

# 1. IAMAESI



*Five-corners (Styphelia triflora)*

The earliest surviving works by Aesi are two small sketches of farmhouses dated 1845 and signed 'Aesi'. These suggest Adelaide added Scott to her middle names by the time she was fourteen years of age, for the newspaper report of her baptism in the Presbyterian Kirk in early 1832, indicates she was christened 'Adelaide Eliza Ironside' by Reverend McGarvie, who was attending to clerical duties during one of the many periods Dr. Lang was abroad. Thereafter, Adelaide Ironside often signed her artwork and correspondence as Aesi. The Ironside papers in the State Library of New South Wales (SLNSW) and Society of Australian Genealogy (SAG) include letters addressed to Aesi, Aize, Ae and Miss Ai. In a letter from the poetess Elizabeth Barrett-Browning to her close friend Isa Blagden in 1857, the poetess refers to Adelaide as 'Aeize'. Again, the Tasmanian-born Caroline Clark, who had been living in the United Kingdom since the late 1840s, addressed Adelaide as 'Aesi' in two letters to Adelaide in the early 1860s. In her 1987 biography of Adelaide Ironside, Jill Poulton speculates that Adelaide added 'Scott' to her name at an early age because of a friendship with Maria Scott (née Barney), who lived on the North Shore with her husband, Captain Scott, and their

children. Although an acquaintance between the two women can be confirmed by several sketches of Scott's children in one of Aesi's sketchbooks, (SL NSW), there is no correspondence between the two women. This is surprising given that both attended the 1862 London International Exhibition where their works were exhibited. As the Ironsides did not 'remove' from their city Sydney residence to the North Shore until the summer of 1848 when Aesi was fifteen years old, and Maria, her senior by ten years, already had several children, I do not think their friendship particularly close, nor Maria the inspiration for Aesi's additional middle name. Poulton also suggests that the addition of Scott may have been inspired by Adelaide's admiration for Sir Walter Scott, evident in the 1852 sketch Aesi produced which depicts a scene from Scott's 1805 poem, *The Lay of The Last Minstrel*, (Art Gallery of NSW).

Newspaper records confirm that Adelaide's father, James Ironside was Scottish, which suggests another possible inspiration. Family realia held in a private collection associated with the Redman descendants, indicate Adelaide's grandfather, John Redman also came from a family of Scottish merchants who lived in Edinburgh before the family relocated to London perhaps not long after the battle of Culloden in 1746. Although the identify of Adelaide's grandfather is difficult to confirm because there were at least three 'John Redman' or Redmonds' living in Sydney in early 1800, the details on a surviving set of silver spoons suggest the owner was probably the John Redman who was born in 1763 and grew up with his brother James around Temple Wharf on the Thames, before both joined Her Majesty's navy as marines around 1779. James and John Redman were both in their twenties when they joined the eleven-ship expedition, now generally known as the First Fleet, which arrived in the waters of Warrang (Sydney Harbour) in the summer of 1788. In 1790, James and John resigned their commission to take their chances at Norfolk Island, with James opting to return to England a few years later. John, however, returned to Sydney and took a role in the Nights Watch while using convict gangs to establish a timber lugging business and build his first home at the bottom end of George Street. He enjoyed several promotions

until he was eventually appointed Chief Intendant of the Town Gaol in the 1820s. Historical Records of Australia (HRA) includes letters to and from Redman in this capacity, including one in which he claims to have done over forty years of service to His Majesty. The set of silver spoons, featured in *Wild Love*, are engraved with the family initials and have been dated to the 1740s. According to E. J. Guthrie and Keith Farrell's *Old Scottish Customs: Local and General* (see bibliography), there was a custom specific to the Edinburgh area which involved grooms going into town to purchase such spoons before their nuptials. As they waited for these to be engraved they would partake of buck's party celebrations.

Given the growing preoccupation with fairies and the fay in the 1840s, as well as Aesi's well-documented mystical and homeopathic interests, discussed below in more detail, I speculate that one of the inspirations for her nickname was the ancient Celtic word for the Fair Folk. The Irish name for this supernatural race was the *Aos sí*, while in Scottish Gaelic they were more commonly known as *daoine sí* or *síth* (the people of the fairy mound). Although Aesi's European heritage is largely Scottish, it would not be surprising for her to know and use the more common Irish term.

Convict records confirm that both Mary Redman (alias Gibson née George) and her father, Robert George, were transported to New South Wales for forging a £1 banknote during the Napoleonic Wars. By tracing their cases through the newspapers and Old Bailey I was able to confirm that before she was transported, Aesi's grandmother had worked throughout the rural parts of England as a tinker, plying her trade with her father's business partner, John Bellair, as they both did their best to pass the forged notes Robert George produced.

The records are contradictory about Mary's age at the time, for some say she was sixteen when she arrived in Sydney in 1811, while others suggest she was in her twenties. While on board a prison hulk awaiting their transportation to New South Wales, Robert George and John Bellair wrote several letters pleading for support and sympathy. These suggest both men were professionally ambitious with a strong sense of their

position. Triangulating these sources with contextual research I conducted into the crime of forgery suggests most forgers came from the middle to upper middle-classes and had sufficient education, culture and social confidence as well as performative skill to produce and pass ‘bad notes’. By triangulating these sources with the many letters John Redman wrote in his official capacity as Town watchman and then Chief Intendant of the town gaol, I have speculated that Mary Redman was most likely to be the member of the family who provided Aesi with her initial artistic and social training and ambition. Richard Reid Junior's portrait, which features in the book, is held in a Redman family private collection and believed to be of Mary Redman. The portrait suggests a woman of stern expression and bright blue eyes. Given her early years as a hawker, I speculate Mary Redman had knowledge of plants and natural remedies and peddled in the old ways years before she shared these knowledges with her eldest granddaughter. Although there are no records to confirm Aesi and Martha went to live at Redman Court after Martha and James Ironside separated, there are newspaper records confirming the Prince Street property where they first lived as a family was returned to the rental market around the same time the death of the Ironsides' second child, John Frederick, was announced in the newspaper.

In this opening chapter I allude to an event, described in more detail in Chapter 18, which took place in June 1855, when Aesi presented a hand stitched banner to the NSW Volunteer Corps. As the chapter notes associated with that account confirm, this quote is verbatim and multiple reports confirm the weather was inclement, to say the least. I also suggest parallels between Aesi and the heroine of Charlotte Brontë's autobiographical novel, *Jane Eyre*, first published in 1847 when Adelaide was fifteen years old. After encountering several references to governessing in my research, I was struck by her resemblance to the unfortunate Jane Eyre. Like Brontë's famed character, who is initially depicted as having little wealth or social connections and later describes herself to Mr. Rochester as being ‘small, plain and obscure’, the sources contain references to Aesi being plain, although the photographic portrait taken in the 1860s suggests otherwise. I nonetheless suspect that James and Martha

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Ironsides's separation resulted in financial and social precarity for Adelaide in ways that exposed her to comparable experiences to Jane Eyre.

Despite, perhaps even because of their perceived peculiarity, both Jane Eyre and Aesi were admired for their strength of character, their faye dispositions and their original sketches, which they produced from their imagination and according to contemporary notions of 'the Ideal'. Mr. Rochester, for example, refers to Jane as a sprite and elfin character, and upon hearing that her parents are dead concludes Jane must be a fairy. In addition to claiming that 'the men in green' are her relatives', Rochester emphasises Jane's mystical qualities as well as the mystical connection between them, by often calling her 'my fairy', 'fairy-born' and 'human-bred' and 'mocking-changeling'. As Bronte gave her novel the title, *Jane Eyre: an autobiography*, I conceived of *Wild Love* accordingly and so the central character must likewise speak in the first person.

To evoke Aesi's character, I have drawn her voice from the fifteen surviving letters she wrote, her Commonplace Book, and original poetry which comprises three unpublished, and twenty-one published poems which appeared in *The People's Advocate*, *The Empire*, and *Leicestershire Mercury* between 1853 and 1855. Of the fifteen surviving letters by Aesi, ten are to the Reverend Dr. John Dunmore Lang; one to his wife, Willie Lang, another to Miss Louise Australia Blaxland, one to a London publisher named John Day, who agreed to produce Aesi's wildflowers in a gilt-bound folio in 1866. There is also one letter to her 'dearest' friend, Caroline Amelia Carr Clark. In an 1859 letter to Dr. Lang, Aesi mentions that her mother is longing for 'the free sea city of Sydney'. There appears to have been some understanding between Dr. Lang and Aesi that he occasionally publish excerpts of her correspondence in the colonial newspapers, for he did so on several occasions including the letter in which she described a royal visit from 'the future King of England'. In other letters to Lang she also states that she intends to return to Australia and adorn the public buildings with frescos featuring her 'Patriot Father', Dr. Lang. Among the letters from Sir Charles Nicholson to Aesi are one where he refers to her desire to become 'The Mistress of Art in the Southern Hemisphere'. Her poems

include repeated refrains to ‘feeding’ the inward eating flame’, the ‘eternal flame’ and ‘roaring fire’ which is ‘electric as the living fire’.

Having conceived of *Wild Love* thus, I decided to open the book in 1859, when the Italian Wars of Unification are under way and Aesi and Martha are living in Rome. Having triangulated extensive archival and contextual sources, I concluded this was a period of considerable personal and professional disappointment for Aesi. In addition to her grandmother’s death in February 1859, Aesi was suffering multiple professional setbacks. The previous year, she and her mother had travelled to Perugia where Aesi befriended several monks associated with the Chapel of San Severo. These men had shared some of their ‘trade secrets’ about the difficult art of fresco with Aesi, and correspondence from two monks, is held at SLNSW confirms Aesi was preparing to return in 1859 to take up a commission which they had secured for her. Although none of the Ironsides’ Papers mention the Massacre of Perugia undertaken by Papal troops on 20 June 1859, the shocking nature of that event probably prevented the Ironsides from returning to Perugia that year, and consequently ensured she never took up her long-sought commission. There are certainly no records of them returning to Perugia, and the Ironsides’ passport papers detail some, but perhaps not all, of their travel across the borders of that contested country between 1856 and 1867.

Two letters written in the early 1860s from the Florence-based expatriate eccentric Seymour Kirkup to the then-Roman Consul Joseph Severn, best known as the young artist who cared for the poet John Keats in the months before he died in Rome in 1821, also suggest there were tensions in the relationship between Adelaide and her devoted mother. Kirkup, a celebrated eccentric, expresses much contempt for ‘Miss Ironside’s’ ‘weak, vulgar’ mother, and seems infuriated with how she ‘extinguished’ Aesi’s ‘gifts as a medium’ when she could have been ‘a painter of the imagination’ like his ‘old friend William Blake’. Instead of such a noble path, Kirkup railed, Martha had ‘encouraged’ her daughter ‘in commonplace studies under the direction of snobs’, such that Aesi had now ‘mistaken her vocation’ and was devoting himself to ‘scripture subjects’ which are ‘worn-out’ and ‘make no impression’. Having acquainted myself with Kirkup’s extensive epistolary outpourings at

University College London, I concluded that although he was often eruptive and declamatory, his observations often contain some truth. And so, in addition to heartbreak about the Massacre at Perugia and Mary Redman's death, I have depicted Aesi feeling personally obliged and artistically suffocated by her adoring mother. The Ironside Papers also include correspondence from Sir Charles Eastlake, a close friend of Aesi's Roman mentor, John Gibson, who was President of the Royal Academy (RA) and Director of the National Gallery during Aesi's time in Italy. These letters indicate that despite Eastlake expressing admiration for 'one so gifted' after he had visited Aesi's studio with John Gibson, Aesi said or did something during this period which she regretted, to write Sir Charles and Lady Eastlake an apology some time later. This they graciously accepted, before adding that now wished 'to forgive and forget'. Aesi was indignant about having her work rejected for the RA's first exhibition of female artists. This aligns with several sources which indicate Aesi had intended to travel to England during this period. A letter from Caroline Clark which refers to Aesi's dedication to 'elevating our sex' and 'hoisting the colours of her dear old country', confirm that such rejection would have stung the ambitious artist.

There is another occurrence which may have also mired Aesi's miserable *Annus horribilis*, although this is based upon my speculation of the sources. *The Brownings' Correspondence*, an extensive on-line resource funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, includes six letters which make tantalizing references to 'Miss Iremonger' and 'Ironmonger', 'Aizee', 'Aesi' and 'Aize'. Most of these have been written to one of the Brownings' closest friends, Isa Blagden, who was born in India, but resided in Florence where she was closely connected with Robert and Elizabeth, commonly known as 'Ba'. Blagden was also close to the literary Bulwer-Lytton and Trollope families and wrote several novels of her own, including *Agnes Tremorne*, published in 1861. Set against the backdrop of the struggle for Italian independence, it tells the story of a female painter's struggles while exploring themes of female genius and spiritualism. The famous American sculptress Harrier Godhue Hosmer, also known as 'The Imp', another close friend and correspondent of the Brownings, was also a mutual acquaintance and probably the inspiration for Blagden's novel. The Ironside Papers include several letters from the Imp in which she refers to Aesi as 'Sister

Painter', a term then used by women artists to evoke their solidarity. Nonetheless, in Hosmer's 30 April 1856 letter to the Brownings she refers to Aesi as 'a queer body'.

By triangulating the Brownings' many biographies, with a calling card to the Ironsides from Robert Browning which lists his Parisian address, it seems likely that the Ironsides became acquainted with the poets in early 1856 when the couple were in Paris. She and her mother then visited Casa Guidi, the poets' famous home in Florence, and during this time Aesi must have conducted several 'performances' for Elizabeth. Although Robert's initial comments about the 'enthusiastic and wild ways of Miss Ironside' indicate he was initially bemused by Aesi, later correspondence with Blagden, Hosmer, and the American sculptor William Wetmore Story, suggested his views had hardened by the early 1860s. Given Browning's well-known suspicion of mediums, I speculate this was a result of an episode which may have occurred while the Brownings were residing in Rome over the winter of 1858 and 1859. Although the Brownings had travelled to Rome in the company of the wealthy American couple, David and Sophia Eckersley, Robert disapproved of the experiments in automatic writing Sophia and Elizabeth were undertaking. Although scholars have been unable to determine why the Brownings left Rome in some haste in late spring or early summer 1859, it is generally suggested that Ba had a breakdown stimulated by severe political disappointment associated with the Italian war for unification, and the realization that Sophia was a spiritualist fraud. Although I do not know if Aesi was involved in the automatic writing experiments between Sophia and Ba, the alignment of key dates and events encouraged me to add the threat of further reputational damage associated with Robert Browning's hardened disposition as yet another source of Aesi's woes at the time.

Extensive historical records confirm Martha's father, John Redman, served several official roles during the early colony while also running a successful timber business, hence the piles of timber in the yard at Redman Court. Many descendants believe that John Redman was a marine who served under Watkin Tench on board the *Charlotte*, which was one of the eleven vessels which anchored in Sydney Harbour as part of the so-called First Fleet in January 1788. The records contain several resignation letters from Redman, suggesting he performed his role



reluctantly. He certainly had to deal with difficult prisoners, including one who did escape through the gaol chimney. Letters in the HRA confirm that Redman also participated in the 1808 military coup against Governor Bligh by arresting Sir Henry Browne Hayes, a well-known Bligh sympathiser. The fact that this was initiated by ex-marine John Macarthur, and enacted by Major George Johnston, adds further weight to my speculation that Redman was a marine, rather than an Irish convict who arrived on board the *Surprize* in 1791, as some parties propose. Nonetheless, after double-checking the hard work of several Redman descendants, who cross-referenced the official records with land grants for Norfolk Island, Toongabbie, and Field of Mars, family archives and realia, I am persuaded that Redman was a First Fleet marine private.

For me, the most compelling pieces of evidence are 1. the collection of Edinburgh spoons, 2. The land grant Redman received out at Field of Mars, which had been explicitly set aside for retired marines, 3. Redman's involvement in the Bligh rebellion with other marines, 4. Repeatedly selling blocks of land to D'Arcy Wentworth who he met while both were residing at Norfolk Island and 5. After retiring from the Good, John Redman purchased a licence for an inn which he named 'Keep Within Compass', a phrase associated with well-known morality sketches, and more in keeping with a marine of Scottish heritage, than an Irish labourer.

Although maps and newspaper articles confirm Redman Court was situated across the road from the gaol on George Street, we do not know if John Redman's home had a Captain's Walk, although in *The Colony*, Grace Karskens mentions several nearby properties which did. In addition to Augustus Earle image reproduced in *Wild Love* because it depicts Norfolk Pines in precisely the part of George Street where Redman Court was located, Redman descendants have oral memories about the trees in the courtyard of the family property across from the gaol Newspaper advertisements confirm Redman Court comprised 'a series of buildings' which were rented out for stores by various businessmen. Being closely located to Circular Quay, it must have been an ideal location for gentlemen with trading businesses, including James Ironside, who kept a store there in the 1830s, even after separating from Martha. The Presbyterian pastor, Reverend McGarvie, who baptised Aesi, also had a shed there, alongside Martha's older brother, John Redman Jr., who ran his fitting and turning business at the back of the property.

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In addition to consulting the papers of colonial families known to the Ironsides, I have drawn upon newspaper reports and portraits of Mary Redman, James, and Martha Ironside to speculate about their appearance and personalities. I do not know if the family conducted ‘improvisations’ at Redman Court, but given Aesi’s performative spirit as well as the literary works she and her uncles John Junior and William produced, this seems probable.

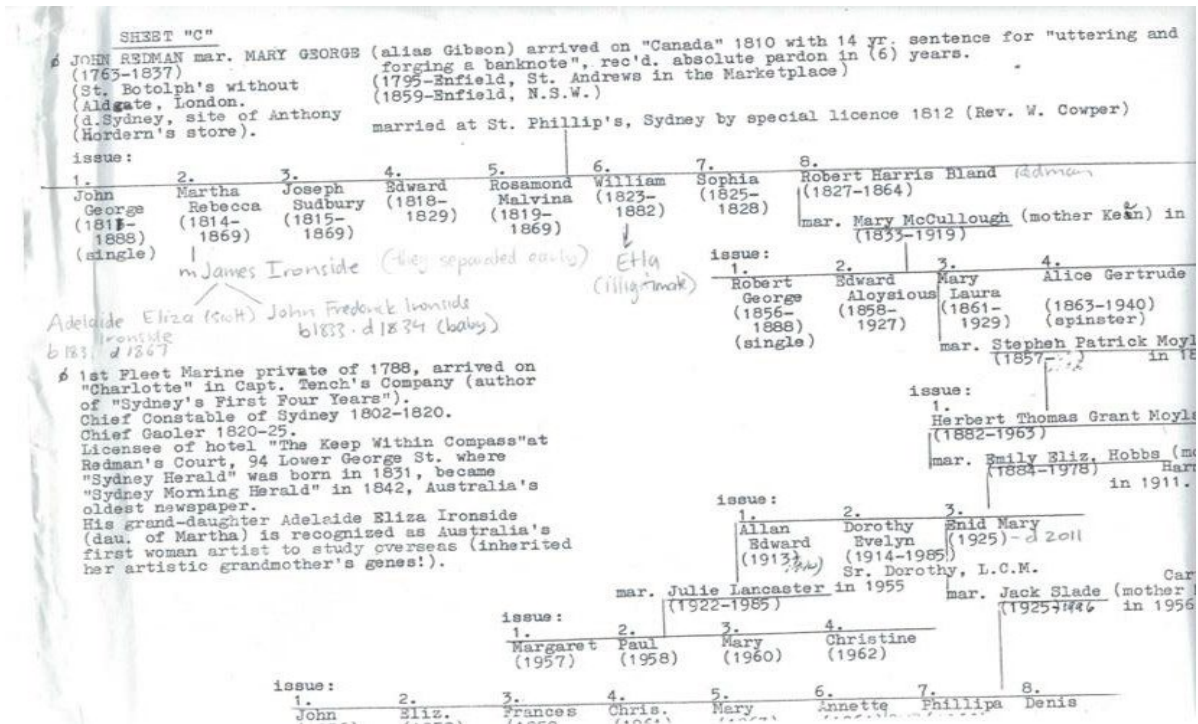
There is some contestation about when Eora women ceased to ply their nawi (bark canoes) upon the waters of Warrang for night-time fishing. Although some records suggest this had ceased by the 1830s, there are artistic depictions from the early 1850s which suggest Eora women still fishing the waters at that time.



REFERENCES				
To whom leased	N <sup>o</sup>	To whom leased	N <sup>o</sup>	To whom leased
1 Robert Campbell Esq	34	J <sup>o</sup> Bolger	67	Sim <sup>l</sup> Lord
2 D <sup>r</sup>	35	Chas <sup>r</sup> Whelan	68	Tho <sup>s</sup> Randall
3 W <sup>m</sup> Bauman, now	36	Serj <sup>t</sup> - Ricketts	69	W <sup>m</sup> Chapman
4 Major L. Bertram	37	John Fleming	70	Tho <sup>s</sup> Reibie
5 M <sup>r</sup> White	38	Geo Pitt	71	W <sup>m</sup> Blake
6 Cap <sup>t</sup> W <sup>m</sup> Bauer	39	John Fleming	72	Tho <sup>s</sup> Jameson
7 Sam <sup>l</sup> Thorley	40	Rich <sup>d</sup> Clarke	73	Isaac Nichols
8 Henry Radle	41	Tho <sup>s</sup> M <sup>r</sup> Hobby	74	Dan <sup>l</sup> M <sup>r</sup> Kay
9 Major Geo Johnston	42	Cap <sup>t</sup> Nichols	75	Chas <sup>r</sup> On <sup>l</sup> Pitt
10 Rich <sup>d</sup> Chears	43	Jonas Bradley	76	Tho <sup>s</sup> Saunders
11 Tho <sup>s</sup> Prior	44	Anne Robinson	77	J <sup>o</sup> M <sup>r</sup> Arthur
12 Cap <sup>t</sup> Waterhouse	45	Will <sup>m</sup> Roberts	78	Rob <sup>t</sup> Sidaway
13 Edw <sup>d</sup> Laing	46	John Driver	79	John Harris
14 J <sup>o</sup> Underwood	47	Tho <sup>s</sup> O Neale	80	John Palmer
15 Grant to Orphan	48	Mal Kearns	81	Nat. Lucas
16 Col <sup>l</sup> M <sup>r</sup> Peterson	49	M <sup>r</sup> O'Connell	82	W <sup>m</sup> Bennett
17 Cap <sup>t</sup> W <sup>m</sup> Blarcell	50	Joseph Smith	83	W <sup>m</sup> Day
18 M <sup>r</sup> Tho <sup>s</sup> Bayne	51	Cap <sup>t</sup> Houstoun	84	Edw <sup>d</sup> Luttrell
19 M <sup>r</sup> Harris	52	Mary Newton	85	James Thomson
20 Rich <sup>d</sup> Chears	53	Nat <sup>l</sup> M <sup>r</sup> Kellar	86	James Wiltshire
21 Rob <sup>t</sup> Turnbull	54	Tho <sup>s</sup> Whittle	87	John Tucker
22 W <sup>m</sup> Jameson	55	J <sup>o</sup> Bloodworth	88	Rich <sup>d</sup> Palmer
23 Edw <sup>d</sup> Haven	56	John Gowen	89	Joseph Sherrard
24 Lieut <sup>l</sup> W <sup>m</sup> Moore	57	Geo. Howe	90	Cap <sup>t</sup> Tho <sup>s</sup> Bentice
25 G. Ravelle	58	Serj <sup>t</sup> Richardson	91	John Redmond
26 Rich <sup>d</sup> Atkins	59	J <sup>o</sup> Aiken	92	Tho <sup>s</sup> Alford
27 Edw <sup>d</sup> Johnson	60	Cap <sup>t</sup> W <sup>m</sup> Wilkinson	93	Nat. Lucas
28 Cap <sup>t</sup> F Kemp	61	Tho <sup>s</sup> Storer	94	Shad Shaw
29 W <sup>m</sup> Hudson	62	David Bevan	95	Nich <sup>d</sup> Davis
30 Rev <sup>d</sup> Johnson	63	James Peet	96	Nat. Franklin
31 Sam <sup>l</sup> Skinner	64	Dan <sup>l</sup> M <sup>r</sup> Colliam	97	Fred. Markell
32 Russell Marsh	65	W <sup>m</sup> Bennett	98	J <sup>o</sup> Callam
33 Rob <sup>t</sup> Cummings	66	D D Mann	99	Alex <sup>r</sup> M <sup>r</sup> Donald

This map of early Sydney details the area known as The Camp which sprung up around 'the Tank Stream' in the first decades of European settlement. The legend lists 'John Redmond' at block 51.

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This Redman Family Tree comes from a private collection and demonstrates the impressive research undertaken by previous family members.

## 2. THE CROSSING



*Flannelflower (Actinotus helianthi)*

Newspaper advertisements indicate the Ironsides moved to the North Shore in January 1848, around the time of Martha's thirty-fourth birthday. In that 'beautiful but extremely sequestered cove', the Ironsides found themselves in the company of clergy, artists and large families seeking a cheaper and healthier way of living than was then possible within the town of Sydney, which now boasted a growing population as well as all sorts of tanning industries and factories, clustered about the harbour. Although this small community on the North Shore was considered somewhat bohemian, it was largely ruled over by Alexander Berry, a Scottish merchant who played the laird over those who rented land from his considerable holdings. As he and Dr. John Dunmore Lang frequently rebuked one another in the press, I suspect he made life uncomfortable for those, like the Ironsides, who aligned themselves with the radical cleric.

Berry had been a business partner of Edward Wollstonecraft, the nephew of the famous Mary Wollstonecraft. Unlike his rebellious aunt, Edward Wollstonecraft was an arch conservative and so reviled the association with his Aunt Mary and her equally unconscionable daughter, Mary Shelley, he left England for

Sydney and refused to be drawn into conversation about either woman. Wollstonecraft set up on the North Shore in the 1830s when he had to suffer few neighbours other than the celebrated landscape artist Conrad Martens, and his family. Martens was, of course, the artist who had travelled on the *Beagle* with Charles Darwin, for a spell.

Wollstonecraft built a modest home on the North Shore, which he named 'Crows Nest Cottage'. This shall appear later in our story because the Ironsides moved into that small house which once commanded views of the Harbour and there is now a North Shore suburb named after that cottage. Colonel Barney, then President of the Mechanics School of Arts, was another North Shore neighbour, as was Reverend William Branwhite Clarke, his wife, and their daughters. Clarke was said to have left his mark in the colony not as a churchman, but rather as a geologist. While chipping about at slates in the Blue Mountains in the 1830s, Clarke discovered gold particles. However, when he showed these to Governor Sir George Gipps, he was allegedly ordered to 'put them away, or we shall all have our throats cut'.

The Clarke's property was named Branwhite after its master, while another property in the area which the Ironsides would have visited frequently was named Graythwaite and inhabited by Sophia Elizabeth Dibbs and her three sons, John Campbell, Thomas Allwight and George Richard. Sophia allowed her sons to believe she was a widow because her sea-faring husband had died at sea. In fact, Captain John Dibbs, was one of the many navy men to suffer from insanity after a head injury incurred during a voyage, which is discussed by James Dunk in his excellent work, *Bedlam at Botany Bay*. After increasingly violent outbursts Dibbs was sent to the East Indian Company Asylum in Calcutta, which, Dunk notes, was specifically reserved for unfortunate seamen. Salt water clearly ran in the veins of the Dibbs boys, for throughout the 1840s and 1850s there are numerous accounts of Thomas and George Dibbs racing their skiff, the *Waratah*, on the various regatta days on the harbour.

In *Reminiscences: the Dibbs family and how we lived in Sydney seventy years ago* (SL NSW), Walter Robey Dibbs, the son of George Dibbs, recalled how his grandmother, Sophia, always kept 'the quince rod at a convenient distance' and had 'a commanding presence with comely placid features... hair braided back from a forehead in homely Scott

fashion' as well as 'the most beautiful dark blue' eyes. Even during his childhood, the North Shore was considered remote and 'the Aboriginals still plentiful'. As he 'roamed the heights of North Shore', he regularly saw their camps as well as children 'playing about in the scrub'. 'At that period the first ferry steamer had still not begun to ply' their trade, he recalled, so 'connection with the southern side of the harbour had to be made by boat'. 'The three boys', therefore, had to use 'their boat to transfer themselves from their home to the wharves on the city side' each day for work and 'every Saturday afternoon..

*boats conveying ladies and their children were rowed from different parts of the sparsely settled foreshores of North Shore as it was then termed to the City and the women folk and kiddies enjoyed the rare delight of being able, after traversing the grass grown George Street as far as Haymarket to visit Paddy's Markets an open air emporium that could be sold was sold. Advantage of the weekly outing being taken to purchase stores or luxuries for the following week. Laden with these commodities, the ladies were rowed back to their respective homes by their husbands or sons, in many cases well primed with rum. Of such stuff were many of our hardy pioneers of North Shore built'.*

In a newspaper article written towards the end of his life, George Dibbs, a one-time Premier of New South Wales, recalled the family's association with the Ironsides. In addition to a friendship between Sophia and Martha, who were both native-born women and daughters of convicts, George implies Thomas Alright may have had a romantic attachment to Aesi. I have given Tom the nickname 'Alright' because of his middle name.

Newspaper references to the 1855 Paris Exhibition did appear at the time indicated in this chapter so it is possible Aesi received news of it accordingly, although, as I later indicate, many of her neighbours were closely involved in its organisation. I do not know the time for the production of her wildflower illustrations; nor when and how she decided to organise these into a folio, which is how they were eventually exhibited. Nonetheless, an immature pastel illustration of a Christmas Bell lily in her Commonplace Book, which I describe in *Wild Love*, suggests she had commenced with such experiments well before embarking upon her ambitious watercolour illustrations which did, indeed, take the Ironsides onto Rome,

via Paris. Waugh & Cox ran a local stationary providing art supplies and the list of items Aesi purchased there are drawn from various Art Material advertisements as well as 1850s Art Catalogues. The names of the markets, shops and items for sale are drawn from newspapers. I do not know the name of the Ironsides' servant, but there are references in their papers indicating they had domestic help. I have named her Hannah, in memory of the servant Jane Eyre befriends while she is staying with her cousins, the Rivers.

Madame De Staël's novel *Corinne; or Italy* (1807), was one of the most popular novels of the era and prompted generations of female artists throughout Britain, Europe, and the Americas to pursue 'a life of aspiration' by going to Italy with the hope of enjoying greater personal and professional freedom than was then possible in their homelands. We know Aesi was familiar with the novel because she prefaces her poem, *Eternity*, which was published in the *People's Advocate*, with a direct quote. Aesi frequently portrayed herself in the style of Corinne, with a laurel crown in self-portraits too. Such depictions are a direct reference to an early scene in the novel where crowds have gathered to watch the dark-haired fictional beauty, Corrine, make her way through Rome in a chariot before ascending the steps of the Capitol to be crowned as a prophet and poetess. With *Corinne*, De Staël provided several generations of women with a fictional heroine who embodied a publicly admired expression of 'female genius', in ways that championed the imagination and intuition. As the crowd cheers Corinne on towards the Capitol in this early scene in the novel, Corinne's future love interest, Oswald Lord Nelvil, a Scottish laird, watches on in wonder:

*People were talking about her all the time; they were telling of yet another of her qualities which heralded the combination of all the talents that capture the imagination. One said that she had the most moving voice in Italy, another than no one performed tragedy like her, yet another that she danced like a nymph and that her drawings were as charming as they were original. Everyone said that such beautiful verses had never been written or improvised before and that at times the grace and at times the eloquence of her ordinary conversation captivated the minds of all around her ...*

*At last, the four white horses drawing Corinne's chariot made their way into the midst of the crowd. Corinne was sitting on the chariot, built in the style of ancient Rome, and white-robed girls walked alongside her. Everywhere she went people lavishly threw perfumes into the air; everyone looked out of their windows to see her and the outsides of the windows were decorated with pots of flowers and scarlet hangings; everyone shouted, 'Long live Corinne! Long Live genius! Long live beauty!' ...*

*She was dressed like Domenichino's Sibyl. An Indian turban was wound round her head and intertwined with her beautiful black hair. Her dress was white with a blue stole fastened beneath her breast, but her attire, though very striking, did not differ so much from accepted styles as to be deemed affected. ... noble and modest ... pleased to be admired ... a feeling of shyness was mingled with her happiness and seemed to ask pardon for her triumph. The expression on her countenance, in her eyes and in her smile aroused interest in her, and the first sight of her inclined ... Her arms were dazzlingly beautiful; her tall, slightly plump figure, in the style of a Greek statue, gave a keen impression of youth and happiness; her eyes had something of an inspired look. ... there was a kind of naturalness which enhanced the effect of her extraordinary situation ...*

No wonder that it was claimed that there were 'three powers in Europe: England, Russia and Mme de Staël', and that the hyper-masculinist Emperor Napoleon so loathed the author of *Corinne* and her influence upon French politics that he forced her into exile in Switzerland. There, de Staël set up a salon which attracted the great artists of the age, including many of the German transcendentalists who are referenced in Aesi's archive. Although French and radical, de Staël was popular with Protestant readers as she was Protestant and reviled Roman Catholicism. I quote this passage at length from Sylvia Raphael's 2008 edition of the novel because it may have been an inspiration for Aesi's pilgrimage to Rome. First published in 1807 and still influential well into the



## WILD LOVE CHAPTER NOTES: PART ONE

1850s, it is likely *Corinne* was also well-known to Martha, who may have used it to encourage Aesi's artistic ambitions. The few lines of poetry quoted in the 'crossing' scene come from Aesi's 1853 epic poem, 'Australia'. This comprised eighteen stanzas and was published consecutively from June to September 1853 in Sydney's most radical newspaper, *The People's Advocate*. Aesi may have conceived of this poem as an offering to her country, comparable to the 'beautiful verses' Corine devoted to Italy.

The excerpt below is from the 30 Jan 1813 *Sydney Gazette*, confirming the payment Martha's father, John Redman, received from the government for supplying the town goal with firewood.

GOVERNMENT AND GENERAL ORDERS.	
<p><b>HIS EXCELLENCY</b> the GOVERNOR has been pleased to direct the following STATEMENTS of the COLONIAL POLICE and FEMALE ORPHAN INSTITUTION FUNDS, for the Quarter ending the 31st of December, 1812, to be published for general Information.  <i>By Command of His Excellency the Governor,</i>                      J. T. CAMPBELL, Secretary.</p>	
<p>THE TRUSTEES of the POLICE FUND in an Account Current with D'ARCY WENTWORTH, Esq. Treasurer, for the Quarter ending on the 31st December, 1812. <span style="float: right;">£ S. D.</span></p>	
1812.	To paid Mr. Alcock, for Repairs done to the Streets of Sydney and Parramatta..... 227 6 6
	The Executors to the Estate of the late Andrew Thompson, Esq. for a Granary House, &c. purchased for the use of Government..... 1500 0 0
	Capt. John Cross, amount of two Bills drawn from Hobart Town, on the part of Government..... 404 11 9
	Mr. Francis Oakes, for erecting a Market Place in the Town of Parramatta..... 139 7 5
	Mr. James Horrax, for Repairs done to the Church of St. John's, Parramatta..... 110 0 0
	Capt. Savigny, of the Ship Frederick, passage of 9 Persons from the Derwent to Sydney..... 27 0 0
	Mr. John Redman, for Fire-wood supplied the Gaol at Sydney..... 37 10 0
	James Bowler, in part Payment for a Well and Pump at the Gaol of Parramatta..... 20 0 0
	Sundry Persons from the Derwent, &c. as Evidences for the Crown..... 28 7 0
	William Cox, Esq. for a new Veranda, and sundry Repairs at the Court-house at Windsor..... 51 6 0
	Ditto, the Government Subscription towards enclosing the Barrack-ground at Windsor..... 10 0 0
	Ditto, for the Persons who prosecuted to conviction Ludlit and Doyle, for clandestine distilling..... 10 0 0
	John Obee, for one Year's Writing done at the Factory, Parramatta..... 5 0 0
	For Sundries supplied to C. Hencforth, in charge of the Medical Department at Liverpool..... 15 0 0
	David Dyer, for Fire-wood supplied the Watch-houses of Sydney..... 12 15 0
	For sundries supplied to the Gaol, and the Hospitals at Sydney and Parramatta..... 7 0 6
	For apprehending Deserters from the Ship Isabella..... 4 0 0
<b>SALARIES.</b>	
	William Broughton, Esq. Acting Commissary, 1006 days Pay: viz. from 1st April, 1810, to 31st December, 1812..... 1006 6 0
	Major McChaine, as Barrack-master, from the 30th June to 31st December last..... 92 0 0
	Lieutenant Rose, as Superintendent of the Government Stock, Port Dalrymple..... 23 0 0
	Lieutenant Durie, as Commandant at Parramatta, from 1st July, to 31st October last..... 30 15 0
	Mr. George Howe, as Government Printer, one Year's Salary, ending 31st December last..... 60 0 0
	Mr. Henry Lane, Government Clock-maker..... 10 0 0
	Mrs. Jemima Fisher, as Housekeeper at Government House, Parramatta, from 17th September, 1810, to 31st December, 1812..... 46 13 0
	Mr. Alcock, as Inspector of Streets, &c..... 25 0 0
	Mr. Robert Jones, Assistant Superintendent of Police..... 15 0 0
	Mr. Redman, as Chief Constable..... 15 0 0
	Mr. Cubitt, as Gaoler..... 15 0 0
	Mr. Michael Robinson, Principal Clerk in the Government Secretary's Office, with Arrears..... 22 10 0
	Mr. Charles Gray, second Clerk in do. with like Arrears..... 22 10 0
	Mr. Joseph Covgill, as Assistant in ditto..... 6 5 0
	Mr. Lewin, as Coroner..... 10 0 0
	Mr. Shears, as Assistant to the General Hospital..... 6 5 0
	Mrs. Sims, as Midwife to ditto..... 10 0 0
	Mr. George Chartres, as Clerk in the Police Office..... 7 10 0
	Mr. Samuel Larken, as extra Clerk in the Commissariat..... 12 10 0
	Mrs. Blady as House keeper at Government House, Windsor..... 5 0 0
	William Davidson, as Assistant to the Gaoler..... 5 0 0
	William Thorne, as ditto to the Chief Constable..... 2 10 0
	Richard Wade, as Steeple-keeper..... 2 10 0
	Five District Constables..... 12 10 0
	By Balance in Hand..... 4501 16 5½
	<b>£8572 8 4½</b>
Ca.	1812.   By Balance in hand from last Quarter..... 7709 2 2½

### 3. BRISTLY; A BEGINNING



*'Bristly' Beard-heath (Leucopogon setiger)*

To evoke the geography of the North Shore I supplemented contemporary recollections, newspaper references and maps with my own observations from visiting the area repeatedly as I researched and wrote *Wild Love*. Walter Robey Dibbs' *Reminiscences*, cited above, recalls Aboriginal people were still living in those parts when he was growing up and as he was the son of Aesi's neighbour, George Dibbs, I speculate this would have been during the 1860s and 1870s. As there are only three references to First Nation people in the Ironsides archive, I have sought to address these archival silences and acknowledge the ongoing occupation of the Cammeraygal and Wallumedgal people on their Country by including other contemporary references from regarding padways (paths), camp smoke and rock art on the North Shore.

My depictions of Aesi working on the bristly bearded heath is informed by interviews I conducted with botanic illustrators, as well as contemporary instruction books such as *The Arts of Sketching Flowers*

from *Nature* (1853). As nineteenth-century art material underwent extensive technological advancement during Aesi's lifetime, I consulted catalogues by Ackermann, Reeves & Sons and Winsor & Newton from the relevant year each time I referred to specific colours and tools. In this instance I have also supplemented that research with advertisements such as the one posted in *Illustrated Sydney News*, 11 March 1854, which announced that Waugh & Cox's Artists' Repository & fancy & General Stationers at 554 George Street had just received a 'choice selection of articles ... scarce for a long time' thanks to the landing of the *Golden Age* (which I refer to in a later chapter). Among the new items which arrived in time for artists to prepare their contributions to the Paris Exhibition was 'Double elephant drawing paper', 'solid sketch books of plain and tinted paper', and 'sable and camel hairbrushes', 'japanned in tin boxes complete with every requisite'.

Records confirm that John Redman had land at Toongabbie, which he sold to D'Arcy Wentworth. For a time, he also had land at Field of Mars which included a hut and was known as 'John's Farm'. In *Sydney Wars*, Stephen Gapps describes the nature of conflict in the early colony between 1788 and 1817 including the nature of life for marines, such as John Redman, who were tasked, among other things, with marking out the line of limitation about 'the Camp' by cutting marks into the trees. Gapps notes that 'by the end of 1791, thirty-two land grants of 20 to 140 acres, but most around 30 acres, had been made outside the main settlements to the north and west of Sydney. Evaluating the state of the colony on the eve of his departure that year, Lieutenant General Watkin Tench (who sailed on the *Charlotte*) mentioned how these land grants would help to 'establish a mutually supporting network of distinct convict settlements with a system of communication that would also 'give protection' to the main settlement. Governor Phillips personally named Field of Mars to mirror another area named Field of Concord (now a suburb of that name).

Paul Irish's *Hidden in Plain View: The Aboriginal People of Coastal Sydney*, charts the lives, journeys and kinships of First Nations communities and individuals who regularly travelled in and out of 'the Camp' from the early period when John Redman was

still serving as a marine to long after Aesi and Martha left Sydney in 1855. Irish also describes the complex relationships and attitudes which developed between First Nation and European settlers, noting a shift those which were typically improvised during the first three or so decades, to those which became increasingly institutionalized by churches and governments as the nineteenth century progressed. Throughout, I have drawn on this as well as other primary and secondary sources to sketch Redman family relations with, and attitudes to, First Nations people such as those depicted in Augustus Earle's painting. Earle's work was so popular that it was reproduced in lithographs which makes it likely that the Ironsides were familiar with this image.

There are no direct references to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* in the Ironside papers, however, these and other sources confirm that the Redmans were a literate family and her Commonplace Book includes passages by Byron and Wordsworth, fellow Romantic poets. The notion of 'priority' was keenly felt and regularly asserted among first generation Australian-born Europeans, particularly if they had convict parents as this encouraged free settlers to treat them with moral panic and contempt as they were considered tainted by the convict stain.

A brief explanation is included in the glossary regarding why the terms 'Stirling' (as in British pound) and 'Currency' (a cheaper local coin) were ascribed to free settler and native-born people. Suffice to say Currency Lads like Aesi's uncles would have been denied land grants and overlooked for government positions and struggled to take advantage of the extensive opportunities afforded to Stirling settlers and other free migrants they disparagingly referred to as 'New Chums' and 'Jimmigrants'. Such conditions continued well into the 1850s, and as John Molony, Ben Jones and I have noted in published scholarly work, these factors shaped early expressions of colonial identity in ways that imbued it with a defiant, self-conscious and hyper-masculine performative impulse. While these circumstances made it hard for Currency Lads to secure a livelihood and therefore a wife, Currency Lasses, such as Martha (and Aesi), were considered particularly attractive to the Stirling set and New Chums as they were often deemed to be healthier than British migrant women

## WILD LOVE CHAPTER NOTES: PART ONE

and convicts. In addition to being more attractive, Currency Lassies were also thought to have a better ‘lie of the land’ when it came to colonial society. I have drawn upon the rich archival material devoted to the patriotic feelings of Currency Lads such as Aesi’s uncles, the Dibbs boys and others we shall soon meet in the following chapters. For example, many new arrivals wrote upon the distinctive dress of these groups. Many wore specific clothes to identify themselves, including cheap, locally made Cabbage Tree hats which resulted in them being known as ‘Cabbagers’. Failure to advance, let alone find work, left many Currency Lads and Cabbagers to loiter the streets and quay and with time on their hands they took to taunting New Chums.



*An Ackermann Watercolour Box c. 1840s to 1860s*

*Leucopogon* is the first of the Australian wildflowers listed on the subscription pamphlet. There are over a hundred species of this genus of heath but as the list is not specific about which species Adelaide painted, I selected a heath which grows in the Sydney area and which First Nation people used as a medicinal tonic for the liver by crushing the berries and mixing them into water.

#### 4.

### A VERY GEORGIAN MATCH



'Weeping' Swamp myrtle (*Baeckea linifolia*)

The nature of life in Sydney during Martha's childhood has been described in sufficient detail across various primary and secondary sources for me to evoke the sounds and smells of that period. I have imagined the scene associated with Martha's birthday bonnet according to the research I conducted into colonial native-born 'Currency Lassess' like Martha, evident in my first speculative biography, *The Convict's Daughter* (2016). This research reveals that native-born women were particularly valuable commodities in the colonial marriage market and often matched or prepared for that purpose by their parents well before they came of age at their sixteenth birthday. See my PhD, *Taken: A History of Bride Theft in 19th c. Ireland & Australia* (UMelb 2011) and Portia Robinson's work *The hatch and brood of time*. There are multiple references to Martha's ability to speak both French and Italian, playing the piano, owning a superior guitar and teaching music lessons. The newspapers include multiple references to John Redman's sloop, *Martha*. HRA records confirm Martha and James both received government land grants in Newcastle upon their union.

Mary Redman's father, Robert George (also Gibson), is a

fascinating character in his own right. The letters he wrote from the prison hulk begging for clemency fell on deaf ears for he arrived in the colony in 1811 to serve a fourteen-year sentence for forgery. He was taken into the service of John Redman and assumed the role of manservant, working for his new son-in-law and pregnant daughter. It must have been a curious reversal of fortunes for Mary, who had previously worked for her father and his business partner, John Bellair. By the time Robert George arrived, John Redman and Mary George were about to have their first child, John Junior. The arrival of Mary's father and then the new baby may have precipitated their nuptials, for forty-nine year old John Redman married Mary George, who was either in her late teens or early twenties the following year, with Robert George as a witness. Martha Redman was born two years later on 15 January 1814. There are numerous sources confirming the Redmans depended upon the government stores during this period, as many colonial families did. As the colony waited for provisions from England, it was also common for colonists to forage for things like Sarsaparilla tea made from *Smilac glycyphylla*. As early as 1788, Lieutenant Bradley described finding a plant which grew about the rocks and 'amongst the underwood entwined, the leaves of which, boiled, made a pleasant drink and was used as Tea by our Ships Company; It has much the taste of Liquorish and serves both for Tea and Sugar and is recommended as a very wholesome drink'.

There was a Scottish tradition associated with christening female babies with the fresh dew of a willow tree to ensure they were fair of face. Although there is no record of the Redmans engaging with such rituals, I wanted to signal the challenges associated with imposing Northern Hemisphere knowledge upon the colonies, so I have suggested Robert George used weeping myrtle to conduct this ritual upon Martha, his first granddaughter. The Redman family tree confirms the name of the only other surviving daughter was Rosamond Malvina. This was a somewhat unusual name in that period, and suggests the Redmans knew the famous (perhaps fraudulent) poetry of Ossian [James MacPherson], whose *Fingal: An Ancient Epic Poem* refers to a heroine of that name. Aesop's Commonplace Book certainly includes verses from that epic.

I have gleaned elements of James Ironside's life from a letter he sent to his brother while living in Hobart, as well as official and shipping

records. The colonial newspapers mentioned many of the items he auctioned, including Hogshead Brandy and ready-made clothing. It was more difficult to establish precisely where he came from in Scotland, for although I found a reference to him originating in the Perthshire region, I also found an obituary to Aesi published in the *Banffshire Journal and General Advertiser* which states her father's family were locals. After visiting both Perth and Banff and undertaking research into the nature of life in both areas in the 1820s, I decided upon Banff, in part, I confess, because the portrait composed by Aesi which remains in the Ironsides' private possession suggests James Ironside had a straggly red beard and thus suggested Viking ancestry as many in those parts of Scotland did. Dr Lang regularly travelled throughout Scotland in the 1820s to secure Scottish immigrants to the colonies and may well have been why Ironside came to Sydney. Spectacles of public violence including the display of corpses were common, as discussed by many including Dunk's *Bedlam at Botany Bay*. I have drawn upon my PhD (UniMelb2011) to speculate about the courtship between Martha Redman and James Ironside, as well as the cause of their separation, which is hinted at in sources.

Newspaper records describe an incident from this period when Mary Redman tore down a line of washing which two convicts named Mary Whitby and James Handby had erected on her land. This triggered a physical altercation during which Handby picked up Mary Redman and threw her from her land. When Mary Redman flew at him again, he hit her on the breast. Aesi's grandmother then took the couple to court for trespassing and assault and the case went in her favour.



**Commission Agency.**  
**T**HE undersigned begs to acquaint his Friends and the Public, that he has commenced Business as a Commission Agent and Broker, at **UNDERWOOD'S BUILDINGS, No. 9, George-street.** Having made arrangements for those spacious stores, holders of goods can be accommodated with storage for any quantity, either wet or dry.  
 He has now on Sale, a few bhds. of **Geneva, 32 O. P.**  
**Edinburgh ale, in cask and bottle**  
**Cloths and cassimeres**  
**Ironmongery, stationery &c. &c.**

**THE SYDNEY MONITOR**  
**WEDNESDAY MORNING, OCT. 19, 1831.**  
*By no other means than by making the ruling few, uneasy, can those they oppress obtain redress.—(Jeremy Bentham.)*

**MR. WENTWORTH'S  
 FETE AND ILLUMINATIONS.**

We have been authorized to state, that **THIS DAY**, an ox, and half-a-dozen sheep, will be roasted entire at *Vaucluse*, in commemoration of a certain joyful event. It is intended that the carcases shall be on the spit early this morning. There will be lots of Cooper's and Wright's *Ast*, to enable the visitors to pour out copious libations on the joyful occasion. A band of music with a pair of brass drums will be intended to play the popular air of "*Over the hills and far away!*" All persons will be welcome to partake of the cheer, and are invited to take fireworks along with them. A couple of bonfires of extraordinary magnitude will be lit in the evening. It is calculated, that the ox and sheep will be ready for serving up by twelve or one o'clock P. M. The company are requested to take knives and tumblers with them, and those who ride, are reminded to take tethers for their horses.

(N. B. We hope the company will all go with ribbons in their hats. Eo)

There will be splendid illuminations in the evening in glass and other fancy lamps; to wit

**W (CROWN) IV.  
 DON SAVE THE KING!  
 DOWN WITH THE ———!**

**ILLUMINATION.**—We beg to inform our Subscribers, that on the night of the General's departure, an illumination in glass lamps, consisting of the joyful words "*He's off!*" will be exhibited at the front gate-way in George-street, of the *Sydney Monitor* Office. (the Office itself being also lighted up). And as it is found impossible to receive company in the Office up-stairs, without great damage to the property, we shall light up our private residence in Cockle Bay, opposite and under the Flag-staff, where we shall be happy, as before advertised, to see our Subscribers to drain a few bowls of cold punch.

*Sydney Gazette*, 11 February 1830, 1 and *Sydney Monitor*, 19 October 1831, 2.

Details of the Prince Street house are drawn from advertisements Ironside posted after the couple separated. I don't know if the Redman or Ironside families attended Wentworth's 'Great Fete and Illumination' at Vaucluse Estate in 1831, however, as most in the colony did and the Redman family had a connection with Wentworth family via their fathers, it is likely. Martha was then about a month from giving birth to Aesi. Given John Redman's recorded involvement in the rebellion against Governor Bligh, I have speculated that the family were sensitive to the consequences of getting involved in colonial disputes and Martha was therefore reluctant to attend this event.

Likewise, that by acting indiscreetly during the festivities, James Ironside provoked the wrath of Martha's brothers. I also speculate that the Redman brothers' response to Ironside's flagrant conduct with another woman, so incensed Ironside that he got drunk enough to participate in Wentworth's public humiliation of Governor Darling, which Wentworth stage crafted. A letter written from Aesi's younger friend Amelia Pommel (see Part 3) to Lady Windeyer in the 1920s suggests that Martha left the marriage because James Ironside drank. This may be true but should be

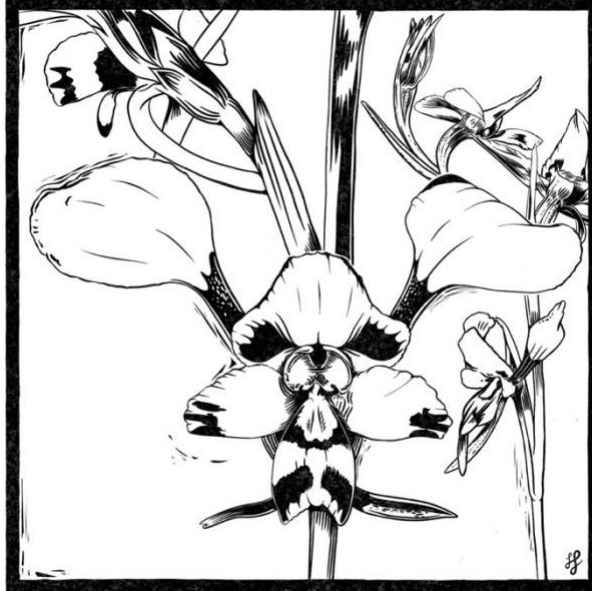
treated with caution, as Pommel was an unreliable source due to her uneven eyesight.

For example, she inaccurately described the colours of Saint Catherine's robes in the painting her father brought from Aesi when he and Amelia were in Rome in the 1860s. Amelia's attitude to alcohol and James Ironside must also be understood in the context that she was an active member of the Worldwide Women's Temperance Movement. As James Ironside's obituary describes him as 'a highly respected commercial gentleman', who was known for his 'honesty of purpose and ever charitable disposition', I have sought to show some complexity of character while also acknowledging that there is slight evidence of him supporting Aesi and Martha.

Martha maintained her father's connection with the Wentworth family for when William Charles Wentworth and his family visited Rome in 1860, the two families spent time together during which Aesi painted portraits of his daughters, Eliza and Laura. Correspondence between Laura and her elder sister, Thomasina Fisher (Timmie) also confirms the Ironsides visited the Wentworths' London and rural estate in the 1860s and that Sarah Wentworth and Martha Ironside had a close friendship.

The Weeping Myrtle is such a rare flower that I could find no material about its First Nation purposes or floriological meanings. Nonetheless, I felt the notion of a 'weeping' myrtle captured evoked the sadness, or at least, gravity of character which is evident in Aesi's portrait of 'MRI from life' which is reproduced in the book.

## 5. THAT FIRST LUMINOUS MOMENT



*Spotted doubletail, or Leopard orchid (Diuris maculata)*

Aside of the death notice for John Frederick Ironside and the advertisement announcing the Prince Street property was for rent, there are no historical records associated with the period immediately after Martha and James Ironside separated. Accordingly, I have speculated that during the years intervening between their residence at Prince Street and documentation which places Martha and Aesi at a Cumberland Street residence for about a decade from the late 1830s onwards, I have returned mother and daughter to Redman Court where Aesi enjoys the stimulations of a busy environment. In so doing we are able to observe her befriending her eldest uncle, and undertaking her first ‘apprenticeship’ as a seer and artist under the stern supervision of her grandmother. I have placed a copy of the popular ‘Keep Within Compass’ allegory in the bedroom Aesi shared with her mother and aunt as this is the name John Redman gave his inn around this period which indicates the term had resonance with the family. This image (below) had various cautionary iterations concerned with female morality, which allowed me to tease out attitudes to the convict women who frequented the gaol across the road. This also allowed me to highlight the precarity of Martha’s social position because of her

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separated status which may have contributed to her social anxiety and explain why Seymour Kirkup considered her 'vulgar'. There is an extensive historiography which has engaged with the themes of morality and convict women which includes Joy Damousi's excellent work on public shame and head shaving.



Image 1: The illustration is a contemporary English print published between 1785 and 1805, engraved by Robert Dighton, published by Carington Bowles, held at the Winterthur Museum. Image 2: This *Saint Michael Vanquishing Satan* (c.1503-05) was by an early Raphael and conveys themes common to her poetry, so I speculate it was a source of inspiration for Aesi, who like many of her era, preferred early and 'Pre-Raphaelite' art. Image 3: *St Michael Vanquishing Satan* (c. 1518) is by a much older Raphael. Department of Paintings of the Louvre.



I also hung a lithograph of an early work by Raphael of *Saint Michael Vanquishing Satan* for three reasons. Firstly, the catalogue for the first Fine Arts Exhibition in Sydney held at the Public Library on Bent Street in 1847 (SLNSW), lists this work, confirming that art enthusiasts, such as Aesi had an opportunity to become familiar with it. Secondly, I wanted to set the scene for the many ways Aesi's art tastes were developing at a critical period when the principles and perspectives of old guard neo-classicists were being challenged by those who privileged more romantic and medieval sensibilities. Among the later, the PreRaphaelite Brotherhood (PRB) are most famous and as their self-appointed name suggests, identified the work of Raphael as a primary battleground for the art war they initiated in the 1848 when Gabriel Dante Rosetti and William Holman Hunt nailed their 'List of Immortals' to a studio wall.

Having suffered the influence of artists Rosetti and Hunt held in contempt, such as Sir Joshua Reynolds, or 'Sir Slosua', as Rosetti dubbed him, he and Hunt made their own list of masters. The neo-classicists were an early and major influence upon Aesi, as evidenced by colonial references to her reading Reynolds' lecture series and what appears to have been an increasingly problematic relationship with a particular set of neo-classical artists in Italy, of whom the doyen was Aesi's mentor, the celebrated sculptor, John Gibson. While the old guard insisted upon symmetry, the PRB sought to break these rules so they could hold a mirror up to nature and capture their subjective truths as well as a sense of the drama which they believed animated every life force. To defy the longstanding rules of painting in which they had been trained, they also insisted upon making a distinction between what they perceived as the decadences of the late Renaissance era so admired by Reynolds and others, in favour of what they perceived of as the more simple purity of the earlier fifteenth century, exemplified in the work of monks such as Fra Angelico (1395-1455) and Fra Lippi Lippo (1406-1469) whose work is considered in Part 3. The PRB considered early Raphael the last moment of true and pure art before it was corrupted. Among the 'Immortals', Rosetti and Hunt listed were many artists and individuals, who the historical record confirms were also admired by Aesi. In keeping with this general shift of tastes in this period, the records confirm that Aesi also

admired figures such as Dante, Goethe, Byron, Wordsworth, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Joan of Arc, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. A third reason to put the early Raphael work in Aesi's bedroom is to introduce the theme of avenging angels and heroic women vanquishing evil which are prevalent in Aesi's art and poetry.

The scenes concerned with Mary Redman's 'ways' are imagined and based upon my speculation about relations between grandmother, mother and granddaughter. They nonetheless provide the impetus for Martha and Aesi leaving the family circle and setting up on their own. Although there is evidence that Aesi attended Miss Rennie's school, this would have been the early 1840s. *Con fuoco* is a musical term meaning to play with fire.

I have traced the colonial career of Professor Rennie and his daughter in the newspapers and biographical studies. Advertisements for Miss Rennie's school confirm the nature of instruction including lessons in drawing from nature. I speculated that these classes were taken at the Sydney Royal Botanic Garden and my research in their library confirms that local flora was growing there in the 1840s. The rest of this scene is pure confection, although, as I describe, pencils and paints were so scarce during this period that they were typically kept under safekeeping.

Anne Hale Chapman's memoir of life in the colony (ML SLNSW) described her time at this school with Aesi and lists the surnames of others such as 'Driver, Neild, Stubbs, Alexander, Peacock, Hindmarsh and Clark'. Annie Hale Chapman (nee Wilson Armstrong), a contemporary of Aesi's who the daughter of a Scottish artist and a French student he met while teaching in Paris. Chapman recalls how she and Aesi both attended Miss Rennie's Ladies Department during the 1840s and that her mother was particularly impressed by Aesi's grasp of French, as I suggest in a later chapter. There are numerous newspaper advertisements detailing the nature of instruction Aesi and Annie would have received therein which I draw upon later too.

Keen to evoke Aesi's early context and character as she was growing up, I have created a fictional figure in the form of Catherine Alexander (one

of the names listed above), who is one of a few composite figures I created from both fiction and fact. A slim but poignant letter from a North Shore friend of Aesi's named Mary, confirms that Aesi certainly fostered the sort of intense affections which often develop between young women. Elements of Catherine's character and relationship to Aesi, have been inspired by the fictional figure of Helen Burns in *Jane Eyre*. David Copperfield's idolisation of James Steerforth was another for admiration of his older school companion made Copperfield vulnerable to exploitation and receptive to high jinks in the way that suits elements of Aesi's character, variously described as pure, noble, generous, wild and enthusiastic. I also drew elements of Catherine's story from several historical women in colonial women, although my primary inspiration was Catherine Bann. Although, she arrived in Sydney from Ireland in 1841 and therefore was not a Currency Lass, I have woven later twists and turns from her true life story into *Wild Love*, to represent some of the less elevated elements of the female colonial experience.

The Spotted Doubletail orchid (*Diuris maculate*), also known as the Leopard or Donkey Orchid, is one of many orchids with edible roots and tubers which formed the rich diet enjoyed by First Nations people. As *maculate* means spotted and stained in Latin, I chose this flower to introduce Mary Redman as well as the moral anxiety associated with convict women. As Mary Redman's convict identity is never mentioned in the family papers, I speculate she concealed her past from her children or that, like many other's descendants, they did so. The Redmans were certainly a socially ambitious family, and unlikely to allow their pursuit of respectability to be 'tainted' by association.

## 6. PURPLE PARSON IN THE PULPIT



*Waxlip orchid, or Purple parson-in-the-pulpit*  
(*Glossodia major*)

In this chapter I have triangulated numerous archival fragments and contextual scholarship to develop a story line which teases out various interrelational dynamics within the Redman family. The inspirations for this are many, commencing with a set of drawers, still in the possession of Redman descendants which clearly date the materials to the Macquarie's era. There is also a family legend that this work was made by John Junior. To my delight, I also found a small newspaper article from March 1838 regarding John Redman's little dog, which incurred a fine from Justice Windeyer for creating a nuisance. I have quoted Windeyer directly from that excerpt, but know nothing else about that episode, other than the breed was a 'little dog'. Nonetheless, a reference from Aesi in an 1853 letter she wrote to Dr. Lang's wife, Wilhelmina, indicates that she loved dogs. This, and an early sketch by Aesi of a carpentry shed suggests she may have spent time in her uncle's shed.

I have drawn upon archival traces from obituaries, family recollections and the extensive newspaper sources associated with the



contested state of William Redman in the 1880s to attribute distinctive personalities to Aesi's uncles. For example, William, who Aesi later described as her 'Tory uncle', attended King's College, then one of the better schools in Sydney. He was also a local swimming champion. He later made an unsuccessful run for local politics, before becoming a solicitor and having an illegitimate son with his wife's sister. When William Redman died in the 1880s his will was the source of a bitter legal dispute between his widow and John Redman Junior.

The transcriptions of that trial reveal that John Junior had been living alone in a hut beside the Dee Why lagoon for decades because he did not enjoy human society. These also confirm he was treated with disdain by the Redman family because he had been born out of wedlock. I have therefore depicted William in ways that invite comparison with John Bell, the spoilt son in *Jane Eyre* who tormented Jane when she was a young child. My portrait of John Junior as a simple-hearted fellow is also reminiscent of Joe Gargery in *Great Expectations*. I depicted George Thornton as the snub-nosed curly-headed boy who Governor Bark Bark bites in this scene because the later Redman v. Redman trial confirms he was a friend of William's and may even have been the last man to see William Redman alive.

There are references to Martha working as a collector for Lang's kirk, during the period she and Aesi lived at Cumberland Street. Likewise, James Ironside lived at Angus Cottage on Kent Street with his new life partner, Ellen Oaks and their children before moving to Denham Street in Surrey Hills. He also ran an auction house on George Street.

I have quoted directly from *National sins, the cause and precursors of national judgments*, a published sermon Dr. Lang gave about the Myall Creek Massacre when he supported Governor Gipps's decision to declare a day of penance and fasting (SLNSW). I have also drawn names for members of this congregation from an 1843 'public testimonial' to Dr. Lang in the *Australian*. References to First Nation people living in Sydney in this period are drawn predominantly from *Hidden in Plain View* and other sources.

James Ironside is listed as a member of the second jury of the Myall

Creek Massacre in the *Sydney Monitor* (10 December 1838). A juryman did protest the foreman's false representation of the second charge relating to that case, and this did result in guilty verdicts, then the execution of all defendants. I did not know if it was James Ironside, however, and have also speculated about that notorious episode may have impacted upon Aesi's family and character. There are, however, extensive primary and secondary sources associated with this terrible event, including the excellent scholarship of Lyndal Ryan, Jane Lyndon and John O'Leary, as well as Anna Johnstone who wrote about Eliza Dunlop, whose poem, 'The Aboriginal Mother', was set to music in 1841 and which briefly features later in *Wild Love*. I was inspired to include a reference to Dunlop's song because Johnstone invites us to speculate about who may have kept the music sheets for this work in their piano stool. As Martha worked as a music teacher during this time and was close to Dr Lang, I speculate that she did.

By the 1830s a terrible drought began to impact many aspects of colonial society. For much of the following decade, this drought, coupled with the colonies' dependence upon fluctuating British financial fortunes, reduced the local economy and damaged livelihoods. Many, including Governor Gipps and Dr. Lang, believed these conditions had been caused by the colonists' unjust and violent treatment of Aboriginal people. Among those who were riled up by these circumstances, were also Quakers who proposed that Europeans had no right to destroy the ancient ways of society enjoyed by Aboriginal people.

The Waxlip orchid, (*Glossodia major*) is a species of native orchid that grows in sandy open forests, particularly in the area around Myall Creek. Its roots were often eaten raw or cooked by First Nation people. Although there is no other floriological and bushflower meanings attributed to this species, its two common names, 'Waxlip' and 'Purple Parson in the Pulpit', evoke something of the thunderous declarations of Dr. John Dunmore Lang, who we see in action for the first time in this chapter.

## 7. THE RISING GENERATION



*Eye-Bright (Euphrasia collina)*

The opening descriptions concerned with the 1840s economic depression are drawn from primary and secondary sources, listed in the bibliography. Professor Rennie gave numerous lectures at the Sydney Mechanics' School of Art, including one devoted to female improvement in early January 1841, the details of which were published in newspapers, along with a mocking reply from 'A Currency Lass' who responded with ironic adulation as quoted. I could find no details about the professor's physical appearance and have therefore sketched him in ways which emulate the many fictional villains of the period, complete with raised eyebrows and liberal lashings of bear grease, then a popular ingredient in male grooming. I have imagined his lecture as a 'grand demonstration', which resulted in Aesi's public humiliation, because such events are in keeping with the later events of Professor Rennie's life. These events helps to explain or at least illustrate elements of Aesi's character which are evident in the archive, such as her exhibitionism and ambivalence for male authority which often shifts from adulation to occasional prickliness. Repeated references to courage in Aesi's poetry also encouraged me to speculate that this was a quality she valued, perhaps because it had once been

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in short supply. Something about Robert Browning's description of Aesi's 'enthusiasm and wild ways' also made me wonder if such performances were self-conscious. I don't know who composed the mocking letter to Professor Rennie in response to his lecture on 'female improvement' but it is a voice of a currency lass from this era, and as such offers another dimension to a demographic of colonial women who have occupied my historical interest for several decades because they have received only scanty scholarly attention.

This letter suggests that like many Currency Lass, native-born women were also ambivalent about the assumed authority of British exports and adept at satire. In her poem *Sketches of Character* (1854) Aesi proves she has a sharp eye and tongue, so I have attributed the letter to her and Catherine as a high jinks prank which restore her spirit. I have set the scene of them writing this letter at Gill's Confection Store to acknowledge my own native-born and convict ancestors, Martin, Margaret, and their daughter, Mary Ann Gill.

### EDUCATION.—FEMALE IMPROVEMENT.

The following clever and well-written paper was read and commented upon at the last public meeting of the School of Arts. We trust that the very able writer will favour us with as many contributions as possible, to enrich the columns of the *Herald*.

(To Professor Rennie.)

SIR,—Although I am not, and have no wish to become a *Blue-stocking*, and should tremble to think of appearing in print; yet you have generously afforded me an opportunity of expressing myself somewhat publicly, without doing violence to that bashfulness and maidenly modesty which are the peculiar ornaments of our sex.

Since hearing your opening lecture in the Sydney College a mist has fallen from my eyes. Accustomed, from my youth upwards (by a defective education, and prejudices which have grown with my growth), to regard female intellect as of an inferior order to that of man; taught to look upon the mysteries of philosophy and science as far beyond the grasp of my feeble comprehension; and frightened by the hard words (as puzzling to the uninitiated as a medical prescription) which meet us at every step,—I resigned these studies to man without a murmur, and betook myself to the more pleasing pursuit of poetry and romance. What has been the consequence? Let those who have for years drank of the same intoxicating draughts answer for themselves. Let those who have, like me, ascended the highest heaven of invention with Milton—wandered through the flowery fields of Fairy-land with Spenser—admired the melting melody of Pope—the terse and vigorous numbers of Cowper—the mellifluous inspiring strains of Campbell—or the impassioned ardour of Byron; let those who have, like me, laughed, and trembled, and wept over the flying, though varnished, pictures of Scott and his brother romancers,—ask their own hearts, and they will tell them that these pursuits, however enticing, instead of filling their minds with useful knowledge—instead of fitting them to become agreeable companions to men of sense and education, have merely been training them for a romantic existence in the land of Utopia.

But, thanks to your prelections, I have now firmly resolved to become a Reformer, to renounce my idols, to lay poetry and romance aside with a sigh, and enter upon a course of more useful study. I was once in a dream, I am now awake; I was once blind, now I see.—I am fairly roused from my lethargy; all the woman knidles in my heart, and when that is the case,—when a man or a woman is actuated by an eager working wish to become wise, you have shewn us that no obstacles can stand in our way.

... purposes which aspire to serve, and which never fail to elevate." Lady Morgan is perfectly right; for what, I would ask, are our boarding schools, here or in England? Convents and nunneries they are jocularly called by their inmates and others. Convents and nunneries indeed! I wish they were worthy of so good a name. How stands the fact? Is it not notorious that many persons in England, conscientiously differing in religious opinions from the founders and promoters of these confined institutions, have consented to the last act of depriving themselves of the sweet society of their daughters, and consigning them to the tender mercies of foreigners for their education, simply because suitable instruction for a female mind could not be found in any of our boarding seminaries in England? And, in this Colony of Australia, have not the hopes of many affectionate parents been miserably blasted, who fancied that a finished education for a female could be found no where but in an English Boarding School? Could not a more judiciously chosen where children, natives of this place, have circumnavigated the globe for the purpose of an Education, and been restored to the arms of their parents, after the world of expense and anxiety they have cost, in a period of less duration of several years, as readily as they pursued their studies as when they left these shores in pursuit of English knowledge? I have nothing to be over severe in my remarks; but when I think on the routine of education adopted in these schools; when I mark the shallow disquisitions and crooked spines of our boarding-school misses; when I call to mind the frivolous and girlish studies, or rather amusements, which occupy our minds in that most important period of life between girlhood and womanhood, my heart boils within me, and I cannot help thinking that there is something rotten in a system of training which so effectually tends to deforest the intellect of the female sex. And why should it be so? Has the schoolmaster gone abroad, and is the schoolmistress still to remain at home? Forbid it justice! Forbid it reason! Forbid it Professor Rennie! Sir, you have nobly persevered as nobly and our emancipation is at hand. Every lady in the land is your debtor, and every gentleman too if he could stop to think so;—mothers are your debtors, who are rearing a family of interesting children, destined to fill our places in the next generation;—all, in short, are your debtors who would wish to see the female mind raised to that state of cultivation for which it is fitted by nature. You have lighted the spark, let us unite to kindle it into flame. In this age of petitioning let us petition; let us approach the throne with becoming humility and becoming firmness; let our earnest prayer be for a reformation in our household.

The high-spirited and satirical response of a Currency Lass to Professor Rennie's didactic lecture on 'Education.--Female Improvement'. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 Jan 1841, 2.

Dr. Lang's visit to America in 1840 proved extremely formative in the development of his politics and may have shaped Aesi's republicanism and artistic aspirations. At the very least, Aesi dedicated one of her poems to an American politician. Dr. Lang's memoir (and his biographers) indicate he secured Queen Victoria's signature from Sir James Clark and that this then granted him an invitation to meet the then president, Martin Van Buren. While in New York Dr. Lang also visited the Broadway Tabernacle which was one of the most famous religious institutions in the world. Equally famous was Reverend Finney, whose celebrated evangelic movement so transformed the areas around New York that these became known as the Burnt-Out Districts because the Holy Spirit was thought to have purged the area with its righteous flame. A devout woman like Martha would have known about this. I do not know if Dr. Lang viewed Trumbull's famous artwork, but he certainly expressed his admiration for American republicanism after this visit and began to recognise the political value of the native-born. Aesi clearly shared many of Dr. Lang's convictions for she later wrote to him, declaring that she intended 'by my own hands' to 'immortalise you in the frescoed story for the future history of our country'. It is possible the seeds for that inspiration were sown by him describing such occasions from his visit to America.

In the winter of 1844 Governor Gipp held a levee and regatta for the Queen's birthday which included the races and boats I have detailed in this chapter. The governor hoped these festivities would appease the resentment that was building towards him because of the colony's growing economic depression. I don't know if the Redmans joined the hundreds out on the harbour that day, but in Aesi's archive there is a small cream card invitation from Governor Gipps to Colonel Barney to attend the 1844 levee, and this prompted me to speculate that such events may have been significant to thirteen-year-old Aesi. I have speculated that as Daniel Deniehy had only recently returned to the colony from his European tour, he and William Bede Dalley, his closest friend during the period, would have been in high spirits if they attended. Both were, after all, only about sixteen years old. Twank and Tiptop were the names Deniehy later attributed to himself and Dalley in his celebrated short story, *How I Became Attorney-General of New Barataria*. Within a few years Deniehy would

become a self-acknowledged alcoholic, and so his liberal consumption throughout this scene seems reasonable. Details of his physical appearance are gleaned from photographs, sketches and descriptions from contemporaries and biographies by A. E. Martin and Cyril Pearl. The same sources speculate that Aesi harboured an unrequited love for Deniehy. I suspect her feelings were less romantic than artistic and spiritual and have therefore constructed the scene of their first meeting so that it references some of the descriptions of colonial life depicted by Deniehy in his short story 'Love at First Sight' which he published on Valentine's Day 1845.

The song the young men sang on the harbour was a patriotic ballad of the period, particularly popular among the native born at the time:

Prate not to me of foreign strand  
 Of Beauty o'er the Sea  
 'This Is my own — My Native Land' —  
 The Only land for me!

...

I Love to roam like a wild gazelle  
 All my native mountains blue  
 And wildly thro' the woody dell  
 Chase the bounding kangaroo!  
 The Bounding kangaroo,  
 The Bounding kangaroo!

This song was inspired by Walter Scott's 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel' (a poem I suspect was among Aesi's favourites, as it inspired one of her sketches) and its lament for "the man, with soul so dead,/ Who never to himself hath said/ This is my own, my native land!"

I chose Eye-Bright (*Euphrasia collina*) for this chapter because there are many references to the optimistic disposition and bright eyes of the native-born, or 'rising generation' of this period. Many of the descriptions of 'Little Dan', Deniehy, the so-called 'boy genius' who arrives in the final passages of this chapter, emphasise both his generous good humour and warm, sparkling brown eyes.

## 8. DAPPER DAN



*Woollyti-tree (Leptospermum grandiflorum)*

I have speculated about Aesi's ambivalence to marriage because the sources suggest she rejected several 'excellent offers' of marriage. There are clues in the archives about who these men may have been, which I allude to later. Throughout my research I was struck by the self-sufficient female role models in Aesi's life. In addition to her grandmother, who never remarried after John Redman's death but managed several properties of her own, I was impressed by Martha Ironside's ability to negotiate her complex marital status and maintain her own household by earning an income as a music teacher to the extent that she was able to finance the 'pilgrimage' she and Aesi took abroad to Europe in 1855. Another self-sufficient role model was Sophia Dibbs, who enjoyed the support of her husband's friend, John Campbell, as she provided for a family of three sons, until they returned the favour. Dr. Lang's wife, Wilhelmina Lang, was also highly capable, and repeatedly described by contemporaries as 'doughty'. She was married to a man who was frequently in prison for debt and financial befuddlements, as well as other misdemeanours. Louisa Blaxland, the wealthy native-born flower enthusiast, who we meet in this chapter, never married but likewise managed her life well enough to care for her parents in their dotage and undertake an extended voyage overseas in the 1860s. These examples offer a rare glimpse into some forms of

economic and social agency enjoyed by nineteenth-century women.

Biographers speculate that Aesi met Deniehy through her uncles, as well as her father whose cottage on Kent Street in Surry Hills was not far from where Deniehy lived with his father and mother at this period. ‘Love at First Sight’ was one of Deniehy’s first publications. Following this and his other early works, he was compared with Dickens and at one stage described as ‘the colony’s very own Boz’, one of the novelist’s best-known nicknames. I have quoted directly from Deniehy’s short story as I too was struck by the commonalities between his fictional sweetheart and Aesi. There are several Bryon poems in Aesi’s commonplace book, including passages from *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, confirming she was familiar with his works, which were considered rather ‘outré’ at the time, though even then also known to be particularly popular among young women, as numerous biographers and scholars have shown. The reference to the Language of Flowers in Deniehy’s short story further encouraged my approach to Aesi’s wildflowers.

Several secondary sources suggest Aesi may have worked as governess for a spell. Such a role was certainly common among the women of her class and education, as *Jane Eyre* reminds us. Her papers include numerous portraits of women – some in crayon and some ‘after the style of Hayter’ as well as other famous portraitists of the period. Some include the names of women from colonial families which are dated 1848 and 1849, suggesting that she commenced as a portraitist then. At least one of the names in her works can be traced to a family connected with Governor Gidley King, who was involved in the establishment of Norfolk Island where John Redman lived for a short period with his brother James. In addition to correspondence between Aesi and Louise Blaxland which expresses the older woman’s strong support for Aesi’s wildflowers, Aesi produced a portrait of her with her hair wreathed in flowers. There is another reference to Louisa Blaxland supporting Martha while both were grieving Aesi’s death.

Dr. Lang’s biographers reference a small note in his papers when he declared 1845 the first year of the Republic, before suggesting it was one of his first experiments in republicanism and greatly stimulated by his



growing disdain for Governor Gipps. Given the violent way colonial authorities typically responded to occasional Irish and convict uprisings, as well as the infamous treatment of British authorities in regard to public protests such as the Chartists' monster meetings at this time, it is reasonable for Willie Lang and Martha Ironside to be concerned about the implications of the doctor's inflammatory document getting into the wrong hands. Lang's financial befuddlements were the stuff of legend, and saw him gaoled for bankruptcy on numerous occasions. In 1845, Willie Lang did ask her brother to help her try and fix his accounts. The family finances were so bad that the Langs were compelled to sell the doctor's extensive library. Alas, the income this generated was so little that the family had to quit the colony to avoid debt collectors. During the years they were overseas, Dr. Lang was constantly hounded by debtors and eventually imprisoned. I do not know if Dr. Lang presented Aesi with any books, but other learned gentlemen certainly did gift Aesi thus, and these are still in the care of family descendants. Enthusiasts of *Jane Eyre* will recognise Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, from Brontë's novel.

I have traced the demise of Professor Rennie from the newspaper records, and supplemented this with secondary sources listed in the bibliography.

When Charles Augustus FitzRoy became governor of New South Wales in the late 1840s, he shared the Colonial Office's intent of resuming transportation to the colony, much to the outrage of its growing urban mercantile population. As Peter Cochrane has amply argued in *Colonial Ambition*, since transportation had ceased in 1840, New South Wales had been actively cultivating a more respectable reputation with the intention of securing first responsible and then self-governance, although this had been repeatedly denied because British authorities could not countenance colonists have their hands on the colonial purse. Thus many in the colony felt that the resumption of transportation represented an over-assertion of imperial authority, which stymied the political ambitions of the growing middle class. The more the British authorities attempted to align themselves with the old settler families who had benefited from free convict labour, the more this was experienced as a bitter insult to the rest of colonial society. Dr. Lang played a leading role in the offensive against the resumption of transportation, and for a brief but scintillating period, encouraged some colonists to flirt with alternative forms of governance

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such as republicanism. More moderate registers of rhetoric were soon mobilised by influential businessmen like Charles Cowper, introduced here, who preferred to 'loosen' rather than 'cut' the ties between the Old and the New Countries.

### DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE.

#### SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE FINE ARTS IN AUSTRALIA.

**FIRST EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS.—FIRST NOTICE**  
HAVING been favoured with a look behind the scenes while the picture hanging operations have been going on at the Australian Library, we are enabled and gratified to announce that the exhibition will be opened, as advertised, this day, Tuesday, at 12 o'clock. We have also the pleasure to announce that His Excellency the Governor, the Patron, has consented to honour the Society (and we may add do honour to himself) by being present at the opening. We cannot help congratulating ourselves and the public that our desire to establish such an institution, which we have expressed in our columns from time to time for several years, is about to be gratified at last—and gratified, too, in a manner which we fairly confess exceeds our most sanguine expectations. We have urged on the public repeatedly that there was abundant material in this colony for the purpose, and we shall leave the people to judge, this day, whether we have been mistaken in our opinion. We rejoice to see that the matter has been taken up so warmly by the Committee, and their wishes so liberally responded to by the community. We look to this exhibition as something of much deeper importance than the mere gratification of the moment: it will read a great moral lesson to the colonists and the mother country.

It will show us that notwithstanding their distance from the centre of refinement, and science, and art, and notwithstanding the nature of the pursuits to which necessity may reduce them, the sons of Britain still carry with them the tastes and the habits of their fathers, preserve their pictures like household gods, and submit to any privations rather than part with these treasured relics of their fatherland; and it will show our friends in the other hemisphere, more than our largest amount of exports and imports, that our city has advanced with a giant's strides to the proud position which she holds as the Queen of the Southern Seas—the metropolis of a new world. This day we are sure the eyes of the Australians who have never left the land of their birth, will open on a scene more pleasing and more magnificent, than it has ever been their lot to witness; and even those who have recently left the shores of England, will be proud to confess that the first exhibition of paintings in Sydney would do no discredit to London itself. We owe a debt of gratitude to the Committee for their gratuitous labours in forwarding the objects of the society. As is usual in all similar cases, we have heard of some

grumbling against the selection made at the public meeting. It was supposed that the drones of the Committee would outnumber the working bees. Has it been so? The general Committee wisely left the whole of the arrangements to be made by a few of their number, including the Secretary, whose labours have been herculean; and when we remind our readers, that from the day of starting the subject to the day of opening the exhibition exactly one month has elapsed, we think we have given a most triumphant refutation to the croakers' complaints. The hanging Committee have had a difficult, a delicate, and an invidious task to perform. To satisfy all parties it would be necessary to make a good light out of an indifferent one; and to place each person's picture in the best possible position, without reference to all other pictures exhibited. Now, as all these conditions cannot possibly be complied with, the Committee wisely determined, without respect of persons, to hang the pictures where they considered they would best suit the general arrangement of the room; and we think any one who has not sent pictures to the exhibition, and unprejudiced persons who have, will confess that the Committee have done their duty in a very straightforward and business-like manner.

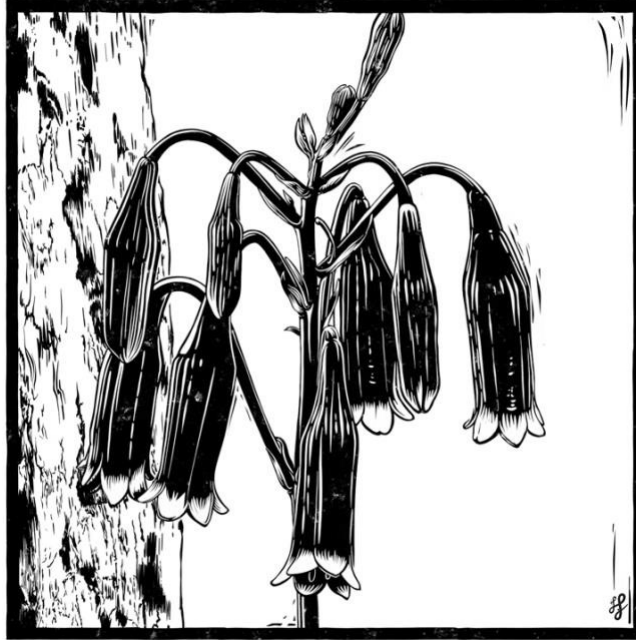
To show how nobly the exertions of the Committee have been seconded by the public, we have only to state that, although numerous beautiful and valuable engravings were sent for exhibition, the Committee have been reluctantly compelled to lay them all aside, as well as several drawings and paintings of merit, for sheer want of room; and we can only hope, nay, we are sure that this valuable institution will be extensively supported, and that every one who has the slightest taste for the fine arts, and who can afford a guinea, will enrol himself as a member. A member's ticket will admit the member and family at all times, while the exhibition is open; and we should imagine when the institution is firmly established, that there will be more than one exhibition during the twelve months. After the present exhibition is over, why should there not be an exhibition of engravings? We are satisfied there is a sufficient number in the colony to form a collection well worth the inspection of the public. We at least throw out the suggestion to the Committee. True, it may be said that it would be wrong to impose on the good nature of the Australian Library Committee, by extending their boon beyond reasonable points. The objection is reasonable, but we trust the day is not far distant when the Institution for the

*The Sydney Morning Herald reports upon the Society for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Australia. SMH 22 Jun 1847, 2.*

Sydney's first Exhibition of the Fine Arts took place in June 1847 at the public library on the corner of Bent and Macquarie. Charles Nicholson was the chair of the committee that took action after Port Phillip and South Australia pipped Sydney at the post in this regard, as the newspaper above confirm. All the artwork mentioned is listed in the catalogue for this exhibition, including Raphael's early work on 'Saint Michael Vanquishing Satan'. I don't know if Aesi or Deniehy attended the exhibition, but given Aesi's interests and the fact that Deniehy was then active in the Public Library, this is possible. The exhibition was lit with a mixture of gas and candlelight, as described.

*Leptospermum grandiflorum* is the sixth flower listed in the pamphlet and one of the few which identify a specific species to the genus of leptospermum. As Les Robinson notes in his *Field Guide to the Native Plants of Sydney*, there are seventy-six species of this genus, and all but four are endemic to Australia. Most are tough shrubs known to flourish in nutrient-poor soil, with fragrant leaves (rather than petals), as Louisa Blaxland demonstrates. There are commonly referred to as 'ti-trees' because early settlers soaked the leaves in boiling water for that purpose. First Nation peoples would burn the leaves to dispel insects and reptiles and soak in water to make a medical body wash to sanitise wounds. The species Aesi chose to illustrate is endemic to eastern Tasmania and one of the only flowers in her collection which is uncommon to the Sydney basin. Another native-born writer and contemporary of Aesi's, Louisa Meredith, was so charmed by this particular species that she described the shrub as presenting a lovely sight when it bloomed in spring, because 'wreathed spires of snowy flowers' much resembled, 'pure and hopeful spirits'. This description reminded me of the of the bright-eyed optimism expressed by Currency Lads and Lasses such as Deniehy, Dalley and Aesi during this period as debates about Anti-Transportation in New South Wales began to galvanise a new spirit of colonial patriotism as well as solidarity between urban classes who had previously been opposed to one another.

## 9. THE WAITING HEART



*Christmas bells (Blandfordia nobilis)*

The descriptions of Adelaide's clothes come from various sources, including the ['Fashion history timeline'](#). The Sydney stores she and Martha visited and the items purchased to acknowledge 'the attainment of Aesi's womanhood' are sourced from colonial newspapers. The Redman brothers regularly competed in swimming competitions in Sydney, including those associated with Robinson's Baths at Woolloomooloo. At this period, John and William often competed with one another, alongside younger brother Robert too. Although William would eventually become the most celebrated of the Redman swimmers, in 1847, the newspapers declared John to be 'the undisputed swimming champion of all of Sydney'. A description of this occasion also mentions 'a dark hero' who swam in the competition. I don't know if he was an Aboriginal man, but, as Woolloomooloo Point is considered an ancient swimming place for the Eora people, this is possible and reminds us that Aboriginal people participated in colonial life in ways which are not always immediately visible in the historical record, as Paul Irish's *Hidden in Plain View* reminds us. I don't know if Aesi and Martha attended this event, but the papers refer

to a considerable crowd, it is possible. The Flying Pieman was a well-known figure at such spectator events.

Martha and Aesi moved to the North Shore in early 1848, just months after she turned sixteen on 17 November 1847 and days after Martha celebrated her thirty-fourth birthday on 15 January. Given that my PhD research confirmed that during the 1840s sixteen was a common age for currency lasses to marry, Martha's motivations for the move seem reasonable. Indeed, women, like Mary Ann Gill, the subject of my first book, *The Convict's Daughter*, eloped just months before her sixteenth birthday. A spate of other elopement cases from this period further indicate that currency lasses were often taken off the marriage market shortly before they came of age.

Reminiscences written by George Dibbs's son indicate Sophia Dibbs was a member of Lang's Kirk and he and Alright both attended Lang's Australia College. John Blue was the grandson of William (Billy) Blue, a convict, settler and Ferryman who claimed have served with the British Army in the American War of Independence. As his *Australian Dictionary of Biography* entry confirms, Billy Blue, may have been an African American slave from colonial New York but was living as a chocolate-maker in England in 1796 when he was convicted of stealing raw sugar and transported to Sydney. Blue worked as a waterman, harbour watchman and established a home overlooking the harbour which led to that area becoming known Billy Blue's Point. There Blue set up a boat service and built up a fleet of ferries. As Governor Macquarie nicknamed him 'The Old Commodore', the inn which was eventually established there was named 'The Commodore Inn'. This inn was handed down through the family to John Blue who continued the family ferry business. Billy Blue was a popular figure and generally considered an 'eccentric, loquacious character'. John Blue appears to have been the same and also competed in water sports on the harbour.



*Billy Blue*, by J. B. East, 1834  
State Library of New South Wales, ML 560

Description of the Ironsides' household items come from later auction notices, while the waterfall and steep walk up the cliffs are gleaned from the previously mentioned *Reminiscences* by the son of George Dibbs. Details relating to other residents come from other local histories and maps.

Descriptions of the parrots in cages and wild pigs breaking palings around the Tench stream all feature in contemporary and secondary sources concerned with Sydney, while Mr. Ford owned Sydney's Artist Repository before Waugh and Cox.

My knowledge of Aesi's early portrait work is based upon the remaining works in the Mitchell Library, National Gallery of Australia (ACT) and a Private Collection, some of which she has signed 'after Hayter' or Westmacott and William Ross. These includes a collection of early pastel portrait efforts in ML SLNSW. I speculate that the right hand image below may be of Maria Scott (AKA M.I.S.T), a North Shore neighbour of Aesi's. I also suggest that the left depicts Catherine Alexander, the composite character I created, for reasons already discussed. Although immature amateur works, these pieces are further examples of how Aesi's archive offers a rare glimpse into the lives and personalities of colonial women from this period.



Pastel sketches by Adelaide Ironside, PA I759 CY2620, ML SL NSW.

Contemporary sources, including the writings of Louisa Meredith, indicate that bush 'rambling' was a common pleasure for colonial women, particular currency lasses. My description of Aesi's experiences come from trekking about those parts alone and also in the company of the truly generous and brilliant Mark Schuster, Strategic Bushfire Officer, Ku-ring-gai Council. I also consulted the Local Guides, listed in the bibliography. Descriptions of Mary Redman's years cohabiting with Robert Bellairs as a hawker and her later conviction for forgery at the Romford Market are based upon court and newspaper records. Again, I have imagined these conversations with Adelaide and that Mary Redman's skills as a forger indicate she was from the middling set and had some artistic training, as per histories of forgery (see bibliography). Both the names and Aesi's descriptions of the flouncy female subjects she was forced to paint come from a poem she published in *The People's Advocate* in 1854, entitled 'Sketches of Character'. Although this was already a well-known satirical genre of verse, Aesi chose to focus upon the vanity and pomp which had turned 'God's temple to a fashion school'. Unlike many of her more earnest patriotic poems, this is sharply observed, suggesting she also possessed a wry wit which I have sought to convey in her first person voice.

SKETCHES OF CHARACTER.  
 BY ADELAIDE E. S. IRONSIDE,  
 PART I.  
 Religion's name, and not her soul, pervades  
 The social universe of Christian grades,  
 But cant and pomp and all the lying train,  
 Mar the heart's candour and its pureness stain:  
 Humility esteem'd as base and low,  
 Must give to Vanity the place below;  
 Pomp in her rounce stalks forth and leads the day,  
 While Christian beauty's sneer'd at on her way;  
 'Twere vain that I should ev'ry motive tell,  
 Or how delusions many bosoms swell:  
 In village fanes Satanic flamens rule,  
 And turn God's temple to a fashion school.  
 Before the lesson ope' the folding doors  
 And mincing, shuffles o'er the sacred floors  
 A richly cloth'd but miserable form,  
 Ennui'd by laziness, wrapp'd up and warm,  
 As if the summer air were breath too cold;  
 Or five and twenty winters were too old;  
 To chase the vapours from her empty brain,  
 Or drive from thence Envy and all her train.  
 In frounces, laces, furbelows and curls,  
 She to her cushion'd seat in languor whirls,  
 Sinks on her knees, responds, and sweeps aside,  
 Glances of hate, of envy, or of pride.  
 Lo, with a lacy kerchief to the eyes,  
 Laded with tears, Hypocra quickly plies—  
 Wipes them away sighs, smooths her eyebrows down,  
 And re-adjusts the frounces of her gown:  
 Downcast, her redd'n'd lids would make believe,  
 Her very soul at name of sin could grieve.  
 Just give another place, and all her peace is gone;  
 The upstart swears 'tis more than can be borne!  
 Espleena views her neighbour thro' her glass,  
 And vows her trinkets are all made of brass,  
 Lifts up her eyes, thanks heav'n that she can wear  
 Locks of real, and not of borrow'd hair;  
 Sees that Acringa's bonnet's like her own,  
 And cries with rage and pious mutter'd moan;  
 "The wretch would have her paltry style to be  
 Taken in its faint resemblance for me!"  
 O'erswell'd with ire Espleena, did she dare,  
 Would wrench the locks from off Acringa's hair.

AESI's witty poem 'Sketches of  
 Character', *People's Advocate and New  
 South Wales Vindicator*, 19 Aug 1854, 8.

As Peter Cochrane reminds us in *Colonial Ambition*, the day of the monster rally in 1849 was marked by torrential rains, vast crowds and the two horses which drew an omnibus down to Circular Quay. I have gleaned additional details of the event from my own research which involved surveying archives and newspapers before depicting it in some detail in *The Convict's Daughter*. To transform this vehicle into a



stage upon which all the political figures delivered their speeches on that sodden day, the then radical Henry Parkes draped a banner across the front of the omnibus upon which the word 'Defiance' had been painted in large black letters. I am sure such a message would have appealed to Aesi who was then a wild hearted republican romantic. I do not know if the Ironside and Dibbs families attended this event, although if Aesi did, she probably would have caught a cold, given the terrible weather. The fever that follows her collapse at the rally is imagined, but in keeping with the health challenges many women suffered during that period due to their restricted clothing, among other factors. The things I depict her saying during her hallucinations are taken directly from her poetry, while the medications listed for her remedy were sold in Ambrose Foss's apothecary store on Pitt Street at the time. *See Glossary for further details.*

Dr. William Bland is another one of those fabulous Georgian figures who became popular in the colony, despite being transported for fighting a duel in 1813. I suspect he was well known to the Redman family because in 1827, John and Mary christened their last son Robert Harris Bland Redman.

The *Eagle* paddle steamer took more than 200 passengers to the Botany Bay Pleasure Gardens on the first day of 1850 and when they reached The Heads, a brass band struck up a rousing melody during which the sousaphone made itself known. My description of that day is drawn from the newspapers. Although I do not know if Aesi, the Dibbs brothers, Deniehy and Dalley, attended this event, the poem, 'O the Night', is by Deniehy and was published September 1849. I have drawn Deniehy's dialogue from the two letters he wrote to Aesi in 1854, including that memorable phrase, 'midsummer madness'.

A note about alcohol: I was visiting Redman family descendants in 2018 when a slim letter fell out of a folder. This had been written to Martha by the sculptor William Ewing, a British expatriate who lived in Rome with the Ironsides. In 1821 Ewing had raced around the Eternal City looking for ice-cream to soothe the throat of his dying friend, the poet John Keats. In this letter, Ewing was offering Martha advice on where to purchase the best red wine in Rome, thus confirming the Ironside women were not teetotallers. Part one concludes on the eve of the first day of the 1850s, an important decade for Aesi and the colony. As numerous sources encourage speculation that Aesi may have harboured feelings for Daniel Deniehy I have allowed her to entertain these possibilities, however, as we shall see Aesi was first and foremost a woman with a vision and a mission and unlikely to be distracted for long.

The pamphlet devoted to securing subscriptions for Aesi's wildflower folio confirms that Aesi did produce a watercolour of the popular two-toned flower, *Blandfordia nobilis*, better known as Christmas bells. Her Commonplace Book also includes a pastel sketch which is sufficiently unfinished to suggest it was an earlier work quite unlike the 'exquisite' watercolour works which were admired in multiple newspapers for their vivid colour and delicate brush strokes.