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### Introduction

Amelia Birch & Daniel Elias

*Submission Co-Editors*

At the start of 2024, *Limina* had a near-complete turnover of editorial members. Those that remained had less than a year's experience on the editorial committee each. With but one exception: our Book Reviews Editor. Even so, the remaining editors rallied, recruited, and persevered. Now, our editorial team is robust and savvy, and we are proud to issue our 2024 General Edition of *Limina: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies*. This year's edition includes a mix of historical and literary articles, two collections of poems, and a short story, along with eight book reviews.

Jewel Oreskovich's first journal article for *Limina* is a literary analysis of Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red*, a pseudo-autobiographical adaption of Stesichoros' *Geryoneis*. In this paper, Oreskovich explores the monstrous being of 'Geryon' and the subversion Carson employs to represent them through a dialectic of the 'human subject' and the 'Other'. In expanding the terms of the human subject, Oreskovich argues that Geryon is liberated from heteropatriarchal norms.

Publishing for a second time with *Limina*, Jennifer Caligari expands her research into Bessie Harrison Lee. Caligari explores the 'demon drink' and the various ways colonial Australian society interpreted alcoholism. Central to Bessie's work was the Christian Temperance Union, which, as their name suggests, helped alcoholics recover through parish community support and an ethos of Christian forgiveness. Caligari's work elucidates the political character of this movement and the central role Bessie played in curtailing alcoholism in colonial Australia.

It is the privilege of *Limina* to continue to provide a publication platform for creative pieces alongside more traditional scholarly work. This edition debuts 'The Clearing', a short story by Sam Mayne that utilises the tropes of the cybergothic to explore contemporary and historic crises of embodiment, particularly those that take place within the context of ecological disaster. The poems of two authors also feature in this edition. Patrick McCarthy grapples with loss, mourning, grief and recovery, while poems by Daniel A. Elias act as meditative reflections on life with a disability in late capitalist society as a person reaches closer to being thirty.

The book reviews within this volume are once more a diverse and significant offering with literary titles, historical works, and genre-straddling books among those reviewed. Two quite different books concerned with modern musical history and theory across pop music and silent cinema are reviewed by Rachel-Denham White, while Doug Whyte and Margo Warburton provide excellent overviews of two significant historical studies, respectively on the development of agriculture in prehistory and antiquity and a

spotlight on genocide within settler colonialism. We also have three reviews of thought-provoking collections of modern poetry by Jewel Oreskovich and Alexandra Cheira that make good on their promise to challenge the reader, through reflecting the past onto the present and dismantling and refashioning cultural myths of different ages. Our last review from Rachel Denham-White is of a work that resists firm categorisation, being a 'fictocritical' collection of essays on miniaturism as a concept in pop culture, science, and literature. All of the books have been chosen for their unique angle or significant approach to their subject matter, which, as our reviews show, are valuable for readers across many individual disciplines.

We would like to thank all the contributors, peer reviewers, and the editorial team for making this year's General Edition of *Limina: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies* come to fruition.

### 'A Little Beyond Human': Expanding the Conceptualisation of the Human Subject in Carson's *Autobiography of Red*.

Jewel Oreskovich<sup>1</sup>  
University of Western Australia

Elizabeth Grosz states that the promise of posthumanist theory is 'its ability to generate concepts that allow us to surround ourselves with the possibilities for being otherwise'.<sup>2</sup> When Anne Carson translated the fragments of Stesichoros' *Geryoneis* into a contemporary pseudo-autobiography, centred on a queer, red, winged, and androgynous POC named 'Geryon', I argue that she positioned herself at the forefront of the posthumanist venture.<sup>3</sup> In this work, entitled, *Autobiography of Red*, Carson subverts the heteropatriarchal dehumanisation of deviant embodiment by granting Geryon a sense of autonomy, recognising him as both the monstrous Other, and as a valid 'subject'.<sup>4</sup> In my reading of *Autobiography of Red*, I argue that Carson engages with ideas of monstrosity, humanness and subjectivity in her presentation of the monster Geryon as a protagonist in the text. Carson highlights the validity and 'possibility' of 'being otherwise', by invoking Stesichorian precedent and gifting the audience insight into Geryon's lived experience from his own abject perspective. In Carson's recognition of the monstrous, the binary dialectics of the modern patriarchy are perverted, and abstracted and themselves become, 'otherwise'; an expanded conceptualising of 'the human subject'.<sup>5</sup> In this paper I will explore Carson's talent for revealing alternate possibilities for texts such as *Stesichoros'* in which monstrous individuals are given autonomy, validated and thereby, liberated.

#### Introduction

The complication of contemporary notions of monstrosity, subjectivity and Otherness that I identify in Carson's text is demonstrably present also in Stesichoros' *Geryoneis*. *Geryoneis* is an early Greek epic poem, written in Doric dialect in the sixth century BC, of which we possess 38 extant fragments.<sup>6</sup> It is a rewrite of the prominent mythology surrounding Herakles' labours in which he must complete twelve ostensibly impossible tasks to obtain a reward of full immortality; the tenth being the acquisition of the cattle of the monster Geryon. In *Geryoneis*, Stesichoros retells only this episode, of Herakles' tenth labour, and positions Geryon as the subject rather than Herakles. Though Stesichoros' Geryon is

<sup>1</sup> ORCID ID: 0000-0002-8352-3901.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Grosz. 'The Future of Feminist Theory: Dreams for New Knowledges?' in H.Gunkel, C.Nigianni, and F. Soderback (eds), *Undutiful Daughters: New Directions in Feminist Thought and Practice* (2012):14.

<sup>3</sup> Anne Carson. *Autobiography of Red: A Novel in Verse* (1998):14,37. The translation of Stesichoros' fragments I have primarily used for this text is: David A Campbell. *Greek Lyric: Stesichorus, Ibycus, Simonides and Others* (1991). The manner of Carson's translation is discussed further in Beasley, Bruce. 'Who Can a Monster Blame for Being Red?' In J. M Wilkinson (ed), *Anne Carson: Ecstatic Lyre* (2015), 75. Ivan Callus, Stefan Herbrechter, and Manuela Rossini. 'Introduction: Dis/Locating Posthumanism In European Literary And Critical Traditions.' *European Journal of English Studies* 18, no. 2 (2014):117 discuss the importance of such literature in furthering the posthumanist venture.

<sup>4</sup> This Otherness is expanded upon in Rosi Braidotti. *The Posthuman* (Cambridge 2013):15, 68, 81.

<sup>5</sup> This expansion of conceptualisation that Carson is partaking in is also considered 'a posthuman theory of the subject,' as demarcated in Braidotti 2013; 37, 61.

<sup>6</sup> Campbell 1991: 29, 65-89.

ultimately conquered by the hero Herakles, the prioritisation of Geryon's perspective, and the heroic aspects afforded him, represent a deviation from the Classical representation of the monster as incongruous with the human, or the subject.

A reimagining of Stesichoros' *Geryoneis*, author and classicist Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red* is verse novel comprised of a prologue, a set of re-envisioned fragments (entitled 'Red Meat: Fragments of Stesichoros'), three appendices (a,b and c) and the main narrative (which is broken up into titled subsections). Despite having 'Autobiography' in its title, the narrative proper is written from a third person perspective, and follows the main character, Geryon, as he formulates his own autobiography through sculpture, writing and photography. Like Stesichoros, I argue that Carson's positioning of Geryon as a subject, and foregrounding of his perspective as the protagonist of her text, challenges the human/monster binary. In my reading of the text, I argue that Carson's complication of this binary, and positioning of the monstrous Geryon as a valid subject, emphasises the uncategorisable, and the validity of 'being otherwise' to prioritise an expanded conceptualisation of the human subject.

There exists a gargantuan framework for the history of this modern conceptualisation of the human subject and its treatment in the twenty-first century. I will briefly summarise those ideas which I found suggestive for my conceptualisation of the human subject and the monstrous Other in writing this paper. Judith Butler notes that the only valid and therefore, human, subject in modern, western society is the cisgender, white, heterosexual, normate male.<sup>7</sup> This subject is formed initially on the model of 'Protagoras as the measure of all things', and then reaffirmed in the following centuries not only as a representation of the crux of 'bodily perfection' but as the only identity that can be granted what Butler terms, 'social recognition' in heteropatriarchal society.<sup>8</sup> Through this embedded cultural repetition of binary gendered, racialized, ableist, and ageist discourse, a humanist dialectic of the self and the Other was born, according to Rosi Braidotti, who states that any 'difference [was viewed] as a pejoration', and positioned only those who can uphold the ideal as a self-evident and self-contained subject, equated with universal rationality, at the top of the metaphorical hierarchy.<sup>9</sup> In this paper I intend to evince how, in my reading of *Autobiography of Red*, Carson challenges this notion of the 'viable' subject by positioning the monster Geryon, who does not conform to this conceptualisation of the human subject by any means, as the main subject and protagonist in the text. In positioning Geryon as her protagonist in this way, I argue that Carson expands this conceptualisation of the human subject to fit him, and those like him, complicating the seemingly fixed binary.

## An Epithet of Redness

What I consider to be Carson's expansion of the fixed ideas of this 'viable', human subject in *Autobiography of Red*, can be foremost found in her dually innovative and inspired use of language.<sup>10</sup> In the preface of the text, Carson praises Stesichoros' use of language, detailing

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<sup>7</sup> Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble: Tenth Anniversary Edition*. 2nd ed. (2002): 15, 45, 157; Judith Butler. *Undoing Gender* (2004): 2,53. 'Normate,' is a term used to describe an idealised able-bodied individual by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson. *Staring: How we Look* (2009).

<sup>8</sup> Braidotti 2013: 1, 13, 24, 65; Butler 2002: 15, 45, 157; Butler 2004: 2, 53.

<sup>9</sup> Braidotti 2013: 15, 27, 28, 68; Michel Foucault. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975): 138. Christina Franzen. 'Sympathising with the Monster: Making sense of Colonisation in Stesichoros' *Geryoneis*. *Quaderni Ubinate Di Cultura Classica* 92, no.2 (2009): 62-63 notes how monsters are the ultimate Other.

<sup>10</sup> Monique Tschofen. "First I Must Tell About Seeing": (De)monstrations of Visuality and the Dynamics of

the manner in which he departed from the 'fixed diction' of Homer and his traditional epithets and in this way began to 'undo the latches of being'.<sup>11</sup> Carson writes:

Stesichoros released being. All the substances in the world went floating up. Suddenly there was nothing in the world to interfere with horses being hollow hooved. Or a river being root silver. Or a child bruiseless...<sup>12</sup>

Carson highlights how Stesichoros' unprecedented adjectival use created a new state of 'being' in which 'all of the substances in the world went floating up' or were 'released' from the fixed discourse that had previously categorised them. I read Carson's metaphor of 'floating up' as likening this freedom achieved by Stesichoros to an 'out-of-body-experience' in which individuals journey away from their earthly bodies and view them from a new perspective. Carson states that because of Stesichoros' literary 'releasing' there was 'nothing in the world to interfere' with new and expanded conceptualisations of all beings. I would argue that this statement imbues an almost environmentalist posthuman perspective into Stesichoros' work, in which the set discursive boundaries of human and non-human subjects come tumbling down in order for Carson to make them anew in her revisioning.<sup>13</sup>

Invoking the precedent of Stesichoros, and the subversive intention with which she endows him and by extension herself, I argue that Carson 'undoes the latches of being' in the creation of her own epithets. One such epithet is her use of the term 'red' as an adjectival description of the main character of the text, the monstrous Geryon.<sup>14</sup> Murray has stated that 'moments of Carson's text suggest that Geryon is synonymous with 'red', as if his entire being can be encapsulated by the simple adjective.'<sup>15</sup> In response to this claim, I have come to read Carson's epithet of redness as a signifier of both the internal and external aspects of otherness that Geryon possesses. The use of this epithet then establishes Geryon as an Othered entity through a humanist lens, such that Carson can apply Braidotti's 'posthumanist turn' and stretch the conceptualisation of the human subject to include him, and othered identities such as him, within the text.<sup>16</sup> The epithet of Geryon's redness as a signifier of his difference, and the link between his redness and his monstrosity, features in the first line of the text, situated in the 'Red Meat: Fragments of Stesichoros' section.

Geryon was a monster, everything about him was red.<sup>17</sup>

This line explains the epithet, expressing how, due to his deviance from the heteropatriarchal ideal, Geryon is rendered a 'monster' and inhuman, which subsequently

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Metaphor in Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red*. *Canadian Literature*, no. 180 (2004):13.

<sup>11</sup> Carson 1998: 4, 5, 9. Stesichoros' use of language is also discussed in Franzen 2009: 59. Adrian Kelly. 'Stesichoros' Homer.' In *Stesichoros in Context*, edited by Adrian Kelly and P.J. Finglass (2015): 21-44 explores how despite his experimental tendencies in *Geryoneis*, Stesichoros works reflected a deep knowledge and appreciation of Homer.

<sup>12</sup> Carson 1998: 5.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Franzen 2009: 63 details the historical tradition of redness with Geryon and why Carson may have chosen it.

<sup>15</sup> Stuart J. Murray. 'The Autobiographical Self: Phenomenology and the Limits of Narrative Self-Possession in Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red*.' *English Studies in Canada* 31, no. 4 (2005): 102.

<sup>16</sup> Braidotti 2013:16. As Butler 2004: 3 states, 'There is a certain departure from the human that takes place in order to start the process of remaking the human.'

<sup>17</sup> Carson 1998: 9.

renders 'everything about him' red, tainting him with aberration primarily. Its position as the opening line of Carson's narrative privileges the notion of Geryon's difference and his deviance as a monstrous body. As the first line of the text, it foregrounds what I read to be Carson's complication of the typically distinct binary between the narrative roles of the protagonist and the monster, and representation of an expanded conceptualisation of the human subject that encompasses both, and informs the remainder of the narrative.

I would argue that Carson's use of the epithet of redness here is an example of what Georgis terms 'the defamiliarizing devices of language'.<sup>18</sup> I consider Georgis' definition as particularly apt for Carson's purposes, as Carson's use of the epithet of red is abstract and links a familiar word with an unfamiliar meaning.<sup>19</sup> This linking of a familiar word with an unfamiliar meaning has an alienating and 'defamiliarizing' effect that parallels Geryon's alienation, and Otherness, as a result of his deviant 'redness'. It gives the adjective an undefinable and ambiguous quality, removed from our previous understanding of the term as readers.<sup>20</sup> This defamiliarization of language, and use of red as an epithet to create a new 'possibility for being' red, invokes Stesichoros' subversion of historically imposed boundaries upon the scope of the epithet, and mirrors Carson's expansion of the human subject through the autonomising of Geryon as an ambiguous anthropomorphic entity.<sup>21</sup> It is within this space of ambiguity that many socially monstrous identities have historically resided, uncontained by the demands of the dimorphic gendered and sexual binary, and it is the proliferation of this tradition of ambiguity that allows Carson to create an unprecedented space for the human subject to expand into; a red space of monstrosity and possibility.<sup>22</sup>

## A Reclamation

By marking her text as an autobiography despite it functioning otherwise, Carson prioritises the subjectivity of her literally and figuratively monstrous character, Geryon. In doing so, I argue that she subverts tradition in which POC, queer, disabled and femme bodies were unable to 'assume the position of the speaking subject', and instead allows Geryon the reclamation of his own mythology.<sup>23</sup> Initially, Geryon writes down the 'total facts known about Geryon' on the first page of his autobiography, which includes an assortment of information about Geryon from various real-world scholia, including different considerations of his appearance.<sup>24</sup> This summary of facts ends with the death of himself and his dog at Herakles' hands, mimicking Geryon's murder in the mythology. Yet, with the prompting of his teacher, Geryon later chooses to rewrite the final line of this summary of facts, and in doing so, reclaims his own narrative. He writes:

<sup>18</sup> Carson 1998: 4, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Dina Georgis. 'Discarded Histories and Queer Affects in Anne Carson's Autobiography of Red.' *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 15, no. 2 (2014): 156.

<sup>20</sup> Georgis 2014: 156. Carson discusses this intentional ambiguity in Kevin McNeilly. 'Gifts and Questions: An Interview with Anne Carson.' *Canadian Literature* 176, no. 176 (2003):12-25. The defamiliarisation of language is expanded upon in Jes Battis. "'Dangling Inside the Word She': Confusion and Gender Vertigo in Anne Carson's Autobiography of Red,' *Canadian Literature*, no. 176 (2003): 203.

<sup>21</sup> Here Carson further engages in what Braidotti 2013: 88 terms the 'defamiliarisation of the dominant vision of the subject,' in her paralleled defamiliarisation of language.

<sup>22</sup> Battis 2003: 199, 202 discusses how this ambiguity may be further associated with the fragmented ambiguity of Stesichoros' original *Geryoneis*.

<sup>23</sup> Beasley 2015: 78. Butler 2002: 158; Franzen 2009: 63, 67; Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: The Will to Knowledge* (2020): 20; Lunblad 2020: vii. Geryon has an interesting reflection on this history of subjectivity and his place within it in Carson 1998: 52.

<sup>24</sup> Carson 1998: 37.

New Ending.

All over the world the beautiful red breezes went on blowing hand  
In hand.<sup>25</sup>

In my reading of this alteration, I argue that Carson positions Geryon not only as the subject of the text but gives him the power to choose his own ending. By shifting perspective to the 'beautiful red breezes' that will continue blowing even after his death, Geryon does not erase his death, or deny the original end of his mythology, but evinces an alternative perspective upon which to focus. This new ending prioritises the beauty of what endures past his death, rather than the violence of his own abject suffering. This rewrite of Geryon's autobiography at his own hand parallels Carson's rewrite of the *Geryoneis*, in which Geryon's alternative perspective is prioritised, and the narrative of Geryon's life and survival as a monstrous figure is foregrounded, instead of his death at the hands of the celebrated hero.

If we accept that redness is a signifier of difference in the text, the 'beautiful red breezes' that 'went blowing on hand in hand' can be read as a metaphor of inclusivity and endurance. In this metaphor, the red breezes constitute those who are considered different, like Geryon, and have historically been made abject for their deviance from the ideal human subject. That they 'went on blowing' is a metaphor for the endurance of these individuals through the micro and macro aggressions they must weather for this deviance: with Herakles' attempt to slaughter Geryon for his monstrosity being a prime example. That they are 'hand in hand' also invokes connotations of unity and endurance. This new ending, replacing the original ending's focus on the murder of the monstrous Geryon, can be read as a message of recognition for that which all these historically discarded figures have had to endure, and includes them, and more importantly their survival and endurance, in a mythology that has canonically focalised their trauma and demise.

I identify Carson's exploration of this notion of inclusivity also in her reworking of Stesichoros' fragments in the first section of her text. In my reading of these reworkings, I suggest that both Carson and Stesichoros humanise Geryon, but argue that they do so in very different ways. Stesichoros' humanising of Geryon is well documented by Eisenfeld, who rightly suggests that Stesichoros confuses the binary of hero and monster by gifting his Geryon attributes associated with the ideal Greek hero. While I agree with Eisenfeld's notion that Stesichoros humanises Geryon by gifting him attributes that fit the patriarchal ideal, I also purport that Carson humanises Geryon by expanding the conceptualisation of the human to include him. I identify this inclusion of Geryon in the notion of the human in my reading of Carson's most overt reworkings of the *Geryoneis* fragments, which I will term the 'Simile' and the 'Centaur Fragment' for the purpose of this paper.

## The Poppy Simile

What I deem the 'Poppy Simile' features in fragment S15 of Stesichoros' *Geryoneis*, in which Geryon's head falling to the side at the moment of his death is compared to the movement of a poppy. This fragment, and Stesichoros' use of the poppy imagery in reference to Geryon and his monstrosity/humanity has been considered by both Franzen and Eisenfeld in detail.<sup>26</sup> I hope to add to this discussion by considering how Stesichoros'

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<sup>25</sup> Carson 1998: 38.

<sup>26</sup> Eisenfeld 2018; Franzen 2009.

emphasis of Geryon's social viability and mortality in in this simile is reworked by Carson, to empower Geryon as a subject despite his monstrosity. In fact, fragment S15 is reworked by Carson twice in her text. The first of these reworkings is in fragment XIV of her 'Red Meat: Fragments of Stesichoros' and in the second instance, the fragment is reimagined as an eroticised interaction between Herakles and Geryon during a plane ride in the narrative proper. It is this pruriently erotic revisioning that most neatly emphasises Carson's empowerment of Geryon as an otherwise deviant figure, and as such I will focus my reading upon this second rewrite.

To examine Carson's revisioning of the fragment S15 I will consider only the excerpt containing the poppy simile that Carson explicitly reworks in *Autobiography of Red*. This excerpt of fragment S15 of Stesichoros' *Geryoneis* is translated by David Campbell as the following:

[A]nd the arrow held straight on the crown of his head, and it stained with gushing blood his breastplate and gory limbs; and Geryon drooped his neck to one side, like a poppy which spoiling its tender beauty suddenly sheds its petals.<sup>27</sup>

Stesichoros humanises Geryon in the use of this poppy simile by referencing and aligning Geryon with the death of a heroic Homeric figure and emphasising Geryon's mortality and, thereby, his humanness. Geryon's death at the hand of Herakles, as emphasised in this excerpt, parallels the demise of the Trojan Gorgythion in the *Iliad*, where he is compared, using the same language, to 'a poppy' (μήκων) which 'to the side lets drop its head'.<sup>28</sup> Eisenfeld (2018:92) argues that this comparison between Geryon and the heroic Gorgythion not only grants Geryon a measure of honour and social viability, but in the invocation of the Homeric reference to death and the natural element of the dying poppy, Geryon is associated with the concept of mortality and is thereby humanised.<sup>29</sup>

In Carson's text, Stesichoros' fragment S15 is reworked into an erotic scene in a subsection entitled 'Gladys'. In this scene, Herakles sexually stimulates Geryon during a plane ride whilst Herakles' new partner sleeps beside them. This erotic entanglement occurs in the aftermath of the breakup between Herakles and Geryon, with Geryon seeming to still harbour unrequited romantic feelings for Herakles. Fragment S15 of *Geryoneis* is alluded to as the intimacy begins, in the line:

[H]e felt Herakles' hand move on his thigh and Geryon's head went back like a poppy in a breeze.<sup>30</sup>

In Carson's reworking of this fragment, she evinces the eroticism present both in Stesichoros' and Homer's use of the poppy imagery in Geryon's death scene.<sup>31</sup> In the excerpts from Stesichoros and Homer, the poppy, passively dropping its head and abruptly shedding its petals, is configured as a symbol of violent defloration as Geryon is

<sup>27</sup> Campbell 1991: 77.

<sup>28</sup> Hom. *Il.* 8.306-8.

<sup>29</sup> Eisenfeld 2018:80 notes the honour of Stesichoros' Geryon. Franzen 2009:67-72 also argues for the death imagery implicit in the poppy reference. Ian Rae. "Dazzling hybrids": The poetry of Anne Carson.' *Canadian Literature*, 166, (2000): 24, details how Geryon may have been regarded as 'death,' himself, at the time of Stesichoros' writing.

<sup>30</sup> Carson 1998:118-119.

<sup>31</sup> The eroticism of this fragment is evinced in Franzen 2009: 68-70. Ian Rutherford. 'Stesichorus the Romantic.' In *Stesichorus in Context*, edited by Adrian Kelly and P.J.Finglass (2015): 98-107 argues for Stesichoros' potential penchant for romance and the erotic, based on the testimony of Athenaeus and his highly skepticism authorship of three romantic fragments.

conquered and overcome by Herakles. The erotic aspect of this violent deflowering is further emphasised by the metaphorical eroticism of flowers in the invocation of deflowering and the loss of virginity.<sup>32</sup> This invocation is supported by the fact that the poppy, specifically, already possessed erotic connotations at the time of Stesichoros' activity.<sup>33</sup> I read the image of the poppy shedding its petals as a violent and erotic metaphor for Geryon's loss in Stesichoros' mythology, and in this sense, I argue that violence becomes synonymous with an act of sex in fragment S15.

I read an inversion of this relationship between sex and violence in Carson's reworking of the poppy simile. The transformation of Stesichoros' fragment into an overt homoerotic exchange in Carson's text foregrounds the death-like violence of Geryon's social othering as a queer individual and emphasises Carson's inversion. Where the fragments of Stesichoros and Homer can be read to position violence as an act of sex by utilising erotic allusion in a climactic battle scene, Carson presents sex as an act of violence by fixing her erotic exchange with a lethal undercurrent. The context of Geryon's painful, unrequited love, in tension with Herakles' nonchalance add to this notion and endows the sexually driven scene with a foreboding and complex sense of emotional trauma.

Furthermore, I would argue that this pruriently homoerotic focus also empowers Geryon by transforming his moment of death in Stesichoros' *Geryoneis*, into a receipt of pleasure in Carson's text. The image of the poppy shedding its petals as a symbol of the loss of Geryon's life is reworked into a dynamic image of vivification and ecstasy as the poppy is livened by the breeze, and Geryon experiences a moment of erotic gain in Carson's rewrite.<sup>34</sup> The implied shift of the arrow from the figurative phallus in Stesichoros,<sup>35</sup> to the literal phallus in Carson, also grants Geryon its possession and situates him further in the position of power within the context of the original fragment. The brevity of the line, concise treatment of Stesichoros' simile and dynamism of 'a poppy in a breeze', lends Geryon's movement a self-possessed strength in contrast to the slow drop of his neck to 'one side' in submission after his death in David Campbell's version. Carson's simultaneous empowerment of Geryon and emphasis of his social deviance serves to humanise Geryon, like Stesichoros, but in this case by expanding the domain of the human subject to include him, rather than moulding him to fit the patriarchal ideal.

## The Centaur Fragment

What I read as Carson's exploration of violence and eroticism in the Geryon myth, and humanising of deviant figures to expand the conceptualisation of the human, is also demonstrable in Carson's identifiable reworking of what I deem the 'Centaur Fragment'. The centaur fragment constitutes Stesichoros' fragment S19 of *Geryoneis*, which is reworked by Carson into fragment VII of her 'Red Meat: Fragments of Stesichoros'. Carson's fragment VII, entitled 'Geryon's Weekend' reads as the following:

Later well later they left the bar went back to the centaur's

Place the centaur had a cup made out of a skull Holding three

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<sup>32</sup> The long literary tradition of this metaphor is mentioned by Franzen 2009: 68 in his analysis of the simile.

<sup>33</sup> Franzen 2009: 68.

<sup>34</sup> Rae 2000: 30.

<sup>35</sup> Franzen 2009: 71.

Measures of wine Holding it he drank Come over here you can  
Bring your drink if you're afraid to come alone The centaur  
Patted the sofa beside him Reddish yellow small alive animal  
Not a bee moved up Geryon's spine on the inside.<sup>36</sup>

This fragment of Carson's parallels the following fragment (S19) in Campbell's translation of *Geryoneis*:

And taking the bowl-cup with the capacity of three flagons he drank it holding it to his lips- the bowl-cup which Pholus had mixed and handed to him.<sup>37</sup>

Fragment S19 is believed to describe Herakles' visit with the centaur, Pholos. The canon puts Pholos 'in possession of a very strong wine' which he gives Herakles to drink per instruction by Dionysus.<sup>38</sup> As the story goes, the scent of this wine then attracts a multitude of other centaurs in the vicinity who attack Herakles and Pholos in a fit of sensational rage. In response, Herakles slaughters the centaurs with an array of poisoned arrows he has in his possession. Ultimately, Pholos dies as a result of touching the poison in the act of burying the fallen centaurs.

What I regard to be most notable about alternative translations of the Stesichoros' fragment S19, and Carson's reworking of it, is the discrepancy regarding who the male subject of the fragment is. In the original fragment there is no subject named, but translators and scholars tend to agree that the 'he' in question is Herakles, based on alternate sources for the myth and contextual clues.<sup>39</sup> Carson completely neglects this tradition by choosing to instead grant Geryon the role of the male subject in the fragment.

This shift of subject means that the narrative differs markedly in Carson's reading, and subsequent reimagining, of the fragment. Yet again, what is imagined as a scene of violence in *Geryoneis* is reimagined into an instant of eroticism in Carson, with her fragment VII appearing to detail an intimate fling between Geryon and Pholos. In invoking the tradition of violent exchange in the erotic encounters between Geryon and his male sexual partners, the fragment can once again be read as positing sex as an act of violence. By representing their homoerotic entanglement in this way, Carson emphasises the internal and external forces of violence that have threatened, and continue to threaten, the queer individual as social punishment for their deviance.<sup>40</sup> This reading is supported by the fact that in the original mythology both Pholos and Geryon are situated as monsters that become eventual victims of Herakles, who here functions as a symbol of the patriarchal ideal.<sup>41</sup>

Despite this focus on violence, like Carson's reimagining of the poppy simile, the transformation of what would have been a death scene in the original text into a primarily erotic encounter in Carson's fragment VII can be read to empower both Pholos

<sup>36</sup> Carson 1998: 11.

<sup>37</sup> Campbell 1991: 81.

<sup>38</sup> Diod. Sic. 4.12.3-8. As described by Eisenfeld 2018: 96.

<sup>39</sup> Campbell 1991: 80-81; Eisenfeld 2018: 96.

<sup>40</sup> Butler 2002: 45. Foley, Helene P. *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy* (2001):11. Marilyn B. Skinner. 'Woman and Language in Archaic Greece, or, Why is Sappho a Woman?' In E. Greene (ed), *Reading Sappho: Contemporary Approaches* (1996): 176.

<sup>41</sup> Diod. Sic. 4.12

and Geryon. Having transformed their traditionally physical monstrosity into a social abjection due to their queer nature, Carson goes on to humanise the pair in her execution of a casual normalisation of their queer romance, using easily recognisable heterosexual context clues associated with 'one-night-stands'. This shift of focus denies the tradition that centres their demise and dehumanises them, and replaces it with an episode detailing their humanness, in their shared pleasure and connection.

I read Carson's granting of the position of the subject to Geryon in her fragment VII as another example of this empowerment of deviant figures, as it works to expand the conceptualisation of the human subject. The shift of subject to Geryon removes Herakles from the fragment entirely. This removal is significant and allows the audience insight into Geryon's lived experience outside of the influence of Herakles. In turn, Geryon is validated as a humanised subject in Carson's rewrite, rather than a monstrous rival against which Herakles' ideal identity is measured.<sup>42</sup>

Taking into account the recognisable alignment of Carson's fragment VII with fragment S19 of Stesichoros' *Geryoneis* and the absence of a clear subject in the original fragment, I argue that Carson not only rewrites the fragment in the literal, modern sense but can be said to have rewritten even the original fragment with her insertion of another potential subject, imbuing it with 'the possibility for being otherwise'. This reconfiguration of both fragment VII and, potentially fragment S19, by Carson not only calls for a new perspective on the human subject in the present but destabilises the patriarchal tradition which seems to inform the Classical world by exposing it as a modern construct. In this way, I read Carson's reimagining of Geryon's subjectivity in this fragment as an encouragement for the reader to expand their perception of the human, and that which is regarded as absolute.<sup>43</sup>

I identify this notion of questioning modern absolutisms regarding humanness, subjectivity and deviance also in Carson's choice of language, grammar and prosaic structure in her rewrite of the centaur fragment. Upon first reading Carson's fragment VII, one immediately notices the unusual use of enjambment, and ostensibly chaotic application of capitalisation, splaying the sentences haphazardly across each consecutive line and emphasising what would be grammatically deemed the wrong words in the sentence. An example of such would be the line 'Place the centaur had a cup made out of a skull Holding three', in which both place (being the last word of the previous sentence) and holding (due to the lack of full stop before it) are, at first glance, incorrectly capitalised. The word 'place' here, and others like it in this passage, as the last word of the previous sentence and the first word of the second line, serve a dual function. These words simultaneously represent Geryon's sense of displacement due to his deviation from the social norm (as the incorrectly capitalised end of a sentence), but also his capacity to function in an utterly unique and equally important way (as the necessary, capitalised beginning of a line). A lack of even basic punctuation, such as commas and full stops, may also be noted.

This subversion of known grammatical rules is a technique often used in poetry, but I read its use here as emphasis of Carson's subversion of the patriarchal order, in her exploration of an expanded human subject and the possibility for being otherwise. In the rejection of all known grammatical rules, a sense of legibility is sacrificed for an alternative and creative ambiguity in which the reader must learn to navigate the new patterns. I read this new space of creative ambiguity that Carson crafts as being symbolic

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<sup>42</sup> Eisenfeld 2018: 93 remarks on how Stesichoros uses Geryon's character as a tool to guide the reader's perspective on Herakles and his mortality.

<sup>43</sup> Eisenfeld 2018: 80.

of the new perspective of the human subject Carson constructs in this fragment. The unconventional structure and ambiguity it brings gives the reader the opportunity to manipulate the rhythm of Carson's fragment VII to suit their own preferences, which, in turn emphasises how our understanding of the world rests on perspective alone rather than what are perceived to be concrete truths and absolutisms.

The prioritisation of the uncategorisable is channelled also into what I read as an exploration of the tension between the themes of life and death in fragment VII. This paradox invokes a sharp sense of foreboding in the fragment. This sense of foreboding can be identified in the phrases 'cup made out of a skull', and 'bring your drink if you are afraid', which parallel this erotic scene with the death-filled scene in the original mythology. These phrases emphasise the fact that both Geryon and 'the centaur', Pholos, are victims of the patriarchal tradition, and, if not slaughtered, become Othered because of their physical and sexual deviance from the ideal norm. The paradox between life and death is also emphasised in the inclusion of the 'cup made out of a skull', and the 'small alive animal' that crawls up Geryon's spine,<sup>44</sup> reinforce the mortality, and therefore humanity of both these otherwise monstrous characters. In fact, 'the small alive animal' that 'moves up Geryon's spine', in the fifth line, emphasises the life within Geryon, and can be read as a symbol of how Carson has brought Geryon and Pholos 'back to life' in her fragment by refusing to detail their gruesome deaths, and instead focusing on their shared desire to express their humanity. The emphasis on the fact that the 'Reddish yellow small alive animal' is 'Not a bee', and the intentional (yet technically incorrect) capitalisation of 'Not', reinforces that Carson is working in the realm of Grosz's 'otherwise', and refuses to categorise the animal or subscribe to binary discourse. The animal, like Geryon, is something Other, yet the focus upon it in the fragment is not upon what it is, but the fact that it is alive. I read this prioritisation of documenting the animal's life over its categorisation as a parallel to Carson's engagement with Geryon primarily as a subject in the text, without attempting to label his social position or sexual, racial or gender identity. The fact that the bee 'moves up Geryon's spine on the inside', not only provides an imaginative representation of erotic titillation and the literally animalistic desire felt by Geryon in the fragment, but emphasises his queer internality, and the focus upon his subjectivity and perspective in Carson's text.

## The Uncategorisable

Geryon's queer internality is explored elsewhere in the text to emphasise Geryon's perspective of the world, in which he exists untethered to the realm of binary or category. Early in the narrative proper, after experiencing sexual assault at the hands of his older brother, Geryon develops, or gains access to, an interior sense of self, and states that 'inside is mine'.<sup>45</sup> I read the phrase, 'inside is mine' as referring to the fact that it is only in Geryon's own interior world that he can amass any sense of self-possession, whereas in the outside world, his monstrosity monopolises his existence and leads to social abjection and disposability.<sup>46</sup> In Geryon's autobiography he 'set[s] down all inside things', which Carson's frame narrator then relates to the audience, and in this way, Geryon's alternative

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<sup>44</sup> Stesichoros' Homeric focus on the themes of life and death, as well as mortality and immortality are discussed by both Eisenfeld 2018: 90-93 and Franzen 2009: 62-71.

<sup>45</sup> Carson 1998: 25, 29, 37, 97.

<sup>46</sup> Georgis 2014: 158, 159. The importance and vitality of Geryon's interior perspective, as a queer and deviant figure, is expanded upon in Butler 2002: 91 and Astrida Neimanis. *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* (2017): 57.

perspective of the world is prioritised, separate from that of the heteropatriarchal 'outside' world, and his monstrosity is validated, recognised, and humanised.<sup>47</sup>

Geryon's focus on the inside often translates into an inability to differentiate between his own perception and what we perceive as reality. This inability to differentiate leads to the inclusion of seemingly illogical and synaesthetic sentiments, such as 'roses screaming' in which his own emotions are prioritised and appear to infiltrate his understanding of the world primarily.<sup>48</sup> In addition to this defamiliarization of language being a continuation of Stesichoros' deviation from the 'fixed diction of Homer', I read this collusion of senses and prioritising of the abstract as another subversion of the hegemonic structure by Carson.<sup>49</sup> It creates a new perspective of the world in which emotions are prioritised over rationality, destabilising the social hierarchy that places the rational masculine at the top, and in turn signifies a new conceptualisation of the ideal social subject as one who feels. This foregrounding of Geryon's abstracted perspective of the world is another way in which Carson, through Geryon, can be read as literally creating a new way of seeing and of being otherwise.<sup>50</sup>

What I read as Carson's prioritisation of the uncategorisable to present an expanded conceptualisation of the human subject<sup>51</sup> is present also in the ambiguous gender and sexuality of her main character. The monster Geryon is never labelled with a specific gender or sexuality in the text, and often seems to oscillate<sup>52</sup> between genders. In fact, Carson's Geryon 'dangles inside the word she like a trinket at a belt'. The word 'dangling' recalls something loosely secured, symbolic of Geryon's lack of adherence to the masculine gender, or alternatively something flaccid, evoking imagery of the masculine genitalia in this sense to symbolise Geryon's dissidence from erect masculinity. The belt has connotations of punishment in the modern imagination, for one stepping out of line – or, in this case, the possibility of Geryon's social punishment and relegation to the monstrous for his departure from expected gender performance. In the same vein, the trinket, of a flimsy, and irreverent nature, comes to symbolise Geryon and his abject gender ambiguity. The belt, in its sturdiness, cyclical shape, and function of keeping order and serving the patriarchal and modern function of assuring modesty, comes to symbolise the expected dual-gender regime of the patriarchal system and the gendered human subject. If we acknowledge the Butlerian notion that 'gender is the repeated stylization of the body<sup>53</sup> a natural sort of being', then the gendered body, and therefore the ideal male human subject, becomes a social construction, rather than a natural disposition. I read Geryon's ability to dangle between these categories as akin to a posthuman ecofeminist perspective of the self, such as that of Astrida Neimanis, who likens the human to 'bodies of water' that 'leak and seethe'. Like Neimanis' bodies of water, Geryon in his ambiguity, is uncontained by the limited and restrictive boundaries asserted by western tradition, and possesses sexual difference that has been biologically 'complexified, elaborated', and is likely to be 'developed further'. In this reading, Carson's fluid and<sup>54</sup> is aligned with the natural

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<sup>47</sup> The use of the term 'recognised,' in this paper refers to the social recognition granted to viable subjects as explored in Butler 2004: 2.

<sup>48</sup> Battis 2003: 200. This identification of emotions as the key to consciousness is expanded upon in Braidotti 2013: 78. In lines such as those found in Carson 1998: 12, 84.

<sup>49</sup> Carson 1998: 4.

<sup>50</sup> Braidotti 2013: 67. Murray 2005; Tschofen 2003: 10.

<sup>51</sup> Carson 1998: 57.

<sup>52</sup> Battis 2003: 201.

<sup>53</sup> Battis 2003: 45, 201.

<sup>54</sup> Neimanis 2017: 126-129. Geryon's fluidity is further discussed in Rae 2000: 32-34.

body, and the gendered male body of the ideal human subject is subversively aligned. In nonchalantly endowing Geryon with a fluid gender identity, the fluid body is naturalised, recognised, and made viable, such that Carson not only expands the conceptualisation of the human to include those who 'dangle' between categories but goes one step further to subversively align the current gendered human ideal with that which is forced and abnormal.<sup>55</sup>

## Conclusion

In a subsection towards the end of the narrative proper entitled 'Tango', Geryon stands in front of his hotel room window in the middle of the night, reflective, and wonders:

[A]t what point does one say of a man that he has become unreal?<sup>56</sup>

I read the term 'Unreal' here as approaching the Butlerian definition of those monstrous identities that are not granted social recognition due to their social deviance and cease to exist as real human subjects in the patriarchal gaze.<sup>57</sup> Thus, Geryon is really asking: at what point does one become the Other? This question is effectively answered only pages earlier in a subsection entitled 'Distances' in which Geryon sits in an Argentinian café, with a man that he has befriended, named Lazer. In the middle of a conversation the two engage in about his four-year-old daughter, Lazer describes her as:

[N]ot quite human or perhaps a little beyond human.<sup>58</sup>

Both the girl's relegation to the status of the subhuman Other by her own father, and her youth, suggest two possible answers to Geryon's earlier question. The first, is the implication that certain identities are born othered and cannot possibly fit into the category of the ideal human subject. For example, the daughter is a girl, and is thus automatically excluded.<sup>59</sup> The second is the implication that all beings are born 'unreal' or 'not quite human', if not 'beyond human', until they grow old enough to internalise their own lack of recognition (as Geryon has), and the discourse that has barred them from being 'real'. In the second case, the reality of the human is exposed by Carson as simply a construction, rather than a truth. In either case, the correction of the initial descriptor of the child as 'not quite human', with the gloss 'or perhaps a little beyond human', is representative of the reader's journey through the text. Over the course of *Autobiography of Red*, I argue that Carson transforms those othered monstrous identities who are seen initially as 'less than human', into validated subjects that fit into her new conceptualisation of an expanded human subject, gloriously 'beyond' that which has previously been defined as such.

Where Stesichoros humanises the monstrous Geryon within the bounds of tradition, I have argued that Carson seeks to humanise Geryon by breaking the tradition of the human subject in order to create a new one. What I read as Carson's invocation of Stesichorian experimentation in the defamiliarizing of language, subjectivising of a monstrous protagonist that is more than a 'little beyond human', and alignment of the audience with Geryon's lived experience and subjectivity, not only subverts the traditional definition of the human subject but exposes it as an absurdist construction. As a result of

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<sup>55</sup> Battis 2003: 198.

<sup>56</sup> Carson 1998: 98.

<sup>57</sup> Butler 2002: 15, 45, 157.

<sup>58</sup> Carson 1998: 94.

<sup>59</sup> Butler 2002: 15, 45, 157; Butler 2004: 2,53.

this subversion of the fixed notion of the human subject, I believe that Carson expands the term into something new and alien, comprised of glorious ambiguity - and only that.

### 'Monsters', the battle with the Demon Drink – Bessie Harrison Lee

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*In nineteenth century Australia, there were various interpretations of the causes of alcoholism and approaches to treating medically diagnosed drunkenness. These ideas were disseminated through different platforms, including pamphlets, public lectures, and medical journals, and were aimed at a range of audiences. Bessie Harrison Lee, a prominent public speaker and leader of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, used a variety of mediums to highlight the dangers of alcohol to both individuals and society. This paper argues that Lee's campaign combined multiple strategies, using powerful terms like 'demon' and 'slave owner' to denounce the alcohol industry. While her stance appeared conservative, Bessie was actually ahead of her time in promoting contemporary medical views on treating alcohol addiction. The ideas were a promulgation of preventing the drink industry from establishing themselves in both rural and urban areas, overseeing the signing of the pledge and helping alcoholics refrain recover through community support and Christian forgiveness.*

#### Introduction

During the nineteenth century in Australia, there existed nuanced interpretations of the cause of alcoholism and the solutions to cure medically diagnosed drunkenness. These ideas were circulated in a variety of medical and non-medical platforms through publications in pamphlets, public lectures, and medical papers, and addressed to diverse audiences in Australia, New Zealand, America, and Britain. Bessie Harrison Lee (1860-1950), public orator and leader of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, published and spoke on many different platforms on the dangers of alcohol to both individuals and society. In this paper, I argue that multiple avenues of attack were integrated into Lee's crusade using terminology such as 'demon' or 'slave owner' to condemn the drink industry, not the 'drunkard'. Although presenting as conservative, Lee was at the forefront of contemporary medical recommendations in addressing alcohol addiction. Lee's ideas in her writing and oratory drew from contemporary debates flourishing overseas and were therefore an amalgamation of actions to prevent the drink industry from establishing itself in both rural and urban areas, overseeing the signing of the pledge, and helping alcoholics recover through community support and WCTU tutelage.

There was a long black box, ornamented with silver on the lid. There were women weeping in the room and mother was weeping too. And then someone lifted me up and in the long black box I saw a woman with a cruel mark on her face and a tiny baby on her arm.<sup>2</sup>

The viewing of a mother and baby lying dead in a coffin, killed by a violent alcoholic

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<sup>2</sup> Bessie Harrison Lee Cowie, *One of Australia's Daughters: An Autobiography of Mrs Harrison Lee Cowie* (Los Angeles: R. Bowen, 1902), 5.

outburst from the father of the child, left a searing impression on Bessie Harrison Lee's memory. This extract from Lee's 1902 autobiography documents her attending the funeral of a young mother and child, both killed because of what we would now define as domestic violence. The image cemented Lee's hatred of drink and its effect on families, where Lee recalled:<sup>3</sup>

Not only was this image of a young family's life cut short imprinted onto my conscience, but what was equally significant was my own mother's soft murmurings. She whispered to me, 'It was the drink that did it.'<sup>4</sup>

Lee's mother's comforting of the mourners and constant reference to 'the drink' spoke of loving kindness as opposed to blame. In the spirit of her mother's soft murmurings, Lee further developed a language of 'the other', 'the demon drink', and 'the serpent', to separate the alcoholic, the human, from the addiction. Lee utilised the language of Evangelical Christianity and modern medical trends to liberate the person and condemn those that profited from a person's weakness, the publican owners, and producers of alcohol. Her ability to take the language developed by the American, Canadian, New Zealand and British Woman's Christian Temperance Unions and adapt it to a nineteenth-century Australian setting meant that her oratory and writings were at the vanguard of modern medical ideas on how alcohol addiction should be treated.

In response to witnessing deaths because of alcohol addiction, and Lee's experiences of living in the gold towns of Daylesford and Enochs Point (Victoria), Lee grew into an indefatigable public campaigner against alcoholic beverages, 'the demon drink'. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), of which Lee became a Victorian member and leader, was an organization of women who were devoted to social reform; they perceived alcoholism as a cause and consequence of larger social problems. Through promoting temperance and reducing or banning the drinking and trade of alcohol, the WCTU believed society would improve the lives of women, children, and society. Through her leadership of the WCTU in the late nineteenth century, Lee argued that social problems such as drunkenness, violence, crime, family desertion, neglect of children, and madness needed to be tackled with a range of approaches. Lee and the WCTU worked to change the social environment that considered drunkenness as an inherited sin, a weakness that required punishment. Viewing alcohol as an external force and personifying it as a monster of demonic proportions allowed Lee to help victims of alcoholism disassociate themselves from the shame of addiction. Lee included other analogies, such as the dehumanising system of slavery, to articulate the inherently evil nature of the drink industry. By condemning the profiteers of alcoholic beverages as opposed to demonising the 'drunkard', she was also able to transform people's lives and help them commit to a temperance lifestyle. In addition to addressing the social environment, Lee and the WCTU also aimed to help strengthen the inner, physical, and spiritual world of victims of alcoholic addiction by encouraging a commitment to a Christian lifestyle and diet.

### **Lee Vickery's childhood and teenage years**

Lee Vickery was born in the Victorian gold-mining town of Daylesford in 1860. Her

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<sup>3</sup> Cowie, *One of Australia's Daughters*, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Cowie, *One of Australia's Daughters*, 5.

father was a butcher and, like many Victorians at the time, also tried his hand at gold mining. At the age of 8 Lee's mother died of consumption and so Lee and her six siblings were separated and sent to live with relatives. Lee spent time with an aunt and uncle in Footscray, where she experienced terrible physical abuse on account of their alcoholic drinking habits.<sup>5</sup> Once Lee's father heard about the mistreatment of his daughter, he relocated her to Enochs Point to live with an aunt and uncle, and it was here she spent her teenage years. Lee became acquainted with Evangelical Christianity that was experiencing, according to Australian theological scholar Associate Professor Stuart Piggin, a second awakening, a revival in popularity and influence.<sup>6</sup> Evangelicalism appealed to the rugged nature of the gold mining lifestyle, where death, loneliness, and disappointment were so evident in day-to-day life. Evangelicalism's worship did not have all the visual trappings of the Catholic or Anglican Church rituals, but reached out to miners through practical activism, biblical authority, conversion, and atonement. The services were characterised by robust hymn singing and were not gloomy affairs, but life-affirming. It was against this backdrop that Lee cultivated her language of faith. In response to her childhood exposure to violence, and other harrowing experiences of living in the hyper-masculine gold towns of Daylesford and Enochs Point, as a young adult Lee witnessed the development of her criticisms of the many injustices surrounding young families, and most importantly children living in poverty.

At the age of 20 Lee married a railway worker, Harrison Lee, moved to Melbourne, and lived in Footscray and Richmond, depending on where work was available.<sup>7</sup> Through her involvement in church activities, she befriended and accompanied Victorian philanthropist Dr Singleton in his voluntary work with female prisoners in the Melbourne gaol and refuges. In 1883, Australia was visited by the world-famous Temperance Lecturers RT Booth and W Glover; Lee attended their presentation at the Melbourne Exhibition Buildings and signed the temperance pledge.<sup>8</sup> Enormous audiences attended their gatherings, and, according to Lee, 'the bit of blue ribbon became conspicuous in every street.'<sup>9</sup> Lee's experience of this was recorded as:

There came God's message to her to 'bind herself so that others might be free.' She signed the temperance pledge, donned the 'bonny bit of blue', and started on quite a new track 'to bring light to them that sat in darkness.'<sup>10</sup>

The significance of these experiences was that Lee was provided with language and rituals to utilise in her public oratory. Rather than demonising victims of alcohol addiction, Lee was able to help members of her crowd who aspired to free themselves of alcohol addiction. Lee emerged as belonging to a band of 'Evangelical temperance workers who prized the testimony of converted ex-drunkards as especially effective in persuading drinkers and alcohol sellers to sign the total abstinence pledge and become Christians.'<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Cowie, *One of Australia's Daughters*, 8.

<sup>6</sup> Stuart Piggin, 'Two Australian Spiritual Awakenings: Moonta Mines 1875 and Loddon River 1883,' *Evangelical Review of Theology* 31, no. 1 (2007): 60-70, 69.

<sup>7</sup> Cowie, *One of Australia's Daughters*, 45.

<sup>8</sup> 'The Blue Ribbon Movement,' *Launceston Examiner*, Saturday 26 January 1884, p. 3; 'Mr R.T. Booth on Temperance,' *Clarence and Richmond Examiner and New England Advertiser* (26 May 1888), 3.

<sup>9</sup> Cowie, *One of Australia's Daughters*, 83.

<sup>10</sup> Cowie, *One of Australia's Daughters*, 83; *Launceston Examiner* (26 January 1884), 3.

<sup>11</sup> Katherine A. Chavigny, "'An Army of Reformed Drunkards and Clergymen': The Medicalisation of Habitual Drunkenness, 1857-1910,' *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 69, no. 3 (2013): 383-425, 395.

## Lee and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union

Following on from the 'Great Awakening' of the Temperance cause in Victoria, branches of the world-famous Women's Christian Temperance Union were formed to bring women into line in waging a war against their deadliest enemy, the drink trade. The WCTU was initially founded in America by a group of women who believed alcohol consumption was the sole reason for the breakdown of families. Initially, the organisation had a singular goal: acting as a lobby group to reduce the number of pub licences, titled 'local option' campaigns. With new leadership under Francis Willard (1839-98), the policy of 'do everything' emanated. Willard widened the objectives of the WCTU from a singular action—promoting the local option campaigns—to encompass other issues such as raising the legal age of consent, participating in missionary work, establishing kindergartens, and educating society about the ills of drink.<sup>12</sup> The WCTU's popularity was such that it had organisations throughout the world including Australia. At the close of the Temperance mission, held in Lee's district, a branch of the WCTU was formed, and she was unanimously elected President of the Footscray Branch, appointed editor of the WCTU page in the *Alliance Record*, the male journal for temperance activism, Colonial Superintendent of literature, and one of the public speakers of the union.<sup>13</sup> Lee began to embrace a life of activism and injected the language of her childhood to help reframe attitudes toward alcoholism.

### Literature on Lee

Examining Lee's activism as a leader of the WCTU can help gain a nuanced understanding of the first-wave women's movement in its multiple forms of education and its influence on social attitudes to drunkenness. Despite Lee's contributions to leadership in the WCTU, scholarly studies about her are still evolving. Decoding her life requires the reading of multiple subjects: evangelicalism, temperance, and colonial and women's history, revealing the breadth of her achievements and places of residence and travel. This paper draws on current Australian, American, British, New Zealand, and Canadian debates over first-wave feminists and their role in changing attitudes to drunkenness.<sup>14</sup>

Within the interdisciplinary field of academic study, 1960s scholars in women's studies became interested in the WCTU and other women's organisations and their transnational relationships. The first phase of research published on the First Wave Women's Movement primarily focused on women's suffrage and highlighted the WCTU's contributions to political lobbying and educating the electorate. This paper draws on Audrey Oldfield's detailed descriptions of the suffrage debate in Australia, and, by focusing on Lee specifically, adds new dimensions to Oldfield's overall narrative. She identified that Australian suffrage organisations were supported or initiated by the

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<sup>12</sup> Dorothy A. Lander, 'A Feminist genealogy of the Women's Temperance Union: Re-membering Ourselves,' *Journal of International Women's Studies* 2, no. 1 (2000).

<sup>13</sup> Sarah Dalton, 'Cowie, Bessie Lee' (first published in *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, 1996), *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3c37/cowie-bessie-lee> (accessed 23 February 2024).

<sup>14</sup> Nancy A. Hewitt, *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of US Feminism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010); Riiko Bedford, 'Heredity as ideology: Ideas of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of the United States and Ontario on Heredity and Social Reform, 1880-1910,' *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 32, no. 1. (2017): 77-100, Katie Pickles and Angela Wanhalla, 'Embodying the Colonial Encounter: Explaining New Zealand's 'Grace Darling', Huria Matenga,' *Gender & History* 22, no. 2 (2010): 361-386.

WCTU, its members often from non-conformist churches. Also, Oldfield discovered that whilst the woman suffrage movement was launched in urban Australia, the rural branches were important in 'spreading their tentacles out beyond country towns.'<sup>15</sup>

This paper also contributes to the dialogue Patricia Grimshaw initiated in the 1980s, when she observed that Lee and her contemporaries 'extended prevailing ideologies, which stressed women's superior moral and spiritual role within the family, to support the idea of women's role in the larger family, the State.'<sup>16</sup> Grimshaw, Marilyn Lake, Ann McGrath and Marian Quartly, in the landmark study *Creating a Nation*, identified Lee as one of four notable colonists who took public stances on issues of social justice in colonial society.<sup>17</sup> Lee was seen as significant because she distinguished structural disadvantages underlying individuals' troubles, be it workers or, in Lee's case, members of a particular sex.

Ian Tyrrell's comprehensive scholarly study first described the WCTU from an international perspective, where he identified the evangelical movement and holiness doctrines as foundational influences on WCTU policies and actions, which also profoundly influenced Lee.<sup>18</sup> Religious discourses, as Tyrrell identified, were never passively received within religious institutions or in the wider culture; instead, they were constantly reinterpreted by women. Despite the 'religious turn' in gender and cultural history, historians of religion have by contrast still produced less sustained research on women, gender, and Lee more specifically.

Recent scholarship has identified that some of the liveliest supporters of women's suffrage came from evangelical communities. Jaqueline deVries' research highlighted how religious belief could and did encourage different, and even oppositional ways of thinking. This led to a questioning of separate spheres as formulated in terms of 'public' and 'private'.<sup>19</sup> Australia's continuous evangelical tradition places Lee at the centre of its sustained development.<sup>20</sup> Professor Stuart Piggin linked the growth of evangelicalism taking place in rural Victoria to the environment Lee was exposed to whilst living in Enochs Point. Evangelical women's ability to make sense of human extremity, the strong communities forged in this movement, and the 'salvation for all' ideal, contributed to Lee's skills at political activism.<sup>21</sup>

Professor Clare Wright's research narrates the victory of suffrage for women in Australia and highlights the many public methods of protest utilised.<sup>22</sup> In this work, Wright details a political world, local and national, of which Lee was an active part. James Keating furthers the research suggesting how suffragists in Australia and New Zealand connected to their counterparts in the United States and Britain over their shared goal, and worked to position themselves within the internationalist struggle for women's enfranchisement.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Audrey Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia: A gift or a struggle?* (Oakleigh: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 183.

<sup>16</sup> Patricia Grimshaw, 'Bessie Harrison Lee and the Fight for Voluntary Motherhood,' in *Double Time: Women in Victoria, 150 years*, ed. Marilyn Lake and Kelly Farley (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1985), 143.

<sup>17</sup> Patricia Grimshaw, ed., *Creating a Nation, 1788-1900* (Ringwood: McPhee Gribble Publishers, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> Ian Tyrrell, *Woman's World/Woman's Empire: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

<sup>19</sup> Jacqueline deVries, 'Rediscovering Christianity after the Postmodern Turn,' *Feminist Studies* 31, no. 1 (2005): 135-55.

<sup>20</sup> Piggin, 'Two Australian Spiritual Awakenings.'

<sup>21</sup> Piggin, 'Two Australian Spiritual Awakenings.'

<sup>22</sup> Clare Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom: The Australians Who Won the Vote* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2019).

<sup>23</sup> James Keating, *Distant sisters: Australasian women and the international struggle for the vote, 1880-1914*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).

Little attention has been given to the significance of the day-to-day struggle for suffrage in the lives of ordinary members, as well as their role in the campaign. Keating's research has remedied this void and helped position Lee as integral to mobilising these urban and rural members.

Illuminating the learning that takes place in non-traditional environments, Michael O'Malley's work identifies the problematic processes of dominant discourses, such as patriarchy.<sup>24</sup> This provides the framework to view Lee's public speaking as 'developing counter discursive strategies'.<sup>25</sup> Paulo Freire's pedagogical frame also informs a study of Lee's activism. The spirit of his comment, 'We learn and teach democracy by making democracy', marries perfectly with Lee and the WCTU's aim to equip women with the knowledge and practical skills of why and how laws could be changed.<sup>26</sup>

### Scholarship on the medical discourse surrounding alcohol

Studying Lee's leadership and the WCTU allows new pathways through which to evaluate how temperance organisations adapted contemporary ideas about alcohol and medicine. The scholar Gerald Olsen, for example, linked the interconnections between the medical community and the temperance movement.<sup>27</sup> Greater scientific knowledge and surgical, therapeutic, and pharmaceutical capabilities later diminished the reliance on alcohol as food and medicine, first in theory, then in practice. Olsen maps the nineteenth-century debates on the medicinal value of alcohol, and it is here where Lee and the WCTU find their platform for promoting a temperance lifestyle. Not only was drinking alcohol bad for health, but Olsen also highlighted that in many churches, drunkenness was regarded as sinful. Progressive reformers targeted alcohol as a promoter of social degeneracy, furthering the moralist position. Degenerationists such as the French physician Bénédict Augustin Morel were popularised by American social and medical journals. They argued that 'conditions like pauperism, criminality, intemperance, and insanity originated in parents' bad habits, which they bequeathed to their children in the form of damaged constitutions or diatheses.'<sup>28</sup> Rosenberg identified that these beliefs later informed eugenics; training, treatment, and environmental reform where it was argued that the reverse of degeneration could occur, although it was generally assumed that 'hereditary inebriates' required longer treatment times and more active restraint.<sup>29</sup> Lee's publications 'Marriage and heredity', and 'Marriage, heredity and the social evil' evidence Rosenberg's discussion.<sup>30</sup> Social and institutional responses to alcoholism were characterised by an evolving range of approaches to treat this affliction, including the reframing of alcoholism as a disease.<sup>31</sup> Lee's oratory and writings on the complexity of

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<sup>24</sup> Michael P. O'Malley, Jennifer A. Sandlin and Jake Burdick, 'Public Pedagogy Theories, Methodologies and Ethics,' in *Oxford Research Encyclopedias, Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.1131>

<sup>25</sup> O'Malley, Sandlin and Burdick, 'Public Pedagogy Theories,' 5.

<sup>26</sup> Héctor Melero and Inés Gil-Jaurena, 'Learning by participation in social movements: Ethnographic research in Madrid,' *Australian Journal of Adult Education* 59, no. 3 (2019).

<sup>27</sup> Gerald W. Olsen, 'Physician heal thyself': drink, temperance and the medical question in the Victorian and Edwardian Church of England, 1830-1914,' *Addiction* 89 (1994): 1167-1176.

<sup>28</sup> Charles E. Rosenberg, 'The Bitter Fruit: Heredity Disease, and Social Thought,' in *No Other Gods: On Science and American Social Thought* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 25.

<sup>29</sup> John C. Waller, 'The Illusion of an Explanation': The Concept of Hereditary Disease, 1770-1870,' *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 57, no. 4 (2002): 410-448.

<sup>30</sup> Bessie H. Lee, *Marriage and heredity* (Melbourne: J.J. Howard, 1893); Bessie H. Lee, *Marriage, heredity and the social evil* (London: H.J. Osborn, 1903).

<sup>31</sup> Victor B. Stolberg, 'A Review of Perspectives on Alcohol and Alcoholism in the History of American Health and Medicine,' *Journal of Ethnicity in Substance Abuse* 5, no. 4 (2006): 39-106.

alcohol and its negative effects on newborns employ terminology informed by Rosenberg's observations. Dr Chavigny's research acknowledged that 'the role played by evangelical religion in constituting their agency in the historical process of medicalisation has not been adequately explored' and it is here where studying Chavigny's work illuminates the significance of Lee and the WCTU's contributions to the debates surrounding the causation of and cure for drunkenness.<sup>32</sup>

Dr Singleton, a contemporary philanthropist who worked with Lee, denounced drunkenness and argued that in Australia it:

[A]bounded to an alarming extent and the quantities of liquor consumed vastly exceeded that of any country in which a statistical return had been taken in comparison with the population.<sup>33</sup>

The historian Pryor also confirmed Singleton's criticism, where he startlingly claimed that in:

1855, 75 percent of the deaths of Victorian Criminals, 60 percent of deaths of lunatics, 35 percent deaths of adult males, and 33 percent of coroners cases were the result of chronic alcoholism.<sup>34</sup>

Contemporaries noted that many white women on the Victorian goldfields lived a more active and independent life than they would have in England.<sup>35</sup> In the unique environment of the gold-digging towns, the accessibility to alcohol, however, was a toxic environment for violence against women and this was attested by Lee's observations. Women suffered from alcohol abuse disproportionately; serious drinking was considered a male prerogative and the 'pub', in the Australian context, was almost exclusively a male institution.<sup>36</sup> Barbara Epstein argued that alcohol in the American environment 'turned gentle fathers and husbands into brutes.'<sup>37</sup> From Lee's first-hand observations, she noted the helplessness of wives to protect themselves and their children from a husband's power, or of other women to help them, given women's vulnerable legal and economic position. Lee wrote about the harsh treatment she experienced while under the care of her aunt and uncle: 'my bruised and blackened body would give evidence that drink had the ascendancy.'<sup>38</sup> Drawing on personal encounters like Lee's, criminal records, and lunacy asylum admissions, international temperance historians have acknowledged multiple explanations for the rise in temperance sensibilities as a response to industrialisation and urbanisation in the nineteenth century.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Chavigny, 'An army of Reformed Drunkards and Clergymen,' 383.

<sup>33</sup> John Singleton, *Narrative of Incidents in the Eventful life of a Physician* (Melbourne: M.L. Hutchinson, 1891), 103.

<sup>34</sup> Robin J. Pryor, 'Gold Rush and Health,' *Melbourne Historical Journal* 2, no. 1 (1962): 59-62, 4.

<sup>35</sup> Sarah Davenport, *Sketch of an immigrant's life in Australia 1841-1867, [extracts] from the diary of Mrs Sarah Davenport* (Melbourne: State Library of Victoria's manuscripts collection, MS 9784); William Howitt, *Land, Labour and Gold, or, Two years in Victoria: with visits to Sydney and Van Diemen's Land* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1855).

<sup>36</sup> A. M. Mitchell, 'Temperance and the Liquor Question in Later 19th Century Victoria' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1966).

<sup>37</sup> Barbara L. Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1981), 102; Diane Kirkby, *Barmaids: A History of Women's Work in Pubs* (Oakleigh, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>38</sup> Cowie, *One of Australia's Daughters*, 8.

<sup>39</sup> Holly B. Fletcher, *Gender and the American Temperance Movement of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Taylor

Associate Professor Sarah Tracey argued that the treatment practices in two types of institutions — asylums or those with a religious philosophy — were quite similar. Inmates were required to ‘stop drinking immediately upon admission, tapering off in either homes or asylums... a routine, nutritious diet, and after about two weeks, light exercise or work.’<sup>40</sup> The inebriate asylum advocates endorsed the principle that ‘intemperance is a disease... curable in the same sense that other diseases are.’<sup>41</sup> Dr. Timothy Hickman, from Lancaster University, wrote about the medicalisation of alcohol addiction and the contemporary ‘Gold Cure’ or ‘Keeley’s Gold Cure’ in the nineteenth century. The ‘Gold Cure’ was developed by pharmacists, where gold chloride, the active agent in the liquid dose, was believed to cure alcoholism.<sup>42</sup> Hickman argues that despite the struggle between the multiple ways of conceptualising and treating addiction, the ultimate winner of the debate was medicalization itself; whichever therapy a patient chose, mainstream or market, both understood addiction to be a medical problem, requiring a medical solution.<sup>43</sup>

### Multiple approaches

The disease concept of drunkenness was a major source of controversy among Victorians, medical and non-medical alike. It aroused emotions because it challenged traditional beliefs in free will and responsibility. Lee’s writings and actions indicated that social problems such as drunkenness, violence, crime, family desertion, neglect of children, and madness needed to be tackled with multiple approaches to address both the physical and spiritual health of alcoholics.

Viewing alcohol as an external force, personifying it as a monster of demonic proportions, allowed Lee to help victims of alcoholism disassociate themselves from the shame of addiction. By condemning the profiteers of alcoholic beverages, as opposed to demonising the ‘drunkard’, Lee was also able to transform people’s lives and commit them to a temperance lifestyle. She was an example of what a survivor looked like. Drawing on her experience as a young girl subjected to alcohol violence, she was far from meek in her determination to promote a spiritual and physical pathway that provided a road out of alcohol dependence—or, in Lee’s terms, a ‘pure lifestyle’. Lee stipulated that class was no barrier: ‘God has proved that a girl without education, money, influence, position, or friends can rise to any eminence.’<sup>44</sup>

With Lee’s leadership, the WCTU saw that the responsibility for social problems such as drunkenness, violence, crime, family desertion, neglect of children and madness lay with society.<sup>45</sup> While Lee herself and the WCTU did provide charitable relief to the poor, they also worked to change the social environment that considered drunkenness as a sin, a self-inflicted weakness that required punishment. In the 1850s, overseas and

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and Francis, 2008); Jack Blocker, Jr., *Give to the Winds thy Fears: Woman’s Crusade, 1873-1874* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985); Ruth Bordin, *Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900* (London: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Stephen Garton, *Medicine and Madness: a social history of insanity in New South Wales 1880-1940* (Kensington, NSW: New South Wales Press, 1988).

<sup>40</sup> Sarah W. Tracy, *Alcoholism in America: From Reconstruction to Prohibition* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 99.

<sup>41</sup> Chavigny, ‘An army of reformed drunkards and clergymen,’ 407.

<sup>42</sup> Timothy A. Hickman, ‘“We Belt the World”: Dr Leslie E Keeley’s ‘Gold Cure’ and the Medicalisation of Addiction in 1890s London,’ *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 95, no. 2 (Summer 2021): 198-226, 198.

<sup>43</sup> Hickman, ‘We Belt the World,’ 198.

<sup>44</sup> Cowie, *One of Australia’s Daughters*, 153.

<sup>45</sup> Garton, *Medicine and Madness*; Peter McCandless, ‘Cures of Civilization’: Insanity and Drunkenness in Victorian Britain, *British Journal of Addiction*, 79 (1984): 49-58, 50.

colonial doctors had referred to inebriety as a disease; yet its curability was in doubt. Gradually, authorities and representatives from churches and charities in the late nineteenth century began to believe that inebriates placed in a therapeutic environment, with treatments such as gold salts, strychnine and atropine injections, could be restored to bodily health if allowed sufficient time to regain their moral fibre. In this environment, the individual's morality that depended on self-restraint could be nurtured and healed.<sup>46</sup> Lee and the WCTU's methodology illustrated how ideas on the rehabilitation of alcoholics challenged and transformed contemporary thinking. Lee not only endorsed the above theories, but she was at the forefront of this thinking. Lee wrote compassionately and argued that 'we all want washing of our sins' and affirmed that through a combination of temperance commitment and society's support 'the cause of righteousness and sobriety would triumph.'<sup>47</sup> She made space for other people's poor life circumstances with an expression of dignity.

### Lee's writing career

Lee supplemented her lobbying activities by producing works of fiction that aimed at shaping Australian culture and morals. In close dialogue with developments in the American WCTU, the Australian branch similarly focused on influencing popular culture by directly offering, through its publications, 'pure' literature of their creation, rather than by simply monitoring and censoring cultural forms others produced. Lee's literature was characteristically melodramatic, containing stereotyped characters, extreme states of being and danger, rapid action, and the vindication of virtue over vice. Similar to the New Zealand WCTU trend, Lee demonstrated that she, too, was part of a transnational community of women who were using fiction to promote the prohibition cause.<sup>48</sup> Her writing demonstrated her attention to people, and she provided a commentary on living and working conditions in various places throughout Victoria to bring to the attention of the middle and upper classes the conditions of the poorer classes of both genders. The *Union Signal*, the American WCTU's official newspaper, repeated the narrative formula. Lee, in a similar spirit, wrote her narrative framework, which featured a woman and her children being abused and destroyed by a husband and father addicted to drink. The wife and mother had no legal or political remedies. This style of narrative was also featured in the WCTU and Lee's publications, where her characters through colourful language attempted to 'put grand alcohol to flight'.<sup>49</sup> Lee did this by granting her female characters the power to be the judges of morality. In the serialised novel *Tempted and Tried, The Story of Two Sisters*, Lee similarly wrote about practical women who worked hard to earn a living, support their families, and remain devoted Christians.<sup>50</sup> Writers such as Lee capitalised on nineteenth-century images of pure, refined women by juxtaposing them with equally vivid portraits of degenerate drunks. Alcohol was portrayed as 'the devil', and women as God's messengers. Lee's novel was printed on the front cover of *The Australian Journal*, alongside works by Charles Dickens, Australian poetry, and both national and international news.

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<sup>46</sup> F.B. Smith, 'Curing alcoholism in Australia, 1880s-1920s,' *Journal of Australian Colonial History* 8 (2006): 137-158

<sup>47</sup> *The White Ribbon Signal* (December 1892), 20; 'Mrs. Harrison Lee Mission', *Gympie Times and Mary River Mining Gazette* (20 July 1893), 3.

<sup>48</sup> Kirstine Moffat, 'The Demon Drink: Prohibition Novels, 1882-1924', *Journal of New Zealand Literature* 23, no. 1 (2005): 139-161, 139.

<sup>49</sup> Bessie Lee, 'Auntie Faith's Travels,' *The Alliance Record* (29 November 1890), 2.

<sup>50</sup> Bessie Lee, 'Tempted and Tried, The Story of Two Sisters,' *The Australian Journal, A Family Newspaper of Literature and Science* (Melbourne: Clarso, Massina & Co., 1865-1962), February 1888 to July 1888.

This was significant because Lee's novel featured the love and dedication of sisters who were central to the family's financial and spiritual success, as opposed to a senior male fatherly figure.

### Children's Literature

Within Lee's published fiction there was a noticeable reversal of conventional gender roles; a girl, not a boy, was the religious, saintly reformer, a moral 'feminine' hero rather than a hero who performed acts of physical prowess. In the four series of *Mrs Pumpkin's Visit to Town as Colonial Quizzo* gender issues figured subtly and both challenged and reinstated convention in new contexts.<sup>51</sup> Rather than retain the masculine prerogative of taking a social glass of alcohol now and then, real manliness, according to the WCTU, lay in keeping promises and following one's written commitment. Those who thought it was 'manly' to drink were regarded as 'poor, silly, weak boys whose fake friends easily tempt them.'<sup>52</sup> Rather, the fictional characters Mr and Mrs Pumpkin urged young men to 'have courage [...] to say no.'<sup>53</sup> Through these descriptive narratives, published in serialised form in the WCTU section of the *Alliance Record* and in book form, Lee promoted the idea that 'gentleness did not mean weakness.'<sup>54</sup> In *Mrs Pumpkin's Visit to Town*, Bartholomew agrees to pray as instructed by Mrs Pumpkin. She proudly says: 'My Bartholomew was ready to do anything and give everything.'<sup>55</sup> The interplay between characters concerned the trials of alcoholics and their families; they were entertaining melodramas with a didactic function in promoting the union's aims to separate the victim from the 'demon drink'.

As well as addressing the WCTU's aims, the stories in Lee's fictional writing provided a less confrontational method of social questioning. The stories played out her ideas with characters such as Sarah Pumpkin and Sally Pumpkin.<sup>56</sup> The latter was an able selector's wife who could turn her hand to everything. She emerged as a practical, energetic, and competent woman, endowed with an informed common sense, an exemplary figure. Lee employed a conversational narrative and self-deprecating sense of humour. Sally Pumpkin in *Mrs Pumpkin's Visits to Town as Colonial Quizzo* declares:

I'm only an old woman from the country ... now where will I begin to tell you about our work in the country. I reckon the spellin [sic] ain't perhaps quite kerrect [sic].<sup>57</sup>

Lee's contribution to WCTU literature was therefore a refining and elevating influence that was used as a means to develop women and children's characters. It became a tool for reformers who did not wholly or willingly become passive audiences; instead, they asserted their rights to be the arbiters of culture. In *Mrs Pumpkin in the Country as Colonial Quizzo*, Bartholomew continually highlights: 'Mother, is goin to get lots of wholesome

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<sup>51</sup> Bessie H. Lee, *Mrs Pumpkin's Visit to Town (as Colonial Quizzo)* series 1 (Melbourne: J.J. Howard, [190-]; Bessie H. Lee, *Mrs Pumpkin in the Country (as Colonial Quizzo)* series 2 (London: National Temperance Union, [190-]); Bessie H. Lee, *Mrs Pumpkin Again (as Colonial Quizzo)* series 3 (National Temperance League, [190-]); Bessie H. Lee, *Mrs Pumpkin Back Again (as Colonial Quizzo)* (London: Ideal Publishing Union, [190-]).

<sup>52</sup> *Alliance Record* (12 December 1891).

<sup>53</sup> *Alliance Record* (12 December 1891).

<sup>54</sup> *Broadford Courier and Reedy Creek Times* (6 June 1891).

<sup>55</sup> Lee, *Mrs Pumpkin*, series 1.

<sup>56</sup> *Alliance Record* (8 August 1891), 203.

<sup>57</sup> *Alliance Record* (12 December 1891).

literature to give to everybody up in our part.<sup>58</sup> WCTU laywomen therefore embraced a multiplicity of roles, one of which was teaching moral issues to change behaviours. Mainstream publications reported that:

Mrs Lee told the children a 'fairy story' in which a wicked giant (strong drink) destroyed the king's house (a human body), a story so cleverly constructed and so well told that its lesson must be an abiding memory to those who were old enough to understand it. A short address was also given to the parents present, an appeal to them to do what they could to save the children from the risk of becoming drunkards.<sup>59</sup>

Another example of Lee's publications directed at a children's audience were such titles as *Auntie Faith's Travels* and *Auntie Faith's Rhymes*. In children's literature, she wrote:

Well my pets, I had been working for over twenty years in many lands to put Giant Alcohol to flight and one year in Victoria I helped in the big work of getting temperance wall sheets put up in every State school and every Catholic school in the land. Then I went to lovely little New Zealand, the southernmost point of the British Empire, and worked in the great Local Option contest there to close the tempting liquor bars, that our children might be saved from the cruel destroyer, drink...<sup>60</sup>

Lee's commentary provides a window into a specific moment of Lee and the WCTU's crusade against alcohol. It was different from the settler narrative as here alcohol was perceived as a male problem, the effects of which adversely affected women.

### The power of language

Early in Lee's career as a leader in the WCTU she wrote:

[W]e build up a distorted, horrible image of God, and we fear and hate the creation of our own minds and daily try to either buy its favour or to drag down and destroy this hellish monster we have fashioned for ourselves and dubbed with the name of God.<sup>61</sup>

Lee was aware of this self-hatred and self-loathing from her observations as a girl watching the miners behave in self-destructive behaviours. She wrote:

[M]en have set up Satan, with all his cruelty, oppression and tyranny, on the throne of their imaginations and called him God, and then with despairing hatred have tried to dethrone the monster, preferring to have no God rather than a God of cruelty.<sup>62</sup>

From these observations Lee's work adopted multiple lines of attack at the urban

<sup>58</sup> *Alliance Record* (12 December 1891).

<sup>59</sup> Mrs Harrison Lee, *South Canterbury Times*, issue 2569 (21 August 1899).

<sup>60</sup> Mrs Harrison Lee Cowie, *Auntie Faith's Travels* (London: Richard J James Temperance Publishing House,

<sup>61</sup> Cowie, *One of Australia's Daughters*, 59.

<sup>62</sup> Cowie, *One of Australia's Daughters*.

and rural frontier. Her role as a temperance writer and activist signalled the intricacies of early Australian temperance movements, which not only operated and adapted the organisational framework established by the WCTU of the United States of America and the British Women's Temperance Association, but forged an organisation equipped to tackle the Australian environment. Lee was at the crossroads of transforming the image of the pious and domestically submissive woman into one versed in evangelical teaching, confident in speaking out about the Demon drink. Using terms such as 'monster' and demonic imagery, Lee and the WCTU were able to capture female discontent, or more accurately, terror. In public newspapers both in Australia and New Zealand Lee narrated how:

[S]he came to take up temperance work from personally experiencing the impossibility of feeding the hungry and clothing the naked in families where drink habits held sway. She drew a contrast between two conditions of the same home she knew before and after the demon of drink had been expelled... she appealed to all her sisters to help in saving the boys from the demon drink.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> 'Mrs Harrison Lee at Greatford,' *Wanganui Chronicle* XLIII, no. 15000 (23 May 1899).

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WEDNESDAY, August 1st, 3 p.m.—GREAT WOMEN'S MEETING.  
WEDNESDAY, August 1st, 8 p.m.—**CAMPAIGN LECTURES.**  
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SUNDAY, August 6th, 3 p.m.—UNITED SERVICE.

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All Temperance Workers invited to take part.

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**Saturday, August 4th, BLACKSTONE SCHOOL OF ARTS, at 8 p.m.**  
**Tuesday, August 7, ROSEWOOD FARMERS’ HALL, at 2.30 and 7.45 p.m.**

The Queensland Times, Ltd., Printers, Ipswich.

## Slavery

In WCTU literature, alcoholism was often likened to slavery, with the intoxicated as the slaves and the publicans as slave owners.<sup>64</sup> Like slavery, the drink trade was trafficking human misery, sanctioned by the law and community, for the material gain of a small group of people. Many of the early nineteenth century temperance advocates in Britain and the United States had also been abolitionists.<sup>65</sup> The moral and political concepts of abolition had left their mark on the Protestant churches, of which so many temperance advocates were members. Temperance historian Brian Harrison argued that the abolitionist movement had a significant ideological impact on later British and colonial social reform movements, not only shaping attitudes to what could be achieved politically and socially through concerted action, but also highlighting the detrimental systematic social impact

<sup>64</sup> Ian Tyrrell, ‘Women and Temperance in Antebellum America, 1830-1860,’ *Civil War History* 28, no. 2 (1982): 128-152, 129.

<sup>65</sup> Lander, ‘A Feminist Genealogy,’ 374.

of the liquor industry.<sup>66</sup> Temperance advocates believed that the law should punish those who were truly responsible for alcoholism, those who sold the drink, and not the victims. Like antislavery, temperance included a political dimension. Temperance advocates not only believed that alcoholic drink was the primary cause of violence: a strong theme in temperance speeches and writings was the idea that the publicans, brewers, distillers, and winemakers were responsible for heavy drinking within society and the damage that followed.<sup>67</sup> By seeking to limit hotel licences, temperance advocates saw themselves as rescuing the inebriated. Lee and the WCTU asked: 'why should our youth of both sexes be destroyed by strong drink to enrich a few monopolies?'<sup>68</sup> It is no coincidence that during Lee's first public tour of England in 1896 she was invited to speak at Exeter Hall in London: symbolically, the location had a history of being a public meeting place for progressive thinkers from the humanist tradition. It had been the meeting place for the Anti Corn Law League in 1846, the Royal Humane Society, and the Anti-Slavery Society; in fact, Exeter Hall became a synonym for the Anti-Slave Lobby.

## Conclusion

In championing those who had crawled their way out of alcohol dependence, Lee and the WCTU drew on contemporary developments in the British, Northern American, New Zealand and Canadian medical and temperance communities to formulate a multifaceted approach to dissuade people from the consumption and trading of alcohol. By representing alcohol as the 'devil', 'a giant' or other personifications, Lee and the WCTU carried out a campaign in children's literature and public spaces to promote a temperance lifestyle without demonising the addicts of alcohol or the families affected by drink-related violence. It was Lee's skills at crafting language that enabled her to navigate the delicate pathway between adopting modern medical directives on supporting those with alcohol addictions without threatening the integrity of the evangelical churches. Her complex interactions with her audiences in halls, in the open air or through the medium of children's literature and temperance tracts were characterised by optimistic and empowering messages of hope. Lee made space for the victims of alcohol addiction to heal embracing transnational ideas of medical and spiritual nurturing and reconfiguring them to suit the Australian environment.

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<sup>66</sup> Brian Harrison, 'Religion and Recreation in Nineteenth-Century England,' *Past and Present* 38 (December 1967): 98-125, 120.

<sup>67</sup> Dawson Burns, *Temperance History: a concise narrative of the rise, development, and extension of the temperance reform* (London: National Temperance Publication Depot, [1889-1891]), 102.

<sup>68</sup> *White Ribbon* (December 1892), 20, 35.



Bessie Lee c. 1890, Yeoman & Co, Melbourne. [National Portrait Gallery](#).

Jack

Patrick McCarthy  
*University of Western Australia*

*I wrote these poems in the ensuing years after the death of my best friend. They are thematically concerned with loss, mourning, grief, and the gradual yet eventual recovery from heartbreak and total despair.*

## **A Lovely Old Man**

When the creeping cold of the everyday  
Seizes my tongue so I've nothing to say,  
Turns my mind to stone, deadens my skin,  
And snakes into my heart to plot from within,  
I steer my soul to thoughts of you  
Imagining what you would do  
If you had grown into a lovely old man.

Years before your life had even begun  
You were ripped from us so terribly young -  
Putting an absolute stop to your clock  
By cracking your head on that cold London rock -  
But this is a path I prefer to shun  
To picture you not so swiftly undone:  
I see you recovering from all the shock,  
Life returning to you the power to walk  
Back into your life,  
To dance with your wife,  
And the chance to be a lovely old man.

On eluding death you'd have much to say,  
Enough so to scribe some wonderful play  
In which you alone would take to the stage  
And imbue with magic the words on the page,  
Where you'd blow the entire cosmos away  
With an impossibly poignant display  
Of humanity far beyond your age,  
Of an artist and man completely uncaged;  
A spared soul thirsting for each radiant ray  
Bestowed upon him with every new day -  
And there I'd sit, in front of the stage,  
Hands clasped in thanks that your fate hadn't changed  
Because you belong by my side,

And if you hadn't died,  
You would've made a lovely old man.

I leap forward in time and hear your name  
Spoken with widespread, respected acclaim:  
A distant future where an age has gone by,  
Your dark hair grown ashen, your faded blue eyes;  
Deep wrinkles abound your skinny old frame;  
Loved by a family, and perhaps I've the same;  
Though still a beauty, none could deny,  
The mere mention of sex by then makes you sigh;  
Our grips on this life beginning to wane,  
Old hearts rife with yearning and nostalgic pain,  
We while out our last days waiting to die  
On twin rocking chairs on a porch getting high –  
Senile or stoned, you can't remember my name,  
Yet you smile at me exactly the same.

Yes, I will always wistfully ponder why  
We weren't granted the gift of a timely goodbye,  
But with you guiding me  
I will hopefully be  
Something close to a lovely old man.

## Leave Me Be

Stay back, old friend, with eyes so blue,  
Our days are done, man, can't you see?  
You took a piece away with you,  
And I beg, I plead, just leave me be.

We two were once the best of friends,  
And surely will, when again we meet,  
Be bound once more, but until then  
I must kick you out into the street.

I've let you fester, raw and red,  
But of grieving you I've had my fill;  
My loss I wish to put to bed,  
For time moves on, yet I stand here still.

You had your chance to see it through,  
But now you're gone, and it's just me;  
You left my heart with so much to do  
That still I struggle with how to be.

It pains me to speak to you so cold –  
You are my friend – but life's so long  
And I wish to see through eyes grown old,  
And with that I see nothing wrong.

I'm sorry, brother, but the time has come  
To cast you aside and somehow forget  
This agony, for what's done is done,  
And look to fresh horizons yet.  
I miss you so, but I seek to dream;  
From nightmares I will now abstain;  
I wish to bathe in life's rich stream  
And wash away this loathsome pain, so

Please stay back, old friend, with eyes so blue,  
I've come so far, man, can't you see?  
I'll forever hold a piece of you,  
But I beg, I plead, just leave me be.

## The Dust of Days Gone By

When tragedy struck a recklessness loomed  
And I dreamt most of running away  
To somewhere distant, dangerous and new  
To keep all the grieving at bay,  
So I studied a globe and found just the place  
I could fuck off the map for a spell,  
Where I could touch the enormity of space  
And where a ginger would feel like hell:  
The Sahara desert seemed like the right place to be  
For a young fool with nothing to lose,  
So I booked a flight in a mad reverie  
Fuelled by narcotics and booze  
Because I wished to die,  
To sift the dust of days gone by.

I met a stranger online who'd take me to see  
The shifting sands of time;  
He lived in a Moroccan village named Hassilabied  
So I set a course feeling sublime;  
I put all my faith in this alien's vow  
To show me the sandy sea, and  
In the face of the risks I refused to cow  
For I felt indescribably free;  
I journeyed through Tangiers, Chefchaouen, Meknes  
With desolation in my soul;  
My own life back home was a terrible mess  
But adventure filled that hole  
And so I said goodbye,  
To sift the dust of days gone by.

My bus screeched to a halt in the dead of night,  
My bag was chucked in the dirt,  
Then off they fucked, and in the ruined light  
To grief I did revert,  
But before too long I spied the lights of a van  
Thankfully heading my way,  
And in I hopped with the brother of the man  
Who had set this fateful day:  
Ahmed pulled up at a nondescript home  
Where I was to lay my head and rest,  
And he assured me that no matter how far I'd roamed  
Just reaching there was the test,  
And I could safely lie,  
To sift the dust of days gone by.

I awoke in a rank groggy veil of sweat  
On the border of Saharan expanse,

And there smiling at me was the man I hadn't yet met  
As I looked stupid in damp underpants;  
His name was Lhoussin of the Berber clan,  
Who said I'd some hours to kill,  
So he urged me explore his little desert town,  
And man, what a madcap thrill:  
A tiny place at the base of a titanic dune  
With a vast garden at its feet  
Where veggies, fruit trees and flowers bloomed  
Right near the main dusty street  
Where a thousand camels sigh,  
And sift the dust of days gone by.  
I ate a chicken tagine whilst a one-eyed cat  
Mewled for a morsel or two,  
When I looked at the time and realized that  
To the desert I was due,  
So I bid farewell to my cycloptic mate  
And made my way back to Lhoussin,  
Where I met Hendrix the camel, who was overweight  
And bravely spat into lands unforeseen;  
I was wrapped in a headscarf of rainbow hue  
For the harsh sun was ready to burn,  
Yet in the cold hard light of what I was about to do  
I felt refreshed in a way I had yearned,  
And I know why:  
To sift the dust of days gone by.

Hendrix ambled upon a mountainous ridge  
Beneath an enormous blue sky;  
Between sand and air I could see the bridge  
That would take me through eternity's eye;  
A peach-orange ocean in fragments of stone  
Farther than any man can see,  
Where only Lhoussin and his people call home  
For the desert is their reason to be;  
They housed me there, his family too,  
Who cooked me a hearty meal,  
Then we sung and howled in the night, as you do,  
And I felt my ragged soul start to heal  
As I screamed at the sky,  
To sift the dust of days gone by.

At daybreak we marched to the heart of the sand  
To find a place yet green,  
Where life may thrive by heaven's hand  
An oasis might be seen;  
The hours crawled by beneath a pale white sun  
In that hot and meaningless space,  
Where nothing changed, time was dead and done,

And would never again show its face;  
Monotonous atoms spanning the earth  
Where fuck all lives and dies,  
Where the sands mock all in which we find worth,  
Where in the dirt everything lies,  
Where I break down and cry,  
And sift the dust of days gone by.

We eventually see it from atop a huge peak  
Winking like an emerald star,  
And we barreled toward it for Hendrix was weak  
And he could taste the shade from afar,  
But when we arrived I was sorely let down –  
It wasn't what I'd had in mind:  
A hundred scabrous cats, the running water was brown,  
And any goats were rude and unkind;  
Maybe this is just life, a mere glint in the waste,  
Where to struggle is to thrive,  
To grin through all the dangers yet faced,  
And return home prepared to survive,  
No longer wanting to die,  
Or sift the dust of days gone by.

### Words of Little Consequence

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*These poems, written between 2020 and 2021, are examples of expressive writing or more accurately, poetic therapy. They explore themes in the author's life, as they process the repetitive nature of history in, A Historian's Lament; the felt realities of living with a disability in, Forsaken: Mourning Life with Disability; and, coming to terms with being in their late twenties in, Entropy: Otherwise known as Getting Old. These vignettes are meditative reflections on life with a disability, in late capitalist society, as a person reaches closer to being thirty. No substantive conclusions are reached.*

#### **A Historian's Lament**

25.2.20

The world is pastiche  
Imitating our forebearers  
Those who came before us  
People who come after us will do the same  
Are we any further to understanding who we are<sup>2</sup>

Our fashion, our aesthetic, are mere reflections  
We dress like our grandparents  
Are we trying to say something  
To protest the system<sup>3</sup>

We echo one another across time and society  
The weight of the past bears on us in the present<sup>4</sup>  
Are we acting out of free will or is the path determined

We humans, you know,  
prefer the path well-trodden  
It promises us certainty in an uncertain future<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ORCID ID: 0000-0002-3821-2039

<sup>2</sup> Or are we just a parody?

<sup>3</sup> Has the system got a hold of us? See, for example, Mark Fisher. *Capitalist Realism*. (London: Zero Books, 2009); where he argues that we've internalised the neo-liberal ethic and, ergo, any expression anti-capitalist antagonism has within it – the contradiction itself.

<sup>4</sup> Indeed, an astute reader would recognise this refrain from the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, by the old man himself, Karl Marx. Full quote, 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please. They do not make it under self-selected circumstances; rather, they make it from circumstances existing already. *The weight of all dead generations weighs like an alp on the minds of the living.*'

<sup>5</sup> UN reports that 2020 is the hottest year on record, they said that last year.

In this path well-worn, though,  
are we ignoring an alternate future?  
Are we not writing a history that rhymes with our past<sup>6</sup>

What if we can imagine a paradise  
A future that can offer a living planet,  
And, dare I say, even peace<sup>7</sup>

Yet when it is all said and done,  
where a utopian future is certain,  
It will appear as a pastiche,  
at least for the next generation...

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<sup>6</sup> Mark Twain once said that history does repeat itself, but it does rhyme – or something along those lines.

<sup>7</sup> This, of course, raises the perennial question of what causes war. Is it the conflict over resources? If so, who owns these resources, is it the barons of industry? What does it imply? Well, you can figure that out.

## **Forsaken: Mourning Life with Disability**

6.8.20

My god, my god, why have you forsaken me  
You have gifted me with a curious mind  
Yet there lies my brain  
Your gift came with a noose

I try to speak  
The noose tightens  
I try to sleep  
The noose tightens  
Existing tighter and harder

There is no reprieve  
No quarter, no peace  
You have forsaken me

Will I become a lumpen sum  
No use to anyone  
A deadweight  
A burden for another  
Maybe I will  
I try to sleep  
But the noose tightens

But fuck that, you know?  
Told I will amount to nothing  
Forgotten in the dust bin of history  
A mere footnote in a tome  
That no one will ever love me

I forsake you god  
Bestowed with this brain  
I'll run away from my death  
Ignore this noose on my neck

Yes, it tightens, so what?  
I'll write tomes, many  
Live to understand the world  
Live to love and care for others  
Step on the neck of the powerful  
And persist until I rest, old and grey

## Entropy: Otherwise known as Getting Old

2.2.21

Entropy, the lack of coherence and predictability  
A gradual decline into disorder.  
I weep the passage of time.  
Entropy deteriorates the present  
Scattering the future  
Life seems to be progressing into mediocrity,  
A gradual decline into disorder

Entropy, do you feel it?  
Reconnecting with old friends  
Our hay day is a bye-gone era  
Connecting these old threads  
They were tightly bound, inertia has withered them away

Entropy, do you feel it?  
I love a woman, yes another one  
She is not like the others  
(I think I said that about the others)  
I wonder if I'll love another soon, I hope not but time will tell

Entropy, do you feel it?  
My friend, how many houses have you lived in?  
Oh dear, how many jobs have you had?  
Oh dear, my love, you are not even thirty yet  
I see you are not the only one, my dear are we okay?

Entropy, do you feel it?  
We have scattered connections across this metropole  
How many of them are meaningful (anymore)  
How many will you pass in the streets and pretend to ignore  
Why must this be so, is it entropy besting us?  
Better still, why is it besting me?

Entropy, deteriorating the present  
And scattering the future

Did you hear they started a family?  
No, but good for them. Entropy.  
Did you hear she moved to New Zealand?  
No, I missed that memo. Entropy.  
Did you hear they bought a house?  
Yes. I live in it, some continuation perhaps.

Entropy, do you feel it?  
Yes and no.  
There are new faces among the old

The old, we seek to reconnect, but,  
Times inertia counteracts our desires,  
I'll see them again, one day  
It is not all doom and gloom  
There will be new faces among the old  
And time will keep marching on

### The Clearing

Sam Mayne

*University of Western Australia*

*This short story utilises the tropes of the cybergothic to explore contemporary and historical crises of embodiment, particularly those that take place within the context of ecological disaster. The narrative takes place in the virtual equivalent of an intentional community, where the disembodied consciousnesses of humans seek refuge from an ecologically devastated Australia. The Clearing is an attempt to confront the vestiges of colonial identities in settler Australians, and to interrogate the material realities and anxieties that are often elided in techno-utopian responses to the climate crisis.*

*This work was written and conceived on the stolen land of the Wadjuk Noongar people. I pay my respect to their Elders, and extend that respect to all Indigenous Australians. Sovereignty was never ceded.*

'That's the thing about Keith Richards though, he knew how to play fuckin' guitar, but people don't know he played the drums too. He played every fuckin' instrument in that band... People don't know. He played in other bands too. Any song from—from the Sixties, if you listen to it and it's got some fuckin' mint guitar, it's probably Keith Richards...'

Nic pressed her shoulder blades into the bus seat, wondering if it was uncomfortable enough, if the air smelled right. They hadn't needed buses, they hadn't thought they had needed transport at all. But it had turned out to be a necessity. When people had arrived in The Clearing and found out that they could move from one place to another in no time—literally no time, seeing as they were all technically everywhere, all the time—they had come apart. She'd seen one man clip maybe ten meters—probably without even meaning to—and collapse, clawing his fingers into the ground, which only made things worse because the ground wasn't quite done yet. Didn't feel right.

'I'm not here, I'm not here,' he had wailed, over and over. They had to hang him up for a bit after that. That sort of panic was catching.

So they had made buses. They had started with private cars, luxurious and driverless, but people seemed to prefer being together. Mutually assuring each other's existence. And the sort of people who ended up in The Clearing knew what a public bus felt like, so Nic had done her best to make it feel authentic. She wondered if the Cities ended up having to do the same. Maybe they had a way of keeping people more stable.

'...Don't give him any fuckin' credit for it though. You know he got a degree too... In like, brain chemistry or some shit. Used it to make his songs more addictive, so it's literally like doing drugs...'

She couldn't take credit for Jax. Jax was an invention of his own making.

'...And get this, every singer, every band every fuckin' celebrity after the Nineties? Probably didn't even fuckin' exist. The media could just make up whole people, right? Digitally generated voices and faces, fuckin' holograms. You remember the AI musicians becoming a thing before we went in? Started way fuckin' earlier, mate, way earlier. Reckon maybe Kurt Cobain was the last real fuckin' person. Probably why he blew a hole in his

head, hey?’

The bus stopped at Crossways Park and Nic got off. Margie was waiting for her, spread out on a picnic blanket in the sun.

‘Took you long enough.’

Nic pushed a lump in the picnic blanket flat with her foot. ‘Bus ride is longer now. Jax updated the physics engine for road traction.’

Margie reached over and reshaped the lump in the blanket. ‘Leave it like that. Looks better.’

A couple of kids ran past, chasing a magpie. Nic could tell that one of them, a little boy with coppery hair, was pure software, a Gen. She’d seen his template in a catalogue a while ago. The girl probably was too, come to think of it. The Clearing hadn’t ported in anyone new for a long time, and kids were normally keen to instantiate adult avatars as soon as they were allowed to.

‘Jesus, Nic, tell me that isn’t one of yours.’

Margie was pointing a crooked finger at a tree that had appeared in the centre of the park. A Norfolk Pine, the kind that had been strewn along the coast back home, transplanted centuries ago by some nonce who thought they would make good masts. They didn’t, but people got so used to them being there that beaches started to look wrong without them.

‘It isn’t.’

Nic made her way toward the newly-instantiated tree.

It stood in the very centre of the park, too straight and clearly not to scale, dwarfing the nearby Melaleucas and Jacarandas, its coarse green branches angled up at the sky in a shrugging tableau, as if to say: *don't ask me, I don't know how I got here either.*

Margie appeared beside the tree, having clipped from behind her. Margie was one of the only people in The Clearing that didn’t seem to mind clipping. She’d told Nic once that it was because she’d never felt she’d really been inside her body before anyway, never had the chance to get attached.

‘Whose is it then? I thought you did all the flora yourself?’

‘So did I. Adi would tell me if he had approved someone else.’ Nic approached the pine. They weren’t actually pines, Norfolks, they were conifers. She didn’t know why she remembered that. She placed a hand on its trunk. It felt as smooth and frictionless as a steel pole. She removed her hand, disliking the contradiction between the rippled bark that she saw and the cool, slick nothing that she felt. Something rustled in the back of her mind. A murmured rumour that she had heard from another founder, back when the City was still a topic of interesting discussion. She pulled at the bark, at the same time accessing the cloud of code that surrounded her, mentally decoupling the segments that read *barkbarkbark* from *basebasebase*.

She had been right. So had the rumour. Behind the thin layer of bark was no woody hypodermis, no carefully crafted rings to indicate an age, a story of being. Not like hers had. There was only a void, a violent white hollow of uncoded space. A necessary consequence of manufacturing tree after tree after tree to fill an ever-expanding world. The Norfolk hadn’t been crafted by anyone in The Clearing. It was a City tree.

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It had started with just a few of them. Her and Jax and Margie and Aditya. They’d met

through *Effloresce*—one of the smaller virtual worlds that people frequented back when the old world was still habitable enough to keep millions of physical bodies functioning. Porting was only something the elderly or infirm did. Everyone else visited using a Lens, or if you were rich, maybe a haptic chamber. It wasn't the same as being ported. If you stopped and focused a moment, you could still feel the slow flux of air in your lungs. An itch behind your ear. A kneading ache in your spine, tugging at your consciousness to remind you of the hours you had spent sitting in one place. She'd been on a glass-bottom boat once, when she was young. Try as she might to look down through the masses of woodbine algal bloom and bone-white fingers of exanimate reef in search of fish, her gaze would adjust every few moments and refocus on the surface of the glass, arresting her with her own reflection and obscuring the water below. That was what it had been like. Porting was different. Porting was diving off the boat and breathing in the ocean and leaving her befuddled reflection behind.

Nic spent every spare moment she had in *Effloresce*. She had earned her degree in Botanical History, and *Effloresce* was a world dedicated to hosting avatars of long-extinct plants. She had created an incredible garden, experimenting with cultivars of *Banksia Montana*, and propagating thick carpets of Esperance Dogweed. When the administrators of *Effloresce* had decided to introduce extinct animals to the server, they had asked Nic to be a beta host, filling her garden with an azure scattering of fairy wren and a cluster of koalas. The koalas had looked different from the pictures she had seen, with smaller bodies and bigger eyes. The administrators told her they had made some aesthetic adjustments. People preferred them that way, they had said.

Droves of visitors had filled Nic's garden. So much so that the traffic began to cause problems. She would find a patch of Spider Orchid rendering incorrectly, trembling in place as if the arachnoid blooms had been transformed into their namesake. Every now and then a koala would disappear from its perch in the elbow of a Eucalypt and reappear on the ground, its limbs twice as long as normal and twisted grotesquely. They weren't programmed with a pain response, so the malformed thing would just blink at her dumbly until the code self-corrected and respawned it elsewhere.

When Nic reported the issues, the administrators had sent Aditya to work with her. Adi specialised in bandwidth management and knew exactly how much traffic her garden could handle at a given time, accounting for the specific activities the visiting avatars were undertaking, the weather simulation program that the world was running, and the bioprocesses that each of her plants was mimicking continuously. He could also tell her in a matter of seconds what needed to be changed when the capacity of the garden was close to being reached—more often than not his suggestion was to temporarily relocate a number of the less-popular plants, the saplings and the non-flowering shrubs, to *Effloresce's* community storage. Despite his ruthlessness with her plants, Nic liked Adi. She had been disarmed the first time they had met, when he had appeared before her as a disembodied face, floating in place like a ghost from an old photograph.

'Less strain on the server' he had told her. 'You get used to it pretty quickly.'

'I don't know that I will' she had said, unconsciously touching her own face to ensure it was still tethered to her body.

She had gotten used to it, eventually, so much so that when she had met Adi for the first time in person it had almost been strange to see him with a neck, and thin, sloping shoulders, and a tangle of time-hazed tattoos across his entire body.

Margie had come next, also sent by the administrators. A sensory feedback expert tasked with writing scents for the garden. She had, to Nic's relief, arrived with a whole body, a blanket of coiled grey hair that she piled high on her head. Cheerful, creased eyes

that were almost the same colour. It had been rare for older women to show their age in their avatars. Nic had complimented Margie on that once. Margie had laughed at her.

'You think this is what I look like back out there?' she had asked. 'I bloody wish.'

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The trees found their way into all sorts of places. It wasn't long before Nic was receiving a new message every hour because a Norfolk had instantiated in a bedroom, a concert hall, in the centre of a painstakingly-curated aquarium, disrupting the strict itinerary of loops, figure eights and static pinwheel-turns that each digitally-generated Saratoga and Grayling ought to have been following. Removing them was no simple matter, Nic had spent most of the day explaining as much. The trees could be disassembled, sure, but that did nothing to alter the overall space in The Clearing that they took up. Whether they were hovering in meandering bytes through the atmosphere or kept in their existing figuration of leaf-twig-branch-bark, the Norfolks would still be the same unplanned strain on the carefully-managed capacity of their space. Better to keep them intact, for now.

Total deletion was out of the question, they never did that with anything, their world was too tightly entwined. One minor miscalculation might mean that instead of permanently removing a blade of grass, they gutted someone's consciousness. Collapsed their last memory of their wife. Severed them from The Clearing, from everything.

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Jax had come to them last, not an envoy from *Effloresce* but a regular visitor to the garden. Nic had found him inspecting a squat Morrisby's gum, its twisting branches slicing the simulated sky above them into blue and white terrazzo.

'How old is it?' he'd asked her.

'They went extinct on earth around two-hundred years ago.' A soft breeze arrived on schedule, sending a rhythmic undulation through the leaves. The silvery, fluid hiss that Nic associated with the movement came microseconds too early, and ended too soon, so that for a moment the leaves rippled in eerie silence.

'Nah, how old is this one in particular?'

Nic thought for a moment. 'I generated it as a sapling, and I've been growing it for six years.' Jax had stood, and now she got a proper look at him. Short and wide, like the gum. Hair to his collar. A mouth that trembled occasionally, as if to keep something from spilling out. 'So, six, I suppose.'

'Would it be normal, for it to be this size at six? Out there?'

She shrugged. 'Hard to say, but the plants we have more data on seem to grow at the correct rate, so I would think so.'

He had nodded and played his fingers against his thumb thoughtfully. His whole jaw moving rapidly, like he was trying to unstick something from his teeth.

'You gonna get ported one day?'

Nic had been struck silent. While it wasn't necessarily an impolite thing to ask, the question had come apropos of nothing and from a stranger.

'Why do you ask?'

He'd leaned in close and let loose a whispered spill of words. Porting, lodging their consciousness firmly in the digital world and nowhere else, was going to become a requirement for most people, he'd told her. Sooner than you would think. And the ports wouldn't be like *Effloresce*. They would be made for efficiency. As many people as possible on a server. Just pleasant enough for just enough of the population to be better off than staying behind. No good for people like him, he'd said. No good for people like her.

'I've found somewhere else we could go. People like you and me,' he'd said, opening his palm and projecting an ID card: *Jackson Reade: Senior Designer, U-Night*.

'This is the world I work for. They're one of the first that's going to be adapted to host the ports. I locked off some space a few years ago that I don't think the administrators know about. Used it for testing new designs, mostly.'

Nic knew about U-Night. It was one of the bigger social worlds. Not really her speed. She'd been thinking about trying to get the strange man booted from the garden until she'd seen the ID. It looked authentic, and she'd heard speculation before about porting becoming mandatory. Water rations were shrinking again, and the air had gotten so bad that you couldn't stay outside, even with a filter, for more than a few hours.

'Why are you showing this to me?'

'You want to grow your plants, don't you? Bring back the dead stuff? Won't happen in the new worlds. No personalised code. Only templates controlled by the city. Monocultures.'

Nic waited for him to say more, had wondered if she was certain about the ID.

Jax gestured at the tree. 'I want to spend some time here, make some observations. Maybe look at your code for the garden.'

'Why?'

'Time. *Effloresce* has one of the best time engines. They had to so that people like you could grow your plants realistically. On some of the worlds, time passes differently for everyone. You might feel like you've been on one of the adventure park worlds for two hours, while the mate you're visiting with feels like he's been there two days. But ported people need stable time. They go whacky if they don't have it.' He waggled his jaw again. 'Stops 'em from being able to pretend, you know?'

'Pretend what?'

'That they're not dead, mate. Dead and gone and turning to soup in a coffin back home.'

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The Norfolks stopped appearing after a few days.

Nic was relieved, as was Adi. He sat across from her at the table in Margie's kitchen, eyes unfocused, reading through the data attached to the most-recently manifested tree.

'It's lucky they are so well-optimised for space, being hollow and all. The load on The Clearing is going to be negligible. Maybe you should start doing that here, Nic.'

'Not a chance. The whole point of our trees is that they act exactly the same as the real thing. They're trees just as much as we're people.' Nic leaned across the table and grabbed a shortbread biscuit from a chipped blue plate at the centre. It tasted exactly as she remembered them tasting, but then her mind, through some association, drifted to Italian food and the fatty biscuit turned to tomatoes and veal and red wine in her mouth. The combination was not pleasant. Jax slipped into the chair beside her, pulling the plate

toward himself and inspecting the biscuits before leaving them where they sat.

'Maybe more so. You know your plants are perfect replicas because you designed them from the bottom up. We can't say that much for ourselves.'

Nic imagined cool, fresh water and in a moment her mouth was free from the lingering residuum of garlic and parmesan.

'I designed myself too,' she said, running her tongue across her teeth, halfway to ensure that nothing remained of the unexpected sensory data, and halfway to reassure herself that her teeth were, indeed, there, crooked and irrefutable.

Jax leaned back in his chair. 'Sure, but you did that once you...' he drew his finger across his throat. 'Do you really reckon you had the presence of mind to give yourself an intestinal tract and lymph nodes and a millionty-fuckin-whatever cells? No chance.'

Nic didn't like to think about her arrival in The Clearing. That sudden painfully-awake and terribly-unmoored feeling, the same as being roused in the night by a strange noise and waking up in a strange bed. She'd arrived as a bodiless configuration of thoughts and impulses and memories, loosely tethered together by some strange momentum that outlasted her physical existence by a few seconds, and had been propelled into The Clearing. She'd had only moments to pull together the body she had now from the blank components that waited around her, ready to be formed into fleshy arms and bony feet and downturned brown eyes, like her mother's.

She thought about the City tree, a fragile façade of knotted wooden skin sheathing a colourless vacuum of data. Bloodless and indistinguishable from the untethered code that floated in the air outside of it. She imagined slicing open her skin and seeing the same.

Adi cleared his throat. An utterly unnecessary sound. He had no vocal chords, no trachea, no syrupy build-up of mucus and dust hindering breaths he was not taking.

'We still need to address the problem of how a vestige from the City showed up here at all. The administrators there should have plenty of space to dismiss unwanted items to, I can't see why—'

'Even if they wanted to chuck all their crap into our space, they shouldn't be able to,' said Jax. 'They don't know we're here.'

Adi paused.

'Perhaps they don't. But if we were wrong about how much the City might grow, they wouldn't need to. If enough of their code is being relocated, some of it is bound to hit us eventually.'

'What does that mean for us?' Nic was still imagining her body unfolded, a broken membrane trickling out the last of its innards. No heart or brain or blood, just countless pieces of unaligned data that happened to be caught in the space that she declared was her.

Jax shrugged, pressing his fingers into the edge of the table as if he wanted to push them all the way through it. He could, Nic thought. There were no electrons here, invisibly repelling *this* from *that*. The only thing that kept him from doing so was the unspoken consensus that he shouldn't. That *this* should stay *this* and *that* should stay *that*.

'Nothing much. The trees aren't coming anymore. I reckon we're right.'

Margie clipped into the room, too quickly, appearing at first as a legless torso in the middle of the table before reforming again as a sudden unfurling of curls and purple blouse and worry-carved face. It took Nic a moment to recognise the thing beside her. At first it seemed to be a distortion of the light, a twisting of the flat planes of the counter and the tessellated pattern of the wallpaper behind it.

The distortion moved and took shape, a button nose and a brown-tufted head balanced on a scrawny body with knurled knees and elbows like wood knots. A little girl,

maybe six or seven. She remained partially translucent, a smudgy silhouette that moved in jerks and sudden pauses, *look up raise arm freeze look down freeze close fist look up*. Nic saw her eyes properly on the third or fourth cycle of the strange routine. They were the same blank-paper white as the inside of the City tree.

'We have a problem.' Margie's voice was wavering. An arrhythmic melody to accompany the movements of the figure before them.

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Jax had not needed long for his study of the garden, but in the time he stayed he had managed to win over Adi and Margie. It helped that his claims about porting were given more weight when it was announced that healthy people could now volunteer to port, and that those who did would have compensation paid to their families. She began seeing advertisements for the new worlds that had been created for the ports, homogenous grids of apartment block public park social centre apartment block artificial beach gymnasium apartment block duplicated ad infinitum across a sprawling cityscape. *A new world awaits* a smooth voice with an unidentifiable accent would whisper at her from the screen, *port to Morai/Promised Acres/First Passage today*. Whenever the ads played in the garden, Jax would snort derisively and begin another coiling oration about how The Clearing would be different. These would always evolve into long conversations about how they would design their little world, Nic's dreams of ungoverned rambles of ancient natives, coursing between houses and wilding the edges of streets and pathways. How Adi would pluck his mother and uncles from the half-sunk vestige of Jakarta and build them a farm filled with wild kangaroos and mop-headed chickens that would eat the scraps from their vegetable garden. They had drawn the map, filled it with colour and expectation. The Clearing was theirs to make of it what they would, a blank slate that they could mould into a world which would fit perfectly into their angles and gaps, fill their wounds and wash the dust of home away.

And dust was a permanent feature of home. Dust and smog and smoke from the fires that were always burning somewhere. The day they decided to port to The Clearing, Nic walked to pick Adi up from the airport and there had been fires in three different directions. They had carried the cremated remains of bush and forest on the wind until she breathed them in. A necrotic amalgam of south and east and west, a graveyard in her lungs. She'd spat it out and watched it sink into the cracked earth. Before she was born, fires used to turn the sky orange, the smoke particles rescattering the sunlight into red wavelengths. Now, they had filled the air with sulphur, great pumps spewed it into the atmosphere to try and reflect some of the ever-growing heat. It had caused a great desaturation, an unblueing of the sky, and now it was all white. She could hardly see the smoke most days. Had almost stopped smelling it. She was as much smoke as she was blood and sinew and water glittering with microplastics.

She'd been exhausted by the time she had returned home, Adi trailing behind her. Everyone was exhausted, all the time. Wasting muscles and silt-clogged pleura were a natural product of living in a near-dead world. They had all begun to decay along with it. She wouldn't miss her body, she'd thought. When Jax told her it was time, she was ready, ready to be poured into The Clearing, awash on a new shore.

They came in crops of two and three, quivering knots like seed pods near bursting. Moments after Margie bought the girl into the kitchen more had appeared. They filled the street outside, burst from bedroom wardrobes, had arisen from the lake in the park, water draining silently from their twitching mouths. The Clearing had turned to chaos, residents running from their homes, clipping involuntarily away from the apparitions and screaming in redoubled terror. Nic and Jax had to hang everyone up, freeze their avatars and force them all into a state of temporary unconsciousness to stem the tide of panic.

'Someone's fucked us Nic, someone's made some deal with the City, we've got rot, we've got a mole, got fuckin' termites. Invasive species termites... Had 'em in my house when I was a kid, Nic. Mum had to call up a guy to come with a flamethrower. Burn the whole thing down, Nic. Detritovores they're called. They're why we had all the fires back home Nic, I reckon, Earth trying to burn out all the termites.'

Jax was flitting between the groups of strange figures, dismissing them to Margie's backyard where Adi was analysing them. Nic was staring down at the ground, a track of red dirt weaving through a block of scrub that some of the deleted figures had wandered into. There were no footprints in the dirt. There never were. Why didn't they make it so that they had footprints?

'I know this one. Nic! I know this one!'

Jax was leaning over the spectre of a woman, she was coiling and unfurling in the dirt like a dying worm. Nic tried to step toward her but was hit with a pulse of vertigo. The dirt wasn't underneath her, not really. She might be sideways or upside down or nowhere at all.

'...Used to work design with me. These are real people Nic, real people. City must be clearing 'em out.'

The woman had started to scoop the dirt into her hands. They were too big and so thin, and the red earth trickled past her distorted fingers like water. Jax dismissed her but the dirt remained, hovering in space like a bloodied gash in the sky.

It was raining. That wasn't possible. They didn't have rain scheduled for weeks. Nic looked up at the sky and saw a swimming pool hovering above her, fat chlorine-scented drops occasionally breaking free of whatever internal logic kept them constrained to the propane flame blue of the surface to fall downwards, upwards at her. She caught her reflection in it and stared, until something in the pool's surface shifted and her outline in the water was dispersed into a shimmering array of rippling light.

Then she was gone, out of the world a moment and then standing again in Margie's kitchen. She must have clipped without realising. She didn't know what time had passed. It had curdled and separated and had never really been there to begin with.

Adi's face floated in front of her. Just his face. The same way he used to be.

'Something is wrong, Nic.' His eyes were flitting back and forth. Still reading, still solving and looking for space and solutions as he spoke. 'The City is throwing everything to the edges. They have to be past capacity. They must be looking for a way to delete things for good.'

'They will,' said Margie. She was sitting cross-legged on the ground. There were flowers in her hair. Thousands of them. They were coiling down her arms and spreading out in a thick carpet across the floor. 'As soon as we're out of space here. Everything is compressing so that we can keep going. No more space between things, Nic.' Her voice was fading away, turning into the velveteen exhalation of flowers being pressed.

'Bullshit about Keith Richards. Didn't know the first thing about playing guitar.'

You know he only had four fingers? Fuckin' God's word, only reason people don't know about it is they edited all the videos of him playing. Had a stand in play for him and then they would sew the shots together. Fuckin' joker, fuckin con artist, took everyone for a ride.'

Jax was sitting on a chair, his feet pulled up as though the floor had flooded, and he was trying to stay dry. His fingers were pressing against the table again, pressed and pushing urgently against the polished wood. Every now and then he shook his head, as if trying to clear something from between his ears.

'I don't know what they did to my body Nic. I dunno if they found us and threw me in a pit or if I'm lying in cold storage somewhere. I dunno.' He glanced down at his fingers. They were sliding through the wood, or the wood was sliding into them. Nic didn't know if there was a difference. 'I don't feel cold. I don't'

Nic looked out the window. There was a copse of trees and an arts centre and a set of seats from one of the buses outside, she couldn't tell what was where, couldn't tell the edge of one thing from another. She stepped through the door, didn't bother to open it. Didn't really need to.

She sat with the trees as they knitted closer together, practically one now. Back home they were one anyway. Tangled together in the understory, woody synapses singing and whispering to each other. She should have given them that here.

Jax was wrong. Their bodies hadn't been buried or frozen. Nic knew that almost everyone who left with nobody to take care of their body was cremated. They had been burned like everyone else. Like everything. The charred carbon she left behind would have been too alkaline, too salty. Would have killed any plants in the soil around her. Poisoned them from the root up. She hoped nobody had found them, hoped she was a carcass. At least then she would be eaten by the wild dogs and the maggots and the necrophages that had waited patiently beneath her skin to devour her from the inside.

Her legs had become caught in the twisting roots of the trees. Something was coming. She could feel it behind her. The pause before a strong breeze, the paper-thin moment of resistance when she stepped into a pond, where the fine skin of water bowed and undulated beneath her but did not break. She tried to look over her shoulder, but her shoulder was gone, had been contoured into the trunk. Still, she felt it. She told herself she did. She tried to find her mouth, tried to find something to say before it came. She didn't. She knew she had been burned. Had been incinerated and spewed into the atmosphere.

The sky was white, and nobody would see the smoke.

**Adhikari, Mohamed, *Destroying to Replace: Settler Genocides of Indigenous People*, Critical Themes in World History vol. 3, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2022; paperback, pp.xliv + 179, 15 b/w illustrations, 5 maps; RRP \$18.00 USD; ISBN 9781647920494.**

From its heartbreaking cover illustration, taken from 'Oscar's sketchbook', a young Queensland Aboriginal boy's record of life in the 1880s, depicting black shooting black in the name of white settlers, until its exhaustively researched final pages, *Destroying to Replace: Settler Genocide of Indigenous Peoples*, tells harrowing stories that must be read, studied and digested by all who wish to understand and move forward from bloody and destructive pasts. Emeritus Associate Professor Mohamed Adhikari may have begun his career researching identity and politics in South Africa, but he has since become an authority within the field of Genocide Studies, with a particular focus on settler colonialism and genocide.

Conceived as a textbook, *Destroying to Replace* seeks to raise as many questions as possible. It begins with a discussion of key concepts, first discussed at the International Network of Genocide Scholars conference held at Sheffield University in England in 2009. Despite that relative recency, through his extensive suggestions for further reading, Adhikari makes it clear that not only is the practice of genocide almost as old as man himself but that many independent observers have seen and documented it. Many of their stories had been lost in the mists of time and are only now being brought to light. Adhikari argues incontestably that genocide persists and that only by understanding the past and applying it to the present can societies look towards a peaceful future.

Adhikari delivers what he promises, starting with his preliminary exploration of essential concepts related to genocide: the meaning of genocide itself, the settler colonialism that initiated it, focusing on Western Imperialism as a result of industrialisation; civilian-driven versus state-directed violence, 'exterminatory violence' (xxi), and their consequences in the devastation of Indigenous societies themselves. One of Adhikari's key concepts is the denial of the destruction by the settler societies themselves, despite first-hand contemporary observations. In his opening chapter, Adhikari explores the work of Raphael Lemkin (1900-1959) in bringing the term 'genocide' to life in 1944, and points out that there remains contestation of its definition and causes. However, his four case-studies, chosen to represent a broad time-scale, different settler origins and different traditional societies – on the conquest, enslavement and deportation of the original Canary Islanders, the 'improvement' of Queensland's Aboriginal people, the annihilation of California's native American societies, and the genocide of the Herero people of present-day Namibia – leave no doubt as to the cause and outcomes of genocide, regardless of how it is defined.

Throughout *Destroying to Replace*, Adhikari quotes extensively from primary sources, representing differing and opposing points of view, and explicitly invites students to themselves interrogate the sources he presents. His well-chosen illustrations, which include contemporary engravings and photographs, are illuminating and poignant and maps help to define the areas affected.

In his reflections and conclusions, Adhikari provides an overview of the range of motivations that brought settlers into conflict with Indigenous Peoples. For example,

market forces which promised profits for the exploitation of mineral resources, soils and natural vegetation, and which led to the expropriation of traditional lands. Or, to the moral justifications applied by those settlers, to the extent the Indigenous People were considered not only an inconvenience, but even inherently evil and therefore legally culpable for whatever cruelty the perpetrators could dream up. Not to mention the diseases settlers brought with them and the sexual violence they perpetrated, against which most Indigenous People were defenceless.

While Adhikari's purpose is to elucidate the past, which he does in excruciating detail, two questions spring to the mind of a teacher who may be tasked to use the book with students. The first is 'how do we make use of this material', and the second is 'how can we move on from a violent past to a more hopeful future?' I will consider these questions as they apply in the Australian situation. Adhikari has presented the Queensland experience, and while settler Australians often grew up with some knowledge of the Tasmanian experience, and for Western Australians, the so-called 'battle of Pinjarra', it is now apparent that these events were mere drops in the ocean of violence that was perpetrated across Australia. Growing up in a town in the south-west of Western Australia, with Aboriginal friends, neighbours, classmates and work colleagues, we knew little of the journey they and their families had endured.

Australians in 2024 are grappling with the aftermath of the most divisive referendum in Australian history, where there was little middle ground between a 'yes' and a 'no' vote – which quickly became equated with 'you don't want us.' Bringing the painful past into the present helps to validate that feeling of dispossession, dislocation and social breakdown experienced by Aboriginal Australians. Wider knowledge and acceptance of these truths by non-Aboriginal Australians may help pave a path to healing. While a national apology has been made, perhaps Aboriginal Australians may move towards forgiveness for the sins of the past, as has happened in one place in Northern California (xiv).

This could be achieved by exploring Memory Studies as a means of dealing with the wounded memory and intergenerational trauma that continue to cost Aboriginal lives today. As Dr Maria Yellowhorse Braveheart notes, healing collective trauma involves 'confronting it, understanding it, releasing the pain of it and transcending it' ([Healing Collective Trauma](#), n.d.). For that to happen, governments and communities must continue to do all in their power to promote education for all Australians. Communities must also recognise and cherish moments of reconciliation as they occur, such as when thousands of Perth people attending the Western Australian Symphony Orchestra's 2023 Christmas Spectacular, witnessing Gina Williams singing 'Silent Night' in Noongar language, spontaneously switched on their mobile phone light in a gesture of shared emotion.

*Destroying to Replace* could be a pivotal resource for Australian students in upper secondary years, or introductory university courses. However, some tightening of agricultural terminology would be needed to bring it into line with Australian usage, including the replacement of 'stock' with 'livestock', the use of the term 'pastoralists' and 'pastoralism' when referring to the grazing of livestock on natural pasture, and restricting the use of the terms 'farmers' and 'farming' to the sedentary land-use which involves the cultivation of the land, whether for food or fodder crops. In Australia, the terms 'squatter' and the 'squattling frontier', are used colloquially to describe the process whereby settlers moved with their livestock into land they considered to be 'unoccupied', ignoring its occupation by Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people used spears and boomerangs for hunting, and not bows and arrows, as mentioned by Adhikari.

Adhikari's suggestions for further reading are so extensive as to make further comment unnecessary, however, I will briefly mention some relevant sources not

mentioned by Adhikari. Jacqueline Wright explores changing cultural perspectives on Katherine Susannah Pritchard's ground-breaking 1929 book, *Coonardoo*, read by generations of Western Australian school students. Bevan Carter examines early maps and accounts of the Swan River Colony by settlers and government officials that identify conflict between local Aboriginal groups and settlers. Raymond Evans, pre-eminent author on Queensland history, recently presented his current thinking on Aboriginal dispossession in Queensland, and as published online contains an extensive list of further reading.

In the words of the series editor, Alfred J Andrea, 'this book should be required reading by every student of world history, but especially by those who enjoy the fruits of lands wrested at great human expense from Indigenous Peoples' (xvii).

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**Browning, Barbara, *The Miniaturists*; Durham: Duke University Press, 2022; paperback, pp.221; 22 b/w images; RRP \$32.95; ISBN: 9781478018919.**

When I opened Barbara Browning's *The Miniaturists*, the first page begins 'with a question of feminist methodology' (1), before diving into everything from gynarchivism, (a phrase which Barbara coins for the 'various ways in which women store certain information in their bodies' (1)), insect parables, and the work of entomologist William Morton Wheeler. And that's just within the first chapter. Professor of Performance Studies at New York University, Browning honed her trademark 'fictocritical' style, (a combination of autobiographical and essayistic prose) through her earlier novels such as *The Gift* and *I'm Trying To Reach You*. Her latest book comprises eight sections of different lengths, all musing on various facets of miniaturism.

After the free-wheeling examination of entymology and feminism in the opening chapter, Browning's second chapter functions as a miniature biography of the crime scene 'dollhouse' artist Frances Glessner Lee, and chapter three focuses on 'Shrinking' movies across a variety of cultures. Chapter four covers multiple subjects, including the history of the Schoenhut toy piano, and Browning's own experiences with 'fictocriticism': which in the context of this novel becomes the tiny snapshots of a creator she forms when researching their artistic work through the Internet. Chapter five, 'gulliver phantasies', analyses the 'shrinking' narratives in the works of Jonathon Swift and Lewis Carroll, after which she goes on to discuss the phenomenon of miniature writing, or *micrographia*, in chapter six. The penultimate chapter, 'lead paint and other poisons' covers miniature portraiture and artists with dwarfism (notably the disabled painter Sarah Biffen), and chapter eight is interested in microbiology, parasites and microscopes.

All throughout the book Browning provides no singular perspective on miniaturism, or what it means to be miniature. Instead, the theoretical elements of each chapter feel like a separate essay, written in a semi-serious critical style. Browning does include her own reactions to pieces of scholarship, especially if, like William Morton Wheeler, their racist and/or misogynistic perspectives are condemnable by today's standards. But her work feels more like a catalogue of her sheer enjoyment of learning – peppering the text with lengthy quotes from her current reading list, as well as favourite artists, movies, songs, poems, and creative works.

The tone of each chapter is varied, with some being more scholarly than others. For example, in 'gulliver phantasies', Browning records her experiences reading the various academics, from Phyllis Greenacre to Sandor Ferenczi, that discuss the fetishized undertones of tiny characters such as the Lilliputians, or Alice and the hookah-smoking caterpillar. However, one of the most engaging elements of *The Miniaturists* is the sheer variety of tangents Browning includes in each chapter. The discussion travels rapidly from the sexual anxiety written into these novels, with the tiny Lilliputians measuring Gulliver's body for clothes according to just his thumb – the 'typical genital symbol' (113) – to the prevalence of 'miniature' people as a potential expression of Carroll's and Swift's germaphobia, as Browning comments 'maybe it's obvious to you that germs are very tiny things, though one's fear of them can be quite overwhelming' (118).

Browning's 'fictocritical' writing style is a distinctive mix of essay and autobiography in this book. She varies between separating her life-writing sections by paragraph breaks,

to just including her autobiographical segments as they bleed into her literary criticism. The further I read, the more I began approaching her work with a sense of decoding it, piecing together her lateral connections. For example, chapter three's analysis of the 1989 film *Honey I Shrunk the Kids* traverses from examining the on-screen 'bungling dad' to an account of her eight-year-old self interacting with her father while he was drunk, then moves to her mother whom she describes as 'neither large nor small' (67). The text then recalls a Lhasa de Sela song, 'Soon this Space will be too small', redirecting Browning's train of thought towards pregnancy and death with the reflection that '[m]aybe [Lhasa de Sela] was just too big for this space' (67). One can read her work as stream of consciousness, but I perceived it more as a stream of intentional thought; Browning frequently observes where her mind is going as she is in the process of writing the text, and then deliberately articulates this wayward journey for the reader.

Despite its episodic and segmented presentation, Browning appears keen to present her work as a *story*, writing 'I began this story with by saying "I first encountered the work of Phyllis Greenacre"...' (115) in chapter five. Likewise, no section is self-contained, and some even feel like diary entries, as when familiar characters from previous chapters re-enter not just the story, but Browning's life: one such footnote marks how 'Zachary wrote me back!' (140). Interspersed between her essayistic prose, Browning writes about her relationship with her partner, her son, and her day-to-day academic life. She develops a chatty familiarity with the reader, frequently quipping about racy personal details (such as including a charcoal sext of herself), and her partner S is equally a vital part of a narrative, as she shares his reaction to miniaturist subjects. There is a charming relatability to these moments. As Browning is describing her passion for 'sucking up written languages', she writes how she and her partner 'begin each day with half an hour or so of this kind of activity over coffee ... He's currently deep into Wilhelm Bolsche' (29).

The four final chapters very heavily feature Browning's experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic. She is often candid about time and place in these chapters, writing how she came back to certain sections of the book after a long period of lethargy. The narrative becomes tinged with her sense of claustrophobia, paranoia, and insignificance during the pandemic years, and her academic connections begin equating to her time spent in lockdown. However, Browning still writes with a great sense of positivism and hope in her accounts – a description of Lewis Carroll's 'morbid fear of breathing contaminated air and a gulping appetite for air he considered clean' morphs into a tranquil scene of Browning and her partner on the Hudson pier 'drinking in the fresh breezes' (120).

*The Miniaturists* feels like more than just a book; it is a multi-layered project crafted into a deeply personal reading experience. The chapters are an engaging exploration of 'the miniature' as a concept throughout human history, and the author's love for the esoteric will no doubt appeal to readers who enjoy learning for the sake of learning. *The Miniaturists* as a whole is deeply varied in its themes and what the author intends to convey, but if I were to detect a common through-line, Browning delights in sharing the poignant and positive effects of other people's actions in her life, and vice versa: 'after I made my own miniatures of Julietta's crime scenes, I gave them to her ... they were quickly appropriated by her daughter, who began making her own miniature things' (55).

To use the obvious pun, this feels like a book about 'the little things' that count.

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**Duffett, Mark and Hackett, Jon, *Scary Monsters: Monstrosity, Masculinity and Popular Music*; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021; paperback, pp.vii + 273; RPP: \$53.99; ISBN: 9781501313370.**

While monstrosity has undoubtedly become an important, emerging strand of scholarship in recent years, it is 'seldom studied' in relation to popular music (1-2). However, according to *Scary Monsters: Monstrosity, Masculinity and Popular Music*, the myths and discourse surrounding musical figures contain 'significantly more monsters' than you'd think (1). A collaboration between Mark Duffett, an Associate Professor of Media at the University of Chester, and Jon Hackett, Associate Professor in Film and Communications at St Mary's University, *Scary Monsters* covers a wide and varied selection of pop culture from the last hundred years of Western music.

The introduction provides an overview of notable perceptions – or as Hackett puts it 'dominant paradigms' (25) – surrounding monstrosity. These include the etymology and historical usage of monstrosity, and scholarly interpretations such as Foucault's theories of how the human monster came to be pathologized. Foucault provided a secular viewpoint of monstrosity, reframing contemporarily perceived degenerates (typically sick, unhoused or disabled people) as 'individual to be corrected' (10) instead of demonic manifestations of evil.

The introduction's discussion of masculinity has a brief, but useful selection of ideas surrounding gender politics, such as the origins of the term's patriarchy, masculinism and the so-called current 'crisis' of masculinity (5). However, the most interesting part of the introduction was the closing sub-section titled 'Popular music, gender and monstrosity', which effectively communicated the commodification and classification of the music industry and how it directs buyers into specific genres and spaces. The authors point out the manufactured difference between 'cock rock' and the 'softer, more romantic teeny bop', which, by comparison, were intended to performatively normalize 'aggressive, dominating and boastful' masculinity as an ideal in popular culture (19-20).

*Scary Monsters's* eight chapters are arranged in chronological order from the 1900s to the present day. However, their style and subject matter can be separated into two distinct groups: character study chapters, and more research-led concept chapters. The character studies make up the majority of the book, with five out of the eight chapters dedicated to individual performers or bands.

These studies begin with 'King Kong and the Promotion of Lead Belly' which focuses on criminal-turned-celebrity folk singer Huddie Ledbetter, AKA Lead Belly, and the racist American media commentary that likened him to King Kong. 'The Manager as Monster' evaluates Elvis Presley's infamous manager 'The Colonel' and questioning whether he was as controlling as he was perceived by the public eye. In 'Extreme fandom as monstrosity', Duffett provides a lengthy analysis of Mark Chapman (John Lennon's murderer) and his double identity – either insane fan or a logical, mentally troubled person – in his television appearances over the years. 'Masculinity on Trial', focuses on the frontman of French band *Noir Desir*, Bernard Cantrat, with Hackett discussing the 'retrospective aestheticization' of Cantrat's murder of his lover Marie Trintignan (176). The final chapter addresses the notorious serial paedophile Jimmy Saville, as Duffett argues his specifically constructed media personas allowed him to remain blameless until the expose.

The more research-led chapters include a discussion of Gaston Leroux's iconic

Opera Ghost in response to musical technology, an analysis of monstrous Frankensteinian imagery within the genre of glam rock, and the uses of horror imagery as an explicit, but also coded, outlet for African-American rap bands to explore the political economy of black life.

In this co-authored book, Duffett and Hackett's writing styles effectively gel together to provide a seamless textual experience. However, the structure and layout of the book is more than a little confounding. The subtitle of *Monstrosity, Masculinity and Popular Music*, indicates that masculinity as a concept is going to be questioned. But apart from the introduction, the wide majority of the book focuses on specific people through the case studies. The book's nucleus is on media witch-hunts, as the authors sift through statements from witnesses, interviewees and biographers to dissect these cultural personalities. Some sections, such as the glam rock thematic chapter, could have benefitted from some judicious editing, while other sections had the potential to be fleshed out into multiple topics, such as the case of the chapter on gothic rap, based primarily on the output of the band Gravediggaz. To Hackett, this group is essential to exploring 'aspects of wider historical or cultural phenomena that are often sidelined' (138); however, for the reader unfamiliar with their work, he provides a limited analysis of their music, lyrics and music videos in relation to horror, only utilizing four pages of a twenty-two-page chapter for this purpose. I would have welcomed up to three chapters of content on this subject: one for Gothic imagery in rap, one on the cultural importance of message rap, and one purely focused on the band.

Occasionally the authors will relate back to the introductory 'dominant paradigms' (25), such as Duffett's Freudian breakdown of Elvis's absent father complex in chapter three which briefly connects to the 'masculinities' section of the introduction. However, each of the eight chapters is completely separate from the others and the book ends on Jimmy Saville's chapter with no overarching conclusion. This leaves the introduction (arguably the most coherent section) feeling somewhat underutilized. In fact, the strongest correlator between the chapters (outside of the umbrella terms of 'monsters, masculinity and music') is the music industry, and how artists are commercialized, commodified, interpreted, villainized, and occasionally lifted up as art pieces. In my opinion, one of the most compelling sections of the book is in chapter five, where Duffett examines how the murder of John Lennon was positioned as artistic desecration, akin to 'slashing a Picasso', instead of just being accepted as a tragic loss of life (120). Therefore, the intense focus on marketing and the spread of information, which was briefly foregrounded in the introduction, arguably should have been a much larger part of the authors' setup. Perhaps a punchier title could have been *Scary Monsters: Monstrous Masculinities within the Popular Music Industry*.

These negativities should not give the impression that I disliked *Scary Monsters*, as I found most of the chapters fascinating. But the layout of the book and the chapters is a choice that I am still puzzling over. Overall, I regard this compilation as a useful collection of interviews and ideas for musical majors or biographers of each individual featured, and the reader should expect a 'true-crime'-esque experience that exposes the deliberate (or indirect) monstrosities of the music industry. However, as a contribution towards musical masculinities as whole, perhaps this book should be treated as a starting point, not a comprehensive study.

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**Johnston, Phillip, *Silent Films/Loud Music: New Ways of Listening to and Thinking About Silent Film Music*; New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2021; paperback, pp. xxii + 223, 38 b/w illustrations; RRP: £28.99, ISBN: 9781501366413.**

An American composer working in Sydney, Philip Johnston has made a name for himself in the discipline of silent film music, with his contemporary and jazz scores composed for various silent films, notably the works of Georges Méliès. This experience of writing scores directly informs the semi-academic and semi-autobiographical text of *Silent Films/Loud Music*. His opening ethos (and one which reverberates continually throughout the book) is that silent film music, although a vital art form, is rarely discussed in any academic or cultural sense. Therefore, this text is intended to champion the contemporary score for the silent film.

Johnston makes it very clear that this particular art form is not just 'background music' performed live, but a 'living kinetic dialogue between artists and across centuries' (xviii-xix). He firmly maintains that a contemporary score 'brings film back to its original heritage as a spectacle' (xix). Therefore, his book has the obligation to explore multiple contributing facets to his main argument. Firstly, he must examine the history of film music and the 'widely held beliefs about what film music *is*' (xx), as only then can Johnston provide his own investigation into the variety of experimental silent film scores.

As a result, the prelude and the first two chapters are a lengthy foundation and contextualization of silent film music and how it was received before the invention of talkies. Early on, Johnston throws a lot of definitions at the reader, the most significant being 'synchronicity', 'asynchronicity' and 'polysynchronicity' to frame his central argument (15). Synchronous scoring is music which follows the narrative, and asynchronous music provides subtext, telling us something different than what we see on screen (xvii). As a silent film itself is a 'fixed text' for which the music can change with every single showing (14), he invites the third term 'polysynchronous' to describe and celebrate the unlimited possibilities for silent film music. These three definitions return in the following chapters and are the most significant pieces of information introduced in the book.

His opening chapters, 'Music for Silent Films: From Synchronicity to Polysynchronicity' and 'Scores for Silent Film: Then and Now', are history-heavy and cover the etiquette of non-diegetic music in early cinema (music heard by the audience and not the characters). These two chapters are frequently broken up into long lists of music theory topics, such as the expectations for a film score (masking noise, providing continuity, communicating meaning) (4), or including all the prerequisites for a silent film score in the early twentieth century (live music, delivered by one artist, continuous through the entire film) (34-35).

Across the next six chapters, Johnston utilizes the same structure of introducing several musical case studies as talking points. Chapter three examines six different pieces of music from various composers all writing for Georges Méliès short films, as the author attempts to convey the diversity in approaches to contemporary scoring (63). Chapter four uses Johnston's set-up of what was 'expected' in a 1920's film score and then provides four case studies that break from this mould, using specific examples of the contemporary

scores for *Sherlock Jnr.* (1924) or *The Golem* (1920). In chapter five, Johnston uses his own work as examples of polysynchronicity, such as his score for Todd Browning's *The Unknown* (1927) where the music suggests a reversal of the roles of hero and villain (108). Johnston's love of jazz as a musical medium is featured in chapter six, as 'Jazzin' the Silents' stresses jazz's techniques of improvisation as an essential part of silent film music. Chapter seven touches on silent film music used in contemporary media, such as 2012's *The Artist*, and chapter eight explores the challenges of writing music for silent mediums such as comics and graphic novels. Each individual chapter asks a variety of questions for each film score and composer, such as what were the creator's intentions in composing certain sections of the score, and how effective is it at conveying the narrative and/or causing the audience to react a certain way. However, Johnston typically provides a very narrow focus for each film; just one specific scene or movement within a score. While each of his points is interesting, because he introduces so many separate texts in each chapter, there are disappointingly few opportunities for an extended discussion of any single score, or even multiple sections of a single film.

Lastly, chapter nine features interviews with other contemporary composers such as Richard Einhorn, Ken Winokur, and Gus Macmillan, and includes an autobiographical summary of Johnston's own methods. The tone of this section is distinctly different to the rest of the book, as Johnston is no longer educating the audience, but rather providing answers to a series of pre-asked questions about how he writes music. Unfortunately, the final section has no noticeable conclusion, the author does not tie the interviews and his own words together, nor does he wrap up his argument as a whole, thus ending the book on a rather sudden and disjointed note.

*Silent Films/Loud Music* comes with the caveat that it will most likely be impenetrable to those who haven't studied film music. As the majority of the content discussed only exists within a certain field of academia (specific recordings for films over a century old), it is likely that a portion of the audience won't be able to access the featured media. This is not a criticism of the book, but an included aspect of the reading experience. Should this book make it to a second edition, this would be a prime candidate for providing further information through direct links in an e-book, or noting where these scores exist in publicly accessible collections in archives, libraries, or online.

Therefore, the target audience for this book seems to be those already in his area of study, as the author provides multiple quotes from fellow musical artists, and includes photocopied sheet music in the appendix. As a result, I would argue that readers should treat Johnston's offering as a textbook rather than an academic discussion. The work includes a large number of concepts and definitions in only 200 pages, and the very act of reading it requires homework, to provide context to the content. Therefore, my personal highlight of the book were the first two chapters, as on their own they provide an engaging introduction to the history of film music. Also, despite the onslaught of new information in each of the chapters, the author's main concept of polysynchronicity is a consistent theme throughout the text and to those in the know, *Silent Films/Loud Music* will most likely live up to the 'New Ways of Listening and Thinking' listed in his title. As a whole, this book provides an extensive (if not quite comprehensive) look into Johnston's own perception of silent film music and composing.

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**Muthukumaran, Sureshkumar, *The Tropical Turn: Agricultural Innovation in the Ancient Middle East and the Mediterranean*; Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2023; paperback, pp. xx + 294, 27 b/w illustrations, 10 maps, RRP US\$34.95; ISBN: 978-0-520-39084-3.**

Sureshkumar Muthukumaran's *The Tropical Turn* explores the translocation and subsequent cultivation of plant species from Southeast Asia to the Middle East and Mediterranean. Despite the importance of agricultural practices in shaping the development of ancient cultures, such processes are too often overlooked by non-specialist scholars. Though a range of other works have investigated this phenomenon, Muthukumaran's *The Tropical Turn* is a significant contribution to the discussion of ancient agriculture, trade and cross-cultural interaction.

In the introduction, Muthukumaran sets up the aims, scope and limitations of the book, outlines the prior scholarly treatment of Eurasian crop exchanges, and then provides the historical context necessary to understand the analysis and discussion which make up the majority of the book's length. The subsequent chapters focus on a selection of agriculturally, commercially and culturally significant cultivars, namely: cotton, rice, citrus, cucurbits, Indian lotus, taro and sissoo tree. Muthukumaran skilfully navigates the available archaeobotanical, lexicographical, and textual evidence to trace the transmission of these cultivars from southeast Asia to the Middle East and Mediterranean. He investigates how they were cultivated in these new environments, what they were used for, and whether they obtained any cultural significance over time. As well as geographical, the evidence analysed by Muthukumaran necessarily spans an impressive temporal range, from the Bronze Age to the early medieval period. The book is punctuated throughout with a selection of informative greyscale maps, botanical drawings, photographs and artwork.

Muthukumaran does not make any radical new claims in *The Tropical Turn* but does effectively promote what can be described as a 'gradualist' model in his interpretation of the westward diffusion of South Asian plant species. He argues that this diffusion took place over a longer period than is generally thought, beginning in the Bronze Age, and continuing through to late antiquity and beyond (5-6). In contrast to Andrew Watson's hypothesis of the early medieval 'Arabian agricultural revolution' (Watson, 1974, 5-6), Muthukumaran further asserts that this process cannot be ascribed to the influence or action of any single group in any particular time period (63). This being said, he does at some points acknowledge that political actors played a significant role in crop transfer (220). Muthukumaran indicates in his introduction that a number of more recent scholarly works still draw on Watson's model (6), despite the criticism it has received from Samuel Delwin (2001), Michael Decker (2009), Anna Kelley (2019), and others. It is apparent then, that the issue of when and why crop exchanges between South Asia and the Middle East and Mediterranean took place has not been settled, or at least critiques of Watson's interpretation have not been successful in communicating their refutation of his model.

While Muthukumaran's 'gradualist' interpretation of crop transfers and his criticism of scholarship which frames them as 'revolutionary' phenomena confined to specific time periods are not wholly original, they make a significant contribution to the

refutation of these 'revolutionary' models. It should be noted however, that only a few small segments of *The Tropical Turn* are devoted to explicitly arguing these points. The majority of the book focuses on exploring the evidence in a more open-ended fashion, as Muthukumaran writes:

This book, in essence, offers an ecological reading of long-distance connectivity in the ancient world ... with the aim of assessing the motivations behind and impact of this phenomenon and ancient Middle Eastern and Mediterranean societies (6).

There are a few other ideas discussed in *The Tropical Turn* that bear mentioning. Tying into his longer timeframe for crop transmission, Muthukumaran places great emphasis on the Bronze Age trade in Lapis Lazuli. He argues that the trade networks along which these semi-precious stones were carried westward through Iran were important precursors to the routes along which plant species were later transmitted (26-28, 49). Additionally, in the concluding discussion of the book Muthukumaran proposes that the transfer of plant species from South Asia to the Middle East and Mediterranean be broken down into four steps: familiarisation, experimentation, routinisation, and indigenisation (208).

Muthukumaran's methodology is perhaps the most impressive aspect of this work. Though the geographical and temporal scope of *The Tropical Turn* is broad, making use of often neglected Bronze Age sources, when it comes to the specific cultivars that are discussed in detail the focus is sensibly restrained to a select few. He examines only those plant species which were capable of being cultivated in the Middle East and Mediterranean, avoiding discussion of the wide range of plant products that were imported to these regions but never successfully grown there. The treatment of the often difficult to interpret textual and material evidence for the selected cultivars is particularly thorough. Muthukumaran is careful to acknowledge when the available sources do not provide concrete evidence for the presence, cultivation or consumption of a particular plant species, noting in his discussion of one popular cereal crop that 'serious history... cannot be written on the basis of a solitary grain of rice' (112). In his analysis of obscure terms derived from the impressive range of ancient languages considered in *The Tropical Turn*, Muthukumaran regularly outlines the different ways they can be interpreted and in cases where he favours a particular interpretation, his reasons for doing so.

*The Tropical Turn* is accessible to classical scholars, historians, and archaeologists, as well as undergraduate students in these fields, though they may struggle with some of the more technical passages. Both established academics and students will find it a useful source in the study of ancient agriculture, globalisation and long-distance trade networks across Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean. Archaeobotanists and other scholars specialising in subjects covered by the book will likely be familiar with at least some of the material discussed. However, they may still find it beneficial for the wide temporal and geographical range it covers, or conversely for the specific detail given to the main cultivars discussed.

Though overall Muthukumaran's main arguments are clear and the structure of the book easy to follow, there are perhaps some concepts which would have been more effective had they been interspersed through the work rather than confined to a particular section. In particular the previously mentioned framework for understanding crop transmission in stages of familiarisation, experimentation, routinisation, and indigenisation is a useful model, but one which is not introduced until the conclusion of the book. While Muthukumaran does touch on some of these concepts in the earlier

chapters, fully incorporating this model into these chapters would perhaps have provided readers with a useful framework for understanding the transmission and adoption of these cultivars. Admittedly however, the lack of evidence for some stages of specific crop species' adoption in the Middle East and Mediterranean may have made this model difficult to apply to some chapters. In any case, there are no serious faults in the scholarship or structure of *The Tropical Turn*. Muthukumaran's engaging writing paired with his thorough treatment of the evidence should entertain and inform any reader with an interest in ancient agriculture and the contact and exchange between South Asia, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean.

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essa may ranipiri, *Echidna*; Wellington, Te Herenga Waka University Press, 2022;  
paperback, pp.96; RRP: \$25.00; ISBN: 9781776920099.

Long studied, taught, and translated by white men, Classics has often been accused of upholding colonialist ideals. In recent years, this identity has been welcomingly challenged by an influx of 'revisionings' championed by queer and femme-identifying authors who prioritise decolonising the classical myth and increasing reader accessibility. These 'revisionings' excite me in their capacity to challenge the status quo and disturb the absolutisms upon which our society rests. For this reason, I was delighted to read essa may ranipiri's *Echidna*, an adaptation of Greek, Māori, and Christian mythology centred on the Greek monster Ἐχιδνα.

The author of *Echidna or The Many Adventures of HINENAKAHIRUA as She Tries to Find Her Place in a Colonised World*, poet and visual artist essa may ranipiri, lives and writes on Whenua Ngāti Wairere land in New Zealand. A collection of poetry in the third person, *Echidna* explores the process of self-discovery that ranipiri's modern Echidna undertakes as a queer person attempting to navigate the socio-cultural tension between her indigenous Māori culture and the pervasive colonialist echoes of Christianity and classicism. In reappropriating the half-woman, half-snake 'she-viper' of Greek mythology as a queer, biracial figure, the text explores the key classical theme of monstrosity through a contemporary lens, asking: what is it to live, and to love, as a monster? (11).

*Echidna* opens with a 'Dramatis Personae | He Tāngata' that introduces the reader not only to the characters of the collection but to ranipiri's subversive, contemporary approach to the classical world (9). Gender-conscious, quippy descriptions of each character are interspersed with ranipiri's Māori dialect and colloquialisms as evident in the first of these *dramatis personae*, where ranipiri describes Echidna as an

eponymous character, Greek Mother of Monsters and messy takatāpui wahine [Queer Woman]. Has long snake tails instead of legs. (she/they) (9)

ranipiri's *Echidna* is a monstrous assemblage that rejects both boundaries and binaries. In the first of the collection's seven parts, ranipiri challenges the classical canon by addressing Echidna's murky Hesiodic parentage and deeming her to be 'Born of Eve & Lucifer [the serpent]' from the Bible (15). This imbues Echidna, as their snake-legged daughter conceived in lust, with the sin of her parents, and quite literally leaves her 'indebted to a slither' that marks her as different from everyone else (18). By the collection's closure the reader witnesses Echidna come to privilege her own queer 'pleasure' over the doctrines of the Christian church, and the influence of her 'pakeha', or white New Zealander, family (15, 29).

This tension between Christianity and Echidna's queer identity mirrors the tension between Echidna's Māori culture and her white ancestry. Themes of colonialism, its relationship with modern Classics, and its effect on the biracial individual are evinced in 'Echidna Gets a Name Change', where Echidna attempts to change her name to the Māori Hinenākahirua as 'she don't want to be white washed by the classics no more' (31). Met with the disapproval of her white family members, metaphorically cast as 'the Olympians' in the poem, Echidna becomes insecure that 'she hasn't earned a Māori name'

(31). It is only in the final poem of the collection, 'Hinenākahirua Repairs Something that Needs Repairing', that Echidna's trans and Indigenous identity is validated, her name is changed, and she can overcome the pervasive 'white washing' rhetoric of western society to embody her authentic self (93).

In part four of the text, entitled 'Trickle Down Colonisation and a World Tour,' ranipiri shifts focus to the wider effects of colonialism on the Māori population (47). In my favourite poem of the collection, 'Echidna & Ureia', ranipiri evinces the alienating effects of displaying sacred indigenous material in white institutions (52). Scenes of Echidna and the *taniwha* (supernatural creature) Ureia playing together in the ocean are contrasted with a description of Echidna later seeing 'them again standing in the Auckland War Memorial Museum' as a display (52-54). Echidna touches the carving of Ureia and 'feels them try their best to touch back', exemplifying how this colonial mode of display disconnects the Māori people from their own modes of connection with culture (54). This feeling 'sits inside her for years afterwards' – and it has stayed with me since reading (54).

Alongside ranipiri's implicit condemnation of colonialism, queerness and queer love are the central themes of the collection. Echidna's physical growth and aging is paralleled by her developing realisation of her gendered identity. This realisation is driven by her erotic, romantic, and platonic interactions with multiple queered characterisations of deities from Christian, Māori, and Greek mythology. As readers we bear intimate witness to the naked power of her quest for pleasure and for truth. Echidna's encounters range from introspective discussions of queerness and selfhood, to dazzling depictions of the lust and verve of the queer party scene. In 'Echidna & a Drag Queen named Pipi' Echidna asks Pipi to 'take her out to a bar made of ancestors queerer than all the motherfucking stars' (82). ranipiri gives those ancestors to us in queered characterisations of an array of popular mythological figures, filling the fragmented gaps of the past with queer pride and experience.

Beside the central narrative of Echidna's queer awakening is a complimentary set of seven poems detailing a love affair between Maui-Potiki of Māori mythology and the Greek Prometheus. I found this to be the most captivating element of the collection, charmed emotionally by the solid narrative of the couple's epic devotion and intellectually by the cleverness of the pairing. A testament to their comparative mythology, ranipiri combines both figures' similar mythological arc of discovering fire for humankind into a new, syncretic myth foregrounding their love. Maui's and Prometheus' discovery of fire is reimaged as a side-effect of their intense passion, shrewdly positing their queer love as the real reason behind human survival and civilisation. Evocative and fervent, ranipiri writes:

tips riddled with flame they tuha [spit] together  
make the rock hot with fluids  
crowning Elbrus in waitātea [semen] (34)

At the text's conclusion, the narratives of Maui and Echidna (now Hinenākahirua) combine. In two snake-shaped poems, ranipiri's protagonists shed the old versions of themselves to embrace their physical and emotional transitions. This emphasises what I consider a key message in the collection: that one must release the constraints of their past to forge a better future, like a snake (person) sheds its skin. This message mirrors ranipiri's rejection of the colonial reception of Greek mythology in favour of rewriting these myths to validate queer and indigenous bodies. ranipiri's brazen defiance of the colonial regime and its compulsory heteronormativity will endear this book to all those who can

identify with Echidna's experience as an outsider, while their subversive revisioning of classical mythology will appeal to those that support the gargantuan challenge that is the decolonising of myth. ranipiri's strength is in their fearlessness, apparent in the crudeness of their prose; but they do not cater to their audience. The Māori dialect abundant in the text is left untranslated, and though it did inhibit my reading of ranipiri's poetry, I support the significance of their unfettered use of the language. ranipiri's *Echidna* is an act of resistance; pushing past the point of comfortability to show that living, and loving, as a monster is the most natural thing in the world.

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**Rhook, Nadia, *Second Fleet Baby*; Fremantle, Fremantle Press, 2022; paperback, pp.104; RRP \$29.99, ISBN: 9781760991692.**

A non-Indigenous poet and historian from Boorloo/Perth who specializes in Indigenous Studies (which she has taught at the University of Western Australia), Nadia Rhook's interest in – and respect for – the subject matters of belonging and non-belonging in both colonial and present-day Australia are apparent throughout *Second Fleet Baby*, their second poetry collection. Drawing on 'informed imagination to connect with the past, mediated by records, places, intuition, conversations, and the body' as well as by their 'learnt knowledge of colonial processes and structures' (94), Rhook combines their personal archives with historical records on eighteenth century English convict women, especially their maternal ancestor Susannah Mortimer, to challenge assumptions on colonial privilege vis-à-vis patriarchal entitlement.

The book's title first references the Second Fleet of six ships (two storeships and four convict transport ships carrying over 1000 convicts) which arrived in Sydney Cove in 1790, following the First Fleet of eleven ships which left England in 1787 to found a penal colony in Australia. Three of the Second Fleet transport ships carried mainly male convicts, whereas the fourth, *The Lady Juliana*, was the first all-female convict transport ship. The only transport of the Second Fleet not owned by the slave trade company Camden, Calvert & King, *The Lady Juliana* carried over 220 women who were expected to redress the marked gender imbalance of the small colonial population. During their 309-day long voyage, female convicts on board *The Lady Juliana* were issued proper rations, spent long stays in port stops, and – as acknowledged in 'Susannah on the Deck' – enjoyed free access to the deck (92). These generous living conditions, as well as the regular cleaning and fumigation of the ship, were likely to have decisively factored in the low mortality rate aboard this ship as compared to the others, as intimated in 'fleet lives'. *Second Fleet Baby* also evokes Susannah Mortimer's baby, born onboard *The Lady Juliana* and recalled in the eponymous poem 'Susannah Mortimer', as well as 'in one corner of her mind' and 'the midwife'. In a broader sense this baby also conjures the many babies born to women convicts and their descendants in the colonies up to the present time, as suggested by the poems 'These women are the great, great grandmothers of thousands of Australians today', and 'porphyria and convict mothers', dedicated to Mary Wade, a fellow convict of Susannah Mortimer's 'whose descendant is former Prime Minister of Australia Kevin Rudd' (22).

A historical poetry collection, 'written in the space of "archival poetics" theorised and realised by First Nations poets' (96), *Second Fleet Baby* finds its foundation in the particular historical narrative of the Second Fleet's voyage. The language of archival sources – namely, the biographic note on Susannah Mortimer (which functions as an epigraph to the collection), taken from Michael Flynn's *The Second Fleet: Britain's Grim Convict Armada of 1790*; explanatory notes on historical details such as the death rate onboard the Second Fleet found in 'fleet lives'; or the dedication of a poem to a historical figure which precedes the poem 'porphyria and convict mothers' – serves as a formal trace of history, both defining and blurring the boundaries between history and poetry, the past and the present. Like the poems, Rhook's notes and references section also stands between

genres: they include publishing information for books used for historical research, but they are often and foremost references to lines of poetry, speeches or talks that inform specific poems, to which sometimes authorial commentary is added to contextualise the quote. In this light, the poet's voice is met by the voices of other poets and historical figures in a truly intertextual web.

Divided into five sections, each containing a variable number of poems which further enhance the dialogue between the language of the archive and the language of the poet, the poems are connected by the common themes of giving birth and motherhood. 'Susannah of the Sea' memorializes being transported away from home, becoming pregnant, and giving birth at sea; 'Settler Dawns' delves into the lives, habits and rituals of white women settlers; while 'Federation Pains' muses on the birth pangs of a nation invoking 'waste land' as 'a legal category employed by European colonisers to steal Indigenous land' (51). 'Fuss or Fertiliser' is informed by the male gaze over the pregnant female body, children and language vis-à-vis meditations on reproduction, namely IVF (undertaken by Rhook), and 'Watching *Free Willy* in the Age of Covid-19' offers vignettes of Rhook giving birth to their own baby while coming full circle with the poem 'Susannah on the Deck', which recalls their foremother.

The poems formally experiment with boundaries of genres and styles, as immediately evinced by the consistent lack of capital letters in the titles, the use of titles redolent of academic or scientific language ('in university I learnt that history is nothing but context'; 'zygote'), and the use of different page layouts and fonts to convey both rhythm and dialogue or suggest commentary. Written in free verse, the lines are often set on the page in configurations which differ from the classical stanza form of verse. For instance, 'in university I learnt that history is nothing but context' is divided into two parts visually marked by the use of italics in the two stanzas serving as an epigraph to the second part. This, in turn, names the ports where the Second Fleet anchored, as well as the oceans they voyaged through, while musing on the fleeting thoughts of the women convicts as they approached their final destination by emulating the movement of the waves throughout the page and the fragmentation of thought processes in frazzled verses. Likewise, poems such as 'in one corner of her mind' challenge the definition of poetry as verse by using the structure of rhythm- and beat-driven prose sentences joined into paragraphs which are only different because of their uneven indentation and their emulation of enjambment in the breaking up of the last sentence of each paragraph. The collection is interspersed with a constant dialogue between past and present – 'this prisoner / spreads rumours / *knowledge is power and evidence*' (20) – and lyrical images:

(...)

as the

ship slaps against the Indian ocean she observes a cluster of buildings  
sloping hills sidling up to the open sea like

an ex-lover testing the distance between  
two once-tangled bodies she moves (30)

In addition, the collection also nods to academic practices, relishing on the use of dictionary entries as both titles and poems ('fleet lives', 'forbear (noun)') and footnotes ('settler dawns') – which always nest in the affective: 'the cry of a White woman, my breath, holds the history of colonisation' (27).

*Second Fleet Baby* finds its momentum in the grounding of female convicts' bodies

as trappings for colonial expansion in a male-dominated society, in which giving birth, in particular, is a means of settling on stolen land:

the context of this story  
is  
thick  
with criminal women loose  
women strategically-beneficial-for-the-colony women  
'settler-wife' women  
  
women who were free then owned (11)

This preoccupation is anchored in the poet's own body: 'sweetheart there are celestial bodies there are living and breathing bodies / there are bodies marked for immediate medical attention' (90). It is likewise imprinted on the bodies and minds of the historical figures Rhook revisits, namely Mary Wade – 'sometimes I wonder who else lies awake at night thinking how / we were criminals before we were criminal' (22) – and Dame Dorothy Tangey:

it is not as a woman  
that I have been elected to this chamber. it is as a ~~citizen~~ an inheritor of  
stolen land, and I take my place here with the full privileges and rights  
of all ~~citizens~~ settler colonists, and, what is more important, with the full  
responsibilities which such a burden of theft entails (48)

With a historical and poetic framework that allows a vivid exploration of the entwined concerns of gender and race which unflinchingly re-imagines English convicts who had been criminalised by their own government and afterwards engaged in colonising First Nations lands, *Second Fleet Baby* is both a mesmerizing poetry collection and a unique addition to the field of women and post-colonial studies. By weaving archival traces into a collection affectively grounded in their own family's history and writing notes that tease the reader into both researching and imagining beyond the information provided, Rhook has certainly provided an entry point for both undergraduates and professional researchers interested in investigating omissions in the archival history of the Second Fleet and the occupation of Eora land.

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**Saleh, Sara M., *The Flirtation of Girls / Ghazal El-Banat*; Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 2023; paperback, pp.xii + 106; RRP: \$24.99; ISBN: 9780702266287.**

Australian writer, poet, and human rights lawyer, Sarah M. Saleh is the daughter of migrants from Palestine, Egypt, and Lebanon. Her essays, short stories and poems have been previously published in a series of anthologies, and 2023 saw the publication of both her first novel and this work, her first full-length poetry collection. Saleh deals with the migrant experience and within it, the liminal spaces of girlhood and womanhood. By exploring the dialogue between generations of Arab women and the many forms of patriarchal violence they face, Saleh's work is both an intimate and personal meditation, and a reminder of our collective humanity.

*The Flirtation of Girls / Ghazal El-Banat* begins with a single poem as a prelude, entitled 'self cartography' (xi). In what feels like a highly autobiographical exploration of self, the speaker regards the multiplicity of their life and the complexity of their identity in a glittering, unfettered prose. This prelude establishes what will go on to be an intrapersonal exploration of the multifaceted nature of selfhood and girlhood within a condition of dispossession and dislocation.

In the first section, 'forgotten girls,' Saleh calls upon her matriarchal line to give voice to the suffering of the aunts, the mothers, and the motherland. In fact, the motherland, the mother and the mothered quickly become interchangeable in the text as the violation of self and place is treated with a decided parallel. In only the second poem 'Aubade for the Ancestors', Saleh's Palestine is the speaker's 'beloved' sickened and confusing 'cobwebs and thorns for its children' (4). Here the motherland is loved, she sickens, she grieves her children, she is as disoriented and dispossessed as Saleh's migrant mothers are. Later, in 'City/Sitti of Grief', the speaker compares their homeland to their grandmother, and mourns the destruction of their family and of the Palestine they remember from their childhood.

The premise of the middle section of this work, 'flirty girls', is revealed in the first line of the first poem, 'The (Not So) Secret Life of 3arab Girls: Our Raqs is Sharqi (an intermittent Ghazal)', in which Saleh writes 'they can't stop us 3arab girls' (33). Though left unexplained by Saleh, the term '3arab' is used colloquially by Arab people in western countries to mean 'Arab,' with the '3' at the front invoking the Arabic letter of ayn. What follows in this section is a testimony to living resistance, inviting the reader into the subversive spaces of softness and strength created, and fostered, by Arab women amidst a reality of dislocation, tragedy, and patriarchal oppression. The speaker here directly identifies herself, for the first time, as an '3arab girl' and situates herself in this space of resistant girlhood. Possessing a particularly confessional tone, the topics in this section range from recollections of nights out on the town and teenage heartbreaks, to the speaker's experience of sexual assault, and meditations on colonialism, generational trauma, and patriarchal power. The concluding line of 'Woman crying uncontrollably in the next stall responds', becomes a phrase – 'I hear you thank you for seeing me' (35) – interchangeable between speaker and reader as Saleh curates a space for understanding and witnessing that defies difference.

The third and final section of the collection, 'girls who live forever,' deals with

what it means for the speaker to live as a modern Arab Australian Muslim woman, who is always literally and metaphorically 'here and there' (63). It journeys into the theme of dislocation from both self and place, and the slipperiness of one's own memory in the romanticisation of homes, lovers, and people you have lost, left or been excised from. This romanticisation is counterbalanced by what feels like a more objective exploration of the suffering traversed in the first section and then conveyed so intimately in the second. This suffering has now been translated into a resolved and defiant dedication to the speaker's heritage.

It feels natural then, that in the final verse of Saleh's 'Afterlude', 'Love Poem to Consciousness', the speaker's resolve is so clear and self-reflexive as she announces:

I know this now, my being contracts and expands  
with the land, boundless.  
I know this too: if ancestral homeland  
gets me killed someday,  
I'll die like our trees, standing up (100).

With the recent events in Palestine a constant spectral presence in the collection, this final message of resistance is particularly salient. Saleh's intimate recollection of the generations of violent oppression and dislocation experienced by her family and her homeland foreground the impact of the Gaza conflict on Palestinian civilians and the enduring trauma of displacement. Divided into three sections dedicated to the exploration of girlhood and matriarchal power within this violence, *The Flirtation of Girls / Ghazal El-Banat* positions this girlhood as key to resistance and speaks to the universality, and sanctity, of feminine experience. Despite its distinctly personal focus, this situates the work's intended audience as all women, young or old, who understand the steadfast bonds of sisterhood and can identify with the heartbreak, loss, grief, and love that the speaker details. It is also a special work for Palestinian, and migrant women especially, who can see their own experiences reflected in that of Saleh's speaker.

It is not often that I am provoked to think and to feel in equal measure, and with such intensity, in reading a collection. I appreciate Saleh's vulnerability, and her defiance; it seems to reach through the page to grip my hands. While I wish that Saleh had explained her choice with the split-title, I find myself satisfied by my own understanding of it. 'Ghazal El-Banat' is not only a direct translation of 'The Flirtation of Girls' but it references a 1949 Egyptian movie of the same name as well as a Lebanese form of fairy floss. In this title, the personal and universal continue to conflate. Saleh nods to each part of her own heritage (Palestinian, Lebanese, Egyptian) and simultaneously reminds her female readers that we can never be contained; that we must always continue to flirt with life, with joy, and with each other, in every language and in every corner of the world.

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