Wallace Stevens’ Birds, or, Ecological Poetics
Presented by Cary Wolfe

Professor of English and Founding Director of the Center for Critical and Cultural Theory (3CT), Rice University (USA)

Date: 5pm, Wednesday 11 February 2015
Location: Building 20, Lecture Theatre 4, University of Wollongong
Register: Online

Birds feature significantly throughout Anglo-American Poetry, particularly in the Romantic genealogy - Keats nightingale, Shelley’s skylark and Poe’s raven. In this inaugural Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts Public Lecture, Cary Wolfe, Bruce and Elizabeth Dunlevie Professor of English and Founding Director of 3CT: Center for Critical and Cultural Theory at Rice University, Texas, will explore how the figure of the bird operates in the work of poet Wallace Stevens, considering how the lines of animal studies and post humanism intersect. Drawing on the work of Niklas Luhmann, Jacques Derrida, Michel Serres, and others, Wolfe explores the unique quality of Stevens’s ecological poetics—namely, that the call of ecological responsibility for other forms of life derives precisely from the absence of a common “world” among different living creatures. Or as the poet Paul Celan puts it, “the world is gone; I must carry you.” Setting out from this realization, this talk will thus explore what we might call the ecological “carrying capacity” of Stevens’ ecological poetics.

Biography
Cary Wolfe currently teaches English at Rice University in Texas, USA. He has written on a range of topics, from American poetry to bioethics, and has been a significant voice in recent debates in Animal Studies and advocates a version of the posthumanist position. Wolfe’s books and edited collections include Animal Rites: American Culture, The Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory (Chicago, 2003), the edited collections Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal (Minnesota, 2003) and (with Branka Arsic) The Other Emerson (Minnesota, 2010). His most recent books are What Is Posthumanism? (Minnesota, 2010) and Before the Law: Humans and Other Animals in a Biopolitical Frame (Chicago, 2012). His work is in two recent multi-authored collections: Philosophy and Animal Life (Columbia, 2008), with philosophers Cora Diamond, Ian Hacking, Stanley Cavell, and John McDowell, and The Death of the Animal: A Dialogue (Columbia, 2009), with philosophers Paola Cavalieri, Peter Singer, Harlan Miller, Matthew Calarco, and novelist J. M. Coetzee. He is founding editor of the series Posthumanities at the University of Minnesota Press, which publishes six books each year.

Following Event
Screening of ‘Roadside Kestrel’, two video installations by Maria Whiteman and Cary Wolfe
Date: 1pm, Thursday 12 February 2015
Location: Building 25, Room 128