



## **UNSETTLING ECOLOGICAL POETICS**

Thursday 24 – Friday 25 October 2019  
RD Watt Seminar Room (203), RD Watt Building,  
Science Road, University of Sydney



# UNSETTLING ECOLOGICAL POETICS

## Schedule of Events

### Wednesday 23 October 2019

6.00 pm – 8.00 pm

**[Book Launch: Nganajungu Yagu](#)  
by Charmaine Papertalk Green**

Hosted by the Visiting Indigenous Writers Program 2019  
Contact: [slam.events@sydney.edu.au](mailto:slam.events@sydney.edu.au)

Common Room N480, John Woolley Bldg (A20)  
University of Sydney, Camperdown | [MAP](#)

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### Thursday 24 October 2019

8.45 am – 4.45 pm

**Day 1: Unsettling Ecological Poetics Symposium**

RD Watt Seminar Room 203, RD Watt Building (A04)  
University of Sydney, Camperdown | [MAP](#)

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

**Speaker Dinner**

Venue: Venue: Bombay Street Kitchen  
University Hall Building Corner of Glebe Point Road &  
Parramatta Rd, Sydney | [MAP](#)

8.00 pm – 10.00 pm

**[Unsettling Eco-poetics Salon \(Public Event\)](#)**

Knox Street Bar, 21 Shepherd St, Chippendale | [MAP](#)

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### Friday 25 October 2019

9.00 am – 12.45 pm

**Day 2: Unsettling Ecological Poetics Symposium**

RD Watt Seminar Room 203, RD Watt Building (A04)  
University of Sydney, Camperdown | [MAP](#)

# Unsettling Ecological Poetics Symposium

**Day 1: Thursday 24 October 2019**

RD Watt Seminar Room (203) | RD Watt Building

Science Road | University of Sydney

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8:45 AM

Coffee on Arrival

9:00 – 9:30

Welcome to Country - Yvonne Weldon

9:30 – 9:45

Welcome - Killian Quigley and Caitlin Maling

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**9:45 – 11:15**

## **KEYNOTE**

Charmaine Papertalk Green and John Kinsella ~  
*Dialogues of time and places*

**11:15 – 11:45**

## **MORNING TEA**

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**11:45 – 1:00**

## **PANEL #1: Who writes // and whom?**

Ellen van Neerven ~ *Ecopotency: Writing blak to power and influence in Australian ecopoetics*

Anne Elvey ~ *Modes of Attention: Questions toward a Poetics of Unsettled Encounter*

Astrida Neimanis and Jennifer Mae Hamilton ~ *Naming without Claiming? Composting Feminisms in the Environmental Humanities*

Chair: Caitlin Maling

**1:00 – 1:45**

## **LUNCH**

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**1:45– 3:00**

## **PANEL #2: Settlements // Unsettlements**

Jeanine Leane ~ *Voicing the Unsettled Space: Rewriting the Colonial Mythscape*

Thom van Dooren ~ *On naming snails*

# Unsettling Ecological Poetics Symposium

## Day 1 cont.

RD Watt Seminar Room (203) | RD Watt Building  
Science Road | University of Sydney

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Michael Farrell ~ *Touching, Reading, Parenting: Bennelong and Bodily Relations*

Chair: Killian Quigley

**3:00 – 3:30**

**AFTERNOON TEA**

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**3:30 – 4:45**

**PANEL #3: Spheres of Eco-poetics**

Michelle Cahill ~ *Islands, ghettos, north and south*

Susan Reid ~ *Vulnerable atmospheres: clear and blue*

Jill Jones ~ *Vagrant Desires and the Homely Queer: Intimacy, eco-poetics, and the local*

Chair: Christine Winter

**4:45**

**Day one close**

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**6:00 – 8:00**

**SPEAKER DINNER**

Venue: Bombay Street Kitchen  
University Hall Building Corner of Glebe Point Road &  
Parramatta Rd, Sydney NSW 2037

**8:00 – 10:00**

**UNSETTLING ECOPOETICS SALON (Public Event)**

Knox Street Bar, 21 Shepherd St, Chippendale

## Unsettling Ecological Poetics Symposium

**Day 2: Friday 25 October 2019**

RD Watt Seminar Room (203) | RD Watt Building

Science Road | University of Sydney

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9:00 AM                      Coffee on Arrival

9:30 – 9:45                      Symposium reopens

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**9:45– 11:00**

**PANEL #4: Forms and other (eco)logisms**

Evelyn Araluen and Jonathan Dunk ~ *Haunting the Bush Ballad*

Toby Fitch ~ *Endlings: Indexing the End-times, or The Index as Elegy*

Joshua Lobb ~ *'The times are cast against them': Fictional forms for Climate Change*

Chair: Mark Byron

**11.00 – 11.30**

**MORNING TEA**

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**11.30 –12.45**

**PANEL #5: Thresholds**

Peter Minter ~ *Walking with Louise Crisp*

Michael Adams ~ *Iridescence*

Anne Collett ~ *Building on the Strata of the Dead: A Reading of Judith Wright's 'The Builders'*

Chair: Olivia Murphy

**12.45**

**Lunch and Symposium Close**

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## Unsettling Ecological Poetics Symposium

Thursday 24 - Friday 25 October 2019

RD Watt Seminar Room (203) | RD Watt Building

Science Road | University of Sydney

### ABSTRACTS AND BIOGRAPHIES (in order of appearance)

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#### Charmaine Papertalk Green and John Kinsella ~ *Dialogues of times and places*

Charmaine Papertalk Green and John Kinsella have spent many years working together on poems that are in dialogue over colonial presence and its impacts on culture and country. Charmaine speaks as a traditional owner and custodian of Yamaji culture and an advocate for her family and community worldview, and mostly writes from her country around the Geraldton-Mullewa region. John Kinsella, who lives and writes on stolen Noongah boodja, went to high school on Yamaji land in Geraldton. His father earlier ran a large farm for a while near Mullewa. John is a whitefella with Irish colonial ancestry whose family were famine migrants to the southwest of Western Australia. So doing, they became part of the dispossessing machine of colonial theft, though, grimly ironically, they themselves had suffered under British colonialism in Ireland. In conversing about rapacity, especially that coming out of the imperialism of the mining industry, Charmaine and John have discussed their different heritages and the consequences of those heritages' contacts—and, at times, overlaps. But even where they overlap, there are huge 'differences,' and poetic dialogue, with its allowance for ambiguity and specificity, for observation and story, and for shared and private languages, is seen as a way through to understanding, justice, and fragments of reconciliation. Both Charmaine and John have had much contact with the mining industry over their lives and have witnessed, in different and similar ways, the contradictions and damages of the industry. Both Charmaine and John want to protect country and environment, and both want it done through consultation with traditional owners. Both Charmaine and John see art and poetry as means of powerful communication and as contributors to conflict resolution. Both respect the Elders and the people whose land it is, even though they come from such different spaces. Charmaine writes her country, John writes himself out of the country he also loves. Can this apparent paradox of presence speak itself out into the broader world? Charmaine and John believe it can, and feel impelled to write and speak in this togetherness of difference. This keynote will be a discussion of what they've done, why they've done it, and why they see activist purpose in this dialogue. The talk will be interspersed with reading of poems from this attempt to make a decolonising bookwork. The stories reside with both Charmaine and John in perhaps different, and perhaps similar, ways. Charmaine has knowledge John hears when it's appropriate, but he doesn't look or listen where and when he shouldn't. Times and places.

**Charmaine Papertalk Green** is from the Wajarri, Badimaya and Southern Yamaji peoples of Mid-West Western Australia. She has lived and worked in rural Western Australia (Midwest-Pilbara) most of her life in numerous roles in the Aboriginal sector industry as a community agitator, artist/poet, community development practitioner and social sciences researcher. Charmaine's publications include her book of poetry, *Just Like That* (Fremantle Art Press, 2007), a children's verse novel *Tiptoeing Tod the Tracker* (Oxford University Press, 2014), and a poetry collaboration with fellow WA poet John Kinsella, *False Claims of Colonial Thieves* (Magabala Books, 2018). Charmaine has poetry included in numerous anthologies and publications, including *Cordite Poetry Review*, *The Lifted Brow*, *Kenyon Review*, *Artlink*, *The Fremantle Press Anthology of Western Australian Poetry*, *Ora Nui*, *Antipodes*, *Those Who Remain Will Always Remember: An Anthology of Aboriginal Writing*, *Inside Black Australia: An*

Anthology of Aboriginal Poetry, and The Penguin Book of Australian Women Poets. Charmaine lives in Geraldton, Western Australia.

**John Kinsella's** most recent works include the poetry volumes *Drowning in Wheat: Selected Poems* (Picador, 2016), and *Open Door* (UWAP, 2018), the story collections *Crow's Breath* (Transit Lounge, 2015) and *Old Growth* (Transit Lounge, 2017), and a recent critical volume is *Polysituatedness* (Manchester University Press, 2017). Recent novels are *Lucida Intervalla* (UWAP, 2018) and *Hollow Earth* (Transit Lounge, 2019). He often works in collaboration with other poets, artists, musicians, and activists. With Tracy Ryan he is the co-editor of *The Fremantle Press Anthology of Western Australian Poetry* (2017). He is a Fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge University, and Professor of Literature and Environment at Curtin University, Western Australia. He lives on Ballardong Noongar land at Jam Tree Gully in the Western Australian wheatbelt, and has also lived in the UK, the USA, Ireland, and other zones.

### Ellen van Neerven ~ *Ecopotency: Writing blak to power and influence in Australian eco-poetics*

This presentation discusses power and influence in eco-poetics and how blackfellas navigate academic and publishing spaces.

In a time of climate emergency, treaty talk and culture resurgence, the urgency that First Nations people write from can be in contrast to non-First Nation eco-poetic craft, which can seek to control language and exploit Country.

This presentation includes an embodied performance of new poems and an exploration of eco-poetic spaces from the perspective of a young Mununjali queer.

**Ellen van Neerven** is an award-winning author born, raised, and currently living in Meanjin. Ellen's mob are Mununjali Yugambah from South East Queensland. Publications include a fiction debut, *Heat and Light* (UQP, 2014), which won multiple awards, and a critically acclaimed poetry volume, *Comfort Food* (UQP, 2016). A new poetry collection, *Throat* (UQP, 2020), is forthcoming.

### Anne Elvey ~ *Modes of Attention: Questions toward a Poetics of Unsettled Encounter*

To write the i out of invasion is the impossible. Where Martin Harrison speaks beautifully about an eco-poetics of attention and Deborah Bird Rose invites us into a world of shimmer despite the multiple ecological and colonial traumas she mourns, the settler-descendant poet carrying the buried truths of intergenerational dispossession as ancestral activity needs to attend otherwise. How much of her capacity to write relies on the labour of Ballardong women in the 1920s-1930s who, more than likely unpaid, worked for her grandparents while they had a farm? When she walks beside Kananook Creek, can she call out to trees? If as she walks, she recollects the names of Boon Wurrung elders who fought for just a little land for their people, what does this mean? She has read representations that are misrepresentations of elders in Victorian colonial records that she will not pass on. Christian prayers are translated into language there. These translations belong to the contemporary Boon Wurrung community not to the government that wrote them down nor to the libraries, State and National, that hold the records. Referencing such records require a hermeneutics of restraint. The i returns. Twitter is alive with voices of strong First Nations women calling out assumptions about what colonially-embedded writers such as i can say. That is good. i must refrain from speaking. i cannot abstain from speech. As Jonathan Dunk reminds me, poets can tell beautiful lies in clever combinations of words and rhythm, line break, spacing and composition on a page, around a breath of voice. If i wander to the nearby creek and attend to the way an egret and, last week, a magpie followed the water like a path marked out as they flew, what are the politics of possession around this observation? How do i write and write my own settled undoing while calling forth ecological obligation my own and others?

Living on Boon Wurrung Country in Seaford, Victoria, **Anne Elvey** is author of *White on White* (Cordite Books 2018), *Kin* (FIP 2014), and *On Arrivals of Breath: Poems and Prayers* (Poetica Christi, due October 2019). She is managing editor of *Plumwood Mountain: An Australian Journal of Ecopoetry and Ecopoetics*. Anne is an Adjunct Research Fellow, School of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics, Monash University, and Honorary Research Associate, Trinity College Theological School, Centre for Religion & Social Policy, University of Divinity.

### **Astrida Neimanis and Jennifer Mae Hamilton ~ *Naming without Claiming? Composting Feminisms in the Environmental Humanities***

From the nature/culture binary to the notion of situated knowledges, feminist conceptual labours are arguably foundational to contemporary environmental humanities scholarship. Yet, while names like Donna Haraway and Val Plumwood may make their way into bibliographies, most field-defining texts in environmental humanities do not consider how the feminism of such thinkers is integral to their concepts. Drawing on the figure of “composting” to think about how different extant matters are incorporated into texts in order to grow new worlds, this talk considers the stakes of naming feminist figures without claiming their feminist commitments in the process of field formation; it also examines how these considerations might be particularly relevant in relation to poetics and ecopoetics.

**Astrida Neimanis** is a Senior Lecturer in Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney, on Gadigal Country, in Australia. Her recent book is *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* (Bloomsbury, 2017). Since 2015, Astrida and Jennifer Mae Hamilton have coordinated the COMPOSTING feminisms and environmental humanities reading and research group.

**Jennifer Mae Hamilton** is a Lecturer in Literary Studies at the University of New England, in Armidale, and author of *This Contentious Storm: An Ecocritical and Performance History of King Lear* (Bloomsbury, 2018). Since 2015, Jennifer and Astrida Neimanis have coordinated the COMPOSTING feminisms and environmental humanities reading and research group.

**Caitlin Maling (Chair)** is a poet, ecocritical researcher and critic from Fremantle, Western Australia. Publications include *Fish Song* (Fremantle Press, 2019), *Border Crossing* (Fremantle Press, 2017) and *Conversations I've Never Had* (Fremantle Press, 2015).

### **Jeanine Leane ~ *Voicing the Unsettled Space: Rewriting the Colonial Mythscape***

I am a Wiradjuri writer, poet, teacher and academic from the Murrumbidgee River near Gundagai. As a child and young adult, I had the great privilege of being raised on Country by strong Black women. I was raised through the 1960s and 70s by Black Aunties who told me that only whitefellas think the dead can't speak. Our Old Ones speak to us in the present through Country – bringing back many sleeping stories that white Australia forgot. Country is speaking now. Country is seething now with stories below the surface of the myth of settlement.

Much if not most of the built-up and over-built landscape that is the crime scene of post-Invasion Australia remains unmarked and/or over-written with visible signs of a 'settled space'. That which is marked, signed or memorialised by settlers is done through plaques or statues constructed to individual Aboriginal figures taken out of both their cultural and community contexts with the signage mediated and curated through sanitized settler filtered discourse.

My poetry seeks to disrupt the 'national amnesia' of the settler mythscape through dismantling the modern mythology of Australia as a settled space; and, to give some voice back to Aboriginal places that are screaming to be heard under the colonial mythscape of settler monuments, plaques and



signage. There is still much work to be done and hard conversations to be had. Poetry is the ideal medium for such conversations of national significance to begin.

**Jeanine Leane** is a Wiradjuri writer, poet and academic from southwest New South Wales. Her first volume of poetry, *Dark Secrets After Dreaming: A.D. 1887-1961* (2010, Presspress) won the Scanlon Prize for Indigenous Poetry, 2010 and her first novel, *Purple Threads* (UQP), won the David Unaipon Award for an unpublished Indigenous writer in 2010. Her poetry and short stories have been published in *Hecate: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Women's Liberation*, *The Journal for the Association European Studies of Australia*, *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Antipodes*, *Overland* and the *Australian Book Review*. Jeanine has published widely in the area of Aboriginal literature, writing otherness and creative non-fiction; and is the recipient of an Australia Research Council Grant on Aboriginal literature. Jeanine was the recipient of the University of Canberra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Poetry Prize and she has won the Oodgeroo Noonucal Prize for Poetry twice (2017 & 2019). She teaches Creative Writing and Aboriginal Literature at the University of Melbourne. Her second volume of poetry, *Walk Back Over* was released in 2018 by Cordite Press. Jeanine is the recipient of an Australian Research Council Fellowship for a project called 'Aboriginal Writing: Shaping the literary and cultural history of Australia, since 1988'; and the 2019 recipient of the Red Room Poetry Fellowship, Sydney.

### Thom van Dooren ~ *On naming snails*

Amongst the many scientific names given to Hawai'i's land snail species in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was *Achatinella dolei*. The naturalist who described and named the species explained: "We take pleasure in dedicating this beautiful shell to His Excellency S. B. Dole, First President of the Republic of Hawaii" (Baldwin, 1895). This short-lived republic was administered by a group of self-appointed politicians, many of whom played significant roles in the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy and the eventual annexation of the islands by the USA. But *Achatinella dolei*'s is just one of many similar naming stories. Numerous other species and landmarks acquired new names in this period, names that often tied them to or referenced colonising people and processes. My rough list of snails of the *Achatinella* genus named after Christian missionaries and their families includes another eight species. While contemporary work on taxonomic nomenclature often emphasises the importance of a well given name for the recognition, valuing, and conservation of a species—perhaps especially amongst elusive invertebrates—other kinds of ethical questions come to the fore here. What does it mean to rename the plants and animals of other people's lands in this way? What work do names do, both in alienating people from, and settling other people into, a place?

**Thom van Dooren** is Associate Professor and Australian Research Council Future Fellow (2017-2021) in the Department of Gender and Cultural Studies and the Sydney Environment Institute at the University of Sydney. His research and writing focus on some of the many philosophical, ethical, cultural, and political issues that arise in the context of species extinctions and human entanglements with threatened species and places. He is the author of *Flight Ways: Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction* (2014), *The Wake of Crows: Living and Dying in Shared Worlds* (2019), and co-editor of *Extinction Studies: Stories of Time, Death, and Generations* (2017), all published by Columbia University Press.

### Michael Farrell ~ *Touching, Reading, Parenting: Belonging and Bodily Relations*

When I wrote *Writing Australian Unsettlement*, I wanted to get beyond the affective use of 'unsettlement' and 'unsettling' which was – and still is – being used with increasing frequency, in the context of Australian literary studies: at worst, its use seems to me a bad faith speech act, one that pretends to do something just by saying the word. Some critics seem to think it's enough to indicate that settlement is/was bad and they've done something unsettling. My project's aim was to theorise unsettlement as a concept – a poetics concept – and as one that did not participate in settlement poetics. I was arguing for possibility, modelling. In *WAO*, while I was focused on the noun of unsettlement, I implicitly at least argued for a (contextual) theorising of unsettling as a verb – a term

that does something. We are used to using conceptual terms from elsewhere, and honing in on the precise difference and problems of using these terms locally is an important start. But etymology aside, unsettling is perhaps a southern hemisphere term, and one that asks – continually – to do unsettling to itself. In WAU, I was concerned with bringing what seemed to me to be interesting practices of poetics from the colonial era into the arena of poetics discussion. It was not my intention to sideline colonial verse, nor to divide Australian poetics practices from each other. If we must start somewhere, why not with Bennelong's letter, that philosophically attractive origin text of Australian poetry? In my book I looked at the letter as an example of poetics; and implicit with this reading is the context of contemporary poetics in English. But what if we unsettle the concept of poetics by bringing in the rival concept of aesthetics? And Spinoza?

**Michael Farrell** wrote *Writing Australian Unsettlement: Modes of Poetic Invention* (Palgrave Macmillan). His books of poetry include *I Love Poetry* and *Cocky's Joy* (Giramondo). Michael was born and grew up in Bombala, NSW, and now lives in Melbourne.

**Killian Quigley (Chair)** is a postdoctoral researcher at the Sydney Environment Institute, University of Sydney. Recent and forthcoming publications include 'The Pastoral Submarine' (*Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 2019), *The Aesthetics of the Undersea* (co-edited with Margaret Cohen; Routledge, 2019), 'Expecting Plastic' (*Green Letters*, 2019), and 'Seascape and the Idea of Land' (in *A Cultural History of the Sea in the Age of Enlightenment*, Bloomsbury, 2020).

#### **Michelle Cahill ~ *Islands, ghettos, north and south***

In this paper, I offer reflections on how white settler coloniality's othering of non-white settlers in Australia is an absolute crisis of institutional and spatial neglect and exploitation, as poetic culture remains predominantly white-centred and discursively white privileged. Differences are inevitably and devastatingly marginalised. On Manus Island, rising sea levels and water contamination from dioxides, mercury and human waste resulting from warehousing has led to neglected health issues. The poetry of asylum seekers intercepts gatekeeping and nationality as well as white ecocriticism's occlusive paradigms. Certainly, archipelagic outcrops of intensity have been described by Bonny Cassidy, while more activist social-cultural, anti-capitalist resistances and manifestos have emerged under the curation of John Kinsella. Publications such as *Plumwood Mountain* and *Verity La* have offered practical models of empathy inclusive of Indigenous and diverse practises. Global south and southern latitudes frameworks might emphasise climate change or extinctions, as in the poetics of Eunice Andrada or Stuart Cooke. What remains problematic, however, is that the voice and subjectivity authoring ecopoesis as a field remains predominantly white. This severely limits the reformatory capacity of the field to one that is descriptive in its decolonising scope and methodology.

**Michelle Cahill** is a Sydney poet. Her short story collection *Letter to Pessoa* won the UTS Glenda Adams Award for New Writing and was shortlisted in the Queensland Literary Awards. Her collection *Vishvarupa* was shortlisted in the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards. *The Herring Lass* is her most recent poetry collection.

Her poems have appeared in *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Meanjin*, *Island*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Antipodes*, *Best Australian Poems* and the *Forward Book of Poetry*, 2018. She co-edited *Contemporary Asian Australian Poets* with Adam Aitken and Kim Cheng Boey, and *Vagabond's deciBels3* with Dimitra Harvey. Her essays on race and poetics have been published in the *Sydney Review of Books*, *Southerly*, *Australian Women Writers Challenge* and *The Australian*. @theherringlass

#### **Susan Reid ~ *Vulnerable atmospheres: clear and blue***

Through vulnerable readings of land, sea and sky worlds, insensible and familiar, I stir up some conceptual breezes with which they/we might connect, materially and phenomenologically. My

presentation opens with a slow, planetary roll into the sun and all that comes with stark shadowless precarities. The second part is shadowy – or rather, stretches imaginatively with shadows that fall into and from vulnerable atmospheres.

The exposures that come with vulnerable reading and crafting are in themselves unsettling and include evocative fails, unformed speculations, unknowings and evaporative ethics. As well, attending to high seas phenomena is unsettling in terms of the landed familiarities of eco-poetics. At some point, this means losing my atmosphere so that I might at least imagine what it means to imagine into another's.

**Susan Reid** is a PhD candidate in the Department of Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney, where she is researching ocean and juridical imaginaries, relationalities, and justice. She is a writer, artist, curator and lawyer with a master's degree in design and a master's of international law.

### **Jill Jones ~ *Vagrant Desires and the Homely Queer: Intimacy, ecopoetics, and the local***

'Tree hugging is indeed a form of eroticism, not a chaste Natural unperformance. To contemplate ecology's unfathomable intimacies is to imagine pleasures that are not heteronormative, not genital, not geared to ideologies about where the body stops and starts. Perhaps this is why mysticisms contain reserves of unthought zones of materiality.' – Timothy Morton, 'Queer Ecology', PMLA 125.2, 280

I will be exploring some ideas around queer ecologies of making which have informed my own approach to writing poems. I am interested in how writing can compose/show us things/beings/events, and desires, as they operate in large ecological systems, smaller bioregions, our own homes and bodies. This can include the way they/we exist as traces, and absences, as hauntings. This leads me to un-natural natures.

I will focus on two ideas – what I call 'weed poetics,' plus ideas around 'queer suburbias' – in particular, how poems enact entanglements with things/beings, with desires and un-natural natures, through iterative, contingent and vagabond composing. What happens between, or despite of, the so-called 'wild' and so-called 'domestication'? What is happening in neglected places, the cracks, abandoned areas? For instance, if we ask 'are weeds pests or are they grass no-one has use for?', I'm led to consider ideas around how to compose or recompose, to adapt, and how things become continually. I think of words as rootstalks or seeds, scattered, wandering, insubordinate, unhomely, queer.

I look at spaces in the poem, and the associative, as wave forms, shimmers, intersections, broods, created by words and phrases. As effects multiply and affect each other, they haunt each other through iteration, erasure and doubleness.

This raises questions such as: How could 'the local,' gender, and intimacy intersect in writing about climate change? What might a suburban queer ecopoetics look like? How might apparently mundane locations of ecological shifting be re/composed in a poetry that enacts or recollects embodied (human and non-human) locatedness?

**Jill Jones** is a Senior Lecturer in English and Creative Writing at the University of Adelaide and a member of the J.M. Coetzee Centre for Creative Practice. Her most recent books are *Viva the Real* (UQP) and *Brink* (Five Islands Press). Another recent book, *The Beautiful Anxiety*, won the Victorian Premier's Prize for Poetry in 2015. With Michael Farrell, she co-edited *Out of the Box: Contemporary Australian Gay and Lesbian Poets* (Puncher & Wattmann). Her work is widely published in Australia and internationally, represented in major poetry anthologies, and has been translated into various languages.

**Christine Winter (Chair)** is a lecturer in the Department of Government & International Relations at the University of Sydney. Her research focuses at the intersection of intergenerational, indigenous and environmental justice. Drawing on her Anglo-Celtic-Māori cultural heritage she is interested in

decolonising political theory by identifying key epistemological and ontological assumptions in theory that are incompatible with indigenous philosophies. In doing so she has two aims: to make justice theory just for Indigenous peoples of the settler states; and to expand the boundaries of theories of intergenerational justice to protect the environment for future generations of Indigenous Peoples and their settler compatriots.

### **Evelyn Araluen and Jonathan Dunk ~ *Haunting the Bush Ballad***

The ostensible telos of Australia's national literary sentiment - which is surmised by John McLaren as the rise 'from the hostility of the landscape to man's efforts to tame it' - moves anxiously around Aboriginal presence in cosmic, embodied, and negated forms. As such, the entanglement of complexes which have, since invasion, structured settler responses to, and representations of Aboriginal land and its custodians, ruptures at its most readable in settler-Australian poetics of country and ecology. Using theory, poetry and debate, this presentation will explore the multiple sites of haunting and rupture in Australian bush and pastoral poetics, and consider how Aboriginal inscription speaks back to these formations."

**Evelyn Araluen** is a poet, educator and researcher working with Indigenous literatures at the University of Sydney, and is an incoming co-editor of *Overland* literary journal. Her writing has been awarded the Nakata Brophy Prize for Young Indigenous Writers, the Judith Wright Poetry Prize, and a Wheeler Centre Next Chapter Fellowship. Born, raised, and writing on Dharug country, she is a descendant of the Bundjalung nation.

**Jonathan Dunk** is an incoming co-editor of *Overland* literary journal, with widely published scholarship, fiction, and poetry. He is the recipient of the A.D. Hope prize and the Dal Stevens Award.

### **Toby Fitch ~ *Endlings: Indexing the End-times, or The Index as Elegy***

"Endling" ... the little sound of it jingles like a newborn rattle, which makes it doubly sad.  
—Elena Passarello, *Animals Strike Curious Poses* (2017)

In language, "so much depends upon" the phenomenon of indexicality, of deictic phrasing. Speech points, presupposes, positions, so as to make meaning. Lyric language, then, as Matt Kilbane writes, "is language becoming aware of its utter dependence on the ceaseless presupposition of a speaker's presence." But how can poetry centered around the lyric "I" as speaker make any difference to Earth, where individualism and greed, among other things, have led to rampant exploitation of natural resources, human-induced climate change, the collapse of ecosystems, and mass extinction?

In the face of such futility, this creative paper will explore the indexical elegy as a "technology of presence" that circumvents the lyric as symbolic construction centered around the self. This is lyric by other means, yet still imbued with feeling, the personal, and still with the resonances of a semiotic system—at once of the real and metaphorical. An indexical and recycled version of me will present a poem-cum-paper-cum-speech-cum-abc-edary that invokes Joyelle McSweeney's necropastoral mode, "in which literary time can move backwards," so as to show how an indexical poetics might bring life back to the extinct—in the radical imaginary—and at the very least leave a record or trace of our destruction as global superpredators, not to assuage but to acknowledge.

**Toby Fitch** is poetry editor of *Overland* and a lecturer in creative writing at the University of Sydney. His book of poems *Rawshock* won the Grace Leve Prize in 2012. His creative PhD, consisting of a poetry collection *Bloomin' Notions* and thesis, 'Themparks: Alternative Play in Contemporary Australian Poetry,' won the 2017 Dame Leonie Kramer Prize in Australian Poetry. His latest book of poems is *Where Only the Sky had Hunt Before* (Vagabond Press 2019).

### Joshua Lobb ~ “The times are cast against them”: Fictional forms for Climate Change

Isabelle Stengers argues that the sheer scale of climate provokes a sense of totalising helplessness in all of us. She states that: “amongst us there are those who know they ought to ‘do something’ but are paralyzed by the disproportionate gap between what they are capable of and what is needed” (2015, 22-23). As a writer, I hope that telling stories might be one way to overcome this sense of paralysis. I subscribe to the beliefs of Amitav Ghosh who states that: “the great, irreplaceable potentiality of fiction is that it makes possible the imagining of possibilities” (2016, 128). But what is the most appropriate form to tell stories about climate change?

In this paper, I propose a potential form that might allow for writers—and readers—to overcome the ‘disproportionate gap’: a short story/novel hybrid. One of the strengths of short story is the way that it links the specific to the general—or, to put it another way, the personal to the planetary. Elizabeth Bowen explains that “the short story...[places its character] alone on that stage which, inwardly, every [hu]man is conscious of occupying” (1937, 262). One of the strengths of the novel is its ability to make connections between individuals and ideas. As Raymond Williams declares, we are people and people within a society: that whole view was at the centre of the [traditional] novel” (1972, 587). By bringing these two fictional impulses together—the comparison of big and small, the interlocking of individuals into a community—perhaps we can come closer to representing the experience of our current historical moment, and even, to use Val Plumwood’s words, to “(re)situate[e] humans in ecological terms” that is part of a community of human, nonhuman, animal, plant, earth (2002, 9).

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**Mark Byron (Chair)** is an Associate Professor of English, in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Sydney. He teaches and publishes across the genres and practices of Modernism: prose, poetry, drama, and film, as well as textual and editorial theory.

### Peter Minter ~ *Walking with Louise Crisp*

The ecopoetry of Louise Crisp deserves greater attention for its complex, insightful and ‘unsettling’ recalibrations of form, voice and image. In this paper I will address Crisp’s new collection *Yuiquimbiang* as a springboard into a deeper survey of her work, which for over three decades has patiently queried the legacy of western landscape poetics in Australia. Crisp has developed an innovative and responsive transcultural ecopoetics that opens up new and respectful tracks for walking with Country. As Uncle Bruce Pascoe has urged, we should “follow Crisp: not for her the umbrella on the beach and a martini by the chlorinated pool. She is enmeshed with Country and throws herself into its wild embrace.”

**Peter Minter** is a poet, poetry editor, and writer on poetry and poetics. He teaches in Indigenous Studies, Creative Writing, and Australian Literature at the University of Sydney, with an emphasis on trans-Indigenous and transcultural ecopoetics.

### Michael Adams ~ *Iridescence*

*I came to see the damage that was done  
and the treasures that prevail.*  
Adrienne Rich

The word geography means ‘earth-writing’— not that different to ‘ecological poetics’ (there is a sub-discipline now called ‘geo-poetics’). I am interested in an earth-writing that grounds my words in specific places and genealogies of connection and that recruits the aesthetics of language to affect meaning.

Aboriginal shell middens, which are hosted in immense numbers on Australian coastlines, are stories written from place, what Alexis Wright (2018) calls ‘the language of country’. They are simultaneously natural and cultural, terrestrial and oceanic, silent and eloquent. Their silence might be enrolled ‘to listen outside the range of hearing that has been normalised to the dominant discourses’ (Howitt 2019). That humble listening might unsettle, invert, unmoor and connect in uncomfortable but generative ways.

These ancient living middens archive millenia of data about climate change, extinctions, the presence of new species, the sustainability of ancient harvests, and human and non-human responses to change. They demonstrate the presence and agency of particular Indigenous peoples in caring for and engaging with land and sea country across enormous timeframes – including times when, like the present, geological and human timescales have coincided.

This paper considers both the materiality and the sacredness of the ancient living middens and the shells that make them as a pathway to viscerally as well as cognitively explore the nets of connectedness that entangle us on this country. Are there ways settler-colonial people can responsibly and ethically learn from the language of country?

**Michael Adams** writes about humans and nature, and is Associate Professor of Human Geography at the University of Wollongong. His research has examined relationships between Indigenous peoples and conservation, and recent work examines freediving and oceans. His work is published in *Meanjin*, *Australian Book Review*, *The Guardian*, *Griffith Review* and academic journals and books. His essay ‘Salt Blood’ won the 2017 Calibre Essay Prize.

### **Anne Collett ~ *Building on the Strata of the Dead: A reading of Judith Wright’s ‘The Builders’***

‘This story has no real beginning and no one knows what its end will be. It is part of the history of the Great Barrier Reef, that great complex structure of coral reefs and living organisms that stretches 1,200 miles along the coastline of Queensland’. (*The Coral Battleground* [Nelson, 1977], xiii) These are the opening lines of Judith Wright’s story of the battle to ‘save’ the Reef, a battle that began in the mid-1960s with the Australian government’s declared intention to mine limestone from Ellison Reef for use as fertiliser in the sugar-cane industry. Published in her second volume of poetry, *Woman to Man*, ‘The Builders’ is founded on Wright’s complex response to Lady Elliott Island, the southmost of the Reef’s coral isles, on which she holidayed in 1949. ‘The Builders’ is a poem ‘about’ coral reef, the live coral that builds on ‘the strata of the dead’. But it is also a poem about social and cultural reconstruction in Australia post-WW2, and a poem that might reflect the very personal battle that Wright was waging against the restraints of a conservative society and family when she made the decision to live ‘in sin’ with a married man: ‘Only those men survive / who dare to hold their love against the world’. As a daughter ‘born of the conquerors’, a daughter who has benefited from the violence of colonial unsettlement, Wright is also acutely aware of the dead upon whom ‘Australia’ was built (see ‘Nigger’s Leap, New England’ for example). In addition, this poem recognizes her debt to those poets who came before, for poetry itself necessarily builds upon ‘the strata of the dead’. We might say that *Poem is Coral Reef*: poetry’s living beauty is built on the strata of the dead – on the poetic ground of ideas, images, form, language of that which came before. Culture is utterly entangled in Nature: it is material as much as it is ephemeral. Ariel’s lines from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* might be called to mind: ‘Full fathom five thy father lies; / Of his bones are coral made’. What difference might it make to ‘saving the Reef’, more pressing today than ever, if we understand that we are coral, that Reef is us? This is the work of Wright’s unsettling ecological poetics.

**Anne Collett** is an Associate Professor in English Literatures & Creative Writing at the University of Wollongong, Australia. She edited *Kunapipi: Journal of Postcolonial Writing & Culture* from 1999-2012 (issues from 1979-2012 are available at <https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/>). Her current research focusses on the intimate relationship

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**Olivia Murphy (Chair)** is a postdoctoral research fellow in English at the University of Sydney. Her current projects include investigating the history of Jane Austen's mother's family, and the interactions between literature, science and politics in the Romantic period. Her most recent book is the collection *Romantic Climates: Literature and Science in an Age of Catastrophe* (Palgrave, 2019), edited with Anne Collett.