



*antae*



SOURCE Image: Detail from Felix Vallotton, 1913. *La Neva dans le brouillard*.

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## Editorial

Aaron Aquilina, James Farrugia

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*antae is an international refereed postgraduate journal aimed at exploring current issues and debates within English Studies, with a particular interest in literature, criticism and their various contemporary interfaces. Set up in 2013 by postgraduate students in the Department of English at the University of Malta, it welcomes submissions situated across the interdisciplinary spaces provided by diverse forms and expressions within narrative, poetry, theatre, literary theory, cultural criticism, media studies, digital cultures, philosophy and language studies. Creative writing is also accepted.*





## Editorial

Aaron Aquilina, James Farrugia

*Lancaster University, University of Malta*

The cover of this issue features *La Neva dans le brouillard*, a 1913 painting by influential Swiss-French woodcutter and painter Felix Vallotton. In an issue about places to which we turn, return and re-return, it might be interesting to start off by contrasting one of Vallotton's post-impressionist viewpoints with another, highlighting both the richness and deficiencies of "place", as well as our own inability to be content with just one view. His painting *Coucher de soleil à Grâce, ciel orangé et violet* (1918), unlike *Le Neva*, offers us a vivid landscape on which to gaze. We as viewers are positioned in the dark, quite literally speaking, but, as if emerging from the Platonic cave, we behold only sunshine. There is nothing to hinder us from seeing where we are not; the clouds do not obstruct the sun, but rather become themselves objects of playing light. Look, the painting offers, looking is easy; and so is knowing where you are not.



In *La Neva*, looking is not easy at all. The difficulties of the painting lie not in knowing where you are not (and perhaps the envy, wanderlust, sadness, or even satisfaction that comes with this), but in being unable to find out where you are. Ironically, one finds oneself lost in *La Neva*; the

snowstorm and the fog obscure everything. Instead of widened eyes taking in a casually beautiful sunset, the viewer strains and squints, trying to make out the church, or perhaps entire town, some distance away. Worse still, the potential light source offers no enlightenment at all and, uncannily, the only other person around leaves no footsteps in the snow, no trace of comings or goings. Perhaps he has been standing still this whole time, going nowhere, so that in effect we find our own selves nowhere in particular, or nowhere at all. After all, where is here?

The articles in this issue all, in one way or another, attempt to locate us here or there, or at the very least try to pry the anonymity of this “nowhere” we find ourselves inhabiting from time to time... and perhaps failing to do so. Sometimes, as the following articles evidence, looking to where we are involves averting our gaze from the sun and trying to make out our own hands in the dark.

The first of these, ‘The Medicinal Qualities of Snow’, is a creative piece by the University of Malta’s Dr Maria Frendo and, like Vallotton in *La Neva*, Frendo ponders the problems of sheer cold, ice, and snow. It can be described as a short piece of Christmas writing (surreptitiously, publishing this in April highlights the unique (non-)time of that holiday, an “elsewhen” that ends a year), and traverses history through Charles Dickens and the Victorians, looking at the slow creeping of the very idea of snow into what we may now consider obviously-chilly Christmas carols. Vivaldi, Wagner and John Mason Neale’s *Good King Wenceslas* accompany the sick narrator in her meditation of curing a cold with cold, reminding us of the power of music to take us elsewhere to where we are, even when, or perhaps especially when, we are getting sick of being sick. The second creative piece of this issue runs in the vein of the personal essay genre, a popular early example of which being the work of Montaigne. Dr Joshua Adair’s ‘Somewhere SO OVER! the Rainbow: The Danger of Safe-Zones’ discusses the contemporary LGBTQ scene on university campuses, its iterations and its resistances—both the resistance to heteronormative or downright homophobic discourse via the setting up of safe-zones, but also the counter-resistance that confronts the LGBTQ student body. Looking at his university in Kentucky, Murray State, Adair traces his journey from advocacy for safe-zones—an on-campus aid to all forms of gender expression from students and staff—to their failures in combating the insidiousness of heteronormativity. Not only does Adair’s essay remind us that sexual and gender identities can be an elsewhere to others, but that they can also be so to our own selves. For those who are not American, an added layer of elsewhere comes in the very American-ness of the essay—and when remembering the recent Supreme Court ruling, for instance, or North Carolina’s controversial “bathroom law”, the U.S. emerges as a very special case when it comes to LGBTQ issues—and so the editors of this journal have taken the decision to retain the American spelling of the paper instead of aligning it with all the others, which follow UK orthographical conventions.

Moving from more creative to what may be considered more conventional though no less vibrant pieces, one is sharply reminded of how poetry can take us elsewhere, perhaps especially when the reader is lost in the many possible significations of a poem. Dr John “Kimo” Reder, from the City University of New York, provides a vast and insightful overview of the poetry of Nathaniel Mackey in his paper ‘An Africa at Every Turn: Nathaniel Mackey’s Layered Landscapes and Puns of Place’. Not only does Reder look at the elsewhere of Mackey’s poetry—sprinting and tumbling across cultures and continents—but the paper’s own masterfully stylised language vividly recalls

how poetry can not only depict elsewhere and its impossibilities, but also turn language itself into its own elsewhere, as Mackey consciously does throughout his prolific oeuvre. Reder's article serves as an excellent and enthralling introduction for those who has never read Mackey's poetry, and highlights the themes of globalisation, exile, lack of centrality or "here-ness", homecoming and escape, as well as the endless trans-historical movement and musicality of the poetry collections addressed. Similarly, Elizabeth O'Connor, from the University of Birmingham, looks at the mutable elsewherees in H.D.'s poetry—the *Sea Garden* collection and 'Oread', as well as her novel *HERmione*—in "Pushing on through Transparency": H.D.'s Shores and the Creation of New Space'. O'Connor looks at the liminal space of the shore, and the mutual modulations of identity and environment as presented through H.D.'s work. She also looks at the wider relations between Modernism and H.D.'s unique poetic vision, which ranges from her conceptualising of Point Pleasant, a beach in New Jersey, to her meditations of nature's harsh tests of well-defined tropes and locations, where elsewhere becomes the place to go when going somewhere new, where an exploration of the self's own heterotopias can take place without ever being *in* place.

The fifth and sixth papers of this issue move us from poetic imaginings of place to the construction of location in fiction and non-fiction. From the university of Albany, Darcy Mullen's paper 'Tales From Nowhere: Burma and the Lonely Planet Phenomenon' takes a look at how places can be constructed—in this case for the commodity of tourism—as ones that are either forbidden or else as representative of "nowhere" spaces. Mullen analyses multiple editions of the *Lonely Planet* series dealing with Burma, looking at how the idea of the tourist is constituted differently according to the pre-conceptions of the visited place, and how the questionable narrative strategies of *Lonely Planet* often serve to capitalise on the reader's lack of prior knowledge in order to colonise Burma into something exotic and desirable, employing a rhetoric which elides insurgency, human rights violations, and socio-political unrest in order to focus on this "nowhere" country, furthering their own ideas of how the relation between visitor and the visited should be structured. In the next paper of this issue, by Rocco de Leo from the University of Calabria, ideas of "visitor" and "the visited" meld in a piece that explores the writings of Mordecai Richler, particularly his set of autobiographical short stories in *The Street*. The reader gets to see how a young Richler experiences a multiple number of elsewhere: his former youthfulness; his childhood in the Jewish ghetto of his native city Montreal; his escape to Europe; and his final return to the place of his birth, now changed beyond description by various significant socio-cultural changes, not least the legislation of the Multiculturalism Act of 1988, which, in effect, further bracketed the elsewhere of his ghettoised childhood into another historical elsewhere. In de Leo's paper, as in Richler's work, we see this shift of allegiances, of feeling oneself to be simultaneously a *visitor* in a particular society as well as being a *visitee*, up for show as if one were nothing more than a historical case-study in need of constant re-assessment by at least a single individual so that any number of elsewherees are not lost beyond the pale of time.

Elsewhere can thus be found both outside of ourselves as well as within us. Dr Satarupa Sinha Roy, from the University of Calcutta, explores elsewhere from the ethos of gastrocriticism, a theoretical field quickly becoming established due to its interdisciplinary and critical breadth. After providing an overview of several works which have shaped gastrocriticism, her paper 'From Sapore to Sapere: The Gustatory Perception of "Elsewhere" in Calvino's "Under the Jaguar Sun"'



analyses the richness of the culinary sign in Calvino's short story, examining the conceptualisation of elsewhere through "exotic" food, and its transformative possibilities when the outside is ingested and thus becomes inside. Elsewhere, therefore, can physically—through the act of eating and gustation—become here and now. In Calvino, then, one can find the negotiation of self and place mediated through food, and ingestion is demonstrated as being potentially able to dissolve the familiar dichotomies of here and there, *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, self and other. The last article of this issue is written by Dr Kristine Larsen, from Central Connecticut State University, whose paper 'Elsewhere and Elsewhen: Parallel Universes and the Dangers of Interdimensional Travel in *Land of the Lost*' reminds us of how far and unreachable elsewhere can be. Larsen looks anew at the 70s children's television show *Land of the Lost*, bringing to the forefront the unexpectedly coherent physics behind this science fiction series. Drawing from scientific theories of time-travel and parallel universes in the work of Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawking, and David Deutsch among others, Larsen examines the show's scripts and ideas in studied detail, highlighting well-thought-out representations of time-travel paradoxes as well as scientifically grounded depictions of multiple realities. This, Larsen argues, entails that the show is one that can be seriously and fruitfully studied by its viewers, and can therefore be placed on the same fertile academic ground as other, more popular shows, such as *Lost* or *Doctor Who*. Like Frendo's Christmas time, Larsen looks elsewhere temporally rather than spatially, allowing us to recall that other times might not simply be past or future, but just that—*other* times.

And yet, what other consequential times are there? What can really divorce us, should we so desire, from the hindrance of being contained by the here of the never-ending moment of living which straddles both the past and that which will yet become the past? What prompt or solace can we take from elsewhere if, to paraphrase Dylan Thomas, the ball we threw 'while playing in the park/has not yet reached the ground'?<sup>1</sup> We tend towards seeing ourselves as being not only able of envisaging elsewheres, but also of fulfilling them to the point where they no longer need to be envisaged. The frustration that comes with unrealised elsewheres is perhaps one of the driving points of human history, as it prompts even more attempts, fruitful or not, to bring something other into view. Not, perhaps, the sunlit Platonic uplands of Vallotton's later painting, a *mise en scene* where everything crystallizes into purposeful meaning; but rather something other laden still with life. What this issue evidences, then, is that *looking over there* is something we must all attempt. To close with the words of Thomas Effer in Paul Auster's *Moon Palace*:

A man can't know where he is on the earth except in relation to the moon or a star. Astronomy comes first; land maps follow because of it. Just the opposite of what you'd expect. If you think about it long enough, it will turn your brain inside-out. A here exists only in relation to a there, not the other way around. There's this only because there's that; if we don't look up, we'll never know what's down. Think of it, boy. We find ourselves only by looking to what we're not. You can't put your feet on the ground until you've touched the sky.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dylan Thomas, *Collected Poems: Dylan Thomas* (London: Phoenix, 2004), p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Auster, *Moon Palace* (Ditzingen, Germany: Reclams Universal-Bibliothek, 2011), p. 220.