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A CONCISE CULTURE REVIEW OF ABORIGINAL AND AUSTRALIAN FICTION

Abstract. Interpreting the Australian fiction, we have suggested that some blossoming of this Australian genre happened during the nineteenth century, so in this review we have to start with some earlier works to express the cultural and poetical picture just unpretentious but completely. Firstly, it ought to be the Aboriginal literature which is of great importance to many both within Australia and internationally. This culture review will relate to the Aboriginal writing in English. The transformative survey of Aboriginal writing presents the stories and patterns of Australian culture and society in new ways, foregrounding and celebrating Indigenous experience and expression. It introduces powerful and creative individual voices as it also reveals a larger history of struggle, suffering and strength.

Key words: fiction, short stories, Aboriginal literature, Australian literature, culture, national-international relation.

Australia has always been strong in fiction. Though Australia has no background of inherited romance and legend, it has its own tales of heroism and endurance and its own immensely varied local and original color.

Studying the Australian fiction, we have suggested that some blossoming of this Australian genre happened during the nineteenth century, so in this review we

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have to start with some earlier works to express the cultural and poetical picture just unpretentious but completely. Firstly, it ought to be the Aboriginal literature which is of great importance to many both within Australia and internationally. This culture review will relate to the Aboriginal writing in English. Rich in diversity and content, it brings together a range of works that any serious expert at Aboriginal history, life and culture will find invaluable. This commentary might also be useful for those interested in more than just scholarship and academic pursuits. The Aboriginal fiction, or better to say literature, is extremely significant from an Indigenous cultural perspective, containing many works that afford the reader a treasured insight into the Indigenous cultural world of Australia.

Modernization and Indigenous expression in Aboriginal prose writing

As we know, any literature and its creation are so important to the lives of everyone. In the case of the Aboriginal literature, specially its fiction can be used and is used as a powerful political tool by Aboriginal people in a political system which renders us mostly voiceless. It can give us confidence and pride to raise our voices through the silence.

Our approach to modern Aboriginal literary style expresses a transformative survey of Aboriginal writing presented through the stories and patterns of Australian culture and society in new ways, foregrounding and celebrating Indigenous experience and expression. It introduces powerful and creative individual voices as it also reveals a larger history of struggle, suffering and strength. No doubt there are gaps and limitations. There are always more voices to be heard and other stories to be told. Yet in their gathering of literature the editors show that Aboriginal authors have created some of the best, most distinctive and most significant writing to come from this country.

This paper makes a comment about the range and depth of Aboriginal writing in English from the late eighteenth century to the present day. Speaking of the Aboriginal literature in general, we can mention Bennelong's letter of 1796, the first known text in the English language by an Aboriginal author. At the time of the letter's composition, Bennelong had recently returned home from three years in England, where he had met King George III and only just survived as a racial curiosity. Bennelong's short, disarming inquiry after the wellbeing of his sponsor, Lord Sydney, and his slightly melancholic petition for shipments of fine clothes and shoes, speaks of one man's experience at the cusp of a sudden transformation in the human condition of all Aboriginal peoples. Therefore, the Aboriginal writings record the history of that transformation as it was witnessed in writing ranging from the journalism, petitions and political letters of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to the works of poetry and prose that are recognized widely today as significant contributions to the literature of the world.

Our primary consideration has been to mention the literature written in English by Aboriginal authors. We also aim to introduce readers to the power, eloquence and

beauty of a remarkable tradition within Australian writing, a set of stories, poems or, plays and political works that, with all their grief and suffering, demand attention and celebration. Such a project necessarily begins with the fact of colonization and the sudden arrival of the English language amidst Aboriginal societies and their modes of exchange. On 22 August 1770, Lieutenant James Cook raised the flag at Possession Island and declared Britain's acquisition of the east coast of Australia. This grandiose assertion was upheld eighteen years later by the tentative but nevertheless permanent British settlement of the continent at Sydney Cove, where on 26 January 1788 a crew of convicts and naval officers disembarked from the ships of the First Fleet. The Governor Arthur Phillip was establishing the colony of New South Wales. With them came not only the hopes and fears of a remote and tenuous European settlement; this moment also marks the arrival of English amongst Aboriginal people as an unexpected, perhaps unwanted, but eventually prevailing language. With this in mind, we can address the development of Aboriginal literature not only from the perspective of history, but also with an awareness of the sudden appearance amongst Aboriginal people of a new set of linguistic and rhetorical conditions.

At its inception, Aboriginal literary writing grew directly from a complex and ancient wellspring of oral and visual communication and exchange. It is generally agreed that at the end of the eighteenth century there were many hundreds of distinct Aboriginal societies in Australia, each of which possessed rich cultural, mercantile and day-to-day languages and forms of expression that had been intact for tens of thousands of years. But just as the Crown's acquisition of 1770 had made sovereign Aboriginal land *terra nullius*, it also made Aboriginal people *vox nullius*. It took only a few generations for almost two-thirds of the pre-contact Aboriginal languages to be made extinct. During the nineteenth century, Aboriginal people were dispossessed of their lands and many were interned on reserves and missions, institutions in which common human rights were rigorously limited by legislative machinery and ideological imperatives to 'smooth the pillow of a dying race'. (Heiss, Minter, 2008: p. 3) Particularly in the eastern and southern parts of the continent, Aboriginal people were unable to live traditionally and were prevented from speaking their native languages.

For Aboriginal people, the use of English became a necessity within the broader struggle to survive colonization. From the early days, writing became a tool of negotiation in which Aboriginal voices could be heard in a form recognizable to British authority. Aboriginal men and women were highly motivated by the duress under which they and their communities lived, and it is in their transactions with colonial administrations that the principal characteristics of the early literature were forged. Aboriginal authorship, as a practice and a literary category, first appears in genres that are common to political discourse: letters by individuals to local authorities and newspapers, petitions by communities in fear of further forms of dispossession or incarceration, and the chronicles of those dispossessed. They also demonstrate one of the persistent and now characteristic elements of Aboriginal literature—the nexus between the literary and the political.

At the very beginning of twentieth century in 1901, the federation of the Commonwealth of Australia did little to advance the social and political conditions of Aboriginal people. The new constitution specifically restricted the capacity of the Commonwealth to legislate in Aboriginal affairs, responsibility for which remained with each of the states and territories. From the late nineteenth century so-called 'Protection Acts', such as the 1869 *Act for the Protection and Management of the Natives of Victoria*, had evolved in each colony, and during the first decade of the twentieth century state and territory bureaucracies consolidated their authority over nearly every aspect of Aboriginal life. While the federal constitution had determined that Aboriginal people were effectively non-citizens, the Protection and later Aboriginal Welfare Acts saw lower tiers of government intensify control over what are generally considered to be fundamental human rights. For instance, Aboriginal people were forced to seek permission from authorities to exercise freedoms of movement and association, to enter into employment, or to marry. Governments and Protection boards acquired authority over the welfare of Aboriginal children, removing thousands from their families. Many of these children were placed in institutions and trained to work in menial, labor-intensive occupations. Aboriginal people were systematically disenfranchised from their traditional lands, their cultural practices and their languages.

The Aboriginal literature of the first decades of the twentieth century is characterized by a concerted and unmistakably public struggle against the overtly assimilation legislative regimes endured by Aboriginal people. "Between Federation and the 1960s, as had occurred in the nineteenth century, Aboriginal authorship appeared in letters and petitions to authorities—but now also in the political manifestos and pronouncements of Aboriginal activist organizations that had begun to coordinate resistance to government control. Organizations such as the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association, the Australian Aborigines League and the Aborigines Progressive Association united Aboriginal men and women from across the south-eastern states between 1925 and 1938, focusing their shared confrontation with mainstream Australia". (Heiss, Minter 2008: p. 3) William Coopers' *Petition to the King* and the APA's (Aborigines Progressive Association) manifesto 'Aborigines Claim Citizen Rights!' are representative of writing at this time. In such texts we see responses to the extreme disadvantages suffered by Aboriginal communities denied access to land, property, education and health care, and a strong clarification of arguments against the various regimes of Protection. Demonstrations such as the 'Aboriginal Day of Mourning & Protest', held in Sydney on 26 January 1938 as the Commonwealth celebrated 150 years of British settlement, deepened the bond between political protest and Aboriginal writing.

The 1929 publication of *Native Legends*, David Unaipon's collection of his people's traditional stories, was a similarly significant development in Aboriginal writing. Unaipon was born in 1872 and educated at the Point McLeay mission in South Australia during the early years of the assimilation era, but as a gifted scholar, inventor, public speaker and writer he was able to successfully negotiate the complexities of life inside and outside the mission. His slim volume, produced by a metropolitan publisher for a white,

middle-class readership in Australia and England, marks the arrival of a new genre of Aboriginal literature in English. Unaipon's *Native Legends* draws directly from the living wellspring of his traditional culture, but is also literary in its adaptation of his cultural imagination to particular modes of authorship and narration. Unaipon's achievement in publication, like that of his peers, was of course also political in nature. In writing *Native Legends*, Unaipon preserved in the English language something of his traditional Aboriginal culture, which he feared was already disappearing under the weight of colonization. His legacy is fortunately twofold: Unaipon also gave subsequent Aboriginal writers a significant precedent by which to imagine their authorship of a culturally grounded future literature.

"It would be another generation, however, before the next authored volume of Aboriginal writing appeared. Following the Second World War, the attention of Aboriginal activists returned to the domestic struggle for Aboriginal citizenship and the removal of state-based Protection and Welfare boards. During the 1950s and 1960s organizations such as FCAATSI (Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders) coordinated the first nationwide movements agitating for Aboriginal rights and constitutional transformation". (Heiss, Minter 2008: p. 5)

Inspired by the worldwide radicalization of Black politics and writing during the 1960s, particularly the American civil rights and the South African anti-apartheid movements, Aboriginal writing was at the forefront of a renewed and partially successful resistance to state authority. Aboriginal writer-activists such as Kath Walker helped lead the fight for full citizenship while producing the early poetry and political pieces that became major contributions to Aboriginal prose and literature in general. Walker's first book of poetry, *We Are Going*, was—in 1964—only the second volume of Aboriginal literature published following Unaipon's work of 1929, and the first by an Aboriginal woman. Like Unaipon, Walker drew deeply from the traditional sources of her cultural imagination, however her literature's political aspirations were far more explicit. Directed to both her own community and to an enthusiastic mainstream audience, *We Are Going* marks the arrival of Aboriginal poetry as one of the most important genres in contemporary Aboriginal political and creative literature.

Key political texts were also produced during the escalating struggle for land rights. Having been on the Aboriginal rights agenda for many decades, demands for land rights took shape in the mid-1960s when tribal councils in the Northern Territory began taking on governments in their fight for the recognition of traditional land rights.

Aboriginal literature as we know it today had its origins in the late 1960s, as the intensification of Aboriginal political activity posed an increasing range of aesthetic questions and possibilities for Aboriginal authors. "Momentum for change took a significant turn with the success of the 1967 constitutional referendum. However practical changes were slow to come, and the period between 1967 and the election of the reformist Whitlam government in 1972 saw a new radicalization in Aboriginal politics." (Kleinert,

Neale 2000: p. 23) With the political agenda focused on land rights and cultural self-determination, Aboriginal literature began to play a leading role in the expression of Aboriginal cultural and political life.

New and challenging works of modern poetry and prose combined the traditions of protest established during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the energy of the 'Black Power' movement. The period between 1967 and the mid-1970s is particularly significant for the sudden growth in Aboriginal authorship across a broad range of genres. Aboriginal writers began publishing volumes of fiction and poetry with both mainstream and grassroots presses, works for the theatre were successfully produced, published and widely read, and around the country Aboriginal journalists were contributing to the pamphlets, newsletters, newspapers and magazines from which an independent Aboriginal print media has since grown and flourished. The growing confidence of Aboriginal people throughout Australia, who still lived in poor and ideologically isolated communities, was frequently demonstrated on the streets in marches and protests, the most prominent of which was the Aboriginal Tent Embassy built in 1972 on the lawn outside the capital's Parliament House.

The literature of the 1970s, inspired by the broad push for political and territorial self-determination, demonstrates a fusion of political and creative energies. As new forms of agency were articulated in Aboriginal social and political life, new categories of authorship were explored and invented. The great importance has the collected work by writers such as Kath Walker, Jack Davis, Kevin Gilbert, Monica Clare, Gerry Bostock and Lionel Fogarty, the Aboriginal writers who were very active in the political sphere what simultaneously catalyzing influenced their own creative literary writing.

Following the uncertain political gains of the 1970s, many Aboriginal communities continued to suffer severe social and economic hardship, and political fights for social equity, land rights and cultural expression were intensified. During the 1980s, Aboriginal people around Australia sought to consolidate gains made in Commonwealth land rights legislation and the promise of self-determination. Aboriginal writers also maintained the rage, as was seen during the lead-up to the Commonwealth Bicentenary celebrations of 1988 when Aboriginal people and their supporters held nationwide demonstrations drawing attention to the Aboriginal rights agenda. They were often led by Aboriginal authors and activists such as Kath Walker, who, in protest against the Bicentenary and returned her traditional name, Oodgeroo Noonuccal. Noonuccal's defiant recovery of her true name is a defining moment in the evolution of contemporary Aboriginal literature, reflecting both an individual and a collective resurgence in the confidence of Aboriginal culture. In the final two decades of the twentieth century, the reach and impact of Aboriginal literature grew exponentially, attracting large mainstream audiences that were increasingly sympathetic to Aboriginal cultural and political demands.

Behind the scenes, a new generation of Aboriginal authors, editors and publishers were working alongside elders to consolidate a vigorous and commercially independent network of Aboriginal literary presses. Mainstream publishers also took a

strong interest in Aboriginal authors, and by the end of the 1980s Aboriginal writing was firmly established as a major force in Australian letters.

“The recognition in Australian law of Aboriginal rights to land was significantly advanced in the High Court of Australia’s 1992 Mabo decision, in which Eddie Koiki Mabo’s claim of uninterrupted ownership of his people’s traditional land at Mer Island was accepted by the court’s full bench, thus finally admitting the falsehood of the assumption that Australia was *terra nullius* in 1788. Aboriginal voices gained widespread public attention as their stories were heard in national inquiries and reports, such as the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and the ‘Bringing Them Home’ report on the separation of Aboriginal children from their families known as the *stolen generation*.” (Kleinert, Neale, 2000: p. 42)

While the worst years of the assimilation period were over, the expression of its legacies in the stories of communities, families and individuals was at the forefront of the recovery of Aboriginal cultural memory and the articulation of contemporary Aboriginal life and aspirations.

Autobiographical narratives and testimonial fiction became the key storytelling genres of the late 1980s and 1990s, particularly for the growing number of Aboriginal women who found in literary writing a vehicle for both authorial independence and cultural responsibility. The growth in Aboriginal media also saw Aboriginal voices in film, television and music gain increased popularity, their political messages more frequently heard in everyday Australian life. The confidence and reach of recent Aboriginal literature has also been reflected in the work of a vigorous community of Aboriginal scholarly and critical writers, and in the essays, lectures and speeches by political voices who remind us that Aboriginal literature remains grounded in the shared experiences of contemporary Aboriginal men and women.

Historical, cultural and literary approach to Australian modern fiction

The Prosperity of Australian short story

The Australian fiction mainly existed since the nineteenth century. For example, Henry Kingsley’s *Geoffrey Hamlyn*, though founded on Australian experience, can hardly be considered a novel of Australian origin. The same must be said of William Howitt’s *A Boy’s Adventures in the Wilds of Australia*, Charles Rowcroft’s *Tales of the Colonies* and the *Bushranger of Van Diemen’s Land* possibly take first place among native works since the middle of the nineteenth century. During the 1850-s come *Clara Morison*, *Tender and True* and others by Catherine Helen Spence, who was better known as a political writer. The most important writer for the period was Marcus Clarke. His novel *Heavy Odds* is now negligible but his main work *For the Term of His Natural Life*, published in 1874, is not only a vivid picture of a settlement, but a power-

ful work of fiction. The short stories written by the same author are also very good and sincere.

Researching the Australian literary history, we conclude that travel and exploration in Australia have inspired many books. One of them is the *History of the Discovery and Exploration of Australia* by Julian Edmund Tenison Woods. The book was published in 1865. In addition, there were a lot of books published in the second half of nineteenth century full of interest and information or the important contributions to anthropology like: *History of Australian Discovery and Colonization* by Samuel Bennett, *Personal Recollections of Early Melbourne and Victoria* by William Westgarth, *History Discovery in Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand* by William Howitt, *Australian Autobiography* and *Australian Facts and Prospects* by R. H. Horne, *Last of the Tasmanians* and *Daily Life and Origin of the Tasmanians* by James Bonwick, *Victoria and its Metropolis* by Alexander Sutherland, *History of Australia* and *History of New Zealand* by George William Rushden and so on. Later Australian literature at the very end of the nineteenth century and through the first four decades of twentieth century has been prolific rather than distinctive.

“Andrew Barton Peterson is a banjo-bard. Henry Archibald Lawson had original talent and wrote both in verse and in prose. *While the Billy Boils* (1898) shows his power as a story-teller with a true Australian flavour. “The South Sea stories” of Louis Becke, i.e. George Lewis Becke (1848-1913), had great popularity, but are not serious contributions to literature, through *By Reef and Palm* (1894) deserves attention as one of the first collections of stories to present the Islands without deceptive glamour. [...] The tradition of scholarship in Australia has been well maintained by A. T. Strong and T. G. Tucker, the latter born and educated in England”. (Sampson 1961: 926) Some writers of Australian birth have made their home in Great Britain and have become part of our own story. One striking example is Gilbert Murray, whose work as scholar and dramatist is dealt with elsewhere. The most delicate literary talent that New Zealand produced came to flower in the stories of Katherine Mansfield, i.e. Kathleen Beauchamp. But her work is entirely European. There is more of Australia in the novels of Henry Handel Richardson, i.e. Henrietta Richardson of Melbourne, afterwards wife of J. G. Robertson, professor in the university of London. She is one of the few writers able to use music successfully as a theme in fiction and her *Maurice Guest* (1908) and *The Young Cosima* (1939) are outstanding. Like other writers of the time she attempted a long continuous story. [...] Her writing was strong, and was for many years assumed to be the work of man.” (Sampson 1961:926)

The Australian short story already had a lively existence in the nineteenth century. Many stories now lost and forgotten were published in newspapers, magazines and journals in both Britain and Australia, stories that documented the conditions of colonial life.

These stories worked out, through the course of their narratives, various ideas and problems that preoccupied Australian colonists. Much of the Australian short fiction of the nineteenth century was produced mainly for a British read-

ership at 'home', and represented Australia as a foreign and exotic place full of strange animals, unpredictable 'savages' and haunting, sometimes threatening, landscapes. Some stories, like Ada Cambridge's 'Arriving in Melbourne', were of the 'sketch' variety: a kind of autobiographical literary journalism also frequently and brilliantly used by Marcus Clarke and later by Henry Lawson.

Other stories were essentially a kind of travel writing that emphasized local color. Stories of colonial adventure abounded, featuring convicts, bushrangers and gold; stories by women tended more usually to fall into the romance genre, often examining questions and issues of nationality and allegiance by setting up and then resolving some romantic problem or quandary for an Australian girl and her British suitor.

"Many nineteenth-century Australian stories fall into two categories beloved of late-Victorian readers: the detective story and the ghost story, genres that are in any case closely linked by their common basis in the mystery of death. With its landscapes, its isolation and vast distances, and the sometimes terrible deaths it had in store for the unwary colonist or visitor, Australia offered a rich source of material for writers who wished to tackle the supernatural, mystery and crime.

During this period, all of the Australian short stories published in Australia, and many of those published in Britain, appeared not in books but in newspapers and journals. *The Australian Journal*, produced in Melbourne, was one of the longest-lived of these; it ran from 1865 to 1958 and it specialized in the publication of short fiction. *The Australasian*, a weekly Melbourne journal published from 1864 to 1946, also specialized in literature and literary matters and published stories by a number of leading Australian nineteenth-century writers." (Goldsworthy 2007: p. 31)

The Main representative authors of Australian short stories

Representative stories by some of the best of these nineteenth-century writers — John Lang, Marcus Clarke, Francis Adams, Ada Cambridge, Rosa Praed, 'Tasma' — were collected in several anthologies published in the 1980s. The title of Hadgraft's anthology suggests, and rightly, that the work of Henry Lawson represents a kind of turning point in the history of the Australian short story. What this meant for writers was that Archibald and especially Stephens (writers of nineteenth century) became powerful figures in the development and directions of Australian writing. And Henry Lawson's work embodied the values they most prized: a nationalist world view offering a distinctive 'Australian' voice and concentrating on local themes and subjects not as exotic matter for British readers but as Australian stories for Australian readers. Lawson's work — with the exception of some of the stories he wrote in London in the first years of the twentieth century — is written for a readership already familiar with the characters and landscapes of his stories.

'The Loaded Dog' is rivaled only by 'The Drover's Wife' as Lawson's most popular and best-known story. 'The Loaded Dog' shows Lawson's mastery of a distinctively Australian form of storytelling: the yarn, an outrageously exaggerated 'tall tale' told in a relaxed, laconic, ironic voice, its underpinnings usually comic and sometimes slapstick. The judicious use of the 'yarn', and of the kind of character who tells it, is something that links Lawson's work to that of two of his contemporaries represented in this book, two writers who are otherwise very different from Lawson and from each other: Steele Rudd and Tom Collins.

'The Loaded Dog', despite its violence, shows Lawson at his most innocently funny; his humor is usually less physical and much blacker, residing more in an ironic tone and turn of phrase than in character or event. A story like 'The Union Buries its Dead', another well-known and much-anthologized Lawson piece, turns on a bleak view of bush life and an even bleaker view of human nature, its black humor residing in its oddly modernist satire of nineteenth-century Australian romanticism: 'I have left out the wattle', says the narrator in concluding his description of the funeral of an unknown man, 'because it wasn't there'.

'The Drover's Wife' is not funny at all, and in its concentration on the trials of a woman in the bush is one of the Lawson stories that comes closest to the work of his contemporary Barbara Baynton. She was another writer approved of and encouraged by Archibald and Stephens at the *Bulletin*; though only one of her stories appeared there and was heavily edited first, she was one of the very few women writers to be published in its pages at all. Like Lawson, she wrote of Australian characters and conditions for Australian readers. Her story 'Squeaker's Mate' was published in her collection *Bush Studies* in 1902 and is a typical Baynton story in its grim view of human nature and gender relations, its representation of bush conditions as harsh and hostile, and its philosophical and aesthetic roots in nineteenth-century European naturalism.

The *Bulletin's* fostering of literary nationalism around the turn of the century provided fertile ground for fiction writers, but between the early 1900s and the early 1930s, little happened in the way of Australian short-story writing; the emphasis in the early decades of this century was mainly on poetry. Between the late 1920s and the outbreak of the Second World War, however, a group of writers emerged who were mainly interested in fiction and whose highly developed political ideas and ideals added to the force of their work. Most, if not all, had left-wing ideals and as the 1930s progressed became more actively involved in the international resistance to the rise of fascism in Europe. The 1930s also saw a revival of the kind of literary nationalism that had been fostered by the *Bulletin*, with organizations like the Fellowship of Australian Writers becoming influential in the growth of Australian culture.

Katharine Susannah Prichard, one of the most prominent names from this period, was like Vance Palmer a novelist and short-story writer. Prichard was a founding member of the Communist Party of Australia in 1921, and her work

during the 1930s and early 1940s demonstrates an intriguing combination of her socialist world view with the recognizable influence of the work of D. H. Lawrence. Much of her writing addresses itself to the evils of capitalism, and concerns itself with social justice and the need for social change; but within that framework, her writing is often sexually charged and informed by the techniques of psychological realism. 'The Grey Horse', one of Prichard's best-known stories, combines all of these aspects to some degree and somehow manages to be funny as well.

Henrietta Drake-Brockman, like Prichard, was a writer of that era whose fiction was ahead of its time in its understanding of some of the problems that beset race relations in Australia; her story 'Fear' shows how an atmosphere of distrust can be self-perpetuating and, like some of Prichard's other stories — 'The Cooboo' and 'Flight' are the two best known of this kind — shows how white Australians' treatment of Aboriginal people has a history of tragic consequences. Xavier Herbert's 'Kaijek the Songman', published eight years later than 'Fear', considers Aboriginal Australians from a different angle; here the story is about Aboriginal subjectivity with the Aboriginal characters at the centre of the story. Their values — highlighting the importance of community and culture — are contrasted with, and implicitly shown as superior to, the gold-greed of the unbalanced white man Andy.

Of the writers mentioned in this paper, others who were particularly influential in the 1930s included Vance Palmer, Frank Dalby Davison and Marjorie Barnard. Like Prichard, these three were primarily novelists and best known as such, though Palmer in particular was also a prolific short-story writer over several decades. Palmer's 'The Stump', Davison's 'The Woman at the Mill' and Barnard's 'The Persimmon Tree' are all stories that concern themselves with 'ordinary' people at some kind of crisis or turning point. The latter two stories in particular are also, like much of Prichard's work, exercises in psychological realism; the characters' interiority, their thought processes and emotional states, are at the heart of both of these stories. In an era of burgeoning literary nationalism when rural Australia was widely regarded as the 'real' Australia, Marjorie Barnard's classic story 'The Persimmon Tree' is rather unusual for its period, and anticipates later developments, in being a wholly urban story, set in inner-city Sydney. Barnard's contemporaries, writers like Prichard, Davison and Palmer, wrote fiction with largely rural settings; but Barnard, who lived in Sydney all her life, was more concerned with the lives of urban characters, often of characters leading 'lives of quiet desperation' like the narrator of 'The Persimmon Tree', or in other stories from the same collection, like 'The Lottery' and 'The Party'. What Barnard shares with her contemporaries is an interest in the effect of environment on character, whether that environment be urban or rural.

The Australian fiction writers of the 1930s and 1940s mostly knew each other and were friends, reading and encouraging each other at a time when there was little in the way of supportive infrastructure for writers in Australia — not many publish-

ing outlets, not many good critics and reviewers, no support from the universities and not much by way of government funding. Two Australian writers from this period who were working under very different conditions from this, however, were Henry Handel Richardson and Christina Stead, both of whom had left Australia as young women and were, in the 1930s, living in Europe. Although there is more than thirty years between them in age, their two stories included in this book — Richardson's "'And Women Must Weep'" and Stead's 'Guest of the Redshields' — were published in the same year, 1934. Richardson's story seems to belong to an earlier time, perhaps to the era of her novel *The Getting of Wisdom* (1910), set in a girls' school in the late nineteenth century. "'And Women Must Weep'", while seemingly late Victorian or Edwardian in its setting and subject matter, feels oddly modern in its treatment; Richardson's familiarity with the work of Freud is visible in this story. The main character Dolly's resentment of the passive, 'feminine' role she is expected to play, though she hardly understands it herself, anticipates the more overt feminism of stories published half a century later by a much younger generation of women.

The Stead's story is written in quite a different mode from the realism that dominates Australian fiction of the period. 'Guest of the Redshields' comes from the first book Stead ever wrote, *The Salzburg Tales*. This extraordinary book is a collection of fairytales, fables, yarns, ghost stories and other varied genres held together, after the manner of *The Decameron* or *The Canterbury Tales*, by an embedding narrative in which a heterogeneous assortment of people find themselves in the same place and take turns telling stories in order to amuse themselves and pass the time.

Gavin Casey's 'Dust' and John Morrison's 'Nightshirt' are examples of the more overtly political stories of this era. They are stories in simple, unadorned language (Morrison's elliptical documentary style adding to its realist effect) that focus on workers and workplace disasters, on the physical dangers lying in wait for working men and women. Alan Marshall's "'Tell Us About the Turkey, Jo...'" and Dal Stivens' 'The Man Who Bowled Victor Trumper' draw on the 'yarn' tradition going back to, and beyond, Lawson and Rudd; Marshall and Stivens, however, are writing not in the genre of the yarn but rather about it, in stories in which yarns and the telling thereof function as a method of characterization. Frank Hardy, another writer of a later generation, also celebrates the 'yarn' in his short stories, again as a quintessentially Australian mode, differentiated from the 'tall story' that Americans also tell by its laconic, ironic, often mocking or self-mocking narrative quality. All five of these writers — Casey, Morrison, Marshall, Stivens and Hardy — are among the most important names in the history of the Australian short story, all with something unique to contribute to the genre and to Australian literary culture. Although traditional and simple in their form, Morrison's stories are particularly original in their representations of the relationship between public and private life: his socialist beliefs are clearly apparent in his choice and treatment of

subject matter, while his concern for individual freedoms and inner life is equally apparent in the dynamics of his plots. In a story like 'The Night-shift' he can sketch the contrast between different social classes without any hectoring or bitterness, but rather with the same documentary neutrality that characterizes the descriptions of his waterfront settings.

The Australian short story was given a considerable boost in 1941 when Angus and Robertson published the first of a series of annual anthologies, collectively entitled *Coast to Coast*. It was published annually from 1941 to 1948, biennially from 1949 to 1970, again in 1973 and once more, finally, in 1986. Like the newspaper supplement *Tabloid Story* over thirty years later, *Coast to Coast* was a determined and largely successful attempt to provide a focus, a publishing outlet and a readership for the Australian short story. Each individual volume had a different editor — often people who were themselves short-story writers.

Eleanor Dark and Kylie Tennant were two of the best-known fiction writers of the 1940s and 1950s; both were prolific and primarily known as novelists, but Dark was the more sophisticated writer with, like Prichard and Richardson, a strong interest in psychological realism. Tennant's story 'Lady Weare and the Bodhisattva' reflects the growing interest in fiction about cities that had begun with writers like Marjorie Barnard, and is typical of her work in being humorous with a strong undercurrent of serious feeling. Dark's 'Serpents' is from her last and rather uncharacteristic book *Lantana Lane* (1959), which, like the work of Steele Rudd half a century before, focuses on the comic aspects of rural life. It has been argued that in the politically repressive and conservative atmosphere of the 1950s it was no longer possible for Dark to write the substantial, broadly based fictions of social and political engagement and critique that typify her earlier work.

Ethel Anderson's 'Miss Aminta Wirraway and the Sin of Lust' is one of a series of linked stories entitled *At Parramatta* (1956) and is quite different from any of the other fiction written during this period. Best described as a non-realist combination of social comedy and historical fiction, this highly-mannered and very funny book about female culture in a highly patriarchal world is set in the 1850s in Parramatta and surrounding villages. This setting gives Anderson the full scope of both urban and rural settings for her pre-feminist reworking of the colonial period.

The most noticeable development in short fiction of the 1950s is the appearance of stories about the wave of postwar European immigration. This is reflected in two very different stories in this collection, E. O. Schlunke's 'The Enthusiastic Prisoner' and Judah Waten's 'Mother'. The first, like Xavier Herbert's 'Kaijek the Songman', uses comedy to frame an implicit critique of the Anglo-Celtic Australian character — and there are a number of such stories from the 1950s and 1960s, notably Thelma Forshaw's 'On Our Safari', a very funny story about a family of hardworking Viennese immigrant chicken farmers. By this decade, and in the wake of the Second World War, the literary nationalism of the 1930s

— which had its roots in that of the 1890s, which in its turn had a number of negative elements including open racism — had begun to give way to a more self-reflective and self-critical view of the so-called national character.

By the 1960s it was becoming clearer that the three dominant characteristics of Australian short fiction for the last three decades — realism, social critique, and a preoccupation with 'Australianness' — were becoming less and less marked. The short fiction of this decade was much more diverse, and paved the way for the exponential increase in literary production and especially the boom in the short-fiction market that Australia was, for various reasons, to see in the 1970s.

Although the middle decades of the century were notable for the large number of gifted women writers, the 1960s and most of the 1970s were overwhelmingly dominated, especially in the field of the short story, by men. John Morrison's *Twenty-three Stories* (1962), Hal Porter's *A Bachelor's Children* (1962) and *The Cats of Venice* (1965), Patrick White's *The Burnt Ones* (1964) and Dal Stevens' *Selected Stories: 1936-1968* (1969) were the most significant and best-received collections of stories published in the 1960s.

Of these four writers, only Morrison was working in the social realist mode of the mid-century. Patrick White had begun to revolutionize Australian fiction with his international world view, metaphysical preoccupations and modernist techniques. Some recent critics have pointed out that White's social criticism and concern with the development of Australian society and culture remain as acute as those of any writer from the previous era, and his political position no more conservative, broadly speaking, than theirs in spite of his own privileged background. His story 'Being Kind to Titina', like many of Hal Porter's, reflects his readiness to write stories with international characters and settings; his style is quite different from what he had rejected as the 'dun-colored journalistic realism' of his Australian contemporaries. Porter's story 'Francis Silver' is typical of his work in several ways: in its use of autobiographical elements, in its preoccupation with memory and the passage of time, and in the way that it uses objects, small details, and the density of the physical world in general to evoke a specific time and place. Although he is comparatively uninterested in questions of nationalism and of nationality as such, the evocation in his writing of particular Australian places is sometimes breathtaking. His style, like White's, is a great deal more elaborate and colorful than Australian readers of the early 1960s were used to, or (sometimes) comfortable with.

The publication of Dal Stevens' *Selected Stories* in 1969 coincided with the publication of a first collection of short stories entitled *Futility and Other Animals* by a young writer called Frank Moorhouse. A 31-year-old journalist, Moorhouse had published his first short story in the literary journal *Southerly* in 1957, but had found it difficult to publish his stories during the 1960s because of their sexual explicitness. After the publication of his second collection *The Americans, Baby* in 1972, his name was to dominate Australian short fiction for the next decade. Dal Stevens,

meanwhile, is regarded by recent critics, with hindsight, as the forerunner of the kind of writing that was to dominate in the 1970s and beyond. Like that of Porter and White, his work had departed from the social-realist norm; many of his stories are self-conscious fictions in which the act of storytelling itself is central to the story, taking the form of fables and yarns.

The explosion of new writing, especially prose fiction, in the 1970s in Australia was a phenomenon with complex causes, but two of the main ones were the lifting of censorship restrictions and the establishment of the Australia Council, including the Literature Board, in 1973. Moorhouse, with Michael Wilding, Brian Keirnan and Carmel Kelly, had established a short-story magazine called *Tabloid Story*, which provided a new publishing outlet for, especially, experimental fiction by younger writers.

With new publishing outlets, new freedoms of subject matter and, most of all, new government support for literature, the amount of literary fiction published in Australia in the 1970s increased dramatically and exponentially. In the wake of the Vietnam War and the rise of second-wave feminism, there were suddenly a lot of new things to write about. Australian fiction became abruptly more internationalist in viewpoint, content and influence; more sexually and politically explicit; and more varied in its subjects and styles, as is suggested by the title of a book on contemporary Australian fiction by Ken Gelder and Paul Salzman called *The New Diversity: Australian Fiction 1970—1988*. Short fiction was the dominant literary form in Australia in the 1970s, and those of its writers most recognized at the time were Moorhouse and Wilding, Peter Carey and Murray Bail. These four, with Morris Lurie, were enshrined as the writers of the decade in an anthology edited by Brian Kiernan called *The Most Beautiful Lies* (1977), in which Kiernan collected the fiction he saw as the most representative, and best, of the 'new' fiction. It was heavily influenced by European and American postmodern writing: experimental, sexually explicit, incorporating elements of fantasy, surrealism, fabulism, literary self-consciousness and the process of storytelling itself. Bail's story ' "ABCDEFGHIJKLMN OPQRSTUVWXYZ" ' and Carey's 'The Last Days of a Famous Mime' concern themselves with the riddles and paradoxes of representation itself, as do later stories in this collection like Beverley Farmer's 'A Man in the Laundrette' and David Brooks' 'John Gilbert's Dog'. There were signs towards the end of the 1970s that the advent of second-wave feminism was beginning to show results in the kind of fiction, poetry and drama that was being written, published and performed in Australia.

Towards the end of the decade, the publication of Helen Garner's *Monkey Grip* in 1977 followed by that of Jessica Anderson's *Tirra Lirra by the River* in 1978 — both novels won national awards and were, by high-culture standards, bestsellers — showed that something radical had begun to happen in the writing of Australian fiction. Both these novels had first-person narrator heroines called Nora, a name irresistibly suggestive of Ibsen's Nora and her quest for autonomy and agen-

cy; and both focused on the paradoxes of women's lives, on the competing claims of romance, domesticity, and the quest to live a useful and meaningful existence. The kinds of social change that followed in the wake of second-wave feminism had begun to produce a receptive audience for such novels and their success was indicative of what would happen to Australian women's writing in the 1980s.

In the meantime, however, there was, as there had been all along, Thea Astley. Astley had been publishing novels and winning prizes for them all through the male-dominated decades of the 1960s and 70s; her only collection of short stories, *Hunting the Wild Pineapple* (1979), was one of the few by Australian women published in the 1970s. It was published, and well received, in the wake of Garner's and Anderson's novels, as were Jean Bedford's *Country Girl Again* and Glenda Adams' *The Hottest Night of the Century*, all in the same year. Their stories in this collection — Astley's 'Petals From Blown Roses', Bedford's 'Country Girl Again' and Adams' 'A Snake Down Under' — come respectively from these three collections. Other women writers of an earlier generation found new voices in the new freedoms that feminism had given them to say particular things in particular ways. Olga Masters, after a long life as a working mother in the field of journalism, had a short but brilliant career as a fiction writer in her sixties, cut short by her death in 1986. Her story in this collection, 'The Lang Women', is representative of her work in the way that it harks back to the writing of the era in which it's set — the 1930s — in its realist detail and its compassionate but unsentimental treatment of poverty. Unlike the writing of the 1930s, it focuses firmly on female subjectivity and on women's lives.

A younger generation of women writers some of whom had already been quietly writing, like Jolley, for years also emerged in the 1980s, in short fiction as elsewhere; among the best known of these are Marion Halligan, Carmel Bird, Helen Garner, Beverley Farmer and Kate Grenville. Of these writers it is Halligan, Bird and Farmer who have given the most time and attention to the short-story form, though Helen Garner's 'The Life of Art' became what one critic called an instant classic and is one of the most frequently anthologized Australian short stories. 'The Life of Art' is a good example of the dangers of generalizing about this generation of women writers; Garner's work has often been described as 'domestic realism', but this, her best-known story, is an explicit departure from both realism and domesticity.

The 1980s were a golden decade for Australian writers of both sexes. Support from the Australia Council had made it possible to expand Australian writing and publishing very quickly; the effects of increasing globalization had not yet begun to be felt, and there was still a comparatively large number of independent Australian publishers. Examination of the statistics will show that the popularity of women's writing in the 1980s did not make it more difficult for male writers to get their work published and read and favorably reviewed, though there were

some who claimed that it did, even though the converse situation had clearly applied in the previous decade.

So there was plenty of room for the publication of stories by male writers like Gerard Windsor, Barry Hill, Peter Goldsworthy, David Brooks and Tim Winton. But the changes wrought by feminism did affect male writers in one way; fiction by men in the 1980s (and even more so in the 1990s) not only concentrates more on gender relations but is concerned in increasingly sophisticated ways with gender difference and the nature of masculinity. Hill's 'Headlocks' and Winton's 'My Father's Axe' offer two particularly good examples of the way that contemporary male writers have tackled the tangled connections among the subjects of masculinity, fatherhood and violence.

One of the most pronounced trends in Australian fiction of the late 1980s and the 1990s, has been a preoccupation among the country's novelists with history: with the nation's troubled, ambivalent beginnings, with colonialism and its consequences, and most of all with Australia's race-relations history. Apart from several stories about Aboriginal characters and a few recent ones by Aboriginal writers, this preoccupation is not very apparent in this collection of stories. The reason is probably something to do with genre: the working-out of complex ideas about history, and the writing of historical fiction, requires far more space than the short-story form can provide. It's too soon — and with the effects of global publishing and technological change, the shifts in publishing conditions are still too rapid — for it be possible to generalize about the new writers whose work began to appear only in the late 1980s and the 1990s. Some of those represented here — notably Gail Jones, Brenda Walker, Gillian Mears and, most recently, James Bradley — have published several books and have established their names firmly in the field of Australian fiction. Each in his or her own way is a sophisticated writer with a distinctive style, but they are otherwise all quite different from each other in subject matter and approach. Mears' most powerful stories are about intimate relationships and their infinite complexities of nuance, detail and change; Bradley, Walker and Jones are more self-consciously intellectual in their approach but all from, as it were, different angles. Walker and Jones are both extraordinarily gifted writers of complex fictions who should be better known than they are.

Two of the youngest Australian fiction writers, Delia Falconer and Elliot Perlman, made spectacular beginnings to their literary careers in 1994; both won prestigious national short-story competitions, run by *HQ Magazine* and the *Age* respectively. But in their setting, style and mode, Falconer's 'The Water Poets' and Perlman's 'The Reasons I Won't Be Coming' could not be more different; all they have in common is an air of having been produced by an internationalist sensibility in an increasingly global culture.

This is not to argue for a minute that this generation's writing has lost its specificity of location. Matthew Condon's 'The Sandfly Man', for example, is an intensely place-specific story in an unmistakably Australian landscape, a story turning

on the difference between Home and Elsewhere. But the writing of this generation is not nearly as concerned with nationality and nationalism as Australian writing once was, for the excellent reason that it no longer needs to be. What is becoming clearer in Australian writing — as in so many other things — as the century ends is a shift in focus: a shift away from the idea of the national, and towards the dynamic between the local and the global.

Finally, taking into consideration the historical and cultural approaches to Both Aboriginal and Australian fiction we can conclude that the resurgence of Aboriginal writing in recent years has taken place during a widespread and vigorous renewal in Aboriginal culture. In the visual arts, performance, film, photography and music, Aboriginal practitioners and their critical communities produce highly significant works that speak to audiences around the world. These works chronicle the ongoing suffering of dispossession, but also the resilience of Aboriginal people across the country, and the hope and joy in their lives. Their voices are a challenge and an invitation.

In addition, we have also suggested the Australian publications like, newspapers and periodicals have always been vigorous and independent but the Australian art of fiction was always presenting both, specific thematic originality and universality at the same time applicable in any nation all over the world.

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САЖЕТИ КУЛТУРОЛОШКИ ПРЕГЛЕД АБОРИЦИНСКЕ И АУСТРАЛИЈСКЕ ПРОЗЕ³

Резиме

Проучавајући аустралијску прозу закључујемо да је до процвата овог жанра дошло тек током 19. века, тако да се у овом раду помињу и прозни текстови који претходе поменутом периоду да би се употпунила културолошка и поетска слика прозног стваралаштва аутора који се, готово искључиво, везују за територију Аустралије и Новог Зеланда. Да би културолошка слика књижевног стваралаштва овог поднебља била још потпунија, тумачење започињемо прегледом аборицинске књижевности, која је, несумњиво, од огромног значаја, првенствено, као претеча аустралијске прозе, али и за њено јасније међународно поимање. Културолошким прегледом аборицинске прозе у овом раду обухваћени су текстови писани на енглеском језику. Трансформациону флоскулу аборицинског књижевног стваралаштва представљају приче о аустралијској култури и друштву испричане другачије, које посебно истичу и славе искуство и поимање света и живота староседелаца. Ова проза одише како снажним, креативним гласом индивидуе, тако представља и незаобилазни историјски траг о борби, патњи и снази самониклог народа.

Тематски врло слична, са незнатним примесама европских, посебно енглеске прозе, рађа се аустралијска проза. Просто се на моменте стиче утисак да аустралијска проза израња из, већ постојеће, аборицинске прозе. Наиме, Аустралија нема позадину наслеђених легенди и митова, већ почива на новонасталим херојским причама и сопственом огромном локалном и надасве оригиналном колориту.

Узимајући у разматрање културне и историјске аспекте у тумачењу прозе једних и других, долазимо до закључка да обнова и рецепција аборицинске књижевности одскора, представља физичку и духовну снагу за поновно рађање аборицинске културе. Глас и дело савремених аборицинских прозних писаца позива аборицински народ на буђење и значи важан изазов за реинкарнацију готово заборављене и неправедно запостављене аборицинске културе.

Осим тога, иако су све публикације са аустралијског тла, било да су продукт аборицинског или аустралијског пера, увек биле духовно снажне и тематски оригиналне, уметничка проза са аустралијског континента је истовремено и универзална тематски прихватљива широм света.

Кључне речи: Проза, приповетке, аборицинска књижевност, аустралијска књижевност, култура, однос национално-интернационално.

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