

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes it is the silences in the sources which speak the loudest. As mentioned in the Explanation of *Wild Love*, I was originally drawn to Adelaide Ironside because she belonged to a demographic in colonial society —native-born European women born in Sydney in the 1830s— who have received scanty archival and scholarly attention. In contrast to Adelaide's male counterparts, whose self-conscious displays of strident patriotism are well-documented because they often expressed a deep ambivalence towards both First Nations, 'native' people and 'Jimmigrant' migrants, in ways that have invited comparison with contemporary Australian nationalism, there is little written about Currency Lassies like Adelaide. Hoping to find fresh insight via Adelaide's comparatively abundant archive, I was disappointed to discover that although she frequently referred to 'her dear old country', she made few references to First Nations peoples. In one of her poems about the Prussian explorer, Ludwig Leichhardt, published in early 1853, Adelaide refers to the 'savage hearts' of 'sable murderers', in ways which are unpalatable now but common to the era. The only other possible reference to First Nations peoples is in a letter Adelaide wrote to Mrs Lang the same year, in which she describes 'some imaginary antique eremite ... walking silently within' the 'semi-secluded shades' of 'the solitary trees' about her home, Burton Lodge, on the North Shore. Although Aesi was probably romancing her 'sequestered retreat' by imagining the bush inhabited by 'eremite' philosophers who had withdrawn from the world, she may have been thinking about the Cammeraygal and Wallumedegai people who lived in the area, but apart from European society.

Determined not to perpetuate the same silences in Adelaide's archive, I cast about for other ways I might re-present the First Nations people with whom Adelaide and Martha cohabited. I soon began to learn about the 'wild flowers' Aesi painted, which were, of course, deeply significant to First Nations people who had used them for plant medicine, domestic objects, weapons and sacred rituals for thousands of years before the incursion of European settlement. D'harawal elder and ethnobotanist, Aunty Fran Bodkin generously walked Country with me sharing the significance of flowers such as the Flannel Flower, Blue Flax Lily and Waratah, which she has also published as her wonderful *D'harawal Dreaming*

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Stories. I also consulted ethno-botanic studies by Rod Mason and Beth Got at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AITSIS) before occasionally referring to these ancient living traditions within the pages of *Wild Love*.

Although many countries and cultures have their own distinctive 'language of flowers', 'floriography', as it is also known, became particularly popular during the Victoria era when artists such the Pre-Raphaelites, painted lilies in the hands of angels and passionflowers at the feet of contemplative young nuns to convey discreet but well-understood meaning. I was fortunate to spend a day walking the Mount Annan Botanic Gardens with Lesley N, a fabulous horticulturalist who drew my attention to a charming publication entitled, 'The Language of Australian Flowers, which was written by 'the Spirit of the Woods' and published in 1867, the year Adelaide died. This appears to be the first published attempt to ascribe symbolic meaning to Australian flowers. Many of the meanings Spirit of the Wood ascribed to Australian flora are so delightful I have also woven these into *Wild Love*. For example, the chapter when Aesi presents native flowers to the 'Likeminded Gentlemen' in Mr Stenhouse's Library, is prefaced with the Bush Fuchsia, *correa speciosa*, which Spirit of the Woods ascribed with meaning 'A Peep into Futurity'.

Throughout the world, different cultures have also sought to understand flowers according to 'the doctrine of signatures' which asserts that a flower's appearance provided an indication of the flower's medicinal purpose because, as the Greek Paracelsus once insisted, 'Nature marks each growth ... according to its curative benefit'. Although such ideas were common among the Greeks and increasingly popular throughout Europe during the medieval period, it was the German religious mystic Jakob Böhme, whose *The Signature of All Things* (1621) gave this theory its name. The late-seventeenth century English botanist William Cole also supposed that having made herbs for the use of man, God gave each one a discernible signature to ensure its purpose was easily read. As Caroline Clark was active in homeopathic circles and Adelaide's correspondence includes explicit references to such treatments, I conducted research into this area before selecting flowers from the Ironsides' subscription pamphlet for Aesi's Australian Wild Flower book which were attributed with specific homeopathic meanings. These include Eyes-Bright, a native flower Aesi painted which belong to the *euphrasia* species which flourish throughout the world and were well known to classical herbalists, who interpreted the red lines on their petals to signal that the species assisted with soothing redness, inflamed eyes, and visual disturbances. The Scottish would soak this plant in milk before applying to the eyes with a feather,

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and in the Elizabethan era the plant was used in ale that one should “Drinke everie morning a small draught of Eyebright wine.”

Keen to learn more about how the doctrine of signatures has been applied to Australian specimens, I consulted the work of herbalist Ian White, who is based in Northern Sydney and has dedicated his life to developing the Australian Bush Flower Essences. White has attributed the doctrine of signatures to many of the flowers Aesi painted including Grey Spider Flower, Mountain Devil, Swamp Banksia, Waratha, and the Fringed Violet. I was fortunate to learn more about these flowers from the wonderful Lisa Jones, who has integrated their healing modalities into her work.

Adelaide's Australian Wild Flowers has been one of the richest and rewarding elements of my research. In addition to consulting various Field Guides of Native Plants listed in the bibliography, this process afforded me many wonderful encounters with fellow flower enthusiasts, such as Aunty Fran, Lesley from Mt Annan and the fabulous Mark Schuster, Strategic Bushfire Officer with the Ku-ring-gai Council, who is a national treasure with the abundant beard of an old bushman, the heart of a lion and the ever-curious mind of a true polymath. My adventures trekking about the North Shore bushlands hunting for wildflowers also brought me closer to Aesi and what she may have referred to as 'the Universal Intelligence'. During that time, as contemporary poet Ingrid Goff-Maidoff wrote, I discovered:

*God spoke today in
flowers, and I, who was
waiting on words almost
missed the conversation.*

1.
I am Aesi



Five-corners (Styphelia triflora)

Five Corners is an erect bushy shrub with spiky leaves and pink flowers which develop five yellow lobes that roll back to expose the stamens. The plant is native to New South Wales and Queensland and is found on sandstone sheltered under stories. First Nation significance: the flesh of the unripe fruit is used for gastric complaints and the blooms often indicate the presence of snakes. In his book on Bush Flower Essences, Ian White observes that the essence of Five-Corners can teach ‘universal lessons of self-esteem and self-acceptance’ to help a ‘crushed’ and ‘held in personality’. I speculate that Aesi felt crushed and held in during that difficult period in 1859 and therefore chose this very pretty flower for the first chapter. White considers Five Corners the most potent of all remedies because it stimulates vitality and self-esteem and can encourage a stronger sense of inner and outer beauty.

2. The Crossing

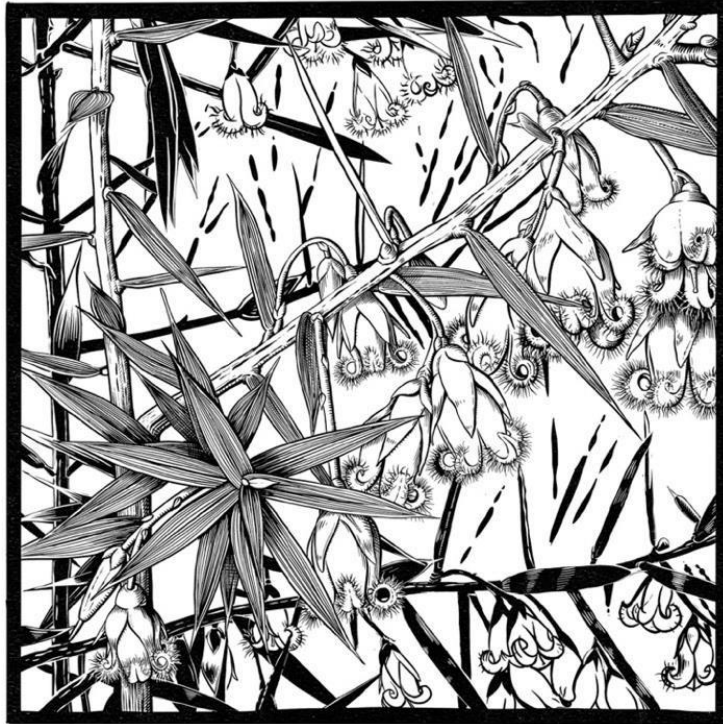


Flannel flower, (Actinotus helianthi)

The Flannel Flower is also known as Star bright because of its star-like shape. It is a herbaceous velvety plant with sage-green tips which grows best in heath and sandy soils and is native to New South Wales and the western slopes of Queensland. In D'harawal Dreaming Stories, 'How the Flannel Flower Came to Be', this flower recalls a young woman named Tiana (Bright Star), who lived during 'a time of great cold' when the 'ground was white with ice all year round', 'Children were born to 'The People' and 'learned to walk without having seen the sun or the moon and the stars'. When the people became worried because they feared Balurniri — the Earth Mother— was sick, they called a meeting for 'all the mothers of the clans' to discuss what could be done. Tiana was considered too young to speak, but asked to be heard before warning that the country had grown cold and sick. After suffering a rebuke from the other women, Tiani went wandering across the dark cold land. One night she laid down and had a dream that the Spirit Woman had lit a great fire which warmed Balurniri, the Earth Mother, and melted the ice. When Tiani awoke, she found 'a tiny plant poking through the thawed ground'. 'It's leaves were soft and covered with fine fur, the colour of frost'. Tiana hurried off to find the women and show them the flower —shaped like a bright star—, but when they returned to the single bloom, they found a whole valley of Flannel Flowers. Ever since, this flower has been thought to signal the end of the winter cold. According to Ian White, the Flannel Flower helps to express feelings as Aesi needed to do as she was embarking upon her artistic pilgrimage. The Spirit of the Woods draws upon similar themes to the D'harawal Dreaming Story, stating that the flower, also known as 'Edelweiss', can be used to state 'If only I can be with thee' 'Tropics or ice are alike to me'.

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3.
Bristly; A Beginning



'Bristly' Beard-heath (Leucopogon setiger)

Leucopogon is the first of the Australian wildflowers listed on the Ironsides' 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. According to the ethno-botanic sources I consulted at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, First Nation people use the leucopogon 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)

As the Ironsides' subscription pamphlet lists only 'baeckia', I needed to choose a specific species from the twenty-seven which grow throughout different parts of Australia. This species is also known as 'swamp baeckea' because the spreading shrub with drooping branches and fine pointed leaves grows in damp gullies, stream banks and near waterfalls. I chose the Weeping Myrtle, *baeckia linifolio*, because it grows in New South Wales as well as Queensland and Victoria and is generally considered a rarer bloom than others. I also thought the notion of a 'weeping' myrtle evoked something of the sadness, or at least, gravity evident in 'MRI from life', Aesi's portrait of Martha Ironside, who assumes a voice of her own for the first time in this chapter.

5.

That First Luminous Moment



Spotted doubletail, or Leopard orchid (Diuris maculata)

The Spotted Doubletail orchid, also known as the Leopard or Donkey Orchid, is one of many orchids with edible roots and tubers which has formed the rich diet enjoyed by many First Nations people. This species grows throughout Australia, except Western Australia and the Northern Territory. As *maculate* means spotted and stained in Latin, I chose this flower to introduce Adelaide's grandmother, Mary Redman, who was transported to New South Wales for forgery. Unsurprisingly, Mary Redman's convict identity is not mentioned in any of the surviving family papers, so I speculate that, like many others' descendants, the Redman family were socially ambitious and determined to ensure their pursuit of respectability was not 'tainted', spotted or stained by any association with criminality.

6. Purple Parson in the Pulpit



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

The Waxlip orchid is a species of native orchid that grows in sandy open forests, particularly in the area around Myall Creek, which features in this chapter. The roots of this orchid were often eaten raw or cooked by First Nation people. Although there is no other florigraphical and Australian Bushflower Essence meanings attributed to this species, its two common names, 'Waxlip' and 'Purple Parson in the Pulpit', evoke the fire and brimstone declarations made by Dr John Dunmore Lang, who we see in action at his pulpit in this chapter. In her 1859 letter to Dr Lang, Aesi recalls the 'deep impression' which her Patriot Father's 'bell, book and candle excommunications' and 'powerful eloquence' had upon her during her childhood. I therefore sought to dramatise Aesi's experience of that in this chapter.

7. The Rising Generation



Eye-Bright (Euphrasia collina)

Worldwide, there are over 170 species of the small herb genus known as *euphrasia*, of which eighteen grow in temperate Australia. As mentioned in the Explanation above, the flower is rich with meaning elsewhere and believed to contain many healing properties. As the Ironsides' subscription pamphlet lists only 'Euphrasia species', I chose *collina* which grows mainly in the New South Wales ranges. This perennial herb grows in the heath and open forest and flowers can be white, blue, pink, even purple, with a yellow blotch on the lower petal. I chose this flower to introduce 'Little Dan', Deniehy, the so-called 'boy genius' in this chapter, as various sources refer to his generous good humour and warm, sparkling brown eyes and the colonial archives also regularly refer to the 'bright eyed' disposition of the native-born, or 'rising generation' of this period.

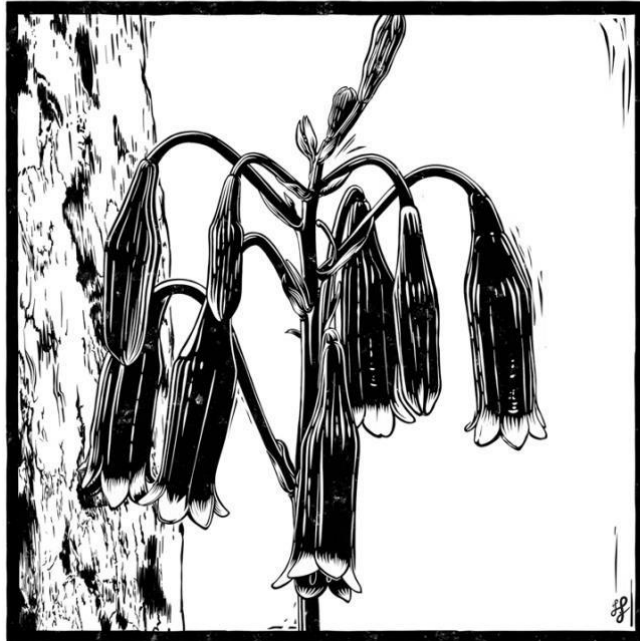
8. Dapper Dan



Woolly ti-tree (Leptospermum grandiflorum)

Leptospermum grandiflorum is the sixth flower listed in the pamphlet. 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 which flourish in nutrient poor soil, with fragrant leaves (rather than petals), as Louisa Blaxland asserts to Aesi in this chapter. These plants are commonly referred to as ‘ti-trees’ because early settlers soaked the leaves in boiling water for that purpose. According to the AITSIS ethno-botanic databases, First Nation peoples burn the leaves to dispel insects and reptiles. They also soak the leaves in water to make a medical body wash with which 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. The writer Louisa Meredith, who was also native-born and a contemporary of Aesi’s, 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’ resembled, ‘pure and hopeful spirits’. Her description seemed to evoke something of the bright-eyed ‘pure and hopeful spirits’ of Deniehy, Dalley and Aesi during this period as debates about Anti-Transportation in New South Wales stimulated a 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 Ironsides' subscription pamphlet confirms that Aesi produced a watercolour of the striking two-toned flower, *Blandfordia nobilis*, better known as Christmas bells. This erect plant grows in open forest and damp heath and swampy margins about the Hawkesbury and other parts of New South Wales. Aesi's Common Place Book includes a pastel sketch of this species which, as I imply in this chapter, is sufficiently unfinished to suggest it was one of her early works and quite unlike the 'exquisite' watercolour works which were admired in multiple newspapers for their vivid colour and delicate brush strokes. According to the *Spirit of the Woods*, this species signifies 'royalty'. That meaning prompted me to make the flower Aesi was picking in the bush shortly before she has her first encounter with illness. In this chapter I depict Alright Dibbs teasingly warn Aesi that the goddess Persephone was also picking flowers before she was abducted by Hades, the god of the Underworld. Later, when Aesi is on the steamer to the Botany Bay Pleasure Gardens, she marvels at the bright summer skies, before wondering what sort of underworld she had recently been in because of her illness.

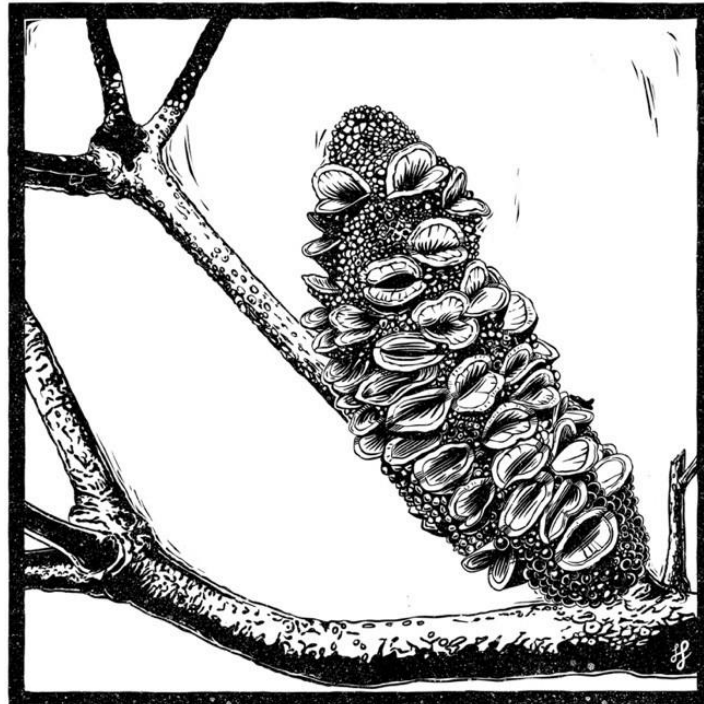
10. Fiery Reckonings



Mountain devil (Lambertia formosa)

The Mountain Devil is part of the Proteaceae family and found in the sandy soils all along the New South Wales coast and the Blue Mountains. It is a stiff, upright shrub with sharp-tipped glossy green leaves which holds profuse amounts of nectar and is pollinated by honeyeaters. According to the First Nation sources, the flowers of the Mountain Devil can be eaten with other nuts and berries and red flowers typically indicate there are reptiles such as bearded dragons nearby. This prickly shrub is common in the Sydney region and second only to the dagger hakea in sheer spikiness. The leaves have a very sharp point, the flowers are a spectacular red and turn into woody capsules with two long projections resembling a devil with two horns. It is also a lignotuber that regenerates after bushfires. Formosa: Latin for Handsome. Ian White believes the essence of Mountain Devil can transform negative emotions such as anger, hatred, fear and sadness such as Aesi and Martha no doubt experienced because of the bushfire.

11. The Phoenix Stirs



Old man banksia, or wattun'goori in D'harawal (Banksias errata)

Also known as Saw Banksia because of its serrated leaves, this woody shrub is part of the Proteaceae family found from Victoria to Queensland. It has wrinkled gray 'warty' bark, shiny dark green serrated leaves and can grow up to seventeen metres. According to the Cadigal people around Sydney harbour, Old Man Banksia is also known as Wiriyagan. The club-shaped grey-green-creamy flowers are an important nectar source for many animals and birds and are striking when burnt by fire. May Gibbs based her famous characters 'the big bad Banksia men' on the scary appearance of these cones. According to Ian White, the essence of this plant can be used to counter sluggishness, low energy and restore enthusiasm for those who are weary and disheartened as Aesi would have been after the fire.

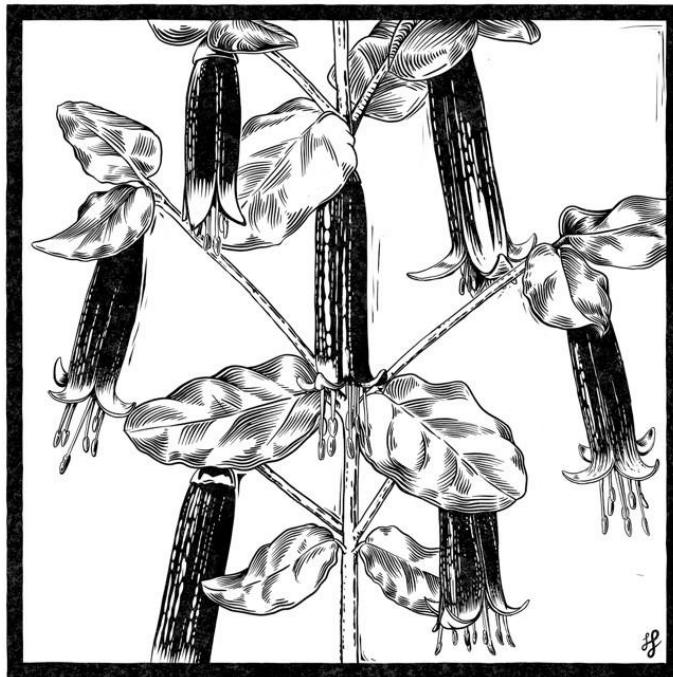
12. Petitions, Parasols, & Parade Grounds



Native rose, or Sydney rose (Boronia serrulata)

This highly aromatic shrub grows in heath and woodlands with bright rose pink flowers bunched at the end of its stems. Now much rarer than it used to be, field guide authors Alan Fairley and Philip Moore, describe it as one of the 'gems of the Sydney sandstone flora'. In my own bush walks I often encountered it in the greygreen landscape as a resplendant splash of vibrant colour . As it is listed as the twenty-first flower in the Ironsides' pamphlet I decided to use it in this chapter beause its vibrant colours reminded me of the fashionable in women's clothing at this period and as such I though it also evoked the way the women of Sydney were publicly participating in political domain at this moment , when as I have Dalley declare at the Parade Ground protests, 'spring and all its feminine charms' had 'come to conquer the manly heart of political Sydney'. For the Spirit of the Woods, the 'Port Jackson Rock Rose' represents 'steadfast affection' such as that expressed between Aesi and Caroline in this chapter.

13. A Peep Into Futurity



Portland belle, or native fuchsia (Correa reflexa)

According to Rod Mason and Beth Gott's research into First Nation ethno-botany, this spreading shrub which grows in the woodland across both sandstone and clay soils across coastal New South Wales, can be used as a tea for neuralgia and toothache, although it does have a bitter taste. The leaves are heart-shaped and papery, while the flowers, which Les Robinson considers 'exceedingly beautiful', are tubular and drooping, passing in colour from red into white and then green. As previously mentioned, according to the Spirit or the Woods, this flower can stimulate 'a peep into futurity', which is the reason I chose it for this chapter which is devoted to imagining the sort of early spiritualists experiments Aesi may have undertaken had she been involved in the meetings which were known to take place among Sydney's literati at Stenhouse's library at Waterview House.

14. The Stunner at the Soiree



Fringe lily, or fringed violet (Thysanotus juncifolius)

Everyone has their favourites, and the delicate Fringe Lily, or Fringed violet is one of my mine for with its delicate frills and colour it has claimed 'a place in my memory', just as the Spirit of the Woods suggested. This perennial sprawling herb is common in moist heath and dense undergrowth about coastal New South Wales as well as the Blue Mountains but is particularly special as its flowers only open for one day. Although, the species does not appear to have any specific First Nation purposes, Ian White believes its purposes can be detected according to the doctrine of signatures. 'The hair-like cilia resemble an aura, which indicates one indicate one of the plant's main functions is to help restore a person's aura after it has been damaged by shock or trauma ... the loss of a loved one, bad news or an unexpected event'. I chose this flower for the chapter when we first encounter Daniel Deniehy's future wife, Miss Adelaide E. Hoalls, as I speculate that although her arrival in Sydney was a source of delight to Daniel Deniehy, the same 'unexpected event' was a source of disappointment for Aesi.

15. The Sword and the Stone



Grey spider flower, or warra garrja in D'harawal (Grevillea buxifolia)

This eccentric bloom is one more than 250 species of grevillea found across Australia. The curious grey-silky flower grows on the terminus of a branch which is covered in round to oblong hard stiff leaves and largely restricted to the sandstone regions about Sydney, including the North Shore, where I encountered it in my own bush walks. Rod Mason and Beth Gott believe that, like many grevilleas, the nectar-rich 'Silky Oak Spider Flower' was often soaked in water to make a refreshing energy drink but can also be eaten with other lower petals, nuts and berries to make a whole meal. Ian White again uses the doctrine of signatures to interpret its purpose or significance, suggesting that close contemplation of the flower reveals a 'face, with two sunken eyes and a wide-open mouth', resembling the famous 1930s painting by Edward Munch of *The Scream*. For that reason he believes the essence of the plant can be used 'to resolve terror and bring about courage, calmness and faith'. For me, the flower also seemed to evoke something of the new extremity emerging in Aesi during this period, as she turned her back on any romantic expectations she may have harboured and decided to 'marry art' and publicly express herself via often extreme, even perverse poetry.

16.

Tricolour



Pine donkey orchid (Diuris tricolor)

Although the Ironsides' subscription pamphlet lists *Diurus elongatus*, I could find no specimen with this name and therefore decided to cast about for another native orchid which might prompt something relating to this period in Aesi and Martha's story. After all, the subscription pamphlet includes two blank listings, number II and I6, where perhaps the printer could not determine the name of the species listed. The Tricolor Orchid grows mainly in south-east Queensland, although it has been sighted in New South Wales. Nonetheless, this specimen appealed to me as the appropriate flower for this chapter as it helped to introduce Edward John Hawksley, the editor of the *People's Advocate* newspaper which played a prominent part of the political scene in Sydney from 1848 to 1856 and also launched Aesi's career as a poet. As mentioned in this chapter and the Chapter Notes, colonial historian Peter Cochrane notes that Hawksley was known to wear a Cabbage Tree Hat adorned with a *tricolore* ribbon to signal his solidarity with the principles of the French revolution and the banner quote on his newspaper was taken from Alphonse de Lamartine, the French statesman who was instrumental in the foundation of the French Second Republic and the continuation of the *tricolore* as the flag of France: 'Political economy has hitherto occupied itself about the production of wealth. It must now occupy itself about the distribution of wealth; so that the labourer may no longer be left without his fair share of the produce'.

17. The Courage to Cope



Waratah in bud, or warada in D'harawal, (Telopea speciosissima)

The Waratah is one of the most famous Australian native flowers and as such it is not surprising that it is listed in the Ironsides subscription pamphlet. Given its rich significance, I chose to list the flower twice so we could enjoy its different stages of development as well as its layered meanings. In this chapter, Aesi goes searching for the bloom as she knows it will be crucial contribution to her folio. Nonetheless, after trekking along ridge lines and down valleys in the North Shore bush in the rain she is unable to find what she is looking for. Until that is, so is startled by the wild shrieks of a flock of red cocktaoos. In their wake, a single red feather eddies and spiral before her and after that she spies—in the distance—a bud yet to unfurl. The Eora people of Sydney call the flower 'Warada', while their clanspeople and neighbours, the D'hawarwal, call it Wurratah, after the beautiful woman who was given the responsibility of looking after the first white waratah created by the Spirit Woman. This plant continues to have many ancient stories associated with it and to be of great spiritual significance to many First Nation groups who only touch it for ceremonial purposes when it used as a spiritual drink. The Burragorang people in the southern Blue Mountains tell the story of Krubi who waited on a sandstone ridge looking out for her lover. To make sure she would stand out she was dressed in the skin of a red kangaroo, ornamented with the red crests of the cockatoo.

18. Seen from Afar



Waratah, or warada in D'harawal, in full bloom (Telopea speciosissima)

The Waratah which is native to New South Wales is now the emblem for that state, although at the turn of the twentieth century, many believed it should have become the national flower, rather than wattle. *Telopea* is Latin for 'seen from a far' and refers to the striking nature of this distinctive member of the proteaceae family which can grow to 3 metres high and boasts inflorescences ranging from 6 to 15 cm in diameter. In this chapter we celebrate the flower in full bloom, just as we see Aesi from afar at the Outer Domain as she finally presents her banner to the troops of the Volunteer Corps. The waratah also felt appropriate for this final chapter of Aesi's life in Australia, for the Spirit of the Woods believed that this flower signifies remembrance in absence'. Ian White believes the essences of this plant can be used to remedy those, like Martha in this chapter, who need courage to cope as they experience a crisis.

19. Cold Beds and Hot Potatoes



Cigarette flower, or fuchsia heath (Epacris longiflora)

When the English-born judge and poet Baron Field first arrived in Australia in the 1820s he wrote a poem dedicated to the Fuchsia Heath, also known as the Cigarette Flower:

When I first landed Australia's shore;
... a flower galdden'd me above the rest, shap'd
trumpet-like, which from a leafy stalk Hangs
clust'ring, hyacinthine, crimson red Melting
into white ...

This perfectly describes this spreading shrub with pointed leaves which flowers throughout the year. Its native range extends from the central coast of NSW to Queensland and it grows in sandy soil and cliff faces. Ian White believes the species can be used to dispel social anxiety and fear of speaking out, and this coupled with the smokiness implied by its vernacular name made me think it was appropriate for this opening chapter of Part Three when the Ironsides first arrive in London.

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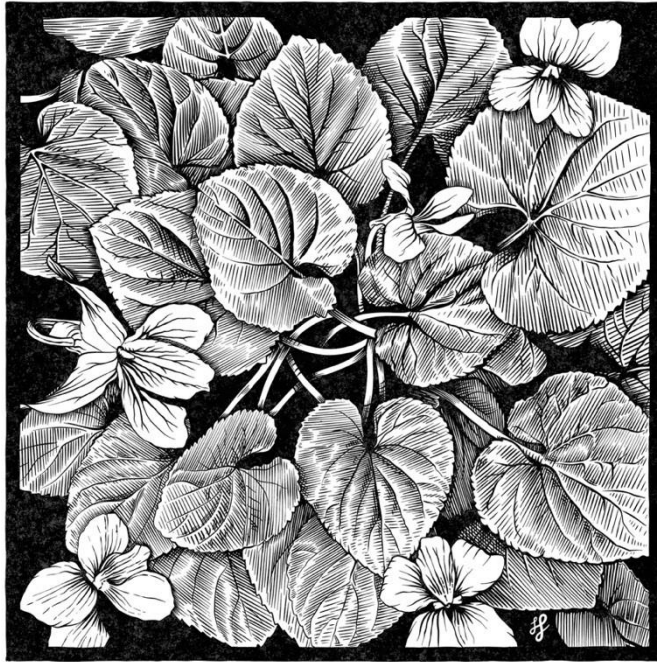
20.
The Like-Minded



Handsome flat-pea, or eggs-and-bacon (Platylobium formosum)

Like the previous flower, the handsome flat-pea or egg and bacon plant is listed in the Ironsides' pamphlet. This scrambling pea-shrub is common to sheltered woodland across NSW's coastal districts. I chose it simply because I imagined that Martha and Aesi probably consumed their fair-share of that breakfast dish during their time in England.

21. Violatio



Parma violet (Viola alba)

This is the first of the flowers featured in chapter openings in *Wild Love* which are not native to Australia nor featured in the Ironsides' subscription pamphlet. I chose it for this chapter as some 19th century floriography believed it represented artistic abilities as well as skills in divination, which were certainly both important to Aesi in this chapter. Dating back to Ancient Greece and the poetry of Sappho, violets were also attributed to homo-erotic desire between women, which certainly animated the relationships between Harriet Hosmer, Charlotte Cushman and other members of the so-called 'Jolly Female Bachelors of Rome' who we meet in this chapter. Violets and roses both flourished about the campagna in Rome, such that there was even a day known as 'violatio', the day when Romans adorned burial sites with both violets and roses.

22.

The Roses of Heligobalus



Hundred-leaved rose (Rosa x centifolia)

Like the violet, the rose was such a common flower in Rome that it features in many myths and festivals. Both were most popular in wreaths and given as gifts and particularly associated with goddesses such as Aphrodite, Persephone and Flora. I named this chapter after a 1888 painting by Alma-Tadema which depicts a celebrated but most likely invented episode in Roman history when the emperor Elagabalus, or Heliogabalus, was believed to have tempted his guests into a banqueting room with a reversible ceiling before smothering them to death with roses and violets. I read so many descriptions of Charlotte Cushman's lavish parties during her years in Rome, that I began to think of her hospitality as theatrical as that of a Roman emperor. The nature of certain comments about her also led me to speculate that Cushman's generosity was sometimes also 'smothering'.

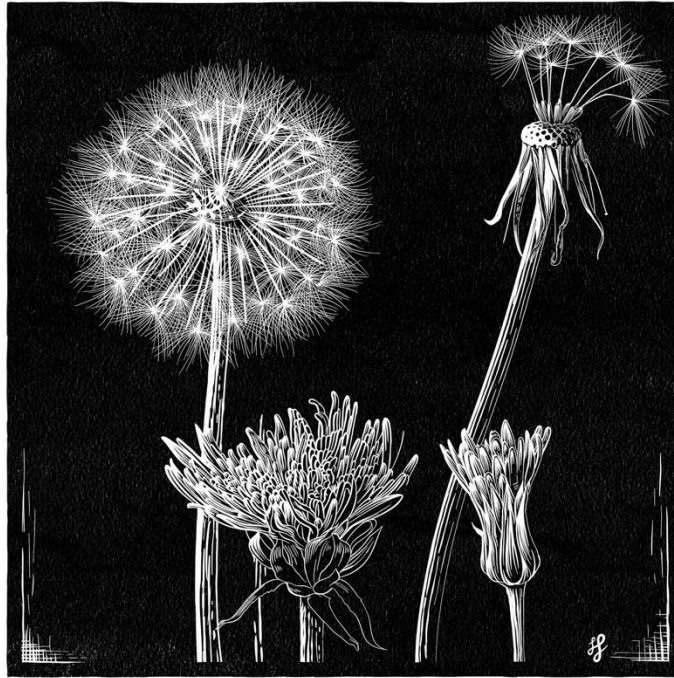
23. Yellow Bells; A Vigorous Climber



Yellow bells, or wonga-vine (Pandorea pandorana)

Yellow Bells, is a vigorous climbing shrub or ‘scrambler’ with pendulous funnel-shaped flowers which was listed in the Ironsides’ subscription pamphlet and grows throughout Australia and the Pacific region. The timber was used for spears by First Nation groups in the south-east region and woomeras in the Central and Western deserts which is why it has many First Nation names including Mingulgi and Wongalbon. I chose it as the flower for the chapter as this was the period in Aesi’s early career in Rome when she too, was ‘scrambling’ to get a foothold in the perilous social world of expatriate Italy and was required to be something of ‘a vigorous climber’.

24. Dandy Lion; or the Prince and the Pilgrim



Dandelion (Taraxacum officinale)

The Dandelion is also known as Blowball, Swine's Snout and Milkwitch and so common throughout Europe that it is also rich with meaning and purpose. I chose the flower because of its association with the young Prince of Wales and future King of Britain, who features in this chapter and was known to be something of a dandy. I also felt that the way the silver-tufted fruits are dispersed into the air from the 'blowballs' spoke to the transient, even capricious nature of Aesi's aspirations during this period. Dandelions have been used to make wine, jam and coffee substitutes for centuries and can also be eaten in soups and salad as a leaf vegetable which are high in vitamins A and C. For the Victorians, Dandelions were also associated with wish-magic and fortune-telling, another theme in this chapter. When paired with ferns they invited magical solstice celebration.

25. Uprisings



Pope's pennies (Lunaria annua)

This curious flowering plant comes from the cabbage and mustard family, Brassicaceae and is native to southern Europe, but now cultivated throughout the temperate world. In spring and summer it bears terminal racemes of white or violet flowers followed by showy, green through to light brown, translucent disc-shaped siliques which gave it the name Moon pennies or Pope's pennies. In witchcraft it is believed to signal protection as well as repelling monsters, while the seedpods were often used in spells to conjure prosperity. Its symbolic meanings include honesty, secret love and protection and it is given to ask the beholder if the giver has been forgotten. This flower evoked many relevant themes for this chapter, including the growing presence of the Pope upon Roman society during this period.

26. Quite Blooming



Sweet chestnut tree (Castanea sativa)

Many nineteenth-century travel writers and guides described the chestnut trees which then flourished on the Roman campagna because the species tend to build a dense canopy which make their pink and white spring blooms particularly striking. The species are native to Southern Europe and Asia Minor and found across the Mediterranean where they have been cultivated for millennia because they respond well to coppicing and producing a light colour, hard and strong timber. Indeed, *sativa*, means cultivated by humans. This long-lived deciduous tree also produces an edible seed which has been used as a food source since the ancient times, with the seeds being roasted, boiled, dried or made into flour or a cereal substitute. Roman soldiers were said to be fed chestnut porridge before they went into battle. Bach flower remedies believe that sweet chestnut essence can be used for a variety of purposes, including reducing the effects of some cancers.

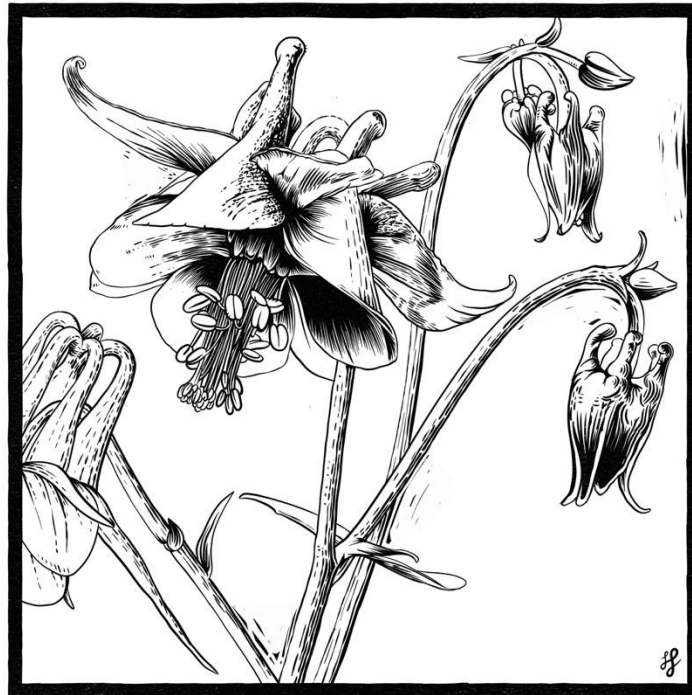
27. A Thorny Crown



Common thistle, or spear thistle (Cirsium vulgare)

The Common Thistle is native to much of Europe where it has rich significance for many different countries, including Scotland which Aesi and Martha visit in this chapter, where it is, of course, the national flower. For the Victorians, thistles were symbolised misanthropy, comparable to that exhibited by Gordon Forlong, who returns in this chapter to expose the various ways that both Aesi's new patron, Sir William Stirling and Scotland's landed classes have benefitted from the legacies of slavery. The symbolic meaning of the thistle derives from its prickly personality, and in the Book of Genesis when God casts Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, telling them that only 'thorns and thistles will henceforth grow in the land as punishment. Perhaps that story of exile and struggle explains why the thistle is also associated with persistence and tenacity such as that shown by Aesi in this chapter when she suffers many disappointments at London's 1862 International Exhibition only to return to Rome and be 'crowned' a member of an elite artistic academy.

28.
Still Achieving, Still Pursuing



Dark columbine (Aquilegia atrata)

Dark columbine is the most mysteriously dark, almost black flower of all the *Aquilegia* works. This species of poisonous *Ranunculus* is native to Europe where it has been given many names including ‘Jester’s Cap’ because it is thought to resemble that. Unsurprisingly, even though it is considered one of the most beautiful wildflowers in the world, the flower is associated with foolishness and brings bad luck to those who give this flower to a woman. While the purple flowers symbolise a resolve to win, as Aesi repeatedly displays in this chapter, the red flowers stand for anxiety and trembling, which she also began to suffer at this time as she was increasingly consumed with tuberculosis.

29. Deep Retreats



Blue Flax Lily, or pokulbi in D'harawal (Dianella caerulea)

I chose this native Australian flower for the penultimate chapter so that we could enjoy a metaphorical return to Aesi's folio of watercolours and the North Shore, where she no doubt sourced many of her species, including the Blue Flax Lily. Found throughout the eastern states this hardy plant grows to about a metre high with grass-like strappy leaves. In spring and summer it blooms with bright blue flowers which then transform into indigo coloured berries. First Nation people call this plant Paroo Lily and Nirra Nirra and have long eaten the fruit and used it for medicine and to dye baskets. There is a D'harawal Dreaming Story associated with this plant which the D'harawal call Pokulbi which recalls how 'many, many grandmothers ago' there lived a beautiful woman of that name who had eyes the deepest blue colour of the wings of Bundelook, the blue wren. Blue was also John Ruskin's favourite colour who features in this chapter and often wore a blue neck cloth to set off his own blue eyes. Ruskin was also very fond of small birds like robins, so it seemed fitting to use this plant given its ancient association with the blue wren. Sadly, despite the efforts of friends and acquaintances, such as Louisa Blaxland, who did their best to revive Aesi's hope and health, Australia's first artist to astonish the world was now making her own 'deep retreat'.

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30. Sighing for Australia



Blackwattle (Acacia decurrens)

For the Spirit of the Woods, Black Wattle, symbolises ‘Strength in a time of need’, which was certainly required of Martha, as she nursed Aesi during the final stages of her illness, then made difficult decisions about returning to Sydney, via London, with Aesi’s remains. As the Ironsides’ subscription pamphlet lists only ‘Acacia Species’, I was tempted to choose another of the 60 species of acacia which grow in the Sydney region, including the Sunshine Wattle, *Acacia terminalis*, which promised a fitting ending to the Ironsides’ pilgrimage of art for Ian White believes its essence can assist those suffering from hopelessness and a sense of being stuck in the past by infusing them with a new sense of joyful expectation. Nonetheless, as records confirm Mr William Leaf grew Black Wattle at Park Hill where Martha spent her last days in March 1869, I have chosen to feature this perennial shrub which is native to eastern New South Wales, including Sydney where it is also known as Green Wattle or Sydney Wattle. It is a fast-growing tree, up to fifteen metres, in fact, with dark grey and brown bark, shiny hairless leaves as well as fragrant

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small golden-yellow flowers of cottony in appearance and densely attached to the stems. For the D'harawal, Black Wattle is associated with the Boo'kerrickin Sisters. For millennia the golden blooms of Boo'kerrickin signalled the end of cold winds and the beginning of gentle rain, when certain fish would soon be ready to eat. The wood and gum of this plant were traded among First Nation men and the leaves crushed and thrown into water holes to paralyse marine animals for easy hunting. Early settlers, such as John and Mary Redman would have used this plant for tanning and as a substitute for tea and gum Arabic when supplies were low, thus bringing our journey back to its beginning and allowing our two pilgrims, Martha and Aesi, who remain buried in London, to return home figuratively, if not actually.