Rewrite, Repurpose, Reclaim:

The Intertextual Reweaving of Australia's Colonial History in
Leah Purcell's First Nations Adaptation Film,
The Drover's Wife: The Legend of Molly Johnson

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Declaration of Originality

I, Delaney Milnes, hereby declare that, except where it is otherwise acknowledged in the text, this thesis represents my own original work.

An earlier version of "Chapter Two: *Molly Johnson*'s First Nations Storytelling Structure and Temporality" was submitted as part of the required "Assessment 3: Major Essay" in ENGL4020: Researching and Writing the Thesis: A Workshop.

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Abstract

This thesis closely reads Leah Purcell's *The Drover's Wife: The Legend of Molly Johnson* (2022) as both a film adaptation and a Fourth Cinema film. Analysing the understudied intersection between these fields shows how the adaptation process and Indigenous filmmaking techniques methodologically complement each other, especially in their retelling of stories and complicating of single-story approaches to history. I argue that the film interweaves these practices so as to respond to Australia's colonial history, creating an alternate version of Henry Lawson's "The Drover's Wife" (1892) that rewrites First Nations peoples' perspectives and experiences back into the archive. As a critical response to and creative rewriting of the archive, I read the film as engaging in postcolonial decolonising practices, notably the "critical-creative"[1] practices of First Nations women writing against the archive. By linking the fields of adaptation and Fourth Cinema to explore their combined decolonising potential, rather than closing a gap in the scholarship, this thesis creates a new interdisciplinary model that can be used in further studies focusing on indigenising adaptation films. The thesis concludes that through *rewriting* Lawson's canonical piece, the film *repurposes* its story, so as to *reclaim* First Nations sovereignty of Australian history, storytelling, and land.

[1] Natalie Harkin, "Weaving the Colonial Archive: A Basket to Lighten the Load," *Journal of Australian Studies* 44, no. 2 (2020): 166, https://doi-org.virtual.anu.edu.au/10.1080/14443058.2020.1754276.

Introduction

Towards the end of Leah Purcell's film *The Drover's Wife: The Legend of Molly Johnson* (2022, hereafter *Molly Johnson*) budding journalist Louisa Clintoff (Jessica De Gouw) visits Molly Johnson (Leah Purcell) on death row. In feminine solidarity, she pulls up a stool, takes out a pencil and asks, "can I hear you, Molly?"[2] In a way, this is the question Purcell herself is answering via her film; by adapting Henry Lawson's canonical short story "The Drover's Wife" (1892),[3] Purcell revives his frontier colonial character, so we, an audience in the twenty-first century, can 'hear' her. Like a work of revisionist history, Purcell poses many questions to the original story, with the primary one being: what would this story look like if the protagonist was a Ngarigo woman instead of Lawson's unstated but assumed White settler?

In this thesis, I interrogate how Goa-Gungari-Wakka Wakka Murri filmmaker Leah Purcell has adapted "The Drover's Wife" to create her film. To do so, I situate *Molly Johnson* as sitting within three larger bodies of creative work: film adaptation, First Nations storytelling, and decolonising practices. Despite retelling being a main foundation of First Nations storytelling - and

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[2] Leah Purcell, director and producer, *The Drover's Wife: the Legend of Molly Johnson* (2022), Prime Video, online film, 01:33:11, https://www.primevideo.com/region/fe/detail/0R6N4S9MZ6Y9QGSRCC3IIGRIXN/ref=atv_sr_fle_c_Tn74RA_1_1_1

[3] Henry Lawson, "The Drover's Wife," *While the Billy Boils* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1896; Sydney: The University of Sydney Library, 1999), 82-88, https://digital.library.sydney.edu.au/nodes/view/12100?type=all&lsk=9ac843ba03eed71b76505d3f767e1d0c. Citations refer to the 1999 edition.

oral storytelling more broadly[4] - the intersection between these first two practices is both underpopulated and understudied. By considering how Purcell combines the two, I highlight both the film's uniqueness, and the opportunity it presents for other creative works to engage in decolonising practices. Thus, this thesis argues that *Molly Johnson* demonstrates how the film adaptation process can be interwoven with First Nations storytelling methods to provide fertile ground for alternative, creative, additive rereadings of Australia's literary and historical past.

Terminology

Before undertaking my literature review, I will first justify the terminology used throughout my writing. This thesis engages with and learns from the work of many Indigenous scholars and filmmakers, specifically from Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand, and North America. While some scholars theorise at the pan-Indigenous level, others work within a deep cultural specificity, a distinction which I indicate throughout my writing. As a non-Indigenous scholar, my intention has been to take direction from the terminology Indigenous scholars use. The scholars I have particularly relied on in this regard are Yaegl woman Pauline Clague, Māori man Brendan Hokowhitu (Ngāti Pūkenga), Seneca woman Michelle Raheja, and Māori woman Jo Smith (Waitaha, Kāti Māmoe, Kāi Tahu).[5] Engaging with their work

[4] Pauline Clague, "The Five Beats of Indigenous Storytelling," *Lumina* 11, no. 1 (2012): 51-2

[5] See Clague, "The Five Beats of Indigenous Storytelling," 49-54; Brendan Hokowhitu, "Theorizing Indigenous Media," in *Fourth Eye: The Indigenous Mediascape In*

has been invaluable not just to my terminology use, but to my work as a whole. Following these scholars, I capitalise 'Indigenous' when discussing global Indigenous peoples, use the lowercase for verbs such as indigenising, and introduce Indigenous scholars and filmmakers with their identified nation or language group. When discussing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cinema or scholarship, I use the title First Nations peoples.[6]

To avoid confusion, I refer to Lawson's short story as "The Drover's Wife," Purcell's film as *Molly Johnson,* her play as *The Drover's Wife* (2016), and her book as *The Drover's Wife* (2019).

My Own Standpoint

As with terminology, it is imperative that I preface this thesis with my own standpoint as a White Australian woman scholar. In her paper *Towards an Australian Indigenous Women's Standpoint Theory: A Methodological Tool,* Goenpul academic Aileen Moreton-Robinson writes that

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Aotearoa New Zealand, ed. Brendan Hokowhitu and Vijay Devadas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 101-23, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.virtual.anu.edu.au/lib/anu/detail.action?docID=1458385; Michelle Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile: Visual Sovereignty, Indigenous Revisions of Ethnography, and *Atanarjuat (the Fast Runner)*," *American Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (2007): 1159–85, https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2007.0083; Jo Smith, "Indigenous Insistence on Film," in *Routledge Handbook of Critical Indigenous Studies,* ed. Brendan Hokowhitu, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Linda Tuhiwai-Smith, Chris Andersen, and Steve Larkin (Oxon: Routledge, 2022), 488-500, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.virtual.anu.edu.au/lib/anu/reader.action?docID=6409609#.

[6] "Australia's First Peoples," Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2022, https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/australias-first-peoples.

> standpoint theory provides a valid starting point for research and analysis whereby the subject can recognise and claim the partiality involved in the process of their knowledge production. Standpoint theory's recognition of partiality and subjectivity brings together the body and knowledge production, which is in contrast to the disembodied epistemological privileging of 'validity' and 'objectivity' within western patriarchal knowledge production.[7]

Her argument stems from the "general acceptance that research is neither value free or neutral"[8] and is instead a deeply political practice.[9]

Following her approach, I would like to "recognise and claim"[10] my own relationship to the land on which I live and how my own social position affects "the process of knowledge production"[11] that created this thesis. I have grown up and currently live, work, and study on Ngunnawal and Ngambri Country. My Irish and Scottish settler heritage means that while I have a love and respect for this land, I do not have the connection to Country that Purcell engages with in her adaptations nor as the First Nations scholars I draw on do.

I find Māori filmmaker Barry Barclay's (Ngāti Apa) differentiation between Western First Cinema and Indigenous Fourth Cinema perspectives

[7] Aileen Moreton-Robinson, "Towards an Australian Indigenous Women's Standpoint Theory," *Australian Feminist Studies* 28 no. 78 (2013): 333, https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2013.876664.
[8] Moreton-Robinson, "Standpoint Theory," 333
[9] Moreton-Robinson, "Standpoint Theory," 331-9
[10] Moreton-Robinson, "Standpoint Theory," 333
[11] Moreton-Robinson, "Standpoint Theory," 333

useful to visualise this distinction: While the "First Cinema Camera [of settlers] sits firmly on the deck of the ship[,] the Camera Ashore, the Fourth Cinema Camera, [is] held by the people for whom "ashore" is their ancestral home."[12] Borrowing Barclay's metaphor, my settler ancestry positions my research and writing as from "the deck of the ship,"[13] viewing the shore - Indigenous Fourth Cinema and scholarship - from the outsider position rather than from lived experience.

In *Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writings by Indigenous Australians*, prominent First Nations scholars, including Marcia Langton and Moreton-Robinson, discuss what it means to engage in scholarship as Indigenous peoples.[14] In the introduction, Michele Grossman states that "*Blacklines* seeks to make visible the presence of an Indigenous critical space. A critical community [whose] intellectual imperatives are distinct, as are its cultural and political coordinates."[15] In this thesis I work to speak *with* this "critical community"[16] of Indigenous scholars, whilst being aware that my readings and arguments are being made from a standpoint *outside* of that community.

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[12] Barclay quoted in Hokowhitu, "Theorizing Indigenous Media," 115
[13] Barclay quoted in Hokowhitu, "Theorizing Indigenous Media," 115
[14] Michele Grossman, "Introduction," in *Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians*, ed. Ian Anderson, Michele Grossman, Marcia Langton, and Aileen Moreton-Robinson (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2012), 12-23, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.virtual.anu.edu.au/lib/anu/reader.action?docID=5628344.
[15] Grossman, "Introduction," 17
[16] Grossman, "Introduction," 17

For this reason, while reading *Molly Johnson* my arguments are heavily guided by Indigenous scholars' works when discussing pan-Indigenous concepts and First Nations scholars' works when considering Australia specifically. This is especially important in chapters two and three, which focus on First Nations storytelling and are largely scaffolded by Pauline Clague's work and Purcell's explanation of storytelling within the film. My intention in these chapters is not to consider First Nations storytelling in an anthropological way, but rather to highlight how Purcell uses her own standpoint and history as a productive part of her filmmaking process.

Although my intention is to be guided by Indigenous scholarship without misinterpretation or misappropriation, I am also aware that my privileged positioning means I may not see my own mistakes. In her essay "Always Was Always Will Be," Aboriginal author and academic Jackie Huggins criticises "non-Aboriginal academics [who] make their living out of theorising and intellectualising Aboriginals and racism without having to live in it daily or experience (...) the passion, anger or the pain."[17] In my thesis, I aim to apply Indigenous theory without theorising Indigeneity. I apply and discuss Indigenous structural frameworks and epistemology, whilst noting that my

[17] Jackie Huggins, "Always Was Always Will Be," in *Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians*, ed. Ian Anderson, Michele Grossman, Marcia Langton, and Aileen Moreton-Robinson (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2012), 65-6, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.virtual.anu.edu.au/lib/anu/reader.action?docID=5628344.

standpoint comes from a Western settler descendant positioning - from “the deck of the ship”[18] - and from a screen studies lens. I apologise if there are any sections in my writing that overstep this important delineation.

[18] Barclay quoted in Hokowhitu, "Theorizing Indigenous Media," 115

Literature Review

This thesis' aim is not to point towards a specific gap within an existing body of scholarship, but rather to link three separate fields and explore their previously unevaluated intersection. In the following literature review, the first scholarly field I draw on is Indigenous media studies, both through its pan-Indigenous lenses and more specific First Nations approaches. Secondly, I overview the dominant theories of adaptation studies, so as to foreground how I will read the film as an adaptation. Finally, I outline the prominent theories within postcolonial reading practices and First Nations "critical-creative"[19] decolonising practices. Before undertaking this work, I will first summarise the narrow body of scholarship on Purcell's "The Drover's Wife" adaptations.

Leah Purcell's "The Drover's Wife" adaptations

Due to how recently *Molly Johnson* was released - 2022 - there is little scholarship surrounding it. However, as Purcell's reworking of Lawson's "The Drover's Wife" extends beyond just the film, there is some scholarship on her 2016 play and playtext, and 2019 book. This thesis has also been informed by official interviews and behind-the-scenes media that offer insight into how Purcell conceptualised the adaptation process and First Nations storytelling use.[20]

[19] Harkin, "Weaving the Colonial Archive," 166
[20] See "Leah Purcell on reclaiming The Drover's Wife with The Legend of Molly Johnson," Australian Centre for the Moving Image, 2022,

Within the scholarship on Purcell's adaptations, most papers highlight the retelling and indigenising aspects of the play, book, and/or film. Nycole Prowse, Jessica Gildersleeve and Kate Cantrell have noted in their paper "From Stage To Page To Screen: The Traumatic Returns Of Leah Purcell's 'the Drover's Wife'" how Purcell "destabilise[s] Australia's foundational narrative" through retelling Lawson's colonial narrative.[21] They draw on Mandy Sayer, whose gendered reading of "The Drover's Wife" adaptations corpus concludes that while adaptations by men focus on plot and "deliberately attempt to spin even wilder and more fantastic lies," retellings by women focus on "giving voice to Lawson's protagonist."[22] Prowse, Gildersleeve, and Cantrell read Purcell's adaptations as sitting within Sayer's feminist category, but also identify Purcell's work as unique in how she reimagines the protagonist as a Ngarigo

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https://www.acmi.net.au/stories-and-ideas/leah-purcell-on-reclaiming-the-drovers-wife-with-the-legend-of-molly-johnson/; Vanessa Gorman, producer, "The Songlines of Leah Purcell," *Australian Story*, season 27, episode 14 (2022), ABC, online video, 29:12, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-06-09/the-songlines-of-leah-purcell/13922656; Matthew Jenkin, producer, "*The Drover's Wife: The Legend of Molly Johnson*: Behind the Scenes." (2022), Screen Australia, online video, 06:12, https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/sa/screen-news/2022/04-26-the-drovers-wife-the-legend-of; "Podcast - Writer/Director Leah Purcell on Her Feature Film Debut," Screen Australia, 2022, https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/sa/screen-news/2022/04-21-podcast-leah-purcell.

[21] Nycole Prowse, Jessica Gildersleeve, and Kate Cantrell, "From Stage to Page to Screen: The traumatic returns of Leah Purcell's *The Drover's Wife*," *Social Alternative* 41, no. 3 (2022): 30, https://virtual.anu.edu.au/login/?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/stage-page-screen-traumatic-returns-leah-purcells/docview/2736852491/se-2

[22] Sayer quoted in Prowse, Gildersleeve, and Cantrell, "From Stage to Page to Screen," 31

woman.[23] They argue that through indigenising Lawson's unnamed protagonist, Purcell "illuminate[s] and interrogate[s] the past"[24] by "tell[ing] the story [of colonisation] that haunts our nation and which has failed to be confronted through so many earlier restoryings and retellings."[25] In her dissertation on "The Drover's Wife" adaptations, Xiang Li draws a similar conclusion: by "ke[eping] most of Lawson's colonial characters and settings unchanged [t]he act of adding, or rather, revealing the protagonist's Indigenous identity subverts the settler foundation myth from within."[26] Martina Horáková has also written on Purcell's work as "rewriting the canon and settler belonging."[27] Although Horáková analyses Purcell's playtext and not her film, her exploration is useful to this thesis as she analyses how Purcell's writing of Indigeneity into a colonial narrative constitutes postcolonial literature.[28] Horáková notes that "in Lawson's canonical story, Indigeneity remains elusive, marginal, and ultimately ambivalent"[29] and that "while Lawson's "The Drover's Wife" has been interpreted in a host of different, often contradictory ways, never before has its [W]hiteness been challenged in the same way."[30] Where these papers see Purcell's *The Drover's Wife* adaptations

[23] Prowse, Gildersleeve, and Cantrell, "From Stage to Page to Screen," 33
[24] Prowse, Gildersleeve, and Cantrell, "From Stage to Page to Screen," 30
[25] Prowse, Gildersleeve, and Cantrell, "From Stage to Page to Screen," 32
[26] Xiang Li, "Gender, Reception and 'The Drover's Wife' Phenomenon," (PhD dissertation, ANU, 2023), 186, https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/gender-reception-drovers-wife-phenomenon/docview/2866085327/se-2.
[27] Martina Horáková, "'Kin-Fused' Revenge: Rewriting the Canon and Settler Belonging in Leah Purcell's *The Drover's Wife*," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 58, no. 4 (2022): 513, https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2022.2051867.
[28] Horáková, "'Kin-Fused' Revenge," 513
[29] Horáková, "'Kin-Fused' Revenge," 512
[30] Horáková, "'Kin-Fused' Revenge," 512

as retelling and refiguring the past through character indigenisation, I expand these ideas to include the indigenisation of plot and temporality through First Nations storytelling methods.

Rather than focusing on how Purcell indigenises Lawson's story, Fiona Morrison closely reads the intersection between temporality and violence in Purcell's play. The play and film offer both similar and different versions of violence - such as Molly's rape and vengeful survival in the play verses her rape and hanging in the film - and their modes offer different ways of communicating temporality. However, her discussion of colonial time, or what she calls the "time of the gun,"[31] being juxtaposed with First Nations temporality, or the "time of recognition,"[32] is useful to my second chapter where I consider the fluctuating temporality in *Molly Johnson*.

While this scholarship has given me a formal foundation of literature to add to, this thesis also draws on radio interviews with Purcell and behind-the-scenes footage to better understand Purcell's connection to the *Molly Johnson* story and her authorial intent. Screen Australia's Caris Bizzaca interviewed Purcell about the adaptation process, including how she interwove various source texts such as her personal family history, Dreaming stories, and Lawson's short story.[33] Purcell's interview with Yorta Yorta man

[31] Fiona Morrison, "The Antiphonal Time of Violence in Leah Purcell's *The Drover's Wife*," *Southerly* 78, no. 3 (2018): 181
[32] Morrison, "The Antiphonal Time of Violence," 184
[33] "Podcast - Writer/Director Leah Purcell on Her Feature Film Debut"

Bryan Andy from the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), takes a slightly different focus, as it was conducted live after screening *Molly Johnson* to ACMI's First Nations Film Club.[34] Speaking to this First Nations audience, Purcell more deeply expands upon how she worked with the "dreaming structure" through film language, as well as her family history.[35] Another noteworthy source is the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's (ABC) *Australian Story* episode entitled "The Songlines of Leah Purcell".[36] The half-hour documentary includes interviews primarily with Purcell, Nidjara and Māori actor Deborah Mailman (Ngāti Porou and Te Arawa), Pauline Clague, and Purcell's partner and producer, Ngugi-Goenpul-Noonuccal Murri man Bain Stewart.[37] Due to its airing in June 2022, the documentary predominantly focuses on Purcell's acting, directing, writing, and producing of *Molly Johnson,* which was released the month prior. These interviews and behind-the-scenes footage are useful when considering how Purcell approached the adaptation process and how she used the film format to express First Nations storytelling methods and interweave her own family history.

Pan-Indigenous and First Nations Media Studies

As a Goa-Gungari-Wakka Wakka Murri woman working on and with Ngarigo country, Purcell's film sits within the First Nations cinema corpus and pan-Indigenous cinema. In their introduction to *The Fourth Eye: Māori Media*

[34] "Leah Purcell on reclaiming The Drover's Wife with The Legend of Molly Johnson."
[35] "Leah Purcell on reclaiming The Drover's Wife with The Legend of Molly Johnson."
[36] Gorman, "The Songlines of Leah Purcell," 29:12
[37] Gorman, "The Songlines of Leah Purcell," 29:12

in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Vijay Devadas and Māori man Brendan Hokowhitu (Ngāti Pūkenga) articulate the discourse between nation specific and pan-Indigenous studies, stating that the "pan-Indigenous discursive formation (...) unites heterogeneous narratives via comparative Indigenous methodologies and produces a universal Indigenous theory to explicate or problematize the local condition."[38] Following Devadas and Hokowhitu's lead, this thesis pairs both First Nations scholarship and pan-Indigenous discourses to understand the "local condition"[39] of First Nations filmmaking. Due to Barry Barclay's influence, and that of his contemporary Māori filmmaker Merata Mita (Ngāti Pikiao, Ngāi Te Rangi), pan-Indigenous studies has a foundation in Aotearoa/New Zealand,[40] a national scholarship that continues today as exemplified by Devadas and Hokowhitu's aforementioned book. Pan-Indigenous media studies has also been promoted by North American Indigenous peoples, especially Inuit filmmakers, due both to their historical connection to filmmaking and influential modern works.[41] This thesis applies

[38] Brendan Hokowhitu and Vijay Devadas, "Introduction: Fourth Eye," in *Fourth Eye: The Indigenous Mediascape In Aotearoa New Zealand*, ed. Brendan Hokowhitu and Vijay Devadas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), xix, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.virtual.anu.edu.au/lib/anu/detail.action?docID=1458385.

[39] Hokowhitu and Devadas, "Introduction: Fourth Eye," xix

[40] Stephen Turner, "Reflections On Barry Barclay And Fourth Cinema," in *Fourth Eye: The Indigenous Mediascape In Aotearoa New Zealand,* ed. Brendan Hokowhitu and Vijay Devadas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 162-78 https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.virtual.anu.edu.au/lib/anu/detail.action?docID=1458385

[41] Faye Ginsburg, "Screen Memories: Resignifying the Traditional in Indigenous Media," in *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*, ed. Faye Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Brian Larkin (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 2002), 39-44, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pnq1m; Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1159-85

Māori and Inuit filmmaking and scholarship due to both their influence in the field and the historical parallels to Australia's colonisation.

Barry Barclay is oft-cited as pan-Indigenous media studies' seminal scholar due to his conceptualisation of Fourth Cinema. Although only coining the term in 2003, for decades prior Barclay's work as an influential Māori filmmaker and theoriser led Indigenous filmmaking globally.[42] As a concept, Fourth Cinema was a reactionary theory against the already theorised First (Commercialised and often Hollywood), Second (Art house and Indie, and often European), and Third Cinemas (postcolonial nations and political).[43] Seneca screen studies scholar Michelle Raheja summarises Barclay's Fourth Cinema as having "its roots in specific Indigenous aesthetics with their attendant focus on a particular geographical space, discrete cultural practices, social activist texts, notions of temporality that do not delink the past from the present or future, and spiritual traditions."[44] In the words of Devadas and Hokowhitu, "[t]he importance of place, immediacy, and historical context to indigeneity itself (...) makes any universalizing attempt to define the concept [of pan-Indigenous] antithetical to its very underpinnings."[45] Thus, Fourth Cinema as a theory links, but does not generalise, that which is geographically and culturally specific to Indigenous peoples. However, just because Indigenous peoples are part of a film's production, that film is not

[42] Turner, "Reflections On Barry Barclay And Fourth Cinema," 162
[43] Turner, "Reflections On Barry Barclay And Fourth Cinema," 163
[44] Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1167
[45] Hokowhitu and Devadas, "Introduction: Fourth Eye," xix

automatically Fourth Cinema. Barclay writes that "some Indigenous film artists will be interested in shaping films that sit with confidence within the First, Second, and Third cinema framework. [O]thers may seek to rework the ancient core values to shape a growing Indigenous cinema."[46] Accordingly, it is a connection to Indigenous culture and politics, through a specific geography and history and by Indigenous peoples, that signifies a Fourth Cinema film.

Māori scholar Jo Smith (Waitaha, Kāti Māmoe, Kāi Tahu) argues that we are in a "New Wave" - using critic Jesse Wente's (Ojibwe) term - of Barclay's Fourth Cinema.[47] She writes that "Indigenous film-makers in the 21st century can now build on a prior Indigenous film legacy (...) to hone, develop, and disseminate production techniques and filmic discourses that reflect Indigenous world-views and sensibilities."[48] In other words, now that the documentary groundwork of telling Indigenous stories through their own perspectives has taken root, there is more room for Indigenous filmmakers to engage in a "more populist form of film-making [*sic*]"[49] that she argues "moves beyond the identity categories that plague Indigenous cultural production [and instead] affirm deeply place-based expressions of Indigeneity."[50] I read *Molly Johnson* as operating not only within Barclay's Fourth Cinema, but

[46] Barclay quoted in Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1167
[47] Smith, "Indigenous Insistence on Film," 488
[48] Smith, "Indigenous Insistence on Film," 488
[49] Smith, "Indigenous Insistence on Film," 489
[50] Smith, "Indigenous Insistence on Film," 490

within this creative "New Wave," where both form and content reflect Indigenous epistemologies.

As well as addressing how to categorise a pan-Indigenous cinema, many scholars are also concerned with what Fourth Cinema does. One important theory in pan-Indigenous media studies is 'visual sovereignty.' Coined and theorised by Michelle Raheja, visual sovereignty uses visual languages, such as film or art, to give voice to Indigenous stories and storytelling methods, allowing "the possibility of engaging [with] and deconstructing [W]hite-generated representations of Indigenous people[s and] interven[ing] in larger discussions of [Indigenous] sovereignty."[51] Indigenous peoples can assert their cultures' sovereignty through their own visual languages rather than through Western-imposed legal sovereignty.[52] Raheja outlines her theory through analysing the first entirely Inuit made and produced film, *Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner)* (Kunuk, 2001). By claiming creative control, the Inuit director, producers, and cast are able to tell a visual story through film in a way that expresses Inuit epistemologies, "tak[ing] the non-Inuit audience hostage, successfully forcing [viewers] to alter [their] consumption of visual images to an Inuit pace."[53] Additionally, the film medium enables creators to "stage performances of oral narrative and Indigenous notions of time and space that are not possible through print

[51] Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1161
[52] Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1161
[53] Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1178

alone."[54] This links to the adaptation theory of medium specificity: that communication methods are informed by the mode in which the story is told, which I expand upon later.[55]

In her paper "Screen Memories: Resignifying the Traditional in Indigenous Media," American anthropologist Faye Ginsburg considers how Indigenous-owned television channels in Canada and Australia give Indigenous peoples a chance to control their own images and histories.[56] She defines screen memories as when having production agency gives marginalised groups the opportunity to explore alternate stories that differ from the dominant narrative, and broaden our concept, or memory, of the past.[57] Importantly for this thesis, Ginsburg's screen memories do not have to be based in fact, as the documentary form is, but can offer a possible reality that may have happened at the time, as "fictional works offer self-conscious, alternative, and multiple accountings of Aboriginal lifeworlds."[58] Screen memories, in summary, broaden the single story narrative of history and allow Indigenous peoples to tell their own stories, rather than having their stories restricted and dictated to them.[59]

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[54] Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1163
[55] Thomas Leitch, "Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, ed. Thomas Leitch (New York City: Oxford University Press, 2017), 3-6, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199331000.013.41.
[56] Ginsburg, "Screen Memories," 39-57
[57] Ginsburg, "Screen Memories," 40
[58] Ginsburg, "Screen Memories," 52
[59] For more on the importance of Aboriginal representation specifically, see Marcia Langton and Australian Film Commission, *Well, I Heard It on the Radio and I Saw It on the Television ... : An Essay for the Australian Film Commission on the Politics and*

By using film in an indigenised way, Fourth Cinema filmmakers rewrite how they have been depicted on film in the past, which was often as anthropological subjects that act rather than people who feel.[60] Raheja specifically positions *Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner)* as claiming a visual sovereignty denied to the Inuit peoples who worked on the anthropological docufiction *Nanook of the North* (Flaherty, 1922),[61] and thus creating a new screen memory of Inuit peoples.[62] Raheja explains that film is "a germinal and exciting site for exploring how sovereignty is a creative act of self-representation [existing in a] space between resistance and compliance wherein Indigenous filmmakers and actors revisit, contribute to, borrow from, critique, and reconfigure ethnographic film conventions."[63] As with Ginsburg, Raheja recognises how film sovereignty operates both within and against the dominant practices and discourses surrounding filmmaking.[64] Raheja's pan-Indigenous visual sovereignty is applicable to First Nations storytelling as, as First Nations scholar Marcia Langton writes, "[v]isual and oral expressions have always been very elaborated, in the social sense, in Aboriginal

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Aesthetics of Filmmaking by and about Aboriginal People and Things (Melbourne: Custom Book Centre, 2012)

[60] Ginsburg, "Screen Memories," 33-59; Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1159-85

[61] Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1159-85

[62] Ginsburg, "Screen Memories," 39-44

[63] Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1161

[64] Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1159-85

societies."[65] Pauline Clague has noted the compatibility of film media to telling Indigenous stories, as Indigenous

> stories are told through various methods [-] be it through song, through painting, through dance [-] when you put all the components together, it is like all the elements of filmmaking are now at your disposal to tell stories, making the Indigenous wave of cinema *a poignant and obvious progression for [Indigenous] storytellers*.[66]

Film is thus not only *a* way of communicating storytelling, but a method that naturally integrates pre-existing Indigenous storytelling methods.

In my second chapter I draw extensively on Yaegl scholar Pauline Clague's concept of the five beats of Indigenous storytelling.[67] She argues that where Western storytelling follows a three-act structure that focuses on an individual's journey, Indigenous storytelling follows a larger five beats, with additional opening and concluding beats grounding the individual with a connection to land and community.[68] Her framework is important as it "allow[s her] to teach a non-westernised viewpoint of interpreting Indigenous films."[69] Just as the film is coded in First Nations epistemologies, it is decoded through First Nations screen studies scholarship.

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[65] Marcia Langton, "Aboriginal Art and Film: The Politics of Representation," *Race & Class* 35, no. 4 (1996): 89, https://doi.org/10.1177/030639689403500410.
[66] Pauline Clague, "Indigenous Storytelling: Deconstructing the Archetypes," *Artlink* 39, no. 2 (2019): 10-9, my emphasis
[67] Clague, "The Five Beats of Indigenous Storytelling," 49-54
[68] Clague, "The Five Beats of Indigenous Storytelling," 49-54
[69] Clague, "The Five Beats of Indigenous Storytelling," 51

Adaptation Theory

From its title to its characters, *Molly Johnson* strongly positions itself as an adaptation film. Through my own analysis, I apply adaptation theory, so as to read the film not just as a text, but one reacting to various sources. Adaptation studies has had two main theories, so divergent that prominent adaptations studies scholar, Thomas Leitch, goes as far as calling them Adaptation Studies 1.0 and 2.0.[70] In broad terms, Adaptation Studies 1.0 is characterised by medium specificity and sees the process as unilateral from source text to adaptation.[71] Adaptation Studies 2.0 rejects this unilateral definition, and understands adaptations as a more intertextual and "palimpsestuous"[72] relationship.[73] This thesis applies Linda Hutcheon's definition of adaptation as a product and process, which sits within Adaptation Studies 2.0.[74] Her idea stems from the two meanings of the word 'adaptation': that it can be a noun, such as a film adaptation, or a verb, such as an adaptation from short story to film.[75] She then breaks down adaptation as a process into two subsets: a process of creation and a process of reception.[76] I apply Hutcheon's definition due to how it articulates the three ways in which

[70] Leitch, "Introduction," 3-6
[71] Leitch, "Introduction," 2-3
[72] Michael Alexander, quoted in Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), 6, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.virtual.anu.edu.au/lib/anu/detail.action?docID=1016075
[73] Leitch, "Introduction," 3-4
[74] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 6-9
[75] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 7-8
[76] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 7-8

Molly Johnson can be read as an adaptation: As a film adaptation product - "a *formal entity or product* [that has] an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works"[77]; as an ongoing process of "(re-)interpret[ing] and then (re-)creati[ng]"[78]; and finally as a "process of reception [where] we experience adaptations (...) through our memory of other works."[79] Using Hutcheon's definitions of adaptation as product, creation process, and reception, allows me to differentiate what aspect of adaptation I am analysing.

Molly Johnson also sits within the broader Australian film corpus.[80] Due to the scope of this thesis, however, I only engage with the subsets of this field that apply to my reading, these being First Nations cinema and Australian New Wave adaptations. As part of reading *Molly Johnson* as an adaptation process, I also consider how the film adds to the Australian film adaptation corpus, especially in how it represents colonial Australia. This reading applies Claire McCarthy's neologism 'retrocolonialism' as a feature of Australian New Wave adaptations.[81] In seeing *Molly Johnson* as an intertextual adaptation process and product, I argue that it is not only adapting from source texts like Lawson's

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[77] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 7, original emphasis
[78] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 8
[79] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 8
[80] For more on the Australian film corpus, see Albert Moran, *Film Policy* (London: Routledge, 1996); Tom O'Reagan, *Australian National Cinema* (London, Routledge, 1996); Deb Verhoeven, *Twin Peeks: Australian & New Zealand Feature Films* (St Kilda: Australian Catalogue Company Ltd, 1999)
[81] Claire McCarthy, "Adaptations down under: Reading national identity through the lens of adaptation studies," in *The Routledge Companion to Adaptation*, ed. Dennis Cutchins, Katja Krebs, and Eckart Voigts (New York City: Routledge, 2018), 218-31, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.virtual.anu.edu.au/lib/anu/reader.action?docID=5351842.

story, but also responding to the adaptations of Australian New Wave and their depicted nostalgic, 'retrocolonial' Australia.

Adaptation and Indigenous Studies Intersection

Although there have been many Indigenous film adaptations they have often been analysed through close analysis or in relation to the political landscape they are made within.[82] One scholar who focused specifically on the adaptation process and Indigenous films is Amy S. Fatzinger, who specialises in American Indian literature and media. In her paper on the methodological intersection between film adaptations and Indigenous storytelling, Fatzinger notes the specific challenges that come with adapting Indigenous stories to film, including "complex decisions related to the story's connection to a specific place and language, (...) issues related to casting, potentially intense social and political issues, and [depicting] conflict resolution that is appropriate for the cultural context."[83] She writes that as filmmakers address both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples,

> Many adaptors of Indigenous source texts (...) simply [omit] details that culturally tie the story to a specific Indigenous community. While cutting, expanding, highlighting, and diminishing content (...) is inherent to the very

[82] For example, see Pascale De Souza, "Maoritanga in *Whale Rider* and *Once Were Warriors*: A Problematic Rebirth through Female Leaders," *Studies in Australasian Cinema* 1, no. 1 (2007): 15-27, https://doi.org/10.1386/sac.1.1.15_1.
[83] Amy S. Fatzinger, "*Winter in the Blood*: A Case for Maintaining Cultural Content in Adaptations of Indigenous Stories," *Adaptation* 9, no. 3 (2016): 307, https://doi.org/10.1093/adaptation/apw025.

> idea of adapting a story, there is cause for concern when the changes involve reducing the cultural content in an Indigenous story.[84]

She suggests that rather than generalise, filmmakers have an opportunity to emphasise specific Indigenous cultures, and that this is done best when Indigenous creatives are included in the adaptation process - specifically those sharing the Indigenous nation with the original author/s.[85]

Although an in-depth consideration of adaptations of Indigenous source texts, noticeably lacking from Fatizinger's argument are indigenised adaptations - those that were originally non-Indigenous, but have been adapted to be Indigenous, in the way that *Molly Johnson* is. This points to indigenised adaptations' rarity and the specific place it would hold in Indigenous adaptation theory. While other scholars have written on Indigenous film adaptations, only Fatzinger has specifically called into question the relationship between Indigenous storytelling and the adaptation process. This thesis thus expands Fatzinger's argument by analysing how the adaptation process and Indigenous storytelling work within an *indigenised* story.

Contrapuntal Readings and Decolonising Practices

[84] Fatzinger, "*Winter in the Blood*," 309
[85] Fatzinger, "*Winter in the Blood*," 307-27

The final scholarship fields I read *Molly Johnson* as operating within are postcolonial literary theory and First Nations decolonising practices. The ideas of rereading and rewriting are woven throughout my thesis, but are especially pertinent to my final chapter on decolonising the Australian literary canon.

The overarching postcolonial reading practice that I read *Molly Johnson* as engaging in is philosopher and critic Edward Said's influential contrapuntal reading. Taking a contrapuntal reading involves interrogating the assumed norms and power dynamics present within a text and challenging them by reimagining the text from underrepresented perspectives.[86] Rather than using a contrapuntal reading to denounce the dominant reading, Said argues that contradictory stories should be viewed as equal, as they give insight into individual perspectives,[87] or as Moreton-Robinson would say, individual standpoints.[88] For example, Said's contrapuntal reading of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* highlights the invisibility of slave ownership as a basis for the Bertram family's riches.[89] This reading does not negate Austen's story, but rather offers a different lens to understand the concurrent slavery in Antigua. In this thesis, I read *Molly Johnson* as performing this contrapuntal practice, arguing that it does not negate Lawson's version, but offers an alternate or parallel history from a First Nations perspective of colonisation.

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[86] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism,* (London: Vintage, 1994), 66-7
[87] Said, *Culture and Imperialism,* 51-2
[88] Moreton-Robinson, "Standpoint Theory," 331-44
[89] Said, *Culture and Imperialism,* 58-61

Two complementary adaptation theories that I read as sitting within contrapuntal reading are Robert Stam's revisionist adaptations and Ebony Elizabeth Thomas and Amy Stornaiuolo's restoryings.[90] Both concepts focus on retellings as offering ways to revitalise an original story for a new context. While Stam considers more traditional adaptations, such as plays, and Thomas and Stornaiuolo engage with fanart as a reclaiming practice, both highlight how manipulating a source text can tell an alternative yet familiar story. I draw on these theories when considering *Molly Johnson*'s additive nature.

In her book, *Decolonizing Methodologies,* Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Porou, Tūhourangi) discusses how research methodologies are inherently Eurocentric and can be decolonised through "the principles of relationships, connections, reciprocity and accountability that are embedded in Indigenous understandings of ethics and knowledge."[91] Although Purcell is not responding to Eurocentric research methodologies, she is working within a space with a Eurocentric history - film - and adapting from the Australian colonial canon, and thus engages in a similar decolonising

[90] Robert Stam, "Revisionist Adaptation: Transtextuality, Cross-Cultural Dialogism, and Performative Infidelities," in *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies,* ed. Thomas Leitch (New York City: Oxford University Press, 2017), 239-50, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199331000.013.13; Ebony Elizabeth Thomas and Amy Stornaiuolo, "Restorying the Self: Bending Toward Textual Justice," *Harvard Educational Review* 86, no. 3 (2016): 313-338, https://virtual.anu.edu.au/login/?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/restorying-self-bending-toward-textual-justice/docview/1820578463/se-2.

[91] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 3rd ed, (Moorpark: Cram101 Inc, 2021), xiii https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.virtual.anu.edu.au/lib/anu/reader.action?docID=6605401.

practice. The two decolonising methodologies I draw on from Tuhiwai Smith's book are reclaiming and reading, as they explain specifically Indigenous modes of contrapuntal reading.

As well as these broader theories, I also read *Molly Johnson* as exhibiting three specific First Nations decolonising practices. Firstly, Narungga poet Natalie Harkin has herself responded to the colonial archive by employing Ngarrindjeri *lakun* basket weaving.[92] From her papers detailing the practice, I draw on how she reads the official colonial archive as colonising, and how she rewrites First Nations voices back into this archive *through* First Nations practices. Secondly, Wiradjuri academic Jeanine Leane describes rewriting as akin to the First Nations women's practice of gathering, which I link to Purcell's use of varied sources.[93] In chapter four, I pair these two concepts to Hutcheon's adaptation as a process in how they demonstrate an

[92] Evelyn Araluen Corr, "Silence and resistance: Aboriginal women working within and against the archive," *Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 32, iss. 4 (2018): 487-502, https://doi-org.virtual.anu.edu.au/10.1080/10304312.2018.1480459; Natalie Harkin, "Intimate Encounters Aboriginal Labour Stories and the Violence of the Colonial Archive," in *Routledge Handbook of Critical Indigenous Studies*, ed. Brendan Hokowhitu, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Linda Tuhiwai-Smith, Chris Andersen, and Steve Larkin (Oxon: Routledge, 2021), 147-61, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.virtual.anu.edu.au/lib/anu/reader.action?docID=6409609; Natalie Harkin, "The Poetics of (Re)Mapping Archives: Memory in the Blood," *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature: JASAL* 14, no. 3 (2014): 1- 14, https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/poetics-re-mapping-archives-memory-blood/docview/1616526168/se-2?accountid=8330; Harkin, "Weaving the Colonial Archive," 154-166

[93] Jeanine Leane, "Gathering: The Politics of Memory and Contemporary Aboriginal Women's Writing," *Antipodes* 31, iss. 2 (Dec 2017): 242-51, https://www.proquest.com/docview/2186486867?parentSessionId=9cP2p6%2FRXkgmOzPxgMRJaY%2Bzyc3OXLsd04ktU3vBUxM%3D&pq-origsite=primo&accountid=8330.

ongoing use of something old to create something new.[94] Thirdly, I apply Goorie author Melissa Lucashenko's "Writing as a Sovereign Act" to explore the power of stories, and thus the equal power in rewriting them.[95]

It is worth noting that *Molly Johnson* is not the first film to be read as decolonising Australia's past. Prominent artists that have been flagged as working within this field include Arrernte and Kalkadoon filmmaker Rachel Perkins,[96] Kaytej filmmaker Warwick Thornton,[97] and the various creatives behind *Redfern Now* (2012-15), including Perkins, Purcell and Batjala Mununjali Wakkawakka director Wayne Blair.[98] However, *Molly Johnson* remains unique and worthy of critique due to how it decolonises *through* interdisciplinary uses of adaptation and First Nations storytelling methods specifically.

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[94] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 6-7

[95] Melissa Lucashenko, "Writing as a Sovereign Act," *Meanjin* 77, no. 4 (2018): 25-31, https://www.proquest.com/docview/2737026955?parentSessionId=11c4kghr5yStFvFWeA5ErCGQ%2F4dD6kkgs0dgLdgZz4M%3D&pq-origsite=primo&accountid=8330&imgSeq=1.

[96] See Felicity Collins, "After Dispossession: Blackfella Films and the politics of radical hope," in *The Routledge Companion to Cinema and Politics,* ed. Yannis Tzioumakis and Claire Molloy (London: Routledge, 2016), 231-41; Jennifer L. Gauthier, "Indigenizing Genre: The Films of Rachel Perkins," in *Visualities 2: More Perspectives on Contemporary American Indian Film and Art*, ed. Denise K. Cummings (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2019), 127-60. https://doi-org.virtual.anu.edu.au/10.14321/j.ctvbcd2qv.10.; Marcia Langton, "Indigenous Trackers in Australian Cinema - 'Out of the Shadows' (One Night The Moon vs Rabbit Proof)," *Meanjin* 65, no. 1 (2006): 55-64

[97] See Kerstin Knopf, "Kangaroos, Petrol, Joints and Sacred Rocks: Australian Cinema Decolonized," *Studies in Australasian Cinema* 7, no. 2-3 (2013): 189–200, https://doi.org/10.1386/sac.7.2-3.189_1.

[98] See Felicity Collins, "Blackfella Films: Decolonizing Urban Aboriginality In *Redfern Now,*" *Studies in Australasian Cinema* 7, no. 2-3 (2013): 215–25, https://doi.org/10.1386/sac.7.2-3.215_1.

Chapter Outline

The chapters of this thesis follow a similar structure to the preceding literature review by breaking my analysis into the fields of adaptation studies, First Nations storytelling, and decolonising practices.

Chapter one analyses *Molly Johnson* as a film adaptation, positioning it in relation to its many source texts. This includes published sources, such as Henry Lawson's short story and Louisa Lawson's feminist periodical, and personal sources, such as Purcell's standpoint and her great-grandfather's diary. I also read *Molly Johnson* in relation to Purcell's previous "The Drover's Wife" adaptations - applying Hutcheon's concept of adaptation as both process and product.[99] The chapter concludes by comparing the film to the Australian New Wave period's adaptation films, which are known for their nostalgic view of Australia's colonial history.[100]

In chapters two and three, I focus on how *Molly Johnson* demonstrates First Nations storytelling methods. Chapter two employs close scene analysis, focusing on cinematography and editing, as well as Michelle Raheja's concept of visual sovereignty and Barry Barclay's category of Fourth Cinema to examine how film language portrays First Nations storytelling. The chapter

[99] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 6-8

[100] McCarthy, "Adaptations down under," 218-31; Brian McFarlane, "Adaptation and the Australian film revival," in *The Routledge Companion to Adaptation*, ed. Dennis Cutchins, Katja Krebs, and Eckart Voigts (New York City: Routledge, 2018), 232-42, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.virtual.anu.edu.au/lib/anu/reader.action?docID=5351842.

reads the film's plot as following Pauline Clague's theorised five beats of Indigenous storytelling, especially in the value placed on land.[101] I also apply Fiona Morrison's concept of the violent, colonial "time of the gun"[102] and First Nations everywhen temporality - a simultaneous past, present, and future held within the land[103] - to explore how temporality oscillates to figure "colonial time"[104] as destructive and everywhen as healing.

While chapter two analyses *Molly Johnson*'s plot, chapter three focuses on the stories embedded within it. Through closely analysing the bullock story - with supporting analysis of Black Mary's (Sinsa Jo Mansell) story - I demonstrate how the embedded stories are used as symbols, as modes of First Nations performance and retelling, and as exploring contrasting versions of history. As such, I read the stories as embedded adaptations, applying Hutcheon's adaptation as product, creation process, and reception.[105] My analysis within this chapter provides an illustrative model for how *Molly Johnson* itself functions as a work of retelling and complicating history.

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[101] Clague, "The Five Beats of Indigenous Storytelling," 49-54
[102] Morrison, "The Antiphonal Time of Violence," 181
[103] Mykaela Saunders, "Everywhen: Against 'the power of now'," in *Griffith Review 76*, ed. Ashley Hay and Teela Reid (ProQuest Ebook Central: Griffith REVIEW, 2022), 115-26, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.virtual.anu.edu.au/lib/anu/reader.action?docID=29408800.
[104] Saunders, "Everywhen: Against 'the power of now'," 116-8
[105] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 6-9

A culmination of my first three chapters, chapter four draws out the decolonising undercurrents touched on throughout this thesis. The chapter begins by outlining how colonial documents silence First Nations voices and maintain colonial power structures through what Natalie Harkin reads as a Derridean hauntology.[106] I read Lawson's text as operating within this hauntological sphere, through its racist depictions of First Nations peoples and consecration in the Australian literary canon. Outlining practical strategies to work against haunting, I explain how *Molly Johnson* sits within Said's contrapuntal reading as a decolonising practice.[107] I then move from this general reading to specific "critical-creative"[108] decolonial practices carried out by First Nations writers. This includes Harkin's interweaving practice,[109] Melissa Lucashenko's assertion that "writing [is] a sovereign act" for First Nations peoples,[110] and Jeanine Leane's explanation of gathering and regathering as First Nations women's practices.[111] Before concluding, I briefly discuss two adaptation theories that sit within Said's contrapuntal reading practices - Ebony Elizabeth Thomas and Amy Stornaiuolo's restoryings and Robert Stam's revisionist adaptations - to highlight the intersection between decolonial and adaptation practices. Through this final chapter, and its links to the preceding three, I argue that Purcell reweaves First Nations storytelling,

[106] Harkin, "The Poetics of (Re)Mapping Archives," 8-10
[107] Said, *Culture and Imperialism,* 66-7
[108] Harkin, "Weaving the Colonial Archive," 166
[109] Harkin, "Intimate Encounters," 147-61; Harkin, "The Poetics of (Re)Mapping Archives," 1-14; Harkin, "Weaving the Colonial Archive," 154-66
[110] Lucashenko, "Writing as a Sovereign Act," 25
[111] Leane, "Gathering," 243-5

perspectives, and history back into Australia's colonial canon by reframing Lawson's "The Drover's Wife" through film adaptation. In this way, Purcell interweaves the colonial canon and First Nations perspectives so as to *rewrite* the dominant literature, *repurpose* its story, and *reclaim* First Nations sovereignty of Australian history, storytelling, and land.

Chapter One: *Molly Johnson* as a Film Adaptation

Figure 1: Louisa Clintoff's article, "The Drover's Wife: Molly Johnson's Story" [112]

Lawson didn't have [the] knowledge to write from a black perspective, and [instead wrote] the stereotyp[es of] how [colonisers] saw Indigenous mob, First Nations mob in those times. And I've just righted that wrong of his and gave them a voice and put them in power

- Leah Purcell [113]

I've re-imagined it and I've applied my family's personal story throughout it, so it's connected through me

- Leah Purcell [114]

Molly Johnson's final sequence begins with a close-up of Louisa Clintoff's article about Molly (figure 1). Louisa's title - "The Drover's Wife: Molly Johnson's Story" - positions the article as complementary to Purcell's film, *The Drover's Wife: The Legend of Molly Johnson*; Louisa has written her

[112] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 01:39:45
[113] "Leah Purcell on reclaiming The Drover's Wife with The Legend of Molly Johnson"
[114] Gorman, "The Songlines of Leah Purcell," 04:54

'story' from her interview with Molly, but as viewers, we have been given the privilege to witness Molly's 'legend'. The slight difference between the two titles reveals how the film positions itself in relation both to its source texts and to Australia's colonial history. The film's title highlights foremost its deliberate relation to Henry Lawson's short story "The Drover's Wife" and its subsequent adaptations, including by Purcell herself. After the colon, however, the relational 'wife' becomes the named 'Molly Johnson,' and her story is qualified as a 'legend': an "unverifiable story handed down by tradition (...) and popularly accepted as historical."[115] While chapters two and three pay close attention to *Molly Johnson*'s narrative structure and its embedded stories, this chapter applies a broader scope to explore how the film fits within a larger context of stories and histories that through the adaptation process comprise this 'legend'. By foregrounding my thesis with adaptation theory, I demonstrate how *Molly Johnson* is a deliberately responsive text, drawing on and responding to various sources - a point which I return to in my final chapter, and one which grounds my thesis overall.

Specifically, this chapter contextualises *Molly Johnson* as a film adaptation, by considering both its source texts, real and fictional, and the film corpora it sits within. To do so, I first consider the deliberate intertextual conversation signalled between *Molly Johnson* and its source texts within the film. This exploration concludes with Purcell's other "The Drover's Wife"

[115] Macquarie Dictionary, 5th ed. (Sydney: Macquarie Dictionary Publishers Pty Ltd, 2005), s.v. "legend"

adaptations and how they constitute both source and product in this ongoing conversation, illustrating Linda Hutcheon's concept of adaptation as process, product, and reception.[116] After analysing *Molly Johnson*'s sources, I contextualise the film in relation to the Australian New Wave period of the 1970s and 1980s, due to their shared adaptation of the colonial frontier.[117] This argument is guided by Claire McCarthy's reading of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Peter Weir, 1975) as 'retrocolonial' in its colonial idealisation and erasure of First Nations peoples.[118] By beginning my thesis by unpacking the film's layered and complex intertextuality, I illustrate the film's context, before addressing its form and content in subsequent chapters.

Borrowing more than its title, *Molly Johnson*'s premise and setting is taken from Lawson's short story "The Drover's Wife" (1892), which holds an important place in the Australian literary canon. Originally published in the nationalist magazine *The Bulletin*, Lawson's story is focalised by the unnamed drover's wife, who while keeping vigil for a snake beneath her house reflects on the hardships she has endured due to her family's isolation and her husband's absence.[119] Seen as a writer who spoke for rural Australians, Lawson became idolised within the pre-federation literary canon,[120] a sentiment pithily

[116] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 6-9
[117] McFarlane, "Adaptation and the Australian film revival," 232-42
[118] McCarthy, "Adaptations down under," 218-31
[119] Lawson, "The Drover's Wife," 82-88
[120] Bruce Bennett, "The Short Story, 1890s to 1950," *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*, ed. Peter Pierce (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 165-8, https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521881654.010; Robert Dixon, "Australian Fiction and the World Republic of Letters, 1890–1950," *The Cambridge*

summarised by *The Bulletin*'s literary critics AG Stephens, who stated that "Henry Lawson is the voice of the bush, and the bush is the heart of Australia."[121] In his paper on Australian colonial writing, Robert Dixon writes that at the time of publishing "the very Australianness that made Lawson a phenomenon at home also made him appealing to British readers as the authentic voice of a new nation."[122] Lawson represented the "epitome" of Australia literature to Britain, as he captured in literary realism what it was like for settlers to live in the unknown bush of the antipodes.[123] Thus, by retelling and repurposing Lawson, Purcell challenges the "heart" - to repurpose Stephens' praise - of Australian canonical colonial literature of the pre-federation period.

In addition to Lawson's initial consecration in colonial Australian literature, "The Drover's Wife" story has been periodically revitalised through its many adaptations, producing what Xiang Li has termed "the cultural phenomenon of 'The Drover's Wife'".[124] Martina Horáková argues that "[t]his continuing interest in Lawson's original story [through adaptations] attests to its resilience as a foundational source of the national obsession with the bush mythology and colonial origins."[125] Both Horáková and Li note that Purcell is

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History of Australian Literature, ed. Peter Pierce (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 227-30, https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521881654.013.

[121] Stephens quoted in Bennett, "The Short Story, 1890s to 1950," 165-6

[122] Dixon, "Australian Fiction," 228-9

[123] Dixon, "Australian Fiction," 229

[124] Li, "Gender, Reception and 'The Drover's Wife' Phenomenon," ii

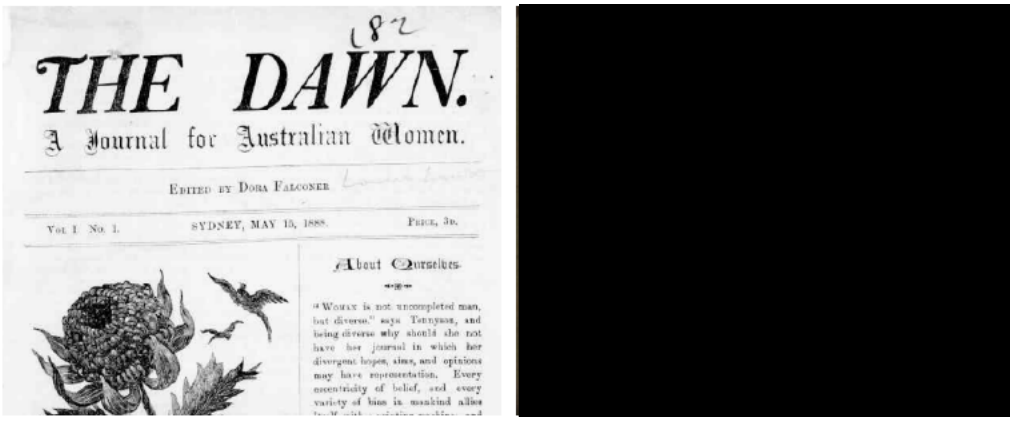
[125] Horáková, "'Kin-Fused' Revenge," 512

the first adapter to indigenise the drover's wife's assumed Whiteness.[126] Li argues that "the absence of Aboriginal characters in contemporary rewritings by settler authors, (...) marks Aboriginal people[s'] continual erasure from the picture."[127] Their respective arguments lead to the same conclusion: that by rewriting Lawson's White settler story with a First Nations protagonist, Purcell "subverts the settler foundation myth from within"[128] by providing "a critical intervention into the history of writing Indigeneity out of dominant Australian narratives, both historical and literary[, and uses] narrative strategies [to] writ[e] Indigeneity back."[129] Purcell is thus able to respond to the lack of First Nations perspectives being valued in Australia's consecrated literature, through presenting an alternate rereading and rewriting of Lawson's valued story.

Another source text Purcell reworks is *The Dawn,* a feminist journal founded and edited by Henry Lawson's mother, Louisa Lawson,[130] which is used to imbue Molly's 'legend' with verisimilitude. Although Purcell's audience may not have come across Louisa Lawson's newspaper *The Dawn*, those who have would recognise the similarity between Purcell's replica and an original

[126] Horáková, "'Kin-Fused' Revenge," 517; Li, "Gender, Reception and 'The Drover's Wife' Phenomenon," 187
[127] Li, "Gender, Reception and 'The Drover's Wife' Phenomenon," 184
[128] Li, "Gender, Reception and 'The Drover's Wife' Phenomenon," 186
[129] Horáková, "'Kin-Fused' Revenge," 513
[130] Donna Benjamin, "DIGITISE THE DAWN: Campaigning for Louisa Lawson's Journal for Australian Women to be Digitised and Made Available Online," *Australian Feminist Studies* 26, no. 68 (June 2011): 225-7, https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2011.574601

(figure 2). Without knowing the original journal, audiences may see Louisa as a purely fictional character. Hutcheon notes this caveat in her notes on adaptation as reception where she writes that "adaptation is a form of intertextuality: we experience adaptations (as adaptations) as palimpsests through our memory of other works".[131] In other words, how we see the adaptation depends on our knowledge of its intertext. However, audiences need not know about *The Dawn*'s historical basis to see its verisimilitude. For example, when we see Louisa hanging up paper sheets to dry, her actions reinforce self-publishing's physicality in the late 1800s for women's journalism.[132]


THE DAWN.

A Journal for Australian Women.

EDITED BY DORA FALCONER

VOL. I. NO. 1. SYDNEY, MAY 15, 1888. PRICE, 3D.

About Ourselves.

Figure 2: Louisa Lawson's *The Dawn* and Louisa Clintoff's replica [133]

[131] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 8

[132] For more on women's colonial journals, see Ken Gelder and Rachel Weaver, *The Colonial Journals: and the Emergence of Australian Literary Culture* (Perth, University of Western Australia Publishing, 2014)

[133] Dora Falconer [Louisa Lawson], "About Ourselves," *The Dawn* 1, no. 1 (May 1888): 1-2, https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/7560838; Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 01:39:45

In addition to this pragmatic historical accuracy, Purcell has also adapted from Louisa Lawson's ideological stances. Jo Aitkin argues, in her paper comparing English and Australian colonial-era feminist writings about domestic violence, that while most Australian feminist publications avoided writing about "violence against wives [*The Dawn* was] one notable exception to this pattern."[134] She continues that "[*The*] *Dawn* did not carry reports of local cases of wife-assault (...) but instead offered a far-reaching critique of power relations within marriage."[135] For example, in her article "The Legal Link" Lawson argues that married women are more mistreated by their partners than unmarried women due to not having divorce rights.[136] However, Lawson intentionally does not explicate the "cruelties, insults, and abominations known to women" and asserts that they "must not here [, in *The Dawn*,] be named."[137] Compared to Lawson's distanced, journalistic positioning, Louisa's article creates a closeness by recounting Molly's story "in her [own] words,"[138] giving voice to a first-person account of domestic violence. Through transfiguring Louisa Lawson into Louisa Clintoff, someone who is "determined to listen"[139] to domestic violence survivors, *Molly Johnson*

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[134] Jo Aitken, ""THE HORRORS OF MATRIMONY AMONG THE MASSES": Feminist Representations of Wife Beating in England and Australia, 1870-1914," *Journal of Women's History* 19, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 109, https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2007.0072.
[135] Aitken, "THE HORRORS OF MATRIMONY AMONG THE MASSES," 120
[136] Dora Falconer [Louisa Lawson], "The Legal Link," *The Dawn* 3, no. 3 (Jul 1890): 7-8. https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/7542011.
[137] Falconer [Lawson], "The Legal Link," 7
[138] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 01:39:46
[139] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 01:39:46

not only writes First Nations experience into Henry Lawson's fictional narrative, but also into his mother's historical archive of colonial Australian womanhood.

In addition to adapting published source texts, Purcell also reworks her own lived experiences and perspective. For example, when Purcell decided she would "not (...) read [Lawson's story and instead] try to remember what [her] mother told" her when writing her playtext,[140] she is adapting her childhood memory and the way her mother read it, as much as the text itself. In an interview with the ABC, Purcell emphasises the influence this memory had over the adaptation process as she "saw [her] mother as that drover's wife [because] there was no father figure in [her] family (...) and [Purcell] was that little boy in Henry Lawson's story, (...) the protector of [her] mother."[141] Purcell's identification with the story demonstrates Hutcheon's understanding of adaptation as "a process of appropriation, of taking possession of another's story, and filtering it (...) through one's own sensibility, interests, and talents."[142] Hutcheon's explanation of adaptation as "first interpreters and then creators"[143] is applicable to *Molly Johnson* when read in conversation with Aileen Moreton-Robinson's standpoint theory as discussed in my introduction. Although describing academic researchers, Moreton-Robinson's theory is applicable to "all subjects who produce history and knowledge [as]

[140] "Leah Purcell on reclaiming The Drover's Wife with The Legend of Molly Johnson"
[141] Gorman, "The Songlines of Leah Purcell," 03:56
[142] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 18
[143] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 18

how we are socially and culturally constituted (...) play[s] a determinative role in our individual 'choices' of research topic and methodology"[144], or, in adaptation, of source texts and medium. Understanding Purcell as one of Hutcheon's "interpreters and creators"[145] through Moreton-Robinson's standpoint theory means that through both lenses we can read Purcell's lived individual experience - her "gendered Indigenous ontology, epistemology and axiology"[146] - as being integral to how *Molly Johnson* works as an adaptation film.

In addition to imbuing a First Nation epistemology through her interpretation, a practice I return to in chapters two and three, Purcell also interweaves her own family history into Lawson's story. In her interview with Yorta Yorta man Bryan Andy, Purcell explains how Yadaka's (Rob Collins) backstory was taken from her great-grandfather, Tippo's diary.[147] This includes life events such as being in the "South African (...) Fillis Circus [and being] left (...) destitute in Melbourne (...) Pentridge Prison [before] Daniel Matthews took him back to the Maloga Mission [as] a house black" as well as personal specifics like how he was "taught (...) to read, write and play the tuba."[148] In the film, Yadaka tells Danny (Malachi Dower-Roberts) and Molly how he worked for "Fillis Circus [and was] abandoned (...) in Melbourne"[149] -

[144] Moreton-Robinson, "Standpoint Theory," 334-5
[145] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 18
[146] Moreton-Robinson, "Standpoint Theory," 338
[147] "Leah Purcell on reclaiming The Drover's Wife with The Legend of Molly Johnson"
[148] "Leah Purcell on reclaiming The Drover's Wife with The Legend of Molly Johnson"
[149] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 00:42:32

interweaving Tippo's reality with Lawson's fiction. By using the diary, Purcell captures Tippo's experience and perspective in 1890s Australia, as "what the stockmen say to Yadaka is almost word verbatim from that diary of what they called [Tippo] in those days."[150] Purcell is not only asking what an alternate version of Lawson's "The Drover's Wife" would look like if the protagonist was a First Nations woman, but also explores the interiority of Lawson's silenced, unnamed "blackfellow"[151] though adapting her great-grandfather Tippo's real experiences.

Purcell consciously chose to make her conversation with these texts an evolving and multifaceted one. In their paper "From Stage To Page To Screen: The Traumatic Returns Of Leah Purcell's 'the Drover's Wife'," Prowse, Gildersleeve and Cantrell detail this multimodal approach.[152] Their analysis fits within Thomas Leitch's category of Adaptation Studies 1.0 as they focus on the differences brought about by medium specificity.[153] They argue that "Purcell's (...) different mediums (...) angle in on different divisions and discussions for illumination, stretching the story across space and time."[154] Rather than following their focus on medium specificity or comparison, I instead point to the play and book to indicate how *Molly Johnson* is also adapting Purcell's other works. Hutcheon's definitions of adaptation are useful here: while each

[150] "Leah Purcell on reclaiming The Drover's Wife with The Legend of Molly Johnson"
[151] Lawson, "The Drover's Wife," 87
[152] Prowse, Gildersleeve, and Cantrell, "From Stage to Page to Screen," 30-6
[153] Leitch, "Introduction," 2-3
[154] Prowse, Gildersleeve, and Cantrell, "From Stage to Page to Screen," 32

work is itself an adaptation as *product* we must keep in mind that together they represent a continuous adaptation as palimpsestuous *process*.[155]

Through this process, Purcell creates different versions of "The Drover's Wife" story, as each adaptation alters the previous. By questioning her own retellings as much as Lawson's, she is presenting them as equally fallible *versions* of the truth. If she had adapted the story once, her process could have been read as rewriting Lawson's story to *replace* it. By instead presenting *multiple* various alternatives, Purcell is highlighting how each adaptation product does not present a single truth about history, but can be read cumulatively to show history as rereadable and rewritable. Through making these versions contradict each other - such as Molly's survival in the play and her death in the film - Purcell forces viewers to confront history as malleable and subjective, rather than fixed and objective.

More than being an adaptation product from various source texts, *Molly Johnson* also exhibits adaptation as reception[156] in how it is an intertextual response to the Australian New Wave Cinema of the 1970s and 1980s, which frequently adapted and revived Australia's pre-federation colonial history.[157] Films such as *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Weir, 1975), *The Getting of Wisdom* (Beresford, 1977), *My Brilliant Career* (Armstrong, 1979),

[155] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 6-9
[156] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 8-9
[157] McFarlane, "Adaptation and the Australian film revival," 232

and *The Man From Snowy River* (Miller, 1982) are set in an isolating frontier landscape and centred around White settler protagonists.[158] In his essay "Adaptation and the Australian Film Revival," Brian McFarlane argues that adaptation films were central to Australian cinema's domestic and international success in this period, positing that "in the burgeoning Australian cinema [it was thought that] prestige in one narrative medium might rub off on another."[159] What McFarlane fails to address in his essay are the ramifications that come from the Australia New Wave echoing canonical settler literature. Namely, that these source texts may bring with them the social structures and hegemonic ideologies of the time in which they were written.

Claire McCarthy discusses one ramification in her essay on Australian identity and film, in which she labels *Picnic at Hanging Rock* as 'retrocolonial' in its "simplified construction of the past, a retrospective envisioning that offers an image of [W]hite Australian heritage that does not reference Aboriginal people or dispossession, let alone ongoing controversy over land rights or migration [and] is a celebration of the Australian landscape connected to [W]hite heritage."[160] Her neologism could be applied to other adaptations which present the Australian colonial, federation, and frontier history in a rose-tinted fashion that omits acknowledging Australia's longer

[158] McFarlane, "Adaptation and the Australian film revival," 232
[159] McFarlane, "Adaptation and the Australian film revival," 232
[160] McCarthy, "Adaptations down under," 221

history or the ways First Nations peoples were and are affected by colonisation. McCarthy illustrates how "the characters [in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*] romanticise place through their awe over the longevity of the landscape, and by imagining they are the only ones in it."[161] She argues that through music and symbolic imagery, the film "foregrounds a sense of nostalgia for (...) Australia's colonial past"[162] revealing either "a naivety or (...) inciting ownership attributed to the dominant [W]hite Australian community (...), [forming] an adaptation of terra nullius (...) on which the country was founded."[163]

Extending McCarthy's concept, we can read *Molly Johnson* as a response to these retrocolonial adaptations. Lawson wrote First Nations peoples out of the land by assuming the sovereignty of settlers and retrocolonial films continue this removal by adapting from the colonial canon. Where a retrocolonial film would continue this erasure, *Molly Johnson* is using the same adaptation methodology to rewrite First Nations sovereignty of the land back into depictions of Australia. For example, Lawson writes First Nations characters as homeless to unwrite their connection to land, as seen by the term "stray blackfellow".[164] *Molly Johnson* writes against this dispossession by contextualising Ngarigo peoples' movements as *due to* a deep connection to the land; as Yadaka explains, "so [their] feet don't get cold, when [they] see

[161] McCarthy, "Adaptations down under," 221
[162] McCarthy, "Adaptations down under," 220
[163] McCarthy, "Adaptations down under," 221
[164] Lawson, "The Drover's Wife," 87

the first mist rise in the valley, [they] head down the mountain and north for the winter,"[165] not because they are homeless, but because they understand the natural seasonal cycle of their Country. The film thus asserts First Nations sovereignty by exhibiting their knowledge and connection to land.

Rather than using adaptation to reinforce First Nations erasure from the canon, in the way retrocolonial Australian New Wave films did, *Molly Johnson* writes against this erasure by rewriting First Nations peoples' sovereignty of the land back into the canon. If retrocolonial adaptation films, in McCarthy's words, "adapt from literature and history to produce a sense of Australian national identity linked to [W]hite heritage situated in the Australian landscape,"[166] *Molly Johnson* uses this same adaptation methodology to rewrite First Nations peoples into Australia's colonial past and landscape, and equally into Australia's cinematic history. By doing so, *Molly Johnson* is not only adding to the adaptation archive, but reacting to the archive's conventions that write and rewrite the Australian colonial frontier as a nostalgic, White landscape.

By interweaving and adapting contrasting sources, *Molly Johnson* constructs a "legend" that decentres colonial sources and presents a more dynamic, layered version of history. Through the use of adaptation - as defined by Hutcheon as product, process, and reception - *Molly Johnson* is able to

[165] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 00:39:09
[166] McCarthy, "Adaptations down under," 222

speak in conversation *with* its sources so as to reinsert First Nations sovereignty back into the Australian storytelling cannon. Now that I have contextualised the film as a responsive adaptation, the following two chapters will argue how the film further reclaims sovereignty through use of First Nations storytelling methods and temporality.

Chapter Two: *Molly Johnson*'s First Nations Storytelling Structure and Temporality

The old principles [of Indigenous peoples] have been reworked to give vitality and richness to the way we conceive, develop, manufacture, and present our [Fourth Cinema] films.
- Barry Barclay [167]

It's not just the surface element of great performance, good music, nice composition in a shot. This is deep, ancient storytelling.
- Leah Purcell [168]

While scholars have noted that Purcell empowers First Nations voices by indigenising characters in her adaptations,[169] much less attention has been given to Purcell's use of First Nations epistemology in her filmmaking techniques. As Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith notes, indigenising involves "a centring in consciousness of the landscapes, images, languages, themes, metaphors and stories of the Indigenous world,"[170] and thus involves more than racebending characters. This chapter aims to address this gap by analysing how *Molly Johnson* engages in First Nations storytelling methods through its structure and temporality. To demonstrate this structure, I first

[167] Barclay quoted in Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1167
[168] Jenkin, "*Molly Johnson*: Behind the Scenes," 05:21
[169] See Horáková, "'Kin-Fused' Revenge," 511–23; Li, "Gender, Reception and 'The Drover's Wife' Phenomenon"; Prowse, Gildersleeve, and Cantrell, "From Stage to Page to Screen," 30-6
[170] Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 167

read the film's plot through Yaegl scholar Pauline Clague's template of the five beats of Indigenous storytelling.[171] I begin by arguing that beat one, an introduction to land and a cultural framework, is constructed in *Molly Johnson* through its landscape shots and everywhen temporality. My reading of the landscape shots is directed by Michelle Raheja's concept of visual sovereignty and Barry Barclay's category of Fourth Cinema, which both argue that Indigenous filmmakers bring specific modes of storytelling to film language.[172] Addressing Clague's beat two, I argue that before being welcomed into Molly's story, the audience is first positioned as outsiders, distancing us from her experiences. My analysis of Molly's hanging demonstrates how her character resolution - Clague's beat four - is strongly linked to Molly's connection to land and Ngarigo culture, and that it is through her death that her children return to the land. *Molly Johnson*'s beat five then positions the landscape as a means of communication, as a refuge, and finally as a means of cyclical resolution. Through following Clague's five beat framework, I argue that *Molly Johnson*'s plot structure follows a First Nations epistemology that begins and ends with the land.

The second part of my analysis focuses on how temporality is used within *Molly Johnson.* This section explores how First Nations peoples' experience of temporality can be different to Western concepts of temporality,

[171] Clague, "The Five Beats of Indigenous Storytelling," 49-54
[172] Hokowhitu, "Theorizing Indigenous Media," 101-23; Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1159-85; Turner, "Reflections On Barry Barclay And Fourth Cinema," 162-78

and how film language expresses this. To do so, I first analyse the juxtaposition between flashbacks in moments of human violence and time lapse in nature, demonstrating a parallel juxtaposition between "colonial time"[173] as destructive and First Nations everywhen temporality as remedial. This section extends Fiona Morrison's analysis of temporality and violence in Purcell's play, *The Drover's Wife* (2016).[174] Through close analysis of the film's plot structure and temporality, this chapter demonstrates how *Molly Johnson* reads not just as a film with First Nations characters, but one that utilises First Nations storytelling methods to demonstrate their power.

Considering the film's plot, Purcell explains how "as Blackfellas, [First Nations creatives] tell [their] stories through [a] five-act structure [with] the land [as] a big protagonist,"[175] a reference to Clague's five beats of Indigenous storytelling.[176] To explain the beats, Clague writes that "[t]he Three Acts [of Western storytelling] are in play in [Indigenous] writing, but so too are two additional beats - one at the front and the other at the end."[177] While the Western act one focuses on introducing the protagonist, in the five beat structure this focus on the individual is delayed until beat two, and preceded by a beat dedicated to introducing us to the land and culture in which the journey takes place.[178] Equally, while the Western three-act structure ends

[173] Saunders, "Everywhen: Against 'the power of now'," 118
[174] Morrison, "The Antiphonal Time of Violence," 173-91
[175] "Podcast - Writer/Director Leah Purcell on Her Feature Film Debut."
[176] Clague, "The Five Beats of Indigenous Storytelling," 49-54
[177] Clague, "The Five Beats of Indigenous Storytelling," 51
[178] Clague, "The Five Beats of Indigenous Storytelling," 52

with the character's personal crisis and resolution, beat five focuses on "the resolution of the theme[, w]here character and land are in balance."[179] Thus, while the Western structure works from the character outward to their context and ends with the character's resolution, the Indigenous five beats work from the land inward to the character's journey, before resolving with an expansive return to the land. Clague argues that this structure comes from the cultural tradition of oral storytelling of Indigenous peoples and highlights their respect for and relationship with the landscape.[180] This respect is seen in how the structure begins and ends with the land, ensuring that the land as a character and a community's lore and history are given primacy over the protagonist. In the following section, I read *Molly Johnson* through this Indigenous five beat structure by analysing how each beat establishes a relationship with the land. Due to their uniqueness to Indigenous storytelling, my analysis focuses predominantly on beats one and five, as well as the transition from these additional beats to and from the character-based Western three act structure.

[179] Clague, "The Five Beats of Indigenous Storytelling," 52
[180] Clague, "The Five Beats of Indigenous Storytelling," 51-4

Figure 3: Opening shot of Snowy Mountains and horse-drawn carriage [181]

While the film introduces itself with a dramatic, plot-driven cold open, it is important to note the degree to which landscape plays a role in framing beat one. In the opening shot the Snowy Mountains are in the distance while the upper half of the screen is filled with blue sky and the lower half with towering eucalyptus trees (figure 3). The widescreen cinemascope 2.35:1 aspect ratio emphasises the landscape's expansiveness, as it stretches not only in depth to the mountains and sky, but laterally across our screens. When the characters enter the scene they are dwarfed by this expanse, their brown horse almost camouflaged as they move within the dappled light. From the very opening shot the characters are shown as melding into the much larger and more powerful story of the landscape. As the camera pans to follow the carriage, we are drawn into Molly's story before being pulled into the scene's violence by a close-up of a handgun being drawn and cocked. This opening

[181] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 00:01:10

foreshadows that while Molly's story is driven by intimate human violence, it operates within the much larger constancy of nature. Nature's primacy in beat one is reiterated by the three time lapse shots of fog following the title card. Li reads the use of time lapse as "captur[ing] the changing elements of the landscape, allowing the audience to sense the (...) rhythm of the land."[182] I would add to this that the combination of using time lapse on static, long duration shots literally holds the audience's attention in place; the time lapse illustrates that time is passing swiftly whilst the static, long shot duration allows us to experience this change slowly, as though a lot of time is passing while we are still and rooted to the land. As Clague explains, the "five beats requir[e] a longer introduction and a placement of land as an ongoing theme."[183] By framing Molly's story as sitting within a larger landscape and timescape, *Molly Johnson* is depicting a First Nations epistemology of prioritising a respect for the land.

In his "Reflections on Barry Barclay and Fourth Cinema," Stephen Turner considers how this temporal, place-based relationship is a crucial aspect of Fourth Cinema.[184] In relation to Māori filmmaking, Turner writes that

> Māori claims to place are based in the anteriority of long history, or being-before, an encounter with place (...) that is prior to the encounter with

[182] Li, "Gender, Reception and 'The Drover's Wife' Phenomenon," 193
[183] Clague, "The Five Beats of Indigenous Storytelling," 53
[184] Turner, "Reflections On Barry Barclay And Fourth Cinema," 162-78

> Pākehā [White settlers].(...) The properties of Fourth Cinema thus express properties, or attributes, of place.[185]

Although Turner's explanation is specific to Māori filmmakers, the sentiment is applicable to other Indigenous filmmakers working within the Fourth Cinema space; as Indigenous filmmakers have a long and deep connection to land their experience of temporality and place-based history is different to non-Indigenous filmmakers' shorter connections. This place-based temporality is noted in Karen Hughes' sociological study of the First Nations concept of temporality in Dreamtime creation stories.[186] She writes that individuals "[belong] to a temporality far deeper and more intricate (...) in which locale and kinship [is] superseded, or perhaps indeed swallowed or enveloped," by the Dreaming.[187] We see this 'envelopment' in *Molly Johnson* when we are taken out of the action based cold open and held within the time lapse, long shots of the landscape. Purcell herself notes how these shots reflect a long connection to the land, as "that (...) shot of that mist rising, [is] all part of Dreaming stories. That's what happens up there. When the mist rises, [Ngarigo peoples] come down from that mountain. That is true. That's culture."[188] Through engaging with the Ngarigo landscape in such specificity, Purcell depicts the First Nations temporal concept of the everywhen, coined

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[185] Turner, "Reflections On Barry Barclay And Fourth Cinema," 165

[186] Karen Hughes, "Arnhem Land to Adelaide: Deep Histories in Aboriginal Women's Storytelling and Historical Practice, 'Irruptions of Dreaming' across Contemporary Australia," in *Long History, Deep Time: Deepening Histories of Place,* ed. Ann McGrath and Mary Anne Jebb (Canberra: ANU Press, 2015), 86, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt183q3h5.12?seq=4.

[187] Hughes, "Arnhem Land to Adelaide," 86

[188] "Leah Purcell on reclaiming The Drover's Wife with The Legend of Molly Johnson."

by anthropologist William E H Stanner.[189] Koori and Lebanese writer Mykaela Saunders explains that in "everywhen temporality, the past is still alive in the eternal present (...). Everywhen is all that has happened, is happening now, and all that will continue to happen."[190] Saunders notes the land's centrality to the everywhen as "[t]ime forever back and time forever onward lives in the land. All times are compressed and nested inside Country like sedimentary layers."[191] Rather than starting with Molly's individual story, beat one's landscape shots place Molly's story within this place-based, everywhen temporality, giving her a deep connection to the Ngarigo land's past, present, and future, and rejecting colonial linear temporality.

Seneca screen studies and literature scholar Michelle Raheja argues that use of place-based long history in film expresses what she terms visual sovereignty: Indigenous peoples' use of visual media to express and affirm Indigenous epistemologies and belonging to land.[192] This cultural and land-based specificity is highlighted by Raheja as she argues how in *Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner)* "slow pans of the landscape (...) and shots of things such as feet crunching through the snow" connect the Inuit characters physically to their land and slower temporality and thus the film "constructs a specifically Inuit epistemology."[193] *Molly Johnson*'s opening has a similar effect: the static

[189] Saunders, "Everywhen: Against 'the power of now'," 115
[190] Saunders, "Everywhen: Against 'the power of now'," 115
[191] Saunders, "Everywhen: Against 'the power of now'," 116
[192] Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1159–85
[193] Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1177-8

landscape shots hold us in place, appreciating a single view of the mountains before moving on to the next while the time lapse effect accelerates time, with the long duration stretching this pace over a long history. We can see how *Molly Johnson*'s beat one encapsulates visual sovereignty as it fits Raheja's criteria of "ha[ving] its roots in specific [I]ndigenous aesthetics [that] focus on a particular geographical space [and] notions of temporality that do not delink the past from the present or future."[194] The opening sequence realises Clague's beat one through engaging with First Nations everywhen temporality and relation to Ngarigo land.

While Clague argues that beat one is distinct to Indigenous storytelling, beats two to four largely follow the Western three-act structure.[195] This is seen clearly in *Molly Johnson*: once we have been introduced to Molly we follow her character arc until its climactic resolution through her hanging. Beat two's purpose, like the Western act one, is to introduce us to the protagonist and give us context about their situation.[196] What is striking about *Molly Johnson* is how we are positioned in beat two as onlookers. Aside from the cold open, the first time we see Molly is when she is sweeping outside her house. The shaky camera movement and placement behind trees positions the camera, and the audience with it, as an uninvited, watchful presence. This is followed by an eye-level, straight-on, wide shot of Molly. While this has removed us

[194] Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1167
[195] Clague, "The Five Beats of Indigenous Storytelling," 52
[196] Clague, "The Five Beats of Indigenous Storytelling," 52

from our distanced, watchful position, it does not neutralise us: her steps backwards are synchronised with the camera's movement forward, as though we are pushing her back. When Molly turns, the camera instantly dolly crashes on to her with eerie music heightening the effect, causing Molly to quickly turn around. Her turn reinforces that Molly can feel our uninvited presence. After this initial unsettling positioning, however, we are brought into Molly's intimate domestic sphere. From inside the house, we watch as she sees the bullock, whose outsider presence has taken over our own. Beat two thus begins by positioning us as outsiders to Molly's story, before allowing us to join her on her journey. The message here is clear: although we are able to watch and follow Molly's legend, we are foremost an audience separated from her, living in the present and watching back at a possible past, rather than existing within it.

Figure 4: Landscape shot of Snowy Mountains and close-up of Molly singing in the Everton lock-up [197]

For the remainder of beats two and three, we continue to intimately follow Molly's journey. In beat four, however, the audience is again separated from Molly through her own separation from the land. Beat four begins when Molly is taken to the Everton lock-up, as her role as maternal protector has been denied through John McPharlen (Harry Greenwood) physically removing her from the cart and Nate Clintoff (Sam Reid) arresting her. Physically removed from her land in the lock-up cell, she sings the line "still I hope that

[197] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 01:28:05; Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 01:28:34

the time will come when you and I will be as one."[198] Hearing these words as we see a landscape shot of a mountain, emphasises her desire to return to her family and land (figure 4). She stands on the toilet bucket's lid so she can place her face by the window and see and feel as much of the outside world as she can. Close-ups of her face are shot from just outside the lock-up, so her face is framed by the lock-up bars: confining her from the land and separating us from her (figure 4). This scene reinforces how she has been physically removed from the land and her desire to be reconnected with it.

In the sequence depicting Molly's death, we transition from Molly's story and beat four, to the broader story and a return to Country with beat five. Walking to her noose, her bare feet crunch onto fresh snow and step up onto a rock. This action not only connects her to the land physically, but also symbolically to the Ngarigo knowledge that Yadaka passes on to Danny, that "so [Ngarigo peoples'] feet don't get cold, when [they] see the first mist rise in the valley, [they] head down the mountain and north for the winter."[199] Although Molly never carries out this tradition, she performs the ritual in miniature, touching her bare feet to the snow before rising north to the rock. Although starting with a separation from Country, beat four resolves by returning Molly to her land physically and culturally through the Ngarigo peoples' long history with the mountain.

[198] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 01:28:04
[199] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 00:39:08

In her analysis comparing the Māori films *Whale Rider* and *Once Were Warriors,* Pascale De Souza notes how when families are estranged from their land and culture "the task of reconciling (...) falls to women who must undergo symbolical and/or actual death before being reborn as leaders."[200] She argues that "reconciliation can only come through a cycle of death and rebirth"[201] as women characters realise the need to return to their communities and ancestral homes through trauma. Likewise, it is through Molly's death that her children are brought back to Country. As she is pushed off the rock to hang by the noose, she takes her final breath. As soon as she falls the scene cuts to a landscape shot of snow on the mountain, with her breath echoing across the land. We see her children walking in the snow turn and look up, showing that they can hear her breath. Finally, we see a shot of the Ngarigo cave that Yadaka told Molly about, and she told Danny to "meet" her at.[202] This sequence conveys that Molly can communicate to her children through nature and guide them to the refuge even after death. Despite her physical death, Molly is still crucial to the passing on of Ngarigo knowledge, as she passes on knowledge of the land through her breath speaking through the land. As in De Souza's analysis, *Molly Johnson*'s beat four ends with a traumatic death that ultimately reconnects the family, and Molly, to their land and culture.

[200] De Souza, "Maoritanga in *Whale Rider* and *Once Were Warriors*," 15
[201] De Souza, "Maoritanga in *Whale Rider* and *Once Were Warriors*," 21
[202] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 01:25:27

After Molly dies, we see Clague's beat five, where "[t]he message and resolution of the theme [conclude with the] character and land (...) in balance with one another."[203] This resolution and balance are carried out through Danny's character, as he leads his siblings to the cave to reconnect them with their First Nations culture and ensure their survival on Country. As Prowse, Gildersleeve, and Cantrell state in their reading, "the narrative inverts the lost child trope so common in [settler] bush literature. Here, the children are not only comfortable in the bush; they move deeper within it in order to return to the safety of their Aboriginal community."[204] Although Nate and Louisa are scared the children will die in the snow, the scene of adult Danny's (Andrew Legg) future family shows that he was well cared for by his community and land. By returning to Molly's house, beat five shows "character and land are in balance"[205] as Danny continues to live on Country and tell his mother's story.

In addition to the plot's five beat structure, First Nations epistemology is written into the film's temporality through editing. While the overall arc is chronological, there are two recurring moments that alter time perception: moments of extreme violence and moments of expansive nature. As noted at the start of the chapter, time lapse, static positioning, and long duration are used to stretch how temporality is experienced in shots of nature. In contrast, in moments of extreme violence, time is compressed and fractured, to

[203] Clague, "The Five Beats of Indigenous Storytelling," 52
[204] Prowse, Gildersleeve, and Cantrell, "From Stage to Page to Screen," 35
[205] Clague, "The Five Beats of Indigenous Storytelling," 52

compound their traumatic effects. Fiona Morrison argues, in her paper on violence and temporality in Purcell's play, that violent scenes observe the "time of the gun" offer[ing] an accelerated and adrenalised temporality [through a] foreshortened and urgent texture."[206] In her analysis of Yadaka's beating and Molly's rape, Morrison writes that the prolonged violence propels the scene, giving it a horrific momentum "where (...) bodies are violated, dehumanised and annihilated [as time] is accelerated and adrenalised and unbearably long."[207] Acceleration and long duration are also used in the film to emphasise violence, with the added element of flashbacks. In *Molly Johnson* when Molly encounters violence, the action does not happen in isolation, but is instead linked to other violent acts. This amplifies the scenes' violence as trauma reverberates both in the past and present. Prowse, Gildersleeve, and Cantrell note how in the film "each confrontation with an aggressor, whether perceived or real, provokes in Molly a temporal collapse in which the faces of her abusers are blurred together (...) underscor[ing] the way in which she experiences each trauma as a repetition of the others."[208] When Molly shoots the bullock, for example, we do not see her pull the trigger, but instead see a match cut of her shooting her husband, Joe (Matt Klarie). The cut forces us to experience the shooting from Molly's point of view as she relives the former shooting in the present.

[206] Morrison, "The Antiphonal Time of Violence," 181
[207] Morrison, "The Antiphonal Time of Violence," 187
[208] Prowse, Gildersleeve, and Cantrell, "From Stage to Page to Screen," 34

I would add to Prowse, Gildersleeve, and Cantrell's argument that as Molly experiences the past and present violent actions simultaneously, as shown by the use of match cuts, she is not only experiencing them as repetitions, but as an accumulative, compounding, embodied trauma. When John assaults Molly a second time, the low-angle shot gives us Molly's point of view as we see him standing above her, his undressing actions shown via match cut between the present and the night before. Although Molly was unconscious, she has traumatically embodied John's rape to the extent that she sees both rapes simultaneously in the second scene. The violent penetration is repeated again, but on the attempted rape it is Molly who is the penetrator, as she stabs John's genitalia. Seeing the violence from Molly's viewpoint emphasises the trauma's embodied nature, forcing us to recognise, in Morrison's words, "the unpalatable realities of the violated and suffering body, making the institution of colonial violence acutely material in the process."[209] This is especially so in the initial rape scene where we are placed in John's point of view through the close-up, hand-held camera, and thus confined to the position of the rapist. While Morrison argues that violence depicted within the theatre format forces audiences to confront "the time of the gun"[210] and "the historical fact of violence against vulnerable bodies on the colonial frontier" through *witnessing* violent acts,[211] the film achieves this same effect through placing the viewers *within* violent action, both as the

[209] Morrison, "The Antiphonal Time of Violence," 179
[210] Morrison, "The Antiphonal Time of Violence," 181
[211] Morrison, "The Antiphonal Time of Violence," 175

perpetrator and the survivor. Through this active dual positioning the audience is forced to focus on both the repetition and embodiment of these abusive acts; in the scene above, Molly is not only experiencing the stabbing, but having to simultaneously relive her rape. In the shooting and rape scenes, each abuse is thus compounded and embodied, as flashbacks show Molly to be living both past and present traumas at once.

Match cut editing of flashbacks compresses and compounds temporality in scenes of violence, which is a stark contrast to the remedial and spacious temporality of nature. Landscape shots throughout the film are given the same treatment as those in beat one - a static camera with long duration, wide shots on time lapse gives the effect that a lot of time is passing quickly, while we are held in a single place. As I have previously argued, this technique illustrates the combining of place and long history seen within Fourth Cinema and the everywhen specific to First Nations epistemology. What I now note is the placement of these shots. After a traumatic compounding of violent, human time, sequences are resolved with a landscape shot, such as after Molly's rape when we see the moon rising. Their stillness and expansiveness give these landscape shots a feeling of objectivity that strongly juxtapose the subjective positioning in violent scenes; horrific scenes are treated as vignettes that can only be completed with a return to nature - like beat five of the film - cleansing us of and removing us from the violence we have just witnessed. Recalling Raheja's argument, this cleansing return to nature

expresses visual sovereignty, as we are taken away from a close, violent colonial time - Morrison's "time of the gun"[212] - and are situated within an expansive, long history, giving us the chance to breathe. In her essay "Everywhen: Against 'the power of now'," Saunders contrasts the everywhen with "colonial time" which she conceptualises as being "like an oil spill on the ocean or a bushfire that razes old-growth forest."[213] The former simile emphasises the constructed and incongruous element of "colonial time," while both similes highlight its quick-spreading destruction of primordial nature.[214] Her essay argues that First Nations peoples have been forced to live within a time that runs counter to the one they have lived in for so long and continue to live in: First Nations peoples "live in [everywhen temporality] and another has been forced over [them], but still, everywhen engulfs colonial time."[215] She expands that "[w]henever [she] live[s] in shallow, colonial time too much, [her] spirit gets sick and [her] body soon follows. [She] heal[s] and feel[s] human again by forgetting clocks and calendars, by expanding back into the world through [her] relationships with people and places."[216] The placement of Purcell's landscape shots depict First Nations everywhen temporality as remedial to toxic colonial time. For example, when John attempts to rape Molly a second time, the "colonial time" compounds trauma through flashbacks to the earlier violence. After Molly has stabbed John, however, this

[212] Morrison, "The Antiphonal Time of Violence," 181
[213] Saunders, "Everywhen: Against 'the power of now'," 116
[214] Saunders, "Everywhen: Against 'the power of now'," 116
[215] Saunders, "Everywhen: Against 'the power of now'," 120
[216] Saunders, "Everywhen: Against 'the power of now'," 118

temporality is resolved through a shot of the Snowy Mountains, giving the audience time to breathe and return to a temporality that revolves around nature. As viewers, we watch the scenes of human violence as part of colonial time, trapping us in reverberating, traumatic flashbacks, with a return to the everywhen through time lapse, landscape shots being our only balm. This reprieve removes us from the colonial violence and returns us to the First Nations connection to land.

Through this chapter, I have shown how film techniques have been used to imbue the structure and temporality of *Molly Johnson* with a First Nations epistemology. More than just indigenising the characters *within* the story, this approach has allowed Purcell to indigenise the way the story is told, and equally, the way it is then experienced by viewers. Through following Clague's five beats of Indigenous storytelling, we have seen how the film follows a structure which situates Molly's individual journey within a larger, and longer, place-based history. Barclay's Fourth Cinema and Raheja's visual sovereignty strengthen this connection between Indigenous storytelling and place and theorise how film can depict Indigenous epistemologies. Like the interweaving of colonial and First Nations sources, explored in chapter one, the temporal interweaving of the everywhen - as defined by Saunders[217] - and Morrison's colonial "time of the gun"[218] highlights both their differences and how they are bound together. Positioning viewers as oscillating between the

[217] Saunders, "Everywhen: Against 'the power of now'," 115-25
[218] Morrison, "The Antiphonal Time of Violence," 181

contrasting epistemologies within a single scene we are hit with traumatic "colonial time" before being soothed through everywhen shots of landscape. Through this analysis, this chapter has opened the discussion on the ways in which *Molly Johnson* is imbued with First Nations storytelling methods. Chapter three continues this focus, but rather than considering the film's form overall, narrows in on how the film's embedded stories further depict a First Nations epistemology.

Chapter Three: The Embedded Stories of *Molly Johnson*

A traditional aspect of Aboriginal storytelling [is] someone experiencing an event, someone witnesses it, and the story's passed on, and that story's retold. And that's how Blackfella cycle goes and it keeps everything alive.
- Leah Purcell [219]

A story, please, Ma! Please? The bullock one. Yadaka might want to hear it. No, Yadaka, you tell your story, about the clown called Tippo in the circus.
- Danny Johnson (Malachi Dower-Roberts) [220]

After a day spent learning about Ngarigo peoples' relationship to the land, Danny begs his mother to tell him and Yadaka a story around the fireside, before changing his mind and imploring Yadaka to elaborate on a story he began earlier. Yadaka faces the two and recounts the events that led him to being on Ngarigo country, instead of "in [his] homelands[, the] land of the coloured sands and rainforest."[221] As soon as he finishes Danny springs into action, not only telling but fully performing the story of the "big bloody wild bullock, [with] horns the width of a grown man's arm span."[222] Seeing Danny's enthusiasm Yadaka joins him, suiting action to word by holding his arms above his head for horns, while stamping his feet and braying. Together, Yadaka and

[219] Jenkin, "*Molly Johnson*: Behind the Scenes," 02:25
[220] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 00:42:16
[221] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 00:42:41
[222] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 00:43:19

Danny bring to life the bullock story, retelling it for Molly through First Nations performance.

By returning to the past, so as to perform it in the present, and share it into the future, these characters are engaging in First Nations storytelling methods, reminding us of storytelling's importance, especially retelling, within First Nations cultures. Before colonisation, First Nations communities sustained stories about their long histories, experiences, and lands via oral storytelling, performance, and visual art.[223] During colonisation, settlers attempted to forcibly erase these communication modes and replace them with Western linear temporality and writing.[224] Whilst First Nations cultures and communication methods continue today, this disruption was still felt as First Nations peoples' history and languages were taken away from them and communities were fractured through forced dispossession and separation.[225]

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[223] Clague, "The Five Beats of Indigenous Storytelling," 49-54; Clague, "Indigenous Storytelling: Deconstructing the Archetypes," 10-9; Langton, "Aboriginal Art and Film," 89-106; Peta Tait, "Enveloping the Nonhuman: Australian Aboriginal Performance," *Theatre Journal* 71 (2019): 347–363; Nicole Watson, *Aboriginal Women, Law and Critical Race Theory: Storytelling from the Margins* (ProQuest Ebook Central: Springer International Publishing AG, 2021), 1-7, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/anu/detail.action?docID=6825113.

[224] Langton, "Aboriginal Art and Film," 89-106; Lucashenko, "Writing as a Sovereign Act," 25-31; Saunders, "Everywhen: Against 'the power of now'," 115-26; Watson, *Aboriginal Women, Law and Critical Race Theory,* 37-68

[225] Melissa Lucashenko, "I Pity the Poor Immigrant," *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature: JASAL* 17, iss. 1 (2017): 1-10. https://www.proquest.com/docview/1986082564?parentSessionId=WwVGMWrkYUbTEQcV7CHBbrn57IDdVBNuJbGzISdolik%3D&pq-origsite=primo&accountid=8330; Kate Warner, "Relationships with the Past: How Australian Television Dramas Talk about Indigenous History," *M/C Journal* 20, no. 5 (2017): non-paginated, https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.1302; Watson, *Aboriginal Women, Law and Critical Race Theory,* 37-68

By centering stories and storytelling as a motif within her work, Purcell is valuing First Nations methods of communication, while herself adding to this long history of retelling.

Whilst there are many stories that are told and retold in *Molly Johnson*, this chapter focuses primarily on the bullock story, due to its meaningful symbolism and how it is retold. Recalling Hutcheon's three elements of adaptations - product, process, and reception[226] - this chapter reads *Molly Johnson*'s embedded stories as *embedded adaptations*. Using these embedded adaptations as a model, I highlight the parallel methodologies of adaptation and First Nations storytelling, a reading which in chapter four is applied to the story of *Molly Johnson* overall. Specifically, the chapter first considers how the bullock story symbolises other colonial, masculine threats, especially Joe - illustrating the stories' intertextuality and their reception as adaptations through Molly. Next, I read the story's retelling as representing adaptation as an ongoing process, linking back to the original source of Molly's shooting and the later adaptations by Danny and Yadaka. I also outline how the retelling process within adaptation parallels the Indigenous oral storytelling methods. Thirdly, I analyse the juxtaposition between Danny's performance and Louisa's article, both adaptation products, in demonstrating a complex understanding of history as told through various perspectives and forms. Finally, I analyse how the different stories surrounding Black Mary

[226] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation,* 6-9

create an intertextual palimpsest through which we see the character herself. Overall, my analysis of embedded adaptations within this chapter serves as a model for how adaptation, retelling, and First Nations storytelling are used within *Molly Johnson* to pose a complex and reworked version of history.

Although the bullock scene has a duration of only two minutes, it is a powerfully symbolic scene that reverberates throughout the entire film. Its largest echo is evident when the scene is read as a metaphor for Molly's relationship to Joe and other settler men. The scene begins with Molly's apprehension of a possible threat, before the threat is made clear and poses a direct danger to her children. To protect them, she eliminates the threat by shooting it. Taking this bare outline, we can observe the pattern of masculine aggressor and maternal protection, which recurs again and again throughout the film. When Trooper Leslie (Benedict Hardie) comes to take Molly away for questioning she shoots him for fear of "what will happen to [her] children"[227] if she is in custody. When John McPharlen threatens Danny she tells him, "I'll do whatever you want, but please let my son go,"[228] before killing him. Finally, there is the parallel whose mystery overshadows the whole film - after Joe beats Molly, she implores him to "think of the children"[229] and only shoots him when there is a chance she may die and leave them unprotected. Although

[227] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 01:00:48
[228] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 01:25:07
[229] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 01:19:52

the bullock symbolises all three threats, the following section primarily focuses on the strong parallels between Joe and the bullock.

Figure 5: Molly's children (Amahlia Olsson, Jobe Zammit-Harvey, and Nash Zammit-Harvey) framed by the bullock's horns and Joe threatening Molly with a broken bottle [230]

The first similarity between the bullock and Joe is in the physical, masculine threats they each pose to Molly and her children. Both the bullock and Joe are denied speech and instead are positioned as senseless animals that physically dominate the outside space (figure 5). In the bullock scene,

[230] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 00:04:14; Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 01:19:47

when Molly's youngest children run around the side of the house, they are framed by the bullock's horns (figure 5). The children are made diminutive, and are spatially caged on the screen by the out of focus, thick horns in the foreground, separating them from the safety of the house and Molly. This shot exposes the control Joe has over his family, as although he is not home often, when he returns his family is subject to, and caged by, his alcoholic violence. Foregrounding the horns as the restrictive frame on the screen also points towards the threat's masculine nature - it is the horns that the family are afraid of, just as they are afraid of Joe's alcoholic beatings. In Danny's flashback we are shown how Joe's violence relates to his masculinity when he accuses Molly of "shaming [his] manhood in front of a whore."[231] It is a fear of sexual emasculation that leads Joe to threaten Molly with a broken bottle (figure 5) - note its piercing, phallic threat like the bullock's horns, Trooper Leslie's gun, and John's penis.

The two scenes are also connected in Molly's lived experience of the traumatic shootings. When she shoots the bullock we see a match cut of her shooting Joe. As we rapidly cut between the two shootings it is obvious they are synchronised in Molly's mind; through shooting the bullock, Molly relives her shooting of Joe. When telling Yadaka the bullock story at the fireside, Danny concludes that Molly "shot him straight between the eyes."[232] Molly's obvious panic at his phrasing illustrates how these two incidents are

[231] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 01:19:44
[232] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 00:43:40

intertwined in her memory, as she cannot tell which shooting Danny is talking about. Similarly, when we see Joe's shooting from Danny's perspective, we hear the bullock bellowing, as the shootings have been coupled in his memory. By joining the incidents through Molly and Danny's experiences and memories of them, they function as intertextual adaptations. As Hutcheon explains viewers "experience adaptations (...) as palimpsests through [their] memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation."[233] Through being repetitions of each other, each shooting refers to the others, and thus collectively symbolise an increasingly prevalent physical, masculine threat.

The threat the bullock poses can also be read more specifically as representing a *colonial*, masculine threat. I have already mentioned the phallic similarities between the threats that Joe, Trooper Leslie, John, and the bullock pose as well as how their demise comes from threatening Molly's children and thus forcing a maternal protection. Another parallel is seen in considering the bullock as an introduced species. Where Lawson's settler protagonist fears a native snake,[234] and thus demonstrates a fear of the land, in *Molly Johnson* our First Nations protagonist fears introduced threats, both animal and human. Although not posing a direct bodily violence, even the paternalistic Nate poses a threat to Molly and her children through his wielding of settler law, another

[233] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation,* 8
[234] Lawson, "The Drover's Wife," 82-8

masculine threat. This racialized and gendered threat illustrates the power White settler men had over First Nations women in the 1890s colonial era.[235]

Now that I have analysed how the bullock symbolises colonial, masculine violence, I will explore the repercussions this has when extended to Molly's shooting of it. When threatened by each of these physical violences, Molly responds with an equally physical protection: the bullock's horns, Joe's smashed bottle, and Trooper Leslie's gun are all counterbalanced by Molly's shotgun, while John's sexual violence is met with Molly stabbing his genitals. Thus, where the bullock represents a colonial, masculine threat, its death represents Molly's resolve to protect herself and her children - a resolve that is *stronger* than these threats. Her maternal strength is shown when she pulls the trigger on the bullock, despite the obvious psychological and physical cost, as she buckles at the knees from the reverberation, breathing hard. Molly tells Yadaka: "I'd never just kill for the sake of it, but fight for my children, fight for my life, I will."[236] Her words and obvious reluctance to shoot the bullock and men until there is apparently no other option to protect her children, shows that she understands the severity of her actions, but must complete them anyway as a last resort. In her book *Aboriginal Women, Law and Critical Race Theory: Storytelling from the Margins*, Nicole Watson outlines a "history of Indigenous women's outlaw culture" that was sparked by "the systematic

[235] Watson, *Aboriginal Women, Law and Critical Race Theory*, 37-68
[236] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 01:07:51

abuse of Indigenous women by settler men."[237] By looking at cases where First Nations women were "empowered through breaking the law,"[238] Watson exposes how that law functioned unjustly: "As British subjects, Indigenous women were entitled to the protection of the rule of law. In reality, that counted for little. On the frontier the Native Police and settlers kidnapped, raped and murdered Indigenous women with impunity."[239] By understanding this context, we can see why Molly felt she had no other option but to kill Joe, John, and Trooper Leslie - as justice was not on her side.

When Nate enters Everton with the dogged determination that "this land needs law"[240] he is unable to see the consequences this may have when the law itself is unjust. Louisa, contrastingly, understands that there are systematic reasons that lead to Molly's manslaughters: namely, her lack of rights within her marriage to Joe. Their divergent views symbolise that Molly is not fighting a physical threat, but a subjective, ideological one. At Molly's hanging we see the ideological power that White men hold as she walks between their unknown faces to her noose, before finally seeing Judge Eisenmangher (Nicholas Hope) who stands alone, emphasising his power. Although Louisa comes to protest the hanging, her overly performative actions only emphasise the overbearing power of the silent men. Molly defends herself against physical threats, but once she has been physically removed

[237] Watson, *Aboriginal Women, Law and Critical Race Theory*, 37
[238] Watson, *Aboriginal Women, Law and Critical Race Theory*, 45
[239] Watson, *Aboriginal Women, Law and Critical Race Theory*, 45
[240] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 01:09:30

from the land,[241] she is unable to protect herself from the ideological threat of the settler patriarchy. She is not defeated by it completely, however, as her silence about her children's location ensures they are brought up on Country.

Stories like the bullock scene are not only experienced and symbolic, but are retold throughout the film, with each retelling taking on a different mode, perspective, context, and thus meaning, acting like embedded adaptations. At the film's conclusion we are given resolution to the bullock scene, as an adult Danny performs the event for his family. This time he plays the part of the bullock, with close-ups on his stamping feet, bent knees, and raised arms for horns, mirroring Yadaka's initial performance.[242] By taking up this role, Danny is acting as an important part in a chain of First Nations knowledge: he is learning from Yadaka's performance of the bullock and passing it on to his own children. Through experiencing the bullock's shooting, watching Yadaka's dance, and performing it to his own children, Danny exhibits adaptation as a process, as he "(re-)interpret[s] and then (re-)creat[es]."[243] Through Danny's performance, adaptation as a process links to Indigenous storytelling methods, as "[t]he story and the story teller [*sic*] both serve to connect the past with the future, one generation with the other,

[241] For more on this see my discussion of beat four in chapter two
[242] For more on First Nations performances depicting animals, see Tait, "Enveloping the Nonhuman," 347–363
[243] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation,* 8

the land with the people and the people with the story."[244] Danny is both adapter and First Nations storyteller.

In her analysis of Purcell's book, *The Drover's Wife* (2019), Li argues that "through the acts of telling and retelling the story (...) knowledge and culture are passed from one generation to another, keeping Molly's story 'alive'."[245] For the retelling's climax, Danny's eldest son stands up, aims his arm as a gun, and shoots Danny playing the bullock. This son has now stepped into Danny's own role from the fireside, and Molly's from the event itself, and is in turn continuing the retelling. As Purcell says, "Molly experienced [shooting the bullock], Danny witnessed it, he shared it with Yadaka, Yadaka developed it, and then Danny retold it with his children;"[246] each time the story is shown we are given an evolving, communal understanding of the events and what they represent. By retelling the bullock story to Yadaka and to his family, Danny is explaining how Molly continuously protected her children from the bullock and other settler, masculine threats. Through adapting the story, Danny is keeping alive the event itself as an ongoing adaptation as a process, its representation of Molly's strength, the First Nations knowledge Yadaka gave him, and the oral storytelling method of blending performance and retelling.

[244] Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies,* 166
[245] Li, "Gender, Reception and 'The Drover's Wife' Phenomenon," 191
[246] "Podcast - Writer/Director Leah Purcell on Her Feature Film Debut"

This palimpsest of stories reflects a First Nations understanding of history as brought alive through retellings. In her work *Aboriginal Art and Film: The Politics of Representation,* First Nations scholar Marcia Langton explains how in oral storytelling "[r]ights to an oeuvre are inherited [and] plagiarism is not a possibility in this tradition."[247] In other words, rather than idolising a single author, First Nations storytelling focuses on the story itself as an evolving, communal narrative. In their respective fields, Hutcheon describes the "multilaminated"[248] compression of adaptations, while Clague explains that "[s]torytelling in many [First Nations] communities in Australia is more than just one layer. There is the oral story, the dance, the song and the paintings that all feed the layers of a story and strengthen the recall of details and patterns."[249] Danny's retelling thus exhibits both adaptation practices and First Nations storytelling, through layering each version upon the next.

[247] Langton, "Aboriginal Art and Film," 91-2
[248] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation,* 21
[249] Clague, "The Five Beats of Indigenous Storytelling," 50

Figure 6: Louisa's *The Dawn* article and Danny performing the bullock story [250]

Danny's second performance is prefaced with Louisa's published version of Molly's story from the interview she held with her in jail (figure 6). These contrasting stories represent Hutcheon's adaptation as a product: both versions have adapted from Molly's strength as a source text - symbolically with the bullock story and literally through interview - and have transmuted the story into divergent products.[251] Reading Danny and Louisa as adapters through Hutcheon's definition, we see how they "tak[e] possession of another's story, and [filter] it, in a sense, through [their] own sensibilit[ies], interests, and talents. Therefore, adapters are first interpreters and then creators."[252] Both Danny and Louisa experienced Molly's maternal strength - Danny as her child and Louisa as a woman - and have used their "interests (...) and talents"[253] - Danny as a First Nations father performing for his family and Louisa as a feminist journalist - to adapt Molly's story in their own way. They

[250] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 01:39:49
[251] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 7-8
[252] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation,* 18
[253] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation,* 18

have each taken the same source and translated it through their individual standpoints[254] to create contrasting adaptations.

These products demonstrate the "palimpsestuous" intertextual nature of adaptations, that when read together they reveal a *multilayered* complicated version of history and storytelling.[255] As a published gazette, Louisa's writing represents a colonial notion of storytelling as being legitimised through the written word. This viewpoint is emphasised by Louisa throughout the film as she expresses her desire to "give (...) a voice"[256] to women through her publication, seeing it as the first step to legislating women's rights. Danny obviously values her article, as it has been framed. However, his lived experience of his mother and performance is also valued through his children's applause. By juxtaposing the written account and the lived performance, and giving value to both through the frame and children's applause, *Molly Johnson* explores the multiple ways that history is preserved and recounted, both colonial and First Nations, showing them as contrasting rather than in competition. Danny's valuing of both First Nations performance and Western publishing to remember and revive a story mirrors Purcell's own use of source texts to present history, as discussed in chapter one.

[254] Moreton-Robinson, "Standpoint Theory," 331-9
[255] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation,* 6, 21
[256] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 00:51:48

Almost every character within *Molly Johnson* participates in storytelling in some capacity: Yadaka relates his life story, Danny performs the bullock story, Miss Shirley (Maggie Dence) spreads hearsay, Louisa is the "first published female writer in Everton,"[257] Nate pursues the truth, and Molly lies to hide Joe's death. Like clues in a mystery novel, many of these stories overlap or add to an overarching story, so that viewers must piece together the whole story via its fragments. For example, Black Mary's story is conveyed to us through various characters. Through Danny's eavesdropping, we hear Miss Shirley's opinion of Black Mary as a "cocksure woman [who] eyeballed her superiors."[258] She ascribes this "audacity of the heathen"[259] to Black Mary's "mixed blood,"[260] her racist views colouring her speech. Juxtaposed to this is the story of Black Mary told by Yadaka of Ginny May's "sister's love for a man of wrong skin"[261] whose "love was [as] deep as the highest peak to the lowest valley and as wild as the Snowy River."[262] Through poetic language and retelling, Ginny May has enshrined Black Mary's love as part of Ngarigo history and landscape through storytelling. This version is further preserved when Molly passes it on to Louisa to publish in *The Dawn*. We are also shown Black Mary's spirit, her love for her family coming through in her actions, such as when she holds Molly's two deceased children in her arms. Rather than seeing only Black Mary herself, we see how each character has "(re-)interpret[ed] and

[257] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 00:50:51
[258] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 01:01:46
[259] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 01:01:55
[260] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 01:01:57
[261] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 00:58:49
[262] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 00:59:24

then (re-)creat[ed]"[263] a version - or adaptation - of her. Like a reversal of Hutcheon's adaptation as reception - where we understand an adaptation via our understanding of its source texts[264] - here we understand Black Mary - a source - *through* how she has been adapted in characters' memories of her. We understand her intertextually: 'as [a] palimpsest through our memory of other [versions] that resonate through repetition with variation."[265] This multilayered approach allows us to see the contrasting stories from different perspectives. Rather than labelling one story as true, the film allows the stories to exist simultaneously, creating an evolving knowledge of the past. Storytelling is more than a recurring event within *Molly Johnson,* but is an important motif that allows the viewer to consider our relationship to knowledge and history as layered and influenced by perspective. As Louisa says when Nate asks how she knows that "Charles Edwards fathered a Black child": it is local "folklore [but] Miss Shirley called it history."[266] Recalling chapter one, the embedded stories are thus used to further reinforce the way Purcell draws on various sources and creates multiple adaptations, to question a single-narrative approach to history.

In this chapter I have read the embedded stories of *Molly Johnson* - focusing on the bullock story and Black Mary's character - as embedded adaptations. By applying Hutcheon's categories of adaptations as product,

[263] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 8
[264] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 8-9
[265] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 8
[266] Purcell, *Molly Johnson,* 00:51:03

process, and reception these stories work as an illustrative example of how adaptations can take from various source texts and demonstrate their own version of history. I have highlighted how use of retelling and intertext complicates a western single-story, linear version of history. Like the film's structure and temporarily discussed in chapter two, these stories, through their retelling and "palimpsestuous" structure, value First Nation storytelling methods. In the following chapter, I argue how this combined use of adaptation and First Nations storytelling methods decolonises the Australian literary canon and history.

Chapter Four: Decolonising the Canon with *Molly Johnson*

In researching this thesis, I realised just how strongly the practices of adaptation and First Nations decolonising complement each other. I came across a pattern in both spheres of literature which neatly illustrates their overlap: the abundance of the prefix 're'. I have recorded some of the many uses below:

> Reappropriates, reassess, rebuild, reclaim, recognise, reconfigure, reconsider, reconstruct, (re-)creation, reemerge, reflect, reframe, refusal, regain, regather, regenerate, reimagine, reinsert, (re-)interpret, (re)mapping, renegotiate, repair, repeat, replace, represent, repurpose, reread, rerecord, rerender, (re)right, rescholarship, reshape, resignify, respond, restore, restory, retell, rethink, retrace, retract, return, reuse, revamp, reverse, revise, revisit, revitalise, rework, rewrite

These recurring words typify something crucial to the literature my argument is built upon: while the prefix 're' highlights a repetition, the base word specifies that there is not a strict copy, but instead a *remaking* that creates something new.[267] This pattern is central to the current chapter on how *Molly Johnson* decolonises the Australian literary canon through both film adaptation and First Nations storytelling practices.

[267] Macquarie Dictionary, s.v. "re-"

Purcell's ongoing rewriting of Lawson's "The Drover's Wife" is expressly engaging in this reworking practice by reflecting on the original story, whilst reinserting First Nations peoples into the canon. Her playtext for *The Drover's Wife* (2016) opens with the following epigraph: "It is quite time that our children were taught a little more about their country for shame's sake."[268] This quote comes from Lawson's nationalistic opinion piece, "A Neglected History," and was originally intended to decry Australian children being taught more about England's history than Australian history.[269] However, Lawson was not proposing children learn about First Nations cultures and histories, but instead Australia's convict and settler history, in his words, "the men who in the past fought for the freedom of our constitution."[270] By intentionally opening her tripartite adaptations with this quote, Purcell is repurposing Lawson's sentiment and applying it to his own work, arguing that Australian children - and adults for that matter - should not just learn about Australia's colonial history from settler viewpoints such as Lawson, but should expand their understanding to include alternate histories and perspectives, most importantly First Nations ones that were denied at the time.

While my first chapter focuses on how *Molly Johnson* reuses source texts through adaptation, this chapter explores how this reuse speaks to a

[268] Leah Purell, *The Drover's Wife,* (Sydney: Currency Press, 2016), 5, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.virtual.anu.edu.au/lib/anu/reader.action?docID=4987480.
[269]Henry Lawson, "A Neglected History," *Essays by Henry Lawson: A Neglected History, Australian Loyalty, and United Division* (online publication: Amazon, 2021), 2-4, Kindle
[270] Lawson, "A Neglected History," 2

renegotiation of Australia's colonial canon. I begin by contextualising Purcell's narratives as sitting within the decolonial practices of First Nations women who write both within and against the colonial archive. Writers such as Evelyn Araluen, Natalie Harkin, Jeanine Leane, and Melissa Lucashenko are primarily negotiating decolonising non-fiction archives, which they frame as colonially constructed spaces.[271] By reimagining an Australian canonical work that was also constructed from a settler standpoint, *Molly Johnson* rewrites the past in similar ways, speculating about the lives of First Nations peoples during 1890s colonial Australia, whose perspectives are largely excluded from the official literary canon. I read these practices as sitting within Edward Said's broader postcolonial concept of contrapuntal readings and Linda Tuhiwai Smith's reclaiming method. This demonstrates what Harkin terms the "critical-creative"[272] in the decolonising sovereign act: that it is *through* the creative process that First Nations peoples repurpose the colonial archive and complicate its proclaimed 'truth'. Applying Lucashenko's "Writing as a Sovereign Act," I argue how the film *rewrites* as a sovereign act through exhibiting Raheja's visual sovereignty and creating Ginsburg's screen memories. I then link adaptation and decolonising explicitly, in how adaptations can refigure old texts for new audiences. I end the chapter by returning to my opening: by reemphasising the overlaps between adaptation

[271] Araluen Corr, "Silence and resistance," 487-502; Harkin, "Intimate Encounters," 147-61; Harkin, "The Poetics of (Re)Mapping Archives," 1-14; Harkin, "Weaving the Colonial Archive," 154-66; Leane, "Gathering," 242-51; Lucashenko, "Writing as a Sovereign Act," 25-31

[272] Harkin, "Weaving the Colonial Archive," 166

theory and First Nations decolonial practices, concluding that *Molly Johnson* demonstrates the fruitful ground between the two.

Before analysing how *Molly Johnson* practises decolonising methodologies, I will first briefly explain how the Australian literary canon perpetuates settler hegemony as part of the colonial archive. Exploring the South Australian "state record files on [her] family,"[273] Harkin argues that the forced absence of First Nations voices from the published, and thus official, settler archive causes a twofold Derridean hauntology.[274] When Harkin reads her nanna's "[s]tate-filed-life [she finds it] replete with lies and colonial-construct misrepresentations."[275] Although her nanna's perspective is excluded from the official records, Harkin reads it between the lines, hearing "that which is silent, hidden or absent but is nevertheless acutely present and felt."[276] This silenced presence between the lines of official colonial records is the first hauntology felt: a haunting of First Nation perspective from *within* the records.

The second hauntology that Harkin describes is the records' "influence on the present."[277] Leane writes that "literary representations are never just

[273] Harkin, "Intimate Encounters," 148
[274] Harkin, "The Poetics of (Re)Mapping Archives," 8-10
[275] Harkin, "The Poetics of (Re)Mapping Archives," 2
[276] Harkin, "The Poetics of (Re)Mapping Archives," 8
[277] Harkin, "The Poetics of (Re)Mapping Archives," 5

benign descriptions; they enter into and shape our national discourse."[278] She adds that this is even more true for canonical literature, which "becomes the authoritative narrative of settler colonialism"[279] where "Aboriginality [is] contained safely within the margins of settler texts."[280] In her influential essay "Writing as a Sovereign Act," Lucashenko reasserts Leane's positions, arguing that "ordinary stories (...) have power"[281] and that "[t]he most powerful stories outside Law stories are the ones that hide inside our own heads and pretend they aren't stories at all."[282] She is referring here to the stories that become normalised within societies, to the point that they are no longer questioned. As Australia's colonial foundation was built upon settler stories while simultaneously silencing First Nations voices - she adds that "[i]t can be hard sometimes to reflect that the stories about [First Nations peoples], told by Australia, are so harmful and so dangerous."[283] To summarise Leane and Lucashenko, by reading the canonical works of the past, we are also reading the ideologies and power-structures that existed when they were written. Leane argues this is "the politics of memory[: of] remember[ing] a dismembered but still living past as it haunts, pervades, and lives in the present."[284] This forms the second hauntology, that by reading the canon

[278] Jeanine Leane, "Other Peoples' Stories: Writing and Indigenous Australia," *Overland* iss. 225 (Dec 2016): 42
[279] Leane, "Other Peoples' Stories," 42
[280] Leane, "Other Peoples' Stories," 43
[281] Lucashenko, "Writing as a Sovereign Act," 27
[282] Lucashenko, "Writing as a Sovereign Act," 27
[283] Lucashenko, "Writing as a Sovereign Act," 27
[284] Leane, "Gathering," 242

without critically examining the perspectives they hold, we are perpetuating these ideologies into the present and future.

For example, in Lawson's "The Drover's Wife" the protagonist describes the "stray blackfellow" who she employs to chop and stack wood.[285] She remembers how "[s]he was so astonished to see a good heap of wood (...) that she (...) praised him for not being lazy."[286] Her surprise that a First Nations man could work hard, and conclusion that her original prejudice was correct as he "built that woodheap hollow"[287] and tricked her, illustrates the harmful stereotypes of First Nations peoples that were prolific during Lawson's time.[288] Through the settler protagonist, First Nations peoples' perspectives are obscured in "The Drover's Wife," leaving these characters to be read through their actions, rather than their words or interiorities. This silencing is akin to Harkin's nanna's voice being obscured from the state records and how anthropological films recorded Indigenous peoples without their creative control.[289] The First Nations characters in "The Drover's Wife" demonstrate both forms of hauntology: their voices and perspectives are purposefully hidden and neglected and thus haunt the text, while their stereotypes perpetuate those silences and attitudes today through the text's consecration.

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[285] Lawson, "The Drover's Wife," 87
[286] Lawson, "The Drover's Wife," 87
[287] Lawson, "The Drover's Wife," 87
[288] Shino Konishi, "Indolent Bodies," *The Aboriginal Male in the Enlightenment World* Oxon, Routledge, 2016), 127-42, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.virtual.anu.edu.au/lib/anu/reader.action?docID=2126791.
[289] Ginsburg, "Screen Memories," 33-59; Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1159-85

Rather than removing such texts and denying their role in Australia's history, one strategy at our disposal is to read them contrapuntally, following postcolonial philosopher Edward Said's method. Using the example of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park,* Said defines contrapuntal readings as "reading a text with an understanding of what is involved [but not stated] when an author shows (...) that a colonial sugar plantation (...) maintain[s] a particular style of life in England."[290] A contrapuntal reading of *Mansfield Park* would consider the enslaved peoples whose work allows the Bertram family to own an estate, and whose perspectives and lives are omitted entirely from the original text.[291] By reading between the lines of the state records, Harkin performs a contrapuntal reading to read her nanna's perspective within the documented history. Although texts may not state their ideologies and perspectives outright, by contextualising them as operating within colonial hierarchies, contrapuntal readings refocus on marginalised narratives. Lawson's short story takes place on unceded lands and mentions in passing the "stray blackfellow" who "was the last of his tribe and a King" without exploring *why* he was without land and community.[292] Instead, it presents an assumed truth of drovers and their wives owning the land. *Molly Johnson,* by contrast, magnifies the First Nations characters and their experience of settler invasion, giving a context and new perspective to the story. For example, contrasting the First

[290] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 66
[291] Said, *Culture and Imperialism,* 80-96
[292] Lawson, "The Drover's Wife," 87

Nations man whose perspective and life is obscured in Lawson's tale, Yadaka recounts his forced removal from far-north Queensland and the genocide of his family, as well as his perspective on these atrocities. More than rereading the story, *Molly Johnson* rewrites it in what could be conceptualised as a contrapuntal adaptation; Purcell both "(re-)interpret[s] and then (re-)creat[es]"[293] Lawson's text by giving voice to his silenced First Nations characters, presenting the impact colonisation had on First Nations peoples in the 1890s and questioning settlers' assumed sovereignty of the land.

Where Said's contrapuntal reading focuses on a text's context, Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith labels "critical rereading of Western history and the Indigenous presence in the making of that history"[294] as one method Indigenous peoples have to decolonise and "deconstruct (...) accounts of the West [and] its history through the eyes of Indigenous and colonized peoples."[295] Another decolonising methodology Tuhiwai Smith suggests Indigenous peoples implement is "claiming and reclaiming."[296] Tuhiwai Smith sees reclaiming as an evolving process as "in time [reclaimings may] have to be rewritten around other priorities."[297] *Molly Johnson* claims sovereignty of First Nations peoples in the colonised era, but over time this act may need to be reclaimed, or readapted, to speak in a new way. This consideration is

[293] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 8
[294] Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 170
[295] Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 170
[296] Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 164
[297] Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 165

reminiscent of Hutcheon's adaptation as a process, as it sees reclaiming as ongoing and evolving.[298]

The following section of this chapter focuses on how *Molly Johnson* exhibits Harkin's "critical-creative" of the decolonising act, which engages in both critique and artistic creation.[299] Harkin's response to the hauntology within the colonial archive recording her nanna's life is akin to Said's contrapuntal reading, or perhaps contrapuntal adaptation. Harkin decolonises the archive by creatively rewriting her nanna and great-grandmother's experiences back into the past through First Nations women's Ngarrindjeri *lakun* basket weaving, where she weaves together strips of their handwritten letters.[300] Harkin writes that

> The art of Ngarrindjeri *lakun* [basket weaving] is complex and layered, meditative and healing. As a cultural practice, it connects so much, invoking personal memory and storytelling, and intimate connections to land—a new way (...) to embody family, history, land and ancestors through these archival records.[301]

By drawing on her family history and First Nations practices, Harkin's "embodied reckoning"[302] presents a part of Australian history that was purposefully repressed from the colonial narrative.

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[298] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 7-8
[299] Harkin, "Weaving the Colonial Archive," 166
[300] Harkin, "Weaving the Colonial Archive," 154-66
[301] Harkin, "Weaving the Colonial Archive," 157
[302] Harkin, "Intimate Encounters," 148

As I argued in chapter one, Purcell interweaves various source texts to create a new product - Henry Lawson's fiction, Louisa Lawson's journal, Purcell's great-grandfather Tippo's life, and more. Where I describe this process as adaptation, Leane might call this intertextuality a form of gathering, a term she uses to describe "the cultural continuation of both the metaphorical and physical gathering practices of [First Nations] women that ensure the material and emotional sustenance of the wider society."[303] She argues that the gathering practice encompasses collecting, but, even more importantly, the "weav[ing] or craft[ing of] vessels in which to keep the gatherings"[304] as "gathering, storing, and sharing [are] an important way of *archiving* and transmitting information, anecdotes, family stories, genealogies, knowledge, and secrets."[305] I draw attention to Leane's use of the word 'archive' here, as her writings are deeply aware of the colonial "archiving of all things Aboriginal [that] has been just one among many interventions—invasions into the lives of Aboriginal people"[306] and thus her word choice points to an alternate, Indigenous archiving practice contrapuntal to colonial archiving. Both Harkin's physical interweaving and Leane's gathering methodologically entwine sources through a First Nations practice to produce a new, decolonial, creative product. Through *Molly Johnson*'s combining of sources - outlined in chapter one - and its First Nations

[303] Leane, "Gathering," 243
[304] Leane, "Gathering," 243
[305] Leane, "Gathering," 244, my emphasis
[306] Leane, "Gathering," 242

storytelling methods - discussed in chapters two and three - the film engages in a similar decolonising methodology to create something "complex and layered, meditative and healing."[307]

Returning to the colonial archives' hauntology, Lucashenko suggests that just as the colonial canon can take away First Nations sovereignty, First Nations peoples can use writing as a way to "wrest back some control over the stories told about [them], and replace them with [their] own [so they] exert power too [and] reshape the ideas of what it is to be Aboriginal."[308] Purcell's adaptation takes up Lucashenko's call, as she reconfigures the negative images of First Nations peoples that were canonised through Lawson's short story and "replace[s]"[309] them with a version that promotes First Nations perspectives, history, and storytelling. By asserting sovereignty through rewriting Lawson's story, Purcell is rewriting First Nations peoples' experiences back into Australia's recorded history.

Like these First Nations decolonising practices of weaving, gathering, and rewriting, film language has also been used to assert Indigenous sovereignty. Through representing First Nations experiences and history, audiences are able to see an alternate past to what was recounted from settler perspectives, a process anthropologist Faye Ginsburg has termed

[307] Harkin, "Weaving the Colonial Archive," 157
[308] Lucashenko, "Writing as a Sovereign Act," 27
[309] Lucashenko, "Writing as a Sovereign Act," 27

creating screen memories.[310] She argues that "[I]ndigenous people[s] are using screen media (...) to recuperate their own collective stories and histories (...) that have been erased in the national narratives of the dominant culture."[311] *Molly Johnson* depicts a new screen memory that contrasts the "great Australian silence" of forgetting First Nations perspectives and histories and how they were and are affected by colonisation.[312] Ginsburg gives the example of how anthropological films that were originally made to "captur[e] images of [Meriam people] before they" died out were "iron[ically] resignifi[ed]" to assert sovereignty in the Mabo Case.[313] She writes that "[I]ndigenous people[s] have been using the inscription of their screen memories in media to "talk back" to structures of power and state that have denied their rights, subjectivity, and citizenship for over two hundred years."[314] Likewise, Purcell has been able to rework multiple sources with colonial views - especially Lawson's tale - to create a screen memory of First Nations peoples experiences of colonisation in 1890s settler Australia.

As well as creating screen memories depicting First Nations perspectives, visual language provides a medium to assert sovereignty in ways

[310] Ginsburg, "Screen Memories," 40-57
[311] Ginsburg, "Screen Memories," 40
[312] WEH Stanner quoted in Warner, "Relationships with the Past," paragraph 3; for more on the "national amnesia" within the colonial archive, see Natalie, "Intimate Encounters," 152-3
[313] Ginsburg, "Screen Memories," 50-1; for more on the extant harms of the Dying Race Trope, see Lucashenko, "I Pity the Poor Immigrant," 1-10
[314] Ginsburg, "Screen Memories," 51

aligned with Indigenous storytelling and epistemologies,[315] as outlined in my introduction and applied in my reading of landscape and temporality in chapter two. For that reason, Raheja labels film as "a germinal and exciting site for exploring how sovereignty is a creative act of self-representation."[316] Parallel to Harkin's "critical-creative"[317] response to the archive, Leane's gatherings, and Lucashenko's writings, sovereignty is expressed here as a "creative act,"[318] which *Molly Johnson* is no doubt a part of through its creative *reimagining* of history and *rewea*ving of sources. As Raheja states, there is a "space between resistance and compliance wherein Indigenous filmmakers and actors revisit, contribute to, borrow from, critique, and reconfigure ethnographic film conventions, at the same time operating within and stretching the boundaries created by these conventions."[319] While Raheja is specifically talking about reworking the film archive from *within* the film archive, Purcell's decolonising practice similarly reworks a literary canon - and conceptions of Australia's settler history more broadly - through film adaptation.

Other scholars have also noted how adaptation methods can decolonise the archive. In their paper on racebending in children's fanart, Ebony Elizabeth Thomas and Amy Stornaiuolo champion "restorying, a process

[315] Hokowhitu, "Theorizing Indigenous Media," 101-23; Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1159-85; Turner, "Reflections On Barry Barclay And Fourth Cinema," 162-78
[316] Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1161
[317] Harkin, "Weaving the Colonial Archive," 166
[318] Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1161
[319] Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1161

by which people reshape narratives to represent a diversity of perspectives and experiences that are often *missing or silenced* in mainstream texts, media, and popular discourse."[320] This illustrates just how closely adaptation restoryings correspond to contrapuntal readings and First Nations decolonising methods with their parallel focus on "missing or silenced" stories. In *Molly Johnson,* for example, Lawson's unnamed "Blackfellow"[321] is restoried into "Yadaka, of the Guugu Yimithirr, adopted Ngarigo"[322] who is more than a plot device, but a central character to the story and passing on of First Nations knowledge.

While Thomas and Stornaiuolo focus on how restorying is an act of responsive reception, Robert Stam's reading of revisionist adaptations focuses on how using an old narrative in a new way can produce different readings.[323] He argues that retelling a narrative is not only an opportunity to add marginalised voices to a dominant narrative, but also to "revitali[s]e (...) source texts."[324] Although a First Nations narrative that challenges Australia's hegemonic history, as a revisionist adaptation, *Molly Johnson* does not negate Lawson's "The Drover's Wife," but instead "transform[s] and revitali[ses]"[325] it - respecting its foundational and ongoing place in the Australian canon, while simultaneously transfiguring it to tell an alternate version. This respect is seen

[320] Thomas and Stornaiuolo, "Restorying the Self," 313, my emphasis
[321] Lawson, "The Drover's Wife," 87
[322] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 00:24:38
[323] Stam, "Revisionist Adaptation," 239-50
[324] Stam, "Revisionist Adaptation," 239
[325] Stam, "Revisionist Adaptation," 239

in the film's title, which foremost places it as a “Drover’s Wife” adaptation, as well as in the concurrent story arc of Nate and Louisa’s experience as recent settlers.

Stam’s revisionist adaptations are understood through an aspect central to Said’s contrapuntal reading: that texts offer “intertwined and overlapping histories”[326] allowing the reader to hold “a simultaneous awareness both of the (...) history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts.”[327] In explaining his concept, Said offers the metaphor of a musical counterpoint melody, where “various themes play off one another, with only a provisional privilege being given to any particular one; yet in the resulting polyphony there is concert. (...) At this point alternative or new narratives emerge.”[328] Said’s musical metaphor feels cognate to Harkin’s interweaving practice and Leane’s gathering - where multiple stories, that can be contradicting, are held together, without any negating each other. As a revisionist adaptation, *Molly Johnson* serves as a counterpoint to Lawson’s text. Combining these ideas with Hutcheon’s adaptation as reception we can see how viewers are able to simultaneously experience both *Molly Johnson* as a revisionist adaptation and the sources “that resonate” within it.[329]

[326] Said, *Culture and Imperialism,* 18
[327] Said, *Culture and Imperialism,* 51
[328] Said, *Culture and Imperialism,* 51
[329] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 8

By using the same central story, but speaking with a different mode and perspective to a different people and time, revisionist "adaptations become ideological barometers that register the shifts in the social/discursive atmosphere[, which] are never univocal; rather, they are polyvocal and dissensual."[330] In the 1890s, the colonies of settler Australia were approaching federation, and Lawson's story as "the heart of the bush"[331] formed part of this nationalistic narrative.[332] Through its consecration, "The Drover's Wife" exhibits Harkin's two fold hauntology: as First Nations perspectives are denied within the text and their stereotyping by Lawson continues to have consequences today. Through using the adaptation process, *Molly Johnson* reinserts First Nations voices and experiences back into both the cannon and our understanding of history. This "critical-creative"[333] practice involves interweaving both decolonising methodologies and adaptation practices. By combining Harkin's reweaving and Leane's regathering we can see how Purcell's adaptation process draws on First Nations women's methods of storytelling, while Lucashenko's "writing as a sovereign act,"[334] Ginsburg's screen memories, and Raheja's visual sovereignty show how this storytelling expresses sovereignty. As a restorying, *Molly Johnson* rewrites First Nations peoples back into depictions of the land and recenters the narrative around their perspectives. As a revisionist adaptation, the film tells a story in the

[330] Stam, "Revisionist Adaptation," 247
[331] Stephens quoted in Bennett, "The Short Story," 165-6
[332] Bennett, "The Short Story, 1890s to 1950," 165-8; Robert Dixon, "Australian Fiction," 227-30
[333] Harkin, "Weaving the Colonial Archive," 166
[334] Lucashenko, "Writing as a Sovereign Act," 25

dominant mode of the twenty-first century in ways that it could not have been in the nineteenth. By rewriting First Nations peoples back onto the land in the Australian canon, *Molly Johnson* creates new screen memories, to use Ginsburg's term, of Australia's past.[335] Through recentering a settler story to be about a Ngarigo woman and telling it with First Nations storytelling methods, Purcell is using her film to reclaim First Nations sovereignty for the land and also within the Australian archive. By decolonising *through* adaptation *Molly Johnson* doubly "revisit[s], contribute[s] to, borrow[s] from, critique[s], and reconfigure[s]"[336] the past. The film cannot change Australia's past, but can problematise our relationship to history and how we remember it.

[335] Ginsburg, "Screen Memories," 40
[336] Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1161

Conclusion: Rewrite, Repurpose, Reclaim

"You ask a lot of questions."

"Ma says that too. But if you don't ask, you don't know, eh?"

- Yadaka (Rob Collins) and Danny (Malachi Dower-Roberts) [337]

I introduced this thesis by framing Purcell's *The Drover's Wife: The Legend of Molly Johnson* as answering the question Louisa poses to Molly in jail: "can I hear you, Molly?"[338] Through interweaving her adaptation of "The Drover's Wife" with First Nations storytelling methods and perspectives, Purcell reworks the text so that we can hear Molly's voice, as a First Nations woman in 1890s settler Australia, rather than the unnamed settler protagonist of Lawson's canonical narrative.

As stated in my introduction, this thesis' aim is not to address a gap in any one scholarly field, but rather to draw together four fields and point towards their valuable intersection as exemplified through *Molly Johnson*. These fields are adaptation studies, First Nations storytelling, pan-Indigenous media studies, and decolonising practices. Chapter one addresses the first of these fields by discussing how *Molly Johnson* situates itself as a film adaptation. Primarily, this section outlines the many source texts that the film draws upon, including published texts, Purcell's family history, and her other

[337] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 00:37:09
[338] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 01:33:11

adaptations. Through the adaptation process, *Molly Johnson* allows these sources to sit in conversation with each other, as equally valued *versions* of Australia's history. The chapter ends by reading the film as responding to the retrocolonial Australian New Wave period that adapted colonial texts to *erase* First Nations perspectives, cultures, and histories.[339] Contrastingly, *Molly Johnson* adapts the canon so as to *reinsert* First Nations perspectives back into the archive. By contextualising the film as writing against earlier Australian film adaptations, I began my discussion of how Purcell rewrites First Nations stories back into Australia's published history.

This discussion continues in the following chapters, where I analyse *Molly Johnson* through the fields of First Nations storytelling and pan-Indigenous media studies. This analysis was broken into two subsets: analysing the film's narrative plot and temporality in chapter two and focussing specifically on the film's embedded stories in chapter three. Chapter two's structure was scaffolded by Pauline Clague's theory of the five beats of Indigenous storytelling.[340] I firstly illustrate how Country and First Nations everywhen temporality, forming beat one, are given primacy over Molly's character arc through editing and cinematography. I contextualise these techniques as exemplifying Michelle Raheja's visual sovereignty - showcasing Indigenous epistemologies through film language[341] - and Barry Barclay's

[339] McCarthy, "Adaptations down under," 221-3
[340] Clague, "The Five Beats of Indigenous Storytelling," 49-54
[341] Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile," 1159–85

Fourth Cinema - operating with an Indigenous place-based temporality.[342] Covering Clague's beats two to four, I analyse how viewers are positioned as outsiders to Molly's story before being invited in, and how her death reconnects her family, and viewers, to the land. This reconnection, especially through Danny, demonstrates beat five. After this structural analysis, I then apply Fiona Morrison's reading of Purcell's play to examine how First Nations everywhen temporality and violent, colonial temporality are juxtaposed through editing to highlight their difference and everywhen's healing quality. Overall, chapter two argues that First Nations storytelling - both in structure and temporality - are foundational tenets of the film.

Where chapter two's scope covers the entire film's narrative, chapter three concentrates on the embedded stories told within it. Firstly, I closely analyse the bullock story as symbolising other introduced, colonial, masculine threats within the film - namely Trooper Leslie, John, and especially Joe - and how it replaces Lawson's antagonist, the native snake. I then examine how the bullock story's retelling demonstrates Molly's maternal strength and Yadaka's First Nations performance knowledge. Finally, I explore how different sources - such as Danny's performance contrasting with Louisa's article and the many stories of Black Mary - present a complicated *version* of history, rather than a single perspective purporting to tell the truth. By closely analysing how various stories adapt the past and provide contrasting perspectives, this

[342] Hokowhitu, "Theorizing Indigenous Media," 115

chapter serves as a model for the entire thesis, where the relationship between the embedded stories and their sources mirrors the relationship between *Molly Johnson* and its various, contrasting sources.

In my final chapter, I interweave the fields of film adaptation and First Nations storytelling through their decolonising practices. I first outline how Natalie Harkin situates the Australian archive as a colonising, hauntological space, before exploring decolonising methods that oppose this. The postcolonial practice of Edward Said's contrapuntal reading serves as an introductory overarching approach to examine what it means to read against the archive. I then integrate two First Nations scholars' approaches: Harkin's interweaving and Jeanine Leane's regathering. Together, these approaches emphasise reconfiguring and combining to create something new - a practice parallel to film adaptations - with Leane stressing how regathering is integral to First Nations women's storytelling.[343] Next, I apply Melissa Lucashenko's "writing as a sovereign act,"[344] Faye Ginsburg's screen memories, and Michelle Raheja's visual sovereignty to argue how *Molly Johnson* rewrites through film's visual language to assert First Nations sovereignty. Returning to adaptation studies, I add Ebony Elizabeth Thomas and Amy Stornaiuolo's paper on restoryings and Robert Stam's category of revisionist adaptations, to explore how adaptation works specifically can sit within this decolonising space. Where my first three chapters follow a close reading methodology, chapter

[343] Leane, "Gathering," 242-51
[344] Lucashenko, "Writing as a Sovereign Act," 25-31

four interweaves concepts from the four fields of First Nations storytelling, pan-Indigenous media studies, adaptation studies, and decolonising practices to illustrate how they methodologically complement each other and together can create a piece that engages, to use Harkin's term, in the "critical-creative"[345] of the decolonising space: where the past can be reread to be rewritten, and reclaimed to rebuild.

While this thesis focuses on *Molly Johnson*'s interweaving of adaptation and storytelling, there is scope to further explore the decolonising practices within the film. When considering embedded adaptations in chapter three, I considered the concept of parallel stories, but, due to my focus on First Nations perspectives, did not analyse the relationship between Molly's story and the parallel narrative arc taking place in the settler town, Everton. Likewise, while I focus on editing and cinematography in chapter two and touch on revisionist adaptations in chapter four, further studies could link these points by considering how these film techniques sit within the Revisionist Western genre. Analysing genre use in *Molly Johnson* could be particularly interesting in regards to adaptation and decolonising, when considering how the film interweaves various genres as well as the historical context of the Revisionist Western as a subversive genre used by Indigenous

[345] Harkin, "Weaving the Colonial Archive," 166

filmmakers.[346] More broadly, further research could apply this thesis' interdisciplinary approach to analyse other contrapuntal adaptations.

As Danny tells Yadaka, "if you don't ask, you don't know, eh?"[347] Danny's curiosity for Yadaka's culture and history allows him to learn about the past and present - which impact his future - in ways that would ordinarily have been hidden from him. Likewise, by questioning the Australian literary canon and depictions of history through adapting Lawson's tale and interweaving it with First Nations storytelling methods, Purcell provides an alternate history that complicates our understanding of Australia's past and whose stories are told and valued.

[346] For example, see M. Elise Marubbio,"Decolonizing the Western: A Revisionist Analysis of Avatar with a Twist," in *The Post-2000 Film Western: Contexts, Transnationality, Hybridity,* ed. M. Paryz and J. Leo (ProQuest Ebook Central: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015), 169-90 http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/anu/detail.action?docID=4001246.
[347] Purcell, *Molly Johnson*, 00:37:12

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