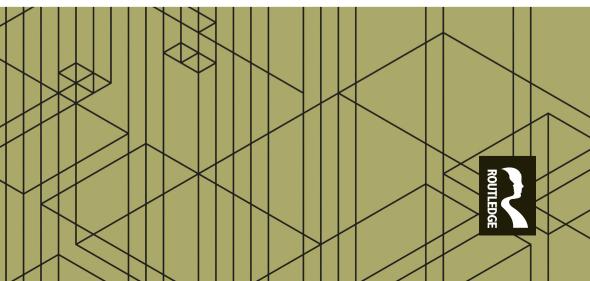# ARCHITECTURES OF OCCUPATION IN THE AUSTRALIAN SHORT STORY

LITERATURE AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AFTER 1900

Patrick West

Architectures of Occupation in the Australian Short Story

Patrick West's *Architectures of Occupation in the Australian Short Story* cultivates the potential for literary representations of architectural space to contribute to the development of a contemporary politics of Australian post-colonialism.

West argues that the predominance of tropes of place within cultural and critical expressions of Australian post-colonialism should be re-balanced through attention to spatial strategies of anti-colonial power. To elaborate the raw material of such strategies, West develops interdisciplinary close readings of keynote stories within three female-authored, pan-twentieth century, Australian short-story collections: *Bush Studies* by Barbara Baynton (1902); *Kiss on the Lips and Other Stories* by Katharine Susannah Prichard (1932); and *White Turtle: A Collection of Short Stories* by Merlinda Bobis (1999). The capacity of the short-story form to prompt creative and politically germinal engagements with species of space associated with architecture and buildings is underscored. Relatedly, West argues that the recent resurgence of binary thought—on local, national, and international scales—occasions an approach to the short-story collections shaped by binary relationships like a dichotomy of inside and outside. Concluding his argument, West connects the literary and architectural critiques of the story collections to the wicked problem, linked to ongoing colonial violences, of improving Australian Indigenous housing outcomes.

Innovative and interdisciplinary, this book will be of interest to scholars and students of Literary, Architectural, and Postcolonial Studies.

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Contents

Preface: Towards an 'Architectural Post-colonialism'—Aims, Methods, and Approach for a 'New Binarism', Ethics and Indigenous Material, Next Steps, and Outline of Chapters

Introduction

This is not a book about Acknowledgements of Country rituals or Welcome to Country ceremonies in any direct sense. It does, however, adopt as a placing shot the notion that these rituals and ceremonies are an index of the peculiar and marked predominance of place over space within the cultural and historical circumstances of Australian post-colonialism. Obviously, this is not to say that place, or cognate notions like land or country, are unimportant. It is, however, to lay the groundwork, I suggest, for a more productive understanding of the relationship between place and space, in which the opportunities of place need not be activated—at least, not in excessive measure—at the expense of the possibilities of space. Providing a testing ground for this proposition are three short-story collections, by female Australian writers, distributed over the length of the twentieth century, if clustered closer to 1900 than to 2000. These collections include *Bush Studies* by Barbara Baynton (1902); *Kiss on the Lips and Other Stories* by Katharine Susannah Prichard (1932); and *White Turtle: A Collection of Short Stories* by Merlinda Bobis (1999).

Aims of the Project

My aims for this book might be summarized as an ambition for an 'architectural post-colonialism'. Working from a social-justice perspective, I want to tease out how each of the three collections, in different ways, disrupts the colonial/imperial model of space as uni-directional—that is, travelling from the heart of empire outwards—and uni-dimensional—that is, impervious to the complexities introduced by the Indigenous other. Said differently: how might these collections, offering a fictional modelling of the world, short-circuit the power relations that have resulted, not least, in the comprehensive defeat of the recent Australian referendum 'to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice' (National Indigenous Australians Agency 2023)? How might each collection turn colonial space back on itself? Or find cracks therein? More specifically, I am interested in the more ambitious project of

how the modelling of different species of space contained in these texts might translate into improved housing outcomes for Indigenous Australians. I say more on this in the concluding Wind-Up.

Methods and Approach in the Context of a 'New Binarism'

Situating the three collections within a dialogue with relevant critical, theoretical, and philosophical, concepts of place and space, is one piece of my method. Another is my decision to work with space in its diverse instantiations as, and within, architecture and buildings. This is in part to make manageable, within the confines of one monograph, such a large topic. More significantly, it is a decision motivated by my hypothesis that this species of space—architecture, buildings—is most persistently and oddly absent from engagements, diverted via literature or otherwise, with Australian post-colonialism. Here, I think, lies scope to approach, freshly, post-colonial thematics of colonization, settlement, and occupation.

A third aspect of my method relates to my choice of a definition of architecture that seeks to conjoin it with what is often taken to be the larger, encompassing notion of buildings. Nikolaus Pevsner distinguishes architecture from buildings thus: 'Nearly everything that encloses space on a scale sufficient for a human being to move in is a building; the term architecture applies only to buildings designed with a view to aesthetic appeal' (Pevsner 1974, 15). In short, I modify Pevsner's understanding of architecture by removing the requirement for 'aesthetic appeal' (Pevsner 1974, 15). At the same time, I attempt to elevate, within his definition, the idea that enclosing space is always already space of considerable structural complexity. Underscoring the complexity of architectural space—as opposed to any association with aesthetics, beauty, or style—suits my project because it establishes a détente with the species of engagement with enclosing space typical across the three short-story collections. The architecture of these texts is more precisely buildings, and these buildings are characterized by, firstly, considerable (enclosing) structural complexity, and secondly, by an almost total absence of engagement with 'aesthetic appeal' (Pevsner 1974, 15). Said differently, the lack of interest shown by the three authors in aesthetics, beauty, or style, makes resort to a differently grounded notion of architecture a simple but firm necessity.

Supplementing Pevsner, the catholic definition of architecture provided by Werner Reichmann and Anna-Lisa Müller, which emphasizes the material aspect of architecture, also informs my approach (Reichmann and Müller 2015, 16–18). The texts of Barbara Baynton, Katharine Susannah Prichard, and Merlinda Bobis, all invest heavily in the materiality of architectural space, and in that of the elements of its construction (walls, doors, and foyers, for example). Furthermore, continuing to work with Pevsner's notion of enclosing space, I also draw upon the insights provided by Yi-Fu Tuan. One such insight, a sort of maximization of binary thinking, is his reference to 'the enduring and universal antithesis between "inside" and "outside"' (Tuan 1977, 110).

At this point, alarm bells might be sounding for some readers. Nikolaus Pevsner and Yi-Fu Tuan call to us, don't they, from an earlier era of thinking about architecture, place, and space? Yes, they do. And aren't their ideas somewhat passé today? Yes, they are. Or rather … *perhaps* they are; for I also hold that their ideas set the appropriate conceptual attitude for my engagement, in present historical circumstances, with my chosen selection of literary texts.

Let me explain. I am writing this book as a tenured academic at a major Australian university. However, I also have intimate knowledge of the conditions of being a real estate agent and copywriter, working in some of the most affluent suburbs of Melbourne. This knowledge teaches that buyers are most certainly attracted to the notions of a flowing architectural and living experience, of a serene if not halcyon disregard for boundaries and separations. At the same time, however, they are attracted to the opposite of that: that is, to a cast-iron division, distinction, and separation—binary, most certainly—between their property and the outside world. And this is before we even mention gated communities … . For buyers like the ones I have knowledge of, Tuan's assertion of the stability and persistence of the internal/external binary, might be seen as a sacred talisman of their purchasing behaviour.

What we see locally (in my case) in real estate, architecture, and buildings, we also see more broadly, within national and international history and culture. In response to the seemingly inexorable rise of gated communities across the world, the United Nation's head of housing, Joan Clos, noted in 2014 that 'The gated community represents the segregation of the population. Those who are gated are choosing to gate, to differentiate, to protect themselves from the rest of the city. This is contrary to the vision of a democratic and open city' (Provost 2014). A little differently, the increasing polarization of politics, at all levels, and the shift away from globalization towards isolationism, also indexes the rise of a sort of 'new binarism'. For Australians, nowhere has this been more apparent, at least in recent times, than in this year's referendum (2023), which put to franchised citizens the following proposition: 'A Proposed Law: to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. Do you approve this proposed alteration?' (National Indigenous Australians Agency 2023). The fact that the referendum was defeated is perhaps no more important, in terms of representing today's cultural zeitgeist, than the fact of the widespread polarization, into 'yes' camps and 'no' camps, that resulted.

Given the context, my re-engagement with figures like Nikolaus Pevsner and Yi-Fu Tuan is, arguably, radical rather than reactionary. Their focus on a binarism of inside and outside chimes not only with today's historical and cultural circumstances but, just as significantly, with the approach to architecture/buildings within the three short-story collections. Each of these texts, as will be shown, is rich with what might be termed 'prima

facie' binarisms. 'Prima facie' should be taken to signify here that I am entirely uninterested in merely sitting with, or reinforcing, such binarisms—even should the focus literature allow for this (which it does not). Rather, I am interested in tarrying over the *tolerance* with binarisms that these texts contain. Such tolerance, in the specific sense of 'an allowable amount of variation' rather than the 'willingness to tolerate' or the 'capacity to endure', is clearly visible in Barbara Baynton's and Katharine Susannah Prichard's collections, whose publication dates (respectively, 1902 and 1932) roughly overlap with the rise of early (binarist) structuralist thinking as personified, for example, by figures like Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009) (*Oxford Languages and Google Dictionary* 2023). It is also, however, evident in Merlinda Bobis's collection of 1999, which might suggest either that her text is a lagging indicator, within a more post-modern and post-structuralist period, of earlier ways of thinking or, more excitingly perhaps, that it anticipates the binarism of the present.

'Prima facie' binarisms, or the tolerance of binarisms, is structuralist to the extent that it adheres to the notion, as Terry Eagleton puts it, 'that the individual units of any system have meaning only by virtue of their relations to one another' (1996, 82). However, whereas, according to Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck, 'structuralism in general likes to work with binary oppositions that can form the basis of a sliding scale', I am more interested in pausing, with the collections I consider, over this so-called basis (2019, 62). The division of inside and outside is the most evident mode of such a tarrying pause, or intensive engagement, with the initial condition of binarism. Still, this engagement also occurs in the distinction between architecture/a building, as a relatively self-contained inside/outside entity, and the built environment as the place of architecture's emergence, more so than as a flowing extension of architecture. This preserves the mentioned pause.

In summary, therefore, I am working with texts and ideas of both another time and of this time, in the clear-eyed perspective that the time of today requires holding binarisms once more to the flame of language and of thought, rather than too easily or fluently moving, to call once more upon the language used by Herman and Vervaeck, from the 'basis' to the 'sliding scale' (2019, 62). This is why I am loathe to relegate too hastily to the sidelines of current critical work figures like Yi-Fu Tuan and Nikolaus Pevsner. While on such figures, furthermore, I also note that one part of my motivation for using another apparently outdated architectural thinker, Gottfried Semper, is that what might read today as highly dubious human study, can sometimes provide a stimulating accompaniment, or co-text, to literature. Grim nineteenth-century anthropology may equal lush, later fiction! Interestingly, once this is said about Semper, Michel Foucault's work also takes on more visible value for this project, at the fuzzy point where philosophy/theory blurs into literature.

Another aspect of method concerns choices around disciplinarity. As a placing shot, this monograph may be said to adopt (or, at least, to aim for) an interdisciplinary approach. Marilyn Stember, as cited by the Centre for

Healthcare, Knowledge and Innovation, notes that this form of disciplinarity '[integrates] knowledge and methods from different disciplines, using a real synthesis of approaches' (Centre for Healthcare, Knowledge and Innovation 2023; Stember 1991). In this monograph, literary studies and architectural studies are most intensively synthesized, I suggest, in the admittedly sprawling concept of unbuilt architecture. At one level, unbuilt architecture, fairly obviously, captures all representations of architecture within literature. Meanwhile, as a sub-section of architectural history, unbuilt architecture may be said to operate in at least two, closely related ways. Daniel M Abramson's work in this field is vital (Abramson 2014). Conversing with Abramson's ideas and rhetoric, I suggest that the notion of unbuilt architecture, once critically activated, brings about a destabilization of the Platonic conception that the essence of architecture lies in the pure being of what might be called its 'unsullied unbuiltness'. More particularly, by effectively impelling architecture into the lively circumstances of built, actual, or human-inhabited, architectural existence, unbuilt architecture creates architectural dialogue with those forms of post-colonial otherness inhabiting short-story collections like the (more or less realist) ones discussed in this book. Simultaneously, and relatedly, the concept of unbuilt architecture, poised as it is at the junction of past and future, invites attention to that fertile locale—the present—where existing architecture may be worked into something different. In this regard, as a time-based artform, literature in general may be set against the 'all-at-once' sweep of (unbuilt) architecture across present, past, and future; meanwhile, the literary short stories explored in this book may be seen as a superior site for investigation into how the (contingent) past and the (visionary) future might be folded together to produce different (architectural and post-colonial) presents in the future.

I add the point here that, while the dominant strands of the interdisciplinarity of this monograph are constituted by literary studies and architectural studies, I do draw, at times, on approaches originating in other disciplines, such as visual studies. Beyond the major, two-part, interdisciplinary dialogue of literary studies and architectural studies, then, this further proliferation of disciplines perhaps provides the raw material for, if not the full realization of, a transdisciplinary mode of disciplinarity, which may be defined as 'a unity of intellectual frameworks beyond the disciplinary perspectives' (Centre for Healthcare, Knowledge and Innovation 2023; Stember 1991). In any event, whether the disciplinary mix of the project is seen as an integration or as a unity, what ultimately holds it together is its umbrella post-coloniality. That is, while I do not situate myself within the discipline of post-colonial studies, my project is motivated by an interest in fleshing out the notion of an 'architectural post-colonialism'.

Ethics and Indigenous Material

Finally, encompassing methods and approach, I situate the important point that, in the measure that this monograph engages with Indigenous material, I have an ethical obligation to situate myself in relationship to that material.

This is because, as New Zealand/Aotearoa-based researcher Linda Tuhiwai Smith states in her classic study *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 'Research in itself is a powerful intervention, even if carried out at a distance, which has traditionally benefited the researcher, and the knowledge base of the dominant group in society' (2012, 178). Therefore, as Smith goes on to say, 'it is critical that researchers recognize the power dynamic that is embedded in the relationship with their subjects' (2012, 178). Smith outlines a four-stage '"scale of relationality"' (my term) for calibrating relationships of the non-Indigenous researcher to Indigenous material (West 2017). Stage 2 provides for 'the strategy of "personal development", whereby the researchers prepare themselves by learning Maori language, attending *hui* and becoming more knowledgeable about Maori concerns' (Smith 2012, 179). Transferring Smith's words to the Australian context from that of New Zealand/Aotearoa, I position myself at stage 2, if perhaps at its lower end. In doing so, I am taking appropriate account of how my relationship to Indigenous material is shaped by both my individual research and life circumstances, and by the fact that I am employed at an Australian research institution that itself has a significant commitment to the quality of its relationship to that material, and a strong investment in matters of non-Indigenous-Indigenous relationality.

Next Steps for the Project

Making these points about the ethics of my relationship to the Indigenous material considered draws attention, obviously, to the fact that none of the collections I look at in this monograph are authored by Indigenous writers. This was a deliberate choice. For the (relatively speaking, very limited) purposes of this project, I have been interested to explore (only, but intensively) the relationship between literature authored by non-Indigenous writers and Indigenous and post-colonial issues of colonization, settlement, and occupation. Within this category, Barbara Baynton and Katharine Susannah Prichard may be defined as settler-colonial writers, while Merlinda Bobis occupies a somewhat different hyphenated space as a non-Indigenous Australian writer born in the Philippines.

What all this means, patently, is that future work might borrow from the methods and approach tested in this book, so as to explore their value in an engagement with short-story collections, or perhaps other forms of literature, authored by *Indigenous* Australian writers. Again: future work might also take the current book as a starting point for enquiry into the specifically gendered aspects of the literary examples I have engaged with in this monograph. Indeed, this is where I see greatest future potential, at least for my own research agenda. Finally, the predominance of animals—most particularly, dogs, horses, and turtles, but also such as birds and sheep—as agents or instruments of colonial and post-colonial space, within the collections considered, suggests the productive possibility of future work in this area too.

Outline of Chapters

In the first half of the prolegomenon, I introduce definitions for, and key understandings of, the central terms of my project, including place, space, architecture, the built environment, and the short story. I underscore the value of the short story for engaging in creative ways with certain species of space. I also elaborate on, and provide examples for, my argument that Australian post-colonialism is hamstrung by a peculiar cultural and historical condition, whereby place has been accorded inordinate prominence in its relationship with space. This sets up the scope and significance of my book's enquiry into the possibilities of space—specifically, architectural and building space—as a precursor to a fresh understanding of the political potential of space to disrupt relations of colonial power, in the interests of what I am thinking of as an 'architectural post-colonialism'. In the prolegomenon's second half, I work with a number of propositions concerning the relationships of architecture and language, and the potential of these relationships to interrogate and/or subvert colonial modes of settlement, inhabitation, and occupation. These propositions may be read, in some degree, as a set of introductions or contextualizations for the later concerns of the monograph (in the chapters on specific short-story collections). They may also be read as more-or-less self-contained, if wide-ranging, experiments of language, thought, and space. Theorists and philosophers covered in part two of the prolegomenon include Erwin Panofsky, Pierre Bourdieu, Gérard Genette, Charles Sanders Peirce, William H Gass and Mary Gass, and Daniel M Abramson.

In Chapter 2, I work with Barbara Baynton's collection *Bush Studies* (1902) to uncover how various matters of settlement and occupation are represented in Baynton's short stories (Baynton 2012). Contextualized historically by the period of Australian federation, Baynton's engagement with thematics of architecture and the built environment channels my readings. Unsurprisingly, central to my enquiry are aspects of, and relations between, place and space. Mixed in with these notions, tropes of distance and distances play a key role in Baynton's stories. This chapter suggests that power is the most enlightening concept for exploring how various instances of architecture and the built environment—in their creation and fashioning by diverse energies of place, space, and distance—speak to political concerns linked to colonialism and post-colonialism. Broadly speaking, two approaches to the literary material, each linked primarily to one story, shape the chapter. 'Squeaker's Mate' focalizes my reading of huts in Baynton's short fiction, which shows them to sit within, and yet also askew, the closely linked literary and philosophical traditions associated with huts. 'The Chosen Vessel', meanwhile, is my focal story for a reading of how distance, both in itself and as a form of connection between different places (of, necessarily, different spaces), enriches our understanding of the spatial and place-based power relations of colonialism and post-colonialism. To an extent, 'Bush Church' sits across these two approaches. One conclusion is that the tensed opposition between centrifugalism and centripetalism is a useful

adjunct in my analysis of *Bush Studies* as a text of (potential) de-colonization (Baynton 2012).

In Chapter 3, I explore *Kiss on the Lips and Other Stories* (1932) by Katharine Susannah Prichard, drawing on Michel Foucault's work on heterotopias (Foucault 1997; Prichard 1932). Foucault elaborates on six heterotopia principles, which assist a fine-grained exploration of three stories from *Kiss on the Lips*: the title story, 'Kiss on the Lips'; the first story, 'The Grey Horse'; and, 'Happiness', which has been read as a dry run of Prichard's most famous work, the novel *Coonardoo* (Prichard 1994). Theories of gazing and looking, as elaborated by thinkers like Foucault, Laura Mulvey, and E Ann Kaplan, supplement the approach from a heterotopic perspective by allowing one to think through complex operations of (visual) power within Prichard's stories. My hypothesis in this chapter is that notions of utopia and dystopia help structure an investigation into how Prichard's writing speaks to issues of Indigenous and non-Indigenous (settler) settlement, occupation, un-settlement, and de-occupation. The relationship of places to places and/or of spaces to spaces (which sometimes, to some extent, overlaps with a relationship of order to dis-order) energizes narratives that may be read as enquiries into the possibilities of Indigenous utopia, or at least as related literary speculations about aspects of colonial un-settlement. This is particularly the case with 'The Grey Horse' and 'Happiness'. 'Kiss on the Lips', on the other hand, I annex to an interpretation of its significance as the sole example in Prichard's collection of a city-based story, which is relevant to my chapter because (in 'The Grey Horse' at least) the city/rural relationship is a structuring force of the collection. Acknowledging Prichard's communist and/or socialist interests, my chapter attends closely to issues of economy and labour in her stories, especially as these interweave with wider issues of coloniality and post-coloniality.

In Chapter 4, I read *White Turtle: A Collection of Short Stories* (1999) by Merlinda Bobis within the framework of what I am terming (borrowing from its usage in architectural history) 'paper architecture' (Bobis 1999). Paper architecture designates a volatile mix of language, spatiality, and architecture, formed through various alchemies of materiality, that culminates in an 'inside-outside-ness' of texts, buildings, and objects. Gérard Genette's work on the peritext comes in here. At one level, paper architecture is an interrogation of Erwin Panofsky's thesis on the homology of scholastic writing with gothic architecture. On another level, it is a prompt to re-thinking, in the Australian post-colonial context, notions of occupation, settlement, and inhabitation. While I look at several stories from Bobis's collection, I spend most time on the title story, 'White Turtle', reading it as a sort of spoof, or even allegory, of Panofsky's thesis. As part of this, working with the intellectual transition from Panofsky's thesis to (broadly speaking) Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus, I read 'White Turtle' as a microcosm of this transition, on the idea that short-story ontogeny recapitulates intellectual-historical phylogeny. More broadly, I also attend to the possibility of developing a form of spatiality that is positioned between the

divisive poles of (literary) metaphoricity and so-called real-world space. Henri Lefebvre is a key figure in this part of the chapter. Also considered in this chapter is the relationship, political and otherwise, between magic realism and paper architecture, given that *White Turtle* is generally read as magic-realist literature.

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Reader advisory: the work quotes from prior works that reflect the creator's view, or that of the period in which the work was written, and which may now be considered inappropriate or offensive.

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Acknowledgements

1 Prolegomenon

Place and Space, Architecture and the
Built Environment, and the Short
Story's Spatial Potential—Experiments
in Spatiality for Post-colonial
(De-)Occupation

Place's Prominence in Australian Post-colonialism and Space's (Relative) Sidelining

This book will likely be launched with Acknowledgements of Country and/or a Welcome to Country delivered by an Indigenous person with cultural connections to place. As Mark McKenna observed, in 2014, 'The relatively rapid and widespread embrace of these rituals constitutes one of the most significant cultural changes in recent years' (McKenna 2014, 478). Alessandro Pelizzon and Jade Kennedy position some manifestations of this change within 'the intersectional space where Australian settler institutions encounter Aboriginal peoples' (Pelizzon and Kennedy 2019, 15). Shot through with colonial and post-colonial imperatives, this space is rife with acceptance and contestation. McKenna references 'the silent thousands who politely accept [these rituals] on a daily basis' (2014, 488) while also acknowledging what Pelizzon and Kennedy call 'the dismissive criticism advanced by [some] conservatives and the sense of tokenism experienced by [some] Aboriginal persons' (2019, 19). I will not interrogate, here, the cultural and political battles surrounding these ceremonies, still less try to unpack McKenna's observation that 'The words are easily uttered, but they are yet to be accompanied by substantial financial or legislative redress' (2014, 479). Rather, my intention is to note that, while such ceremonies (especially Indigenous-delivered Welcomes to Country) importantly connect (non-Indigenous) people 'to the intricate particularities of place', they largely sideline place's (spatial) built environment and/or architecture (McKenna 2014, 488).

Two points consequently arise. Firstly, Indigenous ceremonies of 'country' (a term *approximately* cognate with 'place' or 'land') often communicate that one of the most disastrous legacies of invasion and (ongoing) colonization is the destruction of the natural environment by the predations of the built environment. Quoting from Deborah Bird Rose's *Hidden Histories*, Elizabeth Dempster foregrounds Indigenous elder Hobbles Danaiyarri's imagined recollection of Captain Cook's thoughts on first seeing his (Danaiyarri's) land: 'I like to put my building there' (Dempster 2007, 89; Rose 1991, 64). Invasion/invasive building is certainly to be resisted. Relatedly, Welcomes to

Country are also invitations to care for country, which mesh with climate change activism more generally. Warming, concrete-laden cities stand in stark contrast to place insofar as it is continuous with pre-developed (non-capitalist, non-Western) nature. Thereby, Indigenous references to past (or ancestral) place argue for the rectification and preservation of present and future place; still, direct references to place's built environment are rare in Indigenous ceremonies of country, even as the built environment continues to spread outwards from the hearts of huge cities.

Secondly, place's emphatic place in Indigenous ceremonies of country is also related to the current Australian trend towards re-placing colonial place names with Indigenous names. Writing in 2021, Calla Wahlquist recognizes this practice's association with the actions linked to native title laws:

> The introduction of native title laws in 1993 has aided the process to identify traditional place names in areas with fewer living language speakers. Researching the history of an area and its families, language and boundaries is part of the lengthy process to claim native title. It creates a map of who has authority to name what area.
>
> (Wahlquist 2021)

Such naming and mapping activities further elevate the importance of 'place' and cognate terms already well embedded in Indigenous ceremonies of country. Native title requirements redound to the significance of boundaries, mapping, districts and areas, even if, as Emma Kowal explains, Indigenous notions of place, as 'country', do not translate easily into Western frameworks: '"Country" in the context of Indigenous Australian culture is a wider term than "land" or "area", describing a living, creative entity with a deep ongoing relationship with the humans responsible for it, rather than a passive piece of territory typically part of Western imaginations of land' (Kowal 2015, 194, n.4). Still, the passage from English place names to Indigenous ones lifts place into (even) greater cultural prominence.

Academic, pedagogic, intellectual, and artistic discourses—paralleled by the practices of Indigenous ceremonies of country—have reiterated the importance of place in distinction to the importance of the (often) intensively spatialized entities of the built environment, which includes architecture. Artist-researcher Elizabeth Dempster binds performance pedagogy to place in her argument that 'The Welcome [to Country] … unravels colonial concepts of place and history and thus prepares ground for a new pedagogy of place, one that neither originates in, nor returns to London' (2007, 92). Highlighting what she calls the 'didactic' nature of the Indigenous Welcome to Country, Dempster appropriates it 'as an instance of a decolonising narrative, and as a moment of theatre' (2007, 92). Indigenous elder Caroline Briggs's Welcome to Country is viewed, by Dempster, as an address to an audience that she (Dempster) characterizes as 'strangers who do not know how to be in place' (Dempster 2007, 95). Place, in this perspective, takes on additional significance in being

bound to the academic, institutional, and pedagogic practices of Victoria University (Melbourne, Australia), where Dempster works.

A similar, magnifying iteration of place appears in M Harris's (2003) article 'Mapping Australian Postcolonial Landscapes: From Resistance to Reconciliation?' While Harris heavily references both 'space' and 'place'—sometimes even in tight combination (as in, 'the nature of Indigenous claims upon space/place' and 'tales about place/space')—his definitional, analytical, and critical work revolves almost exclusively around the term place (Harris 2003, 72, 76). Space, oddly, remains distinctly unelaborated terminologically.

The opening section of Harris's article—'Meanings of Place and Space'—virtually ignores space, even as it: relates place to landscape in the phrase 'the term place is not merely synonymous with landscape'; subdivides place into 'a number of sites where the narratives of place are in the process of being inscribed and re-inscribed, traced and erased'; and, concludes with a further linkage 'of place and landscape' (Harris 2003, 71, 73, 76). Throughout Harris's article, place is put into a relationship with multiple notions including and beyond space, while space itself is only ever linked, in a singular if problematic constraint, with place. That is to say, the use of the slash—as in 'space/place' or 'place/space'—makes highly ambiguous the relationship suggested, for the word 'slash' carries a superabundance of meanings (Harris 2003, 72, 76; Oxford Languages and Google Dictionary). The word 'place' appears in the titles of four sections or sub-sections of Harris's article (admittedly once as part of a proper noun), even as 'space' only appears a single time, in the opening section. The title of one sub-section combines place with race, like this: 'Policing race/place through alcohol-free zones' (Harris 2003, 77). Again, here, place is elaborated, even as space is left somehow remote, off-limits—'neutral' and yet oddly looming.

Clearly, place should not be identified, hereabouts, with location as mapped by latitude and longitude. Indigenous ceremonies of country draw upon understandings involving a complex set of non-Western cultural and epistemological networks. Still, one might fairly concede some segment of shared ontology and epistemology across Indigenous and non-Indigenous versions of place, if only through the transitioning power of the English word 'country'. Drawing on the work of Blaze Kwaymullina, Pelizzon and Kennedy note that '"[f]or Aboriginal peoples knowledge is grounded in space—which in English we call Country. Country is the Land, Earth, Sky, Universe and all the relationships of the world moving and interacting with one another"' (Pelizzon and Kennedy 2019; Kwaymullina 2012). Extending this idea, Pelizzon and Kennedy underscore that 'This understanding of Country as a web of interconnected relations is construed in a narrative form within specific stories that are often referred to as "Dreaming stories"' (Pelizzon and Kennedy 2019, 28, n.8). There is, however, a limit to the interconnectedness of relations referred to here. Even as Kwaymullina presents the considerable complexity of Indigenous place, his insights expose the absence of engage-ment with the spatialization peculiar to the built environment and/or