



***The Sound*, Sarah Drummond
Fremantle Press**

Summary

Sarah Drummond's *The Sound* is an excellent contribution to contemporary narratives of the colonial frontier. Complex in structure and style, marked by a ceaseless impulse for movement, it is brilliantly evocative of the coastal landscapes it wanders. The novel is focalised through Wiremu Heke, an Otakau man working his way along the southern coastline of Australia in search of revenge for the destruction of his village. Joining a boat of sealers, he finds himself involved in acts of violence perpetrated against the Indigenous peoples of the coastline similar to those he is attempting to redress.

Wiremu's internal struggle of guilt and denial is beautifully wrought, with hope for redemption emerging through the structural frame—the novel starts and finishes in brief segments in first-person writing from the perspective of Wiremu, which combined reveal a decision to act for the protection of a young child, Tama Hine, victim of one of the sealers' many abductions.

This is Sarah Drummond's first published novel, although she is also author of the creative nonfiction work *Salt Story: of sea dogs and fisherwomen* (2013, Fremantle Press).

About the Author

Sarah Drummond is a blogger, inlet dweller and author. In addition to her debut novel *The Sound* (2016), and *Salt Story* (2013), a memoir of her time deckhanding on the south coast of Western Australia, Sarah has also written essays and short fiction published in *Purple Prose*, *Shadow Plays: an anthology of speculative fiction*, *Short Stories Australia*, *indigo journal*, *The Best Australian Essays 2010*, *LINQ Journal*, *Kurungabaa Journal* and *Overland*. She lives on the south coast of Western Australia.

Questions for Discussion

1. Wiremu is a complex and engaging character. His rising sense of guilt, his relationship with the women, and his defence of Tama Hine all speak to his moral integrity. But he is also shown to be violent and ruthless at certain points, and driven by motivations of revenge. How does our understanding of him change in the novel? Does the ending suggest redemption for him?
2. Drummond is adept at creating voice through particular quirks of speech. How does the language used in the novel create the world? What do these different voices say about colonial Australia?
3. The shift to and from first-person perspective in framing the text is a striking and somewhat surprising (even alienating) manoeuvre. How does this position us as readers? Does the insight into Wiremu's point of view alter our understanding of him?
4. Wiremu's name shifts throughout the narrative to reflect his relationship with those around him. The various monikers he is given represent his complex, stratified involvement in the society. What does this act of naming represent? How does it explore power systems?
5. The novel is rich with strong Indigenous female characters. Does this make it a feminist work? And what is Drummond suggesting about the impasse these women face in their subjugation to the sealers?
6. What does the child Tama Hine represent in this context? How does she point to possibilities for the future?
7. Drummond's descriptions of the natural spaces in the novel are rich and beautiful. In what ways do they create a sublime or utopic experience of the Australian coastline? Is this a world we have lost? Or is Drummond pointing us towards the wealth of Australia's natural beauty?
8. Drummond's novel is written in a complex and fragmented form. What does this contribute to the reading experience? Why has Drummond chosen to write in this style, do you think? And how does it connect to the historical focus of the novel?
9. Likewise, how does the form lend itself to the thematic considerations of the novel – the colonial frontier and cultural conflict?
10. Drummond draws from her experience in creative nonfiction to interweave historical research and sources through her fictional narrative. (Think of the section at the end of the novel called 'Relics, Curiosities and Autographs'.) How does this balance work? What does it achieve in a cultural and social context?

11. What does this novel tell us as Australians about ourselves? What does it signify in contemporary discourses about reconciliation?

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