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Abstract
When I first read Patrick White's novel A Fringe of Leaves (1976) some years ago I was interested in the incredible story of hardship and survival of a woman in the Australian bush. This so-called historical novel tells the story of the 1836 shipwreck off what is now the Queensland coast, the captivity and death of its crew members among the Aborigines and the story of the heroine's, Mrs Ellen Roxburgh, sole survival and eventual escape with Jack Chance, an escaped convict with whom she shares a final bush idyll before returning to Sydney and, eventually, London society. The novel has received widespread critical acclaim by critics in Australia and abroad. Apart from, or in addition to, the so-called historical dimensions of the novel, it has been interpreted as one of many in the White canon which presents the solitary individual in search of an ultimate insight through his or her confrontation with the terrifying metaphysical geography of the mind, soul and spirit. In the case of A Fringe of Leaves, that individual is the simple, sensual Cornish girl, Ellen Gluyas, who marries Austin Roxburgh, a sickly but mannered gentleman, and is seemingly transformed into a genteel lady by his efforts and those of his mother. Her captivity among the Aborigines, which culminates in an act of cannibalism in which she participates and views as sacramental, leads her back to the dark, instinctual side of her nature.
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INTRODUCTION

When I first read Patrick White’s novel *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976) some years ago I was interested in the incredible story of hardship and survival of a woman in the Australian bush. This so-called historical novel tells the story of the 1836 shipwreck off what is now the Queensland coast, the captivity and death of its crew members among the Aborigines and the story of the heroine’s, Mrs Ellen Roxburgh, sole survival and eventual escape with Jack Chance, an escaped convict with whom she shares a final bush idyll before returning to Sydney and, eventually, London society. The novel has received widespread critical acclaim by critics in Australia and abroad. Apart from, or in addition to, the so-called historical dimensions of the novel, it has been interpreted as one of many in the White canon which presents the solitary individual in search of an ultimate insight through his or her confrontation with the terrifying metaphysical geography of the mind, soul and spirit. In the case of *A Fringe of Leaves*, that individual is the simple, sensual Cornish girl, Ellen Gluyas, who marries Austin Roxburgh, a sickly but mannered gentleman, and is seemingly transformed into a genteel lady by his efforts and those of his mother. Her captivity among the Aborigines, which culminates in an act of cannibalism in which she participates and views as sacramental, leads her back to the dark, instinctual side of her nature.

During that first reading I was concerned with and a little distrustful of the assumptions underlying White’s telling of the tale - a tale which pits nature against civilisation, the instinctual self against the social self, the woman, her Aboriginal captors and her convict rescuer against co-
lonial white society, the city against the bush. I was also keen to know
more about the actual events on which the novel is based.

A novel is not history and this novel, in particular, takes only its
barest cues from history. Nonetheless, the canon of scholarship sur-
rounding the novel and its treatment by many commentators draw at-
tention to the parallels between the historical event and its fictional
representation. A novel is not history and Patrick White's novel makes
no pretences at being so. Yet one of the things it shares in common
with other representations of the originating event is that it, like the
historical narratives, fictional accounts and artistic representations that
preceded it as well as the film, novel and reconstructed histories which
have come in its wake, all mythologize the woman and place her in
service to a larger cause - be it Christianity, colonialism, patriarchy,
Australian nationalism, modernist humanism or the prurient interests of
a modern film-viewing public. A novel is not history and yet it seems
curious that none of the many representations of this particular histori-
cal event view it from what might be imagined as 'her' side, whether
'she' be Eliza Fraser, the historical personage, Ellen Gluyas Roxburgh,
her fictional counterpart in *A Fringe of Leaves*, the 'disquieting muse' of
Sidney Nolan's 'Mrs Fraser' series of paintings or the ribald Eliza Fraser
of the 1976 Australian film and novel of the same name. In all of them,
the woman is imagined as an essentially natural, sensual, instinctual
creature who excites the reader's or viewer's interest in being alien,
exotic and strange. It seems as if, as a result of the reported historical
experiences, the fictionally reconstructed woman becomes acceptable to
modern readers only as an 'other' in relation to 'us'; what 'we' are not
but expect 'woman' to be.

In this us-and-them construction I am borrowing the self-other distinc-
tions employed by Edward Said in his study *Orientalism* and applying
them to our purposes here and adding to the discussion a certain post-
Lacanian critical interest in the construction of 'femininity' as otherness
in relation to masculine sexuality and the dynamics of desire. In this
paper I would like to utilize these ideas to explore the mythologizing
of Eliza Fraser in her many disguises and to consider the factors which
give rise to the gap between what might be understood as the real
conditions of a woman's life and the imagined woman/women of the
various narratives.

To be fair, it must be said that Patrick White's novel provides us with
a most complex narrative construction of character and culture. The rep-
resentation of Ellen Roxburgh's split subjectivity arising out of a
number of self-other distinctions is one in which the binary oppositions
which construct and maintain the unified self are constantly conflated
and ultimately transgressed. Several critics have provided insightful
analyses of these inter-relationships between language, culture, the self and the production of meaning. But fundamental to the novel is the idea of Woman as enigma and mystery - which is, of course, a founding myth of Patriarchy.

PATRIARCHAL INTERPRETATIONS: HOW TO REDRESS?

Had I been writing this paper as a feminist critic at the time of publication of the novel in 1976 two major directions in feminist criticism would have been available to me: I could have attempted some primary historical research in hopes of recovering the lost woman, the 'real' and potentially heroic Eliza Fraser, to history; or I might have set to work on the texts, paintings and film themselves, uncovering their masculine biases and casting aspersions on the heads of the likes of Patrick White, Sidney Nolan and David Williamson for their patriarchal misrepresentations of the 'real' Eliza Fraser, their failure to tell 'the truth'. Now that I'm a feminist critic in a post-modern and (I'm told) a post-feminist age those directions no longer seem adequate. In the first place, there is no 'real' Eliza Fraser to recover in the annals of history - only more and more layers of motivated discourse. In the second place, it is not enough to view Eliza Fraser only and essentially as a woman (and potentially a heroine at that). Other factors are significant: her race (a white woman amongst Aboriginal natives); her class status (one of assumed middle class authority amidst an ex-convict and working class crew); her patriarchal position (she was the wife of an ailing captain and aunt to the ship's second mate); her historical position within British imperialism (she was, it seems, born and raised in Ceylon and thus saw herself as a daughter of the British Raj) and colonialism (she travelled on a trading ship which also took emigrant families from Britain to colonial Australia); and the biological contingencies of her situation (she was pregnant when she left Liverpool and gave birth seven months later while floundering at sea in an open boat five days after the wreck to a child which drowned shortly after birth. Thus, she was in a post-partum condition throughout the time of her captivity). These factors also have bearing on and interact with her gender position, sometimes in contradictory ways. In the third place, the various mythological reconstructions of Eliza Fraser were not the authentic creations of Patrick White, Sidney Nolan or David Williamson. Rather, those men were responding to what already existed in the sign systems of their culture. They created 'their' women out of the category of 'the feminine' already available to them through existing cultural discourses. Further, they allowed the idea of Eliza Fraser as an object of desire to
circulate between them and within their narratives, even if disguised as a quest for historical accuracy or psychological truth.

So, if I can't have the pleasure of recovering the lost woman to history because all history is representation and if I can't have the satisfaction of blaming the men for their biased portrayals what can I do? I will have to adopt an approach which accepts that history is discursive and that texts are the effects of available discourses and motivated by the subjectivities of their authors. And I will need to ask as I read: who speaks, for whom and by what authority? It may not be so bad. I may not learn much more about the real Eliza Fraser but a great deal more about the inter-relationships between language, culture, desire and the self.

HISTORY AS TRUTH: SOME CONSIDERATIONS

I cannot reconstruct the history of what happened between and within the various characters as they faced shipwreck, mutiny, captivity and death. I cannot, not because there are too many stories and not enough time; nor because, in the words of the latest historians of the event, 'the main actors, for reasons of their own, did not tell the whole truth' (Dwyer and Buchanan, p. 1); nor because there are too many discrepancies between 'fact' and 'fiction' to be reconciled - but because the 'facts' don't take us very far. There is no truth to be found behind the many conflicting accounts, the tissued layers of interpretive history.

What is interesting, however, is that for every commentator on the event, whether he (or in one case she) be an artist, literary critic, historian or novelist, two common elements occur:

1) a focus on Eliza Fraser and not the other seven (male) survivors of the wreck and captivity and
2) an interest in her sexuality, and particularly on what did happen or might have happened in the brief time between her husband's death at the hands of her captors and the time of her official rescue.

The fact that she is a woman, and therefore a creature of the flesh, provides an unquestioned framework for the various authors. The woman and her sexuality come together as 'our' enigma and mystery.

The writers ponder the burning question: 'Did she or didn't she?' And if she did, 'Where, when and with whom?' And 'Did she provoke, desire, seduce or resist?' 'Was she raped?' is never seriously considered,
although had Anne Summers taken up the event in her feminist history, *Damned Whores and God’s Police*, it surely would have been.

There is both a gap and a supplement in the textual constructions regarding her captivity and her rescue which provoke these questions. The gap is created in historical terms by an absence of data or corroborated evidence as to what may have happened at the time. The supplement is a story of her rescue by the convict David Bracefell and the couple’s extended bush idyll together, to which both Sidney Nolan and Patrick White refer in their work but is a story which appears to be without historical foundation. The gap has provided a tantalizing silence for writers, artists, historians, public figures and convicts alike, all of whom have attempted to supplement it with sexual fantasy and desire.

‘Did she or didn’t she?’, they ponder. Patrick White says ‘She did’: with her husband’s brother before the shipwreck and with her convict rescuer thereafter, and both she and we (presumably) are so much the better for it. Michael Alexander, the main twentieth century historian of the event, doesn’t know and is clearly bothered by this. He complains (in a statement that would be interesting to deconstruct) that: ‘It is clear that she had some unpleasant experiences, but her inconsistency and natural reticence in encountering them has led to a lack of credible information on the subject. Her most reliable biographer [he complains] ... is aggravatingly unspecific about her sexual adventures’ (Alexander, p. 63). In other words, we don’t know. What we do know is that the unofficial reports of her rescue and sexual liaison during a lengthy trek back to Moreton Bay by the ex-convict David Bracefell are without foundation, although historians still speculate that Bracefell may have been briefly involved as a helpmate to her official rescuer, John Graham (Dwyer and Buchanan, pp. 15-6). We don’t know, but Alexander suggests, that the corroboree which was reported to be in progress at the time of her official rescue by a government party may have been intended as a ceremony to consign her as wife to the head of the tribe. In terms of Aboriginal custom, it is likely that a white woman living with the natives would be consigned a male member of the tribe after the death of her husband to give her a place in the tribal community and some degree of protection. Whether or not these women were generally married to ‘the chief’ at the time of a corroboree organised for this purpose, as is customarily suggested in white versions of the captivity narrative, is a matter open for speculation. In the case of Eliza Fraser, the corroboree version of her rescue appears in several histories under provocative headings like ‘saved in the nick of time’ or ‘rescued from a fate worse than death’ - thus creating a submerged and racially charged sub-text to the various reconstructions.
We also know that during the time of her rescue at Moreton Bay her attending physician reported that she was obsessed with the fear that she might be pregnant. And the Commandant’s official report recounts that Mrs Fraser complained to John Graham, her rescuer, that ‘the white men she met were worse than the blacks’. Which white men she met, where and when all remain a mystery. These slim slips of evidence within the official and unofficial records are all that exist to fuel the fires of speculation. None of it suggests that Eliza Fraser was a willing partner in a sexual encounter. In fact, if anything, to me at least, it suggests quite the opposite. But the mystery, the enigma of the woman and her sexuality, invites myth. It has always been so. And with myth, the woman becomes the archetypal Other for man.

Recorded events of her difficult life during her six weeks of captivity amongst the tribe are said to be recounted with some fidelity to the historical evidence in Patrick White’s novel *A Fringe of Leaves* although the interpretations and meanings given to the events in the novel as well as the construction of Ellen Roxburgh’s character depart dramatically from the historical foundations (Ward, 404 ff). On the transposition of fiction from history, White has commented that ‘if I hadn’t substituted Ellen Roxburgh for Eliza Fraser, little more than a hardbitten shrew from the Orkneys, [the novel would not] have had the psychological complexities, the sensibility, and the passion I was able to explore’ (Hassall, 7). White’s account, however, largely because of its accessibility and popularity, has supplanted what was known or devised about the originating event in the minds of modern readers.

Narrative supplements and comes to stand in the place of the event. The ‘real’ Eliza Fraser cannot be rescued from those narratives. It is possible, however, to register the fact that dominant although shifting interests are always brought to bear on and are involved in their constructions. In each of them her sex (as a woman) is central. In each, the question ‘Did she or didn’t she?’ arises. One can tease out of the texts the effects of this gap in knowledge (which on another level all narrative seeks to fill) which results in the continued circulation of ideas about femininity within masculine culture.

The Eliza Fraser story has had several revivals in the twentieth century, the most significant of which for an Australian as well as an international audience have been: Michael Alexander’s history, *Mrs Fraser and the Fatal Shore* (1971); Sidney Nolan’s ‘Mrs Fraser’ series of paintings (three series: 1947-8, 1956-7, 1964); Patrick White’s novel, *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976), and to a lesser extent, David Williamson’s and Tim Burstall’s screenplay/film, *Eliza Fraser* (Hexagon Films, 1976), reconstructed as a novel by Kenneth Cook (1976). Alexander’s history functions to place the event within an historical field. It becomes a point of
reference concerning questions of historical truth for future commenta-
tors. Nolan’s paintings and White’s novel reshape the history and place
the story within the narratives of Australian nationalism. Within this
discourse, the alien landscape of the untamed Australian bush becomes
the threat, both physical and psychic, which must be recognized and
accommodated. The Canadian poet, Michael Ondaatje’s, long poem ‘The
Man with Seven Toes’ (1969) and Andre Brink’s South African novel,
*An Instant In the Wind* (1976), also take the Eliza Fraser story, but as it
has been represented through Nolan’s paintings, as their point of de-
parture.

It is remarkable that all of these twentieth century textual reconstruc-
tions of the Eliza Fraser story occur within a narrow band of time, be-
tween 1969 and 1976. Through drama, film, art and fiction the event in
Australia has become a part of an emerging nationalism associated in
the early 1970’s with the Whitlam era in politics. Within an international
sphere it can be located as a part of the emerging discourses of post-
colonialism and feminism, although the texts themselves can be read as
anti-feminist, as this paper has suggested. The 1970’s were a time of
changing social relations between the sexes and changing power rela-
tions between colonial and post-colonial societies, colonized and coloniz-
ing peoples. Yet, Eliza Fraser, in her various forms, is never constructed
as a hero or spokesperson for the dispossessed. Rather, as this essay
will soon show, she signifies an old order of femininity. In each of the
texts she remains tied to nature, the instincts and the sensual as an
object of fear or desire for men within masculine culture. In all the re-
presentations she is a troublesome ‘other’: quarrelsome, indulgent, over-
bearing and difficult in Alexander’s history; sensual, alien, animal-like
and tied to nature in Nolan’s paintings; lusty, bold, fickle and untrust-
worthy in Williamson and Burstall’s film and Cook’s novel. White’s
portrayal is more complex but equally insistent on her sexuality, her
instinctual nature, her links to the physical world. All depict her as a
betrayer of men.

These retellings and repetitions of the Eliza Fraser story occur in
Australia at a time when the Women’s Movement is exerting consider-
able force within the culture; when women’s demands for political,
social and economic equality are visible and widely reported; and when
feminism begins to challenge masculine perspectives, including those
which link women to nature and men to culture. Yet no feminist his-
torian, artist, writer or critic takes up the event. No example attempts
to present the character as a 1970’s-style feminist hero: a woman en-
dowed with courage and fortitude who suffered extreme privations,
including shipwreck, starvation, captivity, sexual exploitation and poss-
ibly rape - and survived. On the contrary, the extant representations of
Eliza Fraser and the event reassert a femininity firmly inscribed within masculine systems of representation. Taken together they partake of a reactionary force within Australian nationalism quite in opposition to currents within Australian feminism. The effect is to retard the changing currents of history and reassert an ideology of male dominance and female submission. The cross currents within and between the various discourses of Australian nationalism, feminism and post-colonialism deserve further attention.

In an insightful article which studies the story as a post-colonial enabling myth within an international context A.J. Hassall writes:

Nolan, White and Brink perceive in the stories a myth which embodies the archetypal confrontations between the European consciousness and the virgin continent, between the 'civilized' white settler and the 'natural' black inhabitant, between imprisonment and freedom, between woman and man on the edge of survival in the antipodean wilderness, and between suffering and the individual soul.

He concludes that each of these artists fashion their confrontations as 'an enabling myth for their respective post-colonial societies' (Hassall, 4). That is, they portray white civilization conquering the physical, psychological, moral and political threats presented by the alien land. In Hassall's article Eliza Fraser, or Ellen Roxburgh, becomes an everyman character charting a post-colonial territory for modern readers. I recommend the article to you. At the same time I want to question the concept of Eliza Fraser as an everyman character and detail some of the ways in which the central female character as everyman also becomes an everywoman as 'other' in the reconstructions.

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE FEMININE

Each of the artists under consideration, although divided by nationality, academic discipline and mode of address utilize already present assumptions about Western femininity to fashion their heroine. Alexander, for example, presents the historical Eliza Fraser as a dominating wife and a bad mother who deserved her fate. His tone is often disparaging, patronizing and callous. He also suggests a sensual nature to Mrs Fraser quite early in the narrative by commenting that a contemporary sketch of the woman reveals a 'handsome dark-haired lady whose strong features and mobile mouth suggest contradiction between duty and indulgence' (p. 18).

You might want to consider the sketch which prompts this remark [illus. 1]. How strong is the contradiction between duty and indulgence
Il1us. 1: Eliza Fraser.

for you? The supposition has its uses. It allows Alexander later in the text to speculate on her possibly sexual interest in one of her male (native) captors and an attachment to one of them which 'might be more romantic than she admits' (p. 64). Jill Ward, in an early article which compares White's fiction with Alexander's history comments that White may have been stimulated by this aspect of Mrs Fraser which led to his 'similar contradiction between sense and sensuality' in Ellen Gluyas/Roxburgh (404). But the supposition remains an interpolation by Alexander from a visual cue for which he has no historical or factual evidence. Yet Jill Ward is labelled by a more contemporary historian as Eliza Fraser's 'most feminist' commentator, presumably because she was the only woman to write of the event (Ryan, 103), and the mobile mouth becomes a face which contains 'a strange combination of purity and wantonness, virtue and lust' (Cook, p. 7) for the novelist of the film version.
The importance of a modern reading of visual cues has been spurred throughout by Sidney Nolan's powerfully evocative paintings in his 'Mrs Fraser' series. Nolan took up the theme of Eliza Fraser on three occasions. The first in 1947-8 resulted in twelve large paintings including the 'Mrs Fraser' illustrated here [illus. 2]. It appeared on the hardback jacket cover of Michael Alexander’s history and also on the cover of a popular catalogue of Nolan’s paintings, Sidney Nolan's Paradise Garden, edited by Robert Melville. Another painting from Nolan’s second series, 'Mrs Fraser and Bracefell' [illus. 3], was chosen for the first edition cover of A Fringe of Leaves.

In the first instance Mrs Fraser is portrayed as a naked animal blending into the alien bush. Robert Melville suggests that Nolan identified with the convict, Bracefell, through this particularly provocative image. He continues,

her plight arouses not pity but the sense of her openness to sexual assault. She is a woman liable to be taken from behind, like the women in some of the Pompeian wall paintings, with no preference and no certainty on the part of the taker as to which passage is being penetrated. She would spit and snap like a female dingo, without offering resistance. (p. 7)
For Melville and other art critics she is Nolan’s ‘disquieting muse’ who becomes, especially in Nolan’s second series of paintings (1955-6), an Australian Eve in a fallen garden who will eventually betray her rescuer, Bracefell. She is, says Melville, ‘necessarily evil’ (p. 9).

Illus. 3: Cover of Patrick White, *A Fringe of Leaves*: ‘Mrs Fraser and Bracefell’.

Although the 1976 film ‘Eliza Fraser’ bears little relation to its historical point of reference, being a comic sexual farce playing on the popularity of its ‘Tom Jones’ model, it does effectively reinforce the by now established stereotype of Eliza Fraser as a seductress and betrayer.
It also heralds the reissue of Michael Alexander’s history, *Mrs Fraser and the Fatal Shore*, in a paper-back edition with [no surprises here] a film rush photo illustration of Susannah York in a provocatively low cut, garnet satin dress on the cover [illus. 4] and yet another novel, Kenneth Cook’s *Eliza Fraser*, described as ‘a rollicking tale of lust and adventure from the violent bawdy-colonial past’ (dust jacket quotation cited in Ryan, 107).

In all of these examples several common elements prevail. The woman, shaped by prior discourses of patriarchy, Christianity and colonialism, becomes the repository for the myth of original sin. I refer not to the woman herself but to the Woman as symbolic Other of Western discourse. Associated with nature and sensuality she becomes an object/other on the fatal shore in opposition to the self seeking the safe harbour of civilization and reason. She is feared, reviled and blamed for her fate. If aspects of her questing nature make her an everyman acting out a myth for mankind, those aspects of her sensual femininity also and at the same time make her an Other for man.
There are other issues here. Much is at stake in this myth which comes to life at the interstices of post-colonialism, Australian nationalism and feminism. One issue is the absence of a 1970's feminist analysis, or a story told from 'her' side. This 'voice' has been supplemented historically by a surfeit of femininity, that is, a woman constructed through comfortable and acceptable platitudes about Woman which have informed the dominant discourses of Western cultures for at least two centuries. Another is the absence of stories coming from the position of other crew members who survived the wreck: the sailors who mutinied, those who were separated from the Captain's party, the loyal black slave from the Carribean who supported the Frasers against the interests of the others throughout the ordeal, and the twelve year old boy. These gaps in the history have several effects.

Mrs Fraser's story is told. She enters history, even if only within masculine constructions and categories of femininity. The rest do not make it. Although male, and thus the proper subjects of history, none of them could be fashioned by the available discourses into a proper hero. Each, but for different reasons, was barred from this category - some by their class status, others by their anti-authoritarian actions, still others by their race or age. Eliza Fraser's representation in the histories, novels, film and poem, constructed with reference to cultural categories of femininity, enhances already available belief systems and values in the culture - as does the absence of the other voices.

When read as an effect of Australian nationalism this Eliza Fraser of the various mythic reconstructions is not unlike at least two other historical actors in Australia whose stories arise out of and have serviced a national mythology. I refer to Louisa Lawson (until recently the much reviled mother of Henry Lawson, the nationalist writer identified with the Bulletin in the 1890's) and Lindy Chamberlain (the woman who claimed that a dingo took her baby at Ayer's Rock and has become one of Australia's most recent scapegoats in an enduring national mythology). Both these women, sisters under the skin, share a similar fate to the mythic Eliza. In each case, the narrative and visual representations of their lives and actions have supplemented and become the 'reality'. And those representations bear little relation to the historical evidence. All three women have been constructed as bad mothers whose dominant personalities led to their own desperate lives. All three have been judged blameworthy and their actions sighted as affronts to the nation. In each case, there remains a considerable gap between what can be reasonably assumed about the actual woman from the historical evidence and the woman as represented in the nation's mythology. In each case the dominant race, class and gender codes of meaning within Aus-
ustralian culture have been activated against the interests of actual women but in the service of Australian nationalism.

One can never know the 'real' Eliza or Louisa or Lindy - not because the first two are lost to history, but because, whether dead or alive, when they enter history they become the effects of discourse. But we can challenge the assumptions that historical narratives represent 'the truth'. Returning to Hassall's comment, if the Eliza Fraser story has become an enabling myth for post-colonial society, it can also be read as a cautionary tale. I believe that more and more readers are preferring to read it that way.

NOTES

1. The full title of the film is, ironically, 'A Faithful Narrative of the Capture, Sufferings and Miraculous Escape of Eliza Fraser', although it is generally referred to by the abbreviated title, 'Eliza Fraser'.


4. Ondaatje includes the following explanation of the event at the conclusion of his text:

Mrs Fraser was a Scotish lady who was shipwrecked on what is now Fraser Island, off the Queensland coast. She lived for 6 months among the aborigines, rapidly losing her clothes, until she was discovered by one Bracefell, a deserting convict who himself had hidden for 10 years among the primitive Australians. The lady asked the criminal to restore her to civilization, which he agreed to do if she would promise to intercede for his free pardon from the Governor. The bargain was sealed, and the couple set off inland.

At first sight of European settlement, Mrs Fraser rounded on her benefactor and threatened to deliver him up to justice if he did not immediately decamp. Bracefell returned disillusioned to the hospitable bush, and Mrs Fraser's adventures aroused such admiring interest that on her return to Europe she was able to exhibit herself at 6d a showing in Hyde Park.

Colin MacInnes

This is the legend surrounding the event to which both Ondaatje and Brink had reference. It has been proven to be without historical foundation. It appears in Colin MacInnes' introduction to the catalogue Sydney Nolan. Catalogue of an Exhibition of Paintings from 1947 to 1957 held at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, June to July, 1957.
5. This is not to suggest that feminist interpretations favourable to Mrs Fraser would have escaped these discursive categories, although they might have inverted or challenged them, nor that Eliza Fraser could ever be an easy heroine for our times, bound as she was by her own upper-class and racially charged colonial attitudes. The question here is not one of truth, but of who speaks, for whom and by what authority.

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