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Editorial: On the Theme of 'Peripatetica'

by John Charles Ryan, Issue Editor, September 2010

In the nineteenth century, the conservationist John Burroughs wrote that the walker 'feels the pulses of the wind and reads the mute language of things'. Every year I try to take a long walk. Walking to me is a kind of education in the landscape, the senses and the body. Following Burroughs, we continue in this issue of *Landscapes* with the cross-currents between landscape and language, and the creative formations between artistic expression and scientific understanding through the theme of 'Peripatetica'. Whether called 'bipedality' or 'perambulation' or 'sauntering' or 'strolling', walking is intrinsic to human (and animal) life, but its significance has been obscured by modernity's mechanised modes of movement: trains, planes and automobiles. Transcendentalist Henry Thoreau in his essay 'Walking' quipped 'I have never met with but one or two persons in the course of my life who understood the art of Walking, that is, of taking walks—who had a genius, so to speak, for SAUNTERING'. Thoreau lived on the cusp of industrialisation and extolled the sensory fruits of walking. The first ten years of the twenty-first century have brought about a quiet re-ignition of interest in bipedality with published histories of Australian, North American and New Zealand walking, as well as theoretical accounts of walking by European scholars.

This issue continues the walking renaissance through the theme of 'Peripatetica'. In one sense, peripatetica refers to the process of walking, its environmental and political implications, and its cultural heterogeneity. In another sense, peripatetica describes the outcomes of walking or its 'productions': a poem, an artwork, a song, a photograph, a story unwritten but recorded in the mind as an oral narrative, a transformation of values, or a return to the bodily senses. This issue explores the processes of walking and its productions, organised around three parts: Sauntering in Town, Perambulating the Country and Trekking the Wild. The three cultural and geographic spheres of the town, the country and the wild emerge, sometimes in subtle and delicate ways, as ways of organising the selections. Indeed, the poems, short stories, video pieces, photos and peer-reviewed articles in *Peripatetica* have taken on walking in literal and metaphoric ways.

Lastly, we are pleased that the coda, *Revisiting Hydrobotanica*, returns to the twin theme of water and plants, the subject of our last issue including a re-issue of Barbara York Main's article 'Interactions of Water, Plants, and Ground-Dwelling Fauna'.

Our thanks to the contributors and please note our Call for Submissions for 'Sustainabilia', Volume 4, Issue 2 Summer 2010.

Warm wishes,
John

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