
UNIT 1 THE AUSTRALIAN NOVEL: AN INTRODUCTION

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1.1 OBJECTIVES

A study of this unit should enable you to form a general understanding of the social and cultural contexts of the Australian novel and gain an overview of the development of the novel as a genre in Australia.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

This Unit attempts an introduction to the Australian novel, focusing on the social and cultural contexts out of which it has taken shape and on the key texts. “The story of the English novel,” says Terry Eagleton, “from the see-through style of Defoe, to the lushly metaphorical Woolf, is the story of a form of writing, which becomes progressively rich in texture” (21). As we survey the development of the Australian novel from the earliest novel written by the convict Henry Savery in 1831, to the layered, sophisticated, and experimental narratives of contemporary novelists like Kim Scott, Alexis Wright, and Hsu-Ming Teo, the same may be said of the Australian novel, that it has indeed “become progressively rich in texture”.

The Australian novel took shape in the particular social and cultural contexts of the early nineteenth century. In this Unit and the next, we look into those contexts and the gradual development of the Australian novel as distinct from the English language novels from other parts of the world.

1.3 A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO AUSTRALIA: THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Australia is an ancient continent; it is also today, in the first quarter of the 21st century, a thoroughly modernised, affluent, industrial nation. Today, Australia is a “largely immigrant country of approximately twenty million, divided federally into six states and two territories, united under a national government based on British and American constitutional and parliamentary principles and traditions” (Moran, 1). The archaeologist and writer Billy Griffiths identifies “three strands” in Australia’s “national story – the Indigenous, settler and multicultural pasts” (Griffiths B, 9-10).

1.3.1 Aboriginal Australia:

The antiquity of the Aboriginal past of the continent is acknowledged by many contemporary historians and anthropologists; F. G. Clarke says, “Aborigines, the first Australians have lived on the continent for at least 60,000 to 70,000 years” (9). Griffiths also observes that the depth and diversity of Indigenous history has only been understood recently by scholars, and that the “sheer antiquity of humanity in Australia is difficult to fathom” (11).

“Australia’s human history began over 60,000 years ago. The continent was discovered by a group of voyagers who travelled across a vast passage of water to a land where no hominid had roamed before. Over millennia, they explored and colonised every region, transforming the terrain as they moved, making the country their own through language, song and story. They harnessed flame to create new ecosystems, dug the earth to encourage crops, and built water controls to extend the natural range of their resources Theirs is a remarkable story of transformation and resilience.” (Griffiths, 10)



Aboriginal Rock Art from Kakadu National Park (Source: Wikimedia commons)

1.3.2 The Settlement of Australia

However the story of European settlement of Australia is a fairly recent one. The “First Fleet” carrying the earliest British settlers landed on the eastern coast in 1788, but Australia had been imagined by European thinkers much earlier. As Delys Bird points out,

“The existence of a Great South Land had long figured in the imaginations and the calculations of European and Asian geographers. The great exploratory sea voyages of the Portugese, Spaniards and the Dutch through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, ‘discovered’ land masses in the South Seas. ...It took the coincidence of Britain’s seventeenth century colonial expansion, and the landings of English voyagers – Dampier and then Cook, British imperial interest in the South land was awakened. (Bird, D. “The Settling of English.” 22).



Source: www.flickr.com

Robert Murray, in *The Making of Australia* traces the events that led to European colonisation. Though it is likely, he says, that Chinese and Indonesian sailors had visited Australia earlier, the first outsiders to have visited Australia, as known reliably, were the Dutch. Between 1606 and the mid-1700s, several Dutch navigators sailed to Australia, among whom the best known were Abel Tasman and van Diemen. The first English visitor was William Dampier, who after a voyage to the North-West coast of Australia in 1688, published *A New Voyage Round the World*. He led another voyage of exploration to Australia and his writings about the new lands he visited kindled further interest in the region, and eventually led to the explorations by James Cook in the ship ‘Endeavour’. In April 1770, Cook sailed into what was later named ‘Botany Bay’ on the eastern coast of Australia. He continued to explore the eastern coast and in August 1770, claimed the entire east coast in the name of the British king, naming it New Wales, and later New South Wales. The British government selected Botany Bay as the site for a convict settlement to which convicts from the overcrowded British prisons could be transported. In 1787, a fleet of eleven ships carrying convicts, seamen and officials left England under the command of Captain Arthur Phillip. The

First Fleet arrived in Botany Bay in January, 1788. A site was selected and eventually grants of freehold land was made to individuals, thus marking the beginning of European settlement of Australia (Murray *The Making of Australia*, 14-29).

Eventually the colonies of Western Australia (the first free colony in Australia), South Australia, Queensland and Victoria were established. In 1901, Australia became a Federation with a Commonwealth Parliament. Frank G Clarke, explains how “since the late 1940s, Australia has been able to absorb large numbers of immigrants from all parts of the globe, and today the nation is one of the most multicultural communities in the world. Since 1945, almost 5.7 million people have settled in Australia, and today, nearly one in four members of the community was born overseas” (*History of Australia* 4).

The Aboriginal narrative of the history of the continent during the past two hundred odd years (between 1788 and the present) is of course very different - for the Aboriginal people, it is a narrative of marginalization, loss, decimation and humiliation. “For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Australia’s colonial history is characterised by devastating land dispossession, violence, and racism” (reconciliation.org.au). The anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose says that “Exploration, settlement and development were officially the key processes by which land was to be ‘discovered’, occupied and made to be productive. Less officially, it was a matter of wresting control of the land from the people who already lived there.” (Rose, *Dingo Makes us Human* 1). Here Rose expresses the view that the European settlers were merely using ‘exploration’ and ‘development’ as strategies to claim the continent for themselves by thrusting its original inhabitants out of their homelands. Thus it is clear that the settler communities with European antecedents, and the Aboriginal peoples of Australia, view the recent history of the country from very different perspectives. When 26th January, 1988 was celebrated in Australia as the bicentenary of settlement, the Aboriginal peoples observed it as a day of mourning. Penny Van Toorn says, “The arrival of the British at Sydney Cove in 1788, initiated a series of processes which in various ways, and in different degrees in different regions brought death, displacement and severe cultural disruption to Aboriginal peoples” (2000,19).

One of the most painful episodes in the history of the Australian Aboriginal people during the previous centuries has been the practice of forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families.

“Thousands of children were forcibly removed by governments, European churches and welfare bodies to be raised in institutions, fostered out or adopted by non-Indigenous families, nationally and internationally. They are known as the Stolen Generations. The exact number of children who were removed may never be known but there are very few families who have been left unaffected — in some families children from three or more generations were taken. The removal of children broke important cultural, spiritual and family ties and has left a lasting and intergenerational impact on the lives and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples... From 1995 to 1997 the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission undertook a National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their families. They interviewed over 500 people affected, as well as speaking to organisations and institutions across the country. In April 1997, the Commission’s findings were published in the [Bringing Them Home report](#)..... In 2007, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd began consulting with Indigenous

Australians about what form a national apology should take. On 13 February 2008, he offered a formal apology to members of the Stolen Generations on behalf of the Australian parliament.” (AIATSIS.gov.au)

1.3.3 The Australian land and its people

The custodianship/ ownership of the land has been the most contentious issue in Aboriginal – settler relations. The Aboriginal bondedness with land is primarily expressed through the extremely close bonding with one’s ‘country’– Rose defines ‘country’ as a ‘nourishing terrain’ in her essay ‘Nourishing Terrains’:

Country is a place that gives and receives life. ... Country is not a generalized or undifferentiated type of place... Rather, country is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness and a will toward life. Because of this richness, country is home and peace; nourishment for body, mind and spirit; heart’s ease. ...Country is multi-dimensional, it consists of people, animals, plants, Dreamings; underground, earth, soils, minerals and waters, surface water and air. There is sea country and land country; in some areas people talk about sky country. Country has origins and a future; it exists both in and through time.

Aboriginal people take care of their country, ‘caring for country’ being a basic duty of their lives.

The Aboriginal relationship with land has to be understood in the context of the ‘Dreaming’, which refers to a wide range of concepts and entities. Rose explains that ‘Dreaming’ is a Kriol word and in a general sense refers to the following: “the creative beings who were born of earth and who walked first, creating geographical features, different species, and the Laws of existence; the creative acts of these beings; the period in which these things happen; many of the relationships between humans and other species” (2000:44).

On the contrary, the newness of the land, its alienness and apparent resistance to the European cultivation practices imposed on it by them, were issues that troubled early settlers in Australia. John Rickard traces two variations of the settler myth (the ‘Australian legend’ and the pioneer legend). These myths basically idealised the men and women who confronted the environment and tried to master it (Rickard 65). The natural life and landscape were thought to be so unnatural and strange that it seemed to some early writers from the settler community, that no one could possibly be inspired by them to write a poem:

What is the dominant note of Australian scenery? That which is the dominant note of Edgar Allen Poe’s poetry – ‘Weird Melancholy’.... The Australian mountain forests are funereal, secret, stern. Their solitude is desolation. They seem to stifle in their black gorges, a story of sullen despair. No tender sentiment is nourished in their shade There is a poem in every form of tree or flower, but the poetry which lives in the trees and flowers of Australia differs from those of other countries (Clarke, M, 1985: 60)

In an equally famous pronouncement, Barron Field declares in his *Journal of an Excursion across the Blue Mountains of New South Wales*, October, 1822:

Be this as it may, no tree, to my taste, can be beautiful that is not deciduous...All the dearest allegories of human life are bound up in the infant and slender green of spring, the dark redundancy of summer, and the sere and yellow leaf of autumn. These are as essential to the poet as emblems, as they are to the painter as picturesque objects, and the common consent and immemorial custom of European poetry have made the change of seasons and its effect upon vegetation, a part as it were of our very nature. I can therefore hold no fellowship with Australian foliage, but will cleave to the British oak through all the bareness of winter (Field 14).

The early settlers, who adopted European conventions of viewing and mapping the land, were unable to appreciate the profound meaning that the land had for its original inhabitants. The historian Moran points out how “By the end of the nineteenth century, settlers had transformed the Australian landscape, introduced flora and fauna from “home”, and in so doing had displaced indigenous landscapes and meanings built up over thousands of years” (Moran, 2-3).

Land rights of the indigenous aboriginal peoples of Australia have been a major issue ever since colonialists began appropriating the land, assuming the fiction of “terra nullius”. The modern Land Rights movement in Australia, which began in the 1920s, has witnessed various protests and petitions by the Aboriginal people, such as the Yolngu Bark Petition (1963), the Wave Hill protest (1966) the establishment of the Tent Embassy etc. Such protest movements prompted the setting up of Commissions like the Woodward Commission (1973-4) and led to landmark legislations such as the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (1976), the Mabo decision (1992), the Wik decision and recognition of Native Title (Native Title Act 1993). Native Title represents an attempt to acknowledge traditional ownership of land by indigenous communities.

1.3.4 Australian Identity:

As mentioned earlier, identity for the Aboriginal peoples was closely linked to ‘country’ – this close bondedness with the land was ruthlessly severed when most Aboriginal communities were thrust out of their home lands. For the white settler communities, “Australian national identity has always been a complex affair... For some, Australian national identity was almost inseparable from British national identity. For others, Australian identity had to be forged in relationship with Australian land, and needed to be distinguished from British national identity” (Moran 82).

Australia is now a multicultural nation – as Billy Griffiths points out, multiculturalism is the third strand in the nation’s history (Griffiths 9-10). Historian Moran explains how until the 1940s, most immigrants were of British and Irish descent. Through a series of policies and restrictions, government tried to “create in Australia a white British society and a white British population”, a policy that continued till the second World War. Australian governments modified the White Australia policy from the mid-1950s and officially abandoned it in 1973, in response to developments on the global front. During the 1970s, successive governments “articulated a multicultural vision for Australia” (104 -109). With multiculturalism being adopted as a policy, “Australian national identity has become more complicated, even multi-faceted” (Moran 125).

1.4 THE LITERATURE OF AUSTRALIA

1.4.1 Aboriginal writing

While the Aboriginal peoples of Australia did not have a written literature, as Penny Van Toorn points out they “have been telling stories since time immemorial. ... Oral songs and narratives are traditionally an embodied and emplaced form of knowledge. Information is stored in people’s minds in various narrative forms which at the appropriate time are transmitted from the mouths of the older generation, to the ears of the young” (2000,19). Other scholars also point out how Aboriginal people did not write down their knowledge, thoughts and experiences. “They were passed down in the normal course of social life, by word of mouth, supplemented by graphic representations with regionally and socially coded and variable meanings” (Berndt, 1985:7).

While Australia has a literary tradition of song cycles and other oral expressions of creativity, a tradition almost as old as the continent itself, the contemporary phase of Aboriginal writing begins, as pointed out by Penny Van Toorn, with the publication of Oodgeroo Noonuccal’s (Kath Walker’s) first poetry collection, *We are Going* in 1964 (Van Toorn, 2000: 29). Oodgeroo, Kevin Gilbert, and Jack Davis, seen as the founders of contemporary Aboriginal literature ‘ called for justice and land rights, challenged racist stereotypes, dismantled exclusionary models of national identity and corrected biased historical narratives of progress and peaceful settlement. They also insisted on the continuity of past and present’ (Van Toorn 29). Thus Aboriginal writers tried to dismantle the versions of Australian history, especially that of the occupation and settlement of the continent that was projected by the colonial historians and governments. These concerns, which have always predominated all kinds of Aboriginal discourse in Australia may be seen to persist in some form or the other in Aboriginal literature right up to the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Indigenous writing has grown from being a presence on the fringes, to being a crucial voice in the mainstream of Australian literature representing the concerns and aspirations of the Indigenous population. As pointed out by Adam Shoemaker, there has been a significant change in the field of indigenous writing. Black Australian literature, says Shoemaker, once an exotic curiosity for the non-Aboriginal reader, is no longer marginal and has moved from an exploration of the ‘fringe’ to a more central position. Shoemaker attributes this rapid expansion and recognition of indigenous writing talent especially in the decades since 1980 primarily to institutional factors such as : the policies of the Australia Council, the establishment of a strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board, the support of the Australian National Playwrights’ Conference towards indigenous perspectives, the work of independent indigenous companies such as Brisbane’s Kooemba Jdarra Indigenous Performing Arts as well as strongly supportive non-aboriginal companies like Perth’s Black Swan Theatre Company (1998:344).

This impressive expansion of Aboriginal writing is charted by Shoemaker in his division of Aboriginal literary history from the 1960s into three stages, which he acknowledges are not neat formulations but convenient indicators of the dramatic changes in the Black literary landscape. The poetry of Oodgeroo initiated political change in the 1960s, and together with works by Kevin Gilbert and Jack Davis, formed the first wave of contemporary Aboriginal writing, a stage marked by political writing that called for justice, freedom and land. During the 1980s, in the second stage of Aboriginal writing, the focus was more on revisions of the past and the anti-historical in

works like Eric Willmot's *Pemulwuy* (1987), the plays of Merritt and Davis; the performed work of Oodgeroo in the 'Rainbow Serpent Theatre' at World Expo 88 in Brisbane; and much of the poetry written to protest the 1988 bicentennial. The third wave of contemporary Black Australian writing which began around 1990 laid emphasis upon the mysterious, the supernatural, the hyperreal and the weirdly humorous, and the breaking-down of boundaries and forms. Shoemaker emphasizes that even this stage of writing, despite all its experimentation and diversity, never loses the profound sense of political and social engagement which has always characterized Aboriginal literature. He concludes his assessment of the various stages in Aboriginal writing with the remark that 'Indigenous authors are – almost by definition – political spokespeople' (Shoemaker, 1998: 345-6).

1.4.2 Australian literature in English

The beginnings of literature written in English can be traced back to the time of the earliest settlers who arrived on the 'First Fleet'. Many among them were keen to record their impressions of the new land and send their accounts back to England, where their writings were eagerly awaited. Writing the experience of the new land in English was particularly complicated. As Delys Bird explains in the essay, "The Settling of English", "the space that was the new world was unnamed in English, without history, lacking the necessary cultural markers to enable the colonizers to re-inscribe themselves as colonial subjects." The early settlers were legally British subjects, bound to the imperial centre not just by law, but by language and cultural ties. "The colonial world, and the place of these colonizers in it had to be written into being in English In other words, the tendency is towards hybridity, as old world literary conventions are transformed to a greater or lesser extent through the struggle to create discursive practices capable of translating that new world" (Bird, 1998, 21-22).

Through the English language, they had to try to make sense of the new unfamiliar land – this meant that their language as well as literary conventions had to undergo major transformation. Delys Bird says, "Homi Bhabha refers to colonial writing as an 'act of translation' and it was the process of rendering intelligible the colonial space, their European culture was so ill-suited to translate that produced the beginnings of an Australian literary culture" (Bird, "The 'Settling' of English, 1998, 23). Thus the beginnings of an English literary culture were quite problematic, as the settlers had to use European cultural practices to understand and write about the new continent.

1.5 THE NOVEL IN AUSTRALIA: AN OVERVIEW

The first novel written and published in Australia was Henry Savery's *Quintus Servinton: a Tale founded Upon Incidents of Real Occurrence* (1831), "a transportation novel with a happy ending, disguised as a fictional autobiography" (Bird, 32). *Ralph Rashleigh* written in 1845-50 by the convict James Tucker, *Moondyne* (1879), by O'Reilly, *The Broad Arrow* (1859) by Caroline Leakey – all engage with the convict system and its horrors. However Marcus Clarke's *His Natural Life* (1874) was the most notable novel about the convict system written in nineteenth century Australia.

The nineteenth century also witnessed the writing of several classics such as Louisa Atkinson's *Gertrude the Emigrant* (1857), Catherine Helen Spence's *Clara Morison* (1854), Caroline

Leakey's *The Broad Arrow* (1859), and Rolf Boldrewood's *Robbery Under Arms* (1888). (We will be discussing the development of the Australian novel during the nineteenth century, in detail in Unit 2 of this block).

“In the last decade of the nineteenth century, as Australia moved towards Federation, fiction writers began to depart from the generic conventions of romance and melodrama, and from the construction of the reader as essentially a British consumer, looking for exotic and colourful tales of the colonies. Writers like Henry Lawson, Miles Franklin and Joseph Furphy, were more interested in depicting what was “Australian” from an insider’s point of view; the Australian landscape and ideas about the Australian “national character” moved to the foreground in fiction around the turn of the century” (Goldsworthy, 2000: 105).

This increased interest in nationalism towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, resulted in novels such as Joseph Furphy's *Such is Life* and the fiction of Henry Lawson.

Kerryn Goldsworthy points out that throughout the twentieth century Australian fiction writers have returned again and again to “the historical novel as a form of nation-building, of alternative history writing, of expiation of colonial guilts, or of comment on their own times” (2000, 108). Goldsworthy adds that in historical fiction before 1970, writers generally adopted a simple form of either psychological or social realism, and focused on the three aspects of nineteenth century Australian history - convicts, pioneers and gold. The examples pointed out for novels dealing with the Australian goldfields, are Henry Handel Richardson's *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* (1930) and Katherine Susannah Prichard's *Goldfields Trilogy* (*The Roaring Nineties* (1946), *Golden Miles* (1948), and *Winged Seeds* (1950)). For the pioneer theme, Goldsworthy points out M. Barnard Eldershaw's *A House is Built* (1929), Miles Franklin's *All That Swagger* (1936) and Patrick White's *The Tree of Man* (1955) (Goldsworthy 108-9). We have already seen how numerous novels based on the convict theme were written from the early nineteenth century onwards.

War, especially the experience of the two World Wars, has been the theme around which some outstanding twentieth century Australian novels were written. Some examples are Leonard Mann's *Flesh in Armour* (1932), Martin Boyd's *When Blackbirds Sing* (1962), T. A. G. Hungerford's *The Ridge and the River* (1952), G. R. Turner's *Young Man of Talent* (1959) and David Malouf's *Fly Away Peter* (1982). In the first half of the twentieth century, realism was the favoured mode of fiction. The writing of Patrick White marks a landmark in the history of Australian literature, especially the novel. According to Brigid Rooney, “the emergence of Patrick White as a powerful canonical agent in the modernisation of Australian literary culture both reflected and added to the momentum for cultural change” (Rooney 83). Patrick White is one of the most outstanding modernist novelists of Australia, and the country's first Nobel prize winner for literature. Though White was a prolific writer who authored numerous poems, short stories, plays and essays, as Goldsworthy points out, “his reputation was made by, and rests on, his novels. His work dominated Australian literature for three decades and his influence continues to go wide and deep in the work of contemporary Australian writers” (Goldsworthy, 2000, 126). White's acclaimed novels include *The Tree of Man* (1955), *Voss* (1957), *Riders in the Chariot* (1961), *The Solid Mandala* (1966),

The Vivisector (1970), *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976). The writer David Malouf places White among the greatest modernist writers, alongside James Joyce, Gertrude Stein and William Faulkner, as “a practitioner of High Modernism” (Harris, M 258).

In a study of ‘The Novel in English in Australasia to 1950’, K. Moffat remarks that it is important to note that the Australian novelists writing before 1950 “were all of European heritage” (2). However from the 1950s, there is a major change in the contours of the Australian novel. Brigid Rooney points out, “From the 1950s, the Australian novel has diversified to reflect a community, whose size, outlook and ethnic composition has also undergone significant transformation. The field today is so heterogenous as to resist any simple narrative of national progress” (Rooney, Brigid, 81). As mentioned earlier, from the mid-twentieth century onwards, Australia has embraced a multicultural vision for its national life, and this is reflected in the incredible body of fiction written by writers from diverse cultural backgrounds, who engage with themes of identity.

“The rise of Australian multicultural literature since the 1950s, has been strongly connected to political and cultural ideologies. Autobiographical reflections or fictional accounts of the experience of migration have shown potential to shape public discourse on issues of citizenship and belonging.... The ever-increasing body of contemporary ‘multicultural’ texts within the rubric of Australian literature, however offer ways of understanding the nation, the broader geographical region and the ongoing anxieties played out in response to global movements of people and cultures” (Morris, Robyn 312).

From the nineteenth century, almost from the time the novel as a genre took shape in Australia, women novelists had been writing powerful novels that voiced the concerns of women in the newly established colonies, and later the Australian nation. Though women writers such as Eleanor Dark, Katharine Susannah Prichard and Jeanne Devanny produced a remarkable body of realist fiction in the twentieth century, they were working, “still within a deeply patriarchal tradition” (Coates, D, 159-160) and it was only in the later decades of the century, that women’s writing became a much stronger presence. “The 1980s are often called the ‘women’s decade’. Not only did women’s writing flourish, but feminist criticism generated fruitful terms of reception that both challenged and extended the compass of Australian literature.... Writers to emerge in the 1970s and 1980s whose work projected the energy, spirit and sensibility of the women’s movement included Helen Garner, whose debut work *Monkey Grip* (1977), is often deemed the breakthrough novel of second-wave feminism” (Rooney 88-89).

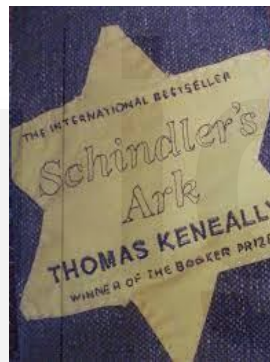
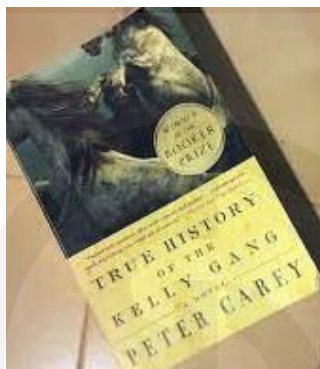
The Aboriginal novel

The novel is one of the genres that Aboriginal writers have experimented with – the usage ‘Aboriginal fiction’ is itself problematic and debatable, since a lot of Aboriginal writing cannot be described in terms of Western literary genres. In her survey of Australian Aboriginal fiction, Penny Van Toorn points out how

Many Aboriginal writings resist classification within conventional European genre systems. A number of Aboriginal “fiction” writers, for instance, undo the Western commonsense categorical distinction between fact and fiction. They may do this by drawing on their own experiences, by creating historical fictions, and by confronting

readers with the double vision of what critics customarily call magic realism. These three strategies form the basis for three strands of Aboriginal fiction, although it must be recognized that these strands may themselves be interwoven in the same text (2000, 38).

In the first category, Van Toorn includes novels such as Monica Clare's *Karobran* (1978), based on Clare's experience of growing up in New South Wales, Archie Weller's novel *Day of the Dog* (1981), John Muk Muk Burke's *Bridge of Triangles* (1994), drawing on his early life in New South Wales, and Herb Wharton's novel *Unbranded* (1992). Aboriginal novelists who have concerned themselves with rewriting history, contest the myths of heroic exploration and peaceful settlement that for many years, were disseminated through the colonial educational system. Eric Willmot's *Pemulwuy* (1987), and Richard Wilkes's *Bulmurn* (1995) told stories of Aboriginal resistance to white settlement (Van Toorn, 2000: 38-39).



1.6 LET US SUM UP

In 1973, the Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded to Patrick White "for an epic and psychological narrative art which has introduced a new continent into literature" (nobelprize.org). Thus Australian literature, especially the novel made its presence felt on the global scene. The achievements of Australian novelists have been acknowledged by the award of major literary prizes such as the Booker prize. Thomas Keneally won the Booker in 1982 for *Schindler's Ark* and Peter Carey twice, for *True History of the Kelly Gang* in 2002 and *Oscar and Lucinda* in 1988. (You will be studying two of these novels in this course: *Schindler's Ark* in Block 4 and *True History of the Kelly Gang* in Block 7). In 2014 the Australian novelist Richard Flanagan was awarded the Booker for *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*. Other Australian novelists have also been shortlisted for the Booker, including David Malouf for *Remembering Babylon* (1993), Tim Winton for *The Riders* (1995) and *Dirt Music* (2002), and Kate Grenville for *The Secret River* (2006). Thus the Australian novel has received major international awards and recognition.

In this unit we have taken a look at some aspects of Australian social and cultural life, which are important to understand the contexts of Australian writing. We also attempted a brief overview of the development of the Australian novel from the early nineteenth century till the present. Here, we have only indicated the directions that the Australian novel has taken during the past two centuries or so of its existence; you will get a broader picture of its development, as you study the

remaining blocks of this course. In the next unit, we will discuss in detail, the rise and development of the novel in nineteenth century Australia.

1.7 GLOSSARY

terra nullius

1.8 REFERENCES

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