

**RMIT University**

**Julienne van Loon**

**Embodied subjectivity and the project of the contemporary literary essay**

Abstract:

The essay's capacity to narrate a situated and embodied experience that entwines poetics, politics and affect enables the form a particular methodology. Contemporary critical theorist Rosi Braidotti has argued for the urgent need to revise theoretical aspects of affect and authenticity so as to more fully register the increasingly complex way we experience embodied subjectivity (2013). In this article, I argue that the contemporary literary essayist is well placed to negotiate such a revision, and that renewed interest in the form of the literary essay during the last two decades can be read as a timely contribution to such a project.

Biographical note:

Julienne van Loon is a Vice Chancellor's Senior Research Fellow with non/fictionLab in the School of Media and Communication at RMIT University in Melbourne. She is the author of *Road Story* (2005), *Beneath the Bloodwood Tree* (2008), and *Harmless* (2013). She won *The Australian/Vogel's Award* in 2004 and her work has been shortlisted for the WA Premier's Prize for Fiction and the Commonwealth Writers Prize (First Book Award). Julienne is a Director at the Australian Society of Authors and Associate Editor at *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Courses*.

Keywords:

Literary essay – Posthumanism – Subjectivity – Rosi Braidotti

## Introduction

Contemporary critical theorists have argued for the urgent need to revise theoretical aspects of affect and authenticity so as to more fully register the increasingly complex way we experience embodied subjectivity (Tanner 2009; Braidotti 2013). In this paper, I argue that the contemporary literary essay is well placed to negotiate such a revision, and that renewed interest in the form during the last two decades can be read as a timely contribution to such a project. The essay's capacity to narrate a situated and embodied experience that entwines poetics, politics and affect enables the form a particular methodology.

As Astrid Lorange (2009) writes in her article on the essay in *TEXT* journal, 'The "presentness" of the essay form asks: *what now*, and *now what*?' I am interested in the way in which literary essays published post the events of 11 September 2001 elucidate relationality at the same time as they 'attempt to reconstruct a missing link between aesthetics and politics' – a characteristic Ahmed Gamal has noted of the post-September 11 novel (2012: 96). The form of the literary essay, I argue, enables a critical practice in which poetics, politics and affect come together to help both writer and reader approach a set of events or questions that might remain otherwise incomprehensible. In and through creative practice, a skillful literary essayist can imbue even the most abstract, philosophical or scientific of topics with a situated, embodied subjectivity, with what Rosi Braidotti (via Adrienne Rich) has identified as a 'politics of location' that is central to the critical theoretical turn of the posthuman (2013: 22). Essayists, it seems, pay attention to 'accountable knowledge practices' (Braidotti 2013: 51). Such practices, in and through the doing, shy 'away from the violence of dogma', a characteristic of the personal essay admired by Robert Louis Stevenson more than a century ago (qtd. in Lopate 1994: xliii).

This article provides close readings of three very different adventures in the literary essay form: Gillian Mears' 'Alive in *Ant and Bee*' (2007), 'The Follower' by Damon Galgut (2010), and Marina Warner's 'Thought Experiments: Flight before Flight' (2011). These three examples, I argue, connect the subject and experience, text and life, in such a way as to deliberately 'complicate what we thought we knew' (Retallack qtd. in Lorange 2009). As such, each of these essays enables important cultural, creative and critical work on embodied subjectivity during a period of chaos, grief and political violence.

I use the term literary essay loosely, but genre can only ever be talked about loosely, as the (itself) wonderfully playful essay on genre Jacques Derrida wrote some decades ago has shown us: the end result of strict classification can only ever be a 'brutal and mercilessly depleting selectivity' (1980: 66). To mention genre at all is to cordon some works off, and to distance others, but it remains, in my view, a useful practice to set oneself to thinking about why particular forms, with particular characteristics, arise and become popular with both readers and writers during certain historical periods and among particular populations. I position myself, an educated Australian reader and writer of both literary fiction and non-fiction, as someone to whom the recent flurry of literary essays has been both directed and well-received. For now, I am content to define my key terms fairly broadly: by essay, I mean a piece of writing that sets out, in the

spirit of the word's Latin and French origins, to test the quality of an idea, to weigh something up (Oxford Dictionary of English 2009: loc. 238131); by literary, I mean a mode of writing that is centrally (but not wholly) concerned with aesthetics, and with the relation between aesthetics and meaning.

### **Post September Eleven essays: writing out of the chaos, grief and violence of now**

I am particularly interested in the pressure and imperative many writers in the west seem to be feeling to contemplate and narrate a highly personalised and political life/world post the events of September Eleven. In the journal *Salmagundi* in 1997 Mary Gordon published an article titled 'The literary essay: an endangered species?' The essay had, at that time, lost momentum and was not popular with readers, writers or publishers. I doubt Gordon would find the impetus for such an article now.

In some ways the events of 11 September 2001 in New York might be deemed an arbitrary – and US-centric – marker of time. Nevertheless, the events are widely regarded as a key turning point in global politics and in the politics of identity. According to a US Department Fact Sheet, some 3212 people died in the terrorist events of September 11, while millions of Iraqis have died in the bombing and occupation of that country since (qtd. in Kensinger 2009: 50). These figures exclude of course the acts of violence related to ethnic and religious hatred that have taken place since 2001 in Palestine, Burma, Chechnya, Sudan, Syria, western Europe and elsewhere over the last decade and a half. Over the same period we have seen a rise of neo-conservative politics across western democracies, a backlash against feminism and environmentalism, virulent rhetorical arguments about atheism and religion, and the constant simplification of conflict into a shallow good versus evil narrative that plays out again and again in the daily news media. It is on these chaotic grounds that the form of the literary essay makes a comeback. Why?

In 2003, Jacques Derrida suggested that the excessively visible nature of September 11 preempted any effective 'hermeneutic apparatus', that the attacks destabilised our attempts to 'comprehend, interpret, describe, speak of' the events (qtd. in Gleich 2014: 162). Perhaps this was so in the immediate aftermath of the event, but fifteen years later the situation is different. The singularity of the event is no longer dominant; the conflicts have multiplied and fractured. Slavoj Žižek, in a now famous post September 11 essay titled 'Welcome to the Desert of the Real', writes of the futility of the US response to September 11, particularly in the acts of violence perpetrated by the US in the Middle East since the event:

The ultimate threat does not come from out there, from the fundamentalist Other, but from within, from our lassitude and moral weakness, loss of clear values and firm commitments, of the spirit of dedication and sacrifice. (2002: 154)

In other words: let's look inwards.

### **Posthumanism**

It is no coincidence that over roughly the same two-decade period, contemporary

critical theory has been trying to come to terms with the end of Humanism, the shortcomings of postmodernism (sometimes categorised as anti-humanism) and the difficult question of how to think about the subject in the context of volatile global politics. My reading of the literary essay in this article relies heavily on the work of Rosi Braidotti's book *The Posthuman* (2013). Posthuman critical theory has, in Braidotti's terms, 'a serious concern for the subject' (52). It is a concern which 'encourages us to undertake a leap forward into the complexities and paradoxes of our times' and one that 'requires new conceptual creativity' in order to meet the task at hand (54). For Braidotti, the posthumanism perspective 'rests on the decline of Humanism, but goes further in exploring alternatives, without sinking into the rhetoric of the crisis of Man. It works instead towards elaborating alternative ways of conceptualizing the human subject' (37). A key methodology for Braidotti's brand of posthumanism is attention to the politics of location:

The posthuman subject is not postmodern, that is to say it is not anti-foundationalist. Nor is it deconstructivist, because it is not linguistically framed. The posthuman subjectivity I advocate is rather materialist and vitalist, embodied and embedded, firmly located somewhere according to the feminist 'politics of location.' (51)

Braidotti's vitalism is a bid to recognise the subject as a dynamic, energetic assemblage: a form driven not by the preservation of boundaries but by the privileging of affinity, transformation and change. Empathy and compassion are key features of her vision for such a subject. Enter the essayist: a narrator of whom we require location and a sense of reliability, even if we know that s/he is also, already a shifting presence.

I am interested in the way recent formations of the literary essay 'shed light on the intricate nature of otherness' (Gamal 2010: 96)<sup>1</sup>. Michel Foucault in *The Masked Philosopher* dreamed of a criticism that would not try to judge (qtd. in Abel 2003: 1246). While we cannot step outside the bounds of representation and language to fully achieve such a dream, there is something about how contemporary literary essayists approach and privilege the politics of location that edges us closer to that dream.

### **Gillian Mears' Rehabilitated Ambulance**

In 'Alive in *Ant and Bee*', first published in 2007, the Australian novelist Gillian Mears writes the personal literary essay as a kind of road narrative. The work documents her period of living in an ambulance repurposed as a campervan, as she recovers from emergency open-heart surgery after acute endocarditis that had been left wilfully untreated for a significant period. The *Ant and Bee* of the title is the thirty-year-old vehicle that Mears buys from a shonky used-car dealer in Sydney: an ambulance converted, in the humblest way, into a home on wheels. It is an actual thing: a shelter, a vehicle. It is also a structural metaphor.

The question at the centre of Mears' essay is a question of why: why did she allow herself to become 'so nearly a corpse'? In the bush, camping with *Ant and Bee*, her mistakes and the trouble they landed her in are almost incomprehensible to her. In love with a macrobiotics practitioner whose treatment regime included not only severe dietary restrictions but also an isolated existence cut off from family and friends and

with no recourse to Western medicine, Mears arrived at the hospital in Grafton in 2002 extraordinarily close to death. She weighed a mere 39 kilograms. Her liver had shut down. A streptococcal vegetation was living off the mitral valve of her heart. In addition to this she had been suffering with undiagnosed multiple-sclerosis for the previous seven years. Taking off to the bush in *Ant and Bee* after ending the abusive relationship, and some months after being released from hospital, enables Mears to take control of her own narrative again. It is only here that she finds herself able to look back and try to make sense of the dreadful experience she calls 'a penumbral eclipse of my life' (1). The story of her ex-lover's physical and emotional abuse is one in which she has been shockingly complicit.

'In a sunny glade,' writes Mears, 'lying on a blanket, I place my hands there over the vertical scar to let it be 2002 again' (12). Like Don de Lillo's post-September 11 narrator in the novel *The Falling Man*, Mears' narrator is not quite returned to her body yet; in fact, because of the debilitating condition of MS, she may never fully re-inhabit it in the sense of regaining full control: the chemical cocktail of antibiotics that saved her from her heart infection has destroyed her inner ear and she will never walk without an aid again. The form of the literary essay enables Mears a critical practice, a form in which poetics and ethics merge to help the author approach a set of events or questions that have up until now seemed incomprehensible. Through this mode of writing Mears can look back at the choices she has made, and especially at the worst of her catastrophes. She is in this sense what Gore Vidal has called, the true confessor (qtd in Lopate 1994: xxxvii).

The 'presentness' of Mears' essay is anchored in her detailed descriptions of making bread by hand in her unpowered campsite; it is a practice over which she has mastery. Bread-making reinforces her position in the material world, stabilising her presence in time and space. While she is kneading she listens to events in Iraq unfold via the car radio. It is significant, I think, that the War on Terror reaches the recovering narrator devoid of images.

In her 2007 book, *The Terror Dream*, Susan Faludi documents the disappearance of women's voices in the aftermath of September 11, as media narratives recast and privilege the masculine hero stereotype, and the role of the woman is reduced to helpless victim, or dependent in need of constant protection and management. Such mythology is powerful and has been relentlessly reinforced in cultural politics over the last decade-and-a-half. In Mears' case it almost killed her, literally. Drusilla Modjeska, who included 'Alive in *Ant and Bee*' in the *Best Australian Essays 2007*, sees Mears' refitted ambulance as a metaphor for the essay itself, a means of re-engaging in a vexed political culture. *I am alive*, Mears insists, in and through her practice as essayist. *My life is real. This is how reality is made.*

For Braidotti, posthumanism's concern for the subject urges us to take into account 'the elements of creativity and imagination, desire, hopes and aspirations without which we simply cannot make sense of contemporary global culture and its posthuman overtones' (2013: 52). Mears' example of dramatic, invasive medical intervention to save her heart situates her close to the edge of what it is to be human in the context of the contemporary scientific advances: such acts complicate established understandings of the self. The

emergency medical invasion/rescue might be read as an example of what the posthumanist Massumi (1998) sees as the materiality of the human undergoing significant mutations: ‘species integrity is lost in a bio-chemical mode expressing the mutability of human matter’ (qtd. in Braidotti 2013: 65). Mears’ bread kneading calls her back to an extended and altered self, in the posthuman sense. Her practice is enacted on a material form, but it is an enactment that foregrounds malleability. Mears’ illness is other to her. It is also intricately and intimately written – through the form and practice of the essay – into the self she is/was always becoming. Her life – her experience – has not and now cannot disappear.<sup>2</sup>

### **Peculiar long-legged insects in Damon Galgut’s *In a Strange Room***

An excerpt from Damon Galgut’s book, *In a Strange Room* (2010), published a decade after the events of September 11, is perhaps the strangest ‘exhibit’ in this article on the contemporary literary essay. I am interested in the first of the three sections of the book – titled ‘The Follower’ – which relays the protagonist/narrator’s experience of walking alone along an isolated hill track in Greece. Early in the work, the narrator comes across a stranger walking the other way on the same path; the two share a brief and somewhat peculiar conversation, and then the narrator walks on:

He gets to the ruins in the middle of the afternoon. I can’t even remember now what they are, the remains of some big but obscure building, there was no fence that had to be climbed, there was a fear of dogs but no dogs appeared, he stumbles around among rocks and pillars and ledges, he tries to imagine how it was but history resists imagining. He sits on the edge of a raised stone floor and stares out unseeingly into the hills around him and now he is thinking of things that happened in the past. Looking back at him through time, I remember him remembering, and I am more present in the scene than he was. But memory has its own distances, in part he is me entirely, in part he is a stranger I am watching. (5)

Forty pages on, the same narrator is in the midst of another long walk, this time through Africa. His companion is the stranger he first met in Greece. They are resting for a few days in their campsite when the author quotes from William Faulkner. These lines are given without the use of quotation marks, as follows, and are significant for their reference to the title of Galgut’s larger work:

He wanders around the campsite, trying to revive, he thinks about everything and resolves nothing, he washes his clothes in the river and drapes them over the rocks to dry. Then he sits in the sun, listening to the water, reading. In a strange room you must empty yourself for sleep. And before you are emptied for sleep, what are you. And when you are emptied for sleep, you are not. And when you are filled with sleep, you never were. The words come to him from a long way off. He puts down the book and stares at peculiar long-legged insects on the surface of the river, they dart frantically back and forth, living out their whole lives in space of one or two metres, they know nothing about him or his troubles, even now they’re unaware of him watching, their otherness is complete. (46)

Galgut's work seeks out and underlines estrangement, but it leaves us with a particularly startling sense of the strangeness of embodied experience. 'The project ... was to recall, as honestly and as truthfully as I could, three journeys that I've taken at different points in my life,' he told a journalist for *The Guardian* in 2010. His emphasis on honesty and truth is of interest here, particularly given that some reviewers, in line with some of the work's marketing, read the book as a novel. Novelistic it may be, but 'The Follower' is a work that is thoroughly in tune with the essay's project to test the quality of something, to weigh something up – perhaps life in Faulkner's strange room – but the very impossibility of the honesty and truth project is quite visible to both writer and reader. It is usefully problematic. The author cannot reach the man he is trying to remember: he both is and is not that man. He is and is not the first person, the third person. He is and is not Faulkner, the stranger, the insect. The struggle to locate the physical, material body in the (unfamiliar) material landscape is important here. We might notice how impossibility, along with relationality, is embedded in the syntax, in Galgut's heavy reliance on the run-on sentence. Full stops are too final, too finite. It is as if a complex, grammatically-correct sentence cannot be trusted to convey the very partiality and relationality of his subject position. His attempts to essay – to complicate, interpret, describe, speak of – are inherently and self-consciously destabilised and this tone of destabilisation is threaded in and through the essay's poetics. It is a work that, in my view, crystallises the contemporary literary essayist's deeply posthuman concerns. Fiction or non? That's the wrong question.

In her article, 'Holding on to 9/11: the shifting grounds of materiality', Laura Tanner writes that, 'apprehending 9/11 ... highlights the need to revise theoretical aspects of affect and authenticity that fail to register the increasingly complex way we experience embodied subjectivity' (2014: 59). Similarly, in her discussion of September 11 in *Precarious Life*, Judith Butler impresses upon us the need to revisit some significant categories, to critically question the fundamentals precisely because the categories we use to order and name reality need reassessing: 'What is real? Whose lives are real? How might reality be made?' (qtd. in Tanner 2014: 59). Galgut's already-failed and yet paradoxically successful attempt at honest recall addresses precisely these concerns.

For Braidotti, one of the key projects of the posthuman is to re-align humans in relation to others, and to recognise a sense of egalitarianism between humans and animals. Galgut's vision of long-legged insects as both deeply familiar and deeply strange has a shocking element to it: how might we be them, or them us? How might we/they be other? For me, his long-legged insects might be contemporary literary essayists, darting frantically back and forth over the same ten pages of words, threading themselves into a mode of being and understanding that is more fully present in the practice than could possibly have been the case in the moment: re-imagining history with an unseemly and disturbing attention to the question of 'What now?' Braidotti conceives of posthuman writing as writing *as if already gone*: 'thinking beyond the bounded self is the ultimate form of defamiliarisation' (2013: 137). It seems to me that Galgut's chosen form and method is precisely this.

## Marina Warner's Thought Experiments

Where Gillian Mears' essay fits the confessional mode, narrating a profound struggle to recover a deeply embodied subjectivity, and Galgut's work troubles the borders between observed and observer, between self and other, in a more lyrical, semi-novelistic mode, Marina Warner's essay 'Thought Experiments: Flight Before Flight,' published in her collection of essays on the *Arabian Nights* in 2011, sits closer to the tradition of literary criticism. Warner's essay looks at flight as a form of enchantment in the *Arabian Nights*, and at the adoption of flight in imaginative literature in the west post the widespread dissemination of the *Nights* in Europe.

The violence of flight in September 11 twin-towers imagery, and the many skirmishes since, contrasts heavily with the uses flight is put to in the *Nights*. Warner has written elsewhere of the way in which combat myths, that tell the story of a struggle between a hero and a diabolical enemy, have gained a 'fresh energy' since September 11 and the world powers' political and military response to it. 'Destruction, extermination, annihilation,' she writes, 'these are the triumphant goals of the hero combat myth' ('Combat myths' 2004: 391). The privileging of these kinds of narratives has come at the expense of other models, such as those that spin on the possibility of metamorphoses and transformation. Unlike the violent and destructive uses of flight in the combat narrative, flight in the stories of *Arabian Nights* is very much about pleasure. Warner writes:

The idea of flying – like birds, like angels – opened a vista of metaphorical meanings for the human subject, associated with angelic bodilessness, sexual delight, fairy ethereality, untrammelled motion, uplift and intoxication – and also with vertigo, disorientation, the unbearable lightness of being. (2011: 331)

The essay opens with reference to a story from the *Nights*: that of Camar al-Zaman and Princess Badoura, one of several long romances told by Shahrazad over many nights. The heroine Badoura is as strong-willed and capable as her husband Camar: the two refuse to marry as instructed by their families, and jinn in flight are, as Warner puts it, 'the catalysts of the protagonists' passion' (2011: 330). As this emblematic story-within-a-story illustrates:

In the *Nights*, flying gives one of the most characteristic fantasy experiences of the stories. Through flying, the realm of the jinn touches and transforms the human body. Flight happens without any to-do; it is a dynamic of the plot, an element of the narrative material, a defining feature in its momentum (its time signature), and the key image of oneiric storytelling. (2011: 331)

Transformation stories, as Warner has noted elsewhere, are often associated with women: 'one of the striking features of the current fantasies about evil is their thoroughgoing maleness,' she writes in her essay 'Combat Myths' first published in 2002 (2004: 391). It is notable that Warner began writing *Stranger Magic* during the first Gulf War, and 'continued during the many appalling and unresolved conflicts in the regions where the *Nights* originated. 'I wanted to present another side of the culture cast as the enemy,' she says in her book's conclusion, 'an alternative history to vengeance and war' (*Stranger Magic*: 2011 436). Where Mears works with the first-person terrain of immediate experience, Warner's essay works at a meta-level to counter the narrative politics outlined in the aforementioned *Terror Dream* outlined by



Susan Faludi. She takes our attention away from the dominant narratives: here is an alternative way to connect aesthetics and politics. There are no borders in the dream flights of the *Nights*. Further, the journey of that set of narratives into European literature is presented here as a delicious, wondrous gift. Warner places our attention on the questions of when and where and how these stories might have the potential to change the way we think.

The fantastic creatures Warner selects to describe in her essay can be read as an answer to Donna Haraway's call for 'new images, visions and representations of the human-animal continuum' (qtd. in Braidotti 2013: 74). Haraway's Oncomouse – the world's first patented animal, a kind of transgenic organism created for the purposes of research – may have a starkly different reason-for-being, but s/he is no less effective at opening up the 'vista of metaphorical meanings for the human subject' observed by Warner.

I am reminded here of D'Agata's commentary on the essay as a genre that functions 'more like a mind: one that can explore the consolidation of ideas, images, emotions, and facts through the negotiation of memory, anecdote, observation, history, religion' (2009: 467). And also, again, of Braidotti, who conceives of the posthuman thinker as 'a new knowing subject'. The posthuman subject is neither human nor divine, but 'relentless[ly] material and vowed to multi-directional and cross-species relationality' (Braidotti 2013: 136-7).

## Conclusion

Essays like the three I have described here are doing important cultural work in a period of chaos, grief, political violence and environmental stress. The pressure and imperative many writers seem to be feeling to connect aesthetics and politics, the subject and experience, text and life, marries very well with the need many contemporary readers have for the situated voice of the essayist, one inherently caught up with the politics of location. As Braidotti argues, posthumanism shifts us into territory well beyond the classical idea of 'Man' first formulated by the ancient Greeks as 'the measure of all things' (2013: 13). The Humanist values invested in the iconic image of Leonardo Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man – an ideal of bodily perfection that doubles as a set of 'mental, discursive, and spiritual values' (2013: 13) – is of no use to us here and now. While the essay form is notable for its yearning to 'complicate what we thought we knew' (Retallack qtd. in Lorange 2009), my argument is that it is its 'presentness' that links it in important ways to the embodied and embedded materialist method, and that enables its potential for embracing and making visible the possibility of transformation (or new understanding). Such a method drives home for both readers and writers the contemporary literary essay's sense of affective and aesthetic urgency. Perhaps the mystery of 'why this form now?' is really not so mysterious at all. The literary essay is vibrant, vital and methodologically suited to help us make sense of the complex way we experience subjectivity in a posthuman, post-September 11 world.

## Endnotes

1. Gamal makes these observations in relation to the post-September 11 novel. I feel they are equally relevant to non-fiction engaging with politics, ethics and the personal after September 11.
2. During 2016, as I was writing this article, Gillian Mears died from complications to do with her long-term illness.

## Works cited

- Abel, M 2003 'Don DeLillo's *In the ruins of the future*: literature, images and the rhetoric of seeing 9/11', *PMLA* 118, 5: 1236-1250
- Braidotti, R 2013 *The posthuman*, Polity, London
- D'Agata, J 2009 *The lost origins of the essay*, Minneapolis, Greywolf Press
- Derrida, J 1980 'The law of genre', Trans. A Ronell, *Critical inquiry* 7, 1: 55-81
- Galgut, D 2010 *In a strange room*, London, Atlantic
- Galgut, D 2010 'Damon Galgut talks about *In a strange room*' *The guardian* (10 Sept): <https://www.theguardian.com/books/audio/2010/sep/07/booker-prize-shortlist-damon-galgut> (accessed 4 Jan 2017)
- Gamal, A 2012 "'Encounters with strangeness" in the post 9/11 novel', *Interdisciplinary literary studies* 14, 1: 95-116
- Gleich, L S 2014 'Ethics in the wake of the image: the post 9/11 fiction of de Lillo, Auster and Foer', *Journal of modern literature* 37, 3: 161-176.
- Gordon, M 1997 'The literary essay: an endangered species?', *Salmagundi* 116/117: 55-60
- Kensinger, L 2009 'Radical lessons: thoughts on Emma Goldman, chaos, grief, and political violence', *Feminist Teacher* 20, 1: 50-70
- Lopate, P 1994, 'Introduction', *The art of the personal essay*, P Lopate (ed), Random House, New York: xxii-liv
- Lorange, A 2014 'The essay as', *TEXT special issue 5: the art of the real* (April): <http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue5/lorange.htm> (accessed 4 Jan 2017.)
- Mears, G 2007 'Alive in *Ant and Bee*', *Heat (new series)* 13: 7-30
- Modjeska, D 2007 'Introduction', *Best Australian essays 2007*, Black Inc., Melbourne: 1-9
- Oxford dictionary of English*, 2009, Second Ed., Rev., Oxford, Oxford University Press
- Tanner, L E 2014 'The shifting grounds of materiality', *PMLA* 127, 1: 58-76
- Warner, M 2011 'Thought experiments: flight before flight', *Stranger magic: charmed states & the Arabian nights*, Vintage, London: 331-356
- 2004 'Combat myths', *Signs and wonders: essays on literature and culture*, Vintage, London: 389-392
- Zizek, S 2002 *Welcome to the desert of the real! five essays on September 11 and related dates*, Verso, London