

With the Moths on Ash Island

by Kathryn Fry

Harriet Scott has spent the day with the Emperor, her brush whispering precise colours to the page, every stage of its silenced life down to each larval hair. The zigzag markings of outstretched wings, the plump flesh, the feathered antennae. She sets her brush on the bench and strides out into the whirr of wings about the mangroves by the Hunter River. As if the air hums in its own wind, an eddy here and there as moths fan close to her ear though none bruise her face. In the distance, water birds settle, the heat muffling their cries. So many quiet hours with the moths on Ash Island for this, her notable work. Her thoughts ring with impatience; she says it out loud and later writes it in her letter to Edward Ramsay, *Clearly I ought to have been Harry Scott instead of Hattie.*



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