

The Place of Lyric: Ethics and Aesthetics in
Australian Ecopoetics
&
Propagules for Drift and Dispersal

Willo Drummond

BA, PG Cert. (Creative Writing)

42151511

Macquarie University

Department of English

October, 2014



Abstract

The Place of Lyric: Ethics and Aesthetics in Australian Ecopoetics & *Propagules for Drift and Dispersal*

This Master of Research thesis draws on the recent shift in the understanding of lyric in literary-ethical discourse to make a claim for lyric poetry as ethical ecopoetry. Representing Milech and Schilo's "research question model" for the creative thesis, it asks: *to what extent is it possible to maintain an ethical, eco-centric poetics whilst writing in the lyric mode?* It then explores this question via two research pathways: critical enquiry, including textual analysis of the work of Australian poet Robert Adamson, and creative writing practice, in the form of a collection of lyric poems: *Propagules for Drift and Dispersal*.

Although ecocriticism has roots in Romanticism, much discourse around *ecopoetry* - with its emphasis on ecocentrism and humility toward the non-human world - has come to hinge on a distancing from a 'Romantic', 'ego-driven' style of poetry, seen to be unethical. Such positions problematize lyric, given its strong association with both Romanticism and the formal centrality of the textual 'I'. This thesis contends however, that lyric has become conflated with a reductive view of Romanticism and seeks to uncouple lyric from such views. Instead, framing lyric as a mode rather than a genre, and as performative, this thesis presents lyric poetry as an engaged type of ethical discourse which functions via reader answerability. Drawing on phenomenology, extended mind theory, and 'innovative' contemporary poetics, it concludes that the lyric can function as a decidedly ethical ecopoetry, via both its material and dialectic performativity: that indeed the "place" of lyric, can also be the place of the ecopoetic.

Acknowledgements

With immense gratitude to my supervisor Marcelle Freiman, for sensitive feedback and constant encouragement throughout the writing of this project, and to Jane Messer for relief supervision during the early months of the year. Thanks also to my parents, for their continued open-minded, open-heartedness and for facing me toward the creative road from the beginning. Finally to B, I will be forever grateful to you for your love and support. You are extraordinary. Thank you for reading chapters and for keeping me fed over the last few weeks. Well look at that, here we are. We made it.

Contents

Section 1

The Place of Lyric: Ethics and Aesthetics in Australian Ecopoetics

Introduction ~ 13

Chapter 1: Who's Afraid of the Lyric Mode? ~ 23

Chapter 2: 'The Place of Lyric': Lyric as Ethical Ecopoetics ~ 31

Chapter 3: Adamson's Lyrical Ethics ~ 43

*

Section 2

Propagules for Drift and Dispersal

Reflections on Mangroves and the eco-lyric ~ 63

Poetry ~ 69

*

Conclusion ~ 87

Works Cited ~ 93

Section 1

The Place of Lyric: Ethics and Aesthetics in Australian Ecopoetics

Introduction

In the geological era of the Anthropocene, distinguished due to the disproportionate impact human activity has had, and continues to have, on the earth's ecosystems (Steffen et al., 842), the vastness of scope of the environmental issues being faced raises new questions for writers and literary critics alike. This Master of Research creative writing thesis examines ethics and aesthetics in light of some of these contemporary issues. Specifically, it considers the tension between an ecocentric poetics and the lyric impulse in contemporary Australian poetic practice. *To what extent, it asks, is it possible to maintain an ethical, ecocentric poetics whilst writing in the lyric mode?* Drawing on literary history and theory, including literary-ethical discourse, as well as the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and ideas from extended mind theory and contemporary poetics, it examines the lyric mode against the sub-discipline of literary studies known as ecocriticism. It does this via two distinct research pathways: critical enquiry, including textual analysis of the work of Australian poet Robert Adamson, and creative writing practice, in the form of a collection of lyric poems: *Propagules for Drift and Dispersal*.

Ecocriticism is a relatively new, interdisciplinary area of literary studies, which draws on contemporary ecology and environmental science.¹ In her introduction to a seminal collection of essays in the field, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, Cheryll Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as:

¹ Although a disparate handful of critics had been undertaking work that might fit this description since the 1970's, it was in the 1990's that the field began to galvanise, with several seminal works emerging over the decade, such as Jonathan Bate's *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (1991), and *The Song of the Earth* (2000); Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing and the Formation of American Culture* (1995); Terry Gifford's *Green Voices: Understanding Contemporary Nature Poetry* (1995); John Elder's *Imagining the Earth: Poetry and the Vision of Nature* (1996); and Leonard. M. Scigaj's *Sustainable Poetry: Four Ecopoets* (1999).

. . . the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies. (xviii)

Glotfelty makes a key distinction between traditional literary theory and ecocriticism: “[l]iterary theory, in general, examines the relations between writers, texts, and the world. In most literary theory [however] ‘the world’ is synonymous with society – the social sphere. Ecocriticism expands the notion of ‘the world’ to include the entire ecosphere” (xix). The complexity and scale involved in meeting such a charge has ensured that interdisciplinarity has remained key in the field of ecocriticism (T. Clark 4). From the earliest examples, ecocriticism has drawn on ideas emerging from the sciences, and in this way the field expands our concept of how we might look at texts. As a creative writing thesis however, this Master of Research project does not have the scope to engage directly with scientific research in this way. Instead, it is a response to ways of thinking about literature and writing which have emerged over the last two decades from within the field of ecocriticism itself.

When a writer approaches their work from an ecocritical perspective, a series of pragmatic, practice-related questions begin to emerge, such as: how might we talk about non-human animals and the environment around us, whether “natural” or urban? How important is it, as a writer, to explicitly acknowledge pressing environmental issues in our writing? And what challenges might this open up for questions of form, particularly for a poet? A subset of ecocriticism specifically concerned with this last question is *ecopoetry*. Building on early work by Lawrence Buell (1995), Terry Gifford (1995) and Leonard M. Scigaj (1999), J. Scott Bryson offered the following definition of *ecopoetry* in 2002: “[e]copoetry is a subset of nature poetry that, while adhering to certain conventions of romanticism, also advances beyond that tradition and takes on distinctly contemporary problems and issues” (*Ecopoetry* 5). Reiterating and summarising his definition in 2005, Bryson states:

. . . ecopoetry is a mode . . . generally marked by three primary characteristics: an ecological and biocentric perspective recognizing the interdependent nature of the world; a deep humility with regard to our relationships with human and nonhuman nature; and an intense scepticism toward hyperrationality, a scepticism that usually leads to condemnation of an overtechnologized modern world and a warning concerning the very real potential for ecological catastrophe.” (*Westside* 2)

Such a stance implies responsibility for the writer. Poet and editor James Englehardt suggests ecopoetry is in this regard “surrounded by questions of ethics” (*Language Habitat*). David Borthwick continues this line of thinking in his introduction to the 2012 anthology of ecopoetry *Entanglements*, when he states:

Ecopoetry seeks to question and renegotiate the human position in respect of the environment in which we are enmeshed. Its ethic is to oppose the violent assumption that the world around us exists merely as a set of resources which can be readily and unethically exploited and degraded for economic gain. (xvi)

It is such questions of ethics, identified by Englehardt, Borthwick (and others as we shall see) to which this thesis responds. For what began to emerge as I read more and more in the fields of ecocriticism and ecopoetics, was a tension between my own aesthetic aspirations and an environmentally conscious ethics. It is this tension that my research seeks to explore. However, a hermeneutic enquiry alone would not be sufficient to speak to the tension between theory and practice. What drives this thesis is the pursuit of a personal poetics in the face of such ethical questions, and as Kim Lasky states, this requires “drawing reflexively on a range of inputs” (20). As such, this thesis employs a multifaceted creative writing research model: it operates via both critical enquiry and creative writing practice.

Barbara H. Milech and Ann Schilo identify three models for the creative thesis: the “research question model”, the “commentary model” and the “context model” (*Exit Jesus*). My project can be considered an example of the “research question” model. It takes a set of personal aesthetic aspirations and considers them against ethical questions raised by the field of ecocriticism and its sub discipline, ecopoetics. At the outset of this

project, I asked myself what I want from my own poetry, and came to the following conclusions: I want my poetry to be *embodied*. I want my poetry to be *intimate* (for how better to be heard?). I want my poetry to *lean in to feeling (rather than 'hide' resolutely in abstraction)*. I want my poetry, at this point in history, and from this place on the globe, to be ethical; I want to maintain *an eco-centric ethics*. The first three of these goals would frame my poetic aspirations as broadly 'lyric'. The term 'lyric' of course, has had a nebulous set of meanings over the last few centuries; it is notoriously difficult to pin down to any set of fixed features. *The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics* suggests that "the story of the lyric charts the history of poetics" (833)² and Daniel Albright states the lyric can seem definable "only as a tissue of paradoxes" (viii). Nevertheless, even in the face of this instability, 'lyric' has attracted significant hostility throughout the twentieth century (see for example, Brown 13; Cole 383; Cook *Poetry in Theory* 9-13; Jeffreys 196), largely due to its frequent association with both Romanticism and the formal centrality of the "I".

Although ecocriticism has roots in Romanticism (Bate, *Romantic Ecology* 9),³ much discourse around *ecopoetry* - with its emphasis on ecocentrism and humility toward the non-human world - has come to hinge on a distancing from a 'Romantic', 'ego-driven' style of poetry. A poetry seen to be unethical, either for its colonising or imperial implications, or the lack of responsibility implied by a turning from, or abandoning, of ever more pressing realities. Bryson, for example, asserts that ecopoets operate from a position of self-consciousness that nevertheless "deamphasize[s] the individual ego" (*West Side* 22). Implicit in this is a charge against an ego driven, Romantic style of poetry. More explicitly, Ali Alizadeh positions *ecopoetry* as a distinct subversion of Romantic discourse: "... a subversive form of writing, presenting an anti-possessive, anti-oppressive contemporary challenge to the dominant discourses of English literature since Romanticism" (Alizadeh 55). In *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and The Environment*, Timothy Clark frames *ecopoetry* as a mode that aims to move beyond "the romantic lyric . . . aggrandizement of the personal ego" (139-40),

² Virginia Jackson. "Lyric" (2012): 826-834

³ See also, Bate, *Song*; T. Clark 13; Nichols xvi; Rigby.

cautioning that many eco-texts in the broader sense⁴ often perpetuate an “individualistic romanticism” (30) which “can tend toward a strident individualism barely distinguishable from a consumerist ethos of regarding all things as a means for self-cultivation” (30). Similarly, in *The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture and Literature in America*, Dana Phillips, draws on Walter Benjamin’s argument for lyric poetry as “antiquated” (qtd. in Phillips 194)⁵ to examine “lyric” (198) non-fiction nature writing such as Annie Dillard’s *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* and argues that an excessive focus on the self in much nature writing makes it “too selfish” (195) to be an ethical kind of writing. Australian poet and essayist Martin Harrison asks what, then, might constitute “writing which in some measure fulfils an ecological requirement” (10), and proposes an eco-ethical writing must:

...position discourse outside of... Romantic and post-Romantic discourses to do with the individual... new writing cannot be tied to the assumption that individuation is the main philosophical aim of acts of imagination because this...predisposes us to think that only humans speak (11).

While the arguments put forward by Timothy Clark, Phillips and Harrison relate to ecological writing more broadly, they evoke criticisms which have been made about lyric poetry throughout the twentieth century: that it is solipsistic, too closed, too sealed to be an ethical mode of writing. This thesis responds to such propositions and asks, is lyric poetry ‘too selfish’ to be an ethical ecopoetry? If, as Tim Bristow states, ecopoetry “contributes to the dissident project of resistance to dominant cultural modes of thinking” (*Ecopoetics* 156), and as Bryson claims “seeks to stir the readers to action in new ways” (*Westside* 3), how might the lyric function as ecopoetry? *To what extent is it possible to maintain an eco-centric ethics whilst writing in the lyric mode?*

In her editorial to the inaugural edition of the Australian journal of ecopoetry and ecopoetics, *Plumwood Mountain*, Anne Elvey suggests she is “hesitant to go all the way

⁴ Clark’s discussion ranges across poetry, fiction and non-fiction.

⁵ Walter Benjamin. “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books, 1969: 193

with Alizadeh in moving on from Romanticism.” Similarly in 2013, Ann Fisher-Wirth and Laura-Gray Street state in the “Editors’ Preface” to *The Ecopoetry Anthology*:

. . . to dismiss the complex traditions of. . . romanticism...
is too easy. The concept of self that romanticism espouses
is problematic, but day to day we still have selves. This is
not a flaw or a moral failing but something we can observe
and ponder.” (xxx)

Taking a cue from the comments of Elvey, Fisher-Wirth and Street, this thesis will not define a lyric ecopoetics against Romanticism. Instead, it seeks to uncouple lyric from received ideas of Romanticism - ideas which emerged through the filters of New Criticism and New Historicism - while refusing to jettison Romantic traditions entirely. In fact, I hope to show that contemporary lyric poetry can be considered an ethical ecopoetry because of, rather than in spite of, some of the very qualities it has inherited from the Romantic poets. In this regard, the work follows somewhat in the footsteps of early ecocritics such as Jonathan Bate; however the argument presented here is not strictly Batesonian, with his Heideggerian emphasis on dwelling (*Song*). Instead, framing the lyric as a mode rather than a genre (Albright), and as performative (Brewster; Culler, *Changes, Literary Theory, Pursuit of Signs, Why Lyric*), it looks to ideas from contemporary ‘innovative’ poetics (Hejinian *Rejection of Closure*; Moxley; Snyder), phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty) and extended mind theory (A. Clark) to present lyric poetry as an engaged type of ethical discourse which functions via reader answerability (Scanlon; Waters). Beginning with a brief overview of the anti-romantic stance in contemporary ecocriticism, I suggest that this anti-romantic position is in fact a continuation of a somewhat flawed critical stance that has been present throughout much of the twentieth-century, one which has unfortunately affected critical views of the lyric as well. I then draw on the recent shift in literary-ethical discourse around lyric, and reader answerability, to suggest that the lyric mode can function as a decidedly ethical ecopoetics due to both its material and dialectic performativity, examining this functionality of the lyric mode in the work of contemporary Australian poet Robert Adamson. It is intended that this textual analysis of Adamson’s work will go some way to illustrating the context of the contemporary Australian poetry milieu in which I wish

my own work to be situated, as well as evidencing the ‘compost’ material which feeds my own writing. For Australian poetry is integral to my own practice as a writer; it is the reading of Australian poetry which often acts as a trigger for a first draft.

Adamson’s poetry is particularly pertinent to my enquiry due to his reputation as “an explicitly romantic and strongly subjective poet” (Nicholls, *Dialectical Study* 108), noted for his ‘lyricism’ (Forbes, qtd in Brooks, *Feral Symbolists* 280 and *Kinsella Interview* 333; Hart 86; Svenson). His poetry is deeply engaged with the natural world, specifically the Hawkesbury River region of NSW, where he lives and works. The many birds, fish and other non-human animals with which Adamson shares his river life feature frequently in his poetry, as does the river itself. Yet only a small sample of Adamson’s poetry has been examined within what may be described broadly as an ecocritical framework (Atkinson; McLaren; Cassidy; A. Johnson; Punshon). This thesis seeks to contribute to this emerging discourse, by asking: in what ways can the work of a ‘Romantic’, ‘lyric’ poet such as Robert Adamson be considered an ethical ecopoetry?

Much analysis of contemporary ecopoetry has examined the ways in which writing engages with place,⁶ and an exploration of the work of Robert Adamson, with his rootedness in the Hawkesbury region might be well suited to another such place-based analysis. Contrary to this trend however, this thesis seeks to tread a line between a phenomenological and a post-structuralist inflected poetics. Borrowing a phrase from Barthes, I suggest an alternative use of the term ‘place’: arguing that the ‘place’ of lyric is the reader encounter, and thus, the ‘place’ of lyric may also very well be the ‘place’, of the ecopoetic.

A criticism of phenomenology within the field of ecocriticism has been its perceived anthropocentrism, and indeed Heidegger’s early phenomenology saw language as “unique to man” (Goodbody 66). This thesis looks instead to the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose understanding of language was far broader than its human manifestation alone (Westling 137). The dynamic subjectivity represented in Adamson’s poetry enacts what Merleau-Ponty called the “imminence” (147) of the reversibility of the “flesh” of the world (131). For Merleau-Ponty, self and

⁶ Bryson *Westside*; Cranston and Zeller; Rigby; Ryan, are but a few examples. See also, Tom Bristow. *The Anthropocene Lyric: An Affective Geography of Poetry, Person, Place*, Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming.

world comprise two parts of the one element of Being he calls ‘flesh’ (139), a concept which serves to overcome the subject-object distinction when describing experience. The “seeing and the visible” (147) are “inextricably entwined” (Diprose 8) in Merleau-Ponty’s ontology, and part of the same ‘flesh’, yet they also remain differentiated. For the moment of perception is also a moment of “dehiscence” (Merleau-Ponty 153), a dividing of self and world. Unification, or merging, of self and world therefore can only ever be “imminent”, “and never realized in fact” (147). Adamson’s poetry enacts this ‘imminence’ and in this way reflects an ethical way of being in the world. At the same time, Adamson’s more abstract lyrics disrupt the usual distinctions between word and world, language and culture. Both of these strategies offer the reader access, in the ‘place’ of lyric, to what Richard Kerridge calls “ecological perception”: the dissolution of “unifying notions of selfhood and strong dualistic separations between culture and nature, subject and object or human and non-human” (354). They function, thus, as an ethical ecopoetics.

Parallel to this critical enquiry, the practice strand of this thesis is comprised of a collection of 10 lyric poems: *Propagules for Drift and Dispersal*, each of which can themselves be considered “sites of enquiry” (Williams 48).⁷ Although these two research methods form discrete arms of this project, they are by no means mutually exclusive. Rather, somewhat appropriately for an ecocritical enquiry, they act as interdependent parts of a complex ecosystem. During the development of this project, research has made suggestions to practice, with practice equally (and crucially) feeding research. While the original research question driving this project was borne of a set of practice based aspirations, a thematic focus on mangroves in *Propagules for Drift and Dispersal* was inspired by my engagement with Adamson’s poetry as well as the extant criticism surrounding it. Mangroves have a place in my own suburban upbringing, as well as a high level of environmental significance due to their potential in climate change mitigation. They are also, as identified by Andy Clark, a rich metaphor for the role of language in second order cognition, or “thoughts about thoughts” (207-8). The mangrove seed, Clark points out, on encountering a “shallow mud fla[t]” (207), sets

⁷ Williams is discussing the compositional strategies of contemporary poet Michael Palmer. Robert Adamson has also referred to his own poetry as “research” (*Kinsella Interview* 339)

about creating its own habitat, by drawing debris and detritus into its web of roots, building its own island. Several such islands can eventually merge, changing the landscape entirely, “effectively extending the shoreline out to the trees” (208). Something similar to this “mangrove effect”, Clark suggests “is operative in some species of human thought” (208). For Clark, words have the power to determine thoughts, rather than simply representing pre-existing ones. Undertaking each of the research methods for this project, I came to see the mangrove seed, or *propagule*, as an apt metaphor for the eco-lyric, which seeks to engage the reader in ethical discourse, so to generate new ways of thinking about, and being in, the more-than-human world. Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean call this kind of multidirectional, mutually beneficial process the “iterative cyclic web” of creative research (1-38). As a writer, this iterative model has enabled me to reflect upon the relationship between ethics and aesthetic aspirations, between the lyric impulse and an Australian eco-centric poetics. It has allowed me to work ‘from the roots up’, so to speak, in a cyclic fashion befitting an ecocritical enquiry into practice. Still, a challenge of working within any conceptual frame in a creative writing project is the potential, imagined or otherwise, for the theory to constrain, or delimit, the creative work (Smith and Dean 25; Cook, *Creative Writing as Research* 209-10). As an enquiry into poetics, interpretation (in the hermeneutic sense) of my own poetry is not the focus of this project, although some such interpretation is engaged in the analysis of the work of Robert Adamson. As Lyn Hejinian states: “the act of writing is a process of improvisation within a framework (form) of *intention*” (*Lang. of Enquiry* 3, emphasis added). The poems that make up the creative practice arm of this thesis are such improvisations of intention: they are open, exploratory, rather than representations of any fixed set of meaning/s. As we shall see, this is perhaps fitting for an exploration of lyric, a mode at the heart of which lies paradox and instability.

*

Chapter 1

Who's Afraid of the Lyric Mode?

Ecocriticism has roots in Romanticism. As Jonathan Bate points out: "...if one historicizes the idea of an ecological viewpoint – a respect for the earth and a scepticism as to the orthodoxy that economic growth and material production are the be-all and end-all of human society – one finds oneself squarely in the Romantic tradition..." (*Romantic Ecology*, 9; see also *Bate Song*; T. Clark 13; Nichols xvi; Rigby). Nevertheless, much discourse around ecopoetry has come to hinge on a distancing from what might be construed as Romanticism's⁸ primary sins. These include an emphasis on the individual self (thus, the poem becomes a form of subjectivism, or worse, of solipsism); an anthropocentric world view; the use of such figurative devices as anthropomorphism, or 'the pathetic fallacy'; and the drive toward transcendence. From an ecocritical perspective, each of these tropes has variously been considered unethical: the first three due to their colonising or imperial implications, the latter for the lack of responsibility implied by a turning away from ever more pressing realities. A detailed interrogation of each of these concerns is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the first two are particularly pertinent to a consideration of lyric poetry as a potential ecopoetry, associated as the lyric so often is with the formal centrality of the solitary, unified, experiencing subject, otherwise known as the 'lyric I'. For as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, critics such as J. Scott Bryson identify that ecopoetry is by definition required to be "eco-", or "bio centric" (*Westside* 2), the ecopoet operating

⁸ Timothy Clark identifies the distinction between "Romantic" and "romantic" in *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and The Environment*: "Romantic" referring to the historical period . . . of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" and "romantic with a small r" referring to "continuing and deeply ingrained modes of thought that oppose industrial society with ideas of 'nature' and 'the natural' as modes of secular redemption" (13). The former will be used from this chapter forward as it is the contention of this thesis that the tensions discussed arise from a conflation of literary trope and genre with received ideas about the literature of the Romantic period.

from a position of self-consciousness that nevertheless “deamphasize[s] the individual ego” (*Westside*, 22). Implicit in this is a charge against an ego driven, Romantic style of poetry, a position echoed by several other critics working in the ecocritical space, in arguments which are worth restating for the purpose of this chapter. Ali Alizadeh for example, goes so far as to position ecopoetry as a targeted subversion of Romantic discourse (55)⁹, while Timothy Clark claims ecopoetry is a mode particularly concerned to move beyond “the [R]omantic lyric . . . aggrandizement of the personal ego” (139-40). Discussing eco-texts more broadly, Clark cautions against a propensity for ecological writing to perpetuate an “individualistic [R]omanticism” which “can tend toward a strident individualism barely distinguishable from a consumerist ethos of regarding all things as a means for self-cultivation” (30). Drawing on the work of Randall Roorda and Lawrence Buell, Clark suggests such texts play out a “drama of solitude” (Roorda, qtd. in T. Clark 30), or an “aesthetics of relinquishment” (Buell qtd. in T. Clark 30), which “obfuscates some realities of environmental history” (T. Clark 30).¹⁰ Clark is discussing the non-fiction nature writing of Edward Abbey¹¹ as he makes these comments, however they remain pertinent to a discussion of lyric poetry which might be accused of similar ‘strident individualism’. Such a link can also be seen in the arguments of Dana Phillips, who draws upon Walter Benjamin’s position on lyric poetry as “antiquated” (qtd. in Phillips 194)¹² to examine the “lyric” (198) non-fiction nature writing of Annie Dillard,¹³ concluding that an excessive focus on the self in much nature writing makes it “too selfish” (195) to be an ethical kind of writing. More recently, Australian poet and essayist Martin Harrison questions what might constitute “writing which in some measure fulfils an ecological requirement” (10), and suggests an eco-ethical writing must:

⁹ Alizadeh claims ecopoetry is “. . . a subversive form of writing, presenting an anti-possessive, anti-oppressive contemporary challenge to the dominant discourses of English literature since Romanticism” (55).

¹⁰ Randall Roorda, *Dramas of Solitude*; Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*.

¹¹ Edward Abbey. *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968; *Down the River* (1982), New York: Penguin, 1991.

¹² Walter Benjamin. “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire”. *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books, 1969: 193

¹³ Annie Dillard. *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. New York: Harper’s Magazine Press, 1974.

. . . position[n] discourse outside of the discursive self. The literary work seems . . . inextricably caught up in Romantic and post-Romantic discourses to do with the individual . . . new writing cannot be tied to the assumption that individuation is the main philosophical aim of acts of imagination because this emphasis on individuation and on the individual residing amid his or her imaginative, self-realised world predisposes us to think that only humans speak. (11)

Such perspectives raise questions that are at the heart of this creative thesis: how might the lyric-I fit within a schema for an eco-ethical writing? Is lyric poetry ‘too selfish’ to be an ethical ecopoetry? In other words, to what extent is it possible to maintain an eco-centric ethics whilst writing in the lyric mode?¹⁴ For the anti-Romantic stance present in contemporary eco-critical thought might be seen not only to target Romanticism in a broader sense, but also to implicate the lyric impulse itself, given lyric is the genre most closely associated with both Romanticism (Siskin 7), and the textual centrality of the ‘I’. Before we are able to answer this question however, it is worth unpacking this critical position somewhat, both in terms of the lyric’s presumed inherent Romanticism, as well as more broadly examining the history of Romanticism’s bad name.

The lyric as a form is widely seen to have roots in Romanticism, with an emphasis on individualism and the subjective, visionary act of the solitary artist/poet. As Paul Sheats states: “[i]t was during the Romantic period that the lyric assumed its modern cultural role as the poetic voice of the individual self” (318). However, the relationship between lyric and Romanticism is not as straight forward as Sheats’s statement might suggest. In fact, although lyric forms actually appear in renaissance and earlier “primitive” poetries (Welsh vii), lyric became strongly linked with Romanticism via criticism that emerged from both modernist and postmodernist poetics and epistemologies. Scott Brewster argues that what we now understand as the ‘Romantic lyric’ “is in significant part, a retrospective construction” (74). Jon Cook cites Charles Olson’s “Projective Verse” as one key text “associating the lyric with its Romantic and nineteenth-century versions . . .” (*Poetry in Theory* 9), when he called for an ‘objectivist’

¹⁴ As will be discussed in the following chapter, Daniel Albright argues lyric should be viewed as a mode rather than a genre.

poetry free of the “lyrical interference of the individual ego” (Olson qtd in *Poetry in Theory* 9).¹⁵ More recently, Charles Altieri reinforced this link in his identification of the lyric poetry of the 1970’s as being “firmly rooted in the extension of a [R]omantic ideology” (qtd. in Williams 28).¹⁶ Closely linked to this concept of lyric poetry perpetuating ‘Romantic ideology’ is the idea of closure. As Rachel Cole states: “In the last decades of the twentieth century, just as literary studies began to consider its relation to ethical inquiry, the lyric attracted considerable critical hostility, in large part because of its association with closure” (383). In “Ideologies of Lyric: A Problem of Genre in Contemporary Anglophone Poetics”, Mark Jeffreys provides a comprehensive overview of several of these critiques. To highlight but one example, he states:

Deconstructionists such as Victor Li and Próspero Saíz . . . have explicitly connected lyric to the imperial assertion of self, the programmatic exclusion of otherness or difference, and the logocentric quest for presence, connections that depend on a late-Romantic conception of lyric and lyric subjectivity. In Li's account, "lyric authority" depends on the narcissism of "the authority of self" and asserts itself through an obsession with purity, intensity, and closure. (197)¹⁷

A writer informed by positions such as these might be tempted to conclude that lyric is uniquely unsuited as a form of ecopoetry, a core concern of which is engagement with, and representations of, the ‘otherness’ of the non-human world (Bate, *Song* 72). However, Jeffreys argues convincingly for an uncoupling of the term ‘lyric’ from ‘Romantic lyric’, suggesting that even critics such as Marjorie Perloff, whom he credits as “the acutest critic of the evolution of nineteenth – and twentieth – century – lyric poetry” (197), have consistently conflated the two terms in their discussions of lyric

¹⁵In *Poetry in Theory* Cook reprints an extract of “Projective Verse” (289-295) as published in *Modern Poets on Modern Poetry*. Ed. James Scully. London: Collins, 1966: 272-81. “Projective Verse” originally published as a pamphlet in *Poetry New York*, No. 3, 1950.

¹⁶ Charles Altieri. *Self and Sensibility in Contemporary American Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984: 10

¹⁷ Victor P. H. Li. "Narcissism and the Limits of the Lyric Self." *Tropic Crucible: Self and Theory in Language and Literature*. Ed., Ranjit Chatterjee and Colin Nicholson. Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1984: 3-23; Próspero Saíz. "Deconstruction and the Lyric." *From Ode to Anthem: Problems of Lyric Poetry*. Ed. Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989: 193-249

texts.¹⁸ Jeffreys contends that lyric is “not inevitably representative of a specific ideology” (196) and further, that critics of lyric texts repeatedly expose more of their own ideology in their various claims for an ideology inherent to lyric forms. For Jeffreys, lyric is neither inherently Romantic, nor inherently ideological.

The various critiques of the lyric mode throughout the twentieth century bring us to the second theme of this chapter: that of Romanticism’s own negative reputation. For it is the contention of this thesis that the contemporary anti-Romantic stance present within the field of ecocriticism, is in many ways a continuation of a flawed critical heritage of resistance to the perceived perils of Romanticism, which developed over the last century. As Richard Eldridge states in *The Persistence of Romanticism* (2001): “[i]t is no news that Romanticism has had a bad press throughout much of the twentieth century, rising to a chorus of vilification in the past fifteen or so years” (1). Romantic poetry in particular, has long been “stigmatized as a poetry of self-indulgence and evasion” (5); “typically faulted, following Hegel’s lead, for its subjectivism: too much visionary blathering; too little attention to both material reality and social forces” (5). According to Eldridge, this enduring critical stance can be categorised into two “different but related forms”, arriving in two waves throughout the twentieth century (5). During the first, beginning in “the earlier part of the twentieth century and continuing up until at least the mid-1960’s, Romanticism was criticized for sentimentalism, or wallowing in the personal, at the expense of a due respect for social convention, social order and the classic. [A] line of criticism . . . most prominently furthered by T.S. Eliot . . .” (5).¹⁹ However, it was in the later part of the twentieth century that the “stronger indictment of Romanticism’s subjective evasion” developed (6), largely due to the publication of Jerome McGann’s 1983 polemic *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation*. As summarised by Nicholas Roe in *The Oxford Guide to Romanticism*, McGann:

. . . argued from a broadly Marxist, materialist standpoint
that Romantic poetry characteristically evades its contexts

¹⁸ Marjorie Perloff. *The Dance of the Intellect: Studies in the Poetry of the Pound Tradition*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

¹⁹ T.S. Eliot “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” *The Egotist* (1919); reprinted in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Eds. M. H. Abrams et al. New York: W. W. Norton, 1974, vol 2: p. 2198

(the world of ‘events’) and substitutes instead the idealized universe of Romantic Ideology... McGann saw in Romantic poetry a powerful denial of context and a wish to credit its own compensation alternatives, which he describes as ‘fundamental illusions’. Romantic poems, seen from this perspective become strategies of escape in which history is ‘displaced’, ‘repressed’, ‘erased’, ‘obscured’, or ‘denied’ by the imagination. (10)

Roe goes on to contextualise McGann’s thesis as the beginning of “the New Historicist project of restoring history and humanity as the ‘displaced’ contexts on which Romantic idealism was culpably dependent” (10). From this moment, “Romanticism” became “a code word for betrayal and dereliction” (10). Yet McGann’s criticism was actually aimed at the “academic ideology of its interpreters” at the time he was writing (Johnston 172), moreover, the “Romanticism” he was referring to and upon which he based his “Romantic Ideology” was actually an incredibly reductive version of “Romanticism” that had made its way through the filter of the New Critical emphasis on the text as a closed unit (Roe 9; see also, Cole 383; Culler, *Changes* 38-41; K. Johnson 172). For New Criticism “[a]uthorial personality, biography, and history were deemed irrelevant to the close understanding of poetry . . .” (Roe 9). Thus, ‘the Romantics’ became distilled to certain poems by a handful of poets²⁰ considered to best represent the ideals of the New Critical ‘canon’, essentially erasing such elements as the author and history, and “vanishing” Romanticism’s broader impact and diversity (9). So, when critics speak of ‘Romantic ideology’ they are on shaky terrain.

In fact, the term “Romanticism” itself is extremely nebulous and difficult to contain. Beyond disagreements about a beginning and end date for the historical period, there is little consensus about what one might mean when using the term qualitatively. As argued by Roe, Romanticism is a fuzzy, “amorphous” concept that has actually been used to refer to a vastly diverse range of artists, styles and beliefs, many of which are contradictory (8). As early as 1924, A.O. Lovejoy argued that, at best, we should perhaps instead use the term “*Romanticisms*, in the plural, or abandon the word altogether” (qtd.

²⁰ “Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats” (Roe 9).

in Roe 9, emphasis added).²¹ Edward Larrissy argues that the word “Romanticism” as generally employed today is misleading: “[t]he writers we now describe as Romantic are not always the same as those who were regarded as important in the Romantic period – during which the word ‘Romanticism’ as we use it did not even exist” (670). Moreover, it is something of a category error to view “Romanticism” as something we can now coolly observe (and subsequently avoid or apply) from a distance. Several critics have recently highlighted the persistence of Romanticism in both art and criticism throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (for example, Eldridge; Goodbody; Larrissy; Shapiro and Shapiro). Larrissy argues that it is “possible to think of modernism” as well as postmodernism as “continuation[s] of Romanticism” (666): “many modernists are indebted to Romanticism both for a suggestive evocativeness they affect to despise and for a clarity which they admire but claim is anti-Romantic” (667). Similarly, in the latter half of the twentieth century, “Allen Ginsberg’s long-lined urban prophecies recall Blake... The poets associated with Black Mountain College combine indebtedness to Pound and William Carlos Williams with a conscious Romanticism: Charles Olson’s notion of the poet’s energy being conveyed to the page in open form is a contemporary reinterpretation of [Romantic] organicism . . .”(672). Paul Kane has made a case for the continued recreation of a belated Romanticism unique to the Australian literary landscape,²² however Larrissy suggests northern and southern hemispheres alike are perhaps still “continuing to create Romanticism in [their] own image” (673):

. . . it appears that there can as yet be no end to the usefulness of the words ‘Romantic’ and ‘Romanticism’ in describing new art. Possibly this is because, since the period of the bourgeois revolution, of which the French Revolution is the most striking manifestation, innovations in art have tended in a certain direction: have born the imprint of isolation and alienation, and offered art as a surrogate for religious certainty or as a rebellious means of challenging an intolerable status quo. (673-674)

²¹ A.O. Lovejoy. “On the Discrimination of Romanticisms” (1924). *Essays in the History of Ideas*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1948: 235

²² As a response to the absence of an original Romantic heritage in Australian (colonial) literature.

So, the concept of “Romanticism” is both broad and complex, and quite possibly continues to offer much to creators of new art. As I hope to show in the following chapters, so too the lyric mode. Neither closed, ‘selfish’, nor the representative of an imperial voice, lyric is neither inherently Romantic (a nebulous term itself) nor inherently ideological. However this thesis will not define a lyric ecopoetics against Romanticism. For “. . . in their own day, the leading Romantics were [actually] perceived as very political animals and their works were seen as contributing to the current debates of the times” (Kitson 675).²³ To use lyric forms in the Romantic era was actually to participate in a wider discursive critical and social project (Siskin 8). In the following chapter, I demonstrate that lyric has from ancient times functioned as a kind of ethical discourse, due to its “concern with the conditions and nature of address” (Brewster 2). Thus, lyric should not be dismissed as potentially powerful tool for the contemporary, ecologically conscious, political animal.

*

²³ Percy Bysshe Shelley being the most obvious example: Kitson reminds us that “Shelley combined a visionary politics and poetics” in his various writings (678).

Chapter 2

‘The Place of Lyric’: Lyric as Ethical Ecopoetics

As discussed in the previous chapter, lyric is often conflated with Romanticism, perhaps to the unfair detriment of both. But what *do* we mean then when we use the word ‘lyric’? This is a question which must be addressed in order to consider the ethics of lyric, and it is a question that has no simple answer. In fact, it frames a debate that has been going on for centuries. As touched on in the introduction to this thesis, *The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics* states that “the story of the lyric charts the history of poetics” (833).²⁴ The lyric is notoriously difficult to pin down to any set of fixed features. Attempts to define ‘lyric’ within a generic frame invariably prove partial at best, as they tend either to be so restrictive that they fail to include what, on second inspection prove to be many important lyric poems, or they are so broad as to be essentially meaningless (Albright; Brewster; Culler *Changes, Why Lyric*).²⁵ Mark Jeffreys, who argues for an uncoupling of ‘lyric’ from “Romantic lyric”, asserts that attempts to “stabiliz[e] the definition of lyric” frequently identify more about a particular critical school than they do about lyric itself (203), while Daniel Albright claims the lyric can seem definable “only as a tissue of paradoxes” (viii). Albright argues instead, that the lyric should be viewed as a mode rather than a genre,²⁶ further, it is a mode not even necessarily confined to poetry:

²⁴ Virginia Jackson. “Lyric” (2012): 826-834

²⁵ Culler and Brewster also each provide excellent surveys of the changing critical approaches to lyric over time.

²⁶ Gerard Genette identifies “*mode*” as “a linguistic category that describes the means of enunciation” and “*Genre*” as “a literary category that refers to formal and thematic features. *The Architext: An Introduction*, trans J.E. Lewin. Berkeley: University of California Press 1992: 60-72 (qtd. in Brewster 3)

... the lyric is not ... a genre; no one can hope to compile a set of criteria, a questionnaire that, when answered, would confidently tell us whether a poem was or was not lyric; rather one should say that the lyric is a mode, discoverable in odes and dramas and novels and possibly the telephone directory, through which the reader becomes aware of the illusion of music beyond the sense of language. (ix)²⁷

Albright's emphasis on the musicality of lyric texts is a theme which recurs in many analyses of lyric, due to the mode's historical roots in "the music and poetry of the troubadours, and in the conventions of *amour courtois* (courtly love)... [which] produced a rich diversity of lyric and related forms" (Brewster 15).²⁸ While a focus on the musicality of lyric is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis, what is important to note in Albright's statement, for the present purpose, are two key points: 1) The lyric mode is not static. Albright's playful suggestion of potential texts in which one may encounter the lyric mode demonstrates that lyric should no more be confined to a certain genre than it should to a certain historical period; and 2) The function of the lyric mode is located in its reception, with the reader. In other words, while we may not quite be able to pin down what lyric *is*, we may find an attempt to examine what lyric *does* a more fruitful endeavour. This may prove a particularly useful approach when attempting to understand how lyric might function as an ethical ecopoetry.

In his 2009 survey of lyric practice and critique from the classical era to the late twentieth century, *Lyric*, Scott Brewster frames the lyric as performative. Brewster argues that despite shifting understanding of the term from antiquity to the present, lyric persistently "involves a (rhetorical) performance and some relationship to another, as it

²⁷ Annie Dillard's nature writing, discussed in the previous chapter, is often considered an example of non-fiction writing in the lyric mode, for example *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974) and *Teaching a Stone to Talk* (1982). See also Mark Tredinnick's discussion of the musicality of the lyric mode as it pertains to the Australian lyric essay in "The Lyric Stance" *Island*. Issue 126, Spring 2011: 60-70, and Sheryl St Germain and Margaret L. Whitford's anthology of contemporary lyric essays: *Between Song and Story: Essays for the Twenty-first Century* (2011).

²⁸ In addition to these historical roots, early twentieth century poets such as Ezra Pound emphasised the importance of music to the modern lyric (61, qtd. in Brewster 13), while late twentieth century views are often strongly informed by Northrop Frye's influential model of *melos* and *opsis* or "babble" and "doodle". (*Anatomy of Criticism*, 1957) see for example, Welsh (1978). More recently, Neil Corcoran (2002) remarked that "a lyric poem 'is always also a musical score of a kind, a set of instructions for the production of sound'" (10, qtd in Brewster 135). Scott Brewster traces the musical lineage of lyric from the medieval lyric through to contemporary pop music, folk music, performance poetry, hip hop and dub.

is invariably an address to a lover, friend, absent or dead other, to an unspecified but implicit interlocutor – to some form of audience” (12). He points out that this “implies a very different aesthetic experience from that associated with the isolated individual, who speaks or sings alone” (2). Brewster’s emphasis on the performativity of lyric allows for the various manifestations of the ‘lyric I’, which many generic approaches to lyric struggle to contain. As he explains: regardless of “[w]hether the ‘I’ speaks alone or to others, expresses emotion directly or adopts an elaborate disguise, lyric is fundamentally concerned with the conditions and nature of address” (2). Brewster draws strongly upon Jonathan Culler’s argument for the predominance of ‘apostrophe’ in lyric.²⁹ For Culler, “. . . apostrophe is such a common feature of lyric that it is almost possible ‘to identify apostrophe with lyric itself’” (Brewster 39, citing Culler, *Pursuit of Signs* 137). This frequent feature of lyric poetry which “directly addresses abstractions, absent or quasi-divine presences in a tone of speech which is often strange or unsettling” (Brewster 38)³⁰ problematizes the New Critical theory of lyric as the individualised voice, or as dramatic monologue (Culler, *Changes* 40). Culler further develops this position in “Why Lyric?” where he contextualises approaches that view lyric as a dramatic monologue as informed by a wider narrative emphasis in criticism (201). He cautions that “it is deadly for poetry to compete with narrative . . . on terrain where narrative has obvious advantages. If narrative is about what happens next, lyric is about what happens now – in the reader’s engagement with each line” (202). Again we see the emphasis on reader engagement.

²⁹ Culler has discussed this on several occasions. See for example, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (1981); “Changes in the Study of Lyric” in *Lyric Poetry: Beyond New Criticism*. Eds. Hisek and Parker (1985): 38-54; “Why Lyric?” *PMLA*, vol. 123, no. 1 (Jan 2008): 201-206; and *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (1997 and 2011).

³⁰ Brewster is summarising Culler (*Changes*).

For Culler, as for Brewster, and others as we shall see, lyric occurs in the reader engagement with the poem.³¹

Culler suggests that Ancient Greek poetry might be a more instructive model for a consideration of lyric. “The Greek model” he argues, “is useful because it treats the poem as an event addressed to an audience. . .” (*Why Lyric* 204). Drawing on Jeffrey Walker’s *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*,³² he states: “[i]n ancient Greece, poetry was a form of epideictic discourse, a rhetorical transaction and instrument of ethical paideia. The audience were expected to make observations (*theôros*) about what was praiseworthy, worthy of belief” (204-5). So, from its earliest origins the lyric has served an ethical function via its nature as epideictic rhetoric. Brewster too, identifies this discursive style of rhetoricity as something which has endured in the lyric mode across history, arguing that this “...challenge[s], the predominant late modern association of lyric with sincerity, intimacy and the direct expression of emotion and feeling” (12). Brewster’s survey demonstrates that:

. . . in practice neither Romantic nor post-Romantic lyric poetry has renounced the rhetorical emphasis of early modern lyric forms. The modern lyric does not retreat ‘inward’: it continues to deploy modes of address that perform the self, from the apostrophe and dramatic monologue to the confessional poem . . . [to the] fluid, ironic ‘I’ of innovative poetry in the contemporary period. (12-13)

Regardless of the degree to which a given poem makes use of the textual ‘I’, the lyric mode works via its exchange with the reader. The lyric as an address always supposes an exchange, and “since it is obliged to address itself to someone,” it is “inter-subjective”

³¹ Indeed it must be noted that even Wordsworth, for so many the exemplar of “lyric solipsism”, also had the reader strongly in mind in the “Preface” to *Lyrical Ballads*. Wordsworth was adamant that these poems have a “purpose” (xiii; xv) and that this purpose is directed toward the reader. The poems in *Lyrical Ballads* function “by placing [the] Reader in the way of receiving from ordinary moral sensations another and more salutary impression than we are accustomed to receive from them” (xvi). More recently, in a deeply nuanced call for a reconsideration of the persistence of “the fallacies” in light of saturation capitalism, poet and scholar David Brooks offers a reminder that regardless of critical theories such as the intentional fallacy, writers write for readers: “...as a writer, I am absolutely concerned for the *affect* my writing will stimulate. I do not write in order to have no affect” (51). “‘The Fallacies’ Theory, Saturation Capitalism and the Animal.” *Southerly* Volume 73. Number 2. 2013: 47-60

³² Jeffrey Walker. *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

and dialogic (Brewster 12). Paul Sheats, discussing the lyric activities of domestic communities in the Romantic era, provides another reminder of the dialogic nature of lyric, highlighting “a substantial class of poems, many but not all composed by women” which “furnished a kind of social currency” across generations of family members and among community members (320).³³ Sheats points out that “. . . the line between public and private is not always easy to draw. It is better, perhaps, to recognize that both coexist in the *encounter*, implicit in all lyrics, a speaker and another always postulated by the human voice” (322, emphasis added). We might say then, to draw on a Barthesian phrase, that the ‘place’ of lyric is the reader encounter.³⁴ “The reader is both recipient and instigator of the act of [lyric] address, and only she or he can perform the act it describes and demands: it asks the reader to *do* something” (Brewster 40).

Such views are in stark opposition to arguments which would present the lyric as “sealed” or “closed” and thus unethical. Views which, as Rachel Cole points out, depend on “[d]efining the lyric on New Criticism’s terms, with reference to a single speaker ensconced in hermetically composed space” (383).³⁵ Over the last decade however, there has been a shift in the understanding of lyric in literary-ethical discourse, largely due to a focus on reader answerability (Cole 384). Mara Scanlon, responding in 2007 to M.M Bakhtin’s influential view of poetry as monologicistic,³⁶ demonstrates several ways in which the lyric might instead be considered dialogic. For Bakhtin, poetry is “by convention suspended from any mutual interaction with alien discourse” (*Dialogic* 285) due to the poet’s “immersive” and “unmediated” relationship with their own language (*Dialogic* 285). It is thus incapable of the kind of ethical discursivity to be found in the novel (*Dialogic* 285). Scanlon simultaneously refutes Bakhtin’s position on poetry, whilst drawing on his ideas around ethics and reader answerability to formulate a concept of the “ethical lyric” (9). Via an analysis of a heteroglossic lyric by Robert

³³ Sheats cites Anna Barbauld, Joanna Baillie, Ann Yearsley, Della Crusca (Robert Merry), Anna Matilda (Hannah Cowley) and Keats as examples (320).

³⁴ Roland Barthes: “No one, no ‘person’ says it: its source, its voice is not the true place of the writing, which is reading.” *The Death of The Author* (1968), reprinted in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, Second Edition (2001): 1325

³⁵ See also Culler, *Changes*: 38-41.

³⁶ *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M Bakhtin*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. Bakhtin refers to poetry more broadly, however he defines poetry in terms that evoke the New Critical definition of lyric.

Hayden, “Night, Death, Mississippi”, Scanlon demonstrates that “the lyric not only allows but even through its form[s] makes possible a Bakhtinian clash of voices and ideas” (2).³⁷ Hayden’s poem employs polyphony to create a dialogic tension within the poem itself, however Scanlon argues that a “second dialogue” also takes place: the dialogue “between the poem and the answerable reader who attends the text, [who is] implored, demanded, and even enacted by the lyric’s mobilizations of voices and forms. . .” (2). This represents “the participation of the lyric in the ethical encounter of dialogue” (2). The notion of reader answerability is key to the understanding of lyric in this thesis. Scanlon identifies that in the case of Hayden’s poem in particular, the lyric can be not only dialogic but ethical: “[t]he reader’s dialogic response is asked by the poem itself . . . to go beyond the cognitive acts of reading and comprehending – that is, the ongoing dialogue between writer, text and reader by which meaning is constructed. It requests or requires an ethical stance, answerability” (16). In a similar fashion, William Waters makes a case for the ethics of lyric address in a discussion of Rainer Maria Rilke’s imperatives. For Waters, the ethics of lyric hinges on reader answerability. Understanding Rilke’s lyrics requires taking on a “responsibility” for “responsiveness” (723), “. . . to understand the poem, we must experience it. . .” (724). Only by doing this, can the reader receive “the power of the aesthetic to make you change your life” (711):

To read, to be played upon, to give up what we are holding
back and to be carried somewhere we did not design to go,
is one way we can be transformed in the hands of another.
The aesthetic effect of the poem *is* its ethical force, but to
know what that means, we must surrender ourselves and
become, instead, the poem’s reader. (718)

For Waters, the responsibility of the reader is the application of the poem “to one’s own experience of life. . .” (724).³⁸ For, “[t]o receive a poem is to be changed, to come to the space that the poem wants to occupy and there to become the poem’s recipient” (728).

³⁷ Bakhtin claimed the novel as the genre capable of “heteroglossia”, the “subversive, ethically necessary act of decentralization . . . through . . . incorporation of multiple voices” (Scanlon 2). The Hayden poem can be found in *Collected Poems*. Ed. Frederick Glaysher. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1985.

³⁸ This evokes Bakhtin’s own statement on answerability: “I have to answer with my own life . . . for what I have understood in art . . .” *Art & Answerability*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990. p1.

This flies in the face of notions such as the affective fallacy, “the supposed error of judging a work by its emotional impact on the reader, an argument which” as David Brooks notes, has had “considerable consequences for the reception and evaluation of the lyric” (*The Fallacies* 49). To return briefly to the Hayden poem: Scanlon argues that the very success of the ethical lyric rests in its ability to move the reader to feel “outrage” at the profound racial violence the poem depicts (18); it asks the reader “to bear witness” (17). While for Waters, reader answerability to Rilke’s imperative mode becomes a “responsibility in some measure, to change your life” (723).

In his introduction to a special edition of *PMLA*: “Ethics and Literary Study”, Lawrence Buell calls this type of reader answerability “conscienceful listening” (12). In the same issue, Derek Attridge uses a Levinasian model of self-other to theorise the creative process, arguing that “an ethical responsibility for the other” is “at the heart of creativity” (29). He proposes a model of reading in which, rather than “the familiar model of the literary work as a friend or companion” instead views “the work as a stranger” capable of revealing to us the other (26). Attridge’s use of ‘the other’ refers primarily to the ‘as yet unknown’: “the otherness that is brought into being by the act of writing” (22) rather than say, the embodied ‘other’ we may encounter in the physical world. Nevertheless, it is an interesting model to consider when writing about the more-than-human world. Attridge contends that a “virtue of the phrase *the other*... is that it is premised on a *relation*. To be other is necessarily to be other to” (22). He argues that the “ethical responsibility for the other” (29) requires understanding the literary work as an “intellectual-emotional event” (27) and works his thesis to a surprising conclusion. That the truest, most just response to a literary work, the highest form of answerability, is in fact to respond with a new creative work: “[o]nly a new, unpredictable, singular, creative act . . . in its turn can do justice to a literary work as a literary work”(27). Marianne and Michael Shapiro, in a 1992 response to the Bakhtinian view of lyric poetry as monologic, discuss Japanese renga poetry as an example of an early lyric form resulting in this kind of creative dialogue over time. Renga poetry ‘seeks’ a response in the reader in the form of a poetic reply, and long poems are formed via dialogic exchange, either during a shared sitting, or over time, often over centuries:

The renga's inner narrative of feeling seeks to elicit a response, which propels it forward. . . . An original poem could lead to a poetic response centuries later when recalled by another poet. So compelling is the response accorded a great poem that a long series of poems might be generated from it. The practice presumes that proper reply – adequate expression – testifies to proper capacities for being affected. Being moved and being led to expression define poetic activity. (402)

This kind of dialogic “poetic activity” was not limited to formal texts themselves however: “[t]he cries of animals and bird songs could move one to respond with a poem, just as would the prior poem of a friend” (402). In the same essay, Shapiro and Shapiro also demonstrate several ways in which Provençal Troubadour lyrics engaged in overt forms of inter-textual discursivity (403-407). Clifford Siskin argues Western lyric poetry has historically been dialogic, and moreover has been deeply engaged in forms of critical practice. Discussing the lyrics of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, he points out:

To assume that these writers were only finding their personal voice in the lyric, or spontaneously expressing themselves in lyrical form, is to erase a layer of representation that was crucial to the use of the lyric at that time. The very act of writing in that form represented one's participation in a larger discursive project – Wordsworth called it an “experiment” – in which lyrics effectively functioned as data in hypothetical narratives of knowledge linking past to present. (8)

Both of these kinds of dialogic engagement, creative, and creative-critical can be seen in the work of Robert Adamson whose poetry is relentlessly engaged in conversation, with critics and other poets, both contemporary and historical (as well as with the more-than-human world). The importance of the engagement with tradition to Adamson's work is something which will be touched on in the next chapter. These examples of intertextual lyric discursivity are not intended to reinforce Attridge's contention that the highest form of reader answerability is another creative act however (for surely there are many forms reader answerability might take), rather, they demonstrate the centrality of dialogism to the lyric mode.

Still, as Lawrence Buell notes, viewing texts as a personal encounter “is not without its perils”, one of which is “the implication that reader resistance is unethical” (*Pursuit of Ethics* 13). But reader answerability certainly need not be prescribed or fixed. In fact, it may be in the very *tensions* of the lyric encounter, what contemporary American poet Jennifer Moxley calls the “[t]he necessary dialectic at work in the lyric stance” (56), that the mode may be most ethically active. For Moxley: “lyric utterances record voices structurally barred from social and political power” (51),³⁹ however the paradox inherent to the lyric mode is that “more often than not”, the very recognition of these voices “consumes and mangles renegade individuality into already accepted and ideologically pat categories of personhood” (52):

The lyric is fundamentally social, but not so far as it celebrates or exists primarily through large scale social channels and venues of cultural dissemination. Rather it expresses all that official social channels cannot absorb without calling attention to, and perhaps even collapsing under, their own contradictions. That which cannot be easily assimilated not only provokes frustration and astonishment, its very existence can serve as a radical critique of *things as they are*. . . . Thus through the lyric *what fails to be* in social space, *IS*. ” (52)⁴⁰

For Moxley, it is the very dialectical nature of the ‘lyric I’ which makes the lyric a site of resistance, an ethical act. The lyric becomes a place in which voice of the “inassimilable” other “comes forth” (51):

No, the lyric “I” is not a political universal, nor the guardian of the rights of men, but neither is it the flaccid marker of an outdated bourgeois egotism... It is a paradox that proposes the need to risk settled definitions at every

³⁹ Moxley aligns such hegemonic forces instead with the epic (51). Jeffreys (199) identifies that Margaret Dickie makes a similar distinction in *Lyric Contingencies: Emily Dickinson and Wallace Stevens*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999. Sheats’s discussion of domestic communities is instructive here also (320).

⁴⁰ Moxley’s argument echoes Theodor Adorno’s claim in “Lyric Poetry and Society” (1957) that the lyric represents a “break or rupture” (28), a form of protest against the “reification of the world, against the rule of the wares of commerce over people which has... established itself as the ruling force in life” (27). For Adorno too, the lyric is “essentially social in nature. Only he understands what the poem says who perceives in its solitude the voice of humanity . . .” (26) Further, the lyric functions as a philosophical experiment, testing the proposition of the relational subject-object (30). See also, Hugh H Grady, “Marxism and the Lyric” (1981).

point, an idealistic proposition which, although impractical and perhaps undesirable, is nevertheless crucial, for it challenges our tendency to symbolically conquer our surroundings and thus stop thought. (57)

Daniel Albright, discussing W.H. Auden's analysis of the 'anonymous I' in George Peele's "Bathsabe's Song",⁴¹ also suggests that the paradox at the heart of lyric means that "a purely lyrical poem should be read deconstructively, for any personal authority is a tenuous illusion that readily disperses into language. . . ." (13). As we shall see in the following chapter, Livio Dobrez identifies a related dialectic in Robert Adamson's representation of the lyric subject: "[t]o be nature while *knowing* it" (174).⁴²

The tension created by lyric dialectic plays out in the reader engagement with the poem, and can be said to be at the heart of the lyric mode. This exploitation of paradox is something which continues in contemporary lyric poetry. In his introduction to *The Allotment: New Lyric Poets*, Andy Brown asserts that ". . . contemporary lyric has come to explore the gaps between *the world as we experience it* and *experience as we describe it*" (Brown 12, emphasis in original). Brown's words evoke the poet Lyn Hejinian's contention that all forms of writing remain open because of the limits of language, because of the gap that remains between language and the world (*Rejection of Closure* 270, 271). Moreover in this gap, in this *rupture*, there lies the "integrity" of "things" (285). This is what Emily Dickinson knew, and is a principle of great power where the ecopoetic is concerned. As Scott Knickerbocker argues in *Ecopoetics: The Language of Nature, The Nature of Language*: "the power of language to make nature matter to us" (3), to "nudge consciousness to a more ecologically ethical state" depends on its ability to "startl[e], or coa[x] us into knowing the world with revived senses" (18).

In a chapter entitled "Language: The Ultimate Artifact", in *Being There: Putting Brain, Body and World Together Again*, philosopher and extended mind theorist Andy Clark argues that the act of composing a poem demonstrates the dynamics at play in second order cognition, or "thoughts about thoughts" (207-8). "In constructing a poem"

⁴¹ W. H. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand*. New York: Random House, 1962: 339

⁴² Discussing what he perceives as the "Romantic stance" in the poetry of the "Generation of '68", Dobrez also notes that it was the Romantics who "*invented* dialectics" (95-96). Jonathan Bate also discusses Romantic dialectics in *The Song of the Earth* (2000). See in particular his discussion of Rousseau's social criticism (36-49) and of Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (77-79).

he states, “we do not simply use words to express thoughts. Rather it is often the properties of the words (their structure and cadence) that determine the thoughts that the poem comes to express” (208). For Clark, words have the power to determine thoughts, rather than simply representing pre-existing ones. Clark is discussing the act of writing; however the writer is also the poem’s original reader. Reader, and writer-as-reader both, respond to the materiality of words - as well as their limitations - via reader answerability, and can come to previously unknown ways of thinking in their encounter with a poem. Perhaps even to ways of understanding the otherness of the more-than-human world. Australian poet and scholar Paul Hetherington, discussing the intersections between poetry and prayer, argues that poetry might be understood as a form of “of trying to ‘say’ the unknowable into a kind of existence . . .” (6). He suggests devices such as apostrophe (which Culler associates so strongly with lyric), may in fact offer up a “language bridge” to “[c]arry us some part of the way” (6) toward the unknowable-unsayable:

Poetry and prayer, then, are not old-fashioned or outmoded forms of address. They may be what those of us who feel connected to larger ecological and ethical issues require. Language may have evolved not in order for us to count and remember things and ourselves but, at least partly, in order to know the inherent and interrelated complexity of a world where a great deal is neither fully knowable nor sayable. (6)

Hetherington’s ‘language bridge’ spans the ‘place’ of lyric. For the place of lyric is in the reader encounter. It is in the ringing of the materiality of words on the tongue, in the mind and in the body of the reader, and in the emotional and intellectual tensions and desires sparked by the dialectics of the lyric stance. As the lyric seeks to affect the reader via both its material and dialectic performativity, it is a mode which is powerfully placed to move the reader to answerability. The poet Ed Roberson states that ecopoetry: “occurs when an individual’s sense of the larger Earth enters into the world of human knowledge. The main understanding that results from this encounter is *the* Ecopoetic” (qtd. in Fisher-Wirth and Street xxx). If the place of lyric is reader encounter, then the place of lyric may very well be the place of the ecopoetic. In the following chapter, I

examine some of the ways this material and dialectic performativity functions in the lyric poetry of Robert Adamson, as decidedly ethical ecopoetics.

*

Chapter 3

Adamson's Lyrical Ethics

If the place of lyric is the reader encounter, how might this function in the work of a contemporary lyric poet? And to what extent might that represent an ethical ecopoetry? As one way of addressing these questions, this chapter provides a textual analysis of the contemporary lyric mode in the work of Australian poet Robert Adamson. Adamson's work is particularly relevant to this thesis, due both to the focus in his work on the natural world, as well as the fact that he is a contemporary lyric poet who refuses to jettison tradition. Adamson lives on the Hawkesbury River in NSW, a natural environment which has had a key place in his poetry throughout his career. He has been noted for his Romanticism (Nicholls, *Dialectical Study* 104, 108, 109),⁴³ or "New Romanticism" (Dobrez 101); and in what might be considered an essentially 'Romantic' stance, has himself "advocated for the primacy of the imagination" to his work (Waldren 6).⁴⁴ Yet Robert Adamson's relationship with what might be described as a 'Romantic impulse' is far from straight forward. David McCooey suggests that Adamson problematizes the label neo-romantic, due to the fact that his work "ranges widely across concerns and styles" (43). While Adamson has been noted for his lyricism, particularly in his early career (Forbes, qtd in Brooks, *Feral Symbolists* 280 and *Kinsella Interview* 333; Hart 86; Svenson), he has also been noted for his openness

⁴³ Nicholls uses a range of adjectives in this essay to describe Adamson's poetics: "radical Romanticism" (104), "explicitly Romantic" (108), defiant Romanticism" (109) and "self-consciously Romantic" (109).

⁴⁴ See also, *Tranter interview* 132; *Sharkey interview* 314; Wilding 36.

to postmodern poetics (Nicholls, *Dialectical Study* 108).⁴⁵ In fact, it is true to say that Adamson has remained connected to *both* the traditions and the avant-garde, refusing to jettison either what Kevin Hart calls the “Orphic conception of art” (77) or his fascination with language and its borders, stating in an interview with Michael Sharkey: “[m]y allegiances are with the avant-garde which I have always loved and am a part of; and also with the traditions which I love and am a part of” (314). Responding to what John Kinsella notes as the “parallel strains” in Adamson’s work of “lyricism and interest in the way language works” (*Kinsella interview* 315), Adamson has replied “...I think that you have an advantage if you don’t have to jettison [tradition]” (322).⁴⁶ Comments such as these anticipate the recent claim made by Andy Brown that “two key elements in lyric poetry” are “newness and tradition” (7).

This thesis suggests that beyond the presence of the “Orphic quest” in Adamson’s work, which Kevin Hart suggests makes his poetry “fundamentally” lyric (86), there is another way in which Adamson’s work can be seen as lyric: that is, by its very mercurial indefinability. As discussed in the previous chapter, Daniel Albright argues the lyric mode [is] “definable only as a tissue of paradoxes” (viii). He continues:

A lyric is a poem in which one notices a certain shiftiness or instability, a certain slipping and sliding of things, a certain tendency to equate a thing with its antiself, a certain evasiveness of being. (viii)

Adamson’s poetry is both ‘Romantic’ and ‘innovative’, rooted in place (The Hawkesbury region of NSW) and devoted to the primacy of the imagination. He is an ‘Orphic’ poet who is fascinated with the borders of language, and who is relentlessly self-conscious and self-reflexive in his lyricism. The very essence of Adamson’s work is paradox, and in this regard, his entire oeuvre might be considered ‘lyric’.

⁴⁵ Nicholls also suggests that Adamson poses the question “[i]s romanticism viable, or even possible, at the end of the twentieth century?” with his 1994 collection *Waving to Hart Crane* (*Adamson’s Poetry* 133), and identifies *Black Water: Approaching Zukovsky* (1999) as an explicit “turn from the old, anthropomorphic, lyric voice, a voice that Adamson often use[d] in earlier volumes” (*Adamson’s Poetry* 133). This thesis argues however, that Adamson has in fact steadfastly refused to jettison either traditional influences or the experimental (a stance which is key to his lyricism).

⁴⁶ It is worth noting that reading Robert Adamson in the service of creative practice has been something akin to being a hungry child at a feast. His deeply intertextual work is a smorgasbord bearing the trace of almost the entire history of Western poetics, from Sappho to Shelley, to Mallarmé and Zukovsky, to Robert Duncan, Hart Crane and an array of contemporary Australian poets.

Only a small sample of Adamson's poetry has been examined within what may be described broadly as an ecocritical framework.⁴⁷ Most recently, Meera Atkinson considers "The Goldfinches of Baghdad", published in Adamson's 2006 collection by the same name, to argue for the potential of 'animal poetics' to "effect change" (114, 117-120). But what of Adamson's lyricism itself? This chapter will examine several approaches Adamson has taken to the representation of, and engagement with, the natural world in his work over the span of his career, drawing attention to the material and dialectic performativity of his lyric poetry, and how this may function as ethical ecopoetics. Although it would take vastly more space than is afforded by this chapter to examine in depth the diversity of Adamson's oeuvre, the three poems examined here do traverse his career chronologically: "The Ghost Crabs" was first published in *Swamp Riddles* (1974), "The Speaking Page" was published in *The Clean Dark* (1989),⁴⁸ while "Walking by The River", the most recent poem considered in this chapter, was first published internationally in *The Goldfinches of Baghdad* (2006), and then in Australia in *The Kingfisher's Soul* (2009).⁴⁹ Anne Fisher-Wirth and Laura-Gray Street argue in the "Editors' Preface" to *The Ecopoetry Anthology* that "[e]copoetry enacts through language the manifold relationship between the human and other than human world" (xxx). This thesis focuses on two key ways in which Adamson's poetry does this: first, via an exploration of the subject in the world and, second, via levels of abstraction which disrupt the usual distinctions between word and world, language and nature. Each of these strategies offer the reader access to what Richard Kerridge calls "ecological perception": the dissolution of "unifying notions of selfhood and strong dualistic separations between culture and nature, subject and object or human and non-human" (354). They function, thus, as ethical ecopoetics.

In *Parnassus Mad Ward*, Livio Dobrez discusses what he calls the 'metamorphosing' or 'shifting' subject position in Adamson's work. For Dobrez, Adamson's poems explore various positions on the spectrum of subject-object

⁴⁷ See Atkinson (2013), McLaren (2009), Cassidy (2007), A. Johnson (2003) and Punshon (2003)

⁴⁸ The collection for which Adamson was first acclaimed as an accomplished lyricist, and which is generally held to be his most 'lyric' collection, in the reductive sense of the term.

⁴⁹ The poems discussed in this chapter are all reprinted in *The Golden Bird, New and Selected Poems*. Melbourne: Black Inc., 2008.

interrelations. These shifts occur from poem to poem, and often even within the poems themselves:

With Robert Adamson it is a case of talking about not the subject in the poem but the many metamorphoses of that subject. Adamson's poetic varies in different periods of his writing and in different poems in any given period – even in a single poem. This is because the 'I' of the poem shifts its ground, masquerades, disappears and reappears, like a magician. (163)

Sometimes, in an Adamson poem, subjectivity is presented as a discrete consciousness,⁵⁰ at other times subjectivity shifts, via varying degrees of interrelatedness with the natural world to what Dobrez – borrowing and developing the concept from Olson – calls “field poetics” or subject as field (173).⁵¹ Here “subjectivity is spread out, allocated borders coterminous with those of the poem itself” (173).⁵² Finally, there are also occasions where subjectivity becomes so stretched as to become “obliterated” (Dobrez 175): where the subject of the poem seems to merge with nature completely, “thus bypassing the complicated subject-object manoeuvres of the epistemological act” (175). We see this motion at play in Adamson's early poem “The Ghost Crabs” (*Golden Bird* 126), a poem which enacts the dynamic of merging and differentiation. Subjectivity flows back and forth throughout the poem with the motion of the tide, from a reflective 'I', to a perceiving, relational subject, to subject as field and subject merged with nature.

From the first line in “The Ghost Crabs” we become aware of the multidirectional nature of being: “I flow back into myself with the tide.” Yet to “flow back” implies a return from elsewhere, and in the very next line, in a moment of what Jonathan Culler would identify as uniquely 'lyric' apostrophe (*Pursuit of Signs* 137), the subjectivity of the poem expands out to cosmic proportions:

O moon that draws and drives
us and we move through until we are

⁵⁰ Something akin to what Nerys Williams calls the “expressive” lyric 'I' (27).

⁵¹ Charles Olson, “Projective Verse” as reprinted in “Statements on Poetics” in *The New American Poetry 1945-1960*. Ed. Donald Allen. New York: Grove Press, 1960: 391 and 395

⁵² Dobrez notes that these moments of “field poetics” bring Adamson's poetry closest to “the poetics of Black Mountain” (173).

dancing. (2-4)

The collective pronoun here implies a sense of communion with all beings - human and more-than-human alike - who are susceptible to the pull of the moon. Subjectivity then disperses, to three lines of 'subject as field': "... Balancing starlight on/ the marshes, shaking the leaves/or calming the water . . ." (4-6). Just *who* is 'balancing', 'shaking' and 'calming' here remains unclear. However, such dispersed subjectivity does not remain for long and subjectivity returns to a perceiving subject-in-the-world over the following seven lines:

Feeling warmth

ghost crabs come out, their claws
snapping held high in the air.

The river pulls at mangrove roots
as the ebb begins: standing to
my waist in water, prawns kick up
from under my toes . . . (6-12)

'Ghost crabs' are not the only beings so affected by the ebb of the tide here, poet - and reader - are caught in the flow also. The tide turning, subjectivity again disperses, this time to the point of 'obliteration', an imagined merging with the river, following the call of the muse:⁵³

--My love

would have me go now – moving off
with the river, skidding along
beneath the silt, head filled with
water. . . . (12-16)

⁵³ Be that the river, or poetry/imagination itself.

This passage is one of two in “The Ghost Crabs” where the subject moves closest to *being* nature. Dobrez highlights this motion as the dialectic at play at the heart of Adamson’s poetry: “[t]o be nature while *knowing* it” (174). But no sooner do we have this moment of liquid union than we are returned abruptly to the reflective, contained subject: “the shock of feeling comes back/to my nerves: memories play/ their part again. . . .” (17-19). Over the next two stanzas this motion is repeated, a movement out through perception, relation: “. . . a kingfisher ruffles its feathers/against the dew. She beckons from/ the far shore, a chill runs/along my arms – I wade into shallows calling, and straining my sight” (22-26); to a sense of the extended self: “. . . My hands/ shoot out over the tide . . . / . . . The senses/strain forward towards claws// turning and growing from the dawn” (29-33). Ultimately though, the subject “. . . cannot reach . . .” (34), and we are returned to the perceiving subject-in-the-world, and the disappointment of the pentasyllabic “dead roots and branches” (38).

The dynamic subjectivity in Adamson’s poetry can be seen as an enactment of what Merleau-Ponty calls the “imminence” (147) of the reversibility of the “flesh” of the word (131). For Merleau-Ponty, “our bodies and the world are two aspects of a single reality” (Evans 187) which he names “flesh” (Merleau-Ponty 131, 139). As stated in the introduction, this concept of the ‘flesh’ of the world functions to overcome the subject-object distinction when describing experience: “flesh” is an “‘element’ of Being” (Merleau-Ponty 139) comprised of the “reversibility of the seeing and the visible, or the touching and the touched” (147). However, Merleau-Ponty emphasises that this “reversibility is always imminent and never realized in fact” (147). Although “self and world are inextricably entwined” (Diprose 8), due to their being part of the same flesh, they are also differentiated. For the moment of perception is also a moment of “dehiscence” (Merleau-Ponty 153), a bursting open, a dividing of self and world. The union of ‘flesh’ is always only a potential, merging cannot be, although we are already in a sense one, as two parts constituting the flesh of the world. As Fred Evans explains:

. . . Merleau-Ponty’s view of being differs from the two traditional alternatives: a duality of substances (subject and object, mind and body) or a single substance completely at one with itself. What he offers us is something closer to what we might call a “unity composed of difference” rather

than a collection of separate, merely externally related entities or a unity formed through domination by one of the elements of that unity – he eschews, in other words, both pluralism and monism. The flesh holds seers and the visible together (they are of the same flesh), while still respecting their difference . . . (191)

Because of this ‘unity composed of difference’, “we can *almost* see through each other’s eyes. But no sooner do I take up your perspective than it becomes mine and no longer yours. Our unification . . . can therefore only be imminent and never achieved” (Evans 192). Adamson’s metamorphosing subject enacts this imminence and therefore reflects an ethical way of being in the word.⁵⁴ Social theorist David W. Kidner has argued for the necessity of dynamic subjectivity to environmental ethics:

In the realm of nature as in personal life, a clear sense of one’s own, separate identity is a prerequisite for a mature relationship, one that recognizes the difference between oneself and the other while respecting the other. Paradoxically it is also a prerequisite for letting oneself *temporarily* merge with the other. This paradox, however, is only superficial, since a vital relationship with the other is one which is dynamic, which recognizes the interplay between separation and relation. (66)

Caitlin Punshon identifies shifting subjectivity as a key theme in the work of the poets of the generation of ’68.⁵⁵ Punshon argues that the work of the poets of Adamson’s milieu presents a new, self-reflexive way of presenting and engaging with the Australian landscape that is not fixed (not ‘map like’), and which therefore “unsettles our preconceptions and shows us new ways of seeing and seeing how we see” (63). Moreover, Punshon suggests that of all the ’68 poets, “the role of subjectivity in perception” was taken up “most particularly by Robert Adamson” (61): “[e]mbracing a more romantic [sic] aesthetic that many other writers in the generation of ’68, Adamson’s poems explore a complex relationship between subject and landscape”

⁵⁴ In *The Song of The Earth*, although he looks mainly to Heidegger, Jonathan Bate posits Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology in particular as the antidote to an “egocentric” poetics (191).

⁵⁵ The “literary clique” (Punshon 53) which emerged predominantly in Sydney and Melbourne in the late 1960’s and with which Adamson is most often associated. The phrase ‘Generation of ’68’ was coined by John Kinsella in his introduction to *The New Australian Poetry*. Makar Press, 1979: xv. This “loose group of writers” (xvi) sought to reject “‘establishment’ values” of the time, such as “mainstream journals, sponsorship by the academy and the reification of the ‘well-made’ poem” (McCooley 43).

(Punshon 61). Crucially, Punshon argues, landscape for Adamson is both perceived *and* experienced:

The landscape in Adamson's poetry is not only perceived but intimately experienced... both speaker and subject in Adamson's work fluctuate and mutate. The reader needs to go with the flow, sinking willingly into the poems and drifting 'away from map reason'. (62)⁵⁶

The suggestion that we must let go, and drift 'away from map reason' can be seen also in the second of Adamson's poems I wish to discuss here, "The Speaking Page" (*Golden Bird* 128-9). "The Speaking Page" was first published in *The Clean Dark*, the collection for which Adamson received large recognition as a lyricist. This poem is particularly interesting to consider in an ecopoetic framework, as Adamson has confessed it was written in response to a photograph of the Hawkesbury, rather than as a direct response to the river itself (*Kinsella interview* 337).⁵⁷ It highlights, and reflects upon the role of the imagination in our connection to nature. Similar to "The Ghost Crabs", in this poem we are given a performance of impermanence, of the imminence of the flesh of the world. There is a movement from perception, to union, to differentiation in the poem. The motion of the tide is key to the work, as it is concretised in the undulating shape of the poem, with lines drifting across the page and back again:⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Punshon is referencing Adamson's poem "Green Prawn Map", *The Clean Dark* (1989): 17.

⁵⁷ An image taken by his wife, photographer Juno Gemes.

⁵⁸ Similar strategies can also be seen in the 'ecopoetry' of Marianne More ("The Fish" and "Paper Nautilus"), A.R. Ammons ("Corsons Inlet") and Mary Oliver ("The Lilies Break Open Over the Dark Water") as but a few examples. *The Ecopoetry Anthology*. Eds. Fisher-Wirth and Street: 48, 50; 133-6; 419.

When the tide moves again
comes up over
the point here
and spills
into Parsley Bay,
goes over
the rivers' torn entrails –
your breath becomes
tidal
atmosphere,
it heals deeply
thoroughly
then you
begin to understand
that the river
is like a blank page (1-16)

What is emphasised in “The Speaking Page” is that you cannot colonise the river with reason. In order to meet the river, to hear “its language” (25) you must “. . . enter it/ differently . . .” (17-18). Adamson makes a link between subjectivity, creativity and understanding in this poem. In this way the poem is a precursor to later work where he blurs the line between poetry and nature more explicitly. Here the river is only “*like* a blank page” (16, emphasis added), nevertheless it is only via a sensitive process akin to writing, or creativity more generally, that one might gain access to it: you must “. . . shape/it as you would/a new thought/first vaguely/with phrases/then sentences/ until finally/its language/starts talking –“ (18-26). This run of enjambed, predominantly three syllable lines, carries the reader along as though on a tidal swell until we arrive at a passage of dispersed subjectivity, where “. . . the tide/begins to make music/as it covers oysters/as it climbs/over rocks/its song fills the valley” (32-37). Ultimately, however,

union cannot remain. The subject returns to a self-consciousness of the role of the imagination. Differentiation is inevitable: “of course/ its imagination/ weaving/the river-song, your mind’s/ invention/is playing you” (43-48). The metamorphosing subjectivity in this poem enacts what coming to an understanding of the river might *feel* like. It performs the creative process of *answerability* to the river. At the same time, the use of the imperative allows the reader access to this feeling, calls to the reader to respond with their own answerability. For to understand a poem like this, “we must experience it, which means experiencing ourselves [as the you]” (Waters 724).

“The Speaking Page” can be seen as an example of what Nerys Williams calls the “self-reflexive lyric” (39). The poem is as much a reflection on creativity, on poetry, as it is a consideration of relating to the river, and in this it highlights the relationship between the imagination and the world. In its movement across the page, and in its undulating acceleration and deceleration; the poem “performs phenomenologically”, in that it “grants us the perception of perception” (Williams 41). Citing Ashbery, Williams explains that self-reflexive lyrics are about the “experience of experience”, the way experience “filters through” the poet (40).⁵⁹ This style of lyric is also relevant to a consideration of “Walking by The River” (*Golden Bird* 13), the most abstract of the three poems discussed in this chapter. This is a point to which I will return. Before moving on to this final poem however, I would like briefly to consider what Dobrez calls the three varieties of kinetics evident in Adamson’s poetry.

Parallel to the three types of subjectivity in Adamson’s work, Dobrez identifies three corresponding kinetic movements:⁶⁰ “centrifugal” (231-232, 276-278), where consciousness is largely directed toward the outside of the poem; “mediating” (231, 259-260, 278-282), where the poem becomes a mediator of experience, self-conscious of itself as a poem, and finally, “centripetal” (282-286), where abstraction is heightened to the point where word, or poem, *is* world. “The Ghost Crabs” and “The Speaking Page” represent the first two of these dynamics respectively, whereas “Walking by The River” can be considered an example of the third. In this poem, words themselves are

⁵⁹ John Ashbery, qtd in Richard Gray, *American Poetry of the 20th Century*. Harlow: Longman, 1990: 324

⁶⁰ Again, Dobrez is “borrowing” (231) from Olson “Projective/Verse”, reprinted in *The New American Poetry 1945-1960*: 387; 388

materialised to the point that the line between language and world becomes blurred, thus disrupting the distinction between nature and culture:

He walked waist-deep
through his thoughts,
emotions, a tangle of vines
and tree-creepers. (1-4)

Michael Palmer has stated that “...to recover meaning we must resist its simulacra... we must allow the voice – the work, its plurality, its silences, its infinite, pleated body” (qtd. in Williams 48).⁶¹ In the opening verse paragraph of “Walking by The River”, it is not precisely clear whether the “vines /and tree-creepers” are to be read as mimetic representations of vegetation in the phenomenal world, or as figurative representations of the “thoughts,/emotions” of the subject. It remains ambiguous; neither option is given status over the other, thus simultaneously materialising both the physical and the psychic planes. Here, nature cannot be captured in words, just as words themselves cannot be ‘captured’ in the second verse paragraph:

His words were finches,
flying before him
as he swung his arms –
scrambled paragraphs. (5-8)

This abstraction however, allows words to be materialised *as* nature. Such a position evokes poet and essayist Gary Snyder’s notion of language as a wild system. In his essay “Language Goes Two Ways”, Snyder sees languages as “naturally evolved wild systems” (174), refuting the distinction between culture (language) and nature (178-9). Further, Snyder suggests, via this very ‘wildness’, language operates both as a window to the world and as an instructor:

⁶¹ Michael Palmer, cover note for Norma Cole, *Moirra*. Berkeley: O Books, 1995.

. . . language does not impose order on a chaotic universe,
but reflects its own wildness back.

In doing so it goes two ways: it enables us to have a
small window onto an independently existing world, but it
also shapes – via its very structures and vocabularies –
how we see that world. (174)

Similarly, as discussed in the previous chapter, Andy Clark states that “the properties of words” have the power to “determine thoughts” rather than simply expressing pre-existing ones; a dynamic he suggests is particularly evident in poetry (208). Clark calls this the “mangrove effect” of “public language” (208). Such ideas regarding the bidirectional nature of language, remind us that if used intentionally, such as in poetry, or poetic writing, language has the potential to disrupt inherited patterns of thought, perhaps even those which serve to maintain human alienation from the natural world. This kind of “disruptive intelligence” (Loukakis, qtd. in *Davies Interview*) is certainly something which is evident in Adamson’s poetry. David Brooks, discussing the influence of Stéphane Mallarmé on Adamson’s work, suggests that Adamson has taken from Mallarmé a commitment to the idea of “. . . the Poem [as] a means of subverting or transgressing prevailing discourses”, and thus “increasing one’s proximity to those things which are shut out by them” (*Feral Symbolists* 288). As discussed in the previous chapter, Lyn Hejinian argues that the moments of disruption provided by poetic language, those moments where the reader becomes aware of the gap between language and the world, serve to reveal the “integrity” of “things” (*Rejection of Closure* 285):

We delight in our sensuous involvement with the materials
of language, we long to join words to the world – to close
the gap between ourselves and things . . .

Yet the very incapacity of language to match the world
allows it to do service as a medium of *differentiation*. (285,
emphasis added)

In the second part of “Walking by The River”, Adamson self-consciously remarks on this gap as “[a] waterfall sound[s]/ ahead of his walk,/chipped words crac[k/] with each step . . .” (9-12). Words are eternally flawed, can never capture the essence of the natural world. However, this marking of the gap between word and world simultaneously serves to allow the integrity of ‘waterfall’, of crumbled and jagged earth,

to ring through. Here, to draw on Jennifer Moxley, “*what fails to be . . . IS*” (52). Insistently self-reflexive, Adamson utilises this gap, and the pause it generates in the momentum of the poem, to shift the poem toward its climax. What was a gap between language and world now becomes a figurative clearing through which subject and poem emerge: “. . . He came to// a calm place . . .” (12-13), where the very wild materiality of language - “. . . opulent phrases/ in bloom. . .” (13-14) - allows for what Tom Bristow calls the “sensitive naming” central to ecopoetics (*Phenomenology* 83). Here, finally, the sensuous materiality of the vegetation by the river sings forth, in all its plump particularity: “. . . purple-fruited/pigface, the blackthorn’s/blue-black sloe” (14-16).

Sensuous language such as we find in the final verse paragraph of “Walking by The River” reminds us that, as stated by Laura-Gray Street: “. . . language – the word – is not something that separates and elevates us above the rest of this planet. Rather language is an integral part of our biological selves. The “roots of it/ Dangle from [our] mouths” (Street xxxvii).⁶² Language and words are as fleshly a part of our experience of the world as are our phenomenal bodies. Indeed, for Merleau-Ponty, language, or speech, is another dimension of ‘flesh’, of the intertwining of self and world:

Like the flesh of the visible, speech is a total part of the significations, like it, speech is a relation of Being through a being . . . there is much more than a parallel or an analogy here, there is solidarity and intertwining . . . speech, which is but a region of the intelligible world, can also be its refuge. . . (118)

Daniel Albright suggests that it is the lyric mode (as opposed to writing which aims for mimesis) which is uniquely qualified in this regard: “[m]imetic art aspires to transparency: every deftness of language, every revel in the colours and textures of words, tends to defeat its goal, which is to endow the shadowy world of reference behind the words with the illusion of mass, gravity, depth of focus. The embodied lyric, on the other hand, aspires to opacity: it does not represent, *it is*” (23-4). Both the material and dialectic nature of lyric give it this qualification.

⁶² Street is citing George Oppen’s “Psalm” here. Reprinted in *The Ecopoetry Anthology*. Eds. Fisher-Wirth and Street:89.

Finally, approaching “Walking by The River” from a practice perspective, it also becomes possible to see that the level of abstraction present in this type of self-reflexive lyric (Williams 39), instead of reflecting a turning from the world, enacts the particular phenomenological experience of the poet in the world. The poem here is a *way of being*. Both the Hawkesbury River and poetry are central to Adamson’s subjectivity.⁶³ As David Malouf states, “[f]or Adamson...poetry is simply the most immediate form of thinking and being” (56). Here, poetry is, to use Ashbery’s term, the way the experience of the word “filters through” the poet. (qtd. in Williams 40).⁶⁴ “Walking by The River” enacts the experience of the poet-in-space via an intensely self-reflexive lyric in which thought and world are *experienced* as language whilst simultaneously retaining their autonomy and particularity.

Jonathan Bate argues that ecopoetry, rather than being descriptive, or a didactic presentation of ‘green’ theory, is rather an ‘experiencing’: “[e]copoetry is not a description of dwelling with the earth, not a disengaged thinking about it, but an experiencing of it” (*Song* 42). Each of these poems offers the reader the experience of the ecopoetic via reader answerability. Just as “The Ghost Crabs” and “The Speaking Page” enact for the reader an experience of the imminence of Being in the more-than-human world, by disrupting the divide between word and world, Adamson’s more abstract poems, such as “Walking by The River” perform for the reader an alternate way of experiencing the world, one in which nature/culture dualisms are dissolved. In the ‘place’ of lyric, these poems enact an ethical ecopoetics: offering up a fleshly engagement with both word *and* world, which may enable the reader to experience the more-than-human-world, as though for the first time.

*

⁶³ This is not to suggest a general conflation of the lyric I with the writer/poet, rather that this particular poem enacts a particular style of subjectivity.

⁶⁴ John Ashbery, qtd in Richard Gray (1990): 324

Section 2

Propagules for Drift and Dispersal

Contents

Reflections on mangroves and the eco-lyric ~ 63

*

This season's out-welling ~ 69

Up to Our Knees in it ~ 70

Anthony Lawrence's Word Pool ~ 72

The possibility of ~ 74

Web ~ 75

Badu Mangrove morning ~ 76

Some words for migratory birds ~ 80

A mud-dove coos to her love ~ 82

Propagules for drift and dispersal ~ 83

Rhizome ~ 85

Reflections on mangroves and the eco-lyric

“Being moved and being led to expression define poetic activity” (Shapiro and Shapiro 402). The poems in *Propagules for Drift and Dispersal* engage in this kind of lyric dialogue. In this they are not simply outpourings of emotion, rather, they are acts of answerability: to other poets, other poems, to language, words, mangroves and birds. To the gaps and potentials inherent in our multifaceted shared existence on this earth. To the many dimensions of the more-than-human world, the encounter with which constitutes the ecopoetic.

A thematic focus on Mangroves comes, of course, from engaging with the poetry of Robert Adamson, whom John Forbes once called “a sort of feral Mallarmé” (qtd. in Brooks, *Feral Symbolists* 280) and whom Michael Wilding describes as:

. . . the poet of the mangrove swamps, that ambiguous
region half under water, half-exposed, half river estuary,
half salt water, the primal soup, visions of mud
wrestling, the liquid larva of some Pompeian setting,
outcast, woebegone, ramshackle. (37)

Wilding’s rich characterisation of Adamson resonated deeply for me, as it reminded me of my own suburban childhood, growing up near Salt Pan Creek, a tributary of Sydney’s Georges River, one of the four “drowned river valleys” (Duke 69) that shape the sprawling city’s waterways, and so much of its identity. Adamson is of course the poet of the northernmost of these: the Hawkesbury River. Moving southward, you’ll also encounter Port Jackson/The Parramatta River, Botany Bay/The Georges River and finally Port Hacking and its own eponymous river. Mangroves are a presence along the shores of each of these estuaries, and with “over 85%” of Australia’s population “living within 50km of the coast” (Duke 11), these unique ‘wild’ environments have long formed a kind of suburban borderlands.

I confess I did not appreciate the significance of mangroves growing up. Many of us ‘suburban swamp dwellers’ thought of mangroves as smelly, out-of-the-way places (at best, the kind of place ‘kids like us’ grew up, at worst, the kind of place killers went to hide the dead). We were not alone in this assessment. Mangroves have long been maligned by western communities the world over, associated “with unlawful access, the refuse dumped on them . . . [and as] breeding grounds for mosquitoes . . .” (Duke 44). Although “Australia has the third largest area of mangroves in the world after Indonesia and Brazil” (Duke 11), representing over “six percent of the world’s mangrove area” (5),¹ it is sadly the case that mangrove stands have “steadily been removed over the last 150 years” from Australian shores (45), with “[a]round 17%” of the original stands having been “destroyed since European settlement” (46).

Luckily, awareness regarding the significance of mangroves is increasing. They are now noted as “among the most biologically important ecosystems on the planet” (NASA), providing “important nursery and habitat for . . . fish and prawns” (Duke 45), as well as offering unique interspecies meeting zones “for land and sea animals” (Lear and Turner 2). In fact, “[i]n no other ecosystem do animals such as crabs, oysters and barnacles exist together with bats and lizards. Some, such as the mudskipper are highly specialized” and are found in almost no other environment (Lear and Turner 2). Mangroves also protect human communities, acting as buffers from cyclones, tidal inundation and erosion (Duke 45). Further, scientists are now investigating what may prove to be mangroves’ most dramatic protective activity of all: their role in carbon sequestration and its potential for climate change mitigation (Stecker).² Mangrove “forests [are] highly effective at capturing and storing carbon emitted into the atmosphere by humans” (Bluecarbon Project). “Dubbed ‘blue carbon’”, they are one kind of aquatic environment capable of sequestering CO₂ “up to 100 times faster” and “more permanently than terrestrial forests” (Bluecarbon Project).³ Mangroves are now being planted in experimental sites around the world for this purpose.⁴

¹ 6.4% (Duke 11).

² See also, BlueCarbonPortal.org. “What is blue carbon?”

³ Unfortunately, the flip side of this high level of carbon sequestration is that when mangrove stands are destroyed they release vast amounts of carbon back into the atmosphere (Bluecarbon Project). See also, Lovelock et al.:763.

⁴ See for example, Lutz et al., eds., *The Abu Dhabi Blue Carbon Demonstration Project*, and BlueCarbonPortal.org. “The Blue Carbon World”.

Mangrove stands also have an intimate relationship to coastal saltmarsh, habitat essential to the international flyways of migratory shorebirds, many of which are endangered, as are several of the saltmarsh species themselves. In NSW, Coastal Saltmarsh is listed as an “‘endangered ecological community’ under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995” (SOPA, *Coastal Saltmarsh*). Migratory shorebirds travel tens of thousands of kilometres over specific routes known as flyways twice a year. “The East Asian – Australasian Flyway” for example, “extends from within the Arctic Circle” where breeding takes place, “through East and South-east Asia [sic], to Australia and New Zealand, stretching across 22 countries” (FlywayPrintExchange. *The Flyway*).⁵ Coastal Saltmarsh, such as is found at Sydney’s Homebush Bay on the Parramatta River, forms part of this flyway and provides crucial resting habitat for migratory birds on these immense journeys.

Preparation for the creative practice part of this thesis involved site visits to two Sydney mangrove stands. Salt Pan Creek, mentioned previously (with all of its associated, complicated, memory), and the heritage listed Badu Mangroves at Homebush Bay. The Badu Mangroves are “the largest mangrove forest remaining on the Parramatta River” an area once flanked entirely by mangrove stands (SOPA *Walking Trails*). Visiting each of these locations, I undertook place-based response work, noting sights, sounds, smells and the various memories evoked by the two locations. I also took photographs for future use. In line with Adamson’s compositional technique for “The Speaking Page”, several of the poems in *Propagules for Drift and Dispersal* were composed, or part-composed, in response to these photographs. The poems also dialogue of course with other ecopoets and ecocritics. Homebush Bay is an area of extremely high urban density, set only to increase in the future.⁶ Spending time in this area, I was reminded of what Ashton Nichols calls ‘urbanatural roosting’: the “idea that human beings are never cut off from wild nature by human culture” (xv). At Homebush Bay, thanks to the surviving mangroves and saltmarsh in the area, humans roost right alongside vast numbers of non-human animals: birds of prey and other migratory shorebirds, fish, crabs, molluscs, reptiles, frogs and bats. As Denise Levertov reminds us in her poem

⁵ The Flyway Print Exchange is an “international environmental art project featuring 20 artists from 9 different countries linked by the East-Asian Australasian Flyway” (*About the Project*). Artworks responding to the East-Asian Australasian Flyway were exhibited in Melbourne at The Atrium, Federation Square, in September 2014. See also, Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, QLD. “Shorebirds”.

⁶ The residential area of Homebush Bay was renamed ‘Wentworth Point’ in October 2009.

“Web” (to which one of the poems in this collection is a response), we are all interconnected. Yet, as Robert Adamson identifies in “The Speaking Page” (*Golden Bird* 128-9), to come to an understanding of this interconnectedness, we must “enter it/ differently”. These lyric poems aim to offer a way of coming to such an understanding, via their material and dialectic performativity. They speak to the aesthetic aspirations set out at the beginning of this project, but with a deeper understanding of the role of abstraction in the lyric mode.

As discussed in Section 1 of this thesis, Andy Clark suggests human thought operates like the development of a mangrove stand: thought attracting thought, just like mangrove roots attract debris to build their requisite habitat (208). For Clark, words have the power to determine thoughts, a dynamic he suggests is particularly evident in poetry (208). Jonathan Culler suggests a unique quality of lyric poetry in particular is its “power to embed bits of language” in the reader’s mind (*Why Lyric* 205), each word taking hold, perhaps akin to a mangrove seed encountering a distant mud flat: setting down roots and beginning the task of building community. In this way, I see the lyric ecopoem as a kind of *propagule for drift and dispersal*: it seeks the new shores of reader encounter, aiming to affect, and grow, new ways of thinking, via reader answerability. This collection of lyric ecopoetry often employs the ‘lyric I’, but it is always concerned with address. All but two of the poems also engage the second person: they seek to engage in ethical dialogue, to connect, to play, to “startl[e] and coa[x]” (Knickerbocker 18). Perhaps even, to grow community. The collection asks finally, one simple thing: “open yourself/ let this skirt of the burbs/ wash through you”.

Willo Drummond

October 2014

This season's out-welling

At this season's out-welling
as the tide begins to ebb
she sets her grief in a small seed pod
sends it out across the river

Under waning moonlight
on the aqua-terrestrial shore
she trains her eye
to velvet vivipary
on very salty water
She's looking
for a future to
enframe the past
as it exceeds
it. Flickering familiar
like the pulse
of being needed

Here in the interstitial
here in the lyric tense
she stills to witness
each furred pod
gain its wild purpose
Her perfect body weightless
as flesh and thoughtⁱ are freed
where what cannot be
is
and is
and so must be

ⁱ Robert Adamson: "where flesh and thought are one" from "The Details Necessary", *The Golden Bird*: 61-2

Up to Our Knees in it

We're up to our knees
in it, here on the flats
our feet
constantly wet

Black rims our edges
as we extrude reason, baking
on decks in seasons
new minted
while past the 'no fishing' sign
down at the front
cinema seats and soft drink cans
get down and dirty
with the kids

These kids can live anywhere,
beneath the hum of the highway
a constant, keeping mute
like a consonant
that suddenly stops the breath.ⁱ

Keep on running, eyes wide shut,
living life on a precarious angle
living local like a canon on a slow drip feed

The air is slightly sour
with it. No matter,
mangroves will take
our mishaps
down, turn them in
to bluest carbon

And we'll keep dreaming
we're not sinking
as we strain toward the light

ⁱ Mary Oliver. *A Poetry Handbook*: 22

Anthony Lawrence's word poolⁱ

So many river shells
where once words
pooled, awaiting
their tidal moment

Patient amongst fish
and lizard bones, they
skittled each time
crab-bubbles broke
the skein of silence

their small white
percussion echoing
throughout the stand

I want to tell you: don't
be afraid, but time keeps feeding
our shadows, quicker than our becoming
In this dim light, in this
present moment, its gaze
remains unwavering. Confidence falters

where once was sung: heron
and mud skipper, spiny ant-plant
Each a unique note on the Baduⁱⁱ

Now the chorus

holds

having become reed thin

Soon it could be so brittle

each pass might spark an

ending

Where once

was all beginning

ⁱ After Anthony Lawrence, “Where The Crane Lies Down”, *Salt*, Volume 11, 1999: 355

ⁱⁱ Badu Mangroves, Homebush Bay. *Badu* is the Dharug word for water: “Dharug Dalang. A Collaborative Tool for Language Teaching”, http://dharug.dalang.com.au/Dharug/plugin_wiki/wordlist [Accessed 17 August 2014].

The possibility of

The moment of return

body heavy

with what's been.

Unnerving

discovery

of adequacy-lacking, something

like the splitting

of light, piercing white,

chills the bones

we carry on

Winded. Wanting

under salted

wounds, dreaming

of something which is, nevertheless, a draft

of what is. A trace of the rise

and fall of the ever-changing

constant

There is a silence that attaches itself to mangroves

But only stillness will do

if you wish to perish

reason

or the possibility of willing drift

owning nothing

but imaginationⁱ

ⁱ After Robert Duncan: "Poetry is the very life of the soul: the body's discovery that it can dream. And perish into its own imagination." qtd. in Robert Adamson, "Introduction", *The Best Australian Poems 2010*: xiii

Webⁱ

In the intricacy
of our interweaving
all change is found
This is our forever
web: beyond thought
beyond knowing
something
at the base
of self and sound

It's you and I now
rare birds standing
on a receding shore
on almost the very last
hour of the strand

All we were, all
we are
is praise
entwined with mystery

What will I do
without you wing?

You run through me, as we
are found
through everything

ⁱ After Denise Levertov's "Web", Neil Astley ed., *Earth Shattering: Ecopoems*: 157

Badu Mangrove morningⁱ

When the sun hits
the surface of the Badu
morning do you know
what must be done?

When the sun hits
the surface of what must be done
fish wake to feed
river and ocean

river fish feed
shore birds training
ironic eyes to
assess the day

shore birds assess
the Badu morning
while grey limbs write
shadows across the silt

shadows lace the surface
of the Badu morning,
of everything here
as good as breathing

of everything here
as sure as hope, where
the sun lights the
surface of the living

where the sun hits
the hope of the shivering
rippling sensation
of understanding

when the sun glints
off the living morning
there is a rippling
of intention

when the sun glints off
the morning badu
when thought is no more
and only time will do

when everything
breathing is alive
to sensation, alert
to morning glance

when the sun glances
off the thought
of no more, rising
waters turn to milk

when the rising
milky badu
thoughts breathe
under-surface secrets

secrets surface then
to cool their heels
with detritus
in white water

when thought hits
the surface of the badu
morning the sky
glimmers at your feet

when the surface of
trees goes under,
when the sky rises up
we hold our breath

we hold our breath
with each root
that we'll make
one more day

under the surface
of this sky, under the
hope we hold for one
more chance of breathing

when the breathing
sun skims roots
as the sky rises up
everything sways

everything sways
and shivers everything
slips just out of grasp

when the shivering
sun breathes Badu
do you recognise
your intention?

When you meet your
breath by the sliding sun
when the light hits
the surface of the shadow lace

when the sun hits
the surface of the Badu
morning do you know
what it is you must do?

ⁱ *Badu* is both the Dharug word for water and the name of a Sydney mangrove stand: Badu Mangroves, Homebush Bay. “Dharug Dalang. A Collaborative Tool for Language Teaching”, http://dharug.dalang.com.au/Dharug/plugin_wiki/wordlist [Accessed 17 August 2014].

Some words for migratory birds

I remember last year on the flyway
just before the fourth stopover
you taught me to read star-maps
under the blush of sea-sprayed moonlight

Direction was magnetic
then: I-you-she-he-we
moved shore-to-shore
without the burden of

knowing. Flying in tight
formation, hearts
driven with
intention

[Now we witness the birth of a
white-bellied sea-eagle on a two inch screen]

My hand – my limb – reaches for
the familiar feel of your wing-tip
while you, preoccupied, testing the waters
of transformation, almost miss the cue

Thing is, the slightest shift in alkalinity
sets the whole thing in motion. We must
conserve our energy, for there's just
so far to go. Here

listen to my voice:

The world is waiting for you
and your flight-notes. What
will you make of them?

Turn

face north-ward

embark

A mud-dove coos to her love

Mr A, mangrove man

Mallarmé of the mud flats

I've taken you in to the jelly
of my brain,ⁱ in a kind
of mud-dove dreaming

Birdman, you'll fly with me

forever now, we've simply no choice
in the matter. Once mud gets in
to mood and memory, life
becomes mangrove in a minor key

Swamp dweller, fisherman

I see you in the eye

of a *Bush Stone Curlew*; hear you

singing for your love; feel you slip

through the gap

in a waterfall of words,

rooting out

a manhole of meaning

You, of the in-between

place; you, of the feathered

imagination; you, who wrote

yourself into existence, one bird

at a time; I row with you, now, gently, along

the mangrove mile

I dream with you

under moonlight

Fish scales glint

in the tangle of your hair, and

on the breeze, I detect a hint

of 'no referent'

It comes and goes with the tide

ⁱ "I sing softly/ from the jelly of the stone curlew's brain": Robert Adamson, "The Stone Curlew", *TGB*: 181

Propagules for drift and dispersal*

Avicennia marina has a viviparous seeding
Habit.[†] It keeps its babies close. Many mangrove

children – on departure from the coop – set sail
across the ocean, travel for months at sea. Weaker

avicennia though, doesn't stray very far. Seeds
often become stranded, establishing close to their parents.[‡]

When I was one such kid, I couldn't wait to flee
this drowned river valley.[§] The scent of mud

in my pores, the cloying air, the constant presence
of swamp dwellers' stares. This wasn't the stand for me.

I wanted to be my own island, to gather
my people close. I wanted to open myself

to the world - of words, vaporous thoughts, gestures
like silk - at least to say triumphant: "*Mother, I've left*

your grey body." Through sheer force of willpower
I'd build my own terra-firma; show life was more than a sentence

based rehearsal.^{**} But today, I read
in the paper: "the mangrove is probably

the most remarkable community
of unrelated families in the world”^{††}

so much for distant mangrove shores.

Trying not to let life ruffle my feathers, I consider
what time and tide has told me: slowly,

the lines are silting over. One grabs a whiff

of a future though, if you massage the meaning
of mangrove. Even on an island, change is the surest

constant. There’s always mud around the edges
and memories that slip through our fingers. We’re all

sucking down carbon, and small shards of selves keep
protruding, for a micro-breath. Glimpse across

the salt-pan as the tide edges in: you’ll see you
can sail as far as you like, but you’ll never leave

this station. So much is pneumataphoric metaphor
and urban, suburban, sub-sub-urban transpiration.

* Title courtesy Norman C. Duke. *Australia’s Mangroves*:21

† “viviparous seeding habit”: Richard Lear and Tom Turner, *Mangroves of Australia*: 2

‡ K.Kathiresian. *Training Course on Mangroves and Biodiversity*, Module 3.4 “Biology of Mangroves” <http://ocw.unu.edu/international-network-on-water-environment-and-health/unu-inweh-course-1-mangroves/Biology-of-mangroves.pdf> [Accessed 4 Sep 2014]: 139

§ Duke: 69

** “sentence based rehearsal”: Andy Clark “Language: The Ultimate Artifact”, *Being There*: 209

†† Lear and Turner: 2

Rhizome

The way you shape it
like a loose soft clay
the way you return to it

tidal

The smell of a line
incoming
the push of a mood

{poetic}

Open yourself
let this skirt of the burbs
wash through you

Conclusion

This creative thesis was borne of a tension between ethics and a set of personal aesthetic aspirations which would frame my own poetry as lyric. Considering both the anti-Romanticism present in some contemporary ecocritical theory as well as criticism the lyric has faced throughout the twentieth century, it asked: to what extent is it possible to maintain an ethical, ecocentric poetics whilst writing in the lyric mode? Is the lyric mode “too selfish” (Phillips 195), too fundamentally the bearer of an outdated ‘Romantic ideology’, to represent an ethical kind of writing? This thesis answers that in fact the lyric mode can represent a decidedly ethical ecopoetics, due to both its material and dialectic performativity. The lyric mode is neither inherently Romantic, nor inherently ideological. It is neither an out dated form of egocentrism, nor a turning from the world. Instead, the lyric is fundamentally social (Moxley 52). It is a mode which has remained, throughout history, deeply concerned with the nature of address (Brewster 2). It is dialogic and inter-subjective (12), and as such, has much to offer as an ethical writing, and, as has been the focus of this thesis, as an ethical ecopoetry.

Each of the poems discussed in this thesis represent an engaged type of ethical discourse which seeks to offer the reader the experience of the ecopoetic via reader answerability. Due to their material and dialectic performativity, Robert Adamson’s lyric poems demonstrate that the lyric mode has the potential to offer the reader access to “ecological perception” (Kerridge 354). Poems such as “The Ghost Crabs” and “The Speaking Page” enact for the reader the imminence of Being in the more-than-human world. At the same time, Adamson’s more abstract poems, such as “Walking by The River” perform for the reader an alternate way of experiencing the world, one in which nature/culture dualisms are dissolved. In the ‘place’ of lyric, these poems enact an ethical ecopoetics: they offer up a fleshly engagement with both word and world, which may enable the reader to experience the more-than-

human-world, as though for the first time. So too, the poems in *Propagules for Drift and Dispersal* seek to question the divide between nature and culture, between language and the phenomenal world. They ask the reader to ‘open’ themselves to new ways of thinking and being in our multifaceted shared existence on this earth.

While this thesis has been specifically concerned with lyric poetry, viewing the lyric as a mode also opens up questions of ethics and aesthetics that extend beyond poetry itself. An exploration of the function of the lyric mode in other genres remains a project for the future. In particular, an examination of the musicality of lyric (which remained beyond the scope of this project) as it pertains to the lyric essay, would allow for a consideration of the lyric mode at the intersections of ecocriticism, creative writing practice and musico-literary discourse.

Rebecca Raglon and Marian Schlotmeijer argue that nature resists narrative. While they suggest (somewhat paradoxically) that fiction may be the genre best suited to ‘reveal’ nature in its resistant autonomy (768), perhaps it is to writing in the lyric mode we should look to encounter the voices of our shared earth. As Jonathan Culler identifies, lyric does not operate on narrative terms (*Why Lyric* 202), rather it is a “foregrounding of language, in its material dimensions . . . in the forms, shapes and rhythms of discourse” (205). Mark Tredinnick, discussing the musicality of the lyric mode as it pertains to the lyric essay, states that:

. . . the lyric essay is . . . written as much with one’s ears as with one’s eyes and all the rest of it . . . The lyric writer uses language at least as much to sound as to mean. . . . Words for a lyric writer are physical things, not just symbols . . . They don’t just signify, they breathe. (65)

Tredinnick is a strong advocate for the lyric mode in environmental writing, and for the lyric essay in particular. He also claims that the lyric essay is a form “we haven’t written much in Australia. Yet” (60).

A survey of the *AusLit* database reveals that while mangroves have a strong presence in Australian poetry, with 215 published poems listed as mentioning these unique habitats (perhaps for many of the reasons discussed in this thesis), mangroves

have a smaller presence in other genres,¹ with only three published ‘essays’ written on the subject, only one of which was written in the last 90 years.² And while critical work has been undertaken on the mangrove as setting for Australian drama,³ no cross genre analysis of the place of mangroves in Australian literature has been carried out to date. This is surprising, as given “over 85%” of Australian lives are lived “within 50km of the coast” (Duke 11), and mangroves grace a significant portion of our coastlines, the mangrove surely must play a significant role in the Australian psyche.

Tredinnick states that “places are made of pieces“, “they never tell their stories straight” (69); “[what] we call the spirit of [a] place is the music through time that all the pieces and the intervals between them amount to” (69-70). Tredinnick claims it takes a “lyric stance”, “to catch and return a landscape’s music” (70). Editors of the *Seneca Review* Deborah Tall and John D’Agata argue “[t]he lyric essay partakes of the poem in its... distillation of ideas and [the] musicality of language. It partakes of the essay in its weight, in its desire to engage with facts, melding its allegiance to the actual with its passion for imaginative form” (7). They continue: “[t]he lyric essay does not expound” however, “it depends on gaps... [i]t is suggestive rather than exhaustive” (7). Just as has been evident in the discussion of lyric poetry in this thesis: “[i]f the reader is willing to walk those margins, there are new worlds to be found” (Tall and D’Agata 8).

A collection of lyric essays, then, may have the potential to reveal to the reader the extended song – or songs – of Australia’s mangroves: littoral habitats on which so much might depend, and about which there is so much more to say than has been covered in this project. Such a collection may provide a way to sing the varied stories of Australia’s mangroves, to embed them in the minds and souls of (non-fiction) readers, in the geological era of the Anthropocene, hopefully before it’s too late. For the place of lyric is the reader encounter. It is in the ringing of the materiality of words on the tongue, in the mind and in the body of the reader, and in the emotional and intellectual tensions and desires sparked by the dialectics of the lyric stance. By offering up a ‘language bridge’ to the unknowable-unsayable, the

¹ One novel, twenty one short stories, ten works of children’s fiction including picture books, four works for film and television, four plays, one musical, three indigenous dreaming stories, two humorous ‘yarns’, and three ‘essays’.

² Neil Bramsen. “Pneumatophores Spring Up”, *Wet Ink* 13 Summer, 2008.

³ Paul Sherman. “Marigolds or Mangroves: Settings for North Queensland Drama”. *LiNQ Literature in North Queensland* vol. 7 no. 1, 1979. Eds. Kay Ferres and Elizabeth Perkins: 88-90

lyric mode has the potential not only to call to the reader to encounter the more-than-human world, but to answer with their emotion, as well as with their intellect. Perhaps even, to answer with their life.

*

Works Cited

- Abbey, Edward. - *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968. Print.
- *Down the River* (1982). New York: Penguin, 1991. Print.
- Adamson, Robert. – *Black Water: Approaching Zukofsky*. Sydney: Brandl and Schlesinger, 1999. Print.
- *The Clean Dark*. Sydney: Paper Bark Press, 1989. Print.
- *The Golden Bird, New and Selected Poems*. Melbourne: Black Inc., 2008. Print.
- *The Goldfinches of Baghdad*. Chicago: Flood Editions, 2006. Print.
- *The Kingfisher's Soul*. Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books Ltd, 2009. Print.
- *Mulberry Leaves. Robert Adamson New and Selected Poems 1970-2001*. Sydney: Paperback Press, 2001. Print.
- *Swamp Riddles*. Sydney: Island Press, 1974. Print.
- *Waving to Hart Crane*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1994. Print.
- Adamson, Robert. Introduction. *The Best Australian Poems 2010, Edited by Robert Adamson*. Collingwood: Black Inc., 2010: xi-xviii. Print.
- Adamson, Robert. - "John Davies Interviews Robert Adamson". 2RES-FM *Monday Arts Live* October 3, 1994. Radio. Transcript reprinted by permission. Web. 2 Apr. 2014.
- <<http://www.robertadamson.com/interviews/Davies.htm>> n.pag.
- Interview by Ivor Indyk. "Robert Adamson and Kevin Hart in conversation". *Heat*. 4 (1997): 75-97. Print.
- Interview by John Kinsella. "John Kinsella interviews Robert Adamson" *Salt*, 11(1999): 315-345. Print.

- Interview by Michael Sharkey. "Robert Adamson and the Persistence of Mallarmé". *Southerly* 45.3 (1985): 308-320. Print.

- Interview by John Tranter. *A Possible Contemporary Poetry. Interviews with Thirteen poets from the New Australian Poetry*. Ed. Martin Duwell. St Lucia: Makar Press, 1982: 132-143. Print. Rpt. from *Makar* January vol. 14 no. 1 1980: 3-13.

Adorno, Theodor. "Lyric Poetry and Society" (1957). *Poetry and Cultural Studies. A Reader*. Eds. Maria Damon and Ira Livingston. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009: 25-34. Print.

Adorno, Theodore and Max Horkheimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Dialektik der Aufklärung, 1944) trans. John Cumming. London and New York: Verso, 1979. Print.

Albright, Daniel. *Lyricality in English Literature*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1985. Print.

Alizadeh, Ali and Penelope Pitt-Alizadeh. "Transgressive Lyric. Teaching Ecopoetry in a Transcultural Space". *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 14:2 (2009): 51-61. *Taylor & Francis online*. Web. 17 Feb. 2014.

Altieri, Charles. *Self and sensibility in contemporary American poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. Print.

Ammons, A.R. "Corsons Inlet". *The Ecopoetry Anthology*. Eds. Ann Fisher-Wirth and Laura-Gray Street: 133-6. Print.

Astley, Neil ed. *Earth Shattering: Ecopoems*. Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books Ltd., 2007. Print.

Atkinson, Meera. "Animal Poetics: Singing the Scorched Tongue". *Southerly* 73.2 (2013): 114-121. *Informit Literature & Culture Collection*. Web. 2 Jul 2014.

Attridge, Derek. "Innovation, Literature, Ethics: Relating to the Other". *PMLA*, 114.1, Special Topic: Ethics and Literary Study (1999): 20-31. *JSTOR*. Web. 21 Mar. 2014.

Auden, W.H. *The Dyer's Hand*. New York: Random House, 1962. Print.

Bakhtin, M.M. . - *Art & Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*. Ed. Michael Holquist, trans. and notes by Vadim Liapunov, supplement trans. by Kenneth Brostrom. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990. Print.

- *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*. Ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. Print.

Barthes, Roland. "The Death of The Author" (1968). *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 2nd Edition. Eds. Vincent B. Leitch et al., New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2010: 1322-1326. Print.

Bate, Jonathan. - *Romantic Ecology. Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*. London: Routledge, 1991. Print.

- *The Song of the Earth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000. Print.

Benjamin, Walter. "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books, 1969. Print.

BlueCarbonPortal.org – "The Blue Carbon World". Web. 4 Oct. 2014.

<<http://bluecarbonportal.org/the-new-blue-carbon-homepage-2/who-i-am/>>

- "What is blue carbon?" Web. 15 Sep. 2014

<<http://bluecarbonportal.org/the-new-blue-carbon-homepage-2/about-2/>>

Bluecarbon Project, The - "What is Blue Carbon?" Web. 28 Sep. 2014

<<http://www.thebluecarbonproject.com/the-problem-2/>>

- Borthwick, David. Introduction. *Entanglements: New Ecopoetry*. Eds. David Knowles and Sharon Blackie: xv-xxiii. Print.
- Bramsen, Neil. "Pneumatophores Spring Up". *Wet Ink* 13 (2008): 60-61. Print.
- Brewster, Scott. *Lyric*. New York: Routledge, 2009. Print.
- Bristow, Tom. – *The Anthropocene Lyric: An Affective Geography of Poetry, Person, Place*. Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming. Print.
- "Ecopoetics", *Facts on File Companion to World Poetry: 1900 to Present*. Ed. R. Victoria Arana. New York: Facts on File, 2008:156-159. Print.
- "Phenomenology, History, Biosemiosis: Heideggerian and Batesonian Poetics in John Burnside's Post-Romantic Process Ecology". *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism*, 13:1 (2010): 74-94. *Taylor & Francis online*. Web. 25 Aug. 2014.
- Brooks, David. - "Feral Symbolists: Robert Adamson, John Tranter, and the Response to Rimbaud." *Australian Literary Studies*, 16.3 (1994): 280-288. Print.
- "The Fallacies" Theory, Saturation Capitalism and the Animal." *Southerly* 73.2 (2013): 47-60. Print.
- Brown, Andy, ed. *The Allotment: New Lyric Poets*. Exeter: Stride, 2006. Print.
- Bryson, J. Scott. – Introduction. *Ecopoetry. A Critical Introduction*. Ed., J. Scott Bryson. Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2002. Print
- *The West Side of Any Mountain. Place, Space, and Ecopoetry*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press. 2005. Print.
- Buell, Lawrence. – *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing and the Formation of American Culture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995. Print.

- "Introduction: In Pursuit of Ethics". *PMLA*, 114.1. Special Topic: Ethics and Literary Study (1999): 7-19. *JSTOR*. Web. 21 Mar. 2014.

- Cassidy, Bonny . "The Sounds of Sight: Jennifer Rankin's Poetics". *JASAL* 6 (2007): 91-102. Web. 4 Jul. 2014.

- Clark, Andy. "Language: The Ultimate Artifact". *Being There: Putting Brain, Body, and World Together Again*. Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1997: 193-222. Print.

- Clark, Timothy. *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Print.

- Cole, Rachel. "Rethinking the Value of Lyric Closure: Giorgio Agamben, Wallace Stevens, and the Ethics of Satisfaction". *PMLA*, 126.2 (2011): 383-97. *Modern Language Association Journals*. Web. 21 Mar. 2014.

- Cook, Jon. -"Creative Writing as Research Method". *Research Methods for English Studies*. Ed. Gabriele Griffin: 195-212. Print.

- Introduction. *Poetry in Theory. An Anthology 1900-2000*. Ed. Jon Cook. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004: 1-26. Print.

- Corcoran, Neil, ed. *Do You, Mr Jones? Bob Dylan with the Poets and Professors*. London: Chatto and Windus, 2002. Print.

- Cranston, CA and Robert Zeller, eds. *The Littoral Zone. Australian Contexts and their Writers*. Amsterdam-New York: Editions Rodopi B.V., 2007. Print.

- Culler, Jonathan - "Changes in the Study of Lyric" *Lyric Poetry: Beyond New Criticism*. Eds. Chaviva Hošek, and Patricia Parker. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985. 38-54. Print.
- *Literary Theory. A Very Short Introduction* (1997). 2nd Ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print.
- *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*. London: Routledge, 1981. Print.

- "Why Lyric?" *PMLA*, Vol 123, No 1 (Jan 2008). 201-206.
JSTOR. Web. 21 Mar. 2014.

Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, QLD. "Shorebirds". Web. 16 Aug. 2014. <<http://ehp.qld.gov.au/wildlife/threatened-species/shorebirds/index.html>>.

Dharug Dalang, A Collaborative Tool for Language Teaching. "Dharug List sorted by English". Web. 17 Aug. 2014.
<http://dharug.dalang.com.au/Dharug/plugin_wiki/wordlist>.

Dickie, Margaret. *Lyric Contingencies: Emily Dickinson and Wallace Stevens*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991. Print.

Dillard, Annie – *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. New York: Harper's Magazine Press, 1974. Print.

- *Teaching a Stone to Talk: Expeditions and Encounters* (1982). New York: Harper Perennial, 2008. Print.

Diprose, Rosalyn. "A Guide to Merleau-Ponty: Key Concepts". *Merleau-Ponty Key Concepts*. Eds. Rosalyn Diprose and Jack Reynolds: 8-14. Print.

Diprose, Rosalyn and Jack Reynolds, eds. *Merleau-Ponty Key Concepts*. Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008. Print.

Dobrez, Livio. *Parnassus Mad Ward. Michael Dransfield and the New Australian Poetry*. St Lucia: Queensland University Press, 1990. Print.

Duke, Norman C. *Australia's Mangroves: The Authoritative Guide to Australia's Mangrove Plants*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2006. Print.

Dunn, Maggie, and Ann Morris. *The Composite Novel: The Short Story Cycle in Transition*. New York: Twayne, 1995. Print.

Elder, John. *Imagining the Earth: Poetry and the Vision of Nature*. Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1996. Print.

Eldridge, Richard. "Introduction: The Persistence of Romanticism". *The Persistence of Romanticism. Essays in Philosophy and Literature*. Ed. Richard Eldridge. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001: 1-28. Print.

Eliot, T.S. "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *The Egotist* (1919). Rpt. in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Eds. M. H. Abrams et al. New York: W. W. Norton, 1974, vol 2: 2198-2205. Print.

Elvey, Anne. Editorial. *Plumwood Mountain: An Australian Journal of Ecopoetry and Ecopoetics*, 1.1. Web. 12 Feb. 2014.
<<http://plumwoodmountain.com/editorial/>>.

Engelhardt, James. "The Language Habitat: an Ecopoetry Manifesto". *Octopus Magazine* #09. Web. 3 Apr. 2014.
<<http://www.octopusmagazine.com/Issue09/main.html>>.

Evans, Fred . "Chiasm and flesh". *Merleau-Ponty Key Concepts*. Eds. Rosalyn Diprose and Jack Reynolds: 184-193. Print.

Fisher-Wirth, Ann and Laura-Gray Street, eds. *The Ecopoetry Anthology*. San Antonio, Texas: Trinity University Press, 2013. Print.

Flyway Print Exchange, The: - "About the Project". Web. 29 Sep. 2014.

<<http://www.theflywayprintexchange.info/>>.

- "The Flyway". Web. 29 Sep. 2014.

<<http://www.theflywayprintexchange.info/the-flyway>>.

Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957. Print.

Genette, Gérard. *The Architext: An Introduction*, trans J.E. Lewin. Berkley: University of California Press, 1992. Print.

Gifford, Terry. *Green Voices: Understanding Contemporary Nature Poetry*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995. Print.

- Glotfelty, Cheryl. "Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis". *The Ecocriticism Reader*. Eds. Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm: xv-xxxiii. Print.
- Glotfelty, Cheryl and Harold Fromm, eds. *The Ecocriticism Reader*. Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1996. Print.
- Goodbody, Axel. "Ecocritical Theory: Romantic Roots and Impulses from Twentieth-Century European Thinkers." *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*. Ed. Louise Westling. Cambridge Companions Online: Cambridge University Press, 2014. 61-74. Web. 6 Mar. 2014. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CCO9781139342728.007>>.
- Grady, Hugh. "Notes on Marxism and the Lyric". *Contemporary Literature*, 22.4, Marxism and the Crisis of the World (1981): 544-555. *JSTOR*. Web. 4 Mar. 2014.
- Gray Richard, *American Poetry of the 20th Century*. Harlow: Longman, 1990. Print.
- Griffin, Gabriele, ed. *Research Methods for English Studies*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005. Print.
- Harrison, Martin. "The act of writing and the act of attention". *TEXT Special Issue 20: Writing Creates Ecology and Ecology Creates Writing*. Eds Martin Harrison, Deborah Bird Rose, Lorraine Shannon and Kim Satchell (2013). Web. 2 Feb. 2014. <<http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue20/content.htm>>.
- Hart, Kevin. Interviewed by Ivor Indyk. "Robert Adamson and Kevin Hart in conversation". *Heat*. 4 (1997): 75-97. Print.
- Hayden, Robert. "Night, Death, Mississippi." *Collected Poems*. Ed. Frederick Glaysher. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1985. Print.
- Hejinián, Lyn. – Introduction. *The Language of Enquiry*. Berkley: The University of California Press, 2000. 1-6. Print.

- "The Rejection of Closure". *Writing/Talks*. Ed. Bob Perlman.
Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press,
1985: 270-291. Print.

Hetherington, Paul. "Are Poems the Prayers of the Secular World?" *Sotto Magazine*,
September 2013: 6. Web. 2 Jan. 2014.
<<http://www.australianpoetry.org/2013/10/09/are-poems-the-prayers-of-the-secular-world/>>.

Jackson, Virginia. "Lyric". *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. 4th
Edition. Roland Greene, Editor in Chief. Princeton: Princeton University
Press, 2012: 826-834. Print.

Jeffreys, Mark. "Ideologies of Lyric: A Problem of Genre in Contemporary
Anglophone Poetics". *PMLA*, 110. 2 (1995): 196-205. *JSTOR*. Web. 21 Mar.
2014.

Johnson, Andrew. "Orpheus on the Hawkesbury: Placing Robert Adamson".
Journal of Australian Studies, 27:80 (2003): 29-42. *Taylor & Francis online*.
Web. 2 Jul. 2014.

Johnson, Kenneth R. "New Historicism". *Romanticism. An Oxford Guide*. Ed.
Nicholas Roe: 165-181. Print.

Kane, Paul. *Australian Poetry: Romanticism and Negativity*. Cambridge; Melbourne:
Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Kathiresian, K. "Module 3.4 'Biology of Mangroves'". *Training Course on
Mangroves and Biodiversity*. Web. 4 Sep. 2014.
<<http://ocw.unu.edu/international-network-on-water-environment-and-health/unu-inweh-course-1-mangroves/Biology-of-mangroves.pdf>>.

Kerridge, Richard. "Ecocriticism". *The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory*,
21.1. Ed. David Tucker. The English Association. Oxford: Oxford University
Press, 2013: 345-374. *Oxford Journals*. Web. 5 Mar. 2014.

- Kidner, David W. "Culture and the Unconscious in Environmental Ethics". *Environmental Ethics*, 20.1 (1998): 61-80. Print.
- Kinsella, John. Introduction. *The New Australian Poetry*. St Lucia: Makar Press, 1979: vx-xxvi. Print.
- Kitson, Peter J. "Politics". *Romanticism. An Oxford Guide*. Ed. Nicholas Roe: 675-685. Print.
- Knickerbocker, Scott. *Ecopoetics. The Language of Nature, the Nature of Language*. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 2012. Print.
- Knowles David and Sharon Blackie, eds. *Entanglements: New Ecopoetry*. Isle of Lewis: Two Ravens Press, 2012. Print.
- Kroll, Jeri and Graeme Harper, eds. *Research Methods in Creative Writing*. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Print.
- Larrissy, Edward. "Modernism and postmodernity". *Romanticism. An Oxford Guide*, Ed. Nicholas Roe: 665-674. Print.
- Lasky, Kim. "Poetics and Creative Writing Research". *Research Methods in Creative Writing*. Eds. Jeri Kroll and Graeme Harper: 14-33. Print.
- Lawrence, Anthony. "Where the Crane Lies Down". *Salt* 11 (1999): 355. Print.
- Lear, Richard and Tom Turner. *Mangroves of Australia*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1977. Print.
- Levertov, Denise. "Web". *Earth Shattering: Ecopoems*. Ed. Neil Astley: 157. Print.
- Li, Victor P. H. "Narcissism and the Limits of the Lyric Self." *Tropic Crucible: Self and Theory in Language and Literature*. Ed. Ranjit Chatterjee and Colin Nicholson. Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1984: 3-23. Print.
- Lovejoy A.O. "On the Discrimination of Romanticisms" (1924). *Essays in the History of Ideas*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1948: 28-253. Print.

- Lovelock, Catherine E, Maria Fernanda Adame, Vicki Bennion, Matthew Hayes, Julian O'Mara, Ruth Reef and Nadia S. Santini. "Contemporary Rates of Carbon Sequestration Through Vertical Accretion of Sediments in Mangrove Forests and Saltmarshes of South East Queensland, Australia". *Estuaries and Coasts* 37 (2014):763–771. *SpringerLink Contemporary*. Web. 29 Sep. 2014.
- Lutz, Steven J, Christian Neumann and Allison Bredbenner (GRID-Arendal), eds. *The Abu Dhabi Blue Carbon Demonstration Project: Building Blue Carbon Projects - An Introductory Guide*. Abu Dhabi Global Environmental Data Initiative (AGEDI). Produced by GRID-Arendal, A Centre Collaborating with UNEP, Norway, 2014. Web. 2 Oct. 2014.
<<http://bluecarbonportal.org/download/11412/>>.
- Malouf, David. Foreword. *Mulberry Leaves. Robert Adamson New and Selected Poems 1970-2001*: 5-6. Print.
- McCooey, David. "Poetry and Non-Fiction from 1950". *Macquarie Pen Anthology of Australian Literature*. Nicholas Jose, gen. ed. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2009: 41-48. Print.
- McGann, Jerome J. *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation*. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1983. Print.
- McLaren, John. "Kingdoms of Neptune: seas, bays, estuaries and the dangers of reading skua poetry (it may embed in your skull)". *Something Rich and Strange: sea changes, beaches and the littoral in the antipodes*. Ed. Sue Hosking. Kent Town. S.A: Wakefield Press, 2009: 161-171. Print.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis. Ed. Claude Lefort. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968. Print.
- Milech, Barbara H. and Ann Schilo. "Exit Jesus': Relating the Exegesis and Creative/Production Components of a Research Thesis". *TEXT Special Issue No 3* (2004). Web. 16 Mar. 2014.
<<http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue3/milechschilo.htm>>. n.pag.

- More, Marianne. "The Fish" and "Paper Nautilus". *The Ecopoetry Anthology*. Eds. Ann Fisher-Wirth and Laura-Gray Street: 48, 50. Print.
- Moxley, Jennifer. "Lyric Poetry and the Inassimilable Life". *The Poker*, 6 (2005): 49-58. Print.
- NASA Earth Observatory. "Mapping Mangroves by Satellite" November 30 2010. Web. 28 Sep. 2014.
<<http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/IOTD/view.php?id=47427>>.
- Nicholls, Angus. - "Adamson's poetry plays in the gap between language and nature (Poetry)". Review: *Black Water: Approaching Zukofsky* by Robert Adamson. *Antipodes* 13.2, Special Issue on Australian Film (1999): 133-134. *JSTOR*. Web. 17 Jan. 2014.
- "Robert Gray and Robert Adamson. A Dialectical Study of Late Australian Romanticism". *Antipodes*, 11.2 (1997): 103-110. Print.
- Nichols, Ashton. *Beyond Romantic Ecocriticism: Toward Urbanatural Roosting*. New York: Plagrave Macmillan, 2011. Print.
- Oliver, Mary. - *A Poetry Handbook: A Prose Guide to Understanding and Writing Poetry*. New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1994. Print.
- "The Lilies Break Open Over the Dark Water". *The Ecopoetry Anthology*. Eds. Ann Fisher-Wirth and Laura-Gray Street: 419. Print.
- Olson, Charles. "Projective/Verse". *Poetry New York*, No. 3, 1950. Rpt. in "Statements on Poetics", *The New American Poetry 1945-1960*. Ed Donald Allen. New York: Grove Press, 1960: *Modern Poets on Modern Poetry*. Ed. James Scully. London: Collins, 1966: 386-397: *Poetry in Theory*. Ed. Jon Cook: 289-295. Print.
- Oppen, George. "Psalm". *The Ecopoetry Anthology*. Eds. Anne Fisher-Wirth and Laura-Gray Street: 89. Print.
- Palmer, Michael. Cover note for Norma Cole, *Moirra*. Berkeley: O Books, 1995. Print.

- Perloff, Marjorie. *The Dance of the Intellect: Studies in the Poetry of the Pound Tradition*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1985. Print.
- Phillips, Dana. *The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture and Literature in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2003. Print.
- Pound, Ezra. *ABC of Reading*. London: Faber, 1961. Print.
- Punshon, Caitlin. "The escaping landscape: Perspective and perception in the landscape poems of the generation of '68". *Journal of Australian Studies* 27:80 (2003): 53-63. *Taylor & Francis online*. Web. 3 Jul. 2014.
- Raglon, Rebecca and Marian Scholtmeijer. "Heading off the Trail: Language, Literature and Nature's Resistance to Narrative". *Global Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Ed. Richard J. Lane. London & New York: Routledge, 2013: 759-768. Print. Rpt. from *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism*. Eds. Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace. Charlottesville & London: University Press of Virginia, 2001: 248-62.
- Rigby, Kate. *Topographies of the Sacred. The Poetics of Place in European Romanticism*. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2004. Print.
- Roe, Nicholas. Introduction. *Romanticism. An Oxford Guide*. Ed. Nicholas Roe. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005: 1-12. Print.
- Roorda, Randall. *Dramas of Solitude: Narratives of Retreat in American Nature Writing*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1998. Print.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality among Men* (1755), trans. Franklin Philip. Oxford: Oxford University Press, The World's Classics, 1994. Print.
- Ryan, John. "Plants, Processes, Places: Sensory Intimacy and Poetic Enquiry". *Axon*. Issue 1. Web. 11 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.axonjournal.com.au/issue-1/plants-processes-places-sensory-intimacy-and-poetic-enquiry>>. n.pag.

- Saiz, Prospero. "Deconstruction and the Lyric." *From Ode to Anthem: Problems of Lyric Poetry*. Eds. Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989: 193-249. Print.
- Scanlon, Mara. "Ethics and the Lyric: Form, Dialogue, Answerability". *College Literature*, 34.1 (2007): 1-22: *JSTOR*. Web. 25 Feb. 2014.
- Scigaj, Leonard. M. *Sustainable Poetry: Four Ecopoets*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999. Print.
- Shapiro, Marianne and Michael Shapiro. "Dialogism and the Addressee in Lyric Poetry". *University of Toronto Quarterly* 61.3 (1992): 392-413. Print.
- Sheats, Paul D. "Lyric". *Romanticism. An Oxford Guide*. Ed. Nicholas Roe: 310-331. Print.
- Sherman, Paul. "Marigolds or Mangroves: Settings for North Queensland Drama". *LiNQ Literature in North Queensland*, 7.1 (1979). Eds. Kay Ferres and Elizabeth Perkins: 88-90. Print.
- Siskin, Clifford. "The Lyric Mix: Romanticism, Genre, and the Fate of Literature". *The Wordsworth Circle*, 25.1 (1994): 7-10. *ProQuest Periodical Archive Online*. Web. 5 Mar. 2014.
- Smith, Hazel and Roger T. Dean. "Introduction. Practice-led Research: Research-led Practice – Towards the Iterative Cycle Web". *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*. Eds. Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009: 1-38. Print.
- Snyder, Gary. "Language Goes Two Ways". *A Place in Space. Ethics Aesthetics and Watersheds*. Berkley: Counterpoint, 1995: 173-180. Print.
- Stecker, Tiffany and ClimateWire. "Restoring Mangroves May Prove Cheap Way to Cool Climate". *Scientific American*. 31 July, 2012. Web. 10 Jul. 2014.
<<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/restoring-mangroves-may-prove-cheap-way-to-cool-climate/>>.

- Steffen, Will, Jacques Grinevald, Paul Crutzen and John McNeill. "The Anthropocene: conceptual and historical perspectives". *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society. A*. 369 (2011): 842-867. *Royal Society Publishing*. Web. 28 Sep. 2011.
- Street, Laura-Gray. "The Roots of It". *The Ecopoetry Anthology*. Eds. Ann Fisher-Wirth and Laura-Gray Street: xxxvii-xl. Print.
- Svenson, Thor. "Stopping by the woods on a sunny day..." *Oz Arts* 12 (1995). Web. 2 Apr. 2014. <http://www.robertadamson.com/articles/OzArts_95.htm>. n.pag.
- Sydney Olympic Park Authority (SOPA). - "Coastal Saltmarsh". Web. 29 Sep. 2014.
<http://www.sopa.nsw.gov.au/our_park/environment/biodiversity/vegetation/coastal_saltmarsh>.
- "Walking Trails". Web. 22 Sep. 2014.
<http://www.sydneyolympicpark.com.au/whats_on/things_to_do_and_see_events/walking_trails>.
- Tall, Deborah & John D'Agata. "New Terrain: The Lyric Essay". *The Seneca Review*, 27.2 (1997): 7-8. Print.
- Tredinnick, Mark. "The Lyric Stance". *Island*, 126 (2011): 60-70. *Informit Literature & Culture Collection*. Web. 12 Aug. 2013.
- Waldren, Murray. "Write a Song For Me". *The Weekend Australian. Review*. 6-7 March 2004: 4-6. Print.
- Walker, Jeffrey. *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Print.
- Waters, William. "Rilke's Imperatives". *Poetics Today* 25:4 (2004): 711-730. *Duke Journals*. Web. 21 Mar. 2014.
- Welsh, Andrew. *Roots of Lyric. Primitive Poetry and Modern Poetics*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978. Print.

Westling, Louise. "Merleau-Ponty's Ecophenomenology". *Under the Sign of Nature: Ecocritical Theory: New European Approaches*. Eds. Axel Goodbody and Kate Rigby. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012: 126-138. Print.

Wilding, Michael. "My Name is Rickeybockey: The Poetry of Robert Adamson and the Spirit of Henry Kendall" *Southerly* 46.1 (1986): 25-43. Print.

Williams, Nerys. "Lyric Subjects". *Contemporary Poetry*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011: 25-57. Print.

Wordsworth, William. "Preface". William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. *Lyrical Ballads, with a Few Other Poems*. 2nd Ed. Vol. 1 of 2. London, 1800: v-xlvi. *Gale. Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Web. 19 Feb. 2014.

*