

ANGELA ROCKEL

John Kinsella and Russell West-Pavlov, *Temporariness: On the Imperatives of Place*
Narre Franck Attempto Publishing, 2018, 372 pp hb, ebook
ISBN 9783823381747, RRP \$AU114

How can we live our connections with place in the Anthropocene? How can we language those connections? How does the writing and reading and teaching of literature and the other arts relate to this project? *Temporariness* is a conversation around questions such as these, between John Kinsella and Russell West-Pavlov, but also between/among and in the presence of other interlocutors, most notably Kinsella's partner Tracy Ryan and their son Tim; West-Pavlov's students and colleagues in the German academy where he teaches; other artists and writers and especially the poet Hölderlin as encountered in the late poems; and all who want to challenge the "entity of ideology and power" (323) that comprises the corporate "team" behind current approaches to land management and community life in Australia and elsewhere.

The book takes the form of "call-and-response" (29) exchanges between Kinsella and West-Pavlov via "a sequence of place-based soliloquies" that "mix the genres of the anecdote, the chronicle, the micro-travel narrative, the essay, and the philosophical/theoretical meditation" (301). It entangles, defers, circulates ideas and actions in "a series of overlapping dialogues (held simultaneous[ly] in different spatialities)" (130). Many of these dialogues, which augment and contest and illustrate one another and include poems and photographic images made by the authors, relate to journeys taken separately and together by West-Pavlov and Kinsella and his family in Germany, Ireland, Australia, England and countries on the Adriatic coast. These journey-places "meshwork" (97) a matrix in which the writers organise and articulate their sense of how/if connection to place is possible, and their responses to their connections where made, and how reparation/s of damage/s to place/s might begin. Journeys also situate and provide starting points for the more formal essays in the collection.

For Kinsella, responsiveness to place comes from an "Activist Poetics" arising out of his realisation that, since childhood, his writing has increasingly been concerned with "'tracking' environmental destruction and climate change" (90). Over a lifetime of writing, as "activism became the major focus of [his] interaction with 'public space'" (90), the journaling that informs his poetic practice has become a means of thinking with/about "how to create a dialogue between the poetic act and the activist movement" (90). Several of the pieces included in the book are examples of this interconnection between journaling that develops an ("anarchist vegan pacifist" [37]) activist ethos and the poems that give voice to this ethos. And the poems are "active" in a variety of ways, as when they are spoken in performance to the bulldozers and their driver-developers and emplaced in their (ephemeral) materiality: a photograph (and there are other examples throughout the book) shows a poem page placed next to a patch of bulldozed bushland (40).

West-Pavlov's responses to the troubles that are deepening in every place are inflected via his engagement with literature as reader, writer and teacher. Disheartened by the way so much intellectual effort goes into "reproducing consecrated knowledge within a closed bubble of academic discourse" (87) with the sole aim of achieving recognition/publication/promotion and funding, he seeks instead to encourage, for himself and his colleagues and students, an attitude of staying with and speaking to "the rapid transformations and multiple crises of the world we live in" (87). He argues for "an animism in the classroom – a sense of co-agency infusing every aspect of the teaching environment" (89). In this kind of "classroom as Country," "teaching and learning is a constantly transforming interaction" (89) that entangles affect and idea and language in a process that "spreads out beyond the four walls of the classroom to connect up with the world" (89) and its pressing concerns. This is the work that could "reconnect the transformative power of concepts and the transformative power of actions" (117) so that the humanities can "foreground an education in the creative work of the imagination ... that capacity to generate novel solutions for a world gridlocked in a global pattern of self-destruction" (117).

West-Pavlov's argument for animation of the teaching/learning environment engages Kinsella's on how poetry works: "Would the poem, as a zone of altered perception, not exert an influence ... To understand the world differently might then exert a tangible transformation of material relations ... Everything makes something happen, and poetry is no exception" (53). For both writers, the late poetry of Friedrich Hölderlin becomes a touchstone for how an activist poetics might produce such "zones of altered perception" and how each successive reader/ing might engage with them. As West-Pavlov puts it, citing the late poem "Patmos" as an example: "Threat never remains the same ... one must have recourse ... to modes of rescue that never remain the same. Hölderlin already knows this, as he translates the post-revolutionary present of the first decade of the nineteenth century via the biblical, apocalyptic past. The same thing is done ... by each generation that reads (and thus 'applies' ...) or literally translates" (337) the work. The poem is able to respond to the exigencies of successive crises because it provides a "generalized theorem, only then to deposit it again in another context where it will take root [in specificity], however briefly" (334).

Kinsella takes this generative capacity of poetry and situates it, using Kim Scott's welcome poem for the new Perth Stadium, within the figure of the corporate "team" or "Club" (323–35) as a way to think with the work of writers (including Hölderlin!) in strategising individual and community activism. He shows how Scott's poem "undercuts corporate ownership of event and site while celebrating the communal coming together, the contest, the expression of competitive no-war" (329). "This is what poetry can do," he says, "to step beyond the reach of those teams who would have us perform their bidding. Instead of a team, here, we have a people, we have other people/s, and we have conversation" (330).

To sit with this text is to feel it elaborate itself within/among its elements and spread to bring in the work of writers and thinkers named and unnamed in the book – the poetry and prose of Tracy Ryan, David Brooks and Coral Hull, the sym-poiesis of Donna Haraway, Tim Ingold's ecological psychology, Eduardo Kohn's nonhuman ethnography to name a few. Thinking place-in-crisis,

walking it, talking and writing it, the book is a song-cry yelled back and forth across continents and centuries, urgent (it's been put together in a hurry; there are typos, some pages out of order – here – read this!). It's from two and their host of witnesses who want to wake the world, the academy, the boardroom; who ask what's meshworking and what's gridlock; what's people and what's The Club; they ask what it means to be in or on corporate teamtraining – who/how gets in, lets in. Keep Out! How to begin to stay out.