

Writing at the End of the World?

A Gathering to Re-imagine Our Contributions in this Rapidly Changing World

July 10-11, 2009, Macquarie University

**LONDON - Climate change will wipe out most life on Earth by the end of this century and mankind is too late to avert catastrophe, a leading British climate scientist [James Lovelock] said.
(Planet Ark, 26-2-09)**



In this short article, James Lovelock announces the beginning of the end. George Monbiot sums up the issues in his always pithy way:

"Quietly in public, loudly in private, climate scientists everywhere are saying the same thing: it's over. The years in which more than two degrees of global warming could have been prevented have passed ... Mitigation (limiting greenhouse gas pollution) has failed; now we must adapt to what nature sends our way. If we can."

So rapidly, and so harshly, thought about the end and post-end is gaining edge. Alan Weisman challenges us with the idea of *The World Without Us*, examining the legacies of humanity's short, hard-hitting un-making of the world into which we came into being. Science fiction, with its long history of imagining post-apocalyptic worlds of all kinds, is joined by mainstream authors like Cormac McCarthy, whose book *The Road* is one of newest and most frightening.

This summit of both junior and senior scholars has been organised in response to this growing assertion that we may now be living at the edge of the end. With special guest James Hatley (*Suffering Witness: The Quandary of Responsibility after the Irreparable*), the summit aims to consider some of the profound questions facing us as scholars, writers, and human beings at the current time:

... What does it mean to write at the end of the world? Is this, in fact, our current situation? What do we who care so much about these issues and who write primarily within academic modes have to offer? Are we called to write differently, and if so, in what ways? What forms of witness can engage with such enormities? Are the ethics of our work adequate? Are our concepts adequate? How can we respond effectively in such a rapidly changing world context ...?

Friday, 10 July

Late afternoon: public lecture by James Hatley (Room W5A-T2).
Evening: drinks and snacks.

Saturday, 11 July

9-5: round table discussion (Room C5C-372).
Evening: dinner for those who have the stamina to keep going.

The following participants have agreed to present five minutes of introductory thoughts at the roundtable discussion:

James Hatley (Salisbury State University), Heather Goodall (UTS), Martin Harrison (UTS), Kumi Kato (UQ), Freya Mathews (Latrobe), Kate Rigby (Monash), Deborah Rose (Macquarie), Mark Tredinnick (Macquarie), Linda Williams (RMIT) and Aidan Davison (UTAS).