

Walking as a wandering ethic of (re)location: A public ‘pedagogy of hope’

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Abstract

This paper considers the public pedagogy of location in relation to walking. I walk and write with and from my compass orientated to the Freirean notion of a ‘pedagogy of hope’. Using an autoethnographic account of a local walk, walking is (re)presented and interpreted as a wandering ethic of (re)location. Temporal and spatial dimensions of my walking are revealed in the social, cultural and ecological context of the bushfires and the pandemic. Drawing from scholars who theorize embodiment and the multiple natures of body~time~space, the inter and intra-actions with/in ecologies are presented in a sensory narrative. To consider walking as a wandering ethic of (re)location, it is argued that various temporal, spatial, material, historical and cultural dimensions are contingent within the context of change as evident in the aftermath of bushfires and the pandemic. What I examine is the inter-play in relation to what is present and otherwise absent whilst walking that is interpreted as a ‘pedagogy of hope’ amidst the struggles and uncertainties of these times.

Keywords

Freire; pedagogy of hope; walking; bushfires

As a public pedagogy, the question of what may be learnt from the bushfires and the pandemic is explored by walking. By suggesting that walking is a wandering ethic of (re)location, I am interested in bringing questions of ethics and problems of culture, society and change to the fore. As Hickey-Moody, Savage and Windle (2010) state, a critical view of public pedagogy that examines and disrupts accepted norms of society is pertinent. There is social and environmental upheaval as the bushfires and pandemic events have unfolded over the past six months or more in south eastern Australia. Impacts of issues that have always been present, such as loss of homes, loss of jobs, have been magnified in this period of (dis)location. The scale of these impacts spans the personal to the global. The temporal experience of these impacts has been rapid and brings events to the collective consciousness such as climate change, as imminent and requiring action. This paper will primarily focus on the impacts of the pandemic, with the COVID-19 virus and make some links made to climate change in relation to the bushfires. COVID-19 will be named as the pandemic in this paper.

Witnessing feelings of hopelessness and despair, my attention was drawn to ask how these feelings could be imaginatively, ethically and pragmatically transformed to hope? In considering the possibility for a public pedagogy of hope, it is not a naïve hope. Paulo Freire (1994) makes an important distinction of the meaning of hope from a critical standpoint. Freire explains that the hope he is describing is not about just hoping in vain but is “an ontological need” borne out of the struggle to improve human existence and how else but through “hopes and dreams” (p. 2). What I can do is not just go walking but by paying attention to the moving body in time and space, create a wandering ethic of (re)location that may bring assist in learning to hope.

In the footsteps of Leesa Fawcett (2009) and her reflection on “nomadic ethics and embodied learning” (p. 227) in relation to environmental education, by considering walking as a wandering ethic of (re)location, the purpose of this paper is to (re)think instrumentalized, colonized walking practices. Thereby situating walking as ecological and embodied that locates us in the present: the present uncertainty and discomfort, the struggles and obstacles. As Fawcett asserts, a “transformed ethics” is needed to guide us, “to be our lifeguard in a sea of critical hope” (p. 227). Fawcett calls on feminist Rosi Braidotti (2006) to “lend a hand” who states:

Ethics is rather a question of expanding the threshold of what we can endure and hence sustain, while not avoiding the effects of the crack upon the surface of our embodied selves. (p. 213; as cited in Fawcett, p. 227).

The “crack” Braidotti explains, is an “indicator of poor health” that accompanies living “under the intensity of Life” (p. 213; as cited in Fawcett, p. 227). In the light of the bushfires and the pandemic, cracks revealing poor health, are not just indicative of bodily health, but ecosystem health as well. Also, the surfaces of our embodied selves are where vulnerabilities and precariousness are revealed. Powell (2019) considers walking as “precarious public pedagogy” and describes it as “indeterminant, a becoming that is entangled within a vulnerable existence” (p. 191). At the broader political level, Powell identifies precarity as a condition existing in neoliberal capitalism, “which thrives on instability” (p. 193). The points of stress become more complex as politics are enmeshed in people’s everyday lives and locations in the pandemic ‘lockdowns’.

I live in Castlemaine, a town in central Victoria, where the experience of ‘lockdowns’ are relatively less strict than in Melbourne. On the surface, the “crack” is not so deep. As the days and months go by, I am present to my fortunate and privileged life, but the sense of the wider collective uncertainty and pain is palpable. What I hope in (re)presenting walking as a public pedagogy of hope are the possibilities of what movement with/in these struggles may

bring and how it may (re)locate us and support us. Drawing on theories of embodied walking combined with a walking experience, I propose a walking praxis of location as a wandering ethic of (re)location. That is, how walking can locate us, but also bring attention to not only what is present but also what is otherwise absent - the other human and more-than human.

In doing so, I will firstly give a brief outline of what my orientation is with regards to Freire's Pedagogy of Hope. There is a vast range of inter-disciplinary literature on pedagogies of hope. I was drawn to Freire's meaning of hope as he positions it in a critical frame and is borne out of his lived experiences. Then, walking as contextualized and conceptualized as an inter/intra-action between body-other(s)-ecologies is discussed. For clarification, the use of tildes (-) follows Payne (2017) aims to represent the mutually constitutive nature of terms often 'texted' in a dualistic or binary-polar manner. In this section I link walking to the notion of a wandering ethic of (re)location which includes the method of "walking-with" (Springgay and Truman, 2018; 2019) as a pivotal point of reference. The following section highlights the methodology of autoethnography, critical reflexive methods and sensory, impressionist narratives that provides the (re)presentative and interpretive framework for the walk. The final sections tie together these threads to discuss and interpret what and how a wandering ethic could contribute to a pedagogy of hope, and the significance of that as a public pedagogy.

My compass orientated to Freirean hope

Within locations, what do we hope for? Or is the question about how we might practice educating for hope? Freire's (1994) Pedagogy of Hope, as understood as a "critical pedagogy", offers insights into these questions. The critical nature of this is the thread of his book, *Pedagogy of Hope: Reviving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire was very clear about this. It was not just a restatement of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) but to say what is [my emphasis], twenty years on, and to do some "new saying ... by speaking of hope" (Jones, 2012, p. 139). Freire (1994) argues that "we need critical hope the way a fish needs unpolluted water" (p. 2). Furthermore, he explains that hope, as an ontological need, "demands an anchoring in practice" (p. 2). Walking practices are the focus of this paper and it is argued that walking as an embodied practice can provide an anchor to hope.

The theorizing of hope and pedagogies of hope has received a lot of attention by scholars across a range of disciplines. Webb (2013) traverses this scholarly landscape of "pedagogies of hope" across five modes of hoping: patient, critical, sound, resolute and transformative (p. 398). The critical hope that Freire (1994) poses "is grounded in reality and the material world" where, as Ojala (2017) observes, exists a "critical understanding of the current situation" and realization that somethings are missing (p. 79). Ojala explores hope in relation to educating for a sustainable future and states that facing negative emotions in the face of overwhelming problems can evoke hope "that will drive engagement" (p. 79). In the walking and writing of hope as a public pedagogy, my intent is not to posit a cause and effect but rather, to open up the complex and multiple convergences and divergences between walking, ethics, hope and public pedagogy.

Freire engages in deep reflection in the writing of a Pedagogy of Hope that has a very existential and personal nature (Jones, 2012). In the examination of Freire's philosophy, Jones observes how Freire's "pivotal concept of hope should be formed from within his very native experience of pessimism" (p. 152). Importantly, Jones points out that the socio-political dimension of Brazil as a society in transition was integral to Freire's experience and that his awareness of the broader educational task meant that "the personal is always political" (p. 152). It is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into the depth and complexity of Freire's Pedagogy of Hope. However, in having identified some of the essential ingredients of Freirean

hope, it is my hope to illuminate some aspects of this through walking as a wandering ethic of (re)location.

Walking: a wandering ethic of (re)location

The wandering and wondering of walking have long been the attention of nature writers, poets, philosophers, sociologists and more. It was 1862, in his essay on 'Walking', when transcendentalist Henry Thoreau stated, "I have never met with but one or two persons in the course of my life who understood the art of Walking, that is, of taking walks—who had a genius, so to speak, for sauntering". Thoreau's emphasis on "sauntering" was quite deliberate. Living on the cusp of industrialization, his essay on walking was a critical account of that time and the social, political and environmental implications of industrialization. The walking mode of "sauntering" was a commentary on the loss of freedom to wander the countryside due to the privatization of property as well as a life divided in terms of work and leisure.

The grid-like imposition forced upon cultures and societies from industrialized worldviews, changed the nature of walking drastically. Walking reflects the wider social and cultural dimensions of societies at various points in time as many authors have noted (Adams, 2001; Edensor, 2010; Ingold, 2010). As Wylie (2005) points out, "there is no such thing as 'walking-in-itself', no certain physical motion which is, as it were, universal and pure" (p.235). He situates walking in two categories: one being "discursive registers" such as pilgrimage, wayfaring, exercise, protest, and the other as "particular modes of engagement" such as strolling, hiking, adventure, purposeful (marching, herding) (p. 235). The walking I engage in fits into the "discursive register" as wandering.

The significance of walking has, on the surface at least, been obscured by mechanized modes of movement in recent times (Ryan, 2013). Gros (2014) positions walking's appeal in the context of modernity through its "simplicity", "transgression" and "the call of the great outdoors" (p. 5). The temporal and spatial qualities of slowness as "stretching time and deepening space" are also highlighted as important antidotes to modernity (Gros, p. 37). Ryan (2010) attributes walking as "an antidote to the ill effects and disembodied rapidity of vehicular travel" (p. 12). The walking pace of three miles per hour is juxtaposed in the rapidity of time in a hyper-mobile world. Solnit (2001) observes how "moving on foot seems to make it easier to move in time, the mind wanders from plans to recollections to observations" (p.5). In proposing a wandering ethic of (re)location, I suggest the mind and body wander with/in a constant inter/intra-action with the surroundings across time and space.

The temporal and spatial dimensions of lived experience during the pandemic has radically altered. Payne (2003) describes the nature of (post)modern lived experience as "the escalation in the everyday of: (i) enigmatic time; (ii) mobile places and fluid spaces; (iii) the compression of such times, places and spaces; and (iv) the intensification of (i), (ii) and (iii) through the use of technologies" (p. 175). However, at the global level, for instance, a major impact of the pandemic has been the diminished hyper-mobility and subsequent slowing down of people. Consequently, the local is becoming more prominent and present.

This has significant implications for walking. Edensor (2000) notes that "the material, spatial, sensual and temporal contingencies of any walk" (p. 100) bring the walker into direct experience through the movement with/in space and time. The walker comes to know their location on foot. This paper pays attention to the temporal and spatial nature of walking by charting the terrain of a wandering ethic of (re)location. I use 're' in front of 'location' to relate to the (dis)locations that have occurred as a consequence of the pandemic. The word location infers an act of doing, such as to locate or be located. So, to walk, is to locate oneself.

The ontology of the body from the phenomenological perspective requires a brief overview in this (re)presentation of walking as an embodied practice. Phenomenologist Maurice

Merleau-Ponty (1962) states that the body immersed in the world is central to the generation of knowledge, which he refers to as the “body–subject”. This ontology understands mind and body together as constitutive of experience. As Ryan (2012) explains:

The physical body holds a conversation with the topography through which it moves. This conversation is imprinted on both material and mental bodily memories, generating a spatiality that equally belongs to both realms, thus drawing them together as one: body and mind as collaborative vehicles through which different types of knowledges of the world can be achieved (p. 44).

The key point made is that the moving body is a sensing, feeling, knowing body that perceives things with/in an ecology of many things: material, corporeal, aesthetic, more-than-human.

Including the body and mind with/in ecologies, the ecological phenomenology of Alphonso Lingis (1998, 2007) has guided my realist interpretation of the richness and depth of embodied experiences. His writing is a blend of corporeal and affectual narratives that relate to ethical concerns (van Manen, 2014). Lingis’s evocative writing transcends discrete subjective descriptions of responses to land, the weather and material objects. He presents the surroundings as alive, active and animate, transcending the subject across fields of sensibilities, tonalities and forces:

... that darkness and light, the sensuous depths, chromatic hue, sonority, textures, the useful but also the enormity of non–useful things we perceive, and the other living species are not simply linguistic and social constructs; they are as real as we are and order us, order our sensibility and our movements. (Lingis, 2012, p. 172)

Lingis’s affectual philosophy of perception, brings alive the embodied qualities and characteristics of walking as emergent from with/in and between self–other–ecology. Therefore, the embodied nature of walking in location is considered in ethical and pragmatic ways, as a wandering ethic of (re)location.

In doing so, I adopt a critical ontology of the body and central to this is the notion of “walking-with” (Spinggay and Truman, 2018; 2019). As a method, walking-with makes explicit the ‘withness’ of walking that disrupts singularized views of the walking self and the associated hegemonic tendencies. For example, the popularized walking tropes such as the flâneur are problematic. Spinggay and Truman (2019) state how the flâneur “is conditioned by autonomy, ability, Whiteness and masculinity, and as such he is able to walk anywhere, detached from the immediate surroundings” (p. 4). Spinggay and Truman explain the notion of “withness”.

Withness is not simply about group walking practices, but rather emphasizes complicated relations and entanglements with humans, non-humans, Land, and an ethics of situatedness, solidarity and resistance (p. 4).

This perspective brings forth the agency of walking as a means of location with/in the heterogeneous nature of relationships between the multiple parts of location. Furthermore, Instone (2015) explains that ‘walking-with’ “... highlights mutuality, respect, plurality, and engenders a respectful ‘being–for’ in the sense of kindling practices of movement and engagement” (p. 137). These are ethical ways of being in the world that align with the intent of Freire’s Pedagogy of Hope. A hope that the world be a better place.

In relation to land, absenced histories that lay within the land must also be recognized and brought present (Spinggay and Truman, 2018). Therefore, a single definition of land(scape) is problematic. In Australia, Plumwood (2006) states that “to describe the land as a ‘landscape’ is to privilege the visual over other, more rounded and embodied ways of knowing

the land, for example, by walking over it” (p. 123). The devastating impact of settler colonialism and imperialism that has been imposed on land in Australia and the dislocation of First Nation peoples is inherent in this statement by Plumwood. Springgay and Truman (2018) make an important point and a caution, that ‘walking-with’:

becomes a movement of thought not only with others, but a process of engaging with erased or disavowed histories. It is also a moving re-engagement with the ways that the earth and the elements have been understood, protected, feared and treasured. (p. xii)

These ethical dimensions are important to acknowledge as inseparable from walking experiences in location and are integral to adopting a wandering ethic of (re)location.

Critical reflexivity of walking and writing

To access, describe and interpret walking from sensory, embodied experience is challenging. There are limitations in what can be described and textually (re)presented. As a qualitative methodology, it is generative and messy. Law (2004) calls this “method assemblage” and describes it as:

... the crafting or bundling of relations in three parts: (a) whatever is in–here or present (for instance a representation or an object); (b) whatever is absent or manifest (that is, it can be seen or described, is manifestly relevant to the presence); and (c) whatever is absent but is Other because, while necessary to presence, it is also hidden, repressed or uninteresting. (p. 161)

This description of method assemblage supports Springgay and Truman’s (2018) methodological approach to ‘walking-with’ as a “moving re-engagement” with elements and the absent, erased histories (p. xii). Acknowledging what is present and otherwise absent, provides a way to access the enigmatic, unknown and unfamiliar qualities that arise whilst walking.

The method of (re)presentation of a walk I use is an autoethnographic sensory narrative. It is both a presentation and representation of my walking. First person narratives of lived experience are powerful because they can provide accounts of living contradictions, convergences and uncertainties (Ellis, 2004). The reflexive examination of the self within the broader context that is revealed can make personal experiences visible and therefore may present “personal accounting and ethical dilemmas” as they are constructed and present within “the life–worlds they inhabit and research” (Humberstone, 2011, p. 499). When examining experiences in/of/with location, this approach is well situated to reveal what emerges with/in my body–time–space.

The method of writing is a process of reflecting and engaging. It is “a form of inquiry, writing, and/or performance that puts questions and ‘issues of being’ into circulation and dialogue”, referred to as Mimesis (Holman Jones, Adams and Ellis, 2016, p. 38). Following Nicol (2013), I draw upon three data sources: direct experiences, memory of experiences and, reflections of experiences. In capturing my sensorial, embodied walking, I used a digital recorder whilst walking in short intervals of one or two minutes. I did not want that to dominate my experience. After returning home, I recorded memories, feelings and sensations in my Journal. There were periods of reflection, research and writing that helped refine the impressions. The purpose of adopting the mode of impressionism is to “create an overall experience for readers [using] language, rhythm, and silence to create the sense of research/field experiences” (Adams, Holman and Ellis, 2015, p. 86). Van Maanen (2011) explains that an “impressionist tale” is “not about what usually happens but what rarely happens” (p. 102). Impressions are made during the narrative and are highlighted in bold and italicized.

As an interpretive tool, the inductive process of scoping emergent data is used to maintain empirical closeness. Payne (2018b) explains that scoping “across the different relational scales of spatiality, temporality and intercorporeality” (p. 179) provides an effective way to

access and describe embodied experiences. There are limitations of correspondence, as Payne (2018b) elaborates, “what representationally (albeit textually/discursively) is presented by the researcher ... in the scoping of a particular Scape invariably reveals what is also absented (textually/discursively) in the ‘others.’” (177). Scalar dimensions of my scoping are organized as micro (body-time-space), meso (social-cultural) and macro (global-cosmos) (Payne, 2018a, p. 75). Whilst scoping attempts to organize descriptions of walking experiences as a first step in interpreting findings, not all experiences are recorded, remembered or recognized.

Pinks’s (2015) principles of sensory ethnography (perception, place, knowing, memory and imagination) has helped guide the interpretative and reflective stages in the research that help to elaborate on social-cultural-ecological points of stress in relation to questions of location. In addition, Pink’s notion of “research encounters ... requires us to understand how we as researchers move through, experience and participate in research contexts” (p. 95). The sensory, embodied nature of this research, as Pink describes, offers the researcher “a corporeal route to the sensorial and emotional affects” of the research encounter “which themselves are ways of ethnographic knowing” (p. 147). This corporeal process of paying attention via direct experience is, in itself, a pedagogical encounter as well as a research encounter.

Prior to the sensory narrative, a short pre-ambule follows that sets the scene.

Pre-ambule: smoke, dust and a virus

Over the past eight months, spanning November 2019 to June 2020, multiple sites of (dis)location and (re)location have and are occurring. In November 2019, bushfires raged in areas of New South Wales and in ecosystems that had not experienced fire such as the ancient rainforests in the north of the State. Not only were specific locations burnt but the fires were felt in cities such as Sydney. Smoke and ash settled for weeks, bringing those bushfires into the lungs of the city and the humans who inhabit it. By December and January, the southeast of New South Wales was ablaze and smoke, dust and ash moved in the stratosphere that touched places hundreds of kilometres away, including at our home in Castlemaine, central Victoria.

Prior to the pandemic, I would travel to Queensland on a regular basis to visit my elderly parents. Driving the two to three day road journey through central New South Wales in January 2020, I witnessed and experienced a massive dust storm that enveloped my car. Fortunately, I was just five kilometres outside a town where I could shelter for the night. Talking to locals, these storms were occurring weekly which was unprecedented – the climate is changing.



Dust storm, central New South Wales, Photo by Author

Emerging at the same time was a global pandemic. The ‘lockdown’ began late March in central Victoria. People had to remain in their local area and could only move from home for ‘essentials’ such as food and work deemed as ‘essential’. A significant change of spatial-temporal experiences for all ages and backgrounds of people unfolded. Bearing witness to these multiple sites and events of catastrophic impacts on all living beings and environments, raised within me and collectively, the alarm of human induced social-ecological injustices and impacts.

A backdrop to this: I had completed my PhD in November 2019. An eight year project juggling a busy full time academic role. This role came to a sudden end with yet another restructure and job losses across the Faculty of Education. 2019 was a year of grieving that personal loss but also the collective loss of the value of teaching in the face of corporatization of Universities. However, I received the gift of time and space and this gift has been extended during these periods of lockdowns. I walk locally on a regular basis. Here is one account.

Sensory narrative: A walk from my door

Where less gives way to more

I live on Dja Dja Wurrung country in the town of Castlemaine in central Victoria and pay respects to elders and custodians, past, present and emerging. The land in this region is called “upside down” country (<http://www.djadjawurrung.com.au/land/>) as it was turned upside down in the 1800s with pastoral incursions of cattle and sheep, and gold mining. Inspired by Australian nature writer Mark Tredinnick (2009), and as part of my PhD thesis (Blades, 2019), I adopted his metaphor of “less gives way to more” as it resonated with my interest to understand my local area on foot. The excerpt below by Tredinnick is written about his location in the Blue Mountains, west of Sydney, New South Wales:

... to walk here where nothing is tall, for the winds howl; to walk where everything, except the merest scratch of red or yellow, is decked out in grey or grey-green or black or off-white – to walk here is to join a lyric essay in restraint. It is to know the loveliness of sclerophyll forms – the beauty of what is leathery, tough, thin and spare. Here’s where you can learn where less gives way to more (p. 250).

Tredinnick’s lyric essay is a beautiful account of pedagogical encounters where to learn in the restraint and seemingly mundane bush, is the richness of what it offers. To walk in my local ‘upside down’ country is to witness restraint also. The hot, dry conditions in summer, the present histories of gold mining can be unsettling. I say to myself – I am a settler here in this land for only a short while having migrated here from Queensland. Walking helps me come to know this location. Another layer has emerged in this location – the pandemic. The social struggles mingle with the ecological struggles and the cultural struggles of the Dja Dja Wurrung that have been here for over two hundred years. Where “less gives way to more” (Tredinnick), became a metaphor as part of my wandering ethic of (re)location.

During this period of ‘lockdowns’ in communities, towns and cities across the State of Victoria, varying degrees of movement and reasons for movement have been implemented. Walking can occur, so one can step outside and just walk (with some limitations). A walk I often do is from my door at home into town and back to home. I composed the narrative after walking this route one day during the pandemic lockdown when it had taken effect in April 2020. The walk is about six kilometres one way. Sections of the walk are linked with footprint images.

I begin: walking out my door.



Micro: I set off along our stony sandstone track at home. Making contact with the stones gives unevenness and some alteration in my gait as I adjust. A cool breeze meets my face as I follow the single form track through scattered grey box trees. The brim of my hat makes contact with a spider's web that is on the path. I stop, step back and see a large dark spider scurrying along its web. I crouch down and walk under it.

Meso: Land cleared in the past is indicated by the re-growth of these small, thin grey box trees. The shrub, Cassinia, is present as it grows well in disrupted land. A new housing development next door reveals the pressure on population growth in this region. But the design is not climatically appropriate with large dark rooves and air conditioning units. There is an eerie silence amongst the streets of these new houses. No sign of people. Cars parked in driveways are evidence of 'stay at home' directives.

Macro: Less use of fossil fuels gives more health back to the cosmos.

Impression: There is stillness in movement expanding time and space.



Micro: The single foot track (and kangaroo pathway) opens to a wider vehicle track. Houses appear in my view – the house with the two small dogs that nip at my feet when I go past; the house with old cars, rusty metal, long grass hiding them. Dust blows across the track from the landscaping supplies place I walk past. The sound of machinery manoeuvring to move gravel and soil dominates the scape. I pause at a large tree stump and observe the old grooves and hollows curled and curved in the greyness of its remains. I wonder what it looked like when alive; how big it could have been!

Meso: To see someone walk along this track and road is unusual. I feel like a stranger in my local place. It is the road people drive along to get landscaping supplies or go to the rubbish tip. The track is busier than usual with cars and trailers of rubbish or soil are present, signifying people at home doing things at home.

Macro: Ancient Aboriginal culture buried and bulldozed in sites of rubbish and resource use.

Impression: Walking pace brings detail to view and things entangle across time that are otherwise absent.



Micro: Walking off the gravel vehicle track, my shoes meet the bitumen. Heel to toe motion is evenly spaced and placed on the smooth surface of the road. Solid underfoot, my awareness

of posture and ease of walking is present, arms swaying by my side. I'm not wearing my rigid walking boots but rather, a thin, single layer of rubber is all that is in between my feet and the ground. This enables me to sense the bones in my feet as they move with the action of my walking gait.

At the same time, I hear bottles crash in a cascade, like a wave, the rubbish tip. Then the sound of dogs barking arises as I pass the animal refuge shelter. I notice a small group of sheep and wonder where they were found. My stride is even and steady as I continue along the bitumen road. I pass the water treatment and the sound of water being pumped and moved along with the pungent odour of the town's sewerage treatment plant, suddenly came to my attention. At walking pace, I look carefully at the 'old school site' that the local Landcare group looks after, noting the trees planted in recent years are doing well.

Meso: The infrastructure to support a town in this peri-urban zone is present. Environmental work relies upon Landcare volunteers who focus on restoring damaged landscapes. These activities have ceased during the 'lockdown' with human absence evident. Small trees in tree guards are visible signs of restorative work.

Macro: Waste accumulated by our consumer culture and the dilemmas of dealing with it. Looking in the direction of the dealing with recycling, a large red container is there to take the recycled goods (bottles) somewhere. I am reminded of environmental activist, Julia Butterfly-Hill's question of 'where is away?' (Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream Symposium, 2010).

Impression: The ground rises up within the peri-urban fringe with stories of land use for humans mainly present.



Micro: Following the road, I walk under a railway line and merge with the Castlemaine-Maldon walking & cycling Trail (https://www.mountalexander.vic.gov.au/Castlemaine_Maldon_Trail) which is a wide purpose made path. Usually the road is busy with cars and trucks, but they are noticeably rare, almost completely absent! I observe my surprise. The trail goes away from the road and merges with a narrow gravel path. Trees and shade surround me. I feel immersed in their canopies. Slowing my pace, I wander off the track to observe some planting by another Landcare group. The saplings look healthy. The path follows Campbells Creek and soon merges again with the main road into town. One side of me a road and the other, a creek. It feels like each side is moving with each step I take.

Meso: There is less stress environmentally and psychically with the absence of cars and the compression of time they bring. Walking is no longer what we do, except for fitness, health and recreation. However, I wonder as I wander and imagine how walking is changing within this pandemic. I have settled into a walking rhythm that enables me to breathe with the canopy of trees around me. The ribbon of track is like a space in-between the movements of town. Arriving at a place called Camp Reserve in town which is a sporting area, I pause there and imagine an Aboriginal camp at this creek confluence hundreds of years ago.

Macro: Vegetation regeneration gives hope to the cosmos.

Impression: Compression of time is stretched and metaphors such as 'time is money' are being ruptured.

Pausing

The familiar path I walk to and from town is still the same in appearance, but I sensed things had changed. Feelings that things are different, and uncertainty would arise, even when my senses would smell the wattle, see the old stump with its lines of age. The familiar walking path signage that keeps order – *keep left; proceed with caution* – echoes the government imperative of social movement in order to diminish the spread of COVID-19.



Imperatives arising, Photo by Author

Yet I was meeting the other, both present and absent. Walking solo but not in solitude, allowing my embodied subject-self walking and inter/intra-acting between materials, thoughts, imagination and actions. This wandering ethic of location is a becoming of aliveness in all that is present and absent. Braidotti (2006) affirms this:

The subject is an ecological entity ... This mode of diffuses yet grounded subject-position achieves a double aim: firstly it critiques individualism and secondly it supports a notion of subjectivity in the sense of qualitative, transversal and group-oriented agency (p. 41; as cited in Fawcett, 2009, p. 234).

My grounded subject-position whilst walking included qualities such as intimacy, presence, slowing down and repeated visits to locations. These were present in my walk into town and were heightened in the period of 'lockdown'.

The scalar dimensions of micro, meso, and macro had varying degrees of intensity. The micro levels were imminent and meso and macro levels emerged in the reflective stages of the research. There is a somatic sensitivity at work as the body moves in space and time at walking speed. During my walk I experimented with engaging my senses as fully as possible so that I was not seeing as an observer along this very familiar route into town but feeling and witnessing the sights, smells, sounds, touch and memories. One moment on the walk I paused by the creek and watched the water flow. Suddenly memories of my childhood emerged playing beside a creek near my family home.

The impressions that emerged were what claimed my attention that was contingent upon the time of day, the weather conditions and the overall impact of what I felt. Using the metaphor of ‘less gives way to more’ highlighted the social and environmental restraint. Restraints that are material and at the same time allusive. To walk, to wander, and witness the generative aliveness of all things yet at same not knowing what lies ahead. The destination is not fixed or certain, it changes and shifts, contingent upon past, present and future time. Less may not always give way to more but I can hope.

Discussion: walking-with hope

In walking-with my compass oriented towards Freirean hope, reminded me to be present and grounded in all parts of this research. Using this inductive, empirical approach to accessing my embodied nature of walking in location, also reveals the nature of my location as I walk. There was an aliveness to the movement, sensing and knowing that was not separate or discrete. Some of the key indicators are outlined in this section. They are not a cause of walking that has the effect of hope but rather, revealing, within the limitations of textual correspondences, a wandering ethic of (re)location that is learnt and engenders a pedagogy of hope.

Embodied awareness referred to as the “flesh” of the world by Merleau-Ponty (1968) presents a relational ontological view. This ontology of “flesh”, whereby the collective flesh that signifies both our flesh and the flesh of the world, is in dynamic exchange (Merleau-Ponty, p. 76). Abram (1997) drew on Merleau-Ponty’s work, focusing on the reciprocity between humans and the natural world. He examined what is referred to as synaesthesia, “the overlap and intertwining of the senses” (p. 124). The significance of Abram’s work is in his contribution to recognizing the wider ecology of things. “We may think of the sensing body as a kind of open circuit that completes itself only in the things, and in the world” (Abram, p. 125). This implies a moral and ethical imperative to attend to a greater sensitivity. This is the intent behind engaging with/in a wandering ethic of (re)location.

The nature of the interaction of walking-with culture and location reveal discursive and diverse entanglements between body-time-space. Edensor’s (2000) study of walking in the English countryside found how walking is “beset by conventions about what constitutes appropriate bodily conduct” (p. 83). Edensor describes the conventional arrangements as “mapped space” wherein walkers are called upon to perform “particular physical manoeuvres, directions, gazes and other procedures” (p. 92). His study reveals that rather than the walking body being a “site of liberation” from societal constraints and pressures, it “actually duplicates all these constraints” (Edensor, p. 100). The conditions for walking to replicate the social norms and expectations during the pandemic are evident. For example, “against the backdrop of health and well-being that promotes walking as a free and accessible way to exercise” (Sringgay & Truman, 2019, p. 3) people are walking! Walking during the pandemic is accessible in the ‘lockdowns’ and by default, due to other forms of exercise not being allowed such as gymnasiums, walking is prevalent. My observation is anecdotal but further research on community walking in locations would be valuable.

The nature of the interaction of walking-with culture and location can transform societal norms and expectations (Edensor, 2010). The intent behind engaging in my walk as a wandering ethic of (re)location was to witness the restraints and constraints in moving, sensing and knowing/learning as a pedagogy of hope. This is the possibility in this current historical juncture of the pandemic.

To elaborate on this point, Lingis (2007) is helpful. In mapping our location, Lingis (2007) describes how:

... for us to live here is to have a home here, to enjoy this town, these forests at the edge of the ocean ... What lies beyond the paths and implements we use and the objectives we work toward is not only the background of what is just on hand but what has broken down ... or left aside; beyond lies the alien, the elemental (p. 12).

My walk into town is familiar to me but it also holds unknown and unexpected elements. Repeating this walk on a regular basis is another key to engaging with/in a wandering ethic of (re)location. Lingis (1998) captures this in his description of elements as “sensuous realities ... and are there by incessant oncoming”. For example, “the ground rises in incessant presence ... it extends support its support before us ... and is there without guarantees for the future” (p. 14,15). “Without guarantees” is a powerful statement. It is unsettling and enables a desire for hope.

Closing

Some final words go to Springgay & Truman (2019) “...walking has become more than a utilitarian or pedestrian mode of getting from place to place; walking is an ethical and political call to collective action” (p. 2). In the spirit of Freirean hope, walking anchors us in an embodied practice to transform restraints, constraints and uncertainties. A wandering ethic of (re)location is enabling of, to use a phrase from Freya Mathews (2015), “reinhabiting as a praxis” whereby we come to understand “what the ground beneath our feet means” (p. 200). The local modalities of roads, people, environments, infrastructure layered with/n social and cultural conditions in time and space are what we learn from. Those present and those otherwise absent.

As a public pedagogy of hope, the restlessness, the despair, the uncertainty of these times can be met at walking pace as an “incessant oncoming” (Lingis, 1998, p. 14) in the public locations of the everyday. Taking ethical responsibility in the forms of attentiveness, listening, sensing and respect are integral to a wandering ethic of (re)location. As I stated in the introduction, walking can locate us, and it can also bring attention to not only what is present but what is otherwise absent - the other human and more-than human. The absent becoming public. The despair becoming hopeful.

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