REAL MATERIAL ETHEREAL

Proceedings of the Annual Design Research Conference 2019

Edited by Laura Harper

Published in Melbourne Australia, by Monash University, 2020
ISBN: 978-1-921994-52-4

The bibliographic citation for this paper is:

Matt Gunn. "Wayfaring Maps: A Place of Departure and Return." In *Proceedings of the Annual Design Research Conference 2019: Real/Material/Ethereal,* edited by Laura Harper, 219-227. Melbourne: Monash University, 2020

Wayfaring Maps: A Place of Departure and Return

Abstract

These maps were drawn on the isthmus known as the Neck on Bruny Island (lunawanna-alonnah). This tenuous geomorphology is one that both connects and protects, and this psychological and material presence is amplified in the context of anthropogenic climate change. The nature of rapid climate change, as a break from largely predictable patterns of the Holocene epoch, is not just about destruction of the environment and its biodiversity. It is also about the undermining of sedentary modes of existence. To acknowledge this condition is to see that in a condition of rapid climatic change, adaptive modes of being can create an alternative cosmography. My drawings withdraw from mapping as a utility for settlement and prognosis, returning to a continual process of discovery in drawing and wayfaring. Mapping in this way is not about representing the form of place through projection. It is about creating a productive process in movement, understanding place as the simultaneous location and un-location of being. My drawings reflect the conditions of environmental disjuncture, as they continually refuse to acknowledge what and where they are. They reconceptualise mapping as a performative production in a condition of departure and return. They frame mapping as an experiential process, creating a transformative and symbolic potential within the architectural discipline.

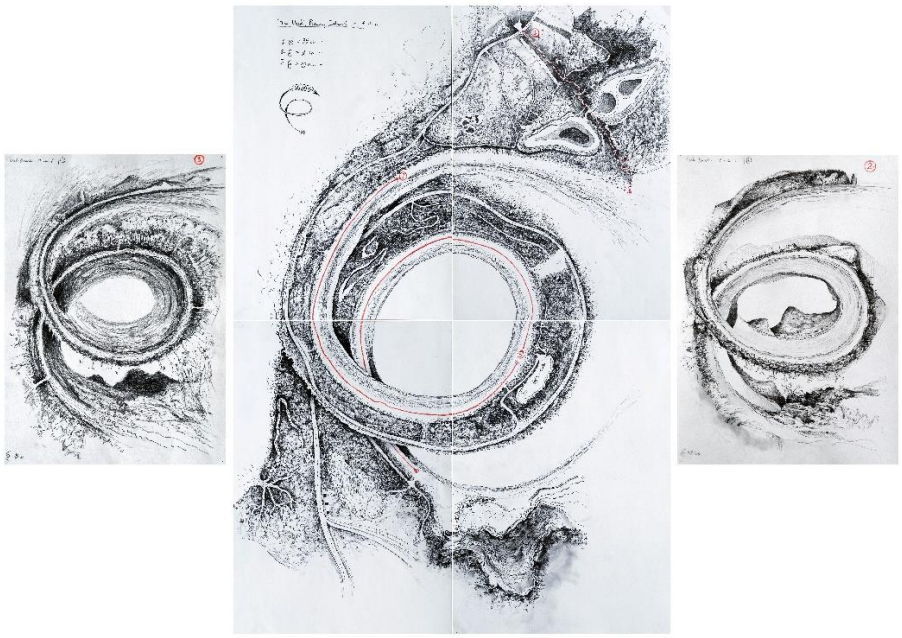

Figure 1. Matt Gunn, *Wayfaring Maps*, 2018

Statement of Research Significance

An experience of climatic change has historically been indivisible from adaptive modes of being. The experiential relationship to climate has largely been built on an existence of movement, flexibility, opportunism in a condition of the nomadic or the sojourn[1]. For the nuenonne of *lunawanna-alonnah*, less concentrated resources meant a relatively large set of specialised skills and activities that was afforded by a seafaring. Prior to colonialisation, their experience of this region was based on seasonal rhythms in movement as the foundation for a lifeworld. They inhabited territory that was encompassed by rich hunting zones where boundaries coincided with well-marked geographical features, such as rivers and lagoons. These boundaries ranged from a sharp, well-defined line associated with prominent geographical features, to a broad transition zone that was typically built on a friendly relation between other groups[2]. Groups broke up, dispersed or reformed according to need. In times of natural disaster, such as drought, a group on the east coast might disperse into other 'hearth' groups and visit other areas where there were relatives in other groups[3]. Adaptability through the ability to roll with climatic change was a necessity of life.

To exist in such a mode resonates with an intuition most would agree to, one that speaks to that tired adage of change being the only constant in life. Or, put in a more eloquent form articulated by Henri Bergson: 'Matter or mind, reality has appeared to us as a perpetual becoming. It makes itself or unmakes itself, but it is never something made[4]'. But those intuitions of the inherently groundless nature of existence are not how most of the world exists; the permanently grounded remains the functionally dominant, material mode of being. The now entrenched sedentary urban culture, economic condition, and scale of human population makes moving to a more convivial location virtually impossible for almost everyone. Then there is a technological aspect which has seen the increasing deployment of engineered environments that inhibit climatic adaptation. As such, this transforms the relationship between climate and experience. As Brian Fagan pointed out in *The Long Summer: How Climate Changed Civilization*; our sedentary lifestyle has afforded a cushioning against smaller and more frequent climate stresses. However, this has made us more vulnerable to larger catastrophes. Viewed as such, the dominant course of modern civilisation is a 'process of trading-up on the scale of climatic vulnerability[5]'.

The purpose of my maps is to explore these contrasts of the *fluid* and the *concrete*, their significance residing in the continual relation of wayfaring, enaction and thinking (fig. 2). The discoveries have thus far arrived in the rhythmic conditions of departure and return that guides their production, and their connection to architectural production and praxis. By explicitly turning to drawing in movement, they look beyond sedentary structures and paradigms of

space that inhibit adaptive modes of being. As this process further develops, it is hypothesised to afford potentials for creating symbolic structures for architecture that surface through spatial syntaxes connected through motion within country[6]. An explicitly enactive development of drawing-in-wayfaring speaks to an account of the performative act and function of maps that has always existed. Yet, at the same time they heighten such semiotic potentials by continually offering new realities and narrative spaces in movement. Such 'fluid' forms of mapping in Christina Ljungberg's terms are more about process than finite objects; their 'protocols of cognition' are equally about generating processes of creating meaning while at the same time 'shaping the meaning of others[7]'.

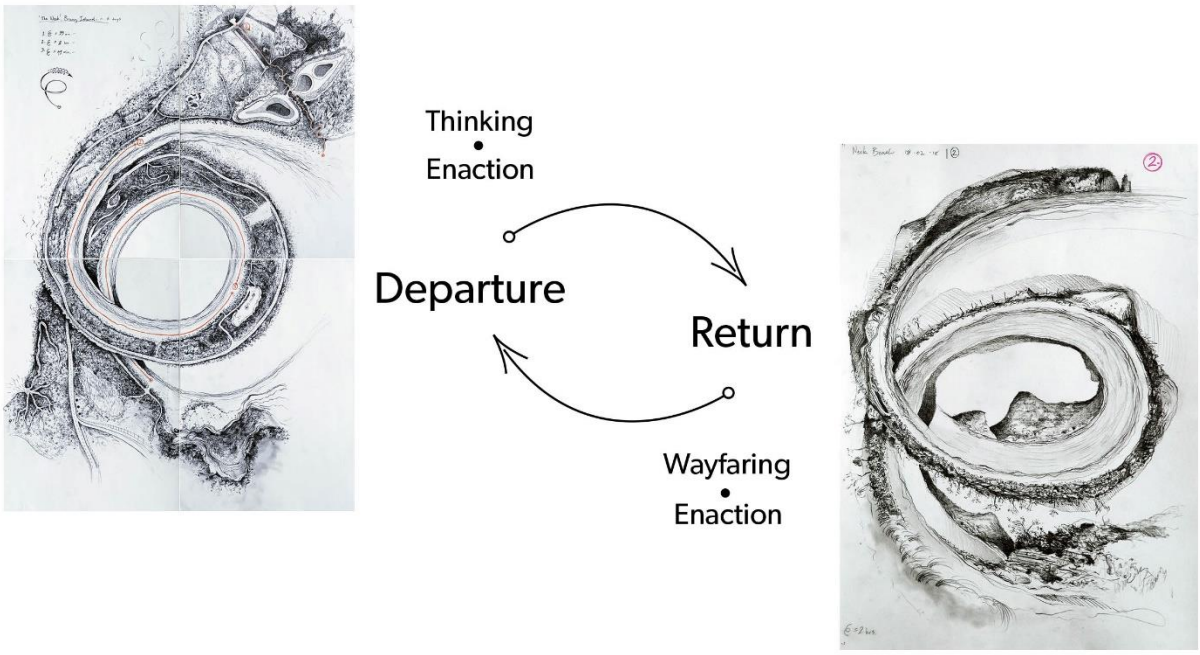

Figure 2. Mapping process: Wayfaring maps (right) produced on the Neck. The larger map (left) is then updated in the studio and marked with paths of the wayfaring maps.

Viewed as such, the meaning of my maps arrives in their conditions of departure and return, revealing the unitive process of their own making and looking. Such a realisation of drawing's intimate connection to time and movement has been rigorously explored by Tim Ingold within the domains of architecture, art and anthropology[8]. In contrast to whatever theorists or historians of art have to say about drawing, Ingold notes that drawing has potentially little or nothing to do with the projection of images and everything to do with the path-journey; 'with breaking a path through a terrain and leaving a trace, at once in the imagination and on the ground, in a manner very similar to what happens as one walks along in a world of earth and sky[9]'. When viewed this way, the problem becomes one of how the make the drawn artefact

productive. In *Reading the Country: Introduction to Nomadology*, Paddy Roe has an expression for this type of production of his culture, one that is apt when referring to this *static* problem of drawing; 'We must make these things move[10]'.

Ingold also touches on this static problem of drawing, inspired by Henri Bergson's claim that every living being is inscribed in the current of life[11]. Ingold attempted to illustrate this idea (albeit more simply than my maps) by creating a single-lined drawn circle. In this he pointed to a simple truth that seemingly goes without saying: in the completed drawing of a circle using a pencil and paper, the trace and curving movement that went into the drawing's production is not seen in the completed form[12]. And within this figure is the division between what is inside and outside. Continuing to draw from Bergson, he noted that in a similar way, we are inclined to view the living being as an externally bounded object, or as a container for life that spirals in on itself. Yet life, Ingold maintains is not contained in things; 'It is movement itself, wherein every organism emerges as a particular disturbance that interrupts the linear flow, binding it into the forms we see[13]'. My maps are continually focused on overcoming this inactive situatedness of the bounded object. This occurs in the acknowledgement that their production is continuous and without a stated ending. Performed as such, the drawn artefacts become punctuations; rhythmic pauses in the beat of departures and returns that manifest my sojourned connection to the Neck. This rhythm is communicated in the relation between the smaller drawings (fig 2. right) that are produced in the return to specific sites while wayfaring. The larger central drawing (fig 2. left) is then updated from memory after the departure and worked-up in studio. In addition, the larger map is marked with the journeyed paths of the wayfaring maps. These two elements work in concert as they co-define each other through the experience of constructing place.

The geometric form of the maps emerged when researching geological and climatic conditions of the Anthropocene. The helix structure has become an effective icon for geologists who need to communicate impossibly vast timescales, the compactness of the graphic offering such an affordance. Beyond this practical functionality, there exists an intuitive, symbolic communication of a recursive, spatiotemporal theme. It reveals a poetic potentiality for engaging with the unfathomable timescales that are essential to any affective engagement with an Anthropocene thesis. As the practice develops further, this temporal affect will be further exploited, not only at larger scales that communicate the impression of land into its form. But also, for recording more minute scales of erosion that expose strata and tell the history of the Neck's making. An account of the temporal has been thoroughly missing in static, Cartesian forms of mapping. In addition to this; the spiral of the helix in a circular form creates a void where Cartesian, spatial dichotomies of *centre* and *periphery* are conveniently ejected.

Within this practice there exists a conciliatory and productive potential for praxis. This can be affectively experienced and communicated through drawing. The potential significance of such a relationship has been investigated in Paul Carter's *Dark Writing: geography, performance, design*. The relationship here touches on what Carter diagnoses as the 'Great Divide' in the dialectic between images and ideas within the domain of design. Carter notes a seeming binary between those practitioners with ties to humanities and social sciences who possess sophisticated skills of critique, yet (in a somewhat terse description) 'don't know how to do anything'. On the other side of this divide (in an equally terse description) are the designers and visualisers on 'digital steroids' who have lost touch with place-making[14]. On both sides of the border of this divide, drawing is a core skill that on one side 'draws conclusions, and on the other, draws lines'[15]. Drawing in this way can thus become a space of negotiation; 'a figure of shared speech shared by both parties, and therefore a site of reconciliation[16]'. As Carter went on to point out by way of John Berger's "ways of seeing"; perhaps drawing has never been representational and has always been a way of notating time and form in movement[17].

A central insight Tim Ingold makes into drawing – one that also addresses Carter's dialectic between thinking and making – is its capacity to examine intransient modes of production. In Ingold's terms, this is to set the verb 'to produce' alongside intransitive verbs, such as 'to hope, to grow, to dwell' this contrasts with transitive verbs, such as 'to plan, to make, to build[18]'. The intransitive turn takes place-making as an active and productive process, where one is constantly in a process of co-evolution or co-definition within their situated environment. Unlike the transitive turn, it is not restricted by the bounds of the plan; 'It does not start with and image and finish with an object but carries on through, without beginning or end, punctuated – rather than initiated or terminated[19]'.

In her pluralistic inspection of Indigenous cosmologies, Deborah Bird Rose has referred to such punctuations of departure and return as 'the work of the world[20]'. She suggests that such work ensures that motion is not just random movement. Departures and returns organise life 'into patterns of connectivity that resolve themselves in eco-places[21]'. For Rose, eco-place is the plurality of embedded scales within country, a location that is not human-centred. It is a radical situatedness that is attentive to the many living things that participate in the world's ongoing renewal. Viewed in this way, movement is a creative process where drawing can further instantiate a world of difference and relationships, creating meaning through such patterns and connections.

Figure 3. Matt Gunn, *Wayfaring Maps*, 2018

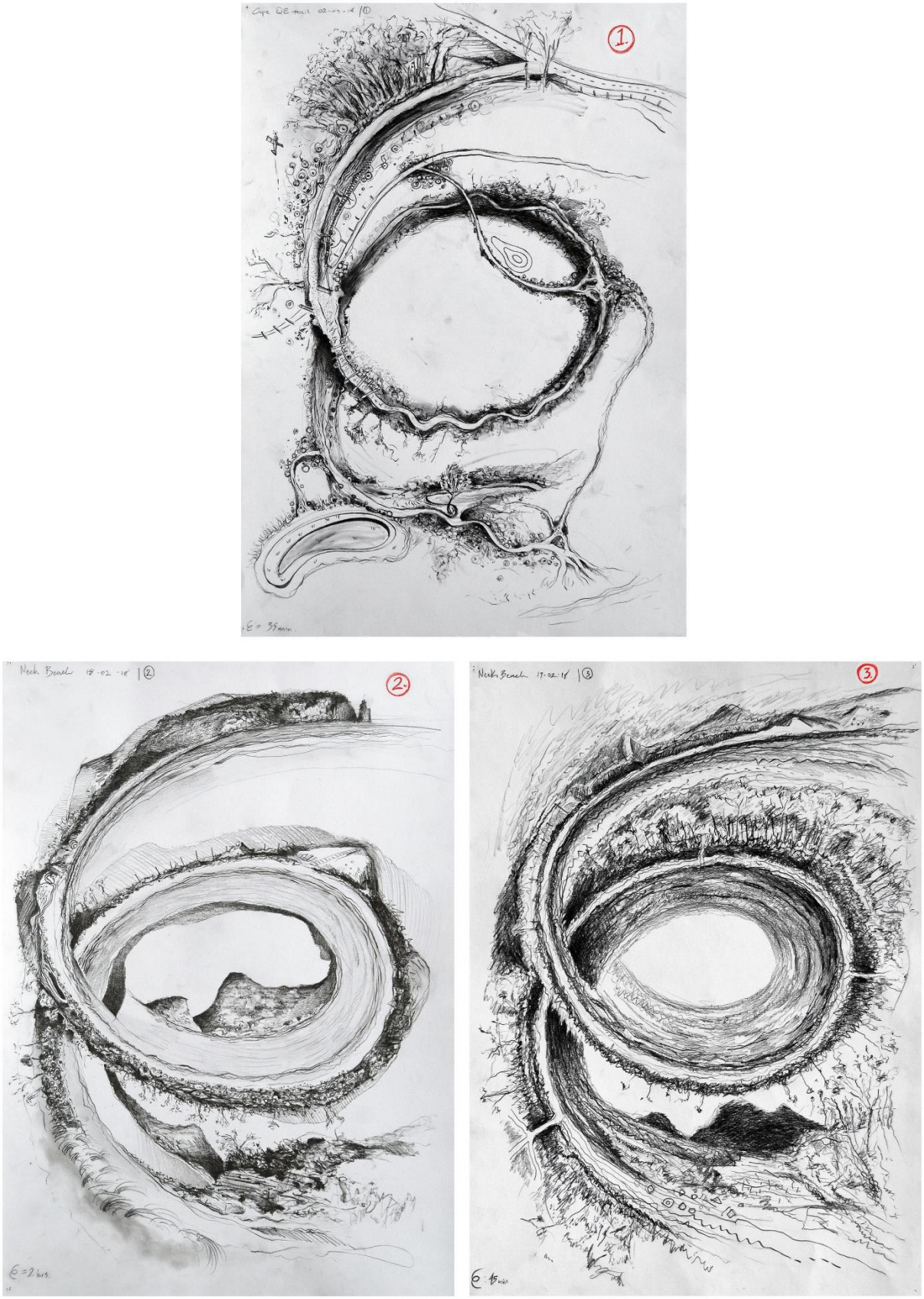

Figure 4. Matt Gunn, *Wayfaring Maps*, 2018

A continuous cosmos such as this, is one bound to the radical empiricism of a Phenomenological approach. To give a narrative account of the Neck's condition of disjuncture and erasure, requires an understanding of change. This is outlined by Rose as 'the interplay between the here and the not-here, the beat and the interval, movement that unfolds into real time[22]'. Indeed, modernity's abstraction of time and reification of space was but one method in the subalternisation of relational lifeworlds based in movement. Now, such an abstract relation to space and time is expressly defied by rapid climatic change. Any mapping activity that will prognosticate the future is realised as explicitly of the past; a mere wake trailing an ever-cresting present that will be perpetually and increasingly uncertain.

Through their repetitive enaction framed by a broad conception of wayfaring, my maps will continually explore the break-down of the Neck's cosmic order – its *cosmetics*. The symbolic order that potentially arises from this process may ultimately be negated by the Neck's finitude; thus falling into the narrative of 'anti-ecology' that eventually becomes an empty gesture. Because within its perpetual regression, normative and nomological order will be continually destroyed. Thus, the final significance of my maps may exist simply in their observation of disjuncture and the evacuation of conditions of reification. An ethereal nature emerging in their refusal to acknowledge where or what they ultimately are.

Endnotes

[1] Krim Benterrak, Stephen Muecke, and Paddy Roe, *Reading the Country: Introduction to Nomadology,* (Fremantle, Western Australia: Fremantle Arts Centre, 1984). Nomadism must be used carefully regarding Indigenous culture. It potentially deploys a single word to the lifestyle of an entire people. This is based on power relations of difference that have existed within colonialism and social sciences. Beyond this, recent discoveries have shown that Indigenous culture was thoroughly adept at agriculture and aquaculture, as can be seen in with the addition of the Budj Bim site to the World Heritage List. 'A counter-strategy is to call nomadism a practice and a knowledge potentially present in relation to any event, potentially effective in relations to any struggle for survival' p. 271.

[2] Norman Barnett Tindale and Rhys Jones, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia: Their Terrain, Environmental Controls, Distribution, Limits, and Proper Names* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1974), 325.

[3] Lyndall Ryan, 'The Aboriginies in Tasmania, 1800-1974 and Their Problems with the Europeans' (Macquarie University, School of Historical, Philosophical and Political Studies, 1975), 20.

[4] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 1944 ed. (New York: Random House Inc., 1911), 296.

[5] Brian Fagan, *The Long Summer: How Climate Changed Civilization* (London: Granta Books, 2004), 15.

[6] John J Bradley, '"Whitefellas Have to Learn About Country, It Is Not Just Land": How Landscape Becomes Country and Not Just an "Imagined" Place', in *The Place of Landscape: Concepts, Contexts, Studies* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2011), 51. Here 'country' is not synonymous with Western notions of landscape. It is taken to mean a plurality of sites that encompass; home, place, earth, land, soil, dirt, possessions, sea, or reef etc. Landscape can contain multiple countries connecting as a series of intermeshing places and events.

[7] Christina Ljungberg, 'Cartographies of the Future: Julie Mehretu's Dynamic Charting of Fluid Spaces', *The Cartographic Journal* 46 (1 November 2009), 309,

[8] Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Tim Ingold, *The Life of Lines* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

[9] Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, 178.

[10] Benterrak, Muecke, and Roe, *Reading the Country*, 22.

[11] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 31.

[12] Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, 13.

[13] Ingold, 13.

[14] Paul Carter, *Dark Writing: Geography, Performance, Design* (University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 15.

[15] Carter, 15.

[16] Carter, 15.

[17] Carter, 273.

[18] Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, 6.

[19] Ingold, 6.

[20] Deborah Bird Rose, 'Dance of the Ephemeral: Australian Aboriginal Religion of Place', in *Experiences of Place* (Harvard University Press, 2003), 178.

[21] Rose, 178.

[22] Rose, 179.