Stephen Knight
University of Melbourne

From Convicts to Contemporary Convictions: Two Hundred Years of Australian Crime Fiction

DOI: https:doi.org/10.7358/ling-2017-002-knig stephen.knight@unimelb.edu.au

Australia the great southern continent was named in European mode from the Latin for southern, 'australis'. The English used it first for European purposes, from 1788 as a base for convicts they did not want to execute, now independent America had rejected this role – and also as a way of ensuring other European powers did not gain control of what seemed likely to be a major source of valuable resources [1].

Those manoeuvres were simplified by the refusal to treat in political or territorial terms with the Indigenous people, who in many tribes with many languages had been in Australia for thousands of years, and by the insistence on seeing the country as *Terra Nullius*, 'the land of nobody', so theorizing the theft of the massive continent.

The white taking of Australia is an action that is only after two hundred years slowly being examined, acknowledged and even more slowly compensated for, and the invasion-related but long-lasting criminal acts against Indigenes are only in the last decades beginning to emerge in Australian crime fiction, as will be discussed later. But criminalities familiar to nineteenth and twentieth-century Europeans were always a presence in popular Australian literature, revealing over time varying attitudes to order and identity in the developing country, and taking paths that can seem very different from those of other countries.

The criminographical genre and Australia had an early relationship when both local and London publishers described the bold distant dramas, as in

[1] This is an invited essay. [Note of the Editor]

Thomas Wells' largely factual Tasmania-set *Michael Howe: The Last and Worst of the Bushrangers of Van Diemen's Land* (1818) – a bushranger is usually an escaped convict who ranges the bleak landscape known as the bush, robbing travellers and occasionally homesteads: there would be many of them, in fact and in crime fiction. Convictism itself was the basis for fiction, like the last third of Thomas Gaspey's English 1828 novel *The Adventures of George Godfrey*, and it is not surprising that the first novel published in Australia was a convict saga, Henry Savery's *Quintus Servinton* (1831) a Hobart-based account of the misery of being unfairly convicted and then badly treated as a convict. One major convict novel only survived in manuscript from 1845 until published in the twentieth century, James Tucker's Ralph *Rashleigh*, a detailed and agonised story with, unusually, a lengthy and positive engagement with Indigenous people. Caroline Leakey, using the puzzling pseudonym Oliné Keese, gave a later female-oriented version of the convict novel in *The Broad Arrow* (1859).

Why are these and the rest of Australian crime fiction so little known? One reason is simply technical and imperial. English publishers stimulated government to give them sole publishing rights in colonies like Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, and so for a hundred and fifty years most Australian writers of crime fiction – and all fiction – were published in London. This meant the firms needed from Australia just another few hundred hardback sales, mostly to libraries, so there was almost no publicity there, and even limited reviewing in Australian papers and magazines. A crime fiction industry was in existence – but largely silent and without public awareness or discussion.

The other way in which Australian crime fiction was kept a mystery is local and attitudinal. Even in Britain and America crime fiction has suffered for its low literary prestige, but at least some pride was developed in the 'Golden Age' wizards or the 'Tough Guy' maestros. Australian literary responses were long very conventional, and there was never any likelihood of the national literature being seen as including crime writers.

But in the silence of English publishing rapacity and Australian literary canonism, much had developed after that first phase of convict-oriented crime fiction. Within twenty years of the convict foundation there were substantial numbers of free settlers arriving, most hoping to do well as farmers. Before long London publishers were responding to this with books about emigration, and soon crime fiction played a role with settler adventures such as Charles Rowcroft's *Tales of the Colonies* (1843), Thomas McCombie's *The Adventures of a Colonist or Godfrey Arabin, the Settler* (1845) and Alexander Harris's *The Emigrant Family* (1849), in which simple settling folk encountered ex-convicts

and bushrangers with very little help from the authorities. An upmarket version was the squatter thriller: in Australia a squatter is prestigious, someone who takes – from Indigenes, without recompensing them – a huge tract of land for raising sheep or cattle. The classic text is *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn* (1859) by Henry Kingsley, a novel rich in manly English adventure and also most clichés and myths known to early white Australia, as was noted by Coral Lansbury, a fine literary scholar and the mother of the current right-wing Australian Prime Minister, in *Arcady in Australia* (1970). The novel was quite popular, and there were other squatter thrillers, like *Tallangetta* (1857) by the English radical William Howitt, and the interesting mystery *Force and Fraud* (1865) by Ellen Davitt, probably the first formal mystery novel by a woman in the world – though the Americans very soon had others.

In 1851 an event changed the population and economy of Australia, and its crime fiction as well. Gold was discovered in New South Wales, and just afterwards in Victoria. Gold-diggers poured out from England, Americans moved on from California. Through the 1850s Australia was producing a third of the world's gold, and the population went in a decade from 430,000 to 1,150,000. Goldfield crime fiction had women authors: Celeste de Chabrillan, a Paris dancer and wife of the French consul in Melbourne produced *Les Voleurs d'Or* (1857), a lively account of pretence and violence on the busy Victorian goldfield, and Mary Fortune was from 1865 writing goldfield stories about people, crime and 'mounted troopers' as police: a selection was printed as *The Detective's Album* in 1871, and a different selection under that title in America in 2003. Male writers participated, as in Charles De Boos's *Mark Brown's Wife* (1871) and J. S. Borlase's stories, later published as *The Night Fossickers* (1867) – fossicking means hunting for things, and night fossickers are thieves of other men's gold.

Gold made Melbourne especially rich, though the state of Victoria also had a wealthy farming area in its Western District. By the late 1860s Melbourne, only some twenty years old, was a busy cultural city producing most of the national writing, and a new sub-genre emerged in the crime fiction with retrospective convict stories, looking back both in realism and also with a heightened sense of the brutality of the regime from which the country had now emerged – convictism ended in the east by 1850. The major work was Marcus Clarke's *His Natural Life*: a young Englishman, Richard Devine, is wrongly convicted, suffers severely for years as a convict. In the original serial version, ending in 1872 he survives a shipwreck, with the very young daughter of a woman he admired, develops a new post-gold life as a successful shop keeper, and is finally restored to his status in England. This plot seemed, it appears, too ultimately benign and

also perhaps too Australian for the London-dominated novel form, and for the 1874 book version, later re-published under the less interrogative but long-used title *For the Term of His Natural Life*, Devine dies in the shipwreck, in the arms of the woman whom he has loved – there is no child, and certainly no future business-based success.

This powerful account of convict maltreatment was re-worked from a female viewpoint in Eliza Winstanley's *For Her Natural Life* (1876), and where these novels retrospectively showed noble English convicts being maltreated, the logical development and localisation of this was in the extremely successful *Robbery Under Arms*, published as a serial in Australia in 1882-83 and as a novel in London in 1888 by Thomas Browne, writing under the Walter Scott style pseudonym 'Rolf Boldrewood'. Two simple Australian brothers join up with an old-style dashing bushranger, Captain Starlight, a mysterious English gentleman with a fantastic horse. The novel is seen from the elder brother's viewpoint, and he becomes a convict through local crime, not English transportation. He is the first ordinary Australian fictional hero, with a colloquial voice and local attitudes. After twelve years in jail he moves to a prosperous farm with the woman who has waited for him. The novel, like the late nineteenth-century country, has itself moved on from the convict days and the English attitudes of early crime fiction: the hero fulfils the new model of male Australian, much celebrated in popular culture at the turn of the century – the bushman, tough, reticent, basically honest, if notably under-sophisticated.

At the same time as some writers were looking back – and ideologically forward – others were recognising the crime fiction capacities of their new urban context. Donald Cameron published in 1873 Melbourne's contribution to the world-wide 'Mysteries of the Cities' genre, reaching back to the Paris of Eugène Sue and the London of George Reynolds, though Cameron was closer to the one-volume Americans, George Lippard and Errol Zane Judson (as discussed by Stephen Knight in *The Mysteries of the Cities*, 2012). A brisk story of murder, ambition, generosity, police incompetence and the mighty local horse-race the Melbourne Cup, *The Mysteries of Melbourne Life* was the evident stimulus for Fergus Hume, a New Zealand lawyer in Melbourne looking to write successfully. Frustrated in his theatrical ambitions, and advised to imitate Émile Gaboriau, Hume did this with flair in *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* (1886), which sold well in Melbourne and then when published in London just before Christmas 1887 did sensationally well – nobody noticed much that season the first appearance in the minor *Beeton's Christmas Annual* of a mere London detective named Holmes.

Hume stimulated other Australians to publish crime fiction, both in London and Melbourne: some offered colonial and multi-national stories – Guy Boothby and Louis Becke are forgotten names in that genre – but most preferred mysteries set in both Melbourne and even Sydney. The harbour city's *The Tramway Tragedy* (1887) by Henry Hoyte was perhaps the sharpest post-Hume novel; this new urban emphasis did not survive long – but would return in modernity.

There were specific Australian sub-genres, such as the racing mystery. Nat Gould, who in the end wrote over a hundred of these back in his British home after 1896 actually began the form while working for a Sydney sporting paper, with *The Double Event* (1888 in serial form) about – of course – the Melbourne Cup. The bush detective sub-genre was continuing from his earlier emergence – a classic was *Billy Pagan: Mining Engineer* (1911), Randolph Bedford's story collection about a large tough man who makes made short work of the crooks and scams he encounters.

In the 1914-18 war the flow of English-published Australian mysteries was interrupted, and the financial depression that followed seemed to bring all-round cultural quiet. There were a few war time spy stories, and the railway-station focused New South Wales Bookstall did steady business in adventure stories, with some limited crime and even more limited detection. The beginning of twentieth-century Australian crime fiction suffered some absences, compared to England and America. One was the lack of interest in the gentleman amateur – too English and too colonial for even joking consideration by Australian writers; there was also, as in Britain, no early response to the American private eye of the between-wars period.

The other absence had a longer history and future and was more socioculturally potent. Where the English and Americans had from the mid-nineteenth century dealt with police detectives in fiction – if not heroically – and so were in position from the 1920s to develop the police procedural as a powerful form, the Australian originary encounters with police and warders made such figures unacceptable. When a novelist in the first half of the twentieth century offers positive police detection the author is not of Australian origin, like Canadian-born Aidan de Brune – though women writers would be more neutral towards police from the mid-1930s on. Another, more positive, continuity from the past was the continued appearance of Islands novel. At this time Australians holidayed by boat in the Islands to the north, and writers like Beatrice Grimshaw and Paul McGuire dealt with this area – as did, in perhaps the largest surprise in the whole national genre, the famous, even infamous, Hollywood actor Errol

Flynn. Born in Tasmania, with an academic father, he was early on a journalist and knew the islands well: *Showdown* (1946), a very capable thriller, was evidently written in the mid-1930s before Captain Blood and Robin Hood called him to higher things.

The first major producer in the 1920s was Arthur Gask, an English dentist who emigrated to Adelaide when fifty and started writing: his first stories are crime novels with some psychothriller elements. Men who are wrongly accused of crime, or who commit murder for good reasons, are followed, examined, and ultimately exonerated: the best is *The Secret of the Garden* (1924). After half a dozen of these, Gask's regular use of an English publisher seems to have led him to use a police detective, Gilbert Larose, whom he soon moved successfully to London – though he remained in Australia himself, naming his fine rural property Gilrose, after his lucrative detective. There were other crime novelists from the period, notably Frank Walford, who used, and explained, a lesbian killer in *Twisted Clay* (1933), and G. M. Wicking, with lighter weight crime novels mixed with something like squatter thrillers as in *The Mysterious Valley* (1938).

A major development was the creation by Arthur Upfield, an English migrant and rural worker, of a police detective who solved crimes in the dramatic outback – and startlingly, he was half-Indigenous, combining in his detecting the legendary tracking skills of Indigenous men with human insight drawn from the English tradition. He first appeared in *The Barrakee Mystery* (1929), and *The Bone is Pointed* (1938), the best-seller of his novels, is an excellent example of the approach. There were fantasy elements in the detective's university degree and high police status, neither credible for decades, and he has a name of the kind often insultingly given to Indigenes, Napoleon Bonaparte, or Bony for short. But though Upfield has been criticised for patronising the native people, he evidently meant to be appreciative and positive, shows real respect for Indigenous traditions and capacities, and makes Bony the spokesman for and interpreter of the grandeur of the wild areas where he works.

Through this period authorial gender was strongly masculine – a puzzling Australian post-war phenomenon – but in the mid-thirties Jean Spender published two Sydney-set classic mysteries with a police detective, if of a distinctly unheroic kind. She would go on after the war, while living overseas, to write only international mysteries, but her model was followed after the second world war by a new and strong range of Australian women crime writers.

The war itself, as before, interrupted the flow of London hardbacks – but also did something else. With the large numbers of American military men both living in and visiting on furlough the eastern capitals from 1942-5, the

private eye became of interest and as American book importations were still imperially banned, so local popular houses stepped up with cheap American-style stories. The publishers had military names like Invincible or local titles like Currawong – a noisy magpie-type bird. Almost all were locally written but set, if at times vaguely, in America. Alan Yates, an English Royal Navy immigrant with an Australian wife, wrote in succeeding years, as 'Carter Brown', over 400 of these titles, many being published also in America. There were some Australia-located versions, but the sub-genre was forgotten before long.

A continuity with the pre-war period was Upfield's resumed productivity: he wrote nothing during the war, being involved in anti-espionage work, but as American soldiers and sailors flooded into Australia, the major New York publisher Doubleday in 1943 started publishing Upfield. He did well there, presumably in part appealing to soldiers headed for Australia, and no doubt their families. This led to English publishing and before long to translation into French and German, where he has remained very popular, perhaps as a partial critique of English imperialism. He resumed a steady flow of Bony novels – *Death of a Swagman* (1945), is the first, at his highest standard, and he also in *An Author Bites the Dust* (1948) pilloried the respectable literary world that had basically ostracised him.

After the war A. E. Martin and Sidney Courtier were energetic writers of exotic crime stories, still lacking any serious police involvement, and offering comic-oriented crime novels – the main tendency of Martin, formerly a circus manager, and psychothrillers with literary reference, in which Courtier, a school-teacher, specialised. One slender trend of the time would later grow to importance. Jon Cleary, after his war service, settled in England as a writer: his outback adventure *The Sundowners* was filmed in 1960 with Robert Mitchum excelling as the lead, and he went on to include crime fiction in his career. Very unusually, for London's strongly crime-linked firm Collins he produced *The High Commissioner* (1966), using centrally that rare thing, a male-written Sydney-based police detective, Scobie Malone – but the events happen in London, and it would be long before Scobie would appear in Sydney, and then only for special London-interested Australian events like the development of the Sydney Opera House in 1970 and the bicentenary of the white settlement in 1988.

One curiosity in the post-war period is the limited appearance of crime novels: perhaps the English publishers' preferences were too dominant, or perhaps the relative prosperity of those years, which the Australian historian Stuart Macintyre calls 'The Golden Age' (in his *A Concise History of Australia*, 2004),

made positive handling of distress and resultant crime less than interesting. But there is one new dynamic presence in the post-war years which has never gone away – the power of Australian women writers, especially with a varied, even volatile, interest in the psychothriller end of the generic pattern.

From 1948 June Wright produced novels set in and around Melbourne, focusing on the lives and problems of women in the context of murder. There was limited police involvement, usually an officer who helps the female amateur inquirer and finally marries her, but before long the flexible Wright turned to a nun-detective, Mother Paul: her best appearance is *Faculty of Murder* (1961), set at the University of Melbourne. Wright may have been stimulated by the work of 'Margot Neville', two Sydney sisters, Margot Goyder and Ann Neville Goyder Joske. They had written plays and romances since the 1930s and started crime writing with a Jean Spender-like Sydney mystery *Murder in Rockwater* (1945). 'Neville' used a calm police detective to disentangle fairly traditional English-style mysteries, and kept up a steady flow until the death in 1966 of Ann, the older sister.

They also seem to have inspired Pat Flower, whose first Sydney-set mysteries use a benign police inspector, starting with *Wax Flowers for Gloria* (1958): she played on her surname in early titles. From the start the characters were more interesting than the mystery and before long Flower was producing high-tension psychodramas such as *Hell for Heather* (1962) and *Term of Terror* (1963). She was overlapped by Patricia Carlon, a profoundly deaf woman who can make sensory impairment a feature of her disturbing mysteries – *The Whispering Wall* (1969) is an impressive achievement. Flower and Carlon regularly work at the level of the major international psychothriller authors Margaret Millar and Patricia Highsmith from America and England's 'Barbara Vine', Ruth Rendell.

Almost all these Australian authors were published in England, and this presumably explains the fact that most of them give very little detail of their Australian context: they are close to zero-setting most of the time – the novel is located in Sydney or Melbourne, but no detail is given to baffle or irritate its U.K. reader. There is also a reflex of this, the touristic novel, where the setting is privileged, emphasised, with kangaroos, droughts, bushfires, flooding rains, and very strikingly the villain will very often be actually consumed in some way by the country he – very rarely she – has betrayed in criminality.

Two historical events changed the patterns of Australian crime fiction in a major way. In 1976 American publishers broke the imperial preference system, and the English control over the Australian product was basically removed. As important was the way in which Britain was now looking to Europe, not its

empire, and the strong ties with the old country, both official and personal, were suddenly much weakened. An event both symbolically and actually innovative occurred when in 1980 Peter Corris, a historian and journalist published with the American firm McGraw-Hill, which had just set up an office in Sydney, a private-eye novel fully Australianised: in *The Dying Trade* (1980) the detective's name, Cliff Hardy, combines endurance and location in a way that looks back to bush heroism.

Corris did well and kept going with local publishers: the series has only just ended in 2017 after forty-two novels and short-story collections. He was followed by Marele Day, with the lively and witty *The Life and Crimes of Harry Lavender* (1988), who with other feminist writers replicated first in Sydney and later Melbourne the model that Sara Paretsky had made so popular in the early 1980s. These writers were published in Australia solely for the Australian market, so they were given full publicity and were widely discussed. They all used the local setting with the same intensity as the major American private-eye writers, rejecting the zero-setting and touristic oddities of the past.

Though the localised private eyes gained much notice, there were other developments. From *Grim Pickings* (1988) Jennifer Rowe, herself in publishing, made the English-style amateur operate successfully in Sydney with her clever, recessive television researcher Verity 'Birdie' Birdwood. As innovative were developments with police. Claire McNab picked up a new American initiative, presenting a lesbian police inspector in Carol Ashton, as glamorous as her own Sydney harbour, who started in *Lessons in Murder* (1988), first published in America, where McNab was living: the series, combining lucid detection and the problems of Carol's own personal life, continued until 2010. Other new feminist contributions were the searching account of lesbian detection in *Still Murder* (1991) by Finola Moorhead and a striking combination of feminism and post-modernism in Jan McKemmish's widely-admired *A Gap in the Records* (1985).

Confirming the impact of contemporary convictions as drivers of modern Australian crime fiction, male gay crime fiction also began to appear. The first in this mode *The Pink Triangle* (1981) was based on the real murder of a gay man in Adelaide, widely thought to have been drowned by police, though the author 'Roger Raftery' (in fact Lance Peters) dilutes the homophobic scandal with murders of police murders for other reasons. A very different tone was developed in Phillip Scott's later series starting with *One Dead Diva* (1995), where an Italian teacher and opera lover Mark Petrucci solves murders as an amateur inquirer in the excitable world of gay Sydney and grand opera. He is also an instance, with

some others from this period, of the new presence in Australian crime fiction of central figures linked to the substantial immigration of non-English people from the 1950s onwards. A varied parallel was Alan Carter's Perth-based police detective Philip 'Cato' Kwong, starting with *Prime Cut* (2011): he is from a Chinese family, but one that had arrived in the mid-nineteenth century.

A long-awaited innovation is the presence of fully Indigenous leading characters in the genre. As Colin Johnson, the author later known as Mudrooroo, wrote a powerful Perth-set crime novel with an Indigenous focus, *Wild Cat Falling* (1965); Archie Weller, another West Australian, produced something similar in *The Day of the Dog* (1981). Both contributed strong short stories to the 'Crimes for a Summer Christmas' series that Allen and Unwin ran from 1990 to 1995, but Mudrooroo centred his stories on a police detective – with the name of Detective Inspector Watson Holmes Jackamara. Known as 'Jackie' – itself long a demeaning nickname for Indigenous men – but he is much more than ironic, operating as a calm, wise figure in complex and often rural mysteries, Mudrooroo's appropriation of Upfield's Bony, in fully Indigenous and authoritative form. A strong development from this work was *Scream Black Murder* (1995) by another Indigenous author, Philip McLaren, who presents two police officers, a man and a woman, both Indigenous, working on murders of Indigenous women in the heart of Sydney.

Another innovation of this period was historical crime fiction, itself a new international sub-genre made suddenly famous by Umberto Eco in 1980. As in America, medieval modes were not available, and the Australian form began with Martin Long's late nineteenth-century series with a retired police inspector, and continued with Marshall Browne's impressive social melodramas set in turn-of-the-century Melbourne.

Historicity meshed with flamboyant feminism in the successful series – now on world television – created by lawyer and scholar Kerry Greenwood. The Honourable Phryne Fisher (her first name rhymes with Tiny, she likes to say) was born to a poor Melbourne family which then inherited an English title and wealth. In the 1920s she returns home, having served with distinction in the war as a front-line nurse: she is glamorous, bold, liberated in every way, and moves across all social levels as a personally committed, sometimes hired, private detective, hunting down offenders of many kinds, usually overweening males. She first appeared in *Cocaine Blues* (1989) and has kept on going. *Murder in Montparnasse* (2002) is one of the best, as Phryne and her foster-daughters solve various Melbourne mysteries and she recalls meeting Gertrude Stein in Paris after the war. The historical detectives were usually amateurs, and after

Jennifer Rowe's success this mode of detection was not uncommon. A notable example was the comic and politically aware series by Shane Maloney set in Melbourne about Murray Whelan, adviser and schemer for the Labor Party in Melbourne: *Stiff* (1994) started an amusing six-book series.

As Australians took control of their crime fiction, the crime novel returns in strong form. The long novel *A Green Light* (1988) by playwright and former convict Ray Mooney had a major impact, and widely admired was the work of Garry Disher, who from *Kickback* (1991) on charted the adventures of Wyatt, without a first name, and as tough and independent as any bushranger hero. A parallel continuity was male writers' suspicion of police heroes, but this was beginning to change: Jon Cleary, living back in Australia, produced for his London publisher annual Scobie Malone stories from 1998 to 2003, and the British-born and South African resident David Owen created one nicknamed 'Pufferfish' in Tasmania, starting with *Pig's Head* (1994). Then Disher localised the police fully in a series about Inspector Hal Challis and his colleagues working south of Melbourne, starting with *The Dragon Man* (1999).

This male move to the police would be shared by Peter Temple, a South African, who arrived in Australia in 1980 and started a Melbourne-based private-eye series with *Bad Debts* (1996). His hero Jack Irish, a laid-back former lawyer, became popular, including internationally. The novels mix urban comment with lively action, including aging football fans and dubious racing people, and link small-scale local crime with large international corruption. Temple matched the wit and urban awareness of Corris and Day, and included a tough part-Indigenous back-up man. He also wrote stand-alone crime novels, but in 2005 *The Broken Shore* focused on Joe Cashin, an injured police detective, who is moved to the coast near Melbourne and with Indigenous help investigates local crimes including a long-standing paedophile ring at a boy's school. Successful around the world, in 2007 this won the prestigious British Gold Dagger award. It was rejected for the major Australian Miles Franklin award for all fiction, not just crime, a decision regarded as showing generic prejudice, but the follow-up novel *Truth* (2009) about Cashin's Melbourne associates, stronger and even darker than its predecessor, won that prize and confirmed Temple's standing.

Policewomen have also appeared in substantial numbers. Y. A. Erskine was a former officer who produced credible Tasmanian stories and P. M. Newton, also with time on the force and avoiding use of a personal name, created the half-Vietnamese Nhu Kelly – welcomed ironically by colleagues through being renamed Ned after the famous national outlaw, executed in 1880. She operates in outer Western Sydney, rich in both migrants and crime. Leigh Giarratano is a

working psychiatrist who investigates female dangers through a troubled female police detective in a series starting with *Vodka Doesn't Freeze* (2007). More exotic still have been recent private eyes – Angela Savage's Jayne Keeney is operating in Thailand, as in *Behind the Night Bazaar* (2006), and Leigh Redhead created in *Peepshow* (2004) the perhaps unique Simone Kirsch, both a detective and a stripper operating in Melbourne's more louche locations.

Historicism has continued with Sulari Gentill's novels dealing sharply with the right-wing political forces of the 1930s, and also Robert Gott's adventures of his foolish, and ironically named, Will Power, set in 1940s war-time and mixing farcical adventures with real situations. A notable new mode has been legal mysteries, witty like Stuart Littlemore's series starting with *Harry Curry: Counsel of Choice* (2011), or closely detailed like Chris Nyst's court-room based group, starting with *Cop This!* (1999). Equally new is that Kerry Greenwood, as well as charting Phryne Fisher's achievements, has located the 'cozy' in Melbourne with her large chef-detective Corrina Chapman starting from *Earthly Delights* (2009).

But just as Flower and Carlon dominated the post-war period, the strongest recent form has been women writing forms of the psychothriller. The productive Gabrielle Lord was working in this mode from *Whipping Boy* (1992), but it is the last twenty years which have seen the major thrust, as by former journalists Bunty Avieson with *Apartment 255* (2001) and Caroline Overington in *The Ghost Child* (2009). Notably successful is Honey Brown who after a farm accident confined her to a wheelchair produced *Red Queen* (2005), a powerful account of a woman responding to a world-wide virus, followed by the less mythic but still troubling *Dark Horse* (2013).

The Indigenous crime story has continued, strong in quality if not in numbers. Philip McLaren followed his important *Scream Black Murder* with *Murder in Utopia* (2009), which won a prize in France. Set in the distant outback, it links a formerly alcoholic New York doctor with local Indigenous issues. A major novel in this mode is *The Boundary* (2011) by Indigenous lawyer-academic Nicole Watson, set in Brisbane, where local native people resist plans to ignore their land rights in favour of a major capitalist development. Murders occur, including that of a highly-placed Indigenous supporter of the plan, and young woman lawyer Miranda Eversley, herself fully Indigenous, is closely connected with events and people, like her radical father, a young Indigenous police detective uncertain of his position, and her own foster-mother, who appears to have connections with both criminal and mythic Indigenous forces. In another Indigenous-themed mystery, *Diamond Dove* (2006) the dove itself has mythic

power, and a distant outback murder is examined by young Indigene Emily Tempest, linked to the police. This is by Adrian Hyland, a white anthropologist with both learning about and strong feeling for Indigenous issues, who has followed up with a strong sequel *Gunshot Road* (2010).

Now offering both a full generic mix and a high level of productivity, Australian crime fiction had come strongly into its own as a significant part of national cultural activity and a major player in the criminographical world. It even had unique qualities: Dorothy Porter, the much-missed Sydney poet who died at the age of 54 in 2008, wrote two full-length mysteries, with clues, detection and wry references across the genre, all in short, witty, revealing poems, *The Monkey's Mask* (1994) and *El Dorado* (2007).

Australian crime fiction has travelled from convict sagas and squatter thrillers to post-modernism and poetry, via the crime novel and the psychothriller, with the innovative weight and the social convictions involved with Indigenous themes, lesbian police, political history and anti-authoritarianism – embellished with kangaroos, bush-fires, horse-racing, strippers and Errol Flynn. Australian crime fiction has experienced a varying, developing, and revealing two centuries, long insulated by distance and other concealing forces, but in its modern dynamic self-confidence it is now claiming the ears and eyes of the world.

References

Avieson, Bunty. 2011. *Apartment 255*. Sydney: Macmillan.

Bedford, Randolph. 1911. *Billy Pagan: Mining Engineer*. Sydney: New South Wales Bookstall.

Borlase, J. S. 1867. *The Night Fossickers*. London: Warne.

Brown, Honey. 2009. *Red Queen*. Melbourne: Viking.

Brown, Honey. 2013. *Dark Horse*. Melbourne: Penguin.

Cameron, Donald. 1873. *The Mysteries of Melbourne Life*. Melbourne: Mason, Firth & McCutcheon.

Carlon, Pat. 1969. *The Whispering Wall*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Carter, Alan. 2011. *Prime Cut*. Fremantle: Fremantle Press.

Clarke, Marcus. 1872. *His Natural Life*. Melbourne: *The Australian Journal*.

Cleary, Jon. 1966. *The High Commissioner*. London: Collins.

Corris, Peter. 1980. *The Dying Trade*. Sydney: McGraw Hill.

Davitt, Ellen. 1865. *Force and Fraud*. Melbourne: *The Australian Journal*.

Day, Marele. 1988. *The Life and Crimes of Harry Lavender*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

De Boos, Charles. 1871. *Mark Brown's Wife*. Sydney: *Sydney Mail*.

de Chabrillan, Celeste. 1857. *Les Voleurs d'Or*. Paris: Levy.

Disher, Garry. 1991. *Kickback*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Disher, Garry. 1999. *The Dragon Man*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Erskine, Y. T. 2011. *The Brotherhood*. Sydney: Bantam.

Flower, Pat. 1958. *Wax Flowers for Gloria*. Sydney: Ure Smith.

Flower, Pat. 1962. *Hell for Heather*. London: Hale.

Flower, Pat. 1963. *Term of Terror*. London: Hale.

Flynn, Errol. 1946. *Showdown*. Sydney: Invincible.

Fortune, Mary. 1871. *The Detective's Album*. Melbourne: Clarson & Massina.

Fortune, Mary. 2003. *The Detective's Album*. Ed. by Lucy Sussex (different selection from above). Sauk City, WI: Battered Silicon Despatch Box.

Gask, Arthur. 1924. *The Secret of the Garden*. London: Jenkins.

Gaspey, Thomas. 1828. *The Adventures of George Godfrey*. London: Colburn.

Giarratano, Leigh. 2007. *Vodka Doesn't Freeze*. Sydney: Bantam.

Gould, Nat. 1888. *The Double Event*. London: Routledge.

Greenwood, Kerry.1989. *Cocaine Blues*. Melbourne: McPhee Gribble.

Greenwood, Kerry. 2002. *Murder in Montparnasse*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Greenwood, Kerry. 2009. *Earthly Delights*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Harris, Alexander. 1849. *The Emigrant Family*. London: Smith & Elder.

Howitt, William. 1857. *Tallangetta*. London: Longman.

Hoyte, Henry. 1887. *The Tramway Tragedy*. Melbourne: Kemp & Boyce.

Hume, Fergus. 1886. *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab*. Melbourne: Kemp & Boyce.

Hyland, Adrian. 2006. *Diamond Dove*. Melbourne: Text.

Hyland, Adrian. 2010. *Gunshot Road*. Melbourne: Text.

James, Wendy. 2006. *Out of the Silence*. Sydney: Random House.

Johnson, Colin, reprinted as by Mudrooroo. 1965. *Wild Cat Falling*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson.

Keese, Oliné. 1859. *The Broad Arrow*. London: Bentley.

Kingsley, Henry. 1859. *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn*. London: Macmillan,

Knight, Stephen. 1997. *Continent of Mystery: A Thematic History of Australian Crime Fiction*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

Knight, Stephen. 2012. *The Mysteries of the Cities*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Knight, Stephen. 2018 (forthcomimg). *A History of Australian Crime Fiction*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Lansbury, Carol. 1970. *Arcady in Australia: The Evocation of Australia in Nineteenth-Century English Literature*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

Littlemore, Stuart. 2011. *Harry Curry: Counsel of Choice*. Sydney: Harper Collins.

Lord, Gabrielle. 1992. *Whipping Boy*. Melbourne: McPhee Gribble.

Macintyre, Stuart. 2004. *A Concise History of Australia*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Maloney, Shane. 1994. *Stiff*. Melbourne: Text.

McCombie, Thomas. 1845. *The Adventures of a Colonist*. London: Simmonds & Ward.

McKemmish, Jan. 1985. *A Gap in the Records*. Melbourne: Sybylla.

McLaren, Philip. 1995. *Scream Black Murder*. Sydney: Harper Collins.

McLaren, Philip. 2009. *Murder in Utopia*. Cockatoo: Federal.

McNab, Claire. 1988. *Lessons in Murder*. Tallahassee, FL: Naiad.

Mooney, Ray. 1988. *A Green Light*. Melbourne: Penguin.

Moorhead, Finola. 1991. *Still Murder*. Melbourne: Penguin.

Mudrooroo, see under Johnson, Colin.

Neville, Margot. 1945. *Murder in Rockwater*. Melbourne: Jabor.

Newton, P. M. 2010. *The Old School*. Melbourne: Viking.

Nyst, Chris. 1999. *Cop This!* Sydney: Harper Collins.

Overington, Caroline. 2009. *The Ghost Child*. Sydney: Bantam.

Owen, David. 1994. *Pig's Head*. Melbourne: Mandarin.

Porter, Dorothy. 1994. *The Monkey's Mask*. Melbourne: Hyland.

Porter, Dorothy. 2007. *El Dorado*. Sydney: Pan Macmillan.

Raftery, Roger. 1981. *The Pink Triangle*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press.

Redhead, Leigh. 2004. *Peepshow*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Rowcroft, Charles. 1843. *Tales of the Colonies*. London: Smith & Elder.

Rowe, Jennifer. 1988. *Grim Pickings*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Savage, Angela. 2006. *Behind the Night Bazaar*. Melbourne: Text.

Savery, Henry. 1831. *Quintus Servinton*. Hobart: Melville.

Scott, Phillip. 1995. *One Dead Diva*. Sydney: Blackwattle.

Temple, Peter. 1996. *Bad Debts*. Sydney: Harper Collins.

Temple, Peter. 2005. *The Broken Shore*. Melbourne: Text.

Temple, Peter. 2009. *Truth*. Melbourne: Text.

Tucker, James. 1952. *Ralph Rashleigh*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson.

Upfield, Arthur. 1929. *The Barrakee Mystery*. London: Hutchinson.

Upfield, Arthur. 1938. *The Bone is Pointed*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson.

Upfield, Arthur. 1945. *Death of a Swagman*. New York: Doubleday.

Upfield, Arthur. 1948. *An Author Bites the Dust*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson.

Walford, Frank. 1933. *Twisted Clay*. London: Laurie.

Weller, Archie. 1981. *The Day of the Dog*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson.

Wells, Thomas. 1818. *Michael Howe: The Last and Worst of the Bushrangers of Van Diemen's Land*. Hobart: Brent.

Wicking, G. M. 1938. *The Mysterious Valley*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson.

Wright, June. 1961. *Faculty of Murder*. London: Long.

Abstract

European Australia began in 1788 as an English jail, and from 1818 novels and stories appeared locally and in London about escaped convicts acting against free settlers, and sometimes Indigenous people resisting the taking of their land. Gold, discovered in 1851, brought new stories and locations, including suddenly rich Melbourne, and past convicts and bushrangers were recreated sympathetically as a tough, independent national image. Twentieth-century fiction continued to feature the crime novel and the bush detective; police remained unpopular, but some mid-century women writers used them before moving on to strong psychothrillers, while American war-time presence led to popular private-eye fiction. Both the imperial weight of London publishing and local literary prejudice made Australian crime fiction little known at home, but this changed by 1980, and well-recognised local crime writing and publishing has strongly developed. Private eyes, both men and women and even police detectives are well-known, crime novels and psychothrillers are flourishing, many contemporary issues are debated in the genre, including Indigenous writers and their concerns.