

Storying *with* Groundwater

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Subterranean waters enable life. Humans, non-human animals and enmeshed ecosystems of more-than-human entities, such as river and creek sides, mound springs and swamps, interact with groundwater in a myriad of complex relationships. Hundreds of Australian inland towns and communities rely on bore water. Population counts of people dependent on aquifers across Australia, on the Asian and African continents, in the Middle East and across the Americas reach into the billions. Despite this, there are few literary expressions of groundwater's potency and vulnerability in the Australian imaginary (Wardle). This essay draws upon fictional portrayals of groundwater from the climate fiction manuscript, *Why We Cry* (Wardle), to suggest the ways that climate fiction might make a small shift from the 'derangement' of blindness to subterranean places through the novel's endeavours to osmotically affect readers.

The science of hydrogeology provides extraordinary information about subterranean waters. However numerous hydrogeologists acknowledge the many unknowns and uncertainties in their field (Fitts 4; Jarvis 2-3). I use the generic terms groundwater and aquifers throughout this essay, but acknowledge the immense diversity of locations, ages, movements and ways that humans interact with sub-surface waters. Accelerating feats of engineering through the use of deep bore augers that can burrow kilometres into the earth's crust, enormous water pumps that can extract from these depths, and complex irrigation systems that spread the waters over many square kilometres, indicate how the human quest to reach and extract groundwater is now reaching new scales. Where is the reply from groundwater itself? Are humans, particularly white settlers occupying Indigenous Country, listening for the response, maintaining an eye to relational and ecological sustainability? The intra-actions that derive from acknowledging the agential materiality of groundwater invite storytelling into new terrains (Bennett; Barad). I acknowledge the mix of limitations and privileges that attach to my positionality as a white settler writer. In this essay I discuss the dilemmas and challenges of connecting and writing *with* subterranean waters.

In the context of escalating climate catastrophes and the variability and uncertainty of the effects of global warming on groundwater reserves (Novicky et al. 8), telling stories *about* groundwater is not enough. The underground territory I explore as a climate fiction writer and a scholar invites ways of considering three aspects of writing *with* groundwater. I initially discuss problems of writing climate fiction, including ways to 'story' enormous and largely invisible entities. Second, I expand upon how climate fiction writers might imagine

groundwater as ‘storied matter’. Finally, I consider how the notion of ‘osmotic skins’, a way of thinking and writing for affect, contributes to writing climate fictions. This essay explores ways to illuminate narrative voice of the more-than-human world in contemporary climate fiction. Storying *with* groundwater I shall argue is a strategy that may enhance human capacities to live relationally with these significant watery entities.

Writing Climate Fiction

Exposing the entanglements of human, non-human lives and more-than-human entities through narratives that listen for and evoke the deep-time tones of groundwater enlivens the problems of climate fiction. Here I mention three strategies which illuminate the potential for climate fiction writers to work with entanglements. First, bringing the science of groundwater to life opens the possibilities of making the complexities of hydrogeology accessible to a wider readership. Second, an approach to writing climate fiction that acknowledges entanglements entails addressing the limits of a representational paradigm, particularly by giving greater emphasis to complicit and convoluted relations between living and non-living entities. Third, climate fiction writers have potential and scope to emphasise the affective realm that can be wrought from groundwater’s pleas. Through the expression of the emotions generated in narrative form, the links between affect and agency can be explored.

The effects of global warming on groundwater vary from place to place, making it a slippery storytelling subject. In some places the water table is rising bringing problems of increasing salinity, for example, around the Sydney basin, along the eastern seaboard of Australia. This occurs as a result of specific geological formations, increasing stormwater surges, and is sometimes coupled with deforestation from fires, development or logging. In other places, such as in particular parts of the Murray-Darling Basin–Murrumbidgee region, for example, over-extraction of groundwater as a response to drought means that the water table is receding beyond reach of community bores and is adversely affecting landscapes that rely on the subterranean water. Climate fiction writers are faced with choosing specific contexts to express particular scenarios in large and complex hydrogeological processes.

Amitav Ghosh discusses the resistance that serious fiction has in engaging with the derangements of climate catastrophes (8-9). Much climate fiction remains speculative, preoccupied with dramatic futurist global events. Ghosh argues that the here and now of ‘wild’ events, the resistance of the climate crisis to find widespread expression in literature, is more a crisis of cultural imagination, than a lack of seriousness of the problems of global warming (8-10). Groundwater invokes an imaginary space with innumerate and complex connections.

Both Adam Trexler and James Bradley argue that climate fiction is inherently embedded with a social and moral purpose to inform and affect readers. Climate fiction's capacity to impact readers, to change knowledge, beliefs and behaviours is important, but its effects are uncertain. How humans come to be affected by such worlding of groundwater's presence potentially gives rise to agential politics, to capacities for meaningful actions. This potential is a significant underlying force in writing contemporary climate fiction.

A representational paradigm in science and literature faces problems in assuming binary separations between nature and culture, body and mind, human and more-than-human, rationality and affect. Addressing these limits of mimetic representation led my writing towards posthuman, non-representation thinkers, such as Rosi Braidotti and Nigel Thrift and from these ideas to my attempts to convey the enmeshed meanings and narrative potential of groundwater in the human and non-human lives in *Why We Cry*.

The manuscript, *Why We Cry*, written in the genre of realist climate fiction, uncovers the enmeshments of protagonist, Frankie Pankhurst. Frankie is a reluctant water activist, nicknamed Froggie Pankhurst, because of her frog-like appearance and interests in amphibian lives. Her story becomes enmeshed with the vulnerabilities and the potency of groundwater. Although the story is told predominantly from Frankie's point of view, readers learn of her discoveries of groundwater's potency. 'Storying *with*' provides a scaffold for challenging how realist climate fiction might reveal the many ways for aquifers to find voice. Storying *with* groundwater, so as to conceive of aquifers as 'storied matter' in *Why We Cry*, involved taking the 'materialist turn' (Iovino and Oppermann 3). This entails engaging with conversations across disciplines, from science and the humanities, which analyse non-anthropocentric approaches to language and reality (Iovino and Oppermann 2). The effects of global warming present the impetus to expand forms of climate fiction writing so that it may continue to push the conventions of fiction writing through the 'materialist turn'.

Subterranean groundwater may not be tangibly seen by most humans, but it is real, it is matter, with significant consequence. Writing climate fictions that encompass very large 'entities' that operate over long, long timeframes, challenges views of what matter matters (Ghosh; Trexler). My fiction aims to portray the material forces of groundwater, and what Jane Bennett calls 'the energy of matter', its vital intensities in action (Bennett 55-6). The self-organising properties of groundwater are illustrated in its impact across history as well as through its contemporary agency. The political and agential qualities of groundwater emerged through the writing process, contributing to the making of its own meaning.

In *Why We Cry*, human characters engage with various negotiations with groundwater. Its meaning and its materiality become critical. For example, in an early scene in Chapter 2, four characters, Frankie Pankhurst, Lizard Green, Betty Winsome and Wade Kean, talk

about groundwater at choir practice. Each character flags groundwater's different meanings. Lizard Green and Frankie's deceased father, Lennie Pankhurst, had shared an interest in water divining.

Excerpt 1: Chapter Two – Darcy's Law

Lizard had heard, in the way that news travelled in a small township, from person to person, like a trickle of water gaining momentum on its path towards the ocean, that Frankie was interested in groundwater. He sidelined her after choir practice one Thursday night.

'I hear you're worried about the groundwater.'

Frankie nodded.

Wade, from the factory, joined them holding a mug of black tea, looking at his feet.

Lizard continued. 'A sense for groundwater is ageless, almost lost, you know, love.'

Frankie leant away from his doughy breath.

'Diviners are rare, often raise suspicions. People think their wobbling sticks are a scam.' Lizard edged towards Frankie.

Frankie wondered whether diviners were pretending they could find water, when they waved their wires and sticks in front of them like headstrong antennae. She was suspicious of trickery, having watched her father step slowly over parched ground balancing two bent twigs on his fingertips. 'How do they do it, Lizard? You knew Dad.'

Betty Winsome, the accompanist, wobbled towards them holding a teacup with a slice of cake teetering in the saucer.

'You three talking groundwater? Old as the hills.' She puffed. Her face was flushed and sweat beads formed under her eyes, threatening to roll down her pillow-like cheeks. Betty spoke in a rush. 'You can't tell me groundwater is a new thing. Way back, Abraham drilled into the hidden sea. You just read Genesis.' She eyed Lizard, who was well known for his heathen ways. 'The Old Book tells you. Abraham dug wells. Limestone hillsides it says. Lined the wells with stone.' Betty's face beamed, her eyes shone, she was on a roll. 'He lifted

that old water from the deep, for his family, his flocks. Made him very wealthy, influential. All because of his access to water.'

'What's changed?' Lizard chipped. Betty shook her head and nodded almost simultaneously.

'How'd he lift the water anyway?' Lizard asked Betty, who was flummoxed by such technicalities.

'How'd he find it underground in the first place?' Frankie asked.

'He knew not to fight his neighbours.' Betty nodded as though it was all over. They turned to Wade when he spoke, low and slow. 'Underground water, it's as precious as the top stuff. Been found around here for tens of thousands of years. Long before your biblical stuff.'

'It's how much you take.' Lizard's voice was roughened like the burring of cicadas thick on summer air.

'Nobody shares their extraction rates. They keep that quiet. No one really knows who's taking what. And there's more people now,' Frankie added.

'It's a pumping race. Who can extract the most, the fastest, wins.' Lizard rubbed his knobbled hands together again.

'You don't fight your neighbours.' Betty repeated her thought.

'You don't shit in your nest.' Lizard scratched at his neck.

Wade nodded.

'Everyone's silence is at the cost of aquifers.' Frankie's voice wavered. This was her first public articulation of her growing unease. Embryonic ideas, quietly drilled home by her father over decades, smouldered. Lennie had repeated his missive. 'Go to the source, love.'

As a child, Frankie often repeated the phrase in her pre-sleep, listening to Lennie throw empty beer cans at the kitchen bin. Something of the tinder had caught a spark.

The material meaning and the implicit ‘storied matter’ (Iovino and Oppermann 3) of the receding aquifer is established, and woven through the novel. The dialogue, the riffing between characters, is the means to enliven the story to the cost of extraction of water from aquifers. I argue that storytelling through human and nonhuman characters enhances understandings of place, even subterranean places (Wardle).

Making meaning from groundwater and contextualising groundwater’s presence in narrative form entails finding ways to express groundwater’s scale, its ecological relationships and movements across fluid timeframes, and its responses to anthropogenic climate change. I endeavour to blur the oppositional nature of subjectivity and objectivity. Through my writing process I came to understand that when authors write about ‘things’ as if they are ‘over there’, separate and disconnected from us, without their own subjectivity, something is lost. My aim is to interrogate groundwater as not merely a fixed ‘object’, but as something larger and viscous. Groundwater became an entity with inter-relational entanglements across infinite geologies and ecosystems. The challenge in *Why We Cry* is to interweave the notions that groundwater occupies multiple spaces, has multiple relationships and moves over contemporary and ancient timeframes, with narrative strategies of plot, timeframes, characterisation and setting. Near the end of the novel, in Chapter Eleven, groundwater’s entanglements with Frankie and with its own ecologies are expressed through the limits of Frankie’s dream-like diary entries and her poetic monologue addressing the aquifer beneath her feet.

Excerpt 2: Chapter Eleven – Gravitational

Clem and Frankie drove to Lennie’s old cabin by the river. Three weeks at the hut would be a chance to unwind, to go fishing, talk. The shack lay dark and uncared for at the end of the bumpy track. The river bank gaped raw, layered sedimentation, and brought back memories of Lennie teetering on the edge. Familiar terrain, the verandah. Clem and Wade bustled with boxes of food. The doorway squealed on rusty hinges as Frankie edged into the one-room den. She pushed open windows and ran mucky water through the taps till they trickled clear into the sink. The tank had held and was full.

...

Frankie needed time at the cabin to settle Lennie’s ghost, to give attention to his spirit. Clem had time off, the friend who stayed.

A shroud of solitude settled, just Frankie and the river now, and all that water below. Clem said they needed to plant Frankie’s presence in the space. Her cells were already in the waters. Being there was both bliss and vacancy. They

read novels, prepared simple meals, walked new tracks. They lounged on the veranda, often for half a day. On long walks Frankie talked to herself, to the river. She practised observation, listening to the rustle of leaves, the calls of birds, and the frogs' chorus. Pobblebonk and Banjos duelled with Barking Marsh Frogs and Bibrons' Toadlets. There were miracles to behold. She listened to what they had to say.

Days of meandering walks and nights of long sleeps and finally the river reached her. Frankie started to understand why Lennie had camped here so often. His long silences may not have been the disconnect with his daughter that she'd imagined. More likely he was in an internal space, lulled to self-reflection and quiet by the passing swirls, the sway and power of river and red gums. And beneath the river water moved. Deep subterranean plumes. Soon these murmurings seeped in to germinate seeds of composure, calm assurance.

She wrote in her journal.

We all are body. We all are bone, all are earth itself. We are water. Well actually 70%, if you believe in averages.

Tears – Brine and minerals from our blood and bones brought to the surface. From deep quiet places they rise. They expose us, bring us to a tipping point. There is no other direction than the way forward. Tears mark the journeys of invisible pains, bring hidden, inside tortures to the air, to sit sweetly on our cheeks. We let them flow, we let them carry us to new places. New places where we can speak, where silent interiors no longer swallow our utterances.

Why do we cry, when the earth itself is crumbling under our ignorance, our knowledge, our selfishness, our irresponsibility? Why we cry – where do I start?

Physics tells us about diffraction in time and space. It explains so knowledgably that a wave can separate as it passes through two slots, to be in two places at once. So too actions can occur simultaneously. So too is time bendable. We're not so certain of anything these days. So the same with words. They can mean everything and nothing. What's the enormity of an aquifer? Language doesn't describe a fixed outside, but wobbles between two spaces, meaning one thing and then another, and progressing over time between insides and outsides, constructing changeable worlds. Words fill the spaces we allow them. Slippery as water, flowing with gravity, meeting time in brief interstitial interludes. Words, words, words.

Some days as she walked along the riverbank she spoke to herself, she held imagined conversations with aquifers. She sensed them seeping below the

river, deep beneath the surface. She addressed herself and the entanglements of life and water around her.

With the bush her attentive audience, her oration took on an eloquence of a bard. She breathed each sentence from the depths. 'Deep, dark, slow, infinitesimally slow. We are liquid beneath earth's surface, fluid-filled, saturating spaces, sometimes slurry. We flow through subterranean sands, gravels, between stones. Through sandstone we seep, slower than sleep. Deep, dark, underground dark.'

She squatted at the base of a gnarled eucalypt, shredded bark fragments around her feet. She spoke her poem into the soil, through the sediments, to where the water flows.

'Your movement is like my own, a narrative through landscape's time. You are language when you move. You tell a story of deep time, of ageless motion through fissures and faults. It is our conversation, our murmurings, our sighs. I have to be still long enough to hear you.'

Later, as she watched the river pass, 'We seep. Your life in the underworld, mine in an over-world. We weep.' She felt as one with subterranean realms, as a body of water, a water-filled skin.

Groundwater's stickiness, the various ways that it is viscous, vital and connected, rings true for Frankie, linking her with the disparate spread of aquifers around landscapes and continents. I cannot think of groundwater as one place. It is in many places, an entity without a locale. A spring in a desert comes from many kilometres of subterranean seeping through porous geologies. When hydrogeologists map groundwaters' localities, and draw arrows to represent its movements, it is tempting to forget that these are merely blurry estimations of place.

As the protagonist in *Why We Cry*, Frankie Pankhurst, ironically says to the hydrogeologist, Helen Mack, 'Subterranean worlds can hardly be expressed in lines'. The novel-writing process exposes the blurry cartographies of what remains unsaid, what remains unknowable in a story. The flow between hydrological lines on maps and those lines I create on a page are both and at the same time determinate and indeterminate. This is indeed the challenge of storying *with* more-than-human entities.

Storying *with* Groundwater

Storying *with* groundwater, rather than *about* it, positions climate fiction writers alongside their compatriot more-than-human ‘writers’. We are osmotically connected, listening for comprehensible tones, exploring ways to express in mere words the moods, the potencies, the affects that groundwater provokes.

By storying I mean ‘making and remaking meaning through stories’ (Phillips and Bunda 7). Phillips and Bunda focus on the power of oral traditions of telling Indigenous stories as a process to make meaning of Aboriginal worlds. It is through similar unfolding processes of writing-reading-writing that groundwater’s viscosity, the stickiness of groundwater’s enmeshments with humans, with multiple species, micro-organisms and stygofauna, with forests and clouds, with future readers, becomes something more than imaginary. However, as much as I feel the layering of stories and places, there are stories that white writers cannot tell. I consider ways of thinking and being *with* groundwater and carefully turn to the insights of Indigenous co-relational connections to Country and Waters (Bawaka et al. 456-457). Bringing to light the emergent co-creation of subterranean places through the limits of language, where a plethora of more-than-human, non-human and human voices find correlation, as do voices in a choir, is one way of evoking underground knowledges and practices (Bawaka et al. 466). My writing voice, while limited by my humanity, aims to create an invitation for co-relational and intra-actional considerations of groundwater’s potency and vulnerability.

Though writers and readers may not usually see groundwater in its geological porous places, groundwater’s interactional reality reveals its potency through storying lively imaginings. Invisibility on its own is limited in explaining how humans have come to know groundwater, and risks the limits of a western scientific framing. The processes of storying provide a way of knowing where seeing or invisibility are not the essential ingredients. Storying *with* groundwater through climate fiction draws attention to the social, cultural and political imperative for engagements with this potent non-human actor. This perspective aims to show how fiction writing might express the necessary urgency for action on climate change.

The term ‘storying’ also infers Claire Colebrook’s injunction to write stories that counter the ‘Anthro’ of the Anthropocene—to write stories that challenge the human-centred, particularly the surface level understanding of places (Colebrook 83). Donna Haraway suggests the Cthulucene—the speaking earth as kin (*Staying with the Trouble* 2). Speaking humans are not separate from this speaking earth, rather symbiotic in the chorus of voices. In *Why We Cry* groundwater finds deep watery tones through my human efforts to story its song.

Storying *with* groundwater, in all its almost unfathomable underground places, creates several challenges for climate fiction writers. Groundwater may at first be invisible to many humans, meaning that imaginative and narrative gestures appear at first glance to be speculative. At the same time, finding ways to tell groundwater stories that conform with currently accepted hydrogeology requires particular efforts to avoid becoming didactic. The shared ground between scientific facts and literature include: reliance on language; the use of subjective representations to present knowledge to readers; the importance of passionate curiosity as a motivation for intensive inquiry; and the regular dialogue that occurs between science and literature (Sleigh). Sociological and historical studies of scientific knowledge have shown that facts are not independent of their representation (Latour and Woolgar; Sleigh 16; Haraway 'Situated Knowledges' 578). The means by which science's facts might be embedded in a narrative involve studying the form of the narrative (Sleigh 18). A realist form, while not widely utilised in climate fictions, is one means of developing readers' osmotic engagements with the contemporary urgency of global warming. Engaging the contemporary science and politics of climate change through a realist style in *Why We Cry* was itself an act of agency of both me, the human author, and the aquifers.

Storying Groundwater for Affect – Osmotic Skins

The significance and potency of emotive writing in climate fiction becomes a means to engage a readership in aspects of global warming that they may otherwise feel disconnected from (Ghosh 11; Trexler 26). Climate fiction has an important role to play in breaking traditional dualisms between the rational and the emotive. With the warp of science and the weft of story, climate fiction has the capacity to integrate cognition of currently known scientific facts with human affective and emotional responses to environments. Climate fiction weaves meaningful stories of places, environmental forces and more-than-human entities with human characters.

Fiction has the capacity to deliver scientific information with emotive force. Drying rivers and dead fish tell a strong story (Rubinsztein-Dunlop). The costs on ecosystems as aquifers diminish their live-giving flows is almost impossible to determine (Geoscience Australia). Groundwater licence holders around the Murray-Darling Basin, for example, who pump thousands of megalitres of water to the surface and strip thousands of hectares of native vegetation to grow almonds, cotton and stock feed, vehemently defend their right to farm amidst the shouts of horror at surface level environmental catastrophes. The role of fiction in expressing complex stories of the effects and connections of groundwater complements non-fiction and scientific forms of representing the potency of groundwater.

In climate fiction, engagement with affect and emotion, such as ideas of threat (Massumi), or fear (Ahmed), and passions in politics (Amin and Thrift 9), enhances the potency of

dissident voices, of both human and more-than-human actants. Porosity and groundwater's subterranean flows provide an analogy for the seeping of emotions from deep internal places to the exterior. In storying groundwater's enmeshments with multiple human and non-human lives, the unpredictable emotions of loss and hope are invoked. Readers may experience anything from alarm or fear, to a sense of deep quiet in fictional depictions of groundwater's potency in *Why We Cry*.

Through affective recognition in texts, Rita Felski (25-26) reminds us, readers can know something of themselves and the world. In *Why We Cry* readers might recognise something of the fragility of internal spaces, something of the importance of recognising themselves and their emotions through the porous movements of groundwater. Expressing the affective entanglements of aquifers through fiction becomes a means of understanding both the limits of knowledge and the potency of metaphoric writing for affect.

The osmotic movement of water through and across semi-permeable membranes is influenced by the chemistry of the fluid solutions on each side of the membrane and the pervious or impervious qualities of the membrane itself. Water wants to balance the concentrations on both sides of the membrane. Water wants.

Entanglements of humans with groundwater, through our guts and our skins, our livelihoods, our souls and our imaginations, come in many and various forms. Chapter 10 of *Why We Cry* includes a brief exploration of human and frog skin to express porosity between human and non-human animals and their shared environments. As Karen Barad asks, how close are we when we touch, particularly when we let fall all pretence to separate the affective from the physics of touch (Barad 206-209)? The following scene where Frankie holds a frog in her hand and feels its skin on hers, aims to portray the affects of inter-species' skin touching skin.

Excerpt 3: Chapter Ten – Porosity

'Wanna catch a frog?' Frankie asked Wade. Along the riverbank frogs called bass lines to the cricket sopranos, a symphony.

'Sure, why not?' Wade crept to the dry riverbed. Frankie followed. They perched, silent. Amphibious throats filled the summer air with vibrations. His calling, her silent approach. Frogs singing, surging, repeating their desires. The sounds entered Frankie, she listened to their love songs, the immediacy and yearning.

'Got one,' Wade called, and held his cupped hand towards her.

Holding the frog in her hands she felt the tender suction of balloon-fingered toes, the damp cool belly skin, the taught musculature of legs ready to leap. She saw the pulsating throat, a pulse and breath, strong gulps of life. She was on a journey towards being more baffled, towards not knowing what she thought she once knew. Takes time and patience to develop a relationship with place, to get the knowledge, to understand rhythms and quirks of place, she mused, gazing at the frog. Seems unattainable. Connection to groundwater may take a lifetime, she thought, not just because it is almost an unknowable place, but because its voices speak in innumerable tones. ‘Choirlike,’ she muttered.

‘What?’ Wade watched her from the bank.

‘Nothing, just thinking.’

Below them, aquifers spread, changed and moved in their own ways, like inkblots on textured paper. Slime slipped between Frankie and frog, permeable, osmotic. Psychic skins, sticky skins. Their skins sensed the fluff and substance of emotions, enclosed internal places where feelings circled, outside in, inside out. She leaned down and opened her hands. The frog leapt from her palm.

The scene shows movement between skins, the permeability of skins, and aims to stretch imaginings of skins, stretch boundaries, and stretch humans out of a singular focus on ourselves towards a relational point of view. As Sarah Ahmed argues, emotional struggles against injustice are not about expressing good or bad feelings. Rather, the struggle is about how humans are ‘moved by feelings into a different relation to the norms that we wish to contest’ (201). *Why We Cry* aims to change reader’s relations to groundwater through the emotions and feelings that emerge through the characters’ experiences, and also through the reader’s affective responses.

Conclusion

Within the limits of my white settler status, learning fragments about Indigenous Australians’ ways of thinking with water gave my writing practice a window into storying that crosses timeframes and acknowledges my enmeshments with surface waters and groundwater (Chen et al. 4-5; Neimanis 2-4; Strang 189). As Deborah Bird Rose has comprehensively argued, Indigenous knowledges of ageless connections with lands and waterways model ways to respectfully communicate with wide kinships and create a form of dialogue that shows responsible entanglements (Rose). It is this way of knowing and feeling groundwater’s potency that *Why We Cry* leans towards.

Establishing matter's enmeshment with humans, merging post-human epistemologies with realist fiction's parameters, including invoking readers' emotions through metaphor, are tools for writing climate fiction. These strategies might be applied to many Anthropocene scenarios—from the loss of forest and grassland ecosystems, melting glaciers and icecaps, to ocean acidification and rising sea levels and the enormous plastics islands polluting the Pacific Ocean. In an entangled world it is not difficult to imagine the many other sites that invite contemporary climate fiction stories.

By emphasising the enmeshments between humans and the more-than-human world, climate fiction writers give themselves firm ground to imagine affective stories that evoke the complexities and enmeshments of global warming. I write into a watery future, a time when climate fiction continues to find new and exciting ways to express matter's eminence. Groundwater's emergence as a deep and evocative voice in politically effective and affective literature has, for me, many potentialities. Readers are invited to know and feel the prompts towards personal and political questions about humans' and more-than-humans' becomings and co-becomings—through storying *with* groundwater.

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