remains, a powerful critique of various historical approaches and disciplined perspectives of education (and research). This post-critical study has re-emphasized that potential, yet critical approaches to environmental education in the "developed" North/West have fallen on harder times since the late 1990s as a consequence of the savage bite of the neoliberal university in teacher education departments. As a historical representational medium, the increasing politics-economics of (global) publication is less than helpful for the "critical." The semester-long third year undergraduate unit studied here is unlikely to survive the latest wave of "educational" reform underway in the Faculty of Education in which this researcher-educator is employed. If it does, it will only be a mere shadow of its current form, despite the "compelling" evidence about its value and usefulness to the researched (Payne & Wattchow, 2009; Nakagawa & Payne, 2011, 2014), many of whom will teach in an upper-secondary schooling outdoor and environmental studies curriculum that discursively/textually as a curriculum document emphasizes the rhetoric of "sustainability."

Using the interpretations, evidence, and explanations provided here, and recalling Dwayne Huebner's (1967/1987) still prescient interest in the *environmental design* of curriculum, this researcher asks: How can *ecocentrism* be given life in education? How do we "walk the talk?" Huebner's notion of the

environment can be pushed further when we enter into the complexities of the term “nature” and who talks for it and how or why (Russell, 2005). Here, as outlined only, the environmental as well as individual and social design of the curriculum at *bare gulli* was materially (em)placed as the “centre stage” of the framing of an educational intervention aimed pedagogically at the “bodying” of a (soma)esthetics, ethics, and ecopolitics. Huebner is, again, helpful in critiquing the (over) emphasis on simplistic notions of learning and teaching (epistemologies) that exclude or ignore ontological matters and politics in education like the environmental design of curriculum design. Much more could be written about the wide range of formal and informal experiences planned materially into the dialogical/recyclical nature of the *elp* and *alp* components of the unit in which these students participated. Space limitations preclude a more detailed account (see endnote 3; Payne, 2010; Payne & Wattchow, 2009).

(ii) Another closely related challenge is the (eco)pedagogical enactments of curriculum. Again word limitations are a major constraint in adequately addressing this issue. In (re)formulating a “slower” ecopedagogy, Bauman and Virilio are important intellectual resources. Many other informants about the timeliness of considering time in environmental education exist (Payne, 2013). The question of how time is conceived and constructed is undertheorized (and underresearched) in educational practices. Learners comply with prescriptively linear measures of time. Teachers slavishly compartmentalize time. Managers organize mechanical timetables for order, control, and accountability. Taking students “outside” for half a day, let alone three or six, is one way to destabilize this time “lack” and its bodied dissonance/intensification in the lives of those like Denise who live it, day-in, day-out as a “normal” and “natural” materialism of postmodernity. The pedagogical role and value of slow time (historicity, temporality) in various environmental designs, including nature’s rhythmical/recyclable times, be it at the tidal beach or even in seasonal “foods,” warrants *discovery* (*elp 1*) and *re-discovery* (*elp 2*)—through curiosity, imagination, inspection, and interrogation. Important questions might then be asked. For example, how does slow or slower or slowing down “sit/fit” critically with the accelerating problem of postmodernity’s detemporalization of socio-ecological spaces, the food we eat, our propensity to walk? Can learning be reconceived according to different time-spaces? How is “instant/digital” body-time-space re/configuring selves, others and nature, and their relations (Payne, 2006)? Some of the researched in this study willingly accepted the challenge to go without their mobile phone for the three-day *elps*. Others wouldn’t, or couldn’t go without it, even for a day, even though the reception is non-existent/poor at *bg*.

Notions of body, time, space, and place and their relations are often treated as static and fixed in environmental education discourses and practices when, indeed, they are experienced in increasingly enigmatic if not paradoxical ways at material and symbolic levels or layerings in the condition known as postmodernity (Payne, 2003). Post-critical inquiry, following Bauman and Virilio,

provides very different conceptual resources for ecopedagogically examining the ontological politics of time (Grosz, 2004, Payne, 2013) and its associated epistemologies. In short, such inquiry gravitates around the need for pedagogues (and researchers) to make much clearer their presuppositions concerning ontology, epistemology-pedagogy, and methodology and how each intersects with the other.

(iii) In an attempt to restore environmental education, the more specific issue of interpretation and representation focused on here is one aspect only of a wider range of methodological concerns (for example, Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, Lather & St. Pierre, 2013; Payne, 2005a, b). The problem of how “best” to “socio-ecologically” interpret, convey, and represent both the transpositional ingredients and subjectification processes of vitalistic bodies experiencing/moving in “nature” while interacting and relating in enigmatic/dissonant time-space is, indeed, daunting (Thrift, 2006). If, within these reconstitutions of selves and natures, the partially “wild” or “feral” and temporary “just” reconciliation of inner, social, and outer “natures” is an aim in education worth pursuing, the limits of studies like this (and representing it in text) must always be acknowledged. This study insists, following Braidotti (2013), on including the “micro” narratives of those subjects within the situated and circumstantial geo-cultural-historical-epistemological problem of the politics of the locations in which the “experiences” of the researched/researcher are lived. Nomadic/wild/feral/villainesque somaesthetics, ethics, and ecopolitics will (unevenly) be personal, social, historical, cultural, environmental, and ecological. There are no shortcuts or answers to this methodological and normative problem of the reductive textualization of historically, culturally, and ecologically bodied-lifeworld research.

Notes

- ¹ For example, on a per capita basis, Australians have amongst the highest “ecological footprints” in the world, averaging 6.84 global hectares/person, according to 2007 data. The global average was 2/3gha/person. Sixty five percent of Australians owned a “smart phone” in 2012, the fourth highest rate in the world—double the 2010 count. Australians are well known for their “growth fetish” (Hamilton, 2003) and “affluenza” (Hamilton & Dennis, 2005).
- ² The *bg elps* have been studied ethnographically “case”-like over a number of years as the curriculum has evolved into its current form of a vagabonding slowly experience. Hundreds of student experiences voiced by the researched and observed by the researcher are represented over that significant body-time-space period. In this text, autoethnographic “student voices” written “phenomenologically” in the first person singular have been chosen interpretatively to represent the majority of the “sample.” The process allows

for reformulating an (ecocentrically disposed environmental) education curriculum “theory” and practicing it as a form of ecopedagogical inquiry.

- 3 Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) CF13/2527-2013001350. Data was de-identified. Names are made up.
- 4 In accordance with John Dewey’s (1938/1991) reconstructive logic of growth, it is the “recyclical” nature of experiential learning programs, or *elps* (in this instance, in the 12-week semester of study 2 x 3 day “discovery” and “rediscovery” programs held about six weeks apart at Bear Gully) and academic learning programs, or *alps* (6-7 x 3 hour lectures, tutorials/workshops, required texts—Leopold 1949/1966 and Davidson 1980/2012, additional readings of about 10 articles, and two assignments of 2000 words each) that “best” achieve the growth of the learner and shared democratic potential of experiential education. The context here is a university undergraduate degree where, increasingly, for a range of economic, legal, and institutional reasons, experiential learning in the field is under siege. Evidence about the value and efficacy of experiential education is needed.
- 5 Not surprisingly, “nomadic” sleeping bags, replete with insuLITE® “suitable for general purpose use in moderate climates,” are now being marketed by a major outdoor retailer in Australia.
- 6 The term *vagabond* can be traced to the Holy Bible, Genesis IV, 12. Cain, who tilled the ground killed his brother Abel, a keeper of sheep, because he did not respect what Abel offered. The Lord banished Cain to become a “fugitive” and “vagabond” in the earth. Vagabonding has been associated with vagrancy characterized as unemployed, idleness, and wandering, sometimes as parasitic on (wealthy, ruling) others. As such, in a number of European countries in the 1800s, “vagabondage” was a criminal offence, and still is in parts of USA and Europe where vagrancy and homelessness is forcibly discouraged. Here, vagabonding refers to the embodied capacity to resourcefully critique and subvert certain “greenwashing” hegemonies and prevailing “sustainable” tendencies in outdoor/environmental/experiential education that reconstitute a range of social and environmental injustices.
- 7 The highly acclaimed movie by the same name was screened for the first time at the Venice Film Festival, the oldest film festival in the world, in late 2013 and due for release in Australia in 2014. Davidson acted as a consultant.
- 8 The underlying methodology of the study is indebted to the theory of “extended social relations,” or “constitutive abstraction” (Sharp, 1985). Paul James (2006) summarizes the meta “method” in terms of four interrelated levels of analytical abstraction: empirical analysis, conjunctural analysis, integrational analysis, and categorical analysis. Aspects of each will be found in the “restorying” of this “micro/local” case study.
- 9 Participants are strongly encouraged to keep a small notebook with them throughout the *elps* and upon return home. When “feelings” are strong (positive/negative), participants jot down their “impressions” (a few

- ‘key’ words, a sketch, or...) sufficient to “prompt memory” later; hence, an ecopedagogy/emplaced moving method for “meaning making” (Johnson, 2007; Pink, 2009).
- ¹⁰ We note here the emerging “representational” interest in different approaches to and forms of *ecopoeisis*, such as environmental and ecocriticism, ecopoetics, environmental artography, ecodrama, dance and ecomusicology, in the embodied *bringing forth* of environmental/eco connections, relations, somaesthetics, environmental ethics, ecopolitics, and spiritualities.
- ¹¹ Critiques of and alternatives to the Euclidean/Newtonian separation of time-space and bodies have been developed, in recent times, by environmental philosopher David Abram (1996), critical geographers David Harvey (1996), and Edward Soja (1987), and ecological anthropologist Tim Ingold (2011), amongst numerous others. William Cronon’s (1995) critique is emphatic: “wilderness areas” and “national parks” (and their derivatives) are places “out of time,” a flight from history, including the forced/legalized exclusion of many indigenous peoples from “virgin” lands designed to offer middle class, civilized “escape.”
- ¹² In *Kith* (2013), Jay Griffiths argues that the Euro-American consumerist cornucopia (including dominant forms of schooling) denies children the freedoms of space, time, and deep play, and creates the loss of longing to belong in nature. Kith means kinship but extends to “native country”—one’s home (*oikos*) outside the house. See also Payne (2009) on the *postmodern oikos*, as well as the intergenerational environmental ethics/ecopolitics that are practiced there (Payne, 2010). On phenomenologies of “wild” and “time,” see also Griffiths (1999, 2006).

Notes on Contributor

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