

# Down Under Rises Up: Nature's Revenge in Ozploitation Cinema

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## Abstract

The Australian outback is a place of isolation. Harsh and uninviting, it seems to hold within it the ghosts of past crimes and a will to destroy anyone who dare try to colonise and contain it. Yet, for the past two hundred years many have sought to dominate this land and in Australian horror cinema the land is beginning to take its revenge. 'Ozploitation' films such as *Wake in Fright* (1971), *Long Weekend* (1978), *Roadgames* (1981), *Razorback* (1984), *Fair Game* (1986), and *Dark Age* (1987), as well as post-2000 horror films such as *Black Water* (2007), *Rogue* (2007), and *Dying Breed* (2008), often have characters battling against the unforgiving environment and its inhabitants. In retaliation against the exploitation and abuse perpetrated by these white settlers, these films present nature as a presence that seeks to avenge and punish past wrongs.

Through the analysis of several key films from Ozploitation past and present, this article will investigate how these films subvert many common Australian stereotypes and question Australian's national identity as one that is predominantly white, male and rural, demonstrating that nonhuman animals and landscape play an important role in commenting on, and embodying, national history and identity.

**Keywords:** Ozploitation, Eco-horror, Nature, Nonhuman, Animals, Australia, Revenge.

## Introduction

The Australian outback is a place of isolation. Harsh and uninviting, it seems to hold within it the ghosts of past crimes and a will to destroy anyone who dare try to colonise and contain it. Yet, for the past two hundred years many have sought to dominate this land and in Australian horror cinema the land is beginning to take its revenge. 'Ozploitation' films such as *Wake in Fright* (1971), *Long Weekend* (1978), *Roadgames* (1981), *Razorback* (1984), *Fair*

*Game* (1986), *Dark Age* (1987), and *The Howling III: The Marsupials* (1987), as well as post-2000 horror films such as *Wolf Creek* (2005), *Black Water* (2007), *Rogue* (2007), and *Dying Breed* (2008), often have characters battling against the unforgiving environment and its inhabitants (both human and animal). In retaliation against the exploitation and abuse perpetrated by these white settlers these films present nature as a presence that seeks to avenge and punish past wrongs.

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In many of these films nature's revenge is embodied and expressed through an animal, usually a large predator such as the crocodiles in *Dark Age*, *Rogue* and *Black Water*, or mutated, hybrid creatures such as the giant pig in *Razorback* or the werethylacines of *The Howling III*. In Colin Eggleston's 1978 film *Long Weekend*, the animals are still agents of vengeance, but they seem to be in service of a larger force, the force of Nature itself: Gaia, or Mother Nature or mother-Earth.

The evocation of James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis' Gaia theory suggests that the film presents Earth itself as a single organism, with humanity therefore portrayed as a primary threat to the organism's survival. Everett de Roche, the screenwriter of the film, confirms this view stating that "(n)ature is supposed to be the hero of the piece",<sup>1</sup> and that the premise of the story "was that Mother Earth has her own auto-immune system, so when humans start behaving like cancer cells, she attacks."<sup>2</sup> Yet, humans are more than a viral force that is just following its own nature, they are villains, evildoers who must be made to pay for their actions. As the tagline on *Long Weekend's* movie poster declares: 'Their crime was against nature... nature found them guilty.' The film then depicts nature meting out its sentence against those who it has found guilty, specifically, a couple from an Australian city, Peter and Marcia, who go camping over the long weekend.



Heroes and villains: Poster for *The Long Weekend* (1978)

Before examining *Long Weekend* in more detail I will first discuss the specific sub-genre of eco-horror, in which concerns and fears about humanity's destruction of the environment are expressed and often embodied by a monstrous animal. The animal's monstrosity is typically the result of human interference, and as such becomes a figure of sympathy even as it wreaks havoc on the human protagonists. Australia has produced many eco-horror films, and I will argue that this prevalence reveals a guilt and shame associated with Australia's colonial history in regards to the resulting destruction of the land and the extinction of animal species. I will explore how the land

itself in these films becomes sentient and aware of human transgressions, whilst the humans themselves remain ignorant. This ignorance is embodied by the gangs of rampaging men that commonly feature in Ozploitation films, who victimise nonhuman animals and women alike. This conflation of femininity and nature is common in eco-horror films, a notion I will examine in relation to films such as *Fair Game* and *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015). A further invasion of sorts will also be considered in regards to the impact of American culture not only on the making of Australian films, but also in terms of how American characters are represented as repeating the sins of the original colonial invaders by continuing to use and exploit the land. Finally, I will return to discussion and analysis of *Long Weekend*, exploring how the film presents nature's revenge as one that is righteous – and inevitable.

### **Ozploitation as eco-horror**

*Long Weekend* is an early example of what has come to be known as 'Eco-horror', a sub-genre of horror cinema which features nature running amok, often in the form of attacking animals or natural disasters and extreme weather. Films with environmental themes and messages about conservation and protection have become more frequent in the past decade, for example, *The Last Winter* (2006), *The Happening* (2008), and *The Bay* (2012). The beginnings of this trend can be traced back to the 1970s, a time of many environmental crises such as

deforestation and species extinction, the problems associated with nuclear waste and radiation (culminating in the tragic accident on Three Mile Island), increasing pollution, and freak events such as occurrences of acid rain. Bernice M. Murphy, in her book *The Rural Gothic in American Popular Culture: Backwoods Horror and Terror in the Wilderness*, explores the basic formula of the 1970s American eco-horror film, which is typically set in a small rural town that is terrorised by a rampaging animal created from the results of human folly or hubris. Despite the presence of a sympathetic human protagonist there is also an overriding sense that the animal antagonist is not purely evil, but an agent of nature's vengeance which is fighting back in self-defence.

Within these horror narratives the rampaging animal is thus positioned in the monster role, an embodiment of the liminal state between civilised humanity and instinctual, primal nature. Although the animal threat is usually vanquished and order restored, an underlying sympathy with the monstrous animal exists and often the deaths of 'deserving' humans are presented and enjoyed with a certain glee. In Stacy Alaimo's article 'Discomforting Creatures: Monstrous Natures in Recent Films', it is argued that while many eco-horror monster movies confirm the hierarchy that places human society above nature, demonstrated by a "vertical semiotics"<sup>3</sup> in which the human environment is located above ground while monstrous nature dwells below in

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subterranean underground spaces, there is a “corporeal identification” with the monster and a “resistance to the desire to demarcate, discipline and eradicate monstrous natures.”<sup>4</sup> I will argue that this resistance exists in Ozploitation eco-horror films wherein the monstrous animal and the national landscape are represented as the righteous hero, while the human is presented as a destructive force that must be judged and sentenced for past transgressions.

Although most eco-horror films have been produced in the US there is also a tradition of such films in Australia, as Murphy explains: “Eco-horror films are most commonly found in the US and Australia, both nations established by the descendants of white settlers who set out to create a “new world” in the midst of a vast, unfamiliar, and often physically treacherous landscape occupied by resentful native inhabitants.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, in Australian films of this type we can see an interrogation of Australian history and a confrontation with the wrongs that have been committed against the land and its native inhabitants, both human and nonhuman. The narrative of colonisation is subverted in the eco-horror film, revealing colonisation as invasion and viral contagion. Echoing de Roche’s earlier statement in which Mother Nature is positioned as the hero, the land itself becomes embodied and sentient. Even Peter Weir’s 1975 film *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, an example of a film from the Australian New Wave, which ran in parallel to

Ozploitation production, features shots in which the landscape is depicted as possessed of knowledge and of threat. In the titular picnic four young girls appear to be drawn to, nay seduced, by the all-powerful rock; repeated low-angle shots convey its overwhelming size and ancient sovereignty, a low rumbling drone suggesting a subterranean force that is ready to erupt. The land takes the girls as part of a sacrificial rite, a temporary appeasement that sends those left behind into chaos, if only because there is never a clear answer or resolution to the girls’ disappearance. Nature cannot be known and it cannot be controlled.

While *Picnic at Hanging Rock* presents nature as an ethereal and mysterious influence (the girls are not taken by force), in Ozploitation films nature becomes vengeful and violent, ready to attack. In her article ‘Australian Eco-horror and Gaia’s Revenge: Animals, Eco-Nationalism and the “New Nature”’, Catherine Simpson explores the notion of trespass in these films, positing that the humans in these films “deserve what they get.”<sup>6</sup> For Simpson, there is a “double trespass, both cultural and ecological” as human characters invade land that is already inhabited by those who are indigenous to it, both human and nonhuman.<sup>7</sup> Not only do these invaders disrupt and brutalise the land through the creation of roads, farms, and tourist attractions, there are also transgressions against indigenous cultural practices and sacred sites. Simpson refers to

Greg McLean's 2007 film *Rogue*, in which a giant crocodile attacks a group of tourists on a boat after they trespass onto a waterway on sacred land. As the tour guide Kate (Radha Mitchell) acknowledges, "We're not meant to be here." As they pass through the waterway several wide shots, one from overhead, reveals the expanse of the landscape and the relative smallness and powerlessness of the boat – as well as planting the suggestion of another presence that is observing and beginning to circle in. It is eerily quiet, with only the almost inaudible sound of high-pitched strings, as close-ups of Kate and Pete, an American journalist, portray their unease. As they continue to glide through between two cliffs, one of the tourists, Simon, begins to take pictures of a drawing of a crocodile that is etched onto the rock. As he takes the photos there is the sound of indigenous music and a lone voice singing – there is no one there so the landscape itself seems to be producing the music. Simon drops the camera and looks unsettled; his taking of the photos, of treating sacred land as a tourist attraction, is a further trespass and exploitation of the land. Not only have they committed an ecological trespass by using the waterway and disrupting the area, the music also signals their cultural trespass and the breaking of indigenous laws.

The tourists in *Rogue* are not intentionally ill-willed, being drawn to the area through curiosity and fascination. In contrast, many characters found in other Ozploitation eco-

horror films are portrayed as completely unsympathetic, as users and exploiters of the land. In the documentary *Not Quite Hollywood: The Wild, Untold Story of Ozploitation!* (2008), director Quentin Tarantino mentions the prevalence in Australian films of "marauding packs of bullies... [who] roam the highways looking for people to pick on, women to rape, and guys to beat up... they roam the countryside looking for people to fuck with." Certainly, in many Australian horror films these rampaging men commonly feature, and as well as looking for 'people to fuck with' they just as often take their aggression out on the land and nonhuman animals. These men are the product of colonisation, malevolent invaders armed with guns and mechanised weapons, souped up cars and heavy utility vehicles that crush everything under their weight.

One of the most shocking scenes in any Australian film is the kangaroo hunt that takes place in Ted Kotcheff's 1971 film *Wake in Fright*, which uses actuality footage of a real hunt. The hunt takes place at night after an afternoon of male bonding and heavy drinking. The scene in question sees the film cross over into documentary, an exposé of commonplace practices that many people are unaware of. The hunt is excruciating to watch, a stark representation of human barbarity and brutality perpetrated against a native species that has become an Australian icon used in many tourist advertisements, as well as in the popular

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children's television show *Skippy the Bush Kangaroo* which aired from 1968-1970. Andrew McCallum writes that during the filming of the scene "Members of the crew were shocked to find the hunters drinking during the hunt and described the event as an "orgy of killing", eventually staging a power failure to put it to an end."<sup>8</sup> Upon the film's release it was a commercial failure in Australia, with one audience member reportedly shouting out "That's not us!" during a screening. Actor Jack Thompson's retort to the audience member: "Sit down, mate. It is us", demonstrates how the film contains harsh truths that the Australian public were unwilling to confront. This scene reveals the stark contrast between the representations of the kangaroo in advertising and children's television (often broadcast to international audiences), and the day-to-day treatment of the animal in the Australian outback – they are not cute companions but viewed as vermin to be exterminated.

Another 'marauding pack of bullies' also shows up in Mario Andreacchio's 1986 film *Fair Game*, with kangaroos again being subject to slaughter, this time in a sanctuary run by a woman, Jessica, played by Cassandra Delaney. According to Alexandra Heller-Nicholas, in *Fair Game* "masculinity is aligned with machines, while femininity is aligned with nature."<sup>9</sup> Just as the men stalk and hunt the kangaroos, they begin to do the same to Jessica, but with a disturbing sexualised aspect to their attacks: they take photos of her while she sleeps naked, one of

the men attempts to rape her, and in one incredibly horrifying scene they strip her and tie her up onto the front of their utility vehicle (the way she is posed is similar to the mounting of kangaroo and other animal 'trophies'). In order to combat these invaders upon her sanctuary Jessica must use their mechanised weapons against them. Heller-Nicholas rightly asserts that: "If the film's symbolic logic is to be understood correctly, the only chance nature (and the feminine) have against machines (and the masculine) is to succumb totally to its dominant order and use its power to fight it."<sup>10</sup> As this comment suggests, a common trope in eco-horror films is the confluence of nature and femininity, which is set in opposition to masculinity and colonialism. Although such a binary opposition is built on essentialist representations of gender, it also brings with it a darker sexual threat as *Fair Game* illustrates. The colonial masculine force does not only destroy, it commits acts of violation and exploitation in its quest for power, which are enacted on the land and on the bodies of women

The recent film *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015) presents the struggle of women who must flee sexual slavery by taking up arms and fighting back using tools commonly associated with masculine power. As a late instalment of the *Mad Max* franchise, a series which typifies the Ozploitation style of fast cars and extreme violence, *Fury Road* confronts head-on past representations of female victimisation and proceeds to shift

the position of women from that of victim to hero. With her mastery of cars and guns the character of Imperator Furiosa illustrates that these devices no longer belong to the domain of the male and exist in conjunction with the cultivation of the land and in balance with nature, as seen in the community of women that she is a part of. These women join Furiosa, along with Max, in a battle against the dominant masculine power that treats women as sexual slaves and breeding machines (earlier in the film Max himself is also treated similarly, as a 'blood bag' - a human who exists to provide blood for a wounded War Boy). *Mad Max: Fury Road* is thus a contemporary film that harks back to the original Ozploitation period (albeit with a much bigger budget), while also playing with the previous binary opposition that divided nature and machinery along strict gender lines.

In one respect though, *Mad Max: Fury Road* continues the Ozploitation tradition by casting two non-Australian leads, Charlize Theron and Tom Hardy. Richard Franklin's *Roadgames* from 1981 typified this trend toward international casting as its two protagonists, Quid and Hitch, are played respectively by American actors Stacy Keach and Jamie Lee Curtis. Often the casting of non-Australian actors, particularly Americans, was down to commercial interests, an attempt for the film to gain a larger international audience through Hollywood star power. Yet, this kowtowing to commercial interests was

often viewed in the Australian media as a form of cultural imperialism, an American invasion of Australian cultural expression that shifts into an extra-textual discourse beyond the representation of American characters in the films themselves. Richard Franklin states that "there was some hostile press about using an American cast in Australian movies",<sup>11</sup> in particular from journalist Bob Ellis, who appears in *Not Quite Hollywood* sardonically exclaiming that "I felt then as now that Americans are scum and should not be let anywhere near our money." There was even an outcry from Actors Equity after the casting of Keach and Curtis, claiming that jobs were being taken away from working Australian actors.<sup>12</sup> Yet, the influence from Hollywood genre cinema on Ozploitation cinema is very apparent – Franklin was marketed as 'the Australian Hitchcock' (in *Not Quite Hollywood* Franklin describes *Roadgames* as 'Rear Window set on a truck'), while Russell Mulcahy's *Razorback* exhibited a heightened and stylised MTV aesthetic, cultivated from Mulcahy's previous experience in music video direction.

Nods to American film making and the American market are often made begrudgingly though, with American characters in Australian films frequently represented in a negative light, as sightseers who treat the land and wildlife as mere tourist attractions and entertainments. Simpson states that "the deaths of Americans can be read as more 'invasion

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scenarios”... foreign imperialists getting their just desserts from meddling in another nation’s business... The foreigners and tourists are unable to know, understand and read the land.”<sup>13</sup> While historically Australia has ties to Great Britain, through the course of the twentieth century there was a marked increase in the influence of America on Australian culture. Simpson’s assertion that this can be viewed as an ‘invasion scenario’ is apt, with the taking over of Australian culture by an outside force answered with a harsh response from the land itself.

As Simpson makes clear, human deaths at the hand of animal or nature are presented as somewhat justified. These films are expressions of national guilt and shame at historical mistreatment of the native flora, fauna and human inhabitants. Simpson cites Tim Low’s admonition of Australia’s terrible record when it comes to animal extinction (it has one of the worst in the world), and even quotes Val Plumwood’s use of the term ‘animal holocaust’ to describe Australia’s history of species elimination at the hands of human and industrial development.<sup>14</sup> The thylacine, or Tasmanian tiger as it is also known, is a common example of an extinct species that haunts Australian cinema. In its appearances in films such as *The Howling III: The Marsupials*, *Dying Breed*, and *The Hunter* (2011) the creature is depicted as non-threatening, its continued survival depending on it remaining hidden from the human population. Sightings of the

thylacine, in fictional films and the occasional news story, are examples of wishful thinking, a hope that we are no longer guilty of its extinction – which may be why they are never shown to be avenging their elimination.

In contrast to the portrayals of thylacines as non-violent, the nonhuman species that do enact revenge are ones that commonly known to be dangerous predators, primarily crocodiles who are a species that hark back to the prehistoric and prehuman era. In *Dark Age* the crocodile is protected by the local indigenous people, who believe it to contain their spirit and link to ancient times. The white poachers who hunt the crocodile and make racist remarks about the Aboriginal people of the area are the ones who are attacked, suggesting that the animal is directing its vengeance toward those who are a threat – toward those who really ‘deserve’ it. The tradition of stories and films involving rampaging animals killing human prey can thus be read as admittances of guilt: we realise our culpability as the agents directly responsible for their destruction, yet also express underlying fears of retaliation – once nature finds us guilty, what sentence will she mete out? Although we may deserve our punishment, we will not be able to overcome our own instincts for survival, as these films illustrate in their climatic battles between human and nonhuman.



**“Nature found them guilty”:** *Long Weekend*

In Colin Eggleston’s *Long Weekend* the revenge enacted is a gradual, systematic, and silent one, which suggests that nature is beginning a process of taking back the land and punishing those who have sinned against it. Unlike the rampaging men seen in *Wake in Fright*, *Fair Game* and many other Ozploitation movies, the protagonists of *Long Weekend* are quite different (as is the style of the film, which is not attempting to ape Hollywood but instead goes for something more experimental). Peter and Marcia are a married couple – unhappily married – who live in the city and, like many tourists from other nations, only venture into the bush for a holiday. They are not outback residents, they are modern and urban: Marcia angrily comments that Peter has spent \$2000 on camping equipment – the same amount it would cost to get “a five star suite at The Southern Cross”. Although the couple are not getting along – it is revealed that Marcia has had an affair and an abortion – they are equals: equally unsympathetic, that is. Not only do they constantly argue and snipe at each other, they also treat their surroundings with the same lack of care and consideration. Even before they arrive at their campsite, a close-up shows that the cigarette Peter thoughtlessly tossed out of the car window has caused the dry grass to be set alight; and due to his tiredness he also runs over a kangaroo (kangaroos really do have a hard time of it in Australian films). Adding insult

to injury, the camera stays on the lifeless kangaroo as another car drives by and again runs over the animal.



Soon to be less-than-happy campers: intruders in the Bush

Once at their camp they continue their insensitive treatment of the land: littering, spraying insecticide, aimlessly chopping at a tree and firing guns for no particular reason. However, it soon becomes apparent that the land and its inhabitants are not taking this mistreatment lying down. In fact, Gaia/nature/Mother Earth had been making the couple aware of her unhappiness about their arrival from the beginning, as the couple has trouble finding where to camp, getting lost and seemingly going in circles. Murphy states that in Australian films, “The natural landscape is possessed of an intelligence that may not see white Australians in a particularly welcoming light.”<sup>15</sup> Yet once there, they are forbidden to leave – they must face judgement and the subsequent punishment for their crimes. The first shot of the film puts the viewer ill at ease. There is a close-up of a spider climbing up a rock, a seemingly innocuous image (depending on your view of spiders), yet the music provides a menacing atmosphere.

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Throughout the film there are a series of close-ups of animals – again, they aren't doing anything particularly threatening, they are just there, watching and judging. These shots reveal that Peter and Marcia are constantly observed, that just as we see them mistreat the land and its inhabitants, so too do the nonhuman animals. The subsequent events are thus the outcome of their judgement.

Unlike the attacking predators in *Razorback*, *Rogue*, and several other films, these animals are not actively attacking and feeding on human prey – the process of punishment is slower, seemingly methodical. In a review from *Cinema Papers* written at the time of the film's release, Scott Murray sees a fundamental problem with this representation of the animals: "Because the animals are shown to be menacing before they have been menaced, they are basically unsympathetic."<sup>16</sup> Murray even goes on to suggest that Eggleston presents a distorted view of the animals: "An inoffensive goanna is photographed to look like a crocodile, while a wombat is asked to take on demonic portents."<sup>17</sup> Screenwriter Everett de Roche also echoes this sentiment, stating that "the bush comes across as a threat too early; it should have emerged as a threat only after the audience had sympathised with the animals. And I don't think the sympathy is there."<sup>18</sup> De Roche mentions the opening shot and the heavy, menacing score as contributing to the representation of the animals as threatening rather than as being victimised.

Furthermore, although Peter and Marcia perpetrate many abuses against the land, they are not extreme ones. In this respect Marcia and Peter are typical campers, completely unaware of their 'crimes' and too wrapped up in their own human drama to realise the consequences of their actions. Restating Simpson's quote from earlier, these characters "are unable to know, understand and read the land."<sup>19</sup> It could be argued that the threats from nature are also repeated chances given to the couple to acknowledge their responsibility and change, yet they are too ignorant to heed these warnings.



All mod cons in the Outback

Another problematic element of the narrative is the issue of Marcia's abortion. Unlike Jessica in *Fair Game* whose femininity is in sync with nature, Marcia is in complete disharmony – she states early on that she is "not the outdoor type" and she is incredibly bored by her surroundings. Exemplifying Marcia's conflict with her location and complete lack of maternal instinct is an incident where she finds an eagle egg. Several shots show her look at it, hold it, and place it on a soft surface. Peter jokes that it should be "made into an

omelette”, Marcia does not respond. Soon after this remark Peter is attacked by an eagle. Marcia is convinced that the eagle was the mother and was after her egg, which she then throws against a tree, an extreme close-up showing the egg smash with blood oozing down the bark. Peter admonishes her and says “It’s a living thing.” Then in a later scene when the two have a very impassioned and vitriolic fight, Peter again brings up the destruction of the egg in the same sentence in which he mentions her abortion: “You knew it wasn’t mine and you attacked it, just like you attacked that eagle’s egg.”

The film is in danger here of taking on a rather moralistic tone – are these two singled out for attack because of Marcia’s abortion? Is this act being aligned with their other acts of harm against nature? It is unclear. The representation of motherhood and the instinct to protect one’s young is persistent throughout the film. Not only do we have the eagle attack, there is also the dugong that Peter shoots and buries on the ocean shore. Marcia sees the dugong and calls it “ugly” and that it “stinks”, while Peter looks at it and says, ‘you poor old lady’ and buries it (although it doesn’t stay buried for long!). Notably, the nonhuman animals seen throughout the film are primarily female – the eagle, the dugong, and Peter’s dog Cricket. Peter and Marcia are also plagued by a repeated sound of a mournful cry, which Marcia likens to a baby’s cry. This turns out to be close to the truth as it is the sound of the dead dugong’s

pup crying for its mother (although at first Peter claims not to hear the sound, which suggests initially that the sound is in Marcia’s head, an expression of guilt).

There is soon a shift in this perception, as it is with the dead dugong that a supernatural presence starts to be felt, with the body of the dugong appearing to move. At the climax of the film, with Peter alone in the bush unable to find his way out, he stumbles across the dugong far away from the beach. Peter comes across another abandoned camp, indicating that Peter and Marcia are not the first victims, that this land is possibly ‘haunted’ or has become a hunting ground for nature and its agents (the animals) to wreak vengeance on the humans who have for so long been the ones to hunt, control and exploit. Found at the abandoned campsite is a dog who Peter finds inside a tent. The dog bares its teeth and looks poised to attack. While the human campers have seemingly vanished, the dog has been spared and has taken its place in the wilderness. Meanwhile, Peter’s dog Cricket remains a loyal companion. Whilst alone at night Peter implores Cricket, ‘You wouldn’t leave me, would you, girl?’

However, it ends up being Peter who leaves Cricket in the car, as he proceeds to run through the bush desperate to find an escape. Yet, Peter and Marcia are eventually killed at the hands of other humans. After Marcia leaves and fails to find her way back Peter sits in the dark, armed with a spear

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gun. He hears several noises and in terror fires the spear. As the sun rises, it is revealed that the noise Peter heard was Marcia and he has killed her. Unlike the situation in *Fair Game*, where the feminine force of nature must take up the symbols of masculine power in order to vanquish its enemy, in *Long Weekend* mechanised masculine power is rendered useless. Cars soon run out of petrol and become bogged down in the mud, weapons are turned against the user as the night sky obscures all targets. Nature need only manipulate the surroundings for a short time, as eventually the human instinct for selfish survival will do the dirty work. Later when Peter reaches a road he is run over by a huge truck. The camera lifts up and in wide shot we see the truck driver walk over to Peter's lifeless body, which he then decides to leave rather than seeking help. Although justice has been served – Peter is now reduced to the status of roadkill, recalling the kangaroo that he ran over earlier in the film – the crane shot also reveals that the truck's cargo is cattle, most likely being transported to a slaughterhouse.

While Peter and Marcia have been dealt with, the cattle in the truck signals the wider injustice that is still being perpetrated. In solidarity with this continuing loss, as the man walks away from Peter's body we hear once again the mournful cry of the dugong.



Just roadkill or just desserts?

In conclusion, through the analysis of several key films from Ozploitation past and present, it is revealed that Australia's history of colonisation is actually one of invasion and exploitation. That this counter view of history is expressed through eco-horror tropes reveals not only the guilt attached to this history, but also the underlying fear of retribution. Incorporating elements from both the European arthouse and the American grindhouse, the foreign influences and characters in these films subvert many common Australian stereotypes and question Australia's national identity as one that is predominantly white, male and rural. Further, these films also question notions of the Other in terms of the human and nonhuman, as animals and landscape play an important role in commenting on, and embodying, national history and identity.

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- <sup>13</sup>Simpson, 47.
- <sup>14</sup>Simpson, 44.
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- <sup>16</sup>Murray, S. (2008) "Long Weekend", *Senses of Cinema*, Issue 48. Found at: <http://sensesofcinema.com/2008/dossier-on-australian-exploitation/long-weekend/> [accessed 11 December 2015]
- <sup>17</sup>Murray.
- <sup>18</sup>Davies.
- <sup>19</sup>Simpson, 47.