

# PLACING THE PERSONAL ESSAY

## COLLOQUIUM

DEC 2-3 2014, WELLINGTON NZ



**STOUT RESEARCH CENTRE**

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*for New Zealand Studies*

Co-convened by the W.H. Oliver Humanities Research Academy at Massey University, the Centre for Research on Colonial Culture at the University of Otago, and the Stout Research Centre for New Zealand Studies at Victoria University.

<http://placingthepersonalessay.weebly.com/>

# PROGRAMME

Te Ara Hihiko, Block 12, Massey University Wellington

## **Tuesday 2 December**

KEYNOTE: MARTIN EDMOND, "RIDING THE GHOST TRAIN"

**4:30 – 5:20**, to be followed by W.H. Oliver Humanities Research Academy Reception from **5:30**.

## **Wednesday 3 December**

PLACING THE PERSONAL ESSAY COLLOQUIUM

**9:00** Arrival, registration.

**9:20** Welcome – Mihimihi. Angela Kilford (Master of Fine Arts), Te Whanau A Kai, Ngati Porou, Ngati Kahungunu

Introduction - Ingrid Horrocks and Cherie Lacey

### *THEORIES OF PLACE*

**9:30** PANEL ONE - chaired by Philip Steer.  
Alex Calder  
Tony Ballantyne  
Lydia Wevers

**10:45** Morning tea (provided)

**11:15** PANEL TWO - chaired by Cherie Lacey.

Annabel Cooper  
Sally Blundell  
Alice Te Punga Somerville

**12:30** Lunch

*ESSAYING PLACE*

**1:50** PANEL ONE - Chaired by Ingrid Horrocks.  
Tina Makereti  
Ian Wedde  
Tim Corballis

**2:50** Break

**3:00** PANEL TWO - chaired by Ashleigh Young.  
Harry Ricketts  
Jack Ross  
Giovanni Tiso  
Lynn Jenner

**4:15** Afternoon tea (provided)

**4:30** Response by Martin Edmond

**4:45** Conversation and future directions - chaired by Ingrid Horrocks and Cherie Lacey.

**5:15** Finish

Colloquium organisers: Ingrid Horrocks [i.horrocks@massey.ac.nz](mailto:i.horrocks@massey.ac.nz)  
and Cherie Lacey [cherie.lacey@yvu.ac.nz](mailto:cherie.lacey@yvu.ac.nz)

**Tuesday 2 December**

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY MARTIN EDMOND**

Te Ara Hihiko, Block 12, Massey University Wellington



**Riding the Ghost Train**

Reading is a ghostly act. You sit alone with a book, whatever it may be, and as you read you entertain, in your own head, the ghost of the writer. He or she, as the book was being written, was also entertaining you, the reader, as a kind of future ghost. Neither in the act of writing, nor in the act of reading, is the other actually present. And yet, despite elisions in consciousness, some kind of communication occurs. Often this is of an intimate kind: never more so than in the

personal essay, in which we are persuaded that the voice of the author is speaking directly to us. And yet we know this isn't so. The author, if not already dead, is certainly in another place, and that absence is profound: all it has left behind are words on the page. Nevertheless, in the act of reading, the reader re-constitutes the author as a living presence; just as, in the act of writing, the author has pre-configured, as it were, the reader. Reading and writing, we are at once visceral and ghost-like; in our bodies and out of them; making imagined places real. This paper will explore this ghostly interchange, across time and space, from the point of view of both writer and reader.

**Bio Note**

Martin Edmond was born in Ohakune and grew up there and in other small New Zealand towns. After completing university study, he joined travelling players Red Mole and toured internationally with them. A period working as a lighting operator for rock bands followed. Since 1981, he has lived in

Sydney. Edmond has written nine non-fiction books, and a number of shorter volumes of essays or other prose excursions, as well as half a dozen films, including the award-winning *Illustrious Energy* (1988) with Leon Narby. Much admired as a prose stylist, Edmond's books range across New Zealand, Australia, and the Pacific and include *Luca Antara: Passages in search of Australia* (2006), described by Nobel prizewinner J.M. Coetzee as "a graceful and mesmerising blend of history, autobiography, travel, and romance," and *Dark Night: Walking with McCahon* (2011). Four of his books have been shortlisted in the national book awards; his genre-crossing memoir, *Chronicle of the Unsung*, won the biography category of the 2005 Montana New Zealand Book Awards. He was the 2004 Writing Fellow at the University of Auckland, in 2007 won a CLL Writers' Award to support writing *Zone of the Marvellous: In Search of the Antipodes* (2009), and was a Michael King Writers' Centre Writer in Residence in 2010. In 2013, he received the Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement for Non-fiction. Edmond has just completed a Doctorate of Creative Arts at the University of Western Sydney, where he is now a Post-Doctoral Fellow. His dissertation, a biographical study of the painters Rex Battarbee and Albert Namatjira, is published in October by Giramondo.

**Wednesday 3 December**

**PLACING THE PERSONAL ESSAY COLLOQUIUM**

"The Pit", Level B Te Ara Hihiko, Massey University Wellington,  
Entrance E, Tasman Street

**THEORIES OF PLACE**

**PANEL ONE**

Chaired by **Philip Steer**



Philip Steer is Lecturer in English at Massey University, where he teaches Victorian and New Zealand literature. He is particularly interested in the relationship between literary genres, place, and history, and the intersections between the novel and forms of non-fiction in colonial environments. He is currently writing an essay on the representation of ecology in early New Zealand literature, and slowly working on a book exploring the transformations of nineteenth-century literary culture brought about by its movement between Britain, New Zealand, and Australia.

**Alex Calder**



Alex Calder is an Associate-Professor and Head of English, Drama and Writing Studies at the University of Auckland. He currently teaches courses in New Zealand Literature, the writings of Herman Melville and Joseph Conrad, the Gothic, and Literary Theory and Critical Practice. His research, for which he has received a Marsden award, focuses on processes of cultural contact and settlement, particularly with regard to writings from New Zealand and the United States. His most recent book is *The Settler's Plot: How Stories Take Place in New Zealand* (Auckland University Press, 2011).

## Tony Ballantyne



Professor Tony Ballantyne is Head of the Department of History and Art History at the University of Otago, where he also is Director of the Centre for Research on Colonial Culture. He has published widely on the cultural history of the British Empire during the nineteenth century, as well as on colonial New Zealand. Some of his New Zealand-focused essays were anthologised as *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand's Colonial Past* (Bridget Williams Books, 2012; North American edition, UBC Press, 2014). His latest work is *Entanglements of Empire: Missionaries,*

*Maori and the Question of the Body*, which will be published by Duke University Press in December and by Auckland University Press in April 2015. Much of his current work focuses on significance of place and region in the history of southern New Zealand.

## Lydia Wevers



Lydia Wevers is the Director of the Stout Research Centre for New Zealand Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. She is a specialist in New Zealand and Australian literature, and has also published on travel writing and the history of reading. Her latest book is *Reading on the Farm: Victorian Fiction and the Colonial World* (2010).

## PANEL TWO

Chaired by **Cherie Lacey**



Dr Cherie Lacey completed her PhD at Auckland University in 2010. In it she explored the Pākehā unconscious and its manifestations in New Zealand history films from 1925 until the present. The thesis received the Vice-Chancellor's award for Best Doctoral Thesis, and since then the work has appeared in various books about New Zealand and Australian film. After several years lecturing at the University of Melbourne, she returned to New Zealand with a renewed interest in place and its relationship to memory and subjectivity. As a Scholar in Residence at the Stout Research Centre for New Zealand

Studies, she began engaging with these themes by writing personal essays. After meeting Ingrid Horrocks and discovering that they were working on similar projects they hatched the idea of holding a colloquium on the topic, to bring together others working in this area. Much of Cherie's recent work has focused on New Zealand-based narratives, particularly those that disturb the boundary between fiction and nonfiction, fantasy and reality. She has recently published an academic piece on Florian Habicht's film *Love Story*, as well as a personal essay on memory and return in *The Pantograph Punch*, which is accessible here: <http://pantograph-punch.com/post/travelling-light>. She is currently teaching film and media studies at Victoria University of Wellington.

## Annabel Cooper



Place is a persistent theme in Annabel Cooper's research. Her early work traced the spatial dimensions of the gendered military symbolism of nationhood in Australia, New Zealand and Gallipoli. Her contribution to the Sites of Gender project analysed space and place in gendered daily life, plotted gender and poverty in Dunedin's southern suburbs, and mapped Dunedin's first public toilets. More recently her studies of poor men in nineteenth-century New Zealand, growing up masculine in Point Chevalier, the antipodean in the films of Jane Campion, and road-making in Te Urewera have variously situated cultural politics and the formation and enactment of identities in place. Annabel's current research on cultural memory and the New Zealand Wars tracks place across landscape and masculinity in the documentary series *The New Zealand Wars*, and landscape, emotion and memory in the writing of James Cowan. She is working on a monograph entitled 'Screen Wars: Remaking the New Zealand Wars in Celluloid and Pixels', which among other things investigates the significance of location in screen narratives of colonial conflict.

Annabel's work has appeared in history, geography, film, gender and cultural studies books and journals. Publications include an edition of Mary Lee's *The Not So Poor* (1993), *Sites of Gender* (2003, ed. with Barbara Brookes and Robin Law), *He Taonga, He Kōrero* (ed. with Lachy Paterson and Angela Wanhalla, forthcoming 2015), and a Special Issue on James Cowan for the *Journal of New Zealand Studies* (ed. with Ariana Tikao, forthcoming 2015). She grew up in Auckland but drifted south, and is Associate Professor, Gender Studies, in the Department of Sociology, Gender and Social Work at the University of Otago.

## Sally Blundell



Dr Sally Blundell is a freelance journalist, researcher and essayist living in Christchurch. She writes for a number of magazines and journals in New Zealand and edited *Look This Way: New Zealand writers on New Zealand artists* (AUP), short-listed for the New Zealand Book Awards. Her doctoral research at the University of Canterbury looked at the role of speech and speechlessness in literary portrayals of trauma. She currently writes on art, architecture, heritage, trade and, in the wake of the Canterbury earthquakes, urban design. In recent months she has contributed to 'Pacific Highways', an edition of the *Griffith Review* edited by Lloyd Jones. 'Amending the Map' explored 'the 'environmental amnesia' that afflicted Christchurch before the earthquakes of 2010 and 2011 and the role of South Island iwi Ngai Tahu in the rebuild of the city and the rediscovery of a social and ecological past. She also contributed to *Once in a Lifetime: City-building after disaster in Christchurch* (2014), published by Freerange Press. Her essay, 'Resisting Erasure', examined the importance of maintaining relevant connections to the past in urban design, particularly in the post-disaster scenario of her home city as it endeavours to build a new CBD, and a new identity, out of the rubble.

## Alice Te Punga Somerville



Alice Te Punga Somerville (Te Ātiawa) is a scholar, poet and irridentist who lives with her husband in Sydney. Because she is an academic, most of her writing is scholarly (her first book was *Once Were Pacific: Māori Connections to Oceania* Minnesota 2012); she also writes the occasional poem. Alice is presently teaching Indigenous Studies at Macquarie University (Sydney), and holds a tenured position as Associate Professor of Pacific Literatures at the University of Hawai'i-Mānoa.

## ESSAYING PLACE

### PANEL ONE

Chaired by **Ingrid Horrocks**



Ingrid's creative publications include a travel memoir, *Travelling with Augusta, 1835 and 1999* (VUP, 2003), which is also part biography and part history of women's travel, and two collections of poetry, most recently *Mapping the Distance* (VUP, 2010). She did a Ph.D. in English at Princeton and has spent much of the past decade thinking about the aesthetics of 'wandering' and historical shifts in British conceptions of mobility, publishing articles in *Studies in the Novel*, *Studies in Romanticism*, *ELH*, *Studies in Travel Writing* and *Women's Writing*. Lately, she has been trying to come home, whatever

that would mean, and has become interested in exploring relationships between mobility and place in a New Zealand context, as well as in bringing critical and creative writing into closer conversation. Recent projects include a personal essay in response to a site-specific collaboration with conceptual artist Maddie Leach; involvement with an interdisciplinary research and teaching project, the Puke Ahu project, which seeks to unsettle and deepen imaginings of the historically rich site on which Massey Wellington is located; and a pair of essays – one 'creative', one 'critical' – which take Martin Edmond's work as their springboard. She is on the advisory board of the W.H. Oliver Humanities Research Academy at Massey and this colloquium comes out of conversations with Cherie Lacey during a residency at the Stout. She teaches literature and creative nonfiction in the School of English and Media Studies, Massey Wellington, and lives near the zoo with her partner and twin daughters.

### Tina Makereti



Tina Makereti's most recent essay, 'This Compulsion in Us', was shortlisted for the Landfall Essay Competition 2014, and will appear in *Landfall 229*. Other essays include 'An Englishman, an Irishman and a Welshman Walk Into a Pā' (*Sport 40*), 'He Taonga Te Reo' (*Tell You What: Great NZ Non-fiction 2015*), and 'Twitch' (*NZ Listener*), which won the RSNZ Manhire Prize for Creative Science Writing (non-fiction) in 2009. Her fiction includes the novel *Where the Rēkohu Bone Sings* (Vintage), and short story collection *Once Upon a Time*

*in Aotearoa* (Huia). She has taught Life Writing at Massey University, where Ingrid Horrocks was one of her first creative writing teachers, and is currently convener of

Māori & Pasifika Creative Writing at the International Institute of Modern Letters, which includes creative non-fiction, fiction and poetry. Tina is a descendant of Te Ati Awa, Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Maniapoto, Pākehā and Moriori ancestors. She finds personal essay a challenging and exciting form which somehow mirrors the challenging and exciting place she often finds herself when considering cultural stories.

### Ian Wedde



Engagements with issues of place have characterised much of Ian Wedde's work as a poet, novelist, essayist and curator. A sample would include his contribution to the 1985 symposium, *Te whenua te iwi/ the land and the people*, many of the essays in his two collections (*How to be Nowhere – essays and texts 1971-1994*, and *Making Ends Meet – essays and talks 1992-2004*), his 'Pacific' novel *Symmes Hole* (1986), his satirical novel *The Viewing Platform* (2006), the 2008 Centennial Exhibition *He Korowai o te Wai: the Mantle of Water* for the Rotorua Museum of Art and history, chapters in books including *Figuring the Pacific: Aotearoa & Pacific Cultural Studies* (2005), essays in several catalogues including Anne Noble's *ice blink: an Antarctic imaginary* (2011), and most recently his book-length essay about place, home and memory, *The Grass Catcher* (2014). Poem sequences such as 'Letter to Peter McLeavey' in *Three Regrets and a Hymn to Beauty* (2005), and *The Lifeguard* (2013) have been deeply personal meditations on the question, 'How are you placed?' A work in progress (*The Little Ache – a German Notebook*) involves the displacement of his German great grandparents – and how they haunt the present.

### Tim Corballis



Tim Corballis is a writer based in Wellington. He is the author of the novels *Below* (2001), *Measurement* (2002), and *The Fossil Pits* (2005—all Victoria University Press), as well as a large number of shorter works including short fiction, reviews, essays and art writing. *R.H.I.*, a pair of novellas on psychoanalysis and communism, will be forthcoming in early 2015. His essay *Winter* won the 2013 Landfall Essay Competition. He has been collaborating with photographer Fiona Amundsen since 2004, on works such as *Si C'est (If It Is)* (2007, shown at The Physics Room, Christchurch Te Tuhi, Auckland) and the ongoing project *The Long Fall*. Recently

he completed a doctorate through The University of Auckland, focusing on the possibilities of aesthetic theory in antipodean contexts. In 2015 he will be Victoria University Writer in Residence.

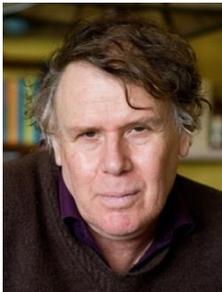
## PANEL TWO

Chaired by **Ashleigh Young**



Ashleigh Young writes poetry and nonfiction. Her collection of essays won the 2009 Adam Foundation Prize and an essay from the collection won the 2009 *Landfall* essay competition. She has published a poetry collection, *Magnificent Moon* (VUP, 2012), and her essays have appeared in *Sport*, *Booknotes*, the *Griffith Review* (Australia), *Five Dials* (UK), and on her personal blog, [eyelashroaming.com](http://eyelashroaming.com). She teaches an undergraduate workshop in creative science writing and works as an editor in Wellington.

## Harry Ricketts



Harry Ricketts teaches English literature and creative non-fiction at Victoria University of Wellington. His books include nine collections of poems (most recently, *Just Then*, 2012), two literary biographies (*The Unforgiving Minute: A Life of Rudyard Kipling*, 1999, and *Strange Meetings: The Lives of the Poets of the Great War*, 2010) and two extended personal essays (*How to Live Elsewhere*, 2004, and *How to Catch a Cricket Match*, 2006). *How to Live Elsewhere*, part of the celebrated Four Winds Press series of 8000-word essays on different

subjects, reflects on a peripatetic childhood, spent in the UK, Malaysia and Hong Kong, and later ricochetings which led to coming to live in New Zealand in 1981. *How to Catch a Cricket Match* is a 20,000-word book-length essay, organised around the detailed account – including drinks, lunch and tea intervals – of a single day’s play during a Test match between New Zealand and the West Indies at the Basin Reserve in March 2006. The book blends cricket history, cricket literature and cricket instruction with personal reminiscence, and is a (very) gappy autobiography of sorts. It has been reprinted and twice broadcast on National Radio. Earlier this year a shorter personal essay, “On Masks and Migration”, appeared in the *Pacific Highways* issue of the *Griffith Review*. This picks up on

themes from *How to Live Elsewhere*, particularly the opportunity for reinvention in the new place.

## Jack Ross



I suppose that my approach to the idea of the personal essay fixed both in time and space has always been defined partly through literature, partly through autobiography. Examples of the first would range from "Kendrick Smithyman's Northland" (*pander* 1, 1997) to "Paul Celan & Leicester Kyle: The Zone and the Plateau" (*Ka Mate Ka Ora* 13, 2014). Examples of the second might include "A Strange Day in the Language School" (*Landfall* 203, 2002) and "Old Shore" (*Trout* 17, 2012). The work I'm engaged on at present is a kind of rambling history of the genre of New Zealand Speculative Fiction (NZSF), fixed in time by a series of canonical texts (*Erewhon*, *Smith's Dream*, *The Quiet Earth*, *Lear*, *Pioneers*, *Wake*), but informed by my own gradual discovery of these texts, first as a teenage SF-fan, then as a budding literary nationalist. The trick is, on the one hand, to avoid a formless personal ramble; on the other, to evade dogmatic lit crit pontifications. Wish me luck!

Jack Ross is a Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at Massey University's Auckland Campus. His latest book, *A Clearer View of the Hinterland: Poems and Sequences 1981-2014*, was published by HeadworX in 2014. His other publications include four poetry collections, three novels, and three volumes of short fiction. He has also edited a number of books and literary magazines, including (from 2014) *Poetry NZ*. Further details are available on his blog *The Imaginary Museum*, at <http://mairangibay.blogspot.com/>.

## Giovanni Tiso



Giovanni Tiso is an Italian writer and translator based in Wellington. He completed a PhD in English Literature at Victoria University in 2006 on the topic of the relationship between memory and technology. Two years later he began blogging at *Bat, Bean, Beam* (<http://bat-bean-beam.blogspot.co.nz/>) as a way of continuing his research and bringing it to a wider public. Over time, a strand of the essays on the blog became steadily more personal, initially in connection with the issue of the transmission of family memory and Giovanni's yearly trips back home to Italy. The peculiar nature of blog writing and the complex, multi-layered

feedback of its readers have informed in turn the direction of these autobiographical writings.

Giovanni has written about media and politics for a range of publications including *The New Inquiry*, *The New Humanist* and *The Guardian*, and is a featured writer for the Australian literary journal *Overland*.

## Lynn Jenner



I'm here on this panel as a writing practitioner not a theorist. My texts often involve formal experimentation. My inclusion is based specifically on a text in the *Griffith Review 43* titled 'Thinking about waves'. In terms of the 6 questions that make up the kaupapa of this day, that piece of text definitely fits into number 4, in the sense that it is a piece of formal experimentation. The process of publishing 'Thinking about waves' highlights some of the uncertainties and consequences of 'formal experimentation. I am very

interested to hear the voices from across disciplinary borders at this Colloquium. Tuning in to voices from across borders helps with most things.

My *Griffith Review* text represents 'located personal experience as a crucial site for critical reflection and political engagement'. (website information 'About' this day) It does this in a form based on my aesthetics and my views of knowledge. I am not sure if my text falls into the category of non-fiction or not and I am not about to secure it by tying it to either of these pillars.

In keeping with these sentiments, I was not the person who gave it the title 'essay'. I gave it the title 'Thinking about waves'. I gave it a visually oriented form that allowed me to use a variety of sources, to combine them with economy and to represent uncertainty. I gave it a fictional skeleton of a pretend research journal, a narrator who bears some relation to myself, and I gave it every bit of encouragement I could to develop in the reader's mind from juxtaposition into metaphor.

'Thinking about waves', the text, returned to me in the *Griffith Review 43* as an Essay, with a banal subtitle, and most of its white spaces removed.

I am not yet sure how I can influence the ways my texts are treated in genre enforcement situations. Perhaps I could do more to mediate their reception?