

Making an expedition of herself: Lady Jane

Franklin as Queen of the Tasmanian

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Making an expedition of herself: Lady Jane Franklin as Queen of the Tasmanian extinction narrative

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Abstract

Geographies of emotion, landscapes of dispossession, marginalised colonial women, settler mourning.

ABSTRACT

This paper compares fictional portraits of Lady Jane Franklin in Richard Flanagan's *Wanting* (2008), Sten Nadolny's *The Discovery of Slowness* (1997), Adrienne Eberhard's verse novel *Jane, Lady Franklin* (2004) and Jennifer Livett's novel fragment, 'Prologue: A Fool on the Island'.

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These fictions variously reconstruct Franklin's vilified roles as modern female traveller and social reformer in Tasmanian colonial society. They also evoke her public lamentations over the loss of her explorer husband on the doomed North-West Passage expedition. While some of these novels privilege white male viewpoints, others foreground Franklin in her guises of political agitator, traveller, and hubristic public mourner. Some of these works also depict intercultural relationships between Franklin and Indigenous Palawa children as central to their elegiac evocations of settler mourning.

I argue that these novels differently show how Franklin's decades-long grief 'performance', traversing two hemispheres, served 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. I argue finally that, with the exception of Livett and Nadolny, these dramatic 'retrievals' of the figure of Jane Franklin in relation to Indigenous subjects, serve a limited critique of the parochial, racist colonial culture of early 'Hobarton'. A complex Jane Franklin character is often elided within these novelised landscapes of dispossession, with Franklin sometimes (mis)cast as wicked queen in the construction of racial extinction narratives.

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Keywords

Lady Jane Franklin:landscapes of dispossession; extinction narratives; marginalised colonial women; settler mourning; intercultural subjectivities.

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