

Ursula Le Guin wrote a short story from the perspective of an oak tree on the side of a highway in Oregon. In this story, *Direction of the Road*, the tree explains how it performs Relativity for the humans who travel along the road by approaching and then retreating away from them. The tree boasts of its mastery in replicating the particular movements and speeds of those travelling by foot, horseback, cart and car. Even as a sapling the tree was able to simultaneously approach and retreat from walkers, riders and drivers travelling in opposite directions. Those on foot would sometimes stop to rest in the shade of the tree, resting their backs on its trunk. The tree does not mind standing still in the one place while the humans rests, reflecting that: "It is only a relative stillness after all. One need only look at the sun to realise how fast one is going..."

The first encounter that the oak tree has with a motorcar is a disagreeable one. Not only does the motorcar require the tree to bounce and shake and lurch at speed, it is also very noisy and the passengers inside the car barely glance at the tree as it races towards and then away from them. Luckily the motorcar appears only twice a day and then, for awhile, not at all, and the tree is relieved. Then all of a sudden multiple cars; newer faster models, appear all at once. The road is paved and expanded as the traffic increases, and eventually the tree is racing back and forth all day long, in multiple directions at the same time, in order to perform Relativity for all the drivers and passengers of the cars. These humans hardly notice the tree, staring fixedly ahead or briefly in the side-view mirror at where they have just been. This behaviour perplexes the tree: "They seemed to believe that they were "going somewhere."...I had thought only beetles believed in Progress." Nighttime becomes a refuge for the tree, a respite from the constant coming-and-going of the humans.

One day a human driving a car tries to overtake the car in front of it without noticing the other car in the opposite lane. The driver crashes the car into the tree and dies immediately. For the tree the consequence of this event is unbearable. Having resigned itself to upholding "the Order of Things" and performing Relativity and Progress to those who drive along the highway, the tree refuses to be a stand-in for Eternity. As the last thing seen by the human who crashed the car, the tree is now forever static in the mind of the deceased and therefore eternal. This is too heavy a cross to bear for the oak tree who is, after all, as mortal as the human, relatively.

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I asked you to take me to the kelp forest at Fossil Cove. In the car on the way you told me not to panic if I became ensnared but to just relax and let the kelp rock me back and forth until in eventually let's go. You said that when you free dive you have to relinquish control to the Other, encounter it on its own terms, or something like that; one of your casual gems. While I swam close to the surface you dived to the bottom and searched for abalone and sea urchin. I approached the kelp tentatively and when I re-watch the footage my discomfort is palpable in the jerky movements of the GoPro. In comparison your movements were graceful and direct. When we were done filming I sat on a rock and watched the oily patches the kelp made on the water's surface while you continued hunting. You came back with one abalone and two sea urchins that you cut open with

your knife and we ate the gonads raw. This is your revenge against the sea urchins that have deforested the kelp with their mouths. They followed the warming coastal waters from New South Wales and came upon an abundant food source with no large natural predators to mediate their appetites. Now you act as that predator but they were too many and too fast. In a seminar catastrophe was described as a world without shadows, I thought of this when I revisited the footage from Fossil Cove.

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The tagline on a flyer for Western Wilds reads: *Discover Nowhere*. The image is an ariel shot of a long winding road that eventually disappears into the forest it bisects. Western Wilds is an initiative by Tourism Tasmania to promote the West coast and interior as a travel destination. The campaign consists of images like that on the flyer; vast and misty landscapes, snaking roads and rivers shot from above, reflective bodies of water and strange rock formations. Images of wildness, isolation and adventure, of roads and paths that disappear into the horizon or their surrounds. These are landscapes to get lost in and overwhelmed by. They are also nowhere.

The oxymoron of *Discover Nowhere* has a number of historical connotations, two that immediately come to mind being that of *Terra Nullius*; the promise of uncharted lands waiting to be explored, and that of incarceration and deportation. The latter is directly referred to in the Western Wilds campaign, which draws heavily on Tasmanian Gothic narratives of convict cannibalism, deserted ghost towns, devastated environments and extinct species. Western Tasmania is described as a frontier with “its fair share of mystery and myth.” The Wild West narratives of the United States are summoned with this word, frontier, which functioned to delineate the limits of settlement and civilisation. The mythos of the frontier and what lay beyond it is recast onto the natural environment of Western Tasmania, where time travel is made possible by highways, walking trails, and mapped routes between sites of historical and folkloric interest.

The Western Wilds campaign suggests, through its imagery, that nowhere is simply a matter of perspective; of sight lines and vanishing points. Nowhere as a somewhere in the distance that retreats a little further every time a corner is turned. But it could also be the forest on either side of the highway that threatens to reclaim the soil beneath the concrete and erode the frontier that is the road. If we insist on using frontier in its expanded meaning, as the extremes in thinking, knowing and doing, then the forest might stand-in for our ignorance. To conceive of nowhere as a not-yet-somewhere or a destination that can eventually be arrived at would be to meet the same inevitable fate as Rousseau in *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*. During one of his walks Rousseau comes across a landscape so pristine and wild that he fancies himself as a Columbus figure, declaring “I am undoubtedly the first mortal ever to have reached this place”. (pg 80) His fantasies are disturbed by a distant familiar sound that he follows until it reaches a clearing where he can see its source: a stocking factory. Rousseau’s desire to escape civilisation and discover nowhere is thwarted by the uncanny reach of industrialisation and Progress.

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The Krill Project was inspired by a PhD study undertaken by Australian scientist Dr. Amanda Dawson, conducted at the Australian Antarctic Division in nipaluna/Tasmania. In this study Antarctic krill specimens were fed varying concentrations of polyethylene microbeads along with a diet of cultivated plankton. The study found that the krill were able to digest the microplastics, which were fragmented in their gullets and then excreted as nanoplastics. The long-term and accumulative effects of these plastics on marine ecologies and living organisms remain unknown, despite their presence in the entirety of the Earth's ocean. Our departure point for The Krill Project began at this particular 'frontier'; where published findings of scientific study are only one extreme in a constellation of speculative unknowns. The research and artwork of Amy Parker and the writings of Billie Rankin have also informed this iteration.

We acknowledge and respect the palawa people as the traditional and ongoing owners and custodians of lutruwita. We pay our respects to elders past, present and future, and acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded.