

## Travel Memoirs: Presenting difference or perpetuating sameness?

*A reflexive, comparative, case study exploring phenomenology of place and representation of Self, Other, sameness, and difference, as documented by Australian and French autobiographical authors; interpreted by an Australian/American traveller, reader, and learner of French.*

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## Declaration & Acknowledgements

I, Ellen Avery, certify that this thesis:

1. does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and
2. the research within will not be submitted for any other future degree or diploma without the permission of Flinders University; and
3. to the best of my knowledge and belief, does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

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And, finally, to my dear dad, Lee Avery (1956-2016); an always-student of life, who showed me the beauty and importance of the everyday. I follow in his footsteps as a teacher, as a lover of learning, and now as a master's student at Flinders University. I dedicate my work, (these stories of living, moving, and belonging) to him; a fellow mover of countries: a traveller, collector of lived experience, and an expert in the necessary transformations of Self.

## Abstract

Travel memoirs: presenting difference or perpetuating sameness? My research project is a thematic, reflexive, comparative, phenomenological case study of two autobiographical travel memoir texts; *La grenouille dans le billabong* by Marie-Paule Leroux (French), and *Almost French* by Sarah Turnbull (Australian), chosen because they mirror each other in terms of cultural situation and authorship. My thesis explores alterity and the role of phenomenology of place in the reconfiguration of identity for travellers who move to a country other than their own. I investigate the relevance of travel writing and the representation of Self, Other, sameness, and difference, as documented by Australian and French authors. The research analyses themes extracted from the authors' written documentations of lived experience, determining that there are elements of each culture that result in challenging experiences in the new country. The texts indicate that the transformative power of phenomenology of place conspires to make each moment what it is: the sum of place, people, language, weather, architecture, history. These phenomenological lived experiences are partially shaped by the authors' culture of origin. As each individual is confronted by alterity, I believe identity is necessarily transformed and adapted, entailing personal losses and gains as one engages with otherness. Retrospectively, the authors emplace their encounters of Self and Other and curate their memorial experiences based on interpretation; involving the complex interplay of seeking sameness and highlighting differences in their efforts to understand and relate to their surroundings. Ultimately, I suggest that phenomenology of place invites confrontation with alterity as individuals seek sameness and comparison to identify elements of difference in shared, human, lived experience and are changed as a result, transforming notions of Self and Other.

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AUSTRALIA  
Adelaide, South Australia  
&  
USA  
Caro, Michigan  
1994

One American, one Australian-and those dual passports defined my childhood identity.

I clutched my precious documents in excitement before our big trip overseas. I remember the image on the passports; I wore a mermaid t-shirt of lavender hue, and you were still allowed to smile in the photographs. I landed in the USA sounding like an Australian and arrived home to Australia several months later sounding like an American.

I developed a love of schooling my accent to suit the situation and dedicated a lot of time to the practice.

"I live in Australia so I am technically Australian, but my whole family is American, not Australian and I have two passports, so I am both, but not really either," I would explain to new friends who asked about my changeable accent.

## Foreword

And so, here I am: an American/Australian-born/Dutch-descent girl with a French-speaking mother and I am fascinated by the Other; captivated by what is different and by what is the same. I am enthralled with the ephemeral quality of what happens in another place and country, because, in my experience, the nature of otherness, and the nature of place, and the complex intertwining of language and culture cannot be fully understood except by experience.

I have had the privilege of travelling a great deal, and it has thrilled me, shocked me, grieved me, enlightened me, taught me, and changed me. I wanted to find a way to incorporate the deep, intrinsic connection I feel with travel into my research—but how? As I read more, the possibility occurred to me that the unwieldy nature of my research process, and the messy, interconnected webs of thought and feeling, and the lack of a defined prescriptive structure were not necessarily the curse I thought they were. Rather, it was simply where I was in the process of uncovering my hermeneutic phenomenological methodology (Van Manen, 1990). Of course, it could also be a sign of poorly constructed research, but therein lies the implicit complication with phenomenological research: how the research looks to the outsider means little in terms of its soundness. Rather, the intention with which it is carried out, the underpinning philosophies, and the driving phenomenological questions provide more feedback about the quality of the research (Van Manen, 1990).

My deep un-knowing about what I *really* wanted to do with my research also made sense, retrospectively. I needed the essence—I needed to distil the questioning that I had been holding inside of myself for years (Van Manen, 1990), since I first considered doing postgraduate research. I needed to gather it into words. I felt called upon to investigate this human experience, and perhaps my research began the first time I stepped onto a plane . . .

“. . . and to all these marks I added my own” (Macfarlane, 2013, p. 7). Robert Macfarlane writes of physical tracks in the ‘overwhelmingly legible’ snow becoming archives of the ‘journeys made’ (2013). Similarly, my prints on this research are overwhelmingly legible, the archive of my own academic travels. “Reflexive researchers front their signature in the texts they create, evoking a feeling of immediacy and self-presence” (Knowles & Cole, 2008, p. 5). As a part of my own self-reflexivity practice within this thesis, I have chosen to include short passages of my own reflexive writing throughout the paper as one visible way of allowing my inevitable marks on the research to be illustrated.

The essence of my interest with regards to travel memoirs was inherently lived experience. *What is it like to be a stranger in another place, and live there and work there? Did it change you? How do your books share that with me? Can I experience it through your writing?* As I will discuss in more detail later, there are repeated cautions for researchers not to become bogged down in the ‘right’ way to conduct phenomenological research (Van Manen, 1990), so rather than shy away from my unconventional beginning, I will simply share and reflect on the process that I experienced as an authentic representation of my research (Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio, 2019). Max Van Manen discusses, “A phenomenological question must not only be made clear, understood, but also ‘lived’ by the researcher” (1990, p. 29), and I propose that in my case, I was living my question before it was made clear through the act of research.

FRANCE  
Ortès, Aquitaine  
1994

I don't remember what I said.

I do remember what I was wearing, what I was doing, who I was with, what the air smelled like...what we were eating.

It is my first ever memory of trying to speak French to a real French person. I was 7, it was almost dusk, and I was wearing shorts, converse sneakers, and a long-sleeved shirt. My long hair was in two braids, and we had just arrived at my parents' friends' house in Ortès, near Pau.

My very new friend, Marion, and I were in a field next door that was filled with trees, blossoming. Maybe almond? There was a little rope set up for children to balance on while hanging on for grim death to another thin rope. We chewed *les bâtons de réglisse*, my first time tasting them. It was strange to chew on sticks, but I liked the flavour. This was magic-a whole Other little girl, just like me-but so exciting and different...so French.

We laughed and laughed as she tried to teach me French words, and in turn, I tried to teach her the English. What was said, or not said, I couldn't tell you. But that was the day we became friends.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Project Overview

My research is a reflexive, comparative case study that seeks to analyse and compare the lived experiences of authors, Marie-Paule Leroux and Sarah Turnbull, who move and live abroad as documented and presented in their travel writing texts: *La grenouille dans le billabong*<sup>1</sup> and *Almost French* respectively. I focus on investigating the authors' lived experiences via their written encounters of alterity and phenomenology of place, their representation of Self, Other, potential shifts in identity, and the ensuing presentations of sameness and difference. The texts of these authors will be read and examined through a hermeneutic phenomenological research design in combination with reflexivity and thematic analysis as methods. More specifically, the extraction and derivation of meaning from these texts via the discovery of themes and subsequent analysis and comparison enable exploration of the cultural and linguistic encounters of the authors, the textual representations of their lives abroad, and their accounts of different experiences, as interpreted by myself: an Australian/American traveller, reader, and learner of French.

#### Rationale for the study

Travel writing holds a unique place in literature and provides something meaningful to the authors, as they reflect upon and document their experiences, as well as for readers, who are able to hear about the world from the comfort of their homes (Anjum, 2014; Beaven, 2007; Berger, 2009).<sup>2</sup> Briefly, it is worth noting that though the term 'genre' may be found as referenced by other authors throughout this paper, I use the term 'travel writing' here, *récit de voyage*, as a collective literary term rather than a genre. I made this choice due to the difficulties with identifying delineations within the category. Tim Youngs (1994) writes "Travel writing feeds from and back into other forms of literature. To try and identify boundaries between various forms would be impossible" (as cited in Youngs & Hooper, 2004, p. 13).

There is an immense body of literature on the topic of travel and travel writing (Berger, 2004, 2009; Besemeres, 2005, 2008).<sup>3</sup> Analysis of travel writing is thought to provide a particularly inimitable, yet

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<sup>1</sup> *La grenouille dans la billabong* is the French title which I chose to use throughout the text. The English translation is entitled *A Frog in the Billabong* (Leroux, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> (Besemeres, 2008; Forsdick, 2009; George, 2005; Gregory & Duncan, 1999; Reichstein, 2006; Thompson, 2011; Youngs, 2019)

<sup>3</sup> (Berger, 2004, 2009; Besemeres, 2005, 2008; Cardell & Douglas, 2018; de Nooy, 2015, 2016; Edwards, 2017; Forsdick, 2009; George, 2005; Good, 2013; Gregory & Duncan, 1999; Hanna & de Nooy, 2006; Knox, 2003; Louviere, 1981; Mills, 1991; Morgan, 2015; Pavlenko, 2001; Reichstein, 2006; Ros i Sole, 2004; Santos, 2006; Thompson, 2011; Van den Abbeele, 1985; Youngs, 2019; Youngs & Hooper, 2004)



complex source of material to gain understanding of an individual's experience in other cultures and with other languages (Besemeres, 2005; de Nooy, 2012, 2015, 2016; Gregory & Duncan, 1999; Hanna & de Nooy, 2006; Thompson, 2011). "By definition, travel narratives invoke an experience of moving between cultural worlds" (Besemeres, 2008, p. 245) and Derek Gregory and James Duncan refer to what they call "a system of 'othering'" (1999, in introduction), which travellers bring to a new space—highlighting the instinctual tendencies we harbour towards comparison. Gregory and Duncan comment on travel writing: "re-imagining the world through its re-presentation, describing spiralling circles between home and away, here and there, and reworking the connective between travel and writing gives much of this [travel writing] a decidedly critical edge" (1999, p. 1). The above concepts of cultural worlds, 'othering', and comparison draw together significant aspects of my research: place, home, Self, Other, sameness, difference, languages, lived encounters, and the authors' reflections thereupon.

Tita Beaven, Mary Besemeres, Juliana de Nooy, Natalia Edwards, Barbara Hanna, Edward Knox, Catharine Mee, and Cristina Ros i Sole are but a few authors who have researched and written travel writings for cultural and linguistic findings. The authors' works are robust and varied and provide an excellent body of literature to draw upon for this research (Besemeres, 2005, 2008).<sup>4</sup> Hanna and de Nooy, in their in-depth study of Sarah Turnbull's *Almost French*, provide an excellent account of their process of analysis and findings (2006). Though their work touches on the cultural 'other', it is not the main focus as compared to Beaven, Besemeres, Mee, and their research of travel memoirs' intercultural narratives (2007; 2005, 2008; 2014).

As Paul Ricœur wrote, "*Oneself as Another* suggests from the outset that the selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought of without the other, that instead one passes into the other" (1994, p. 3). Ricœur's observance of Self and its relationship to the Other in travel writing has developed into a distinguishing feature for my research. Beaven reflects that the extent to which travellers "choose to relate to the Other" (2007, p. 96) is an incredibly important element of travel writing, and as Gregory and Duncan highlight in their discussions of travel writing, I believe this is a key element to be considered when analysing travel writing works (1999). Besemeres also points out that the way in which the author speaks of the Other dramatically shapes how the new or adopted cultures are presented, for example, an attitude of condescension or a dialogic, questioning stance (2005, 2008).

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<sup>4</sup> (Beaven, 2007; de Nooy, 2012 2016; 2015 2016; Edwards, 2017; Hanna & de Nooy, 2006; Knox, 2003; Mee, 2014; Ros i Sole, 2004)

I suggest that phenomenology of place is also critical to the examination of sameness and difference. Robyn Davidson wonders whether travel books are popular with readers because they create the semblance of an “uncontaminated Elsewhere to discover” though alluding to the fact that the Elsewhere is in fact the same as their present place (as cited in Thompson, 2011, p. 14) and Michel de Certeau proposes that, “We travel abroad to discover in distant lands something whose presence at home has become unrecognisable” (1988, p. 50), suggesting that we find anew the familiar, or sameness, in difference. I investigate whether travel writing has merit as a site for the reader to experience phenomenology of place as presented by the author, thus becoming a conduit for observing sameness and/or difference, through the following research questions:

### Research questions

1. In the context of the authors’ intercultural encounters lived abroad, does phenomenology of place disrupt Self, provoke encounters with alterity, and reconfigure identity?
2. To what extent do the authors’ cultural/linguistic backgrounds and perceptions of Self/Other affect their interpretations of everyday lived experiences as recorded in their autobiographical travel memoirs?

I will use the responses to the above questions to then address a final concluding consideration: consequently, do the travel memoirs of these two authors present difference or a perpetuation of sameness?

### Aims

Through this research process I use two autobiographical travel texts as a source of experiential encounters presented by the authors themselves. I extract themes from the material that enable me to interpret the authors’ lived experiences and draw conclusions about their experiences abroad. Specifically, I address the research questions with a qualitative, phenomenological, thematic, and reflexive research design through analysis, comparison, and contrast of two specific autobiographical travel books, *La grenouille dans le billabong* by Marie-Paule Leroux, and *Almost French* by Sarah Turnbull: chosen because they mirror each other in terms of cultural situation and authorship.

### Methodological Overview

Often determined to be the contrivance of philosopher Edmund Husserl, phenomenology is a philosophically-based methodology that is extremely flexible in terms of its application, though focussed on intention. I use a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological research framework: it

focuses on finding the essences of experiential narratives of a particular personal lived experience, asking, what is it like to experience that phenomenon, and how might our interpretations of that knowledge provide insight into the experiences of others? (Caelli, 2001; Dahlberg, 2006; Groenewald, 2004).<sup>5</sup> Martin Heidegger's work paved a strong foundation for hermeneutic phenomenology, particularly his *History of Concept of Time* (1925) and *Being and Time* (1927) (Neubauer et al., 2019), and together with Georg Gadamer and Ricœur, they typify the synthesis that is hermeneutic phenomenology (Sharkey, 2001). This framework is based on understanding lived experiences, providing the opportunity for the researcher to access the experiential qualities portrayed by individuals in the texts as possible events experienced by other persons, in order to link to the phenomenological orientation of existential meaning (Van Manen, 1990).

The literature of Leroux and Turnbull will be used as a source of data via reading, interpretation, and analysis (Anwar, 2020; Given, 2008). Hanna and de Nooy used thematic analysis for their study on Turnbull's *Almost French* (2006), and it is a popular choice for this type of literature study (Beaven, 2007; Fairclough, 2003; McKee, 2003). Max Van Manen comments on biographical texts as a rich source of "lived-experience descriptions for phenomenological analysis or for converting into anecdote or story" (1990, p. 72). Further, Wilhelm Dilthey notes, "Lived experiences are related to each other like motifs in the andante of a symphony," (1985, p. 227 in, Van Manen, 1990, p. 37) which has profound significance for the two travel texts under analysis: they aren't merely a random assortment of stories, rather, they weave an interconnected web of meaning. When viewed as such, the curated collection of lived experiences provides a rich source of data for analysis of phenomena and the revealing of essences (Van Manen, 1990).

As my thesis will be making use of literature as a source of material, thematic analysis (TA) will also be employed. As a nuanced yet foundational approach to qualitative research, thematic analysis complements phenomenological methodologies, providing the researcher with a tool that offers some structure to the excavation of meaning (Holloway & Todres, 2003, as cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis enables the researcher to identify patterns, interpret possible meanings, identify themes, and draw conclusions from the data with consideration of the authors' perspectives. Nadia Anwar notes how well TA works for literature analysis and review, and is of the belief that it is underutilised within the scope of literature study (2020).

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<sup>5</sup> (Merleau-Ponty, 1981; Sharkey, 2001; Smith, 2002; Van Manen, 1990; Willis, 2001)

In addition, deeply embedded reflexivity is a part of my research process (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun, Clarke, & Hayfield, 2019). Reflexivity has been argued as a methodological tool “to account for the situated and embodied nature of knowledge production” (Etherington, 2004; Le Grand, 2014; Pillow, 2003, as cited in Subramani, 2019, p. 2). Supriya Subramini also cites Dorothy Smith (1987, 1990) as considering all qualitative research methodology “to be inherently reflexive” (2019, p. 7). Virginia Braun, Victoria Clarke and Nikki Hayfield implore researchers not to treat the data as self-evidently telling us something, or as meaningful, or as important, but instead to make an argument about why you have chosen to interpret it the way that you have (2019). What assumptions are interpretations based on? How do the assumptions and interpretations connect to the theoretical/socio-cultural/applied/data contexts? One could argue that even within the more prescriptive quantitative methodologies, there are still narratives being created and communicated, as the researchers interpret and draw meaning from data (Westerman, 2006).

The phenomenological methodology framework in conjunction with thematic analysis and reflexivity woven throughout will enable me to extract the data from the texts, identify patterns, consider authorship, and provide meaningful responses to my research questions. Throughout the process, I will keep the significance of my role as researcher at the forefront of my mind, because how I tell the story and shape the narrative of how the data has been analysed is critical to the analysis (Braun, 2013; Van Manen, 1990; Westerman, 2006)

ITALY  
Piazza San Pietro, Roma  
2016

It is June, summer, balmy-warm. We are walking in the side streets approaching St. Peter's Square after dinner, nearing midnight.

We walk in the dark with only the sound of Roman traffic (that never sleeps) and our feet on the cobbles. My wonderfully Italian friend breaks the silence. "Did you know we Romans call these *sanpietrini*?" he pronounces, with his strong accent.

"What, the stones?" I ask.

"*Certo*, yessss, little San Pietros, rock of the church," he states, like it's so obvious, the world should include this fact in their textbooks. "Come on, you can't avoid the church in Rome," and I can almost hear him roll his eyes as he says this, one of his favourite lines.

My eyes brim with tears at this revelation; I walk with new consideration of the saintly-named ground beneath my feet, and wonder why it isn't in a textbook, after all.

But, of course, it can't be. *Sanpietrini* must be stumbled over to be understood.

## CHAPTER 2: TRAVEL, TRAVELLERS, & TRAVEL WRITING

As humans, we have a right to move freely and travel the world, affirmed by the *1948 Declaration of Human Rights*. Though not all people possess this right, the fact that travel is a human right indicates the importance of travel as an aspect of our humanity, and one could well intimate that travel is an important expression of our liberty and curiosity. Whether we choose to travel or not, our personal freedom of movement is central to our identities as independent beings, and in the context of this thesis, it would be remiss not to provide a brief overview of travel, travellers, and how that relates to travel writing. Travel is an interesting and diverse subject, and as an industry it was booming until very recently.<sup>6</sup> COVID-19 has significantly affected peoples' freedoms to travel and severely impacted tourism and global economies, the effects of which are yet to be fully seen. Suffice to say, COVID-19 has changed travel for the foreseeable future, making research like this rather bittersweet and perhaps more precious, as we find meaning and share in the travel experiences of others through travel texts.

Travel has changed in intention and purpose over the last two centuries, shifting from being a "necessary evil to be borne by, for example, pilgrims, merchants, explorers" (Gregory & Duncan, 1999, p. 6), to becoming an end in and of itself; an undertaking that can be purely pleasurable (Gregory & Duncan, 1999). From around the eighteenth century and evolving over the nineteenth, travel for pleasure shifted from an aristocratic pastime, becoming an escape of the bourgeois rooted in romanticism and industrialism. After the Napoleonic wars, romantic travel continued; largely uninterrupted throughout the nineteenth century and particularly marked by long, solitary, and unstructured travel. These changes in travel intention allowed space for the primary goals as marked by this historical era of travel: a passion to experience cultural difference, wild landscapes, and immersion in local existence (Gregory & Duncan, 1999).

Post-nineteenth century, there was another shift from the bourgeois and the bohemian pursuing their dreams through travels, towards the commercialisation and further industrialisation of the world and the burgeoning travel industry showcasing the relentless determination of individuals to pursue their dreams of travel. Post-twentieth century, Gregory and Duncan feel we are situated in a state of industrialised romanticism; the bureaucratisation of travel has continued to increase, but the romantic way we view travel has not changed (1999). Throughout time, humanity has longed for an

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<sup>6</sup> For example, in 1950, global international tourist arrivals were listed at approximately 25 million. In 2007 arrivals were estimated at just under 900 million, and it was predicted that by 2020 they would exceed 1.56 billion (Francesconi, 2014).

escape: for the exotic, for the nostalgic, and for the chance to become someone new in a new place, whether it be for work, or leisure. This historical context, though brief, gives important insight into how we might view travel today.

## What is Travel?

All travel requires us to negotiate a complex and sometimes unsettling interplay between alterity and identity, difference and similarity . . . One definition that we can give of travel, accordingly, is that it is the negotiation between self and other that is brought about by movement in space. (Thompson, 2011, p. 22)

Travel is most simplistically defined as movement of a person from one location to another (Thompson, 2011). Though we cognitively understand that “travel encompasses such a wide range of practices, from beach tourism, to political exile, to commuter journeys, to religious pilgrimages, to business trips, to military manoeuvres, to name but a few” (Mee, 2014, p. 6), for many of us who have been afforded the privilege of travelling in the present day, this word conjures up images of faraway destinations and exotic locations. Either way, as Carl Thompson writes, “to begin any journey or, indeed, simply to set foot beyond one’s own front door, is to quickly encounter difference and otherness” (2011, p. 22). It is this difference and otherness that is a key concept of travel in Thompson’s opinion: *alterity: the state of being other or different; otherness* (2011). In leaving our homes and venturing out, regardless of our intent or how far we travel, we are forced into confrontations and negotiations with this notion of alterity, intertwined with the unavoidable shared identity of humanity we share with the peoples we encounter and places we visit (Thompson, 2011).

Far from human interaction in abstraction, Thompson’s use of this term ‘other’, brought to mind the work of the French philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas, and his concept of ‘the Other’, utilising this word in a very human way:

To approach the Other in conversation is to welcome his expression, in which at each instant he overflows the idea a thought would carry away from it. It is therefore to receive from the Other beyond the capacity of I, which means exactly: to have the idea of infinity. But it also means: to be taught. (Lévinas, 1991, p. 51)

William Barbieri comments that the work of Lévinas surrounding the “philosophical significance of the ‘face’ of the other” (1969 in Barbieri, 2002, p. 24) has greatly contributed to contemporary dialogue on alterity. Given its limitation in scope, this thesis precludes us from discussing the complex philosophical theories of Lévinas in depth. It is worth noting, however, that the way Lévinas views the Other is an interesting perspective with which to approach travel; drawing near to others as an opportunity to learn and experience something new with an open mind, which potentially dissolves alterity, or perhaps transmutes it.

In my research, I question: when we encounter alterity; difference and otherness in our lives and travels, can we remain unchanged? The use of the term, 'the Other', is one that seems entirely appropriate when considering the way that we, as travellers, can experience the *other*-ness of a new place and new peoples; a space of difference, a space of learning, and a space that can lead us to new discoveries about the Self and how we interact with the world. Exploration of the Other could provoke the consideration and contemplation of the differences, and the necessary un-knowing that we experience when relating to people of a new place and culture.

Otherness is a concept long-bound to travel and travel writing, thus I explore it further, as relevant to my research questions; de Certeau refers to the "otherness of alien cultures", "the otherness within our own societies", "the otherness within our own bodies", and as found in Arthur Rimbaud's *Je est un autre*, "the otherness within our own psyches" (1997, 1984, 1983, 1988, as cited in Barbieri, 2002, p. 25). Georges van den Abbeele makes reference to the textual complexity of travel writing, and the "slippery philosophical concept of 'otherness'" that we can expect to find in these kinds of texts (1985, p. 5). Van den Abbeele goes on to herald the increased interest regarding the analysis of travel texts due to their inherent nature of otherness (1985). Thompson clarifies that othering in travel writing can happen in two ways: identifying differences and similarities or determining the inferiority of differences and thereby making a judgement (2011). Thompson goes on to say that it is debatable, in the case of the second scenario, if all travel writing 'others' different cultures by judgement (2011). This is an important distinction, to be revisited during the analysis of the texts.

In summary, rather than define the specifics of travelling (i.e.: it must be a journey of over a month, or it must be a journey that crosses a continent), it seems more appropriate to articulate what defines the travel itself. In this case, we can assume that the concept of travel is a self-motivated and chosen journey, involving the encounter and communication of the Self with the Other, alterity, and the places inhabited, as varied liminal spaces of otherness.

### Who are Travellers and Why Do They Travel?

There is a significant body of work devoted to excavating the distinctions of tourism and travel, but this is not something we have time or space to explore here. Rather, my focus is on the travellers as a part of travel writing, and why they might choose to travel and/or live abroad. As de Nooy states in her research on the topic of travel memoirs, "[They] tend to be premised on the transformation of the self through spatial translation" (2016, p. 25). The aspect of spatial translation is key: to be a



traveller is to experience a cocktail of culture, language, the Self, the Other, and most obviously, place—resulting in self-transformation and change. For example, the concept of spending a year abroad to ‘find yourself’ is not a new one and it has even become somewhat of a cliché. In her study of Italian travel literature, Gaia De Pascale suggests that the principal motivation of voluntary travel today is contact with ‘l’altro da sé’ (the Self’s Other), but she recognises that ‘altro’ is not necessarily a person, as it can refer to a landscape or place (as cited in Mee, 2014, p. 2). The prospect of being thrust into new places and discovering a fresh world outside of your familiar bubble is thrilling for many, terrifying for some, and for almost everyone, it is life changing.

On travel, Arthur Berger employs the work of de Certeau and Vladimir Propp’s morphology of narrative to travel, drawing fascinating parallels between the functions of narrative as applied to the experience of travel (2009). Folk and fairy tales are the skeleton of the stories most children grow up with, and “Typically it narrates a story that has the hero ‘setting out, experiencing trials and adventure, and returning home victorious and changed’” (Dann, 1999, as cited in Beaven, 2007, p. 189). The case is presented that it is these “tales which may be the basis of our quests and searches for adventures that are, in turn, the unconscious motivators of much of our travel” (Berger, 2009, p. 101). Berger goes on to say that “the heroes of folktales, who went on quests or in search of adventure were similar in nature to what we now call tourists and travelers” (2009, p. 101). If travel is story, then we are the heroes of our own travel tales, and we see yet another motive to travel, though perhaps subconsciously. Psychologically, Berger suggests that as per the work of Sigmund Freud, travel is a profound matter that has deep roots in all of us due to the connections with childhood stories (2009).

Travel writing, particularly memoirs of living abroad, tend to communicate important elements of Self:

. . . the defining choice to live elsewhere is one “guided not only by aesthetic concerns but also but an ethical impulse to remake one’s life in accordance with a particular vision of the ‘good life’”, in other words, expatriation as a deliberate act of displacement and a long-term process of self-transformation. (Youngs, 2019, p. 59)

The concept of self-transformation as mentioned above by Young (2019), is a critical thread that weaves throughout this research. Michel Foucault is referenced as noting that when holidays turn into life journeys, it becomes a very important event in the canon of life experiences; journeys taken in order to conquer or develop their self-concept (1980, as cited in Ting & Kahl, 2016). Society greatly values travellers and travels, and travellers are often viewed in our current time as being successful and knowledgeable (Foucault, 1980). Nelson Graburn (2001) observes that international travel

“assists in developing the distinction between the daily mundane at home and the sacred period of travel away from home” (Bui, Wilkins & Lee, 2014, as cited in Ting & Kahl, 2016, p. 48) which is an important concept I draw upon later. As such, many individuals are driven by multiple personal and societal factors to pursue life in another place as a self-motivated journey to transform the Self.

Ricœur, as discussed by David Pellauer and Bernard Dauenhauer, believed that “self-knowledge only comes through our understanding of our relation to the world, and of our life with and among others in time in the world” (2021, para. 2). Ricœur’s statements about knowing Self only as experienced with, and reflected by others is echoed in a different context by Mee, who writes that as an “eminently self-forming activity” travel does indeed make the traveller; “it also does something to the traveller, or rather things are done to the traveller, not only by the journey, but also by the people the traveller encounters along the way” (2014, p. 4). Mee cites Italian anthropologist, Marco Aime and his observation that though tourist advertising focuses on encounters with “nature, history or tradition”, it is a fact that: “*a gestire quella natura, quella storia o tradizione sono individui, persone*” (2014, p. 3).<sup>7</sup>

For some, communion with the Other this is a highly motivating part of why one chooses to travel. “The exotic appeal of unknown people(s), as much as unknown places, is a long-established motivational trope” (Mee, 2014, p. 5). Mee speaks of these travel experiences using the term ‘encounters’, saying that they are as essential to travel as place. “They [encounters] shape and define journeys . . . Exotic fantasies dissolve when faced with the practicalities of interacting and negotiating with individuals” (2014, p. 3). Mee quotes Nicolas Bouvier’s reflection on travel: “On croit qu’on va faire un voyage, mais bientôt c’est le voyage qui vous fait, ou vous défait” (2014, p. 4).<sup>8</sup> Indeed, these ideas are the very skeleton of travel, and it is these events; diverse encounters with place and others, that form the substance of travel and how it shapes us as individuals.

Encounters can be spatial or locational, but Mee’s work focusses on the encounter as an interpersonal engagement; something that happens between two people at a particular time and place, that she believes is a part of any travel. Whether it be a conversation, an exchange of glances, a non-verbal cue, or merely the slightest acknowledgement, it can be an encounter. These encounters may last for a heartbeat or develop into something further, but, Mee explains, it is important to note that the length of the encounter does not determine its significance (2014). An

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<sup>7</sup> English translation of the original Italian: *managing this nature, this history or tradition are individuals, people* (Mee, 2014, p. 3).

<sup>8</sup> “*Usage*, 82; You think you’re going to make a journey, but soon it’s the journey that makes you, or unmakes you” (Mee, 2014, p. 4).

encounter found in a written text is significant, constituting an event, as indicated by the writer's choice to include the encounter in the travel narrative. "Any encounter that is selected for representation, regardless of whether it is fact or fiction, is consequently endowed with significance" (Mee, 2014, p. 3).

The two texts to be analysed for this research centre around showcasing a variety of encounters in the authors' new countries. The lived experiences chosen for inclusion in the texts appear profound from the perspective of the authors, and the assemblage is collectively and phenomenologically significant.

### What is Travel Writing?

Dating back to antiquity, travel writing has woven a rich and broad tapestry throughout history, and has been a significant part of global communication throughout the centuries (Gregory & Duncan, 1999). Having evolved from a prior categorisation of the genre, 'voyages and travels' (Thompson, 2011), travel writing is expansive, dynamic, and multidisciplinary, and is notoriously difficult to categorize, "play[ing] havoc with generic as well as geographic limits" (Anjum, 2014; Beaven, 2007; Van den Abbeele, 1985, p. 5). De Certeau (1980) goes so far as to say, "Tout récit est un récit de voyage" (Van den Abbeele, 1985, p. 5).<sup>9</sup> Travel writing defies limitations and frequently crosses the vague genre boundaries that do exist, particularly into the areas of ethnography, journalism, autobiography, and the novel (Mee, 2014). They can be written as letters, journals, poems, dialogues, and the list goes impossibly on (Mee, 2014; Van den Abbeele, 1985). Not only are travel texts varied in form, but they are prone to displacement and interpretation differences as "They are the most socially implicated and the most idiosyncratically personalized of texts, the most ideologically blind and the most critically aware" (Van den Abbeele, 1985, p. 5).

#### Travel writing as a subjective curation

The facticity of current day travel writing is something that is debated (Mee, 2014; Thompson, 2011). Though most travel books are indeed derived from reality, it remains true that, "Travel *experience* is thus crafted into travel *text*, and this crafting process must inevitably introduce into the text to a greater or lesser degree, a fictive dimension" (Thompson, 2011, pp. 27-28). Even travel writing that is portrayed as highly factual still requires elements of choice: inclusion, and exclusion by the author, as they recall and interpret their own highly subjective experiences and curate the impressions of encounters they wish to share with the world (Berger, 2004).

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<sup>9</sup> English translation: *Every story is a travel story* (Van den Abbeele, 1985, p. 5).

Autobiographical travel memoirs read as retrospectively written accounts of a person's own life: a journey, a new place, and new people. These narratives are rarely neutral, highly personal and driven by the author's memories and interpretations of events, places, and encounters; their subjective experiences (Thompson, 2011). Van Manen contends that when it comes to personal accounts of lived experience, whether or not a certain event happened exactly as described is not of great importance, and of more relevance is the "plausibility of an account—being true to our living sense of it" (1990, p. 65).

Anjum states that travel writing is "unlimited in its expression . . . It aims at the mosaic" (2014, p. 3). Within the miscellany of this discipline, you will find texts that are widely viewed as true literature; rich in content, critical, culturally aware, and relevant, incisive in the analysis and discussion of the author's travel experience and addressing weighty concepts and themes. There is criticism of travel texts regarding quality, but one can consider that there are many books published never presuming to become a part of the great canon of travel literature, but rather, existing more as a private diary, or an interpretation of a record of that time in the author's life (Thompson, 2011). There are writers who travel, and travellers who write; the purpose behind the author's choice to write a travel book matters when it comes to the interpretation of their work, and the overall impressions left by these books can vary greatly (Thompson, 2011).

It is with this in mind that I dare touch briefly upon Roland Barthes and his contributions surrounding *la mort de l'auteur*.<sup>10</sup> With Foucault and Jacques Derrida, there was a push towards the birth of the reader as an entity, and the reading and interpretation of text as is—without the need to filter any meaning ascribed through the possible intentions of the author (Burke, 1998). In his book *Death and Return of the Author*, literary critic Seàn Burke goes to great lengths to refute the concept of an indeterminate author: "The death of the author emerges as a blind-spot in the work of Barthes, Foucault and Derrida, an absence they seek to create and explore, but one which is always already filled with the idea of the author" (1998, p. 172).

Without going into depth as space precludes us, suffice to say that I find sense in Burke's criticisms—particularly for the purposes of this thesis, authors are highly relevant for this work. Language must always be interpreted, as it can be comprehended in more than way (Ricœur, as cited in Pellauer & Dauenhauer, 2021); therefore "Reading thus introduces an 'art' which is anything but passive" (de

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<sup>10</sup> Translation: 'the death of the author'

Certeau, 1988, p. xxii). The authors are crafting their own experiences, and it would be naïve to suggest that we can read these texts as neutral representations.

With this said, the reader does have a role to play in the perception of texts; one's own experience, cultural background, awareness of Self and Other, and one's openness (or not) to see themselves and their particular cultural assumptions and habits through new eyes (Hanna & de Nooy, 2006). Burke cites Georges Poulet, "a book gains its essential life only when read" (1998, p. 189) and goes on to say that "No text is a 'space that resists all intrusion' and the only closed text is the one that has never been opened. Once read, a book has a life beyond its physical or authorial confines" (1998, p. 189).

This is particularly true when we consider the multiplicity that comes with the murky genre of travel writing. ". . . *genres frame readers as well as texts* (Gerhart, 1991, p.156), and clearly not all readers are prepared to relinquish the genre hypothesis with which they come to the book" (Hanna & de Nooy, 2006, p. 14). Hanna and de Nooy use the example of Turnbull's *Almost French*; the book was marketed as a travel memoir, full of excitement, glamour, and whimsical exoticisms, and those expectations drove the consumers' purchases. Most readers didn't think they were purchasing a cross-cultural exploration, thus it became harder for them to interpret it in this way (2006). The reader may disregard the author's purpose entirely and create their own interpretation that is far from the intention; construal is a complex and personal interplay between, cultures, languages, translations, and places (de Certeau, 1988; Gregory & Duncan, 1999; Lévinas, 1991).<sup>11</sup>

### **Why are travel memoirs so popular, and with whom?**

The variety of modern travel literature is part of why it is so popular. With arguably something for every taste, there are more travel writing publications than ever before (Anjum, 2014). Whilst travel memoirs are well loved by the general population, there is dissent among the academic community about the genre and a sense of criticism, in addition to the quality concerns discussed earlier (Thompson, 2011).

Charles Forsdick comments that because of its subject matter, travel writing is "an inherently transcultural, transnational, even translingual phenomenon", and goes on to state later that the travelogue [travel memoir] is the literary form most likely to be the victim of "cross-cultural displacement" (2009, p. 287). Beaven reflects, "all forms of travel narrative reveal aspects of

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<sup>11</sup> (Hanna & de Nooy, 2006; Morgan, 2015; Pavlenko, 2001; Ricœur, 1991, 1994)

intercultural contact” (2007, p. 191), while Hanna and de Nooy argue that the nature of this travel writing genre is such that it entrenches stereotypes, “such that the other remains firmly other”, a concept I will explore more fully in Chapters 4 and 5 (2006, p. 2). The interpretation (and perhaps, assigned value) of the intercultural contact within texts appears to be what decides the author’s intercultural fate. As explored in the discussion of Burke’s refutation of Barthes, we see again the incalculable significance of the author’s elucidation of their experiences, along with the secondary consideration of the interpretation of the reader, affecting the possible elucidations of the text in question (Burke, 1998).

As I am a fluent English speaker and reader, language is another consideration. Many English speakers (the target readership for most authors who write in English) speak only one language fluently (Besemeres, 2008), and the disproportionate dominance of English speakers affects the interest with which we approach language while we ourselves roam the globe, or read about travel in books (Morgan, 2015). Besemeres points out the conspicuous gap between our vernacular and that of the country to be visited, remains largely unexplored (2008). “Only a fraction of travel books in English, however, emphasise the language borders that are crossed in much international travel, and deal in a sustained way with the question of how language impinges on the self” (Besemeres, 2008, p. 245). Besemeres discusses a unique opportunity provided by language learning travel texts, such as Turnbull’s *Almost French*: “Through their focus on the experience of learning another language as a foreigner and cultural outsider—and translating the self in the process—memoirs of language immersion arguably extend the possibilities of the larger travel genre” (2005, p. 28).

The fact that questions about language and related identity are missing from travel writing is a symptom of the limited way in which English speakers experience literature (Besemeres, 2008). And, the impingement of language on the Self is significant: in re-presenting other cultures, “travel writers ‘translate’ one place into another, and in doing so constantly rub against the hubris that their own language-game contains the concepts necessary to represent another language-game” (Dingwaney 1995, p.5; Asad & Dixon 1973; 1985, as cited in Gregory & Duncan, 1999, p. 4). The insufficiency of one language is an ineluctable aspect of travel writing: as authors filter their experiences in a way that is meaningful to them, and further shape their text to be understood by their readers, it is conceivable that in addition to the issues of the translation space, stereotypes and generic interpretations are perpetuated.

Some travel texts are more literary in intention, while others lean more towards journalism, reportage, personal diaries, or even light entertainment. At best, we could conclude that the vast

genre of travel writing provides a space for questioning the politics of representation and transculturation, colonial pasts and an allegedly post-colonial present, and the “. . . ecological, economic and cultural implications of globalizing projects of modernity” (Gregory & Duncan, 1999, p. 1). It is undisputed however, that in conjunction with the above and its capacity to be a portal for undiscovered possibilities, cultural *richesse*, and beauty, travel writing also has a complicated shadow side (Gregory & Duncan, 1999).

Thus, we move forward to the next chapter, with consideration of the above; the vast corpus of travel writing inherently hinges on the confrontation of Self and Other, sameness and difference, the power of place, and the understanding that meaning making of texts relies on the participation of both author and reader.

MYANMAR  
ရွှေတိဂုံဘုရား, Yangon <sup>12</sup>  
2014

It was in the sticky middle of a collaborative arts project in Yangon as a part of my friend's practice-led research PhD. Film, editing, music, dancers, costume design, visual artists...it culminated in a short dance film featuring Burmese children dancing their stories to be shared with the world.

We were walking through the Shwedegon Pagoda, a religious site of great importance to the city.

"Do you know how Lévinas defined philosophy?" My friend asked me, as we walked,

"No," I replied, desperately wishing I did, as I had watched my friend's grasp of philosophy expand before my very eyes as she read seemingly every book in the library.

"Philosophy is the wisdom of love at the service of love," she smiled.

(Lévinas, 2013, p. 162)

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<sup>12</sup> Shwedegon Pagoda



## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

### Introduction

In this chapter, within the larger context of analysing travel writing, I will outline and justify my methodological choices of working with a phenomenological approach, my methods, and provide the process of analysis for investigation of my research questions. My readings have indicated that a process of phenomenological research design, coupled with the methods of reflexivity and thematic analysis, is an optimal combination choice to enable me to address my research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2017; Dahlberg, 2006).<sup>13</sup>

#### Research questions

1. In the context of the authors' intercultural encounters lived abroad, does phenomenology of place disrupt Self, provoke encounters with alterity, and reconfigure identity?
2. To what extent do the authors' cultural/linguistic backgrounds and perceptions of Self/Other affect their interpretations of everyday lived experiences as recorded in their autobiographical travel memoirs?

These questions will be addressed through analysis and contrast of two specific autobiographical travel books, *La grenouille dans le billabong* by Marie-Paule Leroux, and *Almost French* by Sarah Turnbull. There are unique challenges for this analysis due to the textual accounts of encounters being authored for a general audience. The information to be analysed for this study comes from literature; specifically, non-fiction, autobiographical travel memoir texts. Using literature as a data source is widely recognised as legitimate practice, and provides a unique opportunity to analyse a great deal of information in a wide variety of contexts: "Literature invites readers into a literary space of human experience" (Given, 2008, p. 5), and as such, is particularly germane to qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Van Manen, 1990). As a cultural art form, literature provides a compelling case for its use as a data source for research, to elicit or represent data (McKee, 2003). Uniquely, the study of literature (any form) provides the potential to experience, ". . . sensory details, figurative language, and experiences with human consciousness", offering "verisimilitude" to research (Given, 2008, p. 5).

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<sup>13</sup> (Delahunt & Maguire; Fairclough; Fürsich & Kavoori, 2001; Given, 2008; Groenewald, 2004; Hanna & de Nooy, 2006; Kafle, 2013; Kumar, 2014; Louviere, 1981; McKee, 2001; Neubauer et al., 2019; Pälli, Tienari, & Eero, 2010 2010; Sharkey, 2001; Silverman, 2006; Smith, 2002; Van Manen, 1990, 2002; Westerman, 2006; Williamson, 2002; Willis, 2001; Wray, 2006)

## Methodology

### Phenomenology

Van Manen defines phenomenology as: “the study of lived experience” (1990, p. 9). Pamela Maykut and Richard Morehouse define phenomenology as a philosophy, research method, and perspective by which qualitative research is done (1994), and John Creswell states: “Phenomenological research is a design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants” (2014, p. 42).

Peter Willis quotes Ricœur, saying phenomenological research is, “the descriptive study of the essential features of experience taken as a whole. . . it has always been an investigation into the structures of experience which precede connected expression in language” (1978, as cited in Willis, 2001); a particularly pertinent observation given this research centres around travel texts.

Hopefully, it is clear from the above that the broad spectrum of phenomenological research with its entirety of philosophical underpinnings, method choices and modes of practice, is truly unique in its potential to penetrate the human experience; to go “back to the things themselves”, to use Husserl’s terms (Langdridge, 2007). Phenomenological approaches allow the interpretative researcher to find a way to “represent lived experience in as raw and unelaborated way as possible” (Willis, 2001, p. 1).

### ***The things themselves: lived experience, phenomena, & essence***

*The things themselves*, as Husserl is credited as saying (Willis, 2001), require some definition. In 1959, Spiegelberg wrote: “All phenomenology takes its start from phenomena. A phenomenon is essentially what appears to someone, that is, a subject” (as cited in Willis, 2001, p. 1). Individuals describe a particular phenomenon, or lived experience, which is then interpreted by the researcher in order to gain understanding of the phenomena which “culminates in the essence of the experiences” whereby, potentially providing some insight into the phenomena for humankind (Creswell, 2014, p. 42).

Lived experience is a critical aspect of phenomenological research because this is essentially where the research begins and to where it returns (Van Manen, 1990). Dilthey proposed that lived experience “is to the soul what breath is to the body: just as our body needs to breathe, our soul requires the fulfilment and expansion of its existence in the reverberations of emotional life” (1985, as cited in Van Manen, 1990, p. 36). Critically, for the examination of travel texts, lived experience has a completely temporal structure. It can never be grasped in its instantaneous manifestation—instead, it is solely expressed as the past, reflectively. Lived experiences amass import, as we collate

and collect them. “We (reflectively) gather them [lived experiences] by giving memory to them. Through meditations, conversations, daydreams, inspirations and other interpretive acts we assign meaning to the phenomena of lived life” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 37). This has relevance to the analysis of travel texts—as the authors reflect and select content for their texts, they are crafting the totality of their lived experiences in retrospect. “Our appropriation of the meaning of lived experience is always of something past that can never be grasped in its full richness and depth since lived experience implicates the totality of life” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 36). It is these transient-never-again, filled-with-breath-and-soul moments that phenomena can signify: it is here; it is us, and then it is gone; existing only in our memory, or our re-creation and re-presentation of it in the future.

Parce que ce qui est beau, c’est ce qu’on saisit alors que ça passe. C’est la configuration éphémère des choses au moment où on en voit en même temps la beauté et la mort . . . C’est peut-être ça, être vivant : traquer des instants qui meurent.<sup>14</sup> (Barbery, 2006, pp. 342-343)

In phenomenological research, we aim to translate the representation of these lived experiences into a “textual representation of its essence”, so that the text is a “reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 36). When we seek lived experiences—phenomena, with intentionality, we interact with essences, but we do not add them to the research: they are already there to be examined as a part of the connection between the phenomena and us. Karin Dahlberg sought to further excavate essences in a paper, and concluded thus: “An essence is, simply, a phenomenon’s style, its way of being, and thus the essence cannot be separated from the phenomenon that it is the essence of” (2006, p. 18).

Essences are not characteristics to be described, but they are truly a part of the phenomena: the crux, the quiddity, the whatness, the soul, the kernel; essence is the heart of the phenomenon. Through the analysis of the two texts, I seek to identify and excavate the authors’ lived experiences: the phenomena, and the essences; in order to address my research questions.

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<sup>14</sup> Beauty consists of its own passing, just as we reach for it. It’s the ephemeral configuration of things in the moment, when you can see both their beauty and their death. . . maybe that’s what being alive is all about: so we can track down those moments that are dying (Barbery, 2009, pp. 268-269).

## Methods

### Reflexivity

“Reflexivity in research is meant to trace the presence of the researcher onto the research context, marking their interference, their participation, their desire” (Creswell, 2003, as cited in Knowles & Cole, 2008). One of the fascinating aspects of qualitative analysis is the role the researcher plays in the process of analysis. The inclusion of reflexivity transforms subjectivity in research “from a problem to an opportunity” (Finlay, 1998; Finlay and Gough, 2008; Gentles et al., 2014; Guillemin and Gillam, 2004; Pillow, 2003; Stronach et al., 2007, as cited in Subramani, 2019, p. 1).

In a recent article interview with Hayfield, Braun and Clarke note “that any qualitative work is an interpretative process . . . shaped and situated by you as a researcher” (Braun et al., 2019, p. 4). Furthermore, Braun and Clarke dispute the claim that a researcher can simply ‘give voice’ (Fine, 2002, as cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006) to the research, describing it as a ‘naïve, realist view’. The element of interpretation ties in with what we saw earlier in this paper; the unavoidable role of both researcher and writer as curatorial agents within a space of translation (Anwar, 2020; Braun et al., 2019; Gregory & Duncan, 1999). This is certainly the case for my research: I am a lover of travel and have been to France multiple times, so when I read Turnbull’s writing, it means something. Her phrase speaks to me, “artists have compared Paris light to champagne. The evening air does have an effervescent quality” (Turnbull, 2010, p. 22). I too, have felt, and been moved by the evening air in Paris, thus impacting my reading of the text compared to someone who has never experienced a Parisian evening.

Reflective reflexivity is critical: “It’s what you bring that shapes how you make sense of the data, and what you have to decide as a researcher is ‘what story do I tell?’” (Braun et al., 2019, p. 12). The reflexive role of researcher relates to previous content discussed earlier in this paper regarding the Self and relating to the Other. It is a complex topic all of its own, but whether it be as traveller, writer, or researcher, we are a product of our genetics, upbringing, experiences, education, language, culture, and we see the world through our own particular lens, no matter how objective we consider ourselves to be (Boroditsky, 2012; McKee, 2003; Westerman, 2006). It is our responsibility as researchers to reflect, consider, and analyse our own reactions and interpretations of data and its possible meaning, and to be as transparent as possible. Hopefully, my fingerprints are a clear part of the labyrinthine pattern that points to authorship and the lived experience behind my interpretations and my making of meaning. Because, like the authors whose texts are being analysed, each researcher is also crafting a narrative (Braun et al., 2019).

### **Thematic analysis**

As previously mentioned, thematic analysis (TA) is an important part of this phenomenological research process. TA is a notable method within the catalogue of qualitative analytic approaches “because it offers a method—a tool or technique, unbounded by theoretical commitments—rather than a methodology (a theoretically informed, and confined, framework for research)” (Braun & Clarke, 2017, p. 1). Interestingly, this does not indicate that TA is realist, essentialist, or atheoretical. Instead, it provides opportunity for it to be used in a broad range of paradigms and theoretical frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2017). Versions of TA that are designed for use within a qualitative framework tend to accentuate the importance of the active researcher and utilise an “. . . organic approach to coding and theme development” (Braun & Clarke, 2017, p. 297). Despite some practitioners of phenomenology being against coding, I elected to use a system of coding within the structure of TA simply to assist me with recording and noting possible emergence of themes throughout the texts (Van Manen, 1990).

A very useful aspect of TA for my research in particular, is the way it can be used to highlight and identify patterns throughout the data (in my case, travel texts) as they relate to the participants (characters within the text, authors): their experiences, views, perspectives, behaviour, and practices (Braun & Clarke, 2017). For the analysis of these travel texts, I employ the use of TA on a latent level; the analysis goes beyond the semantic subject matter of the data, in order to identify and examine the ideologies, assumptions, ideas, and conceptualisations that “can be theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). As I consider the development of the themes for analysis, I note that theme development itself involves interpretive work, and the resulting analysis is pre-conceptualised and theorised (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Van Manen, 1990).

According to Braun and Clarke, thematic analysis typically takes place via six phases (2019). These phases are continually revised, revisited, and refined as the researcher moves through the research process, allowing for the highly insightful analysis. Continual refining and revisiting is particularly relevant when it comes to the selection and evolution of themes (Braun et al., 2019). We immerse ourselves in the textual experience, whilst keeping in mind the indisputable fact that neither we, nor the author will be able to be completely neutral in the analysis of various experiences and the interpretations of them.

## Integrated Process of Analysis

Detailed in the following section is the process of analysis which I followed. Each stage in the process is a blended approach: including the suggested steps Van Manen recommends for phenomenological research, reflexivity, and Braun and Clarke's proposed steps for thematic analysis. (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Van Manen, 1990, p. 30). I have also included samples of analysis and comments on the two texts: Leroux's *La grenouille dans le billabong* and Turnbull's *Almost French*.

**Stage 1) turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;** (Van Manen, 1990), and **Phase 1: familiarizing yourself with your data** (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The phenomenological research process varies greatly and is dependent on the topic and the researcher (Van Manen, 1990). Brian Neubauer, Catherine Witkop, and Lara Varpio are in agreement, quoting William Bynum: "The interpretive work of hermeneutic phenomenology is not bound to a single set of rule-bound analytical techniques; instead, it is an interpretive process involving the interplay of multiple analysis activities" (2018, as cited in 2019, p. 95). The first step in my process was to read and reread the source material. At that stage, the precise list of texts to be used was not defined. The intent was to read widely, already identifying potential passages and segments in the texts that could be analysed for cultural and linguistic content. "It is vital that you immerse yourself in the data to the extent that you are familiar with the depth and breadth of the content" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). Texts were deliberately selected for this first reading that met one of the following criteria: popular texts, travel texts of historical significance (for example, Peter Mayle's *A Year in Provence*, an iconic and early arrival in the contemporary travel writing scene), well-written texts with intent to focus on cultural content (Elaine Sciolino's *Only Street in Paris*), or slightly more niche texts (Adam Gopnik's *Paris to the Moon*) (Gopnik, 2008; Mayle, 1990; Sciolino, 2015).

One significant challenge was to find texts written by French authors about their time in an English-speaking country. At time of writing, only one travel memoir text written from the French perspective was available with a full English translation, Marie-Paule Leroux's *La grenouille dans le billabong/A Frog in the Billabong*.<sup>15</sup> The lack of choice was undoubtedly a concern; many enquiries were made about possible additional sources with some French-speaking colleagues, yet no other options presented themselves.

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<sup>15</sup> Please note the presence of the French text, *Un femme en marche* (Rey, 2008), on the list of books. It was not an option for the case study because only one small part of the book is about her time in Australia; much of the text is set in France.

**Figure 1: Travel texts**

Initial list of travel texts read (France/Australia specific)			
Title	Author	Nationality of author/language of original publication	Year of publication
<i>Lunch in Paris</i>	Elizabeth Bard	American/English	2010
<i>Picnic in Provence</i>	Elizabeth Bard	American/English	2015
<i>But You are in France, Madame</i>	Catherine Berry	Australian/English	2016
<i>Paris to the Past</i>	Ina Caro	American/English	2011
<i>French Children Don't Throw Food</i>	Pamela Druckerman	American/English	2012
<i>Paris to the Moon</i>	Adam Gopnik	American/English	2001
<i>The Sweet Life in Paris</i>	David Lebovitz	American/English	2009
<i>La grenouille dans la billabong/The Frog in the Billabong</i>	Marie-Paule Leroux	French/French	2004
<i>A Year in Provence</i>	Peter Mayle	British/English	1989
<i>My Twenty-Five Years in Provence</i>	Peter Mayle	British/English	2018
<i>Un femme en marche/Stepping Out</i>	Catherine Rey	French/French	2008
<i>The Only Street in Paris</i>	Elaine Sciolino	American-Italian/English	2016
<i>Notes from the Cévennes</i>	Adam Thorpe	British/English	2018
<i>Almost French</i>	Sarah Turnbull	Australian/English	2002

**Stage 2) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;** (Van Manen, 1990), and **Phase 2: generating initial codes** (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

I began the process of initial code generation before deciding to use phenomenology as my research design, therefore this was a complex and multi-layered stage of analysis. It was challenging to accept the lack of didactic structure for the research process of hermeneutic phenomenology, but I found that my research process thus far was similar in intention, if not in name and consciousness.

As I reread several texts of note in the second stage, I highlighted potentially relevant passages and recorded brief notes regarding the content in the back of the book. The pre-formal coding stage of highlighting potential content for analysis is important as the researcher gains familiarity with the texts and even begins to note tentative, preliminary findings or possibilities (Anwar, 2020; Braun & Clarke, 2006). These notes and findings were an informal, skeletal code, later going through an

evolution which was for me, a second phase of coding, as it continued to be “developed and defined throughout the entire analysis” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87).

In my observance of these texts, there were passages that stood out as providing more insight, either culturally or linguistically. See Figure 1 for an informal example of noting and recording passages of interest from a studied, though not selected text, *The Only Street in Paris* (Sciolino, 2015).

**Figure 2: Coding phase 1—sample of highlighting and recording passages of interest**

Sample of in-text highlighting	Recording of possibly relevant material

The highlighted portions demonstrate a ‘theoretical’ thematic approach. The data notation was shaped by my interest in exploring particular aspects of travel memoirs (place, Self, Other, sameness and difference) which is reflected in my selections (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). I repeated the above process with numerous texts I was considering for the case study selection before making my decision: I chose two memoirs to reflect an opposite experience; an Australian in France, and a French person in Australia.

As detailed in Chapter 1, I did not find existing research regarding travel memoirs in the form of a comparative case study. Therefore, I selected Sarah Turnbull’s *Almost French* for my Australian-in-France representative and Marie-Paule Leroux’s *La grenouille dans le billabong* for the French-in-Australia component. At the time of choosing and to my knowledge, Leroux was the only French author of a full Australian travel memoir, thereby assuring her a place in the case study. *Wild at*



*Heart* by Alienor le Gouvello is now available, but at the time of selection it had not yet been printed. However, amongst the many possibilities of English speaker-penned memoirs there were two authors I considered: Sarah Turnbull (2010) and Catherine Berry (2015). I chose Turnbull because her well-regarded text has already been analysed and studied, providing useful resources and context for my own investigations (Hanna & de Nooy, 2006). Turnbull's book has not, however, been analysed for the case of presenting difference or perpetuating sameness, thereby offering itself as an excellent option. Additionally, I had read this book for pleasure on a previous occasion before ever considering it as a source of data—so I could also recall those first impressions as a reader which was interesting to consider.

After confirming the two texts for the case study, *La grenouille dans le billabong* and *Almost French*, I conducted a second stage of coding. I reread my rough highlighted sections of text along with the scribbled notes and created a table for each book. This document evolved, becoming more refined forms of the initial flags, findings, and ideas that were created during the first perusal of the material in the previous stage (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The codes “refer to the most basic segment, or element of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). I worked with chunks of meaning, rather than a lexical textual analysis approach. Again, it is important to note that these fledgling codes change and develop throughout the research process, as the analysis evolves. Whether semantic, or in this case, latent, the data items enabled me to organise these parts of the material, which will then subsequently come together to form groups—my themes (Anwar, 2020; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

When coding material at this stage, I chose to include a sample of the material, as well as the code—essentially, what interested me about the text. I also added a comment if I felt it was helpful. With reference to Van Manen's work on isolating thematic statements, the below fits into his 'selective or highlighting approach', whereby the researcher listens to or reads a text several times and asks “*What statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described?*” which are then identified in some visual manner (Van Manen, 1990, p. 93). In this case, I highlighted the text when first reading, then went back over the book as a whole and entered the content into the table.

See Figures 3 and 4 for samples of my coding from the two main texts as per Van Manen and Braun and Clarke (2006; 1990).

**Figure 3: Sample of initial coding from phase 2 of thematic analysis**

Source	Page	Data extract "... "	Coded for:	Comments
<i>La grenouille dans la billabong</i>	162	... the scenery was perfect without me, there was true symbiosis. Everything was in unison. Except me.	1. role of place	She is in nature and feels the power of it deeply.
<i>La grenouille dans la billabong</i>	173	If I had to define living the Australian way. . I would choose casual. In fact, there is no French equivalent and the English word is now used in France, especially in the world of fashion	1. language 2. culture	Fascinating!
<i>La grenouille dans la billabong</i>	173	When I embraced Australian culture it was with my French sensitivity and cultural background so my ability to analyse was impaired by my lack of objectivity.	1. culture 2. difference 3. identity	*entire paragraph re: culture  Comparison as definition
<i>La grenouille dans la billabong</i>	173-174	During our first years in Australia it was easier for me to observe the cultural difference between my two countries whilst this difference has faded over time as we became more integrated	1. comparison/difference 2. identity and integration	Identifying difference through comparison

**Figure 4: Sample of initial coding from phase 2 of thematic analysis**

Source	Page	Data extract "... "	Coded for:	Comments
<i>Almost French</i>	63-65	Don't they know the golden rule (show interest in others and they'll show an interest in you? Don't they know they are supposed to make an effort?) . . . Could the rules be so different in France?	1. relationships 2. difference 3. expectations	More about this on these pages
<i>Almost French</i>	65	In France, apparently, serving alcohol is very much a male domain. Even before my champagne gaffe my behaviour had been far too assertive.	1. difference 2. hospitality 3. relationships 4. cultural difference	Vastly different to parties in Aust.
<i>Almost French</i>	66	I can't help but wonder by what secret code he discerned who was interesting.	1. people/relationships 2. culture	French people to her seem boring
<i>Almost French</i>	70	How can you construct neat answer for customs and codes of behaviour you have taken for granted since birth?	1. culture 2. expectations 3. difference	Fred tried to defend his friends' behaviour
<i>Almost French</i>	70	Seeing France through the eyes of an outsider is a new experience for Fred . . . Neither one of us is objective. I'm too vulnerable. And Fred is defensive.	1. difference 2. expectations 3. difference	

It is not necessary to exhaust the data and code every word from each book (Braun & Clarke, 2006; McKee, 2001). Additionally, because mine was a theoretic approach seeking to find content pertaining to my research questions, it was not useful to code sections that were not contributing to the area of interest (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke clarify that even with the intent to code in order to “identify particular (and possible limited) features of the data set . . . the research question is not fixed and can evolve throughout coding and theme development” (2006, p. 89; Braun et al., 2019, p. 1). Braun and Clarke’s statement supports the phenomenological aspect of the research—I allowed the process to guide and direct the refining of my research questions while retaining the overarching phenomenological essence; *what is it like to move and live overseas, how does it change you, and what does your book tell me about that?* (Van Manen, 1990).

**Stage 3) reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;** (Van Manen, 1990), and **Phase 3: searching for themes/Phase 4: reviewing themes/Phase 5: defining and labelling themes,** (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This step begins after reading and familiarising oneself with the potential data. Van Manen responds to the phenomenological question of why we need to collect the ‘data’ of the experiences of others: “We gather other people’s experiences because they allow us to become more experienced ourselves” (1990, p. 62). He goes on to say that from the perspective of gathering, phenomenological research might look like any other research design, but with an important caveat. We are not looking in the data for the experience of an individual, but rather what the experiences of an individual might say about the nature of the phenomenon as a human experience (Van Manen, 1990).

I worked with this in mind. Out of the myriad passages that caught my attention pertaining to my research questions, I found there were recurring themes that were reflected in both memoirs. Place, culture, expectations, sameness, difference, comparison, change, relationships, hospitality (particularly as a site of sameness/difference), language, communication, food and wine were all themes commonly identified in both texts.

These observations relate to Van Manen’s first type of thematic isolation—‘the wholistic or sententious approach’, which I used as an overarching enquiry after completing the more selective approach, allowing me to identify the themes that best represented the lived experience of the authors with relation to my questions (Van Manen, 1990, p. 93). Importantly, this is also valid within TA, and Anwar discusses how the TA researcher has freedom to assess the frequency or prevalence without needing to specify numerically; for example, using the term ‘a number of, many’ in presentation of the data (2020). I looked at the dominance of the themes that were most revealing in

terms of the authors' lived experiences with reference to my research questions and found the following were the most frequently coded:

- Place
- Difference (distinct from comparison)
- Culture
- Relationships
- Identity
- Change
- Communication
- Language

Within each theme, I found subthemes that were not always consistent in their thematic categorisation. Communication contained both culture and language elements, and language can be found with difference, relationships, change, identity, etc. Hospitality, for example, appeared under the theme of both culture and relationships, whilst Self and Other appeared throughout. It became evident Self/Other were intertwined throughout the texts; I chose to analyse Self/Other within other thematic categories to avoid fragmentation of meaning, since Self/Other are best interpreted within a broad context and viewed in relationship with surrounding events. Rather than become fixed on the themes and the multiple codes that each one developed, I chose to use the codes as an organisational resource to address my research questions in a wholistic fashion. It became evident that overarching themes were the driving force behind the highlighted and coded texts:

**Place:** the role and relevance of place in the writings and reflections of the authors, particularly with regards to their identity

**Difference/sameness:** author identification of elements of sameness and difference that affected their experiences in one way or another

**Relationships/communication:** content that highlighted the importance and relevance of relationships and communication within the memoirs.

**Stage 4) *describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and re-writing;*** (Van Manen, 1990);  
**5) *maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;*** (Van Manen, 1990).

Conversation and play are important aspects for hermeneutical phenomenological researchers. The researcher must play with the texts; discuss them; become absorbed in conversation with them and about them; there should be an all-encompassing element of engrossment as the researcher engages with the material (Sharkey, 2001). As we write and re-write reflectively, we are interpreting the texts we are working with (Willis, 2001). This is a circular and dynamic exchange without top, bottom, end

or beginning. Van Manen states that the methodology of phenomenology requires a “dialectical going back and forth among the various levels of questioning”, and that to do research in this sense is “already and immediately and always a bringing to speech of something” (Groenewald, 2004; 1990, pp. 131-132).

It is in play and writing that we can perhaps discover not-yet-revealed insights about our research, “When I speak I discover what it is that I wished to say” (Merleau-Ponty, 1973, p. 142), and Hans-Georg Gadamer makes comment regarding *logos*, from which thinking and speaking, rationality and language are derived; “and in turn *logos* has retained the meaning of conversation, inquiry, questioning: of questioningly letting that which is being talked about be seen” (1975, p.366), or to use Heidegger’s terminology, phenomenology is “to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself” (1962, p. 58, as cited in Van Manen, 1990, pp. 32-33).

At this stage, also, I became completely aware of, and engaged by, how the rest of my life participated in my research. It mattered as a part of who I was as a researcher, and it mattered as a way for me to engage with the phenomenological nature of the research, because every single thing that I encountered during this intense time was provoking new ideas and thoughts: I cooked French recipes, I watched foreign films, I read books both to escape and to inspire me, and it all contributed to what I was thinking and learning about (Subramani, 2019; Van Manen, 1990).

**Stage 6) *balancing the research context by considering parts and whole***, (Van Manen, 1990), and **Phase 6: Producing the written findings**, (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Despite having a clear intention (to analyse travel memoirs), and a clear purpose (to write a master’s thesis), my path was uncertain, and only became apparent as I took one step at a time. As Van Manen discusses, there is no need to follow the conventions laid out in typical qualitative studies, which he states can become little more than endless tables, reproductions, and transcript fragments “under the guise that the researcher has decided to let the research speak for itself” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 167). An important premise of this type of research is that the writing of the findings, the narrative of discovery, is inseparable from the research process.

This stage, therefore, had the end goal of writing responses to my research questions. It comprised integrating the content of the two books in a cohesive way through the themes, to address my research questions and write the findings.

ITALY  
Laguna di Venezia, Venezia  
2016

Like it was yesterday, I remember being on the *vaporetto* from San Marco en route to the island of Lido, filled with thoughts as ocean spray splashed my face. My father had passed away in Rome a week earlier, and so of course, there was a newly-forged heart tie to this country like nothing I had ever experienced. There is a poignancy about my encounters with this place-where one of the people who gave me my earthly life took their last breath-that makes it entirely unforgettable; my memories of Italian essence etched on my bones and filling my veins.

The accent, the friendly, no-nonsense openness of the people coupled with their deep kindness, their complicated politics and many tricks of the trade, the food, the warm, tomato-vine smell of the summer air, riding bikes, the feeling of the foreign pollen tickling my nose...My memories of Italy are bundled up into a tangled mess of grief and love and despair and the naïve memory of my wild, outrageous hope that I might survive this heartbreak unscathed; all centred around the joy of knowing these wonderful people in this newly cherished place, who had been so generous to my grieving family while we were so far from our Australian home.

This life experience altered me, as death must for a daughter. My last memories with my dear Dad are profoundly emplaced, in strangely beautiful Italian ways. So now, my heart overflows in a jumble every time I smell tomatoes, miss my dad, cook Italian food, listen to Ludovico Einaudi, drink *prosecco*, see the ocean; and I remember...

*Sono cambiato per sempre.* <sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> I am changed, for always. [I am forever changed]

## CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION & FINDINGS

In the chapter to follow, I will use text extracts from each book to address the research questions and present my proposed responses accordingly. The discussion is largely based on the excavation of content from the two travel texts, which, according to Darren Langdrige, have hermeneutic phenomenological impact (in, Kafle, 2013 ). As sites of translation and interpretation, these memoirs provide a source of lived experience: personal, documented encounters of real lives, shaped by moving abroad. All stories, including these, are manipulated and molded, portraying phenomenological essence to be excavated uniquely by the researcher (Van Manen, 1990). After Ricœur, discourse becomes fixed: ephemeral language of the lived experience is captured through the words, interpretations, memories, and beliefs of the authors (Pellauer & Dauenhauer, 2021; Van Manen, 1990). Their retrospective storytelling of *being* in their new country describes lived experiences, interrogating phenomena and essentia: in “the secrecy of words, the sonority of sounds—all these modal notions—there is resonance of essence.” (Lévinas, 2013, p. 40).

To contextualise, it is important to note that both books were written by female authors of similar ages (late twenties-early thirties), and the time of writing is similarly situated, with the books being first published in 2002 (*Almost French*) and 2004 (*La grenouille dans le billabong*). Turnbull’s experience took place in 1994 compared to Leroux, who moved to Australia in 1991. The simple premise of each text is that the author moves to their new country in hopes of adventure and a new life, and, eventually, writes their memoir (Leroux, 2004; Turnbull, 2010). I will not discuss the strengths and weaknesses from a literary point of view, except to mention that though both are first novels by the authors, there were marked differences in the quality of the writing. Turnbull is a journalist, and her travel memoir is a more sophisticated example of a travel memoir (Hanna & de Nooy, 2006). Not only did I read Leroux’s book as an English translation (due to availability), introducing another element of complicity, but Leroux is not an experienced writer. This by no means diminishes Leroux’s ability to write incisive commentary on her own experience, however, it did affect my initial perceptions. Despite the difference in writing style and authorial background, there were many similarities between the two books; discoveries and comments about their respective cultures mirrored in each other’s writing.

### Research question 1: [Theme: Place]

*In the context of the authors' intercultural encounters lived abroad, does phenomenology of place disrupt Self, provoke encounters with alterity, and reconfigure identity?*

In the proceeding discussion, I elucidate my findings: phenomenology of place has the power to engender the disruption of Self through the provocation of alterity, resulting in the reconfiguration of identity; in this case, that of authors Marie-Paule Leroux and Sarah Turnbull.

Both authors reference the importance of going to a new place to experience personal change (Youngs, 2019; Youngs & Hooper, 2004). Place exists independently of humankind, yet it is imbued with “cultural, ecological, and political ramifications” (Trigg, 2012, p. 30), and as we shape our environment, so too, it shapes us. At any given moment, we are located ‘in-place’. However, our straightforward acceptance of being in-place is at odds with the complexity of understanding the multi-dimensional nuance of place, and the intricate, complex interplay between where we are and our identity (Trigg, 2012). Luís Umbelino provides a speculative discourse regarding Ricœur’s ontology of place by “examining the question of whether geography might be to space as history is to time” (2017, p. 235). Umbelino builds on this, discussing the premise that in the reflective practises of memory giving, we do not remember ourselves or others as abstracted encounters or ideas but; “we remember them as *emplaced*” (2017, p. 241). For example, Turnbull writes about Australia as the “home of homesickness and my history” (2010, p. 162). Australia is a vessel for her family, friends, and memories and remains a powerful force in her life, despite the distance after moving to France.

Both writers reference the power of place in their texts on multiple occasions as evidenced by the thematic prevalence of ‘place’. I suggest that even when not explicitly articulated, phenomenology of place is central to both Turnbull and Leroux’s writings. For example, Leroux experienced worrying first impressions of living in Australia. As she writes, “I cannot say it [Australia] was love at first sight . . . I was a little disappointed.” (2004, p. 5) and, “my new environment is not very inspiring” (Leroux, 2004, p. 8). Turnbull, meanwhile, discovers that despite telling her friends she was living a romantic dream in Paris, she did not live in any of the esteemed Parisian *arrondissements*, but instead in the outer suburbs. This realization leads Turnbull to look at her surroundings differently, no longer satisfied with the leafy surrounding streets. “In Paris, postcodes matter . . . Levallois [where she lived] is not Paris” (2010, p. 56).



Place is understood experientially which is clear in the texts; Dylan Trigg references Maurice Merleau-Ponty's observance of the relationship between a "human's experience of place and the values, memories, dreams, anxieties, and other such affective states that sculpt that experience" (2012, p. 33), highlighting that places are defined in relationship with the subject who experiences them (Trigg, 2012). For Leroux, her first glimpse of a kangaroo changed everything. In her words, she notes, "Now I truly felt I was in Australia. That moment was a watershed for me . . . from then on I began to love my environment" (2004, p. 12). Leroux's iconic wildlife sighting transformed her from a disappointed visitor to a star-struck resident who finally felt she was in her dream destination (Leroux, 2004). Meanwhile, Turnbull's suburban distress drives her to great lengths to realise her dream of inner-city dwelling; she pesters her boyfriend, Frédéric, until much to her delight, they move to rue Montorgueil which is; "the Parisian *quartier* of my dreams rich in contrasts, characters and vivid colour . . . *Voilà le vrai Paris!*" (2010, p. 101).

A phenomenological feature of place is the belief that spatiality cannot be assessed objectively, rather it is a way of *being-in-the-world*. We are always emplaced in the present moment for, "if our bodies place us in the here, then our orientation and experience of place is never truly epistemic in character but fundamentally affective" (Trigg, 2012, p. 32). As corporeal beings, we are oriented in place. Our bodies are a conduit for the constituents of place to manifest in somatic Self, becoming our chief source of environmental cognisance.

It is my position that the human phenomenological experience of place is tangible, irreplicable and inseparable from lived encounters that occur therein. "As our bodies reach out into the world, so a mimetic interplay arises, in which our sense of Self becomes fundamentally entwined with the fabric of the world . . . places habituate themselves in our bodies . . . We carry places with us." (Trigg, 2012, p. 37). Places become the *mise-en-scène* for our experiences (and thus, memories) to play out. Showing the relationship between place and physical connection (Trigg, 2012), Turnbull reflects, "breathtaking beauty of any kind is moving . . . It anchors your heart to a place" (2010, p. 127). With regards to new emplaced attachments, Leroux writes, "For Alain and me, Richmond [her town] was Tom [their landlord] . . . Conversations with him, endlessly philosophizing, were a delight" (2004, p. 156). Leroux remembers place as being inextricably intertwined with the relationships she formed there. As Umbelino notes,

The people we remember are what they are because of their way of inhabiting, their way of belonging, their way of making place for themselves—but also, crucially, because of the ways in which the dynamics of place themselves materialize meaning . . . (2017, p. 241)

An example of the emplaced attachment is Turnbull's confusion regarding Frédéric's passionate love of his childhood town, for which he longs to depart Paris every weekend. For Turnbull, it is a gloomy, cold, uninteresting place, but for Frédéric, the region is steeped in his childhood memories, and he simply cannot understand her disdain for the town. "My eyes don't see what Frédéric sees, at least they see it differently . . . at heart, it is not about scenery; it is about who we are . . . it highlights ingrained cultural differences" (Turnbull, 2010, pp.149; 151). Turnbull goes on to observe that in time, she learns to love Baincthun and spends memorable and happy times there with friends and family. As she explains,

. . . appreciation of beauty can also creep up on you. It can be a taste acquired through experience, time, love and deepening knowledge. It can spring not from the grandeur of the big picture but affection for the small things and parts that give a place its heart. (Turnbull, 2010, p. 154)

In addition, the impact of time on place and personal meaning-making potential is seen in Leroux's writing as she considers moving from Tasmania after 12 years. She writes, "I had made it my home, my special place" and the thought of leaving her once-disparaged and unfamiliar town fills her with sadness (Leroux, 2004, p. 209).

Thus, the very nature of *being-in-the-world* is to be emplaced. Furthermore, our experiences of place are embodied, enabling place to become "more than inert material by assuming an emblematic role in our understanding of self" (Trigg, 2012, p. 35). Consequently, I propose the two texts demonstrate that phenomenology of place cannot be encountered without the disruption of Self. Disruption occurs, I suggest, through the provocation of alterity.

### **Alterity is encountered**

As referenced by Thompson, alterity is inevitable where travel is concerned, and both authors experience it as they face difference in terms of both location, culture, language, and relationships (2011). Turnbull speaks to the disappointment and guilt she feels at her unhappiness, despite her idyllic French locale. "I feel lonely . . . sure being with Frederic is fabulous, but what about my life?" (2010, pp. 51; 59). Turnbull explains that despite believing herself to be a confident and well-educated woman, in France she is reduced to simple nods and childish responses to questions, feeling betrayed by her home culture and her poor French abilities. "The conversation about the state of affairs in my country continues without me . . ." (2010, p. 47). On another social occasion, Turnbull tries to initiate conversation, but her French counterparts do not reciprocate: "Don't they know the golden rule (show interest in others and they'll show an interest in you?) Don't they know they are supposed to make an effort? Could the rules be so different in France?" (2010, pp. 63-65).

Turnbull goes on, “I’ve become invisible . . . wishing someone would just glance my way to reassure me I exist . . . I can’t fathom the coolness of the others” (2010, p. 68; 69). Despite Turnbull’s high hopes for French life, she laments, “the business of integrating is going to be a much longer process than I’d initially thought” (2010, pp. 70-71). And, “Living in France was starting to seem like landing in the middle of a minefield and instead of nimbly navigating my way out I was stumbling and tripping; triggering disaster after disaster” (Turnbull, 2010, p. 86). Turnbull reflects, “It [my style of communication] had to change” (2010, p. 269).

Leroux remarks similarly of her new culture, observing that “Sometimes the tiniest detail evolved into the proverbial tragedy” (2004, p. 31). Reflecting on her expectations and previously ‘normal’ ways of being, Leroux comments, “I saw for the first time the depth to which my culture and education had permeated me and imposed on me unconscious rules that I now needed to review—if I was ever going to blend in” (2004, p. 30). She comments on the ease of life in Australia compared to her complex Latin upbringing, writing, “it [was] difficult to adjust to such simplicity . . . my reference points failed me. I looked in vain for hidden traps.” (Leroux, 2004, pp. 174-175). For these authors, being confronted by alterity meant adaptation.

### **Identity is irrevocably reconfigured (leaving traces)**

Turnbull and Leroux both came to the personal conclusions that without growing up as a child and absorbing the customs and culture that surround you from childhood, it is impossible to assimilate fully into a new country as an adult. However, they clearly state that their experiences living in Australia and France respectively, changed them. As Turnbull writes, “But the girl who got off the plane from Bucharest HAS changed . . . osmosis has occurred without even noticing it” (2010, p. 291). “Paris has changed me” she reflects, considering her dog’s three hour-long grooming ‘beauty’ appointments at the salon (Parisian dog beauty standards being something to which she swore she would never acquiesce). Turnbull shouts at children yelling outside her window and afterwards is shocked by her actions, noting: “It occurs to me that I would have never done that in Australia—my forceful approach to the problem is actually quite French” (2004, p. 114). Turnbull ends up feeling proud of various social interactions where she rebuts insults or dishes out some of her own to deal with haughty shop assistants or customers. “Five years ago when I first arrived in France such casual rudeness would have been beyond me. In my previous life, daily encounters didn’t require sharp words . . . I see the incident as a sign of progress. My progress” (Turnbull, 2010, p. 270).

Towards the end of her book, Turnbull summarises that living in Paris “is an experience that has left me fundamentally the same—and profoundly changed . . . Once you leave your homeland nothing is

ever the same” (2010, pp. 296-297). Leroux also writes, “I know I have changed. Australia has liberated me and simplified me. And I am happy for the change” (2004, p. 194) and, “For the frog that I am my billabong is Richmond, which, as the years go by, becomes more and more the native land of the Tasmanian and Australian that I have become” (2004, p. 127). Leroux describes nonchalantly bringing a cheese platter to a BBQ for consumption as *hors d’oeuvres*, something she would have been horrified by pre-Australia. She takes pride in her boldness and deliberateness in embracing her new country, reflecting “Have I actually become Australian? I was born French but I became Australian” (Leroux, 2004, pp. 194; 231). Leroux goes on to say that of course, she is still French, but she now feels ‘French’ in Australia, and ‘Australian’ in France. Turnbull speaks in a similar vein, writing “it’s a curse to love two countries” (2010, p. 35), and “. . . in France I may stand out as foreign yet in Australia I feel a bit foreign too. I feel like an insider . . . but at the same time I am still an outsider” (2010, p. 294).

The authors’ lived experiences abroad were representational of a dimension of *being* that had yet to be discovered (Neubauer et al., 2019, p. 93, after Husserl, 1970). Through the writing of their books, Turnbull and Leroux both speak of being, becoming and belonging: via lived experiences abroad they discover as-yet-unknown versions of Self, better adapted to their new environments (Hanna & de Nooy, 2006; Leroux, 2004, p. 231; Turnbull, 2010, pp. 109-298). In the words of De Pascale, Turnbull and Leroux both encounter their Self’s Other, their *l’altro da sé* (Mee, 2014, p. 2). “The notion of self as fluid, fragmented, and multiple” (Hogan & Hogan, 1997, as cited in Pavlenko, 2001, p. 217), places the authors in the remarkable position of attempting to translate, both linguistically and culturally, for their readers in ways that represent their unique experiences of the changing of their selves in new places. Again, we see the impossibility of separating Self from place. “Place becomes profoundly constitutive of our sense of self . . . the very facticity of the world existing through the porous retention of our bodies” (Trigg, 2012, p. 37).

To revisit and paraphrase the words of Ricœur, we only know ourselves through our being in-place, and our understanding of our connectedness to others (Pellauer & Dauenhauer, 2021). I propose that as demonstrated by the texts, emplaced encounters and lived phenomenological experiences of place have a profound impact on Self. Alterity is inevitably encountered and negotiated through spatial immersion, and identity is irrevocably reconfigured (Andrews & Roberts, 2012; Beaven, 2007; Merleau-Ponty, 1981; Reynolds, 2002; Ricœur, 1994; Trigg, 2012; Umbelino, 2017).

## Research question 2: [Themes: Difference/Sameness & Relationships/Communication]

*To what extent do the authors' cultural/linguistic backgrounds and perceptions of Self/Other affect their interpretations of everyday lived experiences as recorded in their autobiographical travel memoirs?*

In each text, the incidences of cultural mishap and incongruence are raised and discussed on topics such as: education, gender, fashion, hospitality, communication, language, food, and wine. These all fit within the overarching themes of difference/sameness and relationships. There are mirror image observations made by the authors that I present as evidence. I postulate that whilst the process of 'assimilation' remains unique to the individual's experience, there are aspects of the Australian and French cultures that lead to somewhat predictable challenges during the process of settling into a new country.

### Language

Both authors were faced with the challenge of gaining fluency in a second language. Though Leroux spoke English quite well, there were things like writing a number one in the French style, (resembling an English numeral seven), that were disastrous for her food order business. Turnbull recalls at one of the many painful French dinner parties, "It was as though in trying to express myself in another language I'd suddenly plunged fifty IQ points" (2010, p. 47) and, "Now they are talking about virility and femininity and I am frustrated not to understand more . . . only to find out they are talking about wine! (2010, p. 49). Turnbull writes, "The [French] language remains a mystery to me—a gorgeous, mellifluous gabble to which I can listen forever without identifying where one word ends and the next begins" (2010, p. 54). Leroux sympathises with those such as Turnbull, reflecting on the complexity of the French language and the common reluctance to speak English by writing "I thought of the tourists and foreigners coming to France, hardly mastering the language at all" (2004, p. 16).

Language affects everything: how we see and experience colour, time, and direction. Language affects our moral judgements, our cognitive abilities, and our predispositions; we are profoundly impacted by our language and its structures and patterns (Boroditsky, 2012, 2019). Turnbull sensed—the divide between herself and the French was more than a language barrier (Besemeres, 2008). Besemeres comments that Turnbull's "dislocation is linguistic in a deeper sense, in that cultural expectations about behaviour make themselves felt through underlying scripts for what can or cannot be said" (Besemeres, 2008, p. 250). As Turnbull hopes, "Things will be easier when I speak

French properly, I tell myself . . . but instinctively I sense that language isn't the only problem. I'd felt totally out of place at dinner" (2010, p. 50). Language has a radical impact on our ability to connect with others. Francisco Varela observed, "We exist in language. It is by languaging and recurrent actions or human practices that we create meaning together" (Jaworski, 1996, p. 177). Varela's statement demonstrates the phenomenological experience of emplacement as being intertwined with language, which Van Manen specifically addresses:

[our] lived experience is soaked through with language. We are able to recall and reflect on experiences thanks to language . . . Language is so fundamentally part of our humanness that Heidegger (1971) proposed that language, thinking and being are one. (1990, pp. 38-39)

The intertwining of language, culture, interpretation, communication, and the resulting lived experience is exceedingly complex. Both authors reference their unfamiliarity with the new social 'rules' of the language. Turnbull experiences intense discussions in French as intimidating, whereas Leroux mentions several times how much she misses the rigour and complexity of French dinner table discussions. "Meals lacked stimulation and lustre . . . I yearned for confrontation between differing viewpoints. I longed for raised voices, the expression of new ideas" (Leroux, 2004, pp. 68-69).

With no topic off limits, the French generally rise to the challenge of a debate—lovingly constructing their arguments and discussions with eloquence (Sciolino, 2015, p. 87). This preference differs from Australians, as Leroux comments, "political philosophical intellectual or religious conversation was not considered desirable and was implicitly banned . . . they don't particularly enjoy debating or arguing about controversial issues" (2004, pp. 68-69). Leroux also comments on what she finds to be a lack of sophistication in the Australian English she hears in Tasmania: "Elegant or clever talking is not their cup of tea . . . Their vocabulary rarely erudite or refined . . . I too sometimes regret the lack of eloquence, richness and elegance in the language" (2004, p. 179). As one reads her text, it is clear this is a heartache for Leroux. She craves what she was accustomed to in France: people who play with words, people who "learn in childhood that constructing a beautiful argument is more important than which side to take—only the most self-confident confess to ignorance" (Sciolino, 2015, p. 87). In France, how something is said matters greatly. Frédéric reflects this belief when talking to Turnbull about the composition of her letters to French companies asking for financial sponsorship. Turnbull reads the long, wordy letters and complains, "Can't you make the letters less flowery? . . . it's not supposed to be poetry" (2010, p. 82). Frédéric assures Turnbull that not only is his writing acceptable, but it is necessary. "Our messages need to be elegant, lucid" (2010, p. 84). The French language is not always precise, "Its beauty lies in the fluid rhythms of musical, meandering passages that express a multitude of possibilities and doubts before reaching any conclusion" (Turnbull, 2010,

p. 83). This is in stark contrast to Australian English, which focuses on effectiveness and brevity; the art of communication is interpreted very differently (Leroux, 2004; Turnbull, 2010).

Tim Parks, an author of a cross-lingual travel memoir, *An Italian Education*, writes, “Our experience of another country is also an experience of its language, how similar it is to our own, how different” (Besemeres, 2005, p. 37). Charlemagne, the Holy Roman Emperor proclaimed that “to have a second language is to have a second soul” (Boroditsky, 2012, p. 616) and when we learn a new language, we are not simply learning a new way of talking; we are also inadvertently learning a new way of thinking, a new way of partitioning, organizing, and construing the world (Boroditsky, 2012, p. 625). Besemeres discusses another foreign language travel memoir, commenting that cross-cultural experience is “a matter of translation, not merely metaphorically but literally” (2005, p. 37). Not only is this relevant to the authors in their day-to-day communication, but it has significance when it comes to recording their experiences in their native languages. Experiences that were lived in French, for instance, must then be translated for English readers, and vice versa. “The relationship between language and thoughts and the meanings involved is not a simple, uncomplicated relationship . . . language makes thought, as much as it is made by thought” (Merleau-Ponty, 1991a, as cited in Dahlberg, 2006, p. 17).

Both texts involve the translation from the language of experience to the language of publication. Turnbull translates her French experiences for her writing in English, and Leroux’s text has essentially undergone a double translation. Any translation induces both losses and gains: encounters, experiences, and descriptions move from one place to the other in the ‘space in-between’, only to be interpreted again by a reader with their own lived experiences and cultural assumptions. Ricœur and Gadamer both make reference to interpretation, the goal of which is to allow us to “make sense of our embodied existence with others” (Pellauer & Dauenhauer, 2021), thereby inherently involving experience and articulation as described by Gregory and Duncan, to create an act of translation (1999). Beaven discusses:

These [travel] books are about ‘over there’, but always mediated by ‘one of us’, for our own consumption. They are, however, inevitably also about ‘over here’, although their authors are no longer ‘one of us’, as their experiences in the other culture have inevitably changed them. (2007, p. 188)

Leroux attempts to articulate this as she talks about her early experiences of Australia being filtered through her French culture, rendering her interpretations subjective. She goes on to say that as time went by, she found it harder and harder to observe the cultural difference between France and



Australia (Leroux, 2004). In exploring the Other, the author must interpret and explain their experiences in one way or another to be understood (Beaven, 2007).

Pavlenko touches on a potentially painful phenomenon, observing “in the new cross-cultural lifewriting, many authors emphasize the fact that the price of ‘successful’ assimilation may at times be unbearably high;” (2001, p. 217), alluding to the displacement that can come from integration into a new place. Both authors reflect on the curse and blessing of knowing two countries as they find themselves wrestling with and learning to love both cultures, and both languages (Leroux, 2004; Turnbull, 2010). We are changed by the places and people we encounter; we leave traces in the lives of others as surely as marks are left in our own: in Lévinas’ words, it “is the very fact of finding oneself while losing oneself” (Lévinas, 2013, p. 11; Mee, 2014; Trigg, 2012). The essence of these musings is encapsulated by Merleau-Ponty:

The full meaning of a language is never translatable into another. We may speak several languages but one of them always remains the one in which we live. In order completely to assimilate a language it would be necessary to make the world which it expresses one's own and one never does belong to two worlds at once. (1981, p. 168)

Our cultural backgrounds have an impact on how we experience the present place and moment. Turnbull discusses how challenging it was for herself and her partner Frédéric to negotiate their cultural differences as he tried to help her adjust to life in France. “Neither one of us is objective. I’m too vulnerable. And Fred is defensive . . . How can you construct neat answer for customs and codes of behaviour you have taken for granted since birth?” (Turnbull, 2010, pp. 70-71).

Both authors experience increased awareness of their cultural behaviours upon living in the new country. Leroux reflects on cultural difference in a similar vein, discussing her own lack of cultural objectivity: “It is precisely because I live overseas, [in Australia] immersed in a new social environment, that I am better able to assess my inherent French culture . . . I can more clearly measure my own identity” (2004, p. 173) and Turnbull comments, “In the struggle to find myself in France I’ve discovered a million details that matter to me—details that define me as non-French” (2010, p. 153).

### **Fashion, aesthetics, & cultural expectations**

Both authors write about appearance as one of their first impressions of difference upon arrival. Turnbull reveals that despite taking some care in her appearance before her flight, upon arrival in France she is suddenly aware of her unwaxed legs, her favourite sandals, and their rather orthopaedic appearance amongst the fashionable French crowd. Later that day Turnbull writes, “This



must be how things are done in France. Everything arranged to look as aesthetically pleasing as possible” (2010, p.15). Conversely, upon arrival in the Hobart airport, Leroux is immediately struck by a barrage of bad ‘mullet’ haircuts, Aussie Blundstone boots, and brightly knitted sweaters that she considered to be in poor taste.

Turnbull reflects on a significant moment of fashion conflict in her Parisian life. She is on the way to the bakery to pick up croissants one morning and throws on some old clothes. Her partner, Frédéric, is aghast that she plans to wear these ugly trackpants that he would not even wear jogging—“But it’s not nice for the baker!” (Turnbull, 2010, p. 128), he pleads, earnestly. Turnbull writes: “He can’t fathom how I could do such a thing. I can’t fathom why he is making such a fuss” (2010, p. 129). Turnbull goes on to say that in time, she understands: “Underpinning Frédéric’s reaction to tracksuit pants is a concept which to me is totally foreign: *looking scruffy is selfish*” (2010, p. 129). The same sentiment is echoed later in the text when Turnbull interviews a woman who advises never to wear shorts in the Parisian summer but rather, opt for long linen or cotton pants. “You would feel more ‘appy, and we would be more ‘appy too” (2010, p. 135), the woman firmly pronounces.

Reflecting on the power of the aesthetic for the French, Turnbull writes, “In France, vanity is not a vice” (2010, p. 129). She recalls a moment when Frédéric removes paintings from a hotel wall, “They’re ugly. I didn’t feel well,” he asserts (Turnbull, 2010, p. 135). “He had done us—in fact, the entire hotel, really—a huge favor . . . ‘We’re so much better now’, he declared royally” (Turnbull, 2010, p. 135). After years of adjusting to the French expectations of beauty, Turnbull concludes, “Louis XIV built a culture of beauty, etiquette, and elegance that still dictates almost every detail of French life . . . *discretion, séduction, élégance*” (2010, p. 137), which still holds power, resulting in a nation of people who are highly sensitive to the aesthetic. Conversely, Leroux shares that if she had to describe life in Australia to a French-speaking friend, she would use the English word ‘casual’ (spoken with a French accent), because there is no direct French translation and the English term is commonly used (2010, p. 173).

Over the years, Turnbull changes her style, “The street (*rue du Faubourg St-Honoré*) is seductive . . . Such is the power of Paris. It inspires me now to dress up too.” (2010, pp.137; 138). Leroux’s style changes too, but in the opposite regard. She happily falls into the Australian ‘fashion’ of casual attire to the shock of her sister who comes to visit, exclaiming in shock at seeing Leroux dressed in such a manner, “I wouldn’t even wear that to work in the garden!” (2004, p. 178). Leroux admits that despite conforming to French fashion ideals when she was a French resident, she feels more comfortable with the Australian way of dressing, and it has been an easy adoption (2004).

Despite perhaps appearing shallow, the texts indicate that varying aesthetic expectations and approaches have a significant impact on the culture. Leroux writes of the Australian approach of 'she'll be right' and relates it to the persistent casualness with which Australians approach nearly everything—with the exception of sport and property ownership. She comments, "Australians can become pedestrian . . . from casual they can become sloppy; from simple they can become vulgar . . . 'Everything is fine as it is, why try to do better'" (Leroux, 2004, p. 188). Turnbull, meanwhile, speaks on multiple occasions of the high, unbending standards of the French and her frustration at the (in her mind, impossible) pursuit of image perfection. Turnbull's statement speaks to the rupturing of a familiar aesthetic which triggers an immediate confrontation of alterity as discussed in the preceding response, contributing to the authors' experience of place. As previously presented, phenomenology of place is inseparable from these elements of environment, aesthetic, and cultural expectations (Trigg, 2012).

### **Hospitality/Food/Wine**

Upon arrival in their new country, both authors discuss their developing horror of social occasions. As Turnbull describes, "The social code I discovered in France wasn't just different from the one I know, it was diametrically opposed to it" (2010, p. viii) and "During my first year [in France], dinner parties turned into tearful trials" (2010, p. viii). Leroux experiences a similar feeling, "The word invitation did not have the same meaning in Australia as it did elsewhere . . . each arrival at a BQQ was agonising for me" (2004, p. 58). They both reference the apparent magic by which locals decipher these seemingly ambiguous hospitality situations (Leroux, 2004; Turnbull, 2010).

For Turnbull, the formality of French hospitality culture was a shock. She considered herself a confident young Sydneysider, well-versed in social cues and how to host or attend a dinner party and how to make friends. In an iconic passage in her book, she describes arriving at what she considers a stilted social event where everyone is standing around awkwardly. "It occurs to me that maybe the French are better at dinners than stand-around drinks parties . . . I make the mistake of trying to bridge it (the distance)" (Turnbull, 2010, p. 63). Turnbull decides to take the initiative, pouring champagne and making small talk. It does not go well. "My efforts only seemed to diminish me in their eyes, as though by showing interest in them I had revealed the depths of my own dullness" (Turnbull, 2010, p. 65). Later, she and Frédéric rehash the events of the evening. He explains that though she was trying to be warm and friendly, Turnbull missed the nuance of what was appropriate when she tried to start chatting with strangers and attempted to pour champagne as a guest. "In France, apparently, serving alcohol is very much a male domain. Even before my champagne gaffe

my behaviour had been far too assertive” (Turnbull, 2010, p. 65). Even Turnbull’s attempt to compliment the house décor is a blunder. “In our culture it implies you don’t have those sorts of things at home and makes you seem a bit *paysan* (a bit of a peasant)”, Frédéric explains (2010, p. 65). Turnbull is too socially assertive, too casual, and she does not understand the unwritten rules that govern French society (2010; Leroux, 2004).

Conversely, Leroux found the language of Australian-style hospitality confusing and uncertain. In particular, she reflects on invitations to the popular Australian BBQ: “we tortured ourselves not knowing whether it was BYO or not. Australians seemed to know this instinctively and we wondered whether a code existed, or was it a tone of voice, a shade of meaning that as yet we had unable to grasp” (2004, p. 58). She also comments on the lack of formality and structure at Australian social events. Leroux witnesses (and eventually adjusts to) the French cardinal sin of eating cheese before the main meal. She observes that whilst in France, food and hospitality are revered by all without discrimination, in Australia there seem to be two types of people, “foodies and others” (Leroux, 2004, p. 61).

Turnbull throws dinners that are too casual for the French sensibilities and is reprimanded when she serves pasta as the main meal, or her timing is slightly wrong for the serving of salads. In opposition, Leroux hears from a friend that despite her efforts to entertain her guests to a French standard, it is not appreciated. “They feel that you French people are just showing off with your sophisticated gastronomy you spend hours preparing after having spent a fortune buying ingredients—for something that will be swallowed in a few minutes” (Leroux, 2004, p. 65). Both authors mention the drinking habits of their new locales; Turnbull comments on the low volume provided at French gatherings and notes an apparent preference for quality over quantity for the French (2010). Meanwhile, Leroux does not feel comfortable with the sheer quantity of alcohol that was regularly consumed by her Australian counterparts (2004).

Both authors had to dramatically adjust their way of being and relating to others to successfully communicate and foster relationships. Turnbull learned to become more assertive, while Leroux learned to become more friendly and approachable. “If you are too nice no-one will respect you . . . the French are not impressed by anything as banal as niceness” (Turnbull, 2010, p. 179), and “My approach to clients was too French . . . too sophisticated, too eager. I was perceived as a pompous snob” (Leroux, 2004, p. 30). In a moment of reflection, Leroux expresses sympathy for those in Turnbull’s position, expressing her new understanding for how difficult it would be to move to France.

France is an old country and the rules of the game are not always clearly set out . . . appropriate etiquette, behaviour in public, class distinctions, know-how as well as traditions going back many centuries . . . [it] must be hard for beginners to grasp. (2004, p. 174)

Leroux concludes that one must be “born in a country and have grown up there to really be said to be from that country” (2004, p. 194). Turnbull agrees—“I am an Australian living in France and the reality is my foreign status is almost permanent . . . To be a true insider you need that historical superglue spun from things like French childhood friends . . . centuries of accumulated culture and complications (2010, pp. 291; 294).

As Leroux notes, modern Australia is a young country, and though imbued with historical cultural disaster of its own, it has not had the time to develop the same complexity as France. Though both authors indicate an awareness that they will never fully assimilate and become ‘French’ or ‘Australian’, Leroux now identifies as Australian (2004, p. 231). Turnbull calls herself an ‘insider’ but says she will never be French, even if she becomes a citizen and lives there for thirty years (2010). The difference in perspective could be a personality difference, a difference in expression, or it could indicate the possibility that Australia is an easier country to adjust to. In general, Turnbull portrays herself as the colourful, flamboyant, strange figure in her French mishaps describing scenes with humour at her own expense (Hanna & de Nooy, 2006). I noted that Leroux, however, tended to situate herself in the ‘normal’ zone, with the Australians being the unusual ones; she positions the otherness of Australians as strange and at odds with her French sensibilities. Both authors tend to generalize about the Other, using sweeping statements such as, “People don’t do things by halves in Tasmania” (Leroux, 2004, p. 163) and “. . . he seemed charming, creative, and complicated—very French, in other words” (Turnbull, 2010, p. vii).

I have not discussed many additional cultural observations in the two texts that mirror each other: gender, education, property ownership, role of land and country in the culture, and finances. However, I suggest the texts demonstrate that culture of origin has a significant impact on the authors and their way-of-being in their new country. The result of this impact is somewhat unsurprising issues: hospitality expectations, fashion choices, language, and communication. These elements are cornerstones for how we view Self and Other, resulting in the immediate encounter with alterity as we saw in the response for Question 1.

The texts indicate each author’s cultural background has a profound impact on the interpretations of encounters in their new country. Zygmunt Bauman explains civility as: “the ability to interact with strangers without holding their strangeness against them and without pressing them to surrender it

or to renounce some or all the traits that have made them strangers in the first place” (2000, pp. 104-105) and this perspective is a sentiment that both authors echo (Leroux, 2004; Turnbull, 2010). As the authors encounter alterity and view situations through the lens of their culture of origin, they are required to adjust and adapt their views and habits—while remaining themselves in a very real way. Leroux and Turnbull describe continuing fondness for their home culture while experiencing the re-invention of Self and adapted interpretations of encounters in the new environment, as provoked by place and alterity (2004, 2010).

CANADA  
St. Johns, Newfoundland  
2017

We stand atop Queen's Battery at Signal Hill; wind blowing, long hair flying and whipping our faces as we make friends with a huge, black dog and his owner. Hands and fingers tangled in strands, we hold back our locks and read the tourist information at the lookout point. My breath is taken away; both by the stiff breeze, and what I read on the sign.

My friend doesn't speak French: "Look...the English text on the sign says, Look around at the spectacular view of the sea...so utilitarian" I deem. "But listen to the French, *Prenez le temps de contempler le panorama spectaculaire de l'océan...*" I interpret with my rudimentary vernacular; Take time to consider the spectacular view of the ocean..."Take time!" I emphasise.

"How beautiful," she smiles, "Where we are and the language, changes everything."

"Yes," I nod. And I think to myself that I would like to research this, one day.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

My phenomenological, reflexive, case study sought to analyse lived experiences of authors Leroux and Turnbull, as detailed in their autobiographical travel memoirs, *La grenouille dans le billabong* and *Almost French*, respectively. The material excavated from these texts provided rich content for an investigation of the authors' representations of Self and Other, cultural lived encounters, and the role of phenomenology of place and alterity as catalysts for the reconfiguration of identity and transformation of Self.

What is read in an autobiographical travel memoir is a collection of encounters that have been filtered through a person's mind, emotions, culture, and linguistic capabilities, the final stage of which is transformation into text before interpretation by a reader. I suggest that the wider field of research and case study of the texts indicates that the author's culture of origin is distinctly related to their unique experience of living overseas. Likewise, phenomenology of place is a powerful element contributing the transformation of Self through the encountering of alterity in a new country. The old Self is not discarded, rather re-integrated into new, adapted and adopted ways of being in time and place. This transformative process is expressed through the representation of Self and Other in the authors' curated texts, as translated by them, documenting significant emplaced lived experiences for their readers to further interpret. These texts, I propose, present difference; they are steeped in alterity as the authors grapple with comparison and sameness in attempts to relate to, and understand difference, through engagement with the Other.

My research wove a complex web from threads of Self, Other, past and present and I recognise that as a qualitative, reflexive, phenomenological research project, my findings are unique to my experience as a researcher and my conclusions are limited by the scope of the project. However, as Braun, Clarke, and Hayfield reflect, each conversation (and I argue, research project), "Is a product of the specific set of circumstances, of time, place, persons, and many other factors, that come together in a particular moment. They are never complete, never a full-and-final pure telling of the 'truth' of things" (2019, p. 18). To this end, in this moment, I present my research, findings, and musings.

## Conclusive considerations

The previous chapter focussed on my responses to the two research questions. The content gives pause to consider; after all is said and done, is there relevance to travel memoirs? Is each personal tale *really* different, or merely more of the same? My thesis questions: with consideration of all that has been excavated and revealed through the research questions, do travel memoirs present difference, or perpetuate sameness? Therefore, in conclusion of the research, I present my perspective on the matter.

In Gregory and Duncan, Joanne Sharp observes that in her opinion, travel writing is “a literary form apparently dependent upon difference” (2006, p. 200). It is a distinctly comparative genre—with the author instinctively relating to new experiences through comparison to the familiar. Sharp’s observation is critical, linking to Berger’s work, which states, “We only make sense of things by seeing how they differ from other things” (2004, p. 14). As travellers, visitors or migrants, it is usually easiest to make sense of a new environment by comparing it to what they are accustomed (Delahunt & Maguire, 2013; McKee, 2003). After Gregory and Duncan, the act of ‘othering’ (1999), or observation of difference, can serve a purpose besides comparing—Thompson states that othering can provide a “justificatory function”, allowing the individual to make sense of either their behaviour towards another, or the other’s behaviour towards them (2011, p. 125). For example, Leroux writes, “At some point I decided to stop making comparisons” (2004, p. 10) then later admits, “I could not avoid comparing” (2004, p. 14), then still later, “I couldn’t help comparing this to France” (2004, p. 42). Turnbull too, struggles to make sense of her new environment, particularly when relating to her new French companions. She cannot help comparing her difficulties with Parisian social life to her previous successful social existence in Australia (Turnbull, 2010).

The perspective of sense-making by comparison is in opposition to a premise presented by J. Gary Knowles and Ardra Cole. Through their writing on reflexivity as a researcher and the desire for presence drawing on Derrida, John Caputo, and Maggie Maclure, they remark that in their opinion, the “desire for presence often reduces the Other to categories of sameness” (Knowles & Cole, 2008, p. 4). David Silverman echoes this as he refers to Propp’s morphology of stories and points out how predictable they are—interesting, in terms of the authors’ storytelling and their experience of their travels. We have a desire for sameness and predictability that is unsurprisingly evident when we try to create presence. I propose that desire for presence is a human experience that is not specific to that of a researcher; therefore, entirely translatable to the experience of being a traveller in a place



of otherness. We want to connect with others in a way with which we are familiar, and perhaps this is coupled by the instinctive drive to compare, in order to understand (Silverman, 2013, pp. 17-19).

Turnbull writes, "I am dying to meet some people I can relate to . . . to dispel the self-doubt that has seeped into my thoughts. What am I doing wrong, why can't I click with anyone??" (2010, p. 67). She craves connection, relationships; to understand the French women she wants to make friends with. Knowles and Cole reference Maclure (2003), and relate the "desire for communion with the Other, and the goal of transparency and presence" (2008, p. 6) to Gadamer's work; "This dream of communion, of the erasure of any distance or difference between self and Other, is a dream we have inherited from Gadamer and the hermeneutic tradition" (Knowles & Cole, 2008, p. 6). Each author desires to connect with and understand their new environment and appear to do this by using comparison to highlight differences and similarities. For example, in seeking similarity, Leroux and Turnbull highlight the importance that land and country have for both the French and Australian cultures, though manifested differently (Leroux, 2004, p. 193; Turnbull, 2010, p. 29).

I question, by providing space for alterity, does travel help us to see the remarkable in the mundane? Turnbull writes, "No day leaves you indifferent (in Paris) . . . everyday incidents elevate into moments of clarity simply because they would never, ever happen in your old home" (2010, p. 294). I suggest there is another significant reason we see the focus on difference in these texts. Trigg asks, "Does habit rob us of time?", relating to Austrian philosopher Alfred Schütz, who wrote that the "everyday world is necessarily taken for granted" (Silverman, 2013, p. 4; Trigg, 2012, p. 35). What we observe daily is soaked in ritual, habit, sameness: the familiar. Jane Jacobs (1961) refers to a 'place ballet', describing the catalogue or routine of our bodily actions (Seamon, 2018). As posited earlier by Graburn (2011), our regular 'place ballet' is particularly disrupted by international travel; travellers experiencing the phenomenology of place through the encountering of alterity (Ting & Kahl, 2016). I posit that it is perhaps impossible to remain unchanged by this experience of moving countries (Beaven, 2007; Leroux, 2004; Turnbull, 2010).

With consideration of the preceding discussion, I conclude that these travel memoirs present difference. However, this comes with a caveat. Harvey Sacks is referenced by Silverman, as he discusses humankind's penchant for a neat conclusion (2013). In general, we are comfortable with black and white, yes or no scenarios: difference or sameness. Despite my statement that these travel memoirs present difference, it is not difference in the way I first supposed. I initially believed that through encountering alterity, the authors identified points of difference and through this process, they experienced elements of sameness, or commonalities with their new country. I now present a

slightly altered perspective. I propose the research and texts show that though we are confronted with alterity daily, it is never more conspicuous than when we are in a new place; our 'place ballet' as per Jacobs (1961) is disturbed; our routines ruptured, drawing our awareness to the everyday. Through the lived experience of cultural difference, the authors became highly attuned to their daily experiences and communion with the Other, having a transformational impact on the Self. Ultimately, they experienced difference, and were able to adjust, adapt and find a shared humanity—not by discarding their old way of being, but rather by engaging with otherness.

Of Merleau-Ponty, Jack Reynolds writes, "he insists upon the way in which self and other are always already intertwined" (2002, abstract); therefore, we must fully embrace this transformative bond, in order to respect the alterity of the other. In doing so, we "transform what we think of as self, and also what we think of as the other" (2002, abstract). This quote speaks to my interpretation of the experiences of the authors—they adjusted to their individual experiences of alterity, translating themselves into a new place and culture. Like any translation, each author invoked losses and gains in the reconfiguration of their identity: the loss of confidence and a sense of complete 'home' in their old country and culture, and the gain of a new sense of Self in their new country through encountering of alterity (Leroux, 2004; Turnbull, 2010). Reynolds elaborates:

Difference is not encountered by preserving it untouched, like a specimen in a jar. Rather, difference and alterity are truly experienced only by an openness that recognizes that despite all of the undoubted differences that we encounter, there is always something shared that allows difference to be conceivable at all. This is an effort not to reintegrate difference into sameness, but to transform the notions of self and other. (Reynolds, 2002, p. 75)

I believe the experiences of Turnbull and Leroux result in texts demonstrating is it *through* phenomenology of place and engagement with alterity and the Other that the Self is irreversibly confronted and altered, reconfiguring identity (Beaven, 2007). In the case of the two authors, this resulted in the presentation of shared human lived experience through curated text, interpreted through the authors' respective cultural lenses, in which they were able to identify and embrace elements of difference, to better understand their new homes.

### Critique

I believe that using two texts for this research project has provided sufficient content for a rich discussion of the research questions. With regards to the case study in context of analysing two travel texts, there was ample data to draw upon and the themes became abundantly clear. I was able to address my research questions with the texts themselves as my main resource, using other literature in the field as theoretical and methodological support. As a qualitative research project,

there have been unique challenges specific to this methodology and chosen methods. This is not a weakness as such, but rather points for consideration; after all, Husserl explained, “We would be in a nasty position indeed if empirical science were the only kind of science possible” (1917/1981, p.16).

There are significant caveats to my satisfaction with the research. As a case study of two travel memoirs, the sample size is extremely small and highly reliant on each author individually. I also did not have choice for which text I selected for the ‘French in Australia’ category of text. In hindsight, it would have been interesting to select Berry’s *But You are in France, Madame*, as she published a follow up memoir to her first book at the end of 2020, entitled *Weaving a French Life, an Australian Story*. It details her experience of life after France, however, at time of selection it was not yet published. The word count was also restrictive, meaning I had to limit my use of additional literature and provision of background philosophical content. This restriction was particularly challenging, given the immense significance of philosophy with regards to phenomenology as a methodology. My research also only examined two cultures of France and Australia, which means that the results are far from replicable in another context regarding alternate cultures.

Additionally, phenomenology is a complex methodology and is not without its critics: there are significant concerns raised by scholars who take issue with various aspects. Some feel, rather simply, that there is a high risk of phenomenological research being conducted poorly (Tuffour, 2017). Another concern is the need for the researcher to engage with the philosophic background of phenomenology: which I can attest, is complex, time consuming, and difficult to address with appropriate rigour and depth, especially on a project with word count limitations such as this (Farina, 2014; Groenewald, 2004; Neubauer et al., 2019; Tuffour, 2017; Van Manen, 1990). Van Manen highlights that in his opinion, lack of orientation, strength, richness and depth are the major quality concerns (1990). This is an important observation, as firstly, perhaps these are possible issues with any methodology? Secondly, “If it is true that there is always more than one way of construing a text, it is not true that all interpretations are equal” (Ricœur, 1991, p. 160). As a qualitative methodology that could be described as researcher-driven, the researcher holds great responsibility with regards to the quality of the outcome. Other concerns centre around phenomenological research being vague and imprecise; questioning if it is capable of communicating and interpreting effectively, to do justice to the experiences being analysed (Tuffour, 2017).

Another restraint on the research was the restriction of English that was placed on both me and the texts. One language is not enough to truly grasp the nuance of another language and culture as

Besemeres reflects, suggesting “that a writer's reliance on English in construing other linguistic cultures is likely to limit cross-cultural vision in some significant ways” (2005, p. 29).

It would be interesting to repeat this with a larger sample size of texts. I would also like to work with a fellow researcher who was fluent in the French language and well-versed in the culture to produce a research project with dual language translations—French and English. I believe this would create a more complete and accurate representation of both cultures and languages as a result, adding significant depth to the study of travel texts, phenomenology of place as it pertains to Self, Other, and identity, and the overarching themes of sameness and difference.

I am very aware that as Sharkey and Braun and Clarke discuss, I am but one student researcher, with a very particular background, skill set, assumptions and experiences, that has resulted in my research outcomes (2013; 2001). We know that “reflexive researchers, like any others, inscribe silence and absence while simultaneously making themselves visible” (Knowles & Cole, 2008), and another person, undertaking the same task with the same research tools would achieve a different result—necessarily, due to their own individuality being stamped on the decisions and interpretations made. Texts, as we have seen, are always interpreted by an individual based on their identity and current place in space and time. “One cannot know everything prior to the encounter with the text . . . One approaches a text . . . as an expression of life within the context of a finite historical situation” (Sharkey, 2001, p. 27). Additionally, “Heidegger and Gadamer believed that all understanding assumes an essential element of presumptions and interpretation” (Tuffour, 2017, p. 4); I drove my research, and thus it is a reflection of me that we see in the analysis of texts; though I attempted to lay bare my assumptions and choices, it is impossible that I present an unbiased perspective.

It is my hope that my research and proposed answers to the research questions are relevant as contributions to the existing body of work on this topic, but I suggest that is for a more experienced researcher and reader to interpret and decide for themselves, based on the merits of my research story. I have whole-heartedly sought to be rigorous and thorough in my research, but I acknowledge that effort alone does not make it so. Perhaps, some relevance and importance of this work has been also in the transformation of myself as a researcher—confronted with alterity, as I read, thought, considered, and analysed. I have changed because of my research process, and integrated new ways of thinking and being into my own life.

As an individual, I believe the answers to my research questions are significant, detailing the importance of small, daily events in the canon of our lives, and the relationships we foster—no matter

where in the world we are. Perhaps this is not a new thought for some, but perhaps for others, it is. As Flannery O'Connor writes in *The Nature and Aim of Fiction*, "there may never be anything new to say, but there is always a new way to say it, and since, in art, the way of saying a thing becomes a part of what is said, every work of art is unique and requires fresh attention" (1969, p. 76).

For me, this research process has been both science and art, as I have crafted and described my internal cognitive experience for you, the reader, to interpret.

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