Moses in Egypt: Crossing Boundaries to Informed Narration

Rebecca Jane Jones
Master of Arts (Writing)

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Creative Writing)
at Monash University in 2017
Faculty of Arts: School of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics

Copyright notice

I certify that I have made all reasonable efforts to secure copyright permissions for third-party content included in this thesis and have not knowingly added copyright content to my work without the owner's permission.

Abstract

This thesis seeks to map out a multi-dimensional strategy for writing about people who lived in the past of whom little evidence now remains, inspired by Virginia Woolf's essay "The Death of the Moth" and the rich textual outcomes she produces writing about the life and death experience of a seemingly insignificant creature.

This strategy is illustrated in the creative component accompanying this thesis, *Moses in Egypt*. *Moses in Egypt* is an Australian historical narrative presented in a combination of literary non-fiction and fiction, clearly delineated by chapters. What cannot be resolved with non-fiction is presented as fiction via a creative strategy I call "informed narration." This hybrid narrative form incorporates techniques used by historians, creative writers, and journalists. I argue that the success of a "moth" narrative rests on co-operation as well an acceptance of the philosophical relevance of multiple relations with the past, including both fact and fiction. The aim of informed narration is to cross the boundaries between the three writer groups, to optimise the evidence and analysis available on a subject and to use this evidence and analysis to inform the creation of fiction where gaps are present.

The journey to creating a work of informed narration is presented as a three-pronged inquiry that firstly critically considers the reasons for the perceived boundaries that exist between those writers who are most concerned with telling stories of people who lived in the past. Examining how historians, creative writers and journalists write about the past, I discuss how each group exhibits traits identifiably borrowed from the others, yet are individually too often one-dimensional in their approach, despite advances in technology that support a more complex approach to this form of writing. In order to cross the boundaries between groups a problem-based assessment of each group's strength and weaknesses is then conducted, considering a range of Australian texts predominantly from the post-bicentennial (1988) decade and international examples where pertinent. By engaging in a pragmatic assessment of the writerly strategies used to tell the stories of people or aspects of people similar to my "moth", an analysis of the informed narration technique used in *Moses in Egypt* is then considered.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signature: [redacted]

Print Name: REBECCA JANE JONES

Date: 15 December 2017

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my supervisor Dr. Ali Alizadeh for his passion and belief in my doctoral project and his significant contribution assisting me in conceptualising the creative work. I thank equally my co-supervisor, Dr. Sascha Morrell and former co-supervisor Associate Professor Anna Poletti for their unwavering support and dedication.

I am grateful for the guidance and mentorship provided by Monash University's Faculty of Arts, School of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics. I would like to specifically acknowledge the contribution at milestone review panels of Professor Sue Kossew, Associate Professor Simone Murray, Associate Professor Chandani Lokuge, Associate Professor Robin Gerster, Associate Professor Kevin Foster and Dr. Stewart King.

In Denmark, I am grateful for the insight and research support provided by Claus Røllum-Larsen, Senior Researcher at the Royal Library of Denmark; Jens Henrik Koudal, Senior Researcher at the Royal Library of Denmark; Svend Erik Larsen, Professor Emeritus at Aarhus University; Susanne K. Jensen, Curator at the Danish Immigration Museum; Dorte Sandorff; Gunver Gruner and Ellen Gruner. In Australia and beyond, I am indebted to Marcel Elfers, Forensic Handwriting Expert; Danielle Whitefield, Curator, Fashion and Textiles, National Gallery of Victoria; Dr. Graeme Skinner, Musicologist and Ray Lane.

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Christina Houen of Perfect Words Editing for her services as a proof reader and copy editor, in compliance with university guidelines and those of the Institute of Professional Editors (IPEd). Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank my parents, John and Debra Evans, my husband David and my children Arthur and Alice for being my ultimate inspiration. If one more story about someone long forgotten gets told as a result of the strategies discussed in this thesis, the last four years has been worthwhile.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART ONE: CREATIVE COMPONENT

PART TWO: EXEGESIS

MOSES IN EGYPT: CROSSING BOUNDARIES TO INFORMED NARRATION

LIST OF FIGURES

MOSES IN EGYPT

BY REBECCA JONES

In such a solitary place,

Where no man ever penetrates,

the site of which confuses and freezes my heart,

Why are we here concealed?

- Rossini, *Mosè in Egitto*

PROLOGUE

Adelaide, 1852

There was no reason for William Homan to talk to John Brooker's sister, but as he struck the carcass of the pig with his cleaver he knew he would have to invent one. The head of the animal at his station was still attached, and had it not been for a tributary of blood around its neck where the blade went in, one might have thought it was just sleeping. William and John had worked together at Humphrey's butchery for the past eight months, and over this time he decided he did not care much for the man. John was a queer and defensive character, a man who was big enough to throw a punch that would do more than wound, but slow in the mind, as if there was a disconnection between his brain and his body. He was tall and broad shouldered and had a mottled beard that grew patchily across his chin. His eyes were the colour of fire-tinged timber and he had a way of holding one's gaze that made William nervous. He reminded William of the now-freed prisoners from Van Diemen's Land who had settled in Adelaide: hollow-eyed and mildly aggressive. John was a loner, and oddly argumentative about issues most others would not deem contentious. He hulked about the shed in a bloodstained apron day in, day out, his carving knife holstered in his belt and a smear of gizzards across his brow. John was the only employee who did not seem to mind the smell of the place. William and John worked six days a week for Mr. Humphrey, and despite spending the daylight hours almost exclusively together, they knew little more about each other than their names.

William was born in London, to whom, he did not know. The filthy streets had raised him, the oily, sooty alleyways educated him, with the pungent scraps of half-rotted vegetables from street vendors his only sustenance. In London, he was as significant as a mollusc on the hull of a ship lost at sea. In London, he was listless and longing for someone or something to reveal itself as a sign that his short life was not a mistake. Or at least that is how it felt that fateful January night two years ago now, when a man stumbled across the cobblestones, doubled over and clutching at his side.

It was this chance encounter in the alley behind an alehouse that had changed everything for William. It came at a time when the combination of piercing hunger and falling snow threatened to kill the little optimism he had left in him. At first, William just watched him from the shadows. The man's insides were pouring out, crimson ribbons of blood funnelled through his fingers as he frantically tried to stop the flow. His eyes were red and bulbous and looked like they might pop from his head at any moment. William instinctively thought first to rob him, but there was something about him that made him think twice. He looked quite pathetic and although his convulsions were growing increasingly violent, William did not think the man was doing everything he could to save himself. It was almost as if he had succumbed to his fate there in the

stinking alley. William rushed over to him and shouted that he ought to lie down. He poured water into the man's wound and ripped off his vest, his only one – and wrapped it around the man's ribcage. The bloodied man coughed and winced in pain as he straightened his spine. William picked up the injured man's face by the chin and looked into his eyes to see if he was still conscious.

"Thank you," the man said and passed out on his lap.

The man's name was Rigby and he was employed as a cook on a ship bound for Australia. William never found out who had stabbed him or why, and Rigby never spoke of it. He did, however, give William a job and within two weeks of their meeting, both men left London aboard the *Rajah* bound for Port Adelaide, South Australia.

Unlike many of his drinking mates on the ship, William did not yearn for the old country. He did not miss the feeling of being so cold he thought his blood might freeze solid in his veins. He did not miss the Old Bailey and he did not miss the smell of the River Thames, the mixture of shit, soil and decay. He did not miss the squeals of caged animals, the crying of babies too weak to do anything else, or the stench of urine streaming from bridled horses in the city square. The best day of his life was the sixth of January 1849 when he slithered up the dirty coil ladder from the galley of the *Rajah* and up onto the deck to join the rest of the crew shouting and cheering.

"Land! Ahoy land!"

William had never seen a landscape so verdant. The exotic trees lining the coastline melted before his eyes in a kaleidoscope of greens, tans and ochres. The water was the colour of salt crystal, so clear you could see the fish swimming. As they got closer he could see the port of Adelaide. Everything was pristine, the structures, the ships. But what struck him most was the sensation that slipstreamed round his body, the air. The air felt so good against his itchy, sweaty skin. He released his hands from around a mast he'd been relying on for balance and threw his arms above his head, palms outstretched and facing the heavens.

He exhaled strongly and then drew in a mighty great breath.

For the first time in a long time he embraced the sensation of living.

William had learned enough of the skills of meat preparation and preservation from his time with the ship's cook to make securing employment in the colony an easy endeavour. In Adelaide town there were numerous butcheries, but the most prominent were located around Hindley Street, one of the main centres of commerce in the town. William was skilled with the cleaver and knew his way

around knives, after four long months of inventive cookery in the galley on the *Rajah*. There was something about being charged with feeding others on the ship that filled him with a sense of duty, more practical and important in his eyes than the spiritual nourishment provided by the clergymen onboard.

William did not know the circumstances of John Brooker's engagement at Mr. Humphrey's store, but he suspected that it was in some part a result of machinations by the man's mother. John Brooker's mother was a great pointy-faced dame named Hannah, whose outspoken nature was well known throughout the colony. Humphrey was a fair, yet feeble man, and William thought he would not have stood much of a chance against the straight-talking Mrs. Brooker.

William had first seen John's sister Elizabeth walking with her mother and her younger sisters along Venn Place about six months earlier. She was not a tall woman, but had a gazelle-like quality — it was almost as if she was dancing on upturned teacups. She had hair the colour of bee's honey and creamy white skin. And when she turned to talk to her mother as they walked together she cocked her head so she could catch her words directly and purposely like they were the most important words ever spoken. When her mother had finished speaking, Elizabeth centred her gaze to the street ahead, as William watched on from the window of the butchery. He watched her mouth move from polite contemplation into the slightest of smiles. Her eyes glistened in the mid-morning sun. William stared down hard at the half-butchered rabbit on the table, his cheeks feverish.

Weeks passed and William did not see Elizabeth again. In the evening he lay in his bed and thought about her, the delicate way her body moved as she negotiated the muddy street, her lightness. He could not remember the shop fronts she passed. He could not remember the day of the week it had been. He could not remember walking home that evening or rising for work the next day. She was unlike any woman he had ever seen since his days in London. She was not like the women on the ship who offered conveniences in exchange for a serving more of pudding. She was not like the women he had brushed past in Piccadilly, so powdered and polished. He imagined her skin would smell of grass after the rains and her hair of dew-covered rose petals. Sometimes he thought of her so much he wondered if she might just manifest before him. At night when he closed his eyes the last thing he saw was her shining dark eyes.

~~~

"Mother asked would like you to join us after church this Sunday," John said as the shop door swung shut behind him with a loud slap.

William and Mr. Humphrey both looked up from their stations. The old man was chopping up a
~~~

fowl. William had the hindquarters of his pig between his bloodied hands. Neither man was sure who the target of this abrupt invitation was. William raised an eyebrow.

"Yes, you Homan. Mother would like you to invite you to dinner," John said in a sharp voice that implied this had not been his idea.

William paused momentarily, as he had never officially made the acquaintance of old Mrs. Brooker, but decided to consider the invitation was not completely unexpected. After all, perhaps this had nothing to do with Mrs. Brooker's daughter Elizabeth and everything to do with the old woman wanting to snoop on her son's success or otherwise as a member of the gainfully employed. He glanced across at old Humphrey, who had returned to his cutting.

"Why, I should be delighted," he replied, trying for an amiable grin.

"Right, I shall pass it on, we eat at three o' clock on a Sunday," John answered. "Like most churchgoing folk."

The words hung in the dusty air of the butchery. John pushed his way past a crate full of plucked fowl and out to the shed. William remained in the front with Humphrey. His heart was beating so fast he could not hear the old man instruct him to help Mrs. Watson with the lamb pieces she'd asked for. He continued to hack away at the carcass on the bench.

Humphrey's reed-thin hand grabbed his forearm as he pulled the cleaver back about to make the next swing.

"William! Get yourself together boy, and get on with it."

William thought he might die of anticipation between now and Sunday. He nodded at Humphrey, cleared his throat and approached the waiting customer. Her bonnet was covered with dust the rains had turned to soot. Her upper lip sprouted hair, and her eyes were little more than two slits in the middle of her flat, round face.

"Ah Mrs. Watson, what'll it be?" He greeted her as cheerfully as he could manage, still thinking about the invitation. "We have some sausages just in, freshly made this morning, quite delicious I hear – "

"I'm here for the lamb," she snapped back. The way her mouth twisted made her look quite rat-like, William decided.

Of course, the lamb. He quickly picked two already wrapped portions from behind the counter and handed them to her.

"You best be careful with that cleaver, young man," she chided as she snatched the parcels.

In the back, John worked with an intensity William had not seen before. His eyes were unreadable, as they often were, but across his giant paddles of hands his knuckles were white and his veins stood up like tree roots after a great rain.

~~~

The Brooker family lived on Currie Street. After her husband died, Hannah Brooker was left destitute and alone to raise the eight of their ten children that made the journey with them from England. Today all but one of Brooker's children were grown; the youngest, also named Hannah, born on the ship on the way over, was now a headstrong young woman of fourteen. She was a queer little girl, the spitting image of her mother in looks and mannerisms, so much so that she was known to all as "Little Hannah". It was she who greeted William at the door on Sunday.

"Ah Mr. Homan, mother said you would not be on time," Little Hannah said with a smirk. Her hair was pulled back so tightly it pinched her eyebrows into two furry peaks.

William took off his hat and smiled nervously.

"Oh, but I am here now, little miss," he replied.

She frowned and spun round on a leather-booted foot.

"Come with me."

The Brookers' house was plainly appointed, and appeared to be furnished exclusively in items brought over in the Brooker's steamer trunks. The walls were unadorned, the floor a thin timber. The hearth in the kitchen appeared too small for a family of nine, but somehow Hannah and her children had managed. To support her family, Hannah had taken on work as a laundress, and was quite successful at the work. Elizabeth and Little Hannah had both taken to helping their mother with her work, and along with John were the only Brooker children still living in the house.

William followed Little Hannah down the narrow hallway and into the dining room, which was little more than an annex off the kitchen. Hannah Brooker did not rise from her seat at the head of the table. She was dressed entirely in black except for a small lace collar at her throat. To her right sat John, twisting his napkin. There were three other place settings at the table, but Elizabeth was not there. Hannah said,

"Mr. Homan, how kind of you to join us for dinner."
~~~

The old woman smiled but her eyes did not move.

“Thank you Mrs. Brooker, I – ”

“A city boy, aye?” She seemed surprised, noticing his accent.

“John did not inform me you were a Londoner,” she said, shooting a look at her son who was still torturing the fabric in his hand.

“Yes ma’am,” he replied. “Came out in ’49 aboard the *Rajah*. Ship’s cook, ma’am.”

That was not quite the truth as he had been little more than Rigby’s offsider, but he felt the sudden compulsion to promote himself to the old woman.

Hannah’s face softened slightly and she considered her adult son. “John here tells me you do fine work in the butchery."

William tried to mask his surprise. He looked down to the hat in his hands and then across to John, eyes still fixed on his napkin. “Why, thank you ma’am, but I am sure you are aware that your son indeed has one of the best techniques in the entire colony,” he replied.

In the corner of his eye he could see the old woman’s chest swell.

John looked up to him and smiled, and William could sense his relief. He watched as his shoulders loosened and he put down the contorted napkin.

Hannah instructed William to take a seat and ushered Little Hannah back into the kitchen to bring in their meal. “Now, we don’t oft meet a friend of John’s, so it is a pleasure to have an extra seat filled at the table on a Sunday,” Hannah continued. “Although I do not recall seeing you at the Trinity Church, or do you join another congregation?” she asked, knowing perfectly well he did not.

Hannah Brooker knew just about everybody in Adelaide town and her inquiries about the circumstance of Mr. Homan had been altogether fruitless. He was indeed a cook — Wallace at the lolly shop on Currie Street, one of Homan’s drinking pals, had verified it, but nobody could attest to his parentage. He kept a small room at a boarding house upon Gray Street, where the proprietor, Mrs. Simpson, reported him to be extraordinarily tidy. He did like a drink, but then aside from her son John, all the menfolk did.

“Ma’am, I confess I do not attend church,” William replied. “I do try and live an honest life, a good life and a kind one, ma’am,” he added.

Soft footfalls resonated behind him and he thought it was little Hannah returning from the kitchen.

But it was Elizabeth, pausing momentarily by the door to the dining room. She looked at William and nodded politely.

William's jaw hung open for a moment, his entire body pulsed as she approached the table. Like a puppet with its strings tangled, he stumbled awkwardly to his feet.

"Miss Brooker," he said, bowing to her by the entrance to the kitchen. His napkin had fallen to the floor, but he did not notice.

"Mr. Homan," she replied.

He watched as her lips parted to say his name and remained slightly so. Her lips were pale like apple skin. He wanted to say something more to her but he could not find the words. Mute, he stood there, barring her passage towards the table, a plate of steaming peas at her breast.

There was food eaten at the lunch but William was too distracted to notice its taste.

"Mr. Homan," Elizabeth began, "Do you know your alphabet?"

William's upper body stiffened slightly in surprise. It was not how their first conversation was set to play out in his mind. He had taught himself to read, out of sheer loneliness if he was honest, and his writing was not bad. It was, other than the art of hacking up meat, one of the few skills he had.

Elizabeth sensed his reaction and arched one delicate brow. Her arms were loose by side, her body perfectly relaxed.

She was a ship with an invisible anchor bobbing in the Thames and he, a cod caught in the coil of its chain.

"Why, yes I do." His voice did not sound as if it belonged to him.

She pounced.

"Astronomer," she said, paused for precisely one heartbeat, and continued: "Rearrange these letters and do tell me what you can think of."

What is she doing? Is this some form of test, or a game he wondered? He studied her face. Her brow was still slightly cocked, her small chin pointed toward his. John and Little Hannah were talking together and it appeared Mrs. Brooker had nodded off. Nobody was paying attention to William but Elizabeth. She watched him like he was prey, her eyes growing wider and brighter. She was enjoying this. He said the word in his head *Astronomer*. He said it over again. And again. He did not want her to see his lips move as he silently sounded each letter out individually. He closed his

eyes.

He stared straight at her and opened his mouth.

“Moon Starer.”

William stabbed at the peas on his plate and put a mighty great number of them into his mouth. He was afraid to leave it unoccupied lest he say something ridiculous. At this precise moment Little Hannah and John paused their fevered conversation and their mother woke up with a snort.

“Moon Starer,” Elizabeth repeated.

She tilted her head ever so slightly to one side and ran a hand down the back of her hair.

“Nobody likes your games Elizabeth,” John interjected. He looked down at his plate. It was so clean it did not look as if there had ever been a piece of food upon it.

She shot him a look of embarrassment. William could sense that however clever Elizabeth might be, her older brother was, still the older one.

Her eyes dropped. She touched her hair again, this time weaving the end into a small spiral. William dared not look at her. He motioned to John it was time he headed home.

The two men stood on the brick steps to the Brooker house and took in a pipe. It was the first time William had ever done so with John, but after the afternoon’s events he felt something had shifted between them. He was not sure who had invited him or for what purpose, but what he did know was that although he was not a spiritual man in the church-going sense, sometimes life had a way sorting itself out in ways that reason and common sense could not explain. He had always loved Australia because here everybody was ultimately alone in an unfamiliar land, as he had always felt he was in London, trying to adjust to an environment that would not adjust for them.

He did not feel alone at that moment.

“Till tomorrow then,” John said when they had finished the tobacco.

“Please do thank your mother for a fine afternoon,” William replied.

“Till tomorrow.”

He had engaged in sociable discourse with Mrs. Brooker, Little Hannah and even John, but somehow when he stepped back out onto muddy Currie Street he did not recall a thing that had happened except that Elizabeth had been there.

A gust of hot wind swirled around his feet as he walked off along Currie Street. When he reached the safety of a row of trees with low-hanging branches, he dared to stop and contemplate the afternoon. The heat of the day had dissipated and his skin felt quite burnt. He could feel every little hair protruding from the pores on his skin, and the combination of dried sweat and his quickened pulse made him lurch for the closest trunk for balance. He removed his hat and considered his image in a shop window close by.

Moon starer.

~~~

Elizabeth kept a diary and had diligently written in it every day since her family departed for Adelaide town in 1839. She felt compelled to record her thoughts and feelings and would often read back over passages she had completed years before, and laugh and wince at her state of mind at the time. It was not until that day at the house on Currie Street that it ever occurred to Elizabeth to stop writing in her journal. But tonight she sat at her small desk in deep thought. She could not think of a single thing to write. It was as if her mind had been completely emptied out, and her predisposition toward any topic whatsoever had been erased or rendered irrelevant. The old Elizabeth would write pages of wicked commentary on her mother, her sisters and brothers, and the people of the town. She delighted in forming private anagrams with their names, which amused her no end. Sometimes she would draw likenesses of the people she saw in the street. Sometimes she would invent add in characteristics in her drawings to make them appear a little more interesting. After all, how fascinating could a blacksmith or harness-maker be? She soothed her conscience with the knowledge that nobody would ever see these drawings or read her words, but really she did not feel guilt about any of it. Her thoughts were her own private domain, and over the course of her short life so far she had perfected a way of appearing to the outside world that merely hinted at the carnival of her inner life.

But now, he had come along, and nothing could ever be quite the same.

She knew it of course, had known since that day she first saw him through the window at Humphrey's store. She had asked John about him, but only under a heavily guarded pretence of polite enquiry into her brother's social livelihood – a topic she knew her sister Hannah could not resist eavesdropping on. John had not said much about the man other than that he was from London and had an unusual method of cutting meat. Elizabeth deduced this probably meant William was more skilled in the craft of butchery than her older brother, as he tended to employ thinly guised insults as a mechanism of defence. But his response was incidental, for Elizabeth knew it would
~~~

only be a matter of time before her younger sister shared the contents of the conversation with their mother. The entire process took exactly four days.

Over the course of the next three months, Elizabeth and William found themselves in the same location more often. At first it was an apple, mistakenly left behind by John in the morning, and thoughtfully delivered by his sister. And then it was due to poor Mrs. Anderson, the widow with a spine the shape of the letter “S”. Elizabeth had spied her hobbling along the dusty street and offered to guide her toward the store. John did not seem to notice his sister’s increased presence at the butchery. She once even said hello to him and he blushed in surprise. Until of course, he realised who she was.

In the evenings, William would walk past Currie Street on his way home. He lingered just out of sight near the Brooker house and imagined what Elizabeth might be doing on the other side of the red-bricked wall.

Inside, Elizabeth lay sleepless in her bedroom and wondered what William might be thinking of as he slid the rusty steel door to the butchery shed closed. She could almost smell the water and animal blood and cloves in the air. In the darkness she could almost make out the sensation of his warm, tanned skin upon hers. He reminded her, unaccountably, of the ocean swell one night on the ship when her father allowed her to sneak a look after the cabin lanterns were dimmed. He was like the black wall of water encircling their vessel from which there was no escaping.

It was not a sensation she had thought she might ever experience again.

1.

THE PHOTOGRAPH

When I inherited an old photograph of an ancestor who looked a lot like me never did I think it would cause me to spend the next two years wondering if it was possible for a man to hack off his own head.

I first saw the photograph as a child at my grandmother's house, but I would not see it again until almost 30 years later when I returned to Melbourne after years living in New York. My grandmother had passed while I was abroad and she did not leave me anything, although this did not surprise me. She was neither generous nor sentimental. My mother, on the other hand, was both.

"Look at this!"

My mother pressed a small plastic bag into my hand and anxiously smoothed wisps of her pale gold hair behind both ears. She had suggested our impromptu meeting at a tiny café on Flinders Lane next to the building I worked in. It was freezing and yet we were seated at the only outside table, at her insistence.

A waitress came to take down our order. My mother thanked her then shooed her off a little too briskly. She seemed tense, jumpy and not at all like herself. Traffic crept by in slow motion to our right, occasionally punctuated by the whoosh of a cyclist threading through slivers of asphalt in the spaces between cars. Salty wind snaked in from nearby Port Philip Bay and ricocheted between skyscrapers that loomed above us in a pickle of grey and ochre. Under our feet was bluestone, surrounding us on the walls of the café was graffiti in neon pinks and blues.

I placed the bag on the table and cradled my coffee cup with sleeves pulled down over my fingers for warmth. The photograph was facing down, but through the wrinkly plastic of the bag I could just make out a pencilled name, printed in blockish script: ELIZABETH.

"I found it when I was cleaning out Nanna’s house the week after the funeral,” she explained.

“I think it’s her mother’s grandmother. Mum said her mother, Mary Lark, who was Mary Gruner before she married, used to carry this photograph around with her. It was pretty special to her.”

“I guess that’s why Nanna kept it safe and never threw it out?” I offered, trying to match her enthusiasm.

We exchanged a glance and she raised an eyebrow as she took a sip of her tea. In the distance, the crackle of an intercom heralded a train winding slowly into Flinders Street Station. The sky looked

as if it might dissolve at any moment.

"Yes, so. It’s Nanna's great grandmother…” she went on, and paused on a rising note. Her face twisted with impatience, her eyes flared.

“Just look at it for Pete’s sake!"

I sighed and replaced my cup in its saucer and pushed back both sleeves. It was no doubt going to be one of the tiny old photographs my grandmother had displayed in her living room on her battered, nicotine-stained buffet, covered in a perennial layer of dust. Amongst this collection of black and white photographs of relatives long dead had been four tiny, almost locket-sized framed pictures of each of her grandchildren. The pictures she chose to display of my brothers and I were far from our best ones. The one of me was one I had not posed for. I was looking down, holding a blue inflatable ball in my hands, thick blond bangs heavy across my tiny heart shaped face.

The other photographs, the older ones, were nested behind these baby photographs, but I could not recall their contents. It had to be one of these, and for this reason I couldn’t see what the big deal was. I shrugged and half-smiled at my mother’s sharpness, and pulled the photograph from the bag.

I flipped it over and saw at once why she so desperately wanted me to look at it.

It was a photograph of *me.*

In an involuntarily reflex my hands snapped back, and the photograph floated to my lap. I reached down and picked it up. My eyes met my mother’s.

The photograph was smaller than a standard 6x4 and on thick card-like paper. I had seen it before, as I suspected, but I hadn’t realised the resemblance. How could I? A child does not know what he or she will look like as an adult, after all.

It was a formal, portrait-style composition of a young woman. Her small elbows pierced a tufted armchair before her at an awkward angle, like a wishbone. Her torso was narrow, her neck long. She wore a dark velvet fitted gown with white lace at the cuffs and an ornate ruffled neckline. Her hair was swept back into a clutch of ringlets either side of her face. Her hands, resting lightly on top of each other, were like the folded wings of a dove. She looked about my age, maybe a few years younger – early twenties perhaps. It was hard to tell.

Her lips curved in the same manner I had seen my own do in photographs, not quite a scowl, not quite a smile. Even in the sepia of the print I could see her eyes were dark and had the same diaphanous quality as my mother’s and mine.

"Did you know about this before today?" I asked, as the bay winds stepped up an octave to a whistle, and an impatient truck driver in the laneway beside us blasted his horn.

"Of course I did," she said, a little calmer now. Her eyes widened and she leaned in, her voice barely above a whisper.

“The pictures you used to send your father and I when you were in New York kept giving me strange feelings of *déjà vu*,” she said.

“About New York?” I asked, not quite following.

“About you.”

I thought it was an odd thing to say, but I didn’t respond. I was a journalist and my mother knew the photo would intrigue me. I studied the image again. Her eyes unmistakably linked us by blood, but it was more than that. It was the way she arched her brow without revealing the intention behind it, and the pivot of her torso. I understood now what my mother was talking about.

“Her name is Elizabeth,” my mother restated. “And that is all we know.”

Filmy pockets of rain were forming on the table between us. My mother reached across and covered the photograph with her hand.

“Keep her safe.”

2.

SHOCKING SUICIDE AT EAST COLLINGWOOD

One lunch break a few weeks after receiving the photograph, I found myself outside the State Library of Victoria. I wanted to know more about Elizabeth and this seemed like the best place to start.

I took the steps leading to the entrance two by two, exhaling when I reached the top. I did not know what I was going to find out about this woman — my doppelganger — and was unclear what was driving me to find out. I paused for the automatic door to slide open and thrust myself forward before I had a chance to dwell on it a moment longer.

Like a rock smoothed with age and a thousand tides, the State Library had mellowed from when it was built in 1854 as a symbol of new money and prosperity, but its ostentatious roots still stood to this day. In the foyer a marble staircase rose through the throat of the building, abutting sandstone walls, papery to the touch. Hints of the modern era had slipped into the bones of the historical skeleton — a digitised information board hung by the cloakroom, a recycling container nestled in the corner.

I expected the library to be teeming with detectives and lay historians behind microfiche machines and scribbling in notebooks with one hand as the other traced an ancient manifest. I expected to spy security guards playing a secret game of cards upon a leather-topped table in the furthest corner of the reading room away from the supervisor's watchful eye. Instead, the library seemed to be occupied by office workers like me who had clocked out of their concrete towers and strolled the three or floor blocks to Swanston Street. Dotted in amongst the workers were students, tourists, the odd hobo, and several school groups. We could have been in any public building in any major city — a motley crew with a shared intention that could dissipate just as quickly as it formed.

The reading room was laid out much like an open plan office in a call centre. There were no high partitions between each cubicle, and the décor was neutral and inoffensive. Heads bobbed over laptops, some using the library-provided devices. A small number of workstations had nothing on them at all. These ones were for reading and were few.

In my purse, I carried the photograph. It was in the same plastic bag my mother placed it in when she cleaned out my grandmother's house. I took a seat at a free computer, opened the bag and withdrew it carefully.

I held the photograph at arms-length and examined it like one might a newborn baby, gingerly and not wanting to stamp it with my preconceptions.

Who are you?

A young man in a grey-hooded top in the seat next to me pulled out one of his earphone buds and asked if anything was the matter.

I realised I had spoken out loud.

I pressed the photograph to my chest. “Oh sorry, I’m fine.”

I let out a little nervous laugh.

He raised an eyebrow and smiled.

I was at a library to do some family research, a completely legitimate use of my time and skills, but I felt underprepared. For a moment I longed for my everyday work of news journalism with its formulaic cast of characters and issues and events. Even my past university research had structure. But this, whatever it was I was doing, caused my fingers to hover above the keyboard, unsure of how to go on.

I stared hard at the blinking search box before me of TROVE, the National Library of Australia’s online database of digitised newspapers and archives. It was almost twelve-thirty and my lunch break was half over.

I needed to get moving.

I looked down at the photograph on the table beside me.

Elizabeth stared back.

I knew her name was Elizabeth. I also knew my grandmother’s mother, Mary Florence Gruner, kept the photograph on her at all times. My mother said my grandmother thought the woman in the photograph was Mary Gruner’s grandmother.

Narrowing the identity down to either Elizabeth Gruner, Mary Gruner’s paternal grandmother or an Elizabeth with an unknown surname that was Mary Gruner’s maternal grandmother, I decided to try my luck with the one surname I knew. I could investigate the maternal lineage later, a task that would no doubt take longer than an hour.

In a flurry, I entered *Elizabeth Gruner* into the TROVE enquiry field and slammed the enter key.

Here goes nothing.

I unscrewed the cap from a bottle of water I had smuggled in and took a quick sip. I scanned the search results, of which there were eleven. The top three appeared to be the same article syndicated across three different newspapers.

They all had the same headline:

Shocking Suicide at East Collingwood

I blinked in disbelief, my heart drumming in my ears. I clicked open the first item:

Mr. Candler held an inquest yesterday, at Potter's Junction Hotel, Simpson's road, on the body of a musician named Anthony Gruner, who committed suicide at his residence, Hoddle Street, on Monday evening, by cutting his throat with a razor. Elizabeth Gruner, the wife of the deceased, on examination, deposed as follows –The deceased was her husband. He was 49 years of age, and was a musician by profession. Last evening (Monday) about 8 o'clock she found him lying on the bed in the bedroom quite dead. There was blood on the bed and on the wall. She saw him alive an hour before. At that time he said he was going to lie down, and he directed her to call him upon the arrival of a pupil he expected. The pupil did not come, and she did not call him till 8 o'clock. Her son, who is 12 years old, was the only other person in the house with her. Deceased had his clothes on. She did not hear any stir in the room. He had been in low spirits since Saturday evening last, and had been wandering in his mind. He said he had been insulted by some of the musicians at the Town Hall, he took it very much to heart, and appeared very melancholy. He did not drink, and never made any previous attempts on his own life. The razor produced was the deceased's. He did not threaten to destroy himself, and was in pretty good circumstances. She and the deceased lived happily together. The handwriting in pencil on the paper produced she identified as that of the deceased. Alfred Cartledge, a constable, stationed at East Collingwood, stated that, on searching the body of the deceased he found the watch and other things produced. The paper with the pencil marks was found in the left-hand trousers pocket. He found it that morning. The razor produced was in the deceased's right hand. There was a great quantity of blood on the wall where it had spurted, and there was also a great quantity on the bed. He saw the cuts in the throat, and believed they had been self-inflicted. William Crambe, a legally qualified medical practitioner, deposed that he had made a post-mortem examination of the body of the deceased. Externally, he found on the left side of the neck a deep and large wound, which had severed everything down to the spine. There were two cuts above that wound, one extending about two inches and about a quarter of an inch deep, and a superficial wound of about half an inch in length. They were all such as could be

inflicted with a razor, were in the same direction, and were made from the back to the front. They were, in his opinion, self-inflicted. The arteries had been severed, and copious haemorrhage had taken place. There were no other marks of violence on the body. The cause of death was haemorrhage from the wound in the throat, and he believed the deceased had committed suicide whilst of unsound mind. The jury found a verdict in accordance with the medical testimony. The pencil writing on the piece of paper alluded to in the testimony of the first and second witnesses was as follows -"Stoneham-Levy Your Handiwork is done My Blood Shall be Revenge You cowards."

The hum of electronic devices, paper shuffling and tennis shoes upon parquetry dissolved around me. I stared at the words on the screen, drinking each one in.

I looked again at the photograph on the table. Was this the wife who discovered her husband dead by his own hand in a pool of blood?

Her eyes revealed nothing.

My eyes.

I was not sure what I had hoped to find out about Elizabeth and the photograph, but an association to a suicide was certainly not it. I re-read the article. My throat softened and I swallowed the now lukewarm mouthful I had taken earlier from my water bottle. The anxiety I had felt just minutes ago had eased. There was now a point to my being here today, beyond a superficial curiosity to learn about an old relative who looked a lot like me. I wanted to know more about Anthony Gruner.

Was it possible for a man to cut his own throat?

And who were these men, Stoneham and Levy?

I searched both of their names and added Gruner's to the request.

One result. It read:

THE LATE ANTHONY GRUNER

TO THE EDITOR OF THE ARGUS.

Sir, -I beg you would kindly state in your paper that I have not had any dealings with Mr. Gruner for the last 14 years, and then only on one occasion he having committed suicide, and my name having been brought before the public in connection with a paper found in his pocket. By inserting this you will very much oblige,

B. LEVY, Leader of the Italian Opera. Opera-house, Sept. 10.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE ARGUS

Sir- I beg to say in reference to the suicide of the late Anthony Gruner (my name having been very disagreeably mentioned in connection therewith) that I never had any transactions with him whatsoever, except in his professional capacity as a musician; neither was I present at any of the late concerts at the Town hall at which he complained to his wife of having been insulted. Have had no transactions with him of any kind for the last five or six months; nor had I the slightest cause to believe that he entertained any but the most friendly feelings towards me. By inserting the above, you will oblige,

WILLIAM STONEHAM

I looked up to the clock positioned above the information counter and saw it was almost two o'clock. I had been gone almost two hours and I needed to get back to the office. I quickly printed the article and two letters and folded both around the photograph, stuffing the entire sum of my research into my purse before sprinting toward the exit.

3.

1873 – *Two days before Anthony Gruner is found dead*

Elizabeth Gruner's husband Anthony was a musician and a composer. He could play all manner of brass instruments and also the pianoforte. She said nothing when he kept his metronome in the bureau in their bedroom, for she knew how much it meant to him. Every night he dreamed to the sound of it clicking. Steady, like a beating heart. He did not know it was a sound that kept her awake for hours and compelled her to listen to the soft whistle of his breathing in time with the device, terrified that one might stop and the other would follow.

Elizabeth had not been present at any of her husband's performances at the Town Hall, but she had seen him perform in other venues, with admiration and just a hint of pride. Anthony Gruner was steadily employed in a variety of musical productions throughout the state of Victoria, and his family was permitted to attend many of these at no charge, so whenever she could, she did.

When Anthony was idle, which was usually when he was without a musical instrument in his hand, he would sing to himself. Often he would choose songs Elizabeth had not heard before; although some of them were in English, for the most part he sang in German. Not once did he sing in Danish, which Elizabeth thought a little odd, as this was after all his mother tongue. Over the years she had developed a practised air of submission, even before she had met Anthony. She could feign nonchalance for any manner of happenings, of any size, in any sequence, such was her skill. It was not her natural disposition, and in fact had the child-version of herself observed the grown woman, she knew they would have crossed in the street as strangers.

It was this cloak of muted indifference that Elizabeth wore like a second skin that would make what she was about to do surprising to Anthony, or anyone for that matter.

Fastening the lace collar of her dress at her throat, she reached for the cameo on her bureau in its muslin case. A small bone mirror provided just enough guidance, with the fingers of moonlight that illuminated the dark bedroom. The brooch was straight enough. She covered her dress with a layer of woollen outer garments, put on her gloves and made her way downstairs.

The hearth twinkled in the bowels of the kitchen, the air scented with ageing potatoes and chicken blood. Patting the dark air in front of her body to avoid whacking her shins into the kitchen table, she sidestepped through the blackened room.

Elizabeth had aligned her departure to coincide with the bedtime of her four youngest children and the return of her eldest son Henry from work at the tannery, and even though she expected Henry at

any moment, she still jumped at the sight of his silhouette at the back door.

Elizabeth had been married to Anthony for ten years now, some thirteen years after she buried her first husband, William – Henry's father.

Henry responded to his mother's skittish move with a soft chuckle and for a second the two forgot about their somewhat strained relationship that had become more difficult as the years passed. She wondered if her son thought anything of her outdoor clothing as he stood there considering her in the muted light. If he did, he did not let on.

When the moment had passed, Henry's mood reverted to the dourness the family were accustomed to. It upset her to see her son melancholy but it also infuriated her that it was her first husband's fault and there was not a thing she could do about it, more than she already had. There was something so dispirited about the young man Henry had grown into and this broke her heart every time she looked at him.

Her son hated working at the tannery. His disdain for his employer was the only topic that he seemed to speak freely on these days — any other opinions lay stuck in his larynx. When he spoke of his work he cussed and stared at the ground, grinding his palms together. He had the same wispy hair as his father, the colour of burnt butter, and the same lean, long-limbed body. And although Henry was just a boy of nineteen years, the creases above his brow were more deeply etched than she could ever remember seeing in his father's face.

Staring into her son's grey-green eyes in the kitchen, Elizabeth thought of William. He had proposed to her on New Years Eve 1853, and they'd married the week after. As soon as practicable, William had said.

The few days between their engagement and marriage at the Holy Trinity Church in Adelaide had been some of the buoyant and most jubilant of his life. He had soared through the days, like a child that knew his birthday was coming. He had become a puzzle solved, a coat hung up for the last time at the end of a long winter. The anticipation of their union had transformed him, and this transformation culminated on their wedding day.

She dared remember that day, but only for a moment. It was a Thursday. Sadness welled in her stomach as she remembered him waiting pensively, kneeling at the foot of the altar.

A backwards glance had revealed he was unconvinced until that very moment she would show up, as if it was all just a heady dream. Gone was the lightness, and in its place a nervous twitch, beads of sweat sliding down to his collar.

Elizabeth had worn a borrowed gown that day and the only pair of shoes she owned.

They were brown, worn and cracked, with creasy tongues that rubbed uncomfortably across her ankles. The dress was too long, so nobody saw the shoes, and an outsider might have commented that she was perfectly turned out. But with every step she took down the aisle those dusty boots pinched her ever so slightly, enough to remind her that nothing in life was effortless. She walked toward him, trying to not to see the investment he made in her in his grey-green eyes.

After their wedding Elizabeth and William had travelled by steamer to Melbourne-town, lured by the promise of gold and all that it inspired. When little Henry was born it was the proudest day of her husband's life, he'd told her, smacking his lips to hers as she lay still bloodied on the bed.

Three years later baby James had arrived, followed by Frances. James would not be with them long, leaving them just short of his second birthday. It was commonplace for babes to not live long enough to see all four seasons more than once, and Elizabeth and her friends had come to know all too well the rituals that followed the death of a child. The boiling of the sheets, the airing out and sweeping of the room, prayers spoken in hushed tones, and tear-stained cheeks. The death of their second son had changed her first husband in a way she had not anticipated, and she was quite unprepared for his emotional disintegration.

"How could this happen to me, Lizzie?" William had pleaded of her one evening, his breath rancid with drink.

William had been so distraught at the death of baby James he did not attend the funeral. Her only comfort that day had been their son Henry, gripping her hand tightly at the graveside.

Looking back, it was as if William died along with James. He might as well have, Elizabeth thought. He had all but vanished from their lives, in mind and then in body.

When the day had finally come that William did not return home, Elizabeth had known this would not be like the other times when her husband would reappear after several days or weeks. Sometimes in different clothes to those that he set out in, and often with a new means of employment. But on that last day, Elizabeth had known she would be alone from then on, and so had her children.

Years later, Henry guffawed in disbelief when Elizabeth announced that she intended to marry again. He had been happy enough at the lodging house and he did not understand why she would want to add further disruption to their already fractured existence. There were no words Elizabeth could to find to explain the situation to the then nine-year-old boy. Henry viewed Anthony as an

outsider who, just by being in their lives, would weaken the brittle skeleton of his family. He did try, at his mother's insistence, to form a friendship of sorts with Anthony. But his attempts were awkward and half-hearted and the older man did virtually nothing to meet him half way.

It was moments like this she clung to when her eldest son regarded her with painful indifference, as he had over the last few years. She wished he had been closer to his younger sister Frannie, or even just born at a time when things were a little more settled, but looking back she realised that no such time existed.

Anthony did not seem to notice any uneasiness between himself and Henry. In this regard he and her first husband William could not have been more different. William was openly emotional. Anthony was withdrawn, moody and often so aloof Elizabeth sometimes felt uncomfortable being in the same room with him. But at least he was there, something William was not, and never would be again.

More than a decade had passed but still, at times she hated William. At other times she yearned for him to be at her side, running ahead of her as they strolled in the early afternoon, darting behind trees to pluck spiky leafed flowers from the foreshore at Sandridge, and inventing stories about the incoming steamer ship passengers. At times she wished she could just see those grey-green eyes one more time.

If things had unravelled differently she would never have met Anthony Gruner. The betrayal she felt by keeping a part of inner herself for her first husband made her cheeks flush, but with Anthony, she was certain these details were not noticed, or at most disregarded. Anthony did not conform to anyone's idea of a husband, nor did he respond to anything like other men did. This had irritated her at first, but now she saw it as an advantage. On the surface he provided shelter and food for his wife and children and even his stepchildren, but he did not interact with them like other husbands and fathers. He did not linger with the returning miners from the field at the top of Hoddle Street on a Friday afternoon to laud their victories and empathise with their failures in the pits of the diggings. He did not chop wood by the back stoop, and he did not chew a pipe. He was standoffish and haughty in his mannerisms, almost feminine — something Elizabeth's mother pointed out on more than one occasion. Anthony Gruner communicated by insinuation and innuendo and was never one to say what was directly on his mind. This infuriated Elizabeth's mother Hannah who often called it witchery, but Elizabeth was more tolerant of his ways, simply because she had to be.

Henry was not privy to her motivations for marrying Anthony, and perhaps this was what had

driven the wedge between them in recent years. They had not once been back to the house on Cambridge Street since her wedding day.

She had to tell herself over and over that she was doing this for the right reasons, for them.

Standing there in the damp, blackened kitchen, Elizabeth longed to embrace Henry and empty out the contents of her heart to him. But she knew from experience that children were not compelled to heed the words of their elders. She remembered her own father's voice at the door of the barn back in England, raised in defiance, announcing to her grandfather they were to set sail aboard the *Cleveland*, bound for the colonies.

Henry's eyes met hers as she passed him and she felt the muscles across her breast contract and her pulse slow. She longed for a word of comfort to reach her lips in time, yet none came. She reached out for him in frustration. He avoided her hand. He watched her smooth long fingers recoil into the folds of her laced sleeve, and her small shoulder slump back under the folds of her cape. Elizabeth could still feel him curled in a ball inside her womb. What happened to the little boy by the tombstone, head bowed in sorrow, palms clasped in prayer?

Briskly, she unlatched the gate and stepped outside and into the night. Pools of evening rain glistened in a hopscotch formation along the muddy street.

~~~

To the passer-by she was invisible. The colouring of her garments seemed to blend with the greyness of the street at night, and to Elizabeth this was ideal. She needed to make her way from Dundee Cottage, their home on Hoddle Street in Collingwood, to the Melbourne Town Hall without being seen. The secrecy sparked a flicker of electricity up her spine for a moment, then it was replaced with a shiver of dread. The night clouds hid the stars from her as she wove her way down Wellington Street. She passed her mother's cottage and noticed a figure dancing behind the curtain in her bedroom. Not a single sound accompanied the movement, except for the bray of a pair of corralled ponies next door. She paused and considered what her mother might be engaged in at eight o'clock in the evening. Hannah Brooker was living the life of a widow, despite possessing a marriage license to a man that was still living.

Like Elizabeth, Hannah had been married twice. Her first husband and the father of all her children, Michael Brooker, died of typhus after landing in Adelaide from England in 1839. Four years later she married a man named John Viant.

Viant was ruddy faced with sly eyes, tall with broad shoulders, and fingers as wide as pitchforks
~~~

that he often wove together behind his head in an act of lazy defiance. He was known to all who knew him always by his full name, never just John and rarely Mr. Viant.

Hannah did not take Viant's name when they wed and Elizabeth wondered if it was simply because folk would not understand that Viant was his family name, and not part of his Christian name.

Not that it mattered, for Hannah was very much still a Brooker.

John Viant had always made his intentions to produce more children very clear. To him, children were an inbuilt workforce he could employ for no wage, and who had no say if conditions were not to their liking. *Slaves* might have been a better word for it, Elizabeth mused. But Hannah was already forty-two when they married, so this desire would never be achieved.

There was word that Hannah and Viant divorced, but Hannah had never mentioned it. Viant allegedly had an allotment in the Gawler region and after trying his luck (which was never very good) in Bendigo, had set about to build his home there.

Today Hannah lived with her son John, Elizabeth's older brother of forty-seven, who had never married and this, according to the churchwomen, had been the most appropriate charter of life for him. To say John Brooker was simple minded was a statement that was both true and false. Her older brother was somewhat of a paradox, a shy yet pigheaded man. He sang while he worked at the abattoir, church songs, mostly. John was conscientious and polite but when he spoke, his words swirled about on his tongue before he could spit them out. The only person who did not seem to notice this was Hannah.

"Nothing is missing from my son," she would snap across the dinner table, on the odd occasion John was not dining with the family.

"He is just waiting for a woman who's worth his bother, is all."

Elizabeth and her siblings knew this was not exactly the case. John had positioned himself as companion to his ageing mother, and it was a role neither of them liked to admit came with an expiration date. Neither they nor anyone else in the family for that matter could conceive of a life for John beyond Hannah's tenure on earth. The topic was avoided in the name of good taste, and only occasionally touched upon by one of her visiting brothers, Samuel or Eli, both younger and more successful than John, and both with established families and land allotments of their own. At the mention of their brother, Hannah would dutifully leap to his defence and silence her other children into submission, compelling them to wring their hands under the dinner table and exchange sideways glances.

Other than Elizabeth's two younger brothers and her baby sister "Little Hannah", the rest of Elizabeth's siblings remained in Adelaide, and aside from a very infrequent exchange via the mail service, her mother never heard from any of them. Hannah had grown accustomed to living apart from her children, so long as her son John was by her side for he was the strongest reminder, albeit a weak one, of her first husband Michael, Elizabeth's father — the man who brought them all here in the first place.

Hannah had not reacted with enthusiasm when Elizabeth and William told her of their intention to relocate to Victoria, but she did not protest. To Hannah, the husband was the leader of the family but she knew the idea was not William's. The old woman understood why this was so and Elizabeth did too. How could she not? She had seen her mother pack their worldly belongings into four steamer trunks and sit upon one along the dock at The Downs waiting to board the *Cleveland.* Her mother had reacted with swift and sensible actions throughout the tumultuous months-long journey to Australia. She was nursemaid, teacher, confidant and referee for all the family, and alone she managed their bouts of diarrhoea, vomiting and complaining. Not one of these roles did Hannah volunteer for, yet she obliged because that was what Elizabeth's father expected of her. Oh how she had hated that ship! But she would never let on, and it was just as well. Mid voyage her husband became ill, and at the same time she discovered she was pregnant with Elizabeth's baby sister. Hannah had a dying husband and a babe in her belly she did not know where she would find the resources to nurture; yet still, she persisted. Hannah saw this spirit in Elizabeth. The two women loved each other but they did not worry about one another; there simply was no need.

Hannah would continue to dance behind her curtains at night, even if she was alone. That was, in fact if she was actually alone tonight. The faint clink of two bottles from inside the cottage answered this question, and with a light press of her heel into the soft earth, Elizabeth spun round and headed toward Victoria Parade.

~~~

Elizabeth liked Melbourne-town best at this time of night. It was mostly silent; the publicans had long swept the drunkards into the street and bolted their doors. Splotchy tributaries of mud ran along the footpath outside the hotels, a composition of beer wrung out from the barkeeper's cloth, and spring rain. Animals dreamed in their pens and the buggies and carts lay idle. Tonight nobody needed anything doing; the men were at home, the children asleep, and the only ones working were the musicians at the Town Hall and the silvery moon that glowed in the night sky. The moon gave Elizabeth just enough light to make out the shadows in the town before her. She walked slowly, careful to keep a straight line. She closed her eyelids momentarily and saw England. In the dark, the
~~~

muted taupes and artichoke green of Melbourne-town could be recast in her mind as the verdant hills of her childhood.

She could almost taste the long, sharp stems of grass ribboning through the fields, up and down, in and out of gullies and lazily slipping into forges where the sky dipped down to kiss the land. If she strained her ears she could almost hear the chiming of the bells at the old village church. She felt the burn of skin too close to the open fire, the warmth of the sun on her small face through cracks in the walls of the farmhouse as she lay on her bed in the early morning. Her lips parted to a whisper of night air so cold, she waited for flakes of snow to fall upon her. But they did not come. Her eyes reopened and her fisted hands released the clotted folds of her skirt. She breathed out, and underneath her cloak she could feel the buttons of her dress tighten across her bosom.

It was not the first time she had travelled back in her mind to the place of her birth, but it was not something she dared indulge in in the daylight hours. Somebody might see her — eyes clasped shut, arms loose by her side, swinging slightly in the breeze. Someone might see her and know that for as long as she had lived here, almost her entire time on this earth – there was a dream that came to her and it was always in England.

As time wore on, this dream came less and less frequent and she wondered if she had merely imagined it. Her mother was her touchstone in this regard. It was a dream she knew she could never share with her own children and one that in future generations would be replaced by a new dream. One where life was not predictable, where the dawn did not know what the dusk would reveal, where it was hard to tell if the horses were broken in or the street dogs tame.

The wind whipped through the drooping gums along Victoria Parade as Elizabeth continued to step one foot in front of the other. Nearing Gisborne Street she began to feel the vibrato of the cello in her ribcage.

Elizabeth had never seen her husband perform as part of the Melbourne Philharmonic so she did not quite know what to expect. It was not customary for the family of the musicians to be present at performances of such calibre, and the advertising for such affairs was limited to a few lines in the Argus. Those fortunate enough to have been afforded a fashionable education in the arts knew of opera and pantomime and all that it entailed, but the families she knew did not.

Public performances were of course, a different matter. Bandmaster-about-town William Stoneham regularly engaged Anthony in his numerous musical collectives for parties and festivals and official events, and his family were always invited. But these events usually happened during the day, and often in conjunction with other forms of entertainment that were not, perhaps, to the discerning

tastes of the Melbourne aristocracy. This class division between musical engagements infuriated her husband, and he often expressed his resentment at the exclusivity of certain venues, especially when the prejudiced ones were the newly minted gold diggers returning from the fields. But as annoying as it was for Anthony to be beholden to employers of questionable pedigree, the gold rush had brought with it a thirst for the arts. Audiences were awed by even the most ordinary of performances (according to her husband) and such enthusiasm inspired a generation of new music lovers, many of whom were keen to learn to play music themselves, a desire her husband was most happy to oblige.

Music academies had sprung up all over Melbourne-town, and Anthony too found himself in constant engagement. He would take lessons in the small reception room of Dundee Cottage, often keeping the front door ajar so that passers-by might drink in the melodies and be incited into signing up for tuition. His foreign mannerisms laced his instruction with a sense of authority the English-born musicians lacked, and his unusual method of facing away from his students as they practised and rapping his middle finger on the neck of his saxhorn in time, added a sense of camaraderie, as if he was about to jump in on the next movement, to form an impromptu duet. He never did, however. But it was this implied sense of co-creation that kept his pupils hungry for more.

Elizabeth and Anthony had been married ten years and not one day had passed that she had been concerned for his welfare. He just was not the sort of person that inspired empathy, being so devoid of the typical markers of emotional fragility. That was until today.

Anthony had not taken his supper with his family, but rather lingered in the yard space by the rear lane behind their cottage. Surprised, Elizabeth had cocked her head out an open window and beckoned him inside. He did not appear to hear her and continued to sit stoically on a pile of earth compacted by the recent rains. In his hand left hand he massaged a small stone back and forth. His gaze lay dully on the wall of the neighbouring cottage and his head hung low. He held his mouth slightly ajar as if might be humming, but Elizabeth could not hear any sound.

Eventually he came into the cottage when the rain began to fall. It had been drizzling solidly for the past two days, and this is what he told his wife was the cause of his despondence.

She did not believe him.

He moved slowly toward her in the pantry where she stood scooping flour from a drum. His graceful torso was pin-straight and supported by two long and slender legs that curved together as he leant against the pantry door. His eyes met hers.

“I’m not sure if I am to go to work this evening Lizzie,” he said.

She looked down at his palm and saw blood where the stone had been.

“Is something the matter?” she asked, tentatively, knowing with Anthony she was likely to receive an answer she was not expecting.

This plain speaking was new for her where Anthony was involved. He paused, surprised by her question, and for a fleeting moment, she thought he was preparing an answer.

But instead he did what he had always done and retreated, giving his wife a look that let her know he had misspoken. Before Elizabeth could ask him more he had disappeared down Hoddle Street in his smart dress suit, with his saxhorn in its case under his arm, the whole outfit layered with a protective woollen outer coat and thick cap that perched upon his carefully oiled hair. She followed him out to catch one last glimpse of him, his lithe body negotiating the pools of water along the street.

He did not look back.

Anthony Gruner was the first Danish person Elizabeth had ever known. She did not have any idea what a man from Scandinavia might look like or sound like until she met her husband.

They had married at the Church of St Peter at Eastern Hill in 1863 in an unremarkable ceremony. Their former landlord and his wife had served as witnesses. Elizabeth had snorted at her mother's thinly veiled outrage at their two Jewish witnesses performing rites in the Church of England. But she wondered later how she could marry a man that she knew nothing of, other than his name — a man who had practically appeared out of thin air that evening all those years ago at the house on Cambridge Street.

Anthony's family did not attend the wedding, nor had they visited once. For obvious reasons, he said. Elizabeth did not understand what these so very obvious reasons were, or why Anthony was without any family, but she never said as much. He was here in the colonies alone, he said and that is all he said.

It would seem to an outsider that Elizabeth had cause long before that night to be concerned about her husband. But in spite of this, it was the image of his blood-pricked palm where the rock had been that prompted her to leave their Collingwood home and steal away into the dark night.

She needed answers.

She needed to see him when he was not aware she was looking. To catch a glimpse of him before

he was able to fasten the mask she knew he wore. Usually she did not mind her husband's emotional evasiveness, but tonight she did, and she wished she had said something more productive that evening at suppertime. In despair she tugged at the tie of her cloak.

She had not felt like this for a long time.

Elizabeth neared the Town Hall, and with each passing step the music bleeding out into the street grew louder as it swirled round the gaslights that lit the town's main promenade. Horses attached to smart buggies stamped absently at their stations, and crumpled old coachmen sucked pipes in the background, their tangerine buttons of tobacco softly dancing in the shadows.

Inside, a crescendo was building. A soprano blew a fiery breath of emotion towards the spellbound audience. A tenor chimed in and the orchestra wound towards its thrilling peak.

Moving towards the grand entrance of the illuminated building, Elizabeth realised she was not attired in a fashion befitting an evening of opera. She was still wearing her house apron, albeit it atop a dress of lace and muslin, and she could not enter the venue in her present state. Instead, she would wait along Little Collins Street near the entrance to the stage. She hoped someone might leave a door ajar so she might take a peek in toward the orchestra pit. Luckily, an usher had wedged a piece of wood in the doorjamb, so by positioning herself in a crouched fashion by its entrance, she was given a clear view.

She knew Anthony would be seated in the front row. She scanned the sea of musicians seated bolt upright in a semi-circle formation, exhaling notes with near military precision. Barnett Levy stood on the dais before the musicians, baton in hand, brows escalated and maintaining such a tension in his jawbone that the veins in his neck were almost visible from where Elizabeth stood.

And then she saw Anthony.

It was not hard to find her husband; he was the only fair-haired player in the company. Elizabeth swore she could hear the sounds he alone was making with his instrument.

But then she noticed his eyes, red rimmed, swollen and wild, like nothing she had seen before. He was crying. Dumbstruck, she recoiled and lost her balance, toppling backwards into the muddy skin of the street edge.

Pleating the folds of her skirts at each hip, Elizabeth rocked upright and began sprinting northward on Little Collins Street. She only stopped to restore her breath when the moon was completely hidden by the clouds and a cloak of darkness protected her path.

Back at Dundee Cottage she climbed into her marital bed and covered herself up to the tip of her head in bed sheets. Her heart beat so loudly it kept her awake for what seemed like hours.

4.

CUT THROAT INJURIES

Alone in my study a few days after my trip to the State Library of Victoria, I stared at the computer monitor I had yet to switch on. Outside it was raining so hard the tips of the old gnarled plane trees that lined the street were wrapped in billowy masses of cloud. I could not stop thinking about Anthony Gruner.

Since discovering how Gruner died it was all I could talk about. I discussed the details of *The Argus* piece at dinner parties, and in e-mails with colleagues and friends in the law and journalism fields. There was something that unsettled me about the notion of self-harming to the extent that, as the article recounted: "arteries had been severed, and copious haemorrhage had taken place".

As far as ways of killing oneself went, at least as far as I was concerned, cutting your own throat had to be one of the more gruesome and painful methods I could imagine. I wanted to know if this was the case, or was it as improbable as I felt it could be.

What I really wanted to know was could Anthony have cut his own throat, or did someone do it for him?

I flicked on the computer and opened a search page.

I learned the human throat is made up of five main areas, six if the esophagus is included: the pharynx, epiglottis, larynx, trachea and lungs. It is located inside the neck in front of the spinal column. Outside of these parts and underneath the skin is the jugular vein. The word "jugular" is derived from the Latin "jugulum" meaning throat or collarbone and the Latin "jugum" meaning yoke. The jugular vein runs along both sides of the throat and is a blood vessel that drains blood from important body organs and parts, such as the brain, face, and neck. Often the left vein is thinner and smaller than the right, but both are equally important. As there is no strong structures like bones or cartilages that protect this vein, it makes it particularly susceptible to damage or injury. When blood flow to the vein is impeded or affected, shock or death can occur. No matter which part of the throat is cut, if the jugular is severed in the process, the outcome is often not a good one.

When someone loses enough blood to cause death, this process is called "exsanguination." This is not to say that a person needs to lose *all* their blood in order to die from an injury; the amount of loss and its consequence is dependent on a number of factors, from age, size, and physical condition, to genetic predisposition. Animals have been slaughtered this way for thousands of years,

and although cultural and social norms have changed in some parts of the world, it remains a device used in some religious groups to prepare meat. A small animal like a goat or sheep may be brain dead just ten short seconds after the jugular vein is severed.

Larger animals take longer, but not that much longer.

The deeper I searched the more apparent it was I was not alone in my curiosity. As early as 1843 the medical profession had also been fascinated with learning more about cut-throat injuries as a cause of death. Dr. Thomas Howden published an article in the medical journal *The Lancet* about a case involving a seventy-year-old man who cut his throat after being inflicted with a "morbid melancholy" for several weeks over guilt surrounding an alleged wrongdoing against his employer. Dr. Howden took a clinical approach to the case; he dismissed the circumstances around the man slashing his throat as not being of much interest, and focused his discussion on the potential remedies for such an injury.

"He, of course, could swallow nothing, not even his saliva when it entered his mouth", Dr. Howden wrote.

The doctor tried several methods to assist the man, including fashioning an elastic catheter and tube, but this only seemed to cause the old man greater discomfort. He died eventually after a fit of coughing, leaving his physician to wonder if an alternative entry for the tube could have helped save him. There was no mention in the article if the wrongdoing against the employer was ever proven.

In 1855, just shy of two decades before Gruner's death, the act of killing oneself with a cut to the throat continued to intrigue the medical profession. Dr. John S. Bartrum, surgeon to the Bath General Hospital, spoke about a case of suicide by cut throat at a meeting of his peers. He described a case of a fifty-two-year-old lady's maid who, after suffering a chronic bout of pleuropneumonia, knelt over a bin and cut her throat with a blunt kitchen knife.

Dr. Bartrum examined the woman shortly after she was found and was struck at the lack of blood present externally to her body, and between the bin and the place on the floor where she was discovered. The absence of blood intrigued the doctor so much that he looked carefully for some at the scene of the incident, yet found none.

Dr. Bartrum reported the woman had severed her trachea, dividing two of the upper rings. The jugular was severed, as was the esophagus. Dr. Bartrum noted a slight orifice in the carotid, "scarcely more than a pin hole". He described the wound as causing "only a general oozing of not

florid blood from the wound, every expiration forcing up the bloody froth". I suspected Dr. Bartrum, like me, had anticipated something a little more dramatic.

I remembered how the police officer in *The Argus* report had described the scene where Anthony Gruner was found. “There was a great quantity of blood on the wall where it had spurted, and there was also a great quantity on the bed,” Constable Cartledge had testified.

Considering the case of the woman in 1855, it seemed like an entirely different outcome to a similar injury was possible.

What was interesting about this case and different to Gruner’s was that the woman did not die immediately from her wounds; in fact once she was found and removed to the hospital, the woman recovered sufficiently to express herself in writing. She lived upwards of seventy hours after the incident. Dr. Bartrum did not have any real answers about why someone might choose this method of self-destruction, or offer comments on the physiological state of the woman immediately after the incision that allowed her to move across the room and not drop a bead of blood.

In 1883 the *British Medical Journal* published a report of Dr. R.C. Harrison who, along with his colleague Dr. Scott, attended to a forty-one-year-old woman, who was discovered in her bedroom, lying on the floor, with a transverse wound to the throat large enough that "a tennis ball could have been easily inserted". At the woman's feet was a pool of blood and the missing pieces of her trachea, which was attached to her thyroid gland.

Dr. Harrison reported that neither carotid arteries were wounded, but the woman's condition was "semi-asphyxiated " and deduced that a large amount of blood must have been lost from the smaller vessels severed. Unlike the 1855 case, this woman died within twenty minutes of being discovered. Her daughter would later testify that her mother had sent her into the yard to fetch some water and that she was only gone around five minutes, leaving her mother a narrow window of opportunity to end her life, if that is indeed what happened. Dr. Harrison had doubts about the version of events that was presented at the inquest, where cause of death was determined to have been suicide while in a state of temporary insanity. He suggests that many would struggle to accept such a mutilation could be self-inflicted, and argues that with the absence of conclusive evidence to the contrary, murder might be suspected.

What the 1855 and 1883 cases have in common is a cursory treatment of the mental health of the deceased prior to the incidents. In the 1855 death, the woman was known to be in good standing with her employer, well trusted and with no reason to fear an unstable future. At least this is what her employer and co-workers said. Yet the woman scrawled maniacal ramblings on paper once she

stabilised, expressing her abject fear of destitution. And in 1883, the woman who died so rapidly after her injury was observed as being in a "depressed state of mind for some days" prior to the incident. Depressed enough to rip out her throat? It would be a question Dr. Harrison would no doubt keep with him.

A similar case in England also in 1883 caused doctors to question the ethics around prosecuting someone who was in the state of mind to cut someone else's throat and then their own. It also showed it was possible to survive such injuries. A man beat his wife and slashed her throat (she would later die), and stabbed his stepson in the chest before drawing his weapon to his own throat and slicing.

The doctor treating the man trialled various ways of keeping his wound clean and promoting its healing. The doctor said the key risk to survival after such an injury was mucus and fluid trickling into the windpipe and slowly asphyxiating the patient. He argued that as long as the man's head wasn't allowed to flop forward, he had a chance of survival, and in this case he got lucky. Eventually the man was deemed well enough by doctors, with the wound shrinking to the "size of a shilling", to be transferred to gaol, just over a month after the incident.

In a 2008 study, a group of medical researchers at Kasturba Medical College in India wrote a report published in the *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine* about suicides by cut throat. They said such a method without the presence of "hesitation marks" was rare, and of these they could only find a few.

The Kasturba researchers reported that a 45-year-old ex-military man with problems at home and money troubles was walking by a market, and he spied a coconut seller who was using a sickle to cut his produce for his customers. The man snatched the instrument from the coconut seller’s hand and slashed his own throat. The man dropped to the floor in a pool of blood and was taken to the hospital where he was declared dead. This study does not go into specifics about how long the man lay on the ground at the market with a gash across his throat, nor does it stipulate if anyone tried to help him by trying to stop the bleeding. The post mortem examination found the margins of the wound were "clean cut with abraded edges". One cut and he was dead. The report also provides the reader with some pictures that are in colour and taken close up. After the autopsy the deceased's family said he had no history of psychiatric illness or episodes of depression. But you have to wonder. How many people with problems, really big problems, keep them from their families?

What is interesting about this case in India is that there was no doubt that the man had killed himself, because he did it in a public place with many witnesses. Even so, the medical researchers

investigating the cases said that without knowing this, the case looked to the naked eye like a homicide case, except that there were no defensive marks observed on his body, and the man's fingerprints were on the sickle.

What made this man act without hesitation — his military training? Or the fact he knew he only had a couple of seconds before the market vendor would chase after his stolen knife? One could speculate forever.

In 2013, three researchers published an article in the *Journal of Affective Disorders*, examining the changes in suicide methods used in England and Wales between the periods 1901–1907 and 2001–2007. The earlier dataset was a little later than the time of Anthony Gruner's death, but not unreasonably later, so I decided to check it out. The researchers collected data from the Office of National Statistics on the method-specific mortality rates and gender. What they found was that over the course of a century, the way people killed themselves had changed significantly, and this was in a large part due to the accessibility of these methods and the "fashion" of the time.

In the period 1901-1907, for men, suicide by cutting one's own throat was the second most popular suicide method, with 18.6% of cases reported as suicides employing this method. Hanging oneself was the most popular method overall for both men and women combined. Interestingly, the researchers found that hanging was also the most popular method in both periods examined, although the amount of suicides by weapon or implement had dropped by 76% by 2001–2007.

After all, most every man had access to a cutthroat razor in 1901, but in 2007, with the advent of the electric razor, the method was not so popular. Of course, not all suicides were accurately reported, and sometimes cause of death cannot be determined, or reporting and labelling standards change over time. The impact of cognitive ability and personal preference or social acceptability on the choice of method is a factor I had not properly considered. What if the use of a razor to end one's life through partial decapitation, as horrific as the concept appeared to me, was not so unusual in East Collingwood in 1873? I needed more information about the scene that night in Collingwood and I knew there was only one place in modern-day Melbourne I could go to find it. I grabbed my coat and headed for the door.

5.

THE NOTE

I had been to the Public Records Office of Victoria, or PROV, on a few occasions in the past in a professional capacity, researching one story or another, and I knew it was the type of place where magic could happen — *if* you knew what you are looking for, and if you didn't then it was about as satisfying as a trip to the dentist.

The problem with PROV, or any government archive for that matter, was figuring out exactly what was on offer and how to request it.

To try to help with this conundrum, PROV publishes online guides for researchers, but finding these hard to decipher, I resorted to detailing my request in an e-mail to its administrators as I waited for the tram to take me into the city. Luckily, they responded, and shortly thereafter, Anthony Gruner's coronial inquest file had been located and put aside, awaiting my inspection.

From the city I hopped on the number 57 tram from the intersection of Elizabeth and Collins Street toward West Maribyrnong. PROV was located to the north of the city on the fringes of Melbourne's central business district, and sat between pockets of ageing government housing and newly gentrified Victorian terraces. Asides from a smattering of neighbourhood stores and churches, little commerce occurred in this once industrial area, and what did was probably not of the legal variety. I sidestepped a discarded syringe laid out at the foot of the tram stop and hurried up the road toward my destination.

Fifteen or so minutes later I arrived at the smart façade of the archive that from the outside resembled more of a modern art museum than a government building.

The archive itself was more like a public reading room. It comprised a large, long rectangular room with rows of desks in the centre, some with computers to search databases not otherwise found online, and printers dotted about, sporadically humming as they spat out search results in hard copy.

Running the length of the room was a counter occupied by several archivists buzzing over monitors, pausing at intervals to jot down notes. Behind them was a collection of floor to ceiling shelving brimming with documents of all colours and shapes, most in plastic sleeves.

On the short end of the room were glass-walled cubicles equipped with more computers and digital cameras set up on mounts. None of these cubicles were occupied. Apart from myself, there were six researchers in the archive, with an average age somewhere around sixty. One woman, who looked

to be in her late forties, wore a tie-dyed crinoline dress and a support bandage around one wrist. She hovered behind an ancient-looking man carefully navigating a mouse around the screen of his laptop. Sensing my gaze, they looked up at me in unison. I smiled and they returned the gesture.

It was not exactly clear which part of the counter one must attend to pick up a requested item, nor was there a line of researchers awaiting items, so I spotted an unoccupied employee and made a beeline toward her.

With few words exchanged and my signature on some release paperwork, the woman handed me a clear plastic pocket with a yellow identification sticker on the top right hand corner. The sticker had my name on it. I noticed underneath my sticker there were at least three others, but the names had faded over time. Beyond the pile of stickers were the gluey remnants of other labels. I wondered how long the archives had been using these sorts of envelopes to keep these documents — five years, ten, twenty?

Inside the plastic envelope was a single bundle of documents entitled: *Proceedings of Inquest Held Upon the Body of Anthony Gruner*. The document was printed on blue paper, A4 size and folded in thirds. Taking a seat at the furthest desk from the other researchers, I unzipped the envelope and carefully retrieved its contents.

The file was smaller than I had been expecting. I had visions of crime scene drawings, maps and diagrams. What I had here was just a bunch of papers.

And then between the folds of the papers, something fell out and floated onto the desk.

The suicide note!

I gasped and pushed back on my chair away from the desk. The woman in the crinoline dress shot me a look, and a man a few rows away adjusted his monocle to better see what the fuss was about. I grabbed the note and slid it securely between the blue pages of the inquest.

Hurriedly, I scooped up the rest of the contents of the envelope and dashed to one of the cubicles to examine them more closely. I shut the door behind me.

I held the note gingerly in the tips of my fingers. I could not believe that after more than 150 years the note still existed. It was about 12 cm x 15 cm long, and written on thick paper. Its edges were straight, not ripped, as if it was once part of a writing blotter. The surface was dirty and smudged (with blood?) but the words, written in pencil, were clearly legible:

Stoneham – Levy

your Handiwork

Is don my Blood

Shall Be Revenge

You Cowards

The wording was consistent with the report in *The Argus*, but what I did not know until this moment was the note was actually two-sided, something that had apparently either been overlooked or discarded by the newspaper reporter at the time.

The writing on the back was not laid out like the front of the note. It was as if the front had been written on, then the note folded vertically in two and on this blank section the following was written with a dash of finality under the final word:

godd Bless

my poor Wife

and Children

I pulled out my cell phone from my pocket and proceeded to photograph it from every angle. Once I was finished I set it carefully to one side and unfolded the inquest papers, my hands shaking slightly.

I had the suicide note in my hands!

The first statement was handwritten and from the officer in charge of the second division at Collingwood Police Station. The officer stated the facts of the case as he saw them: namely that Gruner cut his own throat between 7 and 8 p.m. on Monday 8 September 1873, and this was known because Gruner's wife informed the police her husband had gone to lie down at 7 p.m. and had asked her to wake him at 8 p.m. as he was expecting a student. When she went to wake him, she found him dead.

The first deposition in the file was from Anthony Gruner's wife Elizabeth. It was given to Constable Thomas Moore at the Collingwood Police Station the day after Gruner's death. It was about a page long and appeared to be written out by the constable. Elizabeth deposed that Gruner was her husband and they had lived happily together, that her husband did not drink and he had not tried to kill himself before.

They were in "pretty good circumstances", she stated.

Elizabeth testified that she did not hear any stirring in the bedroom in the hour her husband was in there. There was just one other person in the house during this time, her twelve-year-old son, she explained.

She went on to report Anthony had been insulted by some musicians at the Melbourne Town Hall on Saturday night and had been very melancholy since then.

“Wandering in his mind,” was the phrase she used.

Elizabeth stated there was blood on the walls and on the bed when she found her husband at 8 p.m. in the bedroom. She identified the razor and the handwriting in the note as belonging to Gruner.

I noticed there was no further inquiry about the whereabouts of the anticipated student, nor was there any testimony from other members of the household, including the twelve-year-old boy.

The next statement to be deposed was the attending constable at the scene at the Gruner house, Alfred Cartledge. His testimony was much shorter, just half-a-page. It was also dated the day after Gruner’s death, and judging by the handwriting, also appears to have been also dictated to Constable Moore.

Cartledge was the first official on the scene, so had seen the state of Anthony Gruner with his own two eyes. He stated he searched Anthony Gruner’s body and found his watch. He also found the note in his left side trouser pocket.

Interestingly, he stated he did not find the note until the following morning, and referred to it not as a “suicide note” but as the “paper with the pencil marks”.

I glanced out into the reading room. The sun had retreated behind the afternoon clouds and only myself and the man with monocle was still here. I noticed he was reading a newspaper, and if I was not mistaken it was today’s.

I refocused on Cartledge’s testimony. He stated there were no signs of a struggle in the house. The razor was found in the deceased’s right hand. There was a good quantity of blood on the wall where it had “squirted” and also blood on the bed. He then concluded his deposition, shattering any notion I had of him suspecting foul play.

“I saw the cuts in the throat. From what I saw I believe the deceased inflicted the wounds on himself.”

The third and final deposition in the inquest was from the doctor who examined the body of Anthony Gruner, William Crambe. Crambe’s testimony was the longest, at a page and a half, and

again collected the day after Gruner's death.

Crambe described a "deep and large wound which had severed everything down to the spine" observed on the left side of Gruner's neck. He stated he observed two smaller wounds above this one, superficial wounds, he testified.

Hesitation marks, I thought. The Kasturba study I'd read earlier found these were observed in most of these kind of suicide cases.

Crambe testified all three wounds were consistent with the use of a razor and all were in the same direction, from left to right.

'The wounds were such that they could have been self-inflicted and I am of opinion they were self-inflicted," he deposed.

Crambe said he did not find any other marks of violence on the body. An examination of Gruner's brain found it to be healthy with the exception of a little effusion under the arachnoid and in the ventricles. The brain and other organs were blanched from loss of blood, but otherwise functioning normally. There was some food in his stomach, apparently butcher's meat, according to his examination.

There was a large accommodation of fat throughout the body, but no fatty degeneration of the organs.

Crambe testified he did not find any signs of poison.

"The deceased had died very rapidly after the deep wound. Deceased was alive when that wound was made. I believe it to be improbable for any other person than deceased to have made the wounds without signs of a struggle taken place."

He continued:

"From the condition of the brain I am of the opinion […] was of unsound mind at the time he cut his throat."

My eyes were beginning to hurt from deciphering the handwritten depositions that now lay scattered across the table in no particular order. Somewhere in amongst them was the note. Whoever had bundled the inquest papers in 1873 had taken care not to fold it, instead purposefully slotting it inside the larger pages, keeping it in the original folded state it was found. It was so easy to miss, so neatly nestled in the pages of the court dossier. I fanned out the blue inquest pages until I relocated it. The police had not found this until the day after Gruner died.

I thought of Elizabeth at the police station the next day, being shown the note.

The inquest was held by Coroner Samuel Curtis Candler and conducted before a jury of twelve “good and lawful men” of East Collingwood. It concluded: "Gruner died from a haemorrhage from a wound in the throat inflicted by himself whilst acting under temporary insanity".

I decided to walk back into the city rather than catching the tram. I needed the fresh air and to let these revelations swirl around in my brain a while. I set off with no particular route in mind, wandering past old cottages assembled in a patchwork border along the wide streets, many in original condition and others revitalised. Some had rainbow flags displayed in the front windows. One had a faded sticker on its letterbox, partially obscuring the house number, that read: *No Nukes*. Narrow bluestone lanes separated some blocks and looked to continue on forever, thoroughfares in their own right. I passed a few factories, a garage and an import yard of undeterminable trade dotted in among the residences. A green bin aborted by a garbage truck lay crippled in the gutter. The streetscape was as vacant of people as it was earlier in the day.

After a few wrong turns, I arrived at the northern tip of the Queen Victoria Market. The days were longer now, so the market stayed open later. It was almost an hour now since I left Public Records and my stomach was starting to rumble. A waft of barbequed meat invaded my nostrils from the open doors of a kebab stall. I picked up the pace toward Flagstaff Station.

I completed the last few meters of my journey at a slow jog. To my right was Flagstaff Gardens, and I saw a street performer strumming a beaten-up guitar. He sat right on the edge of the park near the corner of La Trobe Street, blocking the passage of office workers scrambling toward the subway entrance. He appeared nonchalant about this as he played, moving his head back and forth in time with the tune. I patted my jeans pocket to locate my train ticket.

I thought about Anthony Gruner and the medical examiner's testimony as I spiralled my way down the steps to the platform. He stated the brain was 'normal' physiologically, and therefore concluded the suicide happened whilst Gruner was of unsound mind. Elizabeth Gruner supported this diagnosis with her testimony that her husband was altogether a regular sort of man. She did state he was upset about being insulted by two musicians, but I could not help but wonder — was this before or after she knew about the note found on his body. Did she know Stoneham and Levy were both musicians? And for that matter, could Elizabeth Gruner even read?

I also wondered why Stoneham and Levy were not interviewed by the police in the matter, or anyone that knew the Gruners as a couple. I knew the two musicians had published statements in the newspaper rejecting any unfavourable association with Gruner days after his death, but not *the*

day after these interviews were conducted. But was it just as simple as was stated between the folds of the blue-papered inquest document? Anthony "lost" his mind and killed himself. The answers to these peripheral questions would not change the outcome.

So why couldn't I let it go?

Later that night my husband David and I sat down to eat at the kitchen counter. There was still something I couldn't quite work out, that was irritating me about the way Anthony Gruner died. David leaned across the table and uncorked the bottle of wine he'd picked up on the way home.

He grabbed the bottle with his left hand, and pulled at the cork with his right.

"Why did you do that?" I asked.

"Huh?" he responded, not looking at me.

"You picked up the bottle with your left hand," I said.

"Well, yes I'm right handed – I hold the bottle in left hand because I'm going to pull the cork with my strongest hand." He considered me with a puzzled smile.

I tell him the coronial inquest into the death of Anthony Gruner revealed the razor was found in his right hand.

"So he was right handed then, so what?" David asked.

"The suicide note was found in his left pocket."

My husband raised a brow, indicating he didn't follow where I was going with this.

"Pretend you are writing a note, right now – here. Now take that note and put it into whatever pocket feels most comfortable," I instructed. He put his hand in his right pocket.

"Maybe he was standing when he wrote it, that doesn't prove anything," he countered.

"Well," I continued, "how hard is it to put that note in your left pocket?"

He could barely reach it, even with an imaginary note.

6.

1873 – Two days before Anthony Gruner is found dead

Anthony Gruner's arms ached and his eyeballs felt as though tiny spiders had woven webs across them. Tonight had not been one of his best performances, but he felt too weak to defend himself against his band mates' jibes as they slouched against the cool bluestone wall in the alley, waiting for their wage. He wished the composer Rossini had not changed the story of Moses in Egypt to include a love theme, and had simply adhered to how it was written in the bible. Love stories used to intrigue Anthony Gruner in an abstract way, but now they only reminded him of the misery that so often accompanied them.

By the time the last of the crowd had scattered into the night it was near one o'clock in the morning. The chartreuse velvet of the theatre seats sparkled in the last of the lantern light left on for the musicians to gather their instruments, and with each passing minute the shadows grew longer. Ushers moved in pairs up and down the rows of empty seats, picking up scraps left behind by patrons. One broke off from his mate and moved towards one of the great steel doors near where Anthony and the others stood, motioning for them to move along.

"We'll go when we're good and ready," second violin Alasdair McCray snapped at him as he sucked a lungful of smoke from his pipe. The usher retreated. McCray turned to Anthony with a snarl.

"Gruner, I've seen baby goats keep better time, what the devil?"

Joe and Rufus nodded. Joseph Verso and Rufus Hore were Anthony's seatmates in the brass section. Hore worked part time at the pub he owned, the Leviathan Hotel on the corner of Gertrude Street in Fitzroy. Anthony always wondered what inspired such a dark name for a drinking house, but he could not be bothered to ask the man. He might respond and ask him to visit him there, a thought that repulsed him. His drinking days had finished almost immediately after they had begun.

With his face partly shadowed by a young elm, Anthony raised an eyebrow and cocked his head toward the dark sky. He did not need these imbeciles to validate his worth as a performer. He had been playing the saxhorn since his lungs were strong enough to fill it with air. He knew the difference between keeping time and keeping to the intentions of the composer, something he doubted his companions had any idea of. He did not react when his band mates continued to heckle him, but he could not stop his shoulders from tensing and his temples from throbbing.

A few minutes later, their conductor and employer Barnett Levy appeared. It was supposed to have

been Zelman on stage leading them tonight, but for some reason he had been switched out at the last minute. This would have made Levy extremely pleased, Anthony supposed. It would have given him the opportunity to promote his latest artistic venture to the patrons to try and loosen their purse strings after the show.

Levy was a short man with wiry black hair and mottled skin the colour of cork. He wore a permanent half-smile that made him unreadable to others. Except for Anthony, that was. It was no secret that Levy liked the drink, and in the twenty-odd years he'd known him it was easier to recount the times he had not been afflicted than when he had. Tonight was no exception, but to his credit, the man handled himself well, and only those who ventured closed enough to his person could catch a whiff of sweet whisky. The other men circled him and started up again with their predictable banter. Anthony resented having to rely on these ad hoc performances to keep bread on the table between lessons, but thankfully it would not be long and he would be free of these amateurs and their bullyboy tactics.

Anthony hung back in the shadows, waited for Levy to give each man his wage, and watched them peel off into the black night. Finally, they were alone. He waited for Levy to speak. Levy stared up at Anthony with his trademark smirk, but his eyes were different tonight. Anthony could not read them, and this sent a cold tingle across his chest, tightening his airway. He pressed an open palm to his chest, willing his arm not to shake.

"My Tony, I must confess … " Levy started.

This did not sound promising, Anthony kept still, his spine folding into the cracks between the stone of the building in the most casual pose he could muster.

"We have been reasonably patient with you, but there is a limit to everything…"

A limit? Anthony could not have agreed with him more.

"You must give me what you have, and soon. We depart for Sydney town in the coming week and I shall very much like to show my brother what we've been working on."

We?

Anthony winced.

He considered Levy for a moment. Levy went to speak again, but let his unspoken words hang as a threat in the early morning air.

Anthony stood mute. Levy's half-smile turned into a thin-lipped purse.

“It is all but completed,” Anthony spat, cutting him off before he could begin.

“Very good, " Levy looked relieved.

Levy's eyes darted from side to side and he took a step toward Anthony, the tip of his head aligning with his breastbone.

“I think, my Tony… this will all be over soon.”

Levy regarded him a moment, then turned and walked away, his words hanging heavy in the night air.

Over the years the weight of his obligation to Stoneham and Levy had worn Anthony down and squashed whatever passion within him he had for his music. Aside from these performances he was expected to participate in, often at a moment’s notice, Anthony had been working on an original composition for the pair for some months. It was not the first time the two men had pressed him to provide them with material and Anthony was certain, despite Levy’s parting words, it would not be the last.

He was not sure how much more of this he could take.

Anthony was halfway home and walking along Victoria Parade before he realised Levy had not paid him his wage for tonight’s performance. This was not an isolated occurrence, and in some ways Anthony (and his wife for that matter) had got used to having to follow up overdue payments. This did not usually concern him, but tonight it did. He had been so distracted all evening anticipating the post-performance meeting with Levy that he was not perfectly sure what the agreed wage was for the night’s engagement. He turned and retraced his steps back to the Town Hall where he found Levy holding court with an audience of unaccompanied women.

Levy had a bottle under his arm and moved to conceal it with his hat when he saw Gruner approaching.

“Levy,” Gruner’s voice was weak and smacked of the defeat he felt inside.

Levy pretended he did not hear him.

“Levy, I must speak with you, now.”

He watched as Levy tucked the bottle into the front of his buttoned coat and ushered the women aside.

“I cannot do this anymore,” Gruner pleaded.

It had been ten years, and not a month had passed without Levy or his associate Stoneham calling upon him. Recently they had taken to appearing at Dundee Cottage, something they stopped doing when he married Elizabeth and moved out of the lodging house.

At the lodging house, the two men had made small talk with the landlady before pushing their way into his room at the top of the stairs, even on the occasions where she informed them he was not at home.

Anthony had returned to the lodging house on Cambridge Street several times to find his bedroom had been turned over and whatever sheet music lay idle, stolen.

There were times when he couldn't be certain one of the children had not overhead one of their interactions, or been at home when his quarters were ransacked.

The mere thought of it made him sick.

Levy considered him with an incredulous look upon his face and let out a high-pitched laugh.

He was quite drunk.

"What do you mean, old chap?" he asked lightly. "You have no means for recourse, or need I remind you of your obligation?" he added, a little less jovially.

Anthony thought of his brother-in-law John and how he liked to refer to any person of less than pristine character as a *dirty li' cadger*. It was a term he used often, as to John it appeared nobody lived up to his impeccable standards. The closest Anthony had seen anyone come was his former landlady Susan. To John, she was close to sainthood and beyond reproach. Her husband, on the other hand was grouped in with the rest of the population, as Anthony was sure he was too.

He wondered what John would make of Levy and if the two men would ever have cause to cross paths.

Up until this moment Anthony always secretly thought the kind of narrow-mindedness John displayed was an unproductive trait, but tonight he was not so sure.

"There is no opera," Gruner lied. He had of course started the composition, but the accumulation of years of servitude to these two men had left him hollow.

He must end this, even though he knew the consequences.

Gruner turned and fled before Levy could respond.

As he neared the intersection of Hoddle Street he peered down towards his mother-in-law's cottage

where she and John slept, and saw not a light on, yet the distinct shadows of a person moving about in the dark behind the curtains. He blinked, and when he opened his eyes again, saw nothing.

The world was dark and still.

He entered their bedroom at Dundee Cottage without making a sound and slipped into bed next to his sleeping wife. On the bureau the metronome ticked and Anthony Gruner had his first dreamless sleep in more than a decade.

7.

THE FAMILY TREE

After I finished telling David about my trip to PROV we cleaned up the dinner mess and he retired for an early night. My mind was racing too fast to sleep so I sat in my study in the dark thinking about what I discovered today. The only light in the room came from the screen of my laptop. My husband often commented on this peculiar habit of mine, and suggested I was doing my eyesight irreversible damage.

It helps me think, I told him.

That's kind of like turning down the radio when you get lost driving, he would retort.

Yes, I would say. Exactly like that.

I fished around in my desk drawer and pulled out a notepad and the copy of the newspaper article about the death. Opening to a fresh page, I jotted down a quick list of what I knew from the coronial inquest and the main points from the article in *The Argus*.

His name was Anthony Gruner.

He died on Monday 8th September 1873 by a cut to the neck from a razor (found in his right hand) in his bedroom at home.

He lived on Hoddle Street, Collingwood at the time of his death.

He was 49 when he died (so born around 1824-25).

He was a musician and performed at the Melbourne Town Hall on Saturday 6th of September and according to his wife, had some kind of altercation with some musicians.

He also taught music and was expecting a student the night of his death (who never arrived?).

He had at least one son (or stepson?) 12 years old.

His wife's name was Elizabeth, and she reported his death.

He left a suicide note stating his death would be revenge against two men named Stoneham and Levy (found in left pocket).

My pen hovered over a new line, waiting for more information to transfer from the photocopy of the article and onto the page.

But there was nothing more I could squeeze from its words.

This was it. This was all I knew about him.

Nine pieces of information.

And of this nine, only one undisputable fact – Anthony Gruner was dead.

Eight hours and four cups of coffee, two diet sodas and a couple of rice cakes later, I knew only one thing for sure: the internet was both the best friend and worst enemy of the genealogical researcher.

I had begun in earnest with a simple search:

anthony gruner musician killed himself

Nine results, four usable. Among the list of websites there were two family trees, one from Australia and another from Denmark. A man in South Australia administered the first family tree. I quickly shot him off an email asking him where he found the information about Gruner. The Australian web page was exclusively focused on the history of the Brooker family, which apparently Gruner's wife Elizabeth was a part of.

The other family tree site was dedicated to the "Family of Jensen and Bjørneboe" and written in Danish, but with an English translation widget. Unlike the first site, the Danish page was a sophisticated family history receptacle complete with detailed lists, reports and timelines.

In this family tree I learned Anthony was Danish, and also that he was not *Anthony* at all, at least not officially. Anthony Gruner was born Christian Edvard Theodor Gruner in 1825 to Christian Frederich Gruner and Catharine Florentine Appelberg in Copenhagen. He was the youngest of five children and had three older sisters and one older brother.

Anthony's father was the son of Johann Gottfried Gruner and Anna Margartha Brandrup. These names all meant nothing to me, but I jotted them down all the same.

The Danish tree revealed Anthony and Elizabeth Gruner had six children, three boys and three girls. It also had another child listed in the family group, born in 1875. His name was Elias Gruner.

The problem here was, according to the report of his suicide, Anthony died in 1873, and unless he had access to a time machine to impregnate Elizabeth, I doubted this child was his. Perhaps it was just a mistake.

In my notebook, I scribbled a reminder to myself to look into Elias Gruner later on. I noted that only one of Anthony's daughters reached adulthood, the other two died as infants. I also noted his youngest child (excluding the mysterious Elias), also named Anthony, was born after his father

died.

I made another note: pull the birth certificate of Anthony Gruner from the Victorian Births Deaths and Marriages archives to compare dates.

Now, in addition to the details I had of the circumstances surrounding his death, I had some idea about the life of Anthony Gruner from the Danish tree. He was born in Denmark; at some time he immigrated to Australia and married Elizabeth and had at least five (or six, if the dates checked out for Anthony) children. The data collected from the tree would need to be crosschecked with the public archives, but at least for tonight it was a start.

I flicked back to the Brooker family webpage. Its information on Anthony was limited to what I already had learned, but on Elizabeth — there was plenty.

Before she married Anthony Gruner, Elizabeth had been married before to a man named William Homan. According to the site, William was born in London, and the couple married in Adelaide in 1853 before moving to Victoria shortly after.

It appeared Elizabeth and her first husband had four children, William Henry born in 1854, James Edward in 1857, Frances Laura in 1859 and then Charles Turner in 1862. This last child however, did not seem to fit in with what I would read next. William Homan died in 1860. Charles Turner Homan was born in 1862.

Two mysterious pregnancies to two different husbands, I wondered. Could it be the records had been incorrectly transcribed? Could it be that in fact Charles was born in 1860 but for some reason his birth not registered until a couple of years later?

I stared at the photograph of Elizabeth my mother had given me. It was now carefully thumbtacked to the edge of my corkboard. I could barely make out the shapes of her face in the darkened room.

I rapped my pencil on my notepad.

In 1873 Anthony Gruner had three children and three stepchildren, and his wife may have been pregnant with another child. Potentially, seven people relied on him.

What could have two musicians have done or said that was enough for him to take his own life under these circumstances?

This was not going to be easy.

I stood up, and the desk chair sighed. I reached over my monitor and yanked at the blind cord.

Sunlight streamed into the room, and I could see my reflection in the illuminated monitor. Darkness circled both eyes, and my skin was splotchy and dry.

I flicked off the screen and left the room. I made it as far as the living room sofa where I collapsed into a deep sleep.

8.

1873 – The day before Anthony Gruner is found dead

Elizabeth woke early with pangs of guilt about the previous evening's secret expedition. As she stirred quietly on the pillow next to her husband she noticed the way the dying night sky cut jagged shapes across the smooth plane of his face. On the bureau, the metronome continued to tick. Her hands trembled with quiet anxiety. She crossed them under her breast. The stiff cotton blanket that covered them both felt clammy, yet outside she could see clouds pregnant with rain writhing against a colourless sky. She turned to her sleeping husband, his face partially hidden by his pillow. The crimson-hued ire in his face from the night before had vanished, and she decided he looked almost serene in his slumber. She slid out of the bed silently so as not to disturb him.

Downstairs her mother was stoking the fire. Hannah often let herself into Dundee Cottage in the early morning, stating that she did not like taking breakfast alone. Elizabeth knew this to be true; however, this morning her mother was not alone. A skinny dog of indeterminate breed accompanied her.

"Mind that dog, he's terrible bitten," Hannah cautioned before picking up a dusty blanket and starting to belt it clean.

"When do you think you fancy getting some new ones of these?" she inquired pointedly.

Her mother had a way of arranging a conversation to suit her intentions, and never bothered too much to disguise it. She had been insisting Elizabeth call upon her to sew some fresh blankets for the children for the past few weeks. Actually, it had been longer than that — since her sweet Rosa May left the earth.

Her mother was deeply superstitious but equally practical.

"Look here, I don't mean to nag, but no new babe is gonna come to a house with the ol' one still hanging about."

"Mother — " Elizabeth started, and then stopped. It was no use getting into an argument with her. Her mother was convinced she knew the answer to each and every matrimonial quandary and perhaps today she might be wise to let her continue to think so.

Elizabeth raised her eyes to the ceiling and she wondered if she heard her husband stirring. Hannah paddled the blanket one more time and then wound it toward her bosom, pleating each corner into a neat square.

“Would you like a biscuit?” Hannah asked.

“Yes, mother, thank you…” Elizabeth replied, already halfway up the stairs to rouse her children for church.

“Anthony?”

Elizabeth poked her head into the bedroom.

“Have you woken, my love?”

There was no response. Elizabeth was used to her husband’s withdrawal, so much so that if he had answered her she might have been mildly suspicious. There was comfort in the predictability of her husband’s disposition, she decided. He was different to the other men she had known, although she had not known many. The closest thing to male companionship she had now aside from her husband was her brother John, but their relationship was strained at the best of times. Her eldest, Henry, had made sure of that and was forever intent on chiding her brother.

“But he be so inward, ma,” Henry would complain after she pleaded with him to walk a while with her brother to their employment in the mornings.

Hannah had taken Henry’s slights about her son personally, and rarely invited him to her cottage, preferring to keep her eldest grandson and John at arm’s length of each other.

Aside from her husband, John and Hannah, the only other person Elizabeth could converse with was her eldest daughter Frannie. Frances was fourteen years old now and for the past six months had been living on Collins Street with a doctor’s family as their maidservant. She was earning a good wage and Elizabeth was proud of her eldest girl for securing an arrangement with such a respectable family. She had stopped seeking out her daughter in the front pews at the church, though, as she was rarely allowed to accompany the family on a Sunday. Church was the only time the doctor’s wife was ever seen in the company of her young ’uns, Hannah had once snorted. At all other times the doctor’s children were in the charge of Frannie — five little ones in total, all around Amelia’s age and just big enough to walk about the place without toppling. It had been weeks since she had seen Frannie, but she hoped a visit from her eldest daughter would come soon.

Her second son Charlie shared a room with his brothers Teddy and Bertie and between them it was their job to make sure they were all presented in their Sunday best along with their little sister Amelia. Charlie was a spritely child and Elizabeth had never seen someone so genuinely fascinated with the world around him. He was eleven, but young in his mannerisms. He had the earnest disposition of his uncle John but without the sharp opinions. Charlie was the imaginative one,

Teddy the facilitator and Bertie, the dreamer. Together, the boys formed a formidable gang. From sunrise to sunset the trio would play stick and ball in the alley, chase stray cats, and swing from the willows decorating the river.

When Elizabeth peered into their bedroom she saw the boys had been up to their old tricks and fashioned a tent from their bedclothes in the middle of the room. The structure encased Amelia's crib in its entirety. The window was wide open. The room was quiet but for the wisps of morning wind outside rustling the leaves.

Silence.

A muffled giggle.

"Permission to enter the premises, captain," Elizabeth bellowed in her best soldier tone.

"State your business milady," a tiny voice squeaked from within the cotton fort.

Elizabeth swooped down to ground level and whisked open the flaps of their hideout to reveal four gleeful children rolling about on the floor in raptures.

"Mamma!" they shrieked in unison.

"We didn't say you could enter," Bertie said with a scornful look.

Elizabeth feigned a look of horror. She hugged her children to her body and when they squirmed, she tickled their soft flesh and joined in the chorus of giggles, until the five lay flat on the floorboards gasping for air.

"Hurry along little ones, you'll never guess what Granny has brought over with her today."

The children decided to call the dog Birdy. Amelia explained it was because the mangy mutt rather sounded like one when he barked. Elizabeth did not have the heart to tell her the dog's high pitched yelps were most likely from being hit by her mother's cane when he attempted to nip her. But thankfully, with the children, Birdy behaved himself.

Henry joined them in the kitchen. He crouched before Birdy, cupping his flea-bitten ears in both hands and massaging them through his fingers.

"There's a good boy," he cooed. Elizabeth thought she saw a smile breaking through.
It was getting near the time they were due to leave for church and her husband had still not joined them. Light rain had fallen during the night and was now steady.

Her brother John appeared by the back door. His hat was soaked and as he lifted it, pools of water

rushed off it and bled on the rammed earth floor. He glanced at his fob and motioned to Elizabeth it was time to set off.

Elizabeth had negotiated a delicate balance between optimism and denial during her years married to Anthony, and so today, she would not press him to attend church. She glanced again into their marital bedroom and nodded at her husband's back.

The puddles along Hoddle Street had joined up to form larger ones and the edges of the road began to slip into the middle, rushing along either side of the carriageway. It would be a strenuous journey by foot today, and the longer they lingered the worse it would be.

John knew better than to ask where Anthony he was, but before they were out of earshot of the cottage, her brother said, "Why Eliza, I seen Anthony last eve late like, looking middlin' hover as he walked along the road."

Her brother was accustomed to taking night walks about the district on account of his sleeplessness, but she wondered if something more had happened between him and her husband than he was letting on. As they approached Gisborne Street, Elizabeth saw William Stoneham approaching the church with his wife.

"Mrs Gruner," he called out to her, breaking away from his wife and cutting through a flock of children running gaily around the steps of the church.

Elizabeth wondered if Stoneham might know what had been troubling Anthony and she almost asked him, before thinking better of it.

Anthony relied on the man for employment, and who was she to jeopardise this long-standing arrangement?

"Where is Anthony? I was hoping actually to have a word with him," he asked.

She noticed he was speaking quite softly. Hannah and John, who stood either side of her, exchanged a glance behind her back.

"He is not well," Elizabeth lied.

The truth was she did not know was going on with her husband, and it looked like Stoneham did not either.

John excused himself and peeled away, spotting Susan Ziegler chatting to the reverend. Stoneham meanwhile looked as if he was not sure what to say next. He eyed Hannah, who returned his gaze

without blinking.

Moments later John rejoined them with Susan, linked arm in arm and conversing about the sermon planned for the service.

“Ah look here,” Stoneham said. “Another woman unaccompanied by her husband.”

This seemed quite an ungentlemanly observation to make and Elizabeth turned to her mother, who was opening her mouth to scold the man, but he spoke before she had the chance.

“Ask Anthony will you, about another unaccompanied woman. A woman named Valentina Brunt.” The rain had not stopped the parishioners from coming, and the Gruner and Brooker contingent found themselves struggling for a space in the chapel. The Reverend Handfield strained to be heard over the children, who outnumbered the adults in the congregation. This was not the case in the row Hannah was in. Each junior parishioner in her row perched quietly in solemn silence, too terrified to misbehave. And those who may have entertained the idea soon found out why the other children were quiet and still within earshot of old Mrs. Brooker. A single glare from the old woman was enough to steel even the most foolhardy into submission.

Elizabeth and her brother sat either side of their mother and dared not let their eyes wander, staring instead toward the altar and the choir on either side. Elizabeth thought about what Stoneham had said — ask Anthony about a woman named Valentina.

She knew this name, she was sure of it. But right now she could not think why.

The road home from the service seemed to take twice as long to walk, and by the time the family reached Hoddle Street, Elizabeth’s hair was damp beneath her bonnet — from sweat or rain she could not be sure. It was customary for the family to share a meal together after church on Sundays, but today she did not feel much like eating. She was tired, and concerned about Anthony and now also concerned about Stoneham’s parting comment.

The bedroom they shared was empty. Tangled sheets lay across the bed, with no sign of Anthony’s body having lain there. The window she always left ajar was now tightly shut. His clothing was missing from the washstand, as was his musical equipment. He always kept his music in the bedroom, on his side of the bed, within arm’s reach. This seemed absurd to Elizabeth, when space was scarce in the narrow room they called theirs, but Anthony insisted. She had protested at first, but like all of her husband’s oddities, she eventually accepted it and carried on. His saxhorn case was not overly large, and usually snapped shut. His sheet music was always bound neatly in a concertina folder close by. Somehow, without these items the room felt desolate to Elizabeth. She

glared at the metronome on the bureau for answers but all it did was tick.

It was a family custom to take in a stroll along the river together after luncheon on Sunday afternoons. Today Elizabeth did not feel much like walking, so when her eldest son beckoned her by the front door, his brothers and sister jostling about his feet, she waved them away toward the river without her. Her mother and John had since retired to their cottage, but she noticed Birdy had stayed. She wondered if the mutt had been kicked by a horse and was a little slow in the mind because of it. Birdy did not retreat when she approached him with a half-hearted backhand and lifted skirt, cautioning him to flee. He took this as a playful invitation and leapt towards her, his long pink tongue lapping at the hem of her apron.

"Ack, you footy lil' thing," Elizabeth tutted, and crouched to stroke his mottled ears.

Aside from Birdy, she was alone in Dundee Cottage. She collected the lunch dishes from the table and scraped whatever food was left into a bowl for the dog. The unexplained absence of her husband brought on the beginnings of a migraine. All she could think of doing now was to sit by the front door and watch figures on the street approach and then fade off in the mist of the afternoon.

By the time night fell in Collingwood, Anthony was still nowhere to be seen. The pubs were all closed on account of it being a Sunday, not that he drank a drop. He did not have many friends for that matter, and come to think of it, he did not have a single friend or place he might have gone to that Elizabeth could recall. If social urges were not to blame for his vanishing, then surely it must be business related. Official business on a Sunday — it was virtually unheard of. Unless, she thought with a grimace, it was business of the unofficial variety. But what? She should have asked Stoneham this morning, she rued. She should have just asked him.

Even the children knew it was not in Anthony's nature to set off from home without first outlining his plans and expected hour of return. They wandered the banks of the river in the dying light of the afternoon in hope they might spot him by a grassy embankment, instrument in hand, entertaining a crowd.

They did not.

That night as Anthony's dinner sat spoiling on the kitchen table, covered by a pot to keep critters away, Elizabeth lay in their marital bed on her side. She stared unblinking out the window, too afraid to close her eyes lest she see the image of Anthony at the Town Hall, eyes swollen from crying, his skin red and splotchy across his neck and ears.

She knew he was not asleep when she checked in on him before church that morning. It did not

occur to her to say as much at the time, because whatever would she have said? Now she wished desperately to be able to go back in time and act differently, to have acted upon her intuition rather than suppress it. She knew her husband was melancholy during his performance on Saturday night, yet she'd said nothing to comfort him lest he realise she had spied on him.

Where was he?

Elizabeth did not stir from her sleep when Anthony joined her several hours later.

Hannah was already in the kitchen stoking the hearth when they woke. Anthony's curdled supper from the night before lay on the floor, where Birdy slurped it up in delight.

The children awoke a short time after and joined their parents and grandmother at the table. Anthony did not make eye contact with anyone and carried a look of sheer exhaustion upon his brow, so heavy Hannah almost exclaimed over it. He looked exhausted.

Elizabeth had been employed as a laundress since the age of thirteen. She took great pride in her work. Since the arrival of her children, she had been taking in consignments in their home. She had hinted to Hannah that she might stay at Dundee Cottage during the day time hours to supervise her little ones, so that Elizabeth could get more work done, but Hannah didn't respond. She had done her lot, she would tell anyone prepared to listen.

Sometimes Elizabeth forgot her mother was once a young woman too. She seemed so sure of her place, so comfortable in it, that it was as though she had been this age forever. Elizabeth could barely remember her father, and wondered from time to time what Hannah had been like with him as a young woman. She imagined her scaring disobedient young 'uns into submission in the county chapel in Framfield with one of her icy looks. She smiled to herself as she moved past her mother at the table and planted a soft kiss upon Anthony's forehead.
"I will be home at three o'clock my love," she said, as matter of factly as she could manage.

Anthony softened under her touch and raised a hand to touch her forearm. He peered up at her and Elizabeth could have sworn she saw tears forming in the corners of his eyes.

"Very good," he replied. His eyes darted to the floor where they remained until she left the cottage.

9.

ELIZABETH BEFORE ANTHONY

The life that Elizabeth and Anthony Gruner built together over many years had so quickly ended with the flick of a razor blade. I thought about this as I watched two majestic ghost gums, each at least a century old, being dismembered in the front yard of the house next door. The squeal of limbs being fed into the chipper harmonised with the whirl of the diesel engine. It was Saturday, and I was up early in my study, watching out the window the branches disappearing beyond the fence line like broken marionettes. On my corkboard next to the photograph of Elizabeth was a collection of quotes I'd found insightful at one time or another. One that seemed to fit my present mood was from the American astronomer Carl Sagan:

"Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence."

Sagan had a curiosity about the existence of extra-terrestrial life forms, and at this point in my investigation I felt about as close to Anthony and Elizabeth Gruner as if they'd lived on another planet. In actuality, they were in the past, so it *was* another planet compared to the one I knew. There was nobody alive I could talk to that knew the Gruner family, not an old classmate, colleague, friend or foe. The toolkit of investigative journalism techniques I'd relied upon throughout my career was seemingly useless in this circumstance. There was nobody I could call for a quote, no insider to talk over a hunch with, no tapes to play back. Every single person that Anthony Gruner knew and who knew him was dead. I had one photograph and a newspaper article over 150 years old, and that was it.

So far I had applied modern day methods of searching for information on Gruner, and it had just left me with more questions than answers. What I needed to do was to focus on what I could prove rather than what I could not. That, and somehow get comfortable with the idea that just because I couldn't find something, didn't mean it wasn't there.

I needed to think like Sagan.

I grabbed a fresh notepad and scribbled down a rough plan. I would start in Australia, with Elizabeth. I would examine her life up until the time she married Anthony. I would explore her first husband's life, their children, her parents and siblings. Next I would search for the world Gruner stepped into when he stepped off the boat in Australia and hope along the way I would learn why his life ended that fateful September night in 1873.

This had become more than just finding out about an ancestor who looked a lot like me, it had

become a quest to discover the story of a family. My family.

I prised open my laptop.

Genealogy SA maintains the state of South Australia's records, and this is where I commenced by searching for evidence of Elizabeth's first marriage, with the printer connected and a credit card on my lap. I knew from the Brooker family tree website that Elizabeth married a man named William Homan in 1853, but other than his name, I did not know anything about him. The marriage certificate I retrieved helped to fill in some of these gaps, although due to the record keeping practices of the time, I did not learn as much as I had hoped. I discovered William, a 26-year-old butcher, married 20-year-old Elizabeth at Trinity Church in Adelaide, six days into the New Year in 1853.

I searched the South Australian register for any more entries for Elizabeth or William.

Nothing.

I switched my focus to the state of Victoria.

A search of the Victorian Births Deaths and Marriages Index for *William Homan* produced eleven results: two marriages, three births and six deaths. From these results I located the birth record of Elizabeth and William's first child — a son named William Henry, and ordered a digital copy. William Henry was born in Melbourne and his father registered the birth and listed his occupation as a labourer.

I highlighted William's signature on the birth certificate, zoomed in and clicked the print button. I now knew Elizabeth's first husband, a labourer and former butcher, was not illiterate.

The birth certificate of their first child specified that Elizabeth and William were married in 1852, but from their marriage licence transcript I knew this was incorrect.

I scanned the register again for a certificate for Elizabeth and William's other children.

When their second son James was born in 1857, the Homans had moved since their first child Henry was born. At the time of James's birth William was working as a butcher. By the time James died two years later they had moved again and William was back working as a labourer.

I turned my search now to their third born, Frances.

7 results.

I found my Frances in the list. Her record stated she was born on 23 November 1859 and some five

days later, her father registered her birth. In the space of five years William Homan had gone from labourer back to butcher. At the time of her birth the Homan family was residing at Cambridge Street in East Collingwood, which was also where she was born. I noticed under “Issue living and deceased” the oldest Homan boy is known as “Henry William”, possibly not to confuse him with his father. I decided to do the same in my notes.

My final search for information about Elizabeth’s first husband and their children involved widening the search to all listings including the surname Homan and father’s surname Homan.

21 results.

I did not find a death certificate for Frances, but I did find out what happened to Henry.

When Henry was 21 he married a woman named Adeline Draper and they had five children together.

I found an entry amongst the search results for a death certificate for a man named “Wm Hy” Homan. I was beginning to feel more comfortable working with truncated names and misspellings. I suspected this could be Henry's death certificate. If it was then Elizabeth and William's oldest son had outlived his mother by almost a year.

I decided to check it.

Henry Homan died on a Sunday at Foster's Brewing Company on Rokeby Street in Collingwood where he worked as a cellarman. He was 46 years old.

I returned to my initial query about the life of Elizabeth when she was married to her first husband, William Homan. So far I knew they had three children together, and one died as a baby. I knew her husband changed jobs at least three times from butcher to labourer and back again during this time. They also moved around a lot. I knew her husband wasn’t illiterate, but I had nothing to suggest Elizabeth could read or write and it was Elizabeth, Gruner’s wife, I was interested in most.

I had only one clue that might suggest she was illiterate. On the birth certificate of her second son, James, Elizabeth was the informant, and she signed her name with an X. Was it just that her arms were so full of children that she did not have the capacity to write it out in full, or was it that she could not?

I decided to take a walk to digest what I had just learned about Elizabeth and her first marriage. I grabbed my coat and headed outside with no real destination in mind. I needed some space and light to think about the myriad names and dates swirling in the air above me.

Thirty minutes later I found myself at the entrance to the Fitzroy Gardens staring down a boulevard of gracious elms. The park was all but deserted, as it was the middle of winter and late in the day. The gardens were first reserved as a public space in 1848 and were one of the State of Victoria's most manicured parks. It was set on the south-eastern corner of the city, and just a stone's throw away from East Collingwood, where all these people I was tracking had lived, loved and died.

I sat down on an iron and timber-striped bench and stared up at the canopy of green. An earlier rain had soaked my seat, but I did not immediately leap up as I felt the damp creep into my trousers. Instead, I threw back my head and studied the spaces of sky between the arms of the trees above me. What would this place have been like 150 years ago? The roads were the same for the most part, as were many of the old buildings. But they would have been brand new then. The trees all saplings; the faded decal on the sides of the old buildings bright and fresh. Did Gruner walk through this park to get to work? Did William? How could there be so little information about both men when I so badly wanted to know about them?

The jingle of a passing tram snapped my mind back into the present and I realised I had not had anything to eat all day. I reached into my pocket and retrieved my phone. Seven missed calls, all from my husband David.

Later that evening, I told David about what I had found out Elizabeth Gruner and her first marriage to William Homan.

"It all seems quite ordinary to me," he said, looking up from a pot of beans he was draining in the kitchen sink. "They married in 1853, moved to Melbourne sometime after then, had a baby in 1854, another one in 1857 who died in early 1859 shortly after Elizabeth had given birth to their third child, right?"

"Right," I said.

"But what about William going from being a butcher to a labourer to a butcher again?"

"Well, I mean let's just try and think about the times, I guess people did whatever work they could, I mean why would you move an entire state, away from your family and all if you were just going to do the same gig you had back home … doesn't quite fit to me…" he said.

Sometimes my husband had a way of framing facts in a way that made perfect sense to me.

"I bet William was looking for gold," he said.

"Then why did they live in Melbourne and not in the goldfields of Ballarat or Bendigo?" I asked.

"Well, you know what they say about best laid plans."

~~~

Later that night in the darkened bunker that was my study, I considered the doodles made in my notebook about the other Homan son from my research.

According to the Brooker family tree, Charles Turner Homan was born in 1862; some two years after the death of his purported father William Homan.

I flicked on my computer and dialled up the Victoria registry office. I decided, in the interests of not assuming anything about his mother, that I would do young Charles Turner the respect of first examining the death certificate of his late “father”. Perhaps it was *this* record that was simply incorrect?

According to his death record William Homan died on 23 April 1860 at Melbourne Hospital. He was 33 years old. The cause of his death was ascites, the medical term for fluid in the abdomen most commonly due to cirrhosis. He was listed as a labourer who was born in London. I noted the date of his death was just five months after the birth of his daughter Frances, at which he had stated his occupation as a butcher.

Was I making something out of nothing on the constant shifts in occupation of Homan? I was not sure. I noted the section *Name and Surname of Father and Mother, if known, with Rank of Profession* was left blank. This information was also missing from William and Elizabeth’s marriage certificate too, but I had learned through further inquiry with Genealogy SA that it was customary for registrations at the time to only include limited information. 1853 and 1860 weren’t that far apart, but it seemed a lot had changed in terms of procedure. The other certificates I had examined throughout the day were almost all filled out in full.

This one was not.

I decided to perform a quick search of TROVE to see if there was anything more I could find about William Homan. I find a legal entry in the South Australian Register from 1849. It appears William had sued his employer, a farmer by the name of John Wordsworth Heathcote, for failing to pay him properly. William worked for Heathcote as a hutkeeper, a sheep minder.

One year later in 1850, William was listed in the same publication declaring his confidence in a man by the name of John Stephens. Stephens, the article said was a "journalist and tradesman" — the editor in fact of the very publication the piece was printed in. Homan was listed as being a labourer from Rapid Bay, a small town some 100km south of Adelaide.
~~~

The only other trace of William came in 1855, in a list of unclaimed letters in the South Australian newspaper. He was already in Victoria by then, a married father of one.

From these two entries I added the following facts to my cache on Homan: He was able to perform different jobs, he moved around and had a sense of justice or political conscience. He also had at least one person or entity in his life whom he did not tell he'd moved to Victoria, who had cause enough to send him mail.

I glanced back at Homan's death certificate for any clues as to why his certificate was so sparsely completed. There were a few things that stand out to me after examining this extract.

For one, William's next of kin was not the informant of his death – the hospital clerk was – and this was inconsistent with all the other certificates of the Homan family I'd looked at so far. Secondly, why were the information about Homan's age, occupation and city of birth present, but his tenure in the colonies missing, as well as the fact he was a husband to someone with two living children and one dead? How could one know some of these facts, but not all? It did not make sense.

The death certificate of William Homan proved one thing; though I was not sure what else it might mean for Elizabeth and Anthony, for Charles Turner, it proved that William Homan was not his father.

I returned to the search page of the register and looked up Charles. I find his birth certificate listed with his mother Elizabeth's surname misspelt as "Brucker".

I tapped my phone lying on the desk beside me to activate the screen. It was 11:36 p.m. but I did not feel weary. Adrenaline coursed through my veins as I waited for the document to download, my index finger tapping impatiently on the mouse.

From Charles's birth certificate I deduced that around eighteen months after the death of William Homan, sometime around September 1861, Elizabeth Homan became pregnant. On the 4 June 1862, Charles Turner Homan was born.

At the time of his birth Elizabeth and her children were residing at 78 Cambridge Street East Collingwood. I flicked back through the birth and death certificates I'd printed out earlier. When James was born in 1857 they lived at 1 Cambridge, but by the time he died they'd moved to number five, and then apparently moved again by 1862 to number 78.

I made a note: *Lived at three houses on the same street?*

On Charles Turner's birth certificate Henry and Fanny are listed under existing children, as well as

two sons and two daughters. I pause a moment here. I have only one birth certificate for a Homan child who died in infancy, that of James Edward. If the details on this certificate are correct there were three other babies who did not survive, and if the government database is accurate, their births were never recorded.

William and Elizabeth are listed as the parents of Charles Turner, which I already knew to be inaccurate. The wedding date and location is also inaccurate, it was listed here as 1851 in Melbourne. The midwife was a Mrs. Croft, a name I had not seen before. I jotted it down.

I skimmed across to check the informant. The name recorded was a Charles Ziegler. He was listed at the same address as the Homan family.

Charles Ziegler…

Who are you and why are you informing on the birth of Charles Turner Homan?

I had now come as far as I could with Elizabeth's first husband and family, or as far as the official archive was concerned. I checked the time: 12:18 a.m.

It was time to investigate Elizabeth's second marriage… to Anthony Gruner.

I pulled the next item from my list — the 1863 marriage certificate of Elizabeth and Anthony Gruner. Under "witness" I am surprised to see a familiar name, Charles Ziegler. And a Susan Ziegler too.

I notice Elizabeth signed the marriage certificate. This proved she was not completely illiterate despite what I had seen at the Public Records office and on her son's death certificate.

According to the certificate, Theodore Anthony Gruner was a bachelor with no prior children who was born in Copenhagen, Denmark and worked as a musician. Elizabeth Homan was listed as a widow with two living children and one dead. That matched what I knew from my search of the genealogical web sites, but it failed to acknowledge her now 16-month-old son, Charles Homan.

Anthony and Elizabeth were married according to the rites of the Church of England at St Peter's Melbourne on 28 October 1863. Elizabeth listed her parents as Michael Brooker, Carpenter, and Hannah Curd, which was also consistent with my earlier findings on the Brooker web site.

Gruner's father was given as Frederich Gruner, musician; that also matched the family tree research I had seen, except for one thing. Under groom's mother was the name *Valentina Brunt*.

I flicked back in my notebook to the notes I'd made on the Scandinavian family tree I'd found

online.

According to the website Anthony Gruner's mother was a woman named Florentina Catharina Appelberg.

I wrote both names underneath Charles Turner's on my note pad and absent-mindedly drew a heart around them. I attempted to scribble out the heart and rapped the lead of my pencil along the *V* in Valentina.

I thought of Charles Turner.

At this point he was a product of an illegitimate union, perhaps even one of adultery, if indeed Charles and Susan Ziegler were husband and wife at the time of his conception and Ziegler was in fact his father.

I find out that Charles Turner Homan lived until he was 70 years old. He died in 1932 at the Melbourne Hospital. He had stomach cancer. His death certificate said he was a labourer. It was unknown if he married and his parents were not listed. He was a resident of Gordon House, a homeless shelter on Little Bourke Street in Melbourne.

How could I possibly sleep now on this knowledge of an illegitimate life, and a death alone after living in a shelter with a carcinoma growing in his belly, or, as the certificate had put it, *months wasting?*

I widened my search in the Victorian register, desperately seeking something else on him. A broad check of the name *Charles Homan* yielded eight results but other than his birth and death certificate none of them belonged to him.

One more try.

I searched for "Charlie Homan"

One result. It is a marriage certificate between a Charlie Homan and a woman named Elizabeth Reilly in Collingwood in 1888. Charles was 26 years of age at this time, so conceivably this could be my subject. I took a punt and ordered the certificate.

Charles Homan married Elizabeth Reilly on 5th November 1888 at St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne. He was 26 and she was 19. He may have lived and died not knowing his real father but at least he knew some love in his lifetime.

I had to be up early for work. I clasped the underside of my desk and used my elbows to propel me

back on the wheels of my chair. I spun meekly in a semi-circle one way, then back the other, using my outstretched legs as brakes against the wall of bookshelves around me. I stretched my arms above my head and threw back my head, pencil between my teeth.

Tomorrow I would investigate the world of Anthony Gruner as it was during his marriage to Elizabeth and think more about how Charles and Susan Ziegler might have fitted into the labyrinth that was this family's life on Cambridge Street.

10.

1873 – The day Anthony Gruner is found dead

Elizabeth had a way of approaching her work that her past mistresses described as “frenzied” or “harried”. She once had faced near-dismissal over a particularly zealous beating of a bedspread; her employer deemed her methods of cleaning surely came from a place of darkness. The suggestion, made many years ago now, made her laugh to herself whenever she recalled it.

Elizabeth approached her work, much like all facets of her daily life, with a practised precision. She cherished the comfort of the regularity the laundry provided her, and the solitude. In the moments alone with the linens she could uncoil her thoughts without fear of encroachment. She thought of something her mother had once said about the "poor and lonely life" of the lighthouse keeper she had known in Adelaide. The idea of such a job seemed quite delicious to Elizabeth, but she only admitted it to herself in these private moments.

It was the routine of the laundry that enabled her to keep going day after day, week after week. She was not always like this, but the memory of herself as a girl, and even as a young woman, seemed to grow more distant by the day.

In Melbourne-town the people she met did not know her as she was in Adelaide. They assumed her present disposition was how she had always been, and for this Elizabeth was sad. But there was something in the sameness of her life that comforted her. That sameness also caused her to crumble away inside, through from the outside it was not apparent.

The rains had stopped briefly after breakfast and just long enough for her make her way to the northern tip of Hoddle Street to her employer’s home. By the time she would return, her family would have all left for the day, except Hannah, who would stay to watch over Amelia as she napped until she saw Elizabeth on the horizon heading back to the cottage.

Some women had employers who would drop off great wicker urns of washing on the back of a horse-drawn cart and return at the end of the day to collect them. Elizabeth had not been so lucky to secure such an arrangement and was required to collect her washing job by foot and return it the same way. Most days she did not mind the to and fro and carrying of baskets, but today, the rain and cold made her bones creak with tiredness. A large basket of sheets and a basket of clothing, most heavily soiled after the weekend rains, was the day's agenda.

Arriving back at Dundee Cottage, Elizabeth set about untangling the mounds of fabric. Each piece of cloth was satin smooth to the touch and smelt lightly of lemons. A short while later, Amelia

emerged at the bottom of the stairs and greeted her mother with a toothy grin. Elizabeth saw a spark in her youngest daughter's seagrass eyes and watched as she clapped her hands together above her little head.

"Doggy!" she squealed as she spotted the Birdy hanging around by the back door.

Birdy seemed equally excited at the sight of Amelia and set about running in furious circles in the yard.

"Be careful little one," Elizabeth said, cupping the back of her small head as she skipped around the upturned baskets of laundry and toward the back door.

Once the sheets were boiling away, she set about rubbing soap into the dirty garments. Today she would use more than usual, and despite her mother's insistence that her employer would never know the difference if she just rubbed a little harder on the washboard and saved the soap for herself, she just could not do it. Instead, she primed the corrugated iron of the board with cut lemon. The acidity of its juice helped to cut through the grease on the fabric and the soap on top of this made the stains rise easier. Item after item she rubbed, stopping only to stir the pot of sheets and pillowslips. She had positioned the washing board under the small awning by the back door so she might take advantage of the warmth from the hearth while still keeping an eye on her daughter and her new canine friend.

Elizabeth scrubbed until each blouse, dress and shirt shone and then rinsed each one in the wooden trough by the washboard. From start to finish this process took her about five hours. Once the fabric was almost dry she would heat her flat irons on the stoves to smooth out the shirts, blouses, dresses, sheets and pillowslips, tablecloths and napkins, carefully folding each one and ordering it twice over, by size and by function, back in the basket. Her wages were paltry, but compared to the women in her neighbourhood, she earned a fine amount, and along with Anthony's and Henry's contribution, the household was well seen to.

Smoothing the creases from a fine men's shirt, she thought about the first time she met Anthony. The very first thing she had noticed about him was not his eyes, not his smile, not his moustache, but the fabric of the coat he wore to cover his bed clothes, that first evening they met at the lodging house on Cambridge Street. She had never seen anything quite like it before — a smooth, densely woven wool-like fibre, but it seemed too grand, too regal to be plain sheep's wool. It was a deep vermillion; so rich it looked black under certain light. It had smart brass buttons and a high collar that rested perfectly upon his collarbone. It reminded her of a cloak worn by an oriental man she had once brushed past outside of the Eastern Market on the corner of Bourke and Stephens Streets.

Elizabeth had not remarked on the coat at that first meeting, but once they wed she would often finger the satin-smooth arms of it as it hung in his armoire. Sometimes, when her employers were absent, she would slip into the main house when she came to collect her baskets and peer into their closets on the off chance they too had such finery, but she had never come across anything like it.

Anthony did not wear that coat any more. Whenever she asked him about it he would pat his mid-section and exclaim it was too tight. He never thought to give it to Henry, or Charles – who was growing taller by the day. Instead he let it hang lonely like a wedding dress, to be admired but not worn again. Well, that was the idea.

She bit her lip hard to quell the blood from rushing to her head as she thought of her first wedding, to William.

She unclasped the pool of sheeting and in her mind's eye she saw her own pair of mottled brown lace up shoes sitting beneath the coat in the cupboard she shared with Anthony. It was all she had of her first wedding. The dress was not hers, she had to give it back almost immediately after the ceremony, but those shoes, those shoes were hers and they were all she had left. She thought of Anthony's coat hanging above it and suddenly couldn't remember where the shoes had ended up.

Not that it mattered anymore.

It was unusual for Elizabeth to be working her entire shift alone, but that was how it happened that Monday. As a result of illness and childbirth, her fellow laundresses had been unable to report for their share of the baskets and this meant the tasks of the day would fall entirely on her shoulders. Ordinarily she would not mind, but today, given her husband's odd behaviour over the past twenty-four hours, she was anxious to complete her work, return it and make her way back to the cottage. The weather did not help and made her chores, already more arduous because she had no help, take longer. It was half-past two by the time she had wrung the last pillowslip dry and was ready to peel off her now saturated apron. Her toes where quite frozen inside her stockings. She called out for Amelia who was playing in the yard to join her and they set off along Hoddle Street together.

When Elizabeth and Amelia returned to Dundee Cottage the fire had all but died down. Thankfully, the windows of the cottage were all shut and there was not much of a puddle outside the back door for the returning children to step in before they came in.

Elizabeth paused a moment in the hall and caught a glimpse of her reflection in the glass of a portrait her late father, Michael. Her right cheek was flecked with dry mud and it spread across her temple and over the hair above her left ear.

How could she have not noticed this?

She spat on her sleeve and wiped her face feverishly. Her father's chestnut eyes shone back at her. Her father was a man who lived in a world of black and white, but her husband Anthony's world was grey. For a despairing moment she wished she did not have to continually muse over the complexity of her husband, and that their marriage was a simpler arrangement like everyone else seemed to have. But then she saw the coat, his fine coat hanging on a hook by the front door.

What was it doing here?

She opened both palms in front of her and stared at them, checking to make sure they were clean before unclipping it from the hook and considered it carefully. The velvet of the lapels did not feel as slippery as she remembered. She brought them close to her nose, holding the garment lightly like something that may turn at any moment into sand, and sniffed it. The lapels smelt of sweat. Sweat and some other odour she could not quite place.

Perhaps Bertie, Charlie or Teddy had been playing dress ups with it and John or Hannah had seen it on the ground and thought to hang it up? Perhaps even Anthony had accidently taken the coat not realising it no longer fitted him and in haste left it out? She discarded these scenarios as quickly as she came up with them, because the truth of it was there was no reason for Anthony's coat to be hanging anywhere else but in his armoire, where it had been stored since their wedding day.

Elizabeth ran her slight fingers down the seam of the side of the coat and brushed over one pocket. She felt the surface raise slightly; there was something inside.

She felt around inside the pocket and felt paper. In the corner of her eye she spied her young daughter padding around the kitchen, negotiating her way across a sack of potatoes that squatted in the space between the table and wall like a rocky bridge. Beyond her she saw the yard was empty; Amelia's romance with Birdy had run its course. Withdrawing the paper from the pocket, she felt an overwhelming sense of relief. It was a thick piece of paper, a corner ripped from a booklet of some kind that she knew her husband used daily to write his music in.

Uncrumpling the paper she saw it read, *Stoneham and Levy your handiwork*….

And that was it.

She rolled it back into the tight ball she found it in and replaced it in the pocket before re-hanging the coat on the hook.

For a moment she stood there regarding the garment. She went to walk away but felt unsettled

somehow with its presence by the door. She decided to unclip it and return it to their bedroom where it belonged. She rested the coat on the arm of the staircase, ready for her next journey upstairs.

As the afternoon wound on in Collingwood Elizabeth grew increasingly anxious about her husband's return. Her three boys had since returned from school and Bertie and Teddy had begged her to allow them to call into their grandmother's house to see how Birdy was getting along. Upon hearing their plan, Amelia became tearful and insisted that she join her older brothers in their quest. They reluctantly agreed to let her tag along; she shrieked in delight and clapped her tiny ruddy hands together.

"You better not scare the dog, Mille..." Bertie warned her.

"We're here to train him, that's all. Understand?"

Amelia regarded them a moment, gave a solemn nod, and raced toward the door with such haste her stockinged feet slid along the wooden floor like two tiny canoes.

Upstairs, Elizabeth heard Charlie clunking about in his room. As the second son he sometimes felt too old to play with his younger siblings, yet struggled to relate to his older brother Henry. Elizabeth's heart arched for Charlie in these moments, which did not happen often, but often enough for her to appreciate the gap in their ages and the consequences of her first husband's passing that would remain eternal.

"Charlie?" she called to him.

"Would you like something to eat before supper my darling?"

Silence.

"Mamma I have to practice these equations we learned at school," his squeaky voice declared as he appeared at the top of the staircase with an armful of books.

"Alright, I have some marmalade here, your grandmother left it behind this morning and I do not think she'll remember how much left was in the jar."

In many ways Charlie and she were a lot alike. They both sought solace in routine and when they instinctively knew they didn't quite fit into a situation, they worked hard to conceal the fact.

It was not quite seven o'clock when Anthony appeared by the back door. Under his arm he carried his horn in its case. Mottled pieces of music paper protruded from its seams like he had fastened it

in a hurry.

“Hello my love,” Elizabeth said, following his movements with her eyes as he made his way across the room and set the case on the table.

His head hung so low so that his chin almost touched his breastbone.

“Is there something the matter?” Elizabeth prompted him, more forcibly than she had over breakfast.

She was sure he would not respond; he did not usually respond to any inquiry at once, so she paused. His silence hung like a noose around her neck, slowly tightening, until she wanted to scream and shake him by the shoulders and force him to speak.

But she said nothing and let the air swell in her lungs.

It was a game they played on a daily basis. Once he knew she would not press him, he relaxed. Even with her back to him she could feel his shoulders loosen and his kneecaps unlock. She could feel him staring into the nape of her neck but she dared not turn around.

She breathed in.

It was coming.

And there it was.

“I am not feeling well Lizzie, I shall go and lie down.”

She did not expect him to wait for a response and so began scraping a pot on the stove as the heat of the flames loosened the hardened leftover meat that coddled around its rim.

She glanced toward the staircase and at the same time her husband stopped.

Unexpectedly, he turned back. And she remembered what Stoneham had said to her yesterday.

“I have a student coming later, could you wake me at 8 p.m.?” he asked.

Charlie appeared on the staircase. Anthony touched his flaxen mop of hair as they passed one another, but they did not speak. She saw him collect his coat silently under one arm.

“Anthony, who is Valentina Brunt?” she called out to him as he ascended, unsure if he had heard her.

11.

ELIZABETH AND ANTHONY

After my night of trawling through the archives trying to make sense of Elizabeth's life before Anthony, the next afternoon I scanned the faces of the passengers on the crowded number eight tram trying to imagine what all of these people I was researching looked like. A boy in a Melbourne Grammar School uniform seated opposite me shuffled his legs to one side, picked up his overstuffed backpack and placed it on his lap. He saw the laptop perched acutely on my knee and was attempting to give me some room. I smiled. The boy grinned in return then quickly stared out the window. I wondered if he knew his school was founded in 1858 and in fact could be traced back to 1849 with the establishment of an experimental grammar school at St Peter's Eastern Hill, the very church Elizabeth and Anthony exchanged vows in? Or perhaps he didn't think much of anything that might have happened before his birth. Why would he? I had been doing a lot of reading lately about Colonial Melbourne and it was starting to seep into my everyday life. Living in the same city as my ancestors meant I could enjoy no relief from the quest that was beginning to take up more of my free time than I cared to admit. Even if I was yet to learn of their stories I knew the cast, if only by name – and I knew the setting. Melbourne was their home 150 years ago and it was mine now. Still, I did not feel like I was much closer to understanding why Anthony Gruner died, but I was unravelling a picture of the Homan family and Gruner family in Australia in the hope it would lead me towards the answer.

I had not yet considered Gruner's life before Australia. I needed to find out when he immigrated to Australia and more importantly, why. Did he make the months-long journey on the promise of gold like so many others around that time had, like my husband had suspected William Homan did? Was he searching for something… or running away?

I thought of the greater history of Elizabeth's family I had seen online. For hundreds of years before her father, Michael Brooker, made the decision to uproot his family for Adelaide, his people had more or less stayed in the same place. In fact, the Brookers had been in Sussex longer than Australia had been inhabited by European settlers. History was such a relative label.

I looked at the boy across from me, now fiddling with the smartphone in his hand.

My contact at Melbourne General Cemetery and the Necropolis in Springvale had responded overnight to an email I had sent inquiring about burial locations. William Homan was buried in a

public, unmarked grave in the Church of England section, as was Charles Homan. With the latter I was unsurprised, as I knew he had spent his final days as an itinerant, but with William, the thought did not sit as easily. Did this mean his wife could not have mourned at his graveside?

The tram rolled alongside the entrance to South Yarra Station, prompting an exodus of connecting passengers. The carriage was mostly deserted now. The boy across from me remained, as did a few children from nearby schools, breathlessly gossiping and slapping each other playfully, blazers knotted around waists, socks at half-mast.

Outside, shoppers along Toorak Road scrambled for shelter between up-market stores from the blustery wind that seemed to pick up and carry leaves from afar as Fawkner Park in mini-whirlwinds up and down the street, a jetstream interrupted only by passing cars.

I powered on my laptop and began the same process with Elizabeth and Anthony as I'd done for her first marriage to William Homan, retracing their life by examining the birth of each of their children. And by understanding this, I could find out why Gruner died so violently.

I hoped so anyway.

The problem with this kind of research was that it was so easy to spin off into many different tangents. It was hard to work out what was important and what wasn't when almost everything I found seemed interesting and could be important. I decided it best at this stage just to gather as much information as I could. I would discard nothing. The analysis could come later, and separating the investigation into Australia and Denmark components seemed rudimentary, but at this stage necessary.

And then there was Elizabeth, whose face resembled mine so closely and the photograph that had started it all. What did I think of her in light of what I knew so far? I had digitally scanned the photograph and saved it to my desktop.

I opened the file and considered her briefly.

Her eyes revealed nothing.

I considered her clothing, her hairstyle. I scanned the Internet for an expert in 1800s Australian fashion, or English for that matter. I found an email address for the curator of fashion and textile at the National Gallery of Victoria and shot her off a quick email, attaching the photograph for reference. Perhaps she would be able to tell me more about the social class of Elizabeth, her age, or a better idea of the date the portrait was captured.

And although Elizabeth was my initial fascination, day-by-day I did not think of her. I thought of Anthony. Elizabeth had led me to him and from that moment in the State Library I sensed there was more to his story and I needed to know what it was.

I clicked search for all *Gruner* births, deaths and marriages recorded in the state of Victoria in the Historical Index. I wanted to verify what I'd found already through the family trees online.

84 results.

Elizabeth had six children with Anthony Gruner or seven if I counted Elias, who was born long after his purported father's death.

Their first child, Theodore Christian, was born on 16 May 1864. This was six months and eighteen days after the marriage of Elizabeth and Anthony. It was impossible to speculate precisely how far along Elizabeth might have been in her pregnancy on their wedding day, but going by a 40 week pregnancy, she would be have been approximately 11 weeks pregnant when she married Anthony Gruner.

When baby Theodore was born the Gruners lived in Clarendon Place, Victoria Parade in Collingwood. The midwife who delivered him was Mrs. Ziegler.

Susan Ziegler?

Almost two years later to the date, Anthony and Elizabeth welcomed a second child, a girl, Elizabeth Julie. According to her birth certificate, the Gruner family still lived in Clarendon Place at the time. Susan Ziegler of 3 Cambridge Street, Collingwood is listed as both midwife and informant.

I noted this was the fourth address on Cambridge Street I had come across so far.

Sadly I also discovered Elizabeth Julie died aged just nine months in February 1867. Sometime over the months the girl was alive the Gruner family moved to 1 Cromwell Street in Collingwood, as this was given as their address on her death certificate.

In the weeks following Julie Gruner's death, Elizabeth fell pregnant again and gave birth to a son, Albert Anthony Gruner, ten months to the day after her daughter's passing. Unlike the last two births in the Gruner household, this time a Mrs. Croft was the midwife.

I flicked back through my notes. I had seen that name before. Mrs. Croft was also the midwife for Charles Turner Homan in 1862.

What had happened to Mrs. Ziegler, or Mr. Ziegler for that matter?

It would be almost two years before another baby was born in the Gruner household. During this time the family moved from 1 Cromwell Street to 31 Langridge Street Collingwood, where they resided when Amelia Caroline was born on December 2 1869.

On her birth certificate Amelia's father Anthony was listed as being 39 years old and her mother 37. Her siblings were listed as Theodore — 7, Julia — dead, and Albert — 3. The informant was Anthony, who signed his name "T.E.C.A. Gruner" and listed his address as the location of Amelia's birth. Mrs. Croft was the midwife, again.

The last baby to be born in the Gruner house before the death of Anthony was a girl named Rosa May in 1872. According to her birth record, the family still resided in Langridge Street two years later when she was born on 18 May.

This time Anthony was described as being 47 years old and Elizabeth 39. I paused a moment and scanned Elizabeth and Anthony's birth dates once more for clarity. Indeed, it seems nobody quite knew how old he or she were in the 1870s, at least in the Gruner house, not even Elizabeth – and she was the informant.

The midwife who delivered Rosa May appeared to be a Mrs. McClusky, although this is hard to make out due to the near illegible handwriting.

I scanned the entries of the Victorian register for further evidence of Rosa May Gruner. My heart sank as I spied what I had slowly grown accustomed to searching for: a death certificate issued in infancy. The record reveals Rosa May died at eight months, after suffering "dentition" or what we would call in the modern day, "teething", for around three weeks. She died at home on 3 February 1873. Her mother would inform the colonial register the very next day.

By exploring the evidence left by the Gruner family at the Births, Deaths and Marriages registry I was now convinced Elizabeth Gruner was literate. Her signature was on multiple documents related to the Gruner family. This was in contradiction to my earlier discoveries where she'd signed with an X on the death certificate of her son James Homan and on her testimony at Anthony's inquest.

Why sign some documents, but not others? It was not necessarily due to grief as I'd seen she'd signed Julie Elizabeth and Rosa May's death certificates.

The next certificate in the Gruner family was Anthony's death certificate. It reports Gruner died on 8 September at Hoddle Street in Collingwood, City of Bourke. He was 49 years old.

According to his death certificate Gruner was buried the day after on 10 September in Melbourne Cemetery. The undertaker was Edward Warwick, and his service conducted in accordance with the Church of England. The certificate stated Gruner was born in Copenhagen, Denmark, and had been a resident in the colonies for fifteen years. It also stated he was married in Melbourne to Elizabeth Homan and had three children at the time of his death: Theodore, 10, Albert, 6 and Emilia, 4. His two deceased daughters Elizabeth Julie and Rosa May were not listed.

I pulled out my notebook and scribbled: *Anthony Gruner had a proper funeral*?

All of the other Gruners and Homans I'd found so far were buried in pauper graves. This didn't really support the idea that he might have killed himself due to money trouble; if that was a scenario I ought to be considering.

The tram jolted to a stop at the intersection of Glenferrie Road, the end of the line. The driver emerged from his compartment.

I had missed my stop.

"Lady, I know it's raining, but you got to face it," the elderly trammie said with a creasy smile.

He had a woolly eastern-European accent and brows so thick it was hard to work out where they stopped and his lashes began.

He tilted his chin toward the window, motioning outside.

I looked up and suddenly became aware of my surroundings. Sheepishly, I clicked my computer closed, not first checking to see if I had saved the pages from the registry. I stabbed my pencil into the coils of my notebook like a chopstick and hugged both to my chest, wishing the old man well as I stepped out and onto the street.

The sky was bruised steel, a bluish grey, recovering from an earlier drizzle and flecked with magenta from the now setting sun. The footpath was oily in parts, and in others smooth and dry. It took me twice as long as usual to get home, catching each traffic light and every erratic shower. When I finally got to my house I was wet, and the only part of my person unaffected by the journey was my laptop and notebook, tucked securely in the folds of my coat.

I leaned upon the door to search around in my purse for my key, and it swung open. My husband had beaten me home.

"I was just about to start walking to the tram stop," he said with a slightly raised brow.

He spoke casually but I could see the concern in his eyes.

“I’m sorry, I was distracted,” I said. “I found out more about the woman in the photograph.”

I dropped my keys back into my bag and closed the door behind me.

I notice he had already turned on the heating and my mail was resting on the hallstand.

“So, have you worked it out yet?” he asked.

“Mmmm… sort of,” I replied. “So many babies, and dates and deaths and moving house…”

I flung my bag to the floor and placed my laptop and notebook on the arm of a sofa chair and began to explain what I had found searching the register for the Homans and Gruners.

“And these people, the Zieglers,” I explained after I’d given him an update, “they’re a couple — I mean at least I think they are – they appeared from nowhere, first when Elizabeth’s first husband died, as informants for one of her children’s births, then as witnesses at her second wedding, then Mrs Ziegler as the midwife for two subsequent births….”

David sat cross legged on the floor, his head cocked slightly, contemplating the droplets of rain pooling at the base of the ancient double-hung windows that framed the room.

“What’s next?” he asked.

In the background the television hummed. A giant cartoon lottery ball danced across the screen.

I had been thinking about our conversation last night about the Gold Rush. The prospect of wealth does crazy things to ordinary people. Just last week we’d watched a program about a man who’d won the lottery and had his initials tiled into his swimming pool at his mansion, and other people who burned through millions of dollars of prize-winnings and ended up in a worse state than they had started off in. But Anthony Gruner was a musician. It was at best a stretch to imagine Elizabeth’s first husband as a gold-seeker, as the term “labourer” was so impossibly open to interpretation. But a musician was a musician. And as the multitude of records at the Victorian registry had shown, Anthony Gruner was not like William Homan, who went from butcher to labourer to butcher. His occupation was a constant in a myriad of inconsistences, from mismatching ages to pregnancies that could not have been legitimately conceived. As I began to develop a picture of the life of Elizabeth and her children, I was beginning to realise that anything was possible.

I was still no closer to working out how Anthony came into her life.

The only inconsistency I had found with Anthony was his name. Sometimes he was Theodor Christian, other times Theodore Anthony Gruner and then there was T.E.C.A. Gruner. How could one man have so many monikers? What did his friends call him, I wondered. I needed to continue on this path of creating the world around the man to understand his death. I needed to find out about his friends.

I told David I needed to find out what I could about the Zieglers and look into Stoneham and Levy – the two musicians listed on the note found on Anthony's body.

"And I haven't even begun to think about the Danish connection yet," I sighed, and flopped onto the sofa.

"And there's an inconsistency on his marriage record too in one of the names, it's probably just another mistake."

He leant across me and snatched the remote from where it poked out underneath my thigh.

12.

THE ZIEGLERS

Some time passed before I was able to investigate one of the many-circled names in my notebook. Life had ticked on in Melbourne and the bleary tin sky of winter had conceded to a buttery spring sun.

From above, the streets were a flower field of umbrellas in every colour, and the doormen had all switched to short-sleeved attire. The days were still short, but this far south they always were. Light was rationed, and the people of the city went about working and dining and laughing and crying by moonlight.

At night, the elms along St Kilda Road gleamed in iridescent hues with fairy lighting, beckoning nightwalkers into the fringes of the botanical gardens, where the sound of dark water in fountains harmonised with the padding of joggers in soft rubber soled shoes.

I realised I was more curious about the Zieglers than I was about Stoneham and Levy – the two men named on the note found on Anthony Gruner's body after he died. I had been thinking about this for some time and had reasoned that it was probably because of the intimacy of the relationship I now knew the Zieglers had with Elizabeth, and with Anthony as well. Both Charles and Susan Ziegler were listed as witnesses at the marriage of Elizabeth and Anthony. Susan had delivered two of their babies and Charles had informed the authorities of the birth of another.

This was more than cursory good-neighbourly behaviour.

It was Saturday again and my desk was bathed in late afternoon sun. Outside two birds chased one another around pools of muddy water. They struck me as related, brothers perhaps. The practised game of attack and retreat they played seemed rehearsed, the nips looked particularly violent, and the flutters and shrieks sounded genuine, but somehow it was as if the players knew it was just a charade.

I would start with Susan Ziegler.

I presumed at first that Susan must be the wife of Charles, as they bore the same surname, but a presumption was all it was. I needed evidence. I searched the Victorian Birth, Deaths and Marriages Index for *Ziegler between 1820 and 1945*.

76 records.

There is only one Charles listed and it is a death registration from 1876.

There were no death records for Susan. In the index there was only one female listed with a name similar to Susan and that is Susanna Ziegler who married Stephen William Wright in 1918.

Before I examined the Charles Ziegler death registration I decided to check the incoming passenger lists to Australia for either of the Zieglers. There were several ways of doing this. I could look on official government websites and/or privately constructed databases. Both resources offered slightly different information and levels of detail.

I decided to do both.

The Ships List, according to its website, was collated through integration of BISA, the Biographical Index of South Australians, the Birth-Death-Marriage (BDM) index, the newspaper list of passengers published in the *South Australian Registe*r at the time, and online research. The information was then cross-checked to a list by the long time convener of the Germanic research group at the South Australian Heraldry Genealogy Society.

A search of the surname Ziegler on *The Ships List* website revealed two listings. The first listing was from 1850, where the *Leontine* carried from Bremen to Port Adelaide a passenger by the name of Oscar Ziegler. This man was eighteen years of age, so too young to be my Ziegler, but the second listing seemed more promising.

The second listing was for a thirty-year old man named Carl Ziegler who travelled aboard the *Gellert* from Bremen in Germany to Port Adelaide, arriving on 20 December 1847. If this man was my Charles Ziegler he would have been about forty-five years old the year Charles Turner Homan was born.

I searched *The Ships List* again for Susan Ziegler. Nothing.

The passenger's aboard the *Gellert* ranged in age from one to 71. Most passengers were farmers but there was also a surgeon, a teacher, a boot maker and a portrait painter aboard.

Interestingly one of the passengers was named Susan. Susan Amas, aged 20 was listed in the "Single Women" category. According to the record she was a servant with the Zerbst family — a contingent of seven from Silesia, a small region in Central Europe which today is mostly located in Poland.

I looked Susan Amas up on the Victorian and South Australia register of Births, Deaths and Marriages — nothing.

I searched in all categories for "Amas", nothing.

Frustrated, I decided to repeat the search for “Ziegler” and I get a hit. There were 27 births, 23 deaths and 12 marriages recorded on the database, including one between a Carl Zeigler and a Susan Lindon in 1849 in Adelaide. Perhaps Carl/Charles married, not Susan Amas, but Susan Lindon?

I leapt back into The Ship List and searched for a Susan Lindon— nothing. I crosschecked it with the Victorian registry. One result. Not her.

Other than her marriage certificate to Carl Ziegler, there was no trace of Susan Lindon.

And other than the Gruner’s wedding certificate, Charles and Susan did not appear together anywhere in the evidence I had seen so far.

I could not find anything else about Susan Ziegler other than she was a midwife. And again I only knew this from examining the Gruner family certificates.

I had one last hope – the death certificate of Charles Ziegler.

A few clicks of the mouse later and I had the certificate in front of me. My forearms were tensed above the keyboard. I clicked open the file. I discovered Charles Ziegler was 58 when he died in 1876 of chronic alcoholism, three years after Anthony Gruner was found dead.

Working backwards in my mind, if Ziegler was 58 when he died he would have been born around 1818, making him 30 or so in 1848. It was plausible he was the Carl Ziegler who travelled to Adelaide from Bremen and married Susan Linden.

According to his death certificate Charles Ziegler had been in Australia for sixteen years, placing his arrival around 1860 – too late to be the Carl Ziegler I had found in the shipping records who arrived in 1847. I decided to discount this entry. There had been too many examples of approximation of age and time I had encountered in other certificates. There was also the fact that the hospital registrar had been the one to inform the Colony of Victoria of his passing.

How would they know what year he arrived?

The death certificate stated Ziegler was single and had no children.

Charles Turner Homan was fourteen years old at the time of Charles Ziegler’s death and very much alive.

And what about Susan, his wife?

Charles Ziegler was alive when Anthony Gruner died. And Susan was too, at least until 1866, as she

was engaged in midwifery until this time for the Gruners. They all resided in Collingwood at various addresses not more than a few yards from one another. I flicked back to the crude family tree I had fashioned on the inside cover of my notebook and made some scribbles.

Outside the birds were now perched in a line along the fence. I glanced back to the screen and I notice what was listed under occupation on Charles Ziegler's death certificate:

Musician.

~~~

After the revelation that the witness at Anthony and Elizabeth's marriage — and the potential father of Elizabeth's illegitimate child Charles — was also a musician, I decided I needed some outside help. Counting Stoneham and Levy, the two men named in the note found on Anthony's body, I now had four persons of interest attached to the one profession. I needed to understand how musicians lived back then if I was going to have any chance at working out why Anthony Gruner's life ended so violently in 1873.

I was hoping Sydney-based musicologist Graeme Skinner would be able to shed some light on this world, so far away from the one I knew.

Skinner, an honorary associate in Musicology at the University of Sydney, is a respected music historian with a special interest in research into Australian music and musicians in the colonial and early Federation era.

I sent Skinner an email explaining my project and what gaps I hoped he might be able to help me fill in. A TROVE search revealed the orchestra Gruner was performing with at the Melbourne Town Hall on Saturday 6 September 1873 was for the production of the Gioachino Rossini opera *Moses in Egypt.* It was during Gruner's engagement that evening, according to Elizabeth, he had been insulted so severely he ended his life two days later.

I decided not to reveal too much to Skinner in my initial correspondence, just mentioning my interest in the performance, specifically by horn players, but leaving out the names of the two men mentioned in the note found on the body.

Skinner responded to my message almost immediately.

He sent me a pre- and post-history of the performance of 6 September. He also knew the names of at least two other horn players.

He said *Moses in Egypt* was a production of Lyster and Cagli's Italian Opera Company, under their
~~~

permanent conductor Zelman, and with their small touring orchestra of about twenty-five players. *Moses in Egypt* was part of the repertoire for the 1873 season that toured Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne.

He wrote:

The Company's two horn players throughout the season were Richard Kohler (a professional musician) and Joseph Verso (a semi-professional who off season reverted to his trade as a builder). However, it's unclear precisely what type of horns they were playing. One report suggests they were not proper orchestral French horns at all, but some sort of band horn (cornopeans perhaps). Another report in August complained that they were playing really badly, and not up to the standard of the rest of the wind soloists in the orchestra.

Skinner tells me that according to an April advertisement for the company, the combined concerts boasted an orchestra of about 60. From an ensemble of this size he wrote, it would be reasonable to suggest there were at least four horns at the two concerts held at the Melbourne Town Hall.

During the 1873 season, the opera company was also joined by the chorus and orchestra of the Melbourne Philharmonic for special concerts in April (of Rossini's *Stabat Mater* and other works); and in September, for the two performances of *Moses in Egypt* in the Town Hall on Friday and Saturday, where, after the following Wednesday, the opera company alone performed the opera again in the theatre, its last night in Melbourne before sailing for Sydney.

He suggested I examine the archives of the Melbourne Philharmonic for an orchestra list, and told me he would examine his own register of colonial musicians. He anticipated one contender for the names of the other horn players could be a man named Rufus Hore.

Hore, he said was a member of Melbourne's leading family of brass musicians, and incidentally also the licensee of a pub.

I add the names Richard Kohler, Joseph Verso and Rufus Hore to a fresh page in my notebook and fired back a grateful response to Skinner.

Could one of these musicians be the reason Gruner ended his life, or was it, as his suicide note suggested, Stoneham and Levy who caused him to cut his throat that night?

Skinner had this to say about the second man named in Gruner’s suicide note.

"Your Barnett Levy was a violinist and by the way is no known (or significant) relation of the Sydney theatre owner Barnett Levey. But was the brother of the world famous cornet soloist, Isaac

Levy," he revealed.

I had crosschecked this information online and found Skinner was correct. Barnett Levy was born in 1828 in London to David and Maria Levy. He had eight siblings, one being Isaac “Jules” Levy.

I scanned TROVE, the online database of old Australian newspapers, for more evidence on the life of Barnett Levy. I discovered he had been listed as insolvent due to family illness and inability to find work in 1872. By early 1873 he was leading the orchestra in engagements at the Athenaeum Theatre. According to public records, Barnett died in 1880 in Melbourne of an inflamed spleen. A report on his death in *The Argus* revealed he had returned from a rehearsal and complained to his wife about chest pains. She began to fix him a tonic but before she had finished, he had died. He had been married twice, once in London, once in Sydney and had four children.

With Skinner’s detailed insights into the cast and characters of the events leading up to the night Anthony Gruner died, I began to piece together an image of Melbourne in the 1860s and early 1870s. I had what I information I could find on Levy, so now I wanted to know more about the other man named in the note, William Stoneham.

I scanned the TROVE database for evidence of Stoneham. Unlike Levy, Stoneham was consistently documented in the local media of the time. William Stoneham, professor of music, musician, flautist, trombone player, bandmaster, conductor, and orchestra leader, was born in Hobart Town, Tasmania on 19 November 1832. By 1860, according to a newspaper clipping, he was fronting his own band, Stoneham's Brass Band, and performing at balls in the Geelong region of Victoria, west of Melbourne.

Stoneham grew up in Hobart and Geelong and was married three times and had five children – all musicians. He died in Leichardt, New South Wales in his eighty-first year.

I find a newspaper report from 1870. It mentions Stoneham *and* Gruner. It’s a write up of a performance held at the Melbourne Town Hall in September 1870.

Mr. Allen's Ballard Concert

…There was a band of seven saxhorns, which we were informed comprised a complete set of instruments of a new construction recently imported by the house of Wilkie, Webster, and Allan, and these were played by Messrs. Richardson, Stewart, Warnecke, R. Hore, S. Hore, Stoneham and Gruner, by which it may be seen that this part of the performance was in the hands of experienced players.

R. Hore - Rufus Hore? It was likely. Perhaps S. Hore was a brother.

I knew now Stoneham had played with Gruner in 1870; this was interesting but not critical to my research, as Stoneham had already come out in the days after Gruner's death and publicly declare he'd seen the man "five or six months" prior to his death.

I tried searching for Barnett Levy *and* Gruner together in the newspaper archives online.

Nothing.

I had evidence of Gruner and Stoneham working together in the past, but not Gruner and Levy. Levy was a violinist, so it made sense he wouldn't be a part of a brass band, but the two men did know each other. Levy had said so himself after Gruner's death. Levy had said he'd had nothing to do with him in 14 years, making their latest interaction around 1859/1860.

Levy's brother Isaac was a world-famous coronet player, so it would be reasonable to assume Barnett knew something about wind instruments.

I found it strange that Stoneham had said in his statement in *The Argus* after Gruner's death that he had not been present at the Town Hall that Saturday night, the sixth of September, where Gruner had claimed (according to his wife) to be in receipt of an insult.

If Stoneham wasn't even there and Levy hadn't seen him in over a decade, then why were they named in the note found on Anthony Gruner's body?

13.

THE GRANDEST PERFORMANCES

I decided to take Skinner's advice and make a trip to the State Library of Victoria archives to see if I could fill in some blanks. My second trip to the library took place on a Saturday, and to my surprise, the building had an almost festive vibe, like a function hall. The staff behind the information counter looked younger; one had pink highlighted-hair and another wore a shark's tooth on a leather band around his neck.

After a quick but pleasant exchange with the pink-haired woman, I secured the membership card I needed to enter the La Trobe Reading room and view the archives of the Melbourne Philharmonic.

Upstairs, the sign on the door of the archive information counter read: *enter without knocking*. This seemed odd to me, and I hung back staring at it for a second; then I realised this was a library, nobody wanted their concentration ruined by the sound of knuckles on wood.

I slid the prepared request across the counter and waited for my order.

A few minutes later I was presented with a white archive box with a handwritten label on the side: MS 13266 Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society Box 1. It did not seem to be big enough to house all the records for a major musical organisation or the past 150 years.

I thanked the man behind the counter and made my way to the viewing area.

I examined a list of the contents of the archive. The State Library archive contained: guard books, containing programmes, critiques, reports, rules of the Society, 1853–1946; a minute book, 8 Oct. 1853–2 Jan. 1856, containing membership, attendance and financial records; George Peake's Melbourne Philharmonic Society: Diamond Jubilee, 1853–1913: historical souvenirs; a draft, research notes, correspondence and reviews concerning W.A. Carne's *A Century of Harmony*; the Official Centenary History of the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society; an index to artists and works; manuscript scores and an album of arrangements by Charles Edward Horsley, ca. 1860s–1870; printed scores; an illuminated address presented to John Hudson Marsden, 28 Jan. 1879; memoranda of association, articles of association; and by-laws and programs, badges and printed ephemera. It seemed like an enormous amount of content, but in actuality all of this data was mostly contained in a number of old notebooks in plastic sleeves.

I reached in and plucked one out, choosing the oldest-looking one. It had a tan coloured spine, cracked and worn and barely clutching the pages inside together. The cover at one time had had a chocolate brown and ink blue pattern that reminded me of a cross-section of a fossil. The pages

inside were yellowed, but once bright. The paper was thick and felt official. When closed, the edges of the pages revealed a now-faded but once brilliant Florentine-style pattern of greens and blues and reds. It must have been a handsome book in 1853.

I surveyed the reading room. The librarian on duty had her head buried in her computer screen, but otherwise I was alone.

The book was a record of meeting minutes for the society from 1853 to 1856. This was earlier than I was interested in, but I figured toward the end it might reveal some clues as to the state of musicianship in Victoria in the late 1850s when Gruner had arrived in Australia. I started to read the neat, black inked cursive: "Minutes and proceedings of the 'Melbourne Philharmonic Society' initiated Saturday, October 8th 1853. I scanned page after page, carefully and with many short respites to refocus my eyes on easier targets than the difficult handwriting of the colonial era. There was no mention of Gruner. In the back of the book, written upside down, was the register of membership subscriptions. No Gruner, and no Levy or Stoneham or Ziegler either. I made a note of this and carefully replaced the book in its plastic sleeve and proceeded to examine the rest of the contents of the archive.

The second book from the archive was the same A4 size as the minute's book. It was in much better condition. Its red leather spine had not deteriorated, and the blackish-green of the fabric cover had maintained its regal timbre. Inside, the same pattern of the minute's book was repeated in white and navy. On the front cover a sticker with a handwritten label identified the artefact as an "Index to Artist Works of Melbourne Philharmonic Society, 1888–". It was too late for my purposes. Gruner had died fifteen years prior; this book was useless. Or was it? I remembered Stoneham and Levy were both still living in Melbourne at the time, and scanned the index for each man.

Nothing.

The third item in the box was a red leather and gold-embossed book of music, "Fridolin" by Alberto Randegger. The book was in excellent condition; its inside cover in near-new condition featured a pattern of teal, flesh pink, cream and lemon splotches that resembled multiple tins of paint combined upon a maroon background. The book was dedicated with a sticker on the inside cover, dated 12 September 1876.

At least I was getting a little closer to the time of interest.

The next two books appeared to be part of a set, so I unsheathed them together. They bore a sticker that read in cursive script: *I am an Important Book PLEASE TAKE CARE OF ME.* The latter part of

the statement was underlined.

The document was the first draft of "A Century of Harmony: The Centenary History of the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society" by W. A. Carne.

It was divided up into the various conductorships of the Philharmonic and included details of every concert given under each conductor, and snippets of the press reviews of the time. Information from the minute's book I had just handled were also included.

I scanned the index for 1873 and discovered this fell under David Lee's conductorship, the first term of two. Lee helmed the philharmonic from 1866 to 1874 and then again between 1876 and 1888.

Flipping through the yellow pages of the typed document I arrived at page 64. *Mose in Egitto* was the 153rd performance of the Melbourne Philharmonic and an "extra" performance. It was a repeat performance of the show the night before. The Governor, Sir. G. F. Bowen., G.C.M.G. and Lady Bowen attended.

I examined the Friday night performance for more detail. It read:

Mose in Egitto (1) 5th September. Town Hall Extra

Signori Fillipo Colvia, Leandro Coy, Pietro Favas, Francisco Benso, Enrico Dondi, Mr. G. A. Johnson (T), Signora Tournerie, Signora Margherita Zenomi.

The performance was given in conjunction with the Royal Italian Opera Company. Mr. Alberto Zelman Sen. Conducted with Mr. David Lee at the organ. Press reports the performance was outstandingly good – "the best without exception that has been heard here". Mr. Lee received acclamation for his work at the organ.

It continued on page 65:

In reporting on the year's work, the Committee remarked that the concerts given in conjunction with Mr. W. S. Lyster's Opera Company were, in a financial sense, disappointing, but the Society gave the "grandest performances of 'Mose in Egitto' ever attempted in Victoria." Five subscription concerts and three "extras" speak of continued vitality. Again the treasurer reported a surplus of £15/8/9 for the year. This with the balance on hand at the outset permitted an expenditure of £53 on the library and a presentation of £50 to Mr. Lee. Again the Annual Report commented on the changes in performing members; 31 new ones enrolled "but through the constant changes incidental to the Colony, the number of members does not exceed 200". Mr. J. M. Pitts succeeded

Mr. R. B. Caunter as Hon. Secretary.

I was not quite sure what to make of Carne's "history" of the Philharmonic. It appeared after a cursory glance and then a closer inspection to be a fine collation of hundreds of newspaper articles on the Society as well as a seemingly accurate transcription of administration records.

For something the historian himself described as "the oldest choral body in the British Commonwealth of Nations with continuous public performance", I was expecting a little more panache in its composition. Surely the history of music and theatre was more than just a list of performances and ledger of expenses and attendance? This was not the insight I had been hoping for. It did highlight one thing for me, there was no mention of Stoneham or Levy anywhere.

A man had joined me in the reading room and was poring over a set of ancient looking schematics. I bundled the books and papers back into their respective boxes and made my way to the return desk.

14.

1873 – The day Anthony Gruner's body is found

It was commonplace for Elizabeth's three little ones to spend the hours at her mother's cottage if they came calling on her in the late afternoon. They were still young enough to enjoy the novelty of sharing her rickety wooden bed and enjoyed the way her hair smelled of dried lavender when she loosened her braids as she prepared for bed. For this reason, Elizabeth was not concerned when Bertie, Teddy and Amelia had not returned by supper.

Tonight she was alone in the house with her son Charlie, who sat at the table studying a book his master had given him. By the candlelight in the kitchen he cocked his head in deep contemplation and she watched his mouth move as he read.

"You are going to be a very wise man one day my bairn," she said tenderly.

He did not look up from his pages but she could tell he was grinning.

The stew was almost ready so Elizabeth reached for her shawl and told her son she would be back shortly with his brothers and sister.

Charlie nodded, not looking up from his book. Elizabeth eyed the bubbling pot on the stove and wondered if she had made enough. She would set aside a portion of supper for her eldest son, who would no doubt be drinking at Porter's Hotel with his work chums. She did not approve of this of course, but there was little she could do. The fact Henry came back to Dundee Cottage at all these days was enough for Elizabeth to hold on to. She dared not ask any more of him. She also saved a portion for Anthony, mostly vegetables and little scraps of meat, as she was certain he wouldn't touch it anyway.

Elizabeth returned to Dundee Cottage a short while later alone. Hannah had informed her that a tent had been erected in her bedroom and it was presently in a state of occupation.

Elizabeth smiled and considered her mother, who stood in the doorway in her nightgown, seemingly unfazed at her public display of undress.

It would be nice to have a quiet evening, she mused.

"Well," Hannah concluded. "See you in the morning."

The old woman shut the door and Elizabeth made her way back to Hoddle Street.

~~~
~~~

Later at Dundee Cottage, the old clock on the mantlepiece showed five minutes to eight. Elizabeth gathered the underside of her apron; she exhaled deeply and turned toward the staircase, collecting a candlestick to light her way.

At the top of the staircase Elizabeth could see no light streaming from the room she shared with her husband.

The bedroom was silent; she pushed ahead along the hall, holding the candlestick to her breast to guide the path she knew without light. The door fell open.

She let out a scream, her fingers released the lamp, and it dropped to the floor, going out upon impact.

“Anthony!” she gasped, slumping to the ground, clasping her hand to her mouth.

Her husband lay on the bed, his throat sliced from ear to ear, blood streaking the surrounding bed and walls a deep vermillion and pooling at his collar.

In his open palm she saw his razor.

His saxhorn was flung by the foot of the bed, dribbles of blood soaked into its bell.

His fine coat lay discarded in the corner.

Wailing, she crawled along the ground towards him.

“Anthony!”

The severed tendons and veins of his neck spewed from the open wound, and the trickling blood began to slow and thicken in dark patches around his head like a dark halo.

She moved toward him and picked up his limp head, cradling it under her forearm and pressing it toward her breast.

She rocked back and forth holding her husband, sobbing silently by the glow of the candle on the bureau.

Outside, the rain had stopped.

~~~

Hannah, John, and Constable Alfred Cartledge of the East Collingwood police station pushed through the unlocked back door of Dundee Cottage and bolted up the stairs. Charlie remained at Hannah’s cottage where he’d fled after hearing his mother’s bloodcurdling scream.
~~~

In the bedroom Elizabeth slumped motionless against the wall, unblinking. Anthony lay across her lap; the light of the candle illuminated his dark eyes but obscured the rest of his face. John regarded him for a moment and cursed Elizabeth's first husband for dragging their family to this god-forsaken town.

Had they stayed in Adelaide this evening would never have come to pass, he thought.

Two dead husbands. Six children living and four of those still needing raising.

And people thought he lived an unsatisfactory life.

"I've never seen nothing like it John," Cartledge whispered to him by the doorway to the bedroom.

"How does a man cut his own head off?"

John raised an eyebrow and motioned to the Constable to follow him into the kitchen.

"I knew he was never quite right, but you expect a man to fear God, if nothing else," John explained, a finger tracing the rim of a cup of lukewarm tea.

"But that up there is about as far away from God as you can get."

15.

COLLINGWOOD

I had been investigating the life of Elizabeth and Anthony Gruner on and off for almost twelve months, and in all this time I had yet to take a trip to Collingwood — the site of so many of the houses the Gruner and Homan families occupied during their time.

Cambridge Street lay parallel to its larger counterparts Smith and Wellington Streets. To the south it was bordered by Victoria Parade; to the north by Stanley Street. The Homan family lived on Cambridge Street and it was also where Charles and Susan Ziegler lived, at least until 1862.

When Anthony and Elizabeth married in 1863, she was listed as living in East Melbourne, and he in East Collingwood. The year after they married, Elizabeth and Anthony were living on Clarendon Place— a mere stone's throw from Cambridge Street. The Gruner family was still there in 1866, but by 1868 had moved to Cromwell Street, four blocks south. By December 1869 they had moved to 31 Langridge Street; some time after February 1873 the family moved to Hoddle Street. They had only lived in the house, Dundee Cottage, for a maximum of six months when Gruner died.

I wandered the streets searching for a house still standing, but none remained. A nursing home now stood on the site of the Cambridge Street houses, and Langridge Street site was now a commercial building. For the most part, the layout of Collingwood had remained unaltered over the years; the streets were all still in position, but their contents were irreconcilable with what I knew about the place in the 1860s and 70s. Today the neighbourhood was brimful of smart young professional couples and expensive florists. Despite its fashionable veneer, the streetscape memorialised its working class roots. Alleyways were narrow and yard space sparse. Hoddle Street, Anthony Gruner's last address, was then and still is a major traffic arterial.

A search of the land titles office revealed the first title held for Dundee Cottage, the house Gruner died in; 26 Hoddle Street Abbotsford (which in Gruner's time was a part of Collingwood) dated back to 1919 when 42-year-old fireman William Gladwin Lloyd was listed as the owner. Some houses still stood along Hoddle Street that dated from the era, but those where closer to Victoria Parade and mostly single-fronted terrace houses. As I walked along Hoddle Street, I was struck at just how small these houses were. Many of the terraces had been restored, but a sprinkling remained in near original condition. I stood in front of one of these; certain nobody would be home, or had been for the better part of at least half a century.

If only these walls could talk.

Black-green ivy spiralled through the petrified lacework of its veranda. Weeds swayed waist height in the patch of dirt that probably used to be a path leading to the front door. Its sole street-facing window was barred; a dirty muslin curtain hung limp behind its glass. A rat ran out from the yard of the seemingly abandoned terrace and onto the pavement before me. At the same time a passing truck sounded its horn.

I glanced across the street at the small factory on the corner of Greenwood Street where Dundee Cottage once stood. Something horrific happened here in 1873, something that would have changed Elizabeth's life, and that of her children and children's children.

I retrieved the photograph of Elizabeth from my purse. I had unpegged it from the corkboard in my study before I'd left home that morning. I wanted her to be with me when I walked these streets.

I still had yet to hear back from the curator at the National Gallery of Victoria about the fashions in the photograph.

I closed my eyes and tried to imagine the woman in the photograph walking along Hoddle Street.

Anthony Gruner had two descendants, his children Albert and Amelia who carried on his bloodline. His son Theodore never married and worked as a cook until his death aged 77, seemingly alone in a Melbourne hospital. His other children Rosa May and Anthony Junior did not reach adulthood.

Albert Gruner was the father of Mary Florence Gruner, my great grandmother, and the original owner of the photograph.

In my veins I carried her blood.

I carried Anthony Gruner's blood.

Somewhere in the space between my dreams and waking hours I knew, somewhere I knew, I had the answer to why his life ended so violently on 8 September 1873.

I took one last look at the woman in the photograph and placed it back into my purse. I had come as far as I could go in Australia. It was time to reverse his journey in hopes of revealing his story. I would go to Denmark.

16.

COPENHAGEN

It was Saturday morning, 6:45 a.m., and after almost twenty-four hours of flying I had arrived in Copenhagen. The city would be my home for the next two weeks, and although I had sent out numerous emails and exhausted all avenues through friendship groups and academia, I found myself in the arrivals hall alone, with one great red and black backpack on my shoulders.

To the outsider I would have looked like any other holidaying student, but inside my bag was my laptop and reams of files of what I already knew about a dead man who lived in this city almost two hundred years ago.

The airport was smaller than I had expected, and the customs exit — there appeared to be only one — led to a well-worn path between the other terminal and a coffee shop. Outside, the morning sky was slate grey, and the minimalist architecture of the airport, the beamed steel and glass, seemed to sit lower than it ought to. The jumbo jets exhaled on the other side of the structure, so close to where I stood. Actually, everything felt so close; the train station was visible from the arrivals hall. The taxi rank, the bus stop, the other terminals were all nearby. The information counter? Right here. Hire a car? Just over there. There was no need for travelators in this place. It felt regional, like a prototype of an airport from the 1960s, despite its modern fittings.

Around me I heard Russian, and some other eastern European language I could not quite make out. Holidaymakers from the former Eastern Bloc appeared everywhere; couples dragging thin-wheeled suitcases fidgeted with money belts of braided faux-fur. The women were fair, with skin so white but for a splotch or two of red on each cheek, like a droplet of blood on tissue. A gaggle of Scandinavian teenagers milled around the domestic self check-in stations, a tattered rucksack and a dirty-wheeled skateboard each their only cargo.

In between the northern travellers a group of elderly Asian tourists moved forwards, like a wave approaching the shore. In the centre, a woman with a brilliant shock of red curly hair stabbed the ceiling with a long pole carrying a placard of her tour company. The woman, who appeared to be Danish, spoke to the group in Chinese.

Toward me came a group of men, all around early to mid-thirties in matching tee-shirts. As they came into focus I realised some were linking arms and softly singing. Some kind of choir, I wondered? Those with a free hand were clutching tins of beer. Together they waltzed through the

arrivals barricade and towards the coffee shop, perhaps. In other countries a troupe of grown men in matching outfits, swinging hands and singing, fuelled by beer at 7 a.m. in a public place like an airport would be cause for security to bristle. Here, nobody blinked at the sight but me.

I jumped my backpack up my spine and headed toward the underground station. The early morning talent show had beaten me to the platform. There were no seats, but a lean-to suitable for people with heavy luggage to pause at while waiting for the train. I set myself up between the group of men and the digital arrivals board. They were oblivious to all around them, still singing and clapping and occasionally hugging. Their camaraderie warmed me.

I rented an apartment in Nørrebro, in the north of the city, the advertisement had said. When I arrived at the front door I was pleasantly surprised to learn that it was not actually in Nørrebro but within the city limits, which meant commuting would be a cinch. It was also directly opposite the University of Copenhagen, down a small tributary street.

My home for the next two weeks was a fourth floor walk-up with no elevator, and keys that looked as if they were hammered out by the original blacksmith commissioned when the building was erected in 1880. By the entrance, climbing roses trailed over the street number and the heavily graffitied walls of the exterior. The front doors to the building were coated in flaky cream paint and were inlaid with glass so dirty it was hard to see through. It was perfect. There must have been 50 people living in the building with me at the time, but never would I cross paths with one. I could hear them though, the same way I could hear the cars along Øster Søgade, which translated to East Lake Street, the bicycle wheels turning, and the sounds of people laughing and talking as they dined in the neighbourhood restaurants.

For the first time in a long time I was alone in a city. I knew nobody except for the researchers I had managed to secure appointments with before I left Australia, and I did not speak the language. I had downloaded software to my cell phone to help me with basic translation, and a map feature too. But that first night in Copenhagen I did not look at either of them. Instead I smoothed out the courtesy guide to the city I had picked up at the airport. It was covered in advertisements for tourist-inclined retailers, but it was in English, and its cartoonish grid made it easy to orientate myself.
I adjusted the soft feather pillow beneath my head and bunched the duvet up under my neck for warmth. As I closed my eyes to sleep I thought about Anthony and wondered how he felt that first night in Australia without a free map.

17.

1854 – 19 years earlier

Theodor Gruner opened his eyes in the dawn of a September morning in Copenhagen. The ochre glow of a single candle danced the shadows of the night off the filthy walls of the room and across the sleeping Anna Marie's face.

At rest she looked childlike, smaller than an adult woman should be, her thin, angular features in a poised state of perfect relaxation, her limbs lithe under her thin blanket. Each expulsion of air from her part-open mouth met with a pause; Theodore held his own breath so he might wait for the corresponding inhale. He did not know why he cared so much for her in the small hours of the morning. Sometimes she thrashed about in her slumber, rolling from one side to the other. There was something not balanced about Anna that he could not quite explain. In the six years he had lived here at Adelgade 1 in the quarters at the rear of the building with her and the old spinster, he had not once heard her speak of her dead husband or of her hometown in Ganløse, in the north. She rarely spoke to him during the day, but at night she spoke freely. It was as if the sunlight caused her some sort of tension that only darkness could relieve. Not that the sun revealed itself often in their neighbourhood.

Theodor had grown so accustomed to the iron grey skies of the city, the slick welts of watery dirt that coated every surface underfoot. The stench of animal and human waste stuck on his tongue and to the hairs inside his nostrils. His clothing was never quite dry and never quite clean. His hair was fine and dark and so oily that rain beaded on it before escaping to his shoulders. When the dawn broke, he knew Anna Marie would stir quickly before slipping out from her bed to start her daily routine, not knowing he had spent much of the night keeping watch over her. He wondered if her husband used to do the same thing.

Theodor had rented a room at Adelgade from Regine Stokkman since 1848. He was certain the old woman was not the owner of the house, but it seemed she had lived there long enough to become the self-appointed landlady. She was a squat, elderly woman, with a spherical face and two pinholes for eyes. Her hair was pinned so tightly beneath her bonnet she looked quite bald. In her mouth only two teeth remained, both on her upper gum, which made it hard for her to eat small foods like beans or berries. Instead she would crush them into a watery paste and slurp them in the most ungraceful fashion that both intrigued and repulsed Theodor at the same time. Part of the lease agreement was that he and other unmarried or widowed persons would be afforded a room and a small desk and

one meal per day in exchange for half of their weekly wages. A window was not guaranteed, although many did not seem to want one, preferring the warmth of blackness to a view. Not that there was much of a view from the rear quarters – just the alley and the rats and smaller vermin that coasted across the perimeters of the building where it met the street, threatening at any time to slip in through one of the many cracks in the brickwork and join the lodgers in their chambers.

As it turned out, Regine was quite the businesswoman, and when she was not re-selling vegetables from the peasant farmers from outside the city at inflated prices, she was overbooking her rooms at Adelgade. This is how Theodor and Anne Marie came to be in the same room together. Travelling merchants, the newly-widowed, the afflicted by drink or gambling, the godless and god fearing – it appeared Regine did not discriminate. The lodgings were advertised on a word-of-mouth basis only, and their proximity to Nyhavn and Rosenborg Castle meant many a displaced sailor and soldier had beaten on the door seeking sanctuary. To Regine, rigsdaler was rigsdaler no matter the pocket it came from. As the candle burned down in its cradle beside him, Theodor's eyelids grew too heavy to keep open and he slipped into an uncommon moment of peace.

It was the same every morning. She would wait until she was certain he was pretending to still be asleep before slipping out of the room and into the kitchen, where Regine was preparing food. So when she approached his bed Theodor couldn't help but jump awkwardly in surprise. She rested a narrow hand on the knub of his shoulder and pressed down a little to settle him. She let out a little laugh, something Theodor thought even more unusual from her than making physical contact.

"Theodor," she said in a low voice.

"Happy birthday."

He snapped his neck towards her and met her silvery eyes. She smiled tentatively. He wanted to return the gesture but somehow he felt quite frozen. She released her hand and walked softly towards the door.

He was twenty-nine years old today.

Stepping out onto Gothersgade, Theodor drank in the morning air, contracting his chest and outstretching his free arm. His other arm was occupied with his horn case and sheet music. He had many students to attend to today, and his brow furrowed as he contemplated the coming hours. Oh how he hated certain individuals he had to tutor, all in the name of eking out an existence.

He did not play his horn much anymore, and he blamed the inconvenience of adulthood for this. His father had been dead now for almost eight years, his mother and sister Sophie fifteen odd. All that

remained of his kin were his sister Eline, her husband and their baby. His brother Karl was alive, as far as he knew but he had long left the city, for where he did not know. Theodor had begged his father on his deathbed, clutching his feverish palm in two of his, pleading with him to reveal why his brother Karl left that wintry night all those years ago. Karl had left in such haste he had forgotten to take with him his most prized possession, his horn.

By the dimly lit doorway to the kitchen, Theodor remembered the sound of his heart that night; it beat so feverishly he was certain his father would discover him lurking in the shadows.

He did not.

The next morning, Theodor's father informed him it was time he learned the family business. It was more of a statement than a question when it came to his father; this Theodor understood. He watched him closely as the old man drummed the pads of his sinewy fingers atop Karl's abandoned instrument case and stared through him and out into the street where two scrawny fowls circled each other.

And now he was alone with his horn, his only link to his family, and the traditions of generations before him. He was about to stake it all on a voyage to a place that seemed as good as any. The German arranger had said there was a great demand for men with a musical ear, and it wouldn't half hurt if he were good with a shovel. Theodor was not. But he did not let on and handed over his quietly accumulated currency in exchange for his passage.

At the harbour, the ruddy-faced ticket-seller extended his hand in greeting. Theodor did not accept it.

"What name shall I put?" he continued with a frown, noticing Theodor had only completed his family name on the documents.

But Theodor was already making his way up the gangway.

The ticket-seller scribbled his own name – *Anthony* - on the record, and rushed after Gruner, handing it to him.

Theodor glanced down at the paper in his hand. He thought of correcting the man but then decided against it.

18.
THE BLACK DIAMOND

I awoke to the sound of a man shouting through the kitchen window. The sun had not quite risen and the city was otherwise silent. Scrambling off the futon, I fumbled for my cardigan and paced toward the open window at the rear of the narrow galley kitchen. The apartment itself was tiny, but through the use of angles and glassed doors, it felt a lot larger. The interior was all white; the floorboards old, but recently polished, pieces of wax stuck in the cracks between them.

I noticed that like me, many of the neighbours in the buildings around the central courtyard left their curtains open during the night, windows too, except in my case it was not intentional. I peeked out the cantilevered window, to make enough space to stick my head out and peer down to the street.

On the ground an old man dressed entirely in grey was directing another person above him whom I could not see. The pair appeared to be removing a grand piano from an apartment on the top floor. The building itself was one storey shorter than mine. Each tier of the building had four windows facing the courtyard, but upon closer inspection, one of the middle windows was more like a barn door, or balcony door sans balcony. Atop the penthouse level, a great red beam protruded above a single set of doors. It was red and black. A hoist was attached to the beam and several ropes hung from this almost all the way down to the ground.

Except today the ropes were tangled across the stomach of the ancient-looking piano. I wondered if Anthony Gruner had ever heard it played.

I watched for a couple of minutes before heading to the shower.

There was a bicycle hire shop on the corner of my street and Gothersgade. A bright-eyed man named Ole explained the hire process to me in perfect English. No, I didn't need a helmet, just had to keep well clear of the fast riders.

"Are you saying I won't be a fast rider?" I asked him with a grin.

"No, no, you just don't know how fast they go," he said apologetically.

A few meters down the road I understood what the man at the bike shop meant. Copenhagen cyclists *fly*. I had no point of reference for such precision cycling aside from the Commonwealth Games. Except in this city the cyclists behaved like cars, without all the tooting of horns. My bike had squeaky brakes, and the stickers from the hire shop made me feel amateurish. I was wearing the wrong sort of shoes and carrying the wrong sort of bag for this activity. Everyone else seemed to

have the art of commuting by bicycle down to a fine art. And everyone had a bike, everyone. From the oldest man to the smallest child, the overweight, the business professional, to a man who was transporting what looked like air conditioner parts. And each followed the rules, indicating their turns with hand signals, and alerting their fellow path users of their intention to overtake, for the most part anyway.

Struggling to keep my shoulder bag in place, I zoomed past Rosenborg Castle. A young soldier stood guard at the gate.
Zoom. Zoom.

I continued on for a few more blocks until I could see the water ahead, I needed to turn right here down Kongens Nytorv, past the Royal Danish Theatre, across a bridge and then look out for the Royal Library of Denmark, or as it was affectionately known thanks to its onyx hued prism facade, The Black Diamond.

I made it to my destination. It was only about two kilometres from my apartment, but felt like much longer. I checked my watch. It had been exactly ten minutes since I had left Ole at the bike store.

From the outside, however majestic the points and furrows of its steel skeleton appear, the Black Diamond looks rather like a millennial exhibition space. Inside, however, it was a finely appointed depository of the hundreds of years of Danish culture and history. It was only just after nine and already the bike racks were almost completely full. I found a place for mine and navigated the back wheel locking system. To my right was the water, to my left a number of old buildings, a patchwork of ochres and yellows with pointed roofs and spires.

I announced my arrival to two women behind the reception desk and they told me to wait while they call Claus Røllum-Larsen, musicologist and expert in nineteenth century Danish music.

Claus was a tall man with a mop of greying hair. He greeted me with outstretched arms like an old friend.

“It is so great you could make it, when I did not hear from you...” he began.

My cheeks flushed. I had confirmed our meeting via e-mail, I was certain of it. But I decided to check on this later.

I pointed to a book I’d been thumbing through while waiting.

“Look, here!” I said, pointing to the cover, it was one of his. “At least I know I am in the right place,” I said.

He replied, “I can sign this for you later, come on!”

We make our way up a staircase and elevator to the research offices of the library. Claus’s office was long and narrow. Stuffed bookshelves lined the perimeter. An old metal and wood book-reshelving cart sat to one side, lined with old books with pieces of white paper sticking up from within clamped pages. Mountains of papers and books littered an old mahogany side table in the corner and fanned around his computer and keyboard. A large picture window framed the small end of the office; I could see why Claus had positioned his computer away from the view. It was captivating and distracting at the same time.

I began by explaining to Claus how my interest in finding out about Anthony Gruner was born, how I literally stumbled upon him while looking for information about an old relative in a faded photograph. His English was good, but he was not a young man, or a fast talker. I could see his mind spinning as I laid out each development to date in my research before him. “I do not know much,” I say. “And this is why I am here”.

Claus had a way of filling in the “thinking gaps” in our conversations by lightly singing.

Bop bop bop

He told me he had already been researching my ancestor in anticipation of my arrival in Copenhagen, and raised a finger to the sky to motion to me to wait while he sifted through the piles of research on his desk.

“This,” he motioned, handing me a faded old book. “This is where I found your family.”

The book in his hand is titled *Fra Hofviolonernes Tid* by Carl Thrane. It is, Claus explained, the only text of its kind written about the history of the Kings Chapel.

“This is about Anthony Gruner’s father, and grandfather too.”

He flips to the index, and lands on the exact page he was after.

“Look, see here,” he said, pointing to two entries for Gruner in the index.

“This is the old man, and this is his son.” There are four passages in the text for each man.

I was struck silent. I could not believe my luck on my first morning in Copenhagen.

Bop bop bop

Claus saw my reaction and continued excitedly, “Now there is not much written on both men but I can see here that the old man originally came from Germany, from a place called Plaeun.

“In the old days the musicians would be employed by the aristocracy in whatever region they lived in. What happened in Plaeun was the nobility left the area, leaving a great many men without jobs. When the King of Denmark at the time, Christian VII, who was touched by mental illness, sought more musicians in his court, the German men travelled to Copenhagen to take up the opportunity.”

Claus flipped through the text with a practiced dexterity.

Bop bop bop

*“*Ah, you see here,” he said, pointing to a passage I could not understand except for the word “Gruner”.

“This says Johann Gottfried’s son Christian was afforded a discount in tuition to learn his father's instrument, and that the younger Gruner was a most reluctant student.”

I told Claus that Anthony’s father was a long-time organist at Vor Frelsers Kirke, a church still operating in the City of Copenhagen.

“This makes sense to me,” he nodded. “Most musicians needed to have two jobs. Things have not changed much since the 1800s.”

“But wouldn’t working in the Royal Court be considered the highest posting for a musician?” I asked him.

He hesitated, then smiled.

“Well, yes. But you must understand that many musicians resented playing in the Royal Chapel because it was quite boring work. Like elevator music.”

I had not thought of it from this perspective.

Claus told me he would photocopy the relevant pages of *Fra Hofviolonernes Tid*, and disappeared for about ten minutes. I sat in silence, dumbfounded that I had found out such information on my very first attempt.

“So where do I go from here?” I asked as he returned, handing me a thick wad of paper, still warm from the photocopier.

Claus took a pen and wrote down three places: National Archives, Music Museum and Theatre Museum.

“If there is any more information written about your family, this is where you will find it.”

“There is also the Danish Immigration Archive at Aalborg, but its records begin in 1868 – too late for your purposes”, he bemoaned.

“Why do you think Anthony Gruner left Copenhagen?”

“The lure of gold, I suppose.” he did not sound entirely convinced. “It was, I believe, the start of the Golden Age in Australia, and around the end of the Danish Golden Age. Or perhaps it was just opportune, just like Johann Gottfried.”

“We may never know,” I conceded.

“But don’t stop looking.”

I thanked him and stood up, and he walked me out of the office wing and into a reading room.

“Good luck, – you will come back and see me and tell me what you find.”

I gave the old man a hug.

“I will, thank you Claus.”

19.

1854 – 19 years earlier

The day Elizabeth arrived in Melbourne-town she was a young woman of twenty six, newly married to William Homan, a suitcase of hope at her feet. The journey from Adelaide had been quite vexing, which was something she had not been anticipating. The unsettled voyage and the weeks preceding it would prove to be a premonition of what lay ahead for the Homan family in the years to come, but there was of no way Elizabeth could have imagined this as she stood on the dusty pier at Sandridge.

From the moment she and William decided to relocate to Melbourne, issues had cropped up at every turn. William had felt compelled to interview his replacement at the butchery, despite old man Humphrey insisting this was not required. Her mother Hannah had made quite a spectacle of herself demonstrating displeasure at the news of their move and her brother John had been typically unhelpful.

It was with some relief she felt the damp wood of the pier underfoot. This was Melbourne-town.

The buildings and streets were almost identical in style to Adelaide; the trees as dense around the perimeters of the town, and the ships all looked the same in the harbour.

“Lizzie, this reminds me of London,” William remarked, taking off his hat to wipe his brow before wandering off ahead of her.

His feeling was, she decided, not having been to London herself, not about the landscape but the people who inhabited it. There was a sense of entrepreneurship around them, of recklessness, that both excited and terrified her.

A small kiosk at the end of the jetty advertised gold licences. A troupe of men in carts lined the street waiting for men from incoming ships to jump aboard after their lengthy voyage from the motherland and be whisked to the goldfields of Bendigo, Ballarat and Castlemaine. The women walked briskly and the men had carefully flattened hair, often carrying only a pick or a shovel as they disembarked from their vessel. Around the mouth of the pier, dogs ran in packs, chasing each other and snarling. A group of men upon horseback slowed as they neared and one of them called for the animals to follow them. The dogs did not. The largest one was the colour of coal and had a part of his left ear missing.

At her feet was a large trunk, too heavy to drag along the wooden boards alone.

“William, won’t you help me please?” she called after him.

William stood with his hands on his hips, not hearing his wife, his chin titled toward the sky. He drew in a shallow breath, as if testing to see if the air were contaminated.

Something about his stance caused an uneasy feeling in the pit of her stomach. It had been her idea to come to Melbourne, to take advantage of the opportunities a growing colony might provide. William had seemed amenable to the idea, she was sure of it.

“You could own your own butchery!” she had told him one evening as they strolled past Pulteney Street School, weeks before their departure.

“And our sons could work as a part of it. *Homan’s Specialty Meats* would be a suitable name,” she had said. Elizabeth remembered the look of hesitation on her husband’s face. It was quickly replaced with a smile, but since she had seen it, it was now all she could see.

Her husband had never had a clear map of his future, and she knew to be near her was his only ambition. If Elizabeth was honest, this suited her perfectly. She liked to be the planner, the decision-maker, and the instigator. At the same time she sensed her husband knew there were only so many people, so many experiences, so many sensations, that Adelaide could provide a woman like Elizabeth.

William would learn to love Melbourne-town, Elizabeth reassured herself.

“Give me that!” William scolded her with a smile for attempting to move her luggage without his help.

“We are going to love it here William,” she said.

“I know,” he said, not meeting her eyes.

20.
AT THE GOODWILL OF THE KING

The Danish Immigration Museum was not, as one might expect, located with most of the nation's cultural and historic repositories in the centre of Copenhagen, but in Farum, a sleepy town about forty-five minutes by train to the north-east of the city.

My host was Susanne Jensen, the museum curator. She was a tall, fair-haired woman about my age. It seemed I was the only visitor in the museum so far this morning. The exhibition space was compact but thoughtfully composed, with a temporary gallery to the left and the permanent collection on the right, with evocatively lit spaces and glass cabinetry. The text accompanying the exhibits was exclusively in Danish. Susan apologised. I told her I did not mind. This space was primarily for Danish people to learn about the stories of how their ancestors came to Denmark, not the other way around.

"Do you know about the Immigration Archive in Alborg?" she asked.

I said I had checked it out, and that its records did not date back far enough to capture the passage of Anthony from Denmark to Australia.

I told her about my meeting at the Black Diamond with Claus, and the discovery that the Gruner family came to Copenhagen from Germany around 1770.

As we walked around the exhibits, Susan told me that the Gruner timeline of immigration to Denmark occurred at an interesting period in history. The first Danish citizenship law was passed in 1776. Up until that time immigrants were allowed into the country at the goodwill of the King – that is, individual travellers were not a problem, and groups were invited into the country and installed in specific areas with specific purposes.

"Your ancestor was probably one of these," she says.

These immigrants granted passage by the king were not limited to entertainers; the reformed Christian French were also granted passage in the beginning of the 1700s for the purpose of growing tobacco. All of this changed, however, with the reign of the mentally ill Christian VII, who along with a German physician Johann Friedrich Struensee attempted to pass quite a number of reforms, from freedom of the press to agricultural reforms. This became too much for the Danish nobility, and they convinced the king that the doctor was trying to overthrow him. He was arrested and ended up being executed. Shortly thereafter in January of 1776 the citizenship law was passed,

stating that in order to assume a leading position in the government or in the army, you needed Danish citizenship.

She told me that in the first year of the new citizenship laws, more than a thousand people applied. This was mostly people who had to because of their current position, but after these people were filtered through, the applications came from those who changed jobs. People who held lower jobs in the administration, or those who came as tradesmen, did not need citizenship, and could enter and live freely in the country. It was not completely clear where the distinction between higher and lower positions in administration lay — especially as to which positions in the army or at the royal court were subject to attainment of citizenship.

Throughout the nineteenth century, a small number of people (almost all men) applied for citizenship. It was not until 1875 with the so-called *Fremmedlov* (or Foreign Act) that citizenship became somewhat important – because all foreigners in Denmark had to be registered and be able to support themselves either by bringing cash or by having a job. Later, at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, citizenship and pensions (welfare benefits) became more and more connected. After 1891 it was a requirement to be a Danish citizen to receive a pension.

"So, as it seems," Susanne concluded as we returned to the neck of the exhibition where we had started, “for people coming into Denmark in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century there were no records unless they were working in the military or in public administration."

"And public administration would not necessarily include musicians?" I asked.

She nodded.

We retired to a seating area behind the reception area, where Susan left me for a few moments before returning with two bags containing our lunch.

We ate our pressed meat sandwiches and chatted about immigration and life outside of our work. She told me she had just had a baby and her partner was Italian. Travelling to Italy to visit his family had proven a challenge to her, but she was trying her best to learn the language.

"I did not understand what it was like to be an immigrant until it mattered greatly to me to be understood by my partner's family," she said.

I thought of Anthony.

21.

ANTHONY BEFORE ELIZABETH

Denmark conducted its first census in 1787 and since 1834 has held one every five to ten years. The method of collecting information has changed over time, as have the naming conventions, neighbourhoods and parishes, but regardless of these changes, the census is a good source of information about the lives of the Danish people over time.

Today I was at Rigsarkivet, the Danish National Archives, with a cup of strong coffee and my laptop. I would begin searching through the Danish Demographic Database for traces of the family of Anthony, or *Theodor*, as was his name at birth according to the information I had so far.

I begin a simple search for *Gruner* in *København* over all census years. 39 records found. There is Freiderich Carl Gruner in the 1787 census. He is listed as a lieutenant of 18 years, so too early to be Anthony's father.

And then I spotted a familiar name: Carl Frederich Gruner, age 26, and a musician in the 1834 census. Anthony's older brother! I clicked on "household" to reveal the family listing. Father Friedrich, a Kings Chapel musician, and his wife Florentine, lived with their five children, Carl Friedrich, Marie Emile, 22, Sophie Julie, 16, Etine Frederich, 14 and Theodor Edvard, nine, at Sankt Annæ Vester Kvarter, Prinsensgade 381, 1. Sahl, 3.

I jotted down the address and continued weeding through the search results. I found the Gruner family in 1840. A lot had changed in seven years. Friedrich's wife was no long listed, and Friedrich was listed as a widower. His daughter Sophie was also not listed. Theodor was fourteen years old and lived with his father, two sisters and brother at Klædebo Kvarter, Krystalgaden, Anden Sal F2, Huset No 67.

I found a "quarter census" conducted in 1845. I could make out Friedrich's and Anthony's names, but I could not read the other three entries in the record.

This was the last entry I found for Friedrich Christian Gruner. Or any of the Gruners for that matter. The trail ran cold in 1845.

I snapped my laptop shut and headed outside for some fresh air. I found a low set of steps nobody was using and put my bag down. I reached inside it and plucked out my notebook. The paper Claus had given me fell out onto my feet. The wind blew it open.

Music Museum and Theatre Museum were the two places I had yet to visit. And then it struck me, what if Gruner was not a Gruner at all in the later Danish census, but something else? What if he was something else similar, so that the trained eye would be able to identity that both versions were one and the same.

I jogged back into the archives, reopening my laptop. I searched now for derivatives of Gruner.

Gryner? One hit. Theodor's father had lodged with a family, the Laulunds, in Copenhagen in 1801 as a 22-year-old. He was listed as a chapel musician.

Grynner? Two records, no hits.

Grunner? Two records, one hit. I found Anthony in 1850. Twenty-five-year-old Theodor Gruner lived with a 36-six-year-old weaver named Ane Maria Olsen and a 64 year old single woman named Regine Stockman in a part of Copenhagen close to where he grew up, I noted, tracing the address with my finger on an internet map search.

I double clicked the document's database on my desktop and scanned for Anthony/Theodor's death certificate. Fifteen years in the colony, it read. Counting back from 1873, this record pegged his arrival in Victoria at least as no earlier than 1858. I knew now that he was still living in Copenhagen in 1850, closing the gap to eight short years I could not account for yet.

In the evening I walked along Krystalgade and tried to find the Gruner house. The sections of the street between Nørregade and Fiolstræde marked the northern margin of the University Quadrangle, which also comprised University of Copenhagen's old main building on Frue Plads and the former Copenhagen University Library on Fiolstræde.

On my way back to the apartment I stumbled across Adelgade, the last known address of Anthony Gruner in Denmark where he lived with the two women in 1850.

I could not believe my luck!

Where his house once was is now a French restaurant. Next door was a budget hotel designed for youth travelers. Across the street on Gothersgade was a vintage store and a queer designer bazaar. Directly opposite where the house he'd lived in once stood were two old buildings, one cornflower blue, and the other desert red. It was too late for these stores to be open, so I parked my bicycle between them and stepped into the doorway of the blue building to get the best vantage point of the space across the street once inhabited by my ancestor.

Spurred on by this discovery of Anthony's home in Copenhagen in 1850, I arrived back at my

apartment. On the way, I made a quick detour to the supermarket and picked up some snacks for dinner. I had no time to waste. I wanted to try and find Anthony on the ship manifests to Australia, even if it killed me. The Music and Theatre Museum could wait.

By 11a.m. the next morning I was surrounded with shredded pieces of paper, and great lists written upon every surface within arm's reach, detailing the combinations of name, occupation and nationality I'd searched so far.

And then, at 12:38 p.m., after almost twenty hours of checking and cross-checking online lists, I found a group of "German" musicians, listed by age, nationality but not name. This was the only unnamed reference to musicians I could find over the approximately eight-year span when Gruner was unaccounted for.

This *had* to be him.

I glanced up to the top of the blinking laptop screen, eyes watering, and my crossed legs asleep underneath me.

The ship sailed in 1854.

His death certificate stated he had been in Australia for fifteen years at the time of his death in 1873. If he were on this ship, he would have been in the country for nineteen years.

I knew this was as close as I would get.

I clasped the open computer to my chest like a note from a lover, and fell back onto the futon in the living room, utterly exhausted.

After falling into a dreamless sleep that lasted the rest of the day and stretched into the small hours of the next, I found myself outside the apartment with backpack in hand. Around me the city was slowly waking up. In the distance a baby's cry escaped through the crack of an open window, a cat wrestled free from a partially closed gate, and slunk into the front yard of a house across the street. The sky was a swirl of grey and white.

There was nobody about, and yet I felt comforted by the sounds of the city. Partly because I would be boarding a plane in a few short hours to Australia where my husband and family were waiting, but that was not all. It was the musicality of the city, the low, gracious hum of its base notes. The way that even in between movements, where there was silence, I could still hear the music.

This was a city of music, Anthony's city. He left here on his own accord. He had no desire for gold digging. He had no need. He was not a pauper but a man lucky enough to receive an education. He

had a wife and children to love him but somehow this was not enough to stop him from picking up that razor.

I had come as far as I could investigating the life and death of Anthony Gruner. There were things I would never know and now I accepted this. He was born a musician and he died a musician. And it might have been his music that killed him for all I would ever know.

I said out loud, unconcerned about who might be about to listen:

“I am taking your journey now. I will not come back here.”

I set off along Gothersgade toward the harbour like my ancestor before me and I did not look back.

~~~

Almost twenty four hours after I departed Copenhagen International Airport, the plane touched down in Melbourne. My phone beeped once we were within range and I reached into my bag at my feed to check my messages. The curator from the National Gallery of Victoria had finally responded to my inquiry about the garments worn by Elizabeth in the photograph that had started me on this quest.

The dress and hairstyle, according to the curator, dated the photograph around 1880. Elizabeth Gruner was fifty-two years old in 1880. The woman in the photograph was much younger than this. The woman in the photograph was not the wife of Anthony Gruner.

I opened the digital file containing the photograph on my phone and stared at it one last time. This woman had bought me to investigate the story of another ancestor, Anthony Gruner.

“Thank you, Elizabeth – whoever you are,” I said quietly to myself. I gazed into the porthole window of the plane and saw her face before realising it was my own reflection.
~~~

22.

1860 – 13 years earlier

Two men huddled across the table at the Duke of Wellington Hotel, trying to hold a private conversation in one of the most public locations in Melbourne. It was four o'clock and the alehouse was brimming with patrons; from bridge workers, to blacksmiths, to fishmongers. Some puffed at pipes, telling tales of the working day just past; others nursed the same mug of ale for an hour, unable to afford another. Dirty boots layered the floorboards in a film of dung, sleet and gold dust.

"Barney," Stoneham said chewing on the bit of his pipe.

Barnett Levy was but a year or so junior to Stoneham, but there was something about his stunted gait that was juvenile. He had the slender shoulders of a female and long reed-like fingers. And then there was his hair, strand upon strand of raven curls that formed neat ringlets about his nape. He was an elegant man, but he was not weak. Stoneham did not understand this then, but soon he would.

"I wonder, have you thought more about my idea for an opera?"

Levy considered the question for a moment. He kept Stoneham's gaze; he always looked as if he was mere moments away from a cardiac incident, Levy thought. How he was able to maintain his stature in the past two years? Times had been tough for everybody in the colonies, not least for a musician of questionable pedigree, he mused.

Stoneham had asked Levy to meet him, and on a whim he agreed. And although part of him winced at the other man's brassiness, his ostentatious manner of speaking and dressing, he was also curious to see what business he might propose. Engagements had been few and far between for Levy, and although he would never admit it, he had but enough currency for the ale cupped between his hands.

"Ah yes," Levy replied.

Stoneham had been working on an opera of sorts for the past year. Levy had not seen any sheet music for it yet.

"I do recall, yes. Pray tell, is this opera to be a tragedy, or perhaps a *burletta*?" Levy quizzed him, knowing quite well Stoneham would not know what the latter category was.

He arched a brow and pushed his mug closer to Stoneham's as a challenge.

"It will be a tragedy of immeasurable proportions, not seen in the colonies to date," Stoneham

replied.

Levy thought Stoneham sounded like a ringmaster the way he heralded his own causes. But there was something about his companion he found quite endearing. He was a self-taught musician and, even Levy would admit in most circles, his talent was unusual. It was unclear where Stoneham's passion for music came from; as far as Levy knew, he was one son from a stable of cabinetmakers. There was absolutely naught the matter with constructing items from wood for one's living. But he could not think of an occupation in starker contrast than the leader of a brass band. Yet somehow his companion had forged a career for himself, and now it appeared he was preparing to take his modest success to another level.

"I would require the accompaniment of a full ensemble, should this opera be produced," Stoneham continued. "I am thinking, naturally, on a domestic scale with an eye to a tour of Europe, all being well."

Of course he is, Levy mused, and tried to keep his upper lip from curling.

Who does he think he is?

Levy decided to play along. What, after all did he have to lose? His trousers hung low from his waist, and his frayed collars and cuffs were beginning to draw bemused glances from patrons at his engagements. He was accustomed to a certain protocol; a way of doing things that had in his earlier life served him well. He did not have to explain himself or justify his actions. But in Melbourne-town it was different. He was not at home, and this man with the horrid red and gold waistcoat might provide him with an income, so he could afford land and a home of his own. He must adapt. He must.

"Here you go, time for another," Stoneham sprang to his feet, encouraged.

He watched as the giant man drew his mug to his lips and threw his head back. And then slammed the empty vessel onto the table between them in triumph, and ran the back of one hand across his bulbous lips.

Levy watched him approach the bar, where men stood three deep waiting to be served. At the end of the bar, perched awkwardly at corner, was a man Levy was sure he recognised, but from where he could not place. He took a proper sip of his ale, no longer needing to ration it, with Stoneham dispatched for reinforcements.

He considered the man again. He was thin, like Levy, but tall, with hair the colour of wheat and eyes like the inside of an oyster shell. At his feet was a small case. A group of dirty miners barrelled

in and interrupted Levy's view.

Who was he?

It was then Stoneham returned with two overflowing jugs of ale. Levy was beginning to feel affected by the first, but any more time spent with this man might be less arduous with a little more lubrication, so he gratefully accepted the gesture.

"As I was mentioning," Stoneham picked up. "I will have the opera completed very, *very* soon."

He did not meet Levy's gaze.

He doesn't even have a bloomin' opera!

The crowd of men at the bar were growing more boisterous. A lively discussion had sparked up, but about what, was not clear.

Levy had stopped listening to Stoneham now, feeling a sense of deep frustration at his own inability to manage his engagements. A maestro of his pedigree needn't entertain such amateurish collaborations. There was a place for Barnett Levy, and he knew with William Stoneham it was not.

On Flinders Street, the sun had gone, and speckles of moonlight lit the shadows outside. Through the door, Levy could see the Yarra River. In the shadows it was majestic, a curl of black ribbon. In the daylight hours, it was a little more than a slow moving lagoon, pregnant with flies, its banks squelchy underfoot.

In the street outside the foot traffic was dwindling. Most of the workers in the town already had left for the day. The school children were indoors and the women and elderly were resting or preparing the evening meal. Levy noticed a woman walking along Flinders Street alone. Unlike most others that day she was not wearing a coat. She wore only a thin red dress and a shawl of lace, her stockinged ankles exposed. Levy could only see her side-on but suddenly she turned and faced the hotel. He realised he knew her. It was Valentina.

Valentina Brunt, if this was her real name — Levy strongly suspected it was not — was a prostitute. He had met her in the brothels of Ballarat. He felt ashamed of it now, but he hadn't then. She was a pleasant enough woman, slender with silky black hair. But this was not what had kept him coming back to see her. She had been the only "needlewoman" — as the colloquial term for her type was — that he had engaged, but he'd done so at such frequent intervals that when he came back to Melbourne he felt relief he wouldn't cross her in the street. She might have expected him to say hello. He could never do that, he'd told her too much. There was something about her sanguine

emerald eyes that compelled him to confide in her.

All of a sudden, a hot flash struck his cheek, and dampness spread to his collar. In reflex Levy raised a hand to his throat. The expression on Stoneham's face caused his stomach to sink. The fat man thrust aside his ale and lurched, arms outstretched toward him, as if to shepherd him under the table.

Stunned, Levy examined his hand; his own blood ran down the creases of his palm. He looked at Stoneham in bewilderment.

At the bar a great fight had erupted. Glass and splinters of ale mugs sprayed around. The miners were fighting, over what Levy could not see. The patrons either side of them had fled, and the publican was shouting for the constable. Levy mopped at his cheek, trying to stop the bleeding.

Stoneham appeared at his side, and before he knew it had slung one of his arms round his neck and was dragging him out onto the curb. Both men sat panting in the dirt at the roadside. Inside the fight raged on.

"Come with me to Hotham," Stoneham urged him. "You cannot tend to your wounds in the gutter."

Stoneham stretched a hand out, and as Levy moved to accept it, two men came flying toward them from inside the public house. It was the blond man Levy had seen earlier, and one of the miners. The blond man was bleeding from the nose and mouth, his hair yanked out in two places. One eye was closed, swollen with blood and tissue.

The miner struck the blond man's face with a closed fist.

Levy and Stoneham watched in the shadows wondering if they should intervene.

Levy wished he had acted on instinct and rejected Stoneham's idea of a meeting.

The blond man recoiled backward, but he did not collapse. He remained upright and moved to steady himself. He looked even leaner upright. He dropped his right shoulder and formed a fist.

He struck the miner, but his punch was poor. The miner hobbled backwards before falling to the ground.

The sound of bone hitting stone produced a much louder cracking sound than a fist made on flesh. Blood gushed from the miner's head. The blond man cowered in the shadows. Levy glanced at the miner, suppressing the urge to vomit. The miner's head lay tilted at an angle no living person could make.

Levy glanced over to Stoneham and then beyond him, into the distance. The woman he'd seen earlier was standing there.

"Valentina!" Levy cried out, impulsively.

"Valentina Brunt!"

She stared, open-mouthed, at the scene for several moments before fleeing into the shadows.

"Come with me, I have a carriage," Stoneham said, seeming agitated at Levy's outburst. He motioned to the blond man, who was sobbing heavily.

Levy's eyes widened and he stared at his companion. "*Stoneham!,*" he gasped. "What do you think you're doing?"

Stoneham ignored him and moved toward the blond man.

"Now I say, I saw here what happened with you and this gentleman," he said, crouching in front of him, his fingertips resting lighting on the blond man's bunched knees.

Levy did not recognise the intonations in his voice. He was eerily calm, authoritative.

"It was most certainly not your fault what happened," he said, soothingly. "A case of the wrong place, at the wrong time."

The blond man removed his head from his folded arms and peered at Stoneham.

"I have a carriage, let's take care of this before the police arrive."

Levy could not believe the scene he was witnessing. He could not drag himself away from the kerb. He was in it and he was not sure he was ever going to be out of it.

Stoneham vanished and returned moments later with his horse. He sat at the reigns while Levy and the blond man heaped the body of the miner onto the tray.

"Won't he be seen?" Levy exclaimed, his voice high with panic.

"Come on, we will take him to the hospital. Where else might you suggest, Levy?" Stoneham replied, seemingly mildly amused by Levy's reaction.

This evening could not end quick enough, Levy thought. He jumped into the back of the cart, the blond man at his side, and the miner partially obscured with some grain sacks that had already been there.

Stoneham set his horse toward Swanston Street, northbound in the direction of the Melbourne

Hospital. When they arrived, Stoneham turned to Levy and said:

“Come now, tear a sleeve off – I must clean him up a bit.”

Levy responded without thinking, ripping the worn cotton of his shirt and bundling it into a makeshift cleaning implement.

He unbuttoned the man’s vest, feeling about for some identification. Nothing. He poked at the man’s stomach. It was unusually rotund and solid to the touch. His skin had a yellowish hue to it, which wasn’t noticeable on his face and hands because of their extreme dirtiness. “Will you look ’ere at this?” Levy exclaimed with disgust.

The blond man next to him grimaced.

“Cease time-wasting will you, someone will happen by shortly,” Stoneham urged Levy, who was staring in horror at the sight of the miner’s bulging midsection.

Stoneham pushed him aside, grabbing the fabric and worked quickly to remove the smears of blood from the dead miner. Levy felt that perhaps this was not his first time in circumstances such as these, or more likely he was just a man who was built to respond in times of crisis.

“Wait here,” Stoneham ordered Levy and the blond man on the back of the cart.

Stoneham threw the dead miner over his shoulder, like a farmer might a piglet.

Stoneham felt in the miner’s pockets for some identification and uncurled a crumpled piece of paper. It was a mining license dated two weeks prior and issued to a *W. Homan*.

He replaced it in the man’s trousers and made his way towards the hospital gate.

Now alone together, Levy dared look at the blond man beside him. What was it with this man… the man at the bar with the oyster shell eyes?

“I suppose you have a name?” he asked him.

“Gruner,” he said.

“My name is Theo… errr… Anthony Gruner”.

~~~

Anthony Gruner barely made it to the mouth of Victoria Parade after sprinting from the two men who had helped him when his legs simply collapsed underneath him. Kneeling in the mud, he cursed every star in the sky. Now he had nothing. His brother’s horn was gone, lost forever. Never
~~~

would he be able to return to the hotel and ask after it. After all, the miner was dead; Anthony had seen it with his own two eyes.

He would carry the sounds of the man's skull striking rock for as long as he lived.

It would not work to argue who said what to whom; it was clear who had come off second best. He was alive and the other man was dead. He did not even know his name. The man had not offered it, or if he had Anthony could not understand him, or hear him across the crowded room. All he recalled is one moment his case was by his side, the next it was in the man's hands, his soiled fingers assaulting the mouthpiece and twisting the valves.

The man's friends chimed in, jeering and laughing and raising their mugs in approval to the man holding his horn.

"Give it to me!" Anthony shouted. He did not often raise his voice. The man just laughed and pretended to play the instrument with one hand, the other shoving him hard in the sternum with such force that he toppled from his stool.

He could not remember the names of the two men, and barely their faces. The only name he could recall was the woman across the street who had seen it all unfold. The woman in the red dress.

Now he was alone. With nothing but the coat on his back and a vague memory of directions to a house he had originally intended to visit much earlier that evening. Not that this intention mattered at all now. Broken, he curled his knees to his chest and sobbed in the long grass. He cried until his chest hurt and the salt water of his tears stung the bloodied gashes on his face.

23.

1861 – 12 years earlier

Charles Ziegler was not an attractive man. In fact, it might even be suggested that his own wife only tolerated him because she was blind. He was a professional musician, but cared little for his craft. The double bass was a way of making ends meet, and a skill he had acquired only through his desire to appease his mother as a child. Ziegler had taken music lessons at her suggestion after his father abandoned them shortly after his seventh birthday in his hometown of Krakow. There was not much he wouldn't have done for his mother. It pained him to think of her these days because he knew, when he was being completely honest with himself, that she would not be proud of the man he grew up to be.

Ziegler left Susan, his wife, in Melbourne several months ago to join a travelling troupe of musicians in the goldfields of Ballarat. Susan, quite defenceless without her vision, would restrict her movements to the ground level of the house they owned at 78 Cambridge Street so as not to come to any injury where stairs were concerned. They paid for the house with money received from lodgers, but lately the applications for tenancy had dwindled and the Ziegler's had been forced to drop their standards to fill the rooms. Susan had taken in a little extra money, helping with child birthing, as much as a blind woman could, but she did not like to do this much anymore for it served to remind her how desperately she would have liked a child of her own. Sensitive of his wife's limitations, yet determined to cling to his house, the only thing he had ever owned, Ziegler had accepted this latest musical engagement. Little did he know he would end up paying for his time in Ballarat in ways he could not then foresee.

In the goldfields Ziegler was an orphan. He did not have the language of the German musicians who dominated the scene, and he was not congenial enough to win the favour of the colonists. He was stuck in the middle and in need of something to anchor to, at least temporarily whilst he got enough money together to return to Melbourne. After languishing for several weeks on the perimeter of the group, ignored and disregarded, Ziegler noticed he was not the only outsider in the ramshackle ensemble. This was how he came to meet Anthony Gruner. Anthony Gruner was a Dane who could speak English and German, and also appeared to understand what Ziegler would say to him in Polish. He thought it most unusual that a man, especially a musical performer, could be so learned with language, but Ziegler daren't ask him about his educational background. He needed someone he could talk to, and whilst not the most chatty of men, Gruner was available.

As the months wore on, the core of the travelling troupe began to splinter and members began

branching out on their own. Ziegler and Gruner stuck together for the simple reason that most venues sought a minimum of two musicians per engagement. Some nights both would receive engagements, but some nights only one, and then in the most challenging weeks, neither of them would draw a wage.

Ziegler was grateful to have the company of Gruner, but was not certain this feeling was mutual. This made him resent Gruner in a way he could not quite articulate, but not enough to leave the man's side. Gruner paused before answering questions and never reacted to anything in a way that could be described as animated. However, after several months together, Ziegler saw that Gruner had an intensity that revealed itself only in his music. In his daily life he was limp, almost lifeless. He rarely initiated conversation, and once engaged, spent his time looking like he would prefer to be anywhere else. Once, Ziegler was so fed up with his friend's preoccupation, he told him he felt compelled to interrogate him, for *his own sake*.

It was only then that Anthony had told him about his first weeks in the goldfields, and if it had been anyone else, Ziegler would not have believed his story, but for Anthony – it fitted.

Ziegler had thought about going to watch Gruner perform in Castlemaine this evening, but he had overslept and the carriage had left without him. He decided instead to indulge in an ale at Craig's Hotel and hope he might see someone he knew from Melbourne, and catch up on the happenings about town. Heck, any form of conversation at this point would be a welcome respite from the staccato responses of his Danish roommate.

It was with some relief then that Ziegler spied two familiar faces at the bar, William Stoneham of Stoneham's Brass Band (or whatever he was calling it this week) and Barnett Levy – a man he knew by reputation only as one of the best music brokers in the goldfields.

"Bill?" Ziegler called out, sounding much more confident than he felt.

Stoneham squinted, trying to work out who he was.

Levy caught sight of him, and searched momentarily for his name.

"Charlie Ziegler!"

"How are you old chap?" Levy motioned for him to join them, as if he was a close friend.

His smile was wide, his arm outstretched. Ziegler could see the pair had already had quite a bit to drink.

"Stoneham, won't you get dear old Charlie here a drink," Levy said amiably.

Stoneham obliged and the three men began talking. Ziegler could not remember a time when he had conversed with these men in such an informal setting. Over the handful of occasions the men had worked together, their interactions had been limited to those of employer and employee.

As the ale flowed and the hours whiled away, the conversation turned to Ziegler's unusual acquaintance, Anthony Gruner.

Ziegler closed his eyes for effect as he recounted to the two men the time he discovered Gruner sitting in the dark at the piano after the Subscription Ball. It was the end of the summer months and late in the evening. A brilliant electrical storm erupted and split the spines of great number of trees and caused horses to call out in fear from their semi-covered corrals. Only a few drunken miners lay dormant in the corners of the hall. Gruner sat on his stool, unmoving; hands poised above the keys. And then he began to play. It was a piece from *The Art of Fugue* by Johann Sebastian Bach, an odd choice considering the jovial background music he'd been playing mere hours before. Gruner performed it entirely by memory.

At the wings of the stage, Ziegler had watched Gruner's shoulder blades tense and relax as he moved up and down the piano, his head rocking back and forth.

"If I had shouted something at that moment, I knew he wouldn't have heard me," Ziegler told Stoneham and Levy, who were both fascinated at his story.

"And you know… " Ziegler said, pausing for dramatic impact, "the most fascinating part about Gruner, let me give you a clue, is not his four languages, which I know about, or the fact he can perform entire movements from memory…"

Stoneham and Levy leaned forward on their stools.

"When he came to Ballarat, apparently he'd just lost his saxhorn in a bar fight. He had to sing for several months to afford to get another."

"*Sing*," he repeated, his brow raised.

Ziegler could not remember any evening being as enjoyable as this one had been.

The two men put down their glasses and looked at each other.

24.

Ziegler had returned to Melbourne by July, to a much fuller house than he had left seven months earlier.

Charles and Susan Ziegler lived in a two-storey brick structure with two windows facing the street on the ground level and two matching ones along the top. There was no intricate lacework or masonry to speak of and to the passer-by it was not evident at first glance that the place was occupied. The house comprised three bedrooms, a sitting room and a kitchen with a larder attached. Two of the bedrooms were upstairs and the other at the front of the ground floor.

The house on Cambridge Street was the first property of what he hoped, one day, would be an empire of sorts. He always had an eye on the real estate happenings in the town as well as in the goldfields. It would only be a matter of time before he would catch wind of an opportunity too good to pass up and snap it up before anyone else could.

While Ziegler had been in the goldfields, Susan had taken in Elizabeth Homan and her children. Her husband, Ziegler recalled, was a fair-haired man named William with an angular jaw and a tensile gait. Elizabeth was a beguiling woman who would often raise a brow to him when he passed her on the street.

Sometimes he thought she was most cruel to taunt him, if that is what she was doing — he could not say.

“Where is the husband?” Ziegler asked his wife, unloading his satchel of sheet music onto the sitting room floor.

“I do not know,” she said. “Mrs Homan said he is not coming back.”

Ziegler found this shocking, but not altogether surprising. Ziegler had never seen a man drink as much as Homan, and still manage to wield a pick or a shovel.

He often spotted the man stumbling down Wellington Parade with a group of equally intoxicated friends of an evening. Ziegler would cross the road before he was seen.

Hiding had become a survival mechanism for Ziegler and he had done it all his life. It started as a strategy for avoiding the closed fist of his father and had become part of his life in adulthood. He kept his most prized possessions hidden away in corners. He had a fine watch and a number of gemstone rings he had traded for, but he was too afraid to wear them.

Whenever he brokered a deal, it did not matter what was at stake, he would always ensure he would

come out in front, even by the smallest of margins. Often times, he reasoned, his seemingly modest fortunes in business acted as a nifty decoy to stop others getting too close to his real intentions. His intentions of course were to advance in life, sometimes in more ways than financially. This had been the case with the deal he had negotiated with Stoneham and Levy he was sure of it.

“How much are you charging her?” he asked, unlacing a boot.

“The usual amount, she said it would be manageable,” his wife replied evenly.

He wondered if Susan made a visual image in her mind of what people looked like because she could not see them. With his wife he was always careful to select his words before speaking them.

“Susan,” he started. “We will soon have another lodger, a man I met in the goldfields.”

He watched her shoulders tighten.

“He will be no trouble, I agreed to take him in as a favour to Stoneham, err, Bill… and Barney Levy.”

The expression on his wife’s face showed she did not know who these two men were. It was probably just as well. He did not quite understand why they were so insistent that he put Gruner up.

He was looking forward to not having to see Gruner again, but how could he have turned Stoneham and Levy down — they were friends now.

He moved across the sitting room in his socked feet and placed a hand tenderly on his wife’s shoulder. She reached up and cupped it with her own.

“Please Charles, let us have a simple life,” she spoke quietly.

“You will see my darling, our worries are past us now,” Ziegler replied.

25.

1862 – 11 years earlier

Ziegler paced about in his kitchen cursing Gruner, and himself for agreeing to allow the man to lodge with him. He had been told the Dane would arrive around three o' clock in the afternoon, but night had since fallen and he was nowhere to be seen. Ziegler reminded himself he should not complain, after all, the money had been arriving every fortnight like clockwork from Stoneham and Levy for more than a year, even though Gruner had yet to take up his room.

"Musicians!" Susan had said wryly as she sidestepped her husband, her thin arms curled around a bundle of firewood.

She would not stoke the fire herself, but Ziegler thought she probably could manage it without incident, so intuitive were her movements.

Finally, there was a knock at the door. Ziegler knew the identity of his caller. But he would not answer it immediately, choosing to rile in his frustration just a moment longer.

"Well, I suppose I ought to let him in," Ziegler huffed.

Tonight the two men faced each other, not from opposite ends of a dirty tent in the diggings, but in the entrance to Ziegler's home. Neither man reached forward in greeting, and neither spoke at first.

Finally, Ziegler outstretched an arm and Gruner stepped into it.

"Velkommen ven, velkommen."

Gruner produced the smallest of grins, at the sight of which Ziegler felt his chest tighten with guilt, but only for a moment.

Ziegler motioned to Gruner to walk ahead of him down the long, dark passageway.

"The other lodger has some young ones, and they are most polite… most of the time," Ziegler explained, lingering after the word *most* as he ushered him up the staircase.

It was quite late, so Ziegler felt relieved he would not be compelled to provide introductions for Gruner and Elizabeth. The muted glow of a candle underneath Elizabeth's door unnerved him as he passed it.

Gruner watched him and began mirroring his cat-like movements.

"Oh no need to go delicately past," Ziegler said. "There's a little one she's up all night with

mostly.” He paused. “He is quite an unsettled child.”

Ziegler thought he heard his wife make a sound downstairs but when he stopped to listen, all was silent.

He showed Gruner his room, with a single bed and washstand with a tin bucket for bathing. The ticking of the mattress was grey and tufts of horsehair bled from hairline fractures along its perimeter. The window in the room was slightly open and the room smelt like milk, and something stale Ziegler could not identify.

Ziegler waited for Gruner to placed his satchel and music case on the end of the bed. He took this cue to leave his new lodger to settle in for the evening.

Ziegler considered the man for a moment; his face was quite swollen. He looked quite drunk, although he did not know him to drink. No, that was not it, Ziegler thought. He looked bewildered, he decided. He studied his eyes for a moment, and subsequently softened his own. There was something decidedly uncommon about Gruner. He possessed such a personality that one might be driven to the very depths of frustration at his lack of engagement, but one could never dislike the man.

Could Stoneham and Levy be mistaken?

Anthony Gruner was a lot of things, but Ziegler was sure – a murderer was not one of them.

“It is nice to see you again, friend,” Gruner said, pulling back the bedclothes.

Ziegler nodded, unable to look at him.

26.

Anthony Gruner had been lodging with Charles and Susan for several months now, but still was yet to meet the other lodger, the laundress. He had, however, met her children.

“Very good! Very good! Now you try again,” he said as he batted his palms together in delight at the sound permeating from the keys under the fingertips of the small girl, not even four years old.

Frances Homan grinned, her chest puffed with pride. She flicked her skinny blond braid off her shoulder and settled into the stool.

“Thank you Mr. Gruner,” she said earnestly.

Anthony considered his young pupil as she poised above the instrument, mentally recalling the sequence she had been practising in preparation for her lesson. It had been Frances who had come to him about learning to play, and not the other way round. Anthony had little to do with the children in the next room until the girl had heard him playing one afternoon when he thought nobody was home. She was not his first pupil, but she was the first he had taught without charging a fee. It was clear that her mother could not afford to pay for lessons, and even if she could, Anthony wondered if she would consider it a practical investment.

Anthony knew the children’s mother was a woman named Elizabeth Homan and that according to Susan Ziegler she was quite depressed of mind.

He kept in regular contact with the children and was always sure to ask after her. It was not as if he wanted to call upon her, he just thought a polite enquiry was what was expected of him. Sometimes walking along Hoddle Street he thought he might have come across her, but he did not indicate this outwardly. Ziegler never spoke of her, and his wife Susan referred to her as the “widow”. She was a ghost to him. A ghost he only saw traces of in the children that spilled from the bedroom like bees from a hive at dawn each morning. It was for all of these reasons that, when Elizabeth Homan rapped on his bedroom door, he was quite startled.

“Mr. Gruner? Mr. Gruner? Are you in there?” she said, her voice cracking.

Anthony shot upright on his bed and grabbed his shaving mirror, examining his face for answers. Perhaps if he sat deathly still she would just go away?

“Mr. Gruner?” she asked again. “I heard you come in earlier, do listen — it is imperative that I speak with you at once.”

Could it be Frances? Could she have come to harm or not returned from school or perhaps been

involved in an accident?

He decided he could not rest not knowing.

Anthony listened as she gave out a low sigh on the other side of the door.

He stood and she heard the creaking of the timber boards beneath him. He gingerly walked toward the door, unlatching it and holding it open just wide enough to see her face.

“Mr. Gruner?”

He was struck dumb.

She furrowed her brow and continued.

“Mr. Gruner, I wanted to thank you for the lessons for Frances, she has not stopped talking about you.”

Anthony’s shoulders loosened slightly.

“I am sorry but I cannot afford to pay you, so they must cease immediately,” she continued, not meeting his eyes.

Anthony did not know what to say. He stood in silence, staring at the woman, who up close looked more like an osprey chick ejected from the nest. Her eyes were wild and worn, her hair the colour of wheat.

Elizabeth paused for a moment, checking his eyes for acknowledgement. She moved to speak again, but then did not. Instead, she bowed her head and pivoted away toward her room.

"As you wish," Anthony spoke slowly. He meant to say she did not have to pay. He meant to say Frances was the only thing in his grey life that sparkled and teaching her scales was the only thing he did anymore that gave him joy.

But he said none of these things.

"Indeed, Mr. Gruner. Good night," Elizabeth replied and left the room.

Once she was out of sight, Anthony retreated and slumped against the inside of his bedroom door, his shoulder blades almost stretching its width. It took several minutes for him to catch his breath.

The next morning he lay in his bed listening to the sounds of the house. When he was certain the last child had scrambled down the staircase and out into the street and he was alone, he opened the door.

In the afternoon Elizabeth returned from her employer's house with her empty washing basket that now contained only her sleeping baby boy.

As she approached the house she could hear music coming from inside. She entered through the kitchen and stepped silently towards the sitting room, delicately placing the basket on the floor. She could see her tiny daughter seated upon the worn piano stool and Mr. Gruner crouched next to her in duet. Quietly, she retraced her steps before they noticed she was there.

27.

1863 – Ten years earlier

Today Anthony Gruner, the lodger Charles Ziegler took in for a stipend over and above the set rent from Stoneham and Levy, had married Elizabeth Homan.

It was not how Ziegler had thought things might turn out when he agreed to the deal, but of course there was nothing he could have done to stop it without raising suspicion.

And besides, Ziegler was already a married man. Had he been too greedy, thinking he could keep a mistress, if he could even call her that, and a wife under the same roof?

His mother would not have approved.

Ziegler's wife Susan stayed back at the church with the bride's mother and brother after the ceremony. Ziegler despised the old Brooker woman and her dim-witted son, so it did not take much imagination for him to come up with a reason not to join the pair for supper with his wife that day.

He cursed the day he agreed to harbour Anthony Gruner at the behest of Stoneham and Levy. What a fool he had been to think those two had sought to engage him in any plan of equal footing.

Ziegler knew now he was only a pawn in their game, whatever game that was – they never did confide in him. And what could Gruner offer them that was so valuable it would stop them from going to the authorities, if in fact he did do what they said he did?

On the way home he had met Levy, as arranged, at the steps of Parliament House on Spring Street.

Ziegler thought about asking Levy why they had persisted with the Gruner arrangement for so long, but he could not take rejection, so he decided against it.

"Gruner will never forget the name now," Ziegler told him.

Ziegler did not think what he had done would cause any harm, and it was the only way he could think of to ensure he fulfilled the other part of his deal with Stoneham and Levy. He was quite ready to be finished with the lot of them.

"Great," Levy said. "Oh I noticed her son, Charlie is it?"

Ziegler wanted to punch the man, but instead he did nothing but stand there and watch him smirk and skip off down Collins Street, kicking up plumes of dust as he went.

He returned home to their house on Cambridge Street and went immediately to his bedroom. He felt

around under the bed for the raised nail, identifying the loose floorboard. The wooden box had been kept hidden here since Elizabeth and the children had moved out some months ago.

It was time to return it to her. She was never coming back here now.

He could have opened it and examined the contents, one-by-one. He could have burned it in the fire. He could have done a number of things that would have made his poor dead mother proud, but time and time again, he did not. He kept the box for himself and hid it beneath where he slept every night. It would be as close as he would ever get to Elizabeth again.

So much time now had passed Ziegler often wondered if the time he spent with Elizabeth in his house when nobody else was about was all just a dream.

He had a wife, a wonderful woman who loved him sincerely, but she could not give him the one thing Elizabeth had – a son. But he could never acknowledge this fact.

He could not do that to Susan.

As if he hadn't done enough already.

Gathering up the box and stuffing it into a pillow slip, he made his way to Clarendon Place to return the box to Elizabeth at her new marital home.

~~~

At Clarendon Place, Anthony was home alone. Elizabeth and the children would be back shortly. He hadn't felt like joining them for the wedding lunch, even though he thought it might be expected. He was relieved when his new wife did not object to his absence.

Today his body felt lighter. He realised his temples were not pounding in their usual fashion, instead the beating he could hear was the needle of the metronome on the bureau. The stiffness he often experienced in his neck had vanished.

Other than the ticking of the metronome, the house was otherwise silent but for the soft fall of rain on the roof. Gruner heard a knock at the door. He made his way down the stairs to see who it was.

At the doorstep was a square package wrapped in fabric.

Gruner carried the package into the kitchen. The hearth was still emitting some heat, so he sat down beside it and made himself a cup of tea.

The package was an old wooden box that reminded him of something his father might have owned.
~~~

Retrieving the box from within the damp pillow slip, he placed it on the kitchen table.

Elizabeth and the children would not be home for some time, and although Anthony had work to finish for Levy, he could not bring himself to pick up a pen. Instead he decided to stare at the box for half an hour and sip his tea.

Outside the rain was now falling steadily. By the back door he heard a sound, a dog yelping in the cold.

Anthony unclipped the door and let the animal inside. Shaking, he jumped up onto the table to get closer to the open flame, knocking the box to the ground. Its contents spilled out.

Anthony shouted in irritation and the dog bounded into the corner, making furious circles, chasing its tail.

The box was full of photographs, more than he had seen before in one place. Some of the faces he recognised. There was Hannah as a young woman and Michael Brooker, her husband, and Elizabeth's father. Elizabeth kept a small photograph of her father in the sitting room, so Anthony knew who he was.

There were other photographs, smaller ones of ancient faces. They were so small it was hard to ascertain if they were in fact photographs or drawings. He guessed these were her grandparents.

Amongst the photographs was a notebook. Anthony opened it and scanned the first page. It was her diary. He snapped it shut, his face reddening with guilt at his snooping. He should not have looked at her things. He began to gather up each photograph and went to place them back into the box when he saw another photograph taped to the lid. He ripped it off. It was of a man and a woman in wedding attire. Elizabeth, and a man he knew. A man he would never been able to forget as long as he lived. He closed his eyes and remembered the sound of bone hitting stone.

Anthony barely made it into the back yard before he dropped to his knees in the now pelting rain and vomited.

When he finally stopped retching he knew now what he had to do. He felt a sharp pinch in his breast, his head throbbed as he stared at his muddy hands, his fingers outstretched. He had married Elizabeth Homan for a reason, this was clear to him now as it had not been before.

There was an old Danish proverb he knew by heart: *Af to onde Kaar skal man vaelge det bedste.*

Of two wrongdoings one should choose the best.

28.

1873 – The day Anthony Gruner is found dead

The past two days had been torturous for Barnett Levy, his mind plagued with the thought of not having an opera to show his donors.

Damn you Gruner!

The longer he waited on the corner of Simpson Street for William Stoneham to arrive the more he felt rage rising within him.

He detested Stoneham, and rued the day he agreed to meet him at the ale house. He was not a confidence man, he was an artist. And he did not belong in the company of such an oaf.

He had come to the Colonies to escape the shadow of his younger brother, to find his own path. He hadn't meant to do it like this, but now they had come so far there was no turning back.

He saw Stoneham approaching in the distance, kicking dust up as he walked, his feet dragging.

"Levy," he said as he approached. He was flushed, sweaty and looked like he had been running. Although that was unlikely, Levy sniggered to himself.

"Did you tell Elizabeth?" he asked him.

Stoneham glanced quickly sideways and then look at him.

"Why yes, I did. I told her to ask him about Valentina."

Levy was impressed. He hadn't thought Stoneham possessed the level of subtlety to drop the name of the only other witness to the fight that night to the man's widow without seeming completely ridiculous.

"We don't even know where Valentina is," Stoneham pointed out, quite accurately. "It could all be for nought, an empty threat."

"Well, he doesn't know that. Let's go and talk to him," Levy said.

"I need that opera before we depart on Thursday."

As the two men approached Dundee Cottage they noticed a light in the upstairs window. Otherwise the house was dark.

Stoneham went to knock on the door, but Levy swiftly slapped his fist down.

“Don’t,” he said frowning.

“You beat on the door, the children are all going to think Father Christmas is in town. We want to be discreet here, OK?”

Levy rapped on the timber quietly.

No response.

He knocked one more time.

A dishevelled Anthony finally opened the door and when he saw who it was, pressed a finger to his lips to indicate he was not alone.

Levy considered the man. He looked broken.

The three men spoke in hushed tones on the steps of Dundee Cottage.

“My wife knows about Valentina,” Gruner spoke slowly.

Levy shot a look at Stoneham who was preparing to speak.

“She knows,” Levy told him. “And we are going to tell her exactly what Valentina Brunt saw that night and, more importantly *who* she saw.”

Levy, not feeling as committed to the plan as he would have liked to be, now looked to Stoneham for support.

“Yes,” added Stoneham.

“We’re gonna tell her and her little ones just who killed their papa if you don’t do what you promised us.”

“We need that opera,” Levy said.

“As I see it, you have no room for negotiation.”

Gruner stood before them, frozen, his face ashen, his eyes clouded with tears. Levy could see his bottom lip shaking. He bit down hard to stop it from moving.

With his head hung low, Gruner moved to return inside the cottage.

“Gruner, remember what we said,” Levy hissed.

“They will all know. They will all know.”

29.

NEW YEAR'S FLAT

My mother was waiting for me in the lobby of the building I worked in. It was my first day back at the office since my trip to Copenhagen and somehow I still hadn't wrapped my head around why Anthony Gruner's life ended in such a gruesome way.

Everyone's stories around him had bits missing, inconsistencies and things that did not make sense, and this was also how it was with Anthony. I would never know why he called himself "Anthony," I never found his name or any derivation of it on a ships manifest to Australia and I would never know exactly why the note found on his body blamed William Stoneham and Barnett Levy for his death.

There were gaps and holes in the story of Anthony, but equally there was a lot that was consistent and ordinary. His wife Elizabeth said at the inquest into his death that he was in "pretty good circumstances," and my research into his life supported this statement. He was consistently employed, married (albeit later in life) and had children and a roof over his head. He was a musician in Denmark and he continued to be one in Melbourne. He was not described in the historical evidence I'd seen as insolvent, like fellow musician Levy, or a risk-taking entrepreneur like Stoneham. He didn't have the (for the time unusual) status of being married but without children like Charles and Susan Ziegler, nor was he a lifelong bachelor like John Brooker. He wasn't the product of an illegitimate union like Elias Gruner or Charles Homan but the grandson of a highly skilled artist who was handpicked by the King of Denmark to perform in his palace.

What made Anthony Gruner, my great, great, great grandfather leave his home in Denmark and move to Australia? Was it perhaps because his immediate family had either died or scattered beyond the cobblestone streets of Copenhagen? I would never know for sure and the exact circumstances surrounding his death would be something I could only ever resolve in my dreams.

I asked my mother to meet me so I could break the news to her in person about the woman in the photograph not being Elizabeth Gruner. As the elevator doors opened I spied her chatting to the concierge and saw what was in her hands, a photocopied map. Puzzled, I waved to her.

"Look, this is a map of a mining settlement called New Year's Flat," she said, showing me the piece of paper.

I took it from her and examined it.

"This is where she was born, on the 27th of June, 1856," she continued.

“Alright, I give up,” I said.

“Who was born at New Year’s Flat?”

“Elizabeth Kelly,” my mother said, triumphantly.

“*She* is the woman in the photograph I gave you all that time ago. I’ve been waiting for you to come home to tell you.”

She already knew?

“Well when you said you were looking into the maternal line I thought I better check the paternal one, and wouldn’t you know?”

“So did you find out what happened to Anthony Gruner the night he died?” my mother asked, linking her arm in mine as we walked together out onto Collins Street where the sun streamed through the canopy of elm trees and cast ribbons of light on the pavement.

EPILOGUE

Melbourne, 8 September 1873

It was with a certain sense of relief that Elizabeth returned to Dundee Cottage from her mother's without the children. The past few days had been taxing on her and a quiet evening was just what she needed.

She had hoped to talk to her husband more when he arrived home that evening, but he had been in such a hurried state she did not have the chance.

As she neared the corner of Greenwood Street she looked up to the inky night sky. The moon was almost entirely shrouded in clouds. As she approached the cottage she thought to go in the front door so as not to startle Charlie, who was probably deep in his book by now in the kitchen.

In the dim light, she saw three figures on the doorstep. It was Anthony, Stoneham and Levy.

They were shouting.

She dropped behind a cart parked on the street's edge and as she listened the blood in her veins turned cold.

She cupped a hand over her mouth to stop herself from screaming.

William!

He had not left her, he was killed. He was killed and she never knew it.

Oh William!

How could she have shared a bed with this man, this creature, this thing who took away from her the only person she ever really loved?

William!

The jarring shock of the discovery sent her mind racing. She did not know whether to scream, to cry or to run away.

She did the latter, but it was a largely an involuntary reflex. She needed to get her body as far away as she could from Anthony Gruner or she would rip him limb from limb.

He had taken everything from her, and then *married* her?

With tears streaming down her face Elizabeth ran down Hoddle Street as fast as she could to the house of the only other person who knew both her husbands.

Charles Ziegler rested his forearms on the handle of the shovel out front of 78 Cambridge Street. The rain had been too great for the capacity of the drain that ran alongside the house and water had made its way under his front door.

He saw Elizabeth running furiously towards him along the muddy street. She waved her arms as she approached him, as if to flag his attention.

This was of course, unnecessary, Ziegler mused, and sucked in a sharp breath.

Her dark eyes glistened under the moonlight, red-rimmed and wild and full of tears.

She was screaming but he could not make out the words.

It had been years since they had been alone together, and months since he had even exchanged words with her. She occupied his private thoughts, as always, but this was not how he had imagined reconnecting with her.

“Anthony,” she said, catching her breath. She doubled over and grasped at her stomach, retching and coughing.

Was he ill, Ziegler wondered?

“Did you know?” she asked, breathlessly.

He was not quite sure what she was asking him. She saw the look of puzzlement on his face.

“Did you KNOW?” she asked again, her voice rising and shaking.

“What?” he asked. In the corner of his eye he saw a light go on in the front room of the house.

Elizabeth told him what she had heard at Dundee Cottage. With every word that passed through her lips Ziegler felt himself die a little inside.

How could he have been so stupid!

Elizabeth finished speaking and curled up into a ball on the ground, howling.

Ziegler did not know what he should do.

“I will kill him, I will kill him!” she repeated, rocking back and forth now.

He set the shovel aside and sat down next to her in the muddy tributary.

She was the mother of the only child he would ever have.

“Elizabeth,” he said, lifting her chin between his thumb and forefinger.

“I will take care of this.”

It was time to repent for all the pain he had brought into Elizabeth’s life. He knew she only tolerated his advances because she feared for a life without a place to live. He knew he had taken advantage of the situation and yet he spoke harshly of her and her son, *his* son. He knew what Stoneham and Levy had told him that drunken night in the hotel about Gruner killing a man in a bar fight. Heck, Gruner had admitted to the fight himself. But still, he stood by and did nothing while this woman tied her life together with a potential murderer. Would it have made any difference, Ziegler asked himself, if he had known the victim had been William Homan? He stared into Elizabeth’s dark, wild eyes and he knew it wouldn’t have.

~~~

Gruner did not look up when Ziegler opened the door to the bedroom. He was sitting on his bed, his coat at his side and a razor in his hand. His face was puffy, his eyes red, pupils wide in the hazy light of the lantern.

Ziegler watched as he drew the razor to his throat and hold it there.

He repeated the action again, and when he withdrew the blade, Ziegler could see two bloody marks on his neck.

What in the devil?

Gruner was trying to kill himself!

But then he stopped. He put down the blade and sunk his head into his hands and sobbed.

“I can’t do it,” he whispered to himself.

“I can’t leave them like this, again.”

Gruner turned to face the man at the door.

Ziegler glared at him. He could suppress his anger no longer.

Outside, the rain was pelting down now.

“What are you doing here?” Gruner said, looking at the bloodied razor in his hand.

Ziegler stammered, but no words would come. His insides swirling, his pulse quickening.

Ten years it had been. Ten years since he had stood beside Anthony Gruner as he exchanged vows with Elizabeth.
~~~

Gruner would have nothing if it were not for him, Ziegler thought, the anger intensifying within him.

He would have nothing without me!

And there Gruner sat, regarding him the same way he always had, with a sense of slight pre-occupation and minimal eye contact. He had not changed one bit, Ziegler thought.

Just look, just look at what I allowed to happen!

Ziegler was growing more furious by the passing second. He gave Elizabeth a home and he looked after her and the children when nobody else would take her in. Not even her mother or that damned pious twit of a brother of hers. And so he took a little of her for himself, what's the harm? It didn't make any difference in the end did it? She married *him* instead.

She did not have to leave the house on Cambridge Street, she could have stayed with him forever. He might have known his son then, and Lord knows it would have given Susan some happiness to have someone to care for other than him.

He was wretched, fuming and on the cusp of losing his self-control. He hated Anthony, he hated Stoneham and Levy for pushing him into bringing him into his home.

How could he have known Elizabeth's husband was the man in the bar fight?

"I know what you are," Ziegler spat, his voice barely above a whisper, his fists curling in his gloves.

"You're a murderer, a murderer!"

Gruner flinched and dropped the razor on the bed, and curled his legs to his chest and began to rock, sobbing uncontrollably.

He covered his ears to drown out Ziegler's words, but Ziegler was not having it.

He had spent his entire life depending on the favours of others and what did he have for it? The one time he tried to make himself happy and look what happened.

Ziegler grabbed his hand and thrust it from his ear.

"You will listen to me," Ziegler pulled Gruner to a stand by the scruff of his neck.

"You don't deserve her, you don't deserve the chance to make up for what you did," he spat.

Gruner moved to free his hand from Ziegler's clutch, but Ziegler tightened his grip. Gruner winced in pain.

“Charles,” he gasped. “What are you doing?”

Ziegler stared into his pale eyes, searching for some kind of sign not to throttle the man. The rage inside of him now pulsed through his veins. He released Gruner’s hand only to grab him quickly by the wrist and twisted his arm behind his back, thrusting the pair of them onto the floor.

The two men struggled on the floor of the bedroom, Gruner writhed in a bewildered state of hysteria, but Ziegler was overcome with an unearthly calm, his movements almost mechanical.

Gruner pleaded with him to strop crushing him with the weight of his body, but Ziegler was incensed.

Ziegler struck him hard in the stomach. Gruner doubled over, attempting to curl his knees to his chin. Ziegler slapped his legs as hard as he could, causing Gruner to shake, his sobs growing louder.

“I put up with you in Ballarat,” Ziegler hissed.

“I put up with you and you did not once thank me for it.”

“I gave you a place to live!”

“Charles,” Gruner started. “I am sorry, I…”

In the corner of his eye, Ziegler spied the razor.

“You took Elizabeth from me, and Charlie.”

Gruner’s eyes widened.

“I didn’t know!” Gruner pleaded, his voice barely above a whisper.

Blood would show Gruner the seriousness of his crimes and that he was not a man that could be taken advantage of.

He would slash him with his own razor. He wouldn’t kill him, just hurt him. It was the only way he could think of at that moment to externalise the rage he felt within.

Before Gruner could react, Ziegler grabbed the razor and swung it toward him. He meant to aim for his stomach but Gruner lurched forward toward him so he missed at struck his neck. Ziegler closed his eyes until he felt the resistance of flesh against the blade.

Gruner did not make a sound.

On the bureau, the metronome stopped ticking.

Several moments passed before Ziegler could compose himself. This was not the outcome he had expected. He glanced around the room and saw a crumpled piece of paper on the floor. He picked it up with his fingertips, careful not to smear its words with his bloodied hands and read it.

Ziegler stuffed the paper into Gruner's pocket and fled the room. He lingered a moment at the base of the stairs watching Charlie who was seated at the kitchen table before he slipped out the front door and into the night, his heart pounding.

~~

Several days had passed since the discovery of Anthony Gruner's body at Dundee Cottage and Susan Ziegler wondered when the local newspaper would report it.

When Charles arrived home she prepared them both a cup of tea and placed it on the table next to a copy of *The Argus*, tracing her finger alone the spine of the paper to prompt her husband to read aloud to her, which he often did at her request.

"There is not much news today, my love," he informed her.

"Oh please read it anyway, you know how I enjoy it," she insisted.

The news of Anthony Gruner's death had made the front page and although he was certain Susan had heard about it, Ziegler saw no point in relaying the gruesome details to her.

He picked up *The Argus* and considered the headline.

"Well, you know poor Elizabeth's husband Anthony killed himself," he started.

Susan made no response.

Ziegler continued.

"I do not know how she will manage now," he looked at his wife.

"I think we should invite her and the children to lodge again."

Susan stood up and walked to the window. She could feel the warmth of the sun on her face. It had finally stopped raining.

"I think not, Charles."

THE END

MOSES IN EGYPT: CROSSING BOUNDARIES TO INFORMED NARRATION

EXEGESIS

1. Moths and Multiple Relations with the Past

> When there was nobody to care or to know, this gigantic effort on the part of an insignificant little moth, against a power of such magnitude, to retain what no one else valued or desired to keep, moved one strangely.
>
> — "The Death of the Moth," Virginia Woolf 1942

"Little or nothing but life"

My decision to investigate a death that occurred in 1873 and subsequently to re-think conventions of writing about the past when little evidence remains, was inspired by a story about an insect. This insect did not resemble anything that might be remotely classified as grandiose; it was neither a gargantuan Titan beetle, nor an impressive Jerusalem cricket, but a moth… and a dead moth at that.

"The Death of the Moth," while not the most famous work of the twentieth century British author Virginia Woolf, is arguably one of her most profound in the way it captures the beauty and complexity of life and interweaves a meditation on mortality and the inevitability of death. Most significantly, the narrative highlights the merits of exploring all forms of life through literature, and the philosophical relevance of accepting the position that multiple relations with the past exist.

In her 1942 essay, Woolf observes a moth struggling to escape a window ledge, failing and eventually dying. As the narrative unravels, the moth reveals itself as a metaphor for all life and our collective unpreparedness for death. Woolf writes, "he was little or nothing but life," (10) as the moth struggles and attempts to overcome his fate, but is ill equipped for the battle.

Woolf wonders what the moth might have been like had it "been born in any other shape," (10) although it is the shape of her subject that is central to her treatment of life and death as interdependent phenomenon removed from any hierarchical value system created by society. Had Woolf not been concerned with the value ascribed to one life over another, she might have selected any number of subjects to illustrate her contentions about life and death, from a wounded soldier struggling across a battlefield to a dying patient in a hospital bed. However, as she explores in the narrative, the experience of life and death for all creatures is significant; therefore she uses an "insignificant little creature," (11) "so small, and so simple" (10) as her protagonist to demonstrate this point. Woolf emphasises the deliberateness of her decision to write about a moth by elaborating on the unimpressiveness of her subject, insisting the insect was not the type that evoked a "pleasant sense of dark autumn nights and ivy-blossom," but a hybrid critter with pathetic, uninspiring

features who she writes, pityingly, “seemed to be content with life.” By paying attention to this seemingly insignificant creature, she expresses a sense of frustration at higher order creatures’ failure to acknowledge the experience of smaller subjects. Woolf’s creative approach to explore the significance of a seemingly insignificant creatures involves the use of inclusive descriptions such as “unmistakable tokens of death,” (11) and her conclusion that as long as one gives life as much meaning as possible (“What he could do he did”) (9) and then dies with dignity after putting up a noble fight, then this is the only value anyone should seek.

Woolf describes it as a “strange” and “queer spectacle” (9) to observe the moth, but a more productive evaluation might be how irrelevant the size or shape of a life, is because if observed closely, the experience can be scintillating.

Moses in Egypt

In my creative work, *Moses in Egypt*, I am inspired by Woolf’s edict that all creatures contain the “enormous energy of the world” and write about my own moth. I call him a moth because he was a person who existed at one time in history and has now been forgotten about — that is, if he was thought of at all during his life — I cannot be sure. Like Woolf’s moth, somebody wrote about his death, although in this case it was after the fact and in an article in a major daily newspaper. Aside from this report, the only evidence that exists to say this person once lived are the markings made on his behalf in birth and death certificates, the census and on a marriage licence.

My moth is a man by the name of Christian Edvard Theodor “Anthony” Gruner. Gruner is my maternal third-great grandfather and was born in 1825 in Copenhagen, Denmark. In 1873 he was found dead in Melbourne with his throat slashed so severely he was nearly decapitated. I discovered this in 2012 in an article written in *The Argus* newspaper, “Shocking Suicide at East Collingwood”. The inspiration for this thesis came when I decided to research his life and write about it, and I faced the question of how can one write about a moth if one cannot observe it. Was it more prudent to write only of what I could find evidence for, knowing the data was scarce and most likely not able to be corroborated? Should I examine the evidence at hand and use it as an inspiration for an imagined tale, or write an investigative report on my struggle to find out about my subject? I encountered a stalemate of genres, unsure if I ought to write history, fiction, journalism or a hybrid.

This thesis seeks to map out a multi-dimensional strategy for writing about people who lived in the past of whom little evidence now remains. This strategy is illustrated in the creative component of this thesis, *Moses in Egypt*, and presented in a combination of two distinct narrative styles, creative nonfiction and fiction, that collectively I will refer to throughout as “informed narration.” This

hybrid narrative form incorporates techniques used by historians, creative writers, and journalists. The aim of this hybrid narrative form is to cross the boundaries between the three writer groups. I argue that the success of the "moth" narrative rests on co-operation as well an acceptance of the philosophical relevance of multiple relations with the past. To this end, this thesis will explore the creative journey I have undertaken over a four year period to research, reflect and experiment with techniques used by other writers, to reach the decision to structure my work *Moses in Egypt* in this way.

What follows is a three-pronged inquiry that firstly critically considers the reasons for the antagonism and perceived boundaries that exist between those writers who are most concerned with telling stories of people who lived in the past. Examining how historians, creative writers and journalists write about the past, I will discuss how each group exhibits traits identifiably borrowed from the others, yet are individually too often one-dimensional in their approach, despite the advances in technology, specifically the archive collecting and information sharing power of the Internet, that support a more complex approach to this form of writing. In order to cross the boundaries between groups, a problem-based assessment of each group's strengths and weaknesses is conducted, considering a range of texts predominantly from the post-bicentennial (1988) decade in an Australian context, but with reference to earlier and international examples where pertinent. Texts are considered where little archival evidence remains of the historical subject, and where there is plenty of information available about the historical subject, but the writer chooses to focus on a little-reported or known angle and the creative choices made therein. By engaging in a pragmatic assessment of the writerly strategies used to tell the stories of people who left little evidence behind like Anthony Gruner, an analysis of the hybrid narrative techniques used in *Moses in Egypt* is then considered.

Evidence and form

In his 1966 essay "The Burden of History," Hayden White called for "a history that will educate us to discontinuity more than ever before; for discontinuity, disruption, and chaos is our lot" (134). According to White, the historian serves no one well by creating a "specious continuity" between the present world and the one that preceded it and there are many examples of historians writing discontinuously. So what can non-historians offer the history writing space that isn't already being done? The answer may lie within how intuition and imagination are regarded in relation to evidence.

In recent years there has been a great deal of praise and literary awards heaped upon historical imaginings in the form of fiction. Works of historical fiction have dominated public discourse in

recent years, so much so that it is in fact harder to recall a major literary prize-winning novel that was set in the present day than in the past. Four out of the past five winners of the Man Booker Prize have been historical novels, and the 2016 Baillie Gifford Prize for nonfiction was awarded to a work focused on history. The increased attention history writing has received in recent years has caused some to ponder if the study of literature has become the study of history. Mousley (2) contends the increased attention given to history writing has translated into a revival of interest in aesthetics, a point also made by Aviezer Tucker in his 2004 book, *Our Knowledge of the Past: A Philosophy of Historiography.* Tucker pinpoints the shift toward a discourse focus among scholars of history in the last quarter of the twentieth century, and notes an increased attention to form over analytics (8).

The way we write about and study history writing may be changing, yet the underlying challenge at the crux of the uneasiness between and within stakeholder groups is a lack of clarity in the relationship between evidence and form. The complexity of this relationship is something that Walsh unwittingly prophesied in *Philosophy of History: An Introduction*, half a century ago, with the paradox he revealed between evidence and the work of historians. Walsh pointed out the most striking feature of history (and this is still relevant today even with advances in technology, most notably the archival possibilities of the Internet) is that "the facts [history] purports to describe are past facts; and past facts are no longer accessible to direct inspection" (18). At the same time, Walsh described the role of the historian as finding new evidence and thinking of ways to present existing evidence, all the while resisting any form of interpretation. He argued that statement should be based on historical evidence alone, and those made on any other basis "should be given no credence. At best they are inspired guesses; at their worst mere fiction" (18). What Walsh's stance fails to acknowledge is the common scenario of a paucity of evidence as well as the consequences of not being able to interact first-hand with historical evidence. If we were to subscribe to the notion that to be considered a work of history, a text must be supported entirely by evidence, there would be significantly fewer works of historical literature published, *Moses in Egypt* included.

The contradiction of history being valid only through evidence, yet historical evidence by nature being something we cannot interact with first-hand, has given rise to other forms of narratives that seek to solve this dilemma. This predicament is particularly relevant, and compounds the challenge for writing about a person who once lived and left little evidence behind. It is limiting on a larger scale if we consider the evidence remaining from major world events occurring throughout history, from the eruption of Mount Vesuvius and destruction of Pompeii in the year 79AD, to the

September 11 terrorist attack on New York City in 2001. For example, following the acts of terrorism in the United States, it was possible for photojournalists to capture images as evidence of the destruction caused, but in 2017, almost all traces of the disaster have been built over or cleared up, and this interaction is no longer possible. Historians, journalists and creative writers may examine artefacts collected at the time, but they often cannot engage with them on a primary level. This is true eventually for all forms of evidence ranging from recorded documents, archaeological or oral evidence. Tucker describes this challenge, stating: "each historical event generated a burst of information. However, most of it deteriorates rapidly and vanishes" (240). One solution to the problem of evidence and time is to move from thinking around what constitutes history writing, beyond an obsession with evidence and form, to a concern instead with how the writing, irrespective of form, *relates* to the evidence at hand and can relate in multiple ways. Some would argue this transcendence is already happening, and while there are many examples of journalists employing historian-like techniques, and creative writers borrowing from journalistic tools, antagonism about such cross-pollination is evident.

Multiple Relations

The cross-pollination of writerly techniques used by the late Australian historian Manning Clark, and the criticism this incited, is one example of the problematic nature of writing about the past. Clark was widely criticised for his so-called under-reliance on evidence (Ryan 54), specifically for his six-volume *History of Australia.* Mark McKenna in his 2011 biography of Clark, *An Eye for Eternity: The Life of Manning Clark* wrote that, even as one of the nation's most famous professional historians, Clark struggled to separate his work from what he called "fictional history" (470). Ryan (61) pointed out that Clark's "subjective" exploration showed parallels with an epic, and argued for the need to see Clark outside more conventional configurations of historical representation. However, the response to Clark's work by other historians and academics, a mix of "praise, misgivings and puzzlement," (Macintyre 442) illustrates the discomfort his chosen narrative form provoked. Mousley (3) seeks to explain why the way Clark wrote attracted so much controversy, contending to some extent that such criticism is best described as a distracting consequence of hindsight.

> … the distinction between 'now' and 'then', where 'now' equals the brave new historical awareness of contemporary criticism and 'then' the supposed ahistoricism of traditional approaches to literature can be unhelpfully overplayed.

When the first volume of *History of Australia* was released, much of the attention it received focused on the narrative form. Reviewer A.G.L. Shaw describes Clark's methodology of using

fiction techniques in history writing as “engaging,” “unorthodox” and “thought provoking” (118), yet struggles with many of the claims made by Clark in the text, specifically those that appear based on something other than evidence. Shaw highlights the failings of Clark’s text as an historical artefact, stating he made too many factual errors for a work of this character, that ultimately created “a sense of mistrust in the work as a whole” (118).

> Unfortunately this type of discussion raises great difficulties. For how are we to know the mainsprings of a man's life, his motives and his innermost thoughts? Some indeed have told us—though not always accurately; of others, much may be deduced from their actions; but of still others, little is known and little may be said except by guesswork, and guessing is not writing history. (117)

Perhaps a more productive way of evaluating Clark’s work can come only from validating the existence of multiple ways of relating to evidence and his success in engaging multiple narrative forms at once. Shaw agrees with this estimation, stating (in reference to Clark) “in so far as historical knowledge is a synthesis of many ideas and many points of view, this volume [the first of *History of Australia*] makes an important contribution to it” (119).

Clark offered one, albeit controversial, strategy for writing about the past, but there are many other writers who are non-professional historians whose work demonstrates the existence of multiple ways of relating to and writing about the past. Eleanor Dark, arguably one of the most prominent Australian historical novelists in the twentieth century, explored the relationship between white settlers and Aboriginal people in her 1941 work *The Timeless Land*, and chose to shape her fictional narrative *around* the historical record. Other writers exhibit their relations with historical evidence in different ways. For Australian novelist Peter Carey, this transpired in his proclamation of his work *True History of the Kelly Gang* (2000) as fiction, despite engaging in a painstakingly faithful reproduction of the narrative style found in a single piece of writing penned by his protagonist, the Australian outlaw Ned Kelly. Australian author Hannah Kent travelled to Iceland to research the last woman executed in the Scandinavian nation to use the facts she had to inspire her fictitious account *Burial Rites.* Anna Funder employed a similar journalistic strategy for *Stasiland*, but wrote the work as historical nonfiction, interviewing dozens of residents of the former East Germany. Helen Garner sat through hundreds of hours of courtroom testimony for *Joe Cinque’s Consolation* (2004), a nonfiction text about a woman and her friend accused of murder. None of these writers purported to be writing history like Clark, yet each used historical and literary narratives to meditate on history to some extent.

If writing about the past is to be opened up to include these works, then the processes used by these

writers must be considered in an epistemic context and not just in contrast to the work of professional historians. By focusing on the processes as opposed to the form used, an overlap of creative processes becomes apparent.

A Complex Proposition

"History" by definition is an ambiguous word (Tucker 1), which can mean past events or the study of them (Dray 1). It is therefore not surprising that expanding the scope of what is considered "history writing" to include forms other than works written by professional historians is a complex proposition. To consider the techniques and creative processes used by non-professional historians who write about historical people or events may seem a logical response to the increasing numbers of these writers. Hexter, however, in his book *On Historians: Reappraisals of Some of the Makers of Modern History*, contends this ideological shift is a challenging task for scholars of history. Hexter explains that history scholars tend to focus on differences rather than similarities when it comes to evaluating history writing (242). This inclination to "split" rather than "lump" writers together stems, Hexter says, from a need to create classifications and assign examples to them. The problem with this approach is that it ignores the "rich tapestry of historical practice" (Day 418) of non-historians. Rather than focusing on how writing by non-professional historians differs from professional historians, Day argues for a "de-forming" of theoretical practice to refocus how historical language is considered. A better way of thinking about it, Day contends, is to consider the language of historians as having only "philosophical relevance" (418) to how historical events are written about. This is particularly useful when considering a writing project where little historical evidence is available, as it does not preclude other narrative strategies.

This compulsion to create distinctions between groups who write about the past, rather than re-think their characteristics, may be a result of a collective lack of clarity about the relationship of evidence and form, as highlighted in the earlier example of Manning Clark. Linda Hutcheon contends the reason for the unclearness does not lie in the differences between the writers, but in what she terms the "paradox of postmodernism," (5) specifically the interplay between language and what is considered historical knowledge. This dilemma is somewhat resolved, Hutcheon argues, by the writers themselves, in the reinscription that occurs in the "metafictionally self-conscious and self-regulating system of literature" (99). It is this "self-regulating" that writers seem most to struggle with while holding to one form of writing over another. The late Australian historian Inga Clendinnen demonstrated how complex the process of understanding the relationship between evidence and form is in practice, describing the challenge she experienced trying to come up with the appropriate language to present an historical artefact (a journal entry). She wondered:

“Were this fiction, I would know that all things said and left unsaid, all disruptions, were intended to signify. But this is not fiction, and I cannot be sure” (202). Similar struggles occur for writers with a dearth of evidence. Breslauer considers the difficulty of negotiating evidence and form as a consequence of the tradeoff relationship that occurs because a lack of evidence prompts a dependence on counterfactual claims. The less reliable the data, the more the writer’s techniques, their “theoretical apparatus and cognitive imagery” (83) are scrutinised, he contends. There is some merit to this theorem, but in some ways it oversimplifies the relationship of form and evidence by omitting one critical component, the writer’s choice of how to engage with the elements of evidence and form.

This is all not to suggest that form is something that should not be given any attention. On the contrary, the power of a chosen form to communicate different versions of an historical event is apparent in examples throughout literature in varying degrees, from the politically motivated “negationism” described by the French historian Henry Rousso, to historical novels such as Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone With the Wind* (1936), that tell us about a controversial time in history from one side only. However, it is unclear whether having multiple relations with the past represented in literature is tantamount to an “attack,” as described by Hutcheon (99), on historians’ tendency to fetishise facts, or just the result of there being a limit to “footnote fetishism” (Curthoys and McGrath 114). The third option is to present different versions of events when there is a paucity of evidence, using whatever evidence is available, as is the case with *Moses in Egypt*. In this instance, the antagonism expressed by historians to considering footnotes as anything less than a conduit to “bind us to the remnants of a past actuality” (Clendinnen “Fellow Sufferers” 1) seems pointless as the evidence has been engaged with as complexly as it can.

In *A Diplomat for the History Wars,* Muecke (1) suggests the way forward to productively evaluating writing about the past is through acknowledging the differences and similarities of the value systems of the parties involved. Rather than focusing on the form the writing takes, one strategy is to accept that is impossible to write about the past with impartiality (Hawkes 11), and any engagement with records of the past extends beyond the epistemic (Nelson 4). This “inseparability of ourselves from history,” as Paisley (122) defines it, resonates with Hawkes’ (2002) suggestion that historians are foolhardy to believe it possible to “make contact with a past unshaped by their own concerns.” It must be highlighted, however, that historians are not exactly claiming they do this. Historian Kathleen McLuskie stated in her 1995 essay “Old Mouse-Eaten Records: The Anxiety of History,” that “the general caveat about historiography has often been taken to denounce the methodological naiveté of those who base an argument on historical

evidence" (423). Historian Anna Haebich concedes that even the most rigorous responsive reading and interpretation of sources can "demand" historians employ "nuanced fictive writing practices" to "eloquently express" the details (1).

The anxiety that McLuskie describes and the concession Haebich makes about how useful narrative devices outside conventional history writing approaches are to the field, are in some way an acknowledgement of the need to expand the strategies for writing about the past beyond what evidence can support. Alongside the traditional writers of history are creative writers and journalists who engage in a complex process of creative historical practices and appear more comfortable engaging in a space where multiple relations with the past exist and integrate imagination and intuition into their writerly strategies to varying degrees. This has been the case for some time, since the mid-twentieth century, with the advent of "book-length" journalism (Ricketson 67) in the 1960s, and when Peter Hamill labeled the form "new journalism," and since the release of Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* inspired the phrase "nonfiction novel." In the Australian context, there are several key modern examples of creative writers and journalists who have created historical texts distinct from the content produced by historians. An examination of the practices of these writers may go a long way to substantiate the claims of Muecke, that history writing is a much more complicated proposition than Hexter's "splitters" theorem proposes, while simultaneously justifying the anxiety of Clendinnen in dealing with the problem of the relationship between evidence and form.

Creative writing and long-form journalism has become a dominant form of writing about the past. In the antagonistic climate evoked by historians like Clendinnen labelling historical fiction as "simply ourselves tricked out in fancy dress' ("Understanding the heathen" 435), while journalists and creative writers classify historians as "pedants or curmudgeons defending their territory against imaginative incursions" (Griffiths 10). It is these reactions, based on what Mousley describes as "assumed antagonisms," on which certain influential forms of theory have rested in the past, that are now being called into question. Mousley considers the most productive way forward for writers and critics is one that accepts that a system by where there are different ways of representing the past has become "an axiom in literary studies that applies to various aspects of historical inquiry" (3). Neither journalists nor creative writers nor historians wholly acknowledge the multiple relations that exist with the past, but this is because it is impossible to align with every available option.

Creative writers, journalists and historians are all writing about the past, and the idea that only the latter are writing "real" history is disproven by the field itself, where each group has books published, movies made, and an audience to receive their work. The evidence that supports an

extension of storytelling about the past to reach beyond pure historical writing is further fortified by the identifiable similarities between the genres, especially between the writings of journalists and historians; it may be a matter of deciding what form, or combination of forms is best to represent the evidence at hand.

2. What to call it: Prioritising Evidence, Analysis or Imagination

> In spite of all my certainty that this book shouldn't be a novel, I'd written just that.
>
> — Kate Grenville, *Searching for the Secret River* (164)

"Hazy issue"

At some point in the creative process, the writer thinks about their intended audience or market in mind, and reflects, "What is this I am writing?" More often than not, the answer is either unclear, or one that evolves over time. A writing project that starts as nonfiction might finish up as fiction; what begins as a magazine article may transform into a book-length narrative. Of course there are exceptions to this; for example, a commissioned article for a newspaper, or a textbook chapter, where specific guidelines are bestowed upon the writer by whoever is requesting the writing. However, in the creative realm, defining one's writerly intention is not as clear-cut, as was my experience writing about historical people and difficult issues like suicide in *Moses in Egypt.*

Part of the challenge of writing history, as Andrew Cowan (1) contends, is that it is hard to distinguish fictional from historical discourse. The overlap of literary devices used by historians, journalists and creative writers sometimes makes it impossible to know if a text is rooted in fact or fiction. As discussed in the previous chapter, this borrowing of techniques has caused some antagonism among practitioners. I contend this animosity may also be symptomatic of the difficulty writers experience when seeking to situate their work within a genre. One only has to consider the history of the novel form to get some idea of the unclearness of the evolution of history writing outside of the work of professional historians and how techniques of different writer groups have been joined since birth under the umbrella of "novel". The word "novel" emerged from the Italian word for short story *novella,* and has been used in English since the 18th century to describe works that emerged from writings including travelogues, memoirs and chronicles, as well as romance. Scholars have attempted to simply its definition over the years, by classifying this form of writing as whatever is left over from the other genres, but what has not been given the attention it deserves is the flexibility of the form which is perhaps the reason writer unclearness exists in the first place.

In this chapter, I seek to unpack the 'hazy issue of novelistic intention' (Cowan 1) I experienced when planning and writing *Moses in Egypt*. In retrospect, this unclearness was not specifically informed by my self-identification as a creative writer and journalist, but stemmed more from a concern with the paucity and characteristics of the evidence I had to work with. My "intention,"

insofar as I could articulate with *Moses in Egypt*, was to create an engaging narrative that prioritised the integrity of my evidence. However, as for producing a text that slotted into a genre of writing, whether it was fiction, nonfiction or reportage, I had no clear convictions. This inarticulacy of writerly intention is something Cowan, author of the 2013 historical novel *Worthless Men*, also recognised in his creative process. He confessed that any ambition to write history was only "intermittently present" (1) during the writing process and would have denied his text the label of "historical novel" if pressed to classify it.

In some ways, it made sense to me to create an imagined narrative and call *Moses in Egypt* a work of fiction. I had a dearth of evidence, no way of corroborating single-source facts and no real means of understanding life in 1870s Melbourne. I did however have other works of creative writing to inspire my narrative, as well as what historians could tell me. Was it better to use my evidence as a jumping off point for an imagined narrative, or were the facts I pieced together from what little evidence I had, enough to compile an engaging non-fiction narrative?

With no clear answer apparent, I found myself considering three choices of genre for my writing — fiction, nonfiction and reportage, and wondering if a fourth option existed. I decided to examine the creative choices made in three different treatments of historical and/or crime narratives with similar conditions to those I encountered with *Moses in Egypt.* I wanted to know if it was possible to sharpen my writerly intentions toward genre *before* I commenced the writing process by examining the choices others had made about their writing. I selected three texts to do this. The first text, Kate Grenville's *The Secret River* (2005) was selected because it also dealt with Australian content and shared characteristics with my own project. Grenville's original research subject was also her ancestor (born in England in 1777) who, although he came to Australia as a convict, and in the century before my subject (who was born 1825 in Denmark and arrived a free man), left a similar archive of evidence behind. I wanted to know why Grenville decided to switch her genre from nonfiction to historical fiction during her writing process, and how this related to the characteristics of the evidence she had to work with.

I next turned my attention to Anna Funder's treatment of the experience of residents of the former East Germany in *Stasiland* (2002). I wanted to see how being able to interact first-hand with a subject informed the creative choices of a nonfiction narrative about a period in history. I also sought to explore the literary devices Funder employed, and how she used these to deal with a sensitive topic still so raw for many people. Finally, I examined Susan Orlean's treatment of the life of an orchid poacher who, like my protagonist Anthony Gruner, received notoriety for an unusual event but otherwise lived an unnoticed life. In *The Orchid Thief* (1998) I was particularly interested

in exploring Orlean's treatment of subject though the use of metaphoric and philosophical discourse within the framework of a nonfiction narrative.

By exploring the writerly decisions in these three texts I sought to etch out a strategy comprising the most useful elements of each to guide me in writing *Moses in Egypt*. In doing this I was mindful that this might eventuate in a narrative that did not neatly align with any one genre. The spirit of this project is entrenched in a practical mandate to provide a strategy for more stories to be written about people who lived in the past but left few traces behind; so this was a writerly and scholarly leap I was prepared to take.

'Re-framing'

In an Australian context, one key example in recent years of how a writer's intentions can change throughout the creative process is Kate Grenville's *The Secret River*. *The Secret River* is a work of historical fiction, but was originally intended to be a work of nonfiction about the life of the author's ancestor, Solomon Wiseman, for whom the town of Wiseman's Ferry in New South Wales is named. The novel Grenville eventually created focused on an imagined character named James Thornhill and his wife Sal, inspired by Wiseman and his family, and focused on their establishment of a life on the banks of the Hawkesbury River, part of which involved taking ownership of land occupied by Aboriginal people. The choices made by Grenville to "re-frame the scene" and "put them [Aboriginal people] back into the picture" (97) provoked wide-reaching criticism. Historians were upset about her creative decisions, to lift documented parts of history and re-mould them into a dramatised story. The reception of her text illustrates the aggravation that can be aroused by an author highlighting, deliberately or otherwise, the muddiness between fictional and historical discourse. The late Australian historian Inga Clendinnen flinched "from what looked like opportunistic transpositions and elisions" (16) made by Grenville in her text, which in fact they were. This reaction occurred despite the author's self-identification as a novelist, and *The Secret River* as a work of "historical fiction" on her personal and publisher's website, and in the numerous interviews she attended after her novel was released. Grenville was clearly unaware this reaction would be forthcoming during her writing process; she openly documented her evolving intentions towards her project in her exegetical companion text, *Searching for the Secret River* (2006) released a year after her novel, In this she states: "I was shameless in rifling through research for anything I could use, wrenching it out of its place and adapting it for my own purposes…" (191).

Examining her journey as documented in *Searching for the Secret River,* it is evident Grenville conducted extensive archival research in Australia and England before she started writing *The Secret River*. The evidence Grenville gathered was sorted and categorised methodically and set

aside for contemplation at the conclusion of her research phase. Unlike the paucity of facts available about my protagonist in *Moses in Egypt*, Grenville had a surfeit of evidence related to the life of her ancestor, so a lack of material did not seem to be a key motivator behind her decision. It was, as Grenville describes, a choice coloured by her own perceptions of history and nonfiction writing.

> The main problem, though, was something I was reluctant to face. I was determined to write a book of non-fiction, but the only parts of this 'assembly' that were interesting were the 'flights of fancy' where I'd created the flesh to put on the bones of research. Where, in a word, I'd written fiction. (154).

At the same time, as Stewart in "Revisiting the Secret River" points out, every text has a market to reach, and literature must be "readable as well as credible" (76); Grenville seems conscious, if not wary, of how indigestible nonfiction may be. "Where did that awful starchy schoolmarm tone come from…?" (154) she asks, wondering if her nonfiction writing screamed "smart-alec research" (207).

It is this lack of confidence in the readability of her attempts to write nonfiction that seemed to force Grenville's hand towards a fiction model. The cost of Grenville's action is that the laborious archival research conducted to create the text is not given life in the creative work, but relegated into her exegetical mediation of her writing process.

The notion that Grenville decided to switch genres because her evidence did not align with the narrative she wanted to tell reveals a prioritisation of imagination over evidence within the construction of her text. In some ways this seems counterintuitive, as there are many examples of engaging historical creative nonfiction texts; *Stasiland* is one of them. However, it is oversimplifying her motivations to write fiction to suggest it was *only* because the story in her mind was not supported by the evidence in her hands. Grenville tries to explain the complexity of her journey of transformation in her exegetical text, describing how her participation in the Sorry Walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 2000 for Indigenous reconciliation shaped her decision. She also recounts the precise moment in her creative process when the idea of switching genres occurred. Grenville was in London during the Centenary of Federation celebrations and had a conversation with an Indigenous Australian writer that compelled her to change focus.

> "My great-great-great grandfather was born in London … [he] was freed and took up land on the Hawkesbury."
>
> "What do you mean "took up"? she [writer Melissa Lucashenko] said. "He took." (28)

The inclusion of this excerpt of a conversation with an Indigenous person perhaps seeks to underscore the tension between what evidence Grenville had to work with about her subject, and what external forces shaped her feelings about this evidence. Grenville decided to write a work of fiction, but this was not solely because she liked writing fiction more than nonfiction, in fact it might be seen as a decision made to try and do both.

Significantly, in addition to prioritising imagination over evidence, Grenville also reveals the impact of social and political influences on writing history and how this shapes the fiction or nonfiction question. In 2005, shortly after *The Secret River* was released, Grenville (*Searching for* 16) exclaimed, “the voice of debate might stimulate the brain.” While not quite acknowledging the opposition from historians in her exegetical follow up, she later expressed her reaction to it on her website, separating her work from “history” and stating: “Their [historians’] soul-searching about what they do has nothing to do with novelists, even if some of us do write about the past” (“Facts and Fiction”). Clendinnen (77), among others, argues it is the “professional obligation to preserve moments from the past as entirely as possible”; perhaps Grenville underestimated this protectiveness of historians towards history. The creative approaches of *The Secret River* appear to be diametrically opposed to the “boundary maintenance strategies” de Matos (2) explains many historians enact, to reassert themselves as the primary guardians of so-called “truths” about the past. This prioritising of imagination, or de-prioritising of the archive of evidence, is demonstrated throughout *The Secret River* and verified, helpfully, in the companion text. One character in her novel, Grenville explains, was inspired by a photograph she had seen of a different man entirely; another received its name from her then-next door neighbour. Some of the scenes were adapted from activities she had observed her children doing. None of these creative decisions could be corroborated in the archive of information she had stored on her ancestor; yet as a fiction writer Grenville saw no problem with this. In fact, Grenville described how her metamorphosis as a writer of nonfiction to a writer of fiction made her feel the “relief of a kid who's been told the maths homework has been cancelled. You knew you really should come to grips with surds, but oh the joy that you didn't have to" (*Searching for* 165).

This is perhaps what partly irritated Clendinnen about *The Secret River* — the fact that Grenville did not hang her narrative on the evidence she had at hand, but rather used this information to inform her imagining. Grenville’s implications that what she was writing was somehow better than history most certainly were responsible for getting Clendinnen off side. Grenville gave a talk at the University of Sydney in 2005 where she said of her novel, "I wanted to show that the whole history of white-black relations has become a silent place in our history" (Maral). Her decision to use the

phrase "whole history" was possibly ill-conceived and led to much back stepping by the writer to explain herself.

What also contributed to the irritation at Grenville's comments was how she framed *The Secret River* as having historical value as a result of the use of fiction. This was in part due to her basing the text on real people and variations of real historical events, despite changing the names and places. To Grenville, the decision to switch genre from nonfiction to fiction came down, not to what was right and wrong, but to "empathising and imaginative understanding" of the conflict (Healy 481). Herein lies the problem with her approach, that is, the reason her novel raised such controversy. In *Searching for the Secret River,* Grenville explains her intention to be the person who "created" the narrative rather than the person who "analysed it" (217), yet by empathising with one side, she could be perceived as interpreting the past with a particular bias. One example of this was her decision not to give voice to the Aboriginal Australian people. Grenville decided to "to get out of the way" (*Searching for* 171), yet gave voice to the white settlers. Sheila Collingwood-Whittick comments on Grenville's reflexes (both psychological and ideological) that infiltrate her writing, and suggests that these subvert Grenville's "declared intention of telling the truth about Australia's frontier history" (9). This is not to suggest that Grenville's text failed to have reference historically, but that it could be considered to be a form of "valued-added history" as Clendinnen suggests, the value being Grenville's imagining of the moral choices of her protagonists. (17)

Grenville's attempt to write about the past has bearing on the task of writing about Anthony Gruner's life in *Moses in Egypt*. Grenville's fictionalising of a real life historical person (Wiseman) is a useful model for the parts of my evidence that are, as Grenville puts it, "full of gaps" (19). Collingwood Whittick believes there is potential for "gripping novels" to inform us about the past (29), and Clendinnen concedes, in "Who owns the past," that in "human affairs there is never a single narrative" (3). However, Grenville's treatment of her evidence archive does not align with my goal of maintaining integrity of evidence. It is important to note the response of other writers in the space (namely historians) to Grenville's approach to history, but also to pay attention to practical demands of the task. In *The Secret River* Grenville created an imaginary battle scene between white settlers and Aboriginals. Grenville had no evidence this scene occurred, and based her writing on other historical accounts of the time. We know (of course) that there were Indigenous inhabitants on the land the colonists sought to settle, and a rocky history of acknowledgment of this right up until the 1970s. Inventing a battle, as Grenville did, not only transposes a sensitive part of a collective history with fiction, it switches the focus from biography to a meditation on white settlement and reconciliation. There is nothing wrong with doing this from a technical standpoint, but armies of theorists, philosophers, literary scholars as well as clinicians focused on trauma theory

may disagree on an ideological level. From a pragmatic viewpoint, this creative technique is of limited use to *Moses in Egypt* because it is not primarily focused on the protagonist, but the wider possibilities of narrative that can serve purposes other than biography.

Grenville's *The Secret River* is one example of how broad themes can be addressed within the framework of an historical novel, but as the goal of *Moses in Egypt* is to explore the life story of a little-documented person in history, this is of limited value to my quest for narrative form.

In this kind of writing, where all the protagonists (real or imagined) are long dead, and the issues contentious, Stewart offers a different framework for thinking about the task. He contends there are two different classifications of narratives set in the past: one that does not have to be accurate to be convincing, and succeeds "according to the psychological interest they create" (76), and the other that uses imaginary characters set in real historical situations. Within this structure, Grenville's text would most likely fall into the first category; it cannot be classified as the second because she based her characters on real people. This is a useful way of thinking about Grenville's creative process. Examining *The Secret River,* it is difficult to ascertain what Grenville's original intentions were with the text without also having her creative choices spelled out in the *Searching for the Secret River.* Most works of historical fiction, unless they are written as part of a doctoral project, are not supplied with an accompanying exegesis.

Grenville had a greater cache of evidence on her ancestor than I had on Anthony Gruner, yet chose to set this aside, and take from it only what she needed to create an imagined narrative about the life of a fictitious character, James Thornhill, who was inspired by her ancestor. Her writerly intentions were to give narrative voice to the white settler's changing perceptions of place and its Indigenous inhabitants. To do this, Grenville chose fiction as her vehicle. The controversy *The Secret River* provoked underscores the generic oppositions between the intentions of fiction and those of history that will always exist as there is no one way to tell a story.

Living history

Unlike Grenville's Wiseman and my protagonist Gruner, Anna Funder's *Stasiland* (2001) deals with a historical event that occurred in living memory. *Stasiland* attempts to answer the problem of intention when writing history in which a difficult subject features by using nonfiction. Funder's text deals with a unique time in German history, life in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). The narrative is presented in a first-person lyrical narrative that traces Funder's journey of exploration to record the experiences of those who lived in the GDR pre- and post-collapse of the Berlin Wall.

Funder's text prioritises research techniques and journalistic skill as paramount to success in writing about the past, and significantly shows how the restriction of fictional devices within a work of nonfiction does not detract from its impact. The narrative is dense with history, yet her decision to frame the history around a string of interviews gives the overall work a sense of balance. The use of memory and recall in the text aligns with the overall discussion in *The Oral History Reader* (Perks and Thomson 2006) and is reminiscent of the oral history interview techniques explored by Irina Sherbakova in "The Gulag Memory Map: Problems and Gaps" (114).

In *Stasiland*, Funder interviews a spectrum of former East Germans, from dissidents to conformists to military men. Here is a significant point of difference in the creative process of this text from *Moses in Egypt* and *The Secret River*. Neither Grenville nor myself had anyone living we could interview about their interactions with our respective protagonists. The sparse evidence I was able to uncover and the archive of facts and impressions Grenville gathered from her participation in modern-day politics are fundamentally inferior to the insights possible from first person interviews.

Her many conversations with her friend Julia reveal Funder's patience in allowing the silences to speak to the narrative, and her acknowledgement of the silences as a component of her research. She appreciates the magnitude of the life-change for the former East German people, and makes the creative decision to let their stories speak for themselves. One example of this: "Julia glances away. 'I don't have any story of the Stasi, or anything like that,' she says. The clock in the apartment works, and she looks up at it. I've got to go. Got a class. (93)

This is a luxury not afforded to the writer who focuses on a time where nobody is alive to interview. Nonetheless, Funder's journalistic style provides a useful contrast to Grenville's work in *The Secret River*. In a work of pure fiction, a scene like the one quoted with Julia, where nothing much happens, may be omitted. What Funder does instead is to employ memory as an instrument to bridge the gap between past and present, seeking to break down the distance between her and the people who lived in the former GDR. These 'present' moments, such as the conversation with Julia, seek to bring the past into jarring proximity by focusing on a present reaction to something in the past.

Interestingly, Funder resists the urge to insert her own point of view into the story, and this decision allows the reader to make up his or her own mind about the consequences of surveillance. The key to Funder's narrative technique is her ability to observe, without attempting to persuade. Her observational style of writing combined with extended nonfiction passages on the plight of the East German people foreground the question as to whether poetic or rhetorical devices are needed at all to effectively write about the past. She restricts the use of similes, and employs metaphors

sparingly. One example of this is her comparison of the kitchen in her apartment with the *Stasi*, the former GDR State Security Service:

> What surprises me about living here is that, no matter how much is taken out, this linoleum palace continues to contain all the necessities for life, at the same time as it refuses to admit a single thing, either accidentally or arranged, of beauty or joy. In this, I think, it is much like East Germany itself. (51)

The intersection between fiction, journalism and archival research is evident in both Funder's and Grenville's texts, but in *Stasiland* there is less confusion over intention. Is this a consequence of narrative voice or form? It could be argued to be either or both. A parallel reading of *The Secret River* and *Stasiland* reveals distinct literary choices in construction. The most obvious is Funder's ease with a vignette-style text, contrasted with Grenville's plot-driven classical fiction narrative, where there is a clear beginning, middle and end. Comparing the two texts, some common traits are apparent. It is almost as if Grenville's novel was an imagined epilogue to her exegetical text, a step further. Funder could have done the same after writing *Stasiland*, as she had gathered evidence on a number of protagonists in her nonfiction text that would have made for a rich imagined narrative — her friend Julia for one, her musician associate Klaus, another.

Philosophers from Vico to Runia ruminate on how writers perceive their own role in the process of writing history as a narrator, like Funder, or as a creator, like Grenville. Griffiths (1) describes the relationship between history and fiction as a "tag team," and both Funder and Grenville's techniques are testament to this analogy. Funder, however, proves it possible to write about the past in a non-fiction format without having to fictionalise events and protagonists. In *Stasiland* the circumstance of a communist state was enough of a narrative to avoid the make-believe, and in a different degree, the suicide in *Moses in Egypt* plays the same role in some ways. Funder could have focused on any parcel of evidence she came across in her research and extrapolated it into a fictitious account of the conditions the East Germans lived under in the Stasi, but she chose to let the event stand in the evidence she had gathered. It is this restraint Funder exhibits, by not taking her writing that extra step, that is most useful when thinking of writing about an historical person who experienced a difficult event, because Funder, with her observational authorial persona, is transparent about where she stands in the facts. This strategy, however effective for *Stasliand*, is not a complete solution for *Moses in Egypt* for the simple fact that the level and quality of evidence Funder had available to her does not exist.

Orchid as "moth"

American author Susan Orlean's *The Orchid Thief* is an example of nonfiction writing that refuses to be overwrought by fictitious instruments, yet engages with them and with the evidence to subtly support the author's intention from beginning to end. It represents what Jan Whitt (85) describes as the "borderland" between literature and journalism; however, to categorise this text as an intersection of two techniques in a mere quest for labels is to ignore its goldmine of narrative riches. Unlike Grenville, Orlean does not present a body of work that blends archival research with fiction. Rather, Orlean *uses* fiction devices as part of the nonfiction narrative, but does not surrender the entire text to these devices.

Considering *The Orchid Thief* not only as a historical narrative but also as a template for constructing a narrative about an historical person who left little evidence behind, it is useful to examine the complex semiotic structure that is unique to creative nonfiction of the personal journalism variety. *The Orchid Thief* text is presented in three layers: a superficial layer, exhibiting recognisable plot devices — a court case involving the battle of an underdog named John Laroche struggling to get ahead in life, and the journey of the displaced, an intelligent, middle-aged woman who packs up her life at a moment's notice in search of new adventure; a middle layer containing a non-fiction discussion of the history of orchids; and a third philosophical layer where Orlean meditates on the universal desire of human beings to belong.

The Orchid Thief is a homodiegetic narrative, one in which the writer participates as a character in the story (interestingly, the initial preference of Grenville); through this vehicle Orlean presents a plot balanced between two arcs, the biography of an orchid poacher, and the history of the plant and the kooky subculture it inspires. Instead of fictionalising the archive, Orlean encourages the reader to engage with the subject in an unorthodox way, thus resisting the urge to classify nonfiction writing as purely an "assembly" of facts (Grenville *Searching for* 154).

One advantage *The Orchid Thief* appears to have over *The Secret River* is the enriched discourse it achieves through the use of journalistic techniques; one example is Orlean's exploration of the history of orchids (49). Using a journalistic voice, Orlean is able to employ simple analogies to describe scientific concepts, sidestepping the misunderstandings that Hargreaves and Ferguson state are often coupled with technical writing (43). An example of this is her description of orchids: "One species looks like an onion. One looks like an octopus. One looks like a human nose (50)." She does not imagine what her protagonist may be thinking or feeling, she asks him (as Funder did in *Stasiland*). Orlean transcribes her protagonist's responses in the text; for example, when she asks her subject to explain his passion for collecting, he says: "…when a man falls in love with orchids, he'll do anything to possess the one he wants. It's like chasing a green-eyed woman or taking

cocaine... it's a sort of madness…" (94).

Aside from the already noted difference from Grenville's text in accessibility of the subject matter, another creative decision Orlean and Funder both made was to present an indication of the depth of archival research they had undertaken. Without reading Grenville's exegetical text, this would not be apparent for *The Secret River*. This may have had something to do with how Grenville considered her role as a writer of fiction. Cowan (6) argues that this perception can obscure the "extent to which 'finding' plays a part in the fiction writer's operations." We know from Grenville's follow-up exegetical text that she went to great lengths to research her subject, but from her chosen form of fiction the importance she placed on "finding" is not immediately apparent.

Perhaps it is purely a question of form as to what parts of evidence gathered and analysis conducted in the creative process is included in a text. Grenville included little, but Orlean includes it all, unafraid of the question of marketability for a nonfiction text about an orchid stealing petty criminal, despite the current vogue for this kind of extended journalistic writing. In *The Orchid Thief*, Orlean elects to move forward with her hybrid nonfiction/journalistic narrative with a sprinkling of fictional devices (but not actual fiction), providing ample background of the history of orchid collecting, and explaining the fascination of the subject throughout the text. It is the tone and direction she is able to inject into this nonfiction writing, through the use of creative devices such as recounting her interactions with Laroche, and her "outsider looking in" musings on the secular hobby, that reveal the strength of this layered narrative technique.

One notable example of Orlean's prioritisation of evidence in her creative process is her decision to include technical information about orchids. For example, she writes: "The orchidaceae is a large, ancient family of perennial planet with one fertile stamen and a three-petaled flower…" (49)

By combining these three layers the author is able to illuminate an otherwise obscure topic, and this ability is of particular relevance to my project. Had Orlean focused only on a research-based exploration of the orchid, readers without an interest in orchids may not have engaged with the text. Had she focused only on the middle-layer of plot-driven narrative, the reader may not have benefited from the depth of non-fiction research the author conducted on her topic. If the text followed a philosophical theme only, passages like this: "I suppose I do have one un-embarrassing passion – I want to know what it feels like to care about something passionately" (47), would have been without the weight afforded by the research and narrative layers of the text; all the significance of orchids would be lost and the text could have been about any other subject. Interestingly, Orlean manages to incorporate her wider meditation on passion and belonging into a journalistic and nonfiction account without having to split her writing into two texts, or exhibit fictitious restraint

like that found in *Stasiland.*

The creative decisions made by Orlean about her "moth" (Laroche, and orchids) could be applied to the life of Anthony Gruner and the circumstances surrounding his death. For one, both subjects are obscure and under-reported, and *The Orchid Thief* demonstrates this is no barrier to creating an engaging non-fiction narrative. Orlean had an abundance of evidence about her protagonist and the orchid industry, and this is something I cannot replicate in *Moses in Egypt.* However, Orlean's layering techniques of technical, plot-driven and philosophical narratives are useful even with a paucity of evidence. Orlean's use of metaphor and symbolism could also be relevant techniques to consider for analysis of the evidence I have on my subject. This was one area that Funder, with a surfeit of evidence, did not access it could be argued, because she did not need to. One example may be found by considering the occupation of Gruner (a musician) and reflecting on Orlean's use of symbolism. I know very few facts about his professional life; however, I have a world of information available on music history, particularly in Colonial Australia, which is my era of interest. I cannot listen to recordings made by Gruner, but I can listen to other recordings made around the same time and transpose my impressions of these recordings into the narrative. I can substitute my own research on music history and interviews with those who study it for Orlean's access to a real life-orchid enthusiast. This information can be used to create a layer of technical detail to the narrative that would otherwise be impossible given the dearth of information I have on my protagonist. I can also seek to create a plot-driven narrative like that of *The Orchid Thief* by sketching out a timeline of what evidence I have of Gruner's life from certificates and records. The major difference between the extent of my plot direction and philosophical musings and Orlean's (and Funder's for that matter) is – I have gaps, and nobody to ask how to fill them.

To Prioritise Evidence, or Not

Thanks to historians like Hayden White, who analyses historical narrative as a literary form, the debate over how best to write history has evolved into a discourse wherein literary theorists pronounce on "the content of the form" (incidentally also the title of a 1987 paper by White). White, who is more concerned with the politics of such rewriting than the creative strategies behind it, suggests this focus on form or "the way our narrative capacities transform the present into a fulfillment of a past from which we would wish to have descended (1)" is somewhat inevitable. The reason for this, White attests, is what can happen when writers approach an historical subject; it is a "willing backward," when we rearrange our account of events "in order to endow them with a different meaning or to draw from the new emplotments reasons for acting differently in the future (150)." In the case of *Moses in Egypt*, where the writer is faced with so few pieces of evidence, the

rearranging of evidence can occur haphazardly if a narrative strategy is not in place to deal with the "rearranging" the gaps.

When I consider the three texts, *The Secret River*, *Stasiland* and *The Orchid Thief* — the arrangement of evidence and the gaps therein, from a practice-based standpoint rather than a philosophical one — the question emerges: to what extent is it possible to craft an engaging narrative without access to a living subject? Secondly, there is the question of the appropriateness of value-based judgments in works of fiction (which by themselves are perfectly acceptable) in the context of writing about the past, given the controversy surrounding *The Secret River*. Interestingly, all three texts were wildly successful in their markets, despite employing different strategies to achieve this success. *The Orchid Thief* offers a man caught stealing plants as a segue to a wider meditation on collecting and the need to belong. *The Secret River* focuses on a man deported for a crime and his struggle to find a sense of belonging in the world. *Stasiland* narrates how a people resisted the establishment, and how these people came to terms or did not with their past. Funder, Orlean and Grenville are not historians in the classical sense, but each produced writing that at least enables us to imagine something about, or encourages us to ask questions about, a past event or place.

Grenville could have written *The Secret River* as a nonfiction text, she just chose not to. Instead of prioritising evidence and analysis, Grenville prioritised imagination. Orlean and Funder did not experience the same challenges, or provoke the same level of controversy with their creative decisions, because they prioritised evidence and analysis. Importantly for both Orlean and Funder, their prioritisation of evidence did not result in a text that was without imagination, as Grenville feared she might produce.

It was probably not Grenville's intention to dedicate the novel to the Aboriginal people at the outset; that this was a later decision is suggested when the author spoke in interviews and conferences about her relationship with her mother, the source of information that initially sparked her writing journey. Her decision was a *personal* one. Making a personal decision may be the most useful way of finding comfort in the confusion creative writers experience when trying to decide how they will write about the past. Grenville provides a useful examples of the employment of imagination as a strategy to write about the past, and although I will do this in some parts of *Moses in Egypt* it will not be motivated by a desire to create a more satisfying plot, but to fill in gaps in evidence. Grenville also provides me with a useful template in her exegetical work, which goes some way to explain why she chose to write an historical novel, although the unclearness of her approach prompts me to incorporate my own creative process musings as part of my primary text.

Is it possible then to write histories from the safety of a desk behind the cloak of fiction? And if not, is searching the archives enough to “accurately” represent social history or any history? What other experience(s) are necessary for writing about people who lived in the past and experienced difficult events, and how are these events best written about? The next chapter will explore sensitive subjects in biography to try and answer this question.

3. Sensitive Subjects in Biography

> **Fleck**. A crack in the glass of Joel's life so fine we couldn't see it, a dark fleck, the speck that contained an epic treatise on shattering.
>
> - Marcia Aldrich, *Companion to an Untold Story* (95)

Writing without living it

Moses in Egypt deals with the reported suicide of my ancestor, Anthony Gruner, and like Grenville and Funder, I will be writing about a sensitive issue without having experienced it at first-hand. How writers deal with sensitive historical issues or events has been touched upon in the examples of texts in the last chapter, but it is prudent to investigate strategies for this in more detail.

The examples of authors' interactions with evidence so far discussed reveal that a fictional approach is one response to a paucity of evidence and a long-past event; a non-fiction approach is an option when the event occurred in recent history and the archive of evidence is full. However, with the exception of Grenville's ancestral relationship to the man who inspired her narrative, what each of the texts studied so far has in common is that none of the writers had a vested interest in their subject beyond the literary. How would the treatment of the Indigenous/white settler conflict be framed if Kate Grenville were an Aboriginal person? Would Anna Funder have chosen a different narrative voice if she herself had lived in the Communist state of the former East Germany? Compounding this complexity is the tendency for certain interactions with evidence to characterise different writer groups. As Sheila Collingwood-Whittick puts it, the role of history writers is to create a "world of facts," and of novelists "to stimulate our imaginations [so] that we think we are actually there" (21).

To understand how sensitive subjects shape the way we write about them, and how the writer's relationship to subject informs this process, I will now consider examples of literary treatments of suicide and sexuality. I will also explore in greater detail the negotiation that occurs between evidence, imagination and analysis throughout the creative process. To achieve this, I will first consider how the narrative is structured in response to the nature of the sensitive central issue or event, and also in respect of the writer's relationship to this. The narrative voice will then be considered. Marcia Aldrich's *Companion to an Untold Story* (2012) will be examined for its strategies of fusing biographical techniques with personal journalism in dealing with the sensitive subject of suicide. I will also discuss Janet Malcolm's and Colm Tóibín's treatment of sexuality in famous subjects in historical biography, or more precisely, sexuality where it otherwise was overlooked or hidden, in *Two Lives: Gertrude and Alice* (2007) and *The Master* (2004).

Distance as a strategy

Marcia Aldrich wrote about the experience of her friend's suicide in *Companion to an Untold Story* (2012), using a third-person narrative voice juxtaposed with an internal focalised first-person narrative. Aldrich provides an alternative strategy for examining the intersection of the evidence, analysis, and imagination. In particular, she employs the unorthodox format of a companion book of recollections and facts, to engage with her form of personal journalism and biography. In her text, Aldrich approaches the task of writing about a tragic event she has personally been affected by, by organising her narrative in an encyclopaedic format. To Aldrich, this is not the story itself of her friend, which, as the title states, is "untold," (although it is partially revealed gently through the narrative) but a collection of vignettes of memories. The narrative style is detached, assembled like a guidebook or manual. Aldrich describes her narrative style with a computing analogy, likening it to "the target of a go-to statement in a programming language" (4). Aldrich uses others' words to infill her emotional response to her friend's death, and although much of the récit is borrowed, the overall message of mourning still resonates, because of the occasional use of first person reflection. Her decision to intermittently weave a level of intimacy into the allegory — "Her suicide made Joel a motherless son, suicide became his mother" (181) — serves to remind the reader that the narrator was connected to the deceased, and however postmodern her textual strategy appears, the narrative and techniques serve as a coping mechanism for dealing with loss.

The balancing of the unemotional with the emotional is an interesting narrative decision when writing about a sensitive subject like suicide. As Dransart (317) points out, such a structure facilitates meaning making that allows the survivor (Aldrich) to find an existential significance in her experience with loss. By changing the form of the text but keeping the scope of the work within the realms of nonfiction, Aldrich challenges us to reflect on how textual analysis can be applied beyond the text. Rather than focus on the wider social implications of suicide, Aldrich focuses on the aftermath of the event and the events leading up to it. Despite her narrower focus, Aldrich's views are no less philosophical than Orlean's on dying and finding meaning in life, or Funder's on the socio-cultural forces that arouse political change in society.

An example of the fusing of biographical techniques in this form of personal journalism is Aldrich's selection of a subject for each letter of her companion book. For "C" she selects the fruit clementine, and quotes her deceased friend's reaction to the taste when it was served to him: "I've never tasted anything so sweet and bitter at the same time" (52). Aldrich purposely does not elaborate if that visit was made with her, but one assumes as much, and is left to meditate on how the tragic suicide (the bitter) and the sweet (their friendship) appear to coexist in the same space. In

this instance, the effacement of the writer's persona reveals how evidence takes priority over analysis and imagination.

It could also be that Aldrich employs this writing strategy as a coping mechanism. Aldrich appears to use literary techniques to distance herself from the "cognitive skepticism that accompanies our usual discourse" that Murray Krieger speaks of in his essay "My Travels with the Aesthetic" (208).

Indeed, the decision to employ an unusual form of text and ascribe metaphor as a strategy for writing about a sensitive event demonstrate the author's need to put space between herself and the subject. Aldrich's treatment of the sensitive issue of suicide — her tendency to avoid writing directly about the event, and instead use facts or abstract reference — appears to be a strategy to sidestep any unease born of her close proximity to the subject. Considering how the creative techniques illustrated in *Companion to an Untold Story* can be applied to *Moses in Egypt*, the non-traditional biographic narrative style could provide a useful solution for components of my narrative where facts are scarce. The index-like format of Aldrich's text demonstrates that analysis is not required for every piece of evidence included in a text, and in some cases the evidence is more useful to the overall narrative if it is not dissected and filtered through journalistic processes and the writer's imagination.

Under-reported Elements

A very different kind of sensitive subject was the focus of Janet Malcolm's narrative about novelist Gertrude Stein and her partner Alice B Toklas in *Two Lives: Gertrude and Alice.* Significantly, this text does not deal with a forgotten or underreported person or event in history, but rather an *angle* or way of thinking about an otherwise well documented person that has received little attention in literature. The sensitive issue in focus in *Two Lives* was the sexuality or private relationship of Stein, an under-reported element of her otherwise much publicised life. The journalistic and fictitious strategies employed by Malcolm cut and weave through the volumes of literature already in circulation on Stein, and her text exemplifies the effectiveness of the tripartite intersection of evidence, analysis and imagination to inspire new directions in biography. Importantly, *Two Lives* is an example of assigning weight to this under-reported element of a subject, and building the narrative world from this angle. This is useful when considering strategies for writing about Anthony Gruner. Gruner was most well known for being a musician who killed himself with a cut throat razor to the neck; but what if his story was to be told from an angle other than the most obvious? *Two Lives* proves it is possible to consider less obvious, or less common viewpoints as foundations for a nonfiction narrative.

Two Lives is also a useful model of writing about someone who lived in the past, when the writer may choose to focus on a different aspect of a famous person's life than, in this case, the posthumous romancing that has seen Stein iconised as a bohemian enigma, a sort of "opium queen" (Solomon 7). The protagonist in *Moses in Egypt*, Anthony Gruner, was not famous like Stein, nor did he leave behind anything resembling her evidence archive. In many ways Gruner and Stein are exact opposites, but Malcom's treatment of Stein in *Two Lives* is surprisingly useful in its determination to steer the reader into new ways of thinking about an issue. Malcolm insists on focusing on this lesser reported element of her protagonist's life, and even goes so far as to overtly defy the consensus of scholars of her subject. The timbre of her discourse is more idiosyncratic and essayistic, and at times feels academic. An example of this is Malcolm's summary of Hemingway's skepticism of Stein and Toklas as "his revenge" (64) for Stein putting him down in her writing. Another example is Malcolm's musings about Stein's ambivalence towards realism, which she describes as an inner clash of wills: "We can almost hear the one self say: No, I will not narrate, and the other say, Please try" (85).

Steps by Malcolm towards reframing the characterisation of Stein established in past biographies include her use of photographs intermittently placed in the narrative, to present Stein as part of a remarkable couple rather than just a remarkable individual. Interestingly, most photographs are of both Stein and Toklas, whereas one might assume Stein, the more famous one of the pair, would feature in more photographs than her lover. The deliberate selection of these couple photos serves to reconnect the reader with the theme of the narrative, two lives — not one.

The decision to focus on an under-recorded element of a famous person's life required Malcolm to think innovatively about the materiality of the biography. Unlike the bulk of literature produced on Stein, this text follows the life of the pair through their experience of living in rural France throughout World War Two. Malcolm's interest in Stein and Toklas is in their relationship and also their Jewishness, which they rarely advertised and sometimes actually hid. On the latter point, most critics argue it simply wasn't important to her (Damon 492). Will says her Jewishness is "hardly insignificant" (438) to a study on Stein, but warns it is a topic that does not yield easy or conclusive answers. Biographical writing can be an effective tool to demystify topics that are surrounded with ambiguity. In *Two Lives*, Malcolm inserts herself into the narrative, but stops short of negating the volumes already written about Stein and somehow works with them even though she sometimes feels out of place. In the text, Malcolm boldly declares to a group of scholars who study the novelist that she dislikes some of Stein's more experimental writing, and exclaims how, in doing so, she felt "like someone who ordered a cheeseburger at Lutèce" (57). The key to the success of *Two Lives* is

the author's steadfastness in her focus on the parts of her subject's biography she has chosen to prioritise, and refusal to be unnerved by her feelings of uncomfortableness.

Malcolm uses nonfiction to tell the story of Stein and Toklas, but there are examples of biographical history writing that use fiction, and some more successfully than Grenville. Like Malcolm's issue of working with difficult, or unreported information, Colm Tóibín's fictionalised narrative, *The Master*, deals with the life of Henry James. James, like Stein, was not a forgotten person in history, but a famous British-American writer. Like *The Secret River, The Master* is a work of fiction told in the third-person subjective voice, yet unlike the Australian novel, it deals with a much narrower topic — one man and a few years of his life. As a work of fiction, *The Master* raises important questions about the treatment of difficult subjects, where the subject did not reveal the object of the enquiry during his lifetime — in this case James's sexuality. Tóibín explores this aspect by highlighting James's status as a bachelor as well as his practised manner in social situations. He does not, importantly, imply his protagonist's sexual orientation or invent episodes within the text as Grenville did. What is most impressive is that Tóibín refuses to make his protagonist stereotypically, or perhaps even recognisably, gay. For one thing, there is no actual sex in the novel. Tóibín was asked if this was a conscious decision, and his simple and seemingly logical answer was that he saw his choices as twofold, and wrote explicit scenes of gay sex, or something he called "almost sex" (In Conversation with Colm Tóibín) which he deemed a more powerful narrative instrument. An example of this language is found in the text where James is forced to share a bed with another man. He writes, "He waited, knowing it was inevitable that Holmes would turn, inevitable that something would occur to break the silent, slow, deadlocked game they were playing" (94). Tóibín uses the word "inevitable" twice in the one sentence to emphasise how certain James was that something would happen between the two men, and also to imply that this was something his protagonist would not protest at.

As James was also a writer, Tóibín tunes the timbre of his text to James's style and keeps the point of view focused on him. If another character is explained, it is only to negotiate the course of his protagonist's inner life. Tóibín depicts James as repressed about his sexuality but not exactly ashamed of it, and certainly well aware of it. With a subject every bit as famous as Malcolm's Stein, Tóibín employs a technique of trust-building in the narrative to gain credibility. He pays painstaking attention to the factual details of James's life, down to the colour of walls in rooms, or the time a train left for London. Tóibín also cleverly employs real-life meetings that we know later formed inspiration for James's creative works, as a further means of building a relationship with the reader. "He loved the dress rehearsals and allowed himself to picture the potential playgoers in each

seat in the theatre," (10) Tóibín writes. For two men who never met it is impossible for the author to *know* how his protagonist might be feeling, and here the hand of Tóibín is lightly visible in the telling of James' story, employing a mostly third-person subjective narrative technique. Every now and then Tóibín breaks from this limited viewpoint (of James) and comes in with his own narrator's voice. These passages are slight, often limited to a single sentence, and serve to gently steer the reader into the intended focus. The author uses this technique to refocus the narrative, once he has directed attention to a fictional possibility; one instance of this is the aforementioned scene with the two men sharing a bed. Tóibín inserts the narrator here to imply intimacy without having to attribute any action to James. "By eleven the two men were washed and dressed, their luggage repacked, their landlord paid…" (94).

Overall, Tóibín's allegory identifies Henry's same-sex desires unambiguously yet retains the full ambiguity of the life that took shape around, but was not reducible to, those desires. The result of the application of fictional techniques and archival research in this case is outstanding, although the use of journalistic techniques is not as clear as with Malcolm. Malcolm's archival research into her subject's lives was more transparent, through the use of photographs and accounts of the scholarship already surrounding them. This has something to do with the fact that the latter could interview and investigate sources that were still living, whereas Henry James died 35 years before Colm Tóibín was born.

Hierarchy Emerges

In the treatment of sensitive subject matter in these texts, a hierarchy becomes apparent between evidence, analysis and imagination. When the subject matter is sensitive, and the relationship of the writer to the subject intimate, a distancing strategy is common, whereby evidence and analysis are prioritised within a nonfiction casing.

However, fictional and journalistic approaches (particularly the personal journalism approach of Aldrich) have been shown to be equally useful strategies for constructing narratives that deal with sensitive subjects, and Tóibín showed how it is possible to discuss an under-reported element of a famous person's life without even describing exactly what this element was. In the light of this, the arguments of historians like Clendinnen (435), who reduce the contribution of fictional techniques to no more than an "attempt to simulate [the] complexity of reality" in writing about historical people, seem over-simplistic. A more productive way of considering the multi-strategy approaches of writers in this space might be not to view the role of fiction in writing about people who lived in the past as a corollary to exhaustive evidence collection and analysis, but as a component within a framework of thinking.

When a sensitive issue is foregrounded, evidence and analysis appear to overshadow fictional imaginings; however, even prioritising facts and analysis gives no guarantees of integrity. Luce (20) explains that it is writers of contemporary history who are most susceptible to making claims of impartiality, despite the passing of time hindering them from attaining sure knowledge of what happened, while for contemporary issues "envy and enmity, favour-seeking and flattery" distort the picture and impair the truth (17). The entangled relationship of history, journalistic writing, and fiction is central to the different modes of treatment of three devices — evidence, analysis and imagination. The strategies employed on each of these devices can be related to the prevalence or otherwise of the writer's insertion in the narrative; this will be my next focus.

4. The Dilemma of Authorial Viewpoint in Writing about Moths

How to best write about a topic when the facts are scarce or the subject challenging is as much an inquiry into the technical decision processes of writing as it is into the creative "value" judgments writers make. The reason for this might simply be that there is no one “truth” to historical situations, but multiple points of view. This is perhaps something that “fictional” modes of writing about the past help readers to understand, more easily than historical discourse tends to. One of the value judgments writers make is the degree to which the writer's point of view permeates a narrative. Nick Salvatore made a useful observation about the role of viewpoint in biographical texts, reflecting on his own journey of writing about the life of American labor leader and socialist Eugene V. Debs. On the one hand, Salvatore contends, are critics who accuse the writer of not delving deep enough in the psychological life of the subject, and on the other, there is an idea that *any* personal dimension results in an inherently false version (188). This debate provokes a sense of self-consciousness in the writer when reflecting on the "intimate" (Salvatore 187) connection between social history and biography. How a writer balances his or her point of view in a narrative with the evidence and analysis of evidence is a tricky proposition, one I also dealt with constructing *Moses in Egypt.*

So far we have seen how value-based judgments and technical decisions combine to inform the creative process, but what factors direct the degree to which these different components shape a text? In *Two Lives: Gertrude and Alice*, Janet Malcolm demonstrates how creative decisions, such as the decision to focus on less-publicised elements of a famous protagonist, can influence the direction of a narrative and inform the textual construction. The choice of form in response to the nature of the subject matter is also an important consideration. In *Companion to an Untold Story* (2012), Marcia Aldrich exemplifies how non-traditional textual formats such as her directory-inspired format can be employed as a solution to difficult subject matter. Ultimately, my solution to how much of my own point of view to insert in *Moses in Egypt* sidestepped this question by structuring the narrative as a hybrid composition of creative nonfiction and fiction, clearly delineated by chapters. By using this dual-format framework, I could clearly express my own views in the nonfiction component. I could also signal to the reader through the use of an autodiegetic narrative voice (that is, in my own words) how the creative choices made in the fictional part came about. My reasoning was that even though a text of this nature is not required to be written solely in the author's voice, the author is still the one writing it.

One such example is found in the nonfiction part of the text, where I piece together a trail of addresses for Elizabeth Gruner and through doing so, discover that shortly after the death of her

first husband in 1860, Elizabeth moved to an address also occupied by a man named Charles Ziegler, a musician. Subsequent searching uncovered evidence that Elizabeth gave birth to a child in 1862 and listed her long-dead husband William Homan as the father on the birth certificate. This baby, a boy, was named Charles. I checked the names of the first-born sons Elizabeth bore to her two husbands and both were named after their father. I also discovered no descendants were listed on the death certificate of Charles Ziegler. Within the boundary of nonfiction, it is not possible to decide definitively that this baby boy born in 1862 was the illegitimate son of Ziegler, but through fiction it is. The anxiety Salvatore describes of inserting one's point of view appears to be remedied by separating the narrative into fact-finding and what I call *informed narration* through fiction, that is the information gaps revealed by research are fictionalised into a plausible version of the subject's lives. This resolution, however, is far from perfect. There is no way of knowing if the speculations made in the fiction component of the text are accurate, however reasoned they might appear through the revelations documented in the nonfiction component. Examples from my fictional narrative of plausible speculation given the evidence at hand, but not ultimately verifiable, include Elizabeth's unawareness of the fate of her first husband; that she was compelled to exchange sexual favours with Ziegler, her "landlord", to keep her children off the streets; and that her meeting with Gruner, a musician, was due to his occupational commonality with Ziegler.

Not speaking

Whether this writerly anxiety around point of view appearing in a text extends only to writing about people who lived at one time in history *because* of their challenging nature, be it subject matter or paucity of facts, or whether it is symptomatic of the overall antagonism that exists between forms of history writing, creative writing and investigative journalism, it is hard to say. What is clearer is that the choice to employ an autodiegetic narrator, as I did in *Moses in Egypt*, is not unique; many texts about investigating historical murders and crimes are voiced autodiegetically. Some writers employ a "fictional quester" and invent a character that would essentially "be" the writer's voice in the text. Very few texts, however, purport to be nonfiction without using this technique in some incarnation. One notable example of a textual work described by the author as nonfiction that selects a heterodiegetic narrator, one that does not take part in the plot, is Truman Capote's 1966 *In Cold Blood.* It is not the intention of this project to argue for or against either approach of narrative voice within the realm of nonfiction, and a closer inspection of Capote's canonical text is a worthwhile enquiry in its own right. *In Cold Blood* follows the events of the murder investigation, capture of the culprits, their trial, and eventual execution. What is unusual about the text is that despite his first-hand research of the case, Capote chose *not* to use the autodiegetic narrative voice; Tom

Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* is another example from the same era. It is this omission of self in the text, or specifically, alleged omission of self, that led his work to be re-examined and criticised over time. Capote presents his work in what Susan Lanser (160) refers to as "alterodietegic", or the opposite of autodiegetic, or sole participant. To properly understand Capote's motivations in this case, it is perhaps first productive to visit Genette's (186) focalisation theory and the terminology used to describe a point of view, or the very separate questions of who sees and who speaks when thinking about a text.

Capote's decision not to speak in his text, in contrast to my writerly decision to do so in *Moses in Egypt*, is an example of the multiple ways of dealing with the anxiety of writing about challenging topics, or those with a paucity of evidence. There are many reasons to employ an autodiegetic approach to writing about challenging subjects, such as multiple murders. The advantage of having the focaliser (who sees) align with the character is that the reader can view the story through the writer's eyes and be more inclined to accept this vision (Bal 104). Aligning the narrative voice with the viewpoint of the writer feels like an easy choice, especially where a crime features, as this is one example where there are clear winners and losers, victims and perpetrators. This was not the decision Capote made, and one might argue that his decision was somewhat futile; for irrespective of Capote's narrative decision in his text, the perspective offered in any text can never really be bias free because it has to come from somewhere. What decision is significant, regardless of the narrative situation, is the centre of perception (Nieragden 688) in terms of characterisation, reliability and completeness. Wolfe wonders whether Capote, despite having sufficient information to use point of view in a more complex fashion, was "not yet ready to let himself go in nonfiction" (3). Or perhaps it is only with the benefit of hindsight that the weakness in his narrative choices can be truly appreciated. If Capote had written *In Cold Blood* in 2017, he might have voiced it differently. The full title of Capote's work highlights the narrative dilemma that Capote could perhaps be forgiven for not fully understanding in the 1960s. *In Cold Blood: A True Account of a Multiple Murder and its Consequences* is problematic in its assertion, yet saved by its qualifier "a" true account, not "the" true account. Perhaps a more accurate subtitle might have been "My True Account…" invoking the idea of relative truth. Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* provides another example of the narrative challenge of labelling these types of narratives. Carey chose to use neither the definite or indefinite article in his title.

It is this penchant for fictional techniques within nonfiction writing that Wolfe terms "the new journalism", describing Capote's style as a combination of third-person point of view and "omniscient narration" (4). A critical reading of the text reveals, as Garrett (472) points out, an

empathetic and fascinating look at a murderer's psyche in Capote's portrait of Perry Smith. But this is not without sacrifice of other literary outcomes. Although *In Cold Blood* is about a real murder with real victims and perpetrators, the fictitious techniques employed by Capote, once seen, appear to outweigh its veracity as a nonfiction artefact. The lead detective on the case is portrayed as a the "hero", the co-accused Smith, the "good cop" and Hickock as the "bad cop"; Capote conveys his viewpoint about the latter by using unflattering imagery: "It was as though his head had been halved like an apple, then put back together a fraction off centre" (24). The Clutter family, the victims, are defined in near-stereotypical characterisations — the self-made man, the nervous wife, the town darling, the quiet brother. Another example of the weighting toward fictitious devices is given in Capote's description of the retreat one of the murderers to his bed after the homicide. He writes: "he had merely fallen face down across the bed, as though sleep were a weapon that had struck him from behind" (60). If this text were to be deemed nonfiction, Capote would have had to obtain this information from Smith through the course of his investigation; but this level of detail and drama can be surmised to come directly from the author's imagination.

Almog accuses Capote of manipulating the reader: "He creates a seemingly exhaustive and meticulous representation of the murder and intensive descriptions of an array of characters that surrounded it. Yet, a central fact is omitted: the presence of Truman Capote" (5). Many holes have been found in Capote's story, and rumours surrounding his investigative techniques have circulated for as long as the book has been in print. Capote's preference for fictitious techniques within the structure of nonfiction does not make his writing on the murders and subsequent trial any less true than newspaper reports that ran at the time, but it does challenge the conventions of acceptability. Nieragden (694) theorises that when the autodiegetic voice is strong in a narrative, there is an equally strong identification between the subject and object of focalisation (699). *In Cold Blood* supports this idea. Capote, despite being present during the events described in his text, does not voice the narrative. Since its publication, *In Cold Blood* has been subject to analysis by scholars and historians alike, and the perennial theme of its criticism has centred on Capote's 'alterodiegetic' choice of narration and how this coloured the vision of what was focalised in the text.

Picking a side

Capote selected a somewhat unusual strategy for writing about a challenging topic, but Australian author Helen Garner opted for a more common one. Garner inserted herself in her narrative, opting for an autodiegetic approach to tell the story of a murder trial in her 2004 text *Joe Cinque's Consolation.* The text follows the trial of an Australian student Anu Singh who, along with her friend Madhavi Rao, was tried for murdering her boyfriend Joe Cinque.

Garner's text demonstrates how challenging the struggle with narrative balance can be, particularly where a crime is featured. Garner titles the book with a key sentence (*Joe Cinque's Consolation)* that discloses the point of view she writes from the outset. By doing this, Garner seeks to grasp the lynchpin early, setting up the reader with her chosen angle, a technique common in investigative writing, without which a story would be hard to understand (Daniel 15). She does this by picking a side. This also attempts to give readers space to align themselves with both sides of the story, knowing clearly where the author's views lie. This is a transparency technique that is by convention "virtually compulsory" for nonfiction writing on court cases, as Weinberg points out (46). One way to assess whether Garner is successful in achieving this balance is to consider the visual imagery evoked throughout the narrative through Garner's creative choices. One example of this is how Garner describes Singh and Cinque: "She gets bigger, louder, brighter, while he keeps fading. He sinks into the shadows and leaks away, until all that is left of him is his name, and the frozen saintly lineaments of a victim" (178). Extracts like this, particularly Garner's use of the phrase "sinks away" and her description of Cinque as "frozen saintly lineaments," prompt the question of whether readers are given *enough* space to make up their own minds, given Garner's strong opinions on the subject.

Garner's choice reveals that her narrative strategy, despite its perceived transparency, does not escape the question of how far is too far to push one's viewpoint in a text, especially when the central theme is contentious.

Garner's clarity in her opinion about the case is perhaps a result of her first-hand interaction with it. Unlike *Moses in Egypt*, both Capote and Garner had the advantage of living at the same time as the crimes they wrote about were committed. The difference between Garner and Capote is that, unlike the latter, Garner owns this bias through the creative decisions she makes to participate in the plot. "Her" truth is not one and the same as "the" facts and although we are aware of this, it can create an irritating experience for a reader who may not side with the author. Nevertheless, there is no way an author could convey the objective truth, irrespective of what narrative voice is chosen. This said, the advantage of Garner's technique is that it does offer a level of transparency not evident in a third-person narration, which as Almog points out, is a frequent and natural poetic option for works of fiction (6).

Garner's text illustrates that the license most creative nonfiction writers have to overtly express point of view in dealing with complex issues is not available to journalists. Journalists are bound to consider all facts and must work within a limited set of objectives in the spirit of fairness in reportage. One example of this is how Garner treats Singh's refusal to be interviewed for her book.

If Garner was writing a newspaper article on the trial she might simply state that the accused declined to comment when approached; however, in a book-length narrative, this missing piece of evidence creates a larger hole. More interesting potential subplots, such as Singh's struggle with mental health issues, the underexplored pressure of children of first generation immigrants to excel academically, and the consequences of recreational drug use amongst the middle classes, cannot be explored in the text because of a paucity of evidence, specifically Singh's refusal to be interviewed by Garner for her book. On this point, Steedman (xi) attests it is the documents in the archive that grant liberties, or else "'forbid' the saying of certain things." By revealing her investigative process of centering herself as the protagonist (or co-protagonist if we count the book's namesake Joe Cinque), Garner is accepting these limitations.

However, the two texts are not entirely dissimilar. Like Capote, Garner does not always avoid the temptation to interpret people as character-types, essentialising and homogenising real differences (Eggins 130), and this can be problematic when dealing with crime as a central theme. The tangible disdain she expresses toward Singh makes it hard to believe Garner's account of the murder trial, and instead communicates a sense of the author feeling on the "outside of powerful institutions" (Rooney 159). In *Consolation* Garner shows us how the author can still incorporate omniscient insight into a work of creative nonfiction without having to resort to the third-person narrative voice.

The perennial question that arises from *Consolation* is, when an author has made their viewpoint clear and structured themselves within the text as narrator, and if this viewpoint irreversibly changes the story, have they exceeded the limits of narrative point of view? Anu Singh was interviewed in 2016 and asked about Garner's *Consolation* being made into a movie of the same name. Singh complained that the producers of the film had not been in contact with her to seek out her side of the story. "It would have been nice if they… talked to me," she said, so they could get "some understanding about where I was at that time (Gorman)." It could be suggested that Garner's previous attempts to contact Singh more than a decade earlier were deemed enough by the filmmakers to deter them from seeking comment from the convicted woman.

The secondary issue the text raises is how the author selects the point of view to write from. Garner inserts herself into the story in a clear attempt to "speak" for the victim and to highlight how his fate became secondary to the egos of other major players in the case. But at what point and to what degree do the inflictions on the narrative of an outsider's point of view detract from the overall "truth" of the story, in so far as it can be considered within the framework of multiple existing relations with the past? Eggins (127) separates out the ethical challenges of nonfiction writing

Garner dealt with (relevant also to Capote and to a lesser extent Aldrich and Orlean): the first is the journalistic quandary of the need to obtain comment from all sides of a story, and the second is the need to respect the reality of the participant's experience.

Embeddedness

It is the idea of respect, especially when challenging issues of an historical subject or paucity of evidence are factors, that calls into question whether a limit exists in the amount of point of view a writer may insert into a text. Rebecca Skloot straddles the potentially dangerous line between first person narration and "becoming" the story in her 2010 biography, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks.* Skloot's text is an example of where an author's self-insertion can irrevocably shape the narrative, and in the realm of nonfiction changes the lives of the actors.

Henrietta Lacks unwittingly changed the course of medical research when cells taken from her body as part of a cancer diagnosis changed the course of medical history. This is undoubtedly an interesting premise for a biography; however, the level of penetration of Skloot's journey researching her subject dominates the focus of the narrative. Skloot's framing of events as they happened in relation to her places her in the way of the overall narrative of a family coming to terms with a challenging event from the past. Skloot's style of self-insertion could be seen as an obtuse interpretation of Perks and Thomson's assertion in *The Oral History Reader* that "memories are living histories" (1). Such an approach can be read fruitfully against *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks,* where there is a clear divide between the doctors and scientists who were involved in the Lacks case, and the Lacks family, who feel exploited. Rather than highlight the fact that multiple relations with the past exist, Skloot instead filters these different relations through her own experience. One example of this is how Skloot takes Henrietta's daughter Deborah to a laboratory to see firsthand how her mother's cells were helping science. Deborah responds by "putting her arm around her" and exclaiming: "Girl, you just witnessed a miracle" (305). The implied self-congratulatory context of the scene detracts from what might have been a meditation on a daughter and her grieving process, rather than the cleverness of a well-connected journalist to manipulate her cast of characters into a set of stereotypes. Stereotyping is prevalent throughout the text and serves as a reminder to creative nonfiction writers to avoid, or at least acknowledge, the biographer's propensity to do this. One example of this is the emphasis on how scary Skloot finds her journey into the poor, predominantly African-American neighbourhoods. This receives an unnecessary amount of attention and casts racial shadows between the author and her subjects, leaving the reader questioning just how accurate her representations might be. This evaluation may seem unfair in view of earlier labelling of Garner's use of visual imagery as "transparency", but the point is that

this narrative technique can overpower its subject, even when this is not the intention. An example of the subtlety required to narrate a history with complicated elements is when Skloot meets Lawrence Lacks, Henrietta's son, and transcribes their interaction verbatim. "Well hello there, Miss Rebecca," he said, giving me a once over. "You wanna taste the meat I cooked?" (183). Although this interaction is faithfully reproduced, the selection of this dialogue for inclusion in the narrative does little to drive the narrative forward, making the reader question the purpose of its inclusion. Skloot's filtering of the experience of others through herself is also hinted at in the superficial descriptions she gives these key characters in the narrative. Skloot describes Lawrence Lacks only physically, stating he has "smooth hazelnut brown skin and youthful brown eyes" (183).

What the questions of point of view and narrative bias imply is the need for a widening of the epistemological debate about how we write about the past. Hadfield (236) questions whether narratives based on memories like *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* are not just another form of historical knowledge that need to be analysed like other forms. If it is decided they are, then Skloot's text demonstrates the need to expand the discussion to include issues of empathy and the "risk of privileging certain forms of narratives based on the knowledge of insiders" (236). A textual analysis, particularly of the treatment of class and race, highlights a potential mistitling of her book if the work is to be classified as biographical. The treatment of the Lacks family by Skloot may be interpreted to imply it was their race that led the doctors to not consult the family about using the HeLa cells for research. This is not explicitly stated in the text, but the narrative does imply it in a roundabout way by electing to deny the obvious cause of Henrietta's family's complaint, that a lack of overall lack of regulation in the healthcare industry in the mid-twentieth century led to deficient consent procedures between patients and doctors.

Through her narrative choices, Skloot highlights race as a central theme, and this decision, combined with her choice to embellish the truth with artistic details she couldn't possibly have known, is distracting and casts doubt on the credibility of the text.

Skloot's obvious opinion penetrates the text as does Garner's in *Joe Cinque's Consolation*, but Skloot's self-insertion into the text makes it more about her, and this changes the focus of the narrative. Perhaps this is Skloot's way of participating in the "complex textualised universe in which literature participates in historical processes and in the political management of reality" that Howard (28) speaks of. Luce's (20) idea that creative choices can be a response to peer or familial pressures could throw some light on why Skloot chose this embedded form of autodiegeticity.

Skloot and Garner each employed different strategies for dealing with a dearth of evidence and challenging subjects in biography. For some writers, as we have seen, this involves completely

removing themselves from the narrative, and for others it means unabashed embeddedness within it. None of the writers examined so far faced a shortage of evidence or corroboration, and each chose to engage with their evidence in different ways. Where there were multiple versions of the past, each writer overcame this challenge by navigating within the boundaries of history, creative writing and journalism.

Nonlinear choices

As discussed earlier, when writing and researching about the life of a person, it is the author's prerogative to decide which part of that life he or she will focus on. It is perhaps the most exciting opportunity for biographers, and one that can reveal rich, unexpected outcomes.

Some writers chose to deal with the lack of evidence by pegging writing about to the past to a different model. Brian Castro's *Shanghai Dancing* is one such example of a different form of biographical fiction that is balanced on the protagonist's expectation to explore the past, in this case of a family over the course of several generations. The strength of this work lies in its resistance to the rules of the biography as a linear, chronological story. Castro opts for a dense, lyrical prose to explore themes of language, identity and disorientation. His word plays are intense and frequent and the use of neologisms is impressive but perplexing. For example, the main character went dancing:

> … and heard the sound of a ship sheering towards its submarine berth, to where there would be no more of your line, neither word, nor will, and with the stern rearing and bow plunging, let it all close above your head again. (447)

In *Shanghai Dancing*, this meandering memory-based narrative feels like an experiment in narrative, and if it is an attempt to comment on the universality of human experience by thrusting the protagonist into a multitude of cultures and times, the point is never quite made. What the text shows is the ability of art to evoke both past and present simultaneously (Hawkes 11). It confirms Russian literary theorist Viktor Shklovsky's argument in *Art as Technique*, that the purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known (12). *Shanghai Dancing* uses fiction to express a form of meaning making with the past. Castro uses the archival facts about his family's past to signpost a creative experimentation. This is not to say he removes his text from the boundaries of followable narrative entirely. The discourse between the narrator and his paramour Carmen, and the later parts of *Shanghai* that are set in Sydney, and parts of the author's living memory, are linear in composition, but the reliance on unconventional sentence structures and repetition of symbols, such as cameras' shutter speed (27), and exposures being too slow (13), in the first part of the narrative, may be too unconventional for the reader to persevere

with reading.

While *Shanghai* demonstrates the flexibility of the creative nonfiction format, it also shows that creative and nonfiction components do not have to be equally weighted within a text to inspire a stimulating narrative, and when evidence is limited, fiction's form is elastic and may be manipulated. Considering the creative choices of Castro in contrast to the dual nonfiction/fiction format of *Moses in Egypt* and the process of creating *informed narration*, it is interesting to consider the literary outcomes possible when the aesthetic experience is valued more than what the evidence archive reveals.

Alternatives

Given that one of the key motivating factors in this project is to examine strategies that might be re-imagined or adopted to best tell stories like the life of Anthony Gruner, where a lack of evidence and corroboration are key considerations, point of view is one of the key strategies available. When there is nobody to confirm a hunch, a theory or a lead, and no tangible forms of corroboration to rely upon, the creative choices made around form are key to a successful narrative. How point of view is treated when there is little evidence to go on, or when there is a surfeit of evidence, are both useful considerations. Does a fruitless search of digital and physical archives change the way we express our point of view as writers in a text? The short answer is yes.

Poetry is not commonly referred to as "fiction" unless it is explicitly a novel in verse (Dorothy Porter's *The Monkey's Mask* is one such example) but Jordie Albiston's poetic work *The Hanging of Jean Lee* (1998) reveals a unique strategy for dealing with "moth" subjects that is worthy of exploration. Albiston focuses on the life of the last woman executed by hanging in Australia in 1951. Little archival evidence about Lee exists, other than of her crimes and death. Albiston's answer to a limited archive is to skew the weighting of evidence, analysis and imagination towards imagination, which she does using creative devices. Just as Skloot called attention to her whiteness/sense of disorientation within the black community, Albiston attempts to comment on the socio-cultural dynamics of Australia at the time. The creative strategies Albiston uses in *Jean Lee* is useful to reflect on considering how to structure the dramatic voice of characters in *Moses in Egypt.*

Albiston's decision to tell Lee's story in poetic format offers the reader vignettes of insight into the life, and is an interesting solution to the dilemma of writing about someone who, apart than her crime, was not known to the writer except for a few details. Hudgins (67) explains Albiston's choice of poetry as a form where "one detail or two must do the work of many," so the detail always leans more toward symbolism than the same information would do in prose. This is one

solution to the lack of a substantial archive, to pair it with a form that does not demand the same depth as others.

In the poem ‘A Chatswood Chapter’ we see Albiston draw on the known facts and convert them, through a series of creative insights into Lee’s life. Lee lived in Archer Street in Chatswood as a child, and drawing on maps of the time could speculate there would have been a view of the Sydney Harbour Bridge under construction.

> retraces her steps to the Archer
> Street house she recently left for
> a space in her head where two
> arms will meet and a sky full of
> future before her wandering feet (11).

Albiston uses this information to create an imagining of how this view might have been perceived by Lee (“where two arms will meet”) and as a child where this image becomes a space where she daydreaming about (“sky full of future before her wandering feet”) her life ahead.

The limited nature of biographical information on Lee is a tangled blessing, despite the clever solutions the poetic form provides. Albiston still needs to make decisions about the evidence, however limited, and from these decisions she must decide how to focalise the narrative. One example of the weakness in this form is the faith Albiston must have in the premise that while we all "intuit differently" (Hudgins 67), we do not do so wildly differently. Nelson (4) states: “any engagement with the archive is an engagement that necessarily extends well beyond the epistemic." Albiston’s text highlights the need to think more philosophically about the idea of the historian or writer’s relationship to the histories they tell. An example of this consciousness of relationship is found in the excerpt above. The transmission of this evidence to the poetic is through the conduit of the writer's intuition. There is no corroboration possible, so in its place this is what emerges to create confidence in the writer's pen.

Courtney Collins' work *The Burial* is an example of an examination of texts where little archival corroboration could be carried out. It is the story of a female Australian bushranger told though the "voice" of her dead child. Collins' text formulates a rich narrative of rustler, lawmen and vagabonds at the expense of conventional punctuation, using italics in place of quote marks. It takes Castro’s nonlinear solution to the anxiety of a thin archive to another level. As with Albiston’s and Castro’s narratives, little documented evidence survives of the life of the subject, Elizabeth Jessie Hickman. Hickman was born in 1890, gave birth to a child who died soon after, and went bush around the age

of 30 after killing her third husband. The decision to narrate the story through the voice of this child gives a lucid quality to the discourse. The juxtaposition of the perceived hardness of the rural criminal Hickman as portrayed through bushranger folklore against the innocent orations of a child offers an alternative view of the protagonist. This implied honesty creates a sense of trust with the readers. It is interesting to compare the child narrator of *The Burial* with Hannah Kent's condemned woman narrator in *Burial Rites* (2013); once a sense of a character having nothing to lose is established, the credibility of their discourse quickly follows. In, 1830, the last instance of capital punishment in Iceland occurred when Friðrik Sigurðsson and Agnes Magnúsdóttir were executed in Iceland for the murder of two men. A third person was also convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment. *Burial Rites* traces Agnes' final months from her initial imprisonment to her relocation to an isolated farmhouse, where she spent her last days living with a local family. Her story is told through a series of inner monologues, "letters" from officials about her pending execution, a first person narrative, and a third person subjective narrative.

The narrative is a work of fiction, as little was known about Agnes except her name, crime and date of death. Kent said in interviews about her text that through the course of her research into Agnes she discovered religious records which indicated she was literate, and from this snippet of information Kent chose to build her character as an intelligent and strong willed woman. Kent's narrative intention is not to seek sympathy for her protagonist but to offer a more empathetic viewpoint of the condemned woman, and an attempt to understand the circumstances that might have led to her conviction in a double murder. The framing of the biography around an act of passion that is commuted to a death sentence nudges the limits of what is believable in creative nonfiction, but as Kent had limited hard evidence to base the narrative upon, her decision to import a classic master plot borrowed from fictional writing makes sense.

Piecing it together: Toward *Moses in Egypt*

The subject matter of Ali Alizadeh's *Iran: My Grandfather* is inherently different to the narratives discussed so far, but his treatment of his grandfather's life is a useful example of the creative choices of writers of history around challenging topics, or when there is little evidence to create a literary resolution. *Iran* is similar to Janet Malcolm's *Two Lives* in that both seek to explore the under-explored elements of an individual's history. It also speaks to the challenges experienced by Albiston, Castro, Collins and Kent, in that the archive is limited to shreds of information. Alizadeh explains the dilemma aptly: "All I have are the facts of Salman's life and his vicissitudes" (5). The facts, he says are never enough.

Iran: My Grandfather is a study in the limits of what may be revealed by research into a person's

sexual, religious or political identity within a social context where the broader subject is already widely studied. There are ways of getting around this; one of them is to cross-pollinate a personal narrative with a state narrative. Alizadeh deals with a period of history as tumultuous as Malcolm's World War II, but he is directly related to his subject. The text is presented in parts in the first person, but overwhelmingly in the third person. From the title of his work to the depths of the narrative, Alizadeh does not separate the individual identity and state identity; to him they are entwined. The text narrates the life of a man who lived through the rise and fall of revolution and saw Islamic fundamentalism first hand, and it spans from Alizadeh's grandfather's birth in 1905 to his death in the 1970s. Against a volatile backdrop, Alizadeh uses characterisation to enable his protagonist to transcend from being merely a character in the biography to a participant as part of a nation undergoing a period of chance. This is expressed through the imagined dialogue in the text, one example, "Salman grins. He rubs his unkempt beard, opens the collection of mystical lyrics and asks the nameless American, 'You want me to help you plan a coup d'état, is that it?'" (127). This is one way of dealing with a story set in an difficult environment by uniting personality with his Iranian protagonist, and writing an "everyman" biography. It also highlights the disadvantage of not being able to offer a nonfiction account of an individual's life.

Iran is a creative solution and demonstrates the flexibility of creative nonfiction where little evidence of a historical person's inner life exists. Garner, Skloot, and Capote illustrate the points of view possible through selection of narrative voice. Albiston, Kent, Collins, and Castro show that a dearth of information is no barrier to creation. Yet with each of these approaches, there is a cost. The selection of a first person, or autodiegetic narrator, sacrifices the creative possibilities of the invented protagonist or third person narrator. The non-linear narrative is one solution to a patchy archive, yet also has implications for authenticity and credibility. In various ways, the creative choices of all these texts have informed the creation of the informed narration technique used in *Moses in Egypt* that will be explored in the next chapter.

5. Informed Narration in Practice: Moses in Egypt

As we have seen, there are many ways to structure a narrative about someone who lived in the past when facts are scarce. This is also true when the subject matter is sensitive or difficult; for example, suicide in *Companion to an Untold Story*, and sexuality in *The Master*. There are creative and technical strategies for writing about aspects of a person's life when evidence does not exist to guide us about them, but as we have seen there is no single template that fits all scenarios. There is no all-encompassing skeleton to add "flesh" (*Searching for* 154) to, as Kate Grenville puts it. The reason for this is that there are always different reasons for writing, and each writer, whether journalist, historian or novelist, has cause to do it one way or another. Historians like Inga Clendinnen and Sheila Collingwood-Whittick approach history writing as academics, aware of the constructs of language as tools to help them to present artefacts, but committed only to apply these tools in conventional ways. In contrast, fellow historian Manning Clark employed creative devices to communicate his research into the history of Australia, because he believed it made the narrative more engaging. Creative writers like Rebecca Skloot and Helen Garner engaged in years-long investigative techniques akin to the most thorough investigations of journalists, to produce works of creative non-fiction that they hoped would do more than just tell a good story. Hannah Kent and Courtney Collins took the fragments of evidence on their subject and launched headfirst into an imagined narrative. Janet Malcolm and Colm Tóibín applied a novelist's touch to create an alternative narrative about two already famous people by focusing on elements about their lives that were under-reported in existing literature. Every writer chooses to write about the past differently.

In my project, I drew inspiration and guidance from three writer groups most concerned with writing about the past – journalists, historians and creative writers –and considered how each approached the problem of a paucity of evidence. From here I borrowed and transposed techniques that I felt worked best to create a process suitable for writing about a person who existed in history at one time but left few traces.

Evidence, Analysis, Imagination

The process of creating what I call *informed narration* is derived by engaging in a three-step system comprising evidence, analysis and imagination. Each step must be taken in sequence. It is not possible under this system to start by creating a plot based in fiction without first analysing the evidence available. By following a systematic process, I sought to avoid the temptation of creating the world of fiction before I had the facts. My concern stemmed from the demonstrated tendency of writers to disregard evidence that did not fit in with the narrative they had pre-created in their

minds, or in *The Secret River's* case, to create it in spite of the evidence collated.

I also sought to understand what evidence was available on my subject before deciding on how best to analyse it, because I wanted the journalistic techniques I used to investigate the evidence to be as fruitful as possible. This was also the strategy employed by Anna Funder in *Stasiland.* Funder conducted archival research about the former socialist state of East Germany first, *then* sought out people who experienced it, to interview them.

Once research has been conducted and the journalistic tactics worked through, only then can the writer's imagination be called upon. This ordering of strategy was informed by the textual outcomes I witnessed in Garner's work where her imaginings had unintended consequences for some of her characters, essentially altering the real life story to some extent. It was also informed by the unclearness Grenville experienced in her creative journey up until the moment she decided to cast off the evidence and analysis about her ancestor and use both as inspiration only for her imaginings. Up until this point, the narrative is a work of creative non-fiction and is free from speculation. Informed narration must treat the evidence at hand with integrity, but this does not restrict the writer to omitting their point of view from the text. One could argue this is impossible to achieve anyway, but if the work of fiction is to be truly *informed* by the evidence and what can be proactively discovered through asking questions, the viewpoint must align with the facts at hand. That is to say, the imagined dialogue in the text must have some basis in fact.

The homodiegetic narrative technique used by Funder in *Stasiland* was also a useful consideration in mapping out the strategy for informed narration. By voicing the story, she made the reader aware of her position in this work of non-fiction. Susan Orlean, with much less at stake than the socio-political reputation of a people, also adopted a homodiegetic narrator, but unlike Funder, layered her narrative with fictional devices. Orlean's mastery of analogies in *The Orchid Thief* creates a sense of theatre for the otherwise dull subject. How Orlean combined fiction techniques in a nonfiction form to enhance the evidence at hand without denigrating its worth offered a guideline for my task of creating the three-step process. In the *Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks,* Rebecca Skloot's role as both narrator and protagonist demonstrates the powerful messages possible as well as the pitfalls when the writer takes a role in the narrative. Helen Garner also showed this in *Joe Cinque's Consolidation*. The level of writerly transparency of these writers, at least where narrative voice was concerned, is typical of the non-fiction narratives examined in this thesis where the subject is challenging. *In Cold Blood* is the exception to this rule, with its heterodiegetic narrator. This text, despite not aligning with many of the "true crime" narratives of its literary descendants in later years, inspired my decision to voice the narrative in two separate parts, with myself as the

narrator/protagonist in the non-fiction components, and through a polyvocal strategy in the fiction components. By structuring the narrative this way, I sought to clearly show the reader what is nonfiction and what is fiction — a line, one could argue, that Truman Capote did not make so clear.

The aim of my thesis is to create a process that enables the lives of people who didn't leave a lot of evidence behind to be written about. I sought to do this in a way that retains the integrity of the evidence available and customises a resolution for the gaps that are left by using literary devices. By employing a hierarchical sequence of acts to be completed in the writerly process, I sought to underscore the importance of evidence in informed narration, prioritising this as the first step. By analysing the evidence as the second step in the process, I aimed to extract as much detail and insight from it as possible, using journalistic techniques to assist me. The third and final step of the process is using my imagination and fictitious devices to fill the gaps left after completing steps one and two. Jordie Albiston in *The Hanging of Jean Lee* proved it possible to write a rich, meaningful life story about a subject with only the tiniest cache of evidence to work with, and it was my intention to do the same with the life of Anthony Gruner. In what follows, the three-step system of evidence, analysis and imagination is illustrated with examples from *Moses in Egypt.*

Case Study 1: The Suicide Note

Evidence

The note (Fig. 5.1) was found on the body of Anthony Gruner. It was the sworn testimony of police officer, Constable Alfred Cartledge, who was first on the scene at Gruner's house after his body was discovered, that this note was in Gruner's left trouser pocket. The razor blade used to cut Gruner's throat was found in Gruner's right hand, according to Cartledge's testimony (Fig. 5.2). Gruner's wife Elizabeth identified the writing on the note as her husband's, and told the coroner her husband had been depressed (Fig. 5.3). After considering the testimony of Cartledge and the deceased's wife Elizabeth, the coroner William Crambe declared the death an act of suicide whilst of unsound mind.

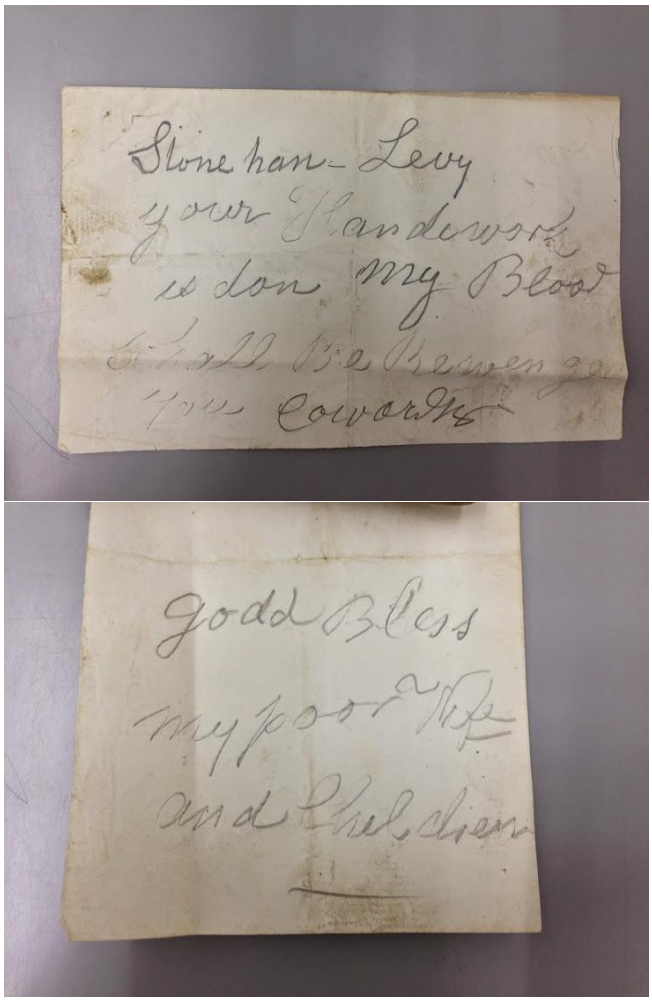
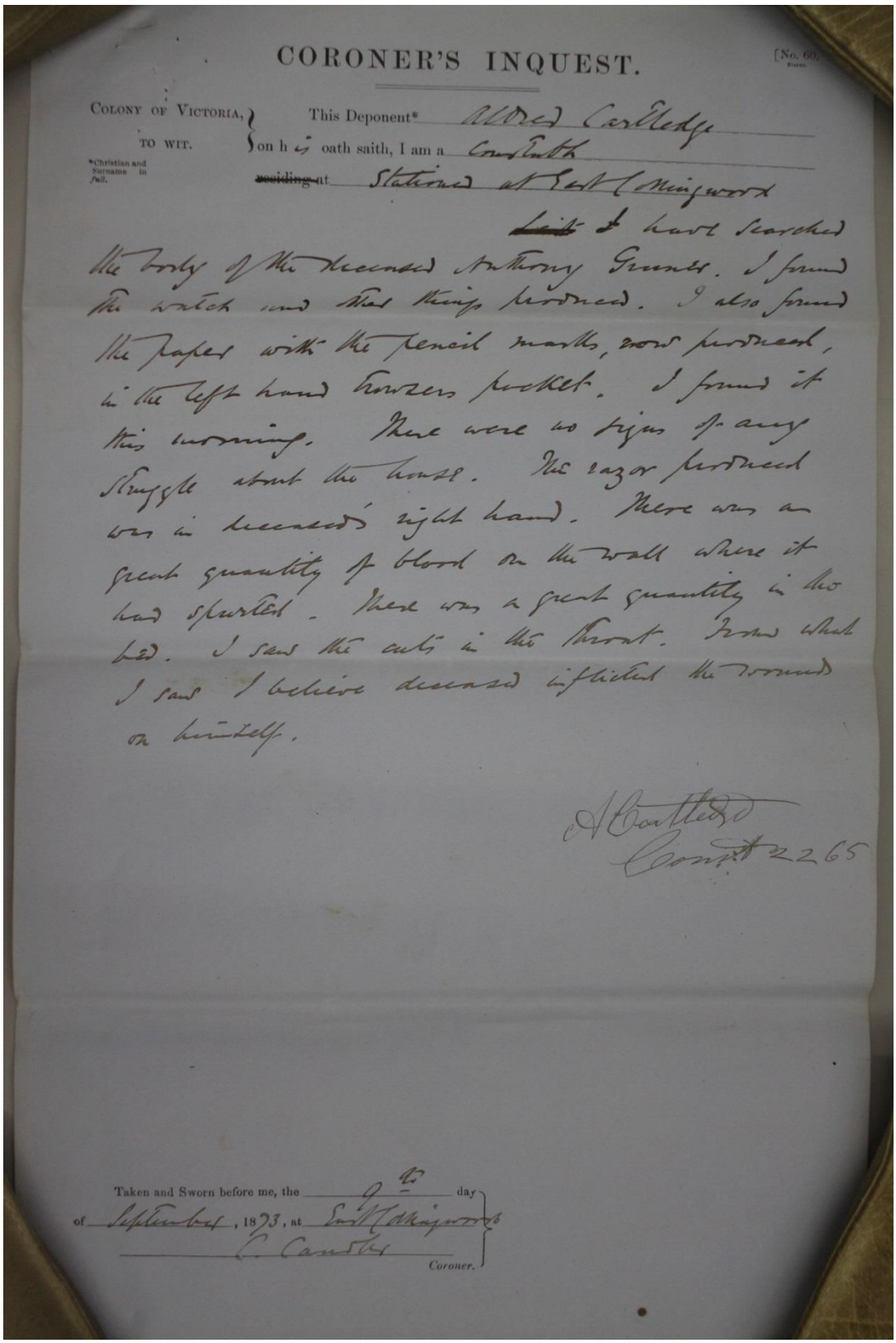


Fig. 5.1 The Suicide Note. Source: Public Records Office of Victoria



CORONER'S INQUEST.

[No. 60.

COLONY OF VICTORIA, TO WIT.

This Deponent* Alfred Cartledge on his oath saith, I am a Constable ~~residing~~ at Stationed at East Melbourne

~~Lieut~~ I have searched the body of the deceased Anthony Gruner. I found the watch and other things produced. I also found the paper with the pencil marks, now produced, in the left hand trousers pocket. I found it this morning. There were no signs of any struggle about the house. The razor produced was in deceased's right hand. There was a great quantity of blood on the wall where it had spurted. There was a great quantity in the bed. I saw the cuts in the throat. From what I saw I believe deceased inflicted the wounds on himself.

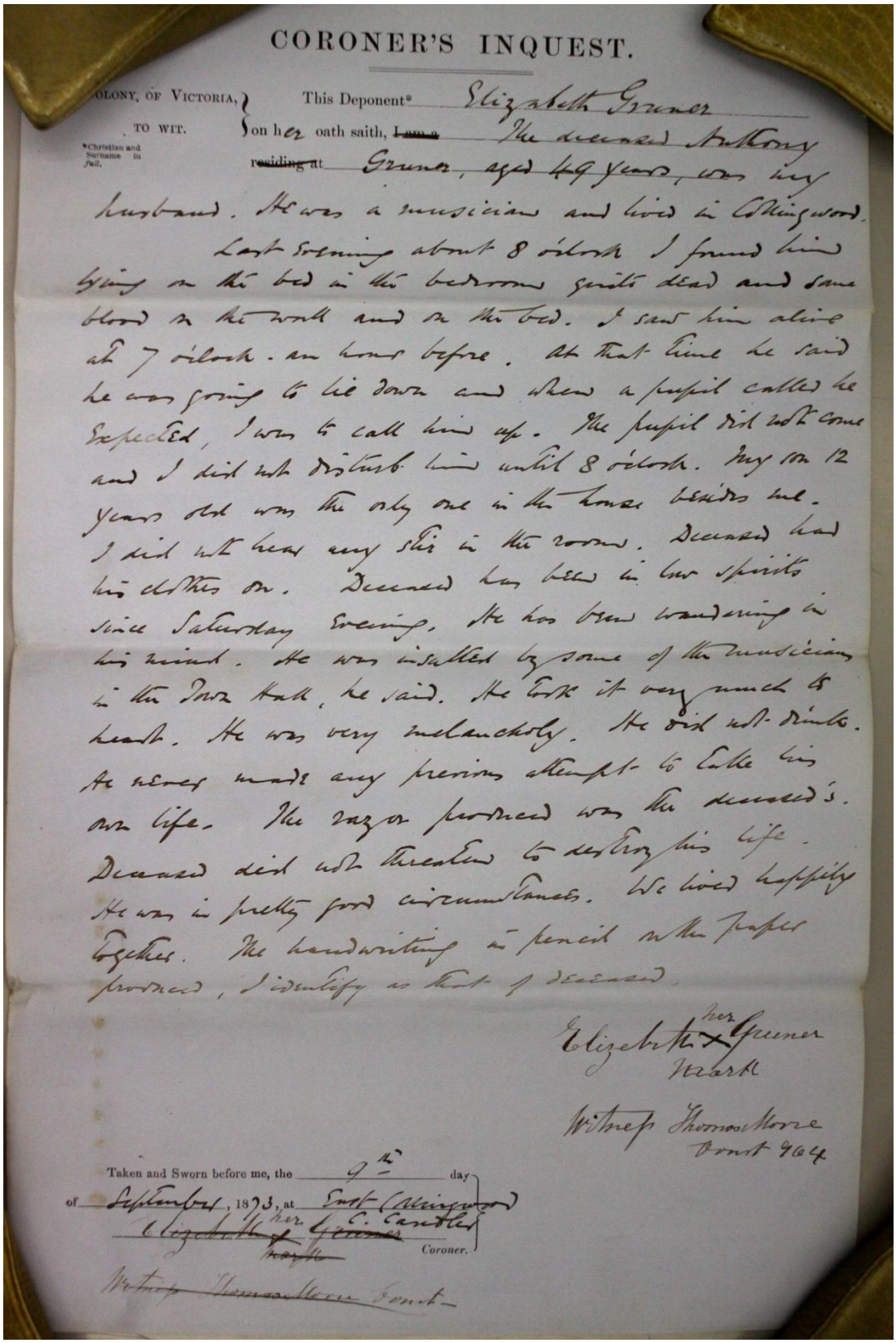
A Cartledge
Constable 2265

*Christian and Surname in full.

Taken and Sworn before me, the 9th day of September, 1873, at East Melbourne

C. Carter
Coroner.

Fig 5.2. Testimony of Alfred Cartledge at the Gruner coronial inquest. Source: Public Records Office of Victoria



CORONER'S INQUEST.

COLONY, OF VICTORIA, TO WIT. This Deponent* Elizabeth Gruner on her oath saith, ~~I am a~~ residing at

*Christian and Surname in full.

The deceased Anthony Gruner, aged 49 years, was my husband. He was a musician and lived in Collingwood.

Last Evening about 8 o'clock I found him lying on the bed in the bedroom quite dead and some blood on the wall and on the bed. I saw him alive at 7 o'clock. an hour before. At that time he said he was going to lie down and when a pupil called he expected, I was to call him up. The pupil did not come and I did not disturb him until 8 o'clock. My son 12 years old was the only one in the house besides me. I did not hear any shot in the room. Deceased had his clothes on. Deceased has been in low spirits since Saturday Evening. He has been wandering in his mind. He was insulted by some of the musicians in the Town Hall, he said. He took it very much to heart. He was very melancholy. He did not drink. He never made any previous attempt to take his own life. The razor produced was the deceased's. Deceased did not threaten to destroy his life. He was in pretty good circumstances. We lived happily together. The handwriting in pencil on the paper produced, I identify as that of deceased.

Elizabeth her X mark Gruner

Witness Thomas Morse Constt 964

Taken and Sworn before me, the 9th day of September, 1873, at East Collingwood

Elizabeth her X mark Gruner

C. Cantlen Coroner.

Witness Thomas Morse Constt

Fig. 5.3. Testimony of Elizabeth Gruner at the Gruner coronial inquest. Source: Public Records Office of Victoria

Analysis

I needed to know if it was realistic to conclude that a man could cut his own head off with a cutthroat razor. I also needed to know if Anthony Gruner wrote the note. The note found on the body of Gruner was determined to be his by a court investigating his death in 1873, because: a) it was found on his body; and b) Elizabeth identified the handwriting (and the razor) as her husband's. This testimony was not corroborated by anyone else at the inquest. I began analysis of the first question, the probability of someone using this method to die, by conducting a literature review of cases of suicide by cutthroat in the nineteenth century. This inquiry revealed that this method of ending one's life was in fact common during this time in history, due to the availability of the implement used. Thomas et al's investigation published in *Journal of Affective Disorders* was the closest data to my period in history of interest (the 1870s). Their study, "Changes in Commonly Used Methods of Suicide in England and Wales from 1901–1907 to 2001–2007" revealed that not only was cutting ones throat as a means of ending one's life common around the time Gruner lived, it was a method unique to the time (237), with a substantial drop off of deaths by weapons and implements (the category that includes razors) recorded by the year 2007.

Interestingly, the number of men and women killing themselves with a cut throat razor may have steeply declined in England and Wales in recent years; however in other parts of the world I discovered it was still a relatively popular method of harm. Gilyoma et al's investigation into cutthroat injuries at a university teaching hospital in Northwestern Tanzania is a retrospective study of the treatment of the 98 patients who presented with the injury over a three-year period. This study was published in 2014 in *BMC Emergency Medicine* and found homicide was the most common reason for the injury with 55.1% of cases falling under this category, followed by suicide attempts at 34.7%. What the Tanzanian study highlighted was the correlation between being poor and from a rural area with this type of injury. 79.6% of patients were unemployed and most of them came from farming areas (65.3%). This analysis was particularly useful as thinking about how the social and political profile of the Eastern African nation of Tanzania, a third world country of today could conceivably be some sort of conduit to understanding Colonial Australia of 150 years ago. In the 1870s most of Australia was farmland and the indictors of socioeconomic development was still being defined. This certainly fit the profile of an environment that might agitate the mental state of a vulnerable person, but I was unconvinced that even if he did live in a place that had only been established twenty or so years before his arrival, if Gruner would have reacted this way.

I knew from examining the Danish State Archives that Anthony Gruner came from a middle-class family. From Elizabeth Gruner's testimony (Fig. 5.3) I also knew the Gruner family was in "pretty

good circumstances." These two facts did not necessarily align with the stereotype of the struggling new immigrant, at least not on the surface. What was more relatable from the African study was that most of the cases presented where a cut throat razor was used involved the making of one or two “hesitation” marks on the neck before going through with the act. This was consistent with the two superficial wounds reported by the medical practitioner who examined Gruner and reported at the inquest into his death. A wider literature review of the scholarship on this type of injury revealed only one documented case of a suicide by razor occurring without these marks.

Throughout the course of my analysis of the medical literature of the time I found myself troubled by the way the injury was described in publications written by doctors, compared to how it was recorded in Gruner’s case. In one article, “Case of Attempted Suicide by Cutting the Throat; Asphyxial Attack; Recovery; Remarks” written by George Bland for *The Lancet*, one man who was found with his throat cut so severely “the edges … were much retracted, and would have easily permitted the passage of a good-sized plum” (863). This was nowhere close to the description the attending police officer, or the coroner had given about Gruner’s injury. Another article in *The British Medical Journal*, “An Unusual Case of Suicide by Cut-Throat” described the wound as being large enough to accommodate a “tennis ball” (115). Accounting for the expected desensitised manner of writing about injury by a medical professional, at a glance it felt like I was considering two different injuries, especially when the subject of *The Lancet* article went on to make a full recovery.

I now knew it was possible, and not altogether unheard of, for a man in the 1800s to end his life with a cutthroat razor, but I decided to check what I had found out through examining literature on the topic with the medical profession of today. I conducted interviews (off the record) with emergency room physicians in a Melbourne hospital to ascertain the likelihood of someone dying from this method. All of the doctors I interviewed conceded this method was a highly effective way of ending one’s life, but none had seen, treated or heard of a case like Anthony Gruner’s in modern times.

Convinced that it was possible that Gruner had intended to end his life with the razor, based on what analysis I could conduct of the literature available on the topic, and considering the language used in the primary sources, I then switched my attention to the suicide note.

I began this analysis by conducting a search of the Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages registry to find the clearest handwriting specimen for Gruner. This was his signature on his 1863 marriage certificate (Fig. 5.4) to Elizabeth Homan (nee Brooker). I wanted to compare the writing in the note to a sample of Gruner’s made when he was not (presumably) about to end his own life (see Fig 5.1).

Fig. 5.4 – Anthony Gruner handwriting specimen, 1863. Source: Victoria Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

I concluded, examining each sample side by side, that Gruner could have written the note. I sent both handwriting samples to an expert in the field, but the amount of duress and distress one might imagine would be needed to write a suicide note made an absolute confirmation of its origin impossible, especially since I had such a dearth of handwriting samples.

Unable to ascertain that Gruner was the author of the note, I then turned my analysis to the contents of the testimony of Alfred Cartledge, the police officer who was first on the scene. Cartledge testified he found the suicide note in “Gruner’s left hand trouser pocket” (Fig. 5.2) and the razor in the deceased’s right hand. Cartledge also deposed his evaluation that Gruner had committed the act on himself.

I then moved onto the testimony of Elizabeth Gruner (Fig. 5.3) who was the source of verifying the handwriting on the note as her husband’s. She also introduced the idea that Gruner had been insulted a few days prior as he performed at the Melbourne Town Hall by two other musicians; however she did not name these people in her statement. She does, however state that the interaction had caused Gruner to be “wandering of mind”. I noticed Elizabeth had not signed her name against her testimony, instead using an X mark, a strategy typically engaged by the illiterate. The fact that she was able to recognise her husband’s handwriting, yet not write her own name seemed odd. I crosschecked other official documents and found Elizabeth had signed her name in all of them except for one other. I also noted that the testimony of Cartledge and Elizabeth appeared to have been transcribed by the same police officer. I did think it feasible if the officer taking down the statement did not know Elizabeth personally he may have assumed she could not read or write and templated the document accordingly. In addition to Elizabeth's comments about her late-husband's low state of esteem, she also states that the only other person home at the time of the incident was her twelve year old son. An examination of the records held by Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages reveals Charles Turner Homan (born 1862) as the likely child this statement refers to.

I considered the coroner's comments about the physical state of Gruner at the time of his

examination, where the dead man's body was described as having a "good deposits of fat throughout". I needed to find a way to get an idea about the physical state of Charles Homan and Elizabeth - without having access to the same detailed information as I had about Gruner. I had discovered the woman in the photograph I had of "Elizabeth" was not Mrs. Gruner, so by thinking laterally, I decided to search service records for the Australian Armed Services to see if any of the Gruner children had enlisted. I knew height and weight was recorded on application to the armed forces and luckily was able to ascertain that three Gruner men had enlisted and all of them were significantly small adults, not weighing more than 105 pounds or taller than five feet four inches. I considered whether a small adult or small pre-teen would have had the physical strength to contribute to Gruner's injuries and decided it was unlikely.

I then considered the wording of the suicide note. It blamed two people (Stoneham and Levy); it specially references death, “My blood...,” and it contains a message for those Gruner loved: his wife and children. Research led by John Pestain at the Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center focused on annotating the contents of more than 1,300 suicide notes written between 1950 and 2012 under strict scientific criteria. This corpus of data revealed that more than half the notes mentioned hopelessness (609 occurrences), but anger (183 occurrences) was a much less described emotion in notes (5). According to this study, this made Gruner's finger pointing at Stoneham and Levy less-typical. Most people seemed to reserve their notes for giving instructions or expressing malaise. It was also quite uncommon for a note to be left at all, at least according to modern day analysis of the act of suicide. I discovered that Haines et al (2011) in “The Characteristics of Those Who Do and Do Not Leave Suicide Notes: Is the Method of Residuals Valid?” estimated that only 33% of suicides left a note. This Australian-based study, interestingly concluded that it might not be possible to learn about suicide or what drives one to it by studying the suicide notes alone.

Finally, I considered the names listed in the suicide note, specifically Stoneham and Levy. I could find nothing about either man that would lend itself to driving a man to kill himself. Both men were musicians. Both had nothing that could be regarded as sinister in their past except entrepreneurial spirit. This was where the analysis of the evidence concluded in this case study, as I had reached the boundary of what could be established through evidence and analysis only.

Imagination

I knew through following the process of creating informed narration that it was feasible that Gruner chose to end his life with a cutthroat razor, but I could not verify he wrote the suicide note found on his body. I also knew that the note, although it contained powerful imagery and was possibly the only physical item belonging to my ancestor I had to work with, was ultimate limited in what it

could tell me. The note had expressed a combination of hopelessness and anger along with love for family. I had only Elizabeth's testimony that the note was written by Gruner's hand and my own ability to compare a specimen of his handwriting against the note. I could also only speculate as to why Elizabeth did not sign her name on the police statement. Perhaps she was too distraught to sign? Had she told the story to a family member and they recounted it to the officer? There was also the unclearness surrounding the "two musicians" who had insulted Gruner the Saturday before his death. Elizabeth had not named them, yet in Gruner's suicide note two musicians named Stoneham and Levy are blamed. Could these people be one and the same? I decided to focus on the placement of the razor blade and suicide note, two facts I knew from the inquest (Fig. 5.2), to enable the reader to reimagine the scene and draw their own conclusion. The following extract is taken from *Moses in Egypt* (45):

> Later that night my husband David and I sat down to eat at the kitchen counter. There was still something I couldn't quite work out, that was irritating me about the way Anthony Gruner died. David leaned across the table and uncorked the bottle of wine he'd picked up on the way home.
>
> He grabbed the bottle with his left hand, and pulled at the cork with his right.
>
> "Why did you do that?" I asked.
>
> "Huh?" he responded, not looking at me.
>
> "You picked up the bottle with your left hand," I said.
>
> "Well, yes I'm right handed – I hold the bottle in left hand because I'm going to pull the cork with my strongest hand." He considered me with a puzzled smile.
>
> I tell him the coronial inquest into the death of Anthony Gruner revealed the razor was found in his right hand.
>
> "So he was right handed then, so what?" David asked.
>
> "The suicide note was found in his left pocket."
>
> My husband raised a brow, indicating he didn't follow where I was going with this.
>
> "Pretend you are writing a note, right now – here. Now take that note and put it into whatever pocket feels most comfortable," I instructed. He put his hand in his right pocket.
>
> "Maybe he was standing when he wrote it, that doesn't prove anything," he countered.

> “Well,” I continued, “how hard is it to put that note in your left pocket?”
>
> He could barely reach it, even with an imaginary note.

In this passage, it is important to note I do not mention any of the other factors that inspired my doubt in whether or not Anthony Gruner was the author of the note and did in fact kill himself with a razor. I use the first person, non-fiction part of the narrative to role-play the details provided about the physical location of the note in the coroner's report. I could have opted to also write into this section a discussion about my concerns with the lack of a signature on Elizabeth’s deposition, the whereabouts of her son at the time of Gruner's death or the fact that despite Gruner naming two men as the reason for his demise, there appeared to be little investigation into either Stoneham or Levy after the fact. However, informed narration requires me to treat the evidence I do have with integrity, and this rules out fictional speculation within the nonfiction component of the text. It is possible to explore these irritations with the evidence born from my analysis in the fiction section, so this is what I did.

The following extract (139) from Moses in Egypt is an example of the informed fiction created as a result of the evidence and analysis of evidence. In this scene, Stoneham and Levy, the two men named in the suicide note, confront the protagonist Gruner and this is how he responds physically to their attack. I wrote this interaction to take place shortly before Gruner is found dead as a way of exploring his mental state at the time, using the evidence (the note) I had to work with.

> Gruner stood before them, frozen, his face ashen, his eyes clouded with tears. Levy could see his bottom lip shaking. He bit down hard to stop it from moving.
>
> With his head hung low, Gruner moved to return inside the cottage.
>
> “Gruner, remember what we said,” Levy hissed.
>
> “They will all know. They will all know.”

The sparse style of dialogue in this scene is a deliberate technique used to create a sense of context about what was written in the suicide note. Using the evidence and analysis I had on hand, I concluded that there was *some* reason Stoneham and Levy had been named in the suicide note, even if the reason was unclear, or if someone else had written the note. It was for this reason that I was guided using the outcomes of evidence analysis to create a fictional response to the gaps I could not fill in with fact. I decided to imagine the reason for Stoneham and Levy's inclusion was their blackmailing of Gruner. The reason I selected blackmail over another struggle, for example, an affair with Gruner's wife - was that there was nothing in the evidence to suggest Stoneham and

Levy were adulterers, even if the data I had on Elizabeth Gruner pointed to at least two illegitimate children born to men who were not her husband. One of these children was likely to have been present in the Gruner house the night the incident occurred (Charles Homan), although for a woman with many children it was not beyond the realms of possibility that at any one time she would have only some of her children under her roof. The other reason I leaned against infidelity being the primary motivating factor in Gruner's suicide note was his naming of his wife and children in the note. Had he been enraged with Elizabeth for being unfaithful to him, he probably would not have signed off by asking god to watch over her.

The usefulness of informed narration in the case of the suicide note lies within the flexibility of the system to write in either fiction or nonfiction. There were many things about the suicide note that I found perplexing, but I could not escape the fact this evidence once lay in the pocket of my deceased ancestor so I could not ignore it. Throughout the nonfiction component of *Moses in Egypt* I struggled with calling it a "suicide" note, as I was not entirely convinced Gruner had died at this own hand. The literature review of injuries of this nature assisted me in forming the clearest picture of what happened that night in September 1873 and this conceivably could have involved Gruner slitting his own throat. The literature review also enabled me to understand why certain elements are included in a suicide note and others are left out. The result of this systematic approach to this piece of evidence resulted in the plotline of a man being blackmailed and this driving him to harm himself. Also informing this plotline is the likelihood of Elizabeth or her young son Charles assisting or committing the crime against Gruner being slim due to the difference in physical sizes and the force required to inflict such an injury. The natural extension of fiction from what evidence and analysis cannot explain points to suicide motivated by the pressures of blackmail, although by subscribing to this resolution I also needed to express the loose ends that didn't neatly tie into this imagining somewhere in the text as well. This is important so the reader can consider my literary response to these questions using fiction, but clearly identify the other scenarios born of inconsistences and gaps and decide if they agree with my version. This would not be necessary if I was writing a work of pure fiction like Hannah Kent or Brian Matthews, but in this case it is necessary because I am attempting to write a nonfiction account of my research journey *and* my fictional imaginings created through using the three-step system of informed narration.

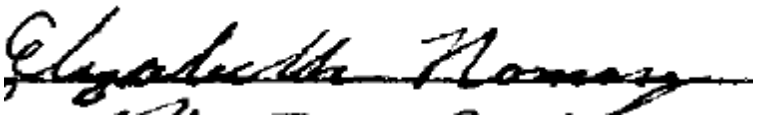
In the creative work I do not explore in detail my investigation into the physical stature of the key participants in the narrative. Instead I opted to use third person subjective narrative techniques to describe some characters (Elizabeth describes her son Charles, Charles Ziegler describes Gruner for example) in the fiction component of the text. This decision was guided by the strength of the

autodiegetic voice as a describer of others, something I observed in Rebecca Skloot's treatment of the Lacks family in *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* where I felt the descriptive language had the tendency to dominate the overall discourse. I also observed the infiltration of point of view of Helen Garner's work and to a lesser extent Janet Malcolm's in biographical writing where I was convinced after reading the way both writers described their protagonist, this was now the *only* way to think about them. In *Moses in Egypt* I faced a paucity of evidence and did not feel qualified to make such evaluations about the participants in the narrative, in the nonfiction component at least.

Case Study 2: The mental decline of Elizabeth

Evidence

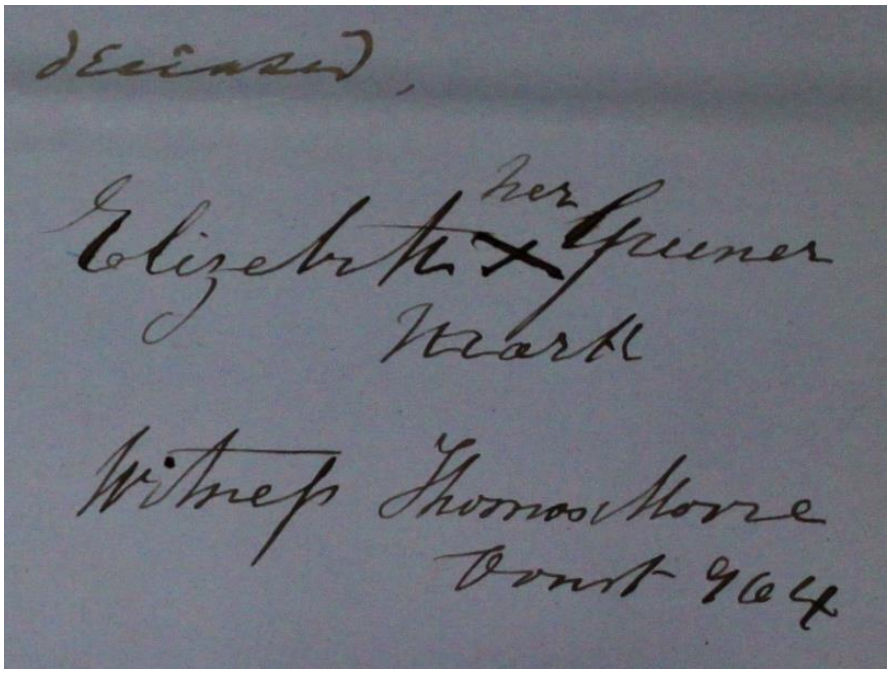
The evidence about Elizabeth was limited to data stored at the registry office in Victoria, Births Deaths and Marriages, Genealogy SA (first marriage licence, immigration details) and the article in *The Argus* newspaper written about the death of her husband Anthony Gruner. The only piece of primary evidence I had of Elizabeth was her signature. I also had a photograph of a woman named Elizabeth, but I did not have a surname. I began the evidence collection process by examining her signatures and the information about her family recorded by the registry office. All six handwriting samples below (Figure 5.5) are extracts from the original paperwork stored at the Victorian registry office unless otherwise stated.



i. Elizabeth Homan’s signature on her wedding certificate to Anthony Gruner, 1863

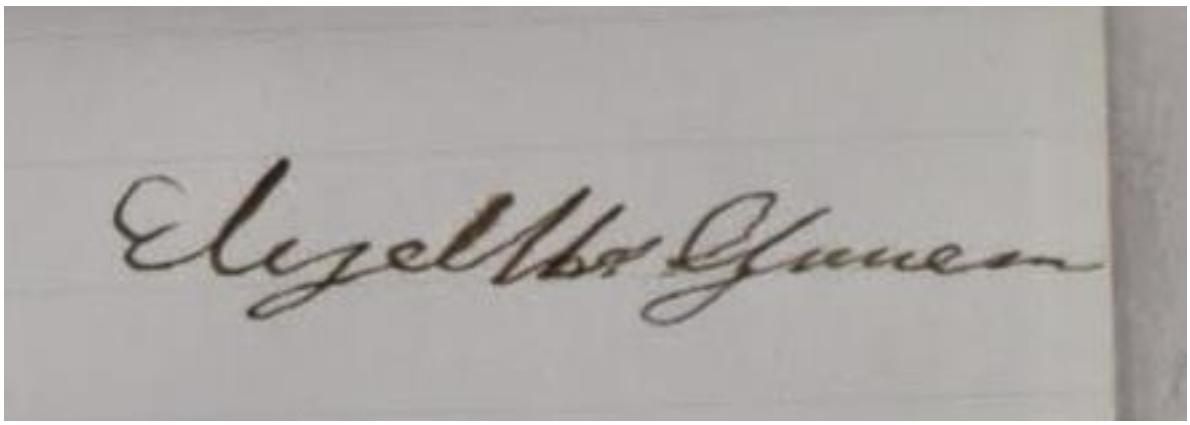
ii. Elizabeth Gruner’s signature on daughter Julie's death certificate, 1867

iii. Elizabeth Gruner’s signature on her daughter Rosa May's death certificate, 1873



iv. Elizabeth Gruner's signature on deposition recorded at East Collingwood Police Station 9 September 1873. Source: Public Records Office Victoria

v . Elizabeth Gruner’s signature on the death certificate of her granddaughter Frances Adeline Barnard, 1880



vi. Elizabeth Gruner's signature on deposition at Anthony Gruner (Jr) inquest, 1883

Fig. 5.5 (collected) Signatures of Elizabeth Gruner (nee Homan/Brooker).

Fig. 5.6 Undated photograph of a woman found in the estate of my late grandmother, Mavis Rose Nash (nee Lark) in 2006. There is a name of the back of the photograph "Elizabeth".

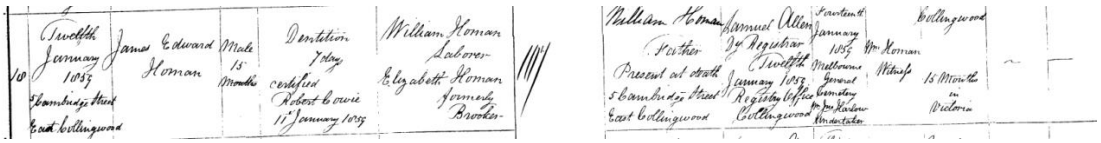


Fig 5.7 Death certificate for James Edward Homan from 1859 (January). The Homan family resided at 5 Cambridge Street, East Collingwood.

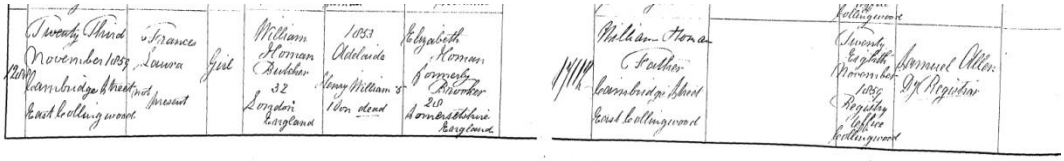


Fig 5.8 Birth certificate for Frances Laura Homan from 1859 (October) shows the Homan family still living on Cambridge Street, but the street number is not displayed.

Fig 5.9 Death certificate of William Homan from 1860 (April). There is no family information recorded, or address information. The clerk at the hospital acted as informant to the registry.

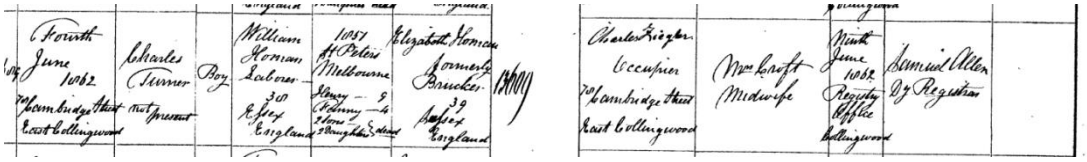


Fig 5.10 Birth certificate of Charles Turner Homan from 1862. This document lists William Homan under father despite Homan being dead for more than a year. The informant is Charles Ziegler who resides at the same location the boy is born, at number 78 Cambridge Street, East Collingwood. Source: Victoria Births, Deaths and Marriages.

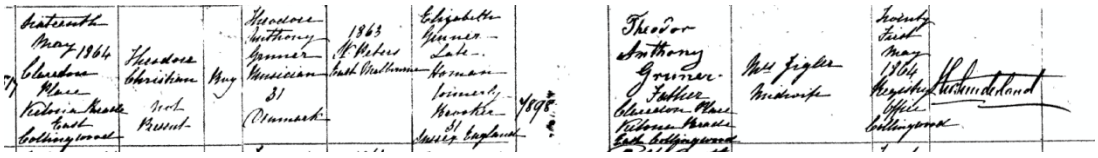


Fig 5.11 Birth certificate for Theodore Christian Gruner in 1864. The midwife is listed as Mrs Ziegler. Source: Victoria Births, Deaths and Marriages. The Gruner family lives on Clarendon Place, so has moved from Cambridge Street by this time.

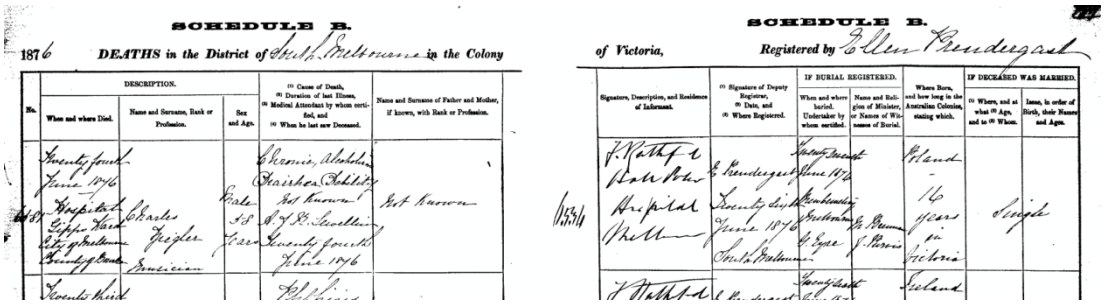
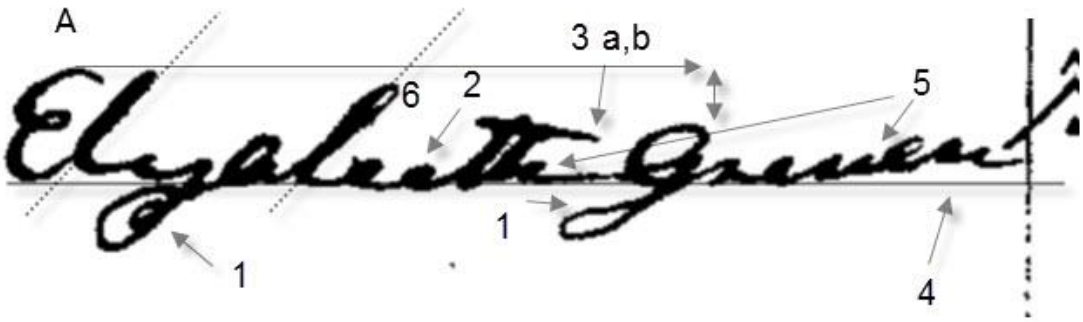


Fig. 5.12 Death certificate of Charles Ziegler from 1876. This document states he was single and had no children. He was also a musician, like Gruner. Source: Victoria Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Analysis

Unsure if it was even possible to gain insight into the mental state of a person by samples of their handwriting alone, I decided, partly because it was the only evidence I had, to engage the services of a forensic handwriting expert and master profiler. I searched for a local expert in the field and through my enquiries with Handwriting and Graphology Analysis of Australia I was introduced to Marcel Elfers via the American Society of Professional Graphologists and the American Handwriting Analysis Foundation. In my attempts to find an expert I learned that handwriting analysis is not a specific field of study taught by universities, but rather a subset of forensic sciences, or more specifically a combination of skills from the art and science spheres. I found handwriting analysis has long fascinated researchers from as far back as when the tombs of ancient Egypt where erected, however the usefulness of this resource in forensic narrative research seemed underrepresented in current literature. One of the reasons for this Said etc. al found was that human intervention in writer identification is both "costly and prone to fatigue" (1). With the limitations of human evaluation in mind, but with nothing else to go on, I delved further into the craft of handwriting analysis. I learned that analysis of one's handwriting is split into three zones: upper, middle and lower. The three zones represent the three sections of the human body, the upper zone represents the head, the middle zone represents the torso and the lower zone is the lower erogenous zone. Handwriting experts look at which zone of a handwriting sample is the most dominant. I sent the samples of Elizabeth Gruner's handwriting to Marcel Elfers (Fig. 5.5) and he provided the following analysis of a specimen of her handwriting (Fig. 5.13):



Elizabeth Gruner signature on daughter Julie's death certificate, 1867

When we are elated, happy etc. we expand (winning: throw arms up in the air). When we are unhappy, negative emotional impact, we shrink (losing: shoulder sagging, head hanging down). The big E shows Elizabeth was Assertive, and presents herself with good self-esteem. The much smaller G shows the thought of Gruner made her "shrink", meaning, a negative emotional impact.

1: The Lower Zone (LZ) is the subconscious, intuitive zone where our biological imperatives resides (material needs/sexual needs). The muddiness in the Z LZ loop and the mild distortions in the G LZ loop

implies "unusual or disturbed physical / sexual desires". The loop inside the loop of the Z, suggests secrecy regarding those needs, and intrusive thoughts regarding, well, in this case, sex.

2. The letter "e" in the Mid Zone (MZ) is closed off, and implies her ability to violate the rights of others.

3a. The t-bar slants down, and implies a domineering personality.

3b. The t-bar ends in a point, and implies a sharp tongue. Sarcasm as a defense mechanism.

4. The signature ends upwards, rising baseline. This implies hope, optimism, and foreseeing positive outcomes (and negating, ignoring negatives).

5. The "h" and the "n" bent in backwards. This is called a "Shark's tooth". Author's like this are kniving manipulators.

6. the upward stroke slant in the "l" and the "b" is marked with the exact same slant of the "l". *Note how the "b" slant is stronger than the "l". This suggests she was impulsive, as she moves forward with more and more gusto. Impulsivity, reactivity, emotionally demonstrative etc.*

When we combine these traits, we see
- unusual sexual desires (LZ)
- impulsivity (slant increase)
- Gruner not fulfilling (he is not "it")
- blind to personal limitations (only seeing positive outcomes)
- manipulative (shark's teeth),
- domineering (downslant t-bar) and
- sarcastic, or a quick and sharp tongue. (t-bar ending pointed)
From a behavioral profile perspective, she is probably best described as follows:
- as a child she did not feel nurtured, and consequently, she felt emotionally deprived.
- to compensate, she must nurture herself by constantly finding new and exciting experiences (sex).

This all too brief profile would be in synch with her being a new settler, in a new area, where "nothing is available".

Fig. 5.13 Handwriting analysis by Marcel Elfers

The strong reaction of the profiler Elfers to the samples of handwriting of Elizabeth's offer definitive personality traits I might use to inform my imaginings of her mental state. Profilers have been used throughout history in courts of law and whilst there is nothing to refute the claims made by Elfers about Elizabeth, there is equally nothing tangible to support them. Further problematicising the situation is the present state of access to digital information on subjects. When I initially approached Elfers to take this case I specifically told him nothing of Anthony Gruner's death or my suspicions that it was more than the result of simple case of depression. Elfers however, responded to my emailed correspondence by immediately questioning whether this woman Elizabeth was linked to Anthony Gruner and presented me with the evidence about his case he had been able to obtain from a quick search of the internet. I wondered how much of what Elfers told me was informed by the information he was able to find about the owner of the handwriting and wished I'd instructed him not to do any digging around before analysing the sample. Elfers was convinced that Elizabeth was the killer, and the reason for the crime likely linked to some form of infidelity. I evaluated this analysis and at the conclusion of my reflections felt I did not quite know

where to place it, so filed his comments away as a resource for structuring the fiction component

I then turned my attention to the next piece of evidence — the photograph (Fig. 5.6). I knew the woman in the photograph was Elizabeth, and that this was the name of my third-great maternal grandmother, Elizabeth Gruner. I did not know if this was the same person. The photograph was found in my maternal grandmother's things, and according to oral history used to belong to her mother, my great grandmother. I figured there was a chance it was Elizabeth Gruner who was born in 1828. I also knew my maternal great grandfather's mother was also named Elizabeth. She was born in 1856. The paper the photograph was printed on was plain card and other than the name, had no distinguishable features. I decided to analyse the contents of the photograph instead, focusing on the fashion of the clothing worn by the woman and the hairstyle. I sent a copy of the photograph to Danielle Whitfield, Curator of Fashion and Textiles at the National Gallery of Victoria and the Australian Museum of Clothing and Textiles. Whitfield was the first to get back to me and dated the photograph based on the fashions worn by the woman as circa 1880.

Elizabeth Gruner was almost 60 years old by this time, making her too old to be the woman in the photograph. The only other person the photograph could logically be of was my maternal great-grandfather's mother, Elizabeth Lark (nee Archer). This piece of evidence, for the purposes of investigating the mental decline of Elizabeth Gruner, was now discarded. With only the strong characteristic traits elicited by the handwriting expert about Elizabeth, the final piece of evidence I had to assess was the movements and detail in the registry office information about her life. Figures 5.7-12 are original extracts from entries in the Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages office. These entries, whilst not glamourous or particular unusual in their content or sequence provided the most insight into the mental state of Elizabeth Gruner.

I learned Elizabeth and her first husband William Homan moved around a lot, according to registry records. The timing of the births of their children was quite close, and every new birth entry has the Homan family living at a different address, and William switching jobs from labourer to butcher and back again. There is limited family information about William Homan on his death certificate. He died in 1860, yet Elizabeth had a child, Charles Turner Homan, two years later, and on his 1862 birth certificate, she claimed that William was his father. This is not biologically possible. I know now that Elizabeth, who travelled to Australia by ship with her family as a child, married a man who moved around a lot, so possibly wasn't very stable. Before the entrance of her son Charles in 1862 where is nothing in public records to suggest Elizabeth was in the habit of engaging in intimate relations with any man who was not her husband.

The next clue to the mental state of Elizabeth came by analysing the listed informant on the birth certificate of her son Charles Turner Homan. This was listed as Charles Ziegler. A midwife named Mrs. Susan Ziegler had been present at at least two of Elizabeth's children's births. I could not find any record of a marriage between Charles and Susan, or any immigration record for the latter. From the registry records, I knew they lived at the same address. This man Ziegler appeared not to be related to Elizabeth in any legal sense.

When Elizabeth married her second husband, Anthony Gruner, Charles and Susan Ziegler acted as witnesses, indicating Anthony Gruner also knew the Zieglers. Once they were married, Elizabeth and Anthony moved to a new address, and when their first child was born, Susan Ziegler helped deliver him. On subsequent birth certificates Susan Ziegler is not present.

Imagination

Moses in Egypt would have been a much easier narrative to construct if I'd only had a little more evidence, or so I thought at the outset of this project. However, by using what evidence I did have I came to the realisation that I had a substantial idea of what the life of Anthony and Elizabeth Gruner and their family may have been like in Melbourne in the 1870s based on what data existed in the archive on the family. I knew things were not economically, and probably socially, stable due to the number of address changes. I knew babies came often, usually at home and sometimes did not survive.

I had the insights provided by Elfers about Elizabeth, and although it was tempting to subscribe to his description of her as a murdering temptress, I had to remain bound to consider the evidence with integrity and not let my creative writer's imagination run wild and skew the overall shape of the evidence and analysis at hand. However, much of what Elfers alluded to in his analysis was supported by the life path I had sketched out for Elizabeth, at least in the fact that she was a survivor. She had married twice, she did have at least two illegitimate children, she was literate (despite her lack of signature on some documents) and somehow managed to carry on and raise multiple children as a widow after Gruner died in 1873.

I could not prove Charles Ziegler and Susan Ziegler were married and not siblings or other relatives. I did know Ziegler was a musician, like Gruner, and that Elizabeth and Ziegler resided at the same address, at least when her son Charles Turner Homan was born. I could not explain why Charles Ziegler was the informant on the birth certificate of Charles Homan, and judging by the naming patterns of Elizabeth's first born children with her first and second husband, it made some sense that Ziegler was the boy's father. It was perplexing to this end to understand why, if in fact

this was the case would Susan Ziegler assist the birth of the child. This made more sense if Charles and Susan were brother and sister as opposed to husband and wife, but I could find no evidence of either scenario and therefore was compelled to choose one or the other based on what made the better fictional story.

Using the evidence and analysis of this evidence at hand about the mental state of decline of Elizabeth I decided to structure her character arc upon the event of the death of her first husband and how this impacted her life. The reason for this decision was the striking lack of information contained on the death certificate of William Homan. The details were such they could have been educated guesses on part of the medical staff present at the time of his death. It would not have been a great stretch to consider a man dressed as he might have been as some kind of labourer. He was Caucasian, the dominant immigrant group of the time, so his birthplace of London could have also been a guess. His age might also been an estimation (it was recorded as 33, placing his year of birth around 1827 which is also as accurate as I had been able to previously establish from his marriage certificate as no birth certificate was on file). Aside from these questionable entries, the strongest part of the analysis of this evidence that informed the eventual fiction resolution was the lack of biographical information about his family on the death certificate. On each of the other entries for the Homan and Gruner families held by the Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages registry, far more detail was included in each entry, even including on the birth certificate of the illegitimate Charles Homan. On William Homan's death certificate only the barest of information was recorded. This inspired the fictional creation of Elizabeth’s belief that her first-husband William had deserted her, as she was not aware of his death. It would have been plausible to consider Elizabeth's mental state as equally distraught from knowing her husband had died, but this scenario enabled me to express the unusual nature of Homan's death certificate and weave this loose end into the master narrative and tie it in with the presence of Stoneham and Levy on Gruner's suicide note.

The decision to structure Elizabeth's story around the loss of her husband was stylistically informed by similar choices made by Marcia Aldrich in her narratives about the suicide of a close friend. In some ways the response of Elizabeth to the events in her life shows shades of what Aldrich did in de-personalising the experience of loss and focusing on a wider meditation about life and the fragility of human relationships. The pragmatic journey of Elizabeth throughout *Moses in Egypt* is also informed by her resilient actions I had supporting evidence of, her continuing to produce children for one, and secondly from her constant engagement as a laundress.

Marcia Aldrich plucked out pieces of her friend's last days to reflect on his suicide, and in some respects the inner monologue of Elizabeth presented in the fiction component of *Moses in Egypt*

achieves a similar effect. Even in her private moments, Elizabeth is a practical person who focuses on the needs of her family above her own. The introduction of the idea that she did not know her first husband had died and did not run away enabled me to use fiction to add a dimension to her personality that was otherwise not able to be verified with the archive of evidence at hand.

The following extract is taken from *Moses in Egypt* (pp. 110-111). The scene is written from Elizabeth's perspective but it is as much about her first husband William as it is about her.

> The day Elizabeth arrived in Melbourne-town she was a young woman of twenty six, newly married to William Homan, a suitcase of hope at her feet. The journey from Adelaide had been quite vexing, which was something she had not been anticipating. The unsettled voyage and the weeks preceding it would prove to be a premonition of what lay ahead for the Homan family in the years to come, but there was of no way Elizabeth could have imagined this as she stood on the dusty pier at Sandridge.
>
> From the moment she and William decided to relocate to Melbourne, issues had cropped up at every turn. William had felt compelled to interview his replacement at the butchery, despite old man Humphrey insisting this was not required. Her mother Hannah had made quite a spectacle of herself demonstrating displeasure at the news of their move and her brother John had been typically unhelpful.
>
> It was with some relief she felt the damp wood of the pier underfoot as it meant they had finally arrived.
>
> The buildings and streets were almost identical in style to Adelaide; the trees as dense around the perimeters of the town, and the ships all looked the same in the harbour.
>
> “Lizzie, this reminds me of London,” William remarked, taking off his hat to wipe his brow before wandering off ahead of her.
>
> His feeling was, she decided, not having been to London herself, not about the landscape but the people who inhabited it. There was a sense of entrepreneurship around them, of recklessness, that both excited and terrified her.
>
> A small kiosk at the end of the jetty advertised gold licences. A troupe of men in carts lined the street waiting for men from incoming ships to jump aboard after their lengthy voyage from the motherland and be whisked to the goldfields of Bendigo, Ballarat and Castlemaine. The women walked briskly and the men had carefully flattened hair, often carrying only a pick or a shovel as they disembarked from their vessel. Around the mouth of the pier, dogs

ran in packs, chasing each other and snarling. A group of men upon horseback slowed as they neared and one of them called for the animals to follow them. The dogs did not. The largest one was the colour of coal and had a part of his left ear missing.

At her feet was a large trunk, too heavy to drag along the wooden boards alone.

"William, won't you help me please?" she called after him.

William stood with his hands on his hips, not hearing his wife, his chin titled toward the sky. He drew in a shallow breath, as if testing to see if the air were contaminated.

Something about his stance caused an uneasy feeling in the pit of her stomach. It had been her idea to come to Melbourne, to take advantage of the opportunities a growing colony might provide. William had seemed amenable to the idea, she was sure of it.

"You could own your own butchery!" she had told him one evening as they strolled past Pulteney Street School, weeks before their departure.

"And our sons could work as a part of it. *Homan's Specialty Meats* would be a suitable name," she had said. Elizabeth remembered the look of hesitation on her husband's face. It was quickly replaced with a smile, but since she had seen it, it was now all she could see.

Her husband had never had a clear map of his future, and she knew to be near her was his only ambition. If Elizabeth was honest, this suited her perfectly. She liked to be the planner, the decision-maker, and the instigator. At the same time she sensed her husband knew there were only so many people, so many experiences, so many sensations, that Adelaide could provide a woman like Elizabeth.

William would learn to love Melbourne-town, Elizabeth reassured herself.

"Give me that!" William scolded her with a smile for attempting to move her luggage without his help.

"We are going to love it here William," she said.

"I know," he said, not meeting her eyes.

This extract from the narrative seeks to situate Elizabeth as a strong woman, but one also not immune to the wanderlust of travel and adventure. I knew Elizabeth was in her mid-twenties at the time she and William relocated to Melbourne from Adelaide so it is conceivable that Elizabeth, like many young people of the time, was excited by the possibility of living in a place alive with the

spoils of an active gold rush. The contrast in personalities between Elizabeth and William is purely a literary decision made purely to drive the narrative forward by attempting to clearly describe the personalities of each. It does not allude to the future years that would follow for William and Elizabeth that I knew involved a lot of job changes and house moves. It does however seek to establish the genuine romantic love between the two, whilst simultaneously exploring the difference in Elizabeth and William's wants and needs in life. This romantic love is supported by the fact that Elizabeth followed her husband from house to house, and eventually brought her entire family over from Adelaide to join them in Melbourne. This extract hints that it is Elizabeth's decision to relocate cities, and one William was reluctant to follow.

The next extract from *Moses in Egypt* (128) is also from the fiction component of the text and seeks to explore the unclear relationship between Elizabeth and Anthony Gruner with Charles and Susan Ziegler. It was not possibly to verify the relationship of the Ziegler's although I knew both knew Elizabeth as early as 1860 and Anthony by 1863. I also knew Charles Ziegler was also a musician, and Polish. I also knew Elizabeth and the Zieglers lived at one time on the same street.

The flexibility of the system of informed narration is that it enables the narrative to be created in a combination of nonfiction and fiction. The following extract from *Moses in Egypt* seeks to describe how the Gruner's and the Ziegler's came to know one another. It is important to note that by the time this scene is presented in the text the reader is aware of the known facts about this relationship as it is explored in detail during the documented non-fiction account of the research journey into the life of Anthony Gruner. That is to say, the reader knows I was not able to find out who exactly Charles and Susan were to each other.

Would it have been possible to not include a fictitious response to the gaps in this four-way relationship? Probably, but at some juncture a creative decision has to be made if a narrative is to be formed. In this case I decided to make Charles and Susan husband and wife as opposed to brother and sister. I also decided Charles Homan was Ziegler's secret son and that the four adults had come together due to two things they had in common: they lived on the same street and both men had the same occupation.

> Ziegler had returned to Melbourne by July, to a much fuller house than he had left seven months earlier.
>
> Charles and Susan Ziegler lived in a two-storey brick structure with two windows facing the street on the ground level and two matching ones along the top. There was no intricate lacework or masonry to speak of and to the passer-by it was not evident at first glance that

> the place was occupied. The house comprised three bedrooms, a sitting room and a kitchen with a larder attached. Two of the bedrooms were upstairs and the other at the front of the ground floor.
>
> The house on Cambridge Street was the first property of what he hoped, one day, would be an empire of sorts. He always had an eye on the real estate happenings in the town as well as in the goldfields. It would only be a matter of time before he would catch wind of an opportunity too good to pass up and snap it up before anyone else could.
>
> While Ziegler had been in the goldfields, Susan had taken in Elizabeth Homan and her children. Her husband, Ziegler recalled, was a fair-haired man named William with an angular jaw and a tensile gait. Elizabeth was a beguiling woman who would often raise a brow to him when he passed her on the street.
>
> Sometimes he thought she was most cruel to taunt him, if that is what she was doing — he could not say.
>
> “Where is the husband?” Ziegler asked his wife, unloading his satchel of sheet music onto the sitting room floor.
>
> “I do not know,” she said. “Mrs Homan said he is not coming back.”
>
> Ziegler found this shocking, but not altogether surprising. Ziegler had never seen a man drink as much as Homan, and still manage to wield a pick or a shovel.
>
> He often spotted the man stumbling down Wellington Parade with a group of equally intoxicated friends of an evening. Ziegler would cross the road before he was seen.

By following the trail of evidence on the life movements of Elizabeth Gruner, the nonfiction framework of her story can be completed with informed fiction to create an overall work of informed narration. Surprisingly, a reliance on physical evidence was not as necessary as I first thought in setting out to represent her inner world. Other than as an interesting appendix to the narrative, the photograph (even though it ended up not being of Elizabeth) was also of little research merit other than the socioeconomic signals it flagged in regards to the wealth of the woman in the photo. The most useful evidence was the institutional records left behind by the Gruner's and the details they revealed though their inclusions and exclusions as well as changes to places and titles.

By relying on this raw data and sketching out a template for the world Elizabeth Gruner existed in, it became much easier to develop an imagined persona for this character in the text.

The usefulness of the forensic profiler to examine the handwriting characteristics of Elizabeth is best evaluated as an interesting exercise in the creative process that failed to meet the aims of informed narration. The reason for the ultimate failure of this type of analysis within the creative process of informed narration was that there was no evidence backing up the analysis provided that could be verified. It was, in crude terms, educated guesses based on a psychotherapeutic strategy of textual analysis. Some ideas from the profiler were useful in thinking about what sort of person Elizabeth Gruner might have been, but others breeched what I considered to be a reasonable extrapolation from a handwriting sample. For example, the profiler claimed he was able to pinpoint "unusual or disturbed physical/sexual desires" in Elizabeth and described her as a "kniving manipulator" by the way she wrote the letters "h" and "n" in her signature. These colourful insights are only useful if I was writing a work of pure fiction using a creative strategy where there was no accountability to the artefacts of evidence that remained about her life, and even in this case, I could have made all of these estimations myself. This has been done throughout history and many notable works discussed in this thesis are examples of rich extrapolation of plot-rich detail derived from tiny amounts of data. Hannah Kent's fictitious work *Burial Rites* is one example of how I could have applied the analysis of the profiler to inspire a work of fiction. Brian Castro's *Shanghai Dancing* may have also been a useful template for adaptation had I decided to give these insights precedence over the other pieces of evidence I had to work with. However these works of fiction do not align with the basis of informed narration to create a narrative using nonfiction and fiction where applicable by following a systematic process of evidence collection, analysis and informed imaginings only to fill in gaps. Marcel Elfers' descriptive estimations of Elizabeth as a conniving murderess would not have stayed faithful to this goal.

The resultant character of Elizabeth in *Moses in Egypt* is a woman who is described through the evidence she left behind, with her inner life a production of my own imaginings, with credence given to the insights available via the profiler. This is an average woman with a strong survival instinct who through circumstances out of her control is compelled to take a path in life she would not have otherwise chosen in order to survive.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have aimed to show how the stylistic, theoretical and literary influences of *Moses in Egypt* have a genesis in a spectrum of fields ranging from journalism, history writing to creative writing. This thesis sought to map out a multi-dimensional strategy for writing about people who lived in the past of whom little evidence now remains. By freeing one's thinking beyond the labels assigned to any one form of writing and essentially remaining aware of, but not quelled by, the constraints that bind writers including commercial forces to audience expectations within categories, the possibilities for new stories to be told using the informed narration protocol is significant.

The creative work presented as part of this thesis took the form of an Australian historical narrative, *Moses in Egypt*, presented in a combination of literary non-fiction and fiction, clearly delineated by chapters. What could not be resolved with non-fiction is presented as fiction via the informed narration creative strategy. This hybrid narrative form incorporates techniques used by historians, creative writers, and journalists and is hinged on the contention that the success of writing about an otherwise forgotten person in history, or an element of a renowned person's life that was underreported, rests on co-operation as well an acceptance of the philosophical relevance of multiple relations with evidence including both imagination and intuition. The aim of informed narration was to cross the boundaries between the three writer groups, to optimise the evidence and analysis available on a subject and to use this evidence and analysis to inform the creation of fiction where gaps were present. This was demonstrated using two case studies from the creative work, the first focusing on the treatment of the suicide note evidence and the second exploring the strategies used to develop the mental profile of Gruner's wife Elizabeth.

Throughout this project we have seen a common thread binding those who are most concerned with writing these kinds of stories. The first is the desire to write the narrative, the second is to make sure people will read it. A creative process strategy like informed narration seeks to answer both of these desires across writer groups by maximizing the evidence at hand and using it to inform fictional imaginings of what cannot be established with nonfiction.

The investigation into my journey into creating a work of informed narration was presented as a three-pronged inquiry that firstly critically considered the reasons for the antagonism and perceived boundaries that exist between those writers who are most concerned with telling stories of people who lived in the past. By engaging in a pragmatic assessment of the writerly strategies used to tell the stories of people, aspects of people and/or situations similar to my "moth", I considered how

historians, creative writers and journalists write about the past. I found that each group was performing similar tasks and borrowing skills and techniques from the other without wholly acknowledging this sharing. I found this was still occurring despite the advances in technology that support a more complex approach to this form of writing and the increased popularity of historical writing in recent years. This seemingly irrational lack of cooperation between writers of history to support the expression of multiple relations with the past was incentive enough to examine some unique texts produced by creative writers in this space to see if I could pinpoint why they were successful. The initial three texts were each concerned with writing about a lesser-known subject and were examined to attempt to understand why writers found it challenging to know what genre to classify this type of writing. I found that with some writers, Kate Grenville in particular, the decision to write fiction or nonfiction was a mutually exclusive decision. Within this framework, I then considered if not having access to one's subject to interview was a mitigating factor in how writers decide on a narrative format for their work. I considered Grenville's choices against other writers who had access to first person sources and dealt with a period of history still in living memory. I found access to evidence and the way evidence was interacted with did make a difference to how a narrative was sculpted, but the choice to write fiction or nonfiction or a hybrid was ultimately a subjective choice made by the writer. In looking at *The Secret River*, Anna Funder's *Stasiland* and Susan Orlean's *The Orchid Thief* from a practice-based standpoint I considered the effectiveness of the narrative techniques to express the evidence at hand. In *Stasiland*, I saw how journalistic interview techniques could be an effective way of gathering information about a subject one does not have a pre-existing interest in. This strategy, employed by the writer Funder, appeared to be particular useful, specifically through the use of her open ended questioning technique to get her subjects to talk. It did not matter what the subject matter was in this case, and the data gathering technique appeared both sound and appropriate. *The Orchid Thief*, although written by a creative writer with direct access to living subjects, pinpointed important lessons in the merit of simple language in biographical writing. This was particularly obvious in the case of Susan Orlean's investigation into the inner working of the orchid enthusiast – a topic not typically revered by the mainstream. Orlean used the strategy of employing imagery and metaphors to communicate complicated information about the plants, and this is a strategy that could be easily transferred to writing about lesser-known historical people.

I reflected on the idea that the ultimate decision to assign a genre to a piece of writing belongs to the creator, and the quantity or type of evidence, either first or second hand, was not necessarily a factor influencing genre selection. Orlean had proven it possible to write an engaging nonfiction narrative about orchids; Funder had documented the experience of residents in the former East Germany with

nonfiction without the need to engage with evocative phrasing. Grenville rejected bundles of nonfiction research she conducted herself, travelling across the globe to compile, in favour of a producing a now best-selling imagined account of a man inspired by one of her ancestors. I considered the market for creative non fiction and the space between fiction and creative non fiction that

The examples of narrative I had examined so far had shown the complex proposition of decisions facing writers in this space concerning evidence, analysis and imagination. I wanted to know how this complexity was heightened or eased with the introduction of a sensitive subject. The protagonist in *Moses in Egypt*, Anthony Gruner, was found to have killed himself and I wanted to see how other writers dealt with similar events in historical biographical writing. In addition to suicide, I also studied a treatment of rape and two cases of a writer focusing on underreported elements that were sensitive about a famous person's life. I found that when a sensitive issue is foregrounded, evidence and analysis appear to outrank fictional imaginings; however, even prioritising facts and analysis gives no guarantee the treatment of the sensitive issue will be appropriate as this appropriateness is a subjective consideration. In one of the texts examined, *Rape New York*, the writer desensitises a traumatic event she personally experience by writing about the experience from a philosophical standpoint. Some may agree this is a perfectly reasonable interpretation of the effects of an upsetting event, but this same author also published an art exhibition of the same name that comprised an open archive of photographs from her emergency visit to the hospital, police reports, crime scene photographs, notes from her therapist, as well as records from the civil suit and other assorted items and documents related to the rape and the legal case that followed. What is considered treating evidence with integrity to one is not to another and this is something I grew to understand.

The ethos of Virginia Woolf's "The Death of the Moth" is a useful starting point for thinking about stories about people who lived in the past and did not leave much evidence of their life behind. Examining the treatment of these sorts of people as well as sensitive issues in historical writing I found the relationship of history, journalistic writing, and fiction techniques existed at an intersection controlled by three forces — evidence, analysis and imagination. The degree to which each force dominates the narrative is decided by the prevalence or otherwise of the writer’s insertion in the narrative. I then turned my attention to examining treatments of authorial viewpoint within this space. I discovered that the decision of how much of oneself to insert into a narrative was equally relative to the creative choices made as well as value choices. Writers could choose to omit their voice entirely from the narrative; to clearly choose one side of an issue over another; to

embed oneself within the research process or try something completely unconventional. I found that by inserting one's self too overtly in a text, especially when the writing was presented as nonfiction, as was the case with *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, the shape of the narrative is altered. This is not to suggest this is a negative attribute of this creative choice, but it is a consequence that precludes the reader of the text from considering the issues from other angles. Even if the writer chooses not to participate as narrator, this equally has consequences for the way the text is received by the reader. I found in this instance, the reader has a similar challenge from the opposite problem of too-much insertion, because the reader does not know where the author stands in relation to this issue.

Writers make the decision of how much of oneself to insert in a text, and in *In Cold Blood,* Capote chose no involvement. Others like to clearly outline where they are positioned within an issue, like Helen Garner did in *Joe Cinque's Consolation*. Unconventional choices sometimes remove this need to think so hard about the level of the creator's involvement in the narrative. Jordie Albiston proved it possible to engage with poetic methods to craft the narrative of the last days of an executed woman. Ali Alizadeh took the seemingly logical step of layering the history of a people (in Iran) over the biography of his grandfather. This strategy required Alizadeh to identify himself and his relationship to his protagonist but in this case the writer used a national history as a textual driver rather than his own history with his elder. Finally, fiction resolutions for subjects where the evidence was scarce, as is the case of the atypical "moth" narrative, showed it is possible to craft engaging narratives from one's imagination informed by whatever facts were on hand. Courtney Collins's *The Burial* and Hannah Kent's *Burial Rites* were two examples studied where the writer engaged innovative literary devices such as the "imagined" voice of a dead child, or the letters of a condemned woman to respond with fiction what could not be verified with fact.

The systematic approach offered by informed narration to writing about people who once lived but left little evidence of their lives behind is just one way of approaching a dearth of facts. This approach in itself will not make the confrontation of the paucity any easier. This approach will also not resolve the tensions and antagonisms or subjective challenges born of writing about these same people when there is a sensitive subject matter in play. It will not provide an automatic answer as to how much of oneself is appropriate to insert into a narrative, or when the narrative is written, what it should be classified as. What this approach to informed narration will do, and effectively as we have seen in the examples taken from *Moses in Egypt,* is to provide a malleable framework from which to begin. There will never be two stories two that are exactly alike, and it is an acceptance of the way we all relate to the past differently, these multiple relations, that will facilitate the success

of this approach.

The creative journey to write *Moses in Egypt* revealed a tendency to try and over work the creative process with this type of writing to in some way compensate for the few facts available. For example, I express my frustration at several times in the creative work at the perceived lack of evidence. In actuality upon completing the research required and engaging with the three step process of creation of evidence, analysis and imagination to write the *Moses in Egypt* I discovered quite the opposite was true, I had enough evidence. I also was able to attempt to define the limits of informed narration insofar as my overall goal of creating a flexible template that others could use to write about their own “moth” or “moth-like” elements of people’s lives. I discovered through the process of evidence collection and analysis that whatever data I was able to obtain, the writing I produced about it needed not to contradict this evidence. This was not always an easy task, as I learned through my examination of the official records of the Births, Deaths and Marriages office that there were many times different dates and participants were recorded for the same event. My two-step creative response to this challenge was to section off my text into nonfiction and fictional parts where I could firstly articulate these inconsistences with the reader in the nonfiction component. The second response involved a fictitious resolution of these inconsistencies, a strategy that I felt did not contradict given that I had already outlined them to the reader. This was my strategy for overcoming the problematic dramatisations of Garner and Skloot that had the potential to change the outcome of the real story. The characters in *Moses in Egypt* lived over 150 years ago, but their descendants still live in the same city today and I wanted to ensure that whatever leaps I was making with fiction were plausible considering the evidence I had to work with.

This text was created with an evidence bank of nine facts about the protagonist Anthony Gruner. This anxiety I felt approaching a task that not only involved a person I couldn't speak to, but a tragic event and a member of my own family was compounded by feelings of insecurity about operating outside an established genre. Throughout the course of this project I read hundreds of texts that dealt with little known people or difficult experiences in history and felt at most ease when I was able to clearly articulate the genre of writing I was reading. Works that challenged my sense of genre including Brian Castro's *Shanghai Dancing* or Brian Matthew's *Louisa,* and to some extent Colm Tóibín's *The Master* all frustrated me because I couldn't immediately compartmentalise them. This is one of the key challenges of creating a system to deal with complex stories about people who lived in the past; there will always be a level of discomfort that accompanies experimentation.

My response to texts that challenge the way we write about people who lived in the past goes some of the way to understanding why historians or other writers who employed strategies beyond the

conventional were on the receiving end of criticism. Manning Clark's *History of Australia* may not have been embellished in parts, but this does not discount its validity as a work of history writing. Even those who clearly identify as creative writers and not historians find their texts subject to less than amiable reception. I am sure Kate Grenville is quite sick of having to defend her creative choices in *The Secret River* because as we have seen, this text is just one example of how we relate to the past in multiple ways. The advent of writers outside of professional historians engaging in this sort of work is nothing new, and the popularity of this form of writing does not appear to be subsiding any time soon. What would be more productive is to revisit the relationship between evidence and form in more detail, a point that often gets lost in larger debates about whose version of events is more valid.

Whether the anxiety of how to best write these stories is compounded by the number of options available to writers, it is hard to say. The irritation and head-scratching exhibited by some of those who write about history is easier to understand in retrospect after attempting to create a hybrid genre narrative. There is no easy way to do it. The key message from a project that takes something so small, so "moth-like," be it a person or an element of a person's life and attempts to write a book about it is, that this is possible and with less evidence than one might first imagine, provided a system of creation is in place. By subscribing to the multi-relations with the past view and systematically following the informed narration strategy it is possible to tell stories like Anthony Gruner's without having to pick a side within the established set of genres.

The consequences for using informed narration as a literary strategy could be as significant as creating a new hybrid genre of history writing or as personal as giving family history researchers a way of presenting otherwise disjointed pieces of evidence. The ideas of storytelling and methods of narrative analysis that have emerged across diverse traditions of inquiry (Herman 2) seek only to enrich the way we as writer's approach the question of character, dialogue, gender or language in our writing. The system of presentation of works of informed narration could also be the subject of further discussions and investigation. *Moses in Egypt* is presented as hybrid genre text comprising of nonfiction chapters detailing my research journey tracing the life and death of my ancestor and in fiction chapters containing informed imaginings of what I could not prove with research. These fiction chapters are interwoven within the nonfiction chapters in the narrative. When a narrative voice changes or there is a change of time and place from present day research to Colonial imaginings I have expressed this by including the date and location of the chapter for the fiction chapters only. Both the nonfiction and fiction components of the narrative follow the same chorological format. I considered presenting *Moses in Egypt* in a number of formats before settling

on this structure. One alternative I considered was grouping the research component into one section, the fiction in another. This would make this narrative not dissimilar to the format of Grenville's *The Secret River* and *Searching for the Secret River* if they were bound together as one text. I decided against this strategy even though it might have made the overall text easier to read without the leaps back and forward in time throughout. I decided it we are to accept multiple relations with the past then we must start to get comfortable with alternate ways of presenting narratives and this format I settled on seemed the most honest way of communicating the system of evidence gathering, analysis and imagination I had used to create the work. It is my hope that others will read this experimental work of informed narration and feel empowered to attempt it.

Did Anthony Gruner kill himself? We will never know, but through this strategy I can tell you I have accessed the skills, techniques and resources available to a journalist, historian or creative writer in a unique way to try and find out, and this is enough for now until the next moth lands on the window sill.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

"2 Nov 1931 / 35 James Duffy and William Gruner and William Harvey and William Kelly." Series VPRS17020, Consignment No.: P0001, Unit No. 78 ed. 1931.

"1858 Hamburg Ships Dinner, 4 October 2008." 2008.

"1873/773 Male." Series: VPRS 24, Consignment No: P0000, Unit No. 293 ed.

"Albert Anthony Gruner Birth Certificate." Victorian Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages 1868.

"Alfred Lark and Elizabeth Archer Kelly Marriage Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages 1878.

"Amelia Caroline Gruner Birth Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages 1870.

"Anthony Gruner (Jnr) Birth Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages 1874.

"Anthony Gruner and Elizabeth Homan Wedding Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Melbourne, Victoria, Australia 1863.

"Anthony Gruner Burial Record at Melbourne General Cemetery." Location List (1873).

"Anthony Gruner Death Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Victoria, Australia 1873.

Beldring, Hans Gregorius and Danish Australian Archive (State Library of Victoria. Australian Manuscripts Collection) “Golddigger life in Australia in the 1850s”, 1999.

"Charles Turner Homan and Elizabeth Reilly Marriage Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages1888.

"Charles Turner Homan Birth Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages 1862.

"Charles Turner Homan Death Certificate." Victorian Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages 1932.

"Charles Ziegler Death Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages1876. Print.

"Christhaven quarter Census." 1845. 721.

"Christian Edvard Theodor Gruner Confirmation Record." Slotskirke, Hof Og Slot Christiansborg 1839.

"Christian Edvard Theodor Gruner baptism Record." Hof Og Slot, Christiansborg Slotskirk 1825.

Copenhagen City Maps 1728-1879. Danish State Archives.

“Colm Tóibín In Conversation,” Melbourne Writers Festival, 2013.

"Detail of Elizabeth Gruner's Mark on Inquest Deposition." Series No: VPRS 24, Consignment No: P0000, Unit No. 293 ed.

Directions to Anthony Gruner's Grave. Melbourne General Cemetery.

"Elias Gruner Wedding Certificate." Victorian Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages 1900.

"Elizabeth Archer Kelly Birth Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages 1856.

"Elizabeth Archer Kelly Death Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages 1890.

"Elizabeth Gruner Death Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Victoria, Australia 1900.

"Elizabeth Julie Gruner Birth Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages 1866.

"Florentine Catharina Appelberg Baptism Record." Kirke, Trinitatis 1787.

"Florentine Catharina Gruner Death Certificate." Kirkebog, Vor Frelsers 1839.

"Frances Homan (Jnr) Birth Certificate." Victorian Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages 1879.

"Frances Homan (Jnr) Death Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages 1880.

"Frances Laura Homan Birth Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages 1859.

"Frederich Christian Gruner Birth Record." Kirke, Frederiks Tyske 1770.

"Frederich Gruner and Florentine Appelberg Wedding Certificate." Danish State Archives, 1809.

"Frederich Gruner Baptism Record." Kirke, Frederiks Tyske 1776.

"Haderslev, Haderslev, Haderslev Købstad, Alt Hadersleben 4te Rotte, Goskierstrasse No. 136, 7." *Census*. Ed. Archives, Danish State 1803.

"Hannah Brooker Photograph." c. 1880s.

"Hannah Viant Death Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Victoria, Australia 1891.

"Historical Search Statement: Volume 04403 Folio 461." Ed. Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure. Victoria, Australia: State Government of Victoria, 2014.

"Hof Og Slot Parish Church Book." Denmark, Government of1825.

"Hubert James Gruner Attestation Paper for Enlistment in Australian Imperial Force." 1915. 26.

"James Edward Homan Birth Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages 1857.

"James Edward Homan Death Certificate." Victorian Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages 1859.

"Julia Gruner Death Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Victoria, Australia1867.

"København (Staden), Klædebo Kvarter, Krystalgaden, Anden Sal F2, Huset No 67 203." *Census*.

Archives, Danish State 1840.

"København (Staden), Prinsensgade, Prinsensgade 381, 1 Sal, 3." *Census*. Archives, Danish State. Copenhagen, Denmark 1834.

"København (Staden), Sankt Annæ Vester Kvarter, Adelgade, 1. Bagsal, 291." *Census*. Archives, Danish State 1850.

"København, København (Staden), Klædebo Kvarter, Klædebo Kvarter, Matr. 131, 520, Ft-1801,." Archives, Danish State 1801 of *Census*.

"Mose in Egitto (Rossini): Theatre Programme." Archives of the State Library of Victoria.

"Note Found in Anthony Gruner's Pocket." Melbourne, Victoria 1873.

"Records of the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society, 1809-1946 [Manuscript]." Eds. Horsley, Charles Edward, George Peake and W. A. Carne.

"Rosa May Gruner Birth Certificate." Victorian Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages 1872.

"Rosa May Gruner Death Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Victoria, Australia 1873.

"Rosenborg Quarter Census." 1787.

"Sales History Report for 26 Hoddle Street Abbotsford 3067." Environment, Department of Sustainability and. Victoria, Australia 2014.

"September 1873 Rainfall." *Bureau of Meteorology, Australian Government*.

"Susan Lindon and George Dove Marriage Certificate." Victorian Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages1867.

"The Ship List - Gellert 1849." Web. 18th December: http://www.theshipslist.com/ships/australia/gellert1847.shtml.

"Theodore Christian Gruner Birth Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages 1864.

"Theodore Christian Gruner Death Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages 1941.

"William Edward Gruner Attestation Paper for Enlistment in the Australian Imperial Force." 1917.

"William Henry Homan Birth Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages 1854.

"William Henry Homan Death Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Melbourne, Victoria, Australia 1901

"William Homan & Elizabeth Brooker Marriage Certificate." South Australian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. S.A., Australia 1853.

"William Homan Burial Record at Melbourne General Cemetery." Location List (1860).

"William Homan Death Certificate." Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Victoria, Australia 1860.

H.G. De Gruchy & Co.'s New Borough Map, Melbourne District [Cartographic Material] : Compiled from the Most Authentic Sources, and Revised by the Official Surveys of the

Various Boroughs. Melbourne: lithographed and published at the Colonial Map Depot, 1869.

Map of Melbourne & Suburbs. Melbourne 1851-1869.

Newspaper Sources

"Advertising." The Argus 1869, 15 April ed.

"Brass Band Open to Engagement." *The Argus* 1867, 5 Oct 1867.

"Brass Taps." Mercury & Wee*kly Courier* 1879, 21 June 1879.

"Bachelor's Ball." *The Argus* 1860, 2 Jul 1860.

"Casualties and Offences 22 November." *The Argus* 22 No 1883: 1.

"Casualties and Offences 28 November." *The Argus* 28 Nov 1883: 1.

"City Coroner Retires." *The Mercury* 1908, 1 Jan 1908.

"Dwellings Houses and Shops to Let." *The Argus*, 18 Feb. 1860.

"Excursion to Port Philip Heads." Advertisement. *The Argus* 22 Nov 1867 1867.

"Familierne Jensen Og Bjørneboe." 2014. Web. Jan-November 2014.

"Family Notices." *The Argus* 20 Jan. 1860.

"Family Notices." *The Argus* 4 April 1861.

"Funeral Notices." *The Argus* 10 Sept. 1873.

"Glossary of Medical Terms Used in the 18th and 19th Centuries." Web. 27 November 2014.

"Lead Piping Theft." *Mercury and Weekly Courier* 1879, 21 June 1879 ed. Print.

"Melbourne." *Geelong Advertiser (Vic.: 1859 - 1924)*1898. 1. Print.

"Melton." *The Bacchus Marsh Express (Vic. : 1866 - 1918)*1867. 2. Print.

"Miscellany." *The Australasian* 1873, 22 March 1873 ed. Print.

"Mr Allen's Ballad Concert." *The Argus* 1870, 28 Sep 1870 ed. Print.

"Mr Wivell's Dancing and Music Academy." *The Argus* 1865. Print.

"New Insolvents." *The Argus* 1861, 26 Feb 1861 ed. Print.

"Potter Fined." *The Argus* 1870, 31 Dec 1870 ed. Print.

"Resident Magistrate's Court." *South Australian Register (Adelaide, SA : 1839 - 1900)*1849. 4. Print.

"Savings Bank Fraud." *The Australasian* 1879, 30 August ed.: 20. Print.

"Shocking Suicide at East Collingwood." *The Argus* 10 Sep 1873 1873: 1. Print.

"Subscription Ball." *The Argus* 1867, 23 May 1867 ed.: 8. Print.

"The Late Anthony Gruner." *The Argus* 11 Sep 1873 1873: 1. Print.

"Unclaimed Letters, September 30, 1855." *South Australian Register (Adelaide, SA : 1839 -*

*1900)*1855. 3. Print.

"Victoria." *The Mercury* 1879, 15 September ed.: 3. Print.

"Wanted, an Engagement as Saddler and Harness Maker." *The Argus* 1858, 27 March ed. Print.

General

Albiston, Jordie. *The Hanging of Jean Lee*. Black Pepper, 1998.

Aldrich, Marcia. *Companion to an Untold Story*. University of Georgia Press, 2012.

Alizadeh, Ali. *Iran: My Grandfather*. Transit Lounge Publishing, 2010.

Almog, Shulamit. "Representations of Law and the Nonfiction Novel: Capote's In Cold Blood Revisited." *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law - Revue internationale de Sémiotique juridique* 25.3, 2012, pp. 355-68.

Backos, Amy K., and Barb E. Pagon. "Finding a Voice: Art Therapy with Female Adolescent Sexual Abuse Survivors." *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 16 (3), 1999. pp. 126-132.

Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. University of Toronto Press, 1985.

Barkan, Elazar. *The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices*. Norton, 2000.

Barnwell, Ashley. "The Genealogy Craze: Authoring an Authentic Identity through Family History Research." *Life Writing* 10.3, 2013, pp. 261-275.

Bartrum, John S. "Case of Suicide by Cut Throat." *Association Medical Journal* 3.151, 1855. p. 1052.

Becker, Annette. "Memory Gaps: Maurice Halbwachs, Memory and the Great War." *Journal of European Studies* 35.1, 2005, pp. 102-13.

Bland, G. "Sheppey Union Infirmary. Case of Attempted Suicide by Cutting the Throat; Asphyxial Attack; Recovery; Remarks." *The Lancet* 121.3116, 1883, pp. 863-864.

Bloch, Marc. "Memorie Collective, Traditions Et Coutume. A Propos D'un Livre Recent." *Revue de Synthese historique*. 40, 1925, pp. 73-83.

Bohner, Gerd, et al. "What Triggers Causal Attributions? The Impact of Valence and Subjective Probability." *European Journal of Social Psychology,* 18.4, 1988, pp. 335-345.

Boulton, Jeremy. *Neighbourhood and Society: A London Suburb in the Seventeenth Century*. Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Breslauer, G.W. "Counterfactuals Reasoning in Western Studies of Soviet Politics and Foreign Relations." *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics*. Ed. Tetlock, P.E. & Belkin, A. Princeton University Press, 1996. pp. 69-94.

Brown, Elissa J., and Richard G. Heimberg. "Effects of Writing about Rape: Evaluating Pennebaker's Paradigm with a Severe Trauma." *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 14.4, 2001, pp. 781-790.

Burton, Antoinette M. *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*. Duke University Press, 2005.

Carey, Peter. *True History of the Kelly Gang*. University of Queensland Press, 2000.

Carne, W. A. *A Century of Harmony: The Official Centenary History of the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society*. Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society, 1954.

Castelli Dransart, Dolores A. "From Sense-Making to Meaning-Making: Understanding and Supporting Survivors of Suicide." *British Journal of Social Work* 43.2, 2013, pp. 317-335

Castro, Brian. *Shanghai Dancing*. Giramondo Publishing, 2003.

Clark, Michael. *Revenge of the Aesthetic: The Place of Literature in Theory Today*. University of California Press, 2000.

Clendinnen, Inga. "Making Stories, Telling Tales: Life, Literature, Law." *18th Lionel Murphy Memorial Lecture*. 17 November 2004.

--- "Fellow Sufferers: History and Imagination." *Australian Humanities Review*. September 1996.

--- *The Cost of Courage in Aztec Society: Essays on Mesoamerican Society and Culture*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

--- "The History Question: Who Owns the Past?" *Quarterly Essay*. 23, 2006, pp. 1-72.

--- "Understanding the Heathen at Home: E. P. Thompson and His School." *Historical Studies* 18, 1979, pp. 435-441

Cohen, Sande. *History out of Joint: Essays on the Use and Abuse of History*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006.

--- "The Use and Abuse of History According to Jean-Francois Lyotard." *Parallax* 6.4, 2000, pp. 99-113.

Collins, Courtney. *The Burial.* Allen & Unwin, 2012.

Collingwood-Whittick, Sheila. "Discursive Manipulations of Names and Naming in Kate Grenville's 'The Secret River'." *Commonwealth Essays and Studies* 36.1, 2013, pp. 9-20.

Cowan, Andrew. " Writing Worthless Men: History and the Literary." *Text Journal,* 28, 2015, pp. 1-15.

Curthoys, Ann and McGrath, Ann. *How to Write History That People Want to Read*. University of New South Wales Press, 2009.

Damon, Maria. "Gertrude Stein's Jewishness, Jewish Social Scientists, and The "Jewish Question"." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 42.3, 1996, pp.489-506.

Daniel, E. Valentine. *Charred Lullabies: Chapters in an Anthropography of Violence*. Princeton University Press, 1996.

Day, Mark. "Our Relations with the Past." *Philosophical Quarterly of Israel* 36.4, 2008, pp. 417-427.

Dray, William. *Philosophy of History*. 2nd ed. Prentice Hall, 1993.

Dark, Eleanor. *The Timeless Land*. Halstead Press, 1941.

de Matos, Christine M. "Fictorians: Historians Who 'Lie' About the Past, and Like It." Text Journal, 28, 2015.

Edel, Leon. *Henry James: The Treacherous Years: 1895-1901*. J. B. Lippincott, 1969.

Eggins, Suzanne. "Real Stories: Ethics and Narrative in Helen Garner's ' Joe Cinque's' Consolation." *Southerly* 65.1, 2005, pp. 122-32.

Ellmann, Richard. *Golden Codgers: Biographical Speculations*. Oxford University Press, 1973.

Fludernik, Monika. "The Diachronization of Narratology." *Narrative* 11.3, 2003, pp. 331-48.

Frank, Manfred. *The Subject and the Text: Essays on Literary Theory and Philosophy*. Ed. Bowie, Andrew. Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Friis, Niels. "*Det Kongelige Kapel: Fem Aarhundreder Ved Hoffet, Paa Teatret Og I Koncertsalen*." Haase, 1948.

Funder, Anna. *Stasiland*. Text Publishing, 2002.

Garner, Helen. *Joe Cinque's Consolation: A True Story of Death, Grief and the Law*. Pan MacMillan, 2004.

Garrett, George. "Then and Now: 'In Cold Blood' Revisited." *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 72.3, 1996, p. 467.

Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse Revisited*. Cornell University Press, 1988.

--- "L'homme Et Les Signes." *Critique: Revue Generale des Publications Francaises et Etrangeres* 21, 1965, pp. 99-114.

"Gertrude Stein: The Language That Rises, 1923- 1934." *Choice Reviews Online* 41.06 (2004): 41-3272-41-72.

Gilyoma, Japhet M., Kiyeti A. Hauli, and Phillipo L. Chalya. "Cut Throat Injuries at a University Teaching Hospital in Northwestern Tanzania: A Review of 98 Cases." *BMC emergency medicine* 14, 2014, p. 1.

Gorman, Ginger. "What I did was a horrible thing': Anu Singh seeks atonement for killing Joe Cinque". *news.com.au*, 14 Jan. 2016.

Gorman, Jonathan. "Our Knowledge of the Past: A Philosophy of Historiography By Aviezer Tucker. *Philosophy*. 80.2, 2005, pp. 292-300.

Grenville, Kate. *The Secret River*. Text Publishing, 2005.

--- *Searching For The Secret River*. Text Publishing, 2006.

Griffiths, Tom. "The Intriguing Dance of History and Fiction." *Text Journal*. 28, 2015.

Haebich, Anna. "Somewhere between Fiction and Non-Fiction: New Approaches to Writing Crime Histories." *Text Journal* 28, 2015

Hadfield, Andrew. "History/Historiography." *The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory* 16.1, 2008, pp. 235-262.

Haines, Janet, Christopher L Williams, and David Lester. "The Characteristics of Those Who Do and Do Not Leave Suicide Notes: Is the Method of Residuals Valid?" *OMEGA — Journal of Death and Dying* 63.1, 2011, pp. 79-94.

Halbwachs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*. University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Handwriting Analysis and Recognition (Ref. No. 1998/440), IEE Third European Workshop on. 1998.

Harrison, R. C. "An Unusual Case of Suicide by Cut- Throat." *The British Medical Journal* 2.1177, 1883, p. 115

Hawkes, Terence. *Shakespeare in the Present*. Routledge, 2002.

Healy, Alice. "When 'History Changes Who We Were.'" *Australian Literary Studies*, vol. 23, No. 4, 2008, pp. 481-489.

Herman, David. *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*. Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Hexter, J. H. *On Historians: Reappraisals of Some of the Makers of Modern History*. Harvard University Press, 1979.

Heyne, Eric. "Toward a Theory of Literary Nonfiction." *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies* 33.3, 1987, pp. 479-90.

Hirst, Martin, and Greg Treadwell. "Blogs Bother Me: Social Media, Journalism Students and the Curriculum". *Journalism Practice* 5.4, 2011, pp. 446-461.

Holden, Colin. *From Tories at Prayer to Socialists at Mass: St. Peter's, Eastern Hill, Melbourne 1846-1990,* Melbourne University Press, 1996.

Hooks, Bell. *Writing Beyond Race Living Theory and Practice*. Routledge, 2013.

Horowitz, Mardi Jon. *Stress Response Syndromes*. Aronson, 1986.

Howard, Jean. "The New Historicism in Renaissance Studies." *New Historicism in Renaissance Drama*. Longman, 1992. pp. 19-33.

Howden, Thomas. "Case of Cut- Throat." *The Lancet* 40.1033, 1843, pp. 402-403.

Hudgins, Andrew. "Poetry and Biography." *Northwest Review* 49.1, 2011, pp. 67-70.

Hutcheon, Linda. *Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. Routledge, 1988.

Jupp, James. *The Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins*. [2nd ed.] Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Kent, Hannah. *Burial Rites*. Picador, 2013.

Kossew, Sue. "Voicing The Great Australian Silence: Kate Grenville's Narrative of Settlement in the Secret River." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 42.2, 2007, p. 7.

Krippendorff, K. "Representation, Re-Presentation, Presentation, and Conversation." *(Re) Presentations and Dialogue*. Eds. Cooren, F. and A. Létourneau: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2012. pp. 143-60.

Lanser, Susan S. "Novel (Sapphic) Subjects: The Sexual History of Form." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 42.3, 2009, pp. 497-503.

--- "Sexing the Narrative: Propriety, Desire, and the Engendering of Narratology." *Narrative* 3.1, 1995, pp. 85-94.

--- *The Narrative Act: Point of View in Prose Fiction*. Princeton University Press, 1981

--- "Toward a Feminist Narratology." *Ka feminističkoj naratologiji*. 06-07, 2005, pp. 81-103.

Luce, T. J. "Ancient Views on the Causes of Bias in Historical Writing." *Classical Philology* 84.1, 1989, p. 16.

Macintyre, Stuart. "Manning Clark's Critics." *Meanjin* 41.4, 1982, pp. 442-452.

--- "The Radical and the Mystic: Brian Fitzpatrick, Manning Clark and Australian History." In: Macintyre, Stuart (Editor) Fitzpatrick, Sheila (Editor) *Against the Grain: Brian Fitzpatrick and Manning Clark in Australian History and Politics*. Melbourne University Press, 2007, pp. 12-36.

Malcolm, Janet. *Two Lives: Gertrude and Alice*. Yale University Press, 2007.

Mansfield, Katherine. *Selected Stories [of] Katherine Mansfield*. Ed. Davin, Dan. Oxford University Press, 1969.

Maral, Louise. "Making history real through fiction – a talk by Kate Grenville," University of Sydney, 16 Sept. 2005. http://sydney.edu.au/news/84.html?newsstoryid=687. Accessed 20 March 2014.

Mays, Milton A. "Wayne C. Booth: The Rhetoric of Fiction." *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 5.2, 1962, pp. 84-90.

Matthews, Brian. *Louisa*. McPhee Gribble/Penguin, 1988.

McDonald, Henry. "The Narrative Act: Wittgenstein and Narratology." *Surfaces,* IV.4, 1994, pp. 1-21.

McKenna, Mark. *An Eye for Eternity: The Life of Manning Clark*. Miegunyah Press, 2011.

McLuskie, Kathleen E. "Old Mouse- Eaten Records: The Anxiety of History." *English Literary Renaissance* 25.3, 1995. pp. 415-431.

Mitchell, Margaret. *Gone with the Wind*. Macmillan, 1936.

Mousley, Andy. "Renaissance Literary Studies after Theory: Aesthetics, History and the Human." *Literature Compass* 1.1, 2004, pp. 1-20.

Muecke, Stephen. "A Diplomat for the History Wars." Text Journal, 28, 2015.

Nelson, Camilla. "Archival Poetics: Writing History from the Fragments." *Text Journal*. 28, 2015.

Nieragden, Goran. "Focalization and Narration: Theoretical and Terminological Refinements." *Poetics Today* 23.4, 2002, pp. 685-697.

Nørfelt, H.F. *Organistbogen. 6. Udg: En Beskrivelse Af Organist- Og Kantorstillinger under Tjenestemandslovens Lønrammesystem Samt En Beskrivelse Af De Respektive Kirkeorgler Efter Den Danske Orgelregistrant*. DOKS, 1979

Paisley, F. "Discoveries Made in the Archives." *The Historian's Conscience :*

Australian Historians on the Ethics of History. Melbourne University Press, 2004. pp.118-126..

Parker, Todd C. *Sexing the Text: The Rhetoric of Sexual Difference in British Literature, 1700-1750*. State University of New York Press, 2000.

Paul, Herman. "Hayden White: The Making of a Philosopher of History." *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 5.1, 2011, pp. 131-145.

Pennebaker, James W. et al. "Disclosure of Traumas and Immune Function: Health Implications for Psychotherapy." *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology,* 56 (2), 1988, pp. 239-45.

Perks, Robert, and Alistair Thomson. *The Oral History Reader*. 2nd ed. Routledge, 2006.

Pestian, John P, Pawel Matykiewicz, and Michelle Linn-Gust. "What's in a Note: Construction of a Suicide Note Corpus." *Biomedical Informatics Insights* 5, 2010.

Prince, Gerald. *A Dictionary of Narratology*. University of Nebraska Press, 1987.

Puseley, Daniel. *Number One, or, the Way of the World / by Frank Foster*. Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1862.

Quinn, Stephen." Convergence's Fundamental Question." *Journalism Studies* 6.1, 2005, pp. 29-38.

Rabey, D. I. *David Rudkin: Sacred Disobedience: An Expository Study of His Drama 1959-1994*. Taylor & Francis, 2013.

Radner, Joan N., and Susan S. Lanser. "The Feminist Voice: Strategies of Coding in Folklore and Literature." *The Journal of American Folklore* 100.39, 1987, pp. 412-425.

Rajchman, John. "The Story of Foucault's History." *Social Text*. 8, 1983, pp. 3-24.

Ricketson, Matthew. "The Vibrant State of Book-Length Journalism in Australia." *Australian Journalism Review* 32, 2010, pp. 67-79.

Rooney, Brigid. "The Sinner, the Prophet, and the Pieta: Sacrifice and the Sacred in Helen Garner's Narratives." *Antipodes* 19.2, 2005, pp. 159-165.

Rousso, Henry. *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*. Harvard University Press, 1991.

Runia, Eelco. "Presence." *History and Theory* 45.1, 2006, pp. 1-29.

Ryan, J. S. "History of Australia as Epic." *Manning Clark: Essays on His Place in History*. Ed. Bridge, C. Melbourne University Press, 1994. p. 236.

Salvatore, Nick. "Biography and Social History: An Intimate Relationship" *Labour History*. 87, 2004, pp. 187-192.

Schneider, Paul Ryan. "Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form." *Modern Language Quarterly* 58.1, 1997, p 121

Shcherbakova, Irina. "Gulag Memory Map: Problems and Gaps." *Laboratorium: Russian Review of Social Research* .7.1, 2015, pp. 114-121.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Penguin, 1990.

Shaw, A.G.L. "Clark's History of Australia." *Meanjin Quarterly* 22.1, 1963, pp. 117-119.

Shetty, B. Suresh Kumar, et al. ""Atypical Suicidal"; Cut Throat Injury – a Case Report." *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine* 16.8, 2009, pp. 492-93.

Shklovsky, Victor. "Art as Technique." *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*. University of Nebraska Press, 1965.

Skloot, Rebekah. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. Pan Macmillan, 2010.

Skodo, Admir. *Hayden White: The Historical Imagination*. Francis Group, 2012.

Smith, Sidonie. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

Solomon, Jeff. "Gertrude Stein, Opium Queen: Notes on a Mistaken Embrace." *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 17.1, 2013, pp. 7-24.

Steedman, Carolyn. *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*. Rutgers University Press, 2002.

Stein, Gertrude. *The Making of Americans; Being a History of a Family's Progress*. New York:

New York, Something Else Press, 1966.

Stewart, Jenny. "Revisiting the Secret River." *Quadrant* 58.1, 2014, pp. 76-79.

Stone, Dan. "Making Memory Work, or Gedächtnis Macht Frei." *Patterns of Prejudice* 37.1, 2003, pp. 87-98.

Orlean, Susan. *The Orchid Thief*. Heinemann, 1999.

Thomas, Kyla H., Ed Beech, and David Gunnell. "Changes in Commonly Used Methods of Suicide in England and Wales from 1901–1907 to 2001–2007." *Journal of Affective Disorders* 144.3, 2013, pp. 235-39.

Thomson, Alistair. "Anzac Memories: Putting Popular Memory Theory into Practice in Australia." *Oral History* 18.1, 1990, pp. 25-31.

Thrane, K. *Fra Hofviolonernes Tid*. Schonberg, 1908.

Tóibín, Colm. *The Master*. Picador, 2004.

Tucker, Aviezer. *Our Knowledge of the Past a Philosophy of Historiography*. Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Capote, Truman. *In Cold Blood: A True Account of a Multiple Murder and Its Consequences*. Hamish Hamilton, 1966.

Wagers, Kelley. "Gertrude Stein's "Historical" Living." *Journal of Modern Literature* 31.3, 2008, p. 22.

Wallace, Ian. "From Stasiland to Ostalgie: The GDR Twenty Years After. (Book Review)." *The Modern Language Review*106.4, 2011, pp. 1195-1196.

Walsh, W. H. *Philosophy of History an Introduction*. Harper Torchbooks, 1960.

Weinberg, Steve. *Telling the Untold Story: How Investigative Reporters Are Changing the Craft of Biography*. University of Missouri Press, 1992.

Whitt, Jan. "Awakening a Social Conscience: The Study of Novels in Journalism Education." *Asia Pacific Media Educator*.18, 2007, pp. 85-100.

White, Hayden V. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973.

--- " The Burden of History." *History and Theory* 5.2, 1966, pp. 111-134.

White, Hayden V., and American Council of Learned Societies. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.

"Who Is Misunderstanding Whom?" *New Statesman* 129.4513, 2000, p. 29.

Will, Barbara. "Gertrude Stein and Zionism." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 51.2 (2005): 437-55. Print.

Wolfe, Tom. *The New Journalism*. Ed. Johnson, E. W. [1st ed.] ed. New York: New York, Harper & Row, 1973. Print.

Woolf, Virginia. *The Common Reader, Second Series*. Ed. University of Adelaide, Library. Adelaide: Adelaide : The University of Adelaide Library, 2004. Print.