‘Little Difference between a Carcass and a Corpse’: Ecological Crises, the Nonhuman and Settler-Colonial Culpability in Australian Crime Fiction

RACHEL FETHERSTON
DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

Introduction

In 1997, Stephen Knight described Australian crime fiction as a genre that is ‘thriving but unnoticed’ (*Continent of Mystery* 1). While in recent years the genre has gained more attention amongst both academics and reviewers, it remains largely absent from an area of study in which I believe it demands more notice—that is, ecocritical discussions of Australian fiction. In this paper, I contend that some texts of Australian crime fiction reflect important ideas about the way Australians—in particular, non-Indigenous, settler-colonial Australians—understand and interact with the Australian nonhuman. In this context, I investigate the idea of Australian crime fiction as a largely underexplored representation of the modern environmental crisis, and the connection between this crisis and settler-colonial systems of domination.

As I will contend, modern Australian crime fiction often portrays the troubling relationship between intra-human violence and the treatment of the nonhuman. Such a relationship indirectly alludes to the impact of a changing climate on Australian communities and ecosystems and suggests that popular genre fiction can contribute in profound ways to broader environmental considerations. With these arguments in mind, this paper considers the ecocritical value of Australian crime fiction and, more specifically, how this genre’s representation of the nonhuman reveals the criminal nature of anthropogenic ecological crises. I include Jane Harper’s *The Dry* (2016) and Chris Hammer’s *Scrublands* (2018) as examples of crime fiction that explore the Australian nonhuman in both productive and problematic ways in the context of the settler-colonial project and the role it has played in environmental devastation in Australia.

This paper’s ecocritical discussion of Australian crime fiction also represents a contribution to a field of knowledge within literary studies that is slowly growing. Crime fiction worldwide is often viewed as entertaining, sometimes escapist reading. Scholars, however, are now more clearly demonstrating the significant influence of crime fiction on modern culture, with more researchers choosing to focus on this genre in their work (Sjö 1). I believe that the ecocritical value of some Australian crime fiction has largely gone unnoticed; as a popular genre, it may provide novel ways to encourage new perspectives on Australia’s nonhumans and associated ecological crises amongst readers of less classically ‘literary’ genres. The fact that crime fiction often attracts a broad audience provides an opportunity to encourage social change amongst a wider variety of readers, and yet it is perhaps for this same reason that it has been overlooked by scholars in past decades. As Knight argues, ‘it would be a crime not to investigate it’ because of how strongly crime fiction speaks, through its popularity and ephemerality, about ‘concerns, beliefs, fears and obsessions’ (*Continent of Mystery* ix), including those associated with ecological crises.

The Nonhumans of Australian Crime Fiction

Before I continue, it is important that I define my use of the term 'nonhuman.' In both *The Dry* and *Scrublands*, what I term the 'individual nonhuman' is sometimes represented by native animals and plants. However, it is more often the plight of the individual non-native nonhuman that is emphasised in these narratives—those domestic animals associated with settler-colonial agriculture, as well as wild non-native species, such as the European rabbit, that traverse these agricultural landscapes.

Additionally, and perhaps most significantly, there are also nonhuman *forces* that play a central role in these texts, such as heatwaves, drought and bushfire, all pertaining to Australia's broader climate. I refer generally to these non-living, or abiotic, nonhumans as 'nonhuman phenomena.' Whilst evidence shows that some of these 'natural' phenomena, as they are often termed, are in fact largely influenced by anthropogenic climate change (such as intense drought and bushfire) (Jones et al. 2), these events still exist externally to human societies and cultures, impacting both human and nonhuman lives. For the purposes of this paper, then, I consider these phenomena as nonhuman, but through a lens that perceives them as forces that are, and will continue to be, exacerbated by anthropogenic climate change.

As already outlined, this analysis is undertaken from an ecocritical standpoint. Ecocriticism, as described by Ursula K. Heise, is 'shorthand for what some critics prefer to call *environmental criticism, literary-environmental studies, literary ecology, literary environmentalism,* or *green cultural studies*' (506). In regard to crime fiction, Jo Lindsay Walton and Samantha Walton contend that the 'generic features [of crime fiction] offer opportunities to reflect on the forms and functions of environmental criticism and ecological narratives more generally' (3). It is also significant that in his reflection on Tim Flannery's ecological history of Australia, *The Future Eaters* (1994), David Farrier argues that Flannery notes 'a connection between historical/colonial and future/ecological acts of violence'—crimes that are often 'without a body' (876). Discussions of colonial violence and the associated environmental devastation are replete with intimations of crimes that are not only committed against fellow humans, but against the nonhuman as well. While Farrier contends that 'in the Anthropocene there is no single body, culprit or scene by which to definitively identify global ecological crimes' (878), the links made between settler-colonialism and ecological crisis in the novels of Harper and Hammer suggest that while we might not have a body, the finger can indeed be pointed at settler-colonial domination as one party responsible for intensified environmental conditions in Australia, and worldwide. In this sense, crime fiction provides a lens through which readers may better understand colonial crimes.

Despite the possibility of an ecocritical reading of these novels, it is important to emphasise how the treatment of nature and the nonhuman in modern Australian crime fiction is also closely tied to early settler-colonial writing that depicted the Australian natural world as something to be exploited and dominated, whilst also largely reviled. Many early colonial writings were actually crime stories—so many, in fact, that Ken Gelder and Rachael Weaver argue for greater recognition of the significance of the crime genre within the colonial scene. In particular, they highlight the fact that 'Australia's first novel'—Henry Savery's *Quintus Servinton* (1830) —is a crime novel, and Fergus Hume's *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* (1886) is a work of colonial Australian crime fiction that sold half a million copies globally (1–2). It is therefore important to understand how the roots of Australian crime fiction stem from early colonial literature, as well as the ways in which the genre today still encapsulates themes of colonial violence through the lens of environmental exploitation.

Interestingly, Gelder and Weaver describe how, in many colonial crime stories, 'the Australian bush … can even seem to bring about the kinds of degradation and debasement that enable criminal impulses to flourish' (6). This portrays the natural world as an exacerbator of human violence, reducing the culpability of those humans responsible. Such a viewpoint is related to the large-scale degradation of Australia's natural places since the time of early European colonisation, during which white settlers could become utterly sullied by 'the lawlessness and corruption of the frontier' (Gelder and Weaver 6). The destruction of Australia's native habitats and species has been linked to the settler-colonial desire for 'dominion of civilisation over nature' (Langton 16). Early colonial stories, especially those involving crime, often encouraged this perspective, which relates to what Gelder and Weaver describe as 'the other side of itinerant life [for colonisers]—the drive towards colonial settlement and stability' (3). This 'dominion' over nature could, in other words, be seen as the logic of the colonial project to police and dominate the Australian natural world in order to establish, and profit from, the colony. More recent works of Australian settler writing also encapsulate this conceptualisation of nature as something to be controlled. The horrific depiction of kangaroo-shooting in Kenneth Cook's *Wake In Fright* (1961) is one notable example and, more recently, the characters of *In the Winter Dark* (1988), one of Tim Winton's early novels, view the bush 'as either romantic or demonic' and are 'unable to conceive of alternative ways to relate to their surroundings' (Cordier 58). Problematic colonial perspectives on nature and the nonhuman still find a voice in Australian literature today, and it is key that both writers and literary scholars continue to problematise and challenge these notions in their work, with particular attention paid to genre works, such as crime fiction, that may reach a broader audience.

Crime Fiction, Ecological Crises and Settler-Colonial Identity

Knight claims that crime fiction—'that massively popular genre that is co-extensive with the expansive and appropriative societies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries'—often represents the ways in which colonised land is picturesque, but also dangerous. In Australia, he claims, popular culture portrays the continent as a place that is 'both dramatically beautiful and life-threatening, as if the merits and risks of imperial possession remain a part of the national consciousness' ('Crimes Domestic' 17). These clear links between land and violence raise interesting questions about the role that Australian crime fiction plays in broader ecological and place discourse in Australia. Like *Scrublands*, many other Australian crime novels portray strong ties between crime and place in their titles, such as Mark Brandi's *Wimmera* (2017), Candice Fox's *Crimson Lake* (2017) and Emma Viskic's *Resurrection Bay* (2015). Generally, location factors significantly in crime fiction narratives (Knight, *Continent of Mystery* 143), and so it perhaps goes without saying that the bush and other Australian natural places often stand at the forefront of many works of Australian crime. Nevertheless, I argue that such texts also form a part of the discourse regarding Australian environmental perspectives and understandings of nature and not simply place, particularly given that a focus on place, as a human-centric concept, does not necessarily go hand in hand with environmental considerations.

According to Knight, Australian crime fiction has over the years addressed a range of typically 'dissenting positions,' such as gay rights, racial tensions, and pro-criminal perspectives. He also states that crime fiction more generally may also be considered 'an early, often the first, voice to respond to new social and cultural encounters generated by the colonial situation' ('Crimes Domestic' 25). It is perhaps no surprise, then, that environmental catastrophe has factored into the genre in significant ways this past decade, and that 'the colonial situation' is also a key theme. Furthermore, Michael Pollack and Margaret MacNabb contend that crime fiction has

long demonstrated a social conscience and that in the latter decades of the twentieth century, this conscience has included environmental issues (99).

Comparatively, Ken Gelder comments on how Australian literature is often said to be 'politically progressive,' whilst popular fiction—crime fiction, in this case—is 'conservative, even reactionary' (113). How, then, can one understand crime fiction as a potentially resistant form of popular fiction through its depiction of the nonhuman and of ecological catastrophe? While *The Dry* and *Scrublands* do not necessarily venture too far from the formulaic nature of popular crime fiction, I consider these texts unique in their ability to utilise this formula to engage with current ecological crises in a specifically Australian, rural context—even if indirectly. It is perhaps due to their status as popular genre texts that these novels are well-positioned to engage some readers in the concerns and realities of environmental crises, whether these be specific events such as Australia's 2017–2019 drought and the 2019–2020 Australian bushfires or broader, albeit related, concerns such as the overarching climate crisis.

It is notable, too, that noir tropes play a role in climate fiction internationally, such as in Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl* (2009) and *The Water Knife* (2015), Liu Cixin's *The Three-Body Problem* (2014) and David Mitchell's *The Bone Clocks* (2014). These novels, amongst others, engage with themes of crime and mystery in their exploration of the climate crisis. In particular, one of the main themes of these novels is culpability—who is responsible for anthropogenic climate change, and how can justice be served? This idea is discussed by Sarah Dimick in her analysis of Antti Tuomainen's *The Healer* (2013), a work of Finnish 'climate crime' fiction. Specifically, Dimick asks:

> In a time when we, as humans, are collectively but disproportionately capable of altering the atmosphere, how do we reconceptualize culpability? How do we understand concepts like intentionality or guilt when agency is distributed across a species instead of contained within a single individual? (20)

This emphasis on guilt and culpability is shared by many climate fiction texts worldwide, and so it is not surprising that crime fiction is also well-placed to explore conceptualisations of both individual and collective crimes in the context of environmental catastrophe.

In comparison to climate fiction, works of crime fiction like *Scrublands* and *The Dry* may, in fact, have more potential to ignite an awareness of the Anthropocene through a less obviously didactic telling of the impacts of climate change. Timothy Morton's understanding of how we come to a moment of ecological awareness says much about this:

> The darkness of ecological awareness is the darkness of noir, which is a strange loop: the detective is a criminal. In a strong version of noir the narrator is implicated in the story: two levels that normally don't cross, that some believe *structurally can't cross*. We 'civilised' people … are the narrators of our own destiny. Ecological awareness is that moment at which these narrators find out that they are the tragic criminal. (9, emphasis in original)

Like a crime reader who discovers that the first-person narrator of a novel has been the murderer all along, the moment of ecological awareness takes the form of a dark epiphany. The texts discussed in this paper can be read as an intersection of these two constructs—the unreliable crime narrator, and humans as the unreliable narrators of their own destinies, implicated in the ecological crimes occurring around them. The implication of the narrator in the crime is relevant

to Kate Rigby's discussion of 'ecoprophetic witnessing' in which the prophet—or, in the context of my research, the narrator or detective of a crime novel—'is both implicated in and wounded by the wrongdoing that is shown to be driving his or her world headlong into catastrophe' (178). As in many works of crime fiction, the narrator is similar to the prophetic voice in that they usually do not narrate 'from a place of purity' (Rigby 178). They are more often than not implicated, or become implicated, in the crimes they are investigating. So, too, is the ecoprophetic witness both investigating and involved in the ecological crises to which they are privy.[1] Deborah Bird Rose expands on this in her work on 'Anthropocene noir,' stating that

> … we are spectators in the unmaking of the world we have known; we are spectators in the mass deaths of other creatures and in the misery of numerous and diverse forms of life including humans; we may indeed become spectators of our own demise. (211)

The detective is a spectator in this unmaking of both humans and nonhumans, but, as according to Rigby, they may also be involved, whether knowingly or unknowingly, in the crimes they are attempting to solve. Relatedly, Walton and Walton insist that 'in an era of widespread environmental crisis, the detective's reassuring and restorative functions must… be reconsidered' (2). The detective may therefore be simultaneously a spectator, a criminal and a restorer of justice in the context of the climate emergency.

What role, then, does the nonhuman play in such realisations? Significantly, Knight highlights the connection between what he refers to as 'zero-setting' stories (Australian crime stories set in a non-discernible geographical location) ('Crimes Domestic' 19) and the land's ability to enact vengeance on the criminal:

> Bush fires are the favourite force of vengeance … closely followed by dangerous snakes and floods as the agents of justice. It is a curious displacement of human agency onto the land, as if it has itself become the law, as if having declared terra nullius has given that terra a curious quasi-human power of its own. Are the colonisers the criminals that the stolen land will ironically avenge? ('Crimes Domestic' 20)

Whilst the texts examined in this paper are not strictly 'zero-setting' crime narratives, they do exhibit this trope of natural justice or revenge. Are the crimes depicted by Harper and Hammer therefore in some way symbolic of the crime(s) of European colonisation, including those committed against the nonhuman and natural world? Is this natural form of justice representative of nonhuman vengeance for the anthropogenic climate emergency and other environmental devastation? These questions will become relevant as I discuss the representation of the nonhuman in selected Australian crime fiction texts.

Interestingly, Knight also draws attention to a possible link between the continuing decimation of native Australian habitats—'the bush,' as he terms it—and a change in the way that Australian crime fiction is being recognised globally. Knight argues that in the past, those writers that have utilised the 'bush myth' for public consumption within crime fiction have been successful overseas ('Peter Temple' 72). Now, that paradigm is shifting as the 'bush myth' becomes more and more displaced by Australia's overexploitation of natural resources and the impacts of climate change. As will be discussed, Hammer's and Harper's works engage with some quintessential settler-colonial ideas regarding the bush (which perhaps explains the

favourable response to *The Dry* worldwide[2]), but they do so through the lens of drought as an ecological catastrophe. This is perhaps an adaptation of the bush myth for Anthropocene times, indicating an awareness that Australia's natural world, and the way settler-colonisers interact with it, is changing.

Drought and Settler-Colonial Culpability in Jane Harper's *The Dry*

The Dry offers readers a protagonist who, as described above, is a spectator *and* a key player in the events of the narrative: a police authority figure who is implicated in a crime that took place in his hometown when he was a teenager, which he is now attempting to solve. *The Dry* is Jane Harper's debut novel, winning the 2015 Victorian Premier's Unpublished Manuscript Award prior to its publication in 2016. So far, *The Dry* remains largely underexplored by scholars, although in their work on perspectives of rural Australian cultural sustainability, Catherine Driscoll et al. contend that Harper's novel represents 'the oppositional relationship between the Australian city and its non-metropolitan hinterland' (1). The narrative of *The Dry* centres on Aaron Falk, an investigator for the Australian Federal Police who has taken a leave of absence from his work in Melbourne to attend the funeral of a childhood friend, Luke Hadler, in Aaron's rural Victorian hometown of Kiewarra. Luke is suspected of committing murder-suicide, killing his wife and son and then himself, supposedly due to the pressures of a devastating drought that has impacted his farm and the broader township. As indicated by the novel's title, drought and heat are a constant presence throughout the narrative, highlighting the plight of farmers and townsfolk whose livelihoods are under threat. However, Aaron is unconvinced of Luke's guilt and spends his time in Kiewarra trying to uncover the truth, as well as reflecting on a secret he has kept since his school days regarding the murder of a childhood friend, Ellie Deacon.

Some of the main representations of the nonhuman in *The Dry* are phenomena such as drought and heatwaves that impact communities and ecosystems across Australia. The immense suffering of Australian farmers during drought periods has long been a point of socio-political tension across the nation. Whilst farmers' livelihoods often take centre stage in discussions of drought, in the background there is always the nagging matter of the unsustainability of Australian settler-colonial agriculture and the immense devastation it has caused to native species and habitats since European colonisation. While drought is far from an uncommon trope of Australian settler-colonial culture, the success of *The Dry* suggests that Harper's intense focus on it has struck a nerve with readers, both in Australia and overseas.[3] Notably, early in Harper's novel it is established that the drought conditions in rural Victoria described in the narrative are not of an ordinary kind: they are 'officially the worst conditions in a century' due to '*El Niño*,' the Melbourne weathermen say (Harper, *The Dry* 1. Hereafter cited in text as *TD*). Statements such as these, made by meteorologists in their 'air-conditioned studios' (*TD* 1), stand in stark contrast to the harsh reality experienced by farmers out on the land. Whilst Harper does not directly link this drought with climate change, it would be difficult for some readers to ignore the relevance of the climate crisis in this context, especially given that recent intense droughts in Australia have been strongly linked to human-induced climate change (Jones et al. 2). The positioning of Aaron as a witness to the crimes of Kiewarra and the associated environmental crisis is significant in this regard.

From the beginning of the narrative, Aaron is portrayed as a spectator to the drought and the crimes committed during it—he is an outsider who 'had chosen his life in Melbourne' (*TD* 151)—but, importantly, he is also forced to choose this city life due to his alleged involvement in the death of Ellie Deacon when he was a teenager, and he is also friends with the alleged

murderer, Luke. Aaron is therefore a witness, a potential criminal and, as an investigator, a seeker of justice, representing Rigby's conceptualisation of the ecoprophetic witness who 'is both implicated in and wounded by … wrongdoing' (178). While Aaron begins the novel as an outsider from Melbourne, he quickly develops a newfound emotional connection to his childhood town and the suffering linked with the murders and the drought. Visiting the river that he and Luke swam in as children, Aaron is shocked to discover that it is dry; he 'clamber[s] into the cavity, hands and knees scraping against the baked bank' (*TD* 106). This moment is a dark epiphany, highlighting the extent of the drought and how much his beloved childhood places have been so drastically marred by both murder and ecological catastrophe. This realisation more broadly represents that of the settler-coloniser coming to terms with their role in the climate crisis, and the implications this has for current colonial systems of domination—such as still-widespread Anglo-agricultural practices—that continue to enact environmental devastation and nonhuman violence; coming to terms with this devastation means accepting that current practices need to change if any real action on climate change is going to be possible.

Harper also draws attention to the role that the Australian federal government is, or rather is not playing in drought relief. Aaron's first interaction with a Kiewarra local on his return to town for Luke's funeral involves another funeral attendee berating the government for 'letting things get this bad' (*TD* 6). In his critique of the government, this man disregards Luke's part in the murders that, at this point in the narrative, the town believes he has committed. He states, 'you can hardly blame the poor bastard' (*TD* 6); to this local, criminal culpability belongs with the Australian government, not the local farmer supposedly driven to desperation. Significantly, such a belief positions the Australian bush and associated drought as a central cause of rural violence. This relates to Ken Gelder and Rachael Weaver's comments about the perceived role of the Australian natural world in aggravating crime (6), enabling people—often men—already under pressure in an unforgiving natural setting to commit atrocious crimes without shouldering the culpability.[4] This local's view suggests that it is no wonder regular men like Luke Hadler commit murder because drought conditions effectively make them do it, representing what Knight describes as 'a curious displacement of human agency onto the land' ('Crimes Domestic' 20).

Such a displacement relates to Ross Gibson's concept of Australia's postcolonial badlands, summarised by Emily Potter as 'spatial containers that encyst a culture's refuse and confronting madness, and—because of this quarantining—condemn a particular place to repetitions of "bad."' In Australia, these areas are those that, as Potter describes, 'become popularly synonymous with violence, unpredictability, excess and fear' (*Writing Belonging* 104). Their categorisation of 'bad' also calls upon elements of noir, condemning such places to exist only as the settings for settler-colonial crime. In both *The Dry* and *Scrublands*, these 'bad' places may be abandoned or isolated farms, agricultural townships on the verge of economic and/or environmental collapse, or unpredictable native Australian habitats experiencing drought and bushfire one moment, and flooding the next. The Australian badlands, with their history of settler violence committed against Indigenous peoples and the violent destruction of the land itself, can be likened to an 'immense, historical crime-scene' (Gibson 1). Potter argues that failing to acknowledge and engage with these violent histories of place upholds Australia's colonial national identity and subsequently continues the destructive colonial practices that wreak havoc on marginalised Indigenous communities and the natural world ('Postcolonial Atmospheres' 82).

Just as these badlands and the violent events that take place within them reflect Australia's bloody past in their 'challenging environments and isolated townships' (Potter, *Writing*

Belonging 105), so too does the setting of Harper's novel reflect the struggle of settler-colonisers to live more harmoniously alongside the Australian natural environment. As indicated above, there is a perception that the harsh drought that engulfs the Kiewarra township exacerbates violent tendencies and paranoia. This is made especially evident when Aaron and police sergeant Greg Raco absorb the starkness of the place where Luke Hadler is found dead:

> There was a pocket of eerie silence as invisible birds were momentarily stilled by the sound of his voice … It was fractionally cooler here, shaded on all sides by a sentry line of ghost gums. The road was completely hidden by thick growth. Something in the bush rustled and scurried away. The yellow earth was baked solid. (*TD* 83)

Interestingly, this passage highlights the presence of nonhuman life, even in drought—the birds, the trees and undergrowth—and yet, this place surrounded by bush is still portrayed in a negative light: Aaron describes it as a 'pretty miserable place to spend your last moments' (*TD*, 83). Gelder and Weaver's concept of the Australian bush as responsible for instigating violent crimes is relevant here (6), the suggestion being that Luke Hadler died because the overbearing power of the bush willed it so, raising questions about the capacity of settler-colonisers to live peacefully and productively on land that still feels so unfamiliar and unforgiving to them.

Animal Suffering in Colonial Farming Landscapes

The Dry also suggests a significant link between ecological catastrophe and the violence committed against individual nonhumans, particularly livestock, in drought-stricken Australia. This is poignantly represented in the prologue when the narrator states that 'there was little difference between a carcass and a corpse' (*TD* 1). This passage speaks of how 'the farmers of Kiewarra levelled their rifles at skinny livestock. No rain meant no feed. And no feed made for difficult decisions' (*TD* 1). As the prologue concludes, the meaning of the introductory sentence becomes clear: based on the description of 'blood pooled black over tiles and carpet' and 'a child's scooter… abandoned' (*TD* 2), the reader learns that these carcasses are, in fact, human corpses. Such a comparison suggests a blurring of boundaries between what violence may be considered ethical in a settler-colonial landscape—for example, the killing of farm animals—and what is unethical—for example, the killing of a human. Prolonged drought is depicted as being responsible for this moral clouding, resulting in desperate men committing horrific crimes when they can no longer make ends meet, as the man at Luke Hadler's funeral suggests.

Such symbolism implies that the human (in particular, the settler-coloniser) can be both implicated in and, problematically, freed from criminal responsibility in the context of environmental crises. As Deborah Bird Rose describes it, 'we are spectators in the unmaking of the world' (211), but we are also, as Timothy Morton puts it, 'narrators of our own destiny' (9), suggesting that settler-colonisers are both observers and perpetrators of violence committed against the natural world. Notably, there is no mention of the party responsible for the murders in this opening passage; the only other living animals present alongside a crying baby (Luke's youngest child, left alive) are the 'blowflies' swarming the dead bodies (*TD* 2). This absence of immediate human culpability, although typical of a 'whodunnit' crime narrative, is indicative of a similar denial of settler-colonial culpability for the crime of anthropogenic climate change that has resulted in such intense drought. Instead, the blowflies represent this culpability, suggesting that it is the state of the natural world in drought—often typified by swarming flies—that has facilitated these murders.

Throughout the narrative, Harper likens the townspeople of Kiewarra to various farm animals, describing pub goers 'star[ing] with bovine blankness at greyhound racing on TV' (*TD* 49–50) and Grant Dow, cousin of the murdered Ellie Deacon, as 'piggy' (*TD* 59). These discriminatory remarks suggest a distancing between certain townsfolk and the horrifying impact of drought on nonhumans, particularly those associated with settler-colonial agriculture. These animals suffer during drought, but they are often not granted the same respect as those humans, such as Luke Hadler, who suffer in the same way. This highlights the complex relationship Australian settler-colonisers have developed with agricultural animals over the years, treating these nonhumans adequately when humans rely on them for their livelihoods and then treating them with violence when drought and bushfire take their toll on the landscape. This is reflected in the aforementioned passage in which farmers are described as 'level[ing] their rifles at skinny livestock' (*TD* 1), forced to euthanise those animals out of both necessity and mercy, as well as in Aaron's observation of 'animals [that] lay dead in paddocks' (*TD* 106). Descriptions published in news stories across the country are shockingly similar to Harper's fictional portrayal, particularly during Australia's 2019–2020 Black Summer. Journalists Sophie Meixner and Tom Lowrey write of how, in an area of New South Wales particularly hard-hit by the bushfires, 'animal carcasses lin[ed] the sides of the road, with farmers beginning the slow, difficult and grim work of loading the bodies onto the trays of utes'; many surviving animals also had to be euthanised. These mass livestock deaths indicate one horrifying way in which the climate emergency will continue to impact Anglo-agricultural livelihoods into the future, and crime novels such as *The Dry* are potentially one means by which readers can engage with ethical questions surrounding the plight of nonhumans in these situations.[5]

Furthermore, there are strong similarities drawn between the mistreatment of nonhumans and intra-human violence in Harper's novel. The non-native European rabbit plays a significant role in this respect, which is brought to light when Aaron reflects on an encounter between Luke, himself and a baby rabbit that they find in overgrown grass as teenagers. In the present narrative, an adult Aaron has just hit a rabbit with his car, feeling 'the sickening thud under the wheels' (*TD* 31) before he has time to avoid it. Comparatively, it is suggested in Aaron's flashback that the teenage Luke may have intentionally killed their rescued rabbit:

> He had one hand in the box. Luke's head snapped up as Aaron approached and he snatched his hand out … 'It died,' Luke said. His mouth was a tight line. He didn't meet Aaron's gaze. (*TD* 31)

A connection is suggested here between Luke's presumed past violence towards an animal, and Aaron's suspicion that Luke may be responsible for both Ellie Deacon's murder, and that of his own family. The sudden killing of a baby rabbit seems completely at odds with Luke's love for his childhood dog (*TD* 154), suggesting that perhaps Luke was not responsible for the rabbit's death, nor that of his family. By comparison, Mal Deacon—Ellie's father, who *is* in fact responsible for her murder—exhibits extremely violent tendencies towards nonhuman animals. Mal is described as exercising 'a brutal hand' on his flock of sheep come shearing time, leaving them 'a staggering, bleeding mess' as he shears them 'too close to the skin' (*TD* 67). Aaron also recalls how Mal hits Luke's dog with his car, leaving a fourteen-year-old Luke crying over his much-loved pet 'as he'd cradled it by the roadside' (*TD* 154). These encounters between human and nonhuman echo a similar sentiment to Rose's concept of 'Anthropocene noir.' Many characters in *The Dry* are spectators of 'the misery of numerous and diverse forms of life' (Rose 211), extending the sorrow associated with murdered humans and their families to the desolation of nonhumans implicated in human violence and environmental crises such as drought.

However, the representational aspect of these nonhuman portrayals is perhaps problematic. The relationship between nonhuman and intra-human violence, as depicted in *The Dry*, can be interpreted in two ways: symbolically and as one of cause and effect.[6] I argue that Harper in fact represents both in her work. Firstly, she presents the suffering of animals as symbolic. This is particularly significant in the case of Luke Hadler and Mal Deacon, as the above instances of animal cruelty could be viewed as prophesying the human murders that the men are later accused of committing. Of course, violence committed against nonhumans is often understood as a sign that a person is capable of intra-human violence as well.[7] While this psychological link is important to recognise, it is also representative of how animal cruelty is perceived as a sign of 'worse' behaviour, when the act of animal cruelty alone is horrific as it is. This positioning of animal cruelty as a crime that comes before intra-human violence is nothing new but does take emphasis away from the experience of nonhumans in these circumstances and also depicts animals as 'scarcely animals at all but schematic elements in an aesthetic or psychological design' (Scholtmeijer 259, cited in Donovan 95). Josephine Donovan comments on the significance of this kind of animal representation in literature and how it has often been analysed from ideological standpoints; she argues that new modes of analysis are required to move past what Philip Armstrong describes as 'reduc[ing] the animal to a blank screen for the projection of human meaning'(3, cited in Donovan 95). While I would argue that Harper largely relies on the symbolic power of the nonhuman in her novel, she also utilises connections between cruelty to animals and intra-human violence in a way that highlights how these events inform one another in reality. Events such as bushfires lead to increased animal deaths, as detailed above, and while many of these deaths may be deemed humane euthanasia, the cruel conditions in which these animals are kept in the lead-up to their deaths (lack of feed and water, and exposure to extreme heat) would be partly avoidable if human-induced climate change was not a reality. With livestock deaths come farmers' desperation to make ends meet, and so the cyclical nature of violence experienced by nonhumans and humans is perpetuated.

Bushfire and Justice in Chris Hammer's *Scrublands*

Like *The Dry*, Hammer's debut novel *Scrublands* is set in a fictional Australian country town, this time in the Riverina region of New South Wales. Described by Laura Wilson as a work of 'outback noir,' *Scrublands* strongly emphasises the oppressive Australian heat and seemingly endless drought. Significantly, the protagonist of *Scrublands* is not associated with law enforcement but is rather a journalist chasing a story. Former war reporter Martin Scarsden travels to Riversend on the one-year anniversary of a tragic mass shooting that occurred at the town's church, committed by the local priest. After speaking with locals, Martin realises that the existing narrative regarding the shooting requires further investigation. The bodies of two murdered backpackers are then discovered on a farm outside of town, raising more questions about which townsfolk have secrets to hide.

Like *The Dry*, there is a focus on broader nonhuman forces in this text through depictions of phenomena such as drought and bushfire. Known for its combination of forested wetland and dry land habitats (Zhang et al. 331), the Riverina area of New South Wales has experienced periods of intense drought with severe flooding often occurring in between (Smee). In *Scrublands*, the heat of the drought is perceived as a nonhuman entity with an agency of its own; it is 'insistent,' and Martin 'can no more ignore it than he can ignore life itself' (Hammer, *Scrublands* 462. Hereafter cited in text as *SL*). As Martin and Robbie Haus-Jones, a local police officer, drive through a fire that is threatening properties in the titular scrublands outside of Riversend, Martin notes that 'the world around them grows increasingly apocalyptic, the sky closing in, the light fading, ash falling, some of it glowing orange at the edges.' It is notable

that the bushfire is compared to a non-natural object: a 'freight train [that] smashes into the back of the house' (*SL* 101). There is a suggestion here that the fire is something more than a natural occurrence; it represents what Knight describes as 'a curious displacement of human agency onto the land,' a force that is enacting justice for lands stolen and devastated by the settler-coloniser ('Crimes Domestic' 20).

The bushfire is also depicted as being partially responsible for revealing the remains of two missing backpackers on a farm outside of town. This alludes to what Knight describes as a kind of zero-policing crime story ('where the just outcome is achieved without a detective and where the moral resolution is often in some way natural, as when execution occurs through fire or flood' ('Crimes Domestic' 24)). As aforementioned, Knight describes how bushfires are often portrayed as 'agents of justice' in these zero-policing crime stories ('Crimes Domestic' 20). While the bushfire in *Scrublands* does not bring about justice in a direct sense, it does reveal the bodies of the missing backpackers and the murders are later linked to Jamie Landers and Allen Newkirk, two teenage boys whose fathers were murdered in the church shooting. In this sense, justice for these murders is indirectly achieved through fire, as it is the means by which the bodies are first revealed. As in Harper's work, a link is drawn between settler-colonial discourse and an agential kind of nonhuman phenomena that is to blame for exacerbating human violence through drought, and yet is also responsible for dispensing justice.

Significantly, though, such events are subtly linked to climate change in Hammer's novel, suggesting that while upholding some traditional aspects of settler-colonial discourse regarding the Australian natural world (the reduction of the nonhuman to 'a blank screen for the projection of human meaning' (Armstrong 3)), *Scrublands* also demonstrates an awareness that nature as we know it is not behaving as it should. Martin likens Riversend's claustrophobic climate to 'a Pacific atoll with rising sea levels gnawing at its shores' (SL 251), and the following passage alludes to the relationship between drought and broader environmental crises occurring elsewhere in the world:

> He knows that somewhere in the world there must be clouds … Somewhere it is raining; somewhere it is pelting down. There will be floods and landslides and hurricanes and monsoons … More water than you can imagine, more water than you could ever want. Somewhere, but not here. Here there are no clouds and no rain. The drought can't last forever; he knows it, everyone knows it. It's just become hard to believe. (*SL* 443)

Situations such as these have occurred very recently in reality. As Australians bear witness to climate-related disasters overseas, many simultaneously experience similar disasters at home—disasters that, like the drought in *Scrublands*, are almost 'hard to believe.' For example, while extreme flooding and landslides killed dozens of people in Jakarta in early 2020 (Renaldi and Handley), Australians were experiencing the worst bushfire season on record. As Rose describes, it may be that Australians are fast becoming 'spectators of our own demise' (211), watching as these unbelievable environmental catastrophes become reality and yet failing to implement effective action quickly enough.

Drought, Zero-Policing and the Settler-Colonial Everyman

Knight argues that a particular trend emerged in Australian crime fiction in the latter half of the nineteenth century: the abandoning of police as crime-solvers ('Crimes Domestic' 24). The protagonist of *Scrublands* is not a police figure, but rather a journalist following a story,

suggesting that Hammer's text subscribes to the anti-authority sentiment prevalent in settler-colonial culture. Whilst Knight claims that the detective protagonist was re-introduced to Australian crime in the 1980s ('Crimes Domestic' 24), the trend of portraying civilian crime-solvers has re-emerged in the twenty-first century. As well as Martin Scarsden of *Scrublands*, other popular Australian crime novels of the past several years include non-police protagonists: Brandi's *Wimmera* and *The Rip* (2019), Viskic's *Resurrection Bay* and Jane Harper's *The Lost Man* (2018) are some examples. What this may indicate about the relationship between the human and nonhuman in these novels is interesting and relates to the anti-authority 'everyman' prevalent in Australian colonial literature.

The strong emphasis on an 'everyman' in settler-colonial cultural expression has led to an admiration for 'everyday heroes.' Jeanine Leane describes the 'handsome, care free, anti-intellectual bushman, apathetic and unaware of the wider world around him' as an identity that was manufactured by settler-colonisers following Australian Federation (32). The writing of non-authority protagonists into Australian crime fiction speaks to this, suggesting that whilst texts like Hammer's may provide opportunities for readers to understand the impacts of environmental catastrophe, these narratives still very much sit within the Australian settler-colonial literary tradition and draw on anti-authority sentiments prevalent within settler-colonial discourse. This is problematic when one considers the environmental destruction caused by colonisation in Australia; the text potentially acts to deny this fact by upholding certain settler-colonial stereotypes that encourage a view of the Australian natural world as unforgiving and in need of taming by the coloniser—for example, Martin's perception that the bushfire 'wants to come in and eat us' (*SL* 101) and that 'the sun hangs over Riversend like a sentencing judge' (*SL* 457). In addition, the 'self-contained' layout of Riversend brings stability to the town that is otherwise 'adrift on the vast inland plain' (*SL* 26). The centrality of the settler-colonial everyman in *Scrublands* also possibly explains the lack of Indigenous characters depicted in the text, as well as an absence of meaningfully depicted female characters. As Leane contends, the exclusion of 'women, urban people, immigrants and Indigenous people' from many settler-colonial narratives is a result of emphasising the settler-colonial bushman identity (32).

It is worth noting here that some Indigenous Australian fiction actually utilises certain tropes of mystery and noir fiction in a way that often opposes problematic settler-colonial perspectives of nature and the nonhuman.[8] Melissa Lucashenko's *Too Much Lip* (2018) and Nardi Simpson's *Song of the Crocodile* (2020) are two recent examples of Indigenous Australian literature that focus on unsolved mysteries stemming from the violent settler-colonial past of both novels' settings. Similarly, Philip McLaren's crime fiction—in particular, *Scream Black Murder* (2002)—features Indigenous detectives investigating crimes committed against both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, highlighting the differences in media attention and police interest assigned to such cases. The works of these Indigenous authors demonstrate that crime tropes have been and continue to be used to undermine the settler-colonial project in Australian literature, highlighting the possibility of utilising such tropes without conforming to settler-colonial stereotypes as Harper's and Hammer's novels do.

However, another possible interpretation of the everyman trope used in modern Australian crime fiction is that the everyday Australian is likely to be implicated in environmental catastrophe; during bushfire events throughout Australia's history, volunteer firefighters and civilians have commonly been on the frontline of these disasters. Whilst law enforcement plays a role in the national discourse surrounding these catastrophes, there is a larger focus on the 'everyday heroes' of Victoria's Country Fire Authority and the Rural Fire Service of New South

Wales, and the everyday people—often farmers and rural townspeople—whose homes and livelihoods have been destroyed. In a review of the media coverage of various Australian bushfire disasters, Susan Yell notes the prevalence of specific iconic images that appeared in this coverage, such as firefighters battling fires and survivors visiting the ruins of their properties (114–15), suggesting that volunteers and an Australian 'everyperson' play key roles in cultural perceptions of bushfire. In *Scrublands*, it is much the same, with reporter Martin helping to fight an out-of-control blaze in order to save a local man's property (*SL* 100-105).

Furthermore, Hammer highlights how the quintessential rural Australian town, made up of 'everyperson' citizens, can resort to crime in the dire circumstances of extreme drought. Martin discovers that Byron Swift, the priest who commits the mass shooting at the local church, had been funnelling drug money to those in Riversend who desperately needed financial assistance in the wake of severe drought. Mandalay Blonde, a local business owner and the romantic interest of the novel, tells Martin:

> … we all knew there was money. For the footy team, for the youth group, for families that were doing it tough. To help with the fire brigade, with the services club. We were in it together—the drought was getting worse, closing in—we didn't ask questions. (*SL* 457)

Byron has also been living under a fake name to escape his past as a war criminal in Afghanistan, for which he is attempting to make amends. The stagnant nature of the drought-prone landscape stands in contrast to the fluidity of Byron's identities. Both he and others in Riversend, such as the character Harley Snouch whose crimes are both confirmed and denied throughout the narrative,[9] maintain these fluid identities in order to commit and then absolve themselves of crimes, lending credence to Gelder and Weaver's idea of the constantly unfolding colonial identities that were especially present in early Australian crime fiction; as they state, 'characters continually slip out of view, changing their identities at will and sometimes even disappearing altogether' (4). Crime, in this case, is helping Riversend combat the worst impacts of the drought crisis, and Byron's identities are manifold: he is portrayed as an outsider (a non-local with a fake name) and a criminal (a murderer), but also as a bringer of justice, when the reader finally learns of his motivations for the shooting (wanting to protect the women of the town from the violent Craig Landers (*SL* 465)). Like Aaron Falk in *The Dry* who acts as an 'ecoprophetic witness' (178), Byron's shifting identities show him to be a spectator witnessing the struggles of those living with the impacts of climate change and also as someone who is implicated in the crimes from which he is trying to save people.

This relates to the fluid nature of ground, which, as discussed by Potter is always 'in movement' (*Writing Belonging* 103). The criminal activities that occur in Riversend are both ruinous and necessary due to the drought's capacity to destabilise these grounds. This indicates a feeling of uncertainty that is particular to postcolonial place, and subsequently relates to Gibson's 'badlands' concept and Morton's discussion of noir and ecological crisis in which he contends that humans are both observers and perpetrators (9). Hammer's novel positions the land on which these crimes occur as ceaselessly oscillating between steady reliability and unstable ground that exists 'in the midst of things unfolding' (*Writing Belonging* 104), suggesting that ecological catastrophe is destabilising the position of the settler-coloniser and bringing their culpability to the fore.

Conclusion

The findings presented in this paper are significant because they demonstrate the potential of Australian crime fiction to communicate the threats to both human and nonhuman life should the impacts of the climate crisis continue to intensify. While neither text goes into explicit detail about the links between intense drought and bushfire seasons in Australia and anthropogenic climate change, the publication of *The Dry* and *Scrublands* in 2016 and 2018 respectively, is notable; their release was situated between the Black Saturday Bushfires of 2009 and the devastating Black Summer bushfires of 2019 and 2020. In 2017, Australia also saw the beginning of an intense drought season (Bureau of Meteorology) which has been linked to climate change (CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology 7). In this context, Harper's and Hammer's portrayals of the impacts of drought and bushfire are important, introducing readers to the struggles of (primarily settler-coloniser) Australians and nonhumans living under these impacts through the use of familiar crime tropes that may engage a broader audience than Australian climate literature does.

The representation of the nonhuman in these texts alludes to the ways in which settler-colonisers are largely responsible for vast changes to Australia's natural environments and the suffering experienced by nonhumans as a result, suggesting an interconnectivity between broader ecological crises and the unsustainability of the settler-colonial project. Both *The Dry* and *Scrublands* engage with what Potter considers 'the colonial obsession with stabilized ground' (*Writing Belonging* 103). Ever-shifting identities, unreliable humans and nonhuman forces, and the irrevocably devastating impacts of ecological crises are major focuses of these narratives, and the authors' emphasis on this latter theme suggests a critique of current settler-colonial systems (in particular the sustained dominance of Anglo-agricultural practices). My discussion of Rigby's ecoprophetic witness as represented in these texts also contends something similar, putting forward the idea that settler-colonisers are witnessing and affected by a catastrophe that they have had a hand in bringing about.

However, whilst Hammer's and Harper's depictions of the nonhuman partly represent a criticism of Australian settler-colonialism, their works also uphold a quintessential view of the Australian bush as the reason for exacerbated levels of violence in rural communities, subsequently denying human culpability for both domestic crimes and broader ecological crimes. Merely setting these violent stories in rural Australian locations in close proximity to the perceived untameability of the bush lends credence to Gelder and Weaver's analysis of the way in which the bush is utilised in colonial crime stories where 'criminality saturat[es] every level of bush life,' suggesting that the bush itself somehow facilitates intra-human violence (6).

These texts therefore remain highly congruous with settler-colonial understandings of the Australian natural world and the nonhuman, problematically denying the role that such understandings have played, and continue to play, in the modern environmental crisis. Nevertheless, their exploration of the links between nonhuman and human communities, whilst representational to an extent, also reflects an important cause-and-effect relationship. As the climate crisis intensifies, nonhumans will continue to suffer and, in some cases, die alongside the humans affected; how this occurs in *Scrublands* and *The Dry* is therefore not simply symbolic of human suffering alone, but the very real connection between the suffering of humans and nonhumans in the context of the climate crisis.

NOTES

[1] I have argued something similar in a discussion of Briohny Doyle's *The Island Will Sink* (2013) (Fetherston).
[2] Of particular note is a review of *The Dry* published in the *New York Times* in 2017 (Maslin).
[3] Over one million copies of *The Dry* have been sold worldwide as of January 2019 (Lester).
[4] This denial of culpability is a common thread in the reporting of murder-suicides in Australia. In particular, media reports about Peter Miles and Geoff Hunt, two men separately accused of murder-suicide involving their own families, described the perpetrators as good men and subsequently attracted widespread criticism from readers and journalists (Media Watch; Ford).
[5] However, it is worth noting that there is primarily an emphasis on non-native animals in this text, such as farm animals, with little consideration granted to native wildlife affected by drought and bushfire.
[6] My thanks to a generous reviewer who made this point.
[7] For a recent study on the link between animal cruelty in childhood and violent crimes committed by adults, see Hensley et al.
[8] My thanks to a generous reviewer who made this point.
[9] Throughout the novel, it is both suggested and disputed that Snouch raped Mandalay's mother.

WORKS CITED

Armstrong, Philip. *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity*. Milton Park: Routledge, 2008.
Bacigalupi, Paolo. *The Water Knife*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015.
Brandi, Mark. *The Rip*. Sydney: Hachette Australia, 2019.
---. *Wimmera*. Sydney: Hachette Australia, 2017.
Cook, Kenneth. *Wake In Fright*. London: Michael Joseph, 1961.
Cordier, Stephane Christophe. 'Tim Winton's *In The Winter Dark* and the Settler Condition.' *Antipodes* 32.1–2 (2018): 58–72.
CSIRO, and Bureau of Meteorology. *State of the Climate 2020*. 2020, http://www.bom.gov.au/state-of-the-climate/documents/State-of-the-Climate-2020.pdf.
Dimick, Sarah. 'From Suspect to Species: Climate Crime in Antti Tuomainen's *The Healer*.' *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 51.3 (2018): 19–35.
Donovan, Josephine. *The Aesthetics of Care: On the Literary Treatment of Animals*. London: Bloomsbury.
Doyle, Briohny. *The Island Will Sink*. Melbourne: The Lifted Brow, 2016.
Driscoll, Catherine, et al. *Cultural Sustainability in Rural Communities: Rethinking Australian Country Towns*. Milton Park: Routledge, 2017.
'Drought: Rainfall Deficiencies and Water Availability.' *Bureau of Meteorology*, 2021, http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/drought/.
Farrier, David. 'Animal Detectives and 'Anthropocene Noir' in Chloe Hooper's *A Child's Book of True Crime*.' *Textual Practice* 32.5 (2018): 875–93.
Fetherston, Rachel. '"No Longer Any Distance between Us": Technology, Climate Change and Narrative Empathy in Briohny Doyle's *The Island Will Sink*.' *Antithesis Journal* 29 (2019): 36–45.
Flannery, Tim. *The Future Eaters*. Birmingham Alabama: Reed Books, 1994.
Ford, Clementine. 'The Problem with the "Good Bloke" Narrative.' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 May 2018.
Fox, Candice. *Crimson Lake*. London: Bantam Press, 2017.
Gelder, Ken. 'Recovering Australian Popular Fiction: Towards the End of Australian Literature.' *Australian Literary Studies in the 21st Century*. Ed. Philip Mead. Association for the Study of Australian Literature, 2001. 112–20.
Gelder, Ken, and Rachael Weaver. 'Colonial Australian Crime Fiction.' *The Anthology of Colonial Australian Crime Fiction*. Ed. Ken Gelder and Rachael Weaver. Melbourne:

Melbourne UP, 2008. 1–10.
Gibson, Ross. *Seven Versions of an Australian Badland*. St Lucia: U of Queensland P, 2002.
Hammer, Chris. *Scrublands*. Melbourne: Allen & Unwin, 2018.
Harper, Jane. *The Dry*. Sydney: Pan Macmillan Australia, 2017.
---. *The Lost Man*. Sydney: Pan Macmillan Australia, 2018.
Heise, Ursula K. 'The Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism.' *PMLA* 121.2 (2006): 503–16.
Hensley, Christopher et al. 'Exploring the Social and Emotional Context of Childhood Animal Cruelty and Its Potential Link to Adult Human Violence.' *Psychology, Crime & Law* 24.5 (2017): 489–99.
Hume, Fergus. *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab*. Melbourne: Kemp and Boyce, 1886.
Jones, Roger, Celeste Young and John Handmer. *Beyond the Mean: Valuing Adaptation under Rapid Change*. Climate Change Working Paper No. 17. Centre for Strategic Economic Studies, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia, 2012.
Knight, Stephen. *Continent of Mystery: A Thematic History of Australian Crime Fiction*. Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1997.
---. 'Crimes Domestic and Crimes Colonial: The Role of Crime Fiction in Developing Postcolonial Consciousness.' *Postcolonial Postmortems: Crime Fiction from a Transcultural Perspective*. Ed. Christine Matzke and Susanne Mühleisen. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006. 17–33.
---. 'Peter Temple: Australian Crime Fiction on the World Stage.' *Clues: A Journal of Detection* 29.1 (2011): 71–81.
Langton, Marcia. 'What Do We Mean by Wilderness?: Wilderness and Terra Nullius in Australian Art [Address to The Sydney Institute on 12 October 1995].' *The Sydney Papers* 8.1 (1996): 10–31.
Leane, Jeanine. 'Aboriginal Representation: Conflict or Dialogue in the Academy.' *Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* 39 (Supplement, 2010): 32–39.
Lester, Amelia. 'Jane Harper Started as a Business Reporter. Now She Writes Novels about Murder.' *New York Times*, 31 Jan. 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/31/books/jane-harper-lost-man-the-dry-murder-mystery-author.html.
Liu, Cixin. *The Three-Body Problem*. Ed. Ken Liu. New York: Tor Books, 2014.
Lucashenko, Melissa. *Too Much Lip*. St Lucia: U of Queensland P, 2018.
Maslin, Janet. '"The Dry," a Page-Turner of a Mystery Set in Parched Australia.' *New York Times*, 9 Jan. 2017.
McLaren, Philip. *Scream Black Murder*. Philadelphia: Intrigue Press, 2002.
*Media Watc*h. 'Reporting on Murder Suicides.' *ABC News*, 2018, https://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/episodes/reporting-on-murder-suicides/9972228.
Meixner, Sophie, and Tom Lowrey. 'Dead Livestock Paint Grim Picture of Fire Devastation and Logistical Challenges of Recovery Effort.' *ABC News*, 5 Jan. 2020, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-01-05/fire-bushfire-dead-livestock-farmers-agforce-animal-carcasses/11841868.
Mitchell, David. *The Bone Clocks*. London: Sceptre, 2014.
Morton, Timothy. *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence*. New York: Columbia UP, 2016.
Pollak, Michael, and Margaret MacNabb. *Hearts and Minds: Creative Australians and the Environment*. Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 2000.
Potter, Emily. 'Postcolonial Atmospheres: Recalling Our Shadow Places.' *By-Roads and Hidden Treasures: Mapping Cultural Assets in Regional Australia*. UWA Publishing, 2015. 75–86.
---. *Writing Belonging at the Millennium: Notes from the Field on Settler-Colonial Place*.

Bristol: Intellect, 2019.
Renaldi, Erwin, and Erin Handley. 'Jakarta Residents Inundated as Severe Flooding Kills Dozens of People in Indonesia.' *ABC News*, 2 Jan. 2020, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-01-02/indonesia-jakarta-flooding-victims-indundated-heavy-rains/11837612.
Rigby, Kate. 'Writing in the Anthropocene: Idle Chatter or Ecoprophetic Witness?' *Australian Humanities Review* 47 (November 2009): 173–87.
Rose, Deborah Bird. 'Anthropocene Noir.' *Arena Journal* 41 (2013): 206–19.
Savery, Henry. *Quintus Servinton: A Tale, Founded upon Incidents of Real Occurrence*. Hobart: Henry Melville, 1830.
Scholtmeijer, Marian. *Animal Victims in Modern Fiction: From Sanctity to Sacrifice*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1993.
Simpson, Nardi. *Song of the Crocodile*. Sydney: Hachette Australia, 2020.
Sjö, Sofia. 'Madness, Otherness and Transformation: Exploring Religion in Nordic Crime Films.' *Journal of Religion and Film* 20.1 (2016): 1–21.
Smee, Ben. 'Brave or Naive? Conservative Wagga Surprises with Climate Emergency Declaration.' *Guardian Australia*, 20 July 2019.
Tuomainen, Antti. *The Healer*. Ed. Lola Rogers. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2013.
Viskic, Emma. *Resurrection Bay*. Sydney: Echo, 2015.
Walton, Jo Lindsay, and Samantha Walton. 'Introduction to Green Letters: Crime Fiction and Ecology.' *Green Letters* 22.1 (2018): 2–6.
Winton, Tim. *In the Winter Dark*. Carlton: McPhee Gribble, 1988.
Yell, Susan. '"Breakfast Is Now Tea, Toast and Tissues": Affect and the Media Coverage of Bushfires.' *Media International Australia, Incorporating Culture & Policy* 137 (2010): 109–19.
Zhang, Yang, et al. 'Effects of Climate on the Size of Wildfires in the Eucalyptys Camaldulensis Forests and the Dry Lands of the Riverina Biogregion, Australia.' *Forest Ecology and Management* 401 (2017): 330–40.