

Prologue:
Aboriginal Literature
European Literature
The Unknown South Land

Australian Literature:
A History Introduction
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Aboriginal Literature

Literature in Australia commencing with
Aboriginal oral literature

Ab's oral lit. known for some 40,000 years ago,
since the Dreaming (Al Charinga), containing:

- | Song cycles
- | Communal songs for dancing & entertainment
- | Songs for love & mourning
- | Songs for contemporary events
- | Spoken songs & prose tales

Aboriginal Literature

- | The Dreaming (Al Charinga), the time when the Ab's ancestors journeying to Aust creating the land & the sky, the seas & the rivers, & all the creatures & they becoming the part of the land, so the lands own the Abos & providing the text to trace the stories that shaped them & providing direction for their life
- | The stories accompanied with the song cycles & rituals constituting a culture

- | Abl. Li. lost: the passing of the custodians, undergoing disruption & displacement, some collected & recounted by white anthropologists, most kept in surviving communities
- | The English version of the text becoming problematic: in a different language & a different kind of text
- | Relationship between Abl tales & landscape showing the land as a text, holding a complex meaning; the Dreaming not only the past but also the present

European Literature

- | Starting with white settlement following the industrial revolution & adopting the European traditions
- | The center of European culture: the power to dominate nature (serving human purpose) & others (serving desires & will of the individual)
- | European lit. based on different traditions: (1) a single God (the Judaic traditions), (2) spirit to search for perfection of mind, body & soul (Athens), (3) practical values in laws & engineering (Rome)
- | Economy serving the basis of a country & intellect of traditions
- | European expansion bringing along the ideas of the Renaissance & Reformation (secularism)

The Unknown Land

- | the name *Terra Australis Incognita* having been recognized before the discovery of the land (mediaeval period, by geographers & imaginers)
- | the myth of the world structure to be broken by Vasco de Gama & Christopher Columbus
- | the 1st report given by the Dutch naming it New Holland
- | the English navigator, William Dampier, in *A New Voyage Round the World*

- | Capt James Cook & Joseph Banks, scientific journey to find out the truth of the mystical lands
- | Charles Darwin, in Beagle, revealing the image of Aust as a lab of nature
- | The hist of lit in Aust → a story of how writers struggled against that alienation, by denying it, by learning it to accept it & by attempting to transcend it.

Unit 1: A Tainted Paradise

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- n For about 50 years after the settlement (1788-1838), no much literature produced but the work of exploration & discovery recorded in letters, journals, & reports, & intended to inform the condition of the settlement & human knowledge
 - n The audiences intended for were the officials, scientists, and curious general public of England: for the practical success of the penal experiment, to raise Britain's prosperity & to contribute knowledge & having very practical & secular purpose
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- n Cottagers & labours neglecting the country life, & leaving for the city, as a result Britain was lack of cottage industries
 - n Britain left in poverty, as a result of the industrial revolution & following the migration to America; the lands left uncultivated, recorded in Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village"
 - n Influenced by the success in North America, the settlement expected to a chance for the convicts for success, instead of the oppression;
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- n rationalism, a problem to be identified to find out the solution, the problem in Britain was poverty leading to crime, & the underlying cause of the poverty was overpopulation. Australia was the solution.
 - n The expected success of life in this new land inspired authors (Dickens, Darwin, Southey)
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The Journals of the Early Settlers

- n These journals—a sort of the first settlers' diaries—recounting the strength of their hope as well as their growing frustration were published by the officials & soldiers (& convicts)
 - n The form is based on historical events but much affected by the authors' perspective & interest
 - n Most concerned with the hardships caused by insufficiency of food
 - n Read like a report to a board of directors (most were government agents)
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Watkin Tench, a Marine (1789 & 1793)

- n His perception about Australia in his writing was affected by “the sentiments of his days for nature pleasantly ordered and varied.”

John White, Surgeon-General (the chief of medical service in the navy): 1790

- n He wrote what captured his interest as a ‘detached observer’ & more than half dealing with his journey, concerned to inform/instruct the reader in morality but leaving out the reality, lacking the essential spirit of scientific inquiry.
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Attitudes towards Convicts

- n The white non-convicts treating the convicts the same as they did the Aborigines: accepting their superiority, having to show their cooperation, & punishment for those who showed resistance
 - n Early Australian writings showed this attitude: caring for & admonishing, & training the convicts with discipline if the colony were to survive, but failing to perceive the logic of convict resistance
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Unit 2: Explorers and Visionaries

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- | The success in the colony at Port Jackson (Sydney, in NSW now) increasing numbers of free citizens : free settlers & emancipated convicts, “Australian-born citizens” & by 1840 other colonies having been established under the British Govt
- | Britain’s southern colony → from penal to economic, providing land & work for the British surplus population & markets for its industries although until the gold-rushes the Aust. col’nies regarded as minor importance
- | Social conflict of the aristocrats vs the emancipated convicts & free settlers seen as the first wishing to restore their social status while the two latter wishing to create their status through their own efforts. Since the col’nies needing labour & skilled services, the govners inclining to the latter.

I Gov. Lachlan Macquarie's aim of convict reformation opposed by Commissioner J.T. Bigge & others, of the Select Committee on Transportation, who perceived the convicts negative & not to be elevated to a rank in society

- | Australia socially & geographically was a copy of England—a means to fulfill their dream to come true i.e. having control over what the nature might offer as their old experience in Britain but which they could not reach
- | In reality, the harsh life in the outback producing the images of the 'laconic bushman' & the 'unillusioned battler' as appearing in the convict songs & laments ("Frank the Poet")
- | This experience generating the "ideal" of the bushranger like Bold Jack Donohue or the Wild Colonial Boy or Ned Kelly

William C. Wentworth (1793—1872)

- | Born in Aust but educated in England
- | Concerned not to transplant an English society in Aust but to develop Aust'n society by itself & to realize this, everybody should be equal before the law
- | Showing a concern for the emancipated convicts & refusing to make them as objects of policy
- | Recognising the necessities of the new society based on common bonds & interests
- | In 1813 with William Lawson & Gregory Blaxland finding a way through the Blue Mountains, breaking up of the coastal pocket in which they were isolated

- | Wentworth's idea of convicts in *Statistical, Historical and Political Description of NSW* (1819) , i.e. former convicts & their descendants to deserve equal rights & protection from the others
- | In 1823 while studying law at Cambridge, producing "Australasia" which won the Chancellor's medal—a dream of successful settlement while listing the tasks facing the new settlers expressed in the English Romantic way & the classical modes of Virgil

The Journal of the Explorers

- | Marking the beginning of a new stage of Australian writing
- | Recounting the harsh reality of the land discoveries & the difficulties they encountered but with hopes to make the alien land useful settlement which strengthened their spirit: finding the means to overcome the problems
- | Behind this practical intent, there still laying the old vision of establishing the land as a new British commonwealth; they had not yet thought of it as a new country of their own

Interpretations of the Landscape

- | Although bringing about frustration over the harsh & alien land, the explorers finally succeeded in their expeditions
- | Despite the harsh & alien land, the explorers found the beautiful aspects of the land as being revealed in their journals that they moved beyond their successful search for economic resources to a fascination with the land itself
- | The form of the reports taking literary models (narrative, epic tale, tragedy), giving more conception than simply a report on exploration

Sir Thomas Mitchell (1792—1855)

- | Born in Scotland, went to NSW in 1827, assistant surveyor-general
- | The most successful & best literary stylist of Aust'n explorers who reported his journal in literary mode
- | a major in military, a practical as well as a visionary, who in 1836 called the land, much of present-day central Victoria, Australia Felix
- | Recruiting Aborigines for his exploration & treated them fairly but aware that the future destiny of Aust was for the white
- | Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia (1838)
- | Journal of an Expedition into the Interior of Tropical Australia (1848)

Captain Charles Sturt, (1795—1869)

- | Born in India & arriving in Aust. in 1827
- | One of Aust.'s most courageous & famous explorers, esp. his discovery in 1828—30 of the Darling & Murray Rivers, & his leadership of a journey from Adelaide into the center of Aust in 1844-46
- | Religious person who accepts God as 'the impersonal designer of the universe', which brings him encouragement to defeat Australia & believes that the successful settlements cannot be achieved by human efforts but through the will of God, which is beyond human reason
- | Commemorated by Sturt's Stony Desert, the Sturt highway, Charles Sturt Uni, & Sturt's Desert Pea
- | Two Expeditions into the Interior of Southern Australia (1833)
- | Narrative of an Expedition into Central Australia (1849)

New Images

- | Basically the new images forming myths pervading in Aust'n writing & in the idea of Aust reverberating from Mitchell's vision of a new golden age in Australia & Surt's image as the lonely explorer
- | Mitchell's vision: a new golden age in Australia's life but lacked human passion
- | Surt's image: the lonely man enduring & struggling with his own doubts in a hostile or indifferent lands of Australia by relying himself under God's fate
- | 50 years after the settlement, the conflicts of interests among the settlers, convicts, free labours, store keepers & traders brought about an image of Aust. as a marketplace of greed
- | Later explorers like Ernest Giles show that the survival relied on their abilities and knowledge. Along with the literature which interpreted Australia, the journals of the settlers provided new images of Australia