

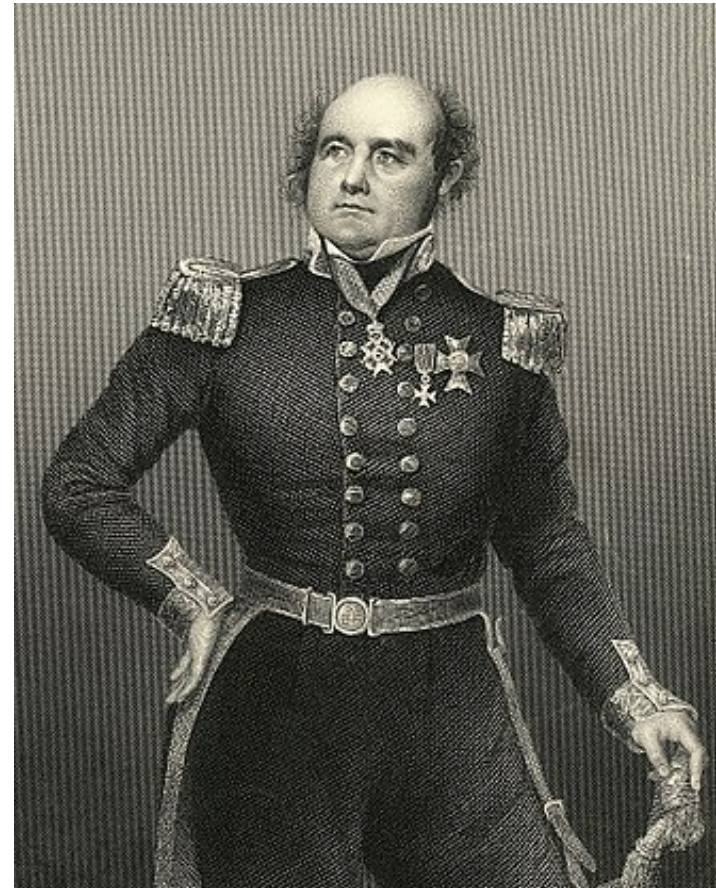


Thomas Bock, 1842 (Hobart Museum)

Lady Jane Franklin



Sir John Franklin Ufficiale, esploratore Governatore della Tasmania (1836-1843)



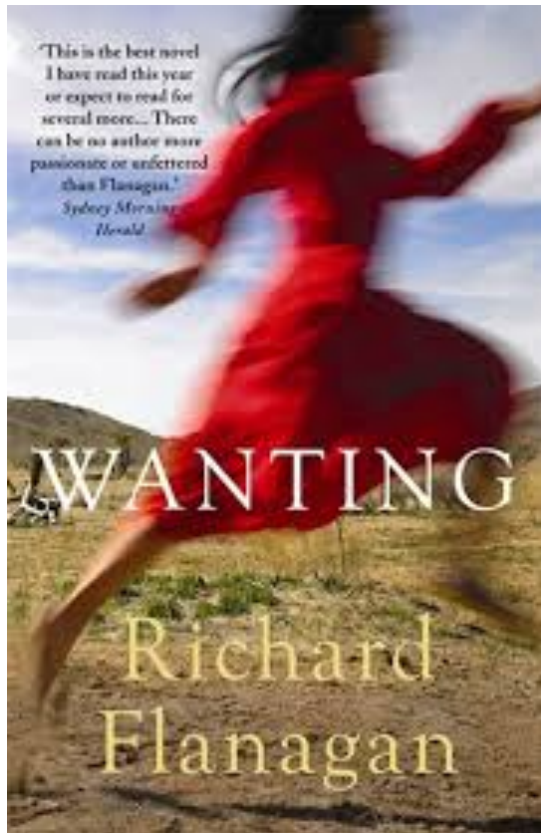
“Mathinna’s portrait is extremely like, but the figure is too large & tall – she looks there like a girl of 12, but is only 7 – the attitude is exactly hers, & she always wears the dress you see her in – when she goes out, she wears red stockings & black shoes – I think you will find people much interested in this portrait & the hair – **She is one of the remnant of a people about to disappear from the face of the earth**”.

(Lady Jane Franklin in A. Alexander, *The Ambition of Jane Franklin*. 2013: 132)

“civilizing project”

Richard Flanagan

Wanting (2008)



Tr. *Solo per desiderio* (2009)



“catastrophe of colonialism” (Flanagan 2008: 256)

Charles Dickens (1812 – 1870)



“Many stories equally tragic, and perhaps even more telling than hers are allowed to lie quietly in the historical record, precisely because there is no such image to lend coherence, a sense of human wholeness, to the stubbornly opaque and disconnected archival fragments”.

(Penny Russell 2012. “Girl in a Red Dress: Inventions of Mathinna”. *Australian Historical Studies*, 43: 348-9)

“I realised that they’d used the frame to cut off that complete assertion of who she was. Like at the end of the day they’d dressed her up in the dress of reason, but there was asserting her blackness, her Aboriginality, and they’d denied that with a wooden frame. And I thought how all their lives really are a war that never ends between wooden frames and bare feet”.

(Flanagan in R. Koval 2008 “*Wanting*: Richard Flanagan Interview”.

The Bookshow. ABC Radio transcript. 12 November 2008.

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bookshow/wanting-richardflanagan/3179486>)

**“a metonym for marginalised and silenced
subjects as a whole”**

(Ho Lai-Ming 2012: 17)

“If we shine the Divine light on lost souls then they can be no less than we. [...] But first they must be taken out of the darkness and its barbarous influence” - Sir John Franklin (69).

Se facciamo risplendere la luce divina sulle anime perdute, esse non potranno essere meno di ciò che noi siamo. [...] Ma prima devono essere allontanate dalle tenebre e dalla loro barbara influenza” (64)

Lady Jane Franklin

- Mathinna
(Tasmania 1839-1849)
- Charles Dickens
(London chapters 1850s)

Were his people not knowledgeable of God and Jesus, as was evidenced by their ready and keen answers to the Catechist's questions, and evinced in their enthusiastic hymn-singing? Did they not take keenly to the weekly market, where they traded skins and shell necklaces for beads and tobacco and the like?

Other than that his black brethren kept dying almost daily, it had to be admitted that the settlement was satisfactory in every way. (2)

Non erano forse preparati su Dio e Gesù Cristo, come si evinceva dalle pronte e acute risposte alle domande del Catechista, e come si evinceva altresì dall'entusiasmo con cui cantavano gli inni sacri? Non si erano forse dedicati con impegno al mercato settimanale, dove scambiavano pelli e collane di conchiglie con pane, tabacco e simili? **Se si tralasciava il fatto che i suoi fratelli neri continuavano a morire quasi ogni giorno, si doveva ammettere che l'insediamento era soddisfacente da ogni punto di vista. (2)**

“scientific curiosity”

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

(Alexander 2013: 129).

Lady Jane Franklin

“You almost wish to hold the little wild beast and pet her” (51).

“I loved her” (198).

“[...] ti viene quasi voglia di stringerla, quella bestiolina, e di coccolarla” (46).

“Le volevo bene” (187).

A small girl ran fit to burst through wallaby grass almost as high as her. How she loved the sensation of the soft threads of fine grass feathering beads of water onto her calves, and the feel of the earth beneath her bare feet, wet and mushy in winter, dry and dusty in summer. She was seven years old, the earth was still new and extraordinary in its delights, the earth still ran up through her feet to her head into the sun [...] (9)

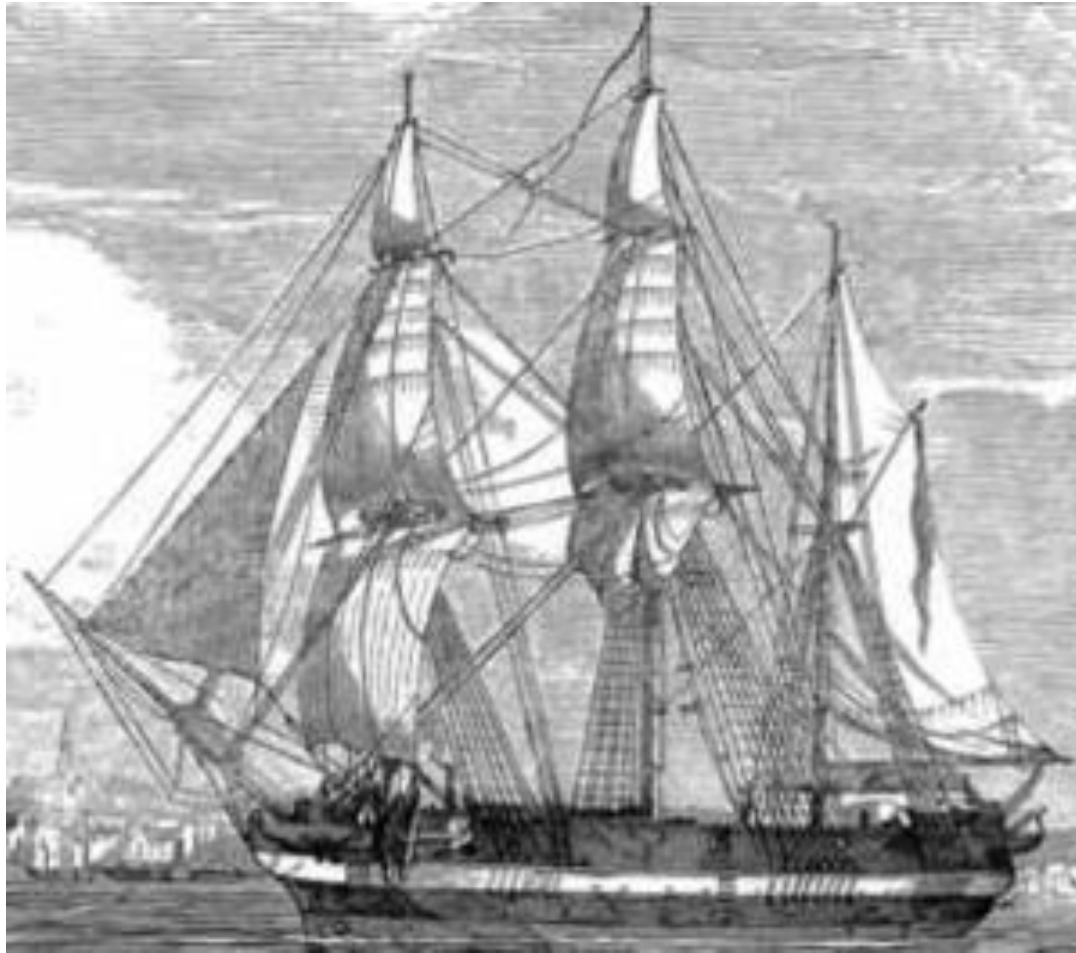
Una bambina correva fino a scoppiare tra ciuffi di danthonia alti quasi quanto lei. Come amava la sensazione di quei fili d'erba morbidi che le stillavano perle d'acqua sui polpacci, e il contatto della terra sotto i piedi nudi, umida e muscosa in inverno, asciutta e polverosa in estate. Aveva sette anni, la terra era ancora nuova e straordinaria nelle sue meraviglie, la terra ancora le saliva dai piedi alla testa fino al sole [...] (7).

“ [...] she spoke in a manner that was neither white nor black, but in a strange way with strange words that made no sense to anyone. Who was this girl? Why did she talk this way, why this strange wavering voice?” (213).

“[...] parlava in un modo che non era né da bianchi né da neri, uno strano modo con strane parole che non avevano senso per nessuno. Chi era quella ragazzina? Perché parlava così? Perché aveva quella voce così altalenante?” (202).

“she spoke in a manner that was
neither white nor black, but a
strange way with strange words
that made no sense to anyone.
Who was this girl? Why did she talk
this way, why this strange
wavering voice?” (213).

HMS Erebus





Lady Jane -

“[...] she felt not the wax with which the oak deck had been prepared but the earth of Van Diemen’s Land” (151)

“One might almost say [...] her body thinks” (53)

“[...] mentre la cera con cui avevano lucidato il pavimento di quercia del ponte diventava la Terra di Van Diemen” (142).

“Si potrebbe quasi sostenere [...] che il suo corpo pensa da solo” (49).

Black/white, colonizer/colonized binary opposition

“The distance between savagery and civilisation is measured by our control of our basest instincts” (126). – Lady Jane

“La distanza tra l’inciviltà e la civiltà è misurata nella nostra capacità di controllare i nostri più bassi istinti” (118).

Savagery/civilization

Sir John Franklin – Mathinna

Charles Dickens – Ellen Ternan

John Bowen

(Professor of 19th century literature at the
University of York)

**“uncovers how Dickens tried to place his wife
in an asylum”**

(The Times Literary Supplement, February 2019)

Catherine Dickens, 1852



“Until now, most accounts of the break-up of Charles Dickens’s marriage in 1858 have given his side of the story. A cache of letters recently discovered at Harvard tells it for the first time from the point of view of his abandoned wife Catherine – and the new information they contain is detailed and shocking.

Biographers and scholars have known for years how badly Dickens behaved at this time: among other things, he blocked up the door between his and his wife’s bedrooms and falsely claimed that Catherine “does not – and she never did – care for the children”. But it now seems that he even tried to place his wife and the mother of those children in a lunatic asylum, despite her evident sanity”.

“...The accusation comes in a letter from Edward Dutton Cook, Catherine’s next-door neighbour in Camden, north London, where she lived after her separation from Dickens. Dutton Cook was already a friend of Dickens’s eldest son Charley, and he and his wife Lynda made a close friendship with Catherine. As Catherine was dying, she told them more and more about how Dickens had behaved twenty years earlier, after he met the young actress Ellen Ternan and decided to break up their long, hitherto happy marriage”. (*The Times Literary Supplement*, February 19, 2019)

Mathinna – dance

Dickens – performance (***The Frozen Deep***)

“a savage [...] be he Esquimau or an Otaheitian, is someone who succumbs to his passions. An Englishman understands his passions in order to master them to powerful effect” (83). – C. Dickens

“un selvaggio [...] che sia un esquimese o un tahitiano, è qualcuno che soccombe alle proprie passioni. Un inglese le comprende, al fine di dominarle e di indirizzarle verso imprese straordinarie” (78).

“the novel is not a history, nor
should it be read as one” (255)

“it had somehow lost the delightful spontaneity of the original” (197)

“when she was at her most admirable [...] Predating her rather sorry decline” (197)

“neatly cut Mathinna off at her ankles and finally covered her bare feet” (197)

“rarely appears in historical or literary representations in any guise other than as a counterpoint or footnote to Mathinna’s more vivid presence. We see here the power of the visual image. If Bock’s portrait were not there to enforce a sense of humanity, we can be fairly sure that Mathinna’s story would likewise be divested of much of its present cultural sway and symbolic significance”.

(Russell 2012: 348)