

Outside The Fold is, then, a fascinating study of the intersection of histories, cultures, movements and lives. I find somewhat problematic, however, its Saidian juxtaposition of "overlapping territories" against a monolithic Orientalist scholarship which allegedly silences the voices of those it wishes to represent. Said has been criticized, and rightly so, for making out of Orientalism the kind of monolith to which he himself takes exception. Certainly Orientalist scholarship, particularly as it pertains to the study of India, is more complex than such an approach makes it out to be.

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Bruce Bennett and Jennifer Strauss, eds. *The Oxford Literary History of Australia*. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1998. Pp. vii, 488. Aus \$49.95.

Twenty-five or so years ago I was introduced to Australian literature through the fiction of Patrick White. In search of a guide that would tell me what to read next, I went to the university library, where I discovered H. M. Green's two-volume *History of Australian Literature* (1961), a leisurely, old-fashioned account of all forms of literature written in Australia from 1788 to 1950. A few months later I picked up, in a used bookshop, a battered copy of the 1964 edition of *The Literature of Australia*, edited by Geoffrey Dutton (rev. 1976). Both books stressed major writers and texts; both proved enlightening and helpful. In setting out to review the most recent *Literary History of Australia*, I wondered how I would react to this book if I were approaching it with the same lack of knowledge and eagerness to learn that I brought to my initial reading of Green's and Dutton's books.

In the introduction, "Making Literary History," the editors, Bruce Bennett and Jennifer Strauss, promise that their *History* "is designed to provide a readable and enjoyable entry into the creative spirit of Australia" (5). They warn the reader, however, that they "have not attempted to give a comprehensive coverage of individual writers and their works," and that "major writers or texts" do not engage all of their attention (1). For such coverage, they recommend *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* (1st ed., 1985; 2nd ed., 1994). So this new book is not so much a "history of Australian literature" as it is a "literary history," with the emphasis on "history." It focuses on the broad picture and provides little assistance to the reader interested in a specific writer or text. As a novice all those years ago, I might have found the present volume daunting, perhaps overwhelming, and would have, as advised, sought out the *Companion* as my guide.

But a quarter of a century later, having read much Australian writing and an abundance of criticism, I suppose I have become a little more knowledgeable. So maybe I am ready for a more sophisticated approach — and possibly today's explorer is better prepared than I

was all those years ago for this newfangled way of writing literary history. Besides, two other major literary histories have appeared over the years and to a degree set the stage for the second *Oxford History*. The first *Oxford History of Australian Literature* (1981), edited by Leonie Kramer, surveyed fiction, poetry, and drama separately, and generally left history to the historians. Kramer's attempt to record the development and state of Australian literature has been much maligned for its reliance on the tenets of New Criticism. In 1989, *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia* appeared under the general editorship of Laurie Hergenhan. Shunning canon formation, genre study, "the flatness of a survey," "outstanding names" (xvi), and other such transgressions, Hergenhan's collection offered a mixture of historical and literary essays that did not always coalesce. Perhaps the editors and contributors to the 1998 account of Australia's literary history learned from the strengths and weaknesses of its predecessor.

The present volume does come together in its five parts, which are titled simply with dates: "To 1850" (the beginning of the gold rushes); "1851-1914" (the beginning of World War I); "1914-1939" (the beginning of World War II); "1940-1965" (the beginning of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War); and "Since 1965" (the beginning of . . . ?). The editors explain the thinking behind this arrangement: "What these moments have in common is that they are all international events with enormous consequences for Australians' views of themselves; and they provide convenient apertures through which others may view Australian culture" (4).

In the essay that opens Part I, "White on Black/Black on Black," Adam Shoemaker traces the genesis of Black Australian writing, which he says "leads us back from the present to the past" (13). In contrast to the excerpts from Black writing, he presents some striking extracts from explorers' letters, diaries, and journals describing early Aboriginal/European contact. Shoemaker concludes that "intense suffering on the psychic level" has always dominated and continues to inform Aboriginal writing in whatever genre it adopts (20). This essay makes evident what is sometimes overlooked: that the Australian creative spirit did not descend for the first time in 1788. To complete Part I, Delys Bird examines what she calls "The Settling of English," which considers the English language, as well as its speakers, as a "settler." Noting that the settlement of Australia coincided with the print revolution in Europe, Bird surveys the abundant writing about all aspects of Australian life that appeared shortly after 1788 in the colonies and in England: poetry — usually bad; journalism — often subversive and scurrilous; letters, journals, autobiographies, and records of travel — frequently bordering on the trivial; religious tracts — mainly of Anglican origin; and so on. Bird concludes this lucid account of an era that is often ignored with a discussion of "The Fiction Fields of Australia,"

an essay by Australia's first critic, Frederick Sinnett, who in a way introduces the succeeding chapters.

Part Two opens with an essay on "Literary Culture 1851-1914: Founding a Canon," in which Elizabeth Perkins describes and discusses the period's journals, anthologies, and early critics, tying in at times the work of some of the writers who were canonized early on. The next essay, Robert Dixon's "Literature and Melodrama," explores the popularity of theatrical melodrama and its effect on the novel, which gave melodrama a feminist turn. Under the all-too-clever title, "National Dress or National Trousers?," Susan K. Martin dissects and condemns an "outmoded, Anglocentric and masculinist" nationalism (91).

Jennifer Strauss in Part Three looks at "Literary Culture 1914-1939." Her survey of the major works of the period emphasizes women's writing and the establishment of a national identity through literature. She subtitles the essay "Battlers All," which is the way she regards the writers who struggled to keep Australian literature alive, or in some people's opinion simply toiled, often fruitlessly, to create a literature. Richard Nile continues the account of Australian writers' efforts to be recognized in a look at what he calls "Literary Democracy and the Politics of Reputation." On the basis of these two accounts, one may conclude that during this period, few readers took Australian writers seriously. The section closes with what is one of the most satisfying essays in the *History*: Adrian Caesar's "National Myths of Manhood: Anzacs and Others." Caesar convincingly argues, through concrete references to major texts, that literary portrayals of the "Anzac myth" and the "bush myth" show "tensions and contradictions" in their attempts to formulate a national identity (147).

Part Four opens with "Clearing a Space for Australian Literature 1940-1965," by Patrick Buckridge, who notes that his essay has "less to do with individual writers, readers and works" and more to do with "political pressures and strategies, administrative structures and processes, group identities and professional associations" (169). Once this "space" has been cleared, Carole Ferrier discusses "Fiction in Transition" during a time of "complex and shifting intra-national and international relationships" (193). Unfortunately, Ferrier commences her essay with undignified remarks concerning the 1981 *Oxford History*. To this point, the new *Oxford History's* critics have generally avoided the contentious streak that often mars Australian literary criticism. Ferrier later makes the remarkable and cliché-ridden assertion that "Women, Aborigines and migrants are usually problematic protagonists by virtue of their marginalisation within dominant cultures" (207). After this testy discussion, Chris Wallace-Crabbe's calm and controlled analysis of "Poetry and Modernism" provides welcome relief.

Part Five, "Since 1965," opens with Bruce Bennett's lively exploration of "Literary Culture since Vietnam: A New Dynamic," which focuses in particular on the internationalization of Australian literature. In a clear, well-informed discussion, Dennis Haskell summarizes "Poetry since 1965," a momentous task that he carries out successfully even though he concludes that "contemporary Australian poetry . . . fiercely resists summarising" (285). Like Bennett, Haskell emphasizes the growing international connections of Australian literature. Because drama is so often overlooked, Helen Thomson's instructive account of "Drama since 1965" is a welcome discussion, which reflects "the enormous diversity of current writing for the stage" (307).

Susan Lever's discussion of contemporary fiction, subtitled "Innovation and Ideology," includes one of the book's few "extended discussions" of a single writer's work: Lever devotes almost two pages to Patrick White. (By this time, the reader of the *History* knows that the editors meant business when they announced they would eschew "major writers or texts.") Lever credits White with having helped change the face of Australian fiction to such an extent that contemporary writers are left "with the task of finding their own individual directions" (312); in the pages that follow, Lever ably describes this undertaking. Because she lets us know her displeasure with a "foreign critic" who "pontificates" (330) on Australian literature, I will refrain from disagreeing with her selection of the three "great" novels since 1965. Adam Shoemaker, who opened the *History*, returns at the end to track Black Australia's stories in a discussion of "Contemporary Indigenous Literature" that provides an admirable overview of the accomplishments of Aboriginal writers despite the problems and challenges they confront. But should this "Black literature," as Shoemaker categorizes it, continue to be considered separately? In an unexpected shift, the *History* concludes with Graeme Turner's study of "Film, Television and Literature," subtitled "Competing for the Nation." In this engaging essay, Turner scrutinizes "literature's competitive and complementary relationship with other representational and narrative forms" (348). Turner's concluding paragraphs provide an appropriate conclusion to the *History* as he lists the problems facing Australian writing in the 1990s and celebrates its capacity "to survive and prosper despite the difficulties it has encountered" (363).

In addition to the usual notes and index, the final 100 or so pages offer an extensive and valuable "Guide to Reference Material," which certainly demonstrates that Australian literature has not been ignored over the years. The richest find in this section is the fascinating "Chronology" that sets out to indicate "the kind of events that formed the context of Australian literary history or indirectly affected writers" (415). It opens in 1605, when Pedro Fernandez de Quiros from Spain mistakenly thought he had discovered Australia; it concludes, in

1998, with the rebellion in Indonesia, the question of the Australian republic, a test for the labor movement, and the publication of the *Oxford Companion to Australian History*. In between these dates all manner of national and international events are listed, along with significant publications. As is always the case with Oxford books, the *History* is a handsome, well-produced volume.

One tendency that surfaces all too often, however, is the "privileging," as they say these days, of women writers. This practice is not only patronizing, it is unnecessary, considering the number of prominent women writers who have made and continue to make literary history in Australia. As a "foreign critic," I detected another recurring theme: a preoccupation with "national identity." The term surfaces again and again, and appears to motivate some discussions in which it is not mentioned explicitly. This preoccupation, it seems to me, is a positive one: Working to establish a "national identity" through a country's literature may well be what a "literary history" should do.

This 1998 treatment of Australian literary culture and the way it speaks for, to, and about the nation emerges as readable, intelligent, well-organized, and fair. But who knows? Maybe twenty or so years down the track, as an Australian critic might say, a third *History* will supersede this one and exercise the latest critical stance: focusing on texts.

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G. N. Devy. *"Of Many Heroes": An Indian Essay in Literary Historiography*. London: Sangam Books, 1998. Pp. vi, 213. £14.95.

G. N. Devy's ambitious project is an attempt to redress a perceived lack in the area of Indian literary historiography. He focuses on the problem of evolving a native tradition of literary historiography in a country that has borne the brunt of colonial interpretations of its literature. Whether the project has succeeded remains, however, a moot point. Although Devy strikes the right opening note in the first chapter, raising "Some Indian Questions," he ultimately fails to provide