

**Making an Expedition of Herself:
Lady Jane Franklin as Queen of the Tasmanian
Extinction Narrative**

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Figure 1. Julie Gough, *Ebb Tide* (1998). © Ricky Maynard/Licensed by Viscopy, 2015.
Image courtesy the artist and STILLS Gallery

In her site-specific installation *Ebb Tide (The Whispering Sands)* (Figure 1) from 1998, the artist Julie Gough constructs sixteen pyrographically inscribed life-size, two-dimensional figures of British colonialists who collected Tasmanian Aboriginal people and cultural materials for ethnographic purposes. Gough's matriarchal Aboriginal family comes from far north-east Tasmania, Tebrikunna, where her ancestor Woretemoeteyenner, one of the four daughters of the warrior Mannalargenna, was born around 1797. Installed across a tidal flat at Eaglehawk Neck in southern Tasmania, one image shows the smiling, half-submerged colonial Governor's wife Jane Franklin, who is neither arriving nor departing, waving nor drowning.¹

The figure derives from a youthful portrait of Franklin by Amélie Romilly that was globally disseminated by Franklin herself across her lifetime (reproduced in Alexander, insert 198a). One cannot be sure whether the figure, as with any fragment or talisman of history, will be submerged, exposed or worn away. The white colonial authority figure loses its historical power as the water rises and settles, bleaching the pigment down. So Gough critiques the tragically dislocating ethnographic obsessions of early settler colonists, who are disabled and flattened, reduced to two-dimensional incursions in a space which, heretofore, they have forcibly, dimensionally occupied.

Tasmania has recently produced and/or inspired a stockpile of literary postcolonial novels, including realist, burlesque, and mythopoetic treatments of cannibalism, violent miscegenation, genocide and natural species extinction narratives. These histories are variously embodied in novels as stylistically diverse as *The Sooterkin*; *Gould's Book of Fish*; *Jane, Lady Franklin*; *Cape Grimm*; *The Roving Party*; *The Hunter*; *Wanting* and *Death of A River Guide*. The controversial figure of Jane Franklin also appears in several Tasmanian-themed millennial historical novels where she is variously portrayed with more and less postcolonial veracity than in Gough's site-specific installation.

This essay compares novelised portraits of Lady Jane Franklin in Richard Flanagan's *Wanting* (2008), Adrienne Eberhard's verse novel *Jane, Lady Franklin* (2004), Sten Nadolny's *The Discovery of Slowness* (1997) and Jennifer Livett's novel prologue from *A Fool on the Island* (2012).² Other pre-millennial works by non-Australian writers—Andrea Barrett's *Voyage of the Narwhal* (1999) and William Vollmann's *The Rifles* (1994)—are also discussed briefly as progenitors and/or 'outsider' precursors with Nadolny of a new antipodean wave of postcolonial novels that contest the Franklins' frozen bio-hagiographies.

The Australian novelists focus upon Jane Franklin's vilified roles as independent traveller, controversial colonial social reformer and performer of hubristic, public lamentations over the loss of her explorer husband on the doomed Northwest Passage expedition. The women novelists, Livett and Eberhard, alongside Flanagan, show how Franklin's decades-long grief 'performance' traversed two hemispheres, serving a personal memorial function while guaranteeing her tentative access to, and 'safe passage' through, the male-dominated imperial political, social and cultural discourses of her day. For Franklin, as Eberhard and Livett suggest, the 'expedition of mourning' (my term) was in itself a grand adventure in personal and public narrative-making, a compensatory surrogacy given the limits placed on nineteenth-century female exploration and travel. For Flanagan, such female expeditions are presented as expressions of monstrous ego.

I argue that these new literary portrayals differently exploit the historical figure of Jane Franklin (hereafter JF) to enact trenchant critiques of the parochial, racist colonial culture of early ‘Hobarton.’ I aim to show how the formally imaginative, genre-savvy works under discussion fearlessly navigate intercultural themes and representations to make important post-millennial contribution to imaginative, postcolonial iconographies of JF. Heretofore, these novels and novel extracts have not been gathered together for close reading and for comparative analysis of the ways in which each writer uses particular narrative techniques to navigate a postcolonial, intercultural imagining of Tasmanian colonial pasts. In order to read the effectiveness of intercultural portrayals across these novels, I draw upon the intercultural postcolonial theories of Indigenous culturalist critic Marcia Langton.³ These novels can be shown as privileging fallible white viewpoints, yet they also strive, in the best Langtonian sense, to articulate ethico-political positions in relation to contact, possession and exploration via explorations of intercultural portrayals.

But where these novels evoke elegiac excess in relation to entwined portraiture of JF and Indigenous subjects, I also aim to show, using LaCapra and Brantlinger’s post-structuralist work on writing historical trauma, that they often express dangerously proleptic depictions of race, limiting their ability to convey the discursive, intercultural nature of colonial experience, past and present. Whether each of these aspirationally postcolonial novels successfully evokes LaCapra’s key notion of ‘empathic unsettlement’ as a critique of ‘the poststructural idealisation of aporia and constitutive loss’ remains to be seen (Koopman 2).



Figure 2. Amélie Romilly, *Portrait of Jane Franklin*, chalk sketch, 1816.

Colonial White Out: Critical Contexts for Intercultural Novels of Colonial Pasts

Contemporary accounts of Jane Franklin's life may be richly framed by feminist-revisionist, postcolonial travel-writing discourses (which certainly apply to Eberhard and Livett's treatments of JF). However, in the novels discussed here, and as the focus of this particular analysis, JF is often fictionalised less as complex character than plot device. This applies to the postcolonial voyage narratives of Nadolny and Barrett, and to Flanagan's and Vollman's elegiac stagings of racial extinction narratives. Flanagan, for example, literalises 'landscapes' of dispossession, creating a space to accommodate or hang a two-dimensional literary portrait of Franklin based on her controversial adoption of Indigenous children. Within his narrative landscape, stereotypes of coloniser and colonised play out, a gallery of types. Questions of genre difference aside, Flanagan's portrayal of a wicked colonial queen is a very different thing to the ambiguous, subversive evacuation of 'dimensionality' explored by artist Julie Gough. While the movement towards heightened intercultural engagement by these white novelists is praiseworthy, generic character typologies in relation to JF and her Indigenous 'charges,' mean that these novels often gesture less to imaginative postcolonial critique than to histories of extinction discourse.

Extinction discourse is given here via Patrick Brantlinger's definition. Brantlinger defines 'extinctions discourse' as pertaining to the 'dual ideologies of imperialism and racism' (1). As a complex, multi-textual discourse, its generically diverse expressions arise and consolidate wherever and whenever there has been a collision or encounter between white European people and Indigenous peoples (10). As Rohan Wilson notes, the death of the so-called 'Last Tasmanian,' Trukanini, is a 'symbolic extinctions moment' which, in Brantlinger's phrase, sentimentally or mournfully expresses, 'even in its most humane versions, the confidence of a self-fulfilling prophecy, according to which new, white colonies and nations arise as savagery and wilderness recede' (4).

Wilson suggests extinction discourse continues to shape the features of modern literature about Tasmania (2). He argues that the persistence of a 'strategically essential vision of Aboriginality develops out of the coloniser/colonised dichotomy which, as a strategy for writing history, might be seen as an oversimplification of a complex period' (3). Wilson is also hopeful, as am I, that some millennial writers at least (perhaps casting back to provocative fictional explorations of Tasmanian whiteness as found in Colin Johnson's *Dr Wooreddy's Prescription for the End of the World* (1983) and Brian Castro's *Drift* (1994)) are subverting extinction discourse 'as a means of understanding or representing Tasmanian Aboriginality in order to reveal its discursive continuities with colonialism and establish a more nuanced, non-raced based view of Aboriginal identity and community in a post-colonial context' (3).

In relation to questions of representing/performing gender and genocide, and/or a multiplicity of (Aboriginal) identities, in Stephen Muecke's pre-millennial phrase (251), novels still struggle to unsettle settler narratives, to achieve an empathics of unsettlement (LaCapra 41). LaCapra has emphasised a play of empathy that does not obfuscate the distinction between one's own experience and the experience of the other. His central thesis from *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001) is that when one is addressing a specific traumatic event, writing ought not only 'act out' but 'work through,' developing 'articulations that are recognised as problematic but which still function as limits and as possibly desirable limits to undecidability' (22). This arguably articulates as a move against abstraction and ambiguity:

What is called for is a balance between disruption and engagement. . . . LaCapra's argument for the notion of empathic unsettlement can help point the way to a fruitful middle ground between a conventional engaging narrative which allows readers to understand the represented others, and disrupting techniques which make clear that understanding the other can never be complete. (Koopman 235)

Koopman cautions that while radically aporetic narratives carry some inherent dangers in cleaving to a philosophical state of 'puzzlement' or doubt when it comes to evoking an ethical reader response to suffering, 'this does not mean that the use of disruptive techniques like aporia should be relinquished altogether. On the contrary, distortion and disruption within a narrative can incite readers to start challenging normative ways of thinking and being' (235). Koopman could well be talking about novels by Indigenous novelist Kim Scott in describing narrative tensions between narrative 'engagement' and 'disruptive techniques.' Scott is an exemplar of such techniques, as I have written elsewhere in relation to his Miles Franklin Award-winning novel of 2000, *Benang* (Johnson, 'Archival salvage'). But in an Australian postcolonial literary setting, recovering from decades of dogmatic postcolonial theorising and a tendency by many white writers to self-censor or de-limit portrayals of Indigeneity, there may be some progress to be made in getting this balance right.

As former Torres Strait Islander Arts Board Director and playwright Cathie Craigie has asserted, the 'great Australian Novel' must include:

Aboriginal undercurrents, acknowledgments or whatever. If you want to show the psyche of Australia you've got to do that. For me I think that all Australian writers have to be able to put that stuff in, but there are certain things they can't talk about. (Quoted by Scott in Heiss, 'Publishing Indigenous Literature' ii)⁴

The question for every novelist is *how* to write 'stuff.' Richard Flanagan has often spoken of a novelistic malaise where writers had become timid, chary of deploying the full range of narrative techniques at their disposal. This timidity, though, as I have argued elsewhere, has been broken open by a new, post-millennial narrative radicality, championed by the exemplars of Kim Scott's novels *Benang* and *That Deadman Dance* (Johnson, 'Archival Salvage' and doctoral thesis).

The power of 'unsettlement,' then, in the recent postcolonial literary setting, and in relation to the novels under discussion here, cannot be understood apart from this evidence of greater experimentation with narrative techniques coupled with both black and white novelists' more overt engagements with strongly intercultural themes.

To this end, Langton's understanding of intercultural engagement requires that 'Aboriginality' be thought about as

' . . . a field of intersubjectivity in that it is remade over and over again in a process of dialogue, of imagination, of representation and interpretation. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people create "Aboriginalities" . . .' ('Aboriginal Art and Film' 119)

Langton does not presuppose that writers and artists, in testing imagined cultural models against one another, arrive at an easy 'fit' or simple, binaried exchange of historical

representations. In fact any such ‘testing’ may pave the way for thinking about a more disjunctive and chaotic coming together of cultural forms in the radical postmodern sense of an ‘ironic and problematising play of enunciation and context’ (Hutcheon 78). This approach is key to realising ‘unsettlement’ within the postcolonial novel.

But the idea of a ‘problematising play’ is no easy thing for writers to achieve (as per LaCapra’s discussion of how narrative engagement is impacted and altered by disruptive writerly techniques); there is no right way, no postcolonial novel formula per se that best enables the experience of the colonial to be told. Australia has not undergone formal processes of decolonisation and millennial writers cannot escape the fact that they write in a continuous colonial present. Yet some historical novels still historicise colonial experience as if it was as some far-distant, gothic Avalon having no bearing on the now.

Representations along these lines ‘reinforce the notion that Aboriginal colonial identity is precisely the same as Aboriginal contemporary identity’ (Wilson 3). Where the sepia-lens creates distance from the present, eulogisations of the last Aborigine and ideations of a lost race thrive, reasserting ‘falsehoods that have their roots purely in nineteenth century perceptions of Aboriginality as purely racial’ (Wilson 8).⁵

As Langton reinforces, ‘. . . the discourse is colonial,’ underscoring the dangers of cultural representations that view Aboriginal culture as benign or that set it in opposition to an entirely predatory colonial (122).

The novels under discussion do not view Tasmanian Aboriginal cultures as benign, and are ever mindful ‘that the discourse is colonial,’ in Langton’s phrase. But where elegiac tropes of a doomed Indigenous culture and tropes of a unanimously predatory colonial culture insinuate the narrative, the delicate balance between engagement and disruption is upset. A close reading of Eberhard’s, Livett’s and Flanagan’s novels, as with Nadolny’s, reveals that these writers’ sincere postcolonial intentionalities—manifested through strong intercultural scenework and the deployment of particular kinds of disruptive narrative techniques—are sometimes residually ‘unsettled’ by ideations of a doomed Indigenous culture at odds with a villainous colonial culture. Where this occurs, complex characterisation is limited. Empathic unsettlement is therefore not easily achieved, or not consistently achieved at any rate, as certain portrayals of JF and Indigenous Tasmanian subjects succumb to the frozen mythologies of melodrama.

Breaking the Ice: History, Territory and Frozen Mythology

Navigating from our cosy, post-millennial virtual bridges, it is hard to imagine that the rather kindly, socially awkward Captain John Franklin was once as famous as Neil Armstrong. Both the celebrated explorer and astronaut, straddling different technological ends of scientific and colonial modernity, were serial travellers to arctic and galactic spaces respectively.⁶

Space may indeed have been the final colonial frontier for cold war American politicians and scientists alike, but, in John Franklin’s era, the Arctic and Antarctic territories were the only continents on earth left for imperial powers to conquer and vanquish. Franklin was, of course, the sometime gentle reforming governor of penal Van Diemens Land, taking up the role after the punitive and cronyist regime of Governor Arthur until his shaming recall. This was the hero-author of the bestselling *Narrative of a journey to the shores of the Polar Sea, in the years 1819–20–21–22* (1824.)

John Franklin may have been the most famous explorer of his day but his energetic second wife, Jane Franklin, was the 19th century's most famous widow, next only in public stature to Queen Victoria. JF was certainly no slouch at prosecuting this image of herself, as a rash of recent critical biographies and historical articles attest (Alexander; Russell 'Antipodean Queen of Sheba,' 'Wife Stories,' 'Girl in a Red Dress'). Nor was she slow to suppress the socially unpalatable fact that she was the most travelled woman of her time, with most of her own travels, on foot, by steamer, camel or sedan chair, undertaken of her own volition and planning.

Poet-novelist Adrienne Eberhard describes Jane's chair on her dangerous Lake St Clair trek of 1842 as 'an encumbrance' ('Palanquin' 80) though a more regal, imperial image is shown in 'King William':

And I, lifted on the shoulders of four men.
Carried like a queen, the country opening before me. (78)⁷

As biographer Alison Alexander shows, Jane Franklin endlessly represses and reinvents the details of her travelling missions to ensure a socially acceptable 'safe feminine passage' in British society (introduction viii). In the Antipodes, there seems to have been less pressure to maintain these disguises. JF tolerated all kinds of media attacks regarding her solo climb of Mount Wellington and her overland trips to Sydney and Lake St Clair. Eberhard and Livett's fictional portrayals praise the grandeur of JF's travelling ambitions while activating Franklin's fallible narratorial point of view in relation to her role in colonial occupation.

Jane Franklin, verbal, learned, and fiercely energetic, brought a refreshing zeal to her reformist agendas as Governor's wife in Van Diemen's Land during the 1830s and early 1840s. Settler locals soon learned to loathe her for cheerfully replacing balls with public lectures on botany, science and ethnography. Famously, she tried to set up a university, reform female prison conditions while also commissioning and building the Greek-styled glyptotek, Ancanthe, in the Lenah Valley, annexing 400 acres for a museum and botanical garden reserve to be enjoyed by the people of Hobart (Alexander xiii). It seemed that with the arrival of Jane Franklin and her step-daughter Eleanor, the Enlightenment had finally arrived in Hobart.

More notoriously, Jane Franklin took two Aboriginal children, Timuridec and Mathinna, into temporary care at Government House (Russell 341–42). Both children came to reside at Government House under Lady Franklin's care for several years from approximately 1838, but in 1843, Mathinna was returned to the orphan school in Hobart when the Franklins were recalled to England (Alexander 135). Little is known of how Timmy or 'Timeo' fared at Government House. Eberhard and Franklin's portrayals of JF differently connect with Mathinna's story, eliding references to other children.

Penny Russell believes that the intensive circulation of questionable stories and images by black and white writers and artists around Mathinna have virtually elided the life story of Timmy and other displaced Indigenous children (347–48). These imaginative life accounts, from Old Boomer's fanciful 1869 Hobart *Mercury* tale to Richard Flanagan's 2008 novel *Wanting* and the Indigenous Bangarra Dance Theatre's 2008 production of *Mathinna*, iconicise the figure of Mathinna for whom very little archival information exists. For this reason, Russell notes, her story has not been able to be told by academic historians (343). Yet artists and writers have rushed to entwine portraits of JF and Mathinna in order to illuminate

the racist ‘philanthropies’ of early colonial administrations. Neither the story of Jane Franklin nor Mathinna can be told without the other.

As Russell and Alexander document, the use of Mathinna as a postcolonial symbol of dispossession is based largely on the compelling portrait by Thomas Bock (commissioned by JF in 1842) and several dubiously mythological accounts of her young life. These have had almost as much cultural gravitational pull for writers and artists over one-and-a-half centuries as Ned Kelly’s beaten metal helmet. Mathinna appears as a central character in Flanagan’s and Eberhard’s fictional treatments, but is not directly associated with the Livett and Nadolny portrayals of JF.⁸ She is also excised from Nadolny’s dramatisation of Tasmanian settlement under the Franklins’ governance.

Russell, like many historians, is critical of dramatic speculations that fictionalise the past where writers fail to examine the political implications of their own inventions.⁹ Displacing the sentimental trope of the child, the reader connects to a ‘complex history of guilt, complicity and distorted good intentions in which the whole of colonial society was intricately enmeshed’ (362). For Russell, that is a ‘history we must all own’ (362).

As a novelist aiming to work with tact and sensitivity inside the archive, I might argue back that good stories are dependent on the predictive notations or talismans of history in the best Barthesian sense, that they help novelists evoke fragmented, personal and contested stories rather than monological colonial fiction. Equally I would argue that working diligently with available sources does not preclude imaginative assembly in narration. As the poet Novalis observed, well before the imperatives of twentieth century postcolonial theory and literary experiment, ‘novels arise out of the shortcomings of history,’ reclaiming private moments that history, and even family, may never record (quoted in Woods 39). Literary critic James Woods advocates a rather more grandiose role for the historical novelist, whom he sees, theoretically at least, ‘as having the power to change history.’ Besides that, he argues, historical characters ‘take on lives of their own, and begin to detach themselves, in our minds, from the actuality of the historical record. When characters in historical novels die, they die as fictional characters, not as historical personages’ (39).

While Woods does not tease out the ramifications of what changing history might mean for specific, novelised evocations of colonial dispossession, Mathinna’s image in the painting can arguably be treated positively as a Barthesian notation, one that signals or alludes to a range of historical presences and absences—an ‘ebb tide’ of speaking and meaning in Julie Gough’s phrase.

But even accepting this, the question then arises as to how recent cultural productions either mythologise or demythologise the JF–Mathinna nexus, and to what end. What are the implications of constantly promulgating a tragic intercultural dance between the two figures? Alison Alexander’s wonderfully cold-eyed, exhaustive new biography *The Ambitions of Jane Franklin, Victorian Lady Adventurer* offers important correctives to mythological accounts of JF and Mathinna. Alexander documents that:

Jane Franklin did not treat her Aboriginal protégés as servants, and there is no evidence that she wanted to help them. She did not like children generally, and showed little maternal or personal interest in them. Instead, she wanted to see what effect civilisation had on them. (129)

Alexander's careful summary of available sources, which also shows Jane Franklin's guilty disinterest in mothering John Franklin's daughter Eleanor, is certainly at odds with the excoriating portrait of Jane as bad mother in absentia, as evoked in Flanagan's *Wanting*. Here, JF is depicted as a person of monstrous ego: her hubristic travel desires, the taking on of any number of prominent public roles coupled with her dubious ethnographic zeal are seen, in studied sexist fashion, as the distorted motivational by-products of JF's repressed desire for children. 'How she longed to hold the child,' Flanagan writes (117). And later JF narrates:

She could not forget her grief, and then the cruel awakening to her barren body, her loneliness, her inescapable sense of shame as a woman, her desperate desire for a child, her pride that rescued her and then crushed her and made her move relentlessly and constantly, desperately seeking to raise herself and her husband forever after, as though they might somehow escape the gravity of her grief. (194)

Flanagan makes an *a priori* decision to dislike JF, and eulogise her adopted daughter, which renders both figures two-dimensional in ways that Alexander's biography avoids. Discomfitingly, John Franklin is also arbitrarily portrayed as a paedophile:

He was all things and all things were him. Looking down at Mathinna, her diminutive body, her exposed black ankles, her dirty little feet, the suggestive valley of her red dress between her thin legs, Sir John felt thrilled. And after was thrilled no more. (152)

The historical novelist artfully manages speculative imaginative leaps in order to furnish the dramatic arc of story, but facts more than the iconic signifier 'John Franklin' and 'Franklinness' problematise this sexualised depiction. Iconic mythologies must be challenged and upended if novelists are to contest the shortcomings of history and, as Ryan has shown, sexual exploitation was a feature of the Tasmanian colony's most vulnerable children and adolescents (1996).

But while this slant on John Franklin, connecting to current public anxieties around paedophilia, makes for an easy plot curve, it is one made without the dramatic benefits/expansiveness that might have come via strategic name-changing. Thus this depiction of the actual governor reads as grand guignol, a plot device driving the spun-out tale of Mathinna's victimhood.

If Mathinna has become, like the Canadian Copper Indian girl, Greenstockings (whose sexual exploitation at the hands of Robert Hood on John Franklin's second Arctic expedition is illumined in diary and letter records as horrifying Franklin (Alexander 19–20)), the poster girl of Indigenous dispossession, both the Franklins are directly positioned as bearers of blame for the death of Mathinna and other Indigenous children beside her.

While racist, ethnographic violence cruelly underpinned Tasmanian 'economic governance,' 'culture' and 'society' at all levels, evidence suggests that the Franklins' Rousseauesque attitudes to colonial Indigenes and commitment to penal reform may have been at the other end of the spectrum to Governor Arthur, whose punitive administration ushered in the Black War on 1 November, 1828, with its tolerance of 'active killing, forced exile and permanent detention'—all consequences of Tasmanian policies between 1828 and 1864 (Lehman 201, 207). It was precisely because of John Franklin's reformist, liberal attitudes to culture and

society that he was, after all, dismissed from his post. Postcolonial empathic unsettlement on the part of the novelist, I believe, requires careful consideration of individual coloniser and colonised subject if simplistic binaries of villain and victim are to be deconstructed as literary tropes within fictionalisations of Tasmanian colonial pasts. Such binaries ultimately build the ideological underpinnings of literary extinction narratives.

The Tasmanian scenes in *Wanting* therefore seldom build to a contestatory dialogism (or ‘problematizing play’); the reader has nothing to ‘work through’ but can only observe from a distance a novel acting out the binary of Indigenous victimhood and white villainy. This is a message the reader has heard many times before across the span of two centuries. Such tropes are part of what Russell has called the ‘fixity of fictions’ around Tasmanian Indigeneity and colonial settlement.⁷⁶

Livett’s focus in *A Fool on the Island* is upon JF’s visit as an ageing, mourning widow to Canadian Sitka, close to the Arctic Circle, where her famed husband perished in the ice. The story is told from the point of view of Harriet, who is also a one-time Van Diemen’s Land colonist and who is now the recipient in London of JF’s letters from Sitka. Harriet’s received information mentions Indigenous Tlingit Indians in passing, and deploys flashbacks to the Franklins’ testy roles as Governor and Governor’s wife in 1830s and 1840s Van Diemen’s Land. These thirty-year flashbacks (in the published excerpts of the forthcoming novel) are devoid of reference to Mathinna and the Indigenous peoples of Tasmania. Livett creates a compelling characterisation of JF as a modern woman at the other end of the world. She takes pains to draw the observable cracks between Franklin’s decades-old persona as high-status public widow, adventuress and the increasingly frail and secretly doubting woman she had become. Sitka and Hobart, two raw colonial outposts, are beautifully drawn, as is the implied failure of colonial projects in both hemispheres. In strongly Europeanist cultural terms, Harriet recalls that:

Hobart was at that time little more than a village, as Sitka is now, and both are on islands, both wedged between mountains and sea, at opposite ends of the earth. Hobart turns its back on the great Transylvannian wilderness behind it with an air of whistling in the dark, of defiant liveliness. It huddles at the water’s edge seeming to gaze out towards the far distance where Europe lies, invisible but ever present. It has a frontier rawness overlaid by sometimes desperate gentility. (115)

The image of perpetual widowhood enjoined with a figure mourning a childless self are the tropes that narrowly define the portrait of an ageing, cloth-layered JF in *Wanting*.³ How different this empty ‘fruit bowl’ approach is to Livett’s.¹⁰ In Livett, JF’s forlorn, even delusional hopes of finding news of the Franklin expedition show both her and Sir John’s niece Sophia Cracroft desperately presenting retrieved artefacts (spoons with Sir John’s crest) to a doubtful American General in hope of enlisting his aid (119). They have travelled with Jane’s library trunk, containing books and letters of entreaty to the British Admiralty written over decades, and accumulated ‘survivor stories’ as so many yellowed newspaper cuttings. Harriet confides to the reader: ‘Jane and Sophy build their mare’s nests from any scrap of knowledge’ (119). And yet Jane and Sophia (with Jane in her mid-seventies by this point) have travelled to a remote Alaskan outpost, making one last effort to uncover the facts of a well-planned voyage gone wrong. Jane is someone, Harriet notes, ‘. . . who always preferred fact to fiction. Poetry—that rich, suspect, emotional fare—she allows herself small helpings

like pudding' (113). Jane Franklin's questing intelligence is dignified by Livett through Harriet's recall of letters home:

There had been many other finds over the years, but all of them more puzzling than explanatory. The great quantity of monogrammed silverware belonging to the ship's officers, for instance. All those desperate spoons and forks. Why had they bothered to lug those into the whaleboat—and left behind the large supply of chocolate, when provisions would be vital. (115)

This is Harriet's rhetorical question but she stands in, indirectly, for a younger, fiercer, smarter JF, who was forced to channel her own desperate questions into brilliantly played, diligent games of global diplomacy as she sought answers about her husband's disappearance, measuring his life out in naval, as opposed to coffee, spoons.

Nadolny, the incomparable poet–novelist of colonised landscapes and territory, does not portray the Franklins' Tasman intercultural relationships other than evoking these through the distanced, often savant mien of his central character, the 'slow excellency' Sir John Franklin; he does, however, evoke Sir John's Rousseauesque, outwardly peaceful encounter with the Copperwood Indians in storying Franklin's perilous voyages to the Northwest Passage.

Nadolny is ever mindful of subtly historicising and parodying the post-enlightenment, primitivist anthropological 'glare' (my emphasis) of European-documented encounters. For example, he shows a young John Franklin on board the Matthew Flinders-commanded *Investigator* entering observations about the Indigenes of Cape Leewin in his log as a reverse ethnography of obtrusive white behaviour:

Something was wrong with the whole situation. John felt he should shout 'Stop!' immediately, but he didn't know what to stop. Something was out of the ordinary about his own people. What was there in them that had been altered by the natives' presence? John now observed the Englishmen as closely as he had watched the Australians before. (76)

...

He entered in his log: 'King George Sound and environs. A. Men. Average samples—20; Height—5'7'. Thigh: 1'5'. Shinbone: 1'4''.' 'What'll we do with those figures? Are we getting them clothes?' asked Sherard. 'No, that's anthropology,' answered the scientist. John had to write down the names of the body parts they had measured: *kaat*—head; *kobul*—belly; *maat*—leg; *waleka*—behind; *bbeb*—nipple. It was a barter: nails and rings in exchange for weights and words.

...

John sat in the top of a tree for a long while, observing both Englishmen and natives. He decided that the Australians, too, were practising anthropology. Each time a boat came in from the *Investigator* they eyed and touched the smooth-shaven whites in order to assure each other that, even in the case of these newly arrived specimens, they weren't dealing with women. (77–78)

Yet, curiously or wisely perhaps, Nadolny sidelines depictions of Mathinna and the controversies of Indigenous adoption.

For the early part of this novel, JF initially appears only as a hieratic, Austenian trope to complement the slightly savant Sir John, furnishing one of two marriage plots. But the character comes into her own as an iconoclastic, if thwarted, reforming Tasmanian Governor's wife and finally, later, as a shrewd political lobbyist in her efforts to search for her husband's lost Northwest Passage expedition (304–07). In relation to the latter, Nadolny has her husband John observe: 'Jane was allowed what was not permitted a woman, not even the Queen, by written and unwritten law: to show energy and to prevail over men' (305).¹¹

The Discovery of Slowness allows for benevolent yet complex portrayals of the Franklins that are largely in keeping with the research of Alexander's authoritative warts-and-all biography. Yet for all his narrative sophistication in critiquing imperial agendas in which, in Richard Crosby and Val Plumwood's definition, discourses of racism and sexism inevitably entwine, Nadolny's representations of intercultural love preclude Indigenous female agency. In the middle section of the book, the artist-officer Hood takes the Copper Indian woman Greenstockings as his lover on the Northwest Passage expedition, and Hood's 'lovesickness' is focalised via the avuncular kindness of John Franklin. The benign response bears no relationship to the intuitions guiding the character's reverse ethnographies, nor does it tally with Franklin's documented abhorrence at his officer's and crew's sexual predations (Alexander 192–200).

The mutually respectful, if not entirely passionate, marital love between the Franklins is given more complex treatment. JF is presented as energetic and politically astute, if sometimes delusional in her reformist zeal. It is for these very reasons that the marriage, at least from her husband's point of view, is painfully tested, even though he depends upon his wife's imaginative speed and political acumen to counter his slow and methodical governing style, a slowness which for him is always intrinsically linked to the slow and considered gestation of appropriate moral responses within personal and political spheres. JF is also savvy enough to wryly name the gender constraints that differently serve or constrain her expressions of political power (262–63).

What Nadolny shows in the place of a predictably agonistic relationship between Mathinna and JF is John Franklin's despair at the Indigenous reserve on Flinders Island (261). And while John Franklin's narrator-character is insightful enough to comprehend that revulsion and rage against older 'policy decisions' (read the detention and incarceration of dispossessed Palawa peoples) produces only self-paralysis when as Governor he needed to act, the character of JF is set up by conniving colonial secretary Montagu as having a 'witchlike' influence over her seemingly vacillating husband (275).

Yet JF is shown as someone who, as her husband's reign as governor comes crashing down, continues to believe in goodness and a fair fight, though '[i]n truth, she had had enough of Tasmanian narrow-mindedness for a while. Should he have kept her away altogether from the irritations of governing? Or should he have let her collaborate more fully?' (277).

Towards the close of the novel, John Franklin, about to be deposed as governor, tiredly observes of his brilliant wife: '. . . they were all angry when success was withheld from them. Even Lady Franklin' (278).

While Nadolny elides the slim Mathinna archive, he nonetheless shows, by representing Franklin's heroic global voyage narratives within the one novel, how imperial discourses of racialised anthropology were always the tragic worm in the apple across myriad networks of

colonial governance. John Franklin is ultimately depicted as a kind of modernist anti-hero, a moral man trapped within the destructive, dispossessing pack-ice of colonial administrivia, enacted on a global scale. His wife JF is, for all her reformist gifts, as much as for all her misguided, cruel ethnographic enthusiasms, shown as participant in and casualty of the sexist, racist mores of colonialism. Nadolny therefore refuses to pigeonhole the Franklins as singular authors of the worst offences of colonialism. He is nothing but democratic when it comes to blame.

In *Jane, Lady Franklin*, Eberhard writes with compassion about JF but Mathinna's characterological and historical complexity slips away as if the writer had come face to face with the limitations of the resistant, shiny and ultimately factless iconographies Penny Russell describes ('Daughters' 40–49). The writing around Mathinna favours abstracted romantic tones: 'you are all spirit / dispersed in the wind / your heart is wild. // You were never really mine' (49).

Eberhard's is, however, the only first-person novelist vocalisation of JF among the texts under discussion. The author captures an illusion of intimacy with her subject, using a skilful double discourse that enables her to gently parody her white bourgeois subject and infiltrate her reveries. JF's autobiographical voice is productively breached each time Eberhard returns to her exquisite descriptions of the natural world. This is shown in her ruminations on the St Clair Trek, above, and in her reflections on the demise of the thylacine:

Abel Tasman saw their footprints.
 Were there flashes of yellow
 in the vegetation?
 Dark stripes banding
 against fern-green, rust-red.
 The Van Diemen's Land Company
 has a bounty: ten shillings a skin.
 I've seen the skins, striped slashes
 like cat o' nine tail strokes,
 imagined fleet passage in the bush:
 darkness blinding my eyes.
 This country offers no sanctuary:
 anything unusual is forced to run;
 there are no resting places,
 no quiet haunts,
 just difficult journeys,
 shadows
 and absence. (98–99)

In the important line 'Everything unusual is forced to run,' the figure of Jane is used as a cipher to deconstruct the broader cataclysms wrought by settler occupation. As we are in the fallible point of view of Jane, 'everything unusual' carries the weight of a problematic ethnographic cast where animals, Indigenous people and land are run together (or literally run down to nothing) as an aggregate, undifferentiated exotic other. A conclusive postcolonial haunting occurs in the last lines, which show that the tragic universal consequence of being forced to run is an absence of 'quiet haunts' and an excess of 'shadows and absence.'

Like Nadolny, Eberhard does not slate JF as carrying the full weight of Indigenous dispossession and the social and political failings of the Hobart settlement in the 1830s and 1840s. Working in the historical verse novel tradition established so effectively by writers such as Jordie Albiston in *Botany Bay Document* (1996) and Judy Johnson in *Jack* (2006; see also Judy Johnson's historical poetry sequences in *Navigation*, 2007), Eberhard uses polyphonic techniques and heightened poetical techniques within an overarching evocation of an autobiographical narrative to compelling effect.¹² To this extent, *Jane, Lady Franklin* counterpoints the generically different novel *Wanting* and Flanagan's rather more negative reading of JF.

But Eberhard nonetheless invokes JF's fictitious desire for children as a way of apprehending the colonial débâcle of Mathinna's adoption. But Eberhard, working against Alexander's biographical account, retreats to a highly mythological view of Jane. In high Dickensian language she describes Jane Franklin's maternal longing as a 'plague of wasps beating in my brain / I would the knocking was in my womb instead' (41). Thus *Jane, Lady Franklin* aligns with *Wanting* in linking thwarted maternity with colonial dispossession.

But Eberhard's verse novel, happily, does not linger on this theme. This is in contrast to long repeat scenes of abject frontier violence and Mathinna's degradation in *Wanting*. A formal strength of the Flanagan novel is the lively way the time frames of *Wanting* leap back and forth in a deft muscular montage, with the early Vandemonian scenes counterpointed by a parallel late Victorian narrative. The latter evokes an aged Charles Dickens as he produces a melodramatic pantomime of the doomed expedition to the icy Northern Passage.¹³

But what is to be morally and dramatically gained by over-extending the melodramatic evocation of the demise of Mathinna, a subject foreshortened in Eberhard, and absented in the Nadolny novel?

After chapters of violent preamble, the twenty-one-year-old Mathinna is raped and strangled with the red dress once worn at Government House, by a black 'friend' at the woefully appointed reserve at Oyster Cove. Russell notes that Flanagan's portrayal of Mathinna's rape and death at Oyster Cove is apocryphal, based on a speculative 'coherent' literary account of her life by a writer known as Old Boomer which appeared in the Hobart *Mercury* in 1857, years after her life had ended (Russell 349). According to Boomer, Mathinna's arrival at Government House followed upon an act of affection and maternal yearning. Jane Franklin is presented in a saccharine light in this account, which was influential for the generation of older idealised biographies of JF as it was for excessively doom-laden cultural mis-readings of the life of Mathinna. Like Boomer, Flanagan imagines JF meeting Mathinna while she was under Chief Protector George Augustus Robinson's care on Flinders Island in 1838. Yet Russell notes that '. . . Robinson's detailed diary entry for the visit describes in some detail the interest that the Franklins displayed in a boy named "John Franklin," while making no mention of a little girl' (352).¹⁴

And yet the idea that Lady Jane saw a girl-child who would become Mathinna and wanted her (hence the Flanagan title *Wanting*) while she was in Robinson's charge remains an unassailable presence in almost every dramatic account of Mathinna's story and, by implication, JF's story. This is the basis of the mythologised demise of Mathinna that is given operatic, sentimental treatment in the last chapters of Flanagan's novel.

Conclusion: Beneath and Beyond White Ice

In examining recent literary and historical portrayals of JF, then, it is possible to frame this historical figure's impressive expeditionary zeal and valuable work in prison reform (see Clarke on JF's letters to Elizabeth Fry 94–96) via a feminist revisionist lens. But JF's controversial role as amateur colonial ethnographer and her problematic adoptions of Indigenous children must be read/evoked alongside those achievements. Alexander's new history makes a singular contribution here, evoking a considered, nuanced JF via postcolonial and feminist revisionist frameworks.

It is equally interesting, as I have shown with considerable help from Russell and Alexander, to consider how new literary depictions of JF engage with the plentiful private and public mythologies aggregating around this complex historical figure. Where these mythologies intersect the stories of mythologised colonial subjects such as Mathinna, Timeo and others, story arises, though the 'true' postcolonial story may not always surface if and where existing mythologies surrounding JF and Indigenous subjects go unchallenged. For all their writerly gifts and postcolonial intentionality, the writers under discussion often struggle to disinherit the binaries of coloniser and colonised. Mythological tropes of a doomed race and 'empty,' pristine wilderness go uncontested, and often, as shown here, proleptic accounts of race flourish. The imaginative moral struggle of the white postcolonial novelist, as I have found, is located here, in the struggle to challenge aggregations of colonial mythologies around race, country and gender.

These novelists' differently imaginative exploitations of the historical figure of JF enable searing critiques of colonial racism and dispossession. Yet, residual and/or overtly proleptic depictions of Indigenous colonial subjects, in keeping with 19th century literary and pictorial portrayals of Tasmanian Indigenous peoples as a doomed race, limit the veracity of such critiques. Thus, vigorous evocations of the discursive, intercultural nature of colonial experience, past and present, are not always strongly or consistently made. Each writer approaches history and its protagonists from an empathic standpoint, but the complexities and contestations of postcolonial unsettlement are often traded for an older, white colonial cultural game: elegiac evocations of Tasmanian Indigenous peoples.

While most of these novels successfully contest the Franklins' frozen bio-hagiographies, some may go too far in symbolically casting JF and her husband John as the sinister, genocidal architects of colonial dispossession in Tasmanian theatres. Nadolny is the exception here, lionising John Franklin's struggles and achievements, while curiously eliding questions of race in relation to Tasmanian colonial history altogether. And yet this writer renders North American intercultural colonial relations with great critical acuity and parodic verve. Nadolny's critique of colonial 'snow blindness,' though hagiographic in relation to the figure of John Franklin, is arguably the most acute in upending the racist underpinnings of early modern ethnography. In Nadolny's novel, JF is rendered as a happily complex, if minor, figure; she is never shown as mere satellite to her husband's public achievements, and is depicted as capably, uniquely perhaps, participating in the public discourses of the day. In his approach to character, Nadolny neither particularly idealises nor demonises, though John Franklin retains the elevated status of flawed hero.

In Livett and Eberhard, JF is compassionately drawn, depicted as a fallible, white colonial protagonist, yet also as an intellectually gifted journeywoman, in alternately weary and stimulated thrall to a series of dubiously conceived, impoverishing global expeditions.

Eberhard depicts a reflective and complicated JF. Tasmania, she writes, speaking as JF, is a place where ‘I could walk on my hands for sure’ (33), where she (JF) offers others ‘another chance / at life; this dishonest, tragic dance’ (53). Flanagan, in marked contrast, rarely adjusts JF’s characterological dial from a setting of racist narcissism. Thus, in *Wanting*, JF is only ever shown as making an exhibition/expedition of herself; her movement and ability to move across geographical and political worlds (as the direct result of white privilege rather than personal zeal and intelligence), is depicted as a prodigious vanity rather than an achievement deserving of praise or even curiosity.

Flanagan is perhaps a more interesting writer when he leaves the limited female character types of JF and Mathinna behind to cleverly satirise 19th century public infatuations with voyaging and voyage discourse (enacted in actuality by the Franklins and other travellers of that time, and theatricalised, as Flanagan shows so well, in Charles Dickens’ foolishly hagiographic ice pantomimes). These clever set pieces reveal an old world deeply infatuated with the mythologies attaching to the well-publicised global peregrinations of the day. Flanagan evokes the myriad ways in which British social, cultural and political instrumentalities created and sustained a mythic whitewash around voyage narratives, glamorising and heroicising colonial voyages, and thereby helping to naturalise the ‘take-up’ or *taking* of colonial lands and the acquisition of sundry ethnographic ‘spoils.’ The cultural romanticisation of the voyage is, as Flanagan suggests across the British scenes in *Wanting*, always complicit with the masking of violent dispossessions attending that enduring oxymoron, colonial progress.

In this essay I have sought to show how these writers variously manage novelistic tensions between ‘engagement’ with the archive and ‘disruption’ of it, producing markedly different temperatures of empathic unsettlement across their works. As Koopman observes, following LaCapra, the novelist must observe a fruitful middle ground between a conventional, engaging narrative that allows readers to understand the represented others, and disrupting techniques which make clear that understanding the other can never be complete. Each of these formally imaginative, intertextually literate historical novels strives to do this with varying degrees of success. Taken together, these works nonetheless make important post-millennial contributions to postcolonial iconographies on JF, a figure seldom represented in dramatic accounts of colonial pasts.

A more complex imaginative ‘navigation’ of the historical figure of Jane Franklin is still to come. Livett’s forthcoming novel may be that very book, and I eagerly await Indigenous novelisations on this subject matter. These may counterpoint the important postcolonial work carried out to date by Indigenous visual artists such as Julie Gough, Ricky Maynard and others in relation to traumatic contact histories in Tasmania.

Ricky Maynard’s silver gelatin print *Broken Heart* (2005) (Figure 3) closes this essay in symbolic fashion, counterpointing Gough’s opening image of JF.¹⁵ As Langton notes, Maynard is a child of Flinders Island and its histories of incarceration (‘We are Here’ 46). The contemporary Indigenous figure in this image is almost a dimensional inversion of Gough’s flattened JF figure in *Ebb Tide*. But Maynard shows a real Palawa man in the sea, the waves soaking his tracksuit as he searches in vain—perhaps for a visitor from home, a ship or an answer. His is a different kind of voyage narrative.

Langton suggests that what Maynard is seeing remains a mystery. ‘But it is also too specific, too there, in that place, to be metaphorical. . . . it is the twin resonance of the past that made

the islanders who they are, and the mystery over the horizon, that overwhelms any such speculation' (47). She may be speaking about the way this image shows an imaginative engagement with real rather than mythologised history. She notes of Maynard's work:

For a son of the Tasmanian wars, social history and the proof of the camera became weapons of subtle resistance to a triumphalist and deceitful history. Against all the odds, his photographs speak a truth that he senses in people and in landscapes. They might be whispering, among other things, 'We are here' ('We are Here' 50).



When we left our own place we were plenty of People, we are now but a little one

Figure 3. Ricky Maynard, *Broken Heart*. Black and white silver gelatin print, 40.5 x 40.5 cm, 2005. Reproduced with permission of the artist and Stills Gallery.

NOTES

¹ The site-specific image of Jane Franklin from *Ebb Tide* is reproduced in Picture Gallery: 'Fugitive history' in 'Tasmania: The Tipping Point' *Griffith Review* 39, 2013. 193–200.

² Jane Franklin is also fictionalised by American novelists Andrea Barrett (*Voyage of the Narwhal* 1999) and William Vollmann (*The Rifles* 1994). Carren Irr has noted that the only character Vollmann extends no sympathy to in his parodic, postmodern reconstruction of Franklin's Northwest Passage expedition is Lady Jane Franklin. The sexually repressed Jane Franklin character (satirical cipher may be closer to the mark) is censured by Vollmann for demonising her husband's cohabitation (in Vollmann's novel) with Inuit women during his quest to find the Northwest Passage (102). For all his postmodern brio, Vollmann draws a long, if not apocryphal, bow in relation to what is known of the Franklins' lives and mores. This fails to ignite a comedic, bushfire postcolonial on ice. As Alexander points out, Franklin is on record as being appalled by his officer's occasional cohabitation with the Copperwood Indian girl now known as the postcolonial poster girl for Canadian Indian dispossession, Greenstockings (19–20). Such a distorted, burlesque portrait may still serve the writer's postcolonial intentionality whereby the Franklins' rapacious bodily appetites (and/or repression of these) stand symbolically for the broader depredations of colonial projects. Nonetheless, this depiction stands in contradistinction to Sten Nadolny's complex, sometimes hagiographic, realist portrait of John Franklin. As Irr notes, Vollmann's demonisation of the grieving widow Jane Franklin enables the writer 'to exalt a guilty bond between a native woman and a white explorer with whom the author is overtly conflated' (102). Here, in doubling John Franklin's character with his authorial persona, a device redolent of Paul Auster's high postmodern author-narrator in *City of Glass* (1985), Vollmann interestingly shows his own complicity with legacies of colonial dominion-making.

Irr observes that this differs significantly from Barrett's approach. In *Voyage of the Narwhal*, the persona of the white explorer 'splits into the authoritarian author-captain and the observant naturalist, while the white woman discovers herself through empathy with the dead or dying Inuit woman. Relative to Vollman's heroic postmodernism and left libertarianism, Barrett's work is both more modest and more temperate, but not less political' (103). Barrett's novel approaches her subject with 'less aesthetic intensity and force than does Vollman's, while displaying a much stronger commitment to investigating the role of the female half of the population' (103). This might also describe novelist Jennifer Livett's approach to this same subject. In any case, Barrett cannot resist portraying Franklin's encounter with the Indigenes of North America as a Rousseauesque idyll. Thus her novel shifts away from the anguished burlesque of Vollmann. But her evocation of events/matters Franklinian is not entirely bound in Romantic cotton wool. For in relation to JF, and 'without ignoring the contributions of domesticity to empire,' Barrett does not 'seamlessly identify metropolitan women with imperialism' and subtly 'explores the interdependence of women very differently situated in the global division of labour' (103). Irr cautions finally that while Barrett bravely articulates something of global mid-nineteenth century divisions of labour, she cannot solve it. From time to time, she even resorts to depicting a 'perhaps overly harmonious empathetic union' between JF and North American Indigenes (103). This arguably proposes a retreat to those old Arcadian mandates, French grown and English made, that underpin Enlightenment imperial voyage discourse and early colonial idealisations of *le bon sauvage* that pave the way for the genocidal 'civilising' of dispossessed Indigenes across two hemispheres.

³ To that end, Indigenous cultural critic Marcia Langton has redefined Aboriginality as a field of 'intercultural subjectivity' ('Aboriginal Art and Film' 118)³ Langton's thought forms a bridge between Kristevan notions of the 'transposition' or 'intertext,' and its cultural and social application in an Australian colonial context. In Langtonian terms, 'Aboriginality' can be thought about as '... a field of intersubjectivity in that it is remade over and over again in a process of dialogue, of imagination, of representation and interpretation. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people create "Aboriginalities" ...' ('Aboriginal Art and Film' 119).

⁴ Craigie's remarks, in both their heroic and cautionary senses, align with Indigenous Studies Professor Marcia Langton's thought in broadly defining a postcolonial contemporary literature made by Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers. Craigie also proposes confidently that the postcolonial novel is capable of speaking back to the hegemonic culture by virtue of a necessary engagement with issues of Indigenous representation.

⁵ Wilson notes that 'it seems that in Tasmania the words genocide and extinction have become synonymous' even though the use of the term 'genocide' remains contentious among historians (12). Historians Keith Windschuttle and Henry Reynolds, Wilson points out, have controversially agreed that the use of the term is unwarranted in relation to the Black Wars initiated by Governor Philip, as distinct from historians such as Jamie Boyce and Bain Atwood, who has observed that 'many Aboriginal people believe that "genocide" is an appropriate word for remembering their historical *experience*' (Atwood 105, quoted in Wilson 14).

⁶ I am grateful for informal discussions on the reception of John Franklin provided by Associate Professor Alison Inglis at the School of Culture and Communication, University of Melbourne, Friday, 1 June 2013 as part of to CSE's Colonial Mourning project.

⁷ JF's actual palanquin is now on display in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

⁸ Livett's full-length novel on the subject of Jane Franklin is forthcoming and may develop or challenge the Mathinna-Jane Franklin doubling that is presented in Flanagan's and Eberhard's accounts.

⁹ Russell notes of the Mathinna story that the 'truth' about Mathinna is, however, impossible to find:

Colonial indifference and bureaucratic neglect contributed to her sad fate: they also ensured that very little of that fate would be recorded. The sparse archival fragments are opaque, elusive, ambiguous and contradictory. Paradoxically, they have preserved Mathinna as an enigma around which truth claims can be freely made. My own project is not another fruitless quest to discover the truth of Mathinna's history. What interests me is the process by which certain fictions have become fixtures in her story, while others have been quietly abandoned. (342)

¹⁰ Among casual misogynistic slurs about the barrenness of Prime Minister Julia Gillard (2010–2013) was one 2005 photoshoot/article reproduced in a national daily that saw the then shadow deputy PM Gillard publicly mocked when the photoshoot in her home revealed an empty fruitbowl in her kitchen. Soon after, she was derisively called 'deliberately barren' by parliamentary colleague, Bill Heffernan. By 2010, with Gillard having won the ALP leadership ballot, Heffernan had to step up and call her Prime Minister. See Anna Goldsworthy's 'Unfinished Business: Sex, Freedom and Misogyny,' *Quarterly Essay* 50, 1–69.

¹¹ As Tasmanian Governor's wife, JF became advisor and helpmeet to her husband who 'was independent of Jane's judgement but listened to it with respect.' (Nadolny 263). Nadolny implicitly praises JF's work on prison reform, discussing her letters to the famed reformer Elizabeth Fry in England (262). She is portrayed as a cosmopolitan, political woman who speaks her opinion frankly 'and without shyness; it never occurred to her to

be an immaculate snobbish lady on the model of Mrs McArthur. She had travelled too widely for that, had read too many books, and had observed too many different people on three continents. . . . Jane's enterprise became nearly infamous: a fortnight after their arrival she became the first woman to climb Mount Wellington—4,165 feet high; that was no mere stroll' (262–63). In a seasoned marriage of equals, Nadolny depicts a JF who says to her husband: 'Don't expect anything from Montagu. He is Arthur's man. He wants to make you dependent on him and paralyse you' (263).

¹² See also historian Peter Cochrane's recent novella *Governor Bligh and the Short Man* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 2013)—told from the point of view of William Bligh's daughter Mary.

¹³ After John Franklin, the second most famous man of the age was Charles Dickens. In fact, Flanagan populates his story with flawed but compassionate portraits of Great Men of the Age. The novel opens with a portrait of Dickens; the writer shows Charles Dickens in full-blown mid-life crisis, mourning the death of his child Dora, in lust with the seventeen-year-old soubrette, Ellen Ternan. Enter Jane Franklin, in her regular, paid-up role as public mourner and lobbyist on behalf of her lost husband. She is bent on enlisting Dickens to undertake a high literary public relations job that will rescue the image of her husband, lost years before on his Arctic quest to find the Northwest Passage. This is something that Dickens did in actuality and of his own volition, without the intervention of the real Lady Jane. British audiences were fascinated and horrified by persistent rumours that the crew had turned to that most savage of crimes: cannibalism. These rumours are dramatised as less than hearsay at the conclusion of Nadolny's novel.

¹⁴ According to Russell, on this official visit to Wybeleena Jane Franklin requested an Aboriginal skull for her collection, not a child (352). Later, however, and more distressingly, Alexander has it that in 1838, Chief Protector Robinson visited Hobart where Jane 'asked him to send her a black boy and examples of different snakes' (129). The boy, Timemernidec, who had been given the name of Adolphus, was the only son of Wymerric, a chief of the north-western people. Jane Franklin dubbed him 'Timeo.' Alexander states 'that there is no account of what Timemernidec felt, taken from his family and friends to the confines of Government House, where he was expected to learn English, do what he was told and learn an alien way of life, cut off from his own people and culture' (129).

¹⁵ This photo is reproduced in a catalogue, *Ricky Maynard, Portrait of a Distant Land* (The Rocks, NSW: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2008). The photo features the accompanying quote from the Jeanneret Petition, signed by eight Aboriginal leaders—Walter G. Arthur, Chief of the Ben Lomond Tribes; King Alexander; John Allen; Augustus; Davey Bruney; King Tippoo; Neptune; Washington. This was signed on Wybalenna, Flinders Island, 17 February 1846 and to Queen Victoria in 1846: 'When we left our own place we were plenty of people, we are now but a little one.' The reserve at Wybeleena is evoked in the Eberhard and Flanagan novels under discussion, though histories of this kind are never alluded to.

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Image reproduced courtesy the artist and Stills Gallery.

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