

Anecdotes of the Anthropocene: An Anthology

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Master of Letters Dissertation:

Creative Artefact and Exegesis



Anecdotes of the Anthropocene

An Anthology

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Abstract

These *Anecdotes of the Anthropocene* are curated into an anthology. Top and tailed, these twelve pieces of earthy writing reframes a long history of environmental consciousness. The creative artefact challenges readers to consider environmental activism as nothing new – and that a need for educative sign erecting endures.

An anthology is a useful way to bring a suite of ‘short’ poems and prose pieces together to encapsulate a cohesive whole – a forest of individual trees. Each vignette is crafted to the norms of a literary sub-genre, but so collected, create a coherent environmental narrative. The goal of the anthology is to proffer an environmental concern via strategic storytelling. Here, the aim of strategic storytelling is to contribute to changing public ecological opinion. Thus the output seeks to motivate an illusionary and unmeasured outcome.

The introduction explains the *Anthropocene* and sets the scene. The twelve following creative non-fiction pieces are then shuffled as: narrative journalism; Op-Ed; ecocriticism; narrative poems (a sonnet, an amphimacer and an ode); speculative non-fiction; concrete-prose; rhetoric and a memoir. The images that begin each vignette signals the theme of the piece visually. Finally, an end-piece wraps up the collection.

The anthology is a work of *Literary Geography*. The word *geography* originates from the Greek *geographia*; further comprised of the Latin for Earth (*gēo-*) and writing (*-graphia*) – thus *writing the world*. An accompanying exegesis extends the *literary* component of the dissertation with a critical analysis of the creative artefact.

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*'Out in the world where it's so beautiful and complex and painful —
sometimes you just need to sit down and write about it'.*

David Sedaris, *Theft by Finding*

It all started with steam

The question is: who knew that eight billion people, give or take a city or three, would wobble the Earth? What did *they* know about climate change? When did *they* know we were besties — us and the natural environment? And so — why weren't we told?

Ah, now we'll see, we were told. Long ago... Like, long before Greta Thunberg, already great at age sixteen.

Sometimes we were told politely, sometimes whimsically, sometimes in your face with popping veins... Certainly with science, and in poems — *oh sorry*, so you don't read poems? In history, in books — wait, wait — you don't *read*? In songs and movies and photographs, *ha, gotch-ya!* And in the news — and sometimes, even in the church; well, some churches. Also, funnily enough, in Parliament with thousand-page reports (oh right sorry, you don't read). In the United Nations... Ah yes hang-on, stop right there. Back-up... If you have to choose between a conspiracy theory and a stuff-up — choose the stuff-up every time. The United Nations is not the enemy here. So — where were we? Oh yes — via the United Nations and then, Greta.

You don't remember? Is it, you don't remember, or is the climate a *wicked problem* consigned to the cerebral too-hard basket? A disconnect between common knowledge and your Instagram feed?

Well then, settle back and refresh your memory with these twelve vignettes. Think of it as a blog read; just long enough between your morning latte in one hand, and the evening chardonnay in the other. Or between the durrie and the pale-ale if you prefer, this being a classless read. And each vignette will be short — like movie shorts, like shorts without sandals and socks. By all means flick right, flick left.

The stories are:

*'Signs that burn like shooting stars
That pass across the night-time skies,
They reach out in their mystic language
For us to read between the lines.
Some are born who would defy them,
Others still who would deny them, signs¹.'*

Signs that say... Welcome to the *Anthropocene* — the period in history were human-kind generated so much change to the Earth, that it can be read in the rocks. And what is this Anthropocene when it's at home? Does it walk? Talk? Will it dispense money? Yes, yes and no.

¹ Diamond, Neil. *Signs*. Song. Beautiful Noise. Columbia Records, 1976.

Yes, because 'anthro' points to our ambitious and ambulant egos. And no, because *you* have to give money to feed this gross-domestic-product machine of things. The 'cene' part is the rock strata that is the modern sedimentation of decomposed metals, plastic and different compounds. And the middle syllable 'po' just winks while we flip the eleven thousand-year-long peaceful period geologists call the Holocene, into this Anthropocene - a new geological epoch.

It all started with a steam engine – just one.

After that one engine, came factories burping and belching smoke; heaps of smoke, Smoke that became carbon laced fog – so you didn't have to see the rest of the gutsy, grimy city. While some countries legislated emission standards in recent decades – smog still claims thousands of respiratory challenged lives; just ask the choking citizens of Beijing.

Twenty years ago, Dutch Nobel Laureate Paul Crutzen (1933-) used the term *Anthropocene* to describe the human modification of the planet since the industrial revolution. Since that moniker, a myriad of concepts have come along to describe the dance of humanity and Nature: 'eco-system services', 'earth system science', 'limits for growth', 'carrying capacity', 'Gaia' and 'climate change' (or 'global warming' – whatever, choose one). And one of those terms is older than all the others in this list — climate change. Are you surprised?

The impact of a burgeoning population on the Earth is now crafting a crayon scrape within the rock wall. When our future selves dig it all up, they will say; 'heavens — what is all this carbon-hydrogen linked ring stuff in this rock bed?' And again; 'why does my Geiger counter go right off here — must'ha been a helluva hydrogen bomb!'

The motivation for divining these twelve disciples is not to build an altar to climate change — as if the climate were a belief system; the 'I believe in climate change' thing. We want to unpack the question: what was it that alerted these apostles of the Anthropocene to the yet-to-emerge bleedin' obvious? Was it facts? Was it a good story? Just noisy neighbours? Was it a human propensity for apocryphal prophecy? Like a fella called Hanrahan who said, 'we'll all be rooned.'²

These dozen icons are opinions based on a lot of evidence for your Honours' learned reflection. The first vignette will ask; who let in the Anthropocene? In a second, Plato complains about deforestation. We'll further wonder at the thoughts of the ancients (and hint: not what you think they thought). We pay homage to Alexander von Humboldt, who saw climate change in the nineteenth century. We will ask – what was the 'Crime of the Century?' We'll wonder at how art can change Government policy – and why rivers disregard gutters. We will be asked to get over it — and move on tectonic plates; you're standing on them. We will ask other

² O'Brien, John. "Said Hanrahan." In *Anthology; around the Boree Log and Other Verses*: The Catholic Press, 1921.

questions. What do farmers feel? How can The Cloud Appreciation Society exist in a rational society? And why do we disrespect our elders so? And lastly, why do we trenchantly fail to translate knowledge into action? Knowledge with action is wisdom, right? Ah – see the problem?

But we will finish with hope, and with optimism. The wilderness has voices. They remind us that we have been told, that there is clarity – if we read the signs.

Vignette #1³ - How comes the Anthropocene?



We are what we are, we want what we want,
product pairs of ancient worn weary jeans.
Hard-wired to strive, to thrive, to drive, to quant-
ti-ta-tive easing to fix fiscal means.
Come saviour, a sweeter human nature,
with poems and songs and cards and banter.
Yet hurled into hunting toilet paper,
ambition is exposed at a canter.
The Selfish Gene⁴ levers worldly wisdom
where 'philosophy is useless, theol-
o-gy is worse'⁵ to explain how freedom
gratuitously grabs resources whole.
And this deep ditch we dig with derision?
Can creative writing re-provision?

³ Image by Gordon Johnson from Pixabay.

⁴ Dawkins, Richard. *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford University Press, 1976.

⁵ Knopfler, Mark. *Industrial Disease*. Love Over Gold. Vertigo, 1982.

Vignette #2⁶ – I think; therefore, I tree.



The rider reigned in the heavy-worked horse at the top of the hill and took in the view.

With two fingers, Henry Russell raised the brim of his grimy wool-felt hat a little — to let the breeze feather his brow. Below him, a river sighted by Europeans for the first time sparkled and sang amongst the mottled and verdant green. His face of 24 years opened in a grin as Andrew Petrie and a few more mounted men joined him — all sweating with satisfaction.

Petrie called it the Wide Bay River — although Fitzroy, Governor of the colony of New South Wales would, in 1847 (five years later), rename it the

⁶ Image: <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/stinging-plants>.

Mary River. For his long-suffering wife. Here then was water to sluice the sheep pastures soon to be hewed out of Wide Bay forest.

Henry sat back on his horse and motioned to Petrie that he would ride to the river, while the rest set up camp on the hill. Petrie nodded. Henry turned the head of his horse with an easy gesture, grabbed down the front of his hat, and let his mind wander to fester a thought. What did the deep black visitors mean at camp last night? When Henry motioned the team's intention to go further into the dense and dripping forest, they just grinned and grabbed their buttocks and giggled the words 'gimpi gimpi'...

Henry let the horse have its head down the hill toward that thread of water hiding now as the bush darkly thickened with palms and vines and shrubs, all competing for light and life. He gave up on shielding his face as each branch slapped past but ducked and weaved and rolled in the saddle to avoid the largest limbs.

Much later, Henry would remember seeing that bunch of huge hairy leaves out of the corner of his eye, each leaf bigger than a dinner plate, dislodge his hat and brush his left cheek. For an aching year after year, he remembered the fortnight of unbearable agony of his face on fire. This rage that made him grind his head on the ground, the rush of hot blood from the welts that he crazily flurried with fingernails that could not be contained. Much later, his companions would tell of his two-days of tent ripping, sweat-soaked writhing accompanied by the screeching of a

demented banshee. Until oblivion became his life preserver. For two years after, every time he had a cold shower, the pain in part returned. And Henry could not forget his horse. His mates said the beast pierced by nettle needles, rolled down the hill - and on finally finding its feet, shook its head as if trying to fight off a lion. With a fling of its mane and a clear decision, the horse leapt into the river to be drawn downstream, never to surface again.

In the gold-fever years that followed, the gimpi-gimpi and the rest of the rainforest were cleared for the village of Gympie.

II

Plato knew his trees twenty-five centuries ago. And he was a thinker. Indeed, Plato could have been a Prime Minister, except he took umbrage when Greek politicians made his mentor Socrates redundant by death. He was kinda put off that career path — and he started a centre for thinking instead. It was a good school this Academy — so long as you were a bloke... Only blokes went to Plato's school - which is odd because Plato believed society fell apart if men and women were not given equal access to education. Even with Plato's luminary status, theory and practice can disconnect.

One warm day, Plato was leaning up against a fluted column of the Academy during class lunch-break as he usually would. He cast his eye over the hills near Athens, and it occurred to him that having no trees on

the hills was like the skeleton of a body wasted by disease, all the fat has wasted away. These valleys were gregariously green once. Now the trees were repurposed as the beams in buildings — like here, in the Academy. Plato lowered his eyes, levered himself off the column, wandered into class, yawned and — sweeping his cloak from his around his feet — sat down. Then he pointed a long bony finger at Aristotle.

'Mate umm, grab me parchment on the effects of soil degradation and deforestation on the peninsula of Attica, will ya?'

Aristotle was his favourite — because, amongst other things, he had already figured out that trees breathed water into the air. This air rose on hot days, only to return to Earth as sweet rain and society restitution. He called his published monologue 'Meteorologica' — and he noted that if you remove the trees, you reduce the rain. A bloody good thinker was Aristotle. A thinking man's thinker.

'Ah, yep, sure — what, time for an update?' queried Aristotle.

'Yeah, I reckon.'

'Let's sketch out that biocentric preservation idea — let's start with the value of nature in and of itself.'

A big think. A big think aided by little ceramic tanks of preserving fluid.
Brewed on-site.

So they talked, Aristotle and his mates - with Plato jabbing a finger, stroking his chin, interjecting from time to time, 'really? Do justify'. And in the end, they agreed that folks like them understood the connectedness between the environment and every-person – and that looking after the environment was an essential part of healthy living in this physical world. They said a lot about the un-physical world as well... And why not? One foot follows the other – which is why the funny pigskin shapes that make a perfectly round football was invented.

Folks like them — and what about the great unwashed? Good thing Plato's students wrote down thoughts in bits; it's why they called it a 'Slice of Philosophy'. Mind you - finger cramp came easy writing on wax tablets.

'Now fellas,' said Plato, 'while you're writing — and because you can't do two things at once - don't forget to breathe!' It occurred to Aristotle that Plato meant; 'remember the trees: breath in, breath out: remember the trees: breath in, ...'

'I'll go one better,' said Plato, because that is what Plato did — deliberately discordant, dogged and determined; 'nature and the universe is itself a living creature that contains all living creatures — whaddya-reckon?' And Plato sat back and smirked with a wink and a nod. Besides notions of the

interconnectedness of all things, and that human Nature was not natural, and goats did terrible things to trees, Plato also thought that the root of all evil was — ignorance.

And indeed — what stories we tell ourselves in the absence of a good read or a good teacher. That trees are only good for toilet paper...

Later thinkers 'got it'. JRR Tolkien in his iconic 'Lord of the Rings' created the 'Ent' characters — giant trees, ardent defenders of the forest and overall helpful good guys. New biology thinkers think that the big trees are brilliant carbon sequesters — and that they chemically communicate under-ground. Don't forget to breathe...

III

The laughter was easy in early March 2020 as sailors of Keppel Bay, wet on their outer, gathered around the beer and banter and got soaked on the inner.

A bigger-than-the-flu virus was inviting itself to town and soon sailing would stop as authorities sought physical distancing as public health protection. One punter wondered what drove people to panic-buy toilet paper and clear the supermarket shelves empty. Insert vernacular here that means 'idiots'.

And as such gatherings sometimes do, the talk descended to body functions and a musing over internet-enabled advice to use leaves as an alternative to toilet paper.

Big leaves would be good — right?

The Gympie-Gympie tree has broad leaves...

Oh, for a good teacher — and a treatise on the value of trees. And wouldn't it be right to ask the advice of the ancients of Greece and Country?

And ... breathe.

Vignette #3⁷ – In the beginning, it was different...



The good thing about shooting from the Bible? There are so many canons to load from...

But at least one pervasive Biblical perception needs challenging – again, and again - until short-term thinking ‘gets it’. This particular rock covering the cave needs rolling away at a rate of around once every decade.

There is sadly, an insidious take on the creation myth that has set up this whole economic growth concept *thing*. A conservative Christian version of creation has set in concrete the moral bedrock for the Anthropocene. It

⁷ A 'Wordle' (www.wordle.net) of Pope-Francis 2015, *Encyclical letter Laudato si'* of the Holy Father Francis, Vatican City.

is just s-o-o-o hard to jackhammer apart. Mind you, plenty of theologians have sighed into their sherry on this one.

And on cue, at the cusp of the millennium, a memorable song by the Irish rock band U2⁸ had a crack at another reminder in a long line of historic reminders:

*'The heart is a bloom
Shoots up through the stony ground.
There's no room
No space to rent in this town.
You're out of luck
And the reason that you had to care.
The traffic is stuck
And you're not moving anywhere.'*

Arguably, the ute carting the Genesis crate is bogged to its axles in the idea that the Earth is a system of stuff for men (let's be frank – mainly men) to use as they see fit. 'It's all good,' said God apparently, 'go ahead multiply and subdue the earth'. In summary; it's yours, use it all up, go for it – apparently. Really? Do you trust the translators from Aramaic to Greek, then to Latin, and only then to English? Do you think perhaps some subtle and surreptitious storyline was buried with the language square peg in a

⁸ Hewson, Paul David, David Howell Evans, Adam Charles Clayton, and Laurence Joseph Mullen. *Beautiful Day. All That You Can't Leave Behind*. Island Interscope, 2000.

round hole, conversion process? Maybe a bloke named Bias laid out the story stony ground when sailing ships first enabled empire. Highly likely, so scholars say. Alternate arguments find no room, no space, no luck – not when money talks.

Yet truth upends stones like a steadfast daisy growing amongst crevices. Softly tough enough to crack concrete slabs – and become a reality; attractive and lively. And true.

*'You thought you'd found a friend
To take you out of this place
Someone you could lend a hand
In return for grace.'*

And like any good friend, the one who can tell you your real foibles without rancour – the Hebrew Torah (and thus the Christian first-testament direct descendent, Genesis) said no such thing. Therein, the role of humanity was interpreted as stewarding servants, a carer's career, wet-nurses, or gardeners. Well, the type of gardening before monoculture, *Glyphosate* and machinery became normal. In the creation narrative, people were intentionally placed as partners with the Numinous in sustaining Earth version 4. Well after the odd Earth reboot by mega-meteors to versions 2, maybe 3, and evolution periodically issuing software updates in between.

The Earth was a free gift; humanity found it as a friend when our feet descended the tree a block away from where the rift valley started parting company. It was graciously given and offered – presented on a platter. All we have to do is lend a hand. And we were permitted to use the odd tool or two. Tools became odder and smellier and outrageously expensive.

Yes, we can use some of the wood – just select it well; regrow it.

'It's a beautiful day

Sky falls, you feel like

It's a beautiful day

Don't let it get away.'

And other ancients didn't mess with wisdom when a change was in the wind. The Celts of pre-Christian Europe moved to a new house in a new country a fair bit – the Roman neighbours egging them on to somewhere else by expanding their fence lines without the need for a bank loan. But when the *on being in Christ* fad hit the town, the Celts 'got it'. They never let the essence of a good argument get away. Their understanding of intersecting reparatory and regenerative cycles of the Earth was simply superimposed on the cross by a central circle. The Celts retained what they observed – a rugged rebranding when common sense was common.

And yet, the ancient Celtic concept of creation being central to the community is being usurped again in modern times. The Celtic cross now

used as the symbol for contemporary Polish conservative politics is another kidnapping of an ancient metaphor entirely out of its original context.

*'You're on the road
But you've got no destination
You're in the mud
In the maze of her imagination
You're lovin' this town
Even if that doesn't ring true
You've been all over
And it's been all over you.'*

When the Pope published *Laudato si* in June 2015, contemplative Christians instigated a cross-denominational love-in as big in modern times, as the Irish peace agreement. And environmentalists swooned.

This wholly Franciscan worldview let go of FOMO; the fear of missing out on subjugated power, prestige, possessions, and any need for the small personal self to be essential. Franciscans know how to bust a creation myth construct. Or, maybe it was the common good expressed by centuries of science – in this, plagiarism is permitted. Perhaps it was to assuage the guilt of dishing the dirt on folks like Copernicus...

Laudato si upped the ante and told Governments to get off the bus without the aid of a bus stop.

But this great good news had all its oxygen sucked out of it as the bells of child sex abuse rang ragged and hollow. Christianity crippled itself again on another crusty concept. And the faint united humanity peace mission for Gaia sank into the mud of obscurity with a gigantic gurgle. For quite literally heaven's sake fellas – get a proper partner.

'It's a beautiful day

Don't let it get away

It's a beautiful day.

Touch me

Take me to that other place

Teach me

I know I'm not a hopeless case.'

Obscurity breeds thinking. It is why the ancients' taught with allegory and analogy. In papyrus, parables and performances; the knowledge of the Elders alluded to the truth; exact details were secondary. Intricacy got in the way of a good yarn. We in the Anthropocene have flipped a narrative switch so that a fact can be a fiction wrapped in fish paper. Smells and all. That way, we bypass the thought process. We have hopelessly lost the ancient art of teaching meaning underneath the surface of a good yarn.

We moderns don't do subtlety – policy-makers just trot out the last thing a shock-jock said because their self-interest mirrors our own.

*'See the world in green and blue
See China right in front of you
See the canyons broken by cloud
See the tuna fleets clearing the sea out
See the Bedouin fires at night
See the oil fields at first light and
See the bird with a leaf in her mouth
After the flood all the colours came out.'*

Where there is a commodity, there is a market. The intellectual arrogance that the Earth is just a mountain of raw material for endless economic growth is deeply ingrained. The maths doesn't add up – today it takes the Earth one year and eight months to regenerate what we use in a year.

Noah went fishing in one of the many mega-paleo floods that ebbed and flowed. Forty days was a long fishing trip. Perhaps longer given that the number *forty* is a biblical storyteller's euphemism for a long time – any lengthy time; like any long fish. This 40-day idea became the Venetian word *quarantena* when physical distancing became the 14th-century norm to deal with the black death pandemic. Nowadays in Australia, we'll quarantine anyone at the drop of an Akubra.

But on one beautiful day, the dove did not come back – and it dawned on Noah that a new home beckoned.

'What you don't have you don't need it now

What you don't know you can feel it somehow

What you don't have you don't need it now

Don't need it now.'

Statistically speaking, Noah had a once in an epoch chance to shun excess and consume reasonably and simply. What we now call – sustainable. Yes, you can eat the fish – choose well, farm them if you have to – don't cut environmental corners and sure, pay for it. There is, for example, a net-cost to fixing things like climate-friendly energy systems!

The ancients read the landscape and used cool fires to farm the environment with regeneration in mind. Pre-Noah people painted the landscape in recognition of its importance. Until over centuries, we got lazy and painted mere impressions of the land. Then we got even lazier still and painted abstracts of the land – until landscapes lacked lustre (at least not according to what hangs on art gallery walls in recent years). Maybe the anthropo-scapes were not very pleasant to paint.

The question is – what do you do with ancient knowledge? Call it mere religion and spurn it? Refuse to feel the Spirit? Refuse to acknowledge the a-lgae to z-inc of dust? No – we moderns mostly concrete it over with

alternate realities. While we kneed the bread of life; we just want the quick sugary syrup. Take some time, marvel at the trick of ancient texts and the allure of analogies where discernment is a knack of neurology.

Some say 'I *believe* (or not) in climate change' as if it were a wee article of faith, not an observable fact... So, the climate is caught up in the original sin of misinterpreting scripture to justify overturning an obligation to be sustainable. And we refuse to accept an earthly gift in its original wrapping. To paraphrase another U2⁹ line: 'Grace, it's a name for a girl and a great idea.' The original idea, arguably.

One hundred years after the *Spanish* (nee *American*) flu, we will remember how the great *China* pandemic of 2020 closed industry and cut pollution – and as satellite pictures subsequently saw for such a brief respite;

'It was a beautiful day.'

⁹ Hewson, Paul David, David Howell Evans, Adam Charles Clayton, and Laurence Joseph Mullen. *Grace*. All That You Can't Leave Behind. Island Interscope, 2000.

Vignette #4¹⁰ - Connect the dots



The first person to write the evidence around colonial empire enabled climate change was a mining engineer named Fred.

Being of aristocratic lineage, Fred's family was from some-place called Humboldt – and being Prussian, that made him Fred von Humboldt. When he was born in 1769, his parents knew him as Friedrich Wilhelm Heinrich

¹⁰ Alexander von Humboldt, oil painting by Friedrich Georg Weitsch 1806, National Museum Berlin.

Alexander von Humboldt. But he called himself Alexander, as did his friends. And Alex had many friends.

Humboldt was the rock-star royalty of post-enlightenment science. US President Jefferson was a friend, as were Prussian kings. Charles Darwin was egged on by Humboldt to go wandering – and we know where that ended up. Humboldt hung out with Simon Bolivar and chewed over the political plight of South America. He attended lectures with Goethe – one Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. And whole Paris salon social sets were ardent admirers.

Maybe he had fabulous friends because he was single as well as famous. Maybe it was because he was occasionally wealthy. Perhaps because he spoke four languages. Maybe it was because he was out-going and charming. Maybe it was because he exemplified the adventurous side of empire building. Maybe too, it was because he was a little gung-ho – climbing the highest mountain in South America dressed in just his summer rig. On that walk, he weathered the wild winter snowy storms starving all the while, and yet he still took systematic science measurements.

Humboldt was a polymath. He could do more than one sum in his head. It's a useful skill when shouting the bar – to simultaneously keep track of dwindling dollars; worry over the drive home and who the heck should be buying the next round. Being capable of doing two things at once,

Humboldt invented the cross-over between biology and geography, took weather observations and mapped climate regions, proposed tectonic plate movement, wrote poetry and philosophy, drew pictures, discovered the magnetic equator – and according to some, invented Nature as an interconnected web of life.

Humboldt's popular personae are plastered all over the world: an oceanic circulation, mountains, rivers, many towns around the world (except in England naturally), schools, ships, squares and streets as well as a large German university (naturally). On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of his birth, many cities including Melbourne (Australia) threw civic parties to the 'Shakespeare of sciences'.

And what made his opinions worthy? Well he had kudos, he was famous – but importantly he backed up a celebrity status with assiduous observations and engaging communication. His secret? He took notes, he thought, and he talked: necessarily in that order. Mostly, Alex was curious.

Alexander was a passionate and purposed communicator – he knew he knew stuff – and he made sure others knew he knew stuff. Incessant talking, cables, letters and lectures are testimony. And sometimes it got him more research and travel gigs – sometimes. In those days, one needed a patron to pay one's bills; even if one was of privilege. It probably helped that Humboldt's older brother was a Prussian Government minister. Patronage is still the same today although research workers call

such patrons; 'Government Research Councils'. It works the same: the 'who you know' – and the importance of your network.

In that visit to Latin America, Humboldt observed how European ways of clear-felling nature and introducing monoculture had debilitating impacts on forests, soil erosion and waterways. He saw how human activity upended the climate. And now, when thinking about the modern climate and coal polarity – consider that a mining engineer was the first celebrity champion for the environment and observer of anthropogenic climate change... There was no inconsistency then – there needn't be one now (except perhaps in the confines of the conservative media camp).

Alexander von Humboldt wrote about anthropogenic climate change when the eighteenth century clicked over to the nineteenth. Quite some time ago. How many dots in the climate change join-your-own-line are now connected?

Vignette #5¹¹ - Crime of the century – a memoir



'If everyone was listening, you know

*There'd be a chance that we could save the show.'*¹²

I was nineteen once, like everyone else. At nineteen in 1979, I bought an iridescent, metallic deep-green, 1974 Ford Falcon XB sedan. I wasn't planning to buy such a large inline 6-cylinder powered petrol pump. But it was cheap – a consequence of the first oil price economy shock.

At the time I was enlisted at an obscure military college in the mid-eastern Melbourne suburb of Canterbury. RAAF Frognall was a heritage-listed property set aside for engineering cadets studying at the Royal Melbourne

¹¹ Davies, Richard, and Roger Hodgson. *Crime of the Century*. Crime of the Century. A&M Records, 1974.

¹² Davies, Richard, and Roger Hodgson. *If Everyone Was Listening*. Crime of the Century. A&M Records, 1974.

Institute of Technology. While the trendier suburb of Toorak housed the ritzy rich, the well off in Canterbury preferred to hide behind summer sky-filled oak trees and seven-foot-high hedges so thick, they may as well have been barbed-wire fences. You had to be careful on your fitness road-run in case you got creamed by a *Roller* reversing out of garage doors built for a fortress. On more than one occasion I thought, *wouldn't it be cool to use the bonnet as a hurdle.*

As the 1979 mid-summer rambled around, one of my more life-experienced friends decided a bunch of us should gather at his father's place in the seaside village of Torquay. It wasn't said, in those days it went without saying; some would drink and subsequently yell a lot, and we would all have to listen to ludicrously loud music. Terry's Dad wasn't going to be home. Terry's Dad probably had no idea that his quiet get-away was being trashed that weekend. On the other hand, Terry's Dad was nineteen once. We never asked about Terry's Mum. Being nineteen is all at the same time a little narcissism; a little anarchy; a latent insecurity and an exploration to a place called wisdom.

It did occur to me that going to Torquay to hear music was an exercise in burning excessive fuel for no good reason – given the daily bout of bass notes bending around the barracks anyway. What the heck – and recheck the wallet.

Peer groups are by definition odd, but in the seventies engineering students, procured scuffed-steel amplifiers, five-foot speaker towers and the finest of long-play phonographs (these weren't just record-players). At Froggnall, nineteen-year-olds washed their records before playing them – and let 'em rip at a rock concert level 120 decibels. Bedsits were used as external speaker boxes in some sort of orchestrated competition. *Yah! My Fleetwood Mac is louder than yours...* I learnt there was only so much of *Rumours* one could take. Terry was much more sophisticated; he'd introduced us tight-bunch to Dire Straits, the Sultans of Swing – still played at an outlandish volume mind you.

Harry and I had joined the RAAF from Queensland, and the idea of taking a swim at the iconic surf beach called Bells, on the way to the Torquay rendezvous, seemed the right thing to do. Bells beach; *wow – say it backwards* – it must be magic given its mojo. The weather forecast for the Saturday of travel was a maximum temperature of 34 degrees Celsius. 'Say, that's Gold Coast weather,' said Harry, 'how hard can it be?' I personally had no idea, as I'd come from Townsville, where surf beaches are, just quietly, unknown.

This drive would take us through the city of Melbourne, another hour out to Geelong, and then a jink right to the wide-open southern coast of Victoria. We rolled up to see.

My metal-green XB with the fetching buff coloured vinyl roof (but no roof racks) nosed in and parallel parked amidst a row of sunset picture painted, silver-wheeled, surfboard adorned panel vans strewn along the fore-shore. Towels flapping on open doors and shirts flapping on open chests. Already we stood out – with short hair and an absolute lack of board short couture.

Harry looked right, I looked left, and we saw the same scene. Rowdy blue-grey waves rolling into long cylinders crashing onto a brown sandy beach strung between cliffs held out like arms. The swirling spray hung like a convulsing fog, whipped and whirled by the wild watery energy underneath. The crashing cacophony of breaking waves assaulted the senses and set off an adrenaline rush and a racing heart. Yet in contrast, the air hung heavy with the hot summer swelter.

‘Ripper,’ said Harry. I would have said something as well if my bulging eyes had allowed my mouth to move. Harry knew how to body surf – and I? Well, I mused, I could swim in sedate water.

At nineteen there was nothing to it. Rip off the outer clothes, pound purposefully to the sea with an ‘I have done this a million times before’ promenade; and finally, power into the pounding surf like you owned it. Disaster didn’t take long. As I got to waist-deep in seawater, a mountainous white-foamed wave wrapped over my head like a commercial beer vat being upended unceremoniously. With a sharp

intake of salty air, I disappeared. The sledge-hammer steel cold belted the body and sucked out all the breath I'd just taken in. There was no time to realise that this couldn't be good. Without warning, the tugging turbulence swept me off my feet and tossed me like a turtle with flailing arms and a deep dreading that my next breath was a long, long way away. I was bounced off the bottom head crackingly first. And eerily, in an ear-ringing and lung emptying eternity, the sky eventually returned.

I dragged myself off the beach, with stinging eyes and a twisted neck. And with no memory of the transit, I wound up back in the XB – with Harry mute. Two skin shivering, teeth chattering Bells newbies huddled inside the XB, and climbing into clothes. The air temperature may well have been 34 degrees C, but the car-heater was wound up to the max as we tried to ward off hypothermia behind firmly closed windows.

Bronzed shirty surfers might have been smiling into their *Ray-bans* – I wouldn't know, I was trying to arrest a rapidly falling body-core temperature while contemplating the proof that Bells beach water comes from Antarctica.

We did, of course, thaw, and so we dawdled on to Terry's party where the iced eskies were open, and the pizza boxes were stacked and steaming. In the late seventies you could get any pizza you wanted – so long as it was Hawaiian; pineapple and ham randomly pitched into tasteless tomato paste.

And in the lounge room strewn with books, rugs, beanbags and record covers; set up sagely from the wall like sentient statues, were the speakers. The front covers removed from each cabinet revealing the rubber ringed black and silver diaphragms pulsed with each cacophonous note threatening to throw the voice coil into the opposite wall. The bass crashing into consciousness like the Bells beach dumper driven by the deep Southern Sea.

Terry rolled out the beer with *Bob Seger and the Silver Bullet Band*, *Black Sabbath*, *Jethro Tull*, *Doobie Brothers* and then spuriously; something symphonic from a supergroup called *Supertramp*. I'd never heard this *Crime of the Century* album before, even though the LP cover announced its make in 1974 – the same year as my XB. Popular and *good* are not always the same thing.

Courtesy of the serious stereo structure, *Crime of the Century* captivated my sensibilities with the soaring subtlety of the saxophone, the intricately carved keyboard stretches, the sassy guitar solos and the purposed quiet interludes between rollicking rhythms. This then wasn't the four chord, two verse-chorus; bridge then third verse-chorus, three-and-a-half minute pop song... This was not *muzak*; this to a nineteen-year-old was genius. An epiphany for me – the world can contain serious music with a message that unravelled schemes and adventuring and asked questions. It was well worth the fee.

In the days that followed, I started to unpack the lyrics into personal meaning. In a six-minute song, the words only took a minute and a bit right upfront. Still, they intrigued me as much as the soaring orchestration that filled out the rest of the Seventies sonata.

Now they're planning the crime of the century

Well what would it be?

Read all about their schemes and adventuring

It's well worth the fee

So roll up and see

As they rape the universe

How they've gone from bad to worse

Who are these men of lust, greed and glory?

Rip off the masks and let's see

But that's not right – oh no, what's the story?

Look! There's you and there's me

(That can't be right...)¹³

In the next few weeks with an ear glued to the new fascination, I learnt that *Supertramp* spent a lot of time questioning the character of chauffeurs – ripping off the masks of those who drove *Rollers*.

¹³ Davies, Richard and Roger Hodgson. *Crime of the Century*. Crime of the Century: A&M Records, 1974.

In the months to follow things went from bad to worse, I would crash the Falcon and fail engineering. I never liked it anyway – the engineering that is. In years to follow, I would garner the whole *Supertramp* discography and become acquainted with Bob Brown and the emerging green politics of Tasmania. These things seemed to be synergies. In ensuing decades, I would take up landscape photography, go wilderness walking, skiing and sailing – to revel in natural beauty from time to time.

And over time, I would contemplate that *Crime* created a character-building education and an environmental consciousness. *Another brick in the wall*. I saw *Supertramp* as a modern messenger with the record covers as much a signpost as their music. I would ride the wave of green politics and chair a local branch of the *Queensland Greens* for a few years. I wanted to know who these folks of lust, greed and glory were – one finger pointing to culprits and necessarily for the gesture (try it), three pointing back. I figured out how to make *Crime* a ring tone on my roller-like *Apple SE* smartphone; a product that takes lithium, titanium and a host of other messily mined metals to make. So, nothing is perfect (and hence the three fingers). My partner and I would go on to build a sustainable and climate-friendly eco-home and use rice syrup instead of sugar. It was, it is, a token I admit – a work in progress?

But I am looking forward to an ... XC. The all-electric motor Volvo XC40 with a 400-kilometre range on one charge and an eighty per cent re-charge in forty minutes. A Roller irony not altogether lost on me. Still, on

balance, riding the front of a future tsunami of surf wave sets to evolve energy.

And these days I teach environmental geography for a living, and I understand the benthic construct that sets up one of the best right-handed breaks in the world. So now, of course, I know that Bells is a beautiful beach – just not for swimming...



Vignette #6¹⁴ - A picture paints a policy change



Wild running rivers are rare.

Getting rarer as the Anthropocene settles.

Such pristine streams are a source.

A source of energy – known as a ‘resource’.

In Tasmania, wild rivers mean cheap electricity.

But you have to spend.

A lot of money to save some.

Hydroelectricity – a renewable resource.

Apart from the newly drowned valley.

¹⁴ Dombrovskis, Peter. 1979, Morning Mist Rock Island Bend, Franklin River, Tasmania, National Library of Australia NLA 147241885 used with permission of the copyright holder (Liz Dombrovskis by email 15th November 2021).

And the construction impact.

On cool temperate rainforests.

And the last stands of Huon pine.

So few and far between.

And in 1983, in one of these valleys.

A water rights fight erupted.

Rubber duckies, kayaks and bulldozers.

Squared off in the water and on the bank.

Of the Gordon-Franklin river system.

Of mostly undisturbed indigenous forest.

An energetic, youthful stage stream.

Winding down a V-shaped valley.

Winding together a bird, a colour and a picture.

Prime Minister Bob Hawke and his Government.

Activist and general practitioner, Bob Brown.

And wilderness photographer, Peter Dombrovskis.

All *agin* the Tasmanian Government.

Who wanted cheap electricity at any price.

But first, define 'wilderness'.

Indeed, is there any wildness left?

Wild human behaviour certainly.

Wild weather increasingly so.

A neglected garden is a wilderness.

And 'wildness' in terms of Nature?

Wilderness – *large, unmodified.*

Or slightly modified.

Areas that retain their natural character.

Without permanent.

Or significant human habitation.

Which are protected and managed.

To preserve their natural condition.

So pontificates the International Union.

For the Conservation of Nature¹⁵.

Land and seascapes.

Fauna, flora and freshwater.

The Franklin River crusade.

To protect the wild from water storage.

Had been on and off for years.

Since the late seventies.

Bob Brown, The Wilderness Society.

Got more focussed and organised.

Camping and canoeing.

Placards, people and paddles.

Clamping themselves to caterpillars.

Confronting steel treaded D9s.

Nose to mettle grid.

They started to sway public opinion.

Toward valuing the wild.

Sufficient to stir the Labor party.

Hawke was elected on a platform.

The environment in part – but partly enough.

¹⁵ IUCN. "IUCN Category 1b - Wilderness Area." International Union for the Conservation of Nature. 2019. Accessed 11th May 2020. <https://biodiversitya-z.org/content/iucn-category-1b-wilderness-area>.

Peter was a large-format photographer.
A large-format camera has high fidelity.
The legendary landscape photographer.
Of the United States.
Ansel Adams used such a camera.
Like Adams, Peter's landscape photos.
Swept you into a place.
Each place vibrant in a lens.
Peter had an eye for an arresting image.
Peter doesn't *take* a photo.
Peter *makes* photos with an artist's sensibility.
Peter walked a hard country for days.
Scrabbling and scratching for footholds.
In the dense wet scrub of the south-west.
To make a photo of the flowing Franklin.
Rock Island Bend it was called.
See it in *Trove*, now a National Treasure.

He gave *Bend* to The Wilderness Society.
Who used it to badge a campaign.
After Bob Brown picked it out.
'This is it!' said Bob.
It turns out Bob has an eye for art.
'Not the best of my pictures,' said Peter.
But Bob saw through the deprecation.

Rock Island Bend is a study of calm.

As water the symbol often is.
 The ferocious serenity.
 One of Nature's dichotomies.
 And in the photo detail, you can see.
 Time stretched, so the river runs.
 Present tense tied to the past.
 River eddies and languid flow captured.
 In a clever slow shutter speed.
 Young water flows from the front left corner.
 Through to the distant background.
 Forks mid- distance around a sheer rock island.
 And the early morning mist hangs.
 Shrouding a drawn-out depth of field.
 Rugged rock walls each fissure laid open.
 Trees clinging for life and light.
 On every conceivable crevice.
Bend became an icon, a symbol.
 On bumper stickers and posters.
 Full pages in *The Age* newspaper.
 And in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.
 A million times *Bend* was reproduced.
 That's a lot of homes and hearts reached!
 The actor portrayed wildness as spectacle.
 As big as an M or an SCG...
Bend connected city hearts to the river.
Rock Island Bend became agency.
 And re-stirred a widespread angst.
 And yet, like all symbols and signs.

The photograph was but a facsimile.

And Hawke hovered to make a legacy.

A canny *Pollie* who saw the art.

And read the breeze.

Of public opinion.

There was no other federated path.

Talking, bribing, politicking the southern State.

Economics and tax cuts had all failed.

Hawke decided to collar the clods.

Of Tasmania bent.

On quite a different power flow.

Tasmanian Premier Robin Gray.

Wanted to damn the Franklin.

Saying the river was nothing.

But a brown ditch.

Leech-ridden, unattractive.

To the majority of people.

But he was wrong.

As Dombrovskis' skill showed.

To more people than most.

The river was not the only casualty.

If the dam had gone ahead.

A sea of stone artefacts.

From the original people of *Country*.

Was un-earthed at an archaeological dig.

Called Kutikina.

Folks of The Wilderness Society.
Were the first to rediscover the cave.
In the Gordon-Franklin river system.

Hawke and his staff.
Tried hard to persuade Tasmania.
That the Franklin was worth its flow.
But *Pollies* love a good tussle.
And the southerners dug in.
With the decision they had made.
To show they are the king of the country.
And that energy has first pick.
Of places for the football team of power.
So the question was tossed to the High Court.
Could the *feds* use its foreign affairs powers?
To tread on the rights of a State?
To protect a wilderness area.
Of high natural values.
And in a decision the biggest before Mabo.
Ruled the *feds* could indeed use their foreign powers.
And ruled that the dam need not go ahead.
To save Australia's reputation overseas.
And preserve the watershed.

That photo saved the Franklin River.
Pundits say of Dombrovskis skill.
A Latvian immigrant who walked.
The length of Tasmania.

Making colour on celluloid dance.

Thus, *Bend* is remembered still.

For the National Heritage listing.

Of the Franklin-Gordon National Park.

Add an icon to world-class saved spaces.

And the Australian Greens was founded.

On the back of it.

Art switches the mind.

The mind sways the heart.

The heart succours action.

And action settles a problem.

A photograph changed policy...

Government policy.

It helps if an environmental issue.

Coincides with the need to be.

Re-elected.

Although that concept.

Hasn't yet helped.

The Murray-Darling.

And environmental flows.

But it might!

Let the Franklin flow.

Was a hit song¹⁶ at the time.

From a songsmith named Shane Howard.

¹⁶ Howard, Shane. *Let the Franklin Flow*. Let The Franklin Flow. Warner-Elektra-Atlantic, 1983.

In the song, Shane said.

'The Kutikina is worth fighting for.'

The High Court agreed.

Ok, so - maybe the song helped *Bend*.

That's a good point...

Reinforcement is a crucial pedagogy.

More than one piece of art.

Is needed.

To educate policy-makers.

And flow the Franklin does still.

As the Anthropocene unravels.

Vignette #7¹⁷ - River running rights



On the one hand, what gives the river a right to rough up our residences?
On the other, why spend a spare couple of million dollars, found floating
in a bottom draw, on reshaping a tiny section of river in the hope of holding
back shape-shifting river banks?

¹⁷ Image: Michael Hewson (2019) Site #7 Fitzroy River Yaamba

A river has an opinion. And a big river can make that opinion felt. A river breaks its banks and builds a flood plain to release a pressure valve. All quite naturally normal.

I've seen the milk-coffee coloured maelstrom that was the Fitzroy River in a minor flood. Stirred sediment and vegetative flotsam swept along as the stream rushed on to the sea. In late March 2017, Tropical Cyclone Debbie had wandered inland soaking the upper reaches of the massive Fitzroy River catchment. It took a week for that deluge upstream to rush coastward through Rockhampton. Others have seen much higher Fitzroy flood peaks over the years. Floods are messy, deadly and bank-breaking.

Later in 2019, the Fitzroy Basin Association herded its members into buses and drove them to site '7' at the end of a dirt road. A clandestine project? No – just a Natural Resource Management organisation charged with balancing the environment and agriculture, gleefully showing off a 1.2-kilometre, \$1.8 million-dollar amelioration to a degrading Fitzroy river-bank. A feel-good project to limit erosion and reduce sediment flow to the Southern Great Barrier Reef. The project finance sourced from an underspent tropical cyclone Marcia recovery fund of 2016.

The Association's consulting Hydrological Engineer took the visitors back to when the river was part of the home range for First Nation peoples. The Darumbal know the river by an original name; Tunuba, meaning *big river*.

The engineer sketched out the geological history of massive Fitzroy floods – some with the capacity to carve out a very different set of stream banks incising the flood plain. Sometimes, in waves of epic proportions, fluvial ‘dozers dredged long meandering stretches of the stream into straight lines. A floodplain is put together from aeons of overflow.

Anthropogenic activity creates ‘peaky’ rivers – landscape clearing upstream sheets water into the stream rather than soaking into the land. In turn, the higher energy speeds more sediment downstream – and onward to sea to smother coastal coral reefs.

The engineer went on to describe the neat rows of wooden poles rammed in like pier-piles at site ‘7’. How they would reduce the high energy erosion, deposit silt on the banks and create stability for hosting vegetation. The piles he explained would rot in time, but first grasses would grow, then reeds, shrubs, and trees – the surface roughness and tensile strength like steel reinforcing rods in concrete, slow the flow rate of a river.

A heart-warming success by all accounts! But hang on (as the Fitzroy glides quietly by) – the ancients saw river route altering floods – and now we bury piddling piles to contain and correct strategic streamflow? About a kilometre of works – on how much river? For how much money? The Fitzroy is the second largest river catchment in Australia. A short-term concept proof perhaps – but so little sludge re-routed from the reef?

And in the long term, even geological timeframes – are these works right for the river? Does a river not make its demands and determine its path? Left naturally to do their thing, don't all streams self-correct? A young river revels in its catchment – but with a wiser girth, older water wants to wander. In times of significant excess, a river seeks to swiftly egress.

In the Anthropocene though, the floodplain is where we plant infrastructure and eat, sleep, work and play – inconvenient, for a river. If there were no landholding on the floodplain – there would be no need to manage river-banks. The site '7' fix was not so much about sediment flow to the reef (beyond a public-facing façade). This minuscule prototype was protecting purchased property boundaries and fighting the river for its space. The main game was the agricultural land loss to the water-stream created cadastre change.

The realistic solution (for the river) lies in two unrealistic (measured in the short-term) public policy changes. Firstly, ceding the river its highway as a general principle – and secondly mandating upstream riparian zone and floodplain land-care. Society thus treats the cause of river ill-health – not just de-sludging the symptoms. Recognition is afforded to the connectivity and community of a river system.

There are precedents. In 1810, Governor Macquarie planned five towns on high ground along the Hawkesbury and Nepean Rivers to flood-proof new settlements. The PR campaign for that initiative was unsuccessful

sadly. Gundagai NSW was relocated to higher ground after the Murrumbidgee flooded in June 1852 and more than a third of its population drowned. Clermont Queensland was similarly shifted in 1916. The Queensland Lockyer Valley Regional Council offered a voluntary land-swap to residents of Grantham hard-hit by the 2011 floods. Remembering the late nineteenth century Brisbane floods, successive Brisbane City Councils have briefly considered banning river-bank building. Notably twice, not long before the devastating 1974 and 2011 floods.

Assuming there is gumption for a long term strategy, it is time to redraft The Water Act 2007. It is past time to legislate a more comprehensive water land management beyond the focus on Murray-Darling Basin allocation of H₂O. International leading laws to intentionally lease river owned property as conservation parks are needed. Rules to allow regulated farming on such land are required, but on a loan basis with river over-run reparation mechanisms – not as freehold ownership.

Now and then, a river sends a resuscitating sign. A river recreates its possession and laughs at restrictive controls. Here in Rockhampton, Tunuba owns what it creates.

Vignette #8¹⁸ - Get over it, move on...



Read column 1 over-three pages then return here to column 2.

Dirty plates

so Earth is,

floating on

magma hot,

thus the ship

was the shore

and the beach

was the bath,

wind and waves

changed place

In the An-

thropocene

since the dark

industry

smog sick days,

certainly

so scholars

now say, since

hunting and

gathering

¹⁸ Image by klimkin from Pixabay

and brought rain	<i>became a</i>
to many	<i>farming place,</i>
different	<i>we reform</i>
distances,	<i>the planet,</i>
as aeons	<i>change weather</i>
spun orbits	<i>lay new ground</i>
round the sun,	<i>wipe the green</i>
dry became	<i>layer off,</i>
wet and warm	<i>the future</i>
refroze as	<i>will see us</i>
continents	<i>laid in rocks,</i>
drifted, con-	<i>plastic here</i>
tent to up-	<i>metal there</i>
sticks and speed,	<i>salty soil</i>
rolling on	<i>a marker,</i>
hot rock and	<i>a line we</i>
dancing on	<i>crossed so quick</i>
springy floors	<i>compared with</i>
of lava flow,	<i>geolog-</i>

rift valleys	<i>ical time,</i>
opened up	<i>too late - no!</i>
and steppes grew	<i>nature based</i>
tall so that	<i>solutions</i>
conditions	<i>honour an</i>
set the stage	<i>agreement</i>
for the An-	<i>that humans</i>
thropocene,	<i>and Gaia</i>
tectonics	<i>coexist,</i>
created	<i>just decide</i>
human form,	<i>and free switch</i>
move on, get	<i>to a more</i>
over it	<i>generous</i>
you are floa-	<i>sustaina-</i>
ting on it!	<i>bility!</i>

Vignette #9¹⁹ - Insectageddon



Farmers know. They can feel it – like the kick in the guts when the bank account empties. They can see it – as the soil sails with the impoverished dust that entrains in a dry-storm gust front. They smell it – like petrichor before the teasing storm arrives; if only that storm would come and rain *here* – and not over *there*. And perhaps only now, can they even touch it. Although usually, insects ping you first... The agribusiness version of the biblically celluloid Armageddon. The end-times last war between good and evil. But the end of agriculture as we know it? Is it here? Now? Really?

In Europe, the scenario is called *insectageddon*. The wholesale application of agricultural insecticide appears to be decimating the pollinator population - and thus debilitating food production. Is this an alarmist's conspiracy theory? Perhaps just a scheme of emotive quasi-science? Or is it solid quantitatively replicated research? As you might expect, the facts lie somewhere in between – but biased to one end of the pendulum swing by dint of numbers. Guess which end...

¹⁹ Image by S. Hermann & F. Richter from Pixabay.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Eric Campbell in an October 2019 *Foreign Correspondent* Television program asked the question: 'remember when a country drive ended with the windscreen covered in smashed insects? Ever wondered why that seems to happen less these days?'

Campbell discusses *insectageddon* with researchers on a thirty-year study of insect populations near the German city of Krefeld. The science is tracking a decline, perhaps a collapse, in the insect population. Campbell looks at Dutch studies that quantify a similar invertebrate decline rate, but a correlated drop in wildlife numbers as well. Professor Hans de Kroon from the Radboud University specifies that 80% of crops and wild plants rely on insects for pollination. Many birds rely on insects for sustenance and consequently, onwards through the rest of the food chain. The foundations of an ecological pyramid are showing signs of collapse like concrete cancer in a sixties high-rise basement. Widespread cropping use of insecticide is considered the culprit.

And are we surprised about these findings? We shouldn't be – we've been presciently warned off before. A reminder that anecdotal observations may (or may not) become facts in time – once the numbers are crunched.

Nearly 60 years ago in 1962, a United States oceanic biologist named Rachel Carson published a best-selling book entitled *Silent Spring*. The creative non-fiction labelled a 'fable for tomorrow', is a collection of stories

on how widespread agricultural use of an insecticide caused damage to wildlife and farmed produce and thus through to human ill health. Carson censured Government and commercial hubris and fixation on economic short term policy goals. History now records that Carson wrote the work while secretly suffering debilitating breast cancer, knowing the kickback from industry would come quickly. And it did, with a vengeance.

President John F Kennedy read the three-part serialisation of the book in *The New Yorker*. To make it to *The New Yorker* is a top-hat journalistic prize. So Carson became a public intellectual and a target for disparate public opinion. Against withering attack from chemical companies, and coyly waiting while *Silent Spring* underwent an informal scientific peer review by duelling dailies, Kennedy's administration launched an investigation into whether pesticides caused illness in humans. Does *insectageddon* realise the *Silent Spring* prediction of eco-system decline? It certainly lines up...

But in 2020 Europe, signs of public support for protecting insects are being erected. The tide of public opinion is creating a trickle of Government agriculture policy change. France and Germany are mandating increasing levels of organic farming, some local constituencies ratcheting up from 30 to 50, even talk of a 100% turn-over of traditional chemical use. Of course, here define 'tradition' – more like 'living memory' perhaps. Ancient agricultural practices were less intrusive. In The Netherlands, there is an increasing need for the recognition of wildlife corridors. This is a significant

success in a country that contains some of the most human refined landscapes on the planet.

And in Australia?

A farmer with a long line of farming ancestry to lean on, and a PhD on the topic, has a view. In an essay for the Griffith Review entitled *Regenerating Country in the Anthropocene*, Charles Massy pushes the concept of regenerative agriculture. The article reprises a 2017 book of his entitled, *Call of the Reed Warbler: A New Agriculture, A New Earth*²⁰. A book as ground-breaking as Bruce Pascoe's *Dark Emu*²¹ – which is a reassessment of Australian First Nations regenerative farming techniques suited to Country, published in 2018. Here the use of capital 'C' for Country is intentional - recognising that land is a physiological construct for First Nation peoples. Taken together, these tomes provide a possible policy agenda for farming sustainability. Now (and we can't shy away from this) comes the hard graft of stakeholder management...

Massy says that retaining the lie of the land, the local watercourses and indigenous vegetation improves long-term farming productivity. Deep soil regeneration and natural fungi and bacteria are vital. He feeds back the collective words of a hundred regenerative farmers who said their job was

²⁰ Massy, Charles. *Call of the Reed Warbler: A New Agriculture - a New Earth*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2017.

²¹ Pascoe, Bruce. *Dark Emu*. London: Scribe Publications UK, 2018.

to get out of the way – and let Nature do its thing. The goal is to achieve longer-term resilience by less monoculture and cooperation with Nature.

The problem says Massy, is that the 60,000-year-old history of farming within *australis nutrio est terra* (the nurtured land of the south) was treacherously and violently overwhelmed when Europeans came to instil wetter intensive farming techniques on a dryer land. Not to mention the hurried guess that food production improvement lay in clear-felling the area. If only the invaders knew what the locals knew. Cool burning grass fires to retain the dry savannah woodland is wisdom based on long experience. Heaping logs into a funeral pyre is profoundly ignorant – in the long term. In the short term, Macarthur and sheep made Australia prosperous it has to be said. In the short term. Nature works on the intersection of times frames – the quick sprint and the mid-cycle intertwining with the long game.

Farmers know. Now policy-makers need to know – to help farmers realise their knowledge – hard graft for sure. But arguably a real strategic plan – where ‘strategic’ effects useful change – and a ‘plan’ points out the who (the ugly), the what (the good) and the when (the bad; send money now).

Vignette #10²² - Ode to clouds and crowds



²² Image: Michael Hewson (2006) Moreton Bay Cirrus

I

Some clouds scurry like streets hurry from seven,

Some clouds boil like an atomic bomb.

Some clouds stretch, strung out in high heaven.

Some clouds shower the surface gently from

A spattering sequence to whet the senses,

And placate a plant which drinks so seldom.

Onshore breeze born Cum-u-lus condenses,

Or cold front Stra-ta-cu lets leaden grey cells

Open up as if a fire hose commences.

Alto-cum-u-lus eases east and spells

The recreated rush of inland waters

That drowns down gullies to desert sea swells.

Fair-weather Cum-u-lus stirs and stutters,

Shifting shape and unfailingly falters.

II

Tower walls of Cum-u-lo-nim-bus crowd
the horizon. Of monsoon proportions,
rain that rages so waterways flow proud.

Cirro-cum-u-lus a cold front cautions
The five p-m office spill to head home
Before brollies blow and the sky ashens.

From the tropical ocean cyclones foam
Fairly whips the whistle blast that unwinds
Furious laughter at the builder's tome.

Hail smacks, roof cracks and season snow reminds
The alpine sedges that winter hastens,
While graupel and sleet sees us seek confines.

The water cycle that gladly freshens
Turns to warfare when the cascade opens.

III

Cloudy fences fend off skin solar

Flaking – slaking some of the sun's harm

As willow thumps leather off a bowler.

At night, cloud floats like a doona down calm

Mulching and mediating so earth heats

Between blankets to smooth sleepy balm.

When the earthly belly belches and beats

Holes in pie-crust precarious perches,

Sulphur clouds sweep up into airy seats,

Where gauges note cooling – and so urges

Scholars to build belching replication

To stave off and reflect the sun's surges.

What is known of human intervention?

Crazy consequences stories caution.

IV

Clouds conjure for some²³, words to paint a claim,
While wardens of the world wander on,
Unaware of the sky sculpture's refrain.

The painter Turner's place in the salon
Would be threadbare without the pastiche
Of sky mixed moisture and cloudy frisson.

Pitch perfect azure heartens a nerves niche.
To feel the welcoming warmth of the orb.
Clouds are plot switches where characters screech.

Clouds make their mark as idle minds absorb.
Grist for yarns when conversation splutters,
Pap'ring over shallow friends coated daub.

Clouds are the tap on agri-wealth gutters,
Flowing and stowing to stem bank mutters.

²³ Pretor-Pinney, Gavin. "The Cloud Appreciation Society." 2016. Accessed 12th March 2020. <https://cloudappreciationsociety.org/>.

V

Clouds are the signs for the weather system
For those who can read them and swift observe.
The news, the views for the literate them.

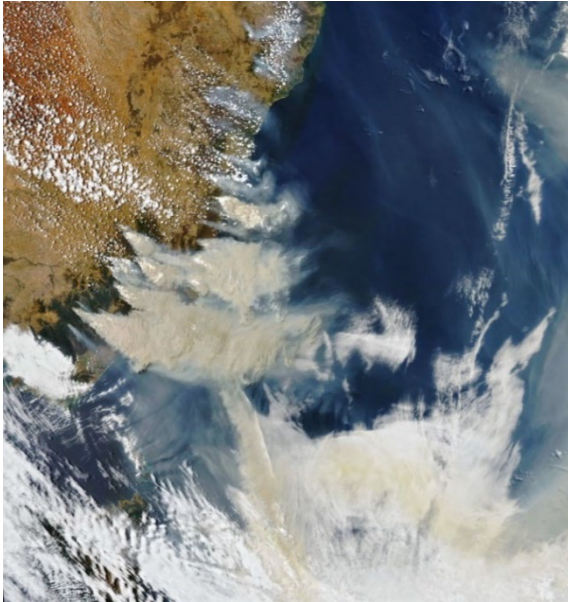
Clouds frame the air flow on an upward swerve.
Craft bound'ries of sheer instability.
The air painted brush strokes hued white with verve.

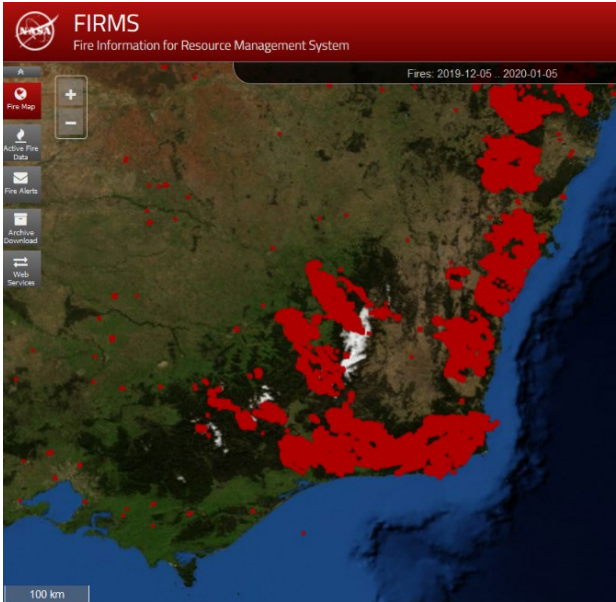
South ocean clouds on probability,
Are the last great unknown in the climate
System guesses of warmed air frailty.

When the venerable vineyards migrate
From the dry mainland to Tasmania,
So signals a clear agri-climate fate.

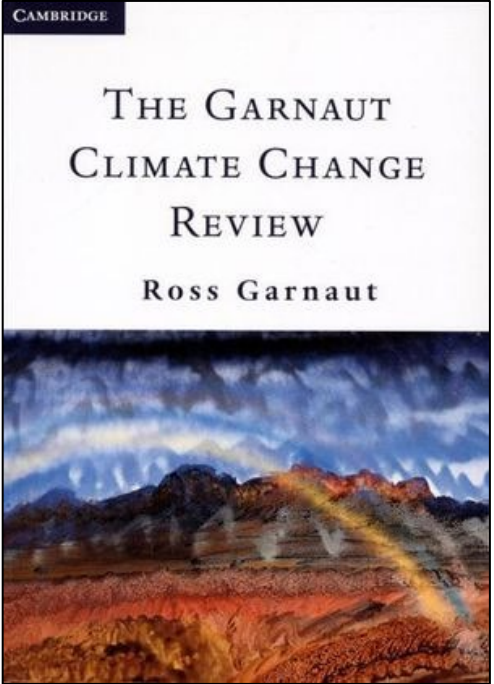
Thus clouds cry less and confound the crania
When blue snuffs the green less familiar.

Vignette #11^{24,25,26} - What role our elders?





In a 2008 report to the Rudd Government, Professor Ross Garnaut wrote: 'recent projections of fire weather suggests that fire seasons will start earlier, end slightly later and generally be more intense... This effect increases over time but should be directly observable by 2020.' And in 2020 rural fire brigade chiefs around Australia made comments to the media along the lines that collectively, they had not seen anything like the 2020 bushfire season for its early start, extent or severity. Fire chiefs are not individuals prone to hyperbole. Question: do lawmakers and politicians no longer listen to the Elders of their tribe? Do they read the flamin' signs?



²⁴ Image: NASA MODIS true colour Image 22nd November 2019.

²⁵ NASA. "Fire Information for Resource Management System." 2020. Accessed 3rd February 2020. <https://firms.modaps.eosdis.nasa.gov>.

²⁶ Garnaut, Ross. *Garnaut Climate Change Review: Final Review*. Port Melbourne, 2009 (Permission from Cambridge Press for use of the cover artwork granted email 17/11/2021).

Vignette #12²⁷ – Fearlessly optimistic



In the movie *The Lion King* (1994), youngsters meet the puerile philosophy of the *circle of life*. It's a storied starting point to ... *being*. On being a sophisticated arrangement of carbon, oxygen and hydrogen – that circulates from one form to another as birth fades to death and death feeds another delivery. It is all a little reassuringly perpetual really.

And as the years roll rattling through the significant '0' decades for each of us, elders know that no endeavour (let alone life) goes in a straight line. Everything, but everything, is circular; 'round like a circle in a spiral, like a

²⁷ Image: Michael Hewson, Artesian Overflow Bowra, 2015.

wheel within a wheel'²⁸. Or if you are visually minded - frustratingly garlanded like a Mobius strip. Arguing sustainably as social consciousness has the same circular delirium – with many beginnings, no ends seem to emerge.

Teaching sustainability is like telling kids to keep their room clean – *like, what's the point?* Tell a kid to think of sustainability like a hydrological cycle... *Like a wa?* Well, would you live without water? *Umm, blink, no.* So we need water in our rivers, right? *One eyebrow raises – where is this going?* *Y e s – m a a y b e.* So we need rain, right! *Oh, for heaven's sake – all right, yes!* Well to get rain, you need trees... *Oh! Stunned silence. Really?* Where the yarn goes from there is like another serious discussion to happen in a few years – but let us not digress. This kid may well be a senior policy advisor one day.

Firstly though, let us not idealise Nature – clearly cyclones, floods and fire have an infrastructure levelling function of unparalleled efficacy. Fear of the environment often sits in an armchair at the back of the mind – even if our Anthropocene has smoothed out some rough edges. Growing from room cleaning to roadside littering, to wholesale dumping of chemicals in the atmosphere, does nothing to indicate that the adult has advanced much after emerging from the pupa of home.

²⁸ Bergman, Alan, Marilyn Bergman, and Michel Legrand. *The Windmills of Your Mind*. Song. The Thomas Crown Affair: 1968.

But even so, the human is not the natural enemy of the Earth system – not until free-will is exercised at least. Fear is quelled by feeling in control. Note: not actually being in control. Being in control can be very illusionary. If you need to be in control, you are not collaborating.

It is tempting to be dragged into the murky black ink of angst and depression on this incapacity to live simply so others can simply live. But (isn't there always a 'but') optimism abounds! That is a different butt.

Hope keeps fear at bay – and hope breeds optimism; fearless optimism. Some agitators have been relatively upbeat in their rhetoric – that society and sense will indeed become common. At least their optimism shines through in their public speeches – not so sure about the pre-dawn hours when fright and fear wake up well before the body yawns into a querulous consciousness.

Christiana Figueres, the then General Secretary of the Inter-governmental Panel of Climate Change, was charged with facilitating the Paris Agreement in 2015. Christiana says that she needed to change the mood if agreements on technical, political and legal documents were to be achieved in meetings. In short, realise optimism. It was her most important lesson she writes²⁹. Measured as an output, the Paris climate treaty in terms of garnering international leader signatures was a success. Measured as an outcome – time has yet to pass judgement.

²⁹ Figueres, Christiana, and Tom Rivett-Carnac. *The Future We Choose: Surviving the Climate Crisis*. Bonnier, 2020.

Ove Hough-Goldberg, the champion of research into climate change impact on the Great Barrier Reef, is optimistic that coral bleaching can be halted. Bob Brown, a venerated previous leader of the Australian Greens, called his autobiography 'Optimism'³⁰. Tim Flannery³¹, 2007 Australian of the year and notary scientist, is optimistic that the global political class will limit anthropogenic warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial revolution average temperatures. On reflection, Tim was upbeat ten years ago - despite the Abbot Government dumping the Climate Council advisory body to Parliament he led.

Charles Massy³² believes that regenerative agriculture, or food production working with Nature, will take off in Australia – it has to he says, or farmers will be hard done by as the new climate continues to emerge. Previous Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull³³ says politics operates by managing fear. We need, he says, optimism. Christiana Figueres, as the founder of the *Global Optimism Group*, writes; 'this is the decade, and we are the generation'³⁴.

So – are these people fools? No, merely optimists.

³⁰ Brown, Bob. *Optimism: Reflections on a Life of Action*. Melbourne: Hardie Grant, 2014.

³¹ Flannery, Tim. *Atmosphere of Hope: Searching for Solutions to the Climate Crisis*. Melbourne: Text Publishing Co, 2016.

³² Massy, Charles. *Call of the Reed Warbler: A New Agriculture - a New Earth*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2017.

³³ Turnbull, Malcolm. *A Bigger Picture*: Melbourne: Hardie Grant, 2020.

³⁴ Figueres, Christiana, and Tom Rivett-Carnac. *The Future We Choose: Surviving the Climate Crisis*: Bonnier, 2020.

End frame

What is it with public policy? How can earth system sustainability be so hard? Why can we not own the problems we cause in the Anthropocene?

In Australia, we had a chance. The grab-bag named Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts was a Federal Government entity between December 2007 and September 2010. I wonder if the senior staff were all in the same building? Can you imagine the discussions at morning tea? Arts informing environmental policy - interpreting signs. No wonder DEWHA was so short-lived.

In 2009 Australia's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme lasted about as long as meat in a Rottweiler's food bowl. Intriguingly, the nation's most senior policy-makers and Department heads very nearly steered the ship of Government toward some climate change amelioration – until politicians found the reverse gear. That intricate process needs to iterate.

Good ideas take time to root and strengthen and grow and become resilient. This hinges on the long haul of the messaging – to package the science with wit until a collective 'aha' arrives. At the same time, we dodge the apoplectic Gaia trying to rebalance and bite back. We could choose to read the signs - or put our fingers in our ears.

Exegesis – Anecdotes of the Anthropocene: An Anthology

'In this life, we want nothing but Facts, sir; nothing but Facts!'

Charles Dickens, *Hard Times – for These Times*

Introduction

Aim

Ann Jones, an Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) journalist, wrote a news feature about walking through a cloud with conservation ecologist Professor Jamie Kirkpatrick in the Mount Field National Park (Jones 2018). They visited the ancient tarns of Tasmania; small lakes carved out of the landscape by ice age glaciers epochs ago. Jones' reporting exhibits the personal angst associated with how climate change is upending the lake environment shaped by the last glacial maximum. Some of the biota in this lake dates way back to the Cretaceous era. Here, plants look like rocks. Even in the wilderness, industry is ploughing furrows in the landscape. It makes some fearful.

Only recently has a medical term for the societal fear around the burgeoning human impact on the Earth been coined. Solastalgia – a term denoting how people suffer a form of existential trauma as a result of changes to the environment (Albrecht et al. 2007). Solastalgia can be evident as a climate change impact on human well-being – or exist

amongst farming families experiencing prolonged drought, rearranging their life and revenue (Wang & Horton 2015). Here is an itch requiring a scratch...

Anecdotes of the Anthropocene: An Anthology aims at examining how environmental crisis science messaging can have more impact with imaginative writing. The Practice-Based Research evaluates an alternate science communication channel. The anthology seeks to be strategic storytelling; a signpost on the path to society seeking sustainability. The collection aims at adjusting public environmental policy. It expounds the benefits of a community being a 'net good' on the Earth system. All this – while avoiding an unproductive 'end times' pendulum swing toward populism and alarmism.

The anthology repositions quantitative environmental science writing toward an ecological narrative. The advice of playwright and artistic director Wesley Enoch (Schultz, J 2014, p. 2) is pertinent; 'do not ever underestimate that there are sometimes cultural solutions to intractable problems. When the law, economics and other systems fail, cultural and creative activities can work.'

Research Question

In considering the 'science' versus 'creative' writing conundrum, the research question for the present dissertation is this: *what elements of imaginative writing praxis are needed to make an anthology of hybrid*

pieces in the form of vignettes an engaging environmental policy communication?

The hypothesis here is that the role of literature in enabling policy change is as compelling, or as necessary, as ever. Scientists need creative types to stir personal, visceral responses to create a popular and deeper environmental consciousness. In critically reflecting on the author's progress in developing the anthology, some secondary questions arise:

- How short do story vignettes need to be to engage the public?
- How will imaginative writing fill the feedlot where policy advisors congregate?

Artefact Overview

The anthology prises open the environmental crisis can – in a way that is arguably different from the noisy tins currently rattling around the mass media. The anthology contains twelve vignettes; a dozen short pieces that collectively encourage the ongoing creation of environmental consciousness amongst non-indigenous Australians. The author acknowledges the ancient role of Indigenous Australian care for Country never ceded and values environmental connectedness as evidence for the viability of sustainable living.

In terms of an umbrella literature genre, the present creative artefact is *literary geography*. The word *geography* originates from the Greek *geographia*; comprised of the Latin for Earth (*gēo-*) and writing (*-graphia*)

– thus writing the world. As it does in the present anthology, literary geography tells stories about human interactions with the Earth (El-Hadi 2020). Saunders (2009) argues that literary geography makes a textual response to a spatial domain. Further, the dissertation shapes the *literary* component of the umbrella genre as an exegesis – a critical reflection of the Practice-Based Research.

While ‘donor fatigue’ may be a myth to some (Everydayhero 2018), pressing shrill voices preaching environmental doom could create something analogous – a ‘communication fatigue’ perhaps. Cameron Muir criticises ‘writing nature by the numbers’ as mere recipes to; ‘find a natural something, contemplate it, express awe, quote Thoreau, describe threats – end hopefully’ (Schultz, J 2018, p. 214). This anthology intends to avoid the less-than-gold-standard-script of environmental creative writing – or at least leverage the least worn out parts.

A separate introduction in the anthology explains the *Anthropocene* and sets the narrative scenery. The term *Anthropocene* was coined by a Nobel prize-winning chemist Paul Crutzen at a geological science convention in 2002. Crutzen needed a new Epoch name to explain how recent sedimentary rock strata included sufficient human-engineered industrial detritus (Horn & Bergthaler 2020).

Like a deck of gambling cards, the twelve creative nonfiction (CNF) pieces shuffle as narrative journalism, Op-Ed, ecocriticism, narrative poems (a

sonnet, an amphimacer and an ode), speculative nonfiction, concrete-prose, rhetoric and a memoir. The anthology is then an eclectic CNF potpourri – because, as in ecology, diversity is vital to audience attentiveness – a concept fleshed out by McNally (2010). Finally, an end-piece wraps up the collection.

Each vignette in *Anecdotes of the Anthropocene* starts with a photograph that visually signals the theme of the piece. The author made some of the images; while other sources are acknowledged.

Literature Review

The literature review describes some of the body of knowledge used to justify the imaginative writing genre and disparate sub-genre selections for each vignette of the anthology. Further, the literature review describes how the present creative artefact contributes to creative writing praxis knowledge via Practice-Based Research. The literature review positions the anthology within a canon of environmental writing and accordingly frames the research question.

Practice-Based Research

A question - should the practice of imaginative writing research be conducted by firstly undertaking research design activity, then the creative writing? Or should one write – and then later unpack the research intent? Either approach works as detailed by Candy (2006); the former known as

Practice Led Research (PLR) and the latter, Practice-Based Research (PBR). PLR focuses on the procedures of the practice under examination and involves changes to that 'practice' – while PBR uses the 'practice' as the research and in itself, articulates the gap in knowledge (Skains 2018).

Here the anthology; *Anecdotes of the Anthropocene* was firstly written, and then the accompanying exegesis followed, retrospectively answering the foreshadowed research question. The exegesis is a reflection on the creative decision process and describes the selection of specific literary techniques – essential exegetic functions (Jackson & Marshall 2018). The imaginative writing then was not inhibited to meeting any subconsciously pre-arranged research stricture. This PBR is a hermeneutic process rather than a scientific method presentation of observations and experiments. Hermeneutics posits that there are ways to communicate experiential truth that cannot be verified by the methods of science. The process of hermeneutics includes ways of interpreting documents so that personal meaning can be appropriated (Grayling 2019).

In addressing PBR as methodology, Batty (2020) notes creative writing (in this case, comedy scriptwriting) *does* the research rather than merely performing it; here the author questions, pulls apart and experiments with techniques (practice). An audience, including a non-academic audience, are arguably better engaged with such research methods – in short, they are not 'just being told' research findings – they experience or 'feel' the findings.

PBR underpins an understanding that creative writing can articulate research findings; they can 'be' the research output. The PBR is critically analysed within the explanatory exegesis being the 'substantial contextualisation of the creative work' (Candy 2006, p. 3). The present anthology is the PBR, and the following exegesis interprets the research output.

Strategic Storytelling

When rephrasing environmental science, how does a writer turn the ship of society to consider sustainable living? It is a big question. According to Wallace (2020), an Australian Labour Party (ALP) opposition leader Bill Shorten, lost the 'unlosable' May 2019 federal election, not due to a lack of sound policy, or talented team members, but because of a lack of emotional theatre in the public engagement. By contrast, a previous ALP theatrical leader Paul Keating won a federal election, beating an 'entirely sensible' Dr John Hewson. Another score-card of an ALP Prime Minister losing an election goes; 'Kevin Rudd 10 out of 10 for content, but naught out of ten for delivery' (Glover 2011, p. 1). Theatre has an impact – it generates opinion. For the exegesis, the pressing question is; does the creative artefact have an *impact*? If so, as the author intends, the anthology is *strategic storytelling*. While not a literary genre per se (more a literary intent) the anthology is pitched as 'strategic' (changes the status quo) and 'storytelling' (a narrative for reader engagement purposes).

In a business context, strategic storytelling supports the process of making organisational changes so that the employed team can move on through the change process invested in the need for it (Callahan 2017). Callahan (2017) further notes that strategic storytelling creeps up on causality – the ‘why’ there is.

Guidance from Frank’s (2020) business psychology research suggests that even outlier social opinion can become herd mentality over time – the so-called behavioural contagion. Frank gives an example; hotel managers observe that room occupants do not re-use their towels beyond a day just because of the little cards in the room note environmental benefits (and of course, benefits to hotel operating costs). Guest behaviour changes once the cards spell out that ‘73 % of people who stay in this room re-use the towels’. For the same reason, water utility companies compare household domestic water usage with that of like households in the suburb and city. These are strategic stories – designed to impinge psychologically. As Stoknes notes (2015, p. XIV); ‘change can happen through dialogue, what is needed first is curiosity, empathy, and focus on finding some common ground’. The Anecdotes of the Anthropocene reminds readers that there is some human continuity in the foundation stories of ecological awareness-raising. It allows a current generation to connect to that body of knowledge.

Modern strategic storytelling performs a similar function in society as the oral tradition of the Elders (arguably any elder, of any culture, anywhere).

Such stories are a collected repository for explaining 'why' – embedded within the allegorical tropes defined by disparate culture. Strategic stories are not so much about the 'how'. Further, storytelling can be subjective filtering as Taylor et al. (2012, p. 9) suggest, so that; 'the stories we choose to find, to attend to and share, shape our understanding of place.' Society has (until recently, arguably) looked to science writing to justify the 'how'.

The scientists' endless frustration with communicating climate crisis findings is: why is what we write so wrong? Why does the objective and carefully considered climate science report, for example – with all its quantification – not hit the policy change mark? Why is climate science an 'I believe in' (or not) statement of faith amongst the general populace – what indeed, is wrong with facts? The answer to that question lies in an understanding of how communication historically has bridged the complex, deep and foggy voids of educational, neurological and psychological disconnect.

Many erudite scientists urge their colleagues to write 'better'; Schultz (2009) and Sword (2017) in particular. Nevertheless, an atmospheric science writing improvement has not caused any climate policy change in Australia to date from a partisan political observation dated 2020. Why does climate science not evolve into the political level, climate emergency amelioration policy? Are cerebrally blocked communication channels the

problem? A key question settles like dust blown off a long-shelved book - are there ways to sheet the science message home?

The literature review acknowledges that many scientists are society shaping communicators, with superb communication skills – in Australia, Tim Flannery, for example. Informing this literature review, and for reasons of word-space limited to one; a pertinent historical representative of strategic science storytelling is eminent evolutionary biologist JBS Haldane (1892-1964) who advised scientists on writing popular scientific articles. In discussing Haldane's advice, Smith (1992) observed that the polymath asked fellow scientists to write differently; to interest or excite the public; to not give them complete information but rather choose items that will make a coherent story.

Bergthaller et al. (2014) discuss the concept that science needs a humanities helping-hand to craft narratives that inform effective public policy. Based on the news reporting of current affairs, an observation might be that policy change is hard – and social polarisation is easy. The anthology cites an example where a single piece of art swung an environmental opinion for a whole slab of society – which in turn changed the environmental politics of the day (beginning at page 41 in this present dissertation). On the other hand, a continuous dialogue of focussed storytelling, aimed at drip-educating the population over time, alternatively articulates a message to those who vote, or protest, or both. One of the ambitions for the anthology is to engage others with writing where

experience and imagination react – the volatility of the chemistry depending on the depth of both. In the present anthology, strategic storytelling is not validating the environmental and climate science per se – but finding some communal space where the idea that desiring sustainable living has a historical precedent. In short; reducing the fear factor.

Discussing the tertiary education level teaching of Environmental Humanities, O’Gorman et al. (2019) note that storytelling is a crucial ingredient to imparting an educative message. The authors further argue that there are vital differences between quantitative and qualitative argument or modes of knowing. Creative writing (and humanities generally) couches evidence in terms of culture and acknowledges historical context in shaping a narrative. The humanities cultural evidence base is different from the ‘culture of no culture’ (O’Gorman et al. 2019, p. 450) of scientists who purposely report evidence from experimentation and observation divorced from cultural context. The present creative artefact explicitly acknowledges the historical evolution of environmental consciousness.

From a hermeneutic perspective, strategic storytelling is also semiotics – accessing the meaning of signs and symbols. This capacity for art to influence opinion is the critical additional ‘tool’ needed to transfer opinion from the results of science. Grayling (2019, p. 494) quotes Gadamer who coined the term ‘hermeneutics’; ‘the experience of art is the most insistent

admonition to scientific consciousness to acknowledge its own limits.’ Environmental Science needs the creative writing component to engage humanity fully. There is a visceral experience to a creative artefact that ‘moves’ a person to accept, or at least consider, the argument or message proposed by the artist.

Anecdotes of the Anthropocene is strategic storytelling - a literary performance designed to contribute to changing the status quo of public opinion. Collectively the anthology aims to proffer an opinion, change the narrative, push a change in policy - an output seeking to achieve an outcome (as theatrical and ephemeral and immeasurable that ambition is).

Anthology

Anthologies are a curated collection of writing - often a collection of epigrams or condensed pithy poems (Strachan & Terry 2011). Anthologies often contain thematically cohesive pieces with various authorship, although as Mukundarajan (2016) notes, an anthology can be a collection of selected writing from one author. An anthology is also a useful way to bring readily consumed (read ‘short’) poems and prose pieces to encapsulate a cohesive whole – like a forest of individual trees. Furthermore, extending the biological analogy given the environmental context – the seventeenth-century etymology from the Greek; an anthology is a collection of blossoms (Liu 2019); *anthos* – flower, *logia* – collection. The word picture here is compelling.

Anthologies are often curated to house several pieces collected according to the memes and expectations of a particular literary genre. Lerer (2003) traced the use of anthology in Europe to the late middle ages (circa fourteenth and fifteenth centuries) when a literary collection came together from the whims and fancies of commissioning patrons. Consequently, such a collection of literature pieces may not necessarily envision cohesion. The purpose of an anthology in the fifteenth century was to push a particular buyer's barrow – to improve the circulation of selected material. Perhaps an early ploy to strengthen what scholars understand now as *confirmation bias*. Early printed books in Europe were not sold in separate bindings – but sold unbound so that readers could make their subjective bounded collections (Lerer 2003). Thus, the anthology as a curated entity towards a single cohesive narrative has had an eclectic start.

The key reason for using an anthology as a collection device for the present creative artefact is so that the present time-poor generation can consume each short literary piece – cohorts in this internet age (thus the *Anthropocene* of the anthology title). However, succinctness is not new to writing, particularly in an anthology. In the *blogosphere*, there is a knack to addressing a big issue in a small story space. It is not easy to pack a multi-year science research project onto a sandwich board (otherwise known as an academic poster), for example.

The vignettes of the anthology are representative expressions of weightier tomes. The carefully compiled Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Assessment Reports is, for example, several volumes and hundreds of pages. The vignettes are not merely succinct summaries of such environmental science reports. The vignettes are more an impressionist canvas, perhaps even an abstract painting in a written form. *Anecdotes of the Anthropocene* is an anthology of short pieces deliberately designed to stave off reader boredom – and to improving reader engagement.

The anthology invites readers to choose from twelve vignettes at any point in the collection - and fits into the now-famous swipe right (like), swipe left (do not like) personal relationship telecommunications device 'app' operating practice. Discussing the design of web-sites that proffer opinion, Lynch and Horton (2016) note that careful content curation is as important as ever – and they make the point that readers are interested in knowing what an author finds interesting enough to recreate (in blogs or 'tweets').

Positioning the Storytelling

While the anthology does not leverage the principally English love-of-nature lyrical ballad writing of the late eighteenth century called the *Romantic Poetry* period – the collection is cognisant of the outcomes of the environmental awareness-raising from that movement. The Romantic Poetry period inculcated in the populace, a sense of the worth of nature as a 'still point' in the maelstrom of Industrial and European revolutionary

changes of the time (Huntington 2017) – even if the period poem writing was sometimes melancholic, and sometimes pantheistic. Huntington (2017) notes that the romantic poets provided a medium by which to express an environmental consciousness with a heightened personal emotional resonance. Importantly British Romanticism engaged ordinary people with accessible but creative and carefully crafted poetry.

Perhaps a more modern equivalent of the Romantic Poetry period, the extraordinary British Broadcasting Corporation television nature series featuring Sir David Attenborough as narrator have creative endeavour has managed to position an ecological stance adored by the general community. The TV documentary flag bearers for nature are many.

Reflecting on the Romantic Poetry period and the ‘flurry of exploration, experimentation, agitation, reflection and creation across diverse fields of activity’, Rigby (2020, p. 2) looks beyond the pastoral poetic tradition and the Romantic Poetry period to the Anthropocene, where ecopoets deal with an Earth where the weather is weird, the sixth species extinction is underway, and the future of nature is not what it once looked like. The anthology sits in the Earth/human divorce court post Romanticism.

The anthology plies the nature writing waters stirred by the boats of many previous authors such as Rachel Carson (1907-1964) whose book, *Silent Spring* was an allegorical reflection on the use of pesticides in agriculture. The passenger list of the nature writing ship of state is voluminous.

However, the anthology does not want to be another plank facing just one side of the polarising fence. The strategic storytelling function of the anthology provides some back-story – and beds in the notion that a modern environmental consciousness has some contextualising history. The author intended some writing subtlety to allow readers to draw a natural conclusion.

The anthology exists within the constructs of social mores and morality. In a twentieth-century addition to the evolving traditions of philosophy, the concepts of Environmental Ethics are generally split into two factions; the so-called ‘deep’ ecology versus a ‘shallow’ ecology (Rolston 2012). The former understand ecological well-being is measured in, and for the sake of itself whereas the latter, measures ecology purely for the service of humanity. The anthology does not take an explicit position on that ecological spectrum – but implicitly asks the reader to consider a deeper ecological perspective. The anthology employs the term ‘stewardship’, positing humankind care for creation that seeks the sharing of environmental system services for future human, flora and fauna generations.

The meta-concept that is taken for granted throughout the creative artefact is Lovelock’s (1979) Gaia theory. Gaia posits that the various ‘spheres’ (biosphere particularly but atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere among many) work collegially toward the health of the one Earth system. Earth components work together as a self-correcting

consciousness that adjusts natural physical excesses to remain in an equilibrium – until the so-called ‘tipping points’ due to anthropogenic meddling, make that balancing act naturally impossible. The Gaia theory has its critics amongst scholars of biological science. However, the anthology raises the notion as a human/Earth symbiosis requiring a reflective, perhaps (following Indigenous Australian connectedness to Country) more spiritual semiotics.

Component Genres

The anthology contains an environmental thematic collection of twelve short items intent on being succinct. Each vignette is studiously crafted to the norms of a particular CNF sub-genre. A necessarily concise theoretical basis for each sub-genre follows – but the following exegesis section discusses the application of the norms of each sub-genre per vignette.

The CNF storytelling genre allows a reader space where ‘reality is mediated and narrativised’ (Perl and Schwartz 2014, p. 8). The anthology aims to provide the reader with opinion-forming ‘wriggle room’ given the serious nature of the present environmental emergency. Accordingly, the anthology needs to maintain reader interest (discussed later) – and to enhance the necessary diversity; a different CNF sub-genre crafts each vignette. Principally a more subjective speculative nonfiction (SNF) approach is undertaken to enhance the narrative approach. Since some of the stories are about environmental elders past, some vignettes are

substantially speculative. This approach involves the creative writing engagement concepts of firstly, suspending the reader's belief and secondly, incorporates a recognition that 'daydreaming, invention, and fantasy are a part of your life every day' (Boren 2019).

In choosing C/SNF writing sub-genres for the anthology, the author intends an 'application of stylistic modes and formal techniques including allusion, realism and allegory - this is where the real elements and intentions of CNF and Strategic Storytelling respectively reveal themselves' (Anae 2020). Further, Burroway (2015, p. 246) notes that CNF 'may be enlivened and made more meaningful through attention to imagery, voice, character, setting and scene – the elements of imaginative writing'.

To ensure a reader remains fully engaged with the CNF, the historical facts of each vignette needs to be accurate. Fact-checking entails further research work. The author noted that pursuing historical accuracy entailed the possibility that the anthology could become mere investigative reportage. To ameliorate that, the author endeavoured to recreate the matters of historical experience with personal voice and language as visualisation – but it did mean that some of the vignettes are more aligned to narrative journalism (Perl & Schwartz 2014) than SNF.

Other SNF vignettes in the anthology allowed the author to work with Op-Eds – where the piece aims to be somewhat more persuasive. Op-eds

are characterised by 'a strong personal voice and storytelling techniques' (Perl & Schwartz 2014, p. 13). To push the CNF nature of the anthology toward more SNF, and to enhance the imaginative writing credentials of the creative artefact, other vignettes were designed to fit the rhetoric sub-genre expectations. For rhetoric, the writing is designed to be persuasive and 'turns up the amp' on picturesque analogy and metaphor.

One of the author's formative life stories informs one of the vignettes - thus exercising the CNF memoir sub-genre. Another vignette pulls apart a contemporary pop-song to examine the environmental message contained therein placing the piece in the ecocriticism sub-genre of nature writing. Ecocriticism communicates how culture (movies, music, art and literature) espouses environmental concerns (Major & McMurray 2012).

The poetic entries of the anthology are couched in the narrative eco-poem sub-genre because a narrative poem tells a story (Strachan & Terry 2011). According to Greene et al. (2012), the narrative poet rearranges events in a time-series that heightens emphasis and embellishes interpretation. The poems are (bar one) deliberately not 'free-verse' as the author intended to continue a personal poetic voice exploration through the music of language; structured rhyme, iambic meter and the scansion of stressed and unstressed syllable pairs of classic poetry as encouraged by Fry (2005).

Writing Mechanics

The literature around creative writing does not seem to address the concepts or the theoretical basis of the ideal length of pieces that engage readers. The reason might be simple – the length depends on the entertainment expectation of a reader. Thus, a reader can select long or short stories as mood, time, or inclination befits. The question is possibly better framed – what is the ideal length of a piece designed to sway the opinions of a reader?

While many online poetry submission sites want poems less than 80 lines long (for example: Overland, The Griffith Review, Frontier Poetry) – they do not define why amongst the format specification. The website of Writer's Relief (2009) advises that poem size matters – the shorter the better so to catch the eye of an editor. Similarly, many creative writing journals specify a word length of around 3,500 words – without indicating why that particular word length is stipulated. Does the internet age encourage short attention spans? Again, perhaps the length depends on the entertainment expectation of a reader.

The vignettes of the anthology vary between 600 and 1,500 words long. Such short pieces raise a reflection for the author - how does one construct the literary staple of a 'satisfactory ending' for each? Kress (2011) advises that a fiction artefact should resolve itself in several ways. Even 'flash fiction', by definition short, needs an ending to provide reader satisfaction. The author endeavours that each vignette ending references

the start of the story somehow - but also stresses the critical argument succinctly, thus achieving a satisfactory conclusion.

The third-person point of view is a CNF norm to merge the distance between writing an opinion and 'writing true' (Perl & Schwartz 2014). The author of the anthology utilises the third-person omniscient narrator point of view in many of the vignettes. In others, the author used the first-person point of view to represent an inherent honesty and a human interest to the reader (Ellerton 2020) – to convey what a story means to 'me' (thus by human connectedness, what a story should mean for 'you').

In a tongue-in-cheek but a useful guide to writing poetry, *The Ode Less Travelled*, the TV personality Stephen Fry (2005) claims to prefer relatively orthodox poetic constructs. Fry prefers poetry that is not free-verse. Apart from the dynamics and mechanics of poetry, Fry proffers ten 'tips for success' when writing poems for public airing. Fry calls them 'poetic vices' and the author of the present anthology, *Anecdotes of the Anthropocene*, has attempted to follow the sage ad-vice:

1. Give readers a good time – do not bore, upset or confuse them.
2. Tell the story to yourself – keep a journal as it aids editing.
3. Consider the voice of the poem – are 'you' talking or some sort of cardboard replica?
4. Read poetry – get some variety.
5. Readers sense untrue emotions – know emotions well.
6. The feeling is good for poetry – but be in control.

7. The labour of making a poem should spring from love – enjoy.
8. Forgive yourself – everyone writes crap from time to time.
9. Review the results of writing in the morning light.
10. Say it out loud...

Reflections on Vignette Construction

Overview

At this point in the exegesis, the third person point of view (POV) switches to the first person POV. While first-person POV is not usually a staple of scholarly writing, it fits the personal exegetical reflection on the process of writing creatively. That means I own the critical reflection that follows.

In the early stages of writing the *Anecdotes of the Anthropocene*, I experienced two dilemmas. Firstly, I wondered at the wisdom of creating an anthology of pieces that belonged to different genres. Would not a reader be expecting a cohesive genre? On the other hand, an eclectic mix of genres can stave off a creative restlessness according to McNally (2010). My choice might well represent my short attention span – and that I prefer to write short pieces. My thoughts revolved around an idea that ‘what seems good for the author might arguably be good for a reader too.’

Secondly, writing style and the finding of voice was a vexed issue. What style most engages a broad audience to achieve the aims of strategic storytelling? Further thinking on my part ranged around questions like -

what style creates curiosity? What style creates empathy? Reflecting on my reading selections, I suspect a finely tuned sense of humour is a key. Informing an earlier written proposal for the *Anecdotes of the Anthropocene*, I noted a liking for the writing of Terry Pratchett (1948-2015). In his *Discworld* series of books (1983–2015), Pratchett told social-fabric fictional truth with an intricate tongue-in-cheek connection to reality. I thought I could adopt something of the style. The matter rested on a personal choice of writing voice.

I came across five tips on writing nature that was foundational to my vignette planning pre-writing (Writer's-Relief 2020) - firstly, 'avoid the expected'. We are familiar with the idea that rivers in a narrative represent change and the passing of time. Writer's Relief recommended using all your senses to experience nature in a new way. Sound and smell and representations of the natural world that readers may not have experienced.

Secondly, Writer's Relief recommended, 'be prepared'. I am a bushwalker, so I get that – but I resolved to pack a pencil and paper everywhere I went. Thirdly, 'personify with awareness'. Get personification right, or it can all turn pear-shaping awkward very quickly. While remembering to avoid the standard nature writer's generic framework (as noted in the literature review) - reflect on the relationship between Earth and people, it is a central idea. The Anthropocene in the anthology title was chosen for a good reason.

Fourthly, be aware of your message. The collective wisdom is – do not push a specific message — meaning, do not moralise. This sage advice came at an awkward time for me, for ‘moralising’ is what ordinarily comes through nature writing – and I was not sure I could avoid it for the anthology. I resolved to pander around this potential problem by being as subtle with the sledge-(sic)-hammer as I could – to use allegory and allusion, rather than the Sir David Attenborough-ish TV nature documentary last-scene environmental crisis preaching.

I decided early on in the writing design process to make twelve items of around 1,000 words each. A round dozen is a number that sublimely exudes a complete collection. I further resolved to ‘top and tail’ the anthology to create the story-arc satisfactory beginning and ending recommended by Perl and Schwartz (2014). I needed the introduction to explain the Anthropocene and to set the scene. The twelve articles would set the arguments – I had an idea that each piece uses a common idea ‘riff’ – like the recursive theme of a symphony. The concluding after-word distils a decision point for the reader – are you with the plot? Or not?

Vignette #1 - How comes the Anthropocene?

The planned sonnet for the first vignette discussed the question, ‘so... how did the Anthropocene get here?’ I wanted to allude to the popular science ‘selfish gene’ concept (Dawkins 1976). I thought the classic short poetry form was a quick way to start the reader’s journey and invest their interest.

While writing vignette #1, I was struck by how the poem construct can be so dense. Each word carefully placed to aid rhyme and rhythm – and to fit the classic sonnet framework. The dreaming up of images to tell the story in a way that is not too obvious – and yet is not too esoteric for the reader as this extract illustrates (Hewson, M G 2020, p. 11):

*We are what we are, we want what we want,
product pairs of ancient worn weary jeans.
Hard-wired to strive, to thrive, to drive, to quant-
ti-ta-tive easing to fix fiscal means.*

The reference to a Mark Knopfler song in the poem foreshadows the reference to popular music culture and an ecocriticism unpacking of popular music in two of the following vignettes. The Knopfler song just ‘popped into my head’ as I was writing the piece – as so much lived experience seems to influence the process of writing. I have decided to use that sub-conscious recall of experience as a treasury of material for writing. I leave it to the later editing process to decide if any particular memory dump is relevant, or useful or enhances the impact. This experience suggests to me that observing life is a rich vein of writing quartz. I reflect on the fact that, at my age, I have ‘a’ store of experience and reading and music and movies to draw on – and I am aware that this perhaps neurotic database might limit the creative writing process. There is I think but one remedy – go out and get more experiences! And write notes...

Vignette #2 – I think; therefore, I tree.

The second vignette, a speculative nonfiction piece of 1,100 words, came readily. The story is structured in three parts, three different eras and three different character sets – collectively trying to make one point; Trees matter – and we have known that for a long, long time. I have tried to make the piece an ‘easy-read’ in terms of being ‘tongue-in-cheek’ as this extract illustrates (Hewson, M G 2020, p. 16):

‘I’ll go one better,’ said Plato, because that is what Plato did — deliberately discordant, dogged and determined; ‘nature and the universe is itself a living creature that contains all living creatures — whaddya-reckon?’ And Plato sat back and smirked with a wink and a nod. Besides notions of the interconnectedness of all things, and that human Nature was not natural, and goats did terrible things to trees, Plato also thought that the root of all evil was — ignorance.

I want to engage a broader audience – not just the usual left-leaning greenie tree-huggers (as some media and politicians will have you believe). I wanted to be less preachy, less pessimistic – more thought-provoking. More an invitation to; ‘I am leaving some space open for you here – go-ahead, fill-it’. Following Aristotle who thought humans were inherently political (Liberty-fund 2020), writing nature is, I think, an inherently political expression.

Vignette #3 – In the beginning, it was different...

The third vignette is a creative (rather than a scholarly) ecocriticism that intertwines an ancient Christian orthodoxy on environmental stewardship philosophy with a pop-song from a very popular modern Irish rock-band known as *U2*. The song is called; 'It's a beautiful day' (Hewson, P D et al. 2000).

Garrard (2012) advises that ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary examination of the environment in literature – where the critic holds the creative artefact and science book in 'happy tension'. Ecocritics examine the intersection of scientific facts, how nature influences life as expressed in literature. I wanted to make an academic practice (ecocriticism) more open to a public reader - and so I sense the vignette became more an opinion piece. I decided that the genre-morphing here was acceptable, given that a person's creativity wells from their individual experience and mind-set.

I have for some time wanted to make known some modern theological reflection that points out that the first book of the Hebrew Torah (Genesis) might mean something entirely different than the inherited Victorian-era notion of subduing the Earth system and endless resource depletion under the guise that 'God said we could'. Having moved to Central Queensland in 2016, I have observed that now quite mainstream theological reflection may not yet have flowed out to some parts of regional Australia perhaps. I imagine the general idea that conservatism

is more entrenched away from the cities is a stereotype. The thought occurred to me that challenging stereotypes could become reader disconnect points quite quickly. I resolved to make a point quickly and move on swiftly (Hewson, M G 2020, p. 19);

There is sadly, an insidious take on the creation myth that has set up this whole economic growth concept thing. A conservative Christian version of creation has set in concrete the moral bedrock for the Anthropocene. It is just s-o-o-o hard to jackhammer apart. Mind you, plenty of theologians have sighed into their sherry on this one.

The vignette asks the reader to peel away centuries of alternate views – and revisit paradoxically, a more ancient philosophy of stewardship and responsibility for Earth – a modern unity of mind and nature (Berkes 2018). The piece trawled *Laudato Si* (Pope-Francis 2015) and a Franciscan heritage with the tenets of respect for nature in Celtic Christianity using the *U2* song as a sounding board. I hope the connections resonate.

I took the opportunity to comment on some not-so-allied, but topical Christian praxis challenges of 2020; the Royal Commission on Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse. The relevancy of the side-comment to the story seemed questionable – but the opportunity to inject a personal comment on a pressing issue was too tempting to give up. For myself the relevancy issue was resolved since the interjection expounded implicitly on the ‘why’ of the narrative – that a belatedly sound theological

voice on environmentalism was trumped by the theatre of awful abuse in the media (Hewson, M G 2020, p. 23):

But this great good news had all its oxygen sucked out of it as the bells of child sex abuse rang ragged and hollow. Christianity crippled itself again on another crusty concept. And the faint united humanity peace mission for Gaia sank into the mud of obscurity with a gigantic gurgle. For quite literally heaven's sake fellas – get a proper partner.

Vignette #4 - Connect the dots

The fourth vignette; a CNF piece, pays personal homage to Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859), who recognised climate change in the nineteenth century (Hewson, M G 2020, p. 29):

Humboldt was a polymath. He could do more than one sum in his head. It's a useful skill when shouting the bar – to simultaneously keep track of dwindling dollars; worry over the drive home and who the heck should be buying the next round. Being capable of doing two things at once, Humboldt invented the cross-over between biology and geography, took weather observations and mapped climate regions, proposed tectonic plate movement, wrote poetry and philosophy, drew pictures, discovered the magnetic equator – and according to some, invented Nature as an interconnected web of life.

As the piece was unfolding underneath the digital pen, I could not decide if the story was becoming narrative journalism or rhetoric or some other form of nature writing. On re-examining 'Twenty Ways to Talk about Creative nonfiction', an assessment of CNF characteristics by Perl and Schwartz (2014, pp. 71-74), I decided the piece was safely narrative journalism reflecting on the following characteristics:

- A back-story or historical context is evident.
- The narrative arc arrives at a satisfactory ending.
- Word pictures rather than textual description.
- More factual than emotional truth (but not steering away from tension).

Vignette #5 - Crime of the century – a memoir

The fifth vignette is a memoir with elements of ecocriticism to add another authority that enhanced integrity. The narrative reflects on my nineteen-year-old self acquiring an environmental consciousness beginning with a *Supertramp* song; 'Crime of the Century' (1974). I agree with Burroway (2015, p. 227) who notes that the aim of a memoir emerges through the narrative of events and characters rather than any direct reflection or speculation on behalf of the author. I aimed to illustrate a personally emerging environmental consciousness by anecdote (Hewson, M G 2020, p. 37):

This was not muzak; this to a nineteen-year-old was genius. An epiphany for me – the world can contain serious music with a

message that unravelled schemes and adventuring and asked questions.

In reflecting on my genesis of appreciating the landscape, I want to agree with, and acknowledge Literature Scholar Brian Elliott's explanation of the stages through which a non-indigenous Australian might travel to acquire an ecological awareness (Colloff 2020, p. 20):

1. Merely topographical – what does the place look like?
2. Detailed and ecological – how does life arrange itself there?
3. Moral – how does the place influence people?
4. How do people make their mark on this place?
5. Subtler enquiries: what spiritual and emotional qualities emerge - do people develop here – what poetry emerges?

The anthology is on that trajectory – and I think stage five if I may be so bold.

Vignette #6 - A picture paints a policy change

The sixth vignette is a CNF fragment discussing the impact of Peter Dombrovskis' iconic 'Rock Island Bend' photograph (1979) on the 1980s Hawke Australian Government environmental policy. The narrative is about art informing action – and while the piece wanders through some of the environmental histories – it might, from a first glance at the writing structure, look like an ekphrasis; a poem describing visual art (Greene et al. 2012), but it is meant to be prose (Hewson, M G 2020, p. 46):

And Hawke hovered to make a legacy.

A canny pollie who saw the art.
And read the breeze.
Of public opinion.

Given the textual style, I'm going to use the term 'concrete prose'. The label leverages the existing idea of 'concrete poetry', a tag that describes how words arranged into a graphic of some form, allows imagery to do some of the interpretative heavy lifting. Concrete poems are 'brief, pared-down pieces of text that are intended to be seen rather than read aloud' (Bray 2012, p. 298).

The concrete prose is deliberately constructed as single line sentences to bring a fresh(er) abstractness to the writing; something a little different in my view. This staccato prose is an abstraction of the, more usual, flowing sentence to progress a narrative.

The abstraction reminds me of impressionist paintings. The artistic term 'impressionism' is attributed to a 19th-century open-air art movement that tried to capture the effects of light using saturated colours and broad brushwork (Chilvers 2004). The impressionists painted to convey the essence and the spirit of a scene, rather than a realistic depiction. The Australian artists Ben Quilty and Anh Do are arguably impressionist portrait artists – using palette knives and broad brushes with sweeping strokes to represent the character of their subject.

For me, literary impressionism is an imaginative writing expression of the 'show do not tell' imperative. The structural elements of the concrete prose in Vignette #6 provides the digital pen version of the painter's palette knives as the next extract from the present anthology illustrates. I have used this literary impressionism for the de-familiarisation writing process (Anae 2018) that I have come to rely on when constructing a narrative. The visual 'split' in a section of the text is meant to evoke the island in the creek at 'Rock Island Bend' – the subject of the Dombrovskis photo. Vignette #6 as staccato prose, is an impressionist painting of the photograph (Hewson, M G 2020, p. 45):

The ferocious serenity.

One of Nature's dichotomies.

And in the photo detail, you can see.

Time stretched, so the river runs.

Present tense tied to the past.

River eddies and languid flow captured.

In a clever slow shutter speed.

Young water flows from the front left corner.

Through to the distant background.

Forks mid- distance around a sheer rock island.

And the early morning mist hangs.

Shrouding a drawn-out depth of field.

In writing this vignette, I realised a propensity to use alliteration as a device to use the sound of words to appropriate rhythm. I use it extensively in my poems – but here too in the concrete staccato prose. Strachan and Terry (2011) note that the poetic use of alliteration,

assonance and consonance is not often replicated in prose. It is for this reason perhaps that vignette #6 sounds more like a poem than prose.

Vignette #7 - River running rights

The seventh vignette started its existence as speculative nonfiction (SNF), narrating a personal experience of examining the work of the Fitzroy Basin Association to rehabilitate riverbanks. On starting to write, I decided the narrative was better suited to the 'Op-Ed' sub-genre of CNF. As I wrote, I decided I wanted to 'go to town' with my opinion on what could be a contentious river geomorphology matter, because my opinion ran counter to the environmental engineering conventional wisdom. Advice from Shapiro (2009) suggests that an Op-Ed should be opinionated – it is what the readers expect.

Vignette #7 reads like a memoir as well – and that, for me, adds the personal connection to the writing (Hewson, M G 2020, p. 51):

I've seen the milk-coffee coloured maelstrom that was the Fitzroy River in a minor flood. Stirred sediment and vegetative flotsam swept along as the stream rushed on to the sea.

Perhaps this crossover between memoir and Op-Ed makes this vignette then, an opinionated memoir – tautology I know.

Here the Op-Ed opens with a 'hook' and a punchy title to reel in the reader. Essential for an Op-Ed writer's integrity in the eyes of the reader, the piece

is connected to reality – it is grounded in an actual dated event. Necessary too for the sub-genre, the Op-Ed engages in a solution and commits to a fix.

Vignette #8 - Get over it, move on

For the eighth vignette, I wanted to take up a writing challenge proposed by Stephen Fry to write an amphimacer. This particular poetic construct, also known as the cretic foot, is as Fry (2005, p. 91) explains; ‘a three-syllable foot with a beat either side of an unstressed middle.’ I chose this particular poetic form just to have some fun... The poem structural frivolity sets off against the weighty topic the poem covers.

The story-arc leverages a not-so-old geological convention that the Gaian surface moves as tectonic plates – and we should (pun intended) get over it – and move on – to other problems of the Anthropocene! For me, the shortened line poem framework fits the anthology aim to communicate environmental imperatives with a pithy narrative (Hewson, M G 2020, p. 57):

rift valleys

opened up

and steppes grew

tall so that

conditions

set the stage

for the An-

thropocene,

Vignette #9 - Insectageddon

The ninth vignette is narrative journalism exploring what farmers know and feel – and the emerging idea that regional resilience to climate change means retaining natural vegetation.

Insectageddon (Monbiot 2017) observes that the Earth system is losing invertebrates at a stunning rate. Bee populations, for example, are now too small to be effective pollinators of agriculture produce. In 2020 we cycle back to the 1960s and acknowledge Rachel Carson (1907–1964) and her SNF book documented the problem with widespread pesticide use. The intention of the anthology to teach readers historical precedents continues as a thematic cohesion in the anthology. Further, the vignette points out and builds on, the related multi-media links that readers can further access (Hewson, M G 2020, p. 59):

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Eric Campbell in an October 2019 Foreign Correspondent Television program asked the question: 'remember when a country drive ended with the windscreen covered in smashed insects? Ever wondered why that seems to happen less these days?'

Vignette #10 - Ode to clouds and crowds

A tenth poem exposes The Cloud Appreciation Society and explores clouds as the Earth's air-conditioner. The piece asks science to be careful with geoengineering (the act of pumping the stratosphere with sulphates to cool the Earth by reflecting solar radiation).

The poem follows the Ode form as exemplified in Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind' (1819), an illustrative extract being this closing couplet of the first tranche (Hewson, M G 2020, p. 64):

*Fair-weather Cum-u-lus stirs and stutters,
Shifting shape and unfailingly falters.*

Similar to the sonnet form of Vignette #1; this vignette is another acknowledgement to classicism – and the British Romantic poetry period. It seemed natural to use the Ode form since it is best known for communicating the gift of nature.

Vignette #11 - What role our elders?

The eleventh vignette is another piece of concrete prose. The text elements are meagre and intended to convey a simple fact clearly without embellishment. A stark, staring, smack in the solar plexus. The graphical elements reinforce the written message, as illustrated in Figure 1.

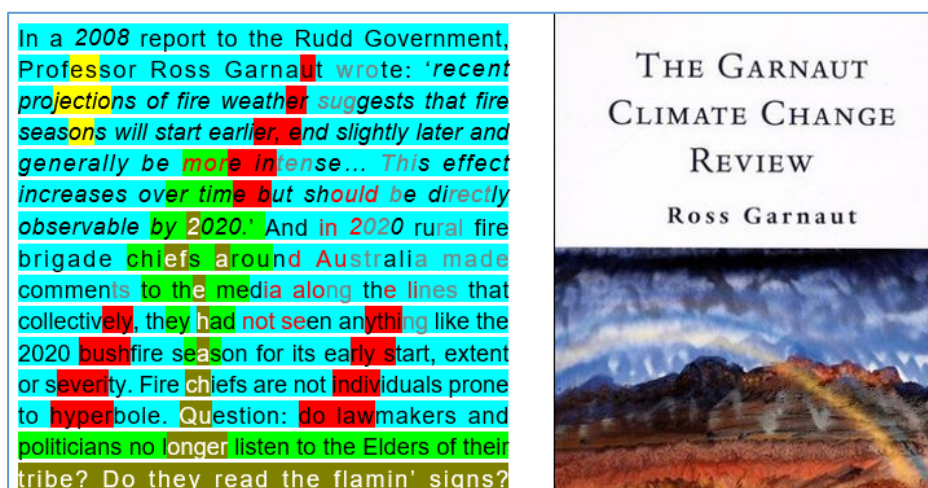


Figure 1: An extract from vignette #11 (Hewson, M G 2020, p. 69)

If the vignette made a reader feel; 'ouch, how dumb is public policy at the moment' – then no further reflection is required here.

Vignette #12 – Fearlessly optimistic

Vignette number twelve is an intentional piece of rhetoric to finish the anthology with a flourish (and perhaps to put the collection out of its misery). The vignette documents the espoused optimism of media-savvy climate crisis luminaries; Ove Hough-Guldberg, Tim Flannery and Christiana Figueres. I discuss the role of 'elders of our tribe' following vignette #11 – and note that the current social polarisation around climate change is all about change and fear – not climate. It was, and is, ever thus – as I try to make clear (Hewson, M G 2020, p. 72):

But even so, the human is not the natural enemy of the Earth system – not until free-will is exercised at least. Fear is quelled by feeling in control. Note: not actually being in control. Being in

control can be very illusionary. If you need to be in control, you are not collaborating.

I am hoping that the reader recognises that the tenet of the anthology comes to an overall satisfactory conclusion where each vignette has made a contribution and exists cohesively.

In sitting down to write the vignette, I found an over-the-top rhetorical gee-up was not required – in my preparatory reading of the selected luminaries work, I was struck by how optimistic each was. However, I chose turns of phrase and embellishment of word pictures to make an understated rhetorical argument. The idea is to influence the reader.

I was intrigued to learn that a rhetorical writing device is also known as an ethical strategy in terms of a mode of persuasion. Aristotle (Nordquist 2020) taught that effective verbal persuasion is achieved by:

1. the personality, character and credibility of the speaker – but only if the speech is well crafted;
2. a declaration that stirs the listener's emotions; and
3. an address that proves a truthfulness by constructing arguments tailored to a particular case study.

I wanted to achieve the literary equivalent of all three of Aristotle's advisory for philosophical rhetoric throughout the anthology.

In writing the concluding vignette (and the one-page end-piece that follows in the anthology), I wanted to leave room for the reader to reflect. As an educator by trade, I deliberately constructed the strategic storytelling of the collection to ask more questions than it answers. As I reflect on the writing journey, it occurred to me that providing the answer does not change a person's mind per se. Being subtle and suggestive is essential to brokering new knowledge. Let the reader garner an education. As Terenzini (2020) notes; a personal conceptual understanding or behavioural change requires thoughtful consideration of what new experience means in the context of previous knowledge. Hence the value of stories – it works for me.

Conclusion

The creative writing praxis Practice-Based Research (PBR) inherent in *Anecdotes of the Anthropocene* has considered the research question: *what elements of imaginative writing praxis are needed to make an anthology of hybrid pieces in the form of vignettes an engaging environmental policy communication?*

The PBR has exercised various forms of CNF literature sub-genres to create a cohesive story-arc that communicates some of the 'why' behind the environmental crisis. The anthology aims to reinterpret science reporting with imaginative writing in a way that is accessible to a wide readership. The research design experiments with enhancing the impact

of imaginary writing with the size of pieces; the use of supporting graphical elements; and the choices of writing voice, tone and style suitable to each sub-genre. These elements are chosen to be another link in the chain toward changing a reader's opinion.

The concrete prose of vignettes 6 and 11 (and to some extent, the two-column poem arrangement of vignette #8) add graphical elements to enhance the impact of the writing. The use of staccato prose, picture arrangement and familiar word processing text colour manipulation directly experiments with using graphics to enhance the messaging of succinct writing.

The collection of creative and speculative nonfiction short pieces (poems or prose) into an anthology aid the cohesion and story-arc of the whole artefact. The reader gets a sense that these embellished stories have a historical context and, while engaging the wit, are grounded in facts. The reader garners a subliminal insight that the anthology has a strategic narrative intent.

The use of popular music lyrics in the memoir and narrative journalism pieces provides engaging literary ecocriticism for some readers (those who might attend *U2* concerts circa 2019 for example). Like the choice of music that sailing and bowls clubs might make denoting their membership demography, the readership for this particular anthology may be somewhat limited! On the other hand, another author might use a similar

approach using more modern music. The author's reflective conclusion observes that the fusing of popular culture with narrative writing is arguably effective in crafting a personal connection.

The re-use of Romantic Poetry era classic poetic forms to narrate contemporary nature issues is an experiment in repurposing highly popular structures of the era correspondingly – that of connecting with an audience. The metre and rhyme of a sonnet, an ode and an amphimacer, retain an engaging character. Similarly, the contemporary re-use of ancient Greek philosophical rhetoric for its original purpose, that of convincing the community of an argument, retains an impact on readers.

The anthology illustrates that short, pithy narrative journalism, memoir and speculative nonfiction can achieve the essential elements of longer story-arcs such as; tension resolution, climax building and satisfactory endings. The anthology shows that individual shorter pieces can be integrated and assimilated to create a cohesive strategic story.

The anthology, as a creative artefact aims to repurpose science communication and education into neo-rhetoric strategic storytelling. These written versions of *sound-bites* are suitable for the internet-enabled media, given the restricted size and scope of each vignette.

Based on extended news media commentary (such as Marian Wilkinson's 2020 book, *The Carbon Club*), science writing (particularly climate

science writing) does not sway the opinion of some political policy makers to the extent necessary to change democratically derived public policy. Yet, as examples in the present anthology indicate, art can inspire an environmental ethos in this Age of the Anthropocene. Perhaps only rarely will a single piece of art lay down a lasting neurological pathway. But the strategic storytelling literature notes, a continuous drip-feed of images, music and writing is needed to deluge the debate. The present creative artefact is another such piece – but purposely tuned for an internet-enabled readership.

Like an ambition expressed by the environmental conservation scientist and nature writer Matthew Colloff (2020), *Anecdotes of the Anthropocene* wants to play a role in reconciling people and the environment. An eminent Australian Environmental Historian Keith Hancock (1972, p. 14) observed drily that humankind is characterised as the spoiler, the restorer and the improver. If creative nature writing activism is successful, the net benefit of the Anthropocene could be to close that continuum.

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The authors here document their findings from clinical practice and qualitative method interviews that humans can acquire psychological stress produced by environmental change. The condition is called *Solastalgia*. This peer reviewed research into the human condition provides a motivation (perhaps the necessity) for nature writing to offer a creative mechanism to express concerns and perhaps alleviate such stress (to some extent). The concept is useful to the exegesis as it provides some background motivation for the creative writing project.

Serendipity can be an intriguing subtlety in scholarly practice – in 2018, a popular music album by an Australian singer-songwriter Missy Higgins entitled *Solastalgia* was released.

Anae, N 2020, *Personal Feedback to Hewson, M on a HUMT20016 Creative Artefact*, CQUniversity, Rockhampton, email 16th June 2020.

I want here to acknowledge the scholarly feedback and writing skill encouragement of the lecturer and tutor for the CQU MLitt in my time; Dr

Nicole Anae. It would be remiss of me not to include in the literature review the scholarly direction Nicole has expertly provided.

Batty, C 2020, *Comedy Writing as Method: Creative Practice Research*, CQUniversity School of Education and the Arts Research Forum, 27th August 2020.

This online (zoom) presentation to a CQUniversity staff research methodology forum was a useful discussion around the concepts of Practice-led and Practice-based research techniques. Batty carefully described the concepts. The post-presentation research staff discussion was engagingly helpful. I was reminded of the definition of Hermeneutics – a research methodology that acknowledges that the interpretation of texts can in itself, be research. Along with other sources, the importance of the exegesis in the Dissertation became clearer.

Bergthaller, H, Emmett, R, Johns-Putra, A, Kneitz, A, Lidström, S, McCorristine, S, Ramos, IP, Phillips, D, Rigby, K & Robin, L 2014, 'Mapping Common Ground: Ecocriticism, Environmental History, and the Environmental Humanities', *Environmental Humanities*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 261-276.

One of the twelve vignettes for the *anthology* will be ecocriticism; a written interpretation (in this case) of the references to the environment in a pop song. In this peer-reviewed journal paper, the authors note that a

Humanities scholarly approach is well placed to research the human dimensions of environmental problems. This paper will be useful for defining the term *ecocriticism*, some of the writing norms, and techniques for critically analysing nature writing in popular culture. This paper does not specify the standards of ecocriticism writing mechanics per se.

The paper reflects explicitly on the links between ecocriticism and environmental history which will be useful input when writing the *anthology* because I plan that a number of the short strategic storytelling entries will involve speculative nonfiction accounts of environmental issue discovery by key historical figures.

The paper is an inductive argument for the academic pursuit of co-operation between environmental humanities disciplines and thus an opinion paper with a noted bias. Nonetheless, the case for environmental humanities is evocatively well made.

Berkes, F 2018, *Sacred Ecology*, 4th edn, Routledge, New York and London.

This book will be used as a reference to make the point that an Indigenous people's worldview typically integrates nature and cognition. Such an issue could be taken for granted in the exegesis – but a scholarly reference for it is important.

Boren, S 2019, *Speculative Nonfiction*, viewed 15th March

2019, <https://grubstreet.org/findaclass/class/speculative-nonfiction/>

Along with a textbook from authors Perl and Schwartz (a reference noted further below), Sari Boren, the author of this website, provided insight into what the speculative nonfiction (SNF) genre of imaginative writing was – and wasn't. The understanding that SNF is about elaborating and reinforcing the narrative truth will be used as a definition in the literature review of the exegesis. The web page covers commercial SNF writing training – so that specific angle was useful.

Bray, J 2012, 'Concrete Poetry and Prose', in J Bray, A Gibbons & B McHale (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature*, Routledge.

The *anthology* will have two (possibly three, depending on a reader's perception) pieces of *concrete prose*. The reference by Bray describes the ideas, memes and practices behind creating textual images to add impact to imaginative writing. Bray documents the recent history of crafting text into graphical elements. Such description will be useful in analysing how readers perceive the pictorial elements made to text as artistic design issues – and what text design decisions I will take for the relevant pieces. I will build on the concrete poem/prose descriptions and include relevant pictorial imagery as well. Accordingly, I will attempt to build on the concrete poetry/prose legacy that Bray describes.

Burroway, J 2015, *Imaginative Writing: The Elements of Craft*, 4th edn, Pearson.

The Burroway textbook was used extensively for several of the Master of Letters study units dealing with the theory and mechanics of creative writing. Not surprisingly, I will use the textbook to describe some of the imaginative and speculative nonfiction writing characteristics and genre/sub-genre expectations behind some of the pieces of the *anthology*. Burroway provides extensive writing examples and critique of those examples. I found the textbook to be a gold-mine for learning about creative writing.

Callahan, S 2017, *Strategic storytelling: use stories to explain why*, viewed 28th February 2020, <https://www.anecdote.com/2017/07/strategic-storytelling-explains-why/>

In discussions with the MLitt course co-ordinator, the idea that the anthology is strategic storytelling was crystallised well before the creative writing (and the literature review) was commenced. This website will be very useful in describing the business-world use of strategic storytelling. It turns out there is very little in the literature concerning strategic storytelling – except as it is used in the business world. In the commercial environment strategic storytelling is about marketing and change management. And while business terms – the intention of the anthology

is similar – marketing environmental science and have a part in changing opinion. Concerning strategic stories then – it is to the advice of business the reading turns.

The commercial imperative of strategic storytelling is to bring employees along with the management-led business changes – willingly. The idea that strategic storytelling tells the ‘why’ for such changes – and not the ‘how’ – was intriguing. I will permeate that idea through the *anthology* – and describe the construct in the exegetical analysis of the creative artefact. This website caused me to reflect on the ways that ancient populations told stories to orally pass down creation myths and thus the ‘why’ of living. This oral tradition of storytelling appeared to me to be a logical precursor to the concept of strategic storytelling – at this stage I don’t intend to follow that line of enquiry in the literature review fully (because the Dissertation has enough lines of enquiry already) – but to mention it ‘in passing’.

Candy, L 2006, *Practice-Based Research: A Guide*, University of Sydney, Sydney.

As a more quantitative environmental geographer, I had to take some time to read more about a Humanities (indeed a creative writing) approach to research. The MLitt learning content was the initial guide – but the concepts behind practice-led and practice-based research required further study. This guide from the University of Sydney was a clearly

written repository of knowledge on researching by writing creatively. There were others, too – I will use similar advice from Edith Cowan University WA and the Adelaide University SA.

The leaflet here informed a decision to label the exegetical research as Practice-based Research (PBR). The theoretical basis of PBR was a useful milestone in the literature review – as that choice provided a framework for further thinking on the research question itself.

Colloff, M 2020, *Landscapes of our Hearts: Reconciling People and Environment*, Thames & Hudson, Port Melbourne.

I rated Colloff's work here as foundational to an Environmental Humanities conceptualisation of the *anthology* as other, similar and earlier, landmark books: *Dark Emu* by Bruce Pascoe and *The Call of the Reed Warbler* by Charlie Massy. The former notes that Indigenous Australians worked complex land and sea-scape farming techniques since ancient time. The latter lauds the success of regenerative farming; approaches to repair the damage of European intensive mono-agriculture methods on Australian soils and the drier farming environment. Colloff eloquently posits that humans need the landscape for good health and in finding meaning. All of these concepts will be weaved into several pieces of the anthology.

For me, Colloff's book provides an exemplar for CNF nature writing, albeit at a novel scale that the *anthology* does not attempt. I noted how Colloff

weaves smaller story vignettes together and creates a cohesive story-arc. This work then is one inspiration for the creative artefact.

One of Colloff's interesting writing stylistic techniques is a capacity to be narrative without preaching and screeching the imperatives of the present environmental crisis. This is important to me as the aim of the collection of C/SNF pieces is to re-interpret the science – and provide some additional semiotics for the environmental crisis communication. I think that society is getting a little tired of the 'doom and gloom' approach so prevalent in contemporary nature writing (or TV) and the need for wisdom couched with some levity seems key to re-interpreting science messages. Colloff discusses a conceptual model for the development of environmental consciousness in non-indigenous Australians. This idea provides a foundations for the creative artefact – and it helped me understand why I found writing the *anthology* a personally compelling writing experience. These reflections will inform the exegesis.

Dawkins, R 1976, *The Selfish Gene*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

In framing the baseline theme for the *anthology* (that is: the various glib concepts around the human impact on the Earth particularly summarised as 'selfishness' or 'survival of the fittest' underpinning *The Anthropocene*), I acknowledge this work as a seminal text. The book is referred to in the first vignette.

El-Hadi, N 2020, *Writing Geography*, viewed 27th February 2020, <https://placesjournal.org/reading-list/writing-geography>

This website will provide some basis for setting the *anthology* into a Literary Geography framework – and thus locate the creative artefact within a canon of academic literary endeavour. The website helped me find the intersection of my current profession with the aim of the Dissertation – a roadmap for the writing journey.

Ellerton, P 2020, *We should use 'I' more in academic writing - there is benefit to first-person perspective*, viewed 6th March 2020, <https://theconversation.com/we-should-use-i-more-in-academic-writing-there-is-benefit-to-first-person-perspective-131898>

At one point I was concerned about shifting to first-person point-of-view (POV) in writing creative nonfiction – knowing most CNF is written in the various forms of third-person POV. Ellerton provided a good argument for more use of the first person POV in CNF so that a writer could better connect with an audience – and exhibit a personal experience. Since the aim of the anthology was to communicate with a broad audience, this seems good advice.

Everydayhero 2018, *Debunking the Myth of Donor Fatigue*, viewed 31st July 2020, <https://charity.everydayhero.com.au/debunking-myth-donor-fatigue/>

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I went looking to verify an idea in my head that society has ‘donor fatigue’ – being bombarded by request for donations from a myriad of not-for-profit organisations. While using this website to note an opinion on that issue, I recall thinking while writing the *anthology*, and again while undertaking the literature review, that one’s opinion could spill from the mind onto the page without scholarly informed intervention.

As academics advise their students, the conventional wisdom is to fact-check with websites and textbooks that are not necessarily peer-reviewed, judiciously. Scholarly sources are preferred – it is tempting to accept any old advice from the far-flung corners of the web (or book). I took some time to check the credentials of web-based opinion, in each case looking for some basis on research or creditable source, evident in the site.

Frank, RH 2020, *Under the Influence: Putting Peer Pressure to Work*, Princeton University Press, New York.

See the entry for *Everydayhero* 2018. The website will inform my definition of strategic storytelling – and note the marketing purpose of such writing; which (after all I said) is the purpose of the *anthology*.

Fry, S 2005, *The Ode Less Travelled*, Random House, London.

In this tongue-in-cheek but useful guide to writing poetry, the TV personality Stephen Fry claims to prefer relatively orthodox poetic constructs. This mirrors my preference – I'm not altogether enamoured with a lot of free-verse.

Apart from the dynamics and mechanics of poetry, Fry offers ten tips for success when writing poems; his 'poetic vices' as he calls them. These tips informed the creation of poem vignettes of the *anthology*. If there is room within the word limit, the exegesis might verify if the poems match Fry's advice.

Garrard, G 2012, *Ecocriticism*, The New Critical Idiom, Routledge, Abingdon and New York.

Scholars of ecocriticism often cite Garrard's book as one of the foundation resources for the environmental humanities discipline. The book explores the literature avenues by which authors have investigated the relationship between humans and the Earth. In my view, it does that comprehensively.

This resource unpacked the extent to which the European romantic era of nature poetry developed nature writing from pastoral poems and provided a popular airing of nature writing. I plan to situate the *anthology* beyond, but grounded by, that continuum – and discuss that positioning in the exegesis. Accordingly, the book forms the basis for my understanding of

the place of the poems in the *anthology following the Romantic period of nature poetry*.

Glover, D 2011, *The Art of Great Speeches: And Why We Remember Them*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne.

See the entry for *Everydayhero* 2018. This book informs my definition (and justifies the placing of the creative artefact) as strategic storytelling. Glover notes that people remember communication that contain elements of *theatre* – and so in the exegesis, I will explain the rhetoric and op-ed vignettes of the *anthology* in that light.

Grayling, AC 2019, *The History of Philosophy*, Viking, Random House UK.

Grayling is a well-respected philosopher, and I will use his definitions and historical information around my plans to include Plato and Aristotle in one of the speculative nonfiction (SNF) pieces of the *anthology*. The advice in writing CNF textbooks (i.e. Perl and Schwartz reference further below) indicates historical correctness is vital to the integrity of CNF/SNF stories and hence the paradigm of ‘writing true’.

Hancock, K 1972, *Discovering Monaro: a Study of Man's Impact on His Environment*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Colloff (noted above) referred to the writing of a scientist Hancock who was well-known for communicating science to society. Further reading suggests that Hancock was an early luminary of Environmental History in Australia and was well respected. The exploration was useful in underpinning a subliminal concept of the *anthology* – that there have been many past voices expressing concerns we now call *Studies of the Anthropocene*. I found a quote from Hancock that I resolved to use in the conclusion of the exegesis.

Horn, E & Bergthaler, H 2020, *The Anthropocene: Key Issues for the Humanities*, Earthscan: Key Issues in Environment and Sustainability, Routledge, London and New York.

The authors set out the scholarly framework for *The Anthropocene*. Accordingly, this work informs the premise and the explanation for the central concept of The Anthropocene in the creative artefact. The authors provide a solid scholarly foundation for Anecdotes of the Anthropocene.

The authors note how the Humanities can be knowledge purveyors of environmental science. The main ideas of the book are:

1. Documenting the history of studies of the Anthropocene.
2. The ontological 'shock' nature of the humankind impact on the environment – and what that means for theoretical framings.
3. Challenging the arrogance of some resource use motivations and thought systems of the past.

All three central ideas will inform the exegesis of the *anthology*. It would be useful if the exegesis could test that these concepts have filtered through the collection.

Huntington, C 2017, 'Can Poetry Save the Earth: A Study in Romantic Ecology', University of Puget Sound - Sound Ideas, Summer Research, Tacoma Washington.

Huntington describes the popular era of nature poetry known as the *Romantic Era* – and expands on the Garrard reference noted earlier. In particular, Huntington argues that the period is not just pastoral poems or pantheistic attitudes – but in its popular appeal, engaged society and created an enthusiastic response to valuing natural places. I will use that concept to exegetically argue that the impact of such writing needs to be revisited. The intention is not so much to copy the style (my skills lack that capability), but in achieving a collection of writing that might be more popular - and appeal to a broader audience.

Lerer, S 2003, 'Medieval English Literature and the Idea of the Anthology', *PMLA*, vol. 118, no. 5, pp. 1251-1267.

In this paper the author describes the European genesis of the anthology as a collection of writings in the fifteenth century. The article goes into a lot of analytical detail concerning the purpose of an anthology in the middle ages. The paper does not develop any history beyond the

medieval period, however. What was useful was the idea that an anthology was a literature buyer scheme for compiling their collections – and that author selection was at the whim of the purchaser. Thus, the anthology was a logistics nicety in its infancy – rather than a publisher's desire to collect specific genre pieces. The idea of an anthology being a collection of mixed genres/sub-genres has some currency then – and that a narrative cohesion based on genre norms was not a necessary focus for an anthology per se.

Lovelock, J 1979, *Gaia a New Look at Life on Earth*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

In framing one of the baseline themes assumed by the *anthology*, I acknowledge this work as a seminal text. Lovelock's Gaia concept – that the Earth is a 'living' system with feedback loops and interconnected sub-systems capable of self-correcting environment problems – is alluded to in some of the vignettes. On the one hand, the Gaia concept is an Earth system semiotic abstraction (or narrative) to assist readers in dealing with the complexities of the Earth system (and the environment). On the other hand, the Gaia principle is a modern equivalent of ancient society foundation myths – a strategic story – and thus is a grounded foundation for this collection of nature writing.

Not all biological or Earth system scientists agree with Lovelock's abstraction and perhaps as some see it, the spiritualisation of physical

processes. Some see Gaia as an excessive anthropomorphism of the Earth system. However (in my view), as a narrative instrument, Gaia works well in scaffolding the *Anecdotes of the Anthropocene*, grounding the writing on an established concept that does not need rephrasing in short space allotted to these strategic stories.

Lynch, P & Horton, S 2016, *Web Style Guide: Foundations of User Experience Design*, Fourth edn, Yale University Press, New Haven & London.

I turned to this textbook to see if luminary website designers were prepared to make a professional judgement on what constitutes poem or prose length in the reading media of the internet age. The author's main point was that writing had to maintain a reader's interest – and that the length of a piece was a subsidiary concern. In short, users of the internet move off a website as soon as interest wanes. This process of moving on from a website is quicker than for a book reader anecdotally, presumably because a reader has had a more fiscally based relationship with a book and retains some motivation to stick with disinterest for a longer time (skipping pages perhaps rather than surfing off a webpage completely).

Major, W & McMurray, A 2012, 'Introduction: The Function of Ecocriticism; or, Ecocriticism, What is it Good For?', *The Journal of Ecocriticism*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 1-7.

One of the twelve vignettes planned for the *anthology* will be ecocriticism; a written interpretation of (in this case), a pop song. I sought this reference to define and understand ecocriticism writing norms. Major and McMurray seek to explore the effectiveness of ecocriticism to communicate environmental problems - and the writing of scholarly activists known as ecocritics. This paper, following Garrard (noted here above), was useful in defining the term *ecocriticism* and in clarifying some of the writing norms for that critical analysis sub-genre of nature writing. The authors reinforced the role of rhetoric in writing ecocriticism.

McNally, J 2010, 'Advice from an Unrepentant Novelist', *The Creative Writer's Survival Guide*, University of Iowa Press, Iowa City.

Related to the research question of the Dissertation, is the question of how long a vignette should be to retain a reader's interest. The comments follow the annotated bibliography entry for Lynch, in which one determination for creative writing success is that the maintenance of reader interest is vital. As a landscape photographer by hobby, I will call that idea 'impact'. McNally tackles this concept in his guide for creative writers – but from two directions. A writer may find it useful to work on short pieces to fend off creative boredom, and a reader may discover diversity fascinating. I suspect these twin ideas are more important to creative nonfiction authors than some fiction genres where a reader expects novel-length engagement – and a good long book.

This entry is opinion rather than scholarly writing (or research) – but the reflective experience is important to a hermeneutic approach and, in this case, Practice-based Research.

Mukundarajan, A 2016, *A definitive guide to writing and publishing an anthology*, viewed 27th February 2020,

<https://notionpress.com/blog/definitive-guide-writing-publishing-anthology/>

The author of this opinion piece noted that anthologies are often popular because they offer shorter pieces to read. The motivation behind the advice here is to give aspiring authors some hints and tips on the business of publishing. Interestingly much of the advice is similar to McNally (entry above) in terms of the dichotomous aims for the modern anthology – solving a writer's issues and engaging readers with short stories. While not a statistical trend (since the number of references here are not a sufficient sample size to model the population with a 'normal distribution') – the small-scale consensus advice will help me discuss the reason for my selection of vignette size.

O'Gorman, E, Dooren, TV, Münster, U, Adamson, J, Mauch, C, Örlin, SS, Armiero, M, Lindström, K, Houston, D, Pádua, JA, Rigby, K, Jones, O, Motion, J, Muecke, S, Chang, CJU, Lu, S, Jones, C, Green, L, Matose, F, Twidle, H, Schneider-Mayerson, M, Wiggan, B & Jørgensen, D 2019, 'Teaching the Environmental Humanities: International

Perspectives and Practices', *Environmental Humanities*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 427-460.

I was reading this reference for a professional reason outside the remit of this Dissertation. However, the relevance of the paper to the present study became apparent when the authors discussed the difference between science and humanities writing. The starting point for the paper mirrors a general expectation of teachers (and writers, and journalists) – that stories engage readers. O'Gorman et al. go on to make the critical point that science result communication often occurs outside cultural context – and therefore some science writing disconnects from a popular audience.

Serendipitously, I discovered this paper espoused the motivation for the anthology – that a science narrative based in cultural experience is strategic storytelling. The paper establishes the idea that storytelling has educative benefits. The article was useful as further grounding for the place of the *anthology*, and I will reflect on that point at length in the exegesis.

Perl, S & Schwartz, M 2014, *Writing True: The Art and Craft of Creative Nonfiction*, Second edn, Wadsworth Cengage Learning, Boston.

Like the Burroway textbook (referred to earlier), this reference was used extensively for several of the CQU Master of Letters study units dealing with the theory and mechanics of creative writing. Not surprisingly (again),

I will use the textbook to describe some of the imaginative and speculative nonfiction characteristics and genre/sub-genre expectations behind some of the pieces for the *anthology*. I appreciated this textbook for its concentration on the skills and expectation required of writing creative nonfiction pieces.

Rigby, K 2020, *Reclaiming Romanticism: Towards an Ecopoetics of Decolonization*, Environmental Cultures Series, Bloomsbury Academic, London and New York.

Rigby's offering was read to add weight to other references (Huntington in particular noted earlier) concerning the place and achievements of the Romantic nature writing period. Like Huntington, Rigby discusses the importance of this nature poetry writing period to giving society permission to observe and appreciate nature per se.

Rigby's themes around the impact of political and commercial colonisation activity of the period were not necessarily used explicitly to argue for the place of the *anthology* as an apologetic post-romantic piece of writing. The concepts were alluded to implicitly in two of the vignettes for readers to consider. In the exegesis, I will acknowledge the powerful environmental consciousness-raising of Shelly and Wordsworth and many (many) others.

Rolston, H 2012, *A New Environmental Ethics: The Next Millenium for Life on Earth*, Routledge, New York and London.

Similar to the Rigby textbook (referred to earlier), Rolston's book positioned the motives of the *anthology* to ask readers to consider a deeper ecology on reading the pieces. For the exegesis, this textbook provided scholarly definitions of the spectrum of environmental ethics.

Saunders, A 2009, 'Literary geography: reforging the connections', *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 34, no. 4, pp. 436-452.

In my first international conference, an atmospheric physics science gathering in Leipzig Germany, one luminary noted how scholars tend to break down their individual fields of research, or some of their theoretical constructs, into ever-diminishing sub-categories of science. In part, they thought, to justify the scholarship unnecessarily. Saunder's paper that described the sub-genre of literature studies known as Literary Geography, reminded me of that problem. Nonetheless, Saunders makes a strong case for the review of literature analysing the sense (and importance) of place and spatial components of a geographical nature.

I reflect that the creative artefact addresses geographical themes; acknowledging that Physical Geography had morphed into Environmental Studies some twenty years ago – and now in the present decade, returns

as 'Environmental Geography'. The scholarly genre-morphing mirrors my own belief that Geography 'doesn't know what it wants to be when it grows up'. Further, the exegesis is a critical assessment of the anthology – and so taken together; the Dissertation is a work of Literary Geography. This paper helps establish the over-arching place of the creative artefact based on the reflection of others as discussed by Saunders; my Leipzig experience notwithstanding.

Schultz, DM 2009, *Eloquent Science: A Practical Guide to Becoming a Better Writer, Speaker and Atmospheric Scientist*, American Meteorological Society, Boston.

I attended a lecture by Schultz in an atmospheric science conference for which I was a co-chair in 2015. Schultz is well respected in climate science writing circles, and he lectures at many such events. In short, Schultz wants climate scientists to write well – and so get the climate emergency message out 'there'. In my view, observing the media discussion around climate, it occurs to me that science writing per se is not the full problem with educating society – in some places. As established elsewhere in the literature review, the concepts of writing 'impact' and 'theatre' are fundamental – these grounding concepts of imaginative writing (established by other references here) is critical. I use the admonitions and exhortations of Schultz (and others) for science writing to counter-discuss the exegetical imperative of this Dissertation; that creative writing will help the science message.

Schultz, J (ed.), 2014, *Griffith Review 44 Cultural Solutions*, vol. 44, Griffith University, Brisbane.

A source of wisdom for the place of creative writing to help a science message gain traction – to add theatre and impact. The quote by Wesley Enoch made the point eloquently.

Schultz, J (ed.), 2018, *Griffith Review 63 Writing the Country*, vol. 63, Griffith University, Brisbane.

This reference is a source of facts for one of the narrative journalism speculative nonfiction sub-genre vignettes – Charles Massy and regenerative agriculture.

Shapiro, S 2009, *10 Rules for Writing Opinion Pieces*, viewed 9th May 2020, <https://www.writersdigest.com/write-better-nonfiction/10-rules-for-writing-opinion-pieces>

This non-scholarly guidance supplemented the Perl and Schwartz textbook concerning the expectations of Op-Ed writing – in particular the need to be opinionated!

Skains, RL 2018, 'Creative Practice as Research: Discourse on Methodology', *Media Practice and Education*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 82-97.

As a geographical scientist, I needed to read a little more about how the act of creative writing can be research. This recent (2018) review paper made it clear that Practice-based Research is the writing equivalent of an objective experiment if undertaken from a carefully designed reflective process. Along with other resources, I was able to distinguish the definition of practice-led research (which reflected on and questioned a given 'practice') to practice-based research – where the 'practice' was the research. As a result, the Dissertation research question can be assembled with clarity and the structure of the exegesis can, on my part, be more confidently approached.

The paper clearly notes that the definition and research design of practice-based research can be confusing. Accordingly, I will take steps to confirm the research question with peers and the research supervisor. I am intrigued by the idea that the writing was the research experiment.

This review paper is a crucial input to the exegetical undertaking – in terms of creative writing research and the context of an overall hermeneutics approach. The insights of post-textual analysis are particularly useful to the critical exegetical commentary of the creative artefact.

Smith, JM 1992, *On Being the Right Size and Other Essays* J B S Haldane, Oxford University Press, Delhi.

Like the entry for Schultz 2009 and Sword, Smith gives advice on how scientists can improve their writing. This reference provides the scholarly background to a particular luminary of popular science writing; JBS Haldane (1892-1964). I will use the example of Haldane to represent the many science writers that have found success in communicating science with storytelling.

Stoknes, PE 2015, *What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming*, Chelsea Green Publishing, White River Junction, Vermont.

One of the key aims of *Anecdotes of the Anthropocene* is to be *strategic storytelling*. For me the lexigraphy is: strategic; meaning long-term; and storytelling; here meaning imaginative writing and the narrative of an environmental crisis. Helpfully, Stoknes defines how science can influence policy decisions by communication that more profoundly engages with shared values – and notes what those values are.

Strachan, J & Terry, R 2011, *Poetry*, Second edn, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.

Along with the Fry reference (noted earlier), this resource helped me define the terms associated with writing poetry – and specific poetic constructs. In particular, entries on poem writing mechanics – metre,

rhythm and rhyme were useful in critically analysing the poem pieces of the *anthology*.

Sword, H 2017, *Air & Light & Time & Space*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts.

See the entry for Schultz 2009 – the same imperatives apply. That is to say, the advice to scientists to improve their writing is not debated in the exegesis, the place of imaginative writing is posited as an alternate place from which to write (but equally 'well').

Taylor, T, Fahey, C, Kriewaldt, J & Boon, D 2012, *Place and Time: Explorations in Teaching Geography and History*, Pearson Australia, Frenchs Forest.

Taylor describes how humans filter stories based on the time and place of their experience. The reflection in this resource helped me to understand why the anthology has several vignettes that are based on my own experience amongst those that are speculative narratives of environmental history.

Terenzini, PT 2020, *Rethinking Effective Student Learning Experiences*, viewed 29th September

2020, <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2020/07/29/six-characteristics-promote-student-learning-opinion>

This opinion piece (in a reputable education training organisation) provided exegetical advice that the writing opinion that changes the opinion of others needs to be couched in the experience of those others. This advice helped me understand how I approached some of the vignettes to leverage, what I consider to be, the current understanding of climate change researchers and scholars of sustainability.

Wang, H & Horton, R 2015, 'Tackling climate change: the greatest opportunity for global health', *The Lancet*, vol. 386, no. 10006, pp. 1798-1799.

The reference will be used to establish one of the motivations behind the *anthology* – that the environmental crisis impact on people's health is worth treatment by imaginative writing.

Writer' s-Relief 2009, *Length Matters: Submit Short Stories and Poems for Publication*, viewed 25th September 2020, <https://writersrelief.com/2009/03/16/why-length-matters-when-submitting-your-stories-and-poems-for-publication/>

This reference is a non-scholarly repository of advice concerning writing pieces for publishing.

Writer' s-Relief 2020, *5 Tips For Writing Your Best Nature Poetry*,
viewed 7th May 2020, [https://medium.com/@writersrelief/5-tips-for-
writing-your-best-nature-poetry-db99fd9a0952](https://medium.com/@writersrelief/5-tips-for-writing-your-best-nature-poetry-db99fd9a0952)

This reference is a non-scholarly repository of advice concerning writing
nature poetry.