Editors' Introduction

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Welcome to our November 2009 issue of *Australian Humanities Review*.

In our Target Essay 'Grizzling about Facebook', Meaghan Morris brilliantly and provocatively tackles the grievances and forebodings, often issuing from print journalism, about the impact of the online environment on everyday life, the future of sociability and possibilities for political change. As a response to what she calls 'grizzling'—fretful or helpless responses to technological and cultural power shifts—Morris delves into the complex realities of online social interaction. While she reminds us of Facebook's complicity in processes of commodification—its simultaneous promotion and limitation of consumer 'choice'—she ultimately insists on the political effectivity of the 'grizzling' of Facebook users as exemplary of a new dynamics of collective action within what is essentially a corporately-owned and controlled social domain.

The question of sociability is also central to Ken Gelder's essay, 'English, Autonomy, and the Republic of Letters', which broaches the question of the future of literary studies in an age of competitive funding and disciplinary fragmentation. This essay situates current debates about literature's identity, autonomy and political potential in the context of its disciplinary history and its roots in the *petite monde* of the seventeenth-century 'republic of letters'. Gelder asks whether literary studies continues to be delimited by this historical antecedent, which orients it in secular, socially-progressive but fundamentally inward-looking ways; and whether its habitual defence of its autonomy not only ensures its marginality in contemporary models of knowledge production, but also continues to characterise its critical potential?

We also present a selection of papers from *The Art of the Real*, a conference dedicated to Creative Non-Fiction held in Newcastle in May 2008. Introduced by Keri Glastonbury and Rosalind Smith, each of the three essays explores different questions about the representation of the 'real'. Ross Gibson's keynote 'Extractive Realism' explores the art of eliciting connective structures from seemingly random details, his conjunction of haiku and Lúkacs itself exemplary of the practice. Cameron Muir's 'The Opera House of the West' takes the reader on a tour of the massive and neglected Burrendong Dam, in a meditation on

the environmental costs of nation-building, while Patricia Pender's 'The Perfect Electrometer' reads Dorothy Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journals* as uncannily exemplary of the rhetorical repertoires of Roland Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse*.

The Ecological Humanities features a special issue on 'Writing in the Anthropocene'. The term 'Anthropocene' was coined by Nobel laureate Paul J. Crutzen to designate the new geological epoch, following the Holocene and conventionally understood to begin with the invention of the steam engine in 1784, in which human activities begin to have a significant impact on the planet's life-support systems. Each of the six essays in this section responds to Val Plumwood's challenge to find new ways of writing in the Anthropocene that take us beyond anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism.

In the Book Reviews section, Deborah Madsen reviews Ouyang Yu's *Chinese in Australian Literature, 1888-1988*; Nathan Hollier reviews a special issue of *Journal of Australian Colonial History* dedicated to historian Russell Ward and his enduring figure of the 'Australian Legend'; Christine McPaul reviews Chris Healy's *Forgetting Aborigines* while Healy himself reviews Robert Kenny's *The Lamb Enters the Dreaming: Nathanael Pepper and the Ruptured World*.