ABSTRACTS

A rivet in the fabric of the Real: Improvised community in Amanda Lohrey's *The Labyrinth*

Nicholas Birns

As Julieanne Lamond has noted, Amanda Lohrey's 2020 novel *The Labyrinth* is, despite appearances, not really a novel of the single female self. Indeed, although being far closer, in its economy of form and means, to the modernist *récit*, than to any idea of the Great Australian Novel, *The Labyrinth* is highly (to borrow Christina Stead's phrase) 'many-charactered,' with over twenty-five named, significant characters in less than two hundred pages. Many contemporary writers who instance this combination of brevity and breadth are, as in the case of the US Indigenous writer Louise Erdrich, trying to forge a broad vision of community. Lohrey, though, emphasises the precarious and brittle nature of community. Lodged between two men and two institutions—the lunatic asylum her father Ken presided over and the prison in which her mass-murderer son Daniel is enmeshed—Lohrey's protagonist, Erica Marsden, improvises a new community in the remote coastal town of Garra Nalla. Erica develops relationships with new neighbours such as Lynnie (and her niece Lexie and, at the very end, her husband Ray), Diana and Jurko, the Montenegrin man who implements her dream of building a labyrinth that would re-enact the one in her father's asylum. Unlike Erica's relationship with her father and her son, relationships with these people do not assume a position of fixity and can move and be negotiated. Though Erica's labyrinth would seem to be a 'glass cathedral' of sorts, a white-settler futile-heroic epitaph upon the landscape, the labyrinth emerges as not just a made thing but a variegated process. It is poised between the enclosure of institutions and the *kairos* that is replete with 'potential' and is 'more of improvisation.' Lohrey, in her 2001 essay on the project of the self in late capitalism, was one of the first to explore the anthropology of the Australian subject under neoliberalism. By Erica's labyrinth being not a self-sufficient icon but a 'rivet in the fabric of the real,' Lohrey sketches a vision of improvised community that can be a rejoinder to a blanched, neoliberal image of the self.

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Amanda Lohrey and the Pastoral

Ruth Blair

This presentation continues my discussion of *Vertigo* for an *ALS* special issue on pastoral (30/2/2015). With *The Labyrinth*, especially, rooted in trauma, loss, and grief, it seems an unusual generic choice, announced in the subtitles of both books. That the subtitles seem largely to be ignored in reviews speaks to a degree of puzzlement. Both *Vertigo* and *The Labyrinth* employ the standard pastoral trope of a counterpointing of city and country. And there are the major pastoral markers of sheep and shepherd that intersect with a more broadly understood meaning of the term in the Australian context of the 'pastoral' industry. The pastoral intersects too with other old Western myths, most obviously the labyrinth. To what end? I offer some reflections on the role of the pastoral and some of these associated tropes, not in allowing, necessarily, the opening up of some grand narrative, but in exploring the intricate, personal spaces and negotiations that carry the freight of the larger context in which we live.

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Things As They Are; or, the Adventures of Erica Marsden
Tom Bristow

> Were it not for the spell cast by my dream, by the force and clarity of it, which remains with me still, I would not persevere. And then there is the flat, sandy expanse of ground between the shack and the dunes that I think of as the gap. Dead space, so abject, so derelict, it demands to be redeemed. I could plant a garden but the conditions are severe: salt, wind and sand. Nature alone is not enough. Some artefact, some human hand is demanded.

Why do sheep graze under a Lebanese cedar of the tired Napier Valley scarred by a recent bushfire in the opening moments of Amanda Lohrey's novel, *Labyrinth: A Pastoral*? With prosperity lost to a coal mine disaster, the valley carries the Scottish name of squatter pastoralists, the flock and paddocks cast in mist coming in from Mount Godwin, a short distance from a degraded coastline. All this appears to compress a number of historical and environmental attributes of the island Tasmania; from convict-made bricks for prisons and hospitals now abandoned or destroyed, to the alpine vegetation, glacial lakes, dolerite plateaus and rivulets of the button-grass plains. This compression brings into relief the demand for human hands marking the first-person narrative of Erica Marsden's adventure into *Garra Nalla*. This novel is the mid-point in a trilogy exploring the relevance of literary pastoral to the consequences of convict settlement and settler pastoralism, bleeding through landscape scales of the regional, the coastal, and the domestic. 'Obedience' and 'confidence' are but two parts of the

deep structure of human experience in the Napier Valley explored through the grafting of the myth of the labyrinth to pastoral. Conversations that test character capture these two terms; ellipses, metonymy and understatement elevate them into the register of praxis. Introjection underlines the unconscious adoption of the ideas or attitudes of others. Oppression, then, must face the poetics of narrative resistance, resistance to 'the reflex which concludes that the narrative fantasies which a collectivity entertains about its past and its future are "merely" mythical, archetypal, and projective' (Jameson). *Labyrinth: A Pastoral* examines an Australian rural collectivity with a daring confidence of its own structuring a fascinating subtext that has to date escaped the attention of the book reviews: an enquiry concerning political justice and its influence on modern morals and happiness.

Messages from another realm: reading *Vertigo* as a writer
Belinda Castles

In an interview with Charlotte Wood, Amanda Lohrey said that 'A text has a literal surface—the "story"—and then it has its own unconscious, a poetry that you the writer can either obscure or reveal…Any narrative that doesn't have a few messages from that realm is, for me, deficient. Too mastered, too known, too literal' (2016). Lohrey's novella *Vertigo* exemplifies this resistance to certainties, to the laying out of familiar terrain via a 'realist' narrative. The message from another realm arrives most clearly in the form of a boy flickering in and out of view of the main characters but is not delivered solely through the insertion of this ambiguous spirit figure.
My interest in this book, and in what Lohrey says about writing, has a specific context, in addition to the pleasures of reading her compelling, unsettling narratives. I am a writer of fiction, interested in how other writers solve their problems, and a teacher, trying to explore method with writing students. There is a tension in the idea of examining the articulation of mysteries (and in the same interview Lohrey says, as an aside, '"teach writing"—ridiculous term'), something literal-minded perhaps in trying to reverse-engineer how a writer conveys 'messages from another realm.' It is nevertheless part of creative writing pedagogy to read carefully, together, to try to work out what has happened in the text, what is happening to us as a result, and how it has been made to happen.

With these contexts in mind, I will examine certain aspects of *Vertigo*, most notably Lohrey's management of time in relation to the well referenced (but eternally difficult to manage) narrative elements of scene and narration, and in the process consider how we read as writers: a mode of

reading in which our end point lies beyond an understanding or experience of the text, pointing further on, towards a desire to make.

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A consumer's report

Morag Fraser

Reading *The Labyrinth*, and pondering Amanda Lohrey's body of work, I am often reminded of the poetry of Peter Porter. Poet and novelist share an ironic consciousness. My title is an appropriation from a 1970s poem by Porter. His 'A Consumer's Report' begins with this line, 'The name of the product I have tested is *Life.*' What follows is Porter in high, wry mode ('I'm not sure such a thing / should be put in the way of children—'). And what will follow from me is a consumer's report on Lohrey's *The Labyrinth*, with occasional deflections into other works.

I am interested in what Lohrey does to attract and hold a reader—how she wields words and creates fictional worlds that are strange but convincing/authentic. I shall be reverting in part to the analytic/reading practice that I employed (as did my fellow judges) when deciding Miles Franklin long and short lists (N.B. I was no longer a judge when Lohrey won the 2021 award). My 'take' is not academic, more a reader's engagement—a consumer's musings.

I have always been struck by the particulars that give Lohrey's novels their staying power, their moral heft, their element of surprise, and by the new landscapes—ethical, physical and intellectual—that are opened up for the reader. Lohrey has, I think, a poet's metaphorical instinct and habit—that ability to fix phrases and images so that they inhabit the reader's mind and resonate there. Other notable traits I will explore: an ear for dialogue in its many registers, and a Chaucerian ability to leave created characters with agency and mystery, inhabiting their dangerous worlds, and testing 'Life.'

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The Labyrinth and the Maze: Lohrey avec Murnane

Tony Hughes-D'Aeth

In this paper, I read Lohrey's *The Labyrinth* (2020) with Gerald Murnane's *The Plains* (1983). In *The Plains*, the labyrinth transpires formally through the obligation that readers have to follow the narrow defiles of the novel's propositional sentences. Any attempt to skim the novel, causes its sense to collapse. In Lohrey's novel, the labyrinth is materialised diegetically— an artistic project that mirrors the film-project in *The Plains*. In both novels, art is posited as a synthesis, a reconciliation of incommensurable modes and impulses. While the two novels differ in key respects, notably in their gendered stances and alignment with realist precepts, they are also linked by their particular attempts to mediate interiority. In both novels, interiority is grief—the grief of maternal abandonment—and each is haunted by the figure of the lost boy. Each novel also re-enacts, in surprising ways, the settler colonial fantasy.

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Forms of conviction: Political agency in the work of Amanda Lohrey

Julieanne Lamond

Amanda Lohrey's body of work thinks about what happens to people's utopian impulses—to 'make the world a better place,' or improve the lives of their community, or their family's situation—in the face of global shifts that make it increasingly difficult to feel that they can meaningfully engage in the political world. Her novels trace a shift from a 1950s waterfront in which communal identity is deeply intwined with politics, to a disillusionment with politics and a shift of attention inwards, towards the self and the body, from the 1980s. Over the past few years the question of what kinds of political agency are possible has been a very live one. A glimmer of utopian thinking has been opened up by the #metoo, Black Lives Matter and Green movements, as it seemed, for a moment at least, that collective action might make something happen. In an interview in 1988 Lohrey talked about her fascination with

> the processes of trying to change the world and make it a better place, and what that does to the individual on the personal level...that sort of movement of advance and withdrawal, advance and withdrawal, throwing yourself into activity, taking on responsibility for the rest of your community, wanting to change it, wanting to improve it; then getting fed up and withdrawing back into your private self and finding other consolations…It seems to me what life's all about.

As I have watched these political movements play out in intensely personal ways for people online, in protests and in my own classroom, I have found Lohrey's fiction illuminating. It focuses our attention on where such conviction comes from, and where it might go. This paper traces how reading Lohrey's fiction has shifted my own thinking about political agency and the role of fiction in documenting and perhaps scaffolding it.

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Contemplating the present-absent: Amanda Lohrey's prose
Bronwen Levy

I'd like to look at Amanda Lohrey's crystalline prose, coming at this through the 'absences' that appear so often in her writing and around which the preoccupations, the plot, etc., of the novels can seem to revolve. For example, in just the first few pages of *The Labyrinth* (2020) we have a mother who's run away, an aunt who's absent except for postcards of statues without faces, a father who's disappeared (murdered), and then, immediately after this, a son who's been removed (imprisoned). There's a lot of not-being-here, here. A lot of not signifying-nothing. This particular pile-on is for precise literary/narrative effect, but I think there are comparable examples elsewhere in her writing—so, how does she write all this absence and what does it mean in/for her writing.

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James Ley
TBA

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Aural geographies in *The Philosopher's Doll*
Brigid Magner

Sound, or the 'aural,' is vital to making sense of space. Diane Ackerman observes that there is a 'geographical quality to listening' (p. 178). This paper considers the audiobook version of *The Philosopher's Doll* (2004) as vocalised by Tracey Callander, in relation to its setting in Melbourne's inner North.

When interviewed on ABC Radio National at the time of publication, Amanda Lohrey said: 'Every novel has its own geographical and symbolic terrain.' She chose to set the novel in

Melbourne due to its resemblance to Hobart, being a southern Australian city, with similar climate, cultural interests, and orientation. In this way, it's a stand-in for Hobart, yet the particularity of the physical details, as narrated by Callander, helps the listener to imagine the locations in their mind's eye.

The central characters all live in Northcote, one of the most intensely gentrified suburbs in Melbourne which has rising income levels and huge demand for home renovation. As such it offers a suitable setting for Lohrey's narrative which features an upwardly mobile couple grappling with the question of whether or not to have a baby. Like others in their demographic, they dream of renovations while valuing their freedom to choose how to spend their leisure time. This presentation will discuss *The Philosopher's Doll* while walking the streets of Northcote, in order to activate the spatial elements of the narrative.

Diane Ackerman, *A Natural History of the Five Senses*, New York : Random, 1990.
Amanda Lohrey, interview with Romona Koval, 'The Book Show,' ABC Radio National, 15 May 2004.

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Amanda Lohrey's loyalties

Dougal McNeill

Amanda Lohrey's *The Morality of Gentlemen* (1984), an historical novel of the movement to ban the Australian Communist Party in the early 1950s, reimagining Tasmania's wharves and watersider political culture while deploying then-contemporary innovations in postmodern and self-conscious literary form, was published at just the moment that the Australian trade union movement began its longest period of setback and decline. Rather than reading it as a farewell to a lost era, this talk, taking on the new interest in work, precarity, organizing and logistics generated by the GFC, its fallout and the rise of global transportation as a key industrial-political worry, takes Lohrey's work as an exploration of complex forms of loyalty and affiliation. Analysed alongside Raymond Williams's *Loyalties* (1985), Lohrey's first novel offers ways to think loyalty and betrayal. What do these terms mean socially, politically, aesthetically? Lost works from the moment of neoliberalism's emergence as resources of hope in its decline.

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'item 3483 <<u>No satire</u>! — don't lose your nerve now.>

Papers of Amanda Lohrey, Special Collections, UNSW Canberra, MSS 213 [*olim* G213]
Jenna Mead

Mss 213 in Special Collections at UNSW Canberra comprises:

> [a] collection of literary papers of Amanda Lohrey, created principally during the 1980s. The collection consists of drafts, especially several drafts and manuscripts of The Reading Group (1988). The collection also includes drafts of other material, notebooks, research files, media clippings. There are also files of correspondence, media clippings and related documents connected with the libel action levelled against The Reading Group in 1989.

This is a unique collection and I propose, in this short paper, to review the collection, to place it in the context of work on collection policy published by Marie-Louise Ayres and to draw attention to elements of particular interest. My suggestion is that this collection is a valuable resource, as yet, under-utilised.

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The form of *The Labyrinth*
Stephen Muecke

According to Helen Garner, Peter Porter once said, 'The purpose of form is to prevent you from putting down on the paper the first thing that comes into your head.' That the novel is actively shaped by the writer, and 'takes shape' as it is written, is not breaking news: structure is all-important. This talk will describe the textual structure of *The Labyrinth,* and also reflect on the structures within it: specific built structures as well as the conceptual architecture of the novel. Finally, it will reflect on the humans, characters as well as readers, who move through, and are transformed by, these spaces.

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'Reversible destiny': Plasticity and Amanda Lohrey's *The Labyrinth* (2020)
Monique Rooney

Erica Marsden, the narrator of Amanda Lohrey's *The Labyrinth* (2020), owns a notebook in which she compiles both research and provisional drawings to do with the labyrinth she is planning to build. Early on, Erica records that the etymon of labyrinth is 'labrys,' and that this Greek word refers to 'a double-headed stone axe said to have been a weapon of the Amazons and to

symbolise the early forms of matriarchal society. Said also to have been an early symbol of the act of creation, of techne, and making by hand' (p. 36). While matriarchal resonances are here recognised, Erica's labyrinth is at least initially contextualised in terms of a patrilineal inheritance. It is in following the example of her father, who as chief medical officer of an asylum had set up a workshop and craft studio for use by the asylum residents, and who was a believer in *homo faber*—'man the maker,' the user of hands as a powerful tool—that Erica is inspired to design and build her labyrinth, a project that has reparative effects for both herself and her imprisoned son. In her notebook, Erica also notes the distinction between a maze and a labyrinth. Whereas the former amounts to an intellectual puzzle that tests the limits of one's intellectual abilities, the labyrinth requires emotional (heart-based) surrender. In the labyrinth 'you let go.' Coming back to where you started, you find yourself 'somehow changed by the act of surrender. In this way the labyrinth is said to be a model of reversible destiny' (p. 37).

This paper reads both Erica's labyrinth and Lohrey's *The Labyrinth* in the light of Catherine Malabou's understanding of plasticity as at once a giving, taking and *destruction* of form. Connecting Erica's father's *homo faber* injunction with the matrilineal symbolism of the design that she co-creates with Jurko, a Serbian-Albanian stonemason and undocumented immigrant, I argue that the novel's labyrinth-object can be understood to represent Lohrey's interest in writing as a synthesis (plasticity) of form capable of melding disparate (masculine and feminine, strange and familiar, old and new) elements.

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Agentic and ambivalent motherhood in Lohrey's *Camille's Bread* and *The Labyrinth*
Jane Scerri

Amanda Lohrey's *Camille's Bread* (1996) and *The Labyrinth* (2020) depict mothers in different situations and at different life stages, yet both protagonists focus on a contemplation of motherhood and the conflictions inherent in the mother-child relationship. In *Camille's Bread,* Marita is in her thirties and has been a single mother for seven years until she becomes involved with macrobiotic, Zen-practising Stephen, but her central preoccupation throughout the novel remains her symbiotic relationship with her daughter Camille. While she does embrace her latent erotic desire, she is ambivalent about many aspects of Stephen, expressly, that he 'pervades the house with a masculine presence…' (p. 97) and that he 'presides at her table like a brooding phantom' (p. 87). Her main dilemma in this novel is therefore the balancing of maternal and

erotic desire which is amplified through masculine/feminine contestations which are often centred around food and words.

In contrast, *The Labyrinth* focusses on parent-child relationships, past and present, how formative they are, and how randomly a child's life, and as a result, its parents' lives can be derailed. The protagonist Erica's maternal role is conflicted by matters that are beyond her control. To be near her son Daniel she buys an idyllic beach shack, and to manage her grief and ambivalence she builds a labyrinth in its backyard. This is both a literal and a metaphoric symbol for rebuilding Erica's life, a life that Lohrey frames as philosophically and psychoanalytically defined by her father's enduring influence and her mother's absence. What Lohrey also alludes to in *The Labyrinth* is that a mother can never win, for as she bemoans when visiting Daniel, 'Despite everything he is still able to mock me. And this is necessary, for who else is there to blame but mother?' (p. 166).

In both novels the mother prioritises the child in different ways and in both there is a concentration on rebuilding and reimagination. However, where they differ is that *Camille's Bread* concentrates on Marita's agency and her control of the mother-child relationship, whereas *The Labyrinth* contemplates Erica's lack of control and fragility once the child has become an adult.

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Writing as building: Myth and materiality in *The Labyrinth*
Katrina Schlunke

The Labyrinth begins with the epigraph, 'the cure for many ills, noted Jung, is to build something.' This paper will consider the ways in which this novel takes the materiality of our ordinary lives and asks how we give them meaning and how they give meaning to us. In centring the making of a labyrinth as metaphor and material reality we feel the way that matter becomes rather than is. In a related manner we can sense the underlying structure of the novel that is being built with no definite break between sentient and non-sentient being or between material and spiritual phenomenon. The novel is alive with mythically enhanced figures and lively matter with complex contingent modes of appearing. The curative power of making is not an act of closure or completion but one where we come to bear greater complexity, materializing one step and stone at a time.

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Three letters

Julienne Van Loon

Julienne van Loon presents letters she has written to three characters selected from Amanda Lohrey's Miles Franklin novels: *The Labyrinth* (2020), *The Philosopher's Doll* (2004) and *Camille's Bread* (1996). Canvassing themes of hope, child-parent relationships, sacredness, philosophy, and the making of things with one's hands, the letters ask questions and share confidences with three imaginary figures who may, in their way, forever be writing back.

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***The Labyrinth* and the Swamp**

Susan Wyndham

The day after Amanda Lohrey won the Miles Franklin Literary Award for her novel *The Labyrinth* (2020), I decided to honour her by walking the labyrinth in Sydney's Centennial Park. I knew she might consider this a perverse celebration because she, or her protagonist Erica Marsden, dislikes my local labyrinth for being 'too perfect.' I set out feeling defensive because Centennial Park has a central, almost sacred place in my life.

Lohrey writes:

> At the opening to the meander I hesitate and then begin to walk it, but almost at once the path seems too narrow, or is it that my ageing body is beginning to lose its balance. By the time I reach the centre I am certain that the complex mandala is not for me. Something is missing: some quirk, some local ingenia of the improvised and unexpected. Am I being perverse? The Chartres works for others. It must do: it is there.

In my personal, practical paper, I compare my experiences of walking the Centennial Park labyrinth with Erica's, and show how they affect my response to the novel. I look at how the idea of building a labyrinth shapes the structure of the novel. Lohrey uses the labyrinth as both a physical construction and a metaphor for Erica's psychic journey, helping her move from the traumatised past towards a sense of self, home and community. Walking the labyrinth and the nearby swamp while rereading *The Labyrinth* also made me think more deeply about aspects of my own life and writing.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Nicholas Birns teaches at New York University. His co-edited *Companion to Anthony Trollope* is just out from McFarland and he is the author of many books and articles, including an analysis of Brian Castro's verse fiction published in *Antipodes*. He is currently co-editing the *Cambridge Companion to the Australian Novel*.

Ruth Blair is an Honorary Research Consultant in the School of Communication and Arts at the University of Queensland. She taught American and environmental literatures at the University of Tasmania and UQ. She was part of a group researching the Pastoral tradition at UQ. Ruth also introduced a special issue of *ALS*, entitled *Afterlives of Pastoral* (30.2, 2015) and wrote on Lohrey's *Vertigo* (2008) for the same issue.

Tom Bristow is a Roderick Research Fellow at James Cook University and an Honorary Research Fellow through the ARC Centre for the History of Emotions at The University of Western Australia. He completed a Postdoctoral Research Fellowship with CHE at The University of Melbourne in 2017 and was a Junior Research Fellow at Durham University. He received his MA (Modern Literature) in 2003 from the University of Leicester, England, and his PhD (Contemporary Literature) in 2008 from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. Tom's research combines affect theory and literary theory to underline an ecocritical reading of the pastoral tradition and its afterlives in contemporary literature. His publications include *Decolonized Pastoral: The Australian Environmental Imaginary* (Routledge, *forthcoming*), *The Anthropocene Lyric: An Affective Geography of Poetry, Person, Place* (2015) and ed., with Thomas H. Ford, *A Cultural History of Climate Change* (2016).

Belinda Castles is the author of four novels: *Bluebottle* (2018), *Hannah and Emil* (2012), *The River Baptists* (2007) and *Falling Woman* (2000) and winner of *The Australian*/Vogel Literary Award (2006) and Asher Award (2013). She also edited the recent essay collection, *Reading Like an Australian Writer* (2021), and teaches writing at the University of Sydney.

Morag Fraser is a writer and one of Australia's most experienced literary and social commentators. She was Adjunct Professor in Humanities and Social Sciences at La Trobe University, 2003-2009 and the editor of *Eureka Street* magazine from 1991-2003. Her journalism includes writing features, opinion pieces, education columns and arts reviews for *The Age*,

Australian Book Review and most of Australia's metropolitan newspapers and magazines. In 2004 she was made a Member of the Order of Australia, for services to journalism.

From 2006 to 2018, Morag was chair of Montsalvat, Australia's oldest arts colony, and chair of the Board of *Australian Book Review*'s Board from 2005–2015. She was for seven years one of the judges of the Miles Franklin Literary Award and from 2009 to 2011 she judged of the Mildura Festival's Philip Hodgins Memorial Prize. She was a member of the advisory board of the Adelaide Festival of Ideas, 1999–2007 and chair of the Melbourne Writers Festival for three years. Morag is currently writing a biography of the Australian poet, Peter Porter.

Tony Hughes-d'Aeth is the author of *Like Nothing on this Earth: A Literary History of the Wheatbelt* (2017) and holds the Chair of Australian Literature at The University Western Australia.

Julieanne Lamond lectures in English at Australian National University. She is the President of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature and co-editor of the journal *Australian Literary Studies*. Her monograph, *Amanda Lohrey*, will be published by Melbourne University Press in 2022.

James Ley is Contributing Editor with the *Sydney Review of Books*. He is the author of *The Critic in the Modern World: Public Criticism from Samuel Johnson to James Wood* (2014) and co-editor with Catriona Menzies Pike of *The Australian Face: Essays from the Sydney Review of Books* (2017).

Bronwen Levy specialises in Australian women's writing, and has a special interest in Amanda Lohrey and others who began publishing in the last part of the twentieth century. She is Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the University of Queensland.

Brigid Magner is a Senior Lecturer in Literary Studies and founding member of the non/fictionLab at RMIT University. Her monograph *Locating Australian Literary Memory* was published in 2019. She is the co-editor of the *Journal of Australian Studies* and Chief Investigator on the ARC Project 'Reading in the Mallee; The Past and Future of a Literary Region.'

Monique Rooney teaches in the English Program, School of Literatures, Languages and Linguistics, ANU. She researches in the broad areas of US literature, film and new media

and the intermediality of Australian Literature. Moniqiue's interest in Catherine Malabou's concept of plasticity is taken up in her book *Living Screens: Melodrama and Plasticity in Contemporary Film and Television* (2015). She is currently working on the following two major research projects: *Brow Media: Programs and Promises* and the *Multiform Writing of Ruth Park*.

Dougal McNeill is a Pākehā critic teaching in the English Programme at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington, currently working on a book project, provisionally entitled *Forms of Freedom*, on the politics of the imagination in Australian and New Zealand literature.

Jenna Mead is Senior Honorary Research Fellow at UWA. Her publications include *bodyjamming: Sexual Harassment, Feminism and Public Life*, ed. (1997) and Caroline Leakey, *The Broad Arrow*, ed. (2019). She is currently co-editing Geoffrey Chaucer, *Treatise on the Astrolabe* for Cambridge University Press.

Stephen Muecke is Emeritus Professor at the University of New South Wales, an Adjunct Professor at Notre Dame University (Broome), and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. Recent books are *Latour and the Humanities*, edited with Rita Felski (2020) and *The Children's Country: Creation of a Goolarabooloo Future in North-West Australia*, co-authored with Paddy Roe (2020).

Jane Scerri teaches literature at Western Sydney University and has published short stories, poetry, book reviews and essays in *JASAL*, *Swamp Writing*, *Global Media Journal* and *TEXT*. Her recently conferred doctorate examines representations of single motherhood in Australian literature concentrating on works by Helen Garner, Elizabeth Jolley and Amanda Lohrey.

Katrina Schlunke is Potsdam Postcolonial Chair for Global Modernities at the University of Potsdam. She is co-investigator on the Australian Research Council Discovery project 'Beyond Extinction: Reconstructing the Thylacine (Tasmanian Tiger) Archive' and has recently published on the Anthropocene and art, fictocriticism and a rug made from Tasmanian tiger skins. Her interest in the materiality of the past and its writing leads inevitably to a consideration of the work of Amanda Lohrey.

Julienne van Loon is Associate Professor in Writing and Publishing at RMIT University, and an Honorary Fellow in Writing at the University of Iowa. She is the author of four works of long

form fiction, most recently 'Instructions for a Steep Decline' (2019), which was joint winner of the *Griffith Review* Novella Project prize. Her first novel, *Road Story* (2005), won *The Australian*/Vogel Literary Award and was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers Prize (Best First Book) award and the WA Premier's Award for Fiction. Her first major work of non-fiction, *The Thinking Woman*, was published to critical acclaim in 2019. Julienne's research interests include feminist literary practice, contemporary narrative fiction and literary value. She is managing editor at *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Programs* and co-director, with David Carlin, of RMIT's non/fictionLab research group.

Geordie Williamson has been chief literary critic of *The Australian* since 2008 and is editor-at-large of the Picador imprint at Pan Macmillan. He is currently a postgraduate student within the ANU School of Literature, Languages and Linguistics.

Susan Wyndham is a journalist, book reviewer and writer. She was literary editor of *The Sydney Morning Herald* for more than a decade and judged the Prime Minister's Literary Award for fiction in 2017-2020. Her books include *Life in his hands: the true story of a neurosurgeon and a pianist* (2008) and *My Mother, My Father: on losing a parent*, ed. (2013).