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I frame this account of the history of Australian children’s literature between two texts: the first Australian-published book for children, *A Mother’s Offering to Her Children* (1841), and Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival* (2006). *A Mother’s Offering* was directed to British-born and first-generation children of British settlers, introducing them to the dangers and wonders of Australia; *The Arrival* follows the journey of a migrant, who leaves his wife and daughter in their impoverished town to seek a better life for his family. It would be an oversimplification to say that *A Mother’s Offering* is didactic while *The Arrival* is not, since writing for children is always informed by socialising agendas, overt and covert. Although the texts differ sharply in their mode of address and the subject positions they offer readers, they are alike in their preoccupation with how newcomers to a strange land make sense of the multiple forms of strangeness they encounter. *A Mother’s Offering* interprets Australia to child readers, offering explanations for its geographical and botanical features and the lives and culture of Aboriginal people, or ‘natives’. *The Arrival* works as a meditation on diasporic and refugee experience, and the processes whereby a stranger becomes a citizen. For my purposes, the two texts function as bookends, drawing attention to the vast shifts of sentiment and representation which characterise Australian children’s literature between 1841 and 2006.

*A Mother’s Offering* is unambiguously a children’s book. The text is framed as a series of conversations between a mother, Mrs Saville, and her four children, three girls and a boy, so that children outside the book can align themselves with the children within, who listen to stories told by an authoritative, knowledgeable female narrator. The audience of *The Arrival* is not so readily defined, since this text crosses notional boundaries between child and adult readers, and has been especially popular among readers of graphic novels and science fiction. Its subject-matter, which incorporates stories by and about characters who have endured pogroms and wars, implies older children and young adults, the audiences of Shaun Tan’s previous picture books including *The Rabbits* (1998) and *The Lost Thing* (2000). Many picture books, even those directed at young children, involve what Barbara Wall describes as ‘dual address’, engaging children in narrative at the same time that they offer adults the pleasure of recognising allusions and meanings
which will often be unavailable to children. The most illustrious Australian example is Tohby Riddle's *The Great Escape from City Zoo* (1997), which deftly incorporates visual references to Edward Hopper, Rene Magritte and the Beatles into its story about the escape of four animals—an elephant, a flamingo, a turtle, an ant eater—from the confines of a zoo, their adventures and eventual recapture (with the exception of the flamingo).

In terms of the readership it addresses, Tan's *The Arrival* differs from *The Great Escape from City Zoo* in that its framing narrative implies readers with some knowledge of 20th-century histories of forced migration and displacement, whereas *The Great Escape* is readily accessible to young children as a story following a schema common in children's literature: when characters leave their home (or place of imprisonment) to embark on adventures, returning at the end of the narrative. Contemporary Australian picture books traverse readerships from babies to young adults as well as the adults (parents, teachers) who mediate texts to children. In another respect too, it is not easy to determine when books are ‘for children’. It has always been the case that young readers have appropriated texts intended for a general audience; examples include Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. During the last decade the reverse trend has been evident, with many books for children and young adults simultaneously marketed to adults. I focus in this chapter on books directed at young people, while recognising that readerships of such books are often broader than their primary audience.

**Australian publishing for children: Antecedents and development**

Australian publishing for children developed from British publishing practices and literary models. In the 1740s the British publisher John Newbery recognised the potential for children's books to attract a middle-class market of parents intent on providing their offspring with reading material that would teach them useful social accomplishments as well as moral and religious values. By the time *A Mother's Offering* was published in Sydney in 1841, then, the British children's book industry was already a century old, producing popular material in the form of chapbooks and periodicals, religious fiction published by organisations like the Religious Tract Society, poetry, and illustrated books. In the United States, too, the Puritans had published instructional material for children from the 1680s to supplement the books they imported from Britain, and following the War of 1812 American publishers, responding to the nationalism of the times, increasingly produced books set in the United States and featuring American children as protagonists.

The emergence of children's literature in Australia has a good deal in common with
the trajectory of Canadian and New Zealand children's literature, where similarly a
reliance on British books and literary precedents continued well into the 20th century,
tracking the cultural shifts whereby former colonies established themselves as inde­
pendent nations. Roderick McGillis notes that a distinctively Canadian literature for
children began to emerge in the 1970s; before this time, he says, 'much of Canada's lit­
erature reflected either the nation's colonial past or the influence of the United States'.

In New Zealand, too, according to Betty Gilderdale, the 1970s saw 'a spectacular trans­
formation in both the quantity and quality of New Zealand children's literature' as
authors such as Margaret Mahy, Maurice Gee and Tessa Duder gained popularity. Simi­
larly the children's book industry in Australia enjoyed rapid growth in the 1960s, with a
phase of energetic development in the 1980s. Contemporary texts for children in these
three nations are informed by the particular and local assumptions of the societies in
which they are produced; at the same time, the publishing industry exists at the nexus
of globalising influences, and multinational publishing conglomerates control a large
proportion of literary production for children.

The extent to which 19th-century and early-20th-century children's books can be
seen to be 'Australian' relates more to their authorship and content than to their place
of publication, since books by Australian and British authors continued to be published
in Britain until well into the 20th century. Brenda Niall notes in *Australia through the
Looking-Glass* that 'for the greater part of the 19th century the literary perspective
from which Australian scenes were created was predominantly that of the outsider', as
representations of Australia were generally filtered through a British perspective; and
texts were addressed more to the primary audience of British children than to the
smaller audience of Australian children. Indeed, many British authors, including W.
H. G. Kingston, Frank Sargent and Anne Bowman, produced settler and adventure
novels set in Australia without any *first-hand* experience of the country, relying on
travellers' tales and documentary writing for local colour and basing their characters
and narratives on British models. Between 1865 and 1884, for instance, Kingston
produced seven novels featuring settler families and their adventures in Australia, in
which characters typically learn to live off the land and engage in a series of adventures
involving bushfires, floods, snakes, encounters with wild Aborigines, bushrangers and
mutinous stockmen, and with formulaic closures in which characters are ensconced in
homes which reproduce Britain in Australia. In *The Gilpins and their Fortunes* (1865),

2 Betty Gilderdale, 'Children's Literature', in T Sturm (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in
3 See Robyn Sheahan-Bright, 'To Market, To Market: The Development of the Australian Children's
pp. 191–217.
the narrator addresses British children as potential emigrants, disclosing the agenda of this and other Kingston novels: 'No more need be said than this – that an honest hard­working man who goes to Australia with a family, though he may meet with many ups and downs, may be pretty sure of doing well himself, and of settling his children comfortably around him.'

_A Mother's Offering_ is addressed squarely to Australian children; but the perspective filtered through Mrs Saville's descriptions of Australian geography, flora and fauna is that of a cultured British migrant viewing the new land through British eyes. Charlotte Barton, the 'lady long resident in New South Wales' who wrote _A Mother's Offering_, asserts in the preface that the book's main virtue is 'the truth of the subjects narrated'.

In this respect Barton's text can be seen as a descendant of influential British works such as _Lessons for Children_, by Anna Letitia Barbauld, published in 1778 and 1779, and Ellenor Fenn's _Cobwebs to Catch Flies_ (1783), both of which incorporated information and moral precepts into conversations between mothers and children. The children addressed by Mrs Saville in _A Mother's Offering_ are older than those of _Lessons for Children_ and _Cobwebs to Catch Flies_, but they are similarly represented as docile subjects and assiduous students. Through their questions and responses they model the values and attitudes of middle-class children of their period.

_A Mother's Offering_ departs from its British antecedents in its emphasis on the exotic and the adventurous: stories of exploration, shipwreck and kidnapping; and accounts of Indigenous cultures and people. As the following excerpt demonstrates, the Saville children are depicted as young explorers and botanists:

CLAIRA – ‘The country is very magnificent all about those Mountain Ranges. I dare say there are many wonderful things yet undiscovered. I should like to spend many weeks exploring in the neighbourhood.

JULIUS – ‘So should I; I would take my spears and try to spear some of those beautiful birds for Mama to have stuffed.'

The children's reactions and their interests here and elsewhere in _A Mother's Offering_ are heavily gendered. Clara’s description evokes the picturesque tradition in its emphasis on the grandeur of the scenery and the wonder and awe it arouses; Julius', in contrast, is related to traditions of adventure writing involving energetic action and the manly pursuit of hunting. The metanarrative informing this description – and the entire book – involves an empty land waiting to be discovered by the children and (by implication) readers of the book.

A large proportion of _A Mother's Offering_ is devoted to stories of shipwreck. The stories of William D'Oyley, the son of passengers on the _Charles Eaton_, and of John Ireland, an apprentice on the same ship, are captivity narratives, tracing the boys’ experience

7 W H G Kingston, _The Gilp1ns and their Fortunes_, SPCK, p 64
8 _A Mother’s Offering to Her Children by A Lady Long Resident in New South Wales_ [1841], Jacaranda, facs. edn, 1970, Preface
9 Ibid., p 9.
when they are 'kidnapped' by Aborigines from Murray Island. Like other colonial captivity narratives, Mrs Saville's account of the wrecking of the Charles Eaton and the death of passengers and crew at the hands of Torres Strait Islanders10 demonstrates the superiority of whiteness through contrasts between civilisation and savagery. Unlike captivity narratives directed at adult audiences, such as the Eliza Fraser stones, which are imbued with prurient pleasure evoked by images of a white woman forced into sexual relations with black men, the stories of kidnapped children in A Mother's Offering focus on their suffering and helplessness, and on their longing for home and family. Kay Schaffer notes that colonial accounts of the shipwreck of the Stirling Castle depict Indigenous women as particularly cruel to captives, and as embodying a lower form of humanity than Indigenous men.11 In contrast, A Mother's Offering, directed to a young audience of boys and girls (mirroring the Saville children), is concerned with positioning boy readers as future protectors of women, and girl readers as future mothers. This makes for a complex and fraught treatment of Indigenous women: kind and loving like Duppah, the Murray Island woman who takes care of William D'Oyley and John Ireland; or unmotherly and promiscuous like Nanny, described in the chapter 'Anecdotes of the Aborigines of New South Wales', whose story comprises a veiled warning against miscegenation.12

A Mother's Offering can be seen as a precursor to the settler narratives and adventure stories (mainly produced in Britain) of the second half of the 19th century. Its descriptions of Australian landscapes position young readers to regard settlers as explorers of country which is unseen until they view it, unknown until they discover it; and the differences embodied in geographical features, flora and fauna are defined in relation to normative European settings. Mrs Saville's preoccupation with botanical names and with close descriptions of exotica such as palm trees anticipates the fiction of other women writers such as Louisa Anne Meredith, whose 'anecdotes of birds and animals' in Tasmanian Friends and Foes, Feathered, Furred and Finned (1880) are said to be 'facts, set down simply from our own experience';13 quasi-scientific information provided in an authoritative tone. The narratives of exploration incorporated into A Mother's Offering, as well as its descriptions of geographical and natural phenomena, demonstrate to young readers that the new land and its features are there to be discovered and owned, through physical journeys and the application of European systems of knowledge to the land, its animals and vegetation.

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10 See McRae Eru, on incidents of shipwreck in Torres Strait history. Eru points out that 'shipwrecked people in Torres Strait and the neighbouring Papuan coast were often secretly killed in order to "send them back to their origins"' - "Cooking, Walking, and Talking Cosmology: An Islander Woman's Perspective of Religion", in R. Davis (ed), Woven Histories, Dancing Lives: Torres Strait Islander Identity, Culture and History, Aboriginal Studies Press, p. 145.
11 Kay Schaffer, In the Wake of First Contact. The Eliza Fraser Stones, CUP, 1995, pp 98-9
The descriptions of Indigenous people woven throughout *A Mother's Offering* also anticipate the typologies of Indigeneity which inform settler and adventure novels for young people, and which persist well into the 20th century. Indigenous people feature as barbaric figures intent on murdering travellers; as comic relief (especially in descriptions of Aboriginal people wearing European clothes); as 'good' natives, like Duppah, who wish only to minister to Europeans; and, like Sally, a 'half-caste, or brown child', as tragic figures torn between cultures because of their mixed racial heritage. All these modes of representation are informed by the conviction that 'they' are a lower order of humans, having little in common with the delicately reared Saville children and the implied readers of *A Mother's Offering*. At the very beginning of Australian writing for children, then, the presence of Indigenous people and the violence of colonialism trouble a narrative which positions readers as young colonials. This dilemma – how to represent Australia to young people while addressing the unresolved consequences of the nation's colonial foundation – stalks Australian children's literature to the present.

As writers living or spending extended periods in Australia began to produce fiction for young people, narratives shifted from stories of British emigrant families and individuals re-creating Britain in Australia, to accounts of young characters, the new 'natives' of the country, forging Australian identities. Toward the end of the 19th century British publishers began to employ agents in Australia to commission works for publication, and as the Australian audience increased in number and purchasing capacity, books for children began to reflect an Australian nationalism centred on the bush and young protagonists who identified as Australians. Many of Robert Richardson's short stories and novels, for instance, feature young protagonists who are 'strong and hardy, as a settler's children should be', and whose characters are tested by adventures in rural settings.

Although myths of Australian nationhood at the end of the 19th century centred on the bush, the book which most forcefully promoted itself as Australian, Ethel Turner's *Seven Little Australians* (1894), locates its story of family life in a suburban setting: Misrule, a house 'some distance up the Parramatta River'. Turner's description of Misrule is, however, strikingly bush-like: 'there was a big wilderness of a garden, two or three paddocks, numberless sheds for hide-and-seek, and, best of all, the water'; the children – except for the eldest son Pip, who goes to the grammar school – are taught by a governess; and a crucial episode, the death of Judy, occurs in the bush, when the children and their stepmother Esther are holidaying at Yarrahappini, the cattle station owned by Esther's parents.

*Seven Little Australians* was published in London, winning praise from Mark Twain and George Meredith. In Australia it was immediately popular and is the only 19th-century Australian text still read by children, having attracted a new readership following

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14 *A Mother's Offering*, p. 199.
15 Robert Richardson, *A Little Australian Girl; and Other Stones*, Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrer, 1881, p 3
16 Ethel Turner, *Seven Little Australians*, Ward Lock, p 13
a 1973 television series based on the novel. Turner begins by appealing to an Australian nationalism which seeks to differentiate Australia from Britain:

Not one of the seven is really good, for the very excellent reason that Australian children never are. In England, and America, and Africa, and Asia, the little folks may be paragons of virtue... In Australia a model child is — I say it not without thankfulness — an unknown quantity.

It may be the miasmas of naughtiness develop best in the sunny brilliancy of our atmosphere. It may be that the land and people are young-hearted together, and the children's spirits not crushed and saddened by the shadow of long years' sorrowful history.  

The novel is built around the escapades of the Woolcot children, the offspring of a career soldier who has remarried following the death of his first wife. Thirteen-year-old Judy, the instigator of much of the children's mischief, is in the mould of other wilful, rebellious girls in fiction: Jo March in Little Women, Anne Shirley in Anne of Green Gables. Indeed, Brenda Niall remarks that "to call Ethel Turner "Miss Alcott's true successor" or "the Australian Louisa Alcott" became a reviewers' platitude and useful phrase for advertisements of her work." Nevertheless, Turner's narrative follows a far more melodramatic direction than either Little Women or Anne of Green Gables, in which wild girls are tamed by domesticity and romance. Judy runs away from the boarding school where her father has sent her because he regards her as uncontrollable; she embarks on a week-long walk to Misrule, and develops pneumonia, to be discovered by her father in the shed where her siblings have been harbouring her. The children and Esther are sent for a holiday to Yarrahappin, where Judy dies, crushed under a falling gumtree as she rushes to save the General, her baby stepbrother.

The world of Seven Little Australians is that of the Anglo-Celtic, middle-class children implied as its audience. But the citizens of Yarrahappin include a 'bent old black fellow', Tettawonga, who had 'earned' a permanent home 20 years earlier, when he saved the baby Esther and her mother from bushrangers. The cattle station can be read as a metonymy for the nation, incorporating a tame Indigenous presence which bestows legitimacy upon the squattocracy represented by Esther's father. Soothing the General to sleep and making 'a billy of hot, strong tea' for the children as they gather around the dying Judy, Tettawonga conforms to the colonial trope of the loyal black servant who demonstrates the benevolence of his masters.

Turner's depiction of Judy's death produces a striking combination of themes and images vital to notions of Australian nationhood and citizenship at the turn of the 20th century. The bush is both a homely space and a place of danger; it is also a settled site where Tettawonga's presence affirms white nationhood. As an unruly feminine subject, Judy is a danger to social order, and must either succumb to a life of domesticity and

18 Ibid., p. 7 19 Ibid., p. 63. 20 Ibid., p. 146. 21 Ibid., p. 184

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motherhood, or experience rejection. Turner chooses the drastic option of killing Judy off, but her death is also a salvific act which confers life on a young child. In effect, her dying restores order; fittingly, her hilltop grave is surrounded by that most iconic – and orderly – of Australian domestic signifiers, a white paling fence.

The coming Australia and children’s texts

Turner continued to write fiction for children and adults until 1928, but none of her subsequent novels was as popular as Seven Little Australians. From 1910, when Mary Grant Bruce published A Little Bush Maid, Bruce’s fiction rivalled Turner’s for its appeal to Australian readers, with 15 Billabong books published from A Little Bush Maid to the last of the series, Billabong Riders in 1942. The Billabong setting is a utopian imagining of the bush, set on a cattle station owned by David Linton, father of Norah, the eponymous bush maid. Much of the action of the Billabong books (apart from the three wartime novels, set in Britain) relies upon interactions between city visitors and Billabong’s inhabitants. The city–bush binary runs along consistent lines: city-dwellers are impractical and vain, spoiled by lives of luxury, while the Lintons and their inner circle live simple, outdoor lives and possess a firm moral code. City visitors are almost without exception reformed by their exposure to the ‘real Australia’ of Billabong, returning to their city lives as improved characters.

Like Misrule, Billabong metonymically represents the nation as white and Anglo-Celtic, but the extensive population of servants and workers at Billabong is organised along lines of class, gender and race. The inner circle comprises David Linton, Norah and her brother Jim; then comes Wally Meadows, a schoolfriend of Jim’s, who is adopted into the Linton family (and eventually marries Norah); and on the fringes, various visitors and long-term guests. A class divide separates Browne, the cook-housekeeper, from the Lintons; and the head stockman Murty O’Toole, the token Irishman, occupies a place equivalent to Browne in the outdoor world of the station. The next tier of workers comprises housemaids and station workers. At the bottom of the class hierarchy are two figures located at the margins by reason of class and race: Lee Wing, who is in charge of the vegetable garden, and Black Billy, Bruce’s equivalent of Turner’s Tettawonga. Bruce’s depiction of Lee Wing and Black Billy over the 30 years of the Billabong books evinces a shift as the two transmute from stereotypes to trusted retainers; nevertheless, hierarchies of class and race remain intact, signalling to young readers the racial logic that distinguishes Indigenous and Chinese characters from the white inhabitants of Billabong.

The Billabong books proposed a version of Australian nationhood located in the bush and valorising the honesty, directness and work ethic of an idealised settler family. Many of the fantasies that emerged during the first decades of the 20th century projected similar settler virtues onto anthropomorphised native animals: for instance, Ethel Pedley’s Dot and the Kangaroo (1899), May Gibbs’ Snugglepot and Cuddlepie (1918), and Dorothy
Wall's *Blinky Bill* (1933). Norman Lindsay's *The Magic Pudding* (1918), which involves a combination of human and anthropomorphised characters, has often been read as a parable about the formation of nationhood, with the pudding representing the coming Australia of the post-war era. The determinedly and self-consciously local emphasis of these books affords a sharp contrast with the work of Ida Rentoul Outhwaite, whose *Elves and Fairies* (1916) and *The Enchanted Forest* (1921) transposed elves and fairies to 'Australian' settings heavily reliant on European fantasy traditions.

Boarding school novels were a prominent component of children's publishing in Britain from Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857) to Enid Blyton's Malory Towers series in the 1940s and to J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter novels. Australian school stories have more commonly located their settings in day schools, so that their action is structured by the interplay between home and school rather than by the rivalries and friendships common in novels set in the enclosed world of the boarding school. One of the earliest Australian school stories for girls was Louise Mack's *Teens* (1897), Angus & Robertson's first foray into juvenile literature. The novel's protagonist, Lennie Leighton, is the eldest of four sisters, eager recipients of Lennie's accounts of school life. In its close attention to the Sydney setting, and its comparisons between Lennie's orderly home and the haphazard household of her friend Mabel, the novel is interested as much in social practices as in the world of school. Indeed, its principal focus, in the words of Lennie's mother, is 'what a beautiful thing was the love of these little schoolgirls for each other'.

My focus so far has been on juvenile books produced by mainstream publishers in Britain and Australia. However, for many Australian children from the 1890s to the 1950s the principal reading material was school readers produced by state Education Departments: the *Victorian Readers*, the *Queensland Readers*, the *Adelaide Readers*, the *Tasmanian Readers*. Charles Long, author of the preface to the Eighth Book of the *Victorian Readers*, articulates its objectives: 'The young readers were to begin at home, to be taken in imagination to various parts of the empire, to Europe, and to the United States of America, and thus to gain knowledge of their rich heritage and acquire a well-founded pride of race.'

The readers comprised poetry, non-fiction and fiction drawn principally from British canonical sources. Notions of 'literary merit' and of 'sound morality' governed the selection of texts, with a strong emphasis on canonical works and – in the case of Australian material – writing that celebrated the achievements of explorers and settlers. The Eighth Book of the *Victorian Readers*, for instance, comprises 85 separate pieces,
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over half of them by British authors. Of the 29 Australian authors represented, only one (Amy Mack) is a woman, with the Australian texts dividing between descriptions of the land, accounts of life in the outback, and stories of heroism and adventure. Even for the time of their publication in the late 1920s the Victorian Readers comprised a conservative array of texts that foregrounded Britishness and promoted mythologies of Australian identity centred on rural life and settler achievement. The Victorian Readers were used in all Victorian state schools until the 1950s; and they are strikingly similar in their composition and selection of texts to readers produced in other states. The influence of the school readers on young Australians can be explained by the pervasiveness of their use, and by the fact that most children had few other sources of reading material until school and public library services developed during the 1950s and 60s.

The post-war baby boom in 1950s Australia coincided with a tendency across Western nations to redefine concepts of childhood and youth. The invention of the teenager in the 1950s; the influence of Benjamin Spock's *Baby and Child Care* (1946); the emergence of children and young people as consumers, among other factors, produced an emphasis on the needs and interests of children. Jan Kociumbas notes of the Australian context that ‘well-to-do white children... became, in the 1950s and 1960s, the objects of intense pedagogical and commercial attention’.

In line with these developments, children's publishing became an object of adult concern, and increasing numbers of Australian publishers developed juvenile lists. The Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) was formed in 1958, growing out of the state-based Book Councils established in the 1940s. The CBCA awards have succeeded in drawing attention to children's books, within a celebratory and largely uncritical perspective; it has also privileged a body of prize-winning texts, so shaping perceptions of cultural capital.

The shifts toward increased attention to children's psychological development coincided in Australia with a conservative socio-political ethos, demonstrated by the banning of J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) as an indecent publication by Australian Customs in 1956. Many mid-century Australian books promote the idea that an authentic Australian identity is to be found only in remote pastoral settings. In Nan Chauncy's series of novels featuring the Lorenny family, *Tiger in the Bush* (1957), *Devils' Hill* (1958) and *The Roaring 40* (1963), depictions of the family's life on their isolated Tasmanian farm are mapped onto settler culture mythologies. The identity-formation of Badge Lorenny, the boy protagonist in all three novels, is imbued with his developing attachment to place - both the family farm and the wild country which surrounds it. Thus, in *Tiger in the Bush* Badge ensures the survival of a thylacine whose existence is a secret known only to the Lorenneys and to Harry, an old recluse who lives in the bush. If Harry has 'gone native', refusing to engage with the outside world, Badge is also depicted as the 'natural' custodian and protector of the wild, exemplified by his act

of tricking American visitors into taking a plaster cast of Harry's wombat instead of the thylacine for which they have been searching.

Referring to *Devil's Hill*, John Stephens notes that Chauncy's depiction of the Lorenn family is marked by a 'reflex misogyny' marked by 'the (male) presupposition that selfhood is predominantly defined by acts of courage'.

In a muted, tentative way, Mavis Thorpe Clark's 1966 novel *The Min-Min* interrogates the masculinism which lies at the heart of conventional formulations of mateship and the bush. Sylvie Edwards is the eldest of five children whose father works as a settler on a railway siding on the Nullarbor Plain. The outback setting represents a world dominated by masculine preoccupations: Sylvie's father Joe neglects his family, spending his leisure time drinking with his co-workers, while Sylvie's dispirited mother, pregnant with her sixth child, dreams of returning to Sydney. When Sylvie's father beats her in drunken anger, and her brother Reg is threatened with a term in an institution because he vandalises the local school, Sylvie and Reg run away to the outstation of Gulla Tank, home of the Tucker family. The min-min which beckons Sylvie away from her dysfunctional family leads not into the desert but to Mary Tucker, who teaches Sylvie how to cook and sew, so inducting her into a feminine world of domestic activities.

Chris Tucker manages a vast sheep station, and the Tucker family is set against the Edwards family as a model of order and discipline. Nevertheless, the novel deals critically with the motivations and behaviour of Chris Tucker and the two acting magistrates who hear the police charges against Reg. Readers are positioned to admire the adroitness with which Mary Tucker undermines her husband's self-righteousness: for instance, she uses the handbrake to ensure that the family car is bogged, thus preventing Chris Tucker from returning Sylvie and Reg to their home. And the events of Reg's trial are described through a perspective that emphasises the limitations of the magistrate's knowledge. Through such strategies the text unsettles a regime of power in which men are ostensibly in control, by pointing to the covert resistance of women and the anxieties which lie beneath the appearance of masculine authority.

The novel ends with the family relocated to Whyalla, where Joe Edwards finds work. Having given birth to a son, Sylvie's mother is staying with her parents, and Sylvie, armed with the skills she has learned from Mary Tucker, imposes an unaccustomed discipline on her brothers and sisters, ensuring that they perform household tasks irrespective of gender. She attends dressmaking classes at the technical school with a view to establishing her own business. *The Min-Min* is a transitional novel in that it promotes female agency in its depiction of Sylvie, while maintaining those gendered binaries that locate women in the home and men in the outside world of work.

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Chauncy's depiction of rural life looked to settler experience as a model of heroic enterprise, while Clark's treatment of the outback critiqued the gendered practices whereby girls and women are treated as marginal. Another representational strand is evident in 1960s novels which projected onto the natural environment a sense of unease about the shallowness of European knowledge and habitation, through narratives in which children struggled for survival in an indifferent or hostile landscape. In Ivan Southall's *Hills End* (1962) a cyclone almost destroys the town of *Hills End*, leaving seven children to fend for themselves; and in Southall's *Ash Road* (1965) and Colin Thiele's *February Dragon* (1965) young protagonists are caught up in bushfires. Scattered through these survival narratives are allusions to Indigenous knowledge, often set against characters' sense that their purchase on the land is tenuous. In Reginald Ottley's *By the Sandhills of Yamboorah* (1965), for instance, the unnamed boy protagonist, working as a station hand on a property at the edge of the desert, observes an Aboriginal man and reflects that 'He's part of it... an' though he's movin', you don't seem to notice.' He himself feels the desert to be a 'great, brown loneliness' which threatens to engulf him.²⁹

**Cultural diversity and children's literature**

Hesba Brinsmead's *Pastures of the Blue Crane* (1964) was one of the first modern Australian texts to engage with race relations, with reference to the sorry history of the indentured labour of Pacific Islanders. The protagonist Ryl discovers after her father's death that he has bequeathed her and her grandfather, Rusty, a run-down house and banana plantation, and Ryl and Rusty — strangers prior to the reading of the will — set out for the country town where their property is located. In part the plot relies on the familiar scenario in which a city-dwelling protagonist is inducted into the 'real' Australia of the bush; in part on a storyline in which two characters (Ryl and Dusty) start out as antagonists and become friends; in part, on its treatment of race relations. Ryl's discovery that she is the daughter of a Kanak woman and that her brother is Perry, a dark-skinned boy whose appearance testifies to his mixed-race origins, is also a moment of revelation concerning inter-racial sexual relations in the past.

The novel does not canvass the race and gender politics of the relationship of Ryl's father and her Kanak mother. Rather, it calls on this relationship to interrogate racial stereotypes and hierarchies in the 1960s setting. Ryl comes to understand that her father's concealment of his marriage has its echoes in the book's present time, when Perry is treated slightingly by one of their friends. Ryl 'instinctively' sides with Perry even before she discovers that he is her brother, but her repugnance for Glen's prejudice is explained in terms of her consciousness of Perry's 'natural' superiority:

'Perry,' she went on, 'I used to be a frightful snob . . . I would have treated you — well — badly — when I first met you — if I hadn't quickly found out that you're — it's hard to say it — that you're a gentleman! . . . There were a few dark girls at school — girls from Malaya and India — and they were — well — ladies! . . . But why should Glen be horrid to you, when he knows perfectly well that you are not stupid, or in any way his inferior?'

Readers are invited to acquiesce in the idea that racism is a function of class norms which define an individual's worth. Within this 'colour-blind' scheme, racialised hierarchies are folded into practices of social exclusion and inclusion.

When the Whitlam Government introduced policies of multiculturalism in 1973 to replace the assimilationist models that dominated political discourses until this time, Australian publishers were quick to produce texts thematising cultural diversity, immigration, community relations and notions of Australian citizenship. In most texts of the 1970s and 1980s, however, views of cultures other than Anglo-Celtic were filtered through the perspectives of Anglo-Celtic, middle-class characters, and multiculturalism was valued insofar as it was seen to contribute to the wellbeing (economic and psychological) of the dominant culture. John Stephens speculates that one explanation for this narrow and limited view of multiculturalism is that 'authors have on the whole not come from the 25 percent of Australians who are of non-British origins'; another is that themes of migration and cultural difference tended to be subsumed into a narrative pattern which dominates children's literature, that of personal growth and development.

By the mid-1990s, following the emergence of Pauline Hanson's far-right nationalism and the Howard Government's promotion of an essentialised Australian identity based on Britishness, texts for children and young adults increasingly subjected Australian versions of multiculturalism to a more critical scrutiny. In Allan Baillie's *Secrets of Walden Rising* (1996), the old gold town of Walden is buried under the waters of a reservoir. As the water-level drops during a long drought, Walden rises into visibility until, by the end of the novel, it is possible to walk its streets and explore its buildings.

As the old town is exposed, so its history is brought into the open. Brendan, the novel's focaliser, is an outsider, 'the Pom', and his investigations disclose stories which have been strategically forgotten. His classmate Tony Lee, descended from a Chinese goldminer, tells Brendan stories he learned from his grandfather, how his great-grandfather Lee Weyun and the other Chinese 'had to work on land that nobody wanted. They had to sleep on slopes that people could not walk on. When someone dred they were not lowered into a hole, they were slid into the ground like a filing cabinet.' Tony's family memories shape his sense of the precariousness of his alliance with the other boys in the town, who are always liable to turn on him with hostility, as their ancestors

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turned on his great-grandfather and the other Chinese prospectors. The reappearance of Walden’s streetscape instantiates old racial hierarchies in that it reveals the tiny shop that Lee Weyun established following the gold rush. Insignificant in comparison with the Empire Hotel, the church and the Emporium, it encodes relations of value still active in the contemporary setting.

Whereas Tony’s family have hung on in the town — his father runs the Lee Family Store — no Indigenous presence survives. Brendan’s classmate Elliot Cardiff insists: ‘Boongs? They were never here.’ This vehemence is a marker of the importance he attaches to a fiction he has been told by his family — that the Cardiffs were the first to live on and own land in the region. A more sinister story then emerges, concerning Charley Cardiff, Elliot’s ancestor, who provided rum to his farm-workers and sent them out to hunt the Aboriginal people who lived in the hills near the town, until all were dead or had fled.

The novel concludes with a kind of treasure-hunt as Brendan and Bago, the boy who has bullied him, search through the old town for a bushranger’s hoard. The treasure turns out to be nothing more than old banknotes which crumble into dust, and a collection of items once prized but now worthless. In the end, what counts as treasure is the tentative friendship forged between Bago and Brendan, boys from different countries who have been brought together by the uncovering of memories. The novel does not, however, provide a consolatory ending. Rather, it positions its readers to engage with the ethical questions that were at the heart of the Australian history wars at the time the novel was published: what responsibility do citizens have toward the past? What constitutes justice for Indigenous people? How is it that anti-Asian sentiments are so close to the surface of national consciousness?

The responsiveness of children’s authors to contemporary politics is evident in the many novels and picture books which took up issues relating to refugees and border control during John Howard’s eleven years as prime minister. Some of these texts, like Morris Gleitzman’s Boy Overboard (2002) and Girl Underground (2004), seek to engage readers by filtering narratives through the perspectives of young refugees. Others, including picture books such as Tan’s The Lost Thing (2000) and Narelle Oliver’s Dancing the Boom Cha Cha Boogie (2005), treat cultural difference and displacement by metaphor and allegory. In The Lost Thing, a young boy finds a ‘lost thing’ at the beach, a ‘thing’ which does not fit within his world, and which may be read as a refugee reaching an Australian shore. The beach is separated from houses by an enormous, solid wall. Among neat rows of sun-umbrellas, citizens stand apart from each other and look out to sea, so that the beach, far from a playground, is a dystopian space where fear erects barriers and where community connections have been destroyed.

The boy takes the lost thing home, where his parents’ reactions are typical of anti-refugee rhetoric in Australia and elsewhere:

33 Ibid., p. 67
‘Its feet are filthy!’ shrieked Mum.
‘It could have all kinds of strange diseases,’ warned Dad.
‘Take it back to where you found it,’ they demanded... 34

The boy sees a notice in the paper, from the Federal Department of Odds and Ends, offering accommodation for ‘troublesome artifacts of unknown origin’, but just as he is about to sign a form consigning the lost thing to bureaucracy he hears the small voice of dissent: ‘If you really care about that thing, you shouldn’t leave it here,’ said a tiny voice. ‘This is a place for forgetting, leaving behind, smoothing over. Here, take this.’ 35 A hand gives the boy a business card carrying ‘a kind of sign’, and at length he finds ‘the sort of place you’d never know existed unless you were actually looking for it’, populated by hybridised creatures of many shapes and sizes, talking, making music, reading, gesturing. Here at last the lost thing is at home, its strangeness merely part of the general strangeness of the inhabitants of this utopian citizenry.

The ‘lost thing’ defines itself as alien to the ordered and bureaucratic setting in which it finds itself. Similarly, in Dancing the Boom Cha Cha Boogie, Oliver establishes a contrast between the Murmels, who ‘did not have a worry in the world, except for the whirligigs’, and the Snigs, who survive under a repressive and regimented regime. Three young Murmels are caught up in a whirligig and shipwrecked on the shore of the Grand Snigdom. Here they are at once consigned to a prison in a desert landscape. But a young snig befriends the murmels, who introduce her to new foods, teach her how to play hopsplotch and leap-murmel and show her how to dance ‘the jitter-murmel and the boom-cha-cha boogie’.

When the Boss Snig threatens to banish the murmels, together with the young snig they dance the boom-cha-cha boogie and introduce him to the delights of eating waterwoppers: ‘The murmels never left Grand Snigdom. And Grand Snigdom has never been quite the same.’ 36

The utopian closure of the narrative, in which the prison is transformed into a children’s playground, promotes a vision of new world orders where spontaneity and play supplant a grim uniformity. Instead of focusing on how the young murmels are to accommodate to the demands of the host nation, Oliver treats cultural diversity as a force capable of radically altering political and social life.

Writing by and about Indigenous peoples

The colonial discourses which informed representations of Indigenous people and cultures in A Mother’s Offering persisted into the 20th century. Jeanne Gunn’s The Little Black Princess (1905) positions readers to align with a narrative perspective that reinforces distinctions between ‘them’ and ‘us’. Gunn’s stories about the relationship between the

35 Ibid.
36 Narelle Oliver, Dancing the Boom Cha Cha Boogie, Omnibus, 2005
narrator, the 'little Missus' of Elsey Station, and the Aboriginal girl Bett-Bett are told in a conversational style that reduces the distance between narrator and implied readers, producing the impression of shared amusement at the quaint habits of Bett-Bett and the Aborigines at the station. On one hand Bett-Bett is a 'little pickle', a common turn-of-century figure exemplified by Judy in Seven Little Australians. On the other hand, she is powerless to evade a kind of psychic disorder that renders her incapable of becoming 'like us': at the end of the narrative she takes flight, caught between loyalty to 'the Missus' and her desire for 'her people, and their long walkabouts'.

By the middle of the 20th century the 'dying race' trope was losing its potency in the face of Indigenous survival, and children's books turned to Aboriginalist modes of representation, exemplified by Rex Ingamells' Aranda Boy (1952). This text adheres to the agenda of the Jindyworobak movement (see Chapters 7, 10); it creates an adventure narrative involving an Aboriginal boy, Gurra, so offering readers an 'authentically' Australian story; as the jacket blurb has it, 'an exciting story for Australian children about the first Australians'. At the heart of Ingamells' narrative, however, is the principle of white superiority. At the end of the novel Gurra, alone of the men of his tribe, resists the call to fight the settlers who appropriate ancestral land. He seeks help from a virtuous white man whom he calls Dongberna (Don Byrne), who protects him and his clan, enabling them to maintain their traditional practices. Thus assimilated within benevolent white rule, Aboriginal survival is represented as contingent upon white power.

Patricia Wrightson's treatment of Indigenous traditions in her novels, from An Older Kind of Magic (1972) to the Wirrun trilogy (1977–81), exemplifies how Aboriginalism presents itself as benign and progressive. In her epilogue to An Older Kind of Magic, Wrightson refers to the futility of transposing European fantasy traditions to Australian settings, calling for 'another kind of magic, a kind that must have been shaped by the land itself at the edge of Australian vision'. In an essay published in 1980, Wrightson tells how she searched through 'the works of anthropologists and early field workers and of laymen who had lived in sympathetic friendship with Aboriginal Australians'. Wrightson's description of her research is notable for its assumption that non-Aboriginal experts are the proper sources of information rather than Aboriginal people who, she says, 'told [their stories] haltingly in a foreign tongue or with skilled techniques that could not be conveyed in print'. Her trilogy The Song of Wirrun – The Ice Is Coming (1977), The Dark Bright Water (1979), Behind the Wind (1981) – is Wrightson's most sustained attempt at creating a pan-Aboriginal mythology. The series follows the progress of a hero, Wirrun, who is charged with the task of restoring order to the land when it is threatened by hostile spirits. On the face of it, this representation might
seem to constitute a homage; but the fantasy genre within which Wrightson works is so shaped and informed by European traditions that the characters, motifs and spirit figures that it deploys are drawn inexorably into Western frames of reference.

By the 1990s, realistic texts were emerging which thematised relationships between contemporary Indigenous and non-Indigenous protagonists. Notable among them are James Moloney's series *Dougy* (1993), *Gracey* (1994) and *Angela* (1998); Philip Gwynne's *Deadly Unna*? (1998) and *Nukkin Ya* (2000); Pat Lowe's *The Girl with No Name* (1994) and *Feeling the Heat* (2002); and Leonie Norrington's *The Last Muster* (2004). Most are located within the dominant culture and filtered through the perspectives of white narrators or focalising characters whose assumptions about race are tested by encounters with Indigenous people, including (in *Nukkin Ya* and *Feeling the Heat*) romantic and sexual relationships. *The Last Muster*, set on a remote cattle station taken over by a multinational corporation, departs from this pattern, shifting among various perspectives in a subtle account of the complexity of colonial relationships and their consequences in the contemporary setting.

The most significant development in representations of Indigeneity has been the emergence of Aboriginal authors, artists and publishers and the production of texts located within Indigenous cultures which write back to the clichés, stereotypes and sentimentalised versions of Aboriginality that have pervaded much non-Indigenous writing. The first Indigenous text published for children was *The Legends of Moonee Jarl* (1964) by Wilf Reeves and Olga Miller, a work so strikingly different from mainstream picture books that it was received with incomprehension. A decade later, Kath Walker published *Stradbroke Dreamtime* (1972) and Dick Roughsey *The Giant Devil-Dingo* (1973) and *The Rainbow Serpent* (1975). These texts, produced by mainstream publishers, were directed to the non-Indigenous readers who have always comprised the majority audience for Indigenous texts, and editorial processes rendered them sufficiently Western to engage this audience.

The establishment of Indigenous publishing houses such as Magabala Books and IAD Press has enabled the production of texts that inscribe cultural difference more radically, partly because Indigenous publishers seek to produce texts that accord with Indigenous modes of address and narrative strategies. Daisy Utemorrah and Pat Torres' *Do Not Go Around the Edges* (1995), for instance, is a strikingly dialogic text: Utemorrah's autobiographical story is placed along the bottom of the pages, while her poems are placed in the body of each page, framed within Pat Torres' illustrations. The border that runs along the lower edge of each page features the three sacred beings known in Wunambal culture as Wandjinias, orienting the various narrative and thematic strands.

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42 See Jennifer Jones, 'Deemed Unsuitable for Children. The editing of Oodgeroo's *Stradbroke Dreamtime*', *Papers: Explorations into Children's Literature*, 16.2, pp. 156-61
of the book in relation to the ancient stories of the Dreaming. Relationships between these strands are elusive, as most of the poems in the book connect only tangentially with Utemorrah’s autobiographical story. Readers accustomed to the reading practices usual in Western picture books will search in vain for thematic and symbolic interactions between verbal and visual texts, and this very complexity disrupts any simplistic notion that Do Not Go Around the Edges can be read as a mixture or blending of elements from different cultures. Rather, its multiplicity of narratives and systems of meaning destabilises the domination of British culture and standard English.

A priority of Magabala and IAD Press, as in Indigenous publishing houses in New Zealand and Canada, has been the production of picture books, and it remains the case in all three literatures that there are relatively few Indigenous novels for young adults. Australian Indigenous novels for older readers and young adults include Melissa Lucashenko’s Killing Darcy (1998) and Anta Heiss’s Who Am I? The Diary of Mary Talence (2001). Meme McDonald and Boori Pryor have collaborated on several notable novels: My Giisangundji (1998), The Binna Binna Man (1999) and Njunjul the Sun (2002). These texts proceed from the assumptions and worldviews of Indigenous protagonists and take for granted the role of spirit figures in the lives of contemporary Indigenous people. They are double-voiced, in that they imply two audiences: young people of the cultures in which they are produced; and non-Indigenous readers for whom they are both comprehensible and emblematic of alterity.

The past, again

Historical fiction, as Maurice Saxby observes, has ‘been slow to emerge’[43] in Australian children’s literature, unlike its pervasiveness in British and American writing for children. Over the last decade, however, fiction for children and young people has engaged with changes in the discipline of history and with Australian debates over what counts as history. Catherine Jinks’ five Pagan novels, featuring the progress of a 12th-century boy from squire to archdeacon, conduct a self-conscious and parodic account of the 12th-century setting, interpolating modern preoccupations and values into the mediaeval world in a way that exposes epistemological and ideological differences between the mediaeval setting and the time of the novels’ writing. In doing so, the Pagan novels undermine the idea that historical fiction can deliver the past, untrammelled by the values and views of the time of its production.

In David Metzenthen’s Boys of Blood and Bone (2003) and Ursula Dubosarsky’s The Red Shoe (2006), narratives of individual progress intersect with mythologies of nationhood. In Boys of Blood and Bone, a double-stranded narrative tells the stories of two young men, in alternating sections: a contemporary character, Henry Lyon, who is temporarily...
marooned in the rural town of Stratford when his car breaks down; and Andy Lansell, a young soldier from the same area, who fights and dies in the trenches in France. The novel's treatment of the personal trajectories of the two young men interrogates those Australian mythologies which fix upon the Great War as the birth of nationhood. Its descriptions of military action resist the hero narratives that inform hegemonic versions of masculinity, focusing instead on the psychological, emotional and bodily experiences of young men caught up in processes that they do not understand.

Through the novel's interweaving of lives and stories in the two time-schemes, it lays claim to continuities of individual and cultural identity across time. When Andy, enduring trench warfare, thinks of home, his memories linger on the materiality of his life on the land: the smell of hay, the sounds of the farm, the sensations of physical work. The novel's treatment of the contemporary setting of Stratford folds its culture and values into those of the earlier setting. The warmth and directness of its inhabitants mirror the same qualities in Andy's army companions from Stratford, just as the pleasure Henry takes in the details of country life echoes Andy's recollections of his home. These parallels enforce the sense that the country is the true Australia and its inhabitants proper Australians – as one character says of her impression of Andy from an old photograph, 'I thought he looked so Australian. With those clear eyes that could look forever.' The romanticism and nostalgia of this version of Australia disguises the extent to which it is based on relations of inclusion and exclusion that centre on myths of nationhood.

Dubosarsky's *The Red Shoe* is set in 1954 in Sydney, as the Petrov affair reaches its climax. It examines the experiences of six-year-old Matilda, who lives with her family in a house full of secrets: her father, a merchant seaman, is deeply affected by his wartime experience; his brother, Uncle Paul, is in love with her mother; her elder sister Elizabeth has had a nervous breakdown; and the house next door is occupied by a mad old man who fascinates and terrifies Matilda. Interspersed through the narrative are excerpts from the *Sydney Morning Herald* for April 1954, including accounts of suicide, reports on incidences of polio and how to protect oneself from the H-bomb. These intimations of danger are kept at bay by strategies of repression, which include Elizabeth's refusal to speak and Matilda's inability to recall an incident that takes place during a family picnic at The Basin, when her father attempts suicide. The family's fragile hold on stability is represented as homologous with the state of the nation, where intimations of disorder, illness and Cold War anxieties erupt through newspaper reports and overheard conversations, even as the appearance of normality is maintained: the Royal Show goes ahead; Matilda and her sisters see *Roman Holiday*; and Queen Elizabeth visits Australia. In line with most children's literature, *The Red Shoe* follows a humanistic direction in its preoccupation with the growth and development of an individual (Matilda) and her identity-formation. At the same time, its evocation of the

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1950s is powerfully informed by 21st-century concerns about globalisation and state intervention.

Tan's *The Arrival*, part picture book and part graphic novel, tracks the journey of a refugee who experiences the bureaucratic rituals of immigration procedures and the confusion of one seeking to make sense of unfamiliar language and practices. Tan's sepia drawings refer, among other intertexts, to early 20th-century photographs of immigrants processed at Ellis Island in New York. The refugee is befriended by other (former) refugees, and their stories of displacement and arrival are framed within the primary narrative. Like *A Mother's Offering*, *The Arrival* engages with the predicament of migrants whose old-world knowledge and experience are insufficient to understand the new world. In *A Mother's Offering*, Mrs Saville mediates the narrative perspective, enabling the author to filter what readers should and should not know. In *The Arrival*, in contrast, readers are aligned with the refugee, through images presented through his eyes and in frames where viewers observe him as he observes. Both books describe strange creatures: in *A Mother's Offering*, animals and plants that have no equivalent in Europe; in *The Arrival*, hybrid creatures that act as pets or familiars. In *A Mother's Offering* the strangeness of Australian birds and fauna is a mark of exoticism, and the creatures themselves are either the objects of an admiring gaze, or potential trophies. In *The Arrival* the interplay between the protagonist and a particular creature (tadpole-shaped, the size of a small dog, with stumpy legs, a long tongue and curled tail) marks his progress from fear of the unknown to a wary engagement and finally the incorporation of the creature into the protagonist’s family, when he is reunited with his wife and daughter.

Whereas *A Mother's Offering* represents ‘Australia’ in relation to a normative Britishness that naturalises a white, middle-class sensibility, *The Arrival* foregrounds diversity: its endpapers comprise rows of passport-style portraits, bearing the signs of handling and (in some cases) damage, and showing people whose features, skin colour and clothing refer to differences of race, culture, age and religion. *A Mother's Offering* positions its readers as citizens of a nation where non-Britishness is equated with inferiority and exclusion; *The Arrival*, in contrast, advocates openness to plurality: its final image shows the young daughter of the refugee (now citizen) giving directions to another arrival, so figuring the beginning of another narrative of arrival and inclusion.

In material terms, the two texts exemplify the growth of Australian children’s literature. From Charlotte Barton’s minor and local work, published by the Sydney Gazette, children’s texts have become a crucial element of Australian literary production: in 2003, for instance, they comprised 16 per cent of all published books, generating $126.7 million.45 An indication of the growth of ‘quality’ publishing for children is the increase

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Despite their cultural and commercial significance, books for children in Australia receive relatively little attention in mainstream media. Few reviews appear in newspapers and literary journals and, in general, discussions of children’s literature in these publications are limited to debates over censorship and the appropriateness of themes and language (especially in books for young adults). Scholarly work on children’s literature has developed far beyond its beginnings in the 1960s, when courses on the pedagogical implications of children’s texts were first offered in teacher education institutions. Researchers in this field are located in a variety of disciplinary settings, including education, communication studies, cultural studies and literature. Children’s literature tends to occupy the margins of academic work in universities, in a similar way to the former marginalisation of Australian literature and women’s writing. Nevertheless, children’s literature studies attract large and increasing numbers of students in both undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The foundation of the Australasian Children’s Literature Association for Research (ACLAR) in 1997, and the inauguration of the first Australian refereed journal, Papers: Explorations into Children’s Literature, in 1990, have been formative in the development of a community of scholars working in children’s literature. The internationalist orientation of Australian research in children’s literature is indicated by the fact that ACLAR is affiliated with the principal international professional body in the field, the International Research Society for Children’s Literature (IRSCIL), of which three Australians (Rhonda Bunbury, John Stephens and Clare Bradford) have been presidents.