ABORIGINE AND LITERATURE

Chapter I

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A race of people who rose with the sun,
As strong as the sun they had laws,
Traditions co-existing with nature.

The cycle of the sun is likened to the life of man;
The snake is said to bite when the sun
is at its most powerful zenith.

The snake has already bitten.

When the snake bites the sun,
The clan, the man, the sun,
Must sink cooling to its inevitable settings,
Yet, it is said, the sun will rise again. (1-11)

(qtd. in Isaacs 294)

The Aboriginal orator Albert Barunga’s words quoted above reflect the Aboriginal people’s history of the Australian continent. The white invaders are the snake that swallow the sun causing an eclipse. Yet he is very optimistic about the future of his people.

Australian Aboriginal Oral Literature / History

Australian Aborigines have the longest continuous cultural history in the world. Discussing the generally accepted anthropological theory
concerning their origin Mudrooroo says that they walked “across Indonesia when the seas froze during the last Ice Age and the islands became a single landmass except for one single stretch of water a hundred or so kilometers in width” (Indigenous Literature 6). Aboriginal people have important stories of their own which relate original journeys to Australia of men and animals. The myth of the whale and the starfish (Unaipon 33-52) belonging to the Thurrawal people and the story of “The Three Brothers” (Isaacs 13-14) belonging to the Gullibul tribe, tell of the arrival of men to the coast of New South Wales. Wandjuk Marika, O.B.E. of Northern Territory in his Foreword to Australian Dreaming: 40,000 Years of Aboriginal History compiled and edited by Jennifer Isaacs says:

In the world today men discuss whether our ancestors came to Australia by land across a land bridge that has now gone, or by boat, across the sea from Asia. Scientists who study faces say we look like some of the Southern Indian people and like some of the hill people of the Celebes. [. . .]

The truth, of course, is that my own people, the Riratjingu, are descended from the great Djankawu who came from the Island of Baralku far across the sea. Our spirits return to Baralku when we die. Djankawu came in his canoe with his two sisters, following the morning star which guided them to the shores of Yelangbara on the eastern coast of Arnhem Land. They walked far across the country following the rain
clouds. When they wanted water they plunged their digging stick into the ground and fresh water flowed. From them we learnt the names of all the creatures on the land and they taught us all our law. (5)

Each Aboriginal group in Australia has its own version of the great stories. By 30,000 B.P. (before the present) there is ample evidence that men were well established throughout the whole of Australia.

Aboriginal oral literature provides accounts of great geological changes. The story of “The flood and the Birdmen” (Isaacs 26) told by Kianoo Tjeemairee of Murinbala tribe speaks of the rising of the seas at the end of the last Ice Age. The story of “The Giant Kadimakara” (Isaacs 16) of Aranda speaks of the fertile plains of Central Australia, now a desert, indicating the great climatic changes that have occurred. “The Story of the Eruption of the Earth and the Waratah” (Isaacs 29-31) talks of volcanic action. These stories contain the essence of truth, much of which can be substantiated by scientific investigation.

Some legends recall huge extinct animals and giant Marsupials of the Pleistocene times -- Ngindyal, (the giant emu), Kurrea, (the giant crocodile), the giant kangaroos -- with fear and awe and rock carvings corroborate the great legends (Isaacs 14-24). Archaeological evidence suggesting the coexistence of Aboriginal people with these animals has been found in a number of places.
Some Aborigines believe that they have been in Australia "from the very beginning of humanity" (Indigenous Literature 7) and that the Djanggawul of Arnhem land and the Three Brothers of Northern New South Wales are later arrivals. Bill Edwards in his article "Living the Dreaming" has listed the various terms used by the different language groups to refer to the Aboriginal creative epoch commonly known as The Dreaming. According to him the Ngarinyin people in the north-west of Western Australia refer to it as Ungud, the Aranda of Central Australia as Aldjerinya, the Pitjantjatjara of north-west South Australia as Tjukurpa, the Yolngu of north-east Arnhem Land as Wongar, and in the Broome region as Bugari (67). Legends of the Creation era relate the activities of the great spirit beings, who named animals and birds, formed the landscape and invented principal ceremonies.

Our people of the desert in the centre of the continent speak of the Creation period, the Tjukirita time when the land was a flat disc, a vast featureless plain which stretched to the horizon without rivers or hills. But as the ages passed many different giant mythical beings emerged from beneath this crust and wandered about. They had the form of animals, insects, and other creatures, snake, kangaroo, euro, owl, honey ants and termites, yet lived and behaved as men do today. When this time was passed these creatures left their life essence behind them and at various places where they
camped or where an event took place a rock, waterhole, tree, cave or boulder now marks the site, and these natural features are full of this essence, this Kuranita. Our people must preserve these areas for ceremonies or the animals, plants and people cannot survive. (Marika 5)

This illustrates the significance of land in Aboriginal thought in which the land itself is seen as a kind of text, a scripture which each Aborigine learns to read, and rocks, trees or birds are seen as representations of their own beings, sharing the same spiritual essence (Edwards 69).

The paths taken by the Dreaming Ancestors in their amazing journeys which criss-crossed the continent in a maze of tracks is described and laid down in legends, myths and ceremonial song cycles. When moving over vast distances, navigation is accomplished by noting the well-known Dreaming sites along the way. The ancestral routes passed through the hunting territory of many Aboriginal groups, each of which knew only sections of the myth concerning them. Bark paintings represented details of these epic journeys through symbols, lines and dots.

The detailed song poetry associated with the great journeys of the Zebra Finch ancestors remain the sacred core of ceremonial life of the Pitjantjatjara people and little is revealed to outsiders. The story of the blue-tongue lizard man is one of the numerous Dreaming routes which is
remembered in songs and paintings by the Pintube-Anmatjera people to the north of Central Australia today. Others include the travels by the native cat, the kangaroo and the Euro, Djankawu and his sisters, Kunapipi mother, Wandjina, The Rainbow Serpent etc. (Isaacs 87-95). These stories are the foundation of the daily lives and thoughts of the Aboriginal people. It is their own oral history and perhaps reflect the early migration patterns of Aboriginal groups (Isaacs 94, Mudrooroo 8). According to Mudrooroo this clearly shows that “Australia was never a trackless wilderness, a *terra nullis* as once stated by the Invaders” (*Indigenous Literature* 8).

The life of the Ancestral Beings as encoded in Aboriginal Oral literature also contained clear instructions governing the role of men and women, marriage laws, bearing and raising children, food hunting and gathering and distribution of food in the camp. Many Aboriginal stories, using an alternating storytelling pattern (we got up, collected food and went to A. We went to sleep, we got up, collected food and went to B, and so on) indicate their movement from place to place. They function mnemonically to remind or teach people about food-gathering routes and also represent the route followed by an ancestor being (Muecke 30). Since all occupations originated with the totemic ancestors, even in the most mundane tasks, people re-live the events of The Dreaming, and sanctify it. It taught the Aboriginal people to live in harmony with nature
and to behave towards one another, thus setting the pattern of traditional Aboriginal culture, which has survived 40,000 years.

The roots of contemporary Aboriginal spirituality can be traced to these age-old traditions and experiences based on The Dreaming. Edwards quotes Rose to show that "Aboriginal religion leads people into this world and towards an immanent experience of unity in the here and now" (69). Previously referred to as the Dreamtime it was changed to The Dreaming by Prof. Stanner taking into account the fact that the Aboriginal concept of time is cyclical as opposed to the Western concept of linear time. Edwards quotes Stanner, who had to coin a new term "everywhen" to convey the idea: "One cannot 'fix' The Dreaming in time: it was, and is everywhen" (67). It continues in the spiritual lives of Aboriginal people today. The various languages, song-cycles, paintings and rituals left as legacies by the Ancestral Spirit Beings, enable humans to enter into a direct relationship with The Dreaming. "The correct narration of the stories, painting of the symbols, singing of the songs and performance of the rituals is designed to ensure the maintenance of the cosmos and society" (Edwards 71). Hence when the events of the ancient era of Creation are enacted in ceremonies, danced in mime form and chanted to the accompaniment of didgeridoo or clapsticks the performer is believed to become a reincarnation of one of the ancestors participating in the original adventures.
The songs and stories of Northern Arnhem land and the coast of North-Western Australia record the frequent contact of coastal Aboriginals with people from Malaya and Indonesia for centuries before the arrival of the pale skinned balanda, the Europeans (Isaacs 261-77). The Baiini, who appear to have come first, came as families probably in the Creation era as both Djankawu and Laindjung (spirit ancestors) are recorded to have come across them on their travels. The Baiini women are spoken of in many Yirritja songs, as planting rice, cooking, weaving, dying, fishing, and making armbands and necklets, stitching sails for their boats and caring for their families.

The story of the Macassans is an important part of the Aboriginal history of Northern Australia. The seasonal visits of the Indonesian fishermen in their sailing praus, and their relations with the Aboriginal people over several centuries before Europeans came, are now a part of Aboriginal history recorded in song cycles of Eastern Arnhem land. The praus (sailing ships) used by Macassans are accurately recorded by Aboriginal artists on rock shelters and in bark paintings.

While the approach of the sails of the Maccasser-men was a cause for celebration for the Aborigines of the northern coast of Australia, the white sails of the English ships was the symbol of a gale which was to cross the continent silencing the Aborigines. The views of the Aborigines on the eastern coast, concerning their first encounters with the
Europeans were not recorded. But on other coasts it has become a part of oral history and their descendants can relate today the story of the coming of the white man. Initially the white men were believed to be the spirits of their dead coming back from their journey across the sea to the spirit land. This view was held by the Bibbulmun of the Swan River area of Western Australia, is recorded in the very north of Australia in Cape York, and is reflected in the story told by Daisy Utemura, Mowanjum:

Aboriginal people from many places came to live near the seaside. [. . .]

[. . .] One day when the men went out for turtle eggs and other things, out on the sea they could see something moving. [. . .] They saw people moving inside it, and they were white.

‘What are they?’ the Aboriginals thought, and others replied that they were Agula, devils. [. . .]. Some of the natives yelled out, ‘Kill the white Agula! See if they’ve got blood in them.’ And so it happened. That’s how the war started. They fought against one another, they killed some white people, and the white people killed the Aboriginals too. The Aboriginals found out that they were really humans, but they still didn’t win. Then the white people took their land and the Dreaming times were forgotten. And so no more
hunting for free food and the water they used to drink out of
the rivers and gullies and springs; today and tomorrow were
finished. (qtd. in Isaacs 282)

Aboriginal oral history offers a number of such examples of Aboriginals
reacting against white invaders and draws attention to a universal
awareness of illegal dispossession. It includes stories concerning the
fighting over cattle and the massacres, and of the spread of diseases,
floods and destructive storms often attributed to the vengeance of the
Spirit ancestors.

According to Stephen Muecke, Aboriginal oral literature responded
to colonialism by fighting back with words, by making stories in order to
come to terms with the structure of colonial economy and law and the
place Aboriginals were supposed to occupy in it; by articulating suffering,
by satirising the various figures of the colonial administration and the
pastoral industry (28). Legendary or heroic tales have emerged about the
people who fought against colonisation and recently the audio-visual
media is also being used creatively. Muecke asserts that Oral literature is
alive and well, ranging from Radio Redfern in Central Sydney to initiation
ceremonies, from the lyrics of country and western songs to the
Djanggawul song cycle of Arnhem land (27).

According to Goodwin and Lawson, traditional Aboriginal stories,
songs and poems often bring together the sacred, the legendary, the
totemic, the erotic and the local in ways that resist European genre classification (76). They have their appropriate occasions for recital and also their clan ownership. These literary traditions maintain an eternal and intimate association with the land. Different from a European sense of belonging to the land, theirs is a sense of being owned by the land. The practice of stressing the continuity of Aboriginal traditions even in the face of change, is "an attitude [...] which contrasts strongly with European modernism and its tendency to celebrate novelty" (Muecke 30).

Much of this literature is lost; the rest remains in the minds of elderly men and women. But those which remain, may be seen as the classical literature of Australia. While Mudrooroo compares it to the Iliad and the Odyssey (18), Strehlow considers them to be poems along the lines of Beowulf (24). In many areas it is too late to collect authentic structures of Indigenous narrative discourse in the original language. As Stephen Muecke points out, kinship, nomadism and the hunter gatherer economy are the basis of the traditional oral forms. These can only be preserved by supporting a whole way of life and by keeping intact the country with its sacred sites (34). Moreover, since 260 Aboriginal languages, exist even today, translation is essential to take Aboriginal literature beyond a very small circulation and Aboriginal Oral Literature has been preserved by translating, transcribing and publishing in the written form. Though no longer oral, the text becomes "readable and culturally valuable in Eurocentric terms" (Toorn 757). T.G.H Strehlow,
ethnologist and missionary, in The Songs of Central Australia (1971) extensively deals with Arrernte oral poetry and Ronald and Catherine Berndt, in Djanggawul (1952) and Kunapi (1951) present songlines of North eastern and North-central Arnhem Land. Their translations have retained traces of the original text. The following extract is from part of The Djanggawul Song cycle translated by Ronald M. Berndt telling the story of the two Djanggawul Sisters and their Brother travelling from the mythological land of sacred Beings, via the mythological island of Bralgu (the Home of the Eternal Spirits and of departed ancestors), to populate Arnhem Land:

Although I leave Bralgu, I am close to it. I Djanggawul, am paddling . . .

Paddling with all the paddles, with their flattened tapering ends.

Close I am coming, with Bildjiwuraroiju,

Coming along from Bralgu. We splash the water as we paddle,

paddling wearily,

With Miralaidj, undulating our buttocks as we paddle.

We paddle along through the roaring tide, paddle a long way.

I am paddling along fast, through the rough sea . . .

Beside me is foam from our paddling, and large waves follow us. (1-8)
And a love song from *The Goulburn Island Cycle* translated by Ronald M. Berndt:

Take clay and coloured ochres, and put them on!
They paint chests and breasts with clay, in water-designs,
Hang round their necks the padded fighting-bags.
They paint themselves, those Golburn Island people, and clans
from the Woolen River...

They are always there, at the wide expanse of water...
They take more clay, for painting the fighting-sticks...
Paint on their chests designs of water-snakes...
And paint the boomerangs with coloured ochres...
Painting the small boomerangs...
Calling the invocations... all over the country, and at the place
of the Wawalag sisters...

Painting themselves at Milingimbi Point, at the place of
Standing Clouds.

At the place of the Western Clouds, at the place of
Coloured Reflections... (1-12)

Though recorded in the twentieth century they are representative
of the oral culture that extended back for tens of thousands of years.
Strehlow stresses the universality of Arrernte Song poetry, which he sees
as poetry in its own right and able to stand with other world poetry. He declares: "In point of language, rhythms and forms, Central Australian poetry is highly developed; and themes of which it treats are of universal interest to mankind" and that "a perusal of [. . .] the aboriginal sacred songs of Central Australia will not prove entirely unrewarding to future poets" (qtd. in Mudrooroo, Indigenous Literature 32).

Heavily Europeanised versions of pre-invasion literature also exist. The genre of "Aboriginal myths in English" consisted of "short and pointless narratives, full of acts of unmotivated sex and violence, with punch-lines consisting of implausible 'just-so' scraps of natural history" (Hodge and Mishra 77). Muecke observes that writers like K. Langloh Parker, Roland Robinson and Bill Harney have translated and summarised, altering the syntax to an English model for written, not spoken, language (32). For example: "Mullian the eaglehawk built himself a home high in a yaraan or white gum-tree. There he lived apart from his tribe, with Moodai the opposum his wife ..." (1953) (qtd. in Muecke 32).

But in Paddy Roe's Gularabulu (1983) edited by S. Muecke, the Aboriginal narrator's English "has been transcribed precisely, with pauses indicated by the spacings into lines:

Well this fella used to look after the trough he had –

oh he had childrens too–

he had childrens–
he had about five or six children—

and a old lady—

mother for the children—

old man— (qtd. in Muecke 33)

To sum up, prior to European invasion and the colonisation of Australia Aboriginal people's literature took many forms— from corroborees, cave, bark and body paintings, sand drawings and song cycles to story telling itself. It was an essential means of passing down the law and lineage of each group. Performance traditions were embedded in practices of warfare, religion and education. Sacred ritual provided immense scope for aesthetic expression especially in dramatic performances with stylised posturing and complicated dance movements. Less intense but sometimes almost as elaborate were the non-sacred ceremonies designed for entertainment and relaxation. But oral culture predominated in the pre-colonial period.

**Representation of the Aborigine**

From 1788, which Aboriginal people call the invasion and non-Aboriginal people call British settlement, “Aborigines were observed through British eyes and culture and put down in British forms. Aboriginal culture became as distorted as others seen through British eyes such as the Irish, African, Indian and Chinese” (Johnson, *Aboriginal
Western constructs of "race", Christian ideology and the development of Social Darwinism have all been influential in the construction of images of Aborigines. According to Terry Goldie, the indigene in literature is a "reified preservation" (4) revealing the ideology and culture of the authors. And the image presented (the signifier) does not lead back to the implied signified, the racial group termed the Aborigine, but rather to other images. According to him, the Aborigine is a semiotic pawn on a chess board controlled by the white signmaker. Yet the individual writer [the signmaker] can move these pawns only within certain prescribed areas; the white and the indigene having clearly limited oppositional moves. So each textual image seems to refer back to those offered before, the positive and negative images being swings of one and the same pendulum (Goldie 4-5).

Eric Wolf, in *Europe and the People Without History* (1982), comments on the creation of "race":

Racial designations, such as 'Indian' or 'Negro', are the common outcome of the subjugation of populations in the course of European Mercantile expansion. The term 'Indian' stands for the conquered populations of the New World, in disregard of any cultural or physical differences among native Americans. (380)

According to Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffins the term "aboriginal" was coined as early as 1667 to describe the indigenous inhabitants of places
encountered by European explorers, adventurers or seamen. It is generally applied to the original or native inhabitants of a country, as opposed to an intrusive conquering race from another area, or colonists and their descendants. ‘Aboriginal’ with a Capital "A" refers to the Australian Aborigines (Key Concepts).

The earliest written consideration of Aborigines, are found in the journals of European exploration in the second half of the eighteenth century (Shoemaker 10). The Dutch officers of the Arnhem and Pera, which coasted sections of the Gulf of Carpentaria in 1623, related that “the men are barbarians all much alike in build and features, pitch-black and entirely naked [. . .] and what they live on [. . .] [are] certain roots which they dig out from the earth” (qtd. in Frost 468). This cluster of images can be found to be repeated regularly in exploration literature.

In 1623, explorer Jan Carstensz, having landed on a Cape York beach, became alarmed by the behaviour of Aborigines and fired on them, killing some (Goodwin 9). Later in the century, William Dampier, in A New Voyage Round the World: 1688 (1697) described the Aborigines he encountered in the north-west coast as “the miserablest People in the world” (303) commented that “setting aside their Humane Shape, they differ but little from Brutes” (303) and seemed surprised that “we could not understand one word that they said” (305). Lieutenant James Cook and Joseph Banks, the natural scientist encountered Aborigines on the
east coast of Australia in 1770. Cook recorded in his journal:

From what I have said of the Natives of New-Holland they may appear to some to be the most wretched people upon Earth, but in reality they are far more happier than we Europeans; being wholly unacquainted not only with the superfluous but the necessary Conveniencies so much sought after in Europe, they are happy in not knowing the use of them. They live in a Tranquility which is not disturb'd by the inequality of Condition: The Earth and sea of their own accord furnishes them with all things necessary for life, they covet not Magnificent Houses, Houshold-stuff &ca, they live in a warm and fine Climate and enjoy a very wholsome Air, so that they have very little need of Clothing and this they seem to be fully sencible [sic] of, for many to whome we gave Cloth &ca to, left it carlessly upon the Sea beach and in the woods as a thing they had no manner of use for. (qtd. in Frost 470)

According to Mcleod, even though this was a scientific expedition and its findings were widely disseminated Dampier's image of the Aborigines persisted. He points out that Swift was clearly inspired by Dampier's account when in the final chapter of his *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), he located the Land of Houyhnhnms, near Perth, the capital of Western Australia. Depicting the Yahoos as "very rank [. . .] the stink somewhat
between a weasel and a fox, but much more disagreeable" (259), Swift comments that "I never beheld in all my travels so disagreeable an animal against which I conceived so strong an antipathy [. . .] the ugly monster" (216). In "The Old Bark School" published in 1897 Henry Lawson recalls being taught (200 years later) Dampier's opinion of Australian Aboriginals: "We got little information re[sic] the land that gave us birth; / Save that Captain Cook was killed (and was very likely grilled) / And 'the natives of New Holland are the lowest race on earth' " (26-28).

Watkin Tench, a captain-lieutenant of marines in the First Fleet, in his book A Complete Account of the Settlement of Port Jackson (1793) records skirmishes with Aborigines, the capture of one of them Arabanoo, the attempts to "civilize" him and his death in 1789 from small pox. Arabanoo is described as "of a countenance which, under happier circumstances, I thought would display manliness and sensibility" (87) and that "strong liquors he would never taste, turning from them with disgust and abhorrence" (89).

In the Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Literatures in English, Alan Frost identifies three forceful images of Aborigines in the narratives of Australian exploration. The first concerns the hostility of tribal Aborigines to the European parties. Thomas Mitchell, Sturt, E.J.Eyre, and Leichhardt harried by Myall blacks; Edmund Kennedy speared when
in sight of the ship that would have rescued him; John Forrest and Warburton also similarly threatened; J.L.Stoke attacked by Northern Blacks; and efforts to burn out Augustus Gregory's camp on Baines River are a few instances.

The second image concerns co-operation between whites and blacks. Aborigines repeatedly pointed out water holes and pasture to Eyre as he struggled across the Nullarbor Plain in 1840-1. The people of the South Alligator River showed Leichhardt's men how to negotiate swamplands, and then fed them. In 1861 inland blacks repeatedly succoured Burke's and Wills' party, and kept John King alive for three months until a search party found him.

Aborigines were present on many of the exploring expeditions. Eyre had Wylie with him, Kennedy had Jackey. In 1844 Harry Brown and Charley accompanied Leichhardt. G.A.Dalrymple had Lt Marlow (of the Native Police) and Cockey with him. Tommy Windich and Jemmy Mungaro accompanied Forrest in 1869; Dick travelled with Giles in 1872 and 1873. Tommy Windich and Tommy Pierre went with Forrest in 1874, Tommy Oldham with Giles in 1875. Their bushcraft, hardiness, and courage were often indispensable to the success of the expeditions. They were invaluable in the search for water and for tracking straying animals and men. In October 1845, two members of Leichhardt's expedition were found by Charley after they had been lost for three days. Thus whites
and blacks were able to come together for survival in the face of the inland's hostility.

The third image emerges out of Cook's *Journals* (1955-67). He considered the accumulation of material wealth as one of the negative aspects of Western Civilization, and his writings reflected a distrust of western industrial society and his fears for the environment. In contrast, the Aborigine is seen as natural freedom, a sign for liberation and as an environmentalist. Terry Goldie quotes Tzvetan Todorov in *The Conquest of America*: "Columbus speaks about the men he sees only because they too, after all, constitute a part of the landscape. His allusions of the inhabitants of the islands always occur amid his notations concerning nature, somewhere between birds and trees" (20) and notes that explorers' narratives often present the indigene as a part of nature. It is very true in the case of the Aborigine. This closeness of the Aborigine to nature leads to their image as the land. Explorers like Cook and Eyre seem to assess the land through the indigene and vice versa. As Said points out in *Orientalism*:

Many of the earliest Oriental amateurs began by welcoming the Orient as a salutary *derangement* of their European habits of mind and spirit. The Orient was overvalued for its pantheism, its spirituality, its stability, its longevity, its primitivity and so forth. [. . .] Yet almost without exception such overesteem was followed by a counterresponse: the
Orient suddenly appeared lamentably under-humanized, antidemocratic, backward, barbaric, and so forth (150).

This is applicable to the Australian Aborigines also.

Influenced by the writings of Rousseau, Cook helped construct the image of the natives as noble savages. The tradition continued till changes in the nature of contact brought about changes in the image of the Aborigine. In most of the frontier areas, there were fictions and rumours of brutality, many of which found their way into diaries, memoirs, letters and histories. This led to a description of the natives as ignoble savages. For government officials, the Aborigines were appropriate subjects for colonisation and civilisation. Arabanoo, Bennelong, Imeerawanyee, and Yagan are examples of individuals singled out for special treatment by white colonialists. When the European missionaries from various Christian denominations arrived in the 1820s they targeted the Aborigines for conversion and represented them as heathen children who needed to be saved. Nineteenth Century Social Darwinism reduced them to the level of sub-humans. For Anthropologists they became objects for study and discussion and notions of superiority stereotyped the Aborigines as simple, primitive, dirty and ugly. As the frontier moved inland, the Aborigines remained where they were, and were soon overtaken by the settlement. Healy quotes Barron Field who noted the position of the Sydney Aborigines twenty-five years after Philip's landing:
They are the Will Wimbles of the colony: the carriers of news and fish; the gossips of the towns; the loungers on the quay, they know everybody; and understand the nature of everybody's business, although they have none of their own but this. (7)

Bungaree in the Sydney of 1820s and Derrimut in Melbourne of the fifties are individual examples.

Until the 1840s Australian poetry and fiction said little about Aboriginal themes or characters. In the 1840s free immigration led to the emergence of a fledgling society with some sense of community and the Aborigine became part of a debate for the first time in the continent. Royal Commissions and official enquiries also brought the Aborigine into public attention (Healy 15). A Mother's Offering to her Children (1841) written by "A Lady Long Resident in New South Wales" is the first children's book published in Australia. Its final chapter entitled "Anecdotes of the Aborigines of New South Wales" "casually turns over Aboriginal death as if it were a distant motif in a fairy tale" (Healy xiv). The first novel that depicts extended interaction with Aboriginal people is James Tucker's Ralph Rashleigh (1845). It describes the protagonist's four year sojourn as a "white blackfellow" (an escaped convict); the freedom of the Australian Aborigine is presented in contrast to the life of a convict. In this novel, Tucker draws satirical comparisons between the behaviour of Aborigines and white settlers that destabilises racial
stereotypes. But when he rescues two shipwrecked white women however, Ralph willingly returns with them to Sydney, renouncing his identity as a white blackfellow. As Goldie comments, though the indigene was acquired, the white had not been abandoned. Years later Ralph is speared to death while pursuing some Aborigines who had killed a shepherd. His companion finds "his remains [. . .] cruelly maltreated by these blood-thirsty barbarians, whom the mock philanthropy of the age characterises as inoffensive and injured beings" (qtd. in Healy 45). Tucker here reaffirms the colonial stereotypes he had challenged earlier.

Rolf Boldrewood's novels articulate his experiences with the Aborigines of Western Victoria in the forties. In his works the Aborigine is reduced to two categories -- the sentimental faithful servant and the vicious half-caste or black tracker (Healy 59). Boldrewood's *The Squatter's Dream* is, according to Jones "the first novel to state openly that natives had suffered seriously at the hands of the whites" (qtd. in Healy 52). Wildduck, the Aboriginal girl, who is the main subject of the activities of Maud, the missionary like daughter of the station owner is used in this novel as a sentimental decoration. So is Doorival, the faithful servant of Waldrun. The pervasive presence is that of old man Jack, the survivor of the Murdering Lake massacre, who is portrayed as one of the invisible Aborigines who "moved with a displaced bitterness through the various states of Australia" (Healy 55). In his *Robbery Under Arms* (1888) Warrigal, the half-caste servant of Captain Starlight, who "hates, kills,
and moves like a shadow" is depicted as "the sinister archetype of a malignant evil" (Healy 56). From Boldrewood's point of view native treachery added to a knowledge of white civilization makes him the epitome of Aboriginal viciousness.

Rosa Campbell Praed, one of the first Australian writers to have been intimately concerned with the Aborigine from her very childhood, presented in her works, especially *Australian Life: Black and White* (1985) and *My Australian Girlhood* (1902) strongly ambivalent views on them. As a child she was invited to watch a corroboree, which had turned out into a rehearsal of a night attack upon a station and throughout her life she believed that she could have averted the 1857 massacre of the Fraser family of Hornet Bank Station. According to Healy this guilt feeling explained her ambivalence. But Chris Tiffin attributes it to "two separate parts of her experience -- she played with Aboriginal children on the one hand, and on the other lived for a while on a cattle run under fear of Aboriginal attack" (1307). In *Fugitive Anne* (1902), the attitude of Anne towards Kombo, the half-caste boy with whom she grew up and is now her protector reflects this. She feels that as an Aborigine Kombo will be treacherous, while as an individual he will be faithful.

George Gordon McCrae brought out two long poems on Aboriginal subjects in 1867. *Mamba* ("The Bright-Eyed"): *An Aboriginal Reminiscence* and *The Story of Baladeadro* (1867). He makes use of fragments of
Aboriginal culture to portray the response of the Aboriginal camps to the arrival of white men. According to Healy, *Balladeadro* was "McCrae's trial run to get inside an Aboriginal myth" (86), and in *Mamba* he invents one of his own.

Noble savage lamentations such as Henry Kendall's "The Last of His Tribe" (1863) "moulds the contemporary 'soothe the dying pillow' attitude to the Aborigines, into a haunting and dignified manner" (Tiffin 764)

He crouches, and buries his face on his knees;—
And hides in the dark of his hair;
For he cannot look up to the storm-smitten trees,
Or think of the loneliness there—
Of the loss and the loneliness there.

The wallaroos gropes through the tufts of the grass,
And turn to their covers for fear;
But he sits in the ashes and lets them pass
Where the boomerangs sleep with the spear—
With the nullah, the sling, and the spear. (1-10)

The plight of the Aborigines were sympathetically memorialised by Dame Mary Gilmore in "The Waradgery Tribe":

We are the lost who went
Like the cranes, crying;
Hunted, lonely, and spent,
Broken and dying. (qtd. in Mcleod 109)

Harpur's "The Creek of the Four Graves" (1853) speak of indigenous brutality:

And four stark corses, plundered to the skin
And brutally mutilated, seemed to stare,
With frozen eyeballs up into the pale
Round countenance of the moon. (279-282)

but he also deplores the mistreatment of the Aborigine by settlers in poems like "An Aboriginal Mother's Lament":

Still farther would I fly, my child,
To make thee safer yet,
From the unsparing white man,
With his dread hand murder-wet. (qtd. in Healy 92)

Healy notes that, "the Aborigine was locked into the efforts of Australians to define themselves" (6). According to him:

The Aborigine, who was a figure of envy and fear for Tucker, of trauma and affection for Mrs. Praed, of spite and sentimentality for Boldrewood, of nostalgia and mythological curiosity for McCrae, of burlesque and uncertainty for Kendall and Brunton Stephens, of compassion for Harpur, ended up, for these nineteenth-century writers, as a vehicle
for their difficulties of being in Australia, and for their fate as Australians. (110)

The push towards Australian Federation in 1901 suggested to the authors of the Nationalist school that themes about Aborigines could be re-deployed in support of Australian distinctiveness. Healy notes that the period 1905-1925 did not have access to the Aborigines and was not touched by memories of them. The breakthrough on this issue was made by Katherine Susannah Prichard's novel *Coonardoo* (1929). She liberated the Aborigine from preconception and stereotype and restituted them at the centre of fictional attention and moral controversy. In 1926 Prichard had spent a few months at Turlee Station in the far north of Western Australia. The Aboriginal women whom she observed and with whom she spoke, led to the creation of some of her most fascinating writing. *Brumby Innes* (1940) is a realistic expose of naked sexual appetite and white exploitation of black in the Outback, while the short stories "The Cooboo" (1932) and "Happiness" (1932) concentrated upon Aboriginal women as the central focus of the narrative -- "as individuals who act rather than nameless characters who are acted upon" (Shoemaker 1310). Frank acknowledgement of sexual relationship between white men and black women and that too motivated by love created a critical storm of protest when *Coonardoo* appeared as a serial in *Bulletin* so that the novel was not published in Australia until 1965. According to critic Drusilla
Modjeska, *Coonardoo* was "effectively the first Australian novel to take an Aboriginal woman as its acknowledged subject" (x).

Terry Goldie notes that with the recognition of "an Other [the Aborigine] as having greater roots in Australia," the white Australians became "the alien within". This gave rise to "the impossible necessity of becoming indigenous" (63) which Goldies terms "indigenization". The white culture could either "reject the indigene, by stating that the country really began with the arrival of the whites"; or "attempt to incorporate the Other" (Goldie 63).

In some cases like Henry Handel Richardson's nation-building trilogy *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* (1930), the Aborigines are not mentioned at all but Goldie states that "for many writers the only chance for indigenisation seemed to be through the humans who were truly indigenous, the Aborigines" (63) and that these efforts ranged from "pseudo Aboriginal names for aspects of white Australian culture to sensitive and sophisticated efforts such as the novels of Patrick White" (63).

The Jindyworobaks wanted to annex or join the culture of white Australians to the culture of the Aboriginal Dreaming. According to Rex Ingamells, the founder of the group "the Jindyworobaks [. . .] are those individuals who are endeavouring to free Australian art from whatever alien influences trammel it [. . . ]" (222). One way of signaling their desire
to do this was by using words appropriated (sometimes misappropriated) from Aboriginal languages, mainly Aranda. "Moorawathimeering" (1935) by Rex Ingamells illustrates this:

Into moorawathimeering,
where atninga dare not tread,
leaving wurly for a wilban,
tallabilla, you have fled.

Wombalunga curses, waitjurk--
though we cannot break the ban,
and follow tchidna any further
after one-time karaman. (1-8)

Moorawathimeering is the Land of the Lost, a place of sanctuary for the outcasts; atninga is the name given to a so-called vengeance party, charged with the task of administering Aboriginal justice; a wurly is a bark or tree-bough shelter; a wilban a cave; tallabilla an outlaw; wombalunga is the verb, to carry; waitjurk is murderer; tchnidna footprint and karaman leader. As Lawrence Bourke points out, "the Jindyworobaks considered Aboriginal mythology as a product of the landscape rather than of a local group, stripping the mythology of metaphysics to recycle it as secular symbols" (735). Yet it remained an important influence for the study of Aboriginal culture.
The thematic use of the Aborigine expanded dramatically in the 1930s. Xavier Herbert's seminal novel, *Capricornia* (1938), examined the concept of Aboriginal culture as an alternative worldview. It portrays the destruction of the Larrapunta tribe by the European invasion, the ludicrous forms of behaviour which accompany the imposition of white civilization, the birth of Norman or Naw-nim, the half-caste, among the Aborigines, and his search for his identity:

Young Mark Anthony Shillingsworth, or, as the natives called him, Naw-nim, which was their way of saying No-name. . . . The name No-name was the one usually given by the natives to dogs for which they had no love but had not the heart to kill or lose. It was often given to half-castes as well. (qtd. in Healy 163)

Rejected by the white society, Norman is impelled towards the other alternative, which waits for the half-caste -- the world of the Aborigine.

*The Moving Image* (1946) by Judith Wright established the moral dimension of the Aboriginal theme by involving Aboriginal characters and situations in a symbolic interrogation of white violence and dispossession. The viciousness of first contact which had been a lodged irritant in the memories of the squatting class resurfaces in Judith Wright and makes her vulnerable to the silent wounds of history (Healy 183). In "Nigger's Leap" night, a symbol for old crimes seems to overrun Western society in Australia:
Here is the symbol, and the climbing dark
a time for synthesis. Night buoys no warning
over the rocks that wait our keels; no bells
sound for her mariners. Now must we measure
our days by nights, our tropics by their poles,
love by its end and all our speech by silence. (9-15)

Aboriginal place and people come together in her poetry and in the "Bora ring" she speaks of the hidden presence of a culture:

> Only the grass stands up
to mark the dancing-ring: the apple-gums
posture and mime a past corroboree,
murmur a broken chant. (5-8) (Healy 185)

Even though "the hunter is gone" and "the nomad feet are still",

[. . .] the rider's heart
halts at a sightless shadow, an unsaid word
that fastens in the blood the ancient curse,
the fear as old as Cain. (13-16) (Healy 185)

The grass and the apple gum stand up for and as the painted bodies of the dancers, secreted, but not lost, in the earth, and the physical landscape becomes porous to the psychological fear of the invader.

Wright's metaphysical approach was later followed by Randolph Stow in To The Islands (1958) and by Patrick White in Voss (1957), Riders in the Chariot (1961), and A Fringe of Leaves (1976). Stow had gone to live
at the notorious Forrest River Mission in the Kimberleys before writing *To the Islands*, and in it he traces the life of a White mission boss Heriot. His act of hostility towards Rex, a young Aborigine forces him into flight in which he is guided by an Aboriginal companion, Justin through the Western desert towards the Islands of the dead. He is placed in a position of having to seek the forgiveness of the Aborigine and is redeemed from his past arrogance, which is that of the white race towards the Aborigines, when, displaced in the desert he enters into a sympathetic identification with the Aborigines. His repentance "is a transforming act of homage to a people and a culture he has maligned by his ignorance" (Healy 229). In *Voss*, based on the story of the German explorer Ludwig Leichhardt, the Aborigines are the chorus and the context. "As an organic society, indifferent to time, and accommodating, at the depth of their being, to the universe around them, they contrast favourably with the abstraction of Voss" (Healy 195). Throughout the book the pattern of meeting, and rejection by the indigenes characterise the moments of contact. Alf Dubbo, the Aboriginal painter, in *Riders in the Chariot*, is a displaced Aborigine in the mythical Sydney suburb, Sarsaparilla. He gives an Aboriginal view of the world and becomes "the vehicle for an integrated conception of man in Australia, embracing black and white, innocent and guilty, past and present" (Healy 204). *A Fringe of Leaves* is based on the story of Eliza Fraser, a white woman who was shipwrecked off the Queensland coast in the 1840s. It depicts the savagery White sees
under the surface of the civilized society and the sufferings of Aboriginal Australians. White gives a sensitive and penetrating revision of Aboriginal man in the figures of Jackie, Dugald, and Alf Dubbo, who are "touched into uncertainty and deprivation by contact with white civilization" (Healy 199). They provide "a removed but indigenous view of the society raised by Europeans in Australia over the bones and rights of the Aborigines" (Healy 203).

Thomas Keneally's *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* (1961), Peter Mather's *Trap* (1966) and Nene Gare's *The Fringe Dwellers* (1961) show a sensitivity to Aboriginal concerns. In *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* the protagonist Jimmie is represented as being disenchanted with Aboriginal society as he knows it, aspiring to equality on white terms. Starting from the story of Jack Trap a part-Aboriginal, *Trap* moves into a history of black-white relations in Australia with all the savagery this involves.

Since 1970s it was the genres of poetry and drama that have emphasized the Aboriginal theme. Les Murray, who calls himself the last of the Jindyworobaks utilises the rhythms and tones of traditional Aboriginal song cycles in 'The Ballad of Jimmy Governor' (1972), 'The Buladelah-Taree Holiday Song Cycle' (1977), which is a rewriting of R.M.Berndt's translation of "The Wonguri-Mandjikai Song Cycle of the Moon bone" and in *The Boys who Stole the Funeral* (1980). In the latter he makes use of a heroic Aboriginal figure of pseudo-legend who by
addressing one of the boys in an imitation of an Aboriginal dream vision indigenises him. A sensitivity to collective Pintupi Orality can be seen in the poetry of Billy Marshall-Stoneking in *Singing the Snake* (1990).

On the stage, David Ireland’s *Image in the Clay* (1964), Jill Shearer’s *The Foreman* (1977) and Thomas Keneally’s *Bullie’s House* (1981) focus on issues of cultural clash, and considers the possibilities for racial accommodation. A majority Black cast in these plays provides a useful platform for indigenous actors, though the works themselves are not written by Aboriginal authors. Bob Maza was one of the Aboriginal actors in the original production of *Bullie’s House*.

The Theatre had used either inflated diction or pidgin and exotic dress to present the stage indigene. Items of indigenous material culture were used for its symbolic power. Song and music and various non-vocal forms of indigenous sounds like that of rhythm sticks or sounds of the corroboree indicated indigenous presence. In most nineteenth and twentieth century plays the Aborigine is employed as comic relief -- as a figure of fun or the faithful servant clown -- with realism being the mode of the play (Goldie 170-190).

Terry Goldie identifies sex, violence, orality, mysticism and historicity as the "standard commodities" (Said 190) created by the semiotic field of the Aborigine in Australian Literature. According to him sex and violence "are poles of attraction and repulsion, temptation by the
dusky maiden and fear of the demonic violence of the fiendish warrior" (15). Picturing the indigene as land the male warrior is seen "as hostile wilderness, the new, threatening land", and the maiden as "restorative pastoral, the new available land" (Goldie 64). He illustrates how the female indigene as emanation of the land is a source of indigenisation, in various ways. In Eleanor Dark's *The Timeless Land* (1941) the "white blackfellow" Johnny, through his Aboriginal wife, "rediscovered the earth" (23). The title character in Prichard's *Coonardoo* provides a native counterpart to the male hero's white devotion to the land he owns.

She had loved Wytaliba and been bound up with the source of its life. Was she not the well in the shadows? Had she not some mysterious affinity with that ancestral female spirit which was responsible for fertility, generation, the growth of everything? (199-200).

Hugh sends her away which destroys himself, her and the land.

Coonardoo's spirit had withered and died when she went away from Wytaliba, was something of what Chitali said. And that withering and dying of Coonardoo's spirit had caused a blight on the place. (199)

Goldies wonders whether this semiotic field will ever allow the indigene to be anything other than the land, a suitable ground for the cultivation of indigenization (40).
The male Aborigine, Goldie notes is almost always represented as violence, with mixed race often intensifying the evil (Goldie 85-106). He points out that most nineteenth century texts give detailed portraits of indigenous violence and words like "devil", "fiend" or "demon" describe the indigene. In some, indigenous violence is shown as sacrifice, or as maintenance of defined indigenous values. While certain violent acts are presented as part of indigenous systems of law others demonstrate an absence of law or are shown as a superior form of government. Indigenous dance often signifies a frenzied prelude to violence and cannibalism forms a prime subject for black humour. Most literary images present violence as an essential characteristic of the indigene. Alcohol is often shown as a cause for sex and violence, which are presented as manifestations of the degraded Aborigine. None recognise violence as the direct and unavoidable product of imperial invasion or white society as essentially violent.

Orality is all the associations raised by the indigene's speaking, non-writing state (Goldie 107-126). In early works it was seen as a symptom of inferiority, a sign of demonic possession and are often characterised by the inflated diction of the orator or their silence. Throughout nineteenth century literature, the typical "translation" of indigene speech uses inverted syntax and various archaisms such as second person singular. Writers attempted to transform Aboriginal orality into Australian writing as a means for indigenization. The use of an
Aboriginal narrator, helped present the text as the product of an Aboriginal voice. Aboriginal speech, names and language were usually represented as appealing. Early texts used a few native words heavily glossed while contemporary ones used Aboriginal terms defined only by context.

Few texts from the early nineteenth century considered indigenous religious beliefs valid. They were shown to be inferior and absurd superstitions. But in many contemporary texts it is seen as a means of indigenisation. In Poor Fellow My Country the central white character Jeremy is visited by an Aboriginal spirit, which makes his Aboriginal friend assert: "Now you all-same blackfeller [. . .] belong country!" (qtd. in Goldie 136). Through the indigene the white character gains soul and the potential of becoming rooted in the land.

Historicity, the fifth commodity, shapes the indigene into a historical artifact, a remnant of a golden age, which seems to have little connection to contemporary life. The Other is not living Aborigines but memories of people long obliterated. Many novels, which deal with Australian history like Eleanor Dark's The Timeless Land trilogy show Aborigines only as a beginning of Australia. The heroic Aborigine of the Golden Age is depicted in Henry Kendall's "The Last of his Tribe", and the degraded Aborigine in the mock epic The Raid of the Aborigines (1875) by William Wilks. The prehistoric Aborigine is considered to be Aborigine,
the present Aborigine is not. The indigene of today continues to be a
deviant, a drunk and a prostitute.

According to Goldie, "sensitivity has failed to erase the
circumscriptions of the image of the indigene" (8). As Goodwin and
Lawson illustrates the white interpretations of Aborigines, by even the
most knowledgeable and sympathetic of white writers like Prichard and
Herbert do not correspond with Aboriginal perceptions. They are framed
by European literary experience. The account of Yagan in George
Fletcher Moore's *Diary of Ten Years Eventful Life of an Early Settler in
Western Australia* (1884) is very different from the presentation of Yagan
in Jack Davis's play *Kullark* (1982). Mudrooroo's *Dr. Wooreddy's
Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World* (1983) and Robert
Drewe's *The Savage Crows* (1976) both deal with the struggle of the
Tasmanian Aborigines to resist genocide. The former written from the
point of view of Wooreddy, the last Aboriginal male from the Bruny Island
clan in the South east of Tasmania proves more convincing than Drewe's
treatment of the character as a "living fossil". The Oombulgari massacre
treated by Jack Davis in *No Sugar* and Randolph Stow in *To the Islands*
are very different.

**Aboriginal Writing in English**

Aboriginal writing in English is considered to be a relatively recent
phenomenon in Australian Literature. It constitutes and represents the
cultural interaction between local literary traditions and those of the immigrant, English-speaking dominant language majority. It arises out of the irrepressible desire of the Aboriginal community to present its perspective, its side of the frontier. By appropriating the imperial language, its discursive forms and its modes of representation the Aboriginal community is able to intervene more readily in the dominant discourse, to interpolate their own cultural realities and to reach a wider audience of readers. Using the English language to bear the burden of the Aboriginal experience, they present a different mode of postcolonial resistance to cultural hegemony.

In the introduction to *Paperbark*, Davis, Muecke, Narogin, and Shoemaker sees Aboriginal Writing as "a community gesture towards freedom and survival, rather than the self expression of an individual author" (3). Broadly defining writing as "any sort of meaningful inscription" (3) in the case of Aboriginal Australia, they include sand paintings and drawings, body markings, paintings and engravings on bark or stone etc. It may be seen as "a form of pictorial writing which could be read off by someone with a knowledge of the symbol system" (Johnson, *Aboriginal Writing Today* 22). Roberta Sykes says: "When I see a bark painting, to me that's a story. I can read it. It's a series of symbols and other things that tell a story about the particular person's dreaming [...] we had a literature. It wasn't on pages like a book, it was on bark. But what's your paper made out of? (Writers in Action 39).
With literacy in English there came a change in traditional methods of literature. Penny Van Toorn points out that from as early as 1796 Aboriginal people have utilised a broad range of written and printed textual forms including letters, poems, essays, pamphlets, newsletters, newspaper articles, petitions, manifestoes, speeches, interviews, anecdotes and traditional stories. The letter dictated on 29 August 1796 by Bennelong to Lord Sydney’s steward, whom he had met on his visit to England is one such example. In 1830 and 1831 on the Congregational mission at Lake Macquarie in New South Wales an Awabakal man named Biraban, who was fluent in both English and the Awabakal language, taught Awabakal to missionary Lancelot Threlkeld and assisted him in translating the Gospel of St Luke into Awabakal. But his name is not listed as the co-author of the translation. The Christian Aboriginal evangelist James Unaipon, had collaborated closely with the missionary George Taplin in the 1860s and 1870s in the recording of traditional Ngarrinyeri stories and customs. But the authorship is attributed to Taplin alone in bibliographical entries on this translation work. Numerous journals, memoirs and reports of missionaries, early settlers, government officials, ethnographers and others also contain transcriptions of diverse kinds of spoken Aboriginal English. This shows that long before Aboriginal alphabetic literacy Aboriginal people had collaborated in the production and reproduction of written texts (Toorn 754-760).
The first written expression in English of Indigenous people in Australia is considered to be *The Flinders Island Weekly Chronicle* a hand written journal produced by Tasmanian Indigenous men under the direction of the superintendent of their station G. A. Robinson. In 1837 it appeared every Saturday (Mudrooroo 34-35). It was the "expression of an Indigenous minority living on the fringes of the majority community" (Mudrooroo, *Indigenous Literature* 33).

Bruce McGuinness has observed in *Aboriginal Writing Today* that a considerable amount of early writings by Aboriginal people were in the form of petitions and similar documents, with land rights often forming the ultimate aim and that most of them are hidden within the government archives and departmental files (46). According to him:

[. . .] there are Aboriginal people right throughout Australia who are not only adept in the field of writing, but are quite creative in the way in which they approach that task. Their writings are quite distinct and quite different from your ordinary run of the mill ways of writing that are acceptable to the publishing companies and [. . .] to the discipline of literature as we know it today (*Aboriginal Writing Today* 46)

The first account of Aboriginal Writing in this regard was the famous nine mile long bark petition produced by the Aboriginal people of the Coranderrk mission station in Victoria. In 1882, it was discovered
that it was indeed an Indigenous person, named Thomas Dunolly who had sent to the Aboriginal Protection Board and the Government, the letters and petitions expressing the genuine feelings of his people (Davis & Hodge 1985; Mudrooroo 1997). According to Penny Van Toorn, the proof of Aboriginal authorship was politically crucial to the fate of the Aboriginal community since it prevented the Victorian Board for the Protection of Aborigines (BPA) from closing the Coranderrk Aboriginal Settlement in the early 1880s (761). She also shows that, in 1963 attempts were made to discredit the Yirrkala people's Bark petition to the federal Government in Canberra, which questioned the decision of the Liberal Government to hand over a large portion of the Yirrkala Reserve to the Gove Bauxite (Mining) Corporation (760). Hence questions of authorship, attribution, editorial intervention and framing are, as Toorn observes, economically and politically crucial to Aboriginal people (760). While samples of traditional Aboriginal oral literature in translation gets included in anthologies of Australian literature, early Aboriginal texts written in English are left out (757).

The first Aboriginal "writer", in the European romantic sense of an individual expressing his/her own ideas, was David Unaipon, a Nunga from Point Mcleay in South Australia. His *Native Legends* (1929) was the first book published by an Aboriginal Australian. Educated by missionaries into Western genres and equally at home with Victorian theology and Black Australian Mythology, he recast Nunga legends in
Aboriginal spoken forms into Standard English written texts. His extensive manuscript and typescript entitled "Legendary Tales of Australian Aborigines" (1929) contains many "Christianised legends, religious fables and anthropological notes" (Shoemaker 44). Shoemaker and Davis describe them as "a fascinating synthesis of quasi-documentary traditional tribal material and Scripture, as well as symbolism more characteristic of fairy tales" (37). During the 1930s and 40s he had published several stories in mission magazines and had produced a brief autobiography in 1951 (Shoemaker & Davis 38). The anthropologist William Ramsay Smith's Myths and Legends of the Australian Aboriginals (1930)[reprinted upto 1970], reproduced most of the stories contained in Unaipon's manuscript without any acknowledgement (Davis et al 4). This (mis)appropriation is an example of "white exploitation of black cultural material" (Watego, Encyclopedia 2).

Later when Aboriginal people moved away from reserves and missions to cities and to educational institutions, they started writing creatively about their Aboriginality in the style of white writers' accepted literature (Bruce McGuinness 46). Bruce McGuinness points out that, in order to exist in the cities, the indigenous people became:

"hunters and gatherers within the city, within the new urban life, and to be hunters and gatherers there they have to
change their weapons. The spear and the boomerang and the woomera are no longer acceptable weapons within the city area. They must change their mode of weaponry that they used to survive with."

Though it doesn’t change Aboriginal lifestyles to a great degree, in an urban situation they needed to become less visible in order to

“escape the stereotyping and stigmatising that goes on when Aboriginal people do things that other people do. Because of the colour of their skin; because of their need to portray an image, that is an image that is beneficial to them as a nation of people, then they need to use a diverse method to achieve this. They become actors in fact. They are able to act in numerous ways. They portray different images in different ways”. (Aboriginal Writing Today 47).

This is reflected in their various styles of writing too.

According to Jack Davis, in 1924, when the first work by an Aboriginal author was published “it was believed that we had the intelligence of children and we were members of a dying race”. (12), and as late as 1969 “there were some members of Australian society who believed we were incapable of writing for publication”. But the contemporary Aboriginal writer has the image of being “supremely flexible, the master of a multiplicity of styles and forms” (Davis & Hodge 2)
Impediments to Black Australians in having their work published lasted well into the 1960s; so did the unwillingness within the wider white community to accept the validity of the Aboriginal voice. Cliff Watego recounts how, when Kath Walker returned from Adelaide after presenting her poem “Aboriginal Charter of Rights”, at the FCAATSI meeting in 1962, her residence had been broken into and all her clothes destroyed in an attempt to intimidate her. She says: “this was the first time they (the whites) realized I was really writing my own poetry. Up till then they were prepared to think that someone else was writing for me” (qtd. in Connections 18). Oodgeroo Noonuccal (formerly Kath Walker) published the first volume of verse of an Aboriginal writer We Are Going in 1964. Its record sales ranked her among the highest selling poets in Australian history. Since then Australian traditions have been transformed from oral to written forms more than ever before. Mudrooroo published the first Aboriginal Novel Wild Cat Falling in 1965. A small but steady flow of books followed in the years upto the publication of Kevin Gilbert’s Living Black (1977), a landmark work. There has been an abundance of publications in the 1980s and beyond. The bicentennial events of 1988 focused more attention upon "First Australians", their grievances, their protests and their creative works than any year since the invasion. Aboriginal literature now includes poetry, fiction, drama, autobiography and biography, Aboriginal Myth and Legend, transcribed testimony material, life history and political, sociological and educational.
writing. Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Kevin Gilbert, Jack Davis, Mudrooroo Narogin, Robert Merrit, Dick Roughsey, Bobby Sykes, Lionel Fogarty, Archie Weller, Faith Bandler, Elsie Roughsie, Bill Rosser, Ruby Langford, Ginibi, Daisy Utemorrah, Sally Morgan and Bill Neidjie are some of the significant Aboriginal Islander writers/speakers.

As Cliff Watego points out while Unaipon’s protest is tentative, the revolt of Bostock and Gilbert is uncompromisingly aggressive and in recent Aboriginal writing there is a movement away from protest to towards sophisticated cultural self-criticism of the post-colonial condition (Connections 5).

Traditional Aboriginal poetry, which had always stressed continuity between past and present, was able to respond creatively to the impact of European settlement, and continue a narrative and song tradition of major world importance. Due to the enormous cultural differences between the races the settlers were unable to comprehend the ageless achievements of Aboriginal people. According to Mudrooroo, the first generation poets, Jack Davis, Kath Walker, Kevin Gilbert, and Colin Johnson "scarred by assimilation" (82) used the techniques and verse structures of white culture to convey their message. But the poetry of new generation poets like Lionel Fogarty "is layered and textured into shapes and meanings which are difficult for European readers to understand." (Mudrooroo, Indigenous Literature 43) Using indigenous
English they give voice to the maban reality and speak of the ancestors who fought against the imposition of European models of thought and feeling (82). "Aboriginal poetry rattles, flings and bends the chains and rules of verse" but Gilbert points out in his anthology of Black Australian Poetry, *Inside Black Australia* that "within each bending one can see the cyclical incantation, the emotional mnemonics, the substance from which Aboriginal poetry is made" (xvi). To fully appreciate their import he says that "one needs to understand a little of the poet, the social and historical context from which is wrought the subjective crystallisation of the voice" (xix).

Fiction in Aboriginal Writing is based on the tradition of oral storytelling and it continues in works like *Karobran* (1981), *The Day of the Dog* (1981), *Dr. Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World* (1983) and *The Kadaitcha Sung* (1990). This is the form which is mainly used to deconstruct and indigenise the invader history of Australia and the form through which post history is being conveyed. Traditional stories deal with the human place in the world, relations between the environment and the many possibilities in life, in human relations. Modern stories while addressing similar issues are also political in that they deal with the status and treatment of Aboriginal people in Australia, which has a high indigenous incarceration rate. Men's stories such as Charles Perkins's *A Bastard Like Me* (1975) and Archie Weller's *The Day of the Dog* while endorsing the powerful past of the Aboriginal way tell of
the destruction of the traditional male role and a search for a new one in the reality of modern Australia. Women's stories like Doris Pilkington's *Caprice -- A Stockman's Daughter* and Sally Morgan's *My Place* (1987) are about solidarity and building esteem in the future generations.

There is a preponderence of biography or autobiography (life story) in Aboriginal written literature. According to Mudrooroo and the Berndts there was such a form in traditional oral literature -- detailing the adventures of a character. Some tell the story of hardships and work through to a transition of adaptation and survival. They provide an explanation for what it has been like for Aboriginal people to overcome enormous obstacles such as forced assimilation policies, separation from family and communities, unequal access to service etc. in a hostile environment. Others speak of what it is to be black in Australia then and today. Life stories have acted as agents of social change.

Other works such as Bill Neidjie's *Story About Feeling* and Paddy Roe's *Gularabulu* (1983) based on traditional Oral storytelling methods and meant to be read aloud call for new interpretative strategies. The knowledge that the sacredness of the land is fundamental to the Aboriginal worldview is an essential pre-requisite for understanding an Aboriginal Story. To isolate the story from its roots in the land is to destroy it.
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