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Cosmology in motion: Aquatic Mobilisation of Multi-species Justice in Melissa Lucashenko’s *Too Much Lip*

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Melissa Lucashenko’s *Too Much Lip* (2018) constructs social justice cosmologically. The novel portrays the intergenerational trauma of an Indigenous Goorie family on Bundjalung country (Southern Queensland/Northern New South Wales), and their healing of old family wounds, which coincides with the regaining of custodianship over parts of a river. By evoking human situatedness in an ecosystem that continuously acts in symbiotic and largely sympathetic relationship to human flourishing, water, land, animals and ancestors become co-actants in the quest to regain land- and water rights and to reconcile the Salter family.

My talk seeks to draw attention to the magnetic pull of the river, and an island, and its more-than-human inhabitants to quite literally ‘move’ protagonists and mobilise various forms of action. Rather than a traditionally fixed connection to Country, I argue that the Salters’ relationship to their river is portrayed to arise out of embodied as well as modern experiences of dispossession, displacement, and ostracization. This movement between tradition and modernity, as well as between the city and country, is what determines the novel’s ‘cosmopolitics’ and ‘eco-cosmopolitanism,’ which conveys that a highly efficient custodianship today often involves caring for *multiple* places and communities. In fact, the novel suggests that it is the very mobility of characters that is the key to winning custodianship. This mobility is mirrored through the river and its more-than-human inhabitants (animals, ancestors, elements), which are presented as more than a metaphor: they become co-actants in the quest for social and environmental justice.

Bio:

Kathrin Bartha-Mitchell is a Postdoctoral Fellow and Lecturer at the Institute of English and American Studies, Goethe University. She earned her PhD as part of the “Joint PhD program” from Monash University (Melbourne, Australia) and Goethe University with a thesis in the Environmental Humanities titled “Unsettling the Anthropocene: Cosmological Readings of Contemporary Australian Literature,” which will be published with Routledge this year. Her postdoctoral project explores Intergenerational Justice in Transcultural Anglophone Literature.

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