



Amazwi  
Literature Heritage Ecology Conference  
SYMBIOSIS  
18 and 19 March 2025 | Makhanda  
Programme



# Amazwi Literature, Heritage, Ecology Conference 2025

## Programme | 18 March

Registration opens at 08:30 on both days

### Session 1

09:30 – 09:35	Rooksana Omar   Director of Amazwi	Welcome and Introduction to the Conference
09:35 – 09:40	Crystal Warren   Manager: Curatorial Division, Amazwi	Introduction to Keynote Speaker
09:40 – 10:30	<b>Keynote Address</b> Jeannie Wallace McKeown	Acknowledging Symbiosis, Initiating Sympoeisis
10:30 – 11:00	<i>Tea break</i>	

### Session 2 | Chaired by Julia Kinghan

11:00 – 11:20	Anthea Garman   Rhodes University	The lure of Antarctica and what failures and fictions can teach us
11:20 – 11:40	Harry Owen   Poet	From parasite to partner: Why poetry counts
11:40 – 12:00	Crystal Warren   Amazwi	She is not a pet: An analysis of the relationships between humanity and the natural world in Lesley Beake's children's book <i>Remembering Green</i>
12:00 – 12:30	Discussion	
12:30 – 13:30	<i>Lunch break</i>	

## Amazwi Literature, Heritage, Ecology Conference 2025 Programme | 18 March

### Session 3 | Chaired by Thomas Jeffery

13:30 – 13:50	Khaya Gqibithole   University of Zululand	Embracing Ecology: Reimagining and repositioning <i>Isiko Lokoluka</i>
13:50 – 14:10	Slindokuhle Tshisevhe   uMsunduzi Museum	Unveiling the cultural significance of <i>Isiphandla</i> in Zulu culture: A symbiotic relationship between tradition and ecology
14:10 – 14:30	Stephanie Victor   Amathole Museum	The story of Nkosazana Amakhaya: Her continued insertion in the colonial imagination
14:30 – 14:40	Thomas Jeffery   Amazwi	The future of the Literature, Heritage, Ecology Conference, a group discussion
14:40 – 15:00	Discussion and close for the day	
15:00	Tea	

## EVENING EVENT | BOOK LAUNCHES

Venue | Amazwi foyer | 18 March, 17:30 for 18:00

SILKE HEISS | *Hiku Hike Harvest*

ALAN NORTHOVER | *Trance and Transfiguration in Rock Art and Literature*



**SILKE HEISS** | Reading, writing, thinking, and immersing herself in nature are Silke's daily spiritual bread. Since 1991 she has published poems, stories and a verse novel in local and international journals. She has an M.A. in Comparative Literature from the University of Witwatersrand and an M.A. in Creative Writing from the University of Cape Town. She is a member of the Ecce Poets. Previous works: *Greater Matter A Journey of Poems to Death and Beyond* (2019); *Sweet Nothings (with Notebook)* (2020).

**ALAN NORTHOVER** is a professor of general literary theory and critical theory in the Department of Afrikaans and Theory of Literature at the University of South Africa. He has published articles on the work of JM Coetzee, Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy, and southern African rock art, placing his work in the fields of animal studies and ecocriticism. From 2016 to 2019 he chaired the Literature Association of South Africa. In 2020 he was appointed as editor of the *Journal of Literary Studies*. In 2024 he was invited by the Culture and Animals Foundation to participate in a panel discussion on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of JM Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* on his being awarded the Nancy Regan Arts Prize. His inaugural lecture (2022) forms the basis of the book *Trance and Transfiguration in Rock Art and Literature* (2025).

# Amazwi Literature, Heritage, Ecology Conference 2025

## Programme | 19 March

### Session 1 | Chaired by Harry Owen

09:00 – 09:20	Carol Leff   Rhodes University	Out of the blue: A reverse ekphrastic response to Richard Powers' <i>Playground</i>
09:20 – 09:40	Silke Heiss   Freelance	Hiku Hike Harvest
09:40 – 10:00	Dan Wylie   Rhodes University	Between symbiosis and exploitation: Animal dependencies in 1820s Albany
10:00 – 10:30	Discussion	
10:30 – 11:00	<i>Tea break</i>	

### Session 2 | Chaired by Khaya Gqibithole

11:00 – 11:20	Matsobane Malebatja, Jessica Cockburn, Boudina McConnachie and Francesca Porri   Rhodes University and the South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity	Collaborative transdisciplinarity in coastal restoration research: A reflective analysis
11:20 – 11:40	Rob O'Donoghue, Wilma van Staden and Caleb Mandikonza   Environmental Learning Research Centre. Rhodes University	Surfacing early agroecological practices as a heritage of biocultural symbiosis for enhancing ESD in school curriculum settings
11:40 – 12:00	Alan Northover   UNISA	A case study of symbiosis: Termites, mushrooms and southern African San rock art
12:00 – 12:30	Discussion	
12:30 – 13:30	<i>Lunch break</i>	

## Amazwi Literature, Heritage, Ecology Conference 2025 Programme | 19 March

### Session 3 | Chaired by Slindokuhle Tshisevhe

13:30 – 13:50	Julia Kinghan   Rhodes University	War and water: Hydropolitics in Emmi Itaranta's <i>Memory of Water</i>
13:50 – 14:10	Marike Beyers   Amazwi	Museums of lost and impossible things: Relationships between the human and the non-human in the fiction of Henrietta Rose-Innes
14:10 – 14:30	Isabel Rawlins   University of Zululand	Vindicating the vultures: Multispecies community in Bessie Head's <i>When Rain Clouds Gather</i>
14:30 – 14:50	Anela Lupuwana   Amazwi	Women as custodians of ecological knowledge and ecofeminist literature
14:50 – 15:10	Aiman Cajee, Nompumezo Makinana and Khululwa Mthi   Rhodes University <b>Discussant</b>   Anela Lupuwana, Amazwi and Rhodes University	Rhodes University Postgraduate Heritage Management students present their work for discussion
15:10 – 15:40	Discussion   Close of the 2025 Amazwi Literature, Heritage, Ecology Conference	
15:40	Tea	

## Opening of the 2025 Amazwi Literature Heritage Ecology Conference

**Rooksana Omar | Director, Amazwi**

Rooksana has worked in museums for four decades. Her life's ambition is to remove the moat that surrounds museums and allow the drawbridges to open to the world. Her vision is to make museums meaningful, accessible, joyful and allow for multiple voices to echo through the curated spaces by making the orchestra of multiple voices reverberate through the galleries. Throughout her working career Rooksana has encouraged learning, growth, contestation and new knowledge making through entertaining the diversity of perspectives irrespective how uncomfortable the subject maybe. She is past President of the South African Museums Association, the Commonwealth Association of

Museums and the South African chapter of the International Committee of Museums and represented South Africa on the board of ICCROM in Rome. On her work in museums, she states that she has had numerous interesting, challenging and meaningful roles at various museums and has found each role extremely rewarding through working with some of the most engaging and talented people.



## Speakers and abstracts

### Keynote Address | Jeannie Wallace McKeown

#### *Acknowledging Symbiosis, Initiating Sympoiesis*



#### Biography

Jeannie Wallace McKeown is a South African poet, writer and editor and has published widely in journals and anthologies. Her first collection, *Fall Awake*, was published in 2020 and her upcoming collection, *Ornithology*, will be published in April 2025. She has twice been the winner of the University of Canberra Vice Chancellor's International Poetry Prize, for 'Climate Emergency' in 2023, and for 'Global South' in 2024. In 2023, while taking a year off from PhD studies, she came second in an AVBOB Poetry Competition, the theme of which was *Water is Life*, with her poem 'Water Crisis'.

#### Abstract

As holobionts in a symbiotic world, our only way through is to collaborate, to practice sympoiesis, or 'making-together'. In a world which is turning back to glorifying autopoietic individualism, and to deifying wealth above sustainability, the philosophy of ubuntu can be applied to deep ecological principles to build communities among the human, non-human and even the non-living; rivers,

Currently enrolled as a PhD student in English (Creative Writing) at the University of Pretoria, Jeannie is working on a collection of poetry exploring the intersections, entanglements and symbiotic relationships which have created the Anthropocene, or 'age of man'. The long reach of colonialism and capitalism, resulting in human-created climate change, provides a fertile substrate for creativity exploring the impacts on human and nonhuman kith and kin alike, both generally and on a more personal and local level. In her academic exegesis, she is examining how poetry, literature and creative non-fiction provide a visceral experience for readers, bringing home the losses and reverberations of the Anthropocene through words on the page.

mountains, beaches. Among all the noise of resumed drilling and mining and extractivism, these communities need us to be their voices: in the spoken, written, sung, planted, and creatively fabricated spaces which exist and in which we must be louder and louder and LOUDER.



**Anthea Garman | Rhodes University**

***The lure of Antarctica and what failures and fictions can teach us***

We, landed creatures of the six inhabited continents, live in symbiosis with the large, iced uninhabited southern continent, Antarctica. Only just over 200 years ago was this continent sighted (in 1820) and then landed on (in 1821). In the next century it became a goal for men craving to push themselves to the extremes to demonstrate their imperial or national ambitions. More recently it's become a somewhat contested zone of no ownership which scientists use as a base to examine some of the most pressing questions about a human future overshadowed by climate change. But also, it has fuelled many writing projects.

**Harry Owen | Poet**

***From parasite to partner: Why poetry counts***

Symbiosis concerns relationships between things, typically the interaction between two different organisms living in close physical association. It is complex, sophisticated and nuanced and can display itself in one of three main ways: mutual, commensal or parasitic. This paper defines these terms, clarifying briefly how they operate and offering examples of each. It then concentrates on the first of them, a relationship benefitting both participants, using marriage as a metaphor for the relationship between humans and the natural world. Just as commitment, respect, communication and listening are commonly accepted as the basis for a strong marriage, so these are also fundamental requirements for ecological symbiosis. I argue especially that communication is central to this –

In this paper I look at Darryl Bristow Bovey's account of the failed Ernest Shackleton expedition to cross the continent, *Finding Endurance: Shackleton, my Father and a World Without End* (2023) and Ursula le Guin's *Sur, A Summary Report of the Yelcho Expedition to the Antarctic, 1909-10* (1982), a fictional account of an expedition by South American women which beat all the men to the pole, but which was then kept secret. I argue that through these two books both Bristow Bovey and Le Guin offer us ways of thinking about exploration, our bonds with others, and the necessary restraint and respect due our planet.

and that it includes both speaking and listening. The natural world constantly communicates with us, but can we hear it? Do we listen? And when we speak to or of nature, what kind of language/s do we employ? I contrast some of our current (largely consumerist) expressions/words/phrases about nature with the ecologically sensitive language of eco poetry. One represents a parasitic approach, the other a partnership.

Which will we choose?

The paper concludes with a short selection of poems that accept the need for genuine communication, employing the language of real symbiosis.

**Crystal Warren | Amazwi**

***She is not a pet: An analysis of the relationships between humanity and the natural world in Lesley Beake's children's book Remembering Green***

*Remembering Green* by Lesley Beake is a youth novel set in a future of ecological crisis. Beake shows different relationships with the environment, from the critique of the ancients (i.e. us) who didn't do enough to stop the rising oceans, Tekkies in their island city atop Table Mountain relying on technology to control the environment, to those peoples in the interior who have a more symbiotic

relationship with the natural world. This is highlighted in the character of Rain, and the lion Saa with whom she is bonded. When Rain and Saa are kidnapped and brought to the Island Beake contrasts very different ways of being in the world.

**Khaya Gqibithole | University of Zululand**

***Embracing Ecology: Reimagining and repositioning Isiko Lokoluka***

*Isiko lokoluka* (traditional circumcision) is one of amaXhosa's most sacred and enduring cultural practices. Over the decades it has played a critical role in identity formation and organizing Xhosa communities. However, colonial and apartheid land dispossession as well as the environmental crisis, exacerbated in part by human settlement, have put strain on this age-old practice, resulting in the depletion and destruction of plants, herbs and other necessary 'tools' initiates need to survive in the bush. Deploying eco-political analysis, this paper examines the pressure exerted on the practice by developmental imperatives. First, the paper argues that the interdependence of *ukoluka* and nature is well established despite the escalating ecological crisis faced currently. In this regard, the paper notes that historically the two enjoyed a positive symbiotic relationship where indigenous people protected and looked after the rivers, mountains and forests which in turn offered sacred spaces for *ukoluka*.

Presently, that relationship requires serious review to incorporate forward-looking ecological considerations. Therefore, the introduction of eco-literacy to initiates is recommended to ensure that the young men who emerge from the mountains appreciate the value of the ecosystem in ensuring the sustainability of their culture, identity and way of life and, most importantly, learn how they can be eco-activists to protect these sacred natural spaces for future generations. The aim is to conscientize the practitioners of *ukoluka* about the ecological realities and their impact on this age-old tradition. The paper posits that truly liberated Xhosa people are those who understand nature conservation beyond the narrow, outdated notions of environmentalism that sought to exclude indigenous people. Finally, the paper seeks to suggest new and innovative ways in which African traditions and cultures can coexist harmoniously with ecosystems.

**Slindokuhle Tshisevhe | uMsunduzi Museum**

***Unveiling the cultural significance of Isiphandla in Zulu culture: A symbiotic relationship between tradition and ecology***

This presentation will explore the cultural significance of *isiphandla* (wristband made out of animal fur) in Zulu culture, focusing on its role as a social and ecological symbol. *Isiphandla*, traditionally understood as a symbolic adornment worn by Zulu people, is a powerful intersection between literature, oral traditions, and the ecological knowledge embedded within the culture. By examining how *isiphandla* is passed down through oral stories and visual symbolism, this presentation will illustrate how it reflects the deep connection between humans and the natural world. Drawing from a rich body of literature and community storytelling, the presentation will discuss how the creation,

adornment, and meaning of *isiphandla* are intricately tied to the cultural and ecological practices that sustain Zulu communities. The study will highlight the role of the environment in shaping cultural practices, and the ecological wisdom embedded in these traditions. Through the lens of symbiosis, this presentation will explore how Zulu culture perceives the relationship between humans, nature, and the divine and how this underscores the responsibility of humans to preserve culture and the natural world, contributing to a broader understanding of how Indigenous knowledge systems and practices offer insights into sustainable ecological stewardship and the preservation of social tradition.

**Stephanie Victor | Amathole Museum**

***The story of Nkosazana Amakhaya: Her continued insertion in the colonial imagination***

In this paper I follow a two-pronged approach. Firstly, I aim to tell the remarkable story of the AmaNgqika Nkosazana Amakhaya and the sacrifice she was willing to make for her father, Nkosi Jongumsobomvu Maqoma, so that he could retain his ancestral land. This act of devotion speaks of the familial loyalty of a daughter in the year when Nkosi Maqoma's legacy is celebrated but also epitomises the centrality of land in her narrative. Secondly, I investigate a variety of colonial observers, including military commentators, evangelical humanitarians, and an English author, the wife of a career soldier, all of whom were willing narrators of

Nkosazana Amakhaya's story. I am specifically interested in the way some of the commentators, although not unproblematic, sympathetically recounted her story, suggesting that they were 'troubled' by at least some aspects of colonial patriarchy. It is, however, a selective commentary. In both prose and rather mediocre poetry, Nkosazana Amakhaya is portrayed and embellished in the colonial imagination, yet her story is absent from any nineteenth century Eastern Cape newspapers or Xhosa commentary.

**Carol Leff | Rhodes University**

***Out of the blue: A reverse ekphrastic response to Richard Powers' Playground***

Set in the Pacific Ocean, on an island that survived nuclear testing and phosphorus mining, Richard Powers' novel *Playground* (2024) draws attention to the unfathomable waters that humankind – thankfully – is incapable of colonising. This ecocritical reading of Powers' text is carried out through my artistic practice of cyanotype printing. My response to *Playground* is thus a form of reverse ekphrasis in that it is a visual rendering (my artworks) of a verbal representation (Powers' novel). Like the blue and white image on the cover of *Playground*, my cyanotypes are in hues of blue. The found objects I use, that have

washed up on the seashore, are also those described in Powers' novel. These are placed onto prepared cotton paper before being exposed to sunlight which sets off a chemical reaction creating a 'photogram'. The paper is then rinsed in water and left to dry, with the cyan colour slowly deepening. By means of a multimedia presentation that showcases my cyanotypes alongside extracts from *Playground*, I will also offer a brief literary analysis that moves beyond Greg Garrard's 'green' ecocriticism and Steven Mentz's 'blue cultural studies' to a refreshing dip into Sidney Dobrin's 'Blue Ecocriticism and the Oceanic Imperative'.

**Silke Heiss | Writer and writing workshop facilitator**

***Hiku Hike Harvest***

I am convinced that our mechanistic relationship with nature (which can even be regarded as parasitic) is possible only because of a grievous disconnect between ourselves and our dynamic environment. The Hiku Hikes seek to restore a flow of living breath between ourselves and the world around us. My new book, *Hiku Hike Harvest* explores and, indeed, embodies this flow in a healthy symbiosis on a number of levels. *Hiku Hike Harvest* presents a total of 26 poems and creative pieces by 20 different participants produced on Hiku Hikes, mostly in the last two years. Some of the authors had never written creatively in their life before, while a few are published writers. I analyse their creations by attending to language

use in the various settings, that is to say, each human soul's writerly responsiveness to the natural or wilderness spaces I take them into.

Here are some lines from one participant, which set the tone.

My heart cracks open.

The trees part for a moment,

And the frown melts from my face.

*Nikita Mabuya, Sunnryridge, East London*

**Dan Wylie | Rhodes University**

***Between symbiosis and exploitation: Animal dependencies in 1820s Albany***

At any point in history, relationships between humans and non-human animals range along a spectrum from mutualisms, benefitting both parties roughly equally; through degrees of interdependent, but not necessarily harmonious, symbiosis, in which both parties depend structurally on the other for sustenance or survival; to degrees of exploitation, in which one party benefits disproportionately, to the detriment or even death of the other. This paper probes a conceptual zone lying somewhere between symbiosis and exploitation. How, in this the Anthropocene era, are we to imagine human/animal relations?

Or rather, re-imagine, since it is abundantly clear that we as a species can scarcely go on the way we are. How should we reassess the attitudes of previous periods, and reassess the historical literatures which evidence those attitudes? These questions underpin an 'animal-critical' reading today of some literary memoirs and travelogues from the 1820s in Albany (Makana district), notably Thomas Pringle. These accounts reveal the absolute dependence of settlers upon animal uses and abuses, and provoke parallel questions about where we position ourselves today.

**Matsobane Malebatja, Francesca Porri | South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity**

**Jessica Cockburn and Boudina McConnachie | Rhodes University**

***Collaborative transdisciplinarity in coastal restoration research: A reflective analysis***

Historically, sustainability science marginalised Indigenous people and local communities through colonial practice. As transdisciplinary research gains momentum, equity, justice and ethical concerns arise with the involved communities. In this qualitative study, we analysed a transdisciplinary project involving researchers and a local community co-producing knowledge for urban coastal ecosystem restoration. Reflective interviews were conducted, and data were analysed through two frameworks: principles of transdisciplinary design and of knowledge co-production, therefore analysing the transdisciplinary project design and execution. Here we show that early efforts towards building trust and transparency set the scene for equitable knowledge exchange and application. Tying collaboration benefits to project objectives maintains participation and advances progress. Transdisciplinary research however

requires time, and uncertainties can exacerbate time constraints. Intercultural challenges affect collaboration quality, but incorporating traditional cultural expressions bridges the gaps between disparate knowledge systems, promoting cohesion. Team building activities and events keep the project in motion and raise morale to ease collective adaptation to uncertainties and response to challenges. Reflexive practice enhances ethical conduct, fairness and equity of transdisciplinary research. Funding institutions recognise the value of transdisciplinary research, but must align their structures and terms with the nature of transdisciplinary research. Addressing these challenges ensures that scientific and societal impact are achieved, preserving the emancipatory potential of transdisciplinary research, usefulness and effectiveness of sustainability efforts.

**Rob O'Donoghue, Wilma van Staden and Caleb Mandikonza | Environmental Learning Research Centre, Rhodes University**

***Surfacing early agroecological practices as a heritage of biocultural symbiosis for enhancing ESD in school curriculum settings***

This paper is developed to uncover southern African agroecological practices as developing processes of biocultural symbiosis for activating Education for Sustainability through the inclusion of a cultural heritage as a foundation for learning in school curriculum settings. It uncovers how the interaction of heritage practices and ecological processes of long durée shaped the social-ecological landscapes of southern Africa. The unfolding evidence points to how southern African 'living landscapes' emerged over centuries of agroecological interaction. Here social figurations of indigenous peoples came to sustain themselves within the harsh biophysical conditions, ecological processes and variable season cycles of the region. Read together peoples and landscapes can

be seen as an evolving dynamic of relational practices shaped and sustained within emergent ecologies of practice within the region and prior to the accelerated change that came with colonial modernity. The study explores some of these dynamics that can be uncovered, despite the limitations of colonial ecological idealism, to contemplate how agroecological heritage and the ecological sciences might best be integrated in schooling. A concluding analysis points to how the co-engaged recovery of indigenous agroecological heritage on living landscapes can be included in curriculum settings to enhance action learning as a self-correction mechanism in response to the sustainability challenges of the present day.

**Alan Northover | UNISA**

***A case study of symbiosis: Termites, mushrooms and southern African San rock art***

The paper covers the three entangled areas of interest – literature, heritage and ecology – by exploring the case of termites, mushrooms and a particular southern African San rock art tradition to see what we can learn concerning symbiosis between humans and the environment. Eugene Marais's *The Soul of the White Ant* (1936) provides a key text on the ecology of the termite, although he does not discuss San rock art. His insights will be supplemented using *Termites of the Gods* (2015), in which Siyakha Mguni persuasively argues that the presence of rare botanical and fungal imagery and winged insects in some rock art north of the Limpopo River suggests that the previously mysterious images

called formlings in the same rock art represent termitaria cells. The termites concerned, *Macrotermes*, and the fungus they farm, *Termitomyces*, exemplify a symbiotic relationship that has lasted perhaps 20 million years. The depiction of termites and formlings in particular southern African San rock art traditions suggests the importance these creatures had to the San in terms of their cosmology beyond their utilitarian use as food. The paper seeks to ascertain what modern people can learn from this case study about living symbiotically with the environment.

**Julia Kinghan | Rhodes University**

***War and water: Hydropolitics in Emmi Itaranta's Memory of Water***

As water access and scarcity becomes an increasingly vital topic in global hydropolitics, our interconnected reliance on water has emerged as a prevalent theme in contemporary eco-fiction. One such novel, *Memory of Water* by Finnish novelist Emmi Itaranta, uniquely explores our relationship with water as an agential element in our lives. Against the backdrop of a parched, post-apocalyptic Scandinavia, Itaranta's narrative brings to the forefront questions of

water-ownership and more broadly 'water ethics' within a community that is desperate for the resource. *Memory of Water* in its contribution to hydropolitical discourse concerns itself with boundaries, memory, power and resistance, while exploring our physical and psychological connection and innate symbiosis with water.

**Marike Beyers | Amazwi**

***Museums of lost and impossible things: Relationships between the human and the non-human in the fiction of Henrietta Rose-Innes***

Symbiosis in a literary context can be read as referring to works that explore the interdependencies between humans and nature or non-human life. Such works focus on the struggles in our societies and individual lives to understand and move the boundaries between culture and nature. This paper will look at the fiction of Henrietta Rose-Innes, particularly *Nineveh* and *Green Lion* in this

context. These novels, described as companion pieces, examine the relationships between the human and the non-human. Some aspects considered would be the representation of nature in an urban context, shifting human interactions with nature, symbolic interactions in understanding this relationship and the human need to create a sense of stability through acts of recording and safekeeping.

**Isabel Rawlins | University of Zululand**

***Vindicating the vultures: Multispecies community in Bessie Head's When Rain Clouds Gather***

Set at the edge of the Kalahari, Bessie Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather* (1968) is recognised for its early environmental awareness, particularly in its depiction of an agricultural community in Botswana. The fictional village, Golema Mmidi, and the surrounding arid landscape are seen through the eyes of Makhaya Maseko, an outsider who escapes apartheid South Africa and joins English expatriate Gilbert Balfour's agricultural efforts. While ecocritics such as Cappelli, Tulloch, Goodhead and Iheka interpret the introduction of agricultural methods into the village differently, their readings tend to centre on human action. This paper shifts attention to the novel's depiction of symbiotic relationships between

humans and more-than-human life, with a focus on vultures as emblematic of the latter. The extended drought, central to the narrative, disrupts the balance of this multispecies community, forcing both human and more-than-human life to adapt in order to survive. As the drought intensifies and thousands of cattle die, only the vultures thrive during the desolation, becoming essential ecological agents tasked with restoring the balance. By foregrounding the symbiotic relationship between these birds and the desert ecosystem, Head underscores their vital role and, thus, vindicates the vultures from the negative perceptions often associated with them.

Anela Lupuwana | Amazwi

***Women as custodians of ecological knowledge and ecofeminist literature***

Ecological conservation has become a popular discourse, and this is evident in the growing number of ecological movements responding to environmental threats such as pollution, industrialization, intensive agriculture, deforestation, and land degradation. These challenges have significant implications for humanity, particularly for future generations. Addressing them requires a multifaceted approach. This study employs desktop research to examine the role of ecofeminist literature in ecological conservation, focusing on the works of Olive Schreiner and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. It further explores the role of women as knowledge keepers of ecological practices, using the case study of

Kenya and South Africa. Drawing on ecofeminist and literary theories, the study finds that literature serve as powerful tools for promoting environmental justice, resisting patriarchy, and challenging the marginalization of women. On the other side, women, especially in rural context, play a crucial role in managing natural resources such as soil, water, forests, and energy, as their daily responsibilities in agriculture and household management. Therefore, the study recommends increased support and funding for such initiatives to address the global ecological crisis effectively.





## Amazwi Literature Heritage Ecology Conference 2025

### THE SPEAKERS



Keynote Speaker | Jeannie Wallace McKeown



Anthea Garman



Harry Owen



Crystal Warren



Khaya Gqibithole



Slindokuhle Tshisevhe



Stephanie Victor



Carol Leff



Silke Heiss



Dan Wylie



Matsobane Malebatja



Jessica Cockburn



Francesca Porri



Boudina McConnachie



Rob O'Donoghue



Alan Northover



Julia Kinghan



Marike Beyers



Isabel Rawlins



Anela Lupuwana