

# “Impossible Speech” and the Burden of Translation: *Lilian’s Story* from Page to Screen

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In her witty “life narrative” which moves from birth to old age, the narrator of Kate Grenville’s *Lilian’s Story* offers an idea of history that exists in a reinvention of personal and collective memory through the minute observation of everyday life. At the end of a life which sees Lilian suffer the marginality of being a “fat” and “intelligent” girl in a post-Victorian society, Lilian defiantly rewrites—or re-stages—personal history through her streetside recitations of Shakespeare and subversions of a middle-class lady’s behaviour. She claims, “I have never cultivated the burden of memory.” This essay extends Lilian’s suggestion in order to problematise the “burden of translation” and its significance for recent ideas of history as performance, variously applied by writers from Greg Denning to Judith Butler. In Lilian’s words:

History is not the past, but the present made flesh. I saw more, as I became older, fatter, more easily tired. *Look*, I told myself, moving up William Street, and when I looked around I saw the window of an abandoned brothel, that was broken in the shape of a map of Australia. *Look... Listen*, I told myself, *this is history*. (253)

The insistence on “presentness” in Lilian’s words carry the weight of the “burden of translation”—what is not said; what resonates; what is disconnected from the moment of speech. Those words reflect not only the observation of seemingly insignificant detail in everyday life, but a reframing of history through the virtual gaze of a constantly moving

subject “walking in the city,” to use Michel de Certeau’s metaphor (91-110). Kate Grenville’s *Lilian* is given a personal history: a childhood in a strict middle-class family with an abusive father, a university education in the shadow of emerging feminisms, and a period in an institution. The key aspect of this story is her birth date, which coincides with the year of Federation and the end of the Victorian era. Grenville reconceptualises Federation as a germinal (rather than seminal) event in Australia’s history through associating it with Lilian’s birth. While her family’s society still publicly enforces Victorian ideas of gender and morality, the feminist presence of Lilian signifies “the old world translated” to use David Malouf’s phrase from “A Spirit of Play.”<sup>1</sup> Like Joan in Grenville’s *Joan Makes History* (1988), Lilian is an everywoman figure in an allegory of Australian history (“her-history”).

The reception of *Lilian’s Story* also signifies practices of framing and interpretation. The novel garnered attention in literary circles by winning the national Vogel prize in 1984 (Thornton 22). A screen adaptation was directed by Jerzy Domaradzki (and his collaborators) and released in 1995. The differences between novel and film are perhaps symptomatic of the historical moment in which they were made, as well as the artistic, historical and political concerns of each story-teller.<sup>2</sup> Whereas Domaradzki’s film focuses on madness and the public life of a famous eccentric, Grenville’s novel sets Lilian’s life against a background of social, political and historical change in Australia dating from Federation to the 1960s, when the suffragette movement shifted social boundaries for women. It therefore reflects the shifting cultural spaces of Australian society, when political structures were starting to break off from direct parental relationship with England and the people were beginning to acknowledge difference and independence. Some critics have suggested that the oppressive relationship that Lilian endures with her father Albion is symptomatic of a similar relationship between Australia and England (Naglazaras 5). The figure of Lilian thus becomes allegorical of Australia’s adolescence in her transgressive recitation of English “scripts.” Lilian’s refusal to stand up for the Queen’s anthem in the cinema during World War Two is an example of her irreverence for such oppressive structures (176). As Ruth Barcan suggests, Lilian’s rewriting of the official passages of the city is paralleled with her use of Shakespeare as an “instrument of rebellion against patriarchy and convention” (44).

This essay examines the translation from novel to film, and its significance to ideas of the “re-staging” of history through performance. It applies Judith Butler’s theory of “excitable speech,” that is, her suggestion that language is alive when it “refuses to ‘encapsulate’ or ‘capture’ the events and lives it describes” (*Excitable Speech* 8-9). Lilian’s streetside recitations of Shakespeare re-inscribe a literature firmly lodged in patriarchal English values, investing it with feminist subjectivity. Her performances are insurgent acts of translation, and it is often when she is “moving” through the city that she remodels her “William” in her own voice.

### LILLIAN’S STORY AS TEXTUAL SERIES

Practices of translation in this instance exhibit in two relationships: the renegotiation of personal history from father to daughter, and the textual series represented in the adaptation of novel to film. The notion of cultural translation offers a useful paradigm to consider both relationships. It serves to mobilise acts of speaking, telling, reading and performing as unstable sites of meaning. Homi Bhabha (among others) insists that translation is an insurgent act, or a process replete with political tensions, contradictions, instabilities. It exists in the space which he calls the “interstices”—“the performativity of cultural translation as the staging of cultural difference” (227). Resurrecting the philosophical ideas of Heidegger, Bhabha also locates the border as the boundary where “presencing begins” (1). This is the location at which contemporary subjectivities, echoing voices of the colonised, the repressed, of minorities, refugees and others can speak through the “silences” in between conventional, nationalistic and homogenous structures (227). Bhabha uses Salman Rushdie’s term, the “migrant’s double-vision,” to identify the virtual sites from which these subjectivities can perform (5). Translation, he suggests, is a process which implies transition:

Translation is the performative nature of cultural communication. It is language *in actu* (enunciation, positionality) rather than language *in situ* (*énoncé*, or propositionality). And the sign of translation continually tells, or “tolls” the different times and spaces between cultural authority and its performative practices. The “time” of translation consists in that *movement* of meaning, the principle and practice of a communication that,

in the words of [Paul] de Man, “puts the original in motion to decanonise it,” giving it the movement of fragmentation, a wandering of errance, a kind of permanent exile. (228)

Lilian’s mobile speech acts represent such shifts in meaning between the “cultural authority” of her father and the “performative practices” inscribed by gender codes. In short, hers is a true “wandering of errance,” the fragmented subjectivity of a supposedly “mad” woman.

As part of a textual series, *Lilian’s Story* follows its own twists and turns, so that any notion of an “original” becomes redundant. It has been translated from the real life of Bea Miles to folk legend, to a symbol of the vitality and struggles of a city in a certain era. The novel based on this life teases out the social and historical questions behind this popular memory—questions of feminist history and Australia’s political independence. Grenville’s prequel to *Lilian’s Story*, *Dark Places* (1994), is told in the misogynist voice of Lilian’s abusive father Albion, and explains the history of patriarchal ideas in Victorian Australia. This novel’s appearance after the publication of *Lilian’s Story* fractures any prior reading of Lilian’s first-person narration. Domaradzki’s film of *Lilian’s Story* is released a year later in 1995 and eliminates the novel’s specific historical background. The film dramatises questions of memory, independence and psychological freedom but frames them in more existential terms, reflecting a Polish Australian film-maker’s concerns, in Rushdie’s phrase a “migrant’s double-vision.”

Domaradzki’s cinematic translation needs to be explained in two contexts: the concerns of Australian cinema at the time, and the cultural background of the filmmaker. In the wake of what journalists termed the “new wave,” the darker films of the late 1990s used a very different aesthetic than the sun-bleached vistas of the “AFC genre” or the “glitter cycle” comedies of the early 1990s.<sup>3</sup> The film of *Lilian’s Story* reflected this different aesthetic. Commentators also pointed to the shift in thematic concerns of Australian cinema in the mid-to-late 1990s. *Lilian’s Story* was one of many films which explored the theme of madness and old age—films such as *Cosi* (1996), *Shine* (1996), *Angel Baby* (1995) and *Bad Boy Bubby* (1994). Lynden Barber suggests that audiences and producers had come to accept confronting subjects after the success of Jane Campion’s *An Angel at My Table* in 1990 (12). Margot Nash, director of *Vacant Possession*, commented that the trend towards thoughtful, serious films in the mid-1990s was the result of a reflexive Australian self-image: “being a little lost and trying to understand where we are at the end of the century” (qtd. in Fitzgerald 65).

*Lilian's Story* also reflects the subjectivity of a migrant film-maker. Jerzy Domaradzki is a Ukraine-born film-maker trained in the national Lodz film school in Poland. His earlier film, *Struck by Lightning* (1990), was produced after a residency at the Australian Film Television and Radio School in 1987 (Connolly 7). Yet it is *Lilian's Story* that more reflects the cinema of socialist Poland prior to its present democratic, free-market society. Some of Domaradzki's Polish contemporaries were film-makers, such as Krzysztof Kieslowski, Roman Polanski and Andrzej Wajda, all of whom were known for sombre, sparsely rendered films that represented the nation's consciousness and visions. In the 1980s, Domaradzki and his contemporaries worked under the visionary umbrella of the "Cinema of Moral Concern." As Alexandra Sosnowski suggests, post-war Polish cinema before the 1980s was concerned with "the cinematic analysis of social problems" (14). Australian cinema inherited this particular aesthetic in *Lilian's Story*, and in such a way as to fit it to a third strata of Polish cinema, the "psychological path," which, according to Sosnowski, "turned the camera inward, focusing on the private workings of the self" (14).

Furthermore, this Polish aesthetic is symptomatic of Domaradzki's training in Polish socialist art, where film-makers were "expected to convey a message, but their works had to be ambitious, complex, and artistically sophisticated" (Sosnowski 16). As Peter Galvin suggests, Domaradzki's directorial style is "consciously poetic, from the rigid stylised performances to the many short wordless scenes, to the theatrical gesture of casting one actor in several roles" (16). Thus, Sydney is seen through fresh eyes, as Ruth Cracknell (who plays Lilian in Domaradzki's cinematic translation of the novel) suggests, "He brought new eyes to Sydney. I found I was rediscovering the place" (qtd. in Crompton 3). Domaradzki's cinematographer, fellow Pole Ślawomir Idziak, presents us with an unconventional series of images of the city, far removed from the harsh sunlight depicted in classical Australian cinema or the major icons presented in tourist films and advertising (Galvin 16). Thus, in the opening sequence, Sydney is shown as though through Lilian's eyes as she peers out of a moving taxi. The camera tracks across grass areas and then captures the boldly lit skyscrapers of the city at night. It could be any city, yet the visual language of the film-makers is unmistakably European.

Domaradzki's European art-film style in *Lilian's Story* reflects the transplantation of the cinematic language of his homeland (an aesthetic frozen in the moment he left pre-Solidarity Poland) into a film which has its roots firmly in the collective memory of Australian society, specifically Sydney people of earlier

generations. It is evidence of the migrancy of ideas, languages, techniques and frame-works. Domaradzki and screenwriter Steve Wright chose to release Lillian from the institution when she is an old woman and set the central narrative in the present (the 1990s). Social and feminist history, as we read it in Grenville’s novel, is abstracted to *psychological* history.

#### PERFORMING MEMORY

In both the novel and the film of *Lillian’s Story*, the operation of memory is symbolised most strongly by Lillian’s capacity to hold all of the words of William Shakespeare in her head, signifying Lillian’s ownership or domestication of “fragments” of “William’s” magisterial text. Lillian’s feminist *play* with Shakespeare’s celebrated work subverts the patriarchal, humanist system which tries to repress her. In her later years, she takes speeches out of context, moulding them to suit her eccentric observations of everyday life, giving them personal significance. She recites Shakespeare’s poetry in brazen, grotesque ways. In her earlier years, Lillian’s recitations signify a tension between the “romantic” desires of a teenage girl and the need for her father’s approval according to her terms. In the film, Lillian recites the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet* as a play of courtship with her “beau” F. J. Stroud as they sit under an upturned boat on the foreshore. In the novel, Lillian is ambivalent to the attentions of F. J. Stroud. As a young man, he is not privy to Lillian’s recitations. Instead, Lillian recites Shakespeare to her friend Duncan in the mistaken belief that there is romantic potential between them. Duncan, a crude but wealthy country boy, does not understand her recitations, yet plays along when she quotes a passage from a courtship dialogue between Ferdinand and Miranda in *The Tempest*:

*I do not know one of my sex! No woman’s face remember, save,  
from my glass, mine own; nor have I seen more that I may call men,  
that you, good friend, and my dear father.* (116)

Lillian’s recitation connotes her desire for “recognition” to be returned by her father and her friend Duncan. Yet both men cannot perceive Lillian beyond given gender codes. In the novel and the film, Albion suspects Lillian of sexual promiscuity when he encounters her reciting Shakespeare to Duncan/Stroud on the beach. In reaction, he throws Lillian’s book into the harbour. It is Albion’s attempt to control her subversive acts by destroying an earlier sign of his paternal love—the gift of Shakespeare. However, Lillian is innocent of any sexual deviance and resists her father’s attempts to silence her. In the novel,

she remarks that she has memorised the words anyway, and has no use for the book (122). In the film, chosen extracts from Shakespeare also represent such brazen acts of defiance. For example, prior to Albion's destruction of the book, Lilian recites Cordelia's famous speech from the opening scene of *King Lear*, where Cordelia refuses easy speech as a measure of her allegiance to her father. Such scenes are exemplars of Grenville's preoccupation with the father-daughter relationships of *King Lear* and *The Tempest*.

This wilful transformation of Shakespeare's text is heightened in the figurative strategy of the grotesque in the film, especially in her performances on the street after her father's death. By indulging in what her society designates as eccentricity or "madness," Lilian is freed from the social expectations of her class and gender previously imposed in her post-Victorian childhood. She uses streets, parks, buses and taxis as stages for her bawdy performances, teaching the crowd her wisdom. They are all transitional sites, where people are moving from one place to another. Thus Lilian's speech acts can be seen as examples of Judith Butler's theory of the socially transformative power of unconventional performances of "conventional" texts:

"Impossible speech" would be precisely the ramblings of the asocial, the rantings of the "psychotic" that the rules that govern the domain of speakability produce, and by which they are continually haunted. (*Excitable Speech* 133)

In *Excitable Speech*, Butler re-contextualises J. L. Austin's theories of the speech act through a study of hate speech and its construction in legal discourse. She refers to the institutions which prescribe ways of speaking and define limits of acceptable "public" behaviour. Hence, the "rantings" of an old Lilian are speech acts that spill over the "domain of speakability" coded in her society. Lilian is aware of her place in other people's histories, and that a speech act can have an effect beyond, as Butler suggests, "the moment it occasions" (14). Her recitations of "her William" therefore represent creative strategies of resistance, what Tejaswini Niranjana calls that "translative practice *between* interpretation and reading, carrying a disruptive force much greater than the other two" (186). Her speech acts restage history, rewrite the lived experience of the city, and translate Shakespeare's words from the page to collective memory. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau also points to the disruption of dominant systems by common people. Through the model of the speech act, he describes how people "escape" domination without leaving the society through the modification of official languages. In the novel, Lilian claims the importance of performance over language when she says "any tale is real if it is told well enough" (112).

## RE-STAGING GENDER

Lilian's unruly speech acts are not only defiant appropriations of the Shakespearian canon. They are also attempts to *speak back* to her father's violent misogyny and society's designation of Lilian as a "failed" woman. Her eccentric performances enact the frightened silences of her own lived experience. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler argues that the enactment of gender is defined by normative standards set by hegemonic practices. Grenville's description of the art and manners of a "young lady," defined and re-iterated by Lilian's mother and the "yellow-stockinged" girls at tennis parties, embodies such notions. Because of physical size and intelligence, Lilian falls short of such social norms. Yet Butler's theory opens up the possibility for subjects to subvert such codes—Lilian doesn't play the young lady, "*daughter of a gentleman*," in the proper manner (92). Yet she does find a way to re-invent her own subjectivity through distorted re-iteration. This is epitomised by the overbearing presence of her large body.

Vicky Roach describes Lilian as "a woman too big for the space allowed her, a character constantly spilling over her boundaries" (39). Roach notes that the film-makers relied on the actor Ruth Cracknell's "imposing presence" to interpret this aspect of Grenville's creation. Yet Cracknell is a lean woman, and such casting could be seen as a move away from Grenville's comment on how Lilian, as a physically large woman unashamed of her sexuality, transcends the limits of a Victorian lady's behaviour. Cracknell's earlier performances, such as Maggie from *Mother and Son* on Australian television, are echoed in the innocence and eccentricity of her portrayal of Lilian. Those prior performances undoubtedly directed the audience's reading of the film; and such an intertextual reference to subversive, difficult characters translates Lilian's physical proportions into what Kathleen Rowe terms an "unruly woman." Lilian (in both novel and film) fits several of Rowe's criteria: she is physically large (in the novel); she is "unwilling to confine herself to her proper place"; she is an old woman; she is a comedic figure; she lives on the streets and thus is associated with borders and thresholds; she is accused (wrongly) of sexual deviance; and her speech is "excessive" (31). Like Butler, Rowe argues that the signifiers of an "unruly woman" are "coded with misogyny" but are also a "potential source of power" (31).

In Grenville's novel, Lilian's marginal relation to normative gender identities is also signified by the absence of any "desirable" female community. Instead, eccentric women influence Lilian's concept of her body, her worth as an intelligent girl, and her place in other people's memories. The film



excludes many of these female characters, eliminating the strong feminist presence that underscores the historical milieu of the novel. The character of Joan is the most powerful omission and significantly weakens the film's representation of Lilian's unashamed sexuality on the streets in her old age. Joan is Lilian's university friend, daughter of Eastern European migrants. She is not from the society of "graceful" young ladies of English descent found at Lilian's tennis parties, debutantes with "tidy smiles" and "tidy futures" (90). Joan, like Lilian's neighbour Miss Gash, offers her the possibility of alternative feminine identities. She teaches Lilian to possess and invent her destiny outside the "tidy futures" inscribed by her family's society (114).

In the film, only Aunt Kitty, the prostitutes, and the female inmates in the institution for the mentally ill remain. Those characters serve to ensure Lilian's freedom from incarceration and protect her from the abusive presence of misogyny in public and private spheres. For example, Aunt Kitty remains as an agent for Lilian's release from the institution at the beginning of the film. Although a minor character, Aunt Kitty provides an ironic re-enactment of the tattered remains of the "Victorian" lady. She chats to Lilian about the price of alcohol. She tries to cheer Lilian by playing dress-ups with gaudy hat and sequined top. As in the novel, she speaks of her preference for "ill green . . . like a cactus" (130). She explains, "Men like women to dress up and make them feel good"; and, when Lilian questions her about women's "wants," she mutters, "fun" (130). "Fun" is a loaded term. Yet the role of Kitty is not only that of reflecting Lilian's eccentricity and grotesquely "garbed" sexuality, but also is one of guardianship. In the novel, Kitty's secret knowledge and power over her brother Albion is implicit although unexplained. In the film, this relationship is omitted. Instead, Kitty functions as an agent of transition for Lilian's re-entry into city life and female experience after years of institutionalisation. Lilian thus becomes free to be an exhibitionist, a lewd inverter of the codes of accepted female behaviour, a character that transgresses the performative through her evanescent perceptions and proclamations.

#### FLÂNEUSE: SHIFTING PERCEPTIONS OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau suggests the social and historical "openings" created by the twistings, disruptions and u-turns of walkers in the city. Walkers both appropriate and modify the text written by a city's urban planners and architects:

In short, *space is a practiced place*. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers. In the same way, an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e., a place constituted by a system of signs. (117)

Lilian’s meanderings, both in her youth but especially in her old age, epitomise this free adaptation of the city’s urban design, this “freedom of the city” brought about by living outside the accepted codes of the society (Cracknell, qtd. in Barcan 31). This is differently pursued in the novel and in the film, and reflects the more contingent processes of reading and translating. De Certeau’s parallel between the shifting subjectivities of city walkers and the interpretive practices of readers is useful here. A reader activates the “system of signs” found in a narrative according to continually shifting contexts, or, to use Hans Robert Jauss’s term, on a changing “horizon of expectations.”<sup>4</sup> The “practiced place” of cultural translation is therefore transformative, rather than reductive. Lilian’s wanderings through the city are liberated from the need to depart and arrive in “official” places.

Lilian’s performances also reflect shifting perceptions of lived experience. Anne Friedberg’s thesis on the *flâneuse* may be helpful here in extending de Certeau’s analogy of the street-walker and reader. Friedberg’s late nineteenth-century *flâneuse* roams the city with the power of the female consumer in the enclosed spaces of the new department stores (36). In her use of the term “shopper,” Friedberg implies the power of looking, consuming and possessing. Similarly, Lilian (in novel and film) “translates” and transforms the city with her mobile gaze and her brash and rebellious speech acts. Yet Lilian does not find a secret power in “shopping” for the products of a rising consumer culture. Instead, she “shops” for the silences and contingencies of lived experience. Her places of observation and recitation are not situated in the contained and fixed “private” space of the shopping mall but in interlinear, transitional and mobile sites—under bridges, in taxis, on ferries, in the shadows of architectural thresholds.

Furthermore, Lilian’s empowerment as a street-walker arises after her father’s death, signifying her emancipation from the constraints of middle-class patriarchal society:

Father’s death made me weightless and I was discovering new ways of journeying through my life. *It is better to travel*, I would

remind myself, when my room began to close in around me, and Frank was nowhere to be found. *No one enjoying life can afford not to journey*, I told people beside me in the bus . . . the arriving was not the important thing. (228-29)

The film depicts Lilian's journeying after her father's death in a montage sequence, compressing memory, time and space. Her new found freedom in journeying leads her to her lost "love" F. J. Stroud. She travels in taxis, on buses and trams, walks the streets and gradually discovers a drunken Frank making home in a stormwater channel. In both the novel and the film, Lilian proclaims, "Mobility is the key" (229). However, in Grenville's novel, her aimless wanderings give her the freedom from the oppression of "being a daughter," from her night-time journeys through the countryside, to her later adaptation of travelling the city according to her own script, just as the migrant's camera re-perceives the city of Sydney. Lilian "invents" a character which she intends to impose on the people of Sydney's memory, a character to play "a part in the stories of others," to become "a small part of history" (248). As Susan Midalia suggests in her description of Rita's final exhibition in Marion Campbell's *Lines of Flight*, Lilian's exhibition of herself is an installation that evokes "the shifting and elusive subject of a promenading gaze," which encourages its audiences to actively create Lilian as folk legend, a haunting of their lived experience (102).

#### THE FILM: SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL MOBILITY

While the novel, shaped as a traditional *Bildungsroman*, takes us linearly through Lilian's life towards her moment of self-determination (or self-acceptance), the film of *Lilian's Story* compresses Lilian's youth into selected flashbacks surrounding the central mystery of what happened between Lilian and her oppressive father Albion. Thus, Domaradzki's film ignores the historicity of Grenville's feminism. Gone are the details of feminist history which background the story of Lilian. The *mise en scène* depicts the crowds and the lights of what we know from previous texts or experience as Kings Cross, yet there is no signage to indicate a specific place. In the background of many scenes are strip-clubs, casinos, banks, a wig shop, an unnamed café, a seafood shop and a laundromat, signposted in neon. While the viewer who knows Sydney would recognise Kings Cross, to others it could be the sleazy section of any city. The people shown in the streets and on the buses signify shifts in the society's accepted codes and behaviours after Lilian's re-entry into it. We know by the dialogue that she

has been institutionalised for forty years, rather than the ten or so years of the novel, so that she is an old lady when she re-enters Sydney life rather than a woman just passed her prime.

In the first third of the film, Lilian explores her new terrain through jumping onto buses and into taxis. A series of angry encounters with individuals who cross paths with Lilian serves to comment on capitalism and democracy in the mid-1990s. An upset Asian transvestite complains to a bus driver when Lilian recites Shakespeare into his ear (“my gay apparel”) without realising its connotations. A businessman wearing one earring frowns at Lilian. Fashion has changed. The crowd represents a multicultural Australia, rather than the milieu of Australian feminism that Grenville invokes. Domaradzki’s film, therefore, presents us with the after-effects of feminism and multicultural policies. It reconceptualises the bohemian milieu of Sydney in the 1960s as the culturally diverse, yet conservative, moment of the mid-1990s. The mix of people in the crowds that witness Lilian’s recitations are shown as alienated individuals in a fast-paced urban environment—a “no-place”—and, although the crowd is cosmopolitan, there is little sense of community except among those who live and work on the streets.

The final scene depicts the protagonist travelling through the landscape voicing “her” story, and asserting her fame. Lilian proposes three conditions for the taxi driver to take her on a long journey that involve present, future and past. The first condition relates to the present. She asserts her opposition to “posturing, posing and affectation.” The second condition ensures her place in people’s memories in the future: “[Y]ou agree to remember me with a smile.” The final condition asks us to recognise the past in all its facets: “everything matters, and is necessary to make up our lives.” The scene therefore proposes a note of hope in proclaiming her memory, the invisible threads of all lived experience and the “falsity” of those who do not “perform.” The snake-like road signifies the presence of stories that are not hers to possess, speech acts implicit in the landscape. Behind the wheel is an Indigenous man who literally shares the “last laugh” with Lilian. Yet his presence as conduit across landscape, memory, past and present signifies Domaradzki’s translation of *Lilian’s Story* from a feminist story to one which acknowledges the importance of Indigenous agency.

## CONCLUSION

*Lilian's Story* continues to reverberate in this paper, just as the memory of Bea Miles remains in translation in the minds of Sydneysiders. This intertextuality is an active process of cultural translation, the making of meaning that permeates social boundaries, individual psychologies and artistic contexts. Lilian's acts of utterance as *flâneuse*, street-walker and story-teller tell much of the contingent aspects of history in all its guises. Grenville's *Lilian's Story* indexes the historical and feminist nature of this character's rite-of-passage. Domaradzki's text seems to universalise its meaning, telling the tale of an "other" happy to journey on peripheral trajectories. The story in all its phases signifies the movement of meaning that works in translation.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 In the second of his Boyer Lectures, Malouf remarks: "We speak of these places we belong to as new worlds, but what they really are is the old world translated: translated with all that word implies of re-interpretation and change, not simply transported. Our ways of thinking and feeling and doing were developed and tested over many centuries before we brought them to this new place, and gave them a different turn of meaning, different associations, a different shape and weight and colour, on new ground."
- 2 Although the film of *Lilian's Story* is discussed as the director Jerzy Domaradzki's work, it is important to remember that film is a collaborative art-form. However, it is beyond the scope of this essay to discuss the contributions of every key artist (screenwriter, cinematographer, set designer, composer and others) in depth. Discussion of "Domaradzki's film," therefore, assumes the director as the central artist while acknowledging the important collaborations of other artists.
- 3 The "AFC genre" was first defined by Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka in their influential two-volume text, *The Screening of Australia*, to categorise the pastoral screen dramas of the 1970s Australian film "Renaissance." The term "glitter cycle" was also used to categorise the three eccentric comedies (*Strictly Ballroom* [1992], *Muriel's Wedding* [1994] and *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* [1994]) which re-iterated and reformed the "popular" with an "Australian identity." Emily Rustin has argued that the "glitter cycle" undermined the Australian (cinematic) imaginary, variously

described by Graeme Turner, Russel Ward and John Tulloch as being characterised by the heterosexual male hero battling an unconquerable landscape and society (see her “Romance and Sensation”).

- 4 In *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, Jauss’s revision of the critical modes for studying literature positions texts against a virtual “horizon of expectations” (*Rezeptionästhetik*), a horizon conditioned by a continual shift in paradigms of intellectual and social thought.

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