Harry Crawford v History: Problem Bodies, Queertrans Cosmogonies, and Historiographical Ethics in Cases of Gender Transgression in Late Nineteenth-Early Twentieth Century Australia

Robin Eames

311196152

A treatise submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of:

Bachelor of Arts (Honours)

Department of History

The University of Sydney

May 2018

This thesis has not been submitted for examination at this or any other university
# Contents

Abstract 3  
Acknowledgements 4  
Title page 6  
Introduction  
  The historian as cosmographer 7  
  Trans gravitational waves 9  
  Finding other universes 10  
Chapter one: Problem bodies  
  Gender outlaws: cultural crimes with legal punishments 13  
  Otherworldly bodies, bodily otherworlds 16  
  Examining the unmentionables 24  
  Queer afterlives: listening to the ghosts 29  
Chapter two: Queertrans cosmogonies  
  The apparitional trans: hidden from history, haunting the margins 33  
  The origin of identity: queer myth and metamorphosis 36  
  The crisis of category 41  
  Visions and retrovisions 46  
Chapter three: Towards a best praxis of transgender historiography  
  Embracing paradox 53  
  Names have power 54  
  Queertrans quintessence 59  
  History Wars Episode IV: A New Hope 68  
Coda/Afterthoughts 72  
Works cited  
  Epigraphs 74  
  Primary sources 74  
  Secondary sources 82  
Visual appendix 92
Abstract

The predominant cultural metanarrative of transgender existence is that we sprang fully formed into being sometime in the 1960s, like Athena stepping out of Zeus’s skull. And yet in every corner of human history we find people who might fit modern definitions of ‘transgender’. This thesis does not seek to retrofit contemporary understandings of gender onto the past. Rather, it sheds light on queertrans antecedence, through the case of Harry Crawford in 1920s Sydney. Crawford was ostensibly on trial for murder, but his court case was more concerned with the social crime of gender transgression. He had been assigned female at birth but lived, worked, and married as a man. Much of the subsequent literary and academic work on Crawford has reproduced the assumptions, stigmas, curiosity, and censure of the 1920s, putting him on trial again and again. This thesis examines Crawford’s life and afterlives, his disallowed embodiment, and the cultural myths that were read onto him, by reading resistantly into and against court transcripts, papers and depositions, contemporaneous newspaper records, and secondary scholarship. Crawford’s case articulated a number of cultural anxieties around aberrant bodies, marginalisation, and the maintenance of social hierarchies. It continues to provide insights into undercurrents of paradox, power, self-definition, and historical futurity. This study also investigates possibilities for culturally respectful and harm-reductive approaches for future historiography. By mapping out the histories of people pushed to the margins, we may gain greater understandings of the ways in which cultural identity is defined both from within (i.e. from interior subjectivities) and from without (i.e. against the Other). The work of filling in historical gaps and silences also allows marginalised people to reconnect with a sense of cultural self, and perhaps to more fully realise our place in the universe.

Please note that this thesis touches on potentially sensitive subjects including various forms of physical, sexual, and institutional violence.
Acknowledgements

This thesis was researched and written on the unceded lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. My love, respect, and solidarity to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders past and present.

I cannot possibly adequately express the depth of my gratitude to my thesis supervisor Dr Peter Hobbins, who has gone above and beyond in every respect and at every turn; whose kindness, sense of humour, ruthless editorial insight, and impeccable sartorial taste have been immensely motivating; and without whom I would have been utterly lost.

My very great thanks extend also to Dr Chin Jou, my supervisor for the first semester of 2017, whose steadfast support and calmness in the eye of the storm were invaluable;

to Dr Astrida Neimanis, whose patience, compassion, and flexibility helped to salvage my degree;

to Dr Hélène Sirantoine, Dr Mark McKenna, Dr Lesley Beaumont, and the dedicated staff of the Disability Services department, for their help navigating academic bureaucracy;

to Nerida Campbell, for kindly granting odd requests;

to Alice Wong, for being a source of resistance and hope;

to Jason Markou, the angel of the Assistive Technology Lab;

to those who fought for my right to access an education at the University of Sydney, including Jacob Baldwin, Joan Hume, Bronwyn Moye, and Jan Daisley;

to Margot Beavon-Collin, whose enduring love and support have been a lifeline, and whose cripple swagger I hope to always accompany with my wheelchair slant;
to all those beleaguered writers and friends from whom I extracted opinions regarding trans historiography, including Nadia Bracegirdle, Gabe Moses, Kaya Wilson, and many others;

to the mates who helped me keep appointments and deadlines, kept me company, kept watch, and kept me together, including Sam Green, Charlie O’Grady, Gabriel Whitehouse, Phoenix Fox, Charlie Kilmartin, Evie Araluen, Jon Dunk, Lawrence Warren, Anna Rowe, Tasnim Rahman, Lexi Brent, Joss Gross, Rowena Körber, Quin Eli, Maggie Korenblium, Josie Gibson, Hayden Moon, Jay Pankau, Theo Sim, Brody Calypso, and too many others to name;

to my so-geliebt cat, even though she is a gremlin and laptop vandal;

to my doctors, who helped me survive to the completion of this thesis;

to the scholars who have poured light into the lives of trans ancestors;

and lastly, to those who are no longer with us. Rest in power.
Harry Crawford v History

Problem Bodies, Queertrans Cosmogonies, and Historiographical Ethics in Cases of Gender Transgression in Late Nineteenth-Early Twentieth Century Australia
Introduction

History is not kind to us
we restitch it with living

–Audre Lorde, excerpt from ‘On My Way Out I Passed Over You and the Verrazano Bridge’.

The historian as cosmographer

History hasn’t happened yet. By this I mean both the physical scholarship and the general cognitive conception of the past; both are engaged in a mutually constitutive relationship with the present, permanently in flux, as ever-expanding as the limits of the universe. The purpose of history, then, is not only to understand the past, but to actively write ourselves into existence. We define cultural identity by reference to a historical lineage. As such the lack of a coherent historical lineage for any given cultural identity can be devastating. The histories of marginalised peoples are subject to what Gerda Lerner calls ‘a corrective “selective forgetting”’, imposed institutionally in order to maintain cultural hegemony. ‘People without a history,’ Lerner writes, ‘are considered not quite human’. Nowhere is this lacuna more apparent than in the erasure and obfuscation around the violent dispossession of Aboriginal peoples on this continent, and in the resulting academic upheaval that has come to be known as the History Wars.

The history of sexuality and gender identity is equally vital to understandings of marginalisation, social control, power structures, and cultural self-awareness. Victoria Harris

---

3 Lerner, Why History Matters, 208.
notes that ‘scholars of the history of sexuality are consistently engaged with issues and historical actors defined as exceptional … who do not fit within the “normal” parameters of society’. Indeed the etymology of the word ‘queer’ itself implies marginality and strangeness. By mapping out the histories of people pushed to the margins we may gain greater insights into the ways in which cultural identity is defined both from within (i.e. from interior subjectivities) and from without (i.e. against the Other). The work of filling in historical gaps and silences also allows marginalised people to reconnect with a sense of cultural self, and perhaps to more fully realise our place in the universe. As such the historian functions as an agent of cultural cosmography.

History-as-cultural-cosmography is something of a Sisyphean task: the more we write, the more there is to write about. Our field of study attempts to explore the infinite. Just as we may view the universe through a telescope, we may view certain cultural patterns through the lens of a single case. Carlo Ginzburg and Giovanni Levi describe this work as ‘microhistory’; phrased quite simply by Charles Joyner as ‘asking large questions in small places’. The case that forms the lens of this thesis is that of Harry Crawford in 1920s Sydney. Crawford came to public attention by way of a murder trial that wasn’t really about murder. The main subject of the court proceedings was the fact that Crawford was assigned female at birth, and yet lived as a man under the name Harry Leo Crawford for twenty-three years, provoking a public scandal and extensive media speculation. The logic of the prosecution was twofold: firstly that a deceptive gender identity might be deemed cognate with other perverse characteristics (i.e. murderousness); and secondly that Crawford’s supposed desire to cover up his deception was construed as a likely motive for murder. Today we would perhaps consider Crawford a

6 Cosmography is the science of mapping the known features of the cosmos.
9 Rex v Eugene Falleni, transcript of the trial of Eugene Falleni in the Supreme Court of New South Wales, 5-6 October 1920, 1920, Central Criminal and Quarter Sessions, 6/1007, State Archives and Records Authority of NSW (hereafter SARNSW).
transgender man, although at the time the terms used in the press were ‘man-woman’ and ‘invert’.¹⁰

Here the primary ethical dilemma rears its head: how can we recognise Crawford as a trans man when ‘trans’ was not yet a coherent identity and his only recorded statements regarding gender identity were made under significant duress? Equally, how can we fail to recognise Crawford as a trans man when all available sources regarding his identity and lived experience point so clearly to masculine identification? Perhaps Crawford’s identity might indeed be best understood under the aegis of transmasculinity. Perhaps, as other historians have opined, Crawford’s identity best fits a narrative of ‘passing women’; that is, queer women who (theoretically) lived as men in order to access employment and education, and to escape censure for their relationships with other women.¹¹ I contend that it is infeasible and inappropriate to make that judgement on Crawford’s behalf a century later. Yet it is equally impossible not to make interpretive decisions. As such I have chosen to take a scholarly approach that aims for harm reduction whilst embracing multiple possible historical interpretations.

**Trans gravitational waves**

The existing historiography of queer and trans identity can roughly be divided into two camps, or to maintain the cosmological metaphor, twin moons: relativist and essentialist, or alternatively Foucauldian and anti-Foucauldian. Michel Foucault posits that prior to 1900 (or 1870 at the earliest) queer identity did not exist: there was only queer behaviour, i.e. sodomy. The sodomite – the perpetrator of forbidden sexual acts – is differentiated from the homosexual in that the latter is defined ‘less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself … a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul’.¹² Foucault invokes transgender/genderqueer and intersex as primordial underlying forces in the construction of

---

¹⁰ ‘Famous Man-Woman’, Singleton Argus, 20 February 1931, 5; Rex v Eugene Falleni, 24-25.
queer identity, as ghosts in the machine, and yet he does not meaningfully engage with either cultural format beyond the realm of metaphor.

The anti-Foucauldian view is essentialist: that an inherent, ahistorical queer identity exists across times and cultures, or in Rictor Norton’s words, ‘that homosexuals are born and not made’. On the whole I find this view unacceptably oblivious to the ways in which sexuality and gender identity are contextually and culturally specific. Furthermore this approach is even more prone to erasing transgender presences in the past, in favour of absorbing them into a totalised history of gay identity and culture. Still, there are some compelling observations in the anti-Foucauldian scholarship. Terry Castle’s argument against the Foucauldian view of queer recency is that it ‘relies… heavily on a condescending belief in the intellectual and erotic naiveté of women of past epochs’.

The twin moons of relativist and essentialist scholarship are tidally locked, moving in synchrony, simultaneously attracted to and repelled from each other. I hope to find an acceptable balance by grounding my work in the primary evidence, mostly consisting of court transcripts and newspaper articles, and examining the multiple meanings and legacies generated by Crawford’s life. My main contention is that Crawford must be recognised as connected to a lineage of transgender identity – if only because so much of the academic and literary work on his life has already named him as transgender. This does not necessitate an essentialist view of Crawford as existing within identity categories that had not yet been named. Rather, I analyse his life in the context of his time, alongside his afterlives and the cultural implications of those representations. The version of Crawford that existed in the past and the version that exists in the present are also mutually constitutive, each locked in the gravitational pull of the other. Attempting to conclusively ‘fix’ Crawford’s gendered subjectivity is a fruitless endeavour. We must instead simply embrace the hugeness of the task and do our best to get it as right as possible.

Finding other universes

We do not write history just to write history. We write to understand ourselves by reference to where we have been; to examine cultures, peoples, places, and ideas in the past, to learn how they were shaped, and how they in turn shaped the cultures that came after them. Ultimately my purpose in this thesis is to argue that transgender identity has a past and a future as well as a present.

My first chapter examines Crawford’s disallowed physicality, the identity categories that were read onto his body, and the legal censure attached to aberrant bodies, ethnicities, sexualities, and gender identities. Certain elements of his embodiment were used to figure him as a cultural, physical, and sexual threat. This figuration is especially notable in the representations of his dildo, which was referenced obliquely in the media and deployed as an exhibit in his trial. My analysis in this chapter is based largely in the court transcripts, papers and depositions, and newspaper records from the time, in conversation with secondary scholarship on queer/trans identities, gender crossing, and racial hierarchies.

My second chapter begins with Crawford’s actual utterances, very few of which are recorded reliably. After considering how Crawford told his own story, I then look to the ways in which his story was told for him, about him and around him. Certain mythologising elements are present in the historical accounts of gender-transgressive subjects, usually with the intention of figuring them into coherent categories and narratives. People who violated social norms were either reintegrated into ‘acceptable’ versions of transgression, or punished, thus reasserting the dominance of normative models of gender and sexuality. This process relied upon an understanding of gender transgressive subjects as perpetually unprecedented, lacking cultural origin and denied connections to other transgressors. In short, they were rendered ahistorical. In reclaiming Crawford’s lineage, this chapter makes detailed reference to the court transcripts and also to contemporaneous newspaper articles, reaching back to similar cases in previous decades to better understand the cultural context surrounding Crawford’s interaction with the law, the media, and medicine.

My third chapter examines the existing historiography and literary representations around Crawford, identifying the major ethical issues and outlining possibilities for culturally respectful and harm-reductive approaches for future histories. This section largely focusses on secondary scholarship, including the work of Suzanne Falkiner, Mark Tedeschi, Ruth Ford, Lachlan Philpott, and Pip Smith, among others. I also reach out to existing queer/trans theory
and history, as well as feminist epistemology and decolonial methodology, examining undercurrents of paradox, power, self-definition, and historical futurity.

As historians we write inescapably from within a cultural tradition. In response to the question of historiographical objectivity Donna Haraway posits an approach of ‘situated knowledges’.\(^\text{16}\) Situated knowledges acknowledge the ‘limited location’ of the historian, including personal politics and interpretive frameworks, rather than falsely projecting a disembodied, impartial, and omniscient author position.\(^\text{17}\) This stance provides a midpoint between dizzying relativism (which Haraway describes as ‘a way of being nowhere while claiming to be everywhere equally’) and universalising essentialism. In rejecting unmarked categories, it relies instead on ‘partial, locatable, critical knowledges sustaining the possibility of webs of connection called solidarity’.\(^\text{18}\)

If I am to adequately situate a history of Harry Crawford then I must acknowledge the competing biases surrounding multivalent visions of the past. The relevant matrices include the interrelated structures and identities that lay claim to Crawford’s existence; the historical specificity of current norms around sex, gender, and sexuality; and my own identity, as a young, white, trans, queer, intersex crip, living on welfare but from a privileged socioeconomic background, writing into the academy. Writing situated historiography requires vulnerability, not simply for vulnerability’s sake, but to provide a strong gravitational core to history work. My transgender identity is relevant to my scholarship because it shapes my interpretive lens, and allows me to draw on cultural connections and familiarities that cisgender (i.e. not transgender) historians may not have access to. In a field where very few of my scholarly peers are transgender, this makes my perspective unfortunately unique. My context as a scholar provides a point of reference from which I may begin to make sense of distant universes. This situated position does not necessarily imbue me with greater cultural authority, but it at least allows for a sense of community accountability in rendering Crawford’s life both accurately and respectfully.


\(^\text{17}\) Haraway, ‘Situated Knowledges’, 583.

\(^\text{18}\) Haraway, ‘Situated Knowledges’, 584.
Chapter one: Problem bodies

Soon they would find out I didn’t have insurance. Momentarily a cop would arrive. Every bit of information I gave him would be a lie. I was still a gender outlaw – any encounter with the police might end up with me in their custody. I panicked. It was time to escape.


Gender outlaws: cultural crimes with legal punishments

When the news of Harry Crawford’s murder trial broke in August 1920, media outlets were more concerned with the perceived social crime of Crawford’s gender crossing than with the actual legal charge. Newspaper headlines referred to ‘The Man-Woman Case’ or ‘Man-Woman On Trial’, as if the trial was for the act of gender transgression rather than for the alleged murder of his first wife, Annie Birkett, who had disappeared in 1917.20 Another article headed ‘Masquerader Charged’ identified Crawford as ‘the Italian woman Eugenie Falleni, otherwise Eugene Martello’ and included a detailed physical description.21 When reporters did mention the murder charge, they usually prioritised Crawford’s gender, or implied that the two were causally linked. One article published the morning after Crawford’s arrest was entitled ‘Remarkable Case: A Woman Arrested: Masqueraded as a Man: Weds Two Women: Accused of Killing One’.22 When Crawford was eventually found guilty and sentenced to death (later commuted to life imprisonment), headlines read ‘Man-Woman Guilty: Falleni Sentenced to Death’, again framing the case as if Crawford had been found guilty of a crime of gender duplicity rather than murder.23 At one point during the trial the Chief Justice reminded the jury


that Crawford was on trial for murder and not for sexual perversion or deceit.\textsuperscript{24} Ruth Ford notes that:

Although she was on trial for murder, she was also effectively on trial – both in the courtroom and in the press – for her gender-crossing, and for his subsequent marriages and sexual relationships with women. Newspaper headlines focussed predominantly on her gender-crossing and her marriages, and depicted the alleged murder almost as a secondary offence.\textsuperscript{25}

The media framing betrays an implicit logic underlying Crawford’s interaction with the Darlinghurst court: that his gender identity was somehow indicative of his guilt. Crawford’s gender crossing was seen as proof of his deceptive and malicious character. He was thus feasibly capable of murder, being described as a ‘fiendish man-woman-killer’ possessed by a ‘murderous mania’.\textsuperscript{26} The other popular interpretation linking Crawford’s gender identity to the murder was that it provided him a motive, i.e. that he had murdered Birkett because she had found him out.

Beyond the issue of motive, the fact that he had lived successfully as a man, unnoticed, for twenty years was profoundly unsettling. The First World War had ended only two years prior, and the nation was already in a state of heightened unease about the women who had taken up ‘masculine’ labour during wartime, before being displaced upon the soldiers’ return.\textsuperscript{27} Crawford’s successful ‘deception’ implied that gender roles were not as rigid and immovable as many liked to think; forebodingly, it furthermore implied that men were potentially replaceable.

\bibitem{ford} Ford, ‘The Man-Woman Murderer’, 159. Ford pointedly varies pronouns in reference to Crawford.
\bibitem{falleni2} ‘The Tragedy of Mental Errors: Men Who Masqueraded as Women, and Women Who Posed as Men – and Were Crushed by the Wheels of Fate, Which Grind Exceeding Small’, \textit{Truth} (Brisbane), 8 January 1928, 14; ‘Falleni Now Free: Famous Man-Woman Masquerader’, \textit{The Daily Telegraph} (Sydney), 19 February 1931, 1.
The 1920 trial was not the first time that Crawford had come into conflict with the law, or the media, on the issue of his gender. In July 1895 the *New Zealand Times* reported on the ‘most extraordinary case’ of ‘a girl, who is 21 years of age’ and ‘a native of Wellington’, who had married a bigamist and subsequently taken up an occupation ‘in a brickyard as a labourer’ dressed in ‘a suit of boy’s clothes’. The Wellington *Daily Telegraph* reported that the youth was ‘a plucky girl’ who ‘donned boy’s clothes, and obtained work in a drain pipe factory. She was recognised after working a week’. Crawford’s New South Wales prison records place his date of birth as 25 July 1875, so he would not quite have been twenty-one in 1895, but Suzanne Falkiner’s interviews with family members indicate that Crawford did indeed work as a bricklayer in his youth.

A year later there were reports of a similar case in the *Wairarapa News*: ‘A girl named Lena Salette, not unknown in Wellington, applied to the local Benevolent Society on Saturday for relief. She was dressed in boy’s clothing, and said she was looking for work. She was arrested on a charge of vagrancy’. The *New Zealand Times* and the *Wanganui Herald* identified Salette as the same youth who had been reported on a year previously. An article in the *Evening Star* wrote that this recent infraction was ‘not the first frolic of Lena Salette, who masqueraded in men’s clothes ostensibly on the look out for work … Evidently she is fond of wearing “the breeks”’.

Given that Crawford hailed from Wellington and occasionally went by the name Lena Falleni (the name he put down as his own on his daughter’s birth certificate), it seems very unlikely that ‘Lena Salette’ was anyone other than Crawford. Evidently the locals were becoming increasingly aware of Crawford’s proclivities with regard to gender expression; this made it dangerous for Crawford to live as he was, ‘not unknown in Wellington’. It was a small

---

30 Gaol photo of Eugenia Falleni aged 45. NRS 2496 3-6006, 499, 1920, State Reformatory for Women. State Archives and Records Authority of NSW (hereafter SARNSW), accessed 7 November 2018.
33 ‘Advertisements Column’, *Evening Star* (Dunedin), 4 August 1896, 2.
city: the non-Māori suburban population was 41,758 in the 1896 Census.\textsuperscript{34} Crawford moved to Sydney soon afterward, presumably hoping that distance and urban anonymity would prevent him from being recognised and exposed.

For Harry Crawford, whose very existence was condemned by the society in which he lived, the law was not an instrument of protection but a weapon wielded against him at every turn. It did not matter whether he was actually guilty of vagrancy (a crime conferred upon a disadvantage), fraudulent impersonation (a crime conferred upon the violation of societal expectations), or even murder. What he was actually being punished for was the crime of living authentically in a gender and sexual identity that was not legally or culturally available to him. As this chapter argues, Crawford’s refusal to align with normative gender binaries presented the Australian public with a profound cultural challenge. In response, the media coverage and public discourse around the Crawford case sought both to escalate and defuse this ‘aberration’ by figuring his gender transgression into a broader constellation of Othered identity markers.

\textbf{Otherworldly bodies, bodily otherworlds}

Social identity can be understood as being created against the Other; that is, dominant identity categories are defined in opposition to that which they are not. The Othered category becomes marked, while the dominant category remains unmarked, default, and featureless. In \textit{The Second Sex} Simone de Beauvoir writes that ‘Humanity is male, and man defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself; she is not considered an autonomous being … He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other’.\textsuperscript{35} So too with other systems of power hierarchy: Indigenous against colonialist; proletariat against the bourgeoisie; and so too queer against heteronormative and transgender against cisnormative.\textsuperscript{36}

The Australian press figured Harry Crawford into multiple Othered categories. Foremost he was ‘the notorious man-woman’, but Crawford was also the Italian immigrant; the


\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Ibid.}
working-class labourer; the neglectful single mother; and the disfigured amputee. Clare Sears theorises that the confluence of Othering in regard to gender transgressors is part of a larger project of defining and stigmatising certain ‘problem bodies’, that is, ‘multiple sets of bodies that local government officials defined as social problems and targeted for interventions’. Throughout this period gender transgressors were targeted alongside Chinese labourers, street sex workers, and disabled homeless people. Sears claims that ‘cross-dressing laws were not an isolated or idiosyncratic act of government, but one part of a broader legal matrix that was centrally concerned with the boundaries of sex, race, citizenship, and city space’.

In part, Crawford was constituted as the Other by figuring him into certain existent narratives of threatening groups. An article published on 6 July 1920 – the day after his arrest – wrote that ‘Eugenie Fallini [sic], an Italian, had married a man named Martello in her native country, and had a daughter. They went to New Zealand, and after several years she came to Sydney with her daughter. Soon after arrival here Fallini adopted a male attire’. Crawford, of course, had not been raised in Italy at all, nor had he married or given birth to his daughter there. He was born in Ardenza, a small town just outside Livorno, Italy, in 1875, and his family emigrated to New Zealand two years later, in 1877. Of course it was far less threatening for Crawford to be ‘a native of Wellington’ (i.e. a colonist) as opposed to ‘a native of Italy’ (i.e. an immigrant of then-stigmatised ethnic background). The same article noted that Crawford was employed as ‘a general useful’ and had ‘worked at various places, such as factories and hotels’, relating Crawford’s arrest in a way that implied the deciding factor in being charged was the ‘discovery’ of his gender: ‘She was taken to police headquarters, and medically examined by Dr. Palmer, Government Medical Officer, and subsequently charged with murder’.

39 Ibid.
42 ‘Romance in Real Life’, New Zealand Times, 2; ‘Alleged Murder: Sensational Discovery: Woman Masquerades as a Man’, The Brisbane Courier, 6 July 1920, 7.
Another method of Othering Crawford was via constant, repeated, exhaustively detailed descriptions of his physical appearance. Of the several people named in the aforementioned article, including Birkett, Crawford was the only one whose physical appearance was provided: ‘She was dressed in a man’s dark suit when arrested, and is described as a very slight, flat-chested woman, with dark hair’.44 Another article published the same morning in Adelaide – based on telegrams from the previous day – wrote that ‘In appearance she was described as slight of build and dark complexioned’.45 The change of phrasing from ‘with dark hair’ to ‘dark complexioned’ is notable, especially given this characterisation was presumably based on the same police report as the earlier article.

The description of Crawford as ‘dark complexioned’ was likely in reference to his hair colour, but would very probably have given the impression that Crawford was dark-skinned. In 1917 the Bendigo Advertiser described an Aboriginal man as ‘dark-complexioned’, and in 1912 the Evening Star used the phrase to describe a Mauritian man.46 In 1894 the Maitland Daily Mercury used ‘dark-complexioned’ interchangeably with ‘coloured’, as did the Argus in 1904.47 In 1900 the Clarence and Richmond Examiner used ‘dark-complexioned’ interchangeably with ‘dark’ and ‘olive-skinned’.48 At the time most of the media usage of the phrase was in regard to people who had broken the law in some way. In 1902 it was used for a person charged with assault and robbery; in 1904 for another charged with impersonation; in 1909 for a pickpocket; in 1921 for a defendant accused of forgery; and in 1927 for a suspected murderer.49 In 1908 the phrase was deployed to describe someone who had been arrested for vagrancy and described as a ‘hermaphrodite’ – a historical slur for people born with physical intersex variations.50 The arresting sergeant said ‘he thought it would be fair to the public, in

---

44 Ibid.
47 ‘The Landlady’s Linoleum’, The Argus (Melbourne), 11 June 1904, 16.
50 ‘Woman Charged With Vagrancy’, Kalgoorlie Western Angus, 12 May 1908, 12.
view of the statement about her sex, to have her examined’, but the judge replied that he did not have the power to order it.51

Helen Andreoni notes that in 1890s Australia, ‘Italians were seen to be not the same colour as the decision-makers nor indeed were they seen as Europeans’.52 This discordance was emphasised particularly along a geographic divide in which Northern Italians were more likely to be assimilated into whiteness, while Southern Italians were prone to being categorised as a racial Other, emphasising Moorish heritage in the area by reference to phrases such as ‘Italo-African blood’.53 In the 1920s, Southern and Eastern Europeans were considered ‘white aliens’ or ‘semi-coloured’.54 Catherine Dewhirst notes that a 1925 Royal Commission studying ‘racial tide-waves in Australia’ expressed an ‘irrational hostility to Southern Italians’ who were ‘racialised’ and made subject to a ‘xenophobic crusade driven by the press’.55

Crawford was Northern Italian but newspaper articles did not specify so, mostly referring to him simply as Italian. It is important to consider Crawford’s description as ‘dark complexioned’ in this context – especially as after he appeared in the Central Police Court, the Barrier Miner contradictorily described him as ‘very pale’.56 The Miner expounded that Crawford was ‘of slight build, with small, brown eyes, and black hair, which was cropped short, and parted on the left side of the head. She was dressed in a man’s suit of grey tweed, with a tennis shirt, and wore patent leather lace boots. She carried in one hand a soft grey felt hat’.57 In fact Crawford’s eyes were blue.58 His first appearance at the Central Police Court on 6 July drew ‘a big crowd’, and some variation of this description was circulated across many different

51 Ibid.
53 ‘Italians Swarm to France’, Labor News (Sydney), 22 December 1923, 7.
56 ‘Annie Birkett’s Death: Falleni the “Man-Woman” Charged with Murder’, Barrier Miner, Tuesday 17 August 1920, 2.
57 Ibid.
58 Gaol photo of Eugenia Falleni aged 45. NRS 2496 3-6006, 499, SARNSW.
newspapers all over the country. The Sydney Sun and the Barrier Miner wrote that ‘The accused woman is strangely interesting. She bore an extraordinary resemblance to a man for facially she is masculine. She wore a man’s clothes’. Nearly identical articles were published in the Melbourne Herald, under the title ‘Charge of Murder: Italian Woman Described’, and in Melbourne’s Weekly Times as ‘Charge of Murder: Woman In Male Attire’. A couple of weeks later, the notorious tabloid Truth printed a description that read:

Standing in the dock in male attire, she seemed extremely nervous, and her hand fidgeted uneasily on the rail. Her short, black hair was neatly parted on the left side. Her complexion was sallow, her cheeks hollow, and her jaw square and masculine. The features generally are those of a man rather than of a woman. The face, and more particularly the mouth, is lined and wrinkled, and has the appearance of HAVING BEEN SHAVEN. She wore a soft tennis shirt and a colored [sic] knitted silk tie. Her dark grey suit appeared to have been worn a good deal, and her feet were shod with neat and well-polished patent-leather boots, with dull uppers. She wore a gold ring on her left little finger … Her hands were rough like a man’s from the work she had been doing.

The description of Crawford’s work-roughened hands is telling because it points to a gendered proletarian physicality that rendered Crawford menacing on multiple levels. Young working-class Italian men were already considered a growing threat to Australian society – that is, to ‘Australian society’ as inherited colonial construct, as opposed to simply the people who were living in what is now called Australia. The Italian migrant worker was no less a coloniser, albeit one who occupied a particularly uneasy position in the existing Australian colonial imagination. Catherine Dewhirst

---

59 ‘Posed as Man: Eugene Falleni In Court’, The Sun (Sydney), 6 July 1920, 5.
60 Ibid.; ‘Woman Masquerading as a Man is Charged with Murder’, Barrier Miner, 6 July 1920, 4.
61 ‘Charge of Murder: Italian Woman Described’, The Herald (Melbourne), 6 July 1920, 10; ‘Charge of Murder: Woman in Male Attire’, Weekly Times (Melbourne), 10 July 1920, 41.
writes that Italian immigrants ‘interpreted and negotiated their “white alien” status at a time when white Australians were being invented. Land was the central issue at stake’. Narratives of inclusion or exclusion for Italian migrants were often based on whether they were perceived to be dispossessing and displacing white settlers, just as white settlers had dispossessed and displaced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (albeit far more violently). A letter to The Worker in 1925 wrote that ‘By every boat and train Italians come and walk straight into jobs … In a few years, if the white men do not come here, they will need passports to get in’.

Such sentiments had been flaring up since the end of the war, in particular due to perceived conflicts between returning soldiers and Italian migrant labourers. In 1919 the Geelong Advertiser reported that in Perth ‘the Returned Soldiers Association has ordered all single Italians to leave the town before six o’clock tonight. The Federal and State Governments are to be asked to make the goldfields a prohibited area for single Italians’. A month later, Perth’s Daily News wrote that returned soldiers ‘took action to secure the removal of Italian workers from the Celebration lease at Hampton Plains’, because they ‘had been given the promise of work, but preference had been given to Italians’. Conversely there were certain narrow conceptions of Northern Italians that could be embraced so long as they were understood as allies against unionists, Communists, and the ‘bad Italians’ of the South. In 1922 the Brisbane Courier wrote that ‘These Northern Italians are no menace to a White Australia: quite otherwise, indeed, for in time they become useful and successful citizens’.

It was widely reported that Crawford had been arrested at the Empire Hotel where he worked in Annandale, on the corner of Parramatta Road and Johnston Street. In 1920 Annandale was considered part of the ‘red belt’ of Sydney’s radicalised working class, populated by the socialist agitators of the International Workers of the World, who were infamous for having led the anti-war movement in Sydney. Annandale’s neighbouring suburb

---

64 Ibid.
65 John Dondilo, ‘Italians in the North’, Worker (Brisbane), 5 February 1925, 17.
69 The Empire Hotel is in fact is still there, and now displays a large portrait of Crawford by Cleo Gardiner; the work takes its name after its subject, ‘Harry’. See visual appendix.
70 Rowan J. Cahill and Terry Irving, Radical Sydney: Places, Portraits, and Unruly Episodes (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2010), 116–120.
Leichhardt was known as Little Italy.\textsuperscript{71} Crawford’s previous occupations were given in detail as ‘a man’s work – manual labor [sic] only – at different hotels, and, amongst other places, at Barnes’ meat works, and at the Perdria rubber works’.\textsuperscript{72} The aforementioned manual labour had involved an accident that led to the amputation of Crawford’s right little finger. This absence was brought up during the trial, when a doctor was asked to examine Crawford’s hand to resolve whether the amputation might have affected his carriage or gait, since apparently he had ‘the masculine angle of arms’\textsuperscript{73}. Multiple witness testimonies mentioned the amputation, though it did not appear in the initial newspaper coverage, perhaps because he had a habit of hiding that hand in his pocket.\textsuperscript{74}

Crawford’s working identity was also tied to his gender, and was the main explanation employed to rationalise his transgressive gender identity: ‘Her reason for assuming the personality of a man was that she thought it better to give up life as a woman, because they worked long hours for a small wage’.\textsuperscript{75} The general public at the time may also have drawn associations between gender-crossing and the radicalisation of the working class due to the lingering cultural spectre of the Rebecca Riots of 1839–44, in which discontented agrarian workers had dressed as women and attacked the turnpike gates blocking highways in Wales. As interwar newspapers noted, several prominent Rebecca rioters were arrested and transported to Australia.\textsuperscript{76}

Crawford was the Australian nightmare of insurrectionary proletariat given human form. Not only was he an Italian migrant worker in a period of high tension between Italian labourers and returned soldiers; he was someone assigned female at birth who had comfortably occupied positions of traditionally masculine employment. Even worse, Crawford was passing

\textsuperscript{71} Rina Huber, \textit{From Pasta to Pavlova: A Comparative Study of Italian Settlers in Sydney and Griffith} (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1977).

\textsuperscript{72} ‘A Startling Story: Woman Who Masqueraded and “Married” Other Women’, \textit{Truth} (Perth), 24 July 1920, 5.

\textsuperscript{73} Rex v Eugene Falleni, 61; Ford, ‘The Man-Woman Murderer’, 169.

\textsuperscript{74} Rex v Eugene Falleni, 69, 71. See visual appendix.

\textsuperscript{75} ‘A Startling Story’, \textit{Truth}, 5.

on his subversive potential to his daughter: *Truth* reported that ‘Falleni’s daughter, named Josephine, kept in touch with her mother after the latter adopted male attire, and all along knew of the deception. She worked at several factories with her mother, and it is believed that she is at present working in a city factory’. Crawford’s ambiguous ethnic identity is also relevant to his construction as a ‘bad mother’, given that at the time there were widespread anxieties about ‘miscegenation’ resulting from Aboriginal women dressing in masculine clothes and socialising with white men. By this time the Stolen Generations removals were in full swing, reflecting wider cultural anxieties around ‘bad’ or racially inappropriate mothers and their influence upon Australian futurity. As Lisa Featherstone notes, in the 1920s ‘reproduction was seen as key to the functioning of a healthy white Australia’, resulting in fervent policing of the bounds of normative sexuality.

The function of these detailed descriptions of Crawford’s physical appearance and occupation was ultimately to figure him into a pre-existing matrix of assumptions and prejudices regarding groups of people considered undesirable or threatening to the established social order. If Crawford could be made sense of as belonging to an existing threat, then paradoxically this identification reduced the destabilising potential of his existence. If Crawford’s gender transgression was due to some quirk of the encroaching Italian labour menace, it could then be brought under control by the same methods being deployed to control the Italian threat.

Conversely, if Crawford’s gender transgression simply existed in its own right, unattached to other marginalised categories, then it was vastly more capable of disrupting norms and structures that maintained their power by virtue of being supposedly natural and inherent. If gender, race, and class were no longer considered inherent and permanent, if they allowed lateral or upward mobility between scaffolded social positions, then the power structures dependent on these hierarchies might be in danger of collapsing entirely. Fear of this

---

77 Ibid.
tumult led to Crawford’s gender being articulated in terms of other marginalised categories so as to render his transgression ‘knowable’. It also led to ubiquitous obfuscation, euphemism, and erasure in public narratives of Harry Crawford and others like him – so that the ‘disruptive knowledges’ around his transgression could be managed and controlled.\footnote{Lucy Chesser, “‘A Woman Who Married Three Wives’: Management of Disruptive Knowledge in the 1879 Australian Case of Edward De Lacy Evans’, \emph{Journal of Women’s History}, vol. 9, no. 4 (1998): 53–77.}

**Examining the unmentionables**

I am not especially interested in the question of Crawford’s guilt. Mark Tedeschi states that in his opinion, Crawford’s trial was woefully mishandled and that on the evidence provided he should have been ‘acquitted outright or, at most, convicted of manslaughter’.\footnote{Tedeschi, \textit{Eugenia}, 236.} Tedeschi blames ‘fallacious scientific evidence, unreliable citing witnesses, devious police practices and an avalanche of prejudicial publicity’ for the murder conviction.\footnote{Ibid.} As a barrister, law professor, and former Crown Prosecutor, Tedeschi’s expertise is far greater than my own in this matter and I defer to his judgement. Regardless, I am not really invested in Crawford’s character or in his innocence or lack thereof when it comes to the charge of murder. What I am more concerned with is the ways in which other perceived crimes were filtered through the murder charge, and the ways in which the trial may be used as a lens through which to examine societal prejudice.

Perhaps the starkest example of Crawford’s gender serving as shorthand for murderous guilt was the way in which his dildo was deployed as an exhibit in the trial.\footnote{See visual appendix.} The prosecution’s argument as to Crawford’s motive was that he had sexually deceived his wife; she had found him out; and he had murdered her and attempted to murder her son to cover it up. Much of the historical and artistic work on Crawford has been unduly fascinated with the question of exactly how much Annie Birkett knew or suspected about her husband. At the very least she knew for eight months before she went missing in 1917, because that was the point at which she told her sister, Lily Nugent.\footnote{Rex v Eugene Falleni, 2.} At the most generous estimate it may well have been common knowledge,
since Crawford’s daughter Josephine had told the neighbours after she came to live with them.\(^\text{86}\) An article published five days after Crawford’s arrest noted that ‘Several people were questioned and admitted that it had been known for a considerable period that Falleni, dressed as a man, was actually a woman’, including an elderly Italian family who had known Crawford in New Zealand.\(^\text{87}\)

In May 1920 Harry Birkett and his aunt and uncle went to the police and suggested that Crawford might have murdered Annie Birkett to cover up the secret of his gender transgression.\(^\text{88}\) The flaw in this accusation, of course, is that Crawford had not also attempted to murder half of the neighbourhood. On 13 June, Detective Sergeant Robson took formal written statements, but did not include the information about Crawford’s gender.\(^\text{89}\)

On 5 July, however, police officers armed with the knowledge of Crawford’s gender transgression went to his workplace and asked to interview him. During questioning they asked Crawford to strip, at which point (supposedly) he told them he was a woman.\(^\text{90}\) They then searched his home, finding in a suitcase an unlicensed revolver, three marriage certificates, and another item that was described only as an ‘article’ – the dildo.\(^\text{91}\) It was only after this discovery that Harry Crawford was arrested and taken into custody.

In a very real sense it was the dildo that damned him. In the three years since Annie Birkett had vanished, neither her son nor her sister had reported her missing to the police, either because they thought she had left of her own volition or because they were worried about the family’s reputation. It is fairly likely that an anonymous body discovered in Lane Cove in October 1917 was indeed Annie’s, because both of her dentists examined the teeth and identified their work, though notably neither of them could say whether the dentures were Annie’s specifically.\(^\text{92}\) When the corpse was found, however, it had been ruled an accidental

\(^{86}\) Herbert M. Moran, *Viewless Winds: Being the Recollections and Digressions of an Australian Surgeon* (London: Peter Davies, 1939), 244, 246.

\(^{87}\) ‘The Chatswood Tragedy’, *Singleton Argus*, 10 July 1920, 5.

\(^{88}\) Rex v Eugene Falleni, 3, 80; Tedeschi, *Eugenia*, 82–83.

\(^{89}\) Harry Bell Birkett, signed deposition. Criminal Investigation Branch, Sydney, 13 June 1920. Papers and depositions from Rex v Eugene Falleni, NRS 880, 9/7250, SARNSW; Rex v Eugene Falleni, 3; Tedeschi, *Eugenia*, 83.

\(^{90}\) Rex v Eugene Falleni, 81.

\(^{91}\) Papers and depositions from Rex v Eugene Falleni, NRS 880, 9/7250, SARNSW. See visual appendix.

\(^{92}\) Rex v Eugene Falleni, 30–33.
death. It was only upon Crawford’s arrest – and his exposure in the press as a ‘man-woman’ – that the coroners recanted their findings and decided that Birkett might have been murdered.93 When it came to the actual murder charge, all of the evidence was circumstantial and very tenuous. A 1934 retrospective was tellingly subtitled ‘The evidence was weak, but none can doubt her guilt’.94

No wonder, then, that so much of the trial focussed on the issue of Crawford’s gender. Not only was it the only element that the authorities had any proof for; it was also the only reason he had been arrested in the first place. Despite the fact that the trial hinged on the issue of sexual deception, and the dildo had been offered as evidence in the prosecutor’s closing statement to the jury, the written records from the time are incredibly reluctant to actually name the dildo for what it was. This was not from unfamiliarity; the word ‘dildo’ had already been in use for centuries: Laura Gowing notes that ‘dildos were surprisingly established objects in early modern culture’.95 And yet whenever the dildo was mentioned in 1920, it appeared in the most euphemistic terms possible. In Robson’s address during the trial, the policeman referred to it only as the ‘article’, ‘something artificial’, and ‘the exhibit’.96 The judge referred obliquely to ‘an imposition [having been] practised’.97 The media described the dildo as ‘the grotesque symbol of her distorted longings’; ‘strange evidence’; and, many years later, ‘gadgets designed to further Crawford’s masquerade’.98 Many reports were vaguer still, including the Evening News’ description of the prosecutor’s presentation of the dildo:

93 Rex v Eugene Falleni, 13–27; Tedeschi, Eugenia, 97.
96 Rex v Eugene Falleni, 83.
97 Rex v Eugene Falleni, 95.
The accused posed as a man, and definitely stated that she was a man, and married two different women as a man. So many lies were told by accused that it was necessary to closely examine all her statements and ask the reason for them.

Mr. Coyle said there were some matters which he did not care to refer to in the presence of so many women.

The Chief Justice: If women came to a Criminal Court they must not be considered for a second.

Mr. Coyle, in conclusion, said that accused was so practical in deceit that she had been able for years to deceive the woman with the belief that she was a man. ‘All her acts,’ he added, ‘are full of deceit’. 99

Ruth Ford writes that the term ‘lesbian’ was never applied to Crawford by the popular press during his trial. 100 This is not quite true. An article in Truth wrote on 31 July 1920:

The Sydney ‘Worker’ wonders how in the case of Eugene Falleni and his wife—reported in last week's ‘Truth’—the ‘husband’ could continue to deceive the ‘wife’ after marriage. The ‘Worker’ must be kidding, surely. Those Lesbian love stunts are not so uncommon as all that. 101

Certainly for the most part the press did make a distinction between Crawford and the women who were characterised as perpetrators of the ‘vice’ of ‘Lesbian love’, and Crawford never used the term ‘lesbian’ to describe himself. 102

It is likely that Crawford made the dildo himself. Herbert Moran – a well-known local doctor who interviewed Crawford a decade after the trial – describes it as constructed from rags covered in gauze and capped with rubber; Crawford had worked for some time at Perdriaus’

---

99 ‘Man-Woman on Trial: Eugene Falleni Pleads Not Guilty’, Evening News (Sydney), 5 October 1920, 7.
rubber factory.\textsuperscript{103} Supposedly the dildo is held at the Justice & Police Museum, but curator Nerida Campbell believes the artefact in their collection is probably not the genuine ‘article’.\textsuperscript{104} For one, it lacks the rubber cap described by Moran, though latex does tend to perish if not stored correctly. Tedeschi notes that the dildo was last reliably seen in 1921, when the two coronial doctors involved in Crawford’s trial presented it at a meeting of the NSW Branch of the British Medical Association.\textsuperscript{105} In 1954 a former NSW Premier wrote an article in \textit{Truth} claiming that Thomas John Ley, the Minister for Justice at the time of Crawford’s conviction, mounted private viewings of the dildo: ‘Ley was holding an exhibition. He was displaying and explaining to members the sex equipment found in Falleni’s possession when arrested. Ley was openly gloating over his grotesque possession’.\textsuperscript{106}

Crawford’s dildo was a powerful symbol of everything that was considered most threatening about his case. It represented both a concerningly detachable masculinity and also the ultimate appropriation of the masculine socio-sexual role (i.e. penetrative capacity). Jeanne Hamming describes the dildo as a ‘rogue object/sign’ that ‘demystifies the penis as a source of male dominance’ and has the potential to overthrow definitive gender categories.\textsuperscript{107} Taking this argument further, if lesbians can possess penises (either as dildos or as organs), then the supposed biological inherence of gender categories begins to fall away, and the presence or absence of a phenotypical penis does not confer or invalidate masculinity.

Hamming furthermore links her interpretation of the dildo to Donna Haraway’s construction of the cyborg as ‘floating signifier’, the ‘hybrid of machine and organism’.\textsuperscript{108} This comparison echoes Moran’s description of Crawford as a ‘robot Don Juan’.\textsuperscript{109} Anjali Arondekar offers possibilities for reading the cultural weight of the dildo as extending beyond gender and sexuality, by exploring the India rubber dildo as a (literal) product of colonialism.\textsuperscript{110}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{103} Moran, \textit{Viewless Winds}, 238; Rex v Eugene Falleni, 12.
  \item \textsuperscript{104} Nerida Campbell, Email correspondence with author, 14 May 2017. See visual appendix.
  \item \textsuperscript{105} Tedeschi, \textit{Eugenia}, 246; Ford, ‘The Man-Woman Murderer’, 180.
  \item \textsuperscript{106} ‘Lang Reveals… The Terrible History of the Chalk Pit Killer’, \textit{Truth} (Sydney), 21 February 1954, 22.
  \item \textsuperscript{107} Hamming, Jeanne E. ‘Dildonics, Dykes and the Detachable Masculine’, \textit{The European Journal of Women’s Studies} 8, no. 3 (August 2001): 331-332.
  \item \textsuperscript{109} Moran, \textit{Viewless Winds}, 244.
  \item \textsuperscript{110} Anjali Arondekar, \textit{For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India} (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 98.
\end{itemize}
At any rate, the dildo with all of its formidable symbolic power was the deciding factor in Crawford’s fate; as Ford puts it, ‘the prosecution was able to convince the jury Falleni was guilty of murder, because she had already been found to be guilty of gender and sexual transgressions’.\textsuperscript{111}

**Queer afterlives: listening to the ghosts**

In Australia it was not actually illegal for a person assigned female at birth to dress as a man. However, as Falkiner notes, Crawford had no way of knowing this, and in fact based on his experiences in New Zealand probably believed it was a crime.\textsuperscript{112} He would not have been entirely incorrect. Cross-dressing or gender-crossing may not have been crimes at law, but many scholars have noted that such non-criminal ‘social crimes’ were often punished by other means – for example a charge of vagrancy or offensive behaviour.\textsuperscript{113} Another frequent charge was fraud, which Lynne Friedli claims ‘suggests that the major issue was deception and the consequent usurpation of rights and privileges, rather than sexual deviance in itself’.\textsuperscript{114}

In Crawford’s case, of course, sexual deviance and deception/usurpation were constructed as simultaneous spectres, both of which were embodied in the epistemic threat of the dildo. The confusion of categories likely exacerbated the problem; Crawford was understood by his peers as both a ‘man-woman’ and as a woman who had married women. Each offence lent fuel to the fire of the other. It is important to remember that although lesbianism itself was also not strictly speaking illegal in Australia, since it did not fall under the auspices of the law against sodomy, that does not mean that it was not punishable by law. It is also not true that sodomy laws never extended to women. Louis Crompton calls this fallacy the ‘myth of lesbian impunity’; in Britain lesbian acts could not be penalised under the law condemning buggery, but on the continent lesbianism was punishable by death.\textsuperscript{115} Even in

---

\textsuperscript{111} Ford, ‘The Man-Woman Murderer’, 185.
\textsuperscript{112} Falkiner, Eugenia: A Man, 292.
\textsuperscript{113} ‘Woman in Male Attire’, The North West Advocate and the Emu Bay Times, 17 March 1911, 3.
Britain the lack of applicability of sodomy laws did not prevent women (or those perceived to be women) from being severely punished for having sex with (other) women, including via sentences of public whipping.\textsuperscript{116} This predicate was true also of former British colonies, whose criminal codes generally retained the \textit{Buggery Act} of 1533.\textsuperscript{117}

A great deal of the anxiety provoked by Crawford’s ‘deception’ was due not simply to his manner of dress, but to his perceived appropriation of masculine social and sexual roles; that is, the fact that he had taken ‘male’ employment, and that he had married and had sex with women. This convergence, again, is where the scholarly conflict between lesbian and transgender readings of Crawford come into play. For lesbian academics it is Crawford’s love of women, and punishment for said love, that makes him part of a lesbian cultural history. His marriages were seen as threatening was because he was perceived to be a woman. However, this reading fails to take into account the fact that transgender men have not only historically also been punished for loving and having sex with women but are \textit{still} punished for doing so, including via criminal charges of rape by deception (for not revealing that they are transgender men rather than cisgender men) or impersonation (absurdly, for impersonating \textit{themselves}).\textsuperscript{118}

The American case of Brandon Teena in the 1990s is an infamous example of a gender-crossing subject being punished for occupying an unacceptable gender role while being perceived to be sexually popular with women.\textsuperscript{119} As with Crawford, Brandon has been the subject of bitter cultural disputes over whether he can best be understood as a butch lesbian or as a transgender man. One perspective holds that failing to recognise Brandon as a trans man furthers the epistemic violence that led to his death; the other holds that subsuming Brandon


\textsuperscript{119} There are some onomastic issues here. The youth in question usually went by ‘Brandon’, but also used a variety of masculine and gender-neutral names, including Charles Brandon, Brandon Brinson, Ten-A Brandon, Billy Brandon, Brandon Brayman, and Tenor Ray Brandon. The name most commonly used in biographies and pop culture is ‘Brandon Teena’, a reversal of the name on Brandon’s birth and death certificates. It is unclear whether Brandon actually used the name ‘Brandon Teena’ in life. See Jacob Hale, ‘Consuming the Living, Dis(re)membering the Dead in the Butch/FTM Borderlands’, \textit{GLQ: The Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies} 4, no. 2, (1998): 312–313.
into a mainstream narrative of trans identity erases complicated truths of his life.\textsuperscript{120} Jack Halberstam describes the tension between trans and lesbian readings as ‘border wars’ which assume ‘that masculinity is a limited resource, available to only a few in ever-decreasing quantities. Or else, we see masculinity as a set of protocols that should be agreed upon in advance’.\textsuperscript{121}

The process of examining Crawford’s life and body is akin to a somewhat gruesome post-mortem dissection. Determining which marginalised subjectivities he might have experienced, and which cultural traditions he can, or should, be ‘claimed’ by, is deeply complicated. When writing about real people who lived in the past and were subjected to horrifying violence due to their identities – identities which have continued relevance today – this process is especially fraught. It is unfortunately easy to unknowingly, and unwillingly, perpetuate great harm in the ways that we talk about marginalised and suppressed subjectivities, even when trying to remain neutral. In a sense true neutrality is impossible. We do not write in a vacuum, and the language that we use and the tropes that we invoke are always going to be imbued with charged cultural connotations.

It is not a neutral choice to refer to Harry Crawford as Harry Crawford, using he/him pronouns, as I have chosen to do in this thesis. Nor is it a neutral choice to refer to him as Eugenia Falleni, or to describe him as a woman, a biological woman, or born as a woman. I prefer instead to refer to him as someone assigned female at birth, or perceived by others to be a woman. These are not neutral choices either. But they are choices I have made after reflecting on the available sources of Crawford’s life; the existing scholarship around him; my own experiences as someone who is both queer and transgender; and through long consultation with queer and transgender scholars and friends.\textsuperscript{122} I hope to write about Crawford in a way that echoes his own attempts at controlling his corporeal, sartorial, and textual self-representation.

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{120} Hale, ‘Consuming the Living, Dis(re)membering the Dead’, 313–314.  
and in a way that provides a model for consistently respectful representation of trans life narratives and trans history more generally.

Halberstam notes that Jackie Kay, engaged in a project of transgender life-writing, ‘points to the danger of biography and warns us to listen to the ghost’.123 It is not my intention to divine the ‘truth’ of Crawford’s life. Rather I am interested in investigating the possibilities of Crawford’s legacy: the imprint he left on the world; the ways in which the narratives around him produce, reinforce, or subvert cultural norms; the forms of life that his image might continue to take. Like the light from a distant, dead star, powerful sociocultural meaning still emits from the details of Crawford’s life. I am trying to listen to Crawford’s ghost – but I am also seeking to engage the ghost in conversation, to speak with him rather than for him or without him.

---

Chapter two: Queertrans cosmogonies

Now the sexes were three, and such as I have described them; because the sun, moon, and earth are three; and the man was originally the child of the sun, the woman of the earth, and the man-woman of the moon, which is made up of sun and earth, and they were all round and moved round and round: like their parents. Terrible was their might and strength, and the thoughts of their hearts were great.

–Aristophanes, in Plato’s *Symposium*.124

Myth… is a mode of signification, a form… There is no fixity in mythical concepts: they can come into being, alter, disintegrate, disappear completely. And it is precisely because they are historical that history can very easily suppress them.

–Roland Barthes, ‘Myth Today’.125

The apparitional trans: hidden from history, haunting the margins

Harry Crawford is not particularly vocal in the material records we have of his life. At only one point does he speak for himself, unfiltered and unobscured, and that is in his brief addresses on the second day of his trial, 6 October 1920: a plea of ‘not guilty’; a dock statement to the jury, and a short outburst in response to the judge’s sentence of death. These statements were made in public enough circumstances and with sufficient corroborating witnesses that we can assume that the transcription we have is faithful to the words he actually spoke. The other records are more in doubt: the police transcript of his deposition on 6 June which he signed even though he could not read it; the second-hand quotations delivered by witnesses at his trial;

the interviews he gave while in prison; and the account that Herbert Moran gives us of their brief conversations in the decade before Crawford’s death. Crawford’s dock statement reads:

Your Honor [sic] and Gentlemen of the Jury. I have been three months in Long Bay Gaol and with this terrible charge hanging over my head and I am real nervous.

(The accused was asked to speak up and continued her statement as follows).

Your Honor and Gentlemen of the Jury. I have been three months in Long Bay Gaol. I am a real nervous breakdown. I would like to make a statement but my constitution will not allow me. I do not know anything at all about this charge. I am perfectly innocent. I do not know what made the woman leave her home. We never had any serious rows, only just a few words but nothing to speak of, so therefore I am absolutely innocent of this charge that is over me.126

According to Mark Tedeschi, the dock statement was by no means the sole deciding factor in Crawford’s guilty verdict, but it certainly didn’t help.127 Crawford should have used the opportunity to clarify elements of the case that were in doubt, and to deny murdering Annie Birkett and attempting to murder Harry Birkett. Instead the statement was ‘such a pathetic effort … that it was tantamount to an admission of guilt’.128 Crawford’s other utterance, several hours later, was transcribed as follows:

(When asked if she had anything to say why the court should not pass sentence of death upon her according to law the accused was understood to say; ‘I am not guilty, Your Honor. The Jury found me guilty on false evidence. I know nothing about this charge.’)129

---

126 Rex v Eugene Falleni, 86.
127 Tedeschi, Eugenia, 178.
128 Ibid.
129 Rex v Eugene Falleni, 91.
Several years later an interview in Smith’s Weekly, advocating for Crawford’s release from prison, quoted him as saying ‘I was convicted on circumstantial evidence … I did not have a chance. I had no education. I was what other people made me’. The interview is melodramatic at times; it describes Crawford as trembling, with an ‘appealing look’, fretting, crying silently, and gesturing femininely with a pink handkerchief. The article depicts Crawford as uncharacteristically eloquent and emotive, though this rendering is internally inconsistent: ‘in a dull, even voice, she told her story in disconnected fashion, grooving every now and then for a word’. The latter characterisation is more in line with Joe Lamaro’s description of Crawford as someone who ‘could scarcely speak’ and Moran’s description of him as ‘aloof’, ‘repl[y]ing cautiously’, and making no attempt to ‘dramatise herself’. Although it temptingly accords with a social constructivist reading, the purported quotation ‘I was what other people made me’ is unlikely to be accurate. Crawford was not what other people made him; he was what he made himself.

Terry Castle observes that for historical subjects who successfully escaped public censure for transgressing norms of gender or sexuality, the measure of their success lies in their capacity to pass out of the historical record entirely. Castle posits a theory of the ‘apparitional lesbian’ existing ‘in the margins, hidden from history’, and ultimately ‘made to seem invisible’. Often this vanishing act is perpetuated by the historiography surrounding gender transgressors. Kadji Amin suggests that we can read the textual ambivalence around ‘unresolved figures of historiographic uncertainty’ as a process of ‘transgender ghosting’. In Derridean terms the apparitional signifier is the ‘trace’; the shape of the Other defined by that which it is not. Spivak articulates the ‘trace’ as ‘the mark of the absence of a presence’.

If we are to make these invisible histories visible again – to revive the ghosts – then we must reach back into the record to actively seek them out, reading ‘against the grain’ of history,

131 Ibid.
133 Castle, The Apparitional Lesbian, 2, 4.
or as Judith Fetterley suggests, to read resistantly.\textsuperscript{137} In doing so we can uncover powerfully subversive cultural elements. George Rousseau names queer historiography as a process of ‘retrieval’, of ‘recovering and decoding’\textsuperscript{138} So too with trans history. Sandy Stone notes that ‘in the transsexual’s erased history we can find a story disruptive to the accepted discourses of gender’.\textsuperscript{139} Reading back against these absences, investigating these invisible histories, is what allows us to recover radical possibilities for the past and for the future. If we are to read resistantly into or against the narratives constructed around Crawford’s life and identity, we must first understand the prevailing cultural forces at work in those narratives: the language of gender transgression, the signs and significations, the myths.

**The origin of identity: queer myth and metamorphosis**

Part of the reason Harry Crawford’s story caused such a commotion in the Australian press was that his transgression of social norms was considered deeply incomprehensible. It would be inaccurate, however, to claim that there was no frame of reference by which the public could make sense of his identity and experience. In fact the media was quite familiar with cases like Harry Crawford’s, though each time one of these stories was reported it was generally presented as if it was totally strange and unique – even when it was being compared to other, similar, cases.

In 1865 Australian newspapers reported on a British discovery of ‘two women living together as husband and wife’, naming it ‘a very remarkable and withal somewhat amusing case’.\textsuperscript{140} Another instance in 1868 of a person assigned female at birth who had lived as a man was described as ‘a very extraordinary case’.\textsuperscript{141} An 1870 report of an ‘androgynous clique’ of


\textsuperscript{140} ‘Two Women Living Together as Husband and Wife’, *Clarence and Richmond Examiner and New England Advertiser* (NSW), 21 November 1865, 4.

\textsuperscript{141} ‘Disguised as a Man’, *Clarence and Richmond Examiner and New England Advertiser* (NSW), 28 January 1868, 4.
‘empty-headed effeminate young men … act[ing] women’s parts and go[ing] about in women’s clothes’ was described as ‘the most extraordinary case we can remember to have happened in our time’.

The word ‘extraordinary’ was again applied to Melbourne’s Edward De Lacy Evans in 1879. Evans had lived as a man for twenty-three years and had married three women. He was ‘discovered’ after being involuntarily admitted to Kew Asylum for dementia. Evans was framed in similar terms as Crawford would be in the 1920s, described variously as a ‘man-woman’, ‘female man’, ‘man impersonator’, and ‘female impersonator’. His case was announced as ‘unprecedented in the annals of the whole world’. Clearly, however, there was precedent.

Multiple articles around the turn of the twentieth century attempted to canvass recent histories of people who had been assigned female at birth but had lived as men: ‘Women Who Wear Trousers’ in 1893; ‘Women Who Have Posed as Men’ in 1901; ‘Women Who Have Lived as Men’ in 1903; ‘Women in Male Attire’ in 1908; and ‘When “He” is a “She”: Women Who Masquerade as Men’ in 1909. There were also articles specifically regarding cases including marriage, such as ‘Lady Husbands: Women Who Have Married Women’ in the Geelong Advertiser in 1904. Although these articles were clearly prolific, they often identified gender transgressions as solitary indiscretions that resembled each other due to pure coincidence, rather than as part of a cultural pattern. An article in the Advertiser in 1910, however, noted that ‘Contrary to general opinion this is a by no means unusual act on the part

---

143 ‘Extraordinary Case of Concealment of Sex’, Bendigo Advertiser, 4 September 1879, 2.
145 ‘The “Man-Woman” Imposture’, Geelong Advertiser, 8 September 1879, 4; ‘Curious Crimes and Cases: The Impersonation of Edward de Lacy Evans’, Truth (Brisbane), 30 May 1909, 9; ‘Man Impersonators’, Quirindi Herald and District News, 16 November 1906, 2; ‘Ellen Tremaye, alias Edward de Lacy Evans, the Female Impersonator’, Australian Town and Country Journal, 11 October 1879, 32.
146 ‘Extraordinary Case of Concealment of Sex’, Bendigo Advertiser, 4 September 1879, 2.
of women. Quite apart from the history of the past … contemporary chronicles simply teem with cases where women live for years disguised as men'.

Indeed perhaps the reason why Crawford’s behaviour was seen not just as interesting but as threatening was that the public understood that cases like his were not rare at all, even if they were not well understood. In 1916 the Evening Telegraph reported:

There are at all times a great many more women masquerading as men than is generally suspected. Many of these cases never come to the light, others are discovered by medical men who are called in to treat the patient during illness. But in most cases it is accident only that reveals the deception.

Despite apparently widespread acknowledgement of the frequency of gender transgression, the media coverage immediately following Crawford’s arrest clung insistently to the familiar framing of extraordinary aberrance. Several newspaper headlines described the case as ‘extraordinary’ or as occurring in ‘extraordinary circumstances’, and some described Crawford himself as an ‘extraordinary woman’. Multiple articles rendered his case as ‘remarkable’, including one that claimed it was ‘one of the most remarkable on record’. Another frequent refrain was that the case was ‘mysterious’, and not only in regard to the alleged murder; one headline read ‘Mysterious Man-Woman’, another ‘Mystery Woman’ (in regard to Crawford, not Birkett). A later retrospective described the case as a ‘double mystery’ of both murder and gender. An article in Sydney’s Evening News published three days after Crawford’s arrest

---

described the case as both ‘mysterious’ and ‘unequalled in a lifetime in this city’.\textsuperscript{154} Truth, true to form, went above and beyond, in the space of a single article managing to describe the case as ‘startling’, ‘sensational’, and ‘amazing and most extraordinary’.\textsuperscript{155} When Crawford was eventually released from prison in 1931, the front page of Sydney’s Truth described him as ‘one of the strangest women criminals the world has ever known’.\textsuperscript{156}

Eventually the press did manage to connect Crawford to a lineage of gender transgressors, all apparently equally as ‘extraordinary’ as he was. A 1929 article titled ‘Strange Men-Women Cases’ began with an account of Dr James Barry, a notorious nineteenth-century episode deemed ‘the most amazing case on record of male impersonation – so successful, indeed, that the deception was not discovered until the woman's death’ in 1865.\textsuperscript{157} The same article mentioned Percy Redwood/Amy Bock, whose exploits ‘startled’ New Zealand in 1909, Victor/Valerie Barker, and finally Crawford – again described as ‘remarkable’.\textsuperscript{158} ‘The rare instances of change of sex’, the article went on, ‘have provided some bewildering stories’.\textsuperscript{159} Finally after Crawford’s death in 1938, Smith’s Weekly ran a feature that admitted his story was not nearly so unique as the media was prone to depicting it:

Fantastic as Falleni’s story may appear to the general public it is paralleled by scores of similar histories in medico-legal annals. Women of a peculiar sex type have not only lived as men, but have imposed upon their own sex, married other women, and the deception has only been discovered after their deaths.\textsuperscript{160}

Clearly gender transgression was not aberrant in terms of actual incidence; rather it was aberrant in terms of deviation from social norms. The constant framing of these cases as ‘extraordinary’ was necessary in order to maintain the normative power of social roles based on gender categories. Sandy Stone describes the transsexual body as ‘a hotly contested site of

\textsuperscript{154} ‘The Man-Woman: Mysterious Story Unfolding’, Eveni\textit{ng News} (Sydney), 8 July 1920. 6.

\textsuperscript{155} ‘A Startling Story: Alleged Murderess Masquerades as a Man’, Truth (Brisbane), 18 July 1920, 9.

\textsuperscript{156} ‘One of Strangest Women Criminals Known to World Set Free’, Truth (Sydney), 22 February 1931, 1.

\textsuperscript{157} ‘Strange Men-Women Cases’, The Richmond River Herald and Northern Advertiser, 3 May 1929, 3.


\textsuperscript{159} ‘Strange Men-Women Cases’, The Richmond River Herald and Northern Advertiser, 3.

cultural inscription, a meaning machine for the production of ideal type … a culturally intelligible gendered body which is itself a medically constituted textual violence’.

The bodies and behaviours of gender transgressors were made culturally intelligible by placing them within particular narrative structures, including the telling rhetoric of ‘the case’.

Gailey and Brown note that early memoirs of transition are dominated by medical discourses, largely due to their placement in ‘socio-cultural and political landscapes … in which such identities were considered pathological, and where alternative conceptions had rarely been voiced’.

We can see discourses of pathologisation at work in and around Crawford’s trial. At one point the defence brought in medical testimony in an attempt to cast Crawford as a congenital sexual ‘invert’ rather than a criminal sexual deceiver, drawing on Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s theory of ‘female sexual inversion’, defined as ‘the masculine soul, heaving in the female bosom’. The judge’s response was to ask if the defence was attempting to set up a plea of insanity; since it was not, the argument was discarded.

The narrative of sexual inversion appeared again in some of the later press coverage. In 1928 Truth counted Crawford among a series of ‘queer human creatures’, ‘Nature’s misfits’, who were ‘doomed’, ‘cursed’ and ‘mentally crippled by … deadly inversion’. Crawford himself was described as ‘a woman with every masculine instinct’ seized with an ‘inverted and unmoral sense’, given a ‘wrong covering of flesh’, whose ‘mind was that of a male in a female envelope’. An article in Smith’s Weekly in 1938 described Crawford as a ‘woman of masculine type’, possessing ‘the body of a woman, but the mentality of a man’, due to a ‘chemical error’ of ‘misplaced atoms’. The language of medicalisation was a double-edged sword; for Smith’s Weekly it rendered Crawford as a pitiable, defective creature, to be treated or cured. For Truth it made him a dangerous, unhinged liability, a ‘case for the psychologists’,

---


165 Ibid.

someone who should be institutionalised for the safety of others.\textsuperscript{167} Generally the narrativisation of gender transgressors furthered assumptions that they were mad, bad, and dangerous to know.

This emplotment can be understood as a project of cultural mythmaking. Much has been written about the convergence of historical and mythical writing, generally by reference to the ‘language-mediated character of the human experience’; that is, the idea that ‘a narrative is not a form that can be added to the content without altering it: narrative, in this context, is a form already full of content’.\textsuperscript{168} Just as we understand our histories by reference to cultural myths, so too were gender transgressors understood by reference to mythic cultural archetypes. The ‘extraordinary’ gender transgressor was one such archetype: one that was constantly erasing its own etymology, denying its own history and rewriting its own myth of origins. Each individual gender transgressor was constructed a lone dissident, born spontaneously out of chaos and night, or from the misconfiguration of atoms, and in possession of dangerous, disruptive, primordial power. The creation myth of the gender transgressor was that they lacked a creation myth altogether.

**The crisis of category**

Often the press clearly distinguished between cases of women wearing masculine clothing for practical reasons and cases of ‘men-women’, people who transgressed gender roles in a more fundamental sense.\textsuperscript{169} Rosa Bonheur, a nineteenth-century painter, fell into the former category, and was mentioned frequently in newspaper retrospectives around gender transgression. Despite the fact that Bonheur was a known lover of women who ‘adopted masculine attire and wore her hair cropped close’, she was generally framed in opposition to ‘men-women’ rather than as one of them.\textsuperscript{170} The difference in reception seemed to mainly be that Bonheur had never concealed her clothing habits, and although she lived with her first partner Nathalie Micas for over forty years, she never attempted to actually marry her women

\textsuperscript{167} ‘The Tragedy of Mental Errors’, *Truth*, 14.

\textsuperscript{168} Chiara Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 204.


\textsuperscript{170} ‘Mainly About People’, *Lithgow Mercury*, 2 June 1899, 8.
partners. It likely didn’t hurt that as a painter her transgressions could be understood as artistic eccentricity, or as one article put it, ‘misunderstood genius’. This distinction was clearly illustrated in a 1910 article in the *Advertiser*:

Rosa Bonheur, however, was not a typical case. Everyone knew that she dressed as a man, and her reason for it. In the case of the genuine man-woman, if such a phrase be permissible, the mystery of sex is not usually discovered until after death. Occasionally there is some unlooked-for accident such as an unexpected arrest which discloses the secret … No class of society appears to be exempt. Men-women have worked before the mast, acted as colliers, one was a policeman in Seville for thirty years, another a soldier, and then there was the case of Bill Edwards, the Brisbane barman.

Harry Crawford, then, along with Marion/Bill Edwards and Edward de Lacy Evans, embodied a kind of threat that Rosa Bonheur did not. Bonheur could be figured into a cultural myth of queer genius that allowed her to exist just on the side of permissible rebelliousness, as opposed to outright transgression that required punishment or reintegration. Crawford, Edwards, and Evans, however, had not only adopted masculine attire; they had appropriated masculine identity. Moreover, they had not merely cohabited with women, but *married* them, thus transgressing too far for sympathetic media coverage. This usurpation of masculine sociosexuality is what earned them – and not Bonheur – the designator of ‘man-woman’.

The phrase ‘man-woman’ itself implies a certain troubling of binary categories, although as Moran notes, Crawford’s gender might have been transgressive and incoherent to his contemporaries but it was never actually androgynous. It is important to recognise that Crawford did in fact occupy a binary gender category; just not the one that he was expected to fill based on his gender assigned at birth. Crawford never indicated that he felt lost between binary categories or that he identified as neither a man nor a woman. Rather, he expressed a consistent and confident identification with masculinity and maleness, even when he was subjected to punitive social and legal consequences for it. Crawford was understood by the

172 ‘Rosa Bonheur Centenary’, *Sydney Mail*, 19 April 1922, 41.
174 Moran, *Viewless Winds*, 239.
people around him to be a man; he wore only masculine clothes when he was given the choice; he chose overtly masculine names even though his given name, Eugene, was already unisex; and he reportedly asked his daughter to always call him ‘father’.\textsuperscript{175} A relative interviewed by Falkiner described him as ‘a beautiful woman who wanted to be a man and who dressed like a man’.\textsuperscript{176}

The media, the courts, and the public found Crawford’s gender utterly baffling; there is nothing suggesting that Crawford himself found it so. The only indication we have of his own feelings is the statement quoted by Detective Sergeant Robson, who claimed that Crawford had described his gender as ‘a terrible thing for me and the worry of my life’.\textsuperscript{177} Robson’s report is not especially reliable, but even so, at most it implies that Crawford’s gender identity posed a hardship, not that he found it confusing.

Marjorie Garber’s seminal work on the sociology of transvestism posits a ‘crisis of category’, or ‘third space of possibility’, that invokes ‘a failure of definitional distinction, a borderline that becomes permeable, that permits of border crossing from one (apparently distinct) category to another’.\textsuperscript{178} The ‘third term’ is ‘a mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of possibility’, that ‘questions binary thinking and introduces crisis’.\textsuperscript{179} Garber tends to equate transvestism with gender transgression more broadly, and is perhaps overly generous at times in ascribing degendered, androgynous, or blurred values to instances of cross-dressing and gender-crossing. She refers at one point to ‘gender undecidability’, albeit more in reference to cultural anxieties around the reading of gender identity than to gender transgressors being somehow undecided or confused about their gender.

Presumably dedicated gender transgressors such as Crawford were very decided indeed about their gender if they were driven to risk such powerful censure to live in the category of their choosing. Suzanne Falkiner speculates that Crawford ‘had never thought about what she was … Like the birds in the garden outside my study, unaware of their birdness’, yet clearly Crawford was deeply knowledgeable about the manifestations of masculine identity and

\textsuperscript{175} ‘The Man-Woman: Committed on Murder Charge’, \textit{The Register}, 20 August 1920, 6.
\textsuperscript{176} Falkiner, \textit{Eugenia: A Man}, 218.
\textsuperscript{177} Rex v Eugene Falleni, 81.
\textsuperscript{179} \textit{Ibid.}, 11.
experience if he lived it for so long.\textsuperscript{180} Perhaps Crawford was unaware of categories such as 
\textit{lesbian or transgender} – after all, the latter phrase did not even exist in 1920. However, he was 
certainly very aware of the category of \textit{maleness}. It is for this reason that I am somewhat wary 
of the ways in which Garber’s ‘third term’ might be deployed to analyses cases such as 
Crawford’s. I feel it does Crawford a disservice to read him as a confused and helpless figure 
simply following instinct, not really knowing what he was doing. Clearly he did know, and he 
did it well, or else he would not have escaped punitive recognition for so long in between his 
arrests in New Zealand in 1895 and in Sydney in 1920.

Yet with an awareness of the ways in which the ‘third term’ might be misused to 
degender gender transgressors, the implication of ‘thirdness’ was absolutely why Crawford was 
seen to be so threatening to the existing social order of post-First World War Australia. Garber 
describes the ‘pervasive fear of transvestism as a powerful agent of destabilization and change, 
the sign of the ungroundedness of identities on which social structures and hierarchies 
depend’\textsuperscript{.181} Although again I think Garber overestimates the ‘ungroundedness’ of gender-
crossing, her underlying concept is sound: that transvestism ‘denaturalises, destabilises, and 
defamiliarises sex and gender \textit{signs}’.\textsuperscript{182}

The reality of Crawford’s existence did not so much suggest an alternative nonbinary 
subject position, but rather asserted that binary categories could be crossed between, and that 
one’s gender could depart from that assigned at birth. It is important not simply to subsume 
Crawford’s life into a broader narrative of gender subversion and androgyny, because there 
were other cases where people \textit{did} express unclear or androgynous identification, and Crawford 
was not one of them. The Brisbane barman Marion/Bill Edwards, for example, reportedly 
refused to confirm if they were a man or a woman, at one point stating in court ‘That is 
immaterial, sex not being of special account in sly-grog selling’\textsuperscript{.183}

It is neither useful nor methodologically sound to approach Crawford and other gender 
transgressors as if they are somehow interchangeable simply by virtue of having transgressed 
gendered norms. Nor is it constructive to subsume Crawford into the category of lesbianism at 
the expense of recognising his relevance to the current-day category of transgender. Peter Boag

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{180} Falkiner, \textit{Eugenia: A Man}, 8.
\textsuperscript{181} Garber, \textit{Vested Interests}, 223.
\textsuperscript{182} \textit{Ibid.}, 147. Emphasis in original.
\textsuperscript{183} ‘A Sex Problem’, \textit{The Daily Mail} (Brisbane), 6 December 1916, 8.
\end{flushleft}
contends that this historiographical approach has emerged because of the predominance of male scholars in the past: ‘When scouring the history of the West for the existence of strong prototypical feminists who spurned the strictures of domesticity and entered into and competed in the male world, women’s historians and popular writers have accepted that female-to-male cross-dressers were women’. Boag relates this convention to the ‘heteronormative trap’, which ‘ensnares the body itself, inscribing it with the essentialist notion that our present-day “normative” heterosexuality, “opposite” sexes, and bifurcated gender system apply to all times and to all people’.

I would further argue that the erasure of early transgender-like subjectivities in favour of (sometimes equally ahistorical) gay and lesbian subjectivities is due to the predominance of cisgender scholars. After all, there are plenty of ‘strong prototypical feminists’ amongst the transgender women of the past; of course they cannot be read as such if they are cast as gay men. Which is not to say that cross-dressing and gender-crossing have no place in gay histories, nor that we should assume every gender-crossing subject was, or might be understood as, transgender. It is for this reason that I speak about queer history or queertrans history rather than gay history. ‘Queer’ by its very nature is broad, inclusive, and inherently radicalised. ‘Queering history’, according to Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon, means ‘challenging the methodological orthodoxy by which past and present are constrained and straitened’, and ‘resisting the strictures of knowability itself’. A truly queer history is a project of alterity, of dissonance, and also of transgression and transition.

**Visions and retrovisions**

Because gender transgression was figured into cultural myths, there were certain narrativising elements at play in the media representation of these cases. Often this formula involved appealing to much older signifiers, such as the Greek myth of the Amazons. In 1900 the *Argus* wrote that ‘History proves that there is a queer latent Amazonian strain in what is

---

184 Peter Boag, ‘Go West Young Man, Go East Young Woman: Searching for the Trans in Western Gender History’, *The Western Historical Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 482.

185 *Ibid*.

186 Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon, ‘Queering History’, *PMLA* 120, no. 5 (October 2005): 1609.
politely called “the softer sex”. The alignment of queer and Amazon is notable, as it evokes the precise anxiety of gender transgression: peculiar for having troubled sexual norms. ‘Queer’ was already being used as cognate with ‘homosexual’ at least as early as 1894, when the Marquess of Queensberry condemned Oscar Wilde and Archibald Primrose as ‘Snob Queers’. In the years leading up to and during the First World War, Australian newspapers were flooded with stories of ‘women warriors’ from all over the world, and in 1915 the Telegraph wrote that ‘the Amazon spirit has reawakened’. These cases were rarely given the title ‘men-women’.

Gender transgression during wartime might be considered eccentric but noble – so long as the transgressors could be understood as representative of a patriotic colonial spirit. Even then the permissibility was somewhat precarious. Victoria Haskins notes that from 1914 there was ‘a level of agitation about the impact of the war not only on women’s morals but also on the security of the established gender order’. There was still an underlying anxiety concerning those who fit neatly into the model of the fervently patriotic gender transgressor, such as Maud Butler, who dressed as a soldier and attempted to stow away on a troopship. This transgression, Haskins writes, was ‘inherently destabilising to fixed and “natural” gender identity’, because Butler had ‘demonstrated that young women could effectively and on a whim appropriate a masculine persona (even of that most idealised model of ‘real’ manliness during wartime, the digger)’.

---

187 ‘[Untitled]’, The Argus (Melbourne), 25 April 1900, 6.
191 Ibid., 174-175.
Still, Butler received relatively little censure even after three separate instances of being caught dressing in military uniform. There was far less tolerance extended to gender transgressors who were not white, even – or perhaps especially – during wartime. One article in the *Sydney Mail* in 1908 described cross-dressing American frontierswomen as ‘gallant’ and Ashanti female soldiers as ‘savage’.192 The figure of the ‘modern Amazon’ was tightly controlled, and could only be considered admirable if she was figured into certain permissible categories: that is, British or Western European; colonial or imperialist; and preferably going to war solely to follow a brother or husband. Indeed the assumption of inborn binary sex/gender categories was itself an imposition of colonialism.193 ‘Amazons’ who hailed from non-Eurocolonial origins were considered dangerous, abhorrent, and indicative of the warped morality of ‘primitive’ peoples.194 The threat they posed was not so much one of incivility as of *uncivilisation* – or in other words, decoloniality, which Mignolo names as ‘epistemic

---


disobedience’. As Crawford discovered, whatever gender norm fluidity might have been permissible in wartime soon evaporated with the postwar reassertion of the masculinist order.

Outside of wartime, the main framework for making sense of gender transgressors who lived as men was that of economic necessity, i.e. living as men in order to seek employment as men. On its own this choice was seen as peculiar or misguided, but not in itself especially threatening, so long as it was done quietly. Lisa Duggan notes that cases of farm labourers or industrial workers who turned out to be gender transgressors were usually described as ‘simply eccentric or remarkable – not sexual, deviant, or insane’, so long as they had not married women. In the case of Marion/Bill Edwards, for example, who worked as a barman in Brisbane, their transgression was known to police but did not result in legal censure until they were arrested for burglary in 1905:

Marion has behaved well since she came to Queensland, and it is understood that there is nothing that could be said against her as far as this State is concerned … Edwards knew that she was under surveillance, but she lived quietly and gave no trouble, and the gallant officers did not give the story away.

Similarly in 1914, police interviewed a young person who had been working as a male farm labourer in Adelaide, but declined to make an arrest: ‘The police deemed it inexpedient to arrest this young woman as she appeared refined and well-conducted’.

---

197 ‘Marion Edwards: A Romantic Career’, Clarence and Richmond Examiner, 16 October 1906, 2. Hereafter I employ the gender-neutral pronouns ‘them’ and ‘they’ to describe Edwards, given that it is unclear which pronouns they preferred during their life. They lived consistently as a man, but their memoir used the pronoun ‘her’, although this may have been added by the publisher. See also Marion-Bill-Edwards, The Life and Adventures of Marion-Bill Edwards, the Most Celebrated Man-Woman of Modern Times (Melbourne: WH Junior, 1908); Gail Reekie, ‘“She was a Lovable Man”: Marion/Bill Edwards and the Feminisation of Australian Culture’, Journal of Australian Lesbian Feminist Studies 4 (1994): 43–50; Lucy Chesser, ‘“When two loving hearts beat as one”: Same-sex marriage, subjectivity and self-representation in the Australian case of Marion-Bill-Edwards, 1906–1916’, Women’s History Review 17, no. 5 (2008): 719–740.
198 ‘In Male Attire’, Truth (Melbourne), 10 January 1914, 3.
Of course, once gender transgressors were found out by the press they were subjected to intense scrutiny, and were much less capable of continuing as they had been. Edwards, too, did not remain unthreatening once their gender transgression was revealed, but rather existed in a kind of uneasy equilibrium with the authorities and the general public, based on a conscious manipulation of societal ideas and assumptions around their identity and behaviour. For a time they appeared at a sideshow exhibit as a ‘male impersonator’.199 This staging, along with their charismatic personality, allowed them to enjoy a certain degree of celebrity; after they was committed for trial in 1906, the papers noted that ‘On leaving the court she was cheered by a crowd of several hundred people’.200 Although Edwards had married women, they apparently did not consummate their marriages (or at least claimed not to have). The Horsham Times claimed that they had ‘made love to a Melbourne widow, and eventually married her’, but contemporary usage of ‘lovemaking’ was synonymous with ‘courtship’, allowing for some ambiguity of interpretation.201 The Clarence and Richmond Examiner reported that Edwards’ love affairs ‘had never progressed to the hymeneal stage’.202 The Examiner article went on to write that:

[Edwards] had run away from home many years ago, and, dressed as a boy, had lived for many years among the shearers, working as a rouseabout. The writer has had several conversations with her, during which she recounted various episodes in her interesting life. She smoked cigarettes, and could spin excellent yarns.203


202 ‘When “He” is a “She”: Women Who Masquerade as Men’, Clarence and Richmond Examiner, 20 May 1909, 8.

203 Ibid.
The public reception of Edwards was deeply rooted in colonial ideas of the romantic lone bushranger and the Australian larrikin.\textsuperscript{204} In many ways Edwards appeared as larger than life: a fantastical story rather than a real individual. Unlike Crawford, Edwards was charming, playful, and cheekily honest in their ‘masquerade’; they had also committed no sexual crimes that the public was aware of. The reactions to gender transgressors who did not share these qualities, including those were assigned male but dressed or lived as women, were often far harsher. In 1863 Ellen Maguire was arrested for solicitation, and then committed for trial for sodomy after it was discovered that she had been assigned male at birth.\textsuperscript{205} Maguire was found guilty and sentenced to death, later commuted to life imprisonment. She died in prison six years later.\textsuperscript{206}

Often these narrativised representations of gender transgression were infused with a keen awareness of aesthetics. This sensibility was frequently invoked by an appeal to themes and motifs that carried great cultural weight – such as the figure of the Amazon or the Australian larrikin – or by the employment of florid language with dramatic elements. It was also invoked via visual devices such as illustrations or photographs. It was very common for stories of gender transgression to be accompanied by sketches or photographs of their subject in dual manifestation, side by side with themselves, wearing masculine attire in one image and feminine outfits in the other.\textsuperscript{207} Evans and Crawford were both subjected to this bipartite visual construction. In Evans’ case a trick photograph was circulated, depicting Evans standing beside himself, apparently created by cutting out the celluloid image of Evans’ face and pasting it over that of a ‘rather overdressed’ woman.\textsuperscript{208} Like Edwards, Evans was later briefly exhibited in a sideshow act, as ‘The Wonderful Male Impersonator’, which Mimi Colligan claims was responsible for a subsequent decline in Evans’ mental state.\textsuperscript{209}


\textsuperscript{205} ‘Extraordinary Case – An Apollo in Petticoats’, \textit{Empire} (Sydney), 23 October 1863, 3.

\textsuperscript{206} Lucy Chesser, \textit{Parting With My Sex: Cross-Dressing, Inversion and Sexuality in Australian Cultural Life} (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2008), 149.

\textsuperscript{207} See visual appendix.


\textsuperscript{209} \textit{Ibid.}, 172.
The use of these dualistic images to represent trans life stories is a harmful trope that continues to be used even today. The Media Reference Guide compiled by GLAAD (no longer an acronym, formerly the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) advises against these depictions: ‘In almost every instance it is unnecessary to show before and after pictures of the person being profiled. Often these images are simply included to satisfy the invasive curiosity of readers or viewers’. 210 This ‘invasive curiosity’ was prominent throughout the coverage of Crawford’s trial; the newspaper articles reported that there was ‘intense interest’ from the public and that ‘Men and women, young and old, crowded into the galleries at an early hour in order to secure a glimpse of the accused’. 211 The use of visual aesthetic in the media coverage of Crawford was essentially voyeuristic, providing an opportunity for the inquisitorial public not present at the trial to secure their own ‘glimpse’. Because the motive proposed by the prosecution for the murder charge was covering up sexual deception, the visual reproduction of Crawford was itself a strategy for condemnation. It invited the public to make their own judgement of Crawford: was he a woman or a man, deceptive or authentic, eccentric or dangerous, innocent or guilty?

Similarly, the media furore around Evans resulted in the publication of a number of rather theatrical ‘interviews’, probably largely fabricated. 212 A satirical piece in Melbourne Punch included an exchange in which Evans switched conversationally between a masculine affect and feminine affect, causing some distress to the reporter’s amanuensis:

DE L. … (Laughs like a man, then sneezes like a woman.)
REP. (excitedly).—Very good. Now would you mind talking like yourself, for old times’ sake, just to keep your hand in?
DE L.—Oh, sir (crying), oh, sir (side glances), but you will tell— (smiles most bewitchingly.)


211 ‘Man-Woman Trial: Intense Interest in Proceedings.’, Singleton Argus, 7 October 1920, 2.

REP.—Wonderful! Now the other! Quick!
De L.—Shut up (gruffly)…
BOY (sobbing).—Is she a man or a woman?213

The media coverage around Crawford similarly sought to instil horror, fascination, and scandalised delight, largely through the use of dramatic descriptions and images.214 Crawford’s life was mythicised by reference to visual and literary tropes. This invocation of aesthetic and narrative reproduced a hostile outside gaze which objectified and fetishised Crawford’s gender-transgressive body. He was a spectacle, a sideshow act, a dizzying optical illusion—a piece of inscrutable art rather than a person. His own voice was neglected, though he surely sought to make sense of his own life against the same cultural backdrop. If we are to break the cycle of objectification then we must learn how to look again into the past, or as Adrienne Rich puts it, to ‘re-vision’: ‘We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us’.215 If we can understand the mythologies of the past then we may move beyond them to cultivate strength, self-knowledge, and solidarity for the future.

214 See visual appendix.
Chapter three: Towards a best praxis of transgender historiography

Because most people have great difficulty recognising the humanity of another person if they cannot recognise that person’s gender, the gender-changing person can evoke in others a primordial fear of monstrosity, or loss of humanness. That gut-level fear can manifest itself as hatred, outrage, panic, or disgust, which may then translate into physical or emotional violence directed at the person who is perceived as not-quite-human.

–Susan Stryker, Transgender History.216

Embracing paradox

The first ethical dilemma in forming an approach toward transgender historiography is the ahistoricity of the concept of transgender history itself. The word ‘transgender’ emerged in the 1960s and only gained widespread popularity in the 1990s, naturally presenting some logistical difficulties when it comes to applying the term to cases and identities from the 1920s.217 Equally, contemporary transgender identity and culture must be recognised as having a historical lineage and precedent, rather than springing spontaneously out of nothing and nowhere. Hegel claims that ‘contradiction is the very moving principle of the world’.218 If, as Hegel understands it, the world is in constant flux, or continuous becoming, then contradiction is inherent to existence, and may be embraced as a functional principle of social change. This dialectic allows us to trace transgender identity and culture as something that has emerged out of something else – that is, something with a history.

Embracing the paradox of transgender history does not necessarily mean advocating for the projection of contemporary understandings of sexuality and gender onto the past, nor for a biologically essentialist view of trans experience as existing somehow independently of culture and context. Rather, I suggest an approach that is highly aware of the contradictions, and seeks to remain accountable via Donna Haraway’s theory of situated knowledges. I am

taken by Haraway’s eloquent exploration of the ways in which attempts to show ‘radical historical specificity’ can dissolve into epistemological nonsense.\textsuperscript{219} I don’t wish to profess transcendent objectivity. Rather, my intention is quite the opposite: to embrace the ways in which history and academia is inherently always subjective, allowing for a diversity of approaches in which each scholar holds themselves, and each other, accountable for their methodological and ethical decisions. My primary ethical predicament is – and has always been – how to speak about subjects who transgressed the gendered norms of their time, without obscuring either the lived reality of their existence or their undeniable relevance to current cultural identities.

Linda Alcoff is correct in her observations that it is difficult to demarcate between ‘speaking about others’ and ‘speaking for others’.\textsuperscript{220} I also agree with Alcoff’s conclusion that contextualised rather than universalised positions are preferable for writing marginalised histories, and that ultimately it is best to try to speak \textit{with} rather than \textit{for} or \textit{about} marginalised people. In histories of gender transgression, many scholars inadvertently perpetuate harmful erasure by claiming historical subjects as part of their own cultural tradition of (implicitly cisgender) queerness, but neglect the equal or perhaps greater relevance of these individuals to transgender cultural traditions. I don’t presume to be above perpetuating inadvertent harm myself. Nevertheless, my solution is to not cast figures such as Crawford as unproblematically and ahistorically trans – and implicitly straight – nor to advise that only transgender scholars should write about historical figures whose experiences may count towards a historical lineage of transgender identity. Instead, I seek to encourage a multiplicity of approaches from various subject positions – but always with an active sense of self-interrogation and ethical accountability.


Names have power

‘There is power in naming, in renaming,’ writes Winona LaDuke.\[^{221}\] For the most part the existing histories of Crawford’s life and trial use the name ‘Eugenia Falleni’, ostensibly because this was Crawford’s given legal name. In fact Crawford’s given name was not Eugenia at all, but Eugene; according to a family member, he was named after his maternal grandmother, Eugene Buti.\[^{222}\] While many contemporaneous newspaper articles did indeed refer to him as Eugenia, and others identified him as Eugenie or Eugeni, the vast majority named him Eugene. Eugene was also the name he was eventually convicted under, and the name that was attached to his criminal record.\[^{223}\] Names are our defining elements. For a gender transgressive subject who chose a masculine moniker, it is deeply questionable for his afterlives to have been subsumed beneath an ahistorical feminine name.

‘Eugenia’ is not by any metric the most respectful or even the most accurate or neutral name to refer to Crawford by. It was not his deadname (birth name), nor at any point his legal name. Nor was it a name that appears to have been used by his family, or indeed anyone around him at all. During Crawford’s youth his parents put out a missing notice that named him as ‘Nina Falleni’.\[^{224}\] His daughter’s birth certificate listed a single parent as ‘Lena Falleni’.\[^{225}\] In the 1920s the newspapers referred to ‘Eugenia’, ‘Eugenie’, ‘Eugeni’, and ‘Eugene’ interchangeably.\[^{226}\] ‘Eugene’ was by far the most frequent designator, but ‘Eugenia’ was admittedly the most popular misspelling. Perhaps it reflected the legend of St Eugenia of Rome,

---


\[^{223}\] Rex v Eugene Falleni.

\[^{224}\] ‘Missing Friends’, *Wellington Evening Post*, 16 September 1891, 3.

\[^{225}\] Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages, 36114/1898. Birth certificate of Josephine Falleni, 19 September 1898, Woollahra, NSW.

\[^{226}\] ‘“Man-Woman” On Trial’, *The Brisbane Courier*, 6 October 1920, 8; ‘The Man-Woman: Committed on Murder Charge’, *The Register*, 20 August 1920, 6; ‘Woman Marries Women: Masquerader’s Strange Career’, *The Manaro Mercury, and Cooma and Bombala Advertiser*, 9 July 1920, 2; ‘Woman Masquerad’ng As Man Is Charged With Murder’, *Barrier Miner*, 6 July 1920, 2.
a nun-martyr who had dressed as a man, was accused of adultery by a woman, but during the trial revealed herself to also be a woman and thus exonerated herself.227

Likewise, Crawford’s last name was cited as ‘Falleni’, ‘Fallini’, or ‘Martello’ (the surname of an alleged husband). This confusion of nomenclature was hardly noteworthy given that many of the articles that mentioned Annie Birkett spelled her name ‘Burkett’ or ‘Burkitt’ (or both – as occurred once in an article only one sentence long). At least one of the articles concerning Edward de Lacy Evans referred to him as D’Arcy Evans.228 Neither Birkett nor Evans, however, suffer anywhere near the same degree of misspelling in the historical record as Crawford. Today ‘Eugenia’ has subsumed ‘Eugene’ to the extent where a 2017 article wrote that ‘Eugenia’ had begun ‘calling herself Eugene Falleni’ while travelling from Wellington to Sydney – as if Eugene was itself a pseudonym and not Crawford’s legal, gender-neutral given name.229

The fascination of the historical and artistic record with the name ‘Eugenia’ is an excellent example of the ways in which the cisgender gaze has warped the scholarly and public reception of the case over the last century. There is nothing that makes ‘Eugenia’ an appropriate name by which to identify Crawford – it is certainly no more apposite than any of the multiple misspellings of his legal name. Yet it is the name that has dominated almost all of the literary and academic representations to date. ‘Eugenia’ was not rooted in documented fact, but was rather a fiction presumably created to inculcate what Pip Smith describes as ‘a feeling of motion-sickness’, a ‘jolt in perception’ that she likens to viewing an Escher print; in other words, an anxious cisgender fascination with Crawford’s perceived dual existence.230 Now you see him, now you don’t. Or, to recall the unfortunate amanuensis for the Melbourne Punch article cited in Chapter Two: ‘(sobbing).–Is she a man or a woman?’231

---

227 Garber, *Vested Interests*, 213.
228 ‘Annie Burkett’s Grave’, *Crookwell Gazette*, 9 July 1920, 2; ‘Fugitive Notes’, *Freeman’s Journal* (Sydney), 10 February 1916, 23.
The first account to employ the name ‘Eugenia Falleni’, outside of newspaper errors, was Herbert Moran’s 1939 memoir *Viewless Winds*.232 By the time Moran published this work, Crawford had been dead for a year, so it is possible that the misspelling was a genuine mistake made out of unfamiliarity. When Moran and Crawford met, it was while Crawford was still incarcerated in the Long Bay State Reformatory for Women, under the name Eugene Falleni.233 After his release in 1931 due to stomach cancer, Crawford legally changed his name to Jean Ford; or at least ‘Jean’ is how Moran transliterated it, though it seems far more likely that Crawford (who was illiterate) intended this to be a contraction of *Eugene Crawford*, in which case it should properly be rendered ‘Gene’.234

In 1945, Norman Haire again named Crawford as ‘Eugenia Falleni’ in his sexology lectures at the University of Sydney.235 The name Eugenia was surely cemented when a professor of English, Suzanne Falkiner, published *Eugenia: A Man* in 1988, renewing public interest in a case that had otherwise been largely forgotten.236 In 1996 Lorae Parry published a play based on Crawford’s life, entitled *Eugenia*.237 A short film directed by Gabrielle Finnane, *I, Eugenia*, was also released in 1998.238 In 2005 an exhibition at the Justice & Police Museum, *City of Shadows*, reproduced Crawford’s prison photograph, listed as ‘Eugenie Falleni’, followed by another exhibition in 2009 titled *Femme Fatales: the Female Criminal*, this time listing Crawford as ‘Eugenia Falleni’.239 These retrospectives inspired yet another book named *Eugenia* in 2012, this time by Mark Tedeschi, a lawyer and professor of law, featuring the

---


233 NRS 2493 [11/3128], State Reformatory for Women, Long Bay, description card, Side B.

234 Falkiner, *Eugenia: A Man*, 28. This reading seems especially probable since, prior to his 1920 arrest, Crawford had occasionally gone by the names Gene Martello or Gene Falleni.

235 Norman Haire, *Sex Education: Sex and the Individual*, Lecture No. 4, Tuesday, 2nd October, 1945, Sydney University Rare Books Library, Special Collections, Norman Haire Collection, file 2.1.


The Justice & Police Museum exhibitions have proved particularly influential. They were cited as the inspiration for a 2014 play by Lachlan Philpott called *The Trouble With Harry*, and a 2017 historical novel by Pip Smith called *Half Wild*. Although Philpott’s stage play used the name Harry in the title, the published text named its protagonist as ‘Eugenia Falleni, alias Harry Crawford’. The lead was played by a cisgender actress in both stage adaptations to date; indeed, the character list specifies that the role is ‘to be played by anyone but a biological male’. Philpott himself is a cisgender gay man. The introduction, written by the (cisgender) director, Alyson Campbell, defaults to ‘she’ pronouns for Crawford and describes him as ‘a biological woman who had sex with other women’. Campbell’s introduction is accompanied by no less than twelve citations of works by cisgender authors, and not a single cited transgender person. The play concludes with Crawford renamed Eugenia by the stage directions, head bowed, while the chorus frenziedly denigrates him as ‘Man-Woman’ and ‘It’.

Smith’s novel *Half Wild* is named after a passage in Moran’s memoir, in which he also calls Crawford a pervert and an animal. The novel is an exploration of what Smith calls Crawford’s ‘multiple selves’ or ‘collective self’, divided into five parts, each entitled after names or epithets of Crawford’s: Tally Ho, Harry Crawford, Nina Falleni, The Man-Woman, Eugenia.

---

240 Tedeschi, *Eugenia*.
242 Lachlan Philpott, *The Trouble With Harry* (London: Oberon Books Ltd, 2014), front matter. Philpott’s play shares its name with a 1955 Hitchcock thriller, whose tag line, rather aptly, was ‘The trouble with Harry is that he’s dead, and everyone seems to have a different idea of what needs to be done with his body’.
243 Philpott, *The Trouble With Harry*, front matter. It is unclear whether by ‘biological male’ Philpott means ‘cisgender male’ or ‘person assigned male at birth’.
244 *Ibid*.
and Jean Ford. Like Philpott, Smith apparently recognised Crawford as essentially a person who was probably transgender. However, she appears to have made more of an effort than Philpott in terms of community consultation, interviewing at least two transgender men (authors themselves), albeit apparently ultimately disregarding their advice. Smith’s work mostly defaults to ‘Eugenia’, and she titled an article about her research process ‘Tall ships, tall tales, and the mysteries of Eugenia Falleni’. Clearly the name ‘Eugenia’ holds particular epistemological power, especially when combined with Crawford’s prison photograph. That particular photo has been used as the cover art for Falkiner’s and Tedeschi’s books, as well as for the cover of a 2017 self-published novel regrettably titled ‘The He She Killer: The True Story of Eugenia Falleni’. It was also used on the poster for Philpott’s play, and reprinted internally in Parry and Philpott’s play scripts. Presumably ‘Eugene’ was not considered contradictorily feminine enough to inspire the combination of shock and titillation that seemed to drive so much of the academic and cultural interest in Crawford’s case.

Jacob Hale notes that naming ‘is part of what constitutes a subject’s solidarity’; for trans people, naming ourselves can be ‘an important part of the process of repositioning ourselves within a gendered social order’. In my work I have elected to use the name Harry Crawford because it is the appellation that Crawford went by for longer than any other name, and one that he freely chose for himself. Within the transgender community, using a person’s assigned name is often referred to as ‘deadnaming’ them, and is considered deeply hurtful and inappropriate. For the sake of the historical record it is probably infeasible to entirely avoid using the name Eugene Falleni, but gender transgressive historical subjects should not by default be referred to


249 Smith, ‘Tall ships, tall tales’.


251 See visual appendix.

252 Hale, ‘Consuming the Living’, 313.

by the name assumed to be the one assigned at birth. We must also be wary of perpetuating historical terms and concepts that are harmful both to trans people today and to potential trans ancestors in the past. Writing about marginalised populations carries a weight of responsibility that cannot be underestimated: by scripting the histories of marginalised communities we have the power to shape the way in which those communities are received and understood in the present.

**Queertrans quintessence**

As illustrated throughout my first two chapters, the issue of pronoun usage presents another significant ethical dilemma. If Crawford’s historical identity most resembled what we would understand as a transgender man, then ‘he’ is the correct pronoun and ‘she’ is inaccurate and harmful. If Crawford’s identity most resembled what we would understand as a butch lesbian, then the reverse holds true. Of course this is not a judgement I can make on Crawford’s behalf. How do we identify the prevailing essence of Crawford’s selfhood without resorting to essentialism? How do we gauge which contemporary community his life and experiences hold most relevance to, and how do we determine which terms and identifiers are most appropriate for writing about him in the present? Crawford’s gender was the subject of a humiliating public trial. In many ways, the subsequent historical and literary works examining Crawford’s life have perpetuated this same humiliation, putting Harry Crawford on trial again and over. If I must contribute to this further humiliation then I will at least do it transparently. It is possible that the most respectful thing to do, as Terry Castle observes, would be to let Crawford fall out of the historical record entirely.\(^{254}\) And yet I know very well how keenly young transgender people today need to know that people like us have a history, too.

In the original court proceedings and newspaper articles, the pronoun ‘she’ was used by default, though ‘he’ was also used quite frequently, either from confusion or a desire to create narrative tension. Moran noted in his memoir that ‘Witnesses and barristers became at times terribly muddled and the trembling, shrinking woman in the dock heard herself alternately referred to as “she” and “he” and designated at least on one occasion as “it”’.\(^{255}\) Haire describes Crawford as ‘she’: an ‘Italian woman’ who ‘desire[d] to be known as a member of the opposite

\(^{254}\) Castle, The Apparitional Lesbian, 2.

\(^{255}\) Moran, *Viewless Winds*, 239.
sex … due to a physical abnormality or to a psychological abnormality’. 256 Falkiner depicts Crawford as ‘a woman who had stepped outside the suffocating bounds of conventional femininity’ and was ‘pretending to be a man’ or ‘assuming a male personality’. 257 Falkiner, nevertheless, does link Crawford to a lineage of transgender identity but uses uncertain terminology to do so, invoking the phrase ‘female transsexual’ to describe trans men, who are by definition male and not female. 258 The Dictionary of Sydney entry on Crawford describes him as ‘Eugenia Falleni, Italian-born woman who dressed as a man and was twice married’. 259 Carolyn Strange also defaults to ‘she’ pronouns and ‘Eugenia Falleni’ in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, adding that ‘Falleni proclaimed her innocence of the murder but never explained what induced her to live as a man’. 260

Ruth Ford mostly defaults to ‘she’ pronouns, occasionally switching to ‘he’ midsentence, identifying Crawford as part of a history of ‘cross-gender identification … sexual inversion, transvestism and female homosexuality’. 261 Ford pointedly deploys period slurs – ‘hermaphrodite’; ‘she-male’; ‘man-woman’ – explaining that ‘I am aware language which gives primacy to biological sex rather than preferred gender is problematic. However, using the label transsexual is equally problematic, as this category was not available at the time’. 262 She thus falls into the trap of assuming that biological sex is inherent, unavoidable, and perfectly binary, while ‘preferred gender’ is socialised and apparently optional. In fact most current sex/gender theory understands both phenotypical sex and sociocultural gender as socially constructed categories. In this context, ‘socially constructed’ simply means defined by cultural norms, and

---

262 Ford, ‘The Man-Woman Murderer’, 160, 189. Ford furthermore has no problem with the term ‘passing woman’, though it is contemporary.
not that these categories are optional, false, or entirely divorced from reality. That is to say, gender is no more ‘preferred’ than sex is, and no less inherent.

Lucy Chesser identifies Crawford as ‘Eugenia Falleni, who had lived as a man, Harry Crawford’ and uses ‘he’, ‘she’, and ‘he/she’ interchangeably. Chesser invokes Crawford’s case as one relevant to narratives of ‘gender ambiguity, inversion, and cross-dressing’, noting that Crawford ‘share[s] characteristics with people who … have identified as transsexual or transgendered. However, those hard-fought identities did not exist 90 or 100 years ago’. Chesser consequently identifies Crawford as one of a number of ‘women who adopted male attire’. Interestingly, however, a year afterwards Chesser published an article effectively retracting her previous historical approach towards ‘the transgender-versus-lesbian historical issue’, writing that ‘I now think that some of my earlier imaginings … were subconsciously defensive and overly anxious’. ‘My approach has shifted somewhat significantly,’ she continues, ‘as a result of engaging with emerging theory and the personal ratings of transgender and intersex people’.

Even when inflected by an acknowledgement of the historical complexities of trans identity, authors struggle to stabilise Crawford’s gender nomenclature. Tedeschi reads Crawford as a transgender man, speculating that ‘Eugenia decided that her true identity was a male … she had been born into a body of the wrong gender’. On the issue of pronouns, Tedeschi writes that ‘there were difficulties in deciding what name to ascribe to Eugenia at different stages in her life, and whether to refer to her as “he” or “she”. The decision I came to … is to use the name and pronoun appropriate to the identity Eugenia assumed at any particular time in her life’. However, Tedeschi defaults to using ‘Eugenia Falleni’ and ‘she’ pronouns.

264 Chesser, Parting With My Sex, 314–315.
265 Chesser, Parting With My Sex, 318–319.
266 Chesser, Parting With My Sex, 319.
268 Ibid.
270 Ibid., xiv.
when speaking about Crawford in a generic sense, and his phrasing assumes a legitimacy of femininity but not masculinity, for example: ‘what she saw as her true self as a man’.271

Multivalency itself remains problematic. In her author’s notes to *Half Wild*, Smith describes Crawford as ‘shape-shifting’ and ‘an indeterminate person: an unstable man and a reluctant woman at the same time’.272 In her article in the *Conversation*, she describes Crawford as an ‘Italian-born-woman-turned-Sydney-dwelling-man’, ‘man and woman in the same instant … switch[ing] from one gender to the other’.273 In regard to gender and pronoun usage, Smith writes: ‘I have chosen to refer toFalleni according to their surname, for its gender-neutrality, and have used the pronoun “they” when referring to Falleni’s collective self, and “he” or “she” for Falleni’s particular identities that presented as decidedly male or female’.274 In fact Smith’s article refers to Crawford by the name ‘Eugenia Falleni’ six times, including in the title of the article, and all in general reference to Crawford rather than in reference to a specific timeframe. Smith does not use the name ‘Harry Crawford’ at all, and it appears in the article only once, in quoting the *City of Shadows* exhibition. In the same quotation Smith added a [sic] note to the name ‘Eugenie Falleni’.

In questioning the existing renderings of Crawford’s name and pronouns, I necessarily invite critique of my own decisions and motives. In the past I have used gender-neutral ‘they/them’ pronouns when referring to cases of gender transgression; not as Smith uses the pronoun, in reference to ‘multiple selves’, but as Shakespeare and the Associated Press Stylebook employ the pronoun, i.e. in the singular.275 This was not in an attempt to degender or to project androgyny onto gender-transgressive subjects; rather I was using the pronoun in the sense of referencing a subject whose gender is unknown. I usually applied this practice when analysing multiple cases at once, many of which concerned singular instances of gender-crossing rather than lifelong experiences. In regard to Harry Crawford alone, I no longer think

271 Ibid., xiii.
273 Smith, ‘Tall ships, tall tales’.
274 Ibid.
it adequate or appropriate to use gender-neutral pronouns. After all, Crawford expressed a clear and consistent desire to live and be identified as a man during his lifetime; he apparently requested that his daughter call him ‘father’, and he lived, worked, and married as a man and husband.276

True, there is no record of Crawford ever expressing a particular preference with regard to pronoun usage. And yet I do not feel the need to use gender-neutral pronouns in regard to Annie Birkett, Crawford’s wife, or Josephine Falleni, his daughter, who both also failed to explicitly express a preference for a particular pronoun in the public record. It feels condescending and inappropriate to decide on behalf of a potential trans ancestor a century my senior that he could not reliably express identification with a binary gender and that I must obfuscate on his behalf. The more I read by cis historians – who claimed that Crawford’s gender was ambiguous, or indeterminate, or conflicted – the more uncomfortable I became with using ‘they’ pronouns. Indeed, I felt increasingly certain that using ‘he’ and ‘him’ represented the most respectful and accurate approach to representing Crawford’s subjectivity. I also find it compelling that every single trans person whose opinion I have consulted on the matter has responded that I should use ‘he’ pronouns.277

It is impossible to avoid describing Crawford’s identity in gendered terms because his gender is the reason I chose to study his case. I can, however, seek to describe certain facets of his identity in a way that is as historically neutral as possible while aligning with current favoured community terminology. For example, it is now generally considered out of fashion (or even offensive) to frame transmasculine identity in terms of people ‘born as women and transitioning into men’ or ‘trapped in women’s bodies’.278 Bernadette Barker-Plummer refers to this phraseology as ‘wrong body discourse’, which effectively ‘articulates transgender identity as a fixable biological problem’.279 ‘Wrong body discourse’ cannot be meaningfully

277 Of course this was an informal canvassing of scholars and friends and not a rigorous consultation, so I cannot claim that these views are wholly representative of the general trans public. Still, I badgered opinions out of at least a dozen trans people, including transgender men, nonbinary people, and lesbian transgender women, and their consistency of opinion surely has to count for something.
separated from the pathologisation of transgender identity. Smith and Tedeschi both employ the narrative of ‘wrong bodies’; Tedeschi even goes so far as to retroactively diagnose Crawford with Gender Identity Disorder (GID), although Tedeschi is not a doctor, and GID had already been phased out of the definitive Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders by the time his book was published.\textsuperscript{280}

Tedeschi and many other scholars, when referencing Crawford, have articulated transgender identity in terms of a lamentable ‘condition’ or ‘disorder’.\textsuperscript{281} I cannot stress deeply enough the harm in medicalising trans bodies and trans life experiences.\textsuperscript{282} The pathologisation of trans identity implies that it is a medical problem that must be treated; places (almost always cisgender) doctors and psychiatrists as the arbiters of identity; and leads to medical gatekeeping of necessary supports and services. It also projects the assumption that trans experience necessarily involves suffering and discomfort, and that our lives are characterised by tragedy. In fact for many of us, much of the discomfort we experience is due to being prevented from accessing the (medical, legal, or social) means by which to live authentic lives, or due to being misidentified by those around us. A social model of transmedicalisation might then posit that it is society that is dysphoric, not us.

Analysing Harry Crawford’s life and afterlives foregrounds how the articulation of transgender lives and experiences – whether in the media or in academia – has greater implications for trans people’s capacity for self-definition. Jamie Colette Capuzza notes that ‘marginalised groups such as the transgender community often feel compelled to assimilate into narrowly defined social identities and standardised new narratives’.\textsuperscript{283} The language of ‘passing


\textsuperscript{281} Tedeschi, \textit{Eugenia}, 234–235.


women’ is also potentially harmful when applied to cases that might be historically understood as pertaining to transgender people, especially when its phraseology legitimates a reading of assigned gender as more real or authentic than identified gender. Generally, in a sociological sense, ‘passing’ is used to refer to people ‘passing’ as something they are not, for example queer people ‘passing’ as straight, transgender people ‘passing’ as cisgender, or black people ‘passing’ as white.284 ‘Passing women’, when used to describe people assigned female at birth who lived (and possibly identified) as men, implies that these were women ‘passing’ as men, rather than men in actuality. In Crawford’s case the use of ‘passing’ rhetoric validates the image created by the criminal prosecution of Crawford as a deceitful masquerader.

I have no wish to remove the relevance of Harry Crawford to lesbian histories, nor to insist upon a certain reading of his case that other scholars must replicate. The figure of the butch lesbian is a powerful and era-appropriate archetype, and yet as Ruth Ford notes, even Crawford’s contemporaries understood that ‘lesbian’ was not an accurate word to apply to his case.285 Supposedly Crawford claimed to be a woman when facing the threat of going to a men’s jail, although I do not put much faith in statements made under duress and recorded only by hostile third parties.286 Furthermore even if he did claim to be a woman after being arrested, we do not know what such a claim would have even meant to him. We cannot know how Crawford might have discursively articulated his identity given the language and the opportunity, nor how the specificity of historical context might influence this self-fashioning. However, we do have evidence that Crawford’s physical manifestations and mannerisms – his close-cropped hair, his shaven face, his clothes, his voice – were shaped so as to be recognised by his contemporaries as decidedly masculine.

Perhaps Harry Crawford did indeed understand himself to be a woman ‘impersonating’ or ‘masquerading as’ a man, as his contemporaries described him. Or perhaps he understood himself to simply be a man. Regardless, he repeatedly chose to be understood as a man by those around him, or at the very least he chose to be referred to with ‘he/him’ pronouns and by the name Harry Crawford. If he was a lesbian then he was a lesbian who used ‘he/him’ pronouns during his lifetime, and I do not think he would begrudge us continuing to use those pronouns

286 Rex v Eugene Falleni.
after his death. On the other hand if he was in fact more closely aligned with an identity category that we would now understand as ‘transgender man’, then using pronouns other than ‘he/him’ is potentially very hurtful. Furthermore if scholars, artists, and journalists are going to continue referring to him as transgender or transsexual, regardless of the historicity of the terms, then they must be willing to follow through with consistently respectful terminology. The GLAAD Media Reference Guide cautions against the use of terms such as ‘transgendered’, ‘transgenderism’, ‘biologically female’, ‘born a woman’, ‘passing’, ‘deceptive’, ‘masquerading’, ‘posing’, and ‘pretending’, and includes directives such as:

- Always use a transgender person’s chosen name.
- Use the pronoun that matches the person’s authentic gender.
- If it is not possible to ask a transgender person which pronoun they use, use the pronoun that is consistent with the person's appearance and gender expression or use the singular they.  

Crawford is long dead and thus unable to clarify the matter for us. For that matter he is also unable to be hurt by being misgendered (although I believe he does still have surviving relatives). My primary concern, then, is not only seeking respectful language in terms of what Crawford might have found most accurate or considerate, but seeking respectful language in terms of setting a precedent for the writing of trans/queer history, and of trans subjectivity more generally. Whether Crawford was transgender or not, he is unavoidably affiliated with our people now, and we are implicated in the retellings of his life. In 2014 Mark Tedeschi wrote an article for the *Daily Telegraph* entitled ‘Harry Crawford revealed to be Eugenia Falleni; a female-to-male transgender murderer’, in which Crawford was referred to as ‘the cross-gender murderer’ and a ‘cross-dressing murderess’. An article in the *New York Daily News* in 2017

---


288 ‘Female-to-male’ or ‘FTM’ was not considered especially respectful terminology in 2014, and it certainly is not today, particularly when used by people who do not identify with the term themselves. Mark Tedeschi, ‘Crime Week: ‘Harry Crawford revealed to be Eugenia Falleni; A female-to-male transgender murderer’, *The Daily Telegraph* (10 May 2014 [accessed 12 November 2017]), dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/crime-week-
was titled ‘Convicted transgender killer sets wife’s body on fire in 1920 murder case’. Its very first line was: ‘Before he cracked her skull and set her body on fire, Harry Crawford told many lies to his wife, Annie’. The SBS TV spot on Crawford, ‘Discovering Eugenia’, has been uploaded to YouTube under the title ‘1920s Trans Man Murdered To Keep Secret’. Never mind that Tedeschi’s conclusion as a practised lawyer was that Crawford should have been acquitted or convicted of manslaughter at worst! After all, the queer murderer looms large in the cultural imagination; these contemporary accounts of Crawford’s life are just new articulations of the ‘transgender menace’.

I cannot pretend that I am not deeply discomfited by the repeated overcriminalisation of a marginalised person far in the past. I know many trans people whose only childhood encounters with transgender narratives were depictions of transgender characters who were murderers. These accounts followed identical logic to that applied in Crawford’s trial: if we are likely to commit acts of deception around our genders, we are equally as likely to commit acts of violent crime and murder. I also cannot ignore the fact that in this country, 48% of young transgender people have attempted suicide, and media representation has an enormous influence on both real-world stigma and the suicidality that it induces. If my methodological choices in recreating and re-reading Harry Crawford’s life and trial relieve even a fraction of that enormous psychological burden upon transgender youth then it is surely worth the scholarly anguish.


290 ‘Discovering Eugenia’. The Feed.


History Wars Episode IV: A New Hope

As I wrote at the beginning of this thesis, the History Wars are an excellent illustration of a number of salient points: firstly, that history matters; secondly, that people denied a history are denied identity, humanity and the capacity for self-definition; and thirdly, that histories written about the marginalised and by those in power can be extremely dangerous. One of my primary motives in choosing my research topic was the lack of substantive transgender history written by transgender academics. What little there is tends to be written by cisgender gay historians, whose work subsumes gender transgression under a broader ‘queer’ history that is implicitly primarily concerned with sexuality rather than gender identity.293 In so doing, they often project current ideas about gender and sexuality onto the past, illuminating a history of proto-queerness while inadvertently erasing and suppressing co-occurring proto-transgender elements. When they acknowledge the potential relevance of current transgender identity, it tends to be swept aside with the claim that transgender identity didn’t yet exist. As someone who is both trans and queer it is very disheartening to find the history of one of my identities consistently swallowed up by the other. It isn’t exactly an issue of autonomous historiography as much as it is an issue of seeing ourselves reflected across history.

That question of autonomy is complicated by the tension between lesbian and transgender readings of Harry Crawford and similar cases. This tension exists for a reason: historically these categories of identity are not always easily separable. The life and work of Leslie Feinberg, for example, offers an excellent illustration of this ambiguity: Feinberg was assigned female at birth and identified as both a butch lesbian and as transgender.294 Of course both of these identities are also simultaneously present in lesbian trans women, whose voices have been disturbingly absent from this conversation, though not for lack of speaking. Butch


trans lesbians are especially excluded and alienated, viewed as an ‘oxymoron’. Hannah Rossiter writes that ‘butch trans women, as women, are subjected to narratives around being respectable women that render female masculinity unreadable’. Rossiter also notes that contemporary cisgender lesbian communities are often hostile to trans lesbians, and perplexed by butch trans lesbians. The legacy of alliances between the lesbian separatist movement and trans exclusionary radical feminism has laid difficult ground for alliances between modern cisgender lesbian feminism and lesbian transfeminism. Still, such alliances, if they are possible, could invoke radical queer possibilities for both the future and the past. And they may well be possible: as Cristan Williams notes, there is also a powerful history of trans inclusive radical feminism.

At times it seems impossible to navigate the histories of our communities without hurting someone. Much of the scholarly work on Harry Crawford has made attempts at neutrality or compromises between trans/lesbian identity and culture; and much of this ‘neutrality’ has come at the expense of respectful trans historiography. As Nathan Sentance notes, the neutrality of academic institutions is often not the neutrality of marginalised peoples. Furthermore if we are to take Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s approach toward decolonising methodologies, the struggle extends beyond the form of text and literature. I have to believe that alliances are possible. I do not wish for the history of the transmasculine figure to subsume the history of the butch. Nor do I wish for the figure of the butch to be remembered and refigured

---

296 Rossiter, ‘She’s Always a Woman’, 89.
297 Ibid., 91–92.
in a way that is destructive or obfuscatory towards her transgender siblings. These identity markers have a shared history; surely we can learn to share that history.

There are no easy answers to the many difficult questions I have raised here. I am very young and, relative to my peers, have not been working in this field for long. Many more experienced academics have been writing on queer and trans history for longer than I have been alive. I do not claim to be capable of resolving ethical dilemmas that have plagued skilled academics for decades. Still, my perspective as a transgender academic writing on trans history is unfortunately still fairly uncommon, and I hope that I will at least be able to contribute some useful insights that may prove helpful for future scholarship. This thesis is my contribution to a greater conversation that I hope will continue for many years.

My intention is also not to lambast other scholars for historiographical decisions that in hindsight may have been misguided. We are all still learning from each other. History tumbles onwards quite swiftly; I am sure that in a few years the views I have put forth in this thesis will seem terrifically outdated, and perhaps also cruel and oblivious. There is undoubtedly a great deal that I have neglected to cover (or uncover). I hope that my community can rise up to meet the challenge of writing the rest of it.
Coda/Afterthoughts

This project cannot help but be close to home, sometimes painfully so.

I currently live in Annandale, around the corner from the Empire Hotel, where Harry Crawford worked as a general useful, and where he met his second wife Lizzie Allison. The hotel has hung a gigantic portrait of Crawford on the wall, a screenprint by Cleo Gardiner with a halo about his glaring, melancholy head.\footnote{Cleo Gardiner, ‘Harry’. Screen print with neon. 81 x 106cm. Accessed 9 May 2018. cleogardiner.com/recent-works.html. See visual appendix.} I used to live in Wahroonga, where Crawford met Annie Birkett. One of my tattoo artists works out of Balmain, where Crawford lived with Birkett, and my psychiatrist works out of Drummoyne, where he lived with Allison. My aunt lives in Auckland, where Crawford lived for a time as a youth. While writing this thesis, a transgender friend of mine flung herself from the cliffside at the Gap, and died; the same Gap where Crawford apparently had an eerie encounter with Annie’s son, Harry Birkett.

Much of the coverage of Crawford’s story over the years is quite difficult to read as a transgender person today. The pronoun slippage, the incomprehension, the assumptions that Crawford was deviant or confused – all very familiar to my own experience. In some ways the older work, like the 1920s newspaper coverage, is easier to process because at least it is honest in its hatred. (Some of it I cannot even bring myself to be hurt by, but rather find myself helplessly amused, because it is so absurd that the writers almost caricaturise their own discomfort.) The more recent work stings because it is so insidious, and because a lot of the time it is quite clear that the authors had sincerely good intentions. Herbert Moran, for instance, was clearly quite sympathetic to Crawford’s circumstances, and helped appeal to have him released from prison. And yet Moran matter-of-factly described his great revulsion and contempt for those people he considered to be abnormal and monstrous. People like Harry Crawford, and myself.

At times I have struggled with writing fair and reasoned criticism of those who have handled Crawford’s narrative in the past. I worry that I am being too harsh, or not nearly harsh enough. I remind myself that if not for the efforts of my academic forebears I would know much less than I do about Crawford’s life; indeed I might never have heard of him at all. I remind myself that for the most part these scholars and artists have tried to be genuinely respectful in their handling of the subject matter, and that the harm they have enacted is certainly not
intentional. And then I think of my friend who leapt from the Gap, whose parents loved her very much, and were still determinedly misnaming and misgendering her even at her funeral, where a number of her transgender friends were also in attendance. And I wonder whether good intentions are enough.

I have spoken to people who are convinced that transgender identity is a recent innovation; that it is ahistorical, unnatural, made-up, mad. When I point out that many ancient scholars including Enheduanna and Herodotus wrote about people who fit modern definitions of ‘transgender’, they say: well, just because it’s been around for a long time doesn’t mean that it’s natural.\textsuperscript{302} When I point out that a great deal of scientific work has spoken to the validity of trans identity, and that there are identifiable traits in many non-human animal species that could be described as transgender, they say: well, just because it’s natural doesn’t mean that it’s moral.\textsuperscript{303} And around and around we go.

Why do we need transgender history? I suppose we need it so we can know that we are human; that we are not alone.

\begin{flushright}
\footnotesize
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\footnotesize
\end{flushright}
Bibliography

Epigraphs

Primary sources

Unpublished
Birkett, Harry Bell. signed deposition. Criminal Investigation Branch, Sydney, 13 June 1920.
   Papers and depositions from Rex v Eugene Falleni, NRS 880, 9/7250, State Archives and Records Authority of NSW (SARNSW).
Drawings from the trial of Eugene Falleni. Courtesy of the Justice and Police Museum.
Eugenia Falleni, alias Harry Crawford, criminal record number 499LB, 21 October 1920.


Haire, Norman. *Sex Education: Sex and the Individual*. Lecture No. 4, Tuesday, 2nd October, 1945, Sydney University Rare Books Library, Special Collections, Norman Haire Collection, file 2.1.

NRS 2493 [11/3128], State Reformatory for Women, Long Bay. Description card, Side B. SARN NSW.

NSW Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages, 36114/1898. Birth certificate of Josephine Falleni, September 19 1898, Woollahra, NSW.

Papers and depositions from Rex v Eugene Falleni. NRS 880, 9/7250. SARN NSW.


*Rex v Eugene Falleni*. Transcript of the trial of Eugene Falleni in the Supreme Court of New South Wales. 5-6 October 1920, Central Criminal and Quarter Sessions, 6/1007. SARN NSW.

‘A Sex Problem’, *The Daily Mail* (Brisbane), 6 December 1916, 8.
‘Adopted Manhood’, *Capricornian* (Queensland), 16 October 1920, 52.
‘Advertisements Column’, *Evening Star* (Dunedin), 4 August 1896, 2.
‘African Amazons’, *Freeman’s Journal* (Sydney), 21 August 1913, 40.
‘After Posing Seven Years as a Woman to Hide a Murder: Albert Sears, like Ellis Glenn, is Unmasked.’ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 28 July 1901.
‘Albanian Amazons’, *Worker* (Brisbane), 9 October 1913, 17.
‘Amazon Warriors’, *The Kyneton Observer*, 20 June 1891, 6.
‘Amazons’, *The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, 30 December 1908, 1689.
‘Amazons’, *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 8 March 1915, 12.
‘Annie Birkett’s Death: Falleni the “Man-Woman” Charged With Murder’, *Barrier Miner*, 17 August 1920, 2.

‘Charge of Murder: Italian Woman Described’, *The Herald* (Melbourne), 6 July 1920, 10.
‘Charge of Murder: Woman in Male Attire’, *Weekly Times* (Melbourne), 10 July 1920, 41.
‘Curious Weddings’, *Burra Record*, 28 April 1882, 3.
‘Dahomey Amazons’, *Border Watch* (South Australia), 19 August 1893, 4.

‘Disguised as a Man’, *Clarence and Richmond Examiner and New England Advertiser* (NSW), 28 January 1868, 4.

Dondilo, John. ‘Italians in the North’, *Worker* (Brisbane), 5 February 1925, 17.


‘Ellen Tremaye, alias Edward de Lacy Evans, the Female Impersonator’, *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 11 October 1879, 32.

‘English Amazons’, *Evening News* (Sydney), 5 April 1915, 2.


‘Extraordinary Case’, *The Kyogle Examiner* (NSW), 10 July 1920, 1.
‘Extraordinary Case – An Apollo in Petticoats’, *Empire* (Sydney), 23 October 1863, 3.
‘Extraordinary Case of Concealment of Sex’, *Bendigo Advertiser*, 4 September 1879, 2.
‘Extraordinary Murder Case’, *The Mercury* (Hobart), 7 July 1920, 5.
‘Famous Man-Woman’, *Singleton Argus*, 20 February 1931, 5.
‘Filipino Amazons’, *Evening News* (Sydney), 1 March 1899, 4.


‘Fugitive Notes’, *Freeman’s Journal* (Sydney), 10 February 1916, 23.


‘Have You Got a Match?’, *The Herald* (Melbourne), 5 February 1902, 2.


‘In Male Attire’, *Truth* (Melbourne), 10 January 1914, 3.

‘In Man’s Attire: Extraordinary Case’, *Cairns Post*, 7 July 1920, 8


‘Mainly About People’, *Lithgow Mercury*, 2 June 1899, 8.

‘Man Impersonators’, *Quirindi Herald and District News*, 16 November 1906, 2.


‘Man-Woman on Trial: Eugene Falleni Pleads Not Guilty’, *Evening News* (Sydney), 5 October 1920, 7.


‘Mrs De Lacy Evans’, *The Ballarat Star*, 16 December 1879, 2.


‘Mysterious Man-Woman’, *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express*, 27 August 1920, 33.

‘Mystery Woman: Charge of Murder’, *The Argus* (Melbourne), 20 August 1920, 7.


‘One of Strangest Women Criminals Known to World Set Free’, *Truth* (Sydney), 22 February 1931, 1.

‘Posed as Man: Eugene Falleni In Court’, *The Sun* (Sydney), 6 July 1920, 5.


‘Rosa Bonheur’, *Sunday Times*, 29 January 1911, 23.

‘Rosa Bonheur Centenary’, *Sydney Mail*, 19 April 1922, 41.

‘Russian Amazons’, *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 6 March 1915, 14.


‘Social’, *Geelong Advertiser*, 3 October 1879, 3


‘Swiss Amazons’, *Port Fairy Gazette*, 23 November 1914, 5.

‘Sydney’s Big Sensation: The Man-Woman Mystery’, *Call* (Perth), 22 October 1920, 2.


‘The Landlady’s Linoleum’, *The Argus* (Melbourne), 11 June 1904, 16.


‘The “Man-Woman” Imposture’, *Geelong Advertiser*, 8 September 1879, 4.


‘The Tragedy of Mental Errors: Men Who Masqueraded as Women, and Women Who Posed as Men – and Were Crushed by the Wheels of Fate, Which Grind Exceeding Small’, *Truth* (Brisbane), 8 January 1928, 14.


‘Turkish Amazons’, *Leader* (Orange, NSW), 6 July 1915, 2.


‘[Untitled]’, *The Argus* (Melbourne), 25 April 1900, 6.


‘Waratah’, *Examiner* (Launceston), 12 January 1905, 3.


‘When “He” is a “She”: Women Who Masquerade as Men’, *Clarence and Richmond Examiner*, 20 May 1909, 8.

‘Woman Charged with Vagrancy’, *Kalgoorlie Western Angus*, 12 May 1908, 12.


‘Woman Masquerading as a Man Is Charged With Murder’, *Barrier Miner*, 6 July 1920, 4.

‘Woman in Male Attire’, *The North West Advocate and the Emu Bay Times*, 17 March 1911, 3.


‘Women in the Boer Ranks’, *The Age* (Melbourne), 24 April 1900, 5.


‘Women Who Have Lived as Men’, *Singleton Argus*, 12 September 1903, 7.

‘Women Who Have Posed as Men’, *Evelyn Observer, and South and East Bourke Record* (Victoria), 18 October 1901, 4.


‘Zucker’s Luck’, *The Evening Star*, 12 August 1912, 1.
Secondary sources

Books


Chapters and articles
Amin, Kadji. ‘Ghosting Transgender Historicity in Colette’s The Pure and the Impure’.


______. ‘Edwards, Marion (Bill) (1874–1956’)’. Australian Dictionary of Biography,


Websites


Films, plays and novels


Exhibitions

Visual appendix

To an extent the inclusion of this appendix perpetuates the hostile historical gaze directed at Crawford and others like him. I debated whether to include it. Ultimately I think it is a useful accompaniment to the analysis that I have provided, but should be viewed with an awareness of the fraught historiographical context.

Primary Sources

‘Adopted Manhood’, *Capricornian* (Queensland), 16 October 1920, 52.
‘After Posing Seven Years as a Woman to Hide a Murder: Albert Sears, like Ellis Glenn, is Unmasked.’ Chicago Daily Tribune, 28 July 1901.

Drawings from the trial of Eugene Falleni. Courtesy of the Justice and Police Museum.


‘One of Strangest Women Criminals Known to World Set Free’, Truth (Sydney), 22 February 1931, 1.

Papers and depositions from Rex v Eugene Falleni. NRS 880, 9/7250. SARNSW.
Rex v Eugene Falleni, 91. Transcript of the trial of Eugene Falleni in the Supreme Court of New South Wales. 5-6 October 1920, Central Criminal and Quarter Sessions, 6/1007. SARNSW.

Secondary Sources

Book covers


![Eugenia: A Man Book Cover](image1)


![Eugenia: A Man Book Cover](image2)


![The He She Killer: The True Story of Eugenia Falleni Book Cover](image3)


**Newspaper articles**

Man-Woman Masquerade Confession
WORKED 10 YEARS WITH MEN;
"WED" GIRL WORKMATE

(From Truth's Auckland Representative)

ONE of the most fantastic stories of a man-woman masquerade, which must rank with the world's strangest examples of human behaviour was revealed in an Auckland flat last week, when a sturdily-built 30-year-old woman admitted under questioning that she had lived and worked for 10 years as a man among men, had fought them, swam against them, and culminated this almost unbelievable existence recently by "marrying" a young girl employed at the same firm where the "husband" was highly regarded as a good fellow.

Amazing Interview
Presmen who attended the amazing interview found it extremely difficult to believe that the woman with the may of unruly black hair, and of little, minus man was not what she had passed herself off to be for so many years.

At first there was a reluctance to discuss her marriage and her past life, but this disappeared when she was interviewed. She and her "wife" are in their thirties and are extremely happy at the end of the Boer war. The woman was a widow in the army.

It was a million in one chance that two women who had worked for 10 years, revealed the secret to a friend. The woman was a widow in the army.

Someone who attended the meeting said the woman who had married the girl was not only happy, but more mature than he had been before. She was a woman of about 30 years old.

Very Happy Pair

About "his" wife, Mr. X's only comment was: "We are very happy together. We work at the same firm. She is a stenographer, I am a laborer. We are known as our mates as man and wife. My reactions to other men are as natural as yours."

The interview consisted of the present day a month after the man was discovered at the Dorset Hotel. The woman who was married to the "husband" was then living in the flat. The woman who married the girl was not only happy, but more mature than he had been before.

The man who married the girl was not only happy, but more mature than he had been before. She was a woman of about 30 years old.
‘State’s Most Brazen Murder: She Fooled Even Her “Wife”’, The Sun (Sydney), 14 August 1954, 5.
Art


**The Trouble with Harry**
