

“A study of the multicultural discourse in Australian

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Children’s literature”

Dissertation submitted to J. N. U. in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the award of the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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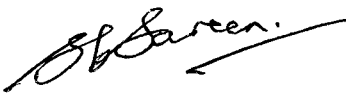
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**CERTIFICATE**

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This is to certify that the dissertation titled **A Study of Multicultural Discourse in Australian Children's Literature**, submitted by **Kranti Biswas**, of the Centre for English Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, under my supervision for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is the candidate's original work and has not been previously submitted in part or full, for any other degree of this or any other university.

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**DEDICATED TO**  
**MA, BABA,**  
**MEJO AND CHHOTO**

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## **An Introduction:**

### **Construction of Children's Literature as a Genre**

“Know you what it is to be a child? It is to be something very different from the person of today.....

it is to believe in love, to believe in loveliness, to believe in belief; it is to be so little that the elves can reach to whisper in your ear; it is to turn pumpkins into coaches, and mice into horses, lowness into loftiness and nothing into everything, for each child has its fairy godmother in its soul.”

Francis Thompson

Children are regarded as that pristine stage where the complications of adulthood do not affect them. Their innocence, their spirit, their cheerful nature and so on prevents the adults from letting them in the arena of the adults. But knowingly or unknowingly they become a part of the adults through their literature as it is the adults of the society who determine and define as to what we know today as children's literature. Children's literature, according to Wikipedia, is a literary genre whose primary audience is children, although many books of this genre are also enjoyed by adults. It has been discussed at great length as to what constitutes the genre called children's literature. Children's literature comprises of everything that children would pick up to read or anything that the adults have thought to be correct and 'appropriate for children'. But there has been no consensus reached to decide as to what the characteristics features of a book belonging to this category should be. According to Leonard S. Marcus<sup>1</sup>, “In every generation, children's books mirror the society from which they arise; children always get the books their parents deserve.” To add to that children do not get the books they deserve and in this process at times the children lose out on the basic issues which they are prone to go through or confront. Children's

literature emerged as a distinct and independent genre only a little more than two centuries ago.

To go back to the history of the presence of literature for children in the European scenario, one would be happy to recollect the tales from the oral tradition, which are meant to be heard and not to be printed. These stories are generally passed from generation to generation orally by mothers and grandmothers to the children of the household. In the European context children have been listening to poems of Homer, the Iliad, the Trojan War and the Odyssey. The themes that were prevalent in those stories were mostly love stories, adventure stories, stories about monsters and demons. In the middle ages very few children could read but very little had already begun to be written for children but it was so less that children had to be content with adult works which held very little interest for them. It was during this time that romances like that of Robin Hood had gained some importance with the children. Along with it also gained importance was the biblical stories which dealt with the stories of the lives of saints. There was distinction between fantasy and reality, and storytellers freely mingled magic, enchantment, the ludicrous with the serious. The literature was rich and replete with childlike imagination, full of wonder, mystery and excitement. With the advent of the European Renaissance in the mid 15<sup>th</sup> C, it was possible to print books in quantities, reducing time, labor and cost and as such become more accessible. This increased literacy, growth of education, dissemination and advancement of knowledge, promoting a higher rate of children to be educated. The European Renaissance created a new class of middle class merchants who valued education. The earliest children's illustrated book, *Orbis Sensualium Pictus*, 1658, a Latin vocabulary book had been published. By the end of the 17th century social changes were well underway and there was a path cleared for a genuine literature for children. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the publication of some wonderful books for children, which served as precedents for later genres of children's literature. An early example of a book devoted to children's has been, *Les jeux et plaisirs de l'enfance* 'The games and pleasures of childhood' by Jacques Stella in



1657, produced to cater to the interests of the children. One of the most enduring genres of fiction was one collection of fables which was initially read in Latin in the classroom rather than for amusement at home. The stories are attributed to Aesop (supposedly a Greek storyteller of the sixth century B.C. but almost certainly a legendary figure) were among the most frequently published and illustrated. *Aesop's Fables* was published in its first English translation by William Caxton (c. 1422–91) in 1484. It soon became one of the most popular illustrated books for children, though in the early editions there was little attempt to adapt the stories to make them easier for children to understand and relate to.

It was only in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when childhood began to take on new importance; adults began to recognize the special needs of childhood, including the need for childhood reading. One very specific and important influence that brought a heightened sense of special needs of the child was the rise of Puritanism, which placed special emphasis on the individual's need to tend to his or her own salvation. Knowledge of the Bible was mandatory for every human being and as such the ability to read and to understand the Bible was a principal requirement for Puritan children. In 1636, they established a college, Harvard, to emphasize their commitment to the primacy of education. The New Primer, first appearing in 1685-90 and continued to be printed until 1886, was a Puritan publication introducing young children to the alphabet through rhymes (A: In Adam's fall/ We Sinned all). It is only in the late seventeenth century that a new attitude toward children and their education began to develop when a number of educators appealed for greater consideration of children's usual needs and also in a time when the notion of pleasure in learning was becoming a very acceptable idea. The ardent supporters or writers of this idea were philosophers John Locke (1632–1704) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78). It was in 1693, Locke in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* wrote that "children should be treated as rational creatures. . . . They must not be hindered from being children, nor from playing and doing as children, but from doing ill." In this book Locke also formulated his notion that the minds of young children were similar to blank slates (*tabula rasa*)

just waiting to be written upon and this instructed. Writers like Bunyan, Defoe and Swift also greatly influenced the children for the children adopted certain adult works of literature like Pilgrim's Progress, Robinson Crusoe, and Gulliver's Travels.

Before the mid-eighteenth century books were not written for children, and children's literature was restricted to literature intended for their education and moral upbringing rather than for their enjoyment. Religious works, grammar books, and "courtesy books" (which offered instruction on proper behavior) were virtually the only early books directed at children. In these books illustrations play a relatively minor role, usually consisting of small woodcut vignettes or engraved frontispieces created by anonymous illustrators. Due to the fact that the notion of childhood has changed so much since the origin of children's literature, all modes of studying children like radio, film, television and art are included in an endeavor to read into the aesthetics and values of children's culture. Not only there has been some momentous change from the eighteenth century onwards, in the culture of children's understanding of the society but also a great change in the perception about children's literature.

It was in 1744 when John Newberry's *Little Pretty Pocket Book*, the first significant book for children was published, which was a collection of songs, moral tales with crude woodblock illustrations. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78), another philosopher who influenced the rise of children's literature, believed that childhood is a pure state and very distinct from adulthood. He also believed that it was essential for educationists, writers, teachers from the children's perspective. It was these philosophers whose writings had greatly influenced the educators and finally led to a more humane approach to education in which enjoyment was considered to a part of the entire learning process. He also said that children's literature till that time was considered inferior to adult writing and was therefore composed mostly by women. Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Tales of Mother Goose by Charles Parrault appeared along with retellings including Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood and Sleeping

Beauty. With the coming of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was an increased interest in folktales amongst children. Though they were considered unsuitable for children by certain adults due to their adult themes, alarming frankness and violence and lack of moral messages, children have continued to read and love the old tales.

It was mainly during the Victorian age (1837-1901), when children's literature first blossomed. Highly influenced by the Romantic Movement which idealized childhood and led to a greater interest in children. It was with the publication of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* that began a new era in children's literature. It was the first significant publication for children that abandoned all pretense of instruction and was offered purely for enjoyment with Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1863); MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872); Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* (1900); Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) to follow. It was the twentieth century which brought in the major diversity in children's literature.

Earlier critics of children's literature, who were often teachers, librarians and other educationalists, rather than looking into the dynamics of reading would recommend "good books" for children. The critics often disagreed about what books they think children would like, and why, and about which books will be "good" for children and why. What is most important is to locate what in literature mostly engages the imagination of young readers. The first point that critics would point out is the construction of the child itself is problematic. Many children's literature critics now point out that children are not one group, but differ according to gender, ethnicity, religious background, and so on. Though many critics are still child-centric, the discipline has expanded to include other modes of analysis. Feminist critics such as Lissa Paul (1987) of children's literature try to figure out the reading differences of boys and girls, whereas some other critics like Peter Hunt (1991), Perry Nodelman (1992), John Stephens (1992), and Roderick McGillis (1996) argument has been a step ahead where they think that children are often "colonised" by adults. Their

argument is substantiated by the act that what we know of as children's literature is also written by adults, as such it is only the adults who speak instead of letting children express themselves. Some critics like Jacqueline Rose (1984) and Karin Lesnik-Oberstein (1994 and 2004), argue that identities are created and not "inherent", and that in the case of an identity such as "childhood" it is created by "adults" in the light of their own perceptions of themselves. Therefore, "adulthood" defines "childhood" in relation to differences and similarities it perceives to itself. In the sociological and anthropological studies of childhood, what is most accepted is the approach of the post structuralist and the critics in gender studies.(Jenks 1996; Jenks, James and Prout 1997). Post colonial approaches to literature have important relevance to what can be said to the literature that is produced for children, and children's literature in English which looms large the literaray scenario can also be implicated as a colonising force throughout the world.

Gradually there has been a major perceptive change about children: they became to be regarded as a major step towards the understanding of adulthood, and as such a part of all the social changes occurring in the society. This perceptive change has also been reflected in the kind of literature available to children, children's literature has started to incorporate social, economic and political issues which affect the lives of children directly. Children are no longer only a sub part of the authoritative adults but has there own arena and their own world. Children's literature is no longer confined to fairy tales, fables, legends or grandma's stories. In fact they have widened their sphere to literatures which bring out a true picture of the society like historical and sociological texts. "Children's literature is a powerful educational tool, and its research is more multi-faceted than research in other literatures," says Prof. Daniel Chouinard. We have to realize that children's literature is very much a part of that literature which has a lot to offer for the purpose of research. Critics also question if children's literature is different from any other kind of literature, which we generally know as adult or, or genaral, or mainstream literature or is it just a subpart. Special issues in the past have argued children's literature's relationship to censorship,

many people mistakenly believe children's literature is exempted from such heavy issues, Chouinard says. "Children's authors often take on the difficult task of representing history," he says. "But in a way that is suitable or palatable for children." Therefore along with living in the fantasy world, children from a very early age get acquainted with the reality they live in, the reality that makes them. This is true to all literature across the world, Australian literature being no different. Children's literature in today's world exists very much on the crossroads of different media like theatre, film, television, video, music, etc. it is the spin-off products, including merchandise (toys, clothes, office supplies, etc.), often play a more important role in the promotion of a book than a book itself and this is something that takes us beyond the arena of children's literature and makes it a part of culture and media studies.

My topic is "A Study of Multicultural Discourse in Australian Children's Literature", where a detailed study of Australia along with its literature is required. Firstly, if someone has to read into the issues that the literature of a particular place is replete in, one has to study into the emergence of their literature along with a detailed knowledge of the Australian identity, which is very essential for a proper understanding of the issues that are present in the literature for and about children. In discussing the Australian identity, Baranay (1989) says,

"We were on the way to recreating the past. They worship an english queen and sing english songs. Their history is english governors and convicts who drank rum and horrible songs. There were explorers and kangaroos. Aborigines stood with one leg and were shot. We never see what this has to do with us and fail to learn about it. That is their history. Our history is the secret stories our parents tell us and the may things they never peak of. We came from somewhere else and something owed to us was taken away."

The first chapter is an endeavour to locate this identity that is typical to the Australian people, so that it enables us to understand the concept of multiculturalism.

This chapter discusses at length, about the multiculturalism as a policy in Australia. Multiculturalism as a process claims to do away with the difference in all the cultures.

This leads us to the second chapter where I have to made an effort to read into certain children's literature and have tried to locate them from the perspective of the multicultural discourse.

The third chapter has been a study of the contemporary British and Indian Children's Literature. This has been done because Australia has been a colony to Britain and has been strongly influenced by its history. The comparison has been extended to Indian Children's Literature due to the fact that even India was a British colony. With its diverse cultures, the Indian identity is multicultural in nature.

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## The evolution of children's literature

A historical overview of children's literature, especially fairy tales, reflects society's attitudes toward children and death. Most readers are unaware that every fairy tale has its own history, and many of them originated in the seventeenth century as oral, adult entertainment. Many featured coarse humor and sensational events. As these tales were transcribed and developed specifically for children, they were modified to contain incidents and behavior that reflected the customs of the place and period in which they were told. They contained material intended to provide moral guidance, and in the earliest versions of children's stories death was prominent because of its ubiquity and drama. Over the centuries there has been significant transformation of fairy tales, storybooks, and schoolbooks (basal readers). In the early twentieth century until the 1970s, topics considered disturbing to children, including death, were toned down and removed. Although late twentieth-century works began to reverse this trend, many children today are insulated from discussions of death in their literature. Schoolbooks were developed primarily to educate, teach morality, and assist in children's socialization. Books for children's education preceded the development of children's literature for pleasure. Charles Perrault and Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm wrote tales to caution children about the perils and consequences of inappropriate behavior.

Literature intended specifically for children did not develop until the mid-seventeenth century. Prior to that time children were perceived as miniature adults or as less than human, as typified by Michel de Montaigne, the sixteenth-century French humanist and essayist. In *Off with Their Heads!* (1992), Maria Tatar, a professor of Germanic languages and literature at Harvard University, notes that early children's literature had an unusually cruel and coercive streak. Early books were often written to frighten children into behaving as parents wished. Two approaches predominated: cautionary tales and exemplary tales. In cautionary tales the protagonist was either

killed or made perpetually miserable for having disobeyed. Stories of exemplary behavior also had a strange way of ending at the deathbeds of their protagonists.

John Amos Comenius's 1658 Latin schoolbook *A World of Things Obvious to the Senses Drawn in Pictures* was the first picture book for children and the first to recognize that children needed their own literature. In 1744 John Newbery wrote *A Little Pretty Pocket Book* for children. Although other books for children had been published earlier, this book is credited as the start of English children's literature because this book was meant to entertain rather than educate. Newbery is recognized as the first serious publisher of children's literature. Between the 1920s and the 1970s incidents of dying and death were removed or glossed over in children's reading material. Concurrently, religious material was also removed from children's schoolbooks. Only since the late 1970s and early 1980s has this tendency begun to reverse. Children's books of the twenty-first century frequently deal with feelings, divorce, sex, and death. Religion is still taboo in schoolbooks—in contrast to colonial America when ministers wrote many of the schoolbooks and the local minister often oversaw the school. The town school was considered an appropriate place for children to be taught not only their letters but also religion.

Books designed to teach children to read are known as basal readers. They use material from a variety of sources. From the early 1800s until the 1920s, American children were commonly taught to read with basal readers edited by Lyman Cobb, Samuel T. Worcester, Salem Town, William Russell, William D. Swan, and William McGuffey, among others. In *McGuffey's Eclectic Readers*, published continuously from 1879 to 1920, the subject of many of the selections was the death of a mother or child, typically presented as a tragic but inevitable part of life. For example, *McGuffey's Third Eclectic Reader* (1920) contains William Wordsworth's poem "We Are Seven," in which a little girl describes her family as having seven children, even though two are dead. The experience of the death of the older sister is also described. Some of the other short stories and poems in McGuffey's Readers that deal with death



as a theme are: "Old Age and Death" by Edmund Waller, "The Death of Little Nell" by Charles Dickens, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" by Thomas Gray, and "He Giveth His Beloved Sleep" by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Unlike early basal readers, today there are no poems or stories that deal with death nor are there prayers in books used in public schools.

An anonymous selection in *McGuffey's Fourth Eclectic Reader*, entitled "My Mother's Grave," provides an emotional account of a young girl's experience with her dying mother. The story aims to make children polite and obedient to their parents. Through recounting the author's thoughts on revisiting her mother's grave, she remembers being unkind to her dying mother after a trying day at school. She realizes her lapse in manners later that evening and returns to her mother's room for forgiveness and finds her asleep. She vows to waken early to "tell how sorry I was for my conduct," but when she rushes into the room in the morning she finds her mother dead, with a hand so cold "it made me start" Even thirteen years later the author finds her remorse and pain almost over-whelming. This is not the type of subject matter and emotional content considered appropriate for twenty-first century basal readers. Commonly used basal readers rarely contain references to dying or death. If they do include a chapter from a book that deals with death, such as E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web* (1952), it is not the chapter in which Charlotte dies.

Insight into how dying and death were portrayed in the nineteenth century can be found in the still widely read storybook *Little Women*, written in 1869 by Louisa May Alcott. Alcott described the death of young Beth in a straightforward manner uncommon for her day. Recognizing that her depiction was at odds with the melodramatic scenes current in more romantic literature, Alcott added in the paragraph following Beth's death: "Seldom, except in books, do the dying utter memorable words, see visions, or depart with beatified countenance . . .".

Between 1940 and 1970 few children's books contained references to death. Two that have become classics are Margaret Wise Brown's *The Dead Bird* (1965) and

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*Charlotte's Web*. White's publisher initially refused to publish *Charlotte's Web* unless the ending was modified allowing Charlotte to live, which White refused. Critical reviewers of the era found death not "an appropriate subject for children" (Guth 1976).

Separating children from an awareness of dying and death has diminished since the 1970s. Although Robert Fulton and Herman Feifel taught and wrote about dying and death before the 1960s, it was the early work of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in 1969 that helped make death a subject for discussion and study. During the 1970s and 1980s over 200 fiction books for children contained death as a major theme. Few measured up to the standard set by *Charlotte's Web*, *Little Women*, *The Yearling* (1938), or *The Dead Bird*. During this same period some very well-written nonfiction books about death were published for children of various ages, making it a more acceptable subject. These included *About Dying* by Sara Bonnett Stein (1974), *When People Die* (1977) by Joanne Bernstein and Stephen J. Gullo, *Learning to Say Good-bye: When a Parent Dies* by Eda J. LeShan (1976), *The Kids' Book about Death and Dying* and *The Unit at Fayerweather Street School* (1985) both by Eric E. Rofes, and *Living with Death* (1976) by Osborn Segerberg Jr.

Fairy tales provide an excellent example of the way society deals with themes considered distressing to children. The insulation of children from death can be traced through progressive versions of typical stories. A generalization can be made about fairy tales that can also apply to all early stories for children: As sexual content diminished, violent content increased. An analysis of successive editions of *Grimms' Fairy Tales* provides insight into the manner in which stories were modified to shield children from exposure to dying and death. To understand this evolution, it is necessary to understand the milieu in which it took place. In the 1700s children were not perceived as needing protection from portrayals of violence primarily because life was harsh and most children died during infancy or childhood. Violence and death in children's stories of the 1700s take on a different light when viewed in the context of

high infant and child mortality and the increasing, universal practice of abandoning unwanted children at the local foundling hospital or on church steps. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, children were routinely required to attend public executions to witness the cost of criminal behavior. The romanticized depiction of an afterlife, superior to the life of this world, served to help children cope with the brutal facts of their lives.

Given these realities, children's literature was motivated by a belief that children needed written material to educate them and prepare them for life. The majority of books published for children through the 1800s can be compared to James Janeway's *A Token for Children: Being an Account of the Conversion, Holy and Exemplary Lives, and Joyful Deaths of Several Young Children* (Parts 1 and 2, 1671–1672). Writers of this era commonly agreed with Janeway's position that they held a sacred duty to salvage the souls of those who were not too young to go to hell. The exemplary stories in *A Token for Children* were also designed to provide *Like many of Grimms' fairy tales, Hansel and Grethel (1823) provides a vivid description of violence not only toward the characters' antagonist, but children as well.* Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm's *Cinderella* stressed punishment more than earlier oral versions. In the first version (1697), taken by Perrault from the oral tradition, Cinderella forgave her step-sisters for mistreating her and introduced them at court. The Grimms' first version (1815) has Cinderella's sisters turning pale and being horrified when she becomes a princess, while in the second edition sisters' punishment is to be blinded by pigeons pecking out their eyes.

In the Grimms' *Hansel and Grethel* (1823), there is a description of how horribly the witch howled when Grethel pushed her into the oven and how ". . . Grethel ran away leaving the witch to burn, just as she had left many poor little children to burn" (Owens 1981, p. 57). The use of violence as punishment is typical in fairy tales, even for minor misdeeds. This tendency is evident in the stories found in *Struwwelpeter*. In these tales, Little Pauline plays with matches and goes up in flames,

and Conrad the Thumbsucker has his thumbs sliced off. Maria Tatar observes that "the weight is given to the punishment (often fully half the text is devoted to its description) and the disproportionate relationship between the childish offense and the penalty for it make the episode disturbing" (Tatar 1992, p. 34).

The removal of sexuality from children's fairy tales paralleled the evolution of housing in Europe. By the seventeenth century, living arrangements had evolved to provide segregation between quarters for working, food preparation, and sleeping. Usually there was a main room used for dining, entertaining, and receiving visitors, but servants and children began to have their own smaller, adjacent rooms. During this same century fairy tales began to transform into works intended primarily for children. The transformation of living spaces parallels the changes that greatly impacted children, including attitudes regarding teaching proper behavior and attitudes toward dying and death.

The obvious changes over time in one fairy tale—*Little Red Riding Hood*—parallel the changes in attitudes toward death, children, and their education. The earliest known oral version from Brittany would not be considered suitable children's entertainment in the twenty-first century. In this early version, Little Red Riding Hood is unwittingly led by the wolf to eat her grandmother's flesh, to drink her blood, and to perform a provocative striptease for the disguised wolf before climbing into bed with him. She escapes from the wolf when she goes outside to relieve herself. Because its primary purpose was to entertain adults, the story was not encumbered with the admonitions and advice that later came to distinguish versions intended for children. The earliest written version of *Little Red Riding Hood* was in French, in 1697, by Charles Perrault. In this version, the grandmother and Little Red Riding Hood are eaten by the wolf and perish. Although Perrault did not have Little Red's mother warning her before leaving for her grandmother's house, he did conclude the story with a moral suitable for the intended children's audience: Do not speak to strangers or you, too, may provide a wolf with his dinner. The death in this story is

later moderated in the Grimms' retelling. They introduce an additional character, a hunter or woodcutter, who slices the wolf open and releases the victims alive.

In a popular nineteenth-century retelling of Little Red's tale, the grandmother is eaten by the wolf, but Little Red survives, learning to pay closer attention to her mother's words: "For she saw the dreadful end to which / A disobedient act may lead" (Tatar 1992). Another version emphasizes avoiding needless suffering. Here is the depiction of the wolf killing the grandmother: "[The Wolf] jumped up on the bed, and ate her all up. But he did not hurt her so much as you would think, and as she was a very good old woman it was better for her to die than to live in pain; but still it was very dreadful of the wolf to eat her" (1933, p. 20). In later versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* the hunter arrives in time to shoot the wolf before he eats either Little Red or her grandmother, or the wolf escapes through an open window or becomes Little Red's pet. The moral, or message, of the story also evolves with the transformation of events. In the traditional, oral version Little Red was not warned by her mother of the dangers of talking to strangers, and cannot be seen as naughty or disobedient. In Perrault's original written version, the mother does not give Little Red any cautions, while in later versions she often gives Little Red many instructions and admonitions. Upon rescuing Little Red from the dire misfortune she brings upon herself, the hunter/woodcutter inevitably lectures her on obedience and on what can happen if she disregards her mother's warnings. The role of death in the changing tale diminishes as the tale evolves. Rather than being the graphic and unmourned event Perrault depicted, it becomes muted and is eventually relegated to the periphery of the readers' attention or disappears entirely.

Fairy tales do not always hold the promise of a happy ending. For example, Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* (1846) has been distorted over time. In the original version the Little Mermaid chooses death for herself rather than murdering the Prince, and thus leave her form as a mermaid. The Little Mermaid would only regain her form as a mermaid if she murdered the prince. She does not do

this and so she dies and becomes a daughter of the air. After 300 years of good deeds she then can gain a human soul and enter heaven and join the prince there. The very morning that the Little Mermaid sacrifices herself and spares the Prince, he marries a princess from another land whom he mistakenly believes rescued him. Only in Disney's bowdlerized version does the Little Mermaid manage to displace the "other woman" and marry the Prince, an alteration partly justified by casting the other princess as the evil sea-witch in disguise.

The classic fairy tale *Bluebeard* (1729) also presents a problematic ending. In this tale, one of three sisters marries a wealthy but mysterious man, distinguished primarily by his blue beard. After the wedding she is given access to all of Bluebeard's possessions, but is forbidden to use one small golden key. She inevitably uses the key, and discovers the bloody bodies of Bluebeard's previous wives. Upon discovering his wife's transgression, Bluebeard prepares to add her to his collection. At the last moment, her brothers suddenly appear and save her by hacking Bluebeard to pieces before her eyes. Although the latest wife did not meet the fate of her predecessors, is it really a happy ending to have her brothers murder her husband? Her disobedience is a necessary part of the story, yet there is no clear resolution of her dilemma. The fast and easy way to conclude a fairy tale is to recite, "and they lived happily ever after," yet a close look shows that many fairy tales do not have a "perfect" ending.

When fairy tales existed solely as oral tradition, storytellers could personalize their version to suit the time, place, and audience. As stories were printed, they began to reflect more enduringly the nature of the time and place in which they were recorded. Thus it seems odd that parents continue to read to their children—often without the slightest degree of critical reflection—unrevised versions of stories imbued with values of a different time and place. L. Frank Baum, the originator of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), recognized this predicament and recommended that it was time for a new set of "wonder tales"; he suggested that previous fairy tales

be classed as "historical" (Tatar 1992, p. 19). Indeed, denoting traditional fairy tales as "historical" would help distinguish the changes that have occurred in the years since they were recorded. It would also encourage parents and teachers to critically examine the material available to children.

There is a growing perception that children are capable of understanding dying and death as natural processes, and that over time they assimilate a number of such experiences. Since the 1970s adults have begun to recognize the difficulties they experienced as a result of being sheltered from awareness of death and have begun to seek ways to allow children to become aware of the reality of dying and death. Since the mid-1970s hospice programs have enabled several million dying persons to receive care in their homes. As a result, some children have been exposed to meaningful death experiences. Increased awareness of the lethality of AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) also makes it important that even the tales told to children reflect current perceptions of dying and death. Scholars maintain it is important to consider the implications of fairy tales in modern times. Perhaps it is time to begin transforming them to reflect the tremendous changes that have occurred in a world increasingly forced to accept the limits of medical technology, with death again being acknowledged as a necessary and inevitable counterpart to life.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, taught children that the world is not a safe place. The *New York Times* best-seller list for September 30 revealed that the new Lemony Snicket book, *The Hostile Hospital*, outsold any of the *Harry Potter* titles that week. Also that week there were four Snicket books and four *Harry Potter* titles in the Top 10. The Lemony Snicket books are an eight-book series dubbed "A Series of Unfortunate Events." The series tells the story of the Baudelaire orphans, good children to whom bad things happen. In the first book Mr. Poe, a family friend, comes to the beach to tell the children that their parents have died in a fire, and their mansion is destroyed. The narrator cautions that everything to come is rife with misfortune, misery, and despair. Children who are protected by parents from awful

truth instinctively know the world is not an absolutely safe place and one way of releasing the tension is to read about someone who is much worse off than they are. Each time the Baudelaire children find a satisfactory situation, something goes wrong. Count Olaf, a distant cousin who takes them in first, is interested only in their money. Kindly Uncle Monty, with whom they next reside, is murdered. Aunt Josephine throws herself out of a window, or at least that is the way it appears. In spite of all the terrible things that happen to the three children, they manage to survive.



## **Australian Children's literature and Multiculturalism**

Australia, as we know, is a nation of immigrants. It began with Great Britain who for over two centuries loomed large over the nation and in its process displacing an entire indigenous population. Australia has been a penal colony of the British, that is, it had become the colony primarily for the convicts, marines and the wives of the marines although free settlers started to arrive in 1793. The migrants who followed later, were predominantly European and loyal to Britain like the British, Irish, Scottish and Welsh. Australia was developing at a steady yet spectacular rate. Then began the gold rush in Australia, for which huge influx of immigrants from various places began to flock in, increasing the continent's population manifold times. It was only with the gold rushes came the financial viability of the Australian colonies which was followed by a long economic boom, spurring the development of state infrastructure, local legislatures, land policies, construction of the first railways and telegraph line and the end of penal transportation to the east coast of Australia. The discovery of gold brought a marked change in attitude of Britain towards its distant colony. They no longer had any excuse for withholding self-government from Australian colonies. At the same time, pressure was increasing to end the transportation of convicts due to the fact that there were actually empty cells in British prisons, and the 'purpose' of Australia began to look different. Gold began to change not only the order of Australian society as the wealthy bourgeoisie expanded its power base, but also the feelings of association with the "old country". The Australians took pride in the fact that the emerging success of the state was not primarily founded on the back of convict transportation. Finally the transportation of convicts ended in 1853. The transportation of convicts to Australia was phased out between 1840 and 1868.

Indigenous Australians are the first human inhabitants of the Australian continent and its nearby islands who make up almost 2.4% of Australia's population.

The combination of disease, loss of land and violence reduced the Aboriginal population by an estimated 90% between 1788 and 1900. A wave of massacres and resistance followed the frontier of European settlement. This has affected the Australian indigenous population to a large extent. Though not as a policy, Australian Multiculturalism specifically excludes any discussion of Aboriginal people to some extent and as such the literature that reflects very little about the Aboriginals adjusting in a multicultural society.

One can trace down the beginning of Australian literature to the early settlement of the Europeans. The themes common to all the writers have primarily been settler identity, alienation, exile and relationship with the place. Australian literature is not necessarily about Australia, just as a Danish setting does not restrict Shakespeare's *Hamlet* from being English. Australian literature has been highly influenced or rather moulded by Aboriginal storytelling, convict tales and the desire by colonists to relate their experiences in the new country. Australian writing for children, commenced in earnest during the 1890s, though from its beginning in 1841, there had been many interesting local examples. Australian children before the 1890s had very little access to information about their own country through play or through fiction and even text books were slow to include Australian history and geography. Australian children who were sufficiently fortunate to own books and games were mainly given overseas publications, with the majority coming from England.

Australia being a melting pot of races, cultures and beliefs, has become very tolerant and inclusive of the multicultural society. Its literature also portrays the same society to the extent that even the literature for and about the children reflect the multicultural society very distinctively. It is this cultural diversity that has shaped up the national identity of the country. Due to this diversity the individuals of the society are undergoing a major crisis in the understanding of the culture of their own community. They are lost between the two cultures, one which has traditionally been theirs and second, that has become theirs: the Australian identity. Because of its

shaken identity crisis, Australia did not have a strong tradition of oral or written literature from its very conception. It is of late that there have been many enthusiastic writers who have made a lot of contribution in shaping up the literary picture of Australia. Similar is the picture of Australian children's literature. It is recently that many writers have been writing for and about children. According to Professor John Stephens, "Australian children's literature has undergone a fundamental shift in the last 30 years, as authors come to terms with social changes brought about by the feminist movement, multiculturalism, and more recently the end of the Cold War." There has been a lot of books after 1972 which follows the official shift from assimilation to multiculturalism as an Australian practice: and in tackling with the concept of multiculturalism, Australian literature specially Australian children's literature are moving away from the conventional notion of portraying literature for enjoyment sake.

As Professor Stephens puts it, Australian children's books are moving away from stereotypical views of what it means to be "Australian" to tackle with the problem of multiculturalism. While the typical Australian book used to have a country setting, social reality is now beginning to prevail. There have been other books on the multicultural society of Australia but children's books as a genre has not been able to incorporate the ideas of the assimilation of various cultures in the same society because many writers regarded children to be too immature to understand such a discourse.

"Australian children's literature was fairly late in becoming a genuinely urban literature," Stephens says. "Settings tended to be rural country towns and the urban novel has really only dominated in the last 10 to 15 years. I don't think that was nostalgia, but rather an attempt to find a kind of 'Australianness', a search for a kind of fabric or texture that is identifiable as Australian."

It was only around the mid 1980's that the picture of the Australian society had changed towards a greater cultural diversity. Children were not considered a part



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of that change occurring in the society. There are also ongoing debates and arguments a part or understand the social changes about children's literature being a part of the canonical texts for multicultural studies. In other words, they were not even regarded as a part of the changes happening in the society and surprisingly all these debates take place in the absence of children. It is the adults of the society who are largely responsible for creating/construct the children's canons and portraying children in them and manipulates the ways in which children react and interact with that canon. Children's books are generally didactic in tone for they were mainly written to impart moral messages to children. According to Nodelman, "Adults tend to represent their own ideas about childhood; including the notion that it is a time of innocence."

It is also important to realize the importance of children's literature in today's world and the effect it has on any issue that it wants to depict. Gradually there has been a lot of change in the understanding of children and their capacity to absorb the societal situations. The purpose of early children's literature being mostly didactic retained the moralistic tone. Till the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were less of illustrations, for they were expensive and were considered as extra decorations; until the 20<sup>th</sup> century many children did not even have access to any kind of literature that was tailored to their interests and needs. It was only through the establishment of certain support organizations after the Second World War that there has been such a tremendous growth and development of other resources as well as the interest in Australian children's literature began.

Australia has a strong tradition of children's books. The earliest books published for children were mostly instructive tales - stories to teach children how to behave. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Australian writers began to focus on stories showing real life experiences and everyday adventures, such as settling in Australia and family life. Charlotte Barton's (1797-1862) *A Mother's offering to her children* was the first children's book to be written and published in Australia. From the very beginning of children's literature we find examples as to how a text for the children reflects the

society and affects the thinking process of the children.

“The mother of the poor little black girl, who has lately met with so dreadful a death, was called Nanny. I do not know her native name. She was a remarkably fine, well-formed young woman.

Surely Clara and Emma you must remember Nanny coming occasionally, with other blacks?

The last time I saw her she had this same little Sally with her; who could just then run alone.

Clara. - Oh yes, Mamma! it was a pretty, fat, little brown girl, quite naked.

Emma. - And I remember we asked you to give her a little frock: but before you could get one they were gone.

Mrs. S. - That was the last time I saw the mother. The child was a half-cast, or brown child, as you call them; and soon after the time you speak of, Jane D...n, a young married woman, who had lost her only child sometime before, took a fancy to little Sally. And her mother agreed to leave the child; as soon as it was weaned. You know the black children are not weaned so soon as white children; most probably from the uncertainty and difficulty in procuring proper food. Though I have remarked that the babies will eat voraciously, at an age when a tender white babe would not touch such food.”

Racism is one of the greatest features that one sees in a multicultural world like Australia, and this is what is very evident in the piece. The whites have always secluded themselves from the black or the brown people. Texts which are meant for children who are devoid of any pretensions are made to internalize the racist mentality

right from their childhood. The contempt of a white immigrant towards the Aborigines is rampantly found in a text which is supposed to be devoid of the politics of the actual multicultural world.

“Clara. - Yes; I have heard of two people, whom they think they recognise as their departed black friends; and call them by their names, when speaking of them.

Emma. - How odd: perhaps they think white people have once been black, because they see those who die look pale.

Mrs. S. - It would be difficult to ascertain what gave rise to such an idea.

Julius. - I wonder Sally was not buried in the Church Yard.

Mrs. S. - She was not a Christian, my dear. Jane had neglected to have her christened; though she told me she had intended it.

Another melancholy instance of procrastination. Oh! my children! how very, very fatal is this habit of putting off from day to day, what should be done immediately; for we know not the day, nor the hour, when time may cease for us; and we be summoned into eternity. Let us dear children, endeavour to profit by the frequent warnings we have, of the uncertainty of life. "For here we have no abiding place," but, "In the midst of life we are in death." May we be found watching! and may God in his mercy so renew a right spirit within us, through Jesus Christ, that in our anxiety to acquire temporal knowledge, we may not forget that "one thing is needful", and so pass through this life that we gain a knowledge of the things which belong to our peace; and become at last heirs of immortality!"

Another extract from the same text brings out even more clearly as to how being a Christian and a white is the only way to salvation. There is also a clear tone of patronizing children as well as the whites.

Elizabeth Honey's book *Don't Pat the Wombat* is a fun story which deals with serious issues of friendship, victimisation and adult alcoholism, but in author Elizabeth Honey's hands, these serious issues are dealt with using humour and loads of interest, to engage readers without trivialising the issues.

Another story, *The Dons* by Archimede Fusillo, is a story about a teenage boy, Paul and his grandfather Nonno. Nonno in Chapter 16, very clearly describes to Paul about the tragic experiences in Italy. This children's book therefore is a classic example of a character Nonno who is still torn between the world he has left, i. e., and the world that he is into, i. e., Australia. He is always nostalgic about his past life to which Paul, who is brought up in Australia, is not able to connect him. We get a lot of sense of the Italian culture through the mention of 'taralli', 'grappa', 'bocce', 'briscola' all very typical of the Italian flavour. Even the use of language in Chapter 15 is very judiciously done. There has been an attempt to show that Paul who has been brought up in Australia speaks in English whereas Nonno, who has his roots glued to Italy, is still trying to adjust the two languages, Italian and English. The 1940s and 1950s are the years when a number of Italian migrants had come up to Australia. Fusillo was born in Melbourne to Italian immigrant parents. His concerns about traditions being lost in a modern multicultural world, and about grandparents and their stories disappearing, formed the basis of Paul and Nonno's story in *The Dons*.

Grandparents are commonly found in picture books. Often they are used to build bridges between generations and cultures. In *Old Magic*, illustrated by Di Wu, a young Chinese boy has adopted his new Australian lifestyle. Through understanding the frustration of his grandfather the boy is able to acknowledge the culture of his heritage and place it within his new culture. Illustrations from children's books have

always been a source for gathering information about the values and social and economic conditions of a particular period - a window to the change and diversity of social and cultural trends.

Early children's books were frequently of a moral or religious nature created to control and improve children. Warning of the consequences of immoral actions, they often portrayed only examples of the well behaved child and the family with two parents who were to be obeyed. The message was largely confined to the text, as limited printing technology and lack of appreciation for the power of the image meant that very few books were illustrated. Then came the refinement of 'offset' litho printing and colour separation techniques in the 1960's and 70's. The technology had an enormous impact on children's books because it released artists from the limitations of illustrating with only a few techniques and colours, into a bold new capability: they were able to illustrate in any medium they desired. Whereas in the earlier style 'illustrated book' the images are purely decorative: in a 'picture book' the images are at least as important as the text. Once the artistic restrictions were removed, the picture book as a genre was established with contemporary illustrators using all the techniques of representation found in art, including impressionism, surrealism, collage and photograph. In the 1800's a few authors started to portray childhood as a period of growth rather than being purely exemplary.

“But it took an Australian to help clear the air and establish stories of family life where children learned by doing, and benefited from their mistakes. Ethel Turner's frank and daring statement at the beginning of *Seven Little Australians* (1894) was to become a sort of manifesto for the family story in Australia:

Before you fairly start this story, I should like to give you just a word of warning. If you think you are going to read of model children, with perhaps a naughtily-inclined one to point a moral, you had better lay down this book immediately and take yourself to Sandford and



Merton, or similar standard juvenile works. Not one of the seven is really good, for the very excellent reason that Australian children never are.”

Although Australian family stories started to portray individuals in a more realistic light the families were still on the whole structured, stable and secure. Then came Mavis Thorpe Clark's *The Min Min* (1966), a ground breaking story where the family was no longer a place for security and happiness and the children run away from their abusive father in order to establish their own self worth. The messages in children's picture books tend to be a reflection of society rather than radical or experimental, but they allow plenty of scope to learn about social and cultural issues. At times the information is not in the text and is only absorbed through reading the illustrations. Family settings are most familiar to children, and are therefore used for the majority of children's picture books, even if this is not implied in the text. Illustrations in contemporary picture books portray a multitude of family structures.

Ian Bone's *Tin Soldiers*, is a complex, hard-hitting, gutsy novel will be of great interest to young adults. It will appeal to boys particularly for its subject matter and girls will be interested in the issues and the insights the novel gives to the behaviour of boys. All young people will like the challenging and thought-provoking issues the novel presents, many of which are relevant to their own lives. Michael is a young adult still attending school. On the weekend he plays soccer in a scrap team as a way of keeping in touch with his mates, some of whom have left school. He used to be very good at soccer and had the potential to play at a high level, now he plays just to keep his hand in. One Saturday in a game he tackles and nearly strangles a Lebanese opponent, frightening himself with the intensity of the experience. Reprisal ostensibly follows as Michael is severely bashed. Michael learns a great deal as he attempts to rebuild his life and find out who he is. He persists with this process until he comes to make a resolve and finds himself again. Soccer is not a game typical to Australia but that has now been internalized.

Initially authors of books about travels in the South Seas gave little more attention to Australia than to the Sandwich Islands or to New Britain since it was the voyages themselves and the discoveries of new lands and unfamiliar people that were mainly of interest. The *Interesting and Affecting History of Prince Lee Boo*, 1789, characterizes this concern with the unfamiliar and exotic elements of the newly explored Southern Hemisphere. Captain Cook, however, was greatly admired and his journals provided the sources for adult books about his voyages and for informative accounts for children. With the English colonization of 'the Antipodes', news of the strange new land soon appeared in the instructional geographies, natural histories and travellers' tales. The earliest account of New South Wales written for children is in *Modern Voyages* by the Rev. John Adams, 1790. The description is derived from Governor Phillip and contains information on the climate and soil at Sydney Cove, together with accounts of Captain Cook, the shipwreck of the *Antelope* on the Pelew Islands and Lee Boo's death and epitaph. This odd mixture of excitement and dreary factual information provided much of the fiction as well as the educational material. Descriptions of real and imagined shipwrecks are scattered among the books, sometimes revealing every horrifying event and suffering experienced by the victims. One such account is found in *The Shipwrecked Orphans*, 1838, taken from the evidence of one of the surviving boys, John Ireland, who describes the murder of the crew of the *Charles Eaton*.

A particularly interesting early work of fiction is *Alfred Dudley* by Sarah Porter published in 1830. This is one of the few books to record the Port Jackson pidgin English from which the later pidgin English developed. In her book, the author has a friendly attitude towards the Aborigines, a concern for their well-being and a willingness to treat them kindly. Though paternalistic in tone this work is one of the few to continue the sympathetic interest shown by Captain Cook in his journals. A sad and poignant statement appears in a picture book for young children by Mary Anne Fitz-Gerald, *Australian Furs and Feathers*, published in Sydney in 1889.

"But since the white people came here about one hundred years ago, the Aborigines have been gradually dying out, and soon they will be remembered only by the names they have given to places and animals."

The discovery of gold was a powerful incentive for emigration. In children's books of the 1850s and 1860s the irregular lives of the gold diggers provoked many a moral, particularly on the value of temperance. Later in the century the days of the gold rush and the bushranger were to form the setting for bold, 'dreadful' adventure tales such as *Blue Cap the Bushranger*, 1878. "Whoever dares to resist, in goes lead and out goes brains!" he roared with a horrible laugh. Authors such as G.A. Henty, W.H.G. Kingston and G. Manville Fenn formulated the traditional Australian tale, mostly written by authors who had never been to Australia. Lured by Australia's siren song of wealth and success, their 'manly' heroes arrived on her shores, soon to become immersed in tried and true adventures in a strange new land. Since the Australia of the 1890s was too urbanized for such heroes, these stories were usually set, as Henty put it, "in the early days when the bushrangers and the natives constituted a real and formidable danger to the settlers". However, in *Jack Harkaway and His Son's Adventures in Australia*, 1893, the heroes found Parramatta still seething with bushrangers, convicts and gold diggers; in between escapades with stock, savages and other villains, they also managed to found a pioneering settlement, Harkawayville.

Adventure stories often portrayed a ruthlessly exploitative attitude towards the original inhabitants, and the flora and fauna. The two young heroes of W. H. G. Kingston's *Adventures in Australia*, 1885, were described as sober, steady, strong, active, willing fellows with heads on shoulders and without any 'fine gentleman' notions. In the course of their adventures they shot bushrangers, blacks, emus, possums, wild cattle, kangaroos, dingoes, wombats and parrots. The fashion for exploring the wilds was eventually superseded by stories of fantasy and of domestic life in Australia. These appeared before the end of the nineteenth century and were written by Australian authors. *Seven Little Australians*, 1894, gained world fame and

together with *Dot and the Kangaroo*, 1899, has become an Australian classic. The story of the growth of Australia's indigenous literature belongs to the twentieth century.

*A Mother's Offering* was published in 1841 and is believed to be the first children's book published in Australia. It covers a variety of topics from geology and natural history to shipwrecks and the customs of the Australian Aborigines. Similar in style is Louisa Anne Meredith's *Tasmanian Friends and Foes* published in 1880. It was written and illustrated in Tasmania but published in England and is one of the few nineteenth century Australian children's books to have coloured illustrations. Local Australian publishing, unlike its English counterpart, was not particularly dominated by the adventure story. It included books of history, geography, natural science, fables, Aboriginal legends, poetry and fantasy. Many of these books were for young children including *Who Killed Cockatoo?* by W.A. Cawthorne published in 1862. This is said to be the first picture book published in Australia.

Several notable Australian women authors during the 1890s introduced family stories. These reflected of the growing urbanization of Australian society as well as being an expression of the authors' interest in family life. They also followed overseas trends in writing. In a few of the boys' adventure stories the family had symbolized warmth and security, contrasting sharply with the dangers of the bush, but overall it was a minor focus of interest. With Ethel Turner, however, every member of the family was part of her story and parental disapproval represented far more terror than the bush. Her *Seven Little Australians* published in 1894, was translated into many languages. Ethel Turner and another woman author, Mary Grant Bruce, whose books were published between 1910 and 1942, dominated the Australian scene for the first half of the 20th century. Mrs Bruce's *Billabong* series, starting with *A Little Bush Maid*, about life on a station in the Outback, highlighted and idealized the qualities of

mateship and family solidarity, two symbols with which Australians have faced the changing times since early colonial days.

Towards the end of the 1950s, a new group of women authors, including Nan Chauncy, Patricia Wrightson and Eleanor Spence, portrayed family relationships within their adventure stories, which were set mainly in the bush. On the whole during this period, there were very few contemporary family stories set in the city and depicting the life which most children live in Australia. Along with the family story and adventure, fantasy also became fashionable during the 1890s. The early fantasy resulted from the desire to people the Australian bush with magical creatures. "Australia! Hast thou no enchanted castles within thy vast domain?" was the question asked by Atha Westbury in *Australian Fairy Tales* in 1897. This echoed the regret that many late nineteenth century authors felt about the lack of fairy folk in Australia. In *Home Sweet Home* by 'Arthur Ferres', in 1896, Daisy Dimple exclaims - "How delightful it must be for those English and German children to live in Fairyland, and to see and speak with the king and queen, and take tea with the fairies themselves!". She achieves her desire to see Titania and Puck when she falls asleep and meets them among the rocks and caves of Port Jackson. Many of these books expressed a concern for nature and the needless killing of wild animals, the most enduring of these being *Dot and the Kangaroo* by Ethel Pedley published in 1899.

Early in the twentieth century the sisters, Ida Rentoul Outhwaite and Annie Rentoul created a magic land where fairies and elves lived in gum trees and tiptoed through paddocks by moonlight. May Gibbs and her *Snugglepoot and Cuddlepie*, 1918, continued this tradition with her gumnut babies, but at the same time she expressed her love of nature and her plea for its preservation. In Norman Lindsay's *The Magic Pudding*, 1918, the characters are masterpieces of invention and the humour is inimitable. This book is not as well known overseas as one would expect, perhaps because its humour relies so much on the Australian idiom. During the second half of the twentieth century Australian authors turned again to adventure and realism. The

Australian Aborigines who featured so prominently in the stories of the nineteenth century were absent from most of the fiction published during the first half of this century. Over the last twenty years contemporary Aboriginal writers have presented stories and tales of the Dreamtime. Daisy Utemorrah, for example, in *Do not go Around the Edges*, 1990, tells the story of her life on a mission station in Western Australia and at the same time presents many aspects of Aboriginal culture in poetry. Pat Torres's outstanding illustrations combine to make this a striking blend of fact, imagination and spirit.

Patricia Wrightson, inspired by the Aboriginal legends, created a series of fantasies in which myth and reality meet. Commencing with *The Nargun and the Stars* in 1973, she has given her own interpretation of the mythical creatures inhabiting the rocks and rivers since the beginning of time. This feeling that the land has a presence and life of its own is an integral part of her early adventure stories, such as *The Rocks of Honey*, 1960, in which the main character says, "I think that the old land itself stirred and breathed and remembered a little." The twentieth century-stories about the bush or the Outback display an understanding of bush life and a desire for people and nature to live in harmony. Many authors have expressed the same respect for wild life and native bush land which was present in the fantasies of the previous century. Colin Thiele's *Storm Boy*, 1963, is one of the most moving pleas. His vivid descriptions of the South Australian Coorong and its wild life are skilfully interwoven with his story of a lonely boy and his friend, Mr Percival the pelican, who is killed by duck shooters.

The destructive effects which people can have on the countryside have been dramatically shown by Ivan Southall in *Ash Road*, 1965, and Colin Thiele in *February Dragon*, 1965, both about bushfires. In these twentieth century stories the humans rather than the bush are the aggressors. *Ash Road* shows the effect of a thoughtless action on the lives of people as well as on the land itself. The Crusoe-like existence which was frequently portrayed in the nineteenth century was revived by Ivan Southall in *Hills End*, 1962, and Lilith Norman in *Climb a Lonely Hill* in 1970. In

their books they stated their faith in the ability of children to cope by themselves without help from adults. In both cases their island is the Outback. Garry Crew in *Angel's Gate*, 1993 sets a family story in a country town in which there are many brooding forces effecting the lives of the people. His mysterious and powerful novel can be read on many levels and contains a wide variety of themes. Nadia Wheatley in *My Place*, 1987 traces the lives of children over two hundred years. In time the same place sees many changes in the environment and multicultural traditions.

Contemporary writers, such as Victor Kelleher, Robin Klein, John Marsden and Gillian Rubinstein among many others, have brought a maturity and insight to their work which equates with the best of world children's literature. Similarly, picture book creators - Julie Vivas, Alison Lester, Bob Graham, Jeannie Baker, Steven Woolman, to name a few, - have all contributed to a contemporary golden age of Australian picture books.

## A Study of Indian Children's Literature

Like a lot of things that have come into India from the West, the terms multiculturalism and political correctness have come into the world of children's books — late. So that now, when a lot of fuss has been made and dust raised about it in the West, we in India are only just beginning to see them as issues. With some of us, these are very important questions that need to be addressed immediately. With the majority, however, they are merely long afterthoughts. There is probably no more multicultural nation in the world than India, given the number of racial types, languages and dialects spoken, organised and unorganised religions practised, and cultures represented. And as for point of view, the joke is: one plus one Indian makes eleven opinions! In this climate, therefore, the multiculturalism and political correctness debate cannot go along the same lines as it does in the West. Lines are nearly impossible to draw because there are more exceptions than rules. The definition of multiculturalism as an effort to reflect the real world of varied people and cultures, or at least helping children find their own space in books, takes on new meaning.

All of us grew up on a diet of mainly imported British books. Anyone who has worked with children knows how naturally and easily they absorb what seems alien and strange to adults. It is a pity that adults decide what children read and impose narrow taboos on the kinds of books that may be written for them, instead of recognising children's instinctive ability to live comfortably with the diversities that surround them.

This is the way we in India understand multiculturalism and political correctness. Talking about something in one culture may be completely unacceptable in another, but that's okay. One of our authors, Cathy Spagnoli, once wrote to us about how American publishers were very touchy about body functions but the Japanese were not at all : "Japanese children's books have for years included folktales with references to excrement, urine and so on. I used to be fascinated as a teller in Japan to watch other storytellers, often elegant librarians or stiff-looking businessmen, tell tale after tale about passing gas and how urine became a river and so on. Audiences loved



them. I could never do that in the United States and the few times I have tried such tales I've had school principals giving me a talking to!" Stretching the point further, poet, translator, folklorist and scholar A. K. Ramanujan believes that such stories were in fact part of the traditional toilet training process for children, told to them while on the job, just as Indian folklore wove in "tales of passion and trouble, told to children by their grandmothers and servants as the dusk descends." (from Radhika Menon, 'Are there taboos in children's literature?' — paper presented at the Delhi Book Fair, February 2000) These tales involved issues which may not have met the standards of 'correctness' in children's books today — issues which, however, were commonly encountered by children living in large joint families. Stories have a way of speaking of what cannot usually be spoken, and these tales were tools to help children deal with the complexities of the world they lived in.

It is also their responsibility to ensure that books claiming to be multicultural are truly so — not merely European, African and Asian faces put together on the same page. But publishing, too, is a business, driven by global market forces, by the ideas of whoever holds sway at the time. Power is glamorous, and more likely to attract and influence than the other way round, even in the case of books read by children.

This is the imbalance that has to be corrected. We must ensure that multiculturalism does not emerge as another face of cultural imperialism. Only when there is a flow of books and ideas freely the world over can there be true multiculturalism. An acceptance of this would automatically unshackle political correctness from the rigidity in which it is held.

'Bangaramma and her husband Pencilayya lived in the village of Narsannapeta in Andhra Pradesh. Normally their home was a quiet, peaceful place. Today, however, the air was filled with excitement.

"I have been waiting for this day," Bangaramma said to Pencilayya. "Finally, finally Gorannagaru has come to this village. I have heard him tell stories so often when I was a little girl. Now at last you can hear him too."

"Gorannagaru? Who is Gorannagaru?" Pencilayya said.

"Ayyo! You don't know anything! Gorannagaru is the finest storyteller this side of the Godavari river. When he tells stories, it is as though he is reciting poetry, it is as though he is playing god's own music..."

"Hmmm," said Pencilayya. "Like a cow calling her calf, like women working in the rice-fields?" he said.

“Oh! You don’t know anything!” Bangaramma said. “You’d better attend Gorannagaru’s harikatha. Maybe then you will understand what I’m saying!”

— extracted from Sweet and Salty, a folktale from Andhra Pradesh, published by Tulika

Just as Bangaramma said, Gorannagaru was famous, famous for his harikathas. He told stories of the gods. For the next ten nights in Narasannapeta, he was going to tell the story of the Ramayana. He had arrived just that morning and was staying in the village headman’s house.

There is great excitement and Bangaramma forces Pencilayya to attend the harikatha. He goes reluctantly and all he does is sleep in the last row. Through a series of comical circumstances Bangaramma finds out what he’s been up to and she accompanies him to the harikatha. Pencilayya is forced to listen to the story and when he does.... he gets involved in the storytelling, so involved that he becomes part of the story. What happened when Pencilayya really listened was that he was transformed.

Art, music, poetry, indeed all of the best literature, offer a creative culture for imagination, transformation, mediation and resistance. Perhaps this is the magic of Harry Potter. It doesn’t matter that Harry is an English boy doing English things. Indian readers have travelled beyond the physical boundaries of Harry’s world.

It would appear that none of the stereotypes apply in the relationship between Harry and his Hogwarts friends and their Indian readers. Yet, all the stereotypes hold in the relationship between the media and children’s books. In view of the marketing phenomenon that HP5 promised and turned out to be, all stops were unplugged in covering the event. The electronic media too did their bit going just so far as to ask patronisingly if there would ever be an Indian HP and why, with our glorious traditions of the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Panchatantra and so on, why did Indian children need Harry anyway?

The anchor on the late night telecast was not listening when one young studio guest said he liked J. K. Rowling, but he also liked a whole lot of other writers, including R. K. Narayan. This attitude sums up the Indian children's books publishing today. It, too, swings from the hype of Harry Potter to the repetition and monotony of the Ramayanas and Mahabharatas, along with the Panchatantra, the Hitopadesha, the Jataka, Vikram and Betal, Raja Bhoj and others of similar voice and vintage. There are hundreds of books in thousands of versions, mostly indifferent, mediocre, downright deplorable published by innumerable small, medium and big houses in the industry.

What can explain this preoccupation, this obsession, with the "rich and glorious" past of India? In one sense, it only mirrors a general obsession with 5000 years of civilization, a tendency to look over the shoulder than to consider the here and now. As for tomorrow, who knows and who cares. The Ramayanas, Mahabharatas, Panchatantras, folktales, of any size, shape, version are the fastest moving titles in bookstores. It doesn't matter how the book is produced. The discerning buyer obviously looks for a more than just 'traditional', but by and large it doesn't matter. The books sell anyway. Obviously, there is a 'need' for Indian books. At Goodbooks, an exclusively-for-children bookstore in Chennai, more and more people come looking for 'Indian' books. It's safe to assume that this is the general trend at least among the growing middle class in bookstores across the country.

Somewhere it seems to be a search for identity, and therefore a harking back to roots. Somewhere, there appears to be a slowly dawning recognition that reading, that books, are 'good'. Somewhere, readers experience a need to find themselves in the books they read. Children too. Since parents want their children to read the books they recommend, preferably anyway, they buy books in which they think their children will find India and 'Indian culture'. Whether they do anything else about imparting these 'lessons' is a matter for discussion, but certainly this is a major factor

as far as choosing books for their children are concerned. And this is natural. It happens to everybody, all societies, all over the world. The histories of children's literature from different parts of the world speak of this compelling need for a sense of identity, of making connections within themselves. Eventually, what is truly representative of the human spirit through a search for roots and identity is transformed into the universal.

The problem is that in India there are no stop signs, no danger signals, anything goes in the name of 'tradition' and 'culture' as far as children's literature is concerned. There is no intellectual debate, there are no scholarly studies, there is no aesthetic engagement, there is no literary discrimination, there is no critical thinking. If it's to do with myths, legends, folktales, epics, then that's fine. After all, India has a 'rich and hoary civilisation', how can anything be other than fine? But, there is a serious problem here, as the following samples of text from various children's books currently available in bookstores will testify. The following lines have been taken from a colourful, fast-moving version of the Ramayana, Rama is on his way to Sita's swayamvara with Lakshmana and Viswamitra.: 'On the way they saw a beautiful deserted hermitage where sage Gautama used to live with his wife in peace and holy meditation. One day Indra disguised as Gautama entered the hut of the sage in his absence to have sexual union with the beautiful Ahalya who was vain of her beauty.'

Another Ramayana published by one of the oldest children's publishing houses in India has this: 'A pious ascetic lived in a holy forest where animals abounded and moved freely in joy. Lord Indra who wanted to break the sage's austerities came in disguise to the hermitage and left a sword in its precincts. It was a calculated act. The ascetic became inhibited to use the weapon always. The habit warped his mind. Slowly giving up his austerities, he used the sword for wrong purposes.' The story goes on in this vein through all the x number of pages. The book received a good review from a young journalist writing in the children's supplement of a leading English daily. Elsewhere, in a collection of folktales, is 'A Guru and his

two devoted disciples were pilgrimaging round.' Turn to any page in a majority of such books and up pop these gems.

In the name of contemporary literature, what is available is the Moral Tale. Decontextualised, deconstructed, devoid of time, place, character, plot, language, these too, are in perennial supply. A book published some four-five months ago called *Grandma's Morals* has one story per page typeset in huge font size so none of anything is missed. Each story carries a moral at the bottom of the page, not to be missed, of course. And what are the morals? 'One man's pat is another's swat', for instance. Or, 'Don't play both sides against the middle'. Or, 'Give a wide berth to those who can do damage at a distance'. Very easy to read, but what does the reader make of it...?

Many copies of books from which these passages have been quoted sell, all over the country. Some of it is even showcased at international bookfairs, and earns India the sort of reputation it has in the children's books industry. Trash such as this — there is no other word for stuff like this — is bought by educated, urban, middle class parents for their educated, urban, middle class children. It is the one-stop culture 'halt' for NRIs and their children. Obviously, the children's books industry has not wised up to the dangers of hitching questions of identity only to the distant past or even to nationalistic fervour, while at the same time distancing oneself from the present, an equal if more compelling partner in the shoring up of identities. Publishing houses, even established ones, have chalked out a well-thought out strategy to tap a market that is seeing a boom in children's products from branded clothes, shoes, fizzy drinks, chocolates, to computers, multimedia products and stationery. When books become primarily products to be marketed, then packaging and speed of delivery is the focus. So we have more and more of the same thing — the same ways of telling, mediocre writing, irresponsible editing, and unimaginative illustrations and design — but well packaged and produced.

A brief look at the history of children's literature, of the baggage that it carries, may offer some explanations for this situation. The first stories came from the Panchatantra around 600 BC, the epics, and so on. These were disseminated from generation to generation, by word of mouth, through folk telling and classical discourse. The history of literatures in different Indian languages uniformly refer to the absence of any distinction between stories for adults and stories for children. Songs and lullabies are widely regarded as the first examples of children's literature. The oral tradition encompassed all members of society.

This tradition worked for everybody. The harikatha that Penchilayya unwillingly attends would have had in its audience bawling children, women nursing babies, lovers stealing kisses, drooling men in their dotage, children playing pranks and yes, some fallen fast asleep. Then came the British, with their new printing presses printing off Bibles, magazines and booklets, their education policy for the 'natives' and high hopes for the English language. Reading materials began to be available. People began to write, children too. In 1978, Keshabchandra Sen in Bengal started the first magazine for children in which the contributors too were children. By the early 20th century, magazines started to proliferate all over the subcontinent. A new, different, compartmentalized, and quite definitely western way of seeing began to find its way into schools and colleges, teaching and learning methodologies. The old, everyone's-in-it-together approach to life and experience, the holistic approach, slowly began to fade. English made great strides. To know English was to be civilized. It was the new aspiration, the new dream.

It is a dream that persists to this day. Girls and boys in tiny, remote villages still without water and electricity and practising the most reprehensible forms of caste discrimination... in all these villages, girls and boys aspire to read and write and speak English. As communication needs grew, and printing became popular, people began to write for children. Unfortunately, however, very often these writers were

often people down and out and desperate to earn something. There is a story of how the well-known Hindi poet Subhadra Kumari Chauhan used to walk into publishing houses with sheafs of poems whenever she needed some money. She and her kind of writing were the exception. Mostly, however, children's magazines and gradually, children's literature, began to be dominated by run-of-the-mill, even mediocre writers. Illustrations didn't come into the picture. That is why Sandesh, the magazine started in 1913 by Upendra Kishore, Satyajit Ray's grandfather, is of such significance. Dr Nabendu Sen, who has written a short essay on Bengali children's literature in *Children's Literature from India*, points out that although the content did not differ from the best Bengali magazines of the time such as Mukul or Sakha, "in respect of its layout, binding, get-up, illustrations, use of colour, fineness of sketches, selection and casting, Sandesh had no comparison". By and large however, only mediocre talents were attracted to children's writings. That mediocrity continues today. Even as Indian writers for adults steadily made bigger waves, this did not find a parallel in children's literature.

With the printing presses came another major development, the publication of textbooks. It didn't take long, however, for textbooks to become synonymous with children's literature. An article on children's literature even declared, "No one need be ashamed to say that children's literature is didactic literature. Its intention is to make our children better, to instill noble ideals in them and to lovingly mould them into men and women of character."

Gradually, the moral or lesson-oriented stories took precedence, as also poems and songs, some expressing nationalistic fervour or extolling the virtues of nature. It seems as though the logic was that dumbing down texts for children would somehow gain legitimacy for them. Didacticism became the byword and stories were published largely shaven clean of inflections, contexts and meaning beyond the page. In a sense, it could be said that children's books were identified by the talking down tone of the

text. If a generalization could be made, it is this, that children's books that talk down to children offer no challenges and are available everywhere.

Compare this with the force and flavour of folktales. They are fantastic, they are open-ended, they subvert. Herbert Kohl (who wrote the perceptive *Shall We Burn Babar?*) makes an interesting and relevant comparison between a good translation of Carlo Collodi's original Italian *Pinocchio* and the Disney version. The original *Pinocchio* is a spirit released from a piece of wood, and children don't forget that when they listen to his adventures. There is something magical about him from the very start.

On the other hand, the Disney version invests *Pinocchio* with an innocence that is wholly lacking in the original. "The book *Pinocchio* does not preach unmitigated virtue," says Kohl. "Pinocchio does not become the perfect child and good boy that Disney projects at the end of the film. Because of the moral ambivalence of the story, it's a wonderful story for children... Since the goal of the story is to read and appreciate the tale and make judgements about the children's behaviour, our talks do not have to be tied up neatly. There's no need to draw final conclusions, write down homilies for children to parrot, or even come down on the side of good or evil."

Children's books in India do precisely all these things. They draw final conclusions, write down homilies for children to parrot and which children are encouraged to parrot, and come down squarely on the side of good. The Indian obsession with moral stories for children takes us far away from the spirit of storytelling, and further away from our own cultural space. One has only to read the African-American children's writer, Virginia Hamilton, to see how she reaches into the traditions of her culture in order in order to tell her own stories. The historical and the spiritual worlds that she carries within infuse her own extraordinary writing for



young adults. Given the rich historical and spiritual and narrative resource that Indian writers have, it is inexcusable why we are not able to produce rich and moving texts for children. Is it because writers are not writing for children and those who do, can't write?

We know there is a natural connection between listening and speaking, and reading and writing. Even small children can listen to complex stories and assimilate them, question them, and are sensitive to the fine meanings and intents in the text. Children, good readers, understand and assimilate contexts and cultures over a period of time. Like Panchilayya who transformed as a result of listening, children possess a natural ability to absorb and analyse. But book after book produced year after year promoting sanitized stories and moral lessons only serve to chip away at these natural instincts.

What do we mean by Indian-ness? And in children's books? A strongly visual quality, for one. Indian storytelling comes in verbal and nonverbal flavours. There are proverbs, riddles, jokes, lullabies, folk tales, family stories, songs, ballads, hero tales, epics, narratives in prose and verse, dances and games, kolams and torans, wall paintings, painted scrolls, toys, craft objects made of stone, metal, terracotta, grass and so on, street theatre, acrobatic tricks, yoga, magic, meditation, all-night theatre and other-world experiences — all these weave in and out of life in India everywhere. Not for the Indian consciousness the separation into areas of activity and endeavour: art, science, religion, economics, music, learning, everything coalesces into one and is expressed as one.

What better way can there be of expressing Indian-ness in children's books than by a natural progression of growth, of a continuum of tradition? Other cultures have shown the way, shown how to use the wealth of verbal and nonverbal material, to transform it and to pass it on in new and continuing ways. The Indian consciousness is closer to visual narrative. This is why picture books are crucial to the experience of a child, not simply in relation to reading, but to living. Japanese

illustrator Satoshi Kitamura says quite simply, “Because I like pictures, I like stories.” He believes that there ought to be a holistic culture which does not “divide adults from children” and he sees his picture books as being created for everyone, not for children alone. In fact, he makes no distinction at all between children and adults.

Ramanujan explains the phenomenon of an overarching sense of lived experience and its relevance in the world of child and adult. “One’s sense of what is beautiful and poetic, or what is moral and right, and even one’s most abstracted sense of values are shaped in childhood by these verbal and non-verbal environments. In a largely non-literate culture such as India’s, everyone — rich, poor, high caste and low caste, professor, pundit and ignoramus — has inside him or her a non-literate subcontinent.”

Reaching out from inside, reaching into the world from within one’s experience, and bringing experience into children’s worlds — these are the ways in which great writers and illustrators negotiate a space for children’s books. The Japanese illustrator, Mitsumasa Anno — one of whose most famous books is in fact a counting book — has much the same approach to his picture-making. “In one of the scenes of Anno’s *Journey*,” he says, “I incorporated a rendering of ‘The Gleaners’, a well known work by the nineteenth-century French painter Jean-Francois Millet, in which peasant women are seen at work in a field. When a small child sees those women in the book, he doesn’t know the source of that particular image but can make up his own story about them — who they are, what they are thinking about, in what kind of house each one lives, and so on. Later he may see the Millet painting and remember the women.”

In India, we don’t have to go far to remember. All across the country are examples of visual narrative that cut across distinctions, whether it is the phad scrolls of Rajasthan or the chitrakathis of Maharashtra or the patuas of Bengal or the leather puppeteers of Andhra Pradesh or the yakshagana of Karnataka or the kathakali of

Kerala... everywhere, the storytelling culture is dynamic, sophisticated and highly visual.

One of the most popular series in India is Amar Chitra Katha. The series shows how potent the packaging of national heritage in comic format can be — both as a cultural commodity and a marketing strategy. Although they use the comic book format, ACK completely bypasses the subtlety and sophistication of the genre and makes the medium the message. The text and pictures are replete with racial, sexist and communal overtones, not to mention the banal writing, poor and often wrong use of language, unedited use of age-inappropriate vocabulary and ideas, plainly chauvinistic or downright insensitive dialogue, blandly rendered narrative, decontextualised perspective, and so on.

The implications do not have to be set down. But it is revealing when a student of journalism argues with the Dalit writer and scholar Kancha Iliah, that she believes Vishnu is clean-shaven because that's how he is represented in ACK! One of the series' foremost illustrators says their art is based on the Ravi Varma school of painting, cinema such as the early mythologicals of V. Shantaram, and movie hoardings. He adds that he personally uses profiles of Hollywood and European actors and actresses occasionally. Clark Gable as Rama and Marilyn Monroe as Sita certainly lends new perspective to multiculturalism!

The authors of the series say they often drew from accounts of British colonial officers, further distorting what has already been distorted. It is not surprising then that the British are often portrayed as helpless, duty-bound officers appreciative of native 'pluck', as opposed to 'destructive Muslim invaders'. In homes where children are exposed to all kinds of books, different kinds of cultural experiences and where is discussion and debate, the damage is, perhaps, not so great. But when they are exposed to little else and parents and teachers see their education on Indian culture being complete because they have read these comics, that becomes dangerous.

At the other end of the spectrum are the apologists who think spending time, energy, effort and most certainly money on producing children's books is, somehow, a waste of valuable resources. Literacy, yes, they are completely committed to pushing literacy. Literature? That's different. The literacy-literature confusion happens all the time in India, with literature most often being used as a synonym for literacy. Not having the money to produce a certain kind of book or anything else for that matter is one thing. Finding cost-effective ways to produce quality materials is another thing, it is the challenge. But to work on the assumption that nothing should be spent on children's books is quite another matter altogether. Perhaps what this boils down to the question of how we view our children, as the Swedish writer, Per Gunnar Evander has, observed: "All problems in the world are due to one single question: how we treat our children." Yes indeed, how do we treat our children?

And how can we treat their books? Through them and in them, can we convey a sense of the multilingual mosaic of our culture? Can the use of language be less rigid, more creative and closer to the spoken? In some languages, for instance, the gap between the spoken and the written seems unbridgeable. Can we explore new ways of illustrating by using and understanding traditional styles better? Equally, can we explore contemporary styles through understanding better the traditional styles? Can we create awareness among young people about the lives and concerns of marginalized communities, people, places through stories about and of them? Can we develop nonfiction material, information books, from an Indian perspective, books that are well-researched and creatively presented? Can we reach more readers through well-developed, challenging dual language books? Can we give children a sense of the plurality of cultures, religions, histories, ways of seeing, languages, and make ourselves comfortable with the idea of differences?

Unless we actively engage with children's growing up experiences which includes what they are reading and watching and give them alternatives, unless we provide the space for debate and discussion so that critical thinking emerges that will

spurn the rubbish that is being churned out in the name of education and culture, unless we create a climate through books in which children can understand the need to make informed choices.... unless those in the business of producing books for children — writers, illustrators, ideators, editors, translators; designers — put the needs of the child reader up there with all their other priorities, we cannot have books in which children can find themselves.

### **A Study of Canadian Children's Literature**

Any books in the past have been banned for reasons varying from offending religious beliefs to portraying women as liberated. In today's free Canada, challenges of literature are taken seriously almost everyday. Furthermore, a great number of the recent challenges have pointed towards children's literature for its literary content and illustrations. Surprisingly, many Canadian children's books are censored, not at the government level, but at the level of local schools and libraries. How can Canadians allow this to happen if many of us believe that the role of the true educator is to teach children to be free thinkers, not closed minded? Restricting children's literature puts a severe limitation on a child's right to read. Many local and school libraries' actions contradict the Canadian Library Association's Statement of Intellectual Freedom, which states that "all persons in Canada have the fundamental right, as embodied in the nations' Bill of Rights and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to have access to all expressions of knowledge, creativity and intellectual activity." What should be done to solve this problem? Before this question can be tackled, three other questions have to be answered. These questions involve the ways children's books are censored, the reasons why children's books are censored, and the actual effects that the challenged books have on children.

Robert Munsch, a children's author who is popular among children and censors, outlines three types of censorship in a letter to the *Canadian Children's Literature Magazine*. The first is government censorship, where writers or publishers are imprisoned or killed for their actions. The second type, as outlined by Munsch, is local schools and libraries censorship. In schools, censorship occurs whenever groups or individuals, attempt to prevent students from reading, hearing, or seeing something or someone because they believe that such exposure will be harmful to the students. A majority of censorship in Canada occurs at this level because the laws usually prevent censorship at higher levels, but parents expect the local libraries and schools to mirror their own values, and it is easy to succeed at censorship at this level because schools and local libraries are very vulnerable to politics and generally want to avoid problems.

A perfect example of this type of censorship is the recent and very publicized attempt for the Surrey, British Columbia School Board to ban the books *Asha's Mums*, *Belinda's Bouquet*, and *One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dad, Blue Dads* because they depict or describe same-sex parents. By December of 1998, the decision to ban the books was taken to the B.C. Supreme court and overturned. "The Court quashed the Board's resolution that banned the three books but declined to compel the School Board to approve the books, saying that such orders are rarely given as that would have the Court assume the role of school board. However, the Judge remitted the matter back to the School Board for consideration in accordance with the Court's reasons."

This case was very publicized and consisted of passionate protesters on both sides, however, many Canadian children's authors' books have been taken off the shelves as a result of a few complaints to librarians or principals. In June, 1992 Roger Pare's *The Annick ABC* was pulled from an Alberta's school library's shelf and thrown out. A mother had complained to the librarian that the reference "'N' is for nudist eating noodles in Naples" is inappropriate reading for kindergarten students. She was

upset that she had to explain nudism to her five-year old daughter. Another example of this situation concerned Robert Munsch's *Thomas' Snowsuit*. In Lloydminster Alberta/Saskatchewan, a teacher at an elementary school told the principal that the book undermined the authority of all school principals. The principal agreed and removed the book from the school library. Robert Munsch also had a librarian call to tell him that three of his books had received complaints in her school district and she was considering taking them off the shelves. She stated that there was an "organized movement," which turned out to be two families in two different schools who had complained about the same three books. As Robert Munsch concludes, "Suppose 10% of the population really wants a book off the shelves and 90% sort of like it, or even really like it. What then? I think the 10% should lose. In real life they often win; .001% can win, as long as they stage a sit-in on the floor of the principal's office."

Many principals and educators do not have the time to read every book that they order for their school or library. To help them out a little, they rely on the many Canadian committees who thoroughly investigate and recommend books specifically aimed at certain ages, reading levels, and literary qualities. Unfortunately, sometimes when a book is challenged by anyone, its merits are quickly forgotten. For example, Margaret Buffie's *Who is Frances Rain* was recommended by many of the reviewing committees and also won a major Canadian award. In preparation for a visit by Margaret Buffie to Queenswood School in Ottawa in the fall of 1990, the school's librarian skimmed through *Who is Frances Rain*, highlighted every profanity that was written. The principal, after seeing this, canceled Buffie's invitation and banned the book from the school without reading the book himself.

Another type of censorship that Munsch did not mention is the one committed by publishers who attempt to avoid the censors through pre-censoring. Munsch himself was asked by Annick Press to write a softer version of his book *The Paper Bag Princess*. Annick Press suspected that there would be objections to the main character, Elizabeth, socking a Prince Ronald in the nose.

Illustration also get pre-censored by publishers. An example is Laszlo Gal's original front cover to Margaret Crawford Maloney's re-telling of Hans Christian Andersen's, *The Little Mermaid*. The cover which had featured a bare-breasted mermaid, was not accepted in the United States because it would not have been good for sales in the "Bible Belt." Gal had to cover the breasts with hair. Similarly, Roger Pare's illustration for a nudist in Naples, had to have clothes on when it was released in the United States.

Fear is at the centre of censorship. Today's Canada, like many countries, is a chaotic world for children. It is filled with violence, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual promiscuity, and teen-age pregnancies. To have control over this chaotic world and protect our children, adults need to blame something that they can control. Frightened adults frequently blame the literature that children are reading. These people see words and books as having the potential to endanger, frighten, and corrupt children. In almost all censorship cases involving children's literature, concern is most commonly focused on descriptions of sexual activity and graphic scenes of violence, as well as on religious or social practices that threaten the censor's moral sensibilities. According to the most knowledgeable specialists (psychologists, sexologists, and social workers), the actual welfare of children is not a factor. Adult feelings are the one's that are to be spared here, so there won't be any problems when their values are passed on to the following generation.

Another basis for challenging children's books is "political correctness." In his article, "Children's Book Challenges: The New Wave," Ron Brown loosely defines political correctness as the act of censoring, or even self-censoring out of the fear of offending some group. Since Canada's multiculturalism is sensitive, a growing number of groups have been considered "offendable." In 1991, a number of Toronto school libraries removed Ian Wallace's *Chin Chiang and the Dragon's Dance* for fear of offending the Chinese. In 1991, Lynne Reid-Banks's *The Indian in the Cupboard* was



removed from library shelves in the Kamloops school district. A Native had objective to the portrayal of Natives in the book.

An example of a politically correct challenge that extended beyond race, though, is the case of Diane Lager Haskell's book, *Maxine's Tree*. In it, Maxine goes camping on weekends with her father in the Carmanah Valley on Vancouver Island. Maxine ends up seeing clear-cut sections in the next valley, and fears for her favorite tree. Member of the Schelt, B.C. area's International Woodworkers of America local called the book "emotional and in insult to loggers." In February of 1992, the union sought to remove the book from the School District 46 libraries. Book challengers appear better equipped than ever with this relatively new term.

It is amazing to see how quickly people forget about the way they thought as a child when they become parents. As Robert Munsch said in a 1988 interview:

Kids love talking about peeing and farting, but they do not like stories where the mother says, "Go to hell!" to the father. That's a major taboo violation, and kids do not want an adult doing that. But to have an adult saying "bum" or "pee" that's great. "Underwear" is good too!

We all knew what a naked body looked like by the time we reached grade three, but again most adults forget that. I'm sure that most of us would agree that it had no major effects on our moral or emotional feelings. Any degree of explicitness in children's literature, fiction or nonfiction, is too much. Kids are supposed to be familiar with their own sexuality, if any sort of sexuality at all, and that's that, end of discussion. In his article, "Book Banning: A How-to for Beginners," Charles Monpetit describes an incident involving an enlargement of a *La Premiere Fois* cover at a book fair. A five year old did not notice that the character on the cover was naked. All he said was "Mom, look! That man's got an apple in his body!" The mother, though, was horrified. *La Premiere Fois* is anthology for true stories about first sexual experiences. In 1992, a number of Quebec parents asked child specialists to evaluate

it. The results were positive, and the specialists concluded that there was a definite need for this type of material in the main stream market. If censors really want to keep children away from focusing too much on sexuality, the issue should be treated like any other everyday problem. Focus should not be on censoring books with this content; it should be put on changing society's values.

In many countries, such as Denmark and Japan, sex for children is a part of life as natural as eating and drinking. These countries usually meet the need for books on sexual topics for children of all ages. Here are two examples. Lene Kaaberbol's *Den Nat Kristian Blev Til* (The Night Kristian was Made), is a Danish book that describes how a young couple, very much in love, create their first child. Nanao Jun's *Oheso Ni Kiite Goran* (Listen to Your Belly Button), is a Japanese book that explains sexuality, by beginning with things that young children are naturally curious about. These countries are encouraging their children's authors to write about sexuality, which results in good books being available when adults and children need to talk about it.

Unfortunately, censorship in its many forms is part of peoples lives from the very first moment they walk into their kindergarten classrooms. Many books are too easily censored as a result of a few complaints or preconceived views. An educator's job is to open up the world of books to children. Those who restrict the world of books, because somebody might object, are simply failing to do their job. Schools must respect the censorial rights of groups and individuals, but schools must equally try to ensure that such people do not succeed in extending their prohibitions to everyone's children. If not, children's authors will be unable to write about controversial or unexplored issues. Children's literature will go back to the boring educational texts of the past. Every child should be allowed access to these controversial books, so that thoughts and questions can be raised about the world that we live in. borrowing from African-American literature, we can classify children's books as socially-conscious, melting pot and culturally relevant. This sounds bland

but is useful. Socially conscious books are those that are didactic, lacking in believable plot and characteristics, and frequently reinforcing the very stereotypes they hope to overcome and worse, creating a new set of stereotypes. The melting pot books focus on the universal ignoring subcultural differences. The culturally relevant books hold the greatest promise of presenting realistic images both in words and pictures to young audiences.

## The Menace of Political Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is an unsound political theory, advocated by liberals, academics, media personnel, social theorists, government officials, and politicians. While it is supported by a majority of those people, it is actually opposed by the overall majority of Australians. It is a deliberate policy to actively maintain, support and build foreign cultures in Australia, to the direct detriment of the Australian identity, culture and way of life. Instead of allowing immigrants, and their native-born offspring, to naturally assimilate into the Australian culture, governments are knowingly creating bases of foreign culture in this country. These deliberately divisive policies are carried out in two areas.

First, through the multicultural policies themselves, whereby foreign cultures are sustained and encouraged. Large sums of money are granted to "ethnic" organisations, which boosts the abilities of such organisations to service and perpetuate their "ethnic culture". In schools, multicultural policies are actively pursued, whereby children are encouraged to identify with their "ethnicity", rather than to become "fully" Australian. Many, if not all, aspects of public life are touched in a myriad of ways by official multicultural policies, all of which actually encourage a "them and us" attitude between "new Australians" and "old Australians".

Secondly, immigration policies are based upon continuing mass immigration, which gives foreign cultures in Australia the ability to self-sustain their separate development. These deliberately divisive policies are turning Australians against each other, and are creating a country populated by a collection of separate communities, instead of a nation populated by a nationally unified society.

Multicultural Australia has thus become a breeding ground for a whole range of "micro-nations", each with their own political and cultural agendas. Indeed, Geoffrey Blainey has warned that "multiculturalism ... is a new form of colonialism, in which we are the colony of every nation on earth". As Australia struggles to encompass the many

little Chinas, little Japans, little Italys, and little Croatias, all determined to preserve their own national, cultural and ethnic peculiarities (including not only "lovely" dancing and foods, but sometimes strange, if not barbaric, customs; as well as some extremely strong ethnic hatreds), it is very easy to see the disunity created among these ethnic communities; as well as between them and those who see themselves as "Australians", foremost loyal to Australia.

Large-scale immigration programmes run the risk that ethnic enclaves will develop, a risk that is heightened by multicultural policies which give immigrants "little incentive to learn English and become socially and economically integrated with those outside their group". Such ethnic ghettos can provide a stimulus to the creation of "ethnic gangs that prey on their own community". Another dark side of this situation is that such enclaves "provide ideal bases for groups to engage in politically motivated violence. Indeed, the conflict over the former Yugoslavia has in Australia resulted in several incidents, including 11 unsolved fire bombings". The ethnic and political rivalry witnessed between the Greek and Macedonian communities in Australia involved "a demonstration outside Parliament House by 60,000 Greeks, a brawl at a soccer match and firebombings and vandalism", but such incidents are minor - compared with the potential for widespread inter-ethnic rivalry and violence. Such a situation is indicative of what multiculturalism can bring about.

As Professor Blainey has stated: "Recent governments emphasize the merits of a multicultural society and ignore the dangers. And yet the evidence is clear that many multicultural societies have failed and that the human cost of the failure has been high. Many of our refugees actually come from multicultural societies that are faltering or in disarray". Also, Professor Loring Danforth has admitted that "Ironically, Australia's own commitment to multiculturalism may also encourage immigrants to involve themselves in the national conflicts of their homelands. This policy of multiculturalism ... defines people in ethnic categories and makes it possible for them to maintain their identities as Italians, Greeks, or Macedonians. Multiculturalism, with its emphasis on community



languages and ethnic media, promotes the development of these ethnic identities and impedes the development of a strong Australian national identity."

We do not need a crystal ball to see where multiculturalism will lead us. The future will bring a vast amount of inter-ethnic rivalry and resultant clashes, even leading to race riots reminiscent of those clashes in the UK and USA. Australia faces the spectre of being another disunified "multicultural" society like Sri Lanka, South Africa, Northern Ireland, Lebanon, the former Yugoslavia, Fiji, etc.; not to mention the USA and the UK, with their continually strained communities, and occasional race riots. The prospects of such a disunified nation are appalling.

Multiculturalists oppose the idea of assimilation (whereby immigrants would be encouraged to become Australian) as they want immigrants to retain their own cultures and pass those cultures onto successive generations. While it is understandable that immigrants would have an attachment to their place of birth and native culture, assimilation does not demand that immigrants should forget their origins; but asks that they, and their offspring, become part of Australia and adapt to the Australian culture and way of life; rather than give impetus to ghettos and ethnic divisions within the country.

Multiculturalism, however, demands that immigrants remain attached to their place of birth and native culture. In fact, this demand even extends to the offspring of immigrants: people born in Australia, of immigrant parentage, are told not to join "mainstream" Australian culture, but to become multicultural "ethnics". Multiculturalism is a political policy to actively encourage the strengthening, building, and promotion of separate cultural units within Australia. Multiculturalism is a political device to discourage immigrants, and their offspring, from becoming Australians.

The aim of internationalist-thinking liberals, academics, and "lefties" is - in effect - to destroy the Australian national and cultural identity. This "aim" is not the design of





some well-organised conspiracy, but is rather the "logical" outcome of the thought-processes of liberal-internationalists, whose actions will cause such devastation; however, since these "trendies" are, or should be, well aware of the effects their policies will have on our national culture, their actions can only be regarded as deliberate. This intended destruction of the Australian identity is being carried out by a two pronged attack:

Firstly, the Australian identity is denied. Many academics, trendies and "lefties" maintain that Australia does not have its own national and cultural identity. They argue that Australian culture is either "British", or a multicultural mish-mash; they tell us that Australia has no culture of its own. Ignored are the poets like Henry Lawson, Banjo Paterson, Rex Ingamells, and Mary Gilmore; painters like Arthur Streeton, Frederick McCubbin, Sydney Nolan, and Russell Drysdale; architecture such as the Federation style; music from Waltzing Matilda, to the Seekers, to the Bushwhackers, to Skyhooks; our heroes and heroines, for instance, Ned Kelly, Nellie Melba, Don Bradman, the ANZACs, and the men of the Kokoda Track; the Australian way of life, including the bush barbeque, Australian Rules Football, and games of Two-Up; Australian icons such as Vegemite, Goanna Oil, Hills Hoists, and Akubra hats; our entertainers and characters like Ginger Meggs, Chips Rafferty, Paul Hogan, Dame Edna Everage and Sir Les Patterson; our distinctive language, accent, and colloquialisms; the Australian character, styled as easy-going, fair and democratic, having a healthy disrespect for authority, and with a laconic humour; all shaped and influenced by the distinctive Australian landscape and our unique history.

Secondly, the destruction of our identity is being carried out by multiculturalism itself. From politicians and academics comes the cry "we are all ethnics", no-one is an actual Australian - everyone is an "ethnic". The origin of your parents or forebears dictates what type of "ethnic" you are: if you have English parents then you're an English "ethnic", if you have Irish parents then you're an Irish "ethnic", German parentage produces a German "ethnic", and so on. If one parent is French, and the other Russian, then it could be assumed that you have to pick just one ethnicity, or perhaps you could

become a multicultural schizophrenic? Australia's culture is being undermined by the effects of the continual push for multiculturalism (especially in our educational institutions); we are now being taught to see ourselves as "ethnics", rather than Australians, and this cannot help but to adversely affect our national cultural output and development.

The aim of this two-pronged attack is simple: no more Australians! Everyone becomes an "ethnic"; and the Australian identity and culture becomes treated as worthless and second-class, or gets twisted around to take on a multicultural slant. This destructive "aim" is the consequence of the actions of liberalistic internationalists of various shades; and, even if such destruction is not their actual intent, their ideology certainly manifests itself as an assault on our national well-being.

As Loring M. Danforth, a Professor of Anthropology, has stated, "Multiculturalism, with its emphasis on community languages and ethnic media, promotes the development of these ethnic identities and impedes the development of a strong Australian national identity." However, rather than being just an impediment, the long term results are actually destructive of the Australian national identity. If this attack on Australia's heritage was being carried out by liberals, academics, and "lefties" only in their capacity as private individuals or groups, then we would not have too much to worry about as they are a minority opinion on the subject. But this is not how these people operate. They lobby and push their ideas through academia, the media, and the political machines; their ideas are then shoved into official acceptance, until they finally become "official policy". Once the "official policy" stage is reached, these lobbyists go into "overdrive"; "official policy" becomes the rationale to enable them to force their ideas onto the community: the public service is retrained and restructured to accommodate the new ideas; a veritable public service "industry" is created to build, promote, and propagate their ideology, encroaching as far as possible into other public service areas, as well as into private enterprise, and even affecting private individuals, becoming a self-serving, self-sustaining industry hell-bent on pushing its new ideology and justifying itself (they begin to wonder how we ever got along without them). In tandem with all this

is the creation of new laws (enacted by self-serving politicians, assisted by the new "Multicultural Industry" and their allies) which sets up the new ideology as "right" and "respectable", whilst painting any opposing views as "wrong", "unworthy" and, in certain circumstances, "illegal". The new policy has now become "politically correct"; and with the media, academia, and the parliamentary political parties being full of small "l" liberals, the public receives the impression that such views are not only "correct", but are held by the majority of the people (when, in fact, these ideas are held only by the majority of journalists, academics, and politicians). In such a climate, it then becomes "politically incorrect" to hold opposing views, with active opponents being effectively labelled as cranks, if not downright criminals ("racial vilification" laws will see some opponents jailed and/or scared off). Opponents in prominent positions are harassed; while those in the public service, self-employment, or any other assailable position, stand to lose their job or livelihood if they speak out.

The most serious aspect of all this is that of education. It is during the formative years of our young children that they are heavily indoctrinated by the education system into believing in multiculturalism (such indoctrination being made by both subtle means and overt means). No opposing viewpoints are given any credible airing (if given any "airing" at all), and multiculturalism is presented as a fact, rather than as a particular biased political viewpoint. As in the days of Galileo Galilei, our school children now believe that "the sun revolves around the earth", and that it is "dangerous heresy" to believe otherwise; in our modern context, that "multiculturalism is good for us", and that to oppose it is "dangerous" and "wrong", perhaps even "illegal".

The ultimate aim of the internationalist liberals is to destroy the Australian national and cultural identity (whether this aim be deliberate or incidental). The general idea is that Australia will have no national identity of its own; that all of the population will be "ethnics" who owe their cultural allegiance to cultures all over the world; creating a situation where, en masse, the people will be loyal to all nations and, paradoxically, will therefore be collectively loyal to none; that Australia will become an internationalist state

(maybe even a building block, or a springboard, for an internationalist world). It would seem that Australia has become a multiculturalist experiment, as the place to create the United Nations' vision of the "brown man": a human creature belonging to no identifiable race, nation, or culture; the new citizen of the cosmopolitan internationalist multicultural world.

That most, if not all, multiculturalists are actually internationalists is beyond doubt. As an example, the government-sponsored document, *Australia as a Multicultural Society*, saw fit to propagate the belief that Australia's interests may have to be overridden by so-called international interests:

"we also wish to emphasise that questions of immigration policy (like many other questions) are embedded in a much wider concept of social cohesion than this: namely, the 'social good' of humanity as a whole. From this point of view, Australia may be a sectional group in a wider international system and the good of the wider system may override the well-being of Australia considered in isolation" (emphasis added). What began as a trendy liberalistic idea, and was picked up and carried along as a "migrant vote winner" for politicians, has become a huge menace to Australia's society and culture.

Multiculturalists advocate the right for other cultures to practice their own cultural traditions and "unique" ways of life, and feel that this liberalistic view is a fair and just position to take. How ironic, therefore, that we find that some of the cultural ways and traditions subsequently practiced are considered to be far from "liberal", "just", or "fair".

Professor Lauchlan Chipman has exposed multiculturalism as containing a wide spectrum; from "soft" multiculturalism (the "food and dances" justification, used so often) to the realities of "hard" multiculturalism:

"It is imperative that we realise that this is what hard multi-culturalism is about. It is not about folk dancing, interesting food, and free-flowing wine. Nor is it about experiments in living and the open-minded and sensitive quest for improved or alternative life-styles. It is not just about reinforcing the 'nice' or the 'cute' or the 'exotic' aspects of these cultures as perceived by widely read, widely travelled

middle-class Australians. Rather, it is about the preservation of 'ethnic integrity', the reinforcement and imposition on the new-born of sets of traditions, beliefs, and values which include, as well as those which are noble and enlightened, some which are at least as inhuman, as grotesquely ignorant, and as racist, as sexist, and as bigoted as any that can be squeezed from even the most appalling of ockers." Also looking at the consequences of multiculturalism, Dr. Frank Knopfmacher warned that "It entails permanent class war with an ethnic dimension -- the worst kind of class-war, and in the end, terrorism and civil war."

The reality of the multicultural ideology (despite what any of its promoters might claim) is that it actually encourages and supports various distasteful ethnic customs:

Treatment of women as second class citizens, including a "sheltered, separate, limited and thoroughly sexist upbringing for daughters" that exists among fundamentalist Muslims.

Female genital mutilation (also known as female circumcision) by Africans.

Girls raised in strict Muslim or Mediterranean households, not being allowed to associate socially with Australian classmates.

Extremely rigid, and almost blindly obedient, patriarchal family structures.

Arranged marriages, whereby brides (and sometimes grooms - depending on which culture is involved) have no say in the choosing of their partner. Indian and Australian Aboriginal arranged marriages can involve girls as young as eleven to fourteen being married to middle-aged men.

The notion of the duty to kill to preserve family or blood honour.

Aborigines being speared in the leg by other Aborigines, as tribal punishment for crimes, in line with their customary law (other types of punishment also occur).

Ethnic hatreds, and traditional anti-Semitism.

To try to encompass all cultures (and their various aspects and realties) within one nation is blatantly ridiculous; but to try to change, or to try to ban, certain cultural traditions is to "discriminate", to act "culturally superior", and to be "racist". Of course, some cultural demands cannot coexist in the same country; for instance, some cultures demand that monogamy be the only legal marriage, while some want polygamy to be legal. It is a direct contradiction: You can't have it both ways.

It also needs to be asked as to whether most Australians have thought about the implications of a "truly multi-cultural society"? At the moment many Australian traditions are based upon our Christian heritage; but in a truly non-discriminatory multicultural society these traditions will lose their official standing so as not to discriminate against, or offend, other religions; especially when the population base for other non-Christian religions, such as Islam, grow enormously. For instance, it is "discriminatory" for Australian governments to recognise, and allow public holidays for, Christian religious festivals, such as Christmas and Easter. It is a "logical" demand of multiculturalism to demand that such "discriminatory" practices cease. In such an event, there are two basic "non-discriminatory" options: 1) to recognise, and declare public holidays for, all religious festivals (a political and economic nightmare), or 2) to ban official support for all religious festivals (this latter scenario being the more likely choice). Do Australians really want government recognition of, and public holidays for, Christian festivals (such as Christmas and Easter) banned?

Some multiculturalists may deny this scenario; but, giving us a taste of things to come, appeared this news item in *The Age*: "The English city of Birmingham has banned Christmas symbols such as Santa Claus, church bells, angels, nativity scenes and 'Merry Christmas' messages from its street lighting decorations in case they upset non-Christians". There should be no doubt in our minds that this is only the start of such matters.

To call Australia "multicultural" is a misnomer. To illustrate the point we can compare culture with language. Australia's language is English, both in the official sense and in the practical sense. There are, however, some people in Australia who speak another language as their "first" language, so in a pedantic sense the country could be termed "multilingual" (but which would infer that most Australians are everyday speakers of foreign languages). Yet, only an idiot would seriously describe Australia as "multilingual": it is an "English speaking country" which happens to have a small minority of people who speak other languages (with only an extremely small minority who can't speak English at all). So it is with culture: the vast majority of Australians

adhere to the Australian culture (even fewer are those who adhere solely to another culture).

Don't be misled by statistics of "ethnic background": the vast majority of the Australian-born (second generation, third generation, or whatever) are Australians, who are part of the Australian culture; some may be raised in such a way as to be imbued with aspects of another culture, but that does not change the overall picture: we share (broadly) the same way of life; speak the same language; relate to the same national icons; operate under the same cultural mode of everyday behaviour; and we live in, and enjoy, the same country. Culturally, most Australians are just that: Australian.

A survey conducted for the Office of Multicultural Affairs revealed some interesting results: that only 9% of Australians considered themselves to belong to a non-Australian ethnic or cultural group (2% of which were "British"), with only 3% actually being members of "an organised group with ethnic affiliations". It was also shown that "only a quarter of the second generation sample saw themselves as belonging to an ethnic group as did just under a third of the first-generation group. The only sub-sample where more than half identified with an ethnic group was the recent arrivals."

Thus, most migrants can be viewed in a different light to that being shown by the multicultural lobbyists, that despite being statistically classified as being of "ethnic background", many have adopted the Australian culture as their own and often have become virtually indistinguishable from the native-born. Of course, many are unable to assimilate so easily, either because they come from a culture that cannot adapt readily to ours, or because they have fallen into the clutches of Political Multiculturalism which demands that they don't assimilate.

The fact is that Australia is not a multicultural country. To use an analogy, it can readily be seen that a white dog, with a pink tongue and black paws, would only seriously be described as "multicoloured" by an idiot, or someone with an ulterior motive; so it is with multiculturalism: there is an ulterior motive behind the push to call Australia

"multicultural". The reasoning is that if Australia is called "multicultural" (which would imply that most Australians are everyday practitioners of foreign cultures), that the entire country will be perceived to be, as a whole, "multicultural" (no matter what the reality is); that, if this country is "multicultural", we therefore need "multicultural policies", that therefore we need "multiculturalism", which will then be used to turn Australia "on its head" to produce a multiculturalist, internationalist society.

The phrase so often used by multiculturalists, that "Australia is a multicultural society" is a cleverly constructed political phrase that is used to justify Political Multiculturalism. Despite its pretensions to moral grandeur; multiculturalism is simply a political ideology, pushed by internationalists and small "l" liberals, that is dangerous and destructive, and promises only one end for our country: the death of the Australian culture and our national identity.

Australia is not a "multicultural society", it is a monocultural society with some ethnic minority cultures at its edges, or to be more succinct, Australia is a "core-culture society". The term "multicultural society" implies that the entirety of our society is multicultural, which is far from the truth, and is a term used in support of a political ideology. The term "core-cultural society" is a far more accurate and truthful description of the Australian nation.

As Brian Bullivant has warned, "We have become so accustomed to the regularly parroted assertion, 'Australia is a multicultural society', that there is a considerable risk of assuming that such a society exists."

Multiculturalism is not just a concept whereby first generation immigrants can keep their culture (they could've kept it anyway), but one which wants to ensure that immigrant cultures are passed from generation to generation, rather than anyone becoming "Australian".



Multiculturalism means:

- The destruction of the Australian culture and national identity.
  
- The internationalisation of all cultures.

Therefore, multiculturalism means no culture.

All in all, multiculturalism is:

- Costly
  
- Contradictory
  
- Dangerous
  
- Divisive

Multiculturalism is not a "fact": it is a liberalistic political ideology, which is being forced upon Australians by politicians, "politically correct" academics, "lefties", and other "social engineers".

It is a destructive concept, posing as a "nice" cosmopolitan idea, that needs to be vigorously opposed by all thinking Australians, until it is eventually defeated.

Multiculturalism is not just the stupid folly of today, it is the disastrous mistake of tomorrow.

## Conclusion

There is major dilemma in the form of multicultural discourse to the extent that the sanitized homogeneity arising from the universalism inherent in the politics of cultural pluralism confronts the very difference that it seeks to avoid to minimize. In other words the celebration of cultural and ethnic identity promoted by the practice of culturalist multiculturalism, as identity politics, creates the very divisions and structures it seeks to avoid. As we know today, ethnic structure – be they in sport, religion or art- art part and parcel of the social and political reality of the diverse and pluralist society. Yet these differences are denied, muted, or ignored to maintain the equality demanded of a common citizenship. We need to devise effective strategies for handling the paradox of pluralism, by accepting the principal of ‘equal but different.’ This however, requires, first, a willingness to confront diversity and this is certainly not achieved by the denying difference. Some ethnic groups, particularly those from recent waves of migration, find themselves disenfranchised and powerless – and the culturalist model of multiculturalism gives them little so less. The orthodoxy of multiculturalism confronts a new pluralism markedly difernt to that which prevail when cultural pluralism first evolved in the late 1970s and 1980s.

Given the shortcomings of multiculturalism and the problematic nature of the doctrine of cultural pluralism, we indeed may have come to the end of the first phase of a bold social experiment which has transformed Australian society. there is no turning back from the reality of the diversity and pluaralism of contemporary Australian society. Clearly, the multiculturalism we have practiced for over 3 decades cannot any longer be narrowly framed as a philosophy of migrant settlement or migrant welfare. In confronting the diversity and pluralism of society, we have stark choice: *do we continue to shy away from difference or do we face up to the stark reality of Australian as a pluralistic society?*

These choices have a significant bearing on how we consider ourselves as being Australian; and also the conception of the common good, the idea of Australia as a good society. The stereotype of a friendly, laid back, egalitarian Australian is full of contradictions. Being egalitarian or having sense of 'fair go' as Vance Palmer once stated in his vision of an 'egalitarian democracy', is far more problematic in a diverse plural society. In articulating the values, beliefs and ideals which underline the 'good society' there is no way we can avoid the reality of difference. Indeed the inescapable fact is that culture is not the problem, nor the solution. I would end my dissertation with a little poem from Australia. This is supposed to be a traditional song of Australia. This is a classic example of what we can say as a truly multicultural text.

### I Still Call Australia Home

I've been no cities that never close down,

From New York to Rio and old London town,

But no matter how far or how wide I roam

I still call Australia home.

I'm always trav'lin', I love being free,

And so I keep leaving the sun and the sea,

But my heart lies waiting over the foam

I still call Australia home

All the sons and daughters, spinning round the world,

A way from their family and friends,

But as the world gets older and colder,

It's good to know where your journey ends.

But somebody we'll all be together once more

When all of the ships came back to the shore,

I still call Australia home.

But no matter how far or how wide I roam,

I still call Australia, is still call Australia,

I still call Australia Home.

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