CHAPTER-I

ABORIGINAL LITERARY RENAISSANCE

Indigenous literature of Australia initially descended from the folklore, which was transmitted in the form of storytelling. This storytelling tradition is significant in the lives of Aboriginal people. Hence, it was considered essential by the elders of the Aboriginal communities to pass on this knowledge to their next generation. Because of various reasons a lot of stories were forgotten. There’s been a need for restoring the lost tradition and indigenous people took the initiation towards raising awareness concerning the preservation of their cultural heritage. There have been numerous Aboriginal stories known across Australia, and each community has its own stories which differ from other communities and regions. A common characteristic of Aboriginal groups is their similar belief systems which are called the *Stories of the Dreaming*. They instruct the people on the rules of living, ancestral being, history, teachings on the natural environment, teachings on the spiritual world.

Because the ‘Stories of the Dreaming,’ have been handed down through the generations, they are not ‘owned’ by individuals. They “belong to a group or nation, and the storytellers of that nation are carrying out an obligation to pass the stories along. The Elders of a nation might appoint a particularly skillful and knowledgeable storyteller as ‘custodian’ of the stories of that people.” (Australian Museum: Stories of the Dreaming)

Aboriginal storytelling is often linked to particular environments and places. It’s a common practice that the elders of the community occasionally join the school
children and their teachers to tell them the traditional stories in the right geographical and environmental settings. It reflects the fact that these elders want to make the youngsters and children knowledgeable regarding the social collectivity of the Aboriginal communities. It’s also in a way, making them understand their role in the collectivity.

The knowledge gained through the stories pertains to all spheres of Aboriginal life. They speak of social, moral, ethical values besides spiritual and transcendental truths. They are also the repositories of geographical and environmental knowledge, which help the people to survive in the harsh environment of Australia. The moral lessons generally enlighten and teach them the gap between vices and virtues. Because of this, stories are important for younger generations to lead a better life and to enrich people’s knowledge on aspects important to Aboriginal life. More specifically, according to the Australian Museum website, Aboriginal dreamtime stories, myths and legends are told to educate the people, and especially the younger generations, about their community and their people’s history:

Storytelling is used in a variety of ways. It is used to teach children how they should behave and why, and to pass on knowledge about everyday life such as how and when to find certain foods… used to explain peoples’ spirituality, heritage and laws. Dreaming stories pass on information to young people about creation, how the land was formed and populated, creation of plants, animals, humans, information about ancestral beings and places, the boundaries of peoples’ tribal lands, how ancestors came to Australia, how people migrated across the country and arrived in a particular part of the country.
As far as the present situation of Aboriginal stories is concerned, it is obvious that there has been an expansion of Aboriginal literary tradition from oral to written literature. They’ve carved a niche for themselves in writing number of novels, poems, songs, plays, autobiographies and histories. And their theater performances, documentaries and films are exemplary, receiving appreciation all over. According to Goodwin and Lawson, from 1950 onwards there were many Aboriginal people who considered writing as a tool to express their knowledge of the cultural inheritance and the subjugation of their people.

Colonizers portrayed a very dreadful picture of Aboriginal people and their cultures to the world. Aboriginal people are marginalized in their own land and several Aboriginal tribes and many native languages have been wiped out. Land, resources and stocks have been forcibly taken by the European colonizers. In spite of their differences in language, culture, tradition, colour, region and religion, only their belongingness to Aboriginality and their Aboriginal consciousness keeps them united. It is this unity that motivates them to fight against inequity and injustice.

Kevin Gilbert (1933-1993), in his book *Living Black* (1977), says, "White people's devaluation of Aboriginal life, religion, culture and personality caused the thinking about self and race that I believe is the key to modern Aboriginal thinking" (Gilbert 1978: 2). Similarly, Adam Shoemaker says that there’s a deep-seated relationship exists between the socio-political milieu and Aboriginal creative writing in English. He defends his observation by further stating that black creative writing cannot be studied in isolation and that it must be examined and evaluated in terms of the social environment which surrounds it and the historical events which precede it.
Both Gilbert and Shoemaker devise a context to meet, recognize, understand and interpret Aboriginal literature. These statements absolutely suggest the rise of Aboriginal literature from Aboriginal suffering and Aboriginal activism.

Obviously, English language has been instrumental as it’s provided the natives ample scope to express their feelings more powerfully. For many, it is a device which has enabled them to make their traditional culture accessible to white people. The language gave them the belief that they could transfer their opinions and feelings to a greater, mostly white community; and they’ve used it with effect to reach a larger audience. That’s why Mudrooroo Narogin mentions that “Aboriginal literature begins as a cry from the heart directed at the white man. It is a cry for justice and for a better deal, a cry for understanding and an asking to be understood.” (Narogin, Mudrooroo. 1)

Melissa Lucashenko doesn’t see Aboriginal writing as a separate genre, but more an issue of content, and that in order for her to define Aboriginal literature she needs to consider the definition of Aboriginality. As she points out:

To me there are people who are biologically white, but culturally Black and people who have lived in the communities for donkey’s years and basically see the world through Black eyes. But they’re not the people who are likely to write books, so that complicates it a bit. Aboriginal writing to me at the moment is a protest literature I suppose and it’s centered around land and social justice and legal stuff. (Lucashenko, Melissa.)

Lucashenko says that Indigenous literature is protest literature, but she doesn’t rule out the possibility of other themes. Aboriginal literature in English has shown
the spark of great literary tradition, something on the lines of British and American literatures. The strong gesture towards an effective literature is possible because both white and indigenous writers have grasped and been writing about the Aboriginal conditions. Socio-political conditions have been improving for the native people over the last few years, resulted in Aboriginal literature focusing on cultural aspects and self-exploration. Mudrooroo observed:

As guilt and blame are not enough for the continuation of a literature, histories from an Aboriginal viewpoint are being constructed; life stories (often in collaboration), novels, short stories and poems are devoting their words to the Indigenous existential being in what is now said to be a ‘multicultural’ Australia and what in a few years time will be a republican Australia. (Mudrooroo 1997: 3)

Indigenous writing has not only concentrated itself on Aboriginal issues such as denial, oppression, dislocation, racism, assimilation, and activism. Aboriginal writers have dedicated themselves to express the facets of Aboriginal culture and society, which include its stories of dreaming, traditions and practices. Besides these writers, there are few more, who write neither about Aboriginal issues nor Aboriginal cultures. Nature and romanticism are their sources of inspiration. With all the above mentioned diversities, Aboriginal literature expanded and became a dominant theme in the World literatures.

The flair of Native Australian writers has been exceptional. It’s been observed that number of writers have been writing in all genres of literature, be it poetry, drama, fiction, etc. Sadly, people don’t recognize the talent of the Native writers. It
might be the egoistic nature of these people, which never allowed them to think about brilliance among Indigenous authors.

There are few events that are highly important in the history of Australian Aboriginal literature. Roland Axtmann and Robert Grant view:

The declaration of 1993 as ‘Year of Indigenous Peoples’ by the UN signaled the extent to which aboriginal politics ha become ‘globalised’. This process began as early as the 1940s but only achieved results in the 1970s when contacts between indigenous peoples became truly transnational… The result was a conference of indigenous peoples in British Columbia, Canada, in 1975. Out of this, the World Council of Indigenous Peoples’ (WCIP) was formed. (Axtmann, Roland, and Robert Grant. 41-42)

The formation of World Council of Indigenous Peoples’ (WCIP) in 1975 was a landmark episode in the transnational relations of the indigenous minorities. The Council was officially sanctioned by the United Nations, an important occasion in the collectivity of Indigenous people. ‘WCIP was a formal international body dedicated to having concepts of Aboriginal rights accepted on a worldwide scale. The WCIP had observer status in the United Nations; a secretariat based in Canada and represented over 60,000,000 indigenous peoples worldwide’. (Wikipedia) The General Assembly of WCIP is an occasion where representatives from New Zealand, Japan, Finland, North and South America get together to share their experiences and commonalities across the globe. Participation in the WCIP gatherings created awareness among the delegates on the life of Indigenous people all over the world, which paved way for new themes and ideas in literature.
To represent these minorities, George Manuel (1921-1989) introduced the concept of The Fourth World, a “term synonymous with stateless, poor, and marginal nations.” (Griggs, Richard) George Manuel was an influential Indigenous personality of Canada advocated the political unification of Indigenous people across the globe and the creation of the Fourth world movement. Indigenous people across the globe have much in common and in the face of adversity, unity becomes the binding factor. To promote the perspective of ‘Fourth World’, with the assistance of Michael Posluns, he published *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality* (1974). Manuel’s campaign from brotherhood to nationhood found its resonance in all the aspects of Indigenous peoples lives. In addition to WCIP meetings, Australian National Playwrights’ Conference unquestionably played a vital role in providing the indigenous writers like Richard Whalley, Eva Johnson and John Harding, a platform to nurture and showcase new Indigenous Australian dramatic works.

Adam Shoemaker provided a detailed account of Black Australian literature in his ground breaking work, *Black words White Page: Aboriginal Literature 1929-1988* (1989). The work combines historical and literary analysis; attempts to come to terms with the diversities and differences in Black literature. Adam Shoemaker comments that there’ve been certain achievements in the history of Indigenous literature of Australia, which brought in a quantum leap change in the attitude towards native literatures. The noteworthy achievements are: conferring Miles Franklin Award to Kim Scott for his novel, *Benang* in the year 2000, the achievements of Magabala Books and other publishers in publishing works of indigenous writers, the contributions of Yirra Yaakin, Kooemba Jdarra, Ilbijerri and
other Indigenous theatre companies; the ‘new ground’ films of Tracey Moffatt, Rachel Perkins, Darlene Johnson and Frances Peters-Little. Indigenous Australians have significantly contributed to all the literary or visual arts.

How Indigenous literature is different from the traditional English literature? Is it not a part of the great English tradition? Like all great literatures, Indigenous Australian literature is dynamic, a response of creative writers to the condition of life in Australia. A truly great writer would be one who successfully comes to grips with authentic feeling of the Australian environment, its character and cultures. Literature is the whole expression of a literate community’s life and activity. Indigenous literature addresses a number of issues, represents the social world around it, and communicates the indigenous past and existing Aboriginal identity. The literature also focuses on the relationship between Aboriginal writing and other forms and genres of Australian literature.

Indigenous writing has been gaining popularity across the world and it’s been far greater than anyone could have imagined. Native written expression has gained a wide and large audience. Indigenous writing’s started receiving serious critical attention and earned considerable recognition, which has been promoted and debated at conferences and seminars. The impact of Australian Indigenous writings fascinated all and inspired many native literatures. Popular books have been translated. Critics keenly follow and assess Aboriginal writings, for example, Maryrose Casey’s Creating Frames: Contemporary Indigenous theatre (2004) is a work of criticism. The success that Indigenous literature and arts have made by 1980s is noteworthy.
In the era of Globalization and because of the advancement in electronic and satellite communications, Indigenous minorities have collectively started coming together on a larger scale. The movements started by Indigenous people; and injustices, atrocities on them; and their protest marches, caught immediate international attention because of the print and electronic media.

Aborigines have thought of ventilating their voice to the world. Adam Shoemaker observes that Australian Aboriginal delegations have visited the Peoples’ Republic of China, the United States, Europe, Nigeria, Canada, and the United Nations to inform them about the Aboriginal struggle for justice and equality; and the discriminating policies of the Federal Government of Australia. Moreover, Aboriginal dancers and artists have attended cultural festivals at various countries to celebrate Aboriginal culture. During 1971-1988, Native Australians have staged twelve plays and a number of revues at various cultural festivals. Their political and social progress spurred them to take up creative writing in English. And during 1961-1988, eighteen collections of poetry, many poems and few novels were authored by Indigenous writers.

Public recognition is slow to come but it’s the most important acknowledgment in the process. Aboriginal authors have created some exemplary works which deserve extensive research and study. Indigenous Australian literature and arts can be considered as strong forms of cultural expression. It was during 1980s that the people started accepting and appreciating Native literatures. Because of various reasons, countries in the modern era are forced to accept the presence and importance of their indigenous minorities. The Maoris of New-Zealand, the
Aboriginals of Australia, the Laplanders of Finland, the Indians of Peru and the natives of Canada have been ventilating their demands through many socio-political and literary movements.

Australian Aboriginal literature as a representation of Aboriginal World, articulated the black past and contemporary Aboriginal identity. It has elucidated the relationship between Australian Aboriginal writing and other forms of Australian literature. The Evolution of Aboriginal literature in Australia is in reflection with the socio, economic, literary & cultural circumstances that affected the lives of Aboriginals. The period between the Great Depression and Second World War influenced the relations of Aboriginals with white Australians. The economies of all the nations were unstable during the period, and Australia was no exception. The nation ‘suffered years of high unemployment, poverty, low profits, deflation, plunging incomes, and lost opportunities for economic growth and personal advancement.’(Wikipedia) The Depression that devastated all levels of Australian society had its impact on Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people throughout Australia were invariably hit harder economically, judicially, socially, and culturally. Many of the Aboriginal camps literally turned to human rubbish camps. C. D. Rowley remarks, “One of the effects of great depression, all over Australia, seems to have been more rigid containment in institutions, where conditions were probably worse than ever before, with enduring effects on Aboriginal attitudes.” (Rowley, CD. 281)

The severe plight of the Aboriginal Australians was the impetus for social questioning. It was during this period the extinction and declining number of Aboriginal population became the concern of everyone. W.H. Stanner in White Man
got No Dreaming (1979) stated that from the estimated number of three lakh in 1788 to about sixty thousand only by 1930. Richard Broome in Aboriginal Australians: Black Response to White Dominance, 1788-1980 (1982) gives specific information that only eight thousand Aborigines remained in New South Wales in 1930 and one thousand in Victoria.

The welfare programs for Aboriginals were intended at avoiding international criticism. Massacres and punitive raids on the natives persisted during the Depression, which caught the public attention upon the uncertainty of Aboriginal existence. The Umbali massacre in 1920, the killing of a white dingo hunter in the vicinity of Alice springs in 1928 and the exceptional case of Arnhem land Aborigine, Tuckiar, accused of the murder of constable McColl, are some of the important incidents that spurred foreign intervention and concern for revised Aboriginal policies.

Literature produced during the Depression and Second World War (1929-1945), aptly presented the uncertainty of Indigenous people. Perhaps the best depicter of the conditions of the outback was Katharine Susannah Prichard (1883-1969). She was the first Australian novelist who gained international recognition. Born in Fiji and settled in Melbourne. Prichard produced a string of novels with Aboriginal themes in to which she wove her political thoughts. Her first published novel The Pioneers (1915), tells the story of the early settlers of Australia. Her next works, Windlestraws (1916), is a melodramatic romance and Black Opal (1921), a study of opal-mining community of Fallen Star Ridge; and a conflict between independent ownership of mines and capitalism.
Prichard was the founding member of the Communist Party of Australia in 1921. She founded the Unemployed Women and Girls’ Association in Perth and established the Modern Women’s Club in 1938. In 1935, she was elected the federal president of the Australian Writers’ League. Her *Intimate Strangers* (1937) prompted the cause of peace and social justice. Her major contribution was in the reconstruction of social and personal histories in Western Australia’s gold fields from 1890s to 1946 which came in the form of The Gold Fields Trilogy: *The Roraring Nineties* (1946), *Golden Miles* (1948), and *Winged Seeds* (1950).

She acquired international reputation with *Working Bullocks* (1926) and *Coonardoo* (1929). *Working Bullocks* has dramatized the traumas of timber workers in the Karri country of Australia’s South West. *Coonardoo* is a sensitive and controversial novel that portrayed the relationship between white men and black women in the northwest, was serialized in the *Bulletin* between September and December 1928. The work has provided considerable insight into traditional Aboriginal culture. The depiction of romantic idealization of traditional Aboriginal life was vehemently criticized by the Aboriginal critics in Australia. But the novel had received well in Britain. The work is a rich, pleasing tale of life, and of its people and the land. *The Times Literary Supplement* remarked: “The story is vivid and moving study of the blacks in relation to the whites and in particular of the lovely and faithful Coonardoo… north western life is pictured vividly in all its aspects and seasons with what seems to be an unexaggerated emphasis.” (“New Novels”, *The Times Literary Supplement*. 574)
Xavier Herbert (1901-1984) was a visionary defender of indigenous rights, one of the elder statesmen of Australian literature and a novelist who celebrated Australian legend of the bush. His works *Capricornia* (1938), *Seven Emus* (1959), *Soldiers’ Women* (1961), Autobiography *Disturbing Element* (1963), *Poor Fellow My Country* (1975) depicted the lives of Aboriginals and whites in a more accommodative and appreciable way. His first novel *Capricornia* was “highly influenced by the Jindyworobak Movement and describes the inter-racial relationships of the period.” (Wikipedia)

*Capricornia* was a work of protest, “stands as one of the great epics of outback Australia, with its sweeping descriptions of northern country.” (Farfor, Susannah, et al. 40) Sprawling, explosive, thronged with characters, plots, and sub-plots, *Capricornia* is without doubt one of the best known and widely read Australian novels of the last seventy years. The theme is immense and rambling, following a range of outback characters over a span of generations. Xavier presents himself as the outstanding champion who demonstrated the real insight and compassion. Herbert has preserved unattractive story by creating a fictional nation Capricornia for the readers which was ignored in the 20\(^{th}\) century pseudo apolitical history of Australia. He has dismantled the white Australian myth with minimal irony predicting the circumstances of Australia almost 70 years later.

The portrayal of Aboriginal subjectivity by Prichard and Herbert obviously acted as precursors of more enlightened white views about Aboriginal Australians. They created a significant educative impact on racial prejudices and Aboriginal stereotypes and their account has become a testimony to the changing public opinion
about Aboriginals and paved the way for creating inter racial tolerance. But on the other hand the over emphasis on the importance of such works has shadowed the genuine contribution of Ion Llewellyn Idriess (1889-1979) whose works are considered as historical fiction.

Ion L. Idriess was the most prolific writers of Australia. He was a multifarious personality; extensive traveler; lived with Aboriginals; mined for gold and opals; took part in the First World War; hunted crocodiles; and chronicled the customs and history of Aboriginal tribes. He wrote more than 50 books, depicting the life of the Aboriginals besides recording history in an idealistic style epitomizing the Australian spirit, during a writing career that spanned for more than 40 years. His most popular works *Flynn of the Inland* (1932) and *Lasseter’s Last Ride* (1931) *The Cattle King* (1936) outsold the works of Prichard and Herbert. *Lasseter’s Last Ride* was the best selling epic on Central Australian gold discovery. It provided an admirable understanding of Aboriginal people and described the unsuccessful exploration of white men for a mythical reef of Centralian gold. Adam Shoemaker observed that the novel had many Aboriginal characters, which were not individualized. It carried out number of stereotypes of Aboriginals: ‘jovial Aboriginal comic’, ‘childlike father’, ‘Venerable tracker’, ‘the evil witch doctor’ etc. The character of Micky directed the explorers to the water holes and was exemplified as a tracker.

The portrayal and misrepresentation of Aboriginals as stupid and brutal savages was an evidence of the disdain that many Australian writers carried during this particular period, Idriess was no exception. Shoemaker again remarked that in *Nemarluk: King of the Wilds* (1941), Idriess reduced the Aboriginal characters to
wicked and bestial level. He showed an undertone of white supremacy and condescending conception in representing Aboriginal culture and in depicting Aboriginal characters which was shared by many of the Australians. To the best possible extent, his writings provided the European perception of Aboriginals. His accurate representation was considered to be a painful and degrading experience.

Daisy Bates’ (1859-1951) *The Passing of the Aborigines* (1938) was another well known work that presented Aboriginals as primitive and moribund. It caused a controversy due to its claims of cannibalism. Daisy Bates was born in Ireland and settled in Australia. She devoted more than 35 years of her life to studying Aboriginal life, history, culture, rites, beliefs and customs. She was supposed to have written many things on the lives of Aboriginals. She worked for Aboriginal welfare, setting up camps to feed, clothe and nurse the transient population almost meeting the needs of the people exhausting her own economic sources. She fought against the policies of assimilation and resisted the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women by white men.

Bates believed in recording the lives of Aboriginals as they were a dying race. She considered half- castes as worthless. Her book *The Passing of the Aborigines* has exerted greater influence upon the perception of Aborigines by European Australians as late as 1970’s. Sara Mills remarks:

She (Bates) portrays Aborigines as barbaric and childlike, but her narrative stresses throughout that she has lived with them for a long time and cared for them. Thus, the text seems to suggest that rather than constituting a simple case of Othering, where indigenous peoples are contemptuously portrayed as barbarians,
Bates’s writing presents a negative portrait of Aboriginal life as if through Aboriginal eyes. (Mills, Sara. 144-145)

The reissue of the book in the recent times illustrates the longevity of Aboriginal themes among the readers across the globe. Unfortunately, the contribution of Daisy Bates and her works are considered responsible for generating misinformation and consolidating stereotypes about Aboriginals.

Ken Hampton, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, in his paper, ‘The Aborigine in Australian Literature’ (unpublished DAA paper, Adelaide 1976) considered Daisy Bates as an eccentric and opined that her book was considered as the most destructive book written on Aborigines. Bates alleged that Aboriginal women killed their children and ate them. But when the bones of those alleged children were sent for investigation to Adelaide University, they were found to be those of Wild Cat. Bates could not speak the language of the Aborigines even at Ooldea where she spent 16 years. He dismantled the myth of Bates that she could speak 188 Aboriginal dialects. Considering these observations, the fables of Bates seems incredible. So it is understood that the popular perceptions generated during 1929-1945 continued to exert their influence on the Australian reading public even in the contemporaneity.

It is strongly believed that the works responsible for inflating false impressions about Aboriginals were ascribed more importance than they deserved. It is only the contemporary Aboriginal consciousness that paved the way for an in depth critical evaluation of the circumstances which have recuperated the sources of authentic information about the first Aboriginal writer in English, David Unaipon.
David Unaipon (1872-1967) was an inventor, writer, musician, orator and the mouth piece of AFA. He was the first Aboriginal Australian to write published books. Born in Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal community, he took patents for 19 inventions that include a tool for shearing sheep, a new design for a wheel, centrifugal motor and a helicopter. He strived hard throughout his life to make life better for the Aborigines. He was encouraged by Aborigines’ Friends Association (AFA) which became a formative influence on his life and career. He worked and travelled around south-eastern Australia for fifty years. He often gave talks in schools and churches of different religions about Aboriginal legends and culture, and about his people’s future. He experienced discrimination and understood the problems of racism.

He was inquisitively religious because of Christian upbringing. His training in Latin and Greek made him comfortable with reading sermons of Thomas de Witt Talmage and Henry Drummond. Gordon Rowe in Sketches of Outstanding Aborigines (1956) says that Unaipon’s acceptance as Aborigine depends on the Aborigine himself. Bestowing ‘Coronation Medal’ was a testimony to his wider acceptance. In an address to a Methodist gathering, Unaipon proved his point:

I am here to plead with you on behalf of my countrymen, the Australian Aborigines. It has been said they cannot be Christianized and uplifted. I am here to prove the contrary… my people are in a state of balance, both physical, moral and intellectual, and Dr. Lancaster says that the destiny of primitive races must be either stagnation, progress or retrogression… We made no progress during these thousands of years… hills, valleys and rivers provided us with food…we lived in the most primitive manner. In this state of
balance, we were found when white people came here with their influence for good and evil. (Ramsland, John and Christopher Mooney)

It is observed that Unaipon in one his addresses, ‘An Aboriginal Pleads For His Race’ supported Aboriginal assimilation into white society. He was faithful to Aboriginal heritage and promoted the ultimate role of Aboriginal people through his legends and fables. The contemporary Aboriginal scholarship has drawn attention to Unaipon’s work and provided an accurate critical appraisal of Unaipon’s legends. The revaluation presented Unaipon’s work as fascinating, complex and considered it as defying any kind of classification. A good example of his master craftsmanship is found in the short piece ‘Totemism’. Unaipon explains the concept in an academic tone that Totemism is one of the ancient customs instituted by Primitive Man. The adoption of Totemism by Aborigines owes its origin to mythological conception. He recounts the interpretation of Aboriginal Totemic belief in a more philosophical way.

Unaipon tried to alter Aboriginal traditions to Christian tradition. His works became significant as they illustrated the honest and finest response of a brilliant Aboriginal man to the expectations of socio-political and religious system. His writings have explicitly portrayed the paradoxical situation of man who tries to move away from traditional Aboriginal society. This attitude of Unaipon proved to be a perfect prediction of the doctrine of assimilation which became a comprehensive mode of reforming the Australian society. His literary output and Aboriginal subjectivity invented dynamism and vitality to Aboriginal people and to their literature. To destabilize the negative perceptions and stereotype characterizations
of Aboriginals as primitives and uncultured, there is a dire need to assess and review Aboriginal literary and intellectual contribution of David Unaipon. This effort paves the way for restoring and acknowledging the Aboriginal contribution and intellectuality.

Aboriginal writers were treated as creative subjects by few white Australians. But many believed that Aboriginals were not self-sufficient and self-reliant. They had to be forcibly directed to sophisticated way of life. The view of contempt naturally led to prejudice and discrimination and invoked derogatory stereotypes. After the Second World War, there was a great change in the visibility of Aboriginals from the earlier period, which can be found in the literature. Anthropologists like Catherine H. Berndt and T.G.H. Strehlow and Ronald M enhanced the reputation of Aboriginals and projected their culture as worthy of praise.

Judith Wright (1915-2000) has initiated the literary response to the indigenous symbols, environmental values and spiritual values with compassion. Wright through her voluminous and influential poetry portrays the guilt of Australian society in suffering Aboriginal people for decades. Her works ushered a phase of guilt investigation. In the post-war era Wright was the most insightful poet, who could convey the pain and agony of Indigenous Australians. She was the author of quite a few collections of poetry that included The Moving image (1946), Woman to Man (1949), The Gateway (1953), The Two Fires (1955), Birds (1962), Five Senses (1963), The Other Half (1966), Alive (1973), Train Journey (1978) etc.

Judith Wright was renowned for her keen focus on the Australian environment. She dealt with the relationship between settlers, native Australians and
the Australian outback. The relationship between mankind and the environment was the catalyst for her poetic creation. Her images “characteristically drawn from the Australian flora and fauna, yet contain a mythic substrata that probes at the poetic process, limitations of the language, and the correspondence between inner existence and objective reality.” (Wikipedia)

Wright’s first collection of poetry, *The Moving Image*, depicts the horrors faced by Aboriginal people during the war years and celebrated the New England table land of her childhood. The mystical quality of her land never leaves her. Her biographer, Veronica Brady said that Wright’s way of writing about the landscape transformed the tradition of Australian writing. (*The Australian*, 27th June) Kevin Hart, a poet and critic, remarked that Wright’s poems taught him how to see the country for what it is and its people for who they are. Few of the poems of the work attempt and accomplish a remarkable reappraisal of Aboriginal culture. The work exhibits the importance of history, place and environment in Aboriginal culture.

*Woman to Man*, is a celebration of womanhood. The poem offers insights into topics such as, conception, pregnancy and childbirth. The source of the poem is drawn from her own experience of raising a child. Critics found the poem noteworthy for its striking imagery and focus on love and chaos. *The Gateway* reflects the influence of great poets in its consideration of creation, love and eternity. *The Two Fires* explores two opposing infernos, one that metaphorically represents the love from which humanity originated and another is the man-made atomic fire that might extinguish love.

Adam Shoemaker observes:
The Black Australian characters she creates in her poetry can be more appropriately interpreted as symbols of the Aboriginal people’s unity with the environment as well as of the invasion which they had been forced to endure… the dilemma of ingrained historical guilt is repeatedly addressed in Wright’s poetry… her writing becomes far more committed to a conception of Aborigines as Aboriginal human beings, rather than as metaphysical symbols… her work exemplifies the symbolic treatment of Aborigines in Australian literature extremely well. (Shoemaker, Adam)

The contribution of White Australians from Anthropological perspective became very important with the R.M. Berndt’s translation of ‘The Wonguri-Mandijigai Song Cycle of the Moon Bone’ published in *Oceania* in 1948. (*Oceania. Vol.xix, September. 1948. 16-50*) It was also published as an opening poem in Rodney Hall’s *The Collins Book of Australian Poetry*. The poem belongs to the Wonguri Mandjigai people of eastern Arnhem Land. Another significant example from Anthropological perspective is T.G.H. Strehlow’s *Aranda Traditions* (1947), a study of language and ceremony, contained anthropological analysis of Northern Aranda Myths.

The translation of *Aranda Traditions* by Strehlow was described as poetic fashion. Though the translation from Aranda to English was difficult, obviously the English version became the version of the anthropologist. The mediating effect of the translator became very important as the anthropologist’s interpretation is filtered through his perceptions. The mediating role of translator was more obvious in Berndt’s translation of ‘Song of Cycle of the Moon Bone’. This has conveyed a sense
of ritual and sacredness latent in Aboriginal songs. From the sociological perspective, Anthropological poeticizing has elevated the lower strata of the Aboriginals. From the social and literary perspectives, the translations of Anthropologists became significant in influencing the perception of Australians associated with Aboriginal people.

Australian author and historian, Mary Durack (1913-1994), exhibited enough interest in the sociological and literary aspects of Australia’s past. She documented the migration of her family from Ireland beginning with the mid 19th century in Kings in Grass Castles (1959) and its sequel Sons in the Saddle (1983). Along with her sister Elizabeth Durack, she has published All-About: The Story of a Black Community on Argyle Station (1935). She authored Keep Him My Country (1955) and The Aborigines in Australian Literature (1978), succeeded in presenting sympathetic view of Aboriginal life. These white Australian portrayals were considered to be stronger in generating social conscience.

In the absence of true Aboriginal identity, it was only Patrick White (1912-1990), a major Australian novelist who broke the ground with the publication of his popular novel Voss (1957) and Riders in the Chariot (1961). Both the novels explore the landscape of memory and the physical landscapes of Australia portraying the Aboriginal efficiency and ease. Riders in the Chariot fetched him Miles Franklin Award. His other novels include The Aunt’s Story (1948), The Tree of Man (1955). The Solid Mandala (1966), The Vivisector (1970), The Eye of the Storm (1973), A Fringe of Leaves (1976), The Twyborn Affair (1979) and Memoirs of Many in One (1986).
Voss provided detailed account of the actions of Aboriginals in the local environment. The novel centers on the two characters Voss and Laura Trevalyan, who in their expedition takes the help of two Aboriginal servants Dugald and Jackie. In their attempt to dominate the land and the Aboriginals, the explorers cross drought plagued desert and water logged lands. During this exploration, the troop splits into two and all the members perish eventually. Voss terribly fails in his idea of dominating Aboriginals and taming the harshness of the desert. What is particularly apparent is the recruitment of Aboriginal people to lament on the follies and presumptions of Voss. The novel is based on the premise “To make yourself, it is also necessary to destroy yourself.” (Voss.168) The progress of the expedition establishes the acceptance of the Blacks about the inevitable presence of the whites in their terrain and environment. There is a cordial reciprocation and shared environment established towards the end of the expedition. But as the shared environment fails to produce cultural and spiritual rapport, Patrick White establishes the dichotomy between the Aboriginals and the whites, which is consistently evoked in the novel. Voss attempts to erase this cultural distance in his interaction with Jackie: “Tell your people we are necessary to one another. Blackfellow white man friend together.” (Voss. 365) However, this reconciliation proves to be futile.

In Riders in the Chariot (1961) Patrick White presents a native, Alf Dubbo as one of the four primary characters. It is the spiritual communion and mystical experience of the four characters against the backdrop of Sarsaparilla. Among the four characters, Alf Dubbo is persuasively drawn and is entirely an imaginative creation of Patrick White. Alf Dubbo’s character is not the resemblance of any
Aboriginal. In one of the personal interviews, Patrick white has claimed that he had known only one or two Aboriginals and expressed ignorance about the understanding of his Aboriginal characters by the Aboriginals. Brian Kiernan in *Patrick White* (1980) justifiably termed it as a triumph of the imagination of White and his consummate identification with the character (*Patrick White. 75-78*). The novel has captured the metaphysical dilemma of White, exerted by the weight of Aboriginal and Australian cultures.

Patrick white has created Dubbo as one of the primary characters honing him with intuitive and spiritual perceptions. This has elevated Alf Dubbo’s rejected status of Aboriginal untouchability divorcing him from the larger white and traditional society. But it is wrong to understand that Alf Dubbo is a representative of integrated conception of combining Aboriginality and White culture. White’s vision of spiritual unity between the four riders fails to reflect the harmony between Europeans and Aborigines. Adam Shoemaker in *Black Words White Page 1929-1988* observes: “The Aboriginal theme is subsumed by White’s exploration of cosmic illumination through isolation and rejection. The experience the author describes is a poetic and symbolic one: he addresses the dilemma of outcast and human kind.” (Shoemaker, Adam .79) In 1973 Patrick White became the first Australian writer to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, giving Australian fiction international recognition.

A similar presentation of the gulf between Aboriginality and white spirituality is depicted by Randolph Stow (1935-2010) in *To The Islands* (1958). He wrote *A Haunted Land* (1956), *The Bystander* (1957), *The Suburbs of Hell* (1984) etc. *To The Islands* is compared with *Voss*. The novel deals with Stephen Heriot who wish to
dominate the Aboriginals as over lord; suffers from the delusion that he can communicate with the Aboriginals and conducts journey through the harsh terrain of the land. He has a profound desire to be accepted by the Aboriginals. Heriot’s attempt to become an Aboriginal, is an aspect of self deception. Dorothy L.M Jones in ‘The Treatment of the Aborigine in Australian Fiction’ says:

_To The Islands_ is a beautiful and moving novel, but its Aboriginal characters are abstractions rather than real people. This can be justified when the novelist makes a symbol of the natives as does Patrick White in _Voss_. I feel it is scarcely permissible, however, for a writer who makes race relationships a major theme. (Unpublished M.A. Thesis. 1960.152)

Despite Stow’s significant literary approaches to the Aboriginal theme, ultimately the novel has registered the absence of persuasiveness.

Donald Robert Stuart (1913-1983) has dismantled the stereotypical representations of Aboriginals. His poverty stricken and peaceful upbringing in Perth, made him live in direct contact with the Aboriginals. He was directly involved with the aftermath of the Pilbara strike and with Pindan Co-operative. Between 1959 and 1981, Stuart published eleven novels and one collection of short stories. Four of his novels _Yandy, The Driven, Yaralie_ and _ILbarana_ were published overseas. _Yandy_ represented Aboriginality in a finest way. He succeeded in depicting completely Aboriginal perspective as a naturalist. In one of his personal interviews Donald Stuart has stated: “I think _Yandy_ to a great extent is written from the Aboriginal point of view…” (Canberra, May 1931). Possessing a sincere and heartfelt respect for Aboriginal culture, he attempts to show its vibrancy in
harmonizing the modern techniques of industrial action. As the one who is intimately involved with the aftermath of Pilbara strike, he believed that Pilbara was motivated and sustained by Aboriginal ways and beliefs of culture. He has offered a factual, measured, restrained and affectionate celebration of Aboriginal Australian world view and projected this as idealistic optimism. His genuine appreciation of Aboriginal people and culture remained as a permanent exemplification that exposed and dismantled the stereotypical portrayals of Aborigines by pseudo white Australian writers. Adam Shoemaker says:

Of all the White Australian writers who have treated Black Australian themes in their works, Stuart probably comes the closest to an appreciation of Aboriginal people as human beings. However, his belief in the exclusively genuine nature of traditional Aboriginal society ensured that he would always fail to appreciate fully the worth of contemporary Aboriginal culture. (Shoemaker, Adam. 76)

The socio literary and cultural expansion during this period 1945-1961 is believed to have been limited by the writings of Judith Wright and Patrick White. Both the writers have shared poetic and metaphysical depiction of Aboriginal culture. Judith Wright has succeeded in developing her literary contribution into fruitful collaboration with Aboriginals. However, in the light of contemporary Aboriginal literary consciousness, even her contribution is found to be lacking in genuine representation.

It is proved that these mainstream Australian writers who dealt with the Aboriginal portrayals succumbed to the then prevailing notion that Aboriginals were
mindless of objects of derision and condescension. On the whole, none of the writers during this period succeeded in presenting Aboriginals as fully sentient individuals. They were only treated as subjects for creative exploitation. This conceptual failure and vacuum has been fleshed and clothed by Aboriginal writers from 1970s onwards.

Aboriginal literature has tackled the theme of Australian history in many ways. It is by studying Aboriginal oral tradition, by fostering a sense of Aboriginal pride in the heroes of Black Australian past and through reevaluation of interracial relations. During bicentennial celebration of British invasion in 1988, the commemoration of Australian achievements was in contradiction with a sense of guilt and responsibility over the treatment of Aboriginals. Australians attempt to identify themselves with the feeling of guilt and injustice. Subscribing to this perspective, most of the Aboriginal writers are preoccupied with the theme of past injustice and emphasize in creating autonomous Aboriginal history. One of the reasons for this preoccupation is to distort the European version of history and to establish Pre/Post European contact history.

Aboriginal writers, in order to establish pride in distinctive Aboriginal Australian history, try to retrieve the information of the indigenous heroes and heroines. Kevin Gilbert in *Living Black: Blacks Talk to Kevin Gilbert* (1978) says that the contemporary indigenous writers had to adopt these approaches as the problem of historical ignorance and neglect had proved them inferior to whites without a perfect chronological history of their own people. It is pertinent to observe that Aborigines became victims of Eurocentric bias. Only during 1970s Historian Henry Reynolds in *Aborigines and Settlers: The Australian Experience*
1788-1939 (1972) and *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia* (1982) has shown the way to understand the Australian past from an Aboriginal perspective. Following this perspective, Aboriginal historians, Phillip Pepper in *You Are What You Make Yourself to Be* (1981) and Robert Borpho in *Fringedweller* (1980) consolidate the past history as socio-political analyses of oppression.

The responsibility of retrieving and tapping Aboriginal past history is a Herculean task for many of the Aboriginal writers. Exploring the Oral history of the Aboriginals is considered to be fertile. The Oral history is rendered effectively in Aboriginal autobiographies, novels, poetry and plays offering a strikingly different presentation of past history marked with historical perspectives. Mostly it is in the genres of poetry and drama Aboriginal writers have established the centrality of Oral culture. But Collin Johnson has succeeded in his recent novel *Doctor Wooreddy’s Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World* in presenting the centrality of Oral tradition as to establish cultural independence of Aboriginal literature. Jack Davis demonstrated the identifiable link with Oral tradition in most of his plays. All his plays *The Dreamers, Kullark, No Sugar* are imbued with strong sense of Aboriginal history. He establishes strong Aboriginal atmosphere with the reminiscences of old Aboriginal, dream dances and didgeridoo music. Depicting the lifestyle of a typical Aboriginal urban household in the 1980s, it poses a challenge to the White theatre and provides a unifying contemporary sense of identification.

Robert Merritt’s *The Cake Man* (1978) is an Aboriginal drama with a precise historical setting. It has presented the historical atmosphere by its locale and action
representing a strong indictment of New South Wale Aboriginal missions. The Central theme of *The Cake Man* is anti-missionary and against forced conversion. Sweet William, the Aboriginal father declaims bitterly against Christianity. Merritt depends on using caricatures. Merritt skillfully appropriates the techniques of Western theatre and caters more to the European theatrical conventions but succeeds in pushing his drama from the European expectations into a greater realm of originality.

The significance of Aboriginal novels in English depends much on Colin Johnson’s *Long Live Sandawara* (1979) and *Doctor Wooreddy’s Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World*. In *Sandawara* Colin Johnson provides the historiography of Aboriginal resistance and subverts the dominant notion that Aboriginal people offered no meaningful resistance to the white invasion of their continent. This myth of Aboriginal passivity is dismantled by Johnson in this novel. Johnson centers the theme of the novel on one of the striking episodes of Black Australian resistance that took place in the Kimberley district of Western Australia. Colin Johnson’s attempt was obviously to consolidate the Aboriginal resistance and leadership against the intrusion of the Whites. His aim was to inculcate a sense of Aboriginal pride and to cultivate the awareness of Aboriginal history. *Sandwara* becomes a historical novel concerned with the concept of Aboriginal patriotism.

Colin Johnson’s another novel *Dr. Wooreddy’s Prescription for Enduring the End of the World* is a more historical novel than *Sandawara*. This is a complete historical novel based on juxtaposed binary oppositions: fire/water, black/white,
good/evil etc. Drawing the sources from Aboriginal and Eastern cultures, Johnson presents the known Australian history with symbolism and mythology. The resolution and enlightenment in the novel owes much to Buddhism and Aboriginal religion. Johnson employs the traditional song rhythms to evoke the atmosphere of tribal occasions and skillfully incorporates a poetic legacy of the black oral tradition. As a crucial symbolic phase in the novel, Johnson’s analysis of the span of the Tasmanian’s traditional world seems to imply the necessity for pan Aboriginal communication. This proposition suggests Aboriginal adaptability and resilience. Johnson professes the implied awareness that not all whites are evil just as in the days of Wooreddy but there were also compassionate Europeans who rescued Truganini’s father Mangana from drowning in the ocean. Johnson proves that the present is perpetually infused with the past and succeeds in offering a cordial perspective of Australian inter racial history. From these examples one can perceive that the historical theme is presented in Aboriginal literature through the usage of venerable Aboriginal tradition, through the endeavor to foster a sense of contemporary Aboriginal pride and through reinterpretation of Australian inter racial history.

Traditional Aboriginal culture is now confined to central and northern Australia. In the contemporary times, every facet of Aboriginal life is influenced by modernity. Most of the Aborigines lead urbanized lives. The contemporary themes of the Aboriginal novels incorporate and present a unique synthesis of Australian cultural past and present. The theme of Black Australian identity connects the contemporary Aboriginal novels, formed as a result of historical and contemporary
attacks on the Aboriginal way of life. One of the striking themes found in contemporary Aboriginal novels is the relationship between sex and violence.

In Aboriginal society sexual relations were treated with reverence and respect and they form an integral component of ceremonies and rituals. Aboriginal writers like Colin Johnson, Faith Bandler, Archie Weller etc., in their works *Doctor Wooreddy’s Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World*, Waevie (1977) and *Day of the Dog* (1981) have portrayed sexual relations as a mirror of violence exemplifying this contemporary brutality. Johnson and Bandler are of the view that in the Aboriginal traditional social and spiritual context sexual intercourse was highly revered and it was only with the arrival of the Europeans the relations have acquired degraded and perverted forms.

In *Doctor Wooreddy’s Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World* a clear comparison is established between the rape of the Tasmanian Aboriginal women and the rape of the land, sacred sites and heritage. He gradually understands the Europeans’ treatment of Aboriginal women. In many cases whites viewed black women as valuable only in sexual terms. Due to the victimization, Truganini debases her own sexuality and makes prostitution a virtue. Johnson clearly presents that Aboriginals were experts in art of lovemaking. It is the Europeans who polarized the chastity of Aboriginal sex and lovemaking. Whites exploit not only women but everything they come in contact with. They occupy the land as easily as they enslave men. There are axe murders of Aboriginal mothers and children.

Johnson’s another novel *Wild Cat Falling* (1965) refutes the sexual haven. The nameless Aboriginal protagonist in the novel internalizes the brutality from the
society and institutional violence releasing from the jail. He, out rightly rejects relationship with black and white women. He feels bitterness and disgust in his sexual relationships. His aversion to sex is associated with drunkenness and produces only nausea. The novel has lucid and distressing examples of the combination of sexual and violent impulses. Johnson describes sexual violence that triggers from over indulgence of alcoholism as a distinctive Aboriginal problem.

In *Long Live Sandwara*, the theme of sexual violence is considered as historical white Australian problem. The novel contains lashing of casual sex and a considerable amount of violence. Johnson presents the love between Rob and Rita intentionally humorous paralleled with constant cooking. At one stage it appears that Johnson is writing a novel of adolescent sex of the two girls: Sally and Jane. The explicitness of author’s description makes us understand that the sexual intercourse is hardly interesting for the girls’ characters. Johnson supports the accuracy of his depiction and he added that most of the characters are based on real life individuals.

Johnson depicts Aboriginal concept of sex as a refuge from a hostile white world. Alan, the leader of the group symbolically makes love to Sally and Jane before helping them escape. Alan as a liberation fighter is in touch with his Aboriginal heritage. Though the depiction of sex is gratuitous and meaningless, it is presented as a means of escaping from boredom, poverty and depression of Aboriginal life. It is described as a unifying factor that helps to form a group identity and solidarity. Almost in equivalence with the depiction of sex, the similar quantum of violence is depicted.
Faith Bandler (1918- ) is an Australian civil rights activist and a campaigner for the rights of Indigenous Australians. Bandler was involved in the Aboriginal Australian Fellowship and the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI), formed in 1957. He worked on four books, out of which two were histories of 1967 referendum; one is an account of her brother’s life in New South Wales and one about her father’s experience of black birding in Queensland. Among these works Waevie (1977) is a fictionalized biography of her father. Bandler has illustrated the institutional violence of the labor trade and its impact upon the Pacific islands and also upon the transported individuals. She gives examples of individualized cruelty and shows clearly how violence breeds resistance. She has also depicted the sexual exploitation of the Aboriginal servants by the whites.

Bandler has aptly illustrated how European women on the cane plantations could wield sexual power over Black men. She also presents how Aboriginals exploit the sexual relations with whites as a means of liberation and advancement in life. Sexual relations are perceived by the whites as a means of asserting their dominance and blacks as a means of realizing equality. Bandler by depicting the impact of sexual relations and violence on the lives of Aboriginals ends the novel with an optimistic note that freedom was achieved.

Archie Weller (1957- ) is another aboriginal writer who depicted sex in the midst of violent life in his popular novel The Day of the Dog (1981). He wrote the novel as a reaction to his wrongful conviction. It fetched him the Australian/Vogel Literary Award and 1982 Prose Fiction award. The novel was made into a film
entitled *Blackfellas* in 1993. The work depicts the absence of love which should accompany the sexual relationships. But the world Weller presents is brutal, cruel and male dominated one. It is only in the life of the protagonist Doug Dooligan we see the coalescing of sex and love. Doug Dooligan and his friend Polly develop passionate relationship on a different plane. In a culture where women are considered as expendable sexual objects, love is projected as the afterglow of intercourse. Besides this, violence is ubiquitous in the novel. Gang feuds, the attempts of Aboriginals to prove their masculinity, the constant harassment of Aboriginals by the police emphasize the violence in the novel. The example of the detectives bursting into the room when Polly and Doug are peacefully sleeping in each other’s arms without a warrant illustrate that the most private and intimate Aboriginal relationships are open to police abuse.

The image of rape and exploitation is associated with the destruction of nature which symbolizes Australians innate aggressiveness. Weller also employs the image of enticement and rejection to sex that snowballs the events leading to blood and destruction towards the end of the novel. Doug in his seduction of the white waitress Angelina at the Halfway House, degrades himself and demeans the woman. The absence of affection in the relationship of Doug and Angelina makes it an animalistic exercise. This makes the sexual relationship meaningless and degradation of sexuality into a commercial undertaking. From another perspective, sex as a mirror of power relations was introduced into Australia by the whites. Aboriginals who were inimical to these themes have adopted them as part of their culture.
The relationship between sex and violence is ancient one. Today, the western culture and Aboriginal culture suffer from the disturbing elements of crime that inflates from sex and violence. These are recognized as white and Aboriginal Australian problems. If the Aboriginal writers with their candid expression can bring the realization among the Aboriginals, it would be a valuable service. It is only from this perspective; Aboriginal novels in English can signify alternative form of literature.

Aboriginal poetry in English illustrates the diversity of Aboriginal literary perspectives. Poetry, in Aboriginal literature continues to be the popular genre of creative expression because it offers a wide spectrum in orienting the Aboriginals towards realizing the significance of health, education, legal matters, governmental policies etc. In the process of generating this consciousness, some Aboriginal poets consider themselves as mouth pieces of their people in representing grievances and concerns of Aboriginal community. Most of the Aboriginal poets agree with the perception of ‘art for art’s sake’ and believe that the purpose of literature is to serve the society. Aboriginal poets try to reinforce Aboriginal pride in identity and criticize social ills within the Aboriginal community.

W.E. H. Stanner’s After the Dreaming (1969) observes the Aboriginal sense of oneness with the soil in relation to the essence of land rights campaign. Aboriginal poetry is polemical, impassioned, restrained and consciously apolitical. Aboriginal poetry ranges from overt political commitment to celebrations of nature expressing and reinforcing a distinctive Aboriginal world view. It highlights the pride, dignity and survival of the Aboriginals in the face unpredictable future. The most significant
and unique aspect of Aboriginal poetry is its inherent oral or phonetic character. The genre has successfully relegated the views of Jindyworobak writers.

Jindyworobak movement inaugurated with Rex Omgamell’s and Ian Tilbrook’s Conditional Culture (1938), tried to develop truly Indigenous White Australian culture, using Aboriginal culture. It tried to establish superficial understanding that Aboriginal culture is only to promote the autonomy of Australian culture from the European domination. In the process of recognizing the efforts of White Australians in exploring the Aboriginal themes, they failed to preserve the distinctive Aboriginal identity. It is from this perspective, Judith Wright dubbed Jindyworobak movement as a matter of white art theory (Personal interview with Judith Wright)

Any understanding of Aboriginal poetry should commence with the knowledge of Oodgeroo Noonuccal (1920-1993). She was an Aboriginal poet, political activist, artist and educator. She was a campaigner for Aboriginal poetry and was best known for her poetry. She was the first Aboriginal Australian to publish a book of verse We Are Going (1964). The book was extraordinarily successful and placed Oodgeroo as the highest selling poet alongside C.J. Dennis. She has published many anthologies of poetry : The Dawn is at Hand: Poems (1966), My People : A Kath Walker Collection (1970), Stradbroke Dreamtime (1972), Little Fella (1986), Kath Walker in China (1988), The Rainbow Serpent (1988), The Colour Bar (1990), Oodgeroo (1994) etc.

Through poetry she registered the pride in her Aboriginality to the broadest possible audience. She won several literary awards: Mary Gilmore Medal (1970), the
Jessie Litchfield Award (19750), the Fellowship of Australian Writers’ Award. In 1988, she adopted a traditional name: Oodgeroo (paperbark tree), Noonuccal (her tribe’s name). She returned her MBE degree as a protest to make Australia realize the condition of her people during Australia’s Bicentenary celebrations. Sam Watson wrote a play entitled *Oodgeroo: Bloodline to Country* in commemoration of Noonuccal’s life. The social and literary commitment of Oodgeroo has made her the doyen of Aboriginal literature. She was chosen to script the Australian Pavilion’s major presentation of holographic version of the Rainbow Serpent Legend at World Expo 88. Her international reputation enabled her to act as a positive and successful role model for Aboriginal Australians.

Her first volume of poetry *We Are Going* was published at the height of her political involvement. This has provided impetus for the cultural expression of Aboriginality. In the initial critical reception, her poetry was considered protest poetry as it violated the permissible forms of society’s literature. There are other evaluations that displayed wider appreciation of *We Are Going*. Jill Helleyer in the article ‘Aboriginal Poet’ says: “Kath Walker’s poetry possesses the very definite merit of coming to life when spoken aloud…When Kath Walker learns the difference between wisdom and propaganda she could well become a significant voice in Australian poetry.” (*Hemisphere*. Vol.8, no.12. 18). Her poetry connotes strong socio-political message:

No More woomera, no more boomerang,
No more playabout, no more the old ways.
Children of nature we were then,
No Clocks hurried crowds to toil
Now I am civilized and work in the white way,
Now I have dress, now I have shoes:
Isn’t she lucky to have a good job!’
Better when I had only a dillybag.
Better when I had nothing but happiness.
(‘Then and Now’ in *My People* 1981.91)

*The Dawn Is At Hand* (1966) was the second volume of Noonucal, which has displayed her keen sense for depicting simple and direct imaginings of Aboriginal life before the invasions of Europeans. She captures the simplicity of Aboriginal life in *Gifts*:

‘I will bring you love’, said the young lover,
‘A glad light to dance in your dark eye.
Pendants I will bring of the white bone,
And gay parrot feathers to deck your hair’.

It is pertinent to understand that despite initial hostile criticism, Oodgeroo’s poetry was new and different in Australian literature. Most significant aspect of her poetry is that she has introduced Aboriginal perspective for the first time into contemporary Australian literature. She proudly celebrated the survival of Aboriginals in the face of adversity. She expressed her grief over the oppression and exploitation of Aboriginals and presented an optimistic and potential view for interracial harmony in Australia. She has introduced directness, environmental values and Aboriginal world view with innovative and exciting ways. Ruth Doobov in the essay ‘The New Dreamtime: Kath Walker in Australian Literature’ observes:
Her importance lies in showing the potentialities of the Aboriginal influence rather than in fully exploring it... She has written poetry based on the Aboriginal philosophy that art is not the province of an intellectual elite, abandoning the esoteric fashion which some believe is strangling modern European poetry. She has produced literary works out of a culture which is neither traditional Aboriginal nor European but an emerging symbiosis of both. (Australian Literary Studies)

One of the obvious significant aspects of Oodgeroo’s poetry is that she wanted poetry to be distillation of the feelings and concerns of Aboriginal people and firmly believed that poetry would definitely be a breakthrough for the Aboriginal people from the mere action of storytelling song making. Undoubtedly, Noonuccal has established representative school of Aboriginal poetry that paved the way for the emergence of notable aboriginal poets such as Jack Davis, Kevin Gilbert etc.

Jack Davis published serious poetry with innovative experimentation in the volumes *The First Born and Other Poems* (1970), *Jagardoo: Poems from Aboriginal Australia* (1978), *John Pat and Other Poems* (1988) and *Black Life: Poems* (1992). Most of his poems are a testimony to his sincerity and honesty. They are composed in the immediate aftermath of socio political events bearing upon Aborigines. His contribution to socio political affairs of Aboriginals and their advancement through poetry is immensely significant. His popular poem ‘Laverton Incidnet’ was composed as a response to the shooting of young Aborigine Raymong Watson. Arriving on the scene and moved by the sight of Watson’s blood on the ground Davis writes:
The two worlds collided
In anger and fear
As it has always been-
Gun against spear.

Aboriginal earth,
Hungry and dry,
Took back the life again,
Wondering why.

Echo the gun-blast
Throughout the land
Before more blood seeps
Into the sand.


Davis in his second collection of verse *Jagardoo- Poems from the Aboriginal Australia* engaged the celebration of nature in its completeness and whimsical childhood experiences. He also provides a lucid analysis of self, convalescence from illness and evils of militarism. He encapsulates the irony of cultural relativism in his poem ‘Bombay’ where he argues that White and Aboriginal Australians are alike in many of ways of living. Thus Davis has upheld unique Aboriginality with imagistic clarity with constant experimentation in poetry.

Kevin Gilbert is another popular Aboriginal poet expressed concern for social issues, like, Noonuccal. With a remarkable directness, he brings a greater appreciation of Aboriginal colloquial patterns. He has published *End of Dreamtime* (1971) and *People of Legends* (1978). Gilbert was bestowed with enthusiastic
critical reception as some of his Aboriginal images are more striking. The poem ‘The Better Blacks’ is an effective poem that conveyed a strong sense of criticism. Besides the strong militant side of Gilbert’s poetry one could also observe sarcastic connotations. In the poem ‘Granny Koori’, he portrays the emasculation of Aboriginal men. His vibrant humour lurks in disguise. Gilbert has also celebrated the themes of love and humour. The poem ‘Extract from a letter to a Woman Friend’ which celebrated love and devotion surprised many readers. He has written substantial whimsical and light poems directed at children. Inspite of his variety of accomplishments, Kevin Gilbert is downplayed as the poet who perpetuates solely the protest poetry.

A natural comparison often is established between Aboriginal poetry and Native Canadian poetry, in view of the common ideological stance of ‘Fourth world Identity’ and numerous other similarities. Poetry as the genre of creative expression becomes amenable to previous oral cultures in the case of Indigenous groups in these countries. Poetry is a politicized activity and a form of agitation for the rights. In native Canadian poetry the symbolic and spiritual nature of indigenous existence is extensively explored. Native Canadian poets Chief Dan Deorge, Rita Joe, Duke Red Bird, Jeanette Armstrong, Sarian Stump, Daniel David Moses etc., evince in their work an over riding sense of loss, the loss of happiness, of traditional laws, of togetherness and of freedom almost similar to Aboriginal Australian poets.

On the whole, Aboriginal poetry is remarkable for striking immediacy and is augmented by the personal and socio political stances. It underscores the fourth world perspective and highlights the distinctive Aboriginal world view. Kevin
Gilbert in his landmark anthology *Inside Black Australia* proclaims the independence of Aboriginal poetry: “Black poets sing… actually the stain of blood, our blood, covering the surface of our land so the White man could steal our land.” (Gilbert, Kevin)

Aboriginal Drama has contributed to the concept of Aboriginality in particular and to the enrichment of Australian literature as a whole. It has explored the important aspects of Aboriginality: endurance, pride, protest, sorrow, anger and humour. All the Aboriginal Playwrights paid particular attention to humour and relied on it as an element of Aboriginal self image. Humour is considered as a solace in the midst of adversity. All the Aboriginal plays examined the aspects of hardship, misery, poverty, discrimination, death etc. by employing humour and rescued them from being oppressive.

Jack Davis in one his interviews has observed that Aboriginal drama displays wide range of emotions: “Don’t just show them (the audience) the comic side of the life right through…show them sadness, pathos, gladness, happiness, sorrow and all the in-between…all those emotions” (Westerly, Vol.27. no.4. 112). However, many Aboriginal playwrights consider humour in contradiction to Western perception. They perceive humour deriving from the traditions and skills of Aborigines. W.E.H. Stanner in *Aboriginal History* (1982) notices general aspects of humour shared by Whites and Aboriginals. But he attributes the distinctive Aboriginal approach to humour found in the roots of traditional sphere. Stanner also emphasized on the longevity of humorous tales derived from the real life experiences of Aboriginals. Many of the Aboriginal dramatists have given effective expression to
the kind of humour emphasized by Stanner. However, they have taken their inspiration from the direct observation and recollection of personal experiences.

Aboriginal playwrights evinced their faithfulness to perceived black reality. They endeavor to illustrate the Aboriginal past in spite of its sorrowful density with honesty and directness. Kevin Gilbert in his first play *The Cherry Pickers* (1988) has explored the psychology of deprivation and subservience. The play is about a group of itinerant Aboriginal fruit pickers who meet every year at the same White owned Cherry Orchard. The Cherry tree symbolizes money and food. So for the fringe dwellers the fruit season represents the end of the year. Gilbert has conveyed other related themes like affinity between Aboriginals and nature, destruction of the natural world by the Europeans, inability of the aboriginals to regain their past and the failure of Good white people to appreciate Aboriginal culture and ethos.

Gilbert’s second unpublished play *Ghosts in Cell Ten* is an evidence of author’s keen ear for black speech patterns. It is about the mental and physical torments of white character called preacher. The preacher grows from the novice to the seasoned veteran in the prison cell. It is only with the Aboriginal character Clarry the drama gains focus and real power. Apart from the detailed prison life, Gilbert focuses on personal, psychological, sexual and racial aspects of life. He enables Preacher and Clarry to contemplate on the important aspects of life. Gilbert criticizes the judicial and punitive system and illustrates the failures of Black Australian society. Clarry reveals his unjust imprisonment for a rape and scorns the help of Aboriginal legal service.
Through this Gilbert addresses larger questions of human rights and prison reforms. Robert Merritt in his play *The Cake Man* (1974) examines the similar theme of Aboriginal imprisonment. It is a complex and subtle drama built on bitter illusions. In the play ironically named Sweet William gets arrested for standing near a pub door while the police quell a brawl. Merritt instills hope and pride in Sweet William’s son. William’s decision to break out of the institutionalized degradation is presented as the key factor of the play. The play raises various socio-political issues which bear upon Aboriginal activism and self image and particularly highlights Aboriginal aspects of despondency, family closeness, and the threat of alcoholism and the retention of pride.

Gerald Bostock an Aboriginal Playwright in the play *Here Comes the Nigger* (1977) deals with the theme of blindness. He portrays figurative blindness which enables to overcome racial prejudice. The play is an examination of physical and mental disabilities experienced by Aborigines in contemporary Australia. The play revolves around two major characters: blind Aboriginal poet Sam Matthews and a white woman Odette O’Brien. The white woman tutors the blind Aboriginal poet. The affectionate relationship they develop is understood as opportunistic sexual exploitation by each one. Though the two characters succeed in achieving colour blindness, they become victims of racial difference. The concept of Aboriginality that Bostock has explored comes at the backdrop of the solidarity of city dwelling Aboriginals. The Aboriginality reflected in the play is vibrant and defiant.

Jack Davis as the most popular Aboriginal dramatist succeeded in presenting Aboriginality in an extremely well balanced manner. His play *Kullark* offers a
careful characterization. He perceptively illustrates Aboriginal socio political attitudes and their genuine ambivalence when they are confronted with radicalism. The Aboriginal father and mother Alex and Rosie display their self contradictions and their own version of Aboriginality. Dividing the play into three sections, Davis develops the theme of independent and sustained aboriginal resistance. He significantly presents the ways of the survival of Aborigines from the onslaught of Whites through mutual dependency and their continuous subscription to tradition.

Davis’s another play *The Dreamers* is a personal play than *Kullark*. Davis envisages himself in the lead role of *Worru* and depicts the experiences of Wallitch family. The happiness and sorrowful experiences, the drunkenness and sobriety of Wallitch family is presented with lyrical sensitivity. Davis employs Nyoongah language in almost every scene. He uses Aboriginal music and dance to create awareness of otherness and a separate sense of Aboriginality. He celebrates the survival of urban Aboriginal culture under the pressure of European culture. Davis makes humour as a vital component of the distinctive Aboriginal self image in these plays.

Another play *No Sugar* (1986) presents a historical theme focusing upon the past half-century of Aboriginal history in Western Australia. It focuses on the story of the Millimurra family highlighting the oppression of institutionalized Aborigines. Davis treats Aboriginal history intriguingly and manages to establish his position as chronicler taking into faithful consideration documented massacres of Aborigines. He employs alternation between European style of historical narration and Aboriginal colloquial speech. The basic necessities of Aborigines such as
tobacco, soap, sugar etc. resurface as motifs throughout the play. The theme justifies the title by proclaiming that the Aborigines have ‘no sugar’ in their lives literally and figuratively. Another play *Barungin* (Smell the Wind) establishes Davis as the most accomplished playwright. Set in the context of Bicentennial and the Royal commission on Aboriginal deaths in Custody, the play is considered as overtly political and accusatory. The play has underlined the distinctive naturalism of Aboriginal drama. Thus, Davis by successfully weaving together the observations of his people with wise humour became a world class dramatist.

However, education and mass media are the major means by which the portrayal of Aboriginality can be disseminated throughout the world. Aboriginal literature is basically involved with the maintenance and extension of Aboriginal self-assurance and the feeling of self-respect. Three major elements come together in Indigenous Australian literature – cultural nationalism, literary talent, and Aboriginal pride. Above all, the Aboriginal literature deals and fights for the identity, an impetus for many native literatures across the world.

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