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Seen Through Other Eyes: Reconstructing Australian Literature in India

PAUL SHARRAD
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Australian Literature (as a body of intellectual inquiry and curriculum) had its beginnings in nationalist self-assertion against the cultural domination of this country by British texts and colonialist attitudes. Since then, we have complicated the idea of national culture and literary canons by recognising the existence of ‘migrant’ and then ‘multicultural’ and ‘Aboriginal’ writing, along with critiques and remodelling of the literary corpus from popular culture, gender and sexualities frameworks. One marker of this shift was the Bicentenary revision of Geoffrey Dutton’s *The Literature of Australia* (1964) as *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia* (1988) edited by Laurie Hergenhan. ‘Aust. Lit.’ was consolidated and institutionalised in a historical moment of conjunction between publishing markets, politics and educational reforms, and carried with it certain hidden assumptions of hegemonic structures at that time (as illustrated in Leigh Dale’s *The English Men*, 1997). So the many and positive corrections to simplistic understandings of a literature that was always produced across conflicted terrains were long due, but the boundaries within which debate and reshaping occurred were always primarily those of the nation, such that Graham Huggan feels able to claim in his reassessment of the field that it has been limited by nationalism and associated binaries of inside and outside (vi, ix).

In doing so, he follows a general turn in literary and cultural theory towards the post-national, the diasporic and the global or cosmopolitan (Appiah, Gikandi, Ashcroft). These formations have helped extend our understanding of individual writers and texts, allowed inspection of aesthetics and cultural agendas as they apply to groups within the national whole, and they have directed our gaze to relationships between nation and the world from the beginnings of literary production in this country and into the future. This double history of postcolonial national cultures is something that Bruce King pointed out back in 1983, and the idea has received new attention following the take-up of Franco Moretti’s mapping of literary networks and Pascale Casanova’s notion of a world literary system. A recent manifestation is the ‘Resourceful Reading’ project, headed by Robert Dixon, which gathers empirical evidence for considering the circulation of other literatures in Australia and of Australian literature into different spaces of geography, language and culture overseas (Bode & Dixon). My own links have been to the teaching of Australian Literature in India, and I want to consider how this particular transnational formation operates. What follows is based on personal experience, interviews (represented by numbered participants), published material and information from the ‘AustLit’ database.

If the outward-looking turn in national cultural history that allowed critics to see and value writing by immigrant groups other than Anglo-Celts was contained within an inward reassessment of national culture, and if terms like ‘diasporic’ carried with their dual/multiple national and ethnic constitutions a literary focus on persons and psychologies (Dayal, Vijay Mishra), what is the dynamic when a nation’s literature goes offshore? How do the terms in which it is received and used change? What happens when the national literature is turned inside out and becomes transnational (Jose, Vittachi)? This is not the same thing as globalisation. Some texts and writers may become globalised; *Harry Potter* and *The Da Vinci Code* and even *Midnight’s Children* (1981) might be taken as globalised commodities,

circulating in a readerly cosmos with the characteristics of an airport lounge. But a body of work associated with one cultural history and geography taken up in another national context is something with its own problematic of ‘translation’. An example is Commonwealth Literature. This has always been transnational, but emerged in the 1960s as the cultural part of Third World decolonisation under the auspices of late-colonial universities still looking to break from the Oxbridge tradition. There had been earlier courses on Australian and other Commonwealth writing set up in the US as a part of post-war enthusiasms from men who had served in the Pacific war and they were also part of the Cold War drive to keep up alliances or understand the threats to ‘free world democracy’. Even earlier there had been studies of Commonwealth Literature (then late Empire literature) in 1920s Germany as a part of knowing a past and potential enemy (Maes-Jelinek *et al*; Tiffin). So in each case, the meanings of the package being offered were different, even if the contents were the same. But the contents also changed according to the time and place of reception, the agendas of those wrapping the package, and the materials available at the time for inclusion.

During the seventies and eighties there was a discernible ‘turn to Asia’ in Australian writing, predating PM Keating’s shift in foreign policy but following on from our involvement in the Vietnam War and the counter-culture movement’s engagement with ‘the East’ and Third World liberation causes in general. In fiction, this can be seen in the sudden appearance of Christopher Koch’s *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1978) set in Sukarno’s Indonesia, Robert Drewe’s *A Cry in the Jungle Bar* (1979), set in the Philippines, and Blanche D’Alpuget’s *Turtle Beach* (1981), following the ‘boat people’ refugee trail to Malaysia. This literary outpouring was matched by new subjects in Australian universities on Commonwealth or Third World writing, introducing writing from Africa, the Caribbean, South East Asia and India to students only recently accustomed to the idea of studying their own national literature alongside of the established corpus of Eng. Lit.

It is noticeable that the ‘Asian turn’ tended not to include any focus on India (Sharrad 2010). This is not to say that no literary contact was being made. Koch had already fictionalised his ‘sixties travel across India *en route* to London in *Across the Sea Wall* (1965)—and in fact produces an interesting reading of Javanese culture as a kind of early post-colonial legacy of Indian transnational dissemination of culture—and as an anthology like Robin Gerster’s *Hotel Asia* (1995), shows, there is a long literary tradition of Australian contact with South Asia. We had a long-standing connection to the subcontinent by virtue of shared subordination to the machineries of Empire. In fact, the first fiction published by an Australian writer comes from the son of a convict, John Lang, and was set around Calcutta. Lang had to go to another colony to find work as a lawyer, and then turned newspaperman and writer, turning an often satirical eye on the life of colonials, and even supposedly sympathising with some of the ‘mutineers’ in the 1857 rebellion (Hosking).

After Lang, there was a slow production of Kiplingesque verse and stories of exotic colouring by people like Molly Skinner and F.J. Thwaites. There was a period of poetry inspired by theosophy and devotion to Sufi or tantric gurus (Mary Bright, Brian P Cox/Leo Conon, Francis Barbazon). Ethel Anderson’s colonial yarns and Hugh Atkinson’s novel *The Pink and the Brown* (1957) are followed by attempts to show the complexities of engaging with Indian culture (as in Janette Turner Hospital’s *The Ivory Swing* 1980). In Australian-located writing, India receives only passing mention (the hawker Barbu Ram in Xavier Herbert; Sally Morgan being told to explain her skin colour by claiming she’s Indian in *My Place*, 1987 38). Punjabi vegetable farmers in pre-war Victoria receive more attention in Eve Langley’s *The Pea Pickers* (1948) and Thomas Keneally gives a leading secondary role to Bandy Habash, a

Muslim Punjabi hawker in *A River Town* (1995). The Punjabi migration dating to the 1860s leads to the first Indo-Australian literary work, the story collection *Time of the Peacock* (1965), written by Meena Abdullah in collaboration with Ray Mathew. Its impact lies in depictions of nostalgia for India and the organic link to traditional practices and it is a work that can readily be assessed as diasporic writing.

Australia's links to India, apart from some ongoing church missions and student exchanges under the Colombo Plan, dried up once Nehru took his country towards socialism and away from the sympathies of PM Menzies. Then the 'new age' movement and cheap travel drew Australians to India in quest of enlightenment, so that we have an extended literary engagement with north Indian cities by Vicky Viidikas and a fascinating blending of cultural references and experiences from Colin Johnson/Mudrooroo in his early poems and the fusion-epic verse of *Dalwurra* (1988). All these texts were generally treated as exotic side dishes to the main national literary banquet and made little long-term impact. Australian interest in its own affairs focused more on the inclusion of 'migrant' and minority writing, and until recently, that has not included Indians. With the exception of Abdullah, Sri Lankan, Yasmine Gooneratne was the first notable South Asian to be accorded hyphenated Australian identity. Some writing in more recent times has come either from Anglo-Indians (Christopher Cyrill, Michelle Cahill) or Indo-Fijian immigrants (Satendra Nandan, Sudesh Mishra). Now there are signs of a renewed interest in the region, sparked in part by the international success of Indian writers (notably the recent Booker winner and sometime Australian resident Aravind Adiga), and the impact of globalisation on our collective consciousness. Signs of this are the 'colonial revival' comedy *Coronation Talkies* (2004) by Susan Kurosawa, the 'chick lit' novel *The Bollywood Beauty* (2005) by Shalini Akhil that brings together Melbourne, Fiji and India, the prize-winning novel of Anglo-Indian diasporic distress, *The Lost Dog* (2007), by Michelle de Kretser, and the recent anthology of Australian encounters with India, *Sadhus and Spinners* (2009), a collaboration between Bruce Bennett and Susan Cowan of ADFA and Santosh Sareen of Jawaharlal Nehru University, published by Harper Collins India.

Aravind Adiga and the anthology signal the other side of the India-Australia connection. There is an increasingly active two-way traffic of people and books and a small but longstanding interest in Australian literature in India. This began under the umbrella of Commonwealth Literature courses and is now promising to be a growing enthusiasm (Australia's treatment of Indian students permitting). However, we might ask what happens to a literature when it travels overseas and is studied by people with their own agendas, different social dynamics, and different kinds of access to materials?

One of the constant drawbacks to studying any literature, of course, is the availability of texts, and for many years Australian books have made it to the hands of students by a few enthusiasts taking copies back home, locking them in metal cabinets and lending them out on demand. Extracts assembled into cyclostyled subject readers and a good deal of back-street photocopying has been the other option. Study of books under a system that still tends to favour 'top down' instruction and set exams also puts great store by secondary critical material—on the part of teachers enjoined to take up new syllabuses as well as by students. This has had the immediate effect of concentrating attention on those books most in line with the 'classics' drummed into Indians since Macaulay's Minute of 1835, and texts most readily circulating in the global marketplace, in particular (because of the old colonial publishing zones) those from Britain. The 'big names' are the ones that are set for study because they have the sanction of European prizes and Oxbridge commentators. So for a long time, most people in India who had any knowledge of Australian literature knew it as a small subset of

Commonwealth writing, and within that it was Judith Wright, Patrick White and A.D. Hope who represented our national culture. Individually prepared readers favour short stories and poems (5, 6, 11). Except for Madras where there has been an interested drama teacher working with students, and for some of the Open University syllabus, theatre does not get as good a coverage as it might. Relative lack of commentary on contemporary poetry and theatre skews studies towards fiction and canonical figures, and a culture of ‘technical’ analysis makes formal verse attractive (11). This tends to produce a fairly conservative model of an Australian literary canon. The need for clear narratives of national identity and thorough coverage of historical, social and cultural background was emphasised by all teachers, though some did recognise that this tends to keep attention directed at ‘safe’ figures hallowed by white-settler traditions (so Carey’s *True History of the Kelly Gang* is taught rather than his other, arguably more interesting writing) (1, 2, 5, 11).

There is a heartening, sometimes quaint ideal still widely held that the humanities play a significant role in shaping humanist ethics and raising moral and social well being (3, 8, 9, Asnani). Many students take on Aboriginal writing with a view to illuminating India’s own cultural dynamic with its tribal and caste minorities. One academic new to the field voiced a common humanist sentiment when he said that reading Australian literature gave ‘more colour and meaning’ to his life (21). Enhancement of personal local interests by access to a wider perspective can be seen when one scholar follows interests in feminism by looking at Australian women writers (2), and when another (Tamil) takes up Australian studies partly through a concern for the Tamil diaspora (12). Such serious moral and social investments can entail degrees of incomprehension of the irreverence and sexual license in Australian culture (except as evidence of the decadence of a godless West) and resistance to taking on contemporary texts of the ‘grunge’ kind, so again, syllabuses tend to the conservative. *Voss* (1957), for example, is still taught to a degree that no longer applies in Australia, partly for its evocation of the (in Indian context) strange idea of exploring ‘empty’ space in a pioneering society, and partly for its serious moral themes illustrative of the Western individual ego.

One limitation on Australian literary studies taking real hold in India is the still quite common method there of conducting postgraduate research. No doubt because of pressure of numbers, students are prepared to take on subjects they see as unusual (often with the false impressions that no work has been done in the area), and some supervisors seem happy to dictate topics they themselves have no expertise in and their students no familiarity with. This can happen in situations where there are no primary, let alone secondary, texts to hand and it results in frustrations for both students and their examiners. The other main factor for choice relates to the professional tactics of finding something new and different instead of the standard diet of British and American literatures (2, 3, 4, 12). (Two respondents suggested Australia is seen as a ‘more comfortable’ option sitting somewhere between the extremes of these old and new world powers [11, 15] and one turned to Australia and Frank Moorhouse’s writing as part of a general anti-American feeling during the Vietnam War [7]. Another gained approval for an Australian Studies Centre because of the general popularity of postcolonial studies [1].) In similar vein, and indicating the kind of local nationalist investments influencing studies of Anglophone writing, Makarand Paranjape has opined that, in Australian literature, ‘India can pursue its hunger for its Other without the attendant humiliation’ of dealing with British or American culture (in Hassam & Sarwal eds. *Australian Studies Now*, xiii).

The other significant (but surprisingly minor) motivation for taking up studies in Australian literature is the curiosity factor. Several people mentioned the obvious ties based on cricket and, increasingly, people have relatives in Australia (4) and have heard about kangaroos and

koalas. Several did not know that English was the common language of the country until they took a class (17). There are connections through British literature and colonial heritage and schooling (2). Except for an occasional personal reason (writing to the ABC as a child and receiving mail back, or reading all the Nobel Prize winners (1), or as a spin-off from reading American literature (4), one contact with Australia through attending a church conference (3), one because of a visiting lecturer from Australia (5), one due to judging the Commonwealth Writers Prize in Sydney and contributing to a journal (2), interest in Australian literature is shaped very much by approaching the field as an academic exercise. Talking to teachers and students in India quickly reveals that beyond any other considerations, 'Aust. Lit.' means a tool for providing distinctive positioning to young teachers looking for an edge in the highly competitive higher education market. It then secondly serves as a more 'neutral' means of addressing local social issues than those provided by UK or US literatures. In this context it has been in competition with Canadian literature, for some time losing out to the greater provision of books and scholarships by the Canadian government and the Shastri Foundation.

Things have, however, shifted a lot since the first courses were taught. The ASAL conference in Australia has welcomed Indian academics as delegates for over two decades, and the Commonwealth Literature associations have held conferences here and in India where both Indian and Australian delegates mingle. The Australia-India Council has funded quite a number of Indian academics on familiarisation tours of Australia and Asialink has sponsored Australian artists of all kinds on study periods in India. Increasingly, Indian professors have children studying and settling in Australia and the traffic to and fro makes transmission of texts, films and critical materials that much easier. There are now at least two major professional associations for the study of Australian literature in India and at least four active centres of teaching and research. Anthologies are something that would help solve the classroom problem of lack of texts and critical readings. Three useful anthologies of critical readings in Australian Studies/literatures have recently been released (Hassam & Sarwal). These are important supplements to the host of rapid compilations of conference papers from the Commonwealth Literature period, bringing Australian perspectives and a range of theoretical frameworks to what otherwise is largely appreciation/ explication with a thematic focus and little contextual awareness. Until the reading of Australian literature moves beyond Masters-level classes, major publishers are not going to spend on royalties to produce class texts and Australian publishers will need to allow anthologies into India at a reduced rate to seed a potential future trade.

Anthologies can serve pragmatic purposes, but they may also obscure underlying questions. We all set material we think 'works well' in the classroom, and this carries attendant assumptions about what is proper and productive in the classroom as well as student ideas of what is interesting and appropriate for discussion. If tertiary study of literature exists to confer respectability and enhance marriage or employment prospects, then what 'works' will be different from a situation in which teachers or students want to generate individuals who are challenged and equipped to produce critical analyses of social systems. In the context of constructing art histories, Huw Hallam observes that the modern curator manages difference by organising exhibitions 'along the lines of [the object's] capacity to be appropriately received' (Hallam 82). We might think of anthologies and class syllabuses in the same way and ask what we mean in any given situation by 'appropriate reception' (and whether and how we should work to stretch and challenge that meaning).

Attempts have been made to produce a standard curriculum so as to enable production of a core body of reading materials, but, really, individual initiative has been the key to success

(11, 12) and fixing text lists slows processes of change so that students can be stuck with difficult texts by writers no longer enjoying active critical attention outside of India. Those sites where there is some cross-institutional collegiality permit a degree of mutual support and exchange of resources to make innovation and experiment more viable. In Tamil Nadu, some Australian poems are inserted into the English syllabus for high schools (11) and in Bengal an Australian poem has been placed in the core college syllabus (1). This is, I think, the only case where such a basis for building student interest through to graduate studies exists, and a fuller survey of its effect would be worth the effort.

All this positive development notwithstanding, the cost of books relative to incomes in India means that it is impossible to import and sell Australian texts, so one should expect that readers will have most access to those titles taken up by Indian publishers and distributed at local prices. Outside of the classroom, Australian literature means the books that have made it onto shelves in homes and shops. Given that many Indians are not at a standard of English literacy that might incline them to tackle more than Mills and Boon or Clive Cussler, we might expect that any book that is translated will become a representative of its country of origin. In this case, probably as a result of his editing a series of Asia-Pacific writing with UQP, the best-known Australian author in India ought to be Michael Wilding. Somehow, a collection of his stories was translated into Punjabi and published by the government authorised Sahitya Akademi (*Somewhere New/ Kition Nawar*, 2001), and even more improbably (though perhaps because of the Communist government of Bengal), his story of the nineteenth-century Australian leftist utopian experiment in Paraguay came out in Bengali in 1995. In keeping with India's long love of detective mysteries, Guy Boothby's *My Strangest Case* (1901) is perhaps the first Australian work to be published in an Indian language. It seems to have been part of the colonial reading circuit, coming out in both English and what seems to be either Urdu or the Raj hybrid, Hindustani in 1901. Apart from that, Malaya Gangopadhyay taught linguistics at Monash for some time and has since published an autobiography and critical work in Bengali in Calcutta. Adib Khan reports that *Seasonal Adjustments* (1996) was translated into Bangla and well received on both sides of the Bangladesh border (Athique interview).

Translation is one strategy to generate awareness of Australian writing. India has been pushing a national program of cross-translation of literatures in all major regional tongues via the government-sponsored Sahitya Akademi and journals such as *Katha* also move writing into wider national and international circuits through energetic translation projects. Children's and young adult literature offers huge potential for sales via translation, but there is some doubt whether the people likely to be reading in Hindi or Tamil might be interested in things Australian (18). Nonetheless, some work is going on: Angshuman Kar's Bengali translations of selected Aboriginal verse, Raja Gopal's translations of Australian verse into Tamil and Nina Kandaswamy's translations of Geoff Page can be mentioned.

The reader might wonder at some point in this article what the significance of it all is. One purpose is to identify some of the differences of configuration in transnational circuits in order to improve the 'knowledge transfer' of Australian literature. This is perhaps a theoretically contentious project, since the deliberate marketing and dictation of its literature by a source nation could be seen as neo-imperialist and based on untenable ideas of essentialist ownership of language and culture. A second point, however, is that a fundamental part of cross-cultural, transnational transmission is the creative reconstruction at the site of reception. This is of interest in itself and knowing about it enables 'us' to see our own constructions of culture in a new informative light. One thing that emerges from looking

into the Indian spaces of Aust. Lit. is the way scholarship in Australia has tended to move into big-picture theory-based packages thereby losing sight of the single-author critical study. There is a continuing need for these, not just to supply authoritative study materials to overseas students, but perhaps also to cater for the students in this country who are, according to the media, turning away from study of their own writers (Neill).

At the same time the challenge for Aust. Lit. scholars is to find ways of thinking about the accessing and reading of Australian texts as more than just reception; the transnational is a 'translation' process in which ideas of source and authenticity continue to have some power, for both good and bad, but dissemination becomes more than passive receiving of transmissions from abroad. Adam Arvidsson points out that consumers produce new meanings around the products they take up. Brands 'take on many aspects of the "attention economy" that was [sic] once particular to the culture industries.' (73). Brands differentiate, so brand 'Aust. Lit.' has to be displayed against brand 'Afro Lit.' and 'Can Lit.' on the shelf labelled 'Commonwealth' or 'Postcolonial' in the 'English' supermarket. Consumers produce an excess around the brand that is part of its value (74) and that invests the product with meanings not anticipated or controlled by the producing 'factory'. The brand can also produce a specific mode of 'sociality' (77)—the set of scholars who become 'Australianists' in a transnational context. They scan product to find things symbolically suitable to their immediate needs and use them to define themselves as a (cosmopolitan) consumer community, holding 'brandfests' (82-3) to celebrate their shared enthusiasms (alumni meets, conferences, professional associations). The original producers of the product will attempt to direct the ways in which consumption occurs, but 'ultimately the forms of affect that consumers generate around the brand are (at least in part) unpredictable.' (87). For the source producers, knowing the product increasingly means knowing how it circulates and what its significances are at all its sites of reception, not just in the country of origin.

As Mary Helen McMurrin makes clear, one of the primary rubrics under which transnational studies have occurred is that of translation. Obviously the etymological sense of the word is relevant: shifting from place to place, and translation studies have taken up consideration of the power systems governing what is translated for whom and in which language (e.g. Tejaswini Niranjana). But 'translation' still provokes debates over accuracy and authenticity that are not central to processes of cultural appropriation accompanying transnational movements of literatures (Even-Zohar 294). Moreover, the common understanding of making over a text from one language into another is not relevant to works circulating globally in an English that is unchanged regardless of the site of reception. Moving from one cultural site of reception to another is certainly a central element of the transnational, and what 'translation' occurs in the latter space as a result of translocation is a key question. However, there is a further aspect to transnational literary studies that goes beyond changes in meaning of texts: the translocation of a national literature as a body of study. This is what we are considering here.

The complexities of literary cultural production and reception in the transnational context are perhaps well framed by Itamar Even-Zohar's 'polysystem theory' (which seems to avoid the centre-periphery binaries still implicit in Casanova's world literature model). Even-Zohar's 'Polysystems theory' runs the danger of being so generalised or meta-level that it seems to be an application of the pedantic to the banal (a criticism made of many other attempts at general theoretical models, such as 'the postcolonial'), but its idea of intersecting and embedded systems operating dynamically within historical process (289-90) is a useful starting point to make distinctions amongst the kinds of circuits operating in discussions of the transnational.

We can, for example, think of micro-national literary circuits (migrant literature, indigenous literature, regional literature) interacting with national circuits (in the construction and renovation of national canons) which in turn interact with other national literary circuits (the space of the transnational) while all of these operate within, against and through global cultural and commercial networks.

At the level of texts circulating and being interpreted within differing cultural contexts, this complex set of dynamic relations is useful because it allows us to see how one writer might be ‘converted’ (to use Even-Zohar’s term 293) into the national circuits of the receptor country as a diasporic writer (in the Indian context, Adib Khan or Azhar Abidi can lose their Australian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani identities and appear as overseas South Asians responding to their ‘homeland’), while another (Kim Scott, say) circulates as a clearly transnational writer (a minority Australian taken as representing the nation crossing into an Indian national market), and yet another (Janette Turner Hospital in *Due Preparations for the Plague*) entering the Indian nation space of readers of English as a cosmopolitan product of global corporate publishing and distribution. Consistent with other checks on overseas sales of Australian books, Nevil Shute had three books published in India, two after Independence, and both—*A Town Like Alice* (1950) and *On the Beach* (1957)—presumably linked to their international success as films. More recently a glance through the websites of major publishers shows that Steve Toltz’s prize-winning *A Fraction of the Whole* (2008) is out with Penguin India.

When set against the globalising of Anglophone Indian publishing, translated Australian work has had less impact than logic suggests, and that is partly because those mostly interested in overseas writing are university-educated and working in English. In that language, the major conduit for Australian writing to Indian readers has been Writers Workshop in Calcutta. Professor P. Lal visited Australia in the seventies and has been indefatigable in supporting Indian writing in English as well as other Commonwealth literature. His bright sari-cloth covers and hand-set books produced at low cost from a backyard press in Calcutta have had a major impact on the early growth of literature in English in India, but more recently one would have to say that many people publish there because it is easy to get acceptance and subsidy arrangements have been part of the deal. This is not uncommon with poetry publishers, especially, and there are many loyal to Prof Lal’s elegant product, so that a number of unfamiliar names on Writers Workshop lists (R.H. Morrison, Wendy Scarfe, Joy Cripps, Juliette Banerjee—mainly in the seventies) are interspersed with more significant ones. Earlier, as part of his scholarly interest in Indian writing, critic-poet Syd Harrex put out a book of verse (1968). The Australian-resident Sri Lankan writer Chitra Fernando (some of whose works are for children) published stories in the eighties, and John Kinsella’s *The Silo* appeared in 1995.

There is not a consistent or equal two-way literary traffic between India and Australia. The long shadow of the White Australia Policy still darkens attitudes outside of the cricket ground. Indians residing in their home country writing about Australia are few and far between. Besides the names already mentioned, there is Tamil-language writing that circulates in local magazines as well as in community publications in Australia. The only trackable book is a sequence of poems by a visiting academic, Prof K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar. *Australia Helix* (1983) although Professor Chamal Nahal produced a historical novel of the Gandhian period that depicts some Australian characters. On the other side, Australian publishers have been notably reluctant to have titles taken up by Indian counterparts (1, 18). This may in recent times be connected to the failure of the Australian-focused Calcutta Book

Fair (1), but also relates to Indian financial arrangements not being sufficiently lucrative for the Australian supplier (and copyright differences that make things less rewarding for authors) (18). There seems also to be a colonialist attitude amongst some publishers who have a fixed idea of what India is like and what readers will want (19). They need to be alerted to the huge market represented by the English-speaking middle class. The Indian book market is reputed to be worth US\$2 billion of which 25% is trade titles in English and another 25% tertiary texts (*Times of India* Jan 09). The expansion of Penguin India's literary list, the boom in 'chick lit' and 'yuppie' titles under Rupa, the incursions of Hachette, Harper Collins and Random House, and the spread of coffee shops and bookstores across the major cities should indicate a healthy potential market and relative ease of moving many Australian titles into the Indian bookshops. Although the raw numbers of places offering courses on Australian topics seem tiny, Indian figures have to be read in terms of population. Indira Gandhi National Open University alone has a potential student market of about 1000 and other sites have a core paper in Australian Literature that would cover at least 100 students each. This is per annum, so we are dealing with the average print run in Australia of some literary titles multiplied over the life of a text on a course.

The opening up of the Indian economy to the global 'free market' has brought in the usual international best sellers (Colleen McCullough has two titles with Harper Collins India—and no, they don't include *The Thorn Birds*!) but has also sparked interest in the diasporic Indian literary community and local writers who can emulate fashionable overseas trends. NRI (non-resident Indian) autobiographies are appearing on the shelves. It is interesting to see that this, plus the conference circuit and interest in South Asian Australian writing sees Bem Le Hunte (*The Seduction of Silence*, 2000 *There Where the Pepper Grows*, 2006), David McMahon (*Vegemite Vindaloo*, 2006), Chandani Lokugé (*If the Moon Smiled*, 2000) and Yasmine Gooneratne (*Masterpiece and Other Stories*, 2002) on lists of Indian publishers. Adib Khan and now Pakistani-Australian Azhar Abidi have work on bookshop shelves in major stores. Fascination with how India is represented by outsiders leads to Sarah Macdonald's debunking travelogue *Holy Cow* (2002) turning up on a book display in a tourist roadside eatery in Rajasthan and Gregory David Roberts' *Shantaram* (2003) being stocked by most railway booksellers. At the turn of the year, Adiga's mix of birthplace, Booker and NRI background meant you could buy *The White Tiger* (2008) from children peddling magazines at any intersection in a major city. If we combine academic practice and market penetration, we come up with the odd couple in fiction of Australia being most represented by *Voss* and two tales of the underworld of modern India! Perceptions of relevance relating to sales may well produce the effect of having Australian literature represented generally in India by a set of 'multicultural' or 'diasporic' writers who make only a passing splash in the ocean of Aust. Lit. in Australia. So while Michael Jacklin expresses concern that the transnational turn might 'sideline' multicultural writing in Australia, the opposite effect appears to obtain in India. The flip side of this is that these writers are marketed and/or read there not so much as Australian as just other diasporic Indians.

Continuing nationalist anti-colonial feeling and intra-national concern for the rights of tribal and low-caste groups produces a strong curiosity about Aborigines. This has resulted in Sally Morgan's *My Place* (1987), Kim Scott's *Benang* (1999) and even Ken Coburg's *Bibulmun Legends* (1991) being briefly taken up by Indian publishing houses. It may not seem to be a lot, but it is backed up by a consistent classroom interest, so that studies are being done on Jack Davis, on Oodgeroo and *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* (1996) to the point where the average Indian student of Australian literature probably comes away with a quite different sense of the national literary scene than is the case in Australia. Aboriginality is associated

with skin colour in India, so that Indians are often quite disconcerted to meet the people they read about and discover they are not all of a uniform dark hue (17). C.A. Cranston reports the converse as well; in her classes at Madras University, some students read writing from the 1890s as though it were all Aboriginal because they couldn't believe white Australians would live in such rural poverty. Such a view clearly flies in the face of reality, but it does serve as an example of how transnational viewpoints can speak back: arguably, it is appropriate to construct a national literature that starts with and is seen through Aboriginal writing, just as it is instructive to Indian students to learn that class and identity is not determined only by skin colour.

What is interesting is the gradual inter-penetration of the two countries in ways that go beyond mere diaspora to demand use of terms like 'transnational' and 'cosmopolitan'. Aravind Adiga might fit under both labels, both personally and in the global awareness of his fiction, but not all cross-overs can be comfortably labelled either diasporic or cosmopolitan. Christopher Cyrill, who does engage with diasporic nostalgia, does so via a literary constructedness unconnected to his own experience. Cyrill is born in Australia of Anglo-Indian parents, and works neither with a nostalgic doubled consciousness of split belonging nor a freely bricolaging multinational fictional world. Equally, Suneeta Peres da Costa records a migrant mother's mental anguish at separation from her native Goa, but centres the 'homework' of her novel on the daughter's troubled but resolutely Australian world. This does take in international affairs and a sardonic demolition of nationalist stereotypes and the realities of multiculturalism, but nonetheless refuses ethnic separation, diasporic longing and an insouciant globalised consumerism alike. Da Costa produced much of her novel while studying in New York and had it published in London before it made it to Australian shelves. Transnational seems to be the most appropriate label with which to read such writing.

Another writer of interest in this context (because she represents the other side of the transnational exchange) is Inez Baranay. While she comes of a background that would in the past at least have led to her work being considered under the 'migrant' or 'multicultural' label, she has shifted ground, literally and in her writing, until her last two novels have been published in India. *Neem Dreams* (2003) shows the messy complicity of everyone in modernity, in global trade, in self-interested encounters with another culture, in local political corruption, but nonetheless reserves the right to say something about global 'biopiracy' (Indra & Pinto 159). The multi-perspective text owes something to Forster's *A Passage to India* ('Aspects'), but it also derives from her own sense of unsettled transnational movements.

What I am focusing on here is a subtle reversal of the transnational in which India absorbs elements of Australia, reconfiguring the idea of Asian-Australian writing while also modifying the Australianness in some of the (South) Asian-Australian and even unhyphenated Australian work. Les Murray, for example, has had one collection of poems published in India and has begun to occupy a space in English departments there as a surrogate Indian—or at least as an Australian occasion for discussing Indian matters—via his 'Walking to the Cattle Place' sequence that speculates on the world civilisational history of nomadic herders, connecting Australia's rural heritage with the Aryan settlement of the Indus and Gangetic plains. Adib Khan—who messes with the critical categories by shifting from diasporic stories to one set in India to another on Vietnam Vets in Australia—makes the point that once books are taken up in other countries, 'they may not be widely read and perhaps not categorized as Australian writers but that they will open... up vistas that lead to further debate and self-questioning about identity and belonging.' (*Kosmopolis* 9).

Even-Zohar concentrates on the processes of canon formation and reformation without actually mentioning the word 'nation', but he does acknowledge that there is power and difference playing across the systems he describes (293), and the idea that texts undergo 'conversion' according to whether or not they meet the values and functional requirements of the central systems in play (295) directs us to consider the contexts, historical and cultural that determine the shifts in texts and what they mean to the people processing them (scholars, translators, publishers, marketers, readers). One such context is the spread of modernity. Mary Helen McMurrin extends Benedict Anderson's tying of nation to novel by calling for a periodising of 'the cultural mobility of fiction' according to the conditions of modernity in each location, noting that the history of the novel has always been transnational as well as national. She voices the problem of how we can learn to write literary history in an era of transnational circulation and transfiguration. This is a conundrum that has spread from decolonising nationalist critiques of the Eng. Lit. canon and its narrative of consolidation over time into other disciplines and beyond the revisionary comparative nationalisms that resulted (Sharrad 2008, Hallam 76). India has led the theoretical attack on constructions of history itself as a way of knowing, and we are challenged to find ways of configuring a history of Aust. Lit. that will encompass all the movements of texts and valuations of them into transnational terrains in a manner that will avoid unitary teleologies or relativised models grounded on an underlying universalist narrative of post-nationalist globalisation.

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