

Guest Editor's Note

There's never been a year like it, not in living memory. While it's not over by a long shot, it has brought into sharp focus the environmental and economic drivers that govern our daily lives. 2020 taught us that we are indeed not alone; that the old globalism—as the border-free economics of consumerism—can collapse, and that an infinitesimal virus can turn globalism into pandemonium. It felled jobs. It slayed people. It gained our attention. We called it Covid-19. While we applauded the dedication of front-line workers, we watched with concern the rising death toll; we felt for those excluded from the bedsides of the sick, for those dying alone; for the First Wave mass burials in New York, Manaus, Brazil. And on. Some of us wore masks, some of us claimed their “civil right” not to. To borrow from Swift, we were Big-Enders, and we were Little-Enders. We were elderly and afraid; we were young and invincible. But like it or not, we were “all connected” in a dystopian rendition of Barry Commoner's ecological phrase. Connected – even if, as students, we were isolated in our dorms, or if, as consumers, we kept two-meters apart from the contagion-potential of the next shopper. In reality, it has been a year of haptic disconnect as —the dawdling of Sweden and the USA aside—we faced police-enforced curfews, travel restrictions, quarantines, and conflicting health advice.

Which might seem an odd way to introduce this special issue of *Tamkang Review* with its focus on Australian and New Zealand ecocriticism(s), edited by Professor Iris Ralph, from the University of Tamkang. But no: the title of her recent publication *Packing Death in Australian Literature: Ecocides and Eco-sides* (2020) is apropos for this Taiwan / Australia issue. Both countries—each with populations around the 24 million mark—share the admirable connection of keeping their infection and death rates well below the global average (as at the time of writing). Though vastly different in scale, their islandness enabled a temporary disconnect from the pandemic, as was the case with New Zealand – unlike the European Union, where member states had to enact “islandness” by reverting to their national boundaries in an attempt to control First, and Second, and Third Wave infections. Taiwan came into the pandemic prepared. Because of its preparedness it was able to offer Australia 100,000 face masks, including N95 respirators (*Taiwan News* 15 Jan. 2020). These, however, were not for Covid-19. These were for battling the “Black Summer” fires that began

burning in September 2019.

Unlike Taiwan, Australia is a land of fire, be it the “fire-stick farming” of Indigenous, or the lightning strikes erupting fire-dependent flora such as eucalyptus (*Myrtaceae*). Settler Australians’ relationship with fire has radically changed. In her early work Judith Wright (1915-2000) rendered the fiery persona as the consilience between metaphor and botany, “. . . the miraculous baptism of fire, / that bows the poinciana tree . . .” (“Botanical Gardens” 1953). For Wright, at that time, Australia’s fires were literally, a regenerative force for the bush and, metaphorically, a life-force for humans. But as the 2019 / 2020 “Black Summer” fires demonstrated, this was no “miraculous baptism of fire,” not with nearly 19 million hectares of bush and almost three billion animals displaced or immolated (Royal Commission 28 Oct. 2020). Present-day Australia, with its increasing fires, caused by increasing lightning strikes, caused by climate change, exacerbated by anthropogenic behaviour – is not the one investigated in this issue of *Tamkang Review*. At least, not overtly.

The events of 2020 mean chronologically that this issue hovers on the newer “new normal” of a world created by Covid-19, “Black Summer” bushfires, and the toppling of a divisive world leader acting according to an idiosyncratic *weltanschauung*. As a result, these essays look back, reflect on, and propose ways forward, while engaging ecocritical, postcolonial, and (commensurate with the “Black Summer” fires) phytocritical approaches to narratives. Unsurprisingly it *is* the trees—with their Linnaean, Wiradjuri, Noongar, Gaagadju, and colonist labels—that take centre stage, and that provide unsculptured *podia* through which human lives are observed. Thanks to the popular media presence of scientists such as Canadian David Suzuki, and Britisher David Attenborough, our reading of *Tree: A biography* (2005), or *The Private Life of Plants* (1995), opens us to the notion that plants have lives, can see, count, communicate, and travel. The authors in this issue are not scientists; ecocriticism, however, is “unique amongst contemporary literary and cultural theories because of its close relationship with the science of ecology” (Garrard 5). The authors’ engagement with the field of critical plant studies (botany) cheerfully transgresses disciplinary boundaries (5), as well as drawing from texts grounded in particularised aspects of postcolonial histories – histories of subjugation requiring *ethnobotanical* understanding. Each scholarly essay gestures towards a collective healing of the *weltschmerz*—world pain—of global vulnerability, exacerbated not only by Australia’s loss, but also by the millions of trees and entire ecosystems lost to fires in California, Oregon, Paraguay, Argentina, Peru, Bolivia, and Brazil—where arson expedited purposeful deforestation in the Amazon, so that Deep Time, endogenous species, their habitats—were, in a figurative milli-second,

transformed into millions of tonnes of CO₂ emissions (Global Forest Watch).

Arson is punishable by law; ecocide is not. On 26 October 2020 despite arboreal depletion, the Victorian government felled a yellow box gum tree (*Eucalyptus melliodora*). This was the “directions” tree, used as the birthing place of Djab Wurrung women. The fate of the yellow gum tree illustrates concerns raised by the writers, who approach trees and their stories ecocritically, from a postcolonial perspective, and regard their human-vegetal subjects through a phytocritical lens (which “emphasizes the agencies of botanical beings”). The Victorian government’s historical amnesia, targeted ecocide, and cultural meddling—officially justified because the “directions” tree would obstruct the new highway—resulted, theoretically, in threefold abuse: of the women, of the tree, and of its agency as a birthing space. For a different (and admittedly self-serving) Taiwanese example of phytocriticism, we turn to the storying of the Alishan Divine Tree, a 3000-year red cypress that also perished but as a result of natural intervention. It succumbed to lily-root fungus, to fire in 1953, lost its canopy in 1956, and finally came crashing down on the Alishan Forest Railway (tbocc.gov.tw). The railway was built during Japanese occupation (1895-1945) to facilitate the logging of the remaining giant cypresses. Borrowing from bioethical and human-vegetal discourses, it’s satisfying to construct a narrative in the manner of the fable, whereby the infrastructure destruction is slow-revenge, a playing out of visible plant agency, and phytocritical poetic justice.

Lending muscle to these posthumanist musings is Tim Flannery (*The Weather Makers* (2005)). A scientist, and previously chair of the Copenhagen Climate Council, he writes: “the most astonishing thing about trees is how social they are. The trees in a forest care for each other, sometimes even going so far as to nourish the stump of a felled tree for centuries after it was cut down by feeding it sugars and other nutrients, and so keeping it alive” (Foreword in Wohlleben viii). This type of “phytothinking,” or as Michael Marder calls it, “plant-thinking” (2013), prepares the way for readers to critique plant-human affect. As, for instance, reading endemic harakeke and invasive bamboo in the context of war (Iping Liang); or the deadly beauty and “agency” of *Virgillia* and *Mimosa* concealing a well in which a toddler drowns (Jessica White); or (continuing the human-vegetal death relation) a poet’s rendition of mental torment as voiced from within a wailing oak (Barbara Holloway). The positive turn comes in John Ryan’s disquisition on Kakadu Elder, “Big Bill” Neidjie’s verse-narrative *Story about Feeling* (1989), where Ryan assures readers that “plant communication has been affirmed scientifically, in recent years, as pivotal to the ecological fitness of botanical communities” (Gagliano “Inside the Vegetal Mind”). If, despite familiarity with Green Man figures and literary conventions

of the grotesque, the science still sounds esoteric and Gagliano's title stretches credulity, a transversal is found in the mid-century writing of social realist, Alan Marshall (1902-1984), whose description of a miner belies a longing for the human-vegetal supranormal: "He was akin to trees and they spoke through him. If I could only understand him, I would understand the bush . . ." (*Trees Can Speak* 1956).

Hannes Bergthaller (the National Chung Hsing University) observes that Antipodean ecocriticism can be singled out from Northern Hemisphere ecocriticism because Australian ecocriticism has "a markedly anti- or post-colonial tendency from the outset" (Bergthaller et al. *Mapping Common Ground* 2014, 270). Just so. It was Australia produced the first preliminary study of postcolonialism in 1989 with *The Empire Writes Back* by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. The convergence of postcolonialism and ecocriticism, as demonstrated in this issue of the *Tamkang Review*, was consummated in yet another Australian publication, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* by Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin (2015).

Bergthaller's additional distinction is that the "down under" approach to ecocriticism lies in its "[p]erceptions of the interrelationship of Indigenous dispossession and environmental degradation" (269). John Ryan, building on his 2018 book, *Plants in Contemporary Poetry: Ecocriticism and the Botanical Imagination*, presents a "subfield of ecocriticism" in the verse-narrative of "Big Bill" Neidjie, whose Indigenous knowledge (nay, Neidjie's experiencing) of plant agency is coupled with academic readings of neurobotany, literary plant studies, all within the context of the Ranger Uranium Mine. Likewise, Māori writer Patricia Grace writes of the dispossession of Hawai'ian Aborigines, such as Aki's wife's family, who are removed from their land to make way for "private beach-front properties" (211).

For readers new to ecocriticism I suggest Hannes Bergthaller et. al. *Mapping Common Ground: Ecocriticism, Environmental History, and the Environmental Humanities* (2014); and Greg Garrard's *Ecocriticism* (2012) in the New Critical Idiom series. Although, apart from discussing Julia Leigh's *The Hunter* (1999) and Les Murray's "allomorphic literature" (167), it does not include specific Australia or New Zealand ecocriticism.

Books like Australian Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* (1975) prepared the way for thinking about speciesism; Roderick Frazier Nash's *The Rights of Nature* (1989) forced us to confront anthropocentrism. Cheryll Glotfelty's extension of literature as a player in multi-disciplinary schemata meant that ecocriticism and ways of thinking evolved, as did definitions. Glotfelty's focus in the '90s on the physical environment came out of a context where environmental movements in

the United States were concerned with the negative material realities of chemical agriculture, water and air pollution. Movements such as Earth First! Friends of the Earth, and Sea Shephard (Garrard 23) were not entirely averse, however, to including humans in their earth-centered ideologies, on condition—said Bill Devall and George Sessions—that they exercise “an egalitarian attitude on the part of humans not only toward all members of the ecosphere, but even toward all identifiable entities (or forms) in the ecosphere” (*Deep Ecology* 1985).¹

In the 21st century, we discover with delight, that the creation stories of Southern Hemisphere indigenes pre-empted Western anthropocentrism eons ago. For instance, “Big Bill” Neidjie’s *Story about Feeling* reveals his cosmology as “a democratic space inhabited by a multiverse of beings, of which humans are just one manifestation” (Black 41 qtd. in Ryan). Likewise, and perhaps more startling for its material presence, New Zealand’s Whanganui River became entitled to a legal identity on 15 March 2017.

Insistence on “a democratic space” is not confined to traditional cosmology. Gomeroi woman, Rachel McPhail, urged the Australian Post Office to include traditional place names in its postal addresses in an attempt to alert the macro-level of “multicultural” Australia to its heteroglossia patchwork of linguistic and geographic spaces (Sept. 2020 Facebook post). At first, Australia Post agreed only to add an “Acknowledgement to Country”; but during NAIDOC week (8-15 Nov. 2020),² it relented, even publishing guidelines on how to include traditional place names when sending mail (McPhail email 12 Nov. 2020). It is already common for academics and writers to acknowledge the Country they live and work on. Equally, in this collection’s concern with ethnobotany, authors acknowledge the traditional names of the places they investigate, and thus usher in temporal aspects beyond “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment.” Here, ecocriticism enables the talking and “writing back” of the physical environment. This “decolonial praxis” (a term given currency by Māori and academic Linda Tuhiwai Te Rina Smith, 2012) shows the authors responding to a multiplicity of voices, human, and other-than-human, while engaging in acknowledgement, response, and recovery.

Both Iping Liang’s and Barbara Holloway’s essays demonstrate what John Ryan calls “bioempathic emplacement”: the valuing, and healing, of the plant world, and its wounding by human action (the “environmental degradation” referred to by Bergthaller). But Liang inverts the relationship: there’s long

¹ *Deep Ecology* was founded on the 1972 philosophical teachings of Norwegian, Arne Naess.

² NAIDOC: National Australian and Islanders Day Observation Committee. Normally held the first week of July but rescheduled due to Covid-19.

been an understanding of the importance of the plant world on human mental health, as portrayed by Chappy, an emotionally wounded Japanese outcast creating his peace garden. In the lived world, *shinrin-yoku*, or Japanese “forest bathing” conceives of this healing conjunction. Its converse is negatively visible as a “psychoterratic” response when there’s a disconnect from the organic world as experienced by city dwellers during the coronavirus lockdown. Australian philosopher and environmentalist, Glenn Albrecht, coined the neologism, giving us also “solastalgia” to indicate emotional distress as a result of the environmental change of a loved place (2005).

There could be no solastalgia greater than that experienced by the Japanese after the Atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. Iping Liang’s “Plant Performance: War, Ethnicity, and the Japanese Garden in Patricia Grace’s *Chappy*” traces the life of a man who is repatriated to Japan as an enemy alien after the war and who, along with its citizens, must raise the unloved country “from its ashes” and “build the new Japan” (149). Liang, from the National Taiwan Normal University, is the only author whose chosen text is exogenous to her home site (in contrast to the three Australian texts). Māori writer, Patricia Grace, sets *Chappy* (2005) on New Zealand’s North Island. In terms of readerly connections, one could argue that Taiwan’s complex history of colonisation, along with its treatment of “sixteen indigenous groups and several diasporic subcultures” provides Liang with an opportunity for concerted ecocritical and postcolonial comparisons between lived and symbolic texts. Liang’s place-based history complements her reading of Grace’s text in as much as her country’s stories include colonisation, Japanese occupation, post-war deportation, and the resultant displacement of Taiwan-born Japanese.

Liang teases out textual transnational connections through the deracinated eponymous “Chappy” (so named because he is from “Chapan”)³ and through the motif of weaving – be it of baskets, of Aotearoan plant histories (such as the endemic harakeke bush and the invasive bamboo) or of islands—Japan, New Zealand, Hawai’i, and Somoa—where Chappy was first interned as a Japanese enemy alien. Chappy’s struggle for sovereignty as a pacifist, versus the stigma of his nationality and phenotype during WW2, offers Liang a performative shadow optic (cf. Ryan) in which to critique the Māori concept of *tūrangawaewae* as

³ Daniel, the narrator of the frame story, is Swiss-born; his father is Dutch, his maternal grandparents were Māori and Japanese. In seeking attachments, he highlights grandfather, Chappy’s dilemma, one recorded by Maria Root in the “Bill of Rights for People of Mixed Heritage” (1993). Verse 3 states: “I have the Right . . . To change my identity over my life-time—and more than once. / To have loyalties and identification with more than one group of people.”

“a place to stand,” to be “connected.” A man with three nationalities, Chappy’s Japanese garden in New Zealand signifies his chosen place, his “secret self” (250), and highlights human-vegetal sensitivities in that the “garden didn’t impose, didn’t assume” (242). Its understated *shibui* aesthetic is forged from the utility of canes grown by invasive bamboo. Liang argues that the garden calls for a “poetics of inclusion,” one that centers on peace and interconnectedness rather than war and exclusion. Likewise, through the reciting of the *whakapapa* (genealogy), Chappy’s adoptive Māori brother, Aki, discovers intergenerational ties that bind his history to that of his Hawai’ian wife’s. In his discovery of his ethnolinguistic links to Polynesia, we are led to discover the extra-textual connections between Grace, the writer, and Liang, her reader, for Polynesian is itself a language subset of Austronesian populations in Taiwan (PLoS Biol. 2005 Aug; 3(8): e247). Hsinya Huang from the National Sun Yat-sen University contends that the storied lives of Taiwanese aboriginal people (or “Austronesian indigenous people”) “might reverse the discourse of the climate change in dominant Western culture” (*Ecocriticism in Taiwan* (2016)). Likewise, Jessica White urges listening to voices other than one’s own when, in “The Most Formidable Teeth,” she suggests that the settler Australian “can, by learning about Aboriginal languages, culture and cultivation . . . be exposed to more effective ways of responding to Australia’s environmental crisis.”⁴

Barbara Holloway turns to Australia, to Wiradjuri Country for story in “Henry Kendall, the Trees and the Un/makings of Their Lives.” Through the material memory of a particular *birri*, or *berrigan* – a scarred, damaged White Box Gum, Holloway traces the life and trespass of a New South Wales 19th century colonial poet through the language of trees. It is this Gum that provides the segue from Kendall’s own past, to that of the present-day school where children practice bioempathic emplacement, rewilding the “land with local indigenous species all the way down to the creek. The area was designed with Wiradjuri names, presence and history on the advice of the Aboriginal elder.” Holloway’s essay retraces writing, suggesting that literature, as well as human technical culture (saws), “remains embedded in the trees, in their living and dead remains, and in human lives.”

The human life she is concerned with is first-generation, Australian-born Henry Kendall, whose earnest desire (as a “native-born” poet) was to present the Australian indigenous natural world as “equal to European ‘Nature’” (Lefebvre 220). “Bell Birds” (1867) demonstrates his knowledge of local biosystems,

⁴ Wiradjuri woman, Olivia Fox, sang the Australian National Anthem along with the Wallabies rugby union team, first in the Eora language then in English (Dec. 2020).

while another much-anthologised work, “The Wail in the Native Oak” (1861), signals an alchemical fusion of time, plant agency, voice and memory. The Native Oak (via intercorporeality and interaffectivity (Fuchs 2013)) communicates with the narrator, through feelings aroused by mournful sounds, the killing of Aboriginal people (the “unrequited Dead!”) and the forest. The marginal gums are “ringed and ragged.” Their story is one of low-cost, wide-spread tree evisceration through the slow-violence of ringbarking, a procedure which severs “the flow of sap from roots to branches.” To rephrase Aldo Leopold, “Thinking Like a Tree” extends species relationship, as in Neidjie’s verse-narrative, where “the processes of transpiration and photosynthesis in trees [is analogous] with blood circulation in the bodies of mammals” (Morrissey 2 qtd. in Ryan).

Grief haunted Kendall’s life: his twin brother betrayed him, his daughter died, he turned to alcoholic for erasure. Kendall’s penury (“The day baby died I had not a shilling to bury her with” (Letter to A. L. Gordon Feb-Mar 1870)) led to a mental breakdown, then to the Gladesville Hospital for the Insane. Holloway traces Kendall’s transition from poet to public servant. After accepting the offer of a paid position as Inspector of Forests, his writing changed from the lyrical expression of “environmental and Aboriginal devastation and sacrifice to a discourse of Europeanized agri-pastoral productivity.”

Holloway concludes that Kendall’s position did, however, enable him to act on behalf of the forests. His felicity with local languages meant that Wiradjuri names were used in the list of settlers’ holdings—Ungarie Run, Youngara Run, Bolagamy-Gulma Run, Wargambegal—in effect lending recognition of Wiradjuri custodianship. Kendall spoke against ringbarking, suggested rewards for “planting and fostering trees,” and making the “wilful [sic] firing of bush” a felony (ML 3796/3). Increasingly unwell, the man became disenfranchised from his energy and his spirit, no longer able to ride, or read, or write, the forests. For Holloway, the *berrigan*—the White Box Gum—remains a mute memorial to “the champion of the native forest.” She leaves us with a sobering statistic concerning the controversial Biodiversity Conservation Act of 2017. And that is that the new Act *decreases* the regulation of tree-clearing.

While these Special Edition papers all discuss human-plant relations, they demonstrate also psycholinguistic interrelations as, for instance, the human speaker in “The Wail in the Native Oak” who demonstrates un-sound neurobiological responses to the non-cognitive, but “natural” sound of the tree as a witness to human-vegetal trauma. Compare that speaker’s dis-ease, with that of “Big” Bill Neidjie, who listens, interprets, and talks to trees, in John Ryan’s “‘That Tree E Listen To You’: Bill Neidjie’s Story About Feeling as Literary

Ethnobotany.” Ryan’s essay highlights the verse-narrative of the last speaker of the Gaagudju language, a narrative that leaves no doubt about Neidjie’s “view of plants as responsive and expressive agents within Gaagudju cosmology.” Utilizing literary ethnobotany “as a critical reading optic” Ryan “elucidates the role of intercorporeality, affect, and voice in mediating human-plant communication.” Ryan aims to demonstrate how, in an “integrative and inclusive manner, literary botany facilitates a rapprochement between Indigenous, poetic, and scientific epistemologies of plants.” This then, is Ryan’s “way forward,” as he explores *Story About Feeling* and the potentialities of Aboriginal Australian poetry as a medium for preserving traditional botanical knowledge that is increasingly under threat in neocolonial Australia.

The epigraph features Neidjie talking about a tree he used to play in, then telling his shocked listener that he chopped the tree down. Listen to how the negative action of tree cutting quietly rebounds on its abuser: “When you get oh, about fifty . . . / you’ll feel it . . . / pain on your back / because you cutted it” (*Story About Feeling* 25). Neidjie would know, after all he sweated it out at timber camps around Buffalo Creek and Van Diemen Gulf, committing acts of ecocide along the way; and during the Second World War, he chopped mangrove for Cape Don lighthouse and radar station. Neidjie returned to his Bunitj Clan land, north-west of the Jabiluka uranium mine shortly after the Gough Whitlam government set up the “Ranger Uranium Environmental Inquiry of 1975–77.” Although, unsurprisingly, the recommendation was that uranium mining proceed, the report advocated the creation of an Aboriginal Land Trust and the gazettement of a national park. Thus, like Kendall, Neidjie had a role to play in governmental administration, providing testimony in 1980–81, the success of which further propelled the establishment of Kakadu [Gaagudju] National Park (AIATSIS, “Biography,” para. 4).

The essay’s title “That Tree E Listen To You” signals plant agency (the tree listens) but is also guided by an *inclusive* pronoun, “E,” a referent that simultaneously *excludes* the need for the pronouns “they,” “she,” “he.” Ryan is fulsome in his critique: “Neidjie’s privileging of the radically-inclusive, subjectivity-obscuring pronoun “e” enfolds the human and non-human, animate and inanimate, and earthly and celestial.” He goes on to add that this “thus situates plants and people in dialogue rather than opposition, engendering relationality rather than estrangement.” Although Ryan does not extend his argument regarding the “radically-inclusive” pronoun “e” it nevertheless invites us to witness again and with delight indigenous inclusivity that resulted in New Zealand’s Whanganui River becoming a legal identity on 15 March 2017. Here, “e” also

“elides strict demarcations,” and being an inclusive pronoun, underpins current gender politics, such as gender-fluidity and LGBTQ+ linguistic contortions; it also pre-dates *The Chicago Manual of Style* which advises “When referring specifically to a person who does not identify with a gender-specific pronoun . . . they and its forms are often preferred”.⁵

The final essay in this critical plant collection is Jessica White’s essay, “The Most Formidable Teeth”: Gardening, Collecting and Violence in Nineteenth Century South-West Western Australia.” White explores Georgiana Molloy’s story (along with the “Formidable Teeth” of her garden rake and her gardening) as a metaphor for the larger ecological and human violence effected by European agricultural practices, and which—pertinent to the “Black Summer” bushfires—ignored, for the most part, the First Nations’ use of mosaic burning for farming and burn control.⁵

Molloy’s garden is situated in Noongar Country – of which the South West Australian Floristic Region is a part. It is “recognised as a biodiversity hotspot, a biologically rich area which has lost at least 70% of its original habitat.” The response that “part of this [loss] is to do with climate change” (Monks et al.) prompts White to reference the 2019 and 2020 fires and to put forward an oft-cited position that if Australia’s ecosystems are to survive, there needs to be a return to Australian Aboriginal ways of looking after Country.

Building on her online biography of Molloy (1805-1843) titled *From the Miniature to the Momentous (Auto/Biography Studies* Vol. 35, 2020, pp. 13-33), White presents her argument through the short life of this mother, settler, and seed collector. Molloy, one of the first botanical collectors in the Western Australia colony, exchanges the Native Seeds of Augusta for English seeds for her garden. Her small-scale activities contributed to what scholar Kate Wright describes as a “crime scene” in which places in Australia “are stained with social and ecological violence and trauma” (*Cultural Studies Review* 2018). By sending indigenous seed to England to be classified, Molloy is an unwitting agent of “linguistic imperialism” (Schiebinger 195). The Linnaean system forbade classification in languages other than Latin and Greek, a practice that “disregarded their existing social and cultural contexts” (White). Because her focus is on human-vegetal communication (including the solace Molloy’s garden imparts following the loss of her drowned infant), White’s concerns are with environmental degradation, Noongar dispossession, and linguistic erasure, although

⁵ Kelly Fuller, ABC Illawarra, reported “Aboriginal leaders to be included in NSW’s top bushfire planning committee” as advised by Wiradjuri man, Shaun Hooper (20 Nov. 2020).

a more overt crime scene was enacted by Georgiana's husband, John, who joined in a revenge killing of the Wardandi Noongar people (1841). With the loss of a child, Georgiana Molloy and Henry Kendall (and fictively, in Liang's paper) occupy a grieving space—being parents whose child predeceases them—a space, remarkably in this age of neologisms, that has no name.⁶

There is another grieving space. The “crime scene” described by Kate Wright where places in Australia “are stained with social and ecological violence and trauma.” These essays bring into focus the environmental impact of colonisation—the crime scenes—through the frameworks of “ecocriticism,” “postcolonialism,” and “phytocriticism.” Grieving spaces are occupied by settler poet, Judith Wright (1915-2000), and by Waanji author, Alexis Wright (b. 1950). Wright, an environmentalist and Aboriginal Rights activist, experienced ethical tension between love for the land, and knowing of her descent from a land-grabbing squattocracy that predated and dispossessed the Wadji. Summarizing the conflict in “The Two Threads of a Life: Judith Wright, the Environment and Aboriginality” (2006) the critic Gary Clark observes Wright grew “concerned with the impact of colonial economy on both the environment and Australia’s indigenous population” (156). Alexis Wright moves the concerns forward – the economics, the environment, the imagined Aboriginal modes of dwelling, in “The Museumesque in Pristine Wilderness” (2020). Iterating the ideas of late Arrernte man, Tracker Tilmouth (“our first economist and resource scientist” (21)), she scathingly rebukes Greenies and environmentalists for expecting Aboriginal people to remain “as some kind of museumesque society” – one where Australia celebrates indigenous arts and society, and yet expects Aboriginal people to “survive just off their spirituality” (22). The colonial economies of dispossession and cost-per-acre are replaced by the interests of environmentalists and Greenies in conserving a “pristine wilderness.” Their interests, says Wright, are not in the interest of the custodians of the land, because the Greenies’ “agenda is wilderness without people” (22). Likewise, the idea that Australia should remain “untouched” by turning Country into National Parks or Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) prefigures, yet again, dispossession. According to Alexis Wright, this “environmentalism” works contrary to the survival of 21st century Aboriginal people, by locking up the very means by which “to care and build our future by and for ourselves” (24-5). To plagiarize and repurpose Ryan, we require inclusive frameworks that replicate Neidjie’s “subjectivity-obscuring

⁶ Nowhere in the languages of the Western world can I find a word for a parent whose child has predeceased them. For more on the theme of lost children, see Peter Pierce (1999).

pronoun ‘e’” and “situates plants and people in dialogue rather than opposition, engendering relationality rather than estrangement.”

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