

Australian, New Zealand and Pacific Literatures

edited and introduced by
Rudolf Bader and Anja Schwarz
with contributions by Gerhard Stilz

POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURES IN ENGLISH

SOURCES AND RESOURCES

Edited by

Tobias Döring, Frank Schulze-Engler and Gerhard Stilz

VOL. II

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General Preface

Postcolonial Literatures in English have become a central field of research and study. If studying 'English' was once synonymous with studying literature from Britain, and later with looking into a bipolar literary world comprising Britain and the USA, it is today a critical engagement with a global network of English-language literatures and cultures. This engagement encompasses a broad spectrum of linguistic varieties, including speakers or writers who may use English (or a variety of English) as only one of the options available to them in their specific socio-cultural context.

The six volumes of *Postcolonial Literatures in English: Sources and Resources* aim to help students and teachers of literature in exploring the diversity of this global network. Postcolonial Literatures in English are linked through a common history of colonisation and decolonisation, but also through current transnational connections in an increasingly globalized world and by transcultural lifeworlds established by large-scale migration and diasporic populations. At the same time, these literatures are very specific engagements with widely diverging experiences of colonisation and decolonisation, local histories and entangled modernities. The volumes in this series on (1) *South Asian Literatures*, (2) *Australian, New Zealand and Pacific Literatures*, (3) *African Literatures*, (4) *Canadian Literatures*, (5) *Caribbean Literatures*, and (6) *Black and Asian British Literatures* address both the local, regional or national contexts in which these literatures have emerged and the transnational and transcultural connections that link them to each other and the wider 'English-speaking world.'

The volumes bring together fully annotated original historical and critical texts documenting the material, political and cultural conditions from which anglophone writing has emerged and continues to operate in the specific regions. Each volume contains an introduction setting out major trends and developments in the region, provides recommendations for further reading and explores the specificities of the region within a general framework focussing on histories, identities, language, education, movements and genres as well as transcultural perspectives. The book series allows easy access to helpful background knowledge on the broad range of postcolonial literatures, aims at facilitating critical dialogues with literary and intellectual voices from relevant regions, and hopes to generate further insights into the interconnectedness of anglophone literatures around the world.

Tobias Döring, Frank Schulze-Engler and Gerhard Stilz

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Introduction

The vast area covered in this second volume of the new series *Postcolonial Literatures in English: Sources and Resources*, at first glance may appear to be too large to be treated adequately in such a slim volume. However, apart from economical considerations of the publishing process, and despite the obvious diversities within the wide expanse of the cultural achievements of this area, there are indeed several geographical, cultural and historical reasons which warrant a common and joint approach to the literatures of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. In spite of the heterogeneity in ethnicities, in indigenous backgrounds, in economic significance, in global recognition and in political and ecological problem areas that can be identified, the first and foremost similarities and common grounds shared by these various countries and regions can be found in their historical connections related to, and based on, European discovery voyages and the utopian projections of European Romanticism. Furthermore, the literatures of this wide area more often than not enjoy a certain academic unity in so far as there is a vibrant contact among the academics of the area (and often, too, among the artists and writers). Likewise, (not only European) academic research into the various regions of the area is often closely linked in terms of persons and institutions.

Like the first volume in this series, which dealt with sources and resources for the literatures of South Asia, this book has been designed to provide European readers with a useful background of contexts and basic information on the literatures in English from Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. It is the first attempt of its kind dealing with this entire region, even though some thirty years ago two separate pioneering forerunners for Australia and New Zealand were prepared by a group of German academics, but never reached publication because the series was abandoned before its completion.¹

The historical connections lie in the way in which the collective European consciousness took possession of the entire Pacific region, the other side of the world, the Antipodes. Long before the first European humans ever set foot on South Pacific soil or even sailed through its expansive waters, philosophers and scientists developed their Eurocentric visions of the other side of the world. The very name of Australia goes back to ancient Greek, Egyptian and Roman thinkers more than two thousand years ago who – for various scientific as well as fantastic reasons – claimed the existence of an unknown southern land mass, which they accordingly called *Terra Australis Incognita*. After the European Middle Ages, near the end of the 15th century, once the rotundity of the earth was generally accepted

¹ Werner Arens, Dieter Riemenschneider & Gerhard Stilz, eds., *Grundlagen zur Literatur in englischer Sprache*, vol. 2: *Australien* & vol. 3: *Neuseeland* (München: Fink). The introduction and the commentaries to these primers were planned in German so that their distribution would have been largely limited to a German-speaking audience.

and the art of navigation was sufficiently advanced, a great number of European explorers began to sail to those unknown distant parts of the world. Their motivations (or the reasons for those who financed them) were scientific, religious, economic and strategic. These 'discovery voyages' not only advanced scientific research or increased the influence of the Christian religion and the political power of European seafaring nations, they also renewed long-established fantasies of Antipodean topsy-turvydom and generated new ones of exoticism, especially towards the second half of the 18th and well into the 19th century. The islands of the South Pacific with their lush vegetation, their strange fauna and their alien peoples, but also their almost unimaginable geographical and mental distance from Europe, nourished the Romantic yearning for a distant exotic paradise on earth. And it was only well into the 19th century when such notions clashed violently with the realities encountered. However, the fact remains that many of the regions treated in this volume were first discovered, explored and exploited by European powers in the same process. In this race for intellectual, political and material gain, it was eventually the British who won over their French and Dutch competitors.

Once Australia, New Zealand and most of the Pacific Islands had been taken possession of for the British crown, their histories began to diverge, with Australia taking a leading position in the negative European images created due to its position as a convict colony, whereas New Zealand became the lesser known destination for free emigration, and the Pacific Islands remained the key projections of European exotic day-dreaming while being no less exposed to economic exploitation. Through the past two centuries, the entire region served as an important source of Britain's economic success, supplying major raw materials, being united under the umbrella of the Commonwealth of Nations, enjoying substantial trade privileges and only falling from this grace after Britain's new alliance with Continental Europe in the 1970s. The region also served Britain's strategic power, an alliance which gradually shifted towards the United States after the Second World War. Britain's language, culture and institutions dominated the entire region for the greater part of this period, and it is only in the last quarter of the 20th century that other influences have been able, at long last, to make themselves felt more markedly, particularly influences from non-British or non-Irish provenance through multicultural immigration and from indigenous peoples fighting for political and cultural recognition in their own ancestral homelands. Towards the end of the 20th century, with the rapid development of world travel and the ideas of globalisation, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific became the favoured destinations of European tourists and vice versa, so that both ends of the world have come closer to each other in many ways. In this process of cultural globalisation, it has become increasingly insignificant for English-speaking authors to declare themselves as English, American, Australian or New Zealanders, even though many significant differences remain, particularly for authors of indigenous background.

This is where this book hopes to be of use by way of offering a general introduction to the field, by historical and critical texts that help to understand the formative conditions and impulses of the literatures in English from Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific, by brief introductions to these texts and, finally, by a list of recommended handbooks and further reading.

Australia, being the largest and today the most powerful nation among the countries under consideration here, was populated by Aboriginal people for a long period before the arrival of the first Europeans. Exact figures cannot be determined, but estimates vary from 30,000 to 200,000 years. Although the first European individual to set foot on Australian soil was the Dutch sailor Willem Jansz in 1602 and various other stray sailors visited its north-western coastline through the 17th and 18th centuries, modern Australian history conventionally sets in with its 'official' discovery by Captain James Cook in 1770 and its subsequent establishment as a convict colony with the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788. After the establishment of several British convict colonies along the Australian coast, from Moreton Bay (today Brisbane) in the north-east through Botany Bay (today Sydney) to Swan River (today Perth) in the west, free settlers remained reluctant to emigrate to a new land burdened by such painful connotations, and it took them over another quarter of a century to start the first free colony in Adelaide. The convict past as well as the harsh natural conditions reported in European travelogues remained a strong impediment for many emigrants through the 19th century. It was mainly the Gold Rush between 1851 and 1870 that managed to quadruple Australia's population (i.e. its European population, since Aborigines were non-existent for statistics) from 500,000 to 2 million. It was also during the Gold Rush period that the first political conflict between the new Australians and British authorities broke out. The conflict which arose over licenses required for the digging of gold on Bakery Hill in Ballarat (Victoria) is known up to the present day as the Eureka Stockade. The affair culminated in an armed conflict which lasted for only ten minutes on 3 December 1854, when a force of 270 soldiers and police attacked the diggers' stockade and dispersed its 150 defenders. With only five soldiers and 30 miners killed, it was nevertheless the only armed conflict approaching civil war status on Australian soil. Grown out of strong anti-authoritarian feelings among the gold diggers – nourished by memories of the power structures which had created the convict system only a few generations before – it laid the foundation for egalitarianism, republicanism and democratic fervour as important elements of the Australian psyche. It was during the same period, too, that the new Australians became aware of the inherent racism in their cultural understanding, when they took measures to limit the rights of Chinese immigrants who had been equally attracted to Australia by the gold findings in Victoria. How much of all this contributed to the emergence of unionism and nationalism towards the 1890s remains a historical debate, but the fact is that, as a result of the political and cultural nationalism of the 1890s, the Australian colonies gained their independence from Great Britain and were united as the new "Commonwealth of Australia" in 1901. The partly legendary period of the 1890s and its role as the decade of Australian nationalism have been the subject of substantial historical and sociological research over the past century, revealing a uniquely Australian feature of such a revolutionary period, which consisted of the common drive supported equally by the working classes and by the cultural elite of the country. The 1890s can be seen not only as the decade of political nationalism but also as the period of literary nationalism, with the magazine *The Bulletin* under the editorship of J. F. Archibald and A. G. Stephens playing an important part by calling upon all Australians to contribute Australian material for their "Red Page."

Through the 20th century, Australia's cultural history was shaped by its gradual movement away from British dominance between 1901 and the 1950s, spurred on partly by Australian experiences in the Boer War, in the 'Great War' (especially at Gallipoli) and in the Second World War (especially by its geographical position). Other conditions, such as the Great Depression of the 1930s, the more radical political debates throughout the first half of the century and the shock of the Japanese air raids on Darwin on 19 February 1942 – the largest attacks ever mounted by a foreign power against Australia – also found resonance in the nation's cultural consciousness. Immigration until the middle of the century still came mainly from England, Scotland and Ireland, while increasing numbers of people also arrived from other countries, especially Italy and Greece. After the Second World War, however, all this shifted dramatically. The new post-war power constellation suggested a strengthened political alliance with the United States, confirmed by the ANZUS Pact of 1951. Australian capital cities and public life became visibly more Americanized. Immigration became much more multicultural, beginning with the so-called 'displaced persons' from war-ridden Eastern Europe, but widening to a large variety of people, initially only limited by the 'White Australia Policy,' a set of political measures and legislations founded by the "Immigration Restriction Act" at Federation in 1901 and only gradually dismantled between 1949 and 1973. With the official abandonment of that racist policy the gates were opened not only for refugees from Vietnam and immigrants from other regions of the world, but also for a new recognition of Australia's own people, the Aborigines. This process of recognition and reconciliation was marked by various significant milestones, such as the Mabo and Wik cases in the 1980s and 90s and the Prime Minister's official apology at the beginning of the 21st century, but the process is still far from completed today.

Thus, the cultural development of Australia has undergone some rather dramatic changes and new orientations through the 20th century. At the time of Federation in 1901, Australia had been a relatively narrow-minded set of provincial state capitals determined by such factors as its geography (with natural 'anomalies,' climatic extremes and the 'tyranny of distance'), the legacies from its convict past and its pioneer society (anti-authoritarianism, egalitarianism, anti-intellectualism and the concept of 'mateship' among male labourers) as well as its allegiance to the British Empire. In the middle of the century, Australian culture was preoccupied with the definition of its identity: geographically, historically, culturally, politically and economically. And by the beginning of the 21st century, Australia has become a modern multicultural nation whose cultural consciousness is determined by its role within a globalized economy, by its firm belief in Human Rights, by its participation in global endeavours for sustainable development and by its recognition of the need for environmental protection.

In literature, Australian authors had to struggle for publication and recognition in England until well into the second half of the 20th century. This situation was radically improved with the Nobel Prize for Literature being awarded to the Australian novelist and playwright Patrick White in 1973. For many European readers, Australian literature only began to become visible with Patrick White. However, we can find a wealth of good writing from Australia produced throughout the second half of the 19th century – with writers like Catherine Helen Spence, Ada