

Call For Papers
ASAL mini-conference April 20-21 2023 at UNSW Sydney

“Who Travels?” The Writing of Michelle de Kretser

“I don’t sit down to write a cosmopolitan book or say to myself that I’m going to write beyond borders. I write about a subject that I feel compelled to write about, whatever that might be. If my characters often cross borders it’s because I’m interested in writing about the contemporary world, and that’s a world of movement, of travel. Not for every- one, mind you, which raises interesting questions – the most interesting questions about travel. Who travels? Who doesn’t, and why don’t they? So, again, I’d say I’m interested in modernity.” (Quoted in Yang Chen, ‘I don’t want to be a tourist in my own country’: An interview with Michelle de Kretser, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, May 2022)

Michelle de Kretser is one of the most significant and acclaimed writers of fiction in Australia. Her six novels have received, between them, all the major literary awards in the country, and have been longlisted for the Booker and the Orange Prize. And yet she has received very little in the way of scholarly criticism; almost of all of the scholarly articles that include some discussion of her work have appeared in international postcolonial journals rather than in the major scholarly Aust Lit journals. This is not a problem exclusive to de Kretser – Australian literary studies has notoriously overlooked or misunderstood writing by non-Anglo authors, although the situation is slowly changing. This symposium aims to generate new research and commentary on this important writer.

Paper (and panel) proposals are welcome on any aspect of de Kretser’s work, including:

- The terrain of the global, and Spivak’s concept of planetarity as a way to re-mobilise thinking about worldliness, the global and the cosmopolitan;
- the sustained interest in de Kretser’s work in the complex spatialities of late-modern existence, of habitation, alongside what Lukács termed “transcendental homelessness” as a condition of the novel;
- the condition of the novelist as a figure negotiating not only the mobilities already outlined but also the social and technological fields of literary form and marketplace, and of digital and networked identities.

Please send abstracts (250 words) and a short bio (50-100 words) with the subject line ASALDEKRETSER2023 to the conference convenor, Prof Brigitta Olubas b.olubas@unsw.edu.au by November 30 2022.

Writers Panel

This symposium will feature a writers panel alongside the paper sessions.

Hybrid Event

This symposium will have remote/online opportunities in the interests of accessibility.

Keynotes

Keynote Lecture: Prof Elizabeth McMahon (UNSW)

Keynote In-Conversation with Michelle de Kretser: Prof Robert Harrison (Stanford)