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“The Distance between Them”: Sheep, Women, and Violence in Evie Wyld’s *All the Birds, Singing* and Barbara Baynton’s *Bush Studies*

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In recent years, animals in contemporary Australian writing and culture have been of considerable interest to scholars and writers. Anna Krien and Delia Falconer have raised questions about their ethical treatment and the preponderance of animal metaphors in Australian fiction and poetry in essays for general readers, while J. M. Coetzee’s representation of dogs has been a significant area of recent inquiry in academic scholarship. Dogs’ salience as metaphors in *Disgrace* (1999) has been noted by James Ley, as has the relationship between human and animal rights, embodiment and belief in *Elizabeth Costello* (2003) in essays by Elizabeth Anker and Fiona Jenkins. The recent interest in animals in the Australian context has also become manifest in a series of novels, many of them by women, such as Michelle de Kretser’s *The Lost Dog* (2007), Eva Hornung’s *Dog Boy* (2009), Gillian Mears’s *Foal’s Bread* (2012), Carrie Tiffany’s *Mateship with Birds* (2012), and Charlotte Wood’s *Animal People* (2011).

In the following, I extend the discussion of animals in Australian fiction to examine the relationship between women and sheep in Evie Wyld’s¹ second novel, *All the Birds, Singing* (2013), which won the Miles Franklin Literary Award in 2014. Although the novel was widely reviewed,² scholarship on the book is scant. I situate this novel in relation to Barbara Baynton’s nineteenth-century collection of stories *Bush Studies* (1902), with a particular focus on “Billy Skywonkie” and “The Chosen Vessel.” I suggest that Baynton and Wyld each establish a series of shifting connections between women and animals, so that they are at times conflated in terms of their phenomenological experience of the world and are at other times distanced from each other.

Both Wyld and Baynton participate in an Australian tradition of writing about the bush. Susan Sheridan argues in her 1995 monograph that in order to be considered an authentic Australian author, women writers, in particular, need to engage with “the masculine construction” of “The Bush,” a place which is rendered as alien and hostile and as a testing ground for men: “Women [. . .] cannot be writers,

Australians and women all at once. Only if they contribute to this masculine construction of 'The Bush' can they be redeemed from the frailties of their gender" (32). Although Sheridan's statement about the difficulties faced by Australian women writers does not have the same currency it had twenty years ago—since 2011, the Miles Franklin Literary Award has been won by three women³—through the use of a bush setting and its iconic animal, the sheep, Wyld's novel is engaging with this Australian literary tradition. Further, *All the Birds Singing* can be construed as an antipastoral that is indebted to Baynton's depiction of the bush as a place of hardship and violence. The antipastoral, according to Terry Gifford, involves a portrayal of the natural world that "can no longer be constructed as a 'land of dreams'" and in which characters undergo "a bleak battle for survival without divine purpose" (120).

This essay examines representations of violence, largely directed toward sheep and women in the texts under discussion, as a means of thinking about what explicit representations of violent acts imply about the relationships between humans and animals in the bush. First, I discuss how sheep are represented in *All the Birds Singing* and in "Billy Skywonkie" before examining conflation and distance in relation to women's and animal's bodies and turning to a more detailed analysis of scenes of slaughter.

All the Birds Singing is narrated by a young woman called Jake, who is a farmer on an unnamed island off the coast of England. The chapters set on the island, which are written in past tense, center on Jake's attempts to determine the identity of a creature that is killing her sheep. These chapters are interspersed with sections set in rural Australia, which are Jake's recollections, and unfold in present tense and reverse chronological order. In these chapters, Jake is held captive by an older man, Otto, who keeps a flock of ewes on a remote property outside Port Hedland in Western Australia. The novel repeatedly returns to Jake's past, which is depicted as happening in the present. Jake's move to England is an attempt to escape the trauma she experienced in the outback. Her haunting by the creature that is killing her sheep implies that her memories of her rural Australian past persist in embodied form.

In the novel's portrayal of the vulnerable position of women and sheep in the bush, *All the Birds Singing* is comparable to "Billy Skywonkie" and "The Chosen Vessel" from Baynton's collection, stories that, according to Elizabeth Webby, reveal "the crudity, cruelty and crimes to which others turned a blind eye" (4) in rural nineteenth-century Australia. "Billy Skywonkie" is about the treatment of an unnamed woman who travels to a remote station in drought-stricken western New South Wales to take up a position as a housekeeper. When she arrives, a series of characters, including a roustabout, Billy Skywonkie, make racist comments about her appearance. On arrival at the station, Gooriabba, she is rejected by the owner

of the property on the basis of her supposed ethnicity and discovers that she had been expected to become the boss's mistress. The story ends when the woman is told that she will be taken back to the railway station but is forced to witness Billy Skywonkie's slaughter of a sheep. In "The Chosen Vessel," a woman in a remote bush hut, left behind to take care of her baby while her husband is away shearing, is killed by a swagman. As the swagman circles the hut after dark, the woman rushes out for help. She hears an approaching horse, but the rider imagines that she is vision sent from God and ignores her. Webby argues that in this story, Baynton is engaged in "expos[ing] the patriarchal double standard which treats women as 'the Other'—objects to be worshipped or abused" (13).

In employing sheep as conspicuous metaphors in these works, Baynton and Wyld each participate in an Australian literary tradition in which sheep are utilized as symbols. As nationalistic ciphers, they appear in nineteenth-century folk songs, celebrated for their meat—the forbidden eating of the jumbuck in "Waltzing Matilda" (Paterson)—and for their wool, as in "Click Go the Shears." Leigh Dale argues in "Empire's Proxy: Sheep and the Colonial Environment" that the merino was more than the source of wool, which provided capital, and enabled a narrative of "prosperity and progress" to be constructed around the colony (3). Yet in "Billy Skywonkie" and in *All the Birds, Singing*, the land is drought stricken and the sheep barely survive; they are by no means the symbol of the landed aristocracy's good fortune associated with the squatter's jumbuck in "Waltzing Matilda."

"Billy Skywonkie" appears to reference the severe drought that Eastern Australia suffered in the late 1890s (Garden 270). Starving sheep signal that the property to which the unnamed woman is being taken is infertile and in some sense degenerate. Billy Skywonkie tells the woman that the dam at Gooriabba Station was formerly "swarmin' with teal in a good season," but Billy now doubts if "it's ever goin ter rain any more!" (Baynton 96). The stock on the property are described as "tottering" as they walk in the direction of the drying-up dam and are followed by crows (97). While the sheep are not responsible for the drought, their inability to endure its effects is evident in the story. In contrast to the sheep's weakness, Skywonkie says that the crows are "Scoffin out" the creatures' eyes and says, "Blanky Bush Chinkies! I call 'em. No one carn't tell 'em apart!" (97), a racist reference by which Skywonkie asserts that the crows are indistinguishable from each other. Skywonkie's comment about "Chinkies" is also an attempt to obtain a response from the woman he is taking to the homestead, whom he assumes is Chinese. The sheep—which ought to connote prosperity—suffer in a degraded and drought-stricken landscape and are weak and beset by crows, birds that are native inhabitants but that Billy Orientalizes and views as predatory. In this scene, the woman observes Skywonkie carefully—his face, clothes, and actions—imagining his teeth as "worn

stepping stones" (96). Baynton portrays the woman as trying to find her bearings in a strange and potentially dangerous place, metaphorically aligned with neither the sheep nor the crows, despite Skywonkie's implied comparison of her to the birds.

In Wyld's novel, the ewes are also starving as a result of a drought, which suggests that the land is unfit for grazing. Otto's slaughter and mistreatment of his ewes also signals his disregard for his property as a farm. Jake observes them to be "ill" with "patches of wool missing, ribs poking out" (133). An equivalence between Jake and sheep is made clear when in an attempt to escape from Otto, she cycles for hours, imagining that she will find "a waterhole that's not dried up in the drought" (91). Her search fails. The only life she encounters is a "whistler high up, riding the hot air" (91), a bird of prey. As in Baynton's story, the suggestion is that the birds of prey grow fat as a result of eating introduced livestock that is unable to survive the harsh conditions.

The shifting connotations of animals in Baynton's and Wyld's fiction suggest that sheep become the voiceless and unknowing agents of environmental damage. In this way, the texts demonstrate recognition of the way grazing animals physically altered the land, an impact, Dale notes, that "constituted colonization" ("Empire's" 6), at the same time as becoming an unwitting aid to white invasion and occupation. Besides changing the fragile soils and plant life of Australia's interior, merinos were a means by which white settlers could displace responsibility for the fate of indigenous people onto their cattle and sheep, through "a persistent effacing of the acts of dispossession" (Dale, "Empire's" 5). Dale quotes the "Shearer in Australian Literature" entry from the *Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* (1994), which discusses the "opening of new pastoral areas" (Wilde, Andrews, and Hooten 691), rather than, as Dale mentions, the acts committed by the people who brought the sheep ("Empire's" 5). The invasion by white settlers is thus euphemized, and the transformation of the landscape is attributed to grazing, rather than, as Dale writes, to the "agency of the colonists" ("Empire's" 5).

Neither of Baynton's stories under discussion nor Wyld's novel explore the dispossession of indigenous people—both texts are set after colonization—but "Billy Skywonkie" and *All the Birds, Singing* portray marginalized indigenous characters. Billy views all women, including his wife, Lizer, who is aboriginal, as commodities: "any red black-gin was as good as a half chow any day" (Baynton 104), by which he compares the unnamed woman's race to the race of his wife. In *All the Birds, Singing*, Denver, an older aboriginal boy on whom Jake has a crush at school, is unfairly blamed for a fire that Jake started and is severely burned (Wyld 199). Characters' attitudes to indigenous people are registered in Baynton's and Wyld's work. The presence of sheep and the absence of traditional aboriginal connections to the land connote the taking of traditional aboriginal land. In Wyld's novel and in "Billy

Skywonkie," farm animals are associated with environmental destruction. More importantly, rural Australia as a pastoral place is questioned in "Billy Skywonkie" and in *All the Birds, Singing*, because of the condition of the sheep and the country.

The argument that sheep become unwitting agents of colonial violence implies a connection between animals and humans as they wreak havoc on the environment. In Wyld's novel and in Baynton's stories, this alignment is complicated in relation to women, as a tension exists between the metaphorical connections between women and sheep and the distinctions between them. The final scene of "Billy Skywonkie" appears to establish an equivalence between the unnamed woman and a ewe awaiting slaughter. The woman watches as Billy Skywonkie sharpens his knife and prepares to slit the sheep's throat. She "noticed that the sheep lay passive, with its head back till its neck curved in a bow, and that the glitter of the knife was reflected in its eye" (Baynton 109). The woman, who does not speak in this scene, observes the lack of resistance on the part of the animal. The passage, which has been cited in several articles on Baynton's work (e.g., Dale, "Rereading"; Lamond), appears to portray the woman and the sheep as equally helpless and at Skywonkie's mercy. The woman neither responds to characters' racist comments about her appearance nor resists their treatment of her. Julieanne Lamond, who is primarily writing on race in "Billy Skywonkie," makes this observation:

The point is that [the woman] "notices" what is happening. She seems to be the passive subject of the gaze but [. . .] the final image of the story is not, as is often suggested in readings of Baynton's stories, simply an example of the collapsing or conflating of woman and sheep. It is also an acknowledgment of the distance between them. (397)

Lamond argues that the woman is not wholly passive, because she "notices" the sheep's apparent acceptance of its fate. By using the word "distance," Lamond implies that Baynton is rendering the woman's subjectivity as distinct from the ewe's. The "distance between them" pertains to the degree to which the woman witnesses the violence about to be inflicted on the animal and apprehends it as bearing a relationship to "her intended role at the station as a physical sacrifice of some sort" (397): the expectation that she was meant to become the boss's mistress. In witnessing the moments leading up to the sheep's death, the woman understands that she is still threatened by the presence of Billy Skywonkie. Her ability to see the knife reflected in the creature's eye, which the sheep cannot physically see, suggests what constitutes the "distance" between the woman and the ewe. "Distance" exists in the woman's realization of the animal's suffering and in her glimpsing of her own predicament. As Lamond argues, there is an obvious difference in how Baynton imagines the ewe and the woman. Even in moments of apparent passivity, women

in Baynton's stories are able to establish a form of psychological distance in which to figure their own gendered humanity.

Wyld's fiction both installs and problematizes the way that women's and animals' bodies are thought about as different from men's and as vulnerable. A distance may exist between them, but women and sheep are viewed as equivalent by characters such as Otto and, to an extent, by Jake herself. The kinship that Jake feels with her flock constitutes a form of resistance to the "othering" of animals: the idea that humans are estranged from beasts. For example, when Jake first shears one of Otto's sheep, she thinks, "I can see [the ewe's] wild eye and I want to tell her, It's just the wool" (Wyld 142). Jake senses the animal's fear and wishes to reassure her that she will not be killed. By resisting the estrangement of animals from humans and by stressing their empathetic and corporeal connections, Jake works against Otto's view of sheep (and women) as wholly other. In this way, Wyld's novel, like the work of Coetzee, can be read by way of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's view of humans and animals as sharing embodiment as a primary condition of consciousness (Oliver 222). Merleau-Ponty contends that embodiment is the means of "direct [. . .] contact with the world" (vii) through the sense that humans are corporeal beings (Anker 179). The idea that the "relation of the human and animality is not a hierarchical relation but a lateral [. . .] that does not abolish kinship" (Merleau-Ponty, qtd. in Oliver 268) is pertinent in relation to *All the Birds, Singing* because of the embodied connections between Jake and the ewes.

However, Jake's sense of connection to the ewes is of a different order to her equivalence to them, as Otto understands it. The novel purposefully juxtaposes the physical relationships between men and sheep and men and women in order to link women and sheep as subject to the desires of men, whether amorous or violent. When Otto teaches Jake how to shear, she observes, "When he has [the ewe] pinned on the boards, a strange gentleness comes over him, I can see it on his face. It's like how he looks at me when we screw" (Wyld 142). When Otto kills a sheep, Jake can see that he "has a hard-on through his shorts" (95). In these scenes, Jake and Otto's livestock are compared to each other. Otto's desire is not for the sheep, one assumes, but stems from his ability to exert power over an ovine body and, by extension, over Jake's. In these physical interactions, his expression and body language are the same, being "gentleness" or desire. Jake and the flock are therefore bodies from which Otto demands passivity or treats with violence if they transgress his authority.

Connections between sheep and women as subject to men's authority and violence are also made through imagery in Baynton's "The Chosen Vessel" and "Billy Skywonkie." In "The Chosen Vessel," which is the final story in *Bush Studies*, a young woman who is unable to fight off the advances of a swagman is killed. Her

dead body is referred to as “a ewe” by the boundary rider who finds her: “it’s been a dingo right enough! [. . .] down in the creek—a ewe and a lamb, I’ll bet; and the lamb’s alive!” (137). The woman has been so viciously murdered as to be indistinguishable from a sheep, and through her slaying (and implied rape), she is reduced to the status of an animal. The “lamb” is the woman’s child, who survives. Animal metaphors are also used to describe male characters in “The Chosen Vessel,” in that the boundary rider attributes the killing to “a dingo.” The woman initially fears the swagman who comes to her door because of “the look of his eyes, and the gleam of his teeth” (133).

Similarly, in *All the Birds, Singing*, the bodies of Otto’s dead wife and the ewes are conflated in Jake’s imagination. Jake believes that Otto’s wife’s body has been dumped with the bodies of the dead sheep and is convinced that Otto has killed his wife. This is a source of horror for Jake, whose hand “trembles” when she sees Otto’s dog with a shoe, “hot pink and to fit a very small foot,” fetched from a place to which Jake has seen the dog “dragging” sheep’s carcasses and burying them (Wyld 114).

Even though some of Baynton’s stories and Wyld’s novel portray women’s and sheep’s bodies as being subject to similar treatment at the hands of men, “Billy Skywonkie” and *All the Birds, Singing* do allow for more nuanced readings of the metaphorical connections between women and sheep. Jake’s recognition of how Otto looks at her suggests a distinction between Jake and Otto’s ewes on the basis of Jake’s subjectivity. Like the woman in “Billy Skywonkie,” Jake “notices” and watches herself being watched: “He stares at me, an unbroken gaze that prickles the hair on the back of my neck” (Wyld 94); “Otto looks at me through a narrowed eye” (95). In both cases, Otto looks at Jake in a manner that from Jake’s perspective is threatening: it “prickles the hair” on the back of Jake’s neck; his eye is “narrowed,” suggesting that he is looking at Jake, in this case, without “gentleness.” In response to the threat posed by Otto’s gaze, Jake opens up a distance between her body and those of Otto’s ewes by working to build a muscular physique: “I get quietly out of bed and I do push-ups in the dark” (119). One reading of her attempts to shape her physicality is that she is trying to make herself less vulnerable, through making herself more apparently masculine. Her name, Jake, also signals her equivocation about her gender and suggests that the development of a muscular body has to do with a more profound ambivalence with thinking about herself as a woman. Unlike the woman in “Billy Skywonkie,” who can only register the gazes of Billy Skywonkie and “the Konk”—another man who comes to look at her—Jake tries to create a distinction between herself and the passive bodies of Otto’s stock.

While Jake observes that sheep and women appear to be conflated in Otto’s mind, she feels empathy for Otto’s ewes. She imagines them thinking “*One by one*”

(Wyld 93; italics in original) when Otto chooses one for slaughter, signaling an act of identification. She resists killing an animal under Otto's orders, initially because she knows her acquiescence would make her a participant in, rather than simply a witness to, Otto's violent acts. Ultimately, unlike the woman in "Billy Skywonkie," Jake is forced to cut a ewe's throat, because of her attempt to escape from the farm. Jake thinks initially, "I am sorry for my bad behaviour, I want to tell [Otto], I want to say I won't do it again, I promise" (95). It is possible, too, that Jake finally agrees because she recognizes that Otto "likes [her] best when she is small and like a child," a thought that causes her to accept the "challenge" (95). When her participation in the butchery becomes inevitable, she imagines that through killing she will show Otto that she is "stronger than he thinks, and the sheep [. . .] will be the sacrifice" (95). For Jake, the act is used to symbolize her capability for violence and thus to assert her distance from Otto's livestock.

Otto gazes at Jake and at the ewes with a similar expression; it is implied that he murdered his wife in the same place that he slaughters the sheep, and the corpses of Carol and his stock are intermingled. Otto's apparent belief in the interchangeability of women and animals suggests that he is forcing Jake to slaughter the sheep instead of killing Jake himself. Another way of reading this scene, then, is to view it as an exchange: Jake has to commit a metaphorical act, in which an ovine body is exchanged for hers. This is the consequence of the imposed conflation of women and animals; if they are interchangeable, then one can be killed in place of the other. There is also a suggestion of self-slaughter. Both Jake and the sheep are female.

The killing of the ewe is rendered more complex, though, by Jake's embodied experience of the act, registered in Jake's first-person, present-tense perspective: "in one motion I cut her throat, as deep and hard as I can, I want her to be dead before she knows about it, but she still writhes about under me as blood pours out of her, and as her strength goes, so does mine, but I hold her to me, I press my face into the wool at the back of her head" (96). Jake's violent and reluctant slaying, "in one motion," causes her strength to fade as the animal's "strength goes." Killing is therefore not empowering; nor does the event create much distance between the two of them; instead the slaughter is a shared physical event, in which Jake feels the last movements of the ewe beneath her as "blood pours out" (96). In response to the physical sensation—the emphasis here is on feeling, rather than seeing—Jake presses her face "into the wool at the back of [the sheep's] head." Rather than being repulsed by the experience, she draws closer, hiding or burying herself. The experience is corporeal not just on the level of the proximity of the two bodies. The one long sentence that describes this moment is broken up with commas, which function like the last gasps of the sheep and Jake's shuddering and emotional breaths. The corporeal nature of the event, it is implied, resides in the paired respiration of Jake and the dying

creature, which is legible in the prose. In this passage, the metaphorical connections between women and animals are rendered more complex by their corporeal relationships: a connection between Jake and the sheep exists, and it is physical, felt.

The corporeal connections between Jake and her flock are also significant in the sections of the novel set on an island in the English Channel. In these sections, Jake stays away from the other inhabitants of the island. She is forced to take in Lloyd, who is grieving for his dead partner by performing rituals with his partner's ashes at the "furthest points of Britain" (161), but her strongest connection is with her dog and ewes. In the scene in which she rounds up the sheep and brings them into the shed for lambing, she acknowledges, "I could feel it, the ripple going through the sheep, the new feeling for some of them, the old familiar ache for others" (184). This "ripple," this "old familiar ache," is caused by the onset of lambing. The feeling passes through Jake and the animals as a "ripple," as though they are part of one entity, although there is no suggestion that Jake wishes to be a mother. Further, Jake says, "I felt like I could lie down in the hay with them, a pang, just for a moment, of what it must be like to give birth to something" (185). Jake's ewes' pain is not distant and separate but imagined to the point that it feels embodied, a "pang" that she shares. Jake's relationship with her flock is lateral, rather than domineering. In this passage, Wyld stresses the connections between Jake and her animals, rather than a hierarchical relationship. Merleau-Ponty writes that this "lateral relationship" is possible because "mind is incredibly penetrated by its corporeal structure" (268). Through Jake's corporeal connections with her ewes, she is acknowledging a shared physicality.

Herein lies the tension in the portrayal of the relationships between animals and women in Wyld's text. The bodies of sheep and women are metaphorically conflated through violent acts on the basis that they are aligned and are therefore similarly estranged from masculine bodies. At the same time, the corporeal connections between Jake and her ewes are emphasized. I read these sections as constituting a resistance to the idea that animals are wholly estranged from humans. If it is admitted that sheep and humans are similarly physically configured by way of Merleau-Ponty's conception of them as sharing embodiment as a primary condition of consciousness, then violence against animals, and therefore women, is harder to justify.

Besides directly portraying the bush as a violent place, Wyld suggests that the threatening presence that inhabits the Australian sections of *All the Birds, Singing*—in the form of Otto—remains present in Jake's mind, in a place distant from its origin. Jake longs to leave behind the violence to which she has been subjected in Australia, but the creature that stalks and kills Jake's ewes in the island chapters makes it clear that this is impossible. If sheep and women are metaphorically connected, the creature also represents a threat to Jake.

There is slippage between whether the creature attacking Jake's flock is human or animal, real or imagined. In a scene in which Jake takes a bath, she hears "someone" climbing the stairs (187). She tries to convince herself that she is hearing Lloyd, but soon afterward, she hears the creature "pant[ing] deep in the back of its throat" (187). Unlike a wild animal, the creature enters the house, seeks Jake, then leaves, yet it "pants" like a dog or a wolf. The predatory qualities of Otto and Clare, a male shearer whom Jake encounters, are present in the creature's characterization (Clare also comes to threaten Jake when she is in the bathroom). The creature's more human qualities are evident from the first chapter, when Jake's neighbor Don says, "But I've never seen anything round here flense an animal like that" (8). To "flense," according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is "to cut up and slice the fat from" or "to flay or skin." Both definitions have been used historically in relation to hunting whales or seals; the word dates from 1820 ("Flense"). The first phrase in the novel states that the dead sheep has been "mangled and bled out" (Wyld 1). Bleeding out and skinning or flensing a sheep are human acts.

Jake is not a wholly reliable narrator. She suffers from nightmares and imagines or hears the presence of a beast or an intruder in her house at night. Geordie Williamson asserts in his review of the novel that Jake is suffering from zooscopic hallucinations⁴ as a result of the trauma she suffered in Australia. Lloyd's corroboration of Jake's vision of the predatory creature complicates this reading. Lloyd and Jake glimpse the creature in the last scene of the book as "a shadow beneath the green canopy, where maybe something moved" (Wyld 227). "Maybe something" suggests that the creature is difficult to see in its entirety. In this scene, Lloyd says that the thing is "huge" and "just in front of us" (228). According to Lloyd, the creature is in front of "us," suggesting not just him and Jake but the reader.

The creature's precise identity remains unresolved by the book's end. Jake's reaction to it, its killing of her sheep, and its human characteristics align it with masculine figures like Otto. Lloyd's acknowledgment of its existence implies that the creature is real and not simply the product of a Jake's traumatic past; it is also "real" inasmuch as it kills Jake's stock. The creature could be read as a metaphor for predatory masculinity, which both stalks Jake and persists in novels set in the bush. Its nature, as a human-animal creature, initially inspires terror on the part of Jake and results in its estrangement from the human characters in the novel. Jake views the unsettling of the boundary between the human and animal, with what appears to be a conflated masculine and animal body, with fear and later ambivalence. The novel asks, if the estrangement of women's and animals' bodies is problematic, then is the conception of predatory and animalistic men as wholly other similarly ethically vexed?

All the Birds, Singing is an antipastoral in its depiction of drought-ridden landscapes and its portrayal of the men who inhabit the bush, who are violent, predatory,

and animalistic. Wyld's novel evokes an uncontrollable and animalistic man-creature, which haunts the characters in the English sections of the narrative, implying that bush fiction is stalked by predatory masculine figures. Its portrayal of the embodied connections between humans and animals and the metaphorical complexities in the relationship of women to sheep constitutes both an extension of Baynton's portrayal of the violence and brutality of bush life and an implicit critique of more reassuring representations of the bush. The novel asks whether violence inflicted on women and sheep can be eschewed through conceiving of the relationships between humans and animals as lateral, rather than domineering. Its depiction of a predatory man-creature suggests that there exist no uncomplicated responses to this question.

Notes

1. Evie Wyld lives in London, where she runs a small independent bookshop. She has won several awards for her fiction in England (paraphrased from "About the Author" in *All the Birds, Singing*). While she now resides in England, she spent several years of her childhood and adolescence in Australia, according to reviews of the novel (see reviews by Meloy and Williamson).
2. For reviews, see Sayer; Williamson. Wyld's novel also received reviews in the *New York Times* and the *New Yorker* (Meloy; "All the Birds, Singing").
3. Anna Funder won the Miles Franklin Literary Award in 2012, Michelle de Kretser in 2013, Evie Wyld in 2014, and Sofie Laguna in 2015 (Miles Franklin Literary Award).
4. *Zooscopy* is a form of hallucination in which imaginary animal forms are seen ("Zooscopy"). One of the uses of the term in the OED relates to alcohol poisoning: "This condition of zoöscopic hallucination is one of the commonest among the phenomena of alcohol poisoning" (*Science* 1890, qtd. in "Zooscopy"). Both Jake and Lloyd consume a lot of whiskey in the Channel Island sections of the novel.

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