

HUMANITARIANISM & HUMAN RIGHTS

48th Annual Symposium

Western Australia · 15–17 Nov 2017



SESSION

The Environment and Human Environment

FRIDAY 17 NOVEMBER, 9:30am-11:00am

WA MARITIME MUSEUM, Fremantle

This session explores the implications of a recent expansion of notions of rights that challenges the boundary between human and non-human, focusing upon issues of disconnection, individualism, and extinction in the age of the Anthropocene.

CHAIR

Associate Professor Andrea Gaynor

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Andrea Gaynor is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Western Australia. An environmental historian, her research seeks to use the contextualising and narrative power of history to solve real-world problems. She has undertaken research with a range of organisations including the WA Department of Parks & Wildlife, Western Power and WWF-Australia, and collaborated with colleagues from a range of disciplines in a research project on engineering education for social and environmental responsibility. She has published on topics as diverse as landscape art and feral cats; her recent publications include an article with Joy McCann in *Oral History Review* on the uses of oral history in marine conservation, and a book chapter with Professor Tom Griffiths on Geoffrey Bolton's environmental history, in *A Historian For All Seasons* (Monash University Publishing). Recent and forthcoming books include *Never Again* (UWA Publishing), a book on Roe 8 co-edited with Professor Peter Newman and Emeritus Professor Philip Jennings, and *Big Skies: land, people and nature in Australia's southern mallee country* (Monash University Publishing, 2018) co-authored with colleagues from La Trobe University. Her new research project is on the history of nature in Australian urban modernity. When not researching or teaching she manages the website and newsletter of the Australian and New Zealand Environmental History Network and is a member of [The Beeliar Group: Professors for Environmental Responsibility](#).

Follow Andrea on [Twitter](#)

SPEAKER

Professor John Kinsella

CURTIN UNIVERSITY

Sightings-failure

We often tell our son of birds and animals we saw frequently as children, now seen rarely or not at all in the same locations. This talk will look at not only the loss of habitat and 'species', but also the way we inadvertently accommodate loss and change through adjusting the language we use to describe place at a particular moment. Sightings-failure also becomes citing-failure in the immediate, with loss recorded and archived as fait accompli. The poem or story or essay can become a repository of an accepted past, when I feel it might become a dynamic affirmation of the present and the future as well as the past — a space in which life is valued, encouraged and respected. This talk suggests a language of rejection of loss, and posits a language of engagement and protection.

John Kinsella is the author of numerous books of poetry, fiction, criticism, and cross-genre works. He is Professor of Literature and Sustainability at Curtin University and a Fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge University. His *Polysituatedness: A poetics of displacement* has just been published by Manchester University Press (2017).

John's profile photo courtesy of Wendy Kinsella.

SPEAKER

Ms Elise Bohan

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

Transhuman Rights: A Defining Issue for 21st Century Humanity

Should you have the right to marry a robot? Are you liable if your self driving car runs over a pedestrian? If machines claim to be conscious should we believe them? And if AI's demand equal rights to humans should we grant them? In the past these issues only ever arose in the pages of science fiction novels, but in the twenty-first century they are poised to become some of the most pertinent social, legal and ethical issues of our time. How far will we extend human rights to non-human beings? Will we broaden our conception of humanity, or personhood, to encompass intelligent cyborgs and other trans, or posthuman beings? I argue that it is not a question of if, but when.

Elise Bohan is a PhD student at Macquarie University's Big History Institute, currently writing a thesis on the history of transhumanism from the Scientific Revolution to the present. She teaches Big History at Macquarie and recently authored the introduction to Dorling Kindersley's popular introductory text, *Big History*.

Follow Elise on [Twitter](#) and her [website](#)

The University of Western Australia is hosting Elise's participation at this year's Symposium.

SPEAKER

Dr Matthew Chrulew

CURTIN UNIVERSITY

Captivity Histories

In this era of extinction, of trafficking and management between zoos, labs, farms and parks, new ways must be found to identify and remediate the transformative, often deleterious effects of human activity on nonhuman communities. For example, through 'captivity histories': a hybrid genre that takes up the challenge of chronicling a species' encounter with human institutions and practices (such as zoological gardens and wildlife management). This demands a very particular sort of interdisciplinary work across the animal sciences and humanities, work that is capable of understanding both human and animal cultures, the differences within and between them, and their entanglement. Only such analysis of the cultural and behavioural destructions and transformations undergone across generations in captivity can adequately support and refashion rehabilitation and conservation practices, and comprehend the impoverished and remade subjects and communities that emerge through and despite them.

Matthew Chrulew is an Australian Research Council DECRA Research Fellow and leader of the Posthumanism-Animality-Technology research program in the Centre for Culture and Technology at Curtin University. He is an Associate Editor of the journal *Environmental Humanities* (Duke). Recent publications included the edited collections *Extinction Studies: Stories of Time, Death, and Generations* (Columbia, 2017, with Deborah Bird Rose and Thom van Dooren) and *Foucault and Animals* (Brill, 2016, with Dinesh Wadiwel). With Brett Buchanan and Jeffrey Bussolini he edited three issues of *Angelaki* on the work of Dominique Lestel, Vinciane Despret and Roberto Marchesini. His current research focuses on the history and philosophy of zoo biology, ethology, and conservation biology.

SPEAKER**Emeritus Professor Stephen Muecke FAHA**

THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE

Extensions of the Human

Humans are not so much 'surrounded by an environment' as intricately networked within various ontologically distinct 'worlds' where through 'making kin' with other species (Haraway), we can extend our capacities, as we do with technological extensions, typified by the internet. This intervention argues for a descriptive practice in the humanities that materially traces these extensions to more-than-human capacities.

Stephen Muecke is Jury Chair of English language and Literature in the School of Humanities at the University of Adelaide, South Australia. Recent publications are *The Mother's Day Protest and Other Fictocritical Essays* (Rowman and Littlefield International, 2016), a special edition of *New Literary History* ('Recomposing the Humanities—with Bruno Latour'), 2016, and a new edition of Paddy Roe's *Gularabulu: Stories from the West Kimberley* (UWA Publishing, 2016).

The University of Western Australia is hosting Stephen's participation at this year's Symposium.

REGISTER

Visit the [Academy's website](#) for more information on the program, speakers and to register.

Join the conversation via Twitter [@HumanitiesAU](#) and [#AHSymposium](#)