

The Transvestite Adventure: Reading the Colonial Grotesque

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This reading of transvestic performance in Australian fiction is in dialogue with Robert Dixon's 1995 monograph *Writing the Colonial Adventure: Race, Gender and Nation in Anglo-Australian Popular Fiction, 1875–1914*. It is informed by the frameworks Dixon developed in his analysis of the relationship between literature and culture, specifically the ways in which he relates the occult effects of the literary imaginary and the political unconscious to historical contexts and their implication in the formation of Australia's particular colonialism. More specifically still, the argument regarding colonial transvestism engages directly with Dixon's deployment of Peter Stallybrass and Allon White's formulation of the 'grotesque' and its application to the Australian colonial context. The essay revisits Dixon's reading of the Australian grotesque as a critical optic for reading Australian colonial narratives of female to male cross-dressing to argue that the transvestite figures in colonial narratives enact performances of what Stallybrass and White schematise as the two orders of the grotesque, which are enacted in the identity formation of the collective. They write, as Dixon quotes:

The first order involves the complete othering of another group. They are completely alien. This fundamental mechanism of identity formation *produces* the second, hybrid grotesque at the level of the political unconscious *by the very struggle to exclude the first grotesque*. . . . The point is that the *exclusion* necessary to the formation of social identity at [one] level is simultaneously a *production* at the level of the Imaginary, and a production, what is more, of a complex hybrid fantasy emerging out of the very attempt to demarcate boundaries, to unite and purify the social collectivity. (Stallybrass and White 5)

In his application of this paradoxical process to the context of Australian colonial literature, Dixon identifies the recurrent processes of racialised 'othering' as pertaining to the first order of the grotesque. The 'complex hybrid fantasy' that emerges from this process, the second order of the grotesque, figures, Dixon argues, the displaced anxieties of 'the colonial self' (75), who fears 'cultural and racial regression' (72). My contention in this essay is that the transvestite's inherent paradoxism allows them to occupy both orders of the Australian colonial grotesque simultaneously. By dint of their doubled and contradictory selves, including their role as both realist character and chimera, the transvestite figure in Australian colonial fiction traverses the spectrum of alienation. S/he is both the othered social subject, an outcast, and the 'hybrid fantasy' of the Imaginary and the political unconscious. Moreover s/he figures that grotesquerie for the white colonial subject so that he can confront it and excise the unwanted other from the boundaries of land, text and self. In fulfilling this function the transvestite unifies and purifies the social collectivity of white settler culture while exposing its precarity. Separately, in tandem and in sequence, the transvestite's performance of the two operations of the grotesque is 'part of the inner dynamic of the boundary constructions necessary to collective identity' (Stallybrass and Allon 13). In the context of colonial Australia, this collective identity is the terrain of the white colonisers.

At the same critical moment as Dixon's *The Colonial Adventure*, Marjorie Garber published her pathmaking study of transvestic representation in literature and culture, *Vested Interests*:

Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety (1992), which deploys a similar methodology to Dixon's *Colonial Adventure* in its dual consideration of literary and cultural imaginaries and the confusion between the objects and subjects of cultural anxiety. Akin to *The Colonial Adventure*, *Vested Interests* maps originary constitutions of culture and representation. Garber makes the claim that 'transvestism is a space of possibility structuring and confounding culture' (17). She attributes this possibility to the transvestite's unique capacity to variously confuse and demarcate boundaries between binary structures, most obviously the fundamental divisions that organise sex, sexuality and gender. However, as we know from post-structuralism, the collapse of even one binary threatens the binary system itself and *Vested Interests* shows how most cross-dressing fictions include the renegotiation of interconnected binaries that organise the divisions of race and ethnicity, class, and between representation and reality.

Cross-dressers habitually cross numerous binary categories at any one time, and the interplay of these transversals functions to strengthen the conviction of their performance. For the bearer of the gaze misreads its recognition of unconventional sex or gender according to, say, cultural difference, as occurs repeatedly in Australian colonial fiction with the 'French man' at the centre of Tasma's story 'Monsieur Caloche' (1878) and the 'native "boy"' in Ernest Favenc's short story 'How the Reverend Simmondsen Lost His Character' (1892). The space and time in which the cross-dresser disrupts and disorients a culture's organising binaries, even if fleeting, present an opportunity for either their revision or re-affirmation. The transvestite characters of Australian colonial fiction create the time and space for these negotiations which they also fulfil in their overdetermined role as literary transvestites and their doubled role within the operations of the grotesque. These interconnections indicate that in colonial Australia too, the transvestite was integral to cultural construction as the spectacle of its desire and anxiety, and the means by which new boundaries are made or old borders reinforced.

Dixon and Garber share an analytical methodology in their attention to textual symptoms and effects rather than locating meaning in stated motivations. Both, that is, direct attention to the surface of the text as the site where meaning is activated. This approach is significant for transvestite and colonial fictions for it directs critical focus onto the gazing subject, those fictional characters who apprehend, read or misread the transvestite scene before them. One key way the captivation of the surface is stressed in Australian colonial fiction is what Susan Martin identifies as the fixation on the faces of cross-dressed characters, from the natural moustaches on the faces of cross-dressed women, such as Nosey Alf and Jim Quartermain in Joseph Furphy's *Such Is Life* (1903), as well as the disfigurements of Nosey Alf and 'Monsieur Caloche' in Tasma's story. Martin invokes Mary Douglas's argument that 'the boundaries of the body can represent any boundaries that are threatened or precarious' (Douglas 115) to link the surface of the face to the precarity of colonial boundaries and to the 'profound disruption of the division between the sexes' in that fictional locus (Martin 69). Kay Ferres extends this focus on boundaries in her reading of Rosa Praed's *Fugitive Anne* (1903) to identify the colonial encounters that 'occur in this novel at both the permeable frontier of the Gulf of Carpentaria and the centre of Empire' (27).

The reader, too, is captivated by the transvestic surface but their attention moves between the compelling object—grotesque figure and/or transvestic spectacle—and the viewing subject, who becomes circumscribed by the dilemma of the object and inseparable from it. Following the trajectory of the subject's gaze reveals the ways in which the transvestite character holds up a mirror to the viewer's desire and anxiety and enables the transmission of these desires and anxieties across the text. Classic transvestic texts, such as Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, make this operation clear. In this play Viola/Cesario is not only an object of desire for Olivia and the

intimate of Duke Orsino but is him/herself a figure of the desire that circulates promiscuously in comedic romance before its eventual organisation according to conventional arrangements. Here, as elsewhere, the transvestite commands not only the gaze of the characters but also that of the audience, for s/he is the figure of consummate performance.

In a very different genre and closer to the Australian texts to be examined here, the transgendered performer ‘Zambinella’ of Balzac’s novella *Sarrasine* (1830) also commands the gaze. *Sarrasine* was one of the early texts of Balzac’s *La Comédie Humaine*, synonymous with realism and naturalism while remaining steeped in the Gothic, so that Zambinella is simultaneously a character in a realist narrative and also a kind of phantom. In *Sarrasine*, a young sculptor desires ‘Zambinella’ as his ideal woman. However, Zambinella’s ideality in fact relates to his/her illusory prowess for s/he is in fact a castrato on the Vatican stage. The narrator’s belated knowledge of Zambinella’s sex leads him to a state of murderous fury; his inability to differentiate between the sexes and the attendant public humiliation exposes his own castrated condition.

In Australian colonial fiction, too, the transvestite is both a character and a phantom but the gender crossing is reversed as most texts focus on women cross-dressed as men. This distinction is significant in numerous ways. First, many of the fictional narratives are taken from reported accounts, such as those Lucy Chesser documents in *Parting with My Sex: Cross-Dressing, Inversion and Sexuality in Australian Cultural Life* (2008). So, too, the prevalence of woman-to-man cross-dressing in Australia announces circumstances of women struggling to survive in Australia and its particular gendered structures. It also connects the assumption of masculinity to the incursions of women into dominant literary forms; in the asymmetry of the gender binary, the assumption of masculinity and masculine form are aspirations to inclusion. Finally—and whatever the problematics of the stereotypes—the traditions of woman-to-man cross-dressing in art and literature do not necessarily carry declarations of sexuality as man-to-woman cross-dressing tends to do. However, while these distinctions are vital, they only partly account for the effect of transvestism within literary fiction. Accordingly, in *Such Is Life*, the narrator Tom Collins is castrated by gender misrecognition even though it is, seemingly, the reverse of Balzac’s tale where Zambinella presents as the ideal woman. Nosey Alf is defined explicitly as a fallen ideal and shut out from femininity.

As a comic picaro, Tom is repeatedly presented as a sexual naïf. He is the hapless target of the predatory widow, Mrs Beadesert, is overwhelmed by the ‘amazonian audacity’ of ‘Jim’ Quartermain and his inept understanding of sex and gender is on full display throughout the long scene at Nosey Alf’s hut in Chapter Six. When Tom first sees the ‘amazonian’ horsewoman Jim (Jemima) Quartermain he is hiding naked in the bushes, which accentuates his physical response to his recognition that ‘Jim’ is a woman. He is moved to quote Wordsworth in an explicit summons to the hybrid fantasy of the Imaginary: ‘She was a Phantom of delight / When first she gleamed upon my sight’ (115). In Wordsworth’s poem, the woman-object is a hybrid of ‘spirit,’ ‘apparition’ and woman—and she is a boundary rider: ‘A Traveller between life and death’ (186). Like Balzac’s sculptor, Tom is literally exposed by the vision and presence of Jim. Tom’s attraction to the hybrid, divided and moustachioed transvestite is, in fact, the core of *Such Is Life*, for his fascination with and admiration for the other boundary rider, Nosey Alf, who also travels between life and death, is the central scene of the novel and directs and structures the narrative.

So, too, in Tasma’s short story ‘Monsieur Caloche,’ set first in Melbourne then an outback station, the industrialist Sir Matthew Bogg is unable to read the repulsion and attraction he feels

for the young French ‘man’ who seeks employment. Bogg is sexually ignorant, described as never having ‘seen an eye brighten, a small foot dance, at his approach. A glance of impotent defiance was the only equivalent he knew for a gleam of humid affection’ (15). Later, gazing upon Monsieur Caloche’s exposed dead body, he sees: ‘a girl with breast of marble, bared in its cold whiteness to the open daylight, and to his ardent gaze’ (25). In this scene of sexual revelation and response, Matthew Bogg is as ‘exposed’ as Monsieur Caloche, who offers a mirror to Bogg’s compromised performance as a ‘self (-) made man.’ He is as shamed as the sculptor of *Sarrasine*.

The young clergyman at the centre of Ernest Favenc’s short story, ‘How the Reverend Simmondsen Lost His Character,’ is also sexually ignorant—hence his inability to discern the true sex of his Aboriginal guide, Charley/Charlotte, who is cross-dressed as a boy. It is only when he sees her emerging from a lake, naked, that he finally recognises Charley as a woman. Similar to Tom hiding naked in the bushes in *Such Is Life*, Simmondsen is also naked in the scene of recognition, and is fully exposed to Charley and others. His shocked apprehension of Charley’s body is an apprehension of his own condition of castration and carries the same humiliation as that of Balzac’s sculptor. Here, however, the intensity is deflated and deflected by the alibi of the joke.

Integral to Simmondsen’s revelation is his retrospective understanding of the numerous sites of sexual co-habitation between white men and Aboriginal women they have encountered on the journey. Thus, Charley’s cross-gendered hybridity also signifies the racialised sexual couple of which Simmondsen has unwittingly become one partner. In the ethos of this story, these relationships are presented as a part of the vulgar reality of the boundary lines, which are set in stark contrast to the artificial, ‘priggish’ world of an English clergyman. The narrative’s central joke hinges on the distinction of the natural from the national. Simmondsen is naturalised as an Australian through his journey in which he apprehends, incorporates then commands the grotesque reality and Imaginary of his new homeland. Having effected this transformation, Charley vanishes from the narrative. Only the newly-made white man enters into national space, as he can now position himself within the social collectivity. And so the story concludes:

The Rev. Simmondsen received indignant letters from his Bishop, his churchwardens, several missionary societies, and, last and worst, a letter of eternal farewell from the young lady to whom he was engaged to be married. Fortunately he inherited some money at the time, so he did the best thing possible—threw up the church, went into squatting, and is now one of the most popular men in this district. (107)

In the terms of Stallybrass and Allon’s argument, Simmondsen’s personal journey seems to signal a move away from thinking that sexual and racial segregation are the mechanisms by which the purity of his collective is maintained. His apprehension of cross-racial sex seems to contradict that segregation: the slippage between sexual and racial conceptions of purity in the story might suggest the acceptance of cross-racial sexual relations as a condition for naturalisation within a cross-racial collective. Furthermore, the truth about cross-racial sex is made coincident and equivalent with the truth of sex itself in the story and carries that essential authority. However, as the story’s conclusion indicates, the fantastic hybrid is, in fact, precisely the means by which *segregation* is ritually enacted. While the revelations lead to Simmondsen rejecting his religious, English past and being inducted into the Australian collective, this collective does not include Aboriginal people, who vanish from the story. The move is not from one falsely-imagined purity to a realistic impurity but from one imagined purity to another.

Charley is the means of this reaffiliation but remains outside the collective. She has been, in fact, the means by which the text bifurcates the categories of the native and the national. This division and exclusion have been achieved through the Reverend's belated confrontation with the laws of nature, which is used, in turn, to *naturalise* the social and political position of the colonists.

Recent research shows that the visibility and illegibility of these cross-dressed Aboriginal women was not a joke but a source of great anxiety for colonial and, later, state authorities who recognised the potential power of both the knowledges and the capacity of the Aboriginal woman horse rider to escape the gaze of colonist and the law. The increased recognition of the contribution of Aboriginal people including women to the pastoral industry, from the colonial period onwards, revises the record to highlight both the achievements of Aboriginal workers and the consequent fretfulness of the non-Aboriginal authorities. Much of this research has focussed on the Northern Territory, Western Australia and northern Queensland, where both 'The Reverend Simmondsen' and *Fugitive Anne* are set (McGrath 1980; Reynolds 2003; Simone 2016). Tauri Simone records how the power of Aboriginal women in this context became an anxiety for the colonies. She then states:

During the early 1900s colonial powers started to realise that Aboriginal women in remote areas wielded more control than was desired by the colony. With the fear of miscegenation a major concern, between 1900 and the 1940s, new legislation was introduced at different times across Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia relating to the employment of Aboriginal women. *The first policy being that women could not be dressed in men's clothing, and the second being that Aboriginal or part Aboriginal women could not be employed by single white pastoralists unless she was married and her husband employed* (McGrath 1987). However, for obvious reasons this was not strictly enforceable and women were employed as stock workers, quite often being disguised as men or dummy husbands employed. (italics mine, 84)

As McGrath and Simone identify, cross-dressing was perceived as a primary source of social disruption, a political, racial and eroticised borderline that broke social apartheid. Its position at the forefront of policy and control signals its prevalence, its capacity to elide the law, and the illegibility of Aboriginal people to the colonial culture. Against Favenc's narrative of the joke, in which a single new chum is ridiculed for his ignorance, the policy forbidding cross-dressing signals that this joke hides the one about the colonists' widespread incapacity to read the land and its people.

The eponymous heroine of *Fugitive Anne* crosses both race and gender in her transvestic disguises and is accorded divine as well as human status by various tribes she encounters, a role she practised in games as a child. As Tanya Dalziell astutely observes, Anne is a consummate mimic (Dalziell 25–50). Anne does not experience or transmit the same sexualised horror as that of Tom Collins, Matthew Bogg and Joseph Simmondsen. As Kay Ferres notes, in *Fugitive Anne*, the voice offers as a kind of substitute for the gaze as the mode of allure (30) but this voice is always connected to the spectacle of performance and is deployed to maintain distance from others, a form of disguise or armour. However this results, perversely, in the containment of the text's castration anxiety within the range of Anne's own multiple selves. Castration anxiety in *Fugitive Anne* centres on the conviction of performance, specifically Anne's impersonations and her singing. Anne's series of performances recalls the virtuosic heroine of Edward Geoghegan's 1844 musical play *The Currency Lass; Or, My Native Girl* (the first play

written in the colonies) who moves across a range of roles and styles, including cross-dressing, all the while fending off the anxiety articulated by her prospective father-in-law that the term 'Native Girl' refers to an Aboriginal girl. In *The Currency Lass*, as in 'The Reverend Simmondsen,' the perceived grotesqueries of cross-racial sex and miscegenation are released in the form of an extended joke based on the confusion between the categories of the native, natural and national. In *Fugitive Anne*, the operation is more akin to nightmare: sudden and urgent predicaments in which life itself is at stake are repeatedly fended off by musical performance. This 'performance' refers to both the song and the mask of deception, of exposure then death. The incongruity between the narrative situation (impending death) and the strategy (musical performance) also accentuates the nightmare of endless role-play or deception. It recalls Joan Riviere's famous essay 'Womanliness as a Masquerade' in which the performance of conventional femininity is itself exposed as the mask of survival (127–38).

In *Fugitive Anne*, Anne's remarkable singing fends off death at the hands of the Aboriginal people and by the Red Men:

The sublime strains of the chant echoed among the forest trees and the great boulders, and were thrown back from the face of the basalt cliff. The girl's soul was in the invocation. She was singing for the glory of God, and the preservation of the life He had given her. (53)

Her performances have the capacity to bring rain, and to stun her captors and rivals. They are colonial castration anxiety writ large as one stressful performance after another is needed just to keep alive. In every performance of a song to distract and enchant hostile peoples is the anxiety that the performance of identity and authority will not hold:

It was a critical moment for the perplexed divinity [Anne]. Anne looked up to the sky, and saw that it was overcast, and that a pale glimmer of lightning shone low among the trees. Perchance, she thought, Nature and coincidence would come to her aid; and so, at the entreaty of Buli and of the gins who wailed while the warriors fought, she lifted her voice and gave out the first song that occurred to her—one peculiarly appropriate to the occasion, 'God save the Queen.' At the sound of these heroic strains, the war-whoops of the Maianbars were changed to acclamations, and fear seized the hostile tribe. The spears ceased whirring, the swords fell. (68)

The castration anxiety exhibited in these processes signals the sense of precarity of the colonial subject in the face of their achieved inclusion in a defined collective. As a corollary of this anxiety and its need for assuagement, the transvestite's role in effecting this process is ceaseless. There is no end to transvestic travelling for the boundaries must be constantly re-asserted. Their role in the demarcation of boundaries is explicit in the working occupations of Nosey Alf in *Such Is Life* and the eponymous 'Monsieur Caloche,' as both are boundary riders who tour and maintain the outer perimeters of land holdings. In narrative terms, both occupy this liminal position because its isolation enables them to hide their disfigurements. In figural terms they are condemned to embody the boundary that is simultaneously or holographically hard and fast, yet abject and corroded. In this double function, they hypostatise the border-making process of collective identity formation. Like a curse from myth or fairy tale, they are doomed to occupy the boundary as one cultural collective's ceaseless repetition of admitting and erasing hybridity, the grotesque impurity which has become part of them.

In 'How the Reverend Joseph Simmondsen Lost His Character,' too, the clergyman's journey, guided by Charley, is described in terms of the outer limits. His zeal leads him to venture into remote territory left unattended by his predecessor, so he can 'embrace the uttermost limits of his fold' (103). It is at the point of the 'uttermost limit' that the revelation of Charley's sex occurs. This liminal zone is well beyond the safe, self-imposed boundary set by his predecessor. It is, rather, the charged space of primal forces, of the psychic Imaginary and political unconscious. The transvestites' role in guiding the colonial subject to the site where they can identify difference and re-assert boundary lines is necessarily endless, for the instability of the process and the uncertainty of its effectiveness mean that it requires constant repetition. This set of needs is manifest in the text by the constant travelling of the cross-dressed boundary riders. Nosey Alf, Monsieur Caloche and Charley are represented in and by movement, traversing the country, marking and re-marking the 'uttermost limit' of its boundaries, enacting and figuring continuous process. So, too, Fugitive Anne is defined by her horsemanship and by her constant journeying, as the title suggests. From the first scene, in which she voyages down the coast of north Queensland, to the last, when she has embarked upon lecture tours across Europe, Anne, too, is a figure in perpetual process. Significantly, her original escape from the passenger boat, the Leichardt (*sic*), involves a long swim to shore before she cross-dresses as a 'Lascar' for the first leg of her escape (17) and then as a 'half-caste boy' named Billy (24):

She knew the Blacks' language well enough to find no difficulty in passing as a half-caste boy; and should they meet diggers or stock-men by the way, she would certainly be thus less likely to arouse suspicion. Besides, she could more easily ride in man's dress, for it was not likely that Kombo would be able to buy a side-saddle at the diggings. That in itself would cause remark. Often in the bush, she had ridden on men's saddles, and even bare-back, and had therefore no qualms on that account. (24)

The life of a cross-dressed, cross-racial bush-rider is, in key ways, a return to a natural way of being for Anne. Defined by flight, Anne's travelling does not ever cease, though she sojourns amongst various communities. The novel's ending seems to promise the conclusion of her flight. The final action within the narrative proper is when Anne is set free from a literal bondage of rope by her lover, the Danish explorer and ethnographer Eric Hansen: 'He went straight to Anne, and seeing she was still in bonds, drew out an Acan knife he carried, and cut the rope that bound her hands asunder. Then he took them both in his' (303). This final sentence seems to offer a romantic resolution. But it is also a sentence in the judicial sense in that it signals a transmission of the flight dynamic that defines Anne, rather than its cessation or completion. This is borne out by the Epilogue, a textual prosthesis that undercuts the earlier apparent resolution of a loving couple. For in the Epilogue we learn that Anne has been rightfully restored to her status as Baroness Marley, making one more shift in identity for the chameleon heroine. The newly separate titles and patronyms for the couple—Baroness Marley and Mr Eric Hansen—signal differences within national class structures, independent networks of identification and a form of separation. Furthermore, Anne's faithful companion, the young Aboriginal man Kombo, accompanies Baroness Marley and Mr Eric Hansen on their lecture tours across Europe. Hence, the narrative ends with the resolution of a trio rather than a couple. Moreover, the trio embark on a program of continuous travel according to their new schedule of speaking engagements.

The Epilogue operates as a frame narrative that has been placed at the conclusion rather than the opening of the novel and exposes the line of the narrative as a closed circuit, like their current lecture circuit. For the lecture tours are a sanitised, bounded imitation of the travels in

northern Australia. So, too, the trio represents Australia in itself: white, black and white/black. Each character is (at least) doubled by this mechanism: there are the selves of the main narrative in Australia; and the self-impersonation in a program of explicit performances in Europe. The conclusion of *Fugitive Anne* thus produces a literalised version of the hybrid fantasy described by Stallybrass and Allon, except here three characters make up the doubled hybrid. The trio of Anne, Kombo and Eric presents a racialised spectrum: Hansen is described as an epitomic Scandinavian: copper skinned, blonde and blue-eyed. Kombo is described in stereotypical terms of blackness. Anne stands between these two as the performative figure of their negotiation. For Anne's travels are not only across Australia and the globe but between whiteness and blackness. Like the divine trinity, Anne is the spirit who emanates from the other two and signifies the relationship between them. She is like Wordsworth's 'spirit' or 'phantom.' In a further complication, as the ideal Australian girl, she is described as a white Aborigine. She speaks language and can read the bush. Hence, Kombo is a part of her too.

In her 1992 tour de force on transvestism, Garber directs our gaze to the surface of the transvestite text to focus on his/her textual effects. There are, however, levels of the surface, as the cross-dressed figures of Australian colonial narratives show: there is the outer surface of dress and the surface of the body. The naked sexed bodies of the gazing male subjects may indicate a perceived truth of the body, but this is a reflected vision that retains a film. Accordingly, it does not espouse the body as an independent truth. But skin and the surface of the body are matters of explicit complication in these texts, the surface of the body specifies the referents of the exclusion and their hybridity.

The shared disfigurements of Nosey Alf and Monsieur Caloche are one category of bodily inscription in these fictions, as Martin has also noted. Nosey Alf's face was disfigured by a horse-riding accident. Tom writes: 'The upper half of his nose was represented by an irregular scar, running off toward the left eye, which was dull and opaque' (244). Monsieur Caloche was disfigured by smallpox. Like the castrato 'Zambinella' in *Sarrasine*, the effects of these traumas are not reversible by a change of costume but are written onto the body. Akin to the bodily inscription of the letter 'A' in Hawthorne's novel of colonial settlement, both Nosey Alf and Monsieur Caloche bear primitive marks of identification, judgment and division on their faces: Nosey Alf's scar divides and disfigures her face, Monsieur Caloche's 'breast of white marble' bears a long red scar, the mark of Cain. Both Molly Cooper and Henriette Caloche have been cast out from identities and narratives as desirable women within conventions of heterosexual romance, so assume masculine roles. In the terms of Stallybrass and Allon's formulation of the grotesque, they have been expelled from home, nation and gender. The defacement signals their role in the grotesque in demarcating borders and the irresolubility of their condition announces this as a life sentence.

The relationship between defacement and transvestic performance conforms to what Garber terms the 'progress narratives' of transvestite fictions (Garber 69–71). These are the situations or circumstances of plot lines that necessitate cross-dressing, and which are most often a pretext to introduce the fantasy and irony of cross-dressing into the text or performance. In *Fugitive Anne*, Anne stages her own death in order to flee from a violent marriage. All her fellow passengers on board the Leichardt (*sic*) sympathise with her against her husband but take no action so she, too, is forced out of home, nation and gender, though is eventually restored. When cross-dressed as a 'half-caste' boy early in her journeys, she encounters an old family friend, and elects to maintain the disguise and avoid conversation with him:

She was terrified lest he should discover Anne Marley in Billy, the black boy. Then all would be lost. She was sufficiently well acquainted with Captain Cunningham's views on matrimony and things in general, to be quite sure that he would take her in charge and escort her back to her husband. (46)

Given the genre of the novel, however, the fantastical effects of her journey, including repeated acclamations as a divinity, pertain to another genre than the realist narrative of a violent marriage. Cross-dressing is the bridge across this generic threshold. In many ways the two worlds represent discontinuity and excess but their juxtaposition can also be understood to amplify the untenability of the violent marriage.

Anne's escape involves changing the colour of her skin, a process, as Dalziell observes, that was previewed by the inclusion of minstrel-show songs, those 'quaint plantation melodies,' in her performance repertoire while still on the ship (34–36). When she first makes land off Cooktown in north Queensland, we are told she has painted herself with 'materials' to appear as a Lascar 'half-caste.' This is understood as a temporary measure. In 'How the Reverend Simmondsen Lost His Character,' Charley's black skin is, of course, permanent.

Examination of this second surface of the skin assists in identifying a particular relationship between the symptoms and effects of transvestism as they circulate between the literary texts and the broader culture. Judith Rodriguez researched the connection between the character of Nosey Alf and the historical figure Johanna Jorgensen in 1975, following up on a note in Furphy's letters to William Cathels. Furphy wrote: 'And I must thank you for the two papers you sent, containing particulars of Jack Jorgensen. Perhaps I told you I was intimate with poor Johanna in '77; and afterwards knowing her sex, worked her into my opus as Nosey Alf' (quoted in Rodriguez 176). Johanna Jorgensen, who had lived most of her adult life as Johann Jorgensen, was born in Berlin in 1843 and, like Molly Cooper in the novel, was disfigured in an accident with a horse as a young woman. In Australia, she lived around Bendigo working variously as a woman and a man and died in 1893. Indeed the historical archive includes records of many women who cross-dressed in colonial Australia (as documented in Chesser) for many reasons—from employment and safety, to sexual and gendered identification—and their many interconnections.

The link to the facticity of the real is a conventional trope of transvestic representation and reveals the culture of performance as being embedded equally in text and life. In *Such Is Life* and *Fugitive Anne* this particular crossover is stressed by the reversal of time and sequence. Both Molly Cooper and Anne Bedo stage their own deaths to become reborn. Molly's brother recounts his heartbreak when he reads what he thinks is Molly's suicide note:

'... she's somewhere at the bottom o' the Hawkesbury river; an' there's no more home. About three or four year after her accident, I was away in Sydney one time, on some business about shares; an' when I come home, Molly was gone. She'd left a letter for me, sayin' she'd nothing to live for; an' we'd meet on the other side o' the grave; an' I must always think kind of her; an' to remember ole times.' (22–23)

Molly is reborn and returns to the narrative as Nosey Alf. Anne Bedo also leaves a letter that may signify her death by drowning. Her husband discovers the letter Anne was supposedly writing to her mother just before her disappearance overboard:

‘Out there, where the moon shines, all looks cool and pure and free, and there’s just a ripple on the water; and the moonbeams shake and stretch out arms as if they were calling me. Why shouldn’t I take a dip? . . .’

And here the blot had fallen, and the writing ended. (9)

At this point Anne ceases to be Anne Bedo. As Dalziell points out, the reclamation of her maiden name, Anne Marley, is a mark of liberation in keeping with the novel’s appropriation of slave narrative topoi (21) and Kombo calls her Missa Anne. She is also Billy, Baiamè, High Priestess, Baroness Marley, and the unnamed ‘Lascar.’ Free of the patronymic, she self-defines by multiple naming.

These post-death or reborn lives reflect the capacity for colonial reinvention. They also demonstrate the particular circulation between history and fiction enabled by transvestism. In this role, the transvestite is the living figure of colonial fantasies. It is this final dualism that enables the transvestite to fulfil the two orders of the grotesque in the formation of the collective. For the division stresses the violent expulsion of the ‘othered’ grotesque subject, whose return is impossible because of the marked or coloured surface of their skin. The two surfaces of dress and skin may be understood not so much as surface and depth but as a doubled surface, one that reflects back to the colonial eye an apprehension of the colonial conscious and unconscious in its relentless labour of ‘becoming’ through expulsion.

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