

Three Tales for Emmie: Joan Wise's Forgotten Tasmanian Triptych

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Joan Wise made her fiction debut in the pages of Australia's *Bulletin* magazine in 1950. A poem of hers had earlier appeared in the same publication, but her arrival as a writer of prose was announced by a series of linked tales, "The Conquest of Emmie" (January), "Poison in the Furrow" (May), and "A Fence for Emma" (August). The stories are a subtly comic triptych about gender politics and hardscrabble bush-farming life in the remote Central Highlands district of Tasmania.

We discovered Joan Wise by chance, while trawling the archives during the early stages of editing *Deep South: Stories from Tasmania* (2012).¹ One of our intentions in editing the anthology was to re-present to the contemporary reader a selection of the best Tasmanian stories that had for decades languished unread in back issues of journals and magazines. More than sixty years after the original publication of Wise's stories, they struck us as original, witty, and of remarkable interest to the contemporary reader.

Born Joan Boyd in Tasmania in 1912, Wise was educated at St Michael's Collegiate School, a private Anglican girls' school in Hobart, and following her graduation trained as a Mothercraft nurse. At the age of twenty, she met and married Archibald ("Arch") Wise, a farmer from Plenty, a small town in Tasmania's Derwent Valley. Following her marriage, Wise took over management of the farmhouse at "Kinvarra," a substantial sheep- and hop-producing property, combining the demands of this role with raising three daughters and trying to establish a career as a writer. While Wise's publications span four decades, her writing life was fragmented and her output sporadic. The first flush of her publishing career came between 1946 and 1950 when she focused on producing poetry and short fiction for an adult audience. The 1950 publication of the Emmie stories, when Wise was thirty-eight years old, might have heralded the emergence of a strong new voice in Australian fiction, but immediately following their publication, Wise seems to have

disappeared from view. When she reemerged on the publishing scene fifteen years later, it was as an author of children's poetry and fiction. Between 1965 and 1978, Wise produced two children's novels, *Trapped on Tasman* (1971) and *The Silver Fish* (1972), as well as numerous shorter works that appeared in the *School Magazine* (published by the New South Wales Department of Education since 1916) and various anthologies. During the final phase of her career, Wise confided in a letter to an editor at Writers' Radio that she was "now not able to write for children," although her reasons for this conclusion remain unclear. Her last written works were fragments of autobiographical nonfiction that were never published but possibly intended for radio broadcast. They tell of the period of her life in which she cared for her husband after he suffered two strokes and—together with her correspondence—paint a picture of a woman torn between concern for her husband and frustration at the lack of time she is able to devote to her writing.

Wise's biographical profile is remarkably similar to those of the Australian women writers who are the subjects of Susan Sheridan's group biography, *Nine Lives*. Judith Wright, Thea Astley, Gwen Harwood, Elizabeth Jolley, Amy Witting, Jessica Anderson, Rosemary Dobson, Dorothy Hewett, and Dorothy Auchterlonie Green were all born between 1915 and 1925, and each of them achieved success between the mid-1940s and 1970s. Sheridan is interested in why some of them (Jolley, Witting, Anderson) did not publish until middle age and why others (Dobson, Hewett, Green) "started strongly as poets in the 1940s, but either reduced their output or fell silent for the next twenty years" (back cover). "Literature," writes Sheridan, "was a particularly unwelcoming and uncertain profession for women" (5) in the immediate postwar period, the time when Wise was seeking a foothold for her fiction. The "ideologically driven ousting of women from public life" (5), the chauvinism of established literary gatekeepers, the dominance of Cold War politics (in which relatively few women writers participated), and the personal circumstances of individual women—who usually combined "the artistic life with the domestic" (2)—are among the interlocking cultural, social, and political factors that Sheridan offers as an explanation for the partial occlusion of Australian women's writing at that time.

Little biographical information about Wise has been recorded, but the dust jacket of her 1971 children's novel *Trapped on Tasman* provides a rare glimpse into her early writing life. It reports that she began to write "when her three children went to boarding school" and that she "struggled" with a correspondence course in journalism. Although the nature of this struggle could simply have been fitting the coursework in among various other commitments ("breeding children's ponies, cooking for shearers and harvesters, picking hops and milking cows"), the text suggests that she was initially frustrated in her attempts to get her work published:

“Eventually she achieved acceptance for her work.” This was a difficulty that Wise had to contend with again when she returned to publishing after her fifteen-year hiatus and tried to interest a publisher in the manuscript of *Trapped on Tasman*. In media interviews in 1970 and 1971, she described how she wrote the book three times, and suffered numerous rejections, before a fourth rewrite netted her a contract.

There are distinct patterns to Wise's fiction that may have made her work more appealing at certain times as the hues of literary fashion changed. Her protagonists are invariably capable women and resourceful children, and her locations are always far from the city. The characters of her 1950 *Bulletin* triptych eke out their living in cold, wet central Tasmania, while *Trapped on Tasman* depicts the isolated community life of the remote Tasman Island light station, and *The Silver Fish* is set during a Derwent Valley hop harvest. Especially in her work for young audiences, Wise seems to have had an educative purpose in depicting the material living conditions of families who live beyond the margins of suburbia. For example, *The Silver Fish* includes an appendix of factual material about hop farming, and the main text incorporates close detail about the organization of the crop's annual harvest. Other hallmarks of Wise's fiction are a strong feeling for the Australian vernacular and a preoccupation with animals, both native and domestic.

When Wise died in 1985, her estate included a modest collection of papers comprising a travel diary, letters, and drafts of creative works both published and unpublished. The collection is a haphazard one, interspersed with such ephemera as a dry-cleaning bill, an insurance policy statement, and a recipe for a cocktail called Purple Gin. Added to the collection, presumably by one of Wise's daughters, are media clippings relating to the writing career of Wise's granddaughter Rachael Treasure, widely acknowledged as a pioneer in the contemporary resurgence of popular Australian rural fiction and now the custodian of Wise's papers. The creative components of the collection, along with the correspondence, provide evidence that Wise—in order to meet publishing opportunities or requests—was given to repurposing chapters of longer works as short fiction and that, like many writers, she began many more works than she completed. We can speculate that prevailing sociocultural conditions during her lifetime, in combination with the multiple demands of farm life, prevented her from producing the output and enjoying the profile that her evident talent might, in other circumstances, have made possible.

An obituary in Hobart's *Mercury* newspaper describes her as a “notable author-ess of children's books” (“Death” 28) and nominates *Trapped on Tasman* as her best-known work. This essay seeks to provide a more comprehensive picture of Wise's career and to pay overdue critical attention to her earliest and finest works, the Emmie stories.



Figure 1. Joan Wise (Photograph from the Joan Wise Papers, courtesy of Rachael Treasure)

THE EMMIE STORIES

Wise describes the setting of the Emmie stories as the “Lake District” (“Conquest” 22) of Tasmania. “Lake District” is not now a common geographical descriptor, but it presumably refers to the area now more commonly called the Central Highlands, a region that lies north of the historic town of Bothwell and south of the Great Western Tiers. The specific location of Wise’s stories is within a circle of marginal, marshy land bordered by the Lyell and Lake Highways. Although, geographically speaking, this is the very center of Tasmania, it is also home to some of the island’s most remote communities. Within its bounds is the notorious hamlet of Black Bobs, a place whose name has become synonymous in local parlance with isolation, incest, and the legendary two-headed Tasmanian. The temporal setting of the Emmie stories is less easily pinpointed. The rough, remote bush conditions faced by the central characters of the triptych make for few markers of social progress, and apart from the occasional reference that firmly marks these tales as post-World War II (such as the use of the word “jeep” in “Poison in the Furrow”),² they might be set in almost any decade of the first half of the twentieth century.

Because the stories feature the same three characters in interactions over the course of approximately two years, it is tempting to read them as fragments of a novel. However, the self-contained, episodic structure of the stories might more clearly point to their being installments of a series. Either way, it is likely that Wise envisaged her three *Bulletin* stories as only the beginning of something larger. Whatever that larger work might have been, however, it was never realized.

At the center of the stories is the hardworking, progressive Emmie (referred to as “Emma” only in the title of the third story, “A Fence for Emma”). She is flanked by Sam Creese, the man she has chosen, and Moss Jones, the man she has fore-sworn. Sam is a small-time farmer working a small holding of barely arable land, although Emmie has talked him into earning some “steady money” (“Conquest” 22), by taking on the local mail run. But Sam is easily tired by life and its obstacles and is apt to complain about “These wimmen!” (“Conquest” 22; “Fence” 32) and their “fancy ideas” (“Conquest” 22; “Fence” 32). By contrast, Moss is “small, energetic and quick-witted” (“Conquest” 22). He spends part of the year away from his father’s small holding, earning money fishing, but he returns at the end of each season with his admiration for Emmie undimmed. Each of the stories turns on Emmie’s success or partial success in spurring Sam to live up to her expectations of him as a partner and provider and how she deploys the presence of another man—usually Moss—as a motivating force.

But Emmie is not only, or even primarily, a manipulator. “There was nothing slack about Emmie!” Wise assures us (“Conquest” 22). The reader’s first vision of Emmie is a striking one: she is skinning a pair of wallabies, with a brace of dead rabbits on a length of fencing wire around her waist and her squalling baby strapped to her back in a sugar bag. And she is clearly expecting a second child. Emmie’s “fancy ideas” relate to nothing more fanciful than providing a secure and healthy environment for her children. The third story, “A Fence for Emma,” describes Emmie becoming literate so that she can read newspapers, in whose pages she learns about the importance of “vitamins for children and how to conserve them in vegetables” (32). Emmie works toward her goals not only by keeping Sam to his promises (to build their rough four-room home, to construct a fence to keep the wallabies and rabbits out of her vegetable garden) but also by trapping and skinning animals for food and extra money, taking over Sam’s mail run when he fails to do it himself and laboring beside him on the building of the house. Both “The Conquest of Emmie” and “Poison in the Furrow” conclude with proof of Emmie’s fundamental loyalty to Sam and her delight in how her provocations have resulted in Sam taking actions that prove him a worthy partner, both in her eyes and in Moss’s.

The gender politics of the Emmie stories are often surprising, and this springs in part from the remoteness of the setting. While Emmie’s off-the-grid life is in

many ways more determined than those of most city dwellers—dictated as it is by the uncompromising demands of self-sufficiency—it is in other ways less constrained. For example, in “The Conquest of Emmie,” it passes without comment from anyone that Emmie bears her second child before she marries, and it is not a foregone conclusion that the man she commits to will be Sam, the father of her children, and not her admirer, Moss. The title of this first story in the triptych is cleverly layered, though this comes into focus only in the final scene, in which Sam—who the reader might easily have assumed is already married to Emmie—is jolted into an ungainly proposal at the hospital where Emmie has just given birth:

“Well, what about it?” Sam said sharply. “Can’t y’ speak up, woman? Pity t’ waste me trip down t’ Hamilton. Parson says he’ll marry us right away!”
“Ere, take me string-bag; I’m glad y’ didn’t let Moss beat y’ to it,” said Emmie proudly. (22)

This, then, is the titular conquest of Emmie. And while traditional views of gender and marriage in the 1950s might have led contemporary readers to anticipate Emmie’s surrender, the exquisitely understated conclusion of Wise’s story instead challenges them to consider whether Emmie is the conquered or the conqueror, the object of the title’s conquest or its subject: a woman with agency who “proudly” reflects on what she has engineered.

Given Emmie’s status as a capable wife and mother in the bush and her appearance in the so-called Bushman’s Bible, the *Bulletin*, it is difficult not to sense looming over her the shadow of the iconic heroine of Henry Lawson’s seminal 1892 short story “The Drover’s Wife.” While the Emmie stories form no part of the explicit writing back to Lawson that over the past century has consciously mapped and remapped mythologies of Australia’s relationship to the bush, Emmie nevertheless embodies a fresh and unexpected version of female toughness in a forbidding landscape. She is not precisely left to fend for herself and her children, as is Lawson’s “gaunt, sun-browned bushwoman” (19), but Sam’s laziness means that Emmie is both the primary breadwinner and primary carer for her family. Like Lawson’s heroine, Emmie works as hard as any man in the name of survival and in the service of her children, but unlike her, Emmie is no tragic figure. She is not trapped in her fate but embraces the challenges of her life with humor. She is neither prematurely aged nor rendered (to a male gaze) unfeminine by the harsh physical demands of her work and home life. Though Emmie is often dirty, tired, sore, and dressed in men’s clothes, she retains a youthful vitality and girlishness that sit curiously alongside the maturity and strength of her decisions and actions. Wise describes her as “a slip of a girl” (“Fence” 32), “slight and brown,” with a “small oval face” (“Poison” 22); Emmie picks her way through the bush “daintily” and laughs “shyly” (“Poison” 22). The

men in her life are certainly cognizant of her appeal, and Wise has a male neighbor somewhat lustily observe her “pink skin shining through the slit in the back of Sam’s old coat” (“Poison” 22).

In the course of Kay Schaffer’s close reading of Lawson’s “The Drover’s Wife”—and of historian Manning Clark’s commentary on it—she observes that the idealization of the capable bush mother has usually been conducted within a discourse that simultaneously inverts and reinscribes traditional gender roles: the capable woman is forced into a situation in which she “usurps” a male role, becoming less than feminine as a consequence (71). Schaffer argues that underpinning Lawson’s and Clark’s depictions of the woman in the bush is an assumption that the heroic bush mother’s role is naturally located within the home and family and not the bush proper. It was 1980 when Barbara Jefferis produced her “first-wave feminist rebuttal” of the various male-authored drover’s wife stories by Lawson, Murray Bail, and Frank Moorhouse (Kossew 36). But fifty years prior to that, and with her tongue firmly in her cheek, Wise had crafted a series of stories that had obliquely answered back from a female viewpoint, albeit in a much more ironic vein. Emmie, even though she agreeably takes on the nontraditional role of primary breadwinner, clearly acknowledges and subscribes to accepted notions of man as provider. The stories, then, might have achieved nothing more than a simple reinscription of the status quo, except that through Wise’s sly humor, Emmie is drawn as a heroine who is able to simultaneously work outside the home to provide for her family, work within the home to nurture her children, enchant men with her sweet and youthful appearance, *and* make amusing attempts to keep up the appearance of her work-shy partner being the provider of the family. The Emmie of Wise’s stories is indeed a very capable bushwoman.

While the triangulated relationship of Emmie, Sam, and Moss forms the basis of “The Conquest of Emmie,” in the triptych’s second tale, “Poison in the Furrow,” there is a shift in the gender dynamics. This time, Sam and Moss band together in their indignation that Emmie has attracted the attention of the ostentatious, jeep-driving neighbor Jack Todd. When Todd suggests that he and Emmie share the profits from a poison furrow—a death trap of strychnine targeting browsing animals such as wallabies, possums, and rabbits that Emmie proudly reports killed, in a single night, “four hundred and twenty rabbits, ten possums, six ’coots [bandicoots] and three native cats [quolls]” (22)—Sam and Moss retaliate by rustling a pair of Todd’s prime steers. This warning shot misses its mark, however: the thefts go unremarked, and Todd keeps collaborating with Emmie. Sam grows angrier still, but Moss starts to find the situation amusing: “fanned by Moss’s lewd mirth” (22), Sam’s resentment of Todd grows, and he alone decides to take the more drastic path of slashing Todd’s fences and burning his access bridge. Emmie, instead of

being incensed when she learns of these attacks on her business partner, reacts in a manner that gives the conclusion of "Poison in the Furrow" a strong resemblance to that of "The Conquest of Emmie":

Emmie, her face shining with admiration, looked across at Sam.

"Ere, le me make you a fresh billy of tea."

It was wonderful what Sam would do for her when roused. (22)

But if the first two installments of the triptych prepare the reader for a third repetition of the formulaic joke—Emmie, through her hard work and cunning, provokes her lazy husband into action and is finally delighted with his efforts—the third and last tale, "A Fence for Emma," does not entirely complete the contract. This time Emmie's ploy is to pack up and go to her parents' holding, "six scrubs back" (32), relying on Sam's loneliness without her, and on the presence of Moss, to shame Sam into completing a fence for her vegetable garden and to ready the wood heap for the long, cold winter ahead. Her strategy only partly works: Sam does build her a fence—and "no skimpy brushwood fence as he usually made. It was built with substantial logs" (32). But the garden area it marks out is pitifully small and unlikely to produce much food for the family table. In order not to exert himself harvesting tall timber from the bush, Sam has instead elected to build the fence with the shorter logs that were set aside close by and that had formed the beginning of a now nonexistent wood heap. The way this story ends—not with the triumph of Emmie's cleverness and her generosity of spirit that we encountered in the earlier stories but with her angrily registering the inadequate proportions of her garden and the absence of the winter firewood—reads more as a soon-to-be-reversed low point in Emmie's ongoing narrative than as a satisfying ending to a trilogy of bush stories. It is precisely because the first two Emmie stories collapse expected gender boundaries that they are of interest to the modern-day reader. It seems unlikely that the restoration of gender norms in the third story is where Wise would have wanted to leave Emmie for all time. But amid Wise's papers, there appears not the slightest evidence of plans or sketches for any future episodes. In fact, there is no trace of the stories in the collection at all: no drafts or even any clippings of the published stories from the pages of the *Bulletin*. It is difficult to believe that "A Fence for Emma" was Wise's intended conclusion to the Emmie stories, the last the reading public would ever see of Emmie, Moss, or Sam or of Emmie's children, Johnnie and Maggie.

CHILDREN'S FICTION

In Wise's papers, there are several references to Wise's success in writing material for broadcast. It is possible that in the fifteen years between the publication of the

Emmie stories and her reinvention of herself as a children's writer, Wise produced work that was read on radio. Equally, her broadcast career might have been concurrent with the later period during which she wrote and published works for children. But since broadcast works are vastly more likely than textual works to remain uncatalogued and to become lost over time, it is now impossible to report on the exact nature of Wise's contribution in this area. Certainly the Australian Broadcasting Corporation was a key outlet for the works of those other Tasmanian writers, Joan Woodberry and Nan Chauncy, who were writing for children at around the same time as Wise (in Woodberry's case) or earlier (in Chauncy's).

Wise wrote, certainly a little and probably more than a little, during her fifteen years of publishing silence; her story about two children solving a crime during a hop harvest in the Derwent Valley (later published as the novel *The Silver Fish*) won the Tasmanian division of a 1960 competition that sought out tales suitable to be made into thirty-minute children's films. Wise's entry was honorably mentioned in the Australia-wide awards, and the judging panel, which included Tasmania's best-known children's fiction writer, Nan Chauncy, listed the "pleasant scenery" of the Derwent Valley hop fields, the depiction of the "unusual (for Australia) work of hop-picking," and a "slightly humorous" crook as appealing and potentially filmic aspects of *The Silver Fish*. Although there was a strong prospect of the film being made by Tasmania's Island Film Services in 1961, a lack of funds eventually saw the project abandoned.

In the mid to late 1960s, Wise began to contribute to the *School Magazine*, a journal for young readers that celebrates its centenary in 2016. During the period that Wise published the short stories "The Blue Star" (1965), "Billy-Goat Ledge" (1966), "Humbug" (1967), and "Willie" (1969) in the *School Magazine*, the celebrated Australian children's writer Patricia Wrightson was assistant editor—and later editor—of that publication. "Humbug" and "Willie" (the latter of which references the catastrophic 1967 Tasmanian bush fires) were stories about the adoption and later release of orphaned animals: Humbug the emu chick, and Willie the wombat. "The Blue Star" is a more complex story about young Mike Donovan, who hails from Plenty (an area of Tasmania particularly familiar to Wise) and saves assiduously for a £20 Blue Star bicycle. Instead of buying the coveted bicycle, however, Mike—with the help of his grandfather—successfully bids for an impressive, flighty thoroughbred from a sale yard and names it Blue Star.

Also included in Wise's collection of papers are a number of early chapters from an unpublished children's novel that again centers on the experiences of a young boy called Mike, from Plenty, who saves his pocket money and hop-picking wages in the hope of buying a bicycle: a Malvern Star. The chapters feature a character called Mrs. One-eye MacGowan, a traveling tinker with a box cart, supreme

longevity, a witchy aspect, and—according to Mike’s young friend Tom—fearsome powers: “when my dad was a kid she chased him through the hop-grounds with a broom, and—and, then she looked right through him with that one black eye of hers, and—and the next day—he had an enormous wart stickin’ on his eyelid; he—he couldn’t even open his eye.”

As with the description of the devastating strychnine furrow in “Poison in the Furrow,” this snippet of Wise’s text offers a tantalizing glimpse of midcentury Tasmanian social history. Wise’s Mrs. One-eye MacGowan is likely a fictionalization of the notorious hawker Mrs. One-eye Brown, whose activities are recorded, with some verve, in the autobiography of the Tasmanian domestic goddess Marjorie Bligh. “Every child was frightened of her,” writes Bligh, reminiscing about her childhood in the 1920s, “as she had only one eye and a hole where the other one should have been. [. . .] If you didn’t buy [anything from her] she would abuse you, steal something or let out a pet” (5). In Wise’s unpublished children’s novel, Mrs. One-eye MacGowan gives young Mike a ferret as payment for his silence after he has witnessed her thieving. The surviving chapters of this manuscript are idiosyncratic and colorful; it is a loss to Australian children’s literature that the work was never completed.

Wise’s first major work of fiction for children came in 1971. *Trapped on Tasman* is an adventure story inspired by a visit Wise made to the remote Tasman Island light station in the state’s south, in characteristically wild weather, aboard the supply ship *Cape York*. The lighthouse has long represented an irresistible beacon for writers of fiction, and at least two of Wise’s works respond to the fascinations of a light station’s remoteness and potential for drama. As well as *Trapped on Tasman*, set on Tasman Island, Wise set her short story “Billy-Goat Ledge” on the even more remote Maatsuyker Island (fig. 2), located off Tasmania’s wild and uninhabited southwest coast. But Wise did not have this territory to herself. Two of Nan Chauncy’s late novels, *Lizzie Lights* (1968) and *The Lighthouse Keeper’s Son* (1969), were also set at Tasmanian light stations.

Trapped on Tasman is quite a different story from either of Chauncy’s, however. It largely eschews the opportunity for sweeping, impressive landscapes and individual heroics. Rather, Wise betrays a deep interest in the practicalities of light-station life, writing with some glee, for example, about how the protagonist’s father must wire up his own broken teeth after a sticking-toffee incident and wait for shore leave before getting dental attention. Given the lack of harbors and the steep terrain on Tasman Island, supplies were winched to a landing stage on the cliffs in a basket clipped to “the Flying Fox” (9), then conveyed by trolley to the homesteads at the top of the rise. The only other access is the perilous “zig-zag” (13), a narrow track on the other side of the island from the landing stage, which is beset by rock slides and has fallen into disrepair.



Figure 2. Maatsuyker Island, the setting of “Billy-Goat Ledge” (Photograph from the Joan Wise Papers, courtesy of Rachael Treasure)

The challenges of getting on and off the island are Wise's focus, and the action of the novel centers on the hilarious logistics that follow when young Fred Perkins wins a donkey in a children's television-show riddle contest. Hosted by the clownish Billy Bodkin, *The Tiger Hour* is one of Fred's few points of contact with the world beyond Tasman Island and the small community of adults, and much younger children, that define the limits of his daily life. Part of the thrill of the riddle contest is that the prizes are always delivered, in person, by the television host himself. Although Fred's address is far from easily accessible, Bodkin is not deterred. He comes to Tasman Island with the donkey, cheerfully meeting all the challenges of the Flying Fox and the landing stage, but then is trapped by the sudden arrival of bad weather. When Bodkin, through his good-natured buffoonery, suffers a serious medical emergency, the dilemma of how to get him off the island must be solved through the efforts of the tight-knit light-station community and the heroics of a Flying Doctor Service pilot. The book was well received, with the *Brisbane Telegraph* critic Terry Shaw reviewing the book in precisely the terms it sets for itself, commenting on the appropriateness of “pure Australian fiction” coming to the fore in the children's book market and commending *Trapped on Tasman* for being “not only interesting and exciting to read” but educational, teaching its readers “something about Australia.”

It was presumably on the success of *Trapped on Tasman* that Wise's *The Silver Fish* finally found its way to publication. It was released in 1972 as a book for children with reading difficulties, its oversized type accompanied by stark black-and-white illustrations by Marilyn Newland. Since no transcripts have been preserved of the original *The Silver Fish* (composed prior to the 1960 film-script competition), it is impossible to know how different were the first and final versions of the tale. Like *Trapped on Tasman*, "The Blue Star," and Wise's unpublished children's novel, *The Silver Fish* has as its protagonist a young boy. His name is Colin Woods, and he travels from Hobart to the Derwent Valley by bus to participate in a hop harvest with his aunt, his uncle, and his cousin Jane. During the harvest, Colin and Jane witness suspicious activity on the part of the itinerant hop picker Foxy Fenton. Fenton is at last arrested for a theft, with the help of crucial evidence seen in the background detail of a photograph taken by Colin on his new Kodak Instamatic 50 camera.

Although Wise's longer children's works were published in the early 1970s, in many respects they belong to an earlier period of Australian children's fiction, which Brenda Niall categorizes as the "Post-war Pastoral" of the 1950s (when Wise was likely writing, if not publishing). Niall suggests that the hallmarks of this period, exemplified by the works of Nan Chauncy, Joan Phipson, and Colin Thiele, were "images of the Australian family in an idealized landscape," "enough hardship cheerfully overcome to flatter national self-esteem," and "an unequivocal rejection of urban Australia" (216), all of which are characteristics of Wise's children's fiction.

In contrast to the Emmie stories, which could be regarded as ahead of their time, Wise's children's works may have come too late for her to achieve the popular success that the Emmie stories suggest she deserved. In a serendipitous twist, the success that Wise never enjoyed has been passed down the generations to her granddaughter. In the three Emmie stories, Wise created a Tasmanian triptych that, in its rural setting, and in the way it challenges gender stereotypes, anticipated the type of popular Australian rural fiction that would be written so successfully by Rachael Treasure and others half a century later.

Notes

1. "The Conquest of Emmie" concludes the collection of twenty-four stories in the anthology. See Crane and Wood 315-20.

2. The *OED* lists the earliest usage of *jeep* as 1941. The etymology is from the letters GP, used to denote general purpose vehicles during World War II, and is probably influenced by the resourceful "Eugene the Jeep," a character that made its first appearance in the Popeye cartoon strip in 1936.

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