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Western Literature Association

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PLAINS AND PRAIRIE SPACE, HISTORY, AND THE LITERARY IMAGINATION, IN AUSTRALIA AND THE UNITED STATES

DON D. WALKER

In 1825 a space observer orbiting the earth could have looked down on two enormous land masses separated by more than 7000 miles. In the southern hemisphere the great body of land was Australia, an insular continent surrounded by the southern seas. In the northern hemisphere the great body of land was the United States, framed on east and west by oceans, bordered on the north by the even greater land of Canada and on the south by the lesser land of Mexico. Australia and the United States were roughly the same size, some three million square miles.

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GEOGRAPHY

A closer look would have revealed some interesting similarities. Both Australia and the United States would have shown great stretches of relatively flat open country. In Australia, from the mountains facing the Tasman Sea northwestward across the entire continent lay a vast plains unbroken except by distant and unassuming desert ranges. From the Darling Downs west of Brisbane to the Indian Ocean was nearly two thousand miles. In the United States, from the Ohio valley westward to the eastern slopes of the Rockies stretched a vast area of prairie and plains. From Cincinnati to Denver a crow would have flown more than a thousand miles. In the geographies of both countries the horizons seemed distant and the skies limited only by the flat curve of the earth itself.

A closer look would also have revealed some important differences. From any perspective in space Australia would have offered a vast uniformity of surface, a continental flatness. A yet closer look would have revealed the presence of mountains, particularly the Great Dividing Range along the southeastern continental

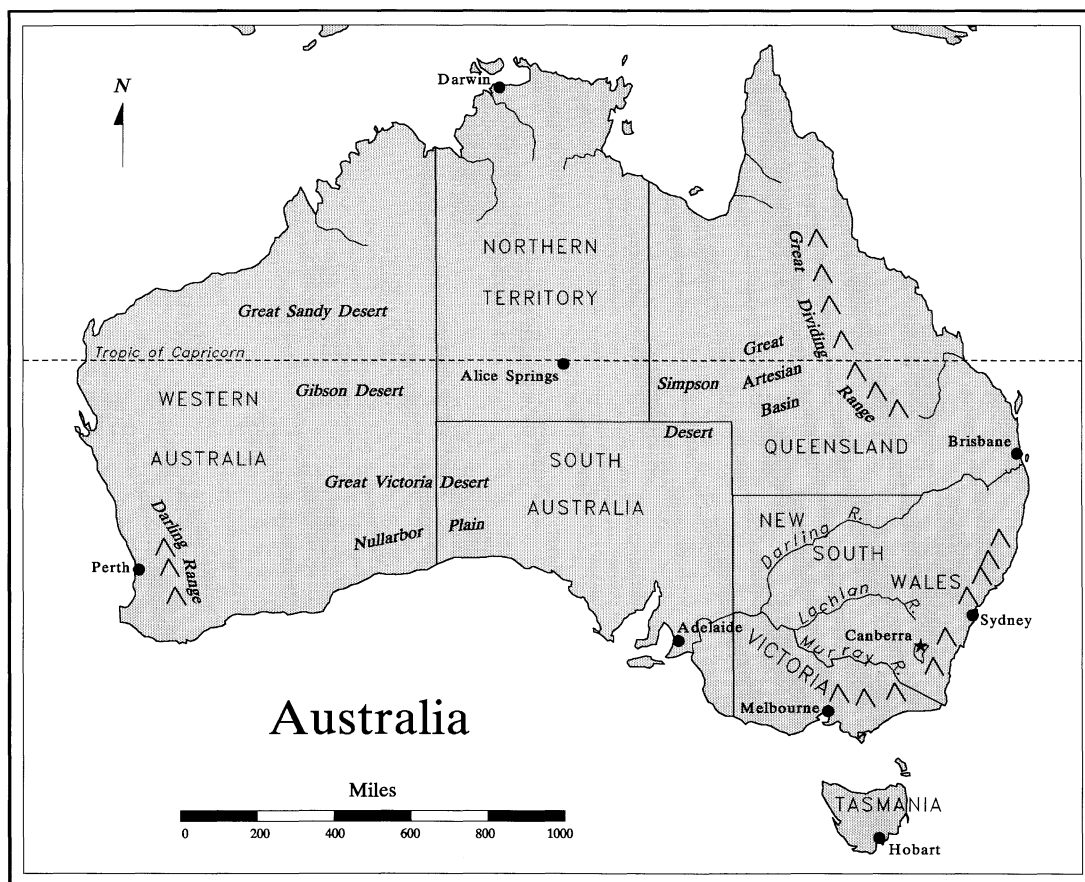


FIG. 1. Map of Australia showing major cities and rivers. Map by Brad Bays.

edge, and the Musgrave and Macdonnell Ranges, uplifts deep within the expansive plain. These mountains, in comparison with the world's great mountains, however, are barely bumps on the earth's round surface. Mount Kosciusko, in the Australian Alps, rises to only 7316 feet. Mount Woodroffe, in the Musgrave Ranges, and Mount Ziel, in the Macdonnell Ranges, are both just under 5000 feet, well under the 6684 feet of Mount Mitchell in the Appalachian Mountains of eastern America. Beyond the westward sweep of prairie and plains the American mountains climb steeply to impressive heights. Mount Whitney tops the American land rise at just under 15,000 feet.

High mountains catch and store rainfall. Long slopes downward provide the beds for rivers. Australia has only one major drainage system, only one major river. The Murray, with its source in the Snowy Mountains of New South Wales, flows more than 1600 miles to its mouth in the Indian Ocean. With its tributaries, it drains more than 400,000 square miles. The Murray is thus, in its length and area of drainage, seemingly one of the world's important rivers. The Missouri is longer, nearly 2500 miles, its drainage basin is larger, 528,000 square miles, but what is finally significant is the fact that the Missouri has a flow of 40 million acre-feet, three and a half times the flow of the Murray.

Of lakes in Australia, Lake Eyre is the largest, covering 3600 square miles, much larger than America's largest desert lake, the Great Salt Lake. But in spite of the fact that Lake Eyre drains a system of some 500,000 square miles, it is very shallow at best. Normally it remains "a waste of saline mud." Cooper Creek, the best-known of the streams that feed it, like many Australian creeks and rivers, is sometimes a vast waste of water, sometimes a braided channel and a series of stagnant river pools.¹ The Great Salt Lake is fed by a number of streams flowing from the high Wasatch Mountains, where in some places and some years the snowpack exceeds a dozen feet. In Salt Lake City, at a lower elevation between the mountains and the lake, the average rainfall is more than 18 inches a year. In contrast, the average annual rainfall at Lake Eyre is 5 inches, with an evaporation rate of 100 inches. Much of the great flat interior of Australia is thus a desert wilderness. Of the notable deserts of the world four are in Australia, together totaling almost 800,000 square miles, thus approaching the size of Texas and Alaska combined. Four of the notable deserts are found in the western United States, but they total barely 125,000 square miles, less than the size of Montana alone. The open spaces of Australia are not only bigger; they are also considerably drier.

A configuration of these geographical facts leads the observer to a further significant difference. If, as historical geographers have long insisted, settlement has been determined by accessible waterways, then much of Australia remained inaccessible to settlement. With only the shallow Murray as a river of entry, most of Australia would have to await other ways to exploration and settlement. Had there been beaver along the streams flowing westward from the Great Dividing Range, Australian beaver men could conceivably have paddled and portaged their canoes up the Murray to bring down their bundles of pelts to a post somewhere near where Adelaide would eventually be. But there were no beaver in the mountains, and there were no Australian trappers.

As a matter of historical fact, the Murray was explored downstream, not upstream, after the Blue Mountains west of Sydney had been crossed in 1813 with packhorses. Australia lacked not only natural access to her vast interior; she also lacked enticements of natural value to lure the hardy venturer into that interior. The beaver has been called the greatest single stimulus for exploration of North America, particularly of the American West.² Australia not only lacked beaver in her mountains; she could also offer no rich deposits of gold and other precious metals in her bleak interior.³ There was of course land, and in the second half of the nineteenth century Australian selection, like American homesteading, stimulated a rush to acquire land. In Australia, however, only a relatively small portion of the continent was arable. Across the Blue Mountains the valleys opened in lovely grasslands, but 450 miles west of Sydney the arid zone began. From there to the western coastline, more than 3500 miles away, much of the land was usable only for the grazing of sheep and cattle, and extensive stretches of it were good only for holding sand and spinifex.

HISTORY

History may be thought of as the intrusion of a sense of time into geographical space, time made concrete in social development and/or decay, and documented by artifact, observation, and printed record. In most traditional history, time is assumed to be objective, although in some histories events may become so internalized that time may seem almost as psychological as time in modern fiction. Can we suppose a universal history? In 1877 Lewis Henry Morgan assumed universals in his theory of social evolution. In 1961 Raymond Aron, in a quite different intellectual context, wrote of *The Dawn of Universal History*. Ethnic relativism, however, seems to preclude any truly universal history. The time sense in the Dakota "Lone-dog Winter Count" is not the historical time sense in works by George Hyde and Robert Utley. And the dream-time



FIG. 2. *The Pahvant (or Sevier) Desert in western Utah. Vegetation is primarily varieties of saltbush. The photo gives a misleading impression of emptiness. Three national highways cross this space, and the main line of the Union Pacific slices across it. And if the photo were retaken today, the tall stacks of a 1600 megawatt coal-burning power plant would loom near the center. Photograph (1969) courtesy of Don D. Walker.*

of Australian aboriginal myths is not the historical time of C. M. H. Clark and other Australian historians.

For the following essay, much of this is academic. The essay does not attempt to give a complete history, let alone a universal one. It simply argues that geographical features condition the traditional sense of history and that this sense of history (or the absence of it) helps to determine the possibilities of the literary imagination.

If history was the penetration and claiming of land by a moving people, Australia present-

ed unusual barriers to the making of a continental history. From the beginning of settlement, America had her westward destiny. That way lay the course of empire. American history moved northward and southward too. The Mississippi provided the axis, a waterway flowing nearly 2400 miles from north to south, dividing the nation into East and West, defining as no other feature the setting of American western space. This axis bisected the east-west axis at a number of natural points, and these coordinates became the sites of major historical settlement, St. Louis, Missouri, being

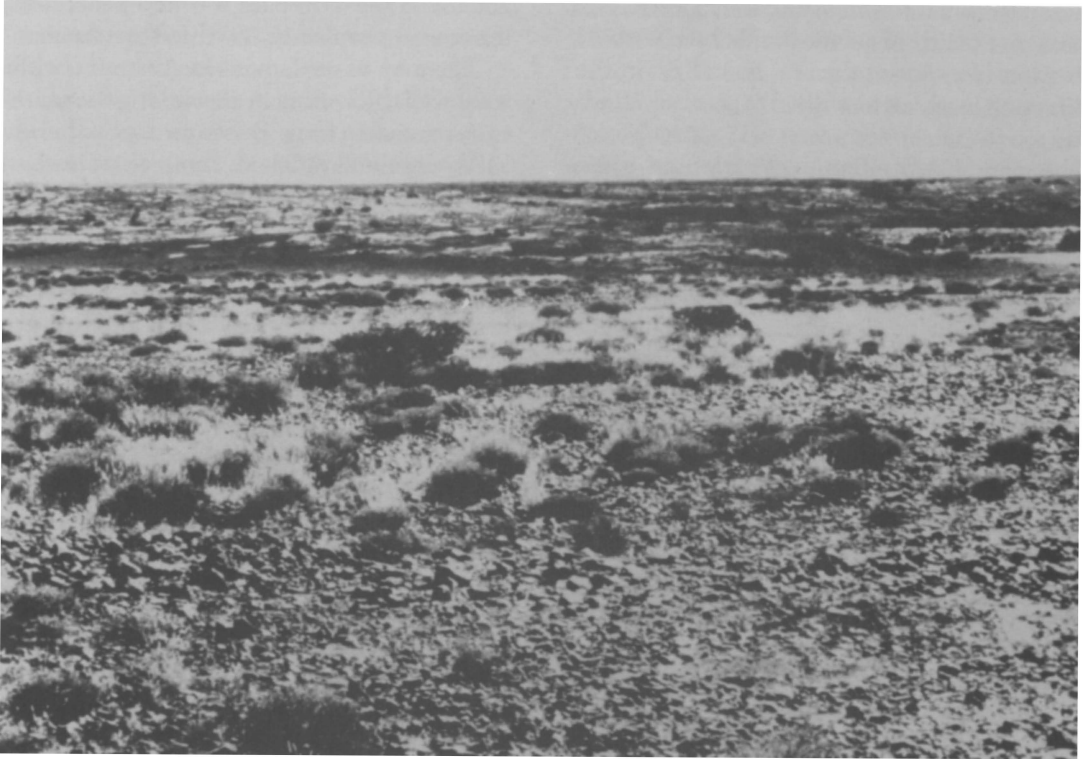


FIG. 3. Saltbush plain, Simpson Desert, Australia. Similarity to Pahvant Desert: big, flat, hardy saltbrush growth. Difference: much bigger, with no societal development. From Birdsville, population less than 200, to Alice Springs, directly across the Simpson Desert, is roughly 600 kilometers, with no highways and no towns. Photograph courtesy of Rosemary Purdie, *Land Systems of the Simpson Desert Region*.

a notable example. There is no St. Louis on the historical map of Australia. Alice Springs sits in splendid isolation at the center of the Australian continent. But it holds very little history.

Another way to contrast the historical occupation of Australian space and of American space is to take blank outline maps of Australia and the United States and line in the major routes of exploration, trade, and settlement. For well over a century before Cook's landing at Botany Bay and his exploration of the eastern Australian coast, various men and ships

had touched the outer shores of the continent, but the interior remained a mystery.

And for almost a half century after Cook, exploration was primarily coastal. When, in the first decades of the nineteenth century, the Great Dividing Range was crossed in a push westward, the penetration of the continent was still relatively shallow. Charles Sturt discovered the Darling River in 1829, but from the Pacific to the Darling is scarcely a greater distance westward than from the Atlantic to the Shenandoah. Only in his later explorations in the 1840s did Sturt venture into the

desolate blank, finding the Stony Desert, "an immense plain, of a dark-purple hue, with its horizon like that of the sea, boundless in the direction in which he wished to proceed," finding too the uncertain waters of Cooper Creek.⁴ The map of Australian exploration, as it appears for example in C. M. H. Clark's *A History of Australia*, shows few lines from south to north—notably, besides Sturt's, the tragic venture of Burke and Wills in 1860-61 and the more consequential crossing of the continent by J. McDouall Stuart in 1861—few lines between the center and the far western coastal settlements, and no line across the breadth of the continent from east to west.⁵ In 1848 Ludwig Leichhardt tried to make this line. He failed, and his disappearance left Australia one of its greatest mysteries.

In contrast to the interior blankness of the map of Australia, the central space of the map of the United States is extensively crisscrossed with trails of exploration. One might even say "braided" with paths of discovery, to borrow a geographical metaphor so appropriate to Australian rivers as well as the rivers of the American Great Plains. Daniel Boone blazed Boone's Trace through the Cumberland Gap in 1775, and by the end of the century he had crossed the Mississippi. That river was already well known both to the Spanish and the French. DeSoto had discovered the river in 1541, and La Salle had descended its entire length in the 1680s. In the first decade of the eighteenth century Jefferson had projected Lewis and Clark down the Ohio, up the Missouri, over the Divide, and down the Columbia, the entire breadth of the continent and straight through its spatial vastness. In the second decade traders penetrated the southwest by way of the Santa Fe Trail, and mountain men explored the beaver streams and traded with the Indians of the entire mountain and basin West. Jedediah Smith crossed the Mojave Desert to the California coast and returned over the Sierra Nevada and through the central Great Basin. What at one time seemed an immense blank triangle (the image is John Neihardt's) became a network of human passage.⁶ Thus

American western space was well penetrated, if not well peopled in "civilized" settlement.

The map of settlement in Australia, while it shows a thickening in areas along the southeastern coast, from Brisbane to Sydney to Melbourne and Adelaide, and Western Australia on the lands out from Perth, the interior remains to this day relatively unmarked by cities and towns of any size. Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, and Perth together have a population of roughly ten million, well over half the total population of Australia. Darwin, the largest settlement in the Northern Territory, has a population of only 41,000. The interior cities and towns are of an even smaller order. Broken Hill, Cloncurry, and Kalgoorlie are all major interior towns with fewer than 40,000 people. The desert towns remain outposts along the desert tracks. In 1954, Marree, at the southern end of the Birdsville Track and 441 miles north of Adelaide, had a population of 206. Three hundred miles northeastward across the Stony Desert from Marree is Birdsville, described by Douglas Stewart as "a town so small/ That blink but twice/ And the plain is bare."⁷ On up the railroad northward from Marree one comes finally to what might be called in Australian irony the jewel settlement of the central outback, Alice Springs, white population in 1927 forty persons. Alice Springs is very nearly the geographical center of the continent, 981 miles north of Adelaide, 954 south of Darwin. The population in 1954 had risen to 2785, exclusive of full-blood Aborigines.

An Australian geographer has written that "Australian history during the bulk of the nineteenth century was largely the history of the successful and satisfactory disposal of a vast and unknown domain of nearly 3,000,000 square miles (7,769,000 km²) amongst, at the greatest by 1914, nearly 5,000,000 people."⁸ Even in context this statement may be rather misleading. If the population were evenly spread, it would mean that in 1914 there were fewer than two persons per square mile. Thus by the definition that closed the American frontier in 1890,⁹ taken as a whole Australia

remained a frontier. But the population was not evenly spread. It was dense in certain coastal areas, and almost nonexistent in much of the interior. A recent map shows a density of more than twenty-five persons per square mile around Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, and Perth, with well over half of the continent "virtually uninhabited." In 1984, with an estimated population of nearly fifteen and a half million, Australia was 85 percent urban. But much of Australian space remains quite simply uninhabited space, except for a thin presence of Aborigines.

To the extent that continental space was penetrated and given history, the process of occupation showed the same kinds of contrasts as the lands themselves. After the early settlement of coastal areas west of Brisbane and Sydney, north of Melbourne and Adelaide, and east of Perth, by 1850 extensive areas as deeply inland as two or three hundred miles had been occupied. The crossing of the Dividing Range and the discovery of usable lands to the west led to a peopling of New South Wales and Victoria. Likewise settlement pushed north and east from Adelaide and over the entire southwestern corner of Western Australia. Forty years later pastoral settlement had claimed very nearly the entire eastern half of the continent. But in all of this movement there were no major routes of land and river passage. Occupation proceeded by way of a myriad of land-crossing courses. That is, there was no Cumberland Gap, and there was no Oregon Trail. In the late 1820s and early 1830s, convict labor completed the Great West Road over the Blue Mountains and the Great North Road northward to Maitland. But while the Great West Road gave access to the "boundless regions" of the Bathurst Plains and beyond, it did not open a transcontinental route of settlement. In 1848 the town of Bathurst, less than one hundred and fifty miles west of Sydney, had a population of fewer than two thousand. As late as 1954 the town numbered just over sixteen thousand.

Contrast the westward movement of settlement in the United States. In 1850 Cincin-

nati, Ohio, had a population of more than 115,000, almost as great as Philadelphia. Farther west St. Louis had a population in 1850 of almost 80,000, with more than half a million by 1900. The center of American population moved steadily west. By 1880 that center was west of Cincinnati. In 1927, while there were barren unsettled areas, for example the salt flats of Utah, and thinly populated areas, for example the desert basins of Nevada, there was no sizeable part of the United States that could be called "Empty." In 1927 a map of Australia could show half of the continent as "Empty Australia."¹⁰

Historical persons move into unsettled space for a variety of reasons: to see the other side of the mountain, to find gold or other precious metals, to graze their stock on the virgin pastures. Both Australia and the United States had their gold rushes, the Aussies south to Victoria and east from Perth to Kalgoorlie, the Forty-Niners across the whole country to the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada. The Forty-Niners left a historical trail through western space. The Aussies left no track across their continent. Despite Australia's huge uranium reserves, it remains to be argued whether discovery by airborne radiometric survey nearly half a mile above the ground constitutes the historicizing of space.

For this study, the historical movement of grazing livestock in the late nineteenth century has a special interest. In both Australia and the United States, pioneering ventures involved the trailing of stock into vast unsettled grasslands. Although there are similarities between the early pastoralism of Australia and the rangeland development of the American West, in the matter of peopling the empty spaces there are significant differences. Overlanding, as the Australians call the driving of stock long distances over undeveloped land, began in 1837 with the movement of sheep and cattle from lands west of Sydney to the Port Phillip area in southern Victoria. The following year cattle were overlanded to Adelaide in South Australia, and during the 1840s great herds of sheep were moved

northwestward to the Darling Downs. In 1864 cattle were overlanded to the northern peninsula of Queensland and in the 1870s and 1880s to the northern ranges of the Northern Territory and on westward to the northern districts of Western Australia. In *The Passing of the Aborigines*, Daisy Bates tells of riding side-saddle 3000 miles in Western Australia behind a mob of 770 Herefords. Once established, the productive stock stations needed routes to drive their cattle to the markets in the growing southeastern ports and cities. One track, the Murrarji Track, ran from the Victoria River in the northwest corner of the Northern Territory across the Barkly Tableland to western Queensland. Best known of all tracks was the Birdsville Track. Herds came "like wild red rivers"¹¹ from western Queensland to Birdsville, then three hundred miles southward across the Stony Desert to Marree, a sort of Australian Abilene, where the cattle track met the railroad. From there it was another 441 miles southward to Adelaide.

Yet whatever the similarities this epic movement of stock may have had to the great cattle drives of the American West, there remain important differences and consequences. There is the difference of numbers. We do not know the number of drovers and cattle that came down the Birdsville Track, but we can suppose that the number was small compared to the number of men and cattle moving northward up the trails of the American West. In five years, between 1867 and 1871, a million and a half cattle went up the Chisholm Trail, main artery in a growing system of trails. Between 1865 and 1890 an estimated ten million head were driven out of Texas alone.¹² But more important than numbers were the consequences in historicizing of open space. However many cattle and sheep moved westward and northward across New South Wales, Queensland, and the Northern Territory, however many head of stock were driven down the tracks to southeastern markets, vast parts of Australia were still untouched by selection, station, and town, unmarked by cattle tracks and bullock roads.

In sum, through two centuries of national development the vast spaces that have geographically marked both Australia and the United States came to have quite different meanings. American space became historical space in the sense that it was mapped and lived in historically. One does not think of this space without knowing the historical meanings that attach to it. On the contrary, a sizable portion of Australian space remained free of the configurations that come from an encounter in history. At the beginning of a brilliant new account of the founding of Australia, Robert Hughes writes of the continent "locked in its historical immensity."¹³ It is an assumption of the study that follows, however, that immensity is historical only insofar as immensity is humanly experienced. To be sure, the immensity has a deep past in geographical time, but that abstract scientific history does little to condition the lived-in world of the literary imagination. Similarly human "pre-history" of place and space is outside the scope of my argument. A central thesis of this study is that vast space in American western literature had been grounded in historical experience. If there have been great distances between points of action, say between St. Louis and Henry's Fork of the Snake, or between the Great Salt Lake and the passes of the High Sierra, or between Red River, Texas, and Abilene, these distances have been known historically. The literary imagination has been bound by this historicity. In contrast, space in Australian literature has often been just space, a vastness to be claimed by an imagination needing a genuinely unknown and unconditioned landscape.

INTERLUDE

After this geographical and historical introduction, it may be useful to pause for a defining interlude, to clarify some key terms of this discussion: space, history, and the literary imagination.

One cannot meaningfully talk about pure space. Space is a setting, not a substance. Space

can be experienced or it can be known (in a neo-Kantian sense). What I mean by historicized space is space that becomes historical setting. Such space cannot be known free of the historical events, social patterns, the sediments of experience that have been left in and upon it. The objective geography may remain unchanged, but the perception of it will have been radically altered. The mountains and deserts may seem to be unchanging, although they have their geological history, but the human space, by virtue of intensive exploration and settlement, becomes subject to what C. V. Wedgwood calls "the spoils of time."¹⁴

The concepts of history and space in this essay can perhaps be further clarified with a note on a passage from Charles Sturt's *Narrative of an Expedition into Central Australia* (1849).

Southward, and for degrees on either side, a fine dark line met the sky; but to the north-east and south-west was a boundless extent of earthy plain. Here and there a solitary clump of trees appeared, and on the plain, at a distance of a mile to the eastward, were two moving specks, in the shape of native women gathering roots, but they saw us not, neither did we disturb them,—their presence indicated that even these gloomy and forbidding regions were not altogether uninhabited.¹⁵

Now we can of course say that this desert space, this "boundless extent of earthy plain," became known in 1845 when Sturt saw it and described it. And we can of course give Sturt a prominent place in a history of Australian exploration. But though we can mark on a map the route he traveled, we cannot say that he left a historical track in the sense that he changed this world of sand and spinifex to a world known and perceived as lived in.

What should one say about the native women seen as moving specks? They are of course a small part of the Aborigine population that lived deeply past in Australian prehistory. By 30,000 B.C.E. there were well-established

tribes in southeastern Australia. To many people the Aborigine culture has seemed "frozen" over many millennia "by its immemorial primitivism, unchanged in an unchanging landscape." Modern anthropology has altered this simplistic view. In 1787, when the white intrusion began, however, there were perhaps only 300,000 Aborigines in the whole of Australia.¹⁶ If they had been evenly distributed over the continent, there would have been one inhabitant for every ten square miles. They were not, of course, evenly distributed, but in much of Australia they remained, as Sturt saw them, "specks." Indeed, in much of Australian history and literature, they have been denigrated to specks, whatever rightful importance anthropology has given them. This importance, however, does not alter my thesis about the space of the great interior. That space is not virginal, but much of it is not marked by historical patterns of track and settlement. It can thus be imagined freely. It can become metaphor or objective correlative, metaphysical as well as social. Two illustrating instances: the old man Heriot, in Randolph Stow's *To the Islands*, speaks the final words of the novel: "My soul is a strange land." Ken Barratt's poem "Burke and Wills" contains the following lines:

Whether as they, we explore a continent,
or are content
to explore our selves we find that mysterious
centre,
that vast and utter loneliness, which is the
heart of being;
we hear that silence more fatal than the
siren's song.¹⁷

If we can find in Australia a vast "empty" center known by explorers and drovers but not historicized by grids of road and settlement, we can also find the great expanse of the Australian bush, inhabited by small groups of Aborigines, isolated selectors, drovers and bullocky men, and bushmen of all sorts, including bushrangers like Ned Kelly and Dick Marston. It is a world heard in the rousing balladry of "The Man from Snowy River,"

crossed by the bullocks of Tom Collins, endured by the selectors and swagmen of Henry Lawson, and imaged in the paintings of Sidney Nolan. Unlike the wilderness of western America, it has rarely been viewed romantically. It has seldom, if ever, been seen as an Edenic world, where innocence can be regained and where a beginning can truly begin, though D. H. Lawrence with irony called it "a new weird grey-blue paradise, where man has to begin all over again." Its features are harshness and isolation, its moods loneliness and sometimes despair. A. G. Stephens wrote: "The Universe presses very closely upon a solitary or semi-solitary dweller in the bush. He loses pride of humanity in the sense that he is but an atom in the grand scale of Nature moving grandly about him." This dehumanizing reduction is surely intensified by an awareness of the great Emptiness out there. Stephens continued: "Human forces seem puny in face of the Bush; they are extinguished where the Bush joins hands with her terrible sister the Desert."¹⁸

With the scattered settlement of the bush world, there began a history, at least a local history, but often it took the form of legend, folklore, and myth (Ned Kelly, Warrigal Alf, Judith Wright's old Dan, the lore of matesmanship). The major bush novels are thus not bound by a firm historical geography and pattern of action. The classic bush novel *Such Is Life* by Joseph Furphy (Tom Collins) (1903) is a striking imaginative deviation from traditional notions of historical order and continuity.

As already noted, the Aborigines have their long prehistory, and their troubled lives over the past century have had representation in a variety of forms of literature, folklore, and painting. A few illustrating instances include: the novels *The Squatter's Dream* by Rolf Boldrewood (1890), *Capricornia* by Xavier Herbert (1938), *The Timeless Land* by Eleanor Dark (1942), *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* by Thomas Keneally (1972), the short stories of Katharine Prichard, the Dreamtime paintings of Ainslie Roberts, and the classic autobiogra-

phy of Daisy Bates, *The Passing of the Aborigines* (1967).

For this essay, however, the figure of the Aborigine has a special meaning. The world of the great deserts seems timeless; it has no history. The dark figure of the Aborigine in this world is portrayed as timeless too. But the great fictive characters who confront this world are not timeless. They feel their historicity. They experience the spiritual cancer of time passing. They yearn to discover "the still point of the turning world." In some of the literary works to be discussed later in this essay, the finite condition of the protagonist is intensified by the juxtaposition of an angst-free Aborigine. In Louis Esson's *The Drovers*, as Briglow Bill awaits his death, his passing is sung in the sympathetic pigeon chatter of a watching "black boy." But the song cannot be called an elegy. Accompanying old Heriot on his ultimate journey of self-discovery in a strange land is Justin, a faithful Aborigine. And as Voss the explorer travels toward the interior of the continent he wills to know, at his side rides Jackie, a "black boy." Jackie carries with him his most precious possession, a bone-handled clasp-knife that his leader has given him. With this knife he ultimately expiates his innocence by killing and beheading Voss. In this act, unknowingly he gives concrete meaning to Laura's statement that "Man is God decapitated."¹⁹

Finally, in this interlude, a brief note on the literary imagination. All of the developments mentioned in the preceding paragraph are purely fiction. The historical imagination functions in Australian historiography as it does in all historical writing, but it works out its patterns of the past using documentary facts and field observations. It does not use images given to a literary and philosophical anthropology by Shakespeare's *King Lear* and a rich tradition of Christian literature and theology.

CREATING THE AMERICAN LITERARY WEST

The date 1825 with which this discussion opened is not purely arbitrary. In the 1820s

the wide prairies of the American West increasingly fascinated the American literary mind, an interest stimulated by the growing number of published accounts. The Lewis and Clark crossing of the continent received public notice in a variety of documents, including two volumes based on the journals of the leaders themselves. John Bradbury's *Travels in the Interior of America, in the Years 1809, 1810, and 1811*, published in 1815, immediately became "one of the most widely used sources of information about the American West."²⁰ These works were the beginning of a small river of documentation, evidence that Americans (and Europeans too) not only were venturing into the western space but also were claiming it as knowledge in a growing historical record.

The first major literary response to the prairie West was James Fenimore Cooper's *The Prairie* (1827). In an earlier novel of the Leatherstocking series, Cooper had pictured a virginal world, "a vast region of country"²¹ seemingly untrodden by the foot of man. In 1827 the Great Prairies became that world.

Cooper, it should be noted, had never visited this prairie world. Yet nowhere else in his writings, wrote Carl Van Doren, "has Cooper shown such sheer imaginative power as in the handling of this mighty landscape."²² Is this "impressionistic" rendering of western American space therefore an imaginative act unconditioned by a historical claim upon that space? Cooper's nature and Cooper's natural heroes, Uncas, Hardheart, and Leatherstocking, are defined with romantic assumptions, not with historical experience. Cooper, however, was profoundly aware of the historical push westward. Leatherstocking himself has moved to the prairies and become a trapper for the very reason that history has peopled his wilderness world of lakes and forests. Thus, as Allan Nevins, Georg Lukacs, and many others have recognized, *The Prairie* assumes a historical setting and movement. The prairie space of Cooper's novel, whatever the absence of specific geographical details, is historical space.

During the next century and a half, American writers would continue an imaginative interest in the West of prairie and plain. The wide open spaces would be the geographical world of travel narratives, novels, poems, and of course the movies. Washington Irving, Francis Parkman, and Theodore Roosevelt would add to the growing western library. The trapper became the mountain man in Mayne Reid's *The Scalp Hunters* (1851), Harvey Fergusson's *Wolf Song* (1927), Stewart Edward White's *The Long Rifle* (1933), and A. B. Guthrie's *The Big Sky* (1947). The vast ranges of the buffalo would become the setting for such novels as Milton Lott's *The Last Hunt* (1954) and John Williams' *Butcher's Crossing* (1960). The prototypical frontiersman became a cowboy in Arthur Paterson's *A Son of the Plains* (1895), Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902), and in a multitude of works down into our own time. The "big range," "the open range," "the unfenced world," "the sea of grass," all would be metaphors for the vast cattle kingdom assumed, if not always delineated, in novels like Andy Adams's *The Log of a Cowboy* (1903) and the many trail-drive fictions that derive from it, and in big-ranch novels like Conrad Richter's *The Sea of Grass* (1937). A poetical image of the prairies would appear in Albert Pike's *Prose Sketches and Poems* (1834), William Cullen Bryant's "The Prairies" (1832-33), Longfellow's *Evangeline* (1847), and in John Neihardt's western epics. To indicate the cinematographic sense of western space, one need only mention the big-screen opening of *Gunfight at the O. K. Corral* (1957).

At this point, however, one can further clarify the central thesis of this study by focusing briefly on one of these works, A. B. Guthrie's *The Big Sky*. Written one hundred and twenty years after Cooper's *The Prairie*, Guthrie's novel shows important elements of what we must call the Cooper tradition of wilderness fiction. There is an elegiac aura of edenic goodness beneath the big sky. It is the corruption and loss of this virginal goodness, through the historical intrusion of new realities, that give this work its tragic tone. The differences

between *The Prairie* and *The Big Sky* are, of course, many. If the landscape in Cooper's work is "impressionistic," as Nevins calls it, with "hardly a single tree, plant, or animal by name,"²³ the world of *The Big Sky* is concretely and specifically rendered. Such a difference may of course follow from the literary differences between a romantic period and a realistic period, but such a difference is perhaps intensified by the contrast in writers' methods. If Cooper was content to imagine his prairie world in the vague outlines suggested by the travel books, Guthrie needed to see and feel his mountain world in personal closeness. Maps and histories he used, but much of his detail came out of his own store of intimate observation. Dick Summers and Boone Caudill are sons or great grandsons of Leatherstocking, but their conception as characters shows generational literary changes. Leatherstocking is a gentle philosopher of nature. Dick and Boone live in the concrete experience of hunting and trapping; philosophical abstractions are not their meat for thought. They are tough survivors in a natural world that shows them no favors.

Most important for this study is the fact that the big wilderness worlds of Cooper and Guthrie are historical worlds. For both, the West has been conditioned by historical encounter and discovery. Summers and Caudill go up the Missouri in 1830. By that time the West had been crisscrossed by mountain men like Fitzpatrick, Bridger, and Jedediah Smith. When Smith left the mountains in 1830, as one of his biographers notes, "the whole country had been printed on the living maps of his trappers' minds." Smith alone had traveled more than sixteen thousand miles.²⁴ Yet to a significant degree, the West was filled with unknown spaces, at least as far as the literary world was concerned. Writing in the 1940s, Guthrie, had he chosen to use the West as it was known in the 1830s, could have exercised a considerable degree of imaginative freedom. He could have developed an imaginative geography instead of a historical one. He did not. The map that serves as frontispiece to *The*

Big Sky is just as accurate as an outline map from Rand McNally.

A. B. Guthrie has made it abundantly clear that he regards himself as a historical novelist. Whatever the nooks and corners of the unknown in the country of the big sky, he assumed a historical world for his novel, a world he could rediscover from document and observation, a world he was obligated to be true to. He could not rearrange mountains; he could not extend deserts; he could not imaginatively divert rivers or simply erase them from the landscape of his mind. There is indeed a security in the preestablished reality of an objective history.

In his autobiography, Guthrie reveals a striking bit of evidence:

Writing ahead of my research, I kept finding my guesses jibed with the facts. A final experience came close to closing the case. One of my characters called himself Deakins, a name unheard of. A couple of years after I had completed my manuscript, I wandered along the crest of Independence Rock in eastern Wyoming. There, on what was called the great register of the Desert, furhunters and others who followed the sun had painted or chiseled their names. One leaped to my incredulous eyes. DEAKINS. Standing there, staring at a name inscribed long ago, gazing at distances too far for the mind to reach, I thought: I have been there before.²⁵

CREATING AN AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE

In 1825 Australia had no written literature. It remained a distant penal colony of transported British convicts and their hard-minded masters. By 1825 coastal explorations and surveys had proceeded; the Blue Mountains had been crossed; but the great interior remained a vast unknown. In 1827, the year of the publication of Cooper's *The Prairie*, Allan Cunningham discovered Darling Downs, "extensive tracts of clear pastoral country" some hundred miles west of coastal Brisbane. No

doubt the landscape appealed to the explorer's English sensibilities. But Cunningham had more than a glimpse of another kind of Australian world. His report to the *Geographical Journal*, 1832, used the exclamatory when this world came into sight: "a level, open interior, of vast expanse, bounded on the north and north-west by a distant horizon, broke suddenly on our view!" At the conclusion of his report Cunningham wrote of "a great expanse of interior beyond the tropic, and the whole of the equinoctial part of the continent" as continuing, "at this day, a vast region, entirely unknown."²⁶ It is not surprising that a 1983 collection of Australian historical landscapes does not include a photograph taken within the vast interior.²⁷ The unknown, even when viewed in transitory passing, does not become historical landscape.

In 1888 Ernest Favenc's *The History of Australian Exploration from 1788 to 1888* revealed a continuing effort to know the unknown of Australian geography. It summarizes a series of great explorations narrated in detail in a growing library of desert discovery: Charles Sturt's *Two Expeditions into the Interior of Southern Australia* (1834), his *Narrative of an Expedition into Central Australia* (1849), and Ludwig Leichhardt's *Journal of an Overland Expedition from Moreton Bay to Port Essington* (1847). There was to be no journal of Leichhardt's final expedition into the great interior in 1848, however. The explorer and his party disappeared, becoming unknowns in the great unknown. A *Successful Exploration through the Interior of Australia*, compiled from the papers of William John Wills (of Burke and Wills), was published in 1863, and the *Journals* of John McDouall Stuart, who journeyed to the center of Australia and then across the entire continent, was published the following year. All of these accounts, it should be noted, were published in England, not Australia. Thus, however important they are in the history of Australian exploration, they do not represent a beginning of an Australian literature. And yet they gave Australian readers a sense of the vastness and desolateness of their interior

world, the "silent and sullen blank," as Alan Moorehead would later call it.²⁸ They did not give historicity to the great Australian space, but they did make the Australian mind aware of its haunting presence.

When Australian literature achieved its independence from its English beginnings is perhaps a matter to interest only specialized scholars. One supposes that a new national literature needs more than a change of national setting, that besides shaggy bark trees, kangaroos, experience in the bush, and a hundred other exotic details, there must be a distinctly native way of seeing, feeling, and speaking. For this study this means that the Australian literary sensibility must have come to terms with Australian space in its own way.

One Australian literary scholar identifies Dick and Jim Marston, of Rolf Boldrewood's *Robbery Under Arms* (1988), as "the first Australians in fiction."²⁹ But if Dick and Jim can be called Australians by virtue of their Australian vernacular and their activities as bushrangers and cattle duffers, their wild world does little to image the vast interior of their native land. In another generation, however, as settlement pushed into areas further west and north, the bigness and emptiness of the continent was strongly rendered in terms of human isolation. In the bush stories of Henry Lawson, for instance, the protagonist is situated in a landscape of unending flatness. In "The Drover's Wife" (1892): "Bush all round—bush with no horizon, for the country is flat. . . . nineteen miles to the nearest sign of civilization—a shanty on the main road."³⁰ Louis Esson's play "The Drovers" (1944) evoked a sense of vast arid plains and dramatically defined the tragic predicament of a man trapped there.

The thesis of this study can be sharpened by a brief focus on two ventures into Australian interior space. In 1860-61 Robert O'Hara Burke and William John Wills attempted to cross the continent of Australia from south to north. Although they reached the Gulf of Carpentaria, their return was fraught with desperate struggle and death. Only one member of the exploring party, John King, survived



FIG. 4. Another part of the Pahvant desert. The bleakness here is enlivened by a touch of Aussie-like irony in place naming. The rough road pointed to leads to a small ghost mining town called Joy. Photograph courtesy of Don D.Walker.

what an explorer-historian called “the most dashing feat ever recorded in the annals of Australian exploration.”³¹ From King’s narrative, Wills’s papers, and other documents, it has been possible to establish a history of the ill-fated expedition. But the great inner reaches between Adelaide and Cooper’s Creek and the northern gulf cannot be said to have been claimed for history—compared, for example, to the Lewis and Clark crossing of the American continent. At most one can say that a historical line was run through the center of the Great Blank. Still, the imaginative elaborations—with some exceptions, for instance, Ken Barratt’s poem “Burke and Wills”—have

followed the explorers’ trail as history. This is true of the intensely dramatic recreation *Cooper’s Creek* by Australia’s brilliant journalist Alan Moorehead.

There was, however, another attempted continental crossing, this time from east to west. Ludwig Leichhardt in 1848 made his final venture into the interior, seeking to move from eastern Queensland to the ultimate western shores. He and his party disappeared into the great unknown and were never heard of again. There is no history of Leichhardt’s death and thus there was no historicizing of the mysterious space he penetrated. But uncomfortable with mysteries of this sort and needing a

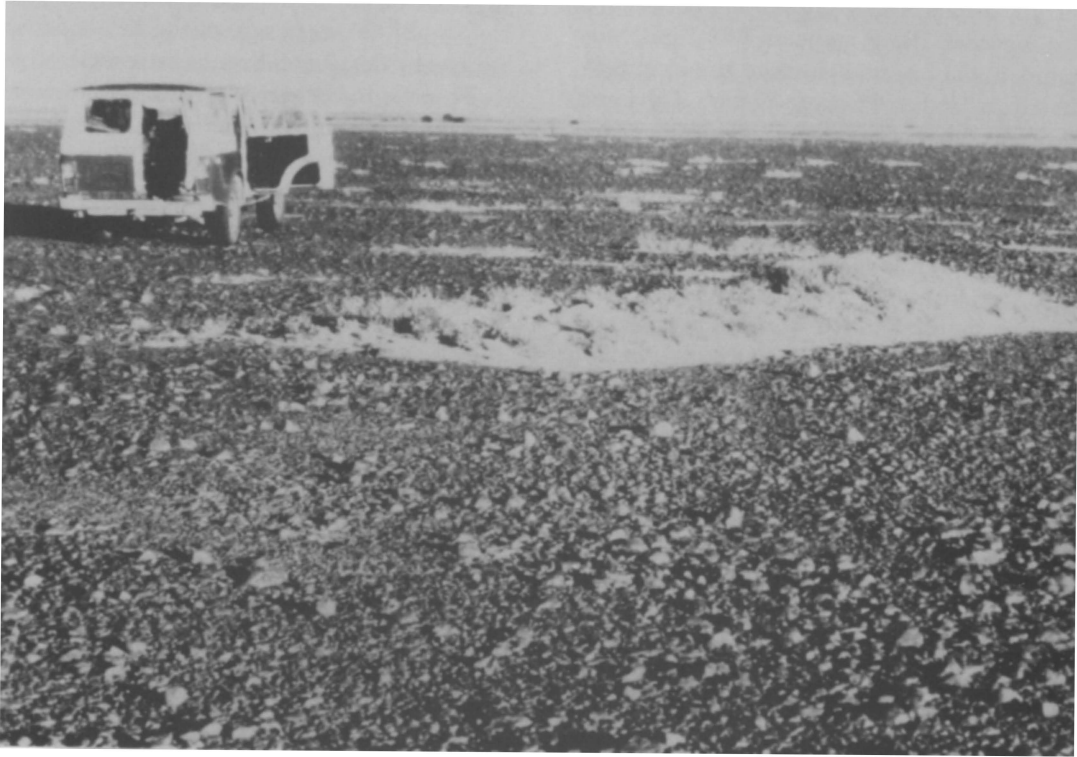


FIG. 5. Australian space: gibber plain, Simpson Desert, north of Birdsville. Photograph courtesy of Rosemary Purdie, *Land Systems of the Simpson Desert Region*.

history of this human venture, many explorers, historians, biographers, even poets, have tried to fill in the final story. Ernest Favenc followed *The History of Australian Exploration* (1888) with a second book, *The Secret of the Australian Desert* (1896), in which he imagined the death of Leichhardt. The explorer is left unburied “there on the big plain” where “no living thing ever comes or will come.”³² It should be clear, however, that this is not history, though its use of pseudo-documentation gives a semblance of history. This account and the many elaborations like it do not make the vast interior space of Australia a historical world.

One can thus argue that this space, free of historical conditioning, is open to the literary imagination to use as the writer sees artistic possibilities in it. One cannot say the same of space in the American West. That West is known historically; its historical meanings shape, indeed dictate, the nature and use of spatial settings.

CONTEMPORARY WRITERS OF AUSTRALIA AND THE AMERICAN WEST

A number of contemporary novels illustrate the difference I am claiming. Gerald Murnane’s Australian novel *The Plains* (1982) provides a

setting common to a great number of works dealing with the American West, but Murnane's novel has no history of the kind celebrated in Walter Prescott Webb's *The Great Plains*. Unlike the great ranchers of the American West, Charles Goodnight, Shanghai Pierce, John Iliff, and others, the plainsmen of Murnane's novel live on their immense stations outside of any traditional historical context. Yet ironically they are obsessed with keeping their own history, not a relationship to the historical world of Australia, but a record of their human continuity on the great isolated stations, an orderly accumulation of daily minutia. The history of *The Plains* is pure fiction, and the truths of that fiction are the truths of human perception and condition.

In the prize-winning novels of Thea Astley, there is a strong sense of both history and landscape, but both history and landscape are transformed by a modernist imagination.³³ The year Murnane published *The Plains*, Astley published *An Item from the Late News* (1982), a novel that brilliantly illustrates how the novelist can use history, open landscape, and the creative resources of myth, language, and non-traditional forms. I say *use* history, not *recreate* it. History is present in Astley's novels in a number of ways. As background (or back-time) in several of her novels is a remembered past, made specific by decaying mining towns or back country settlements, forgotten fossickers, old stockmen already ossified in action and values. For some of this there is a sort of documentation. In *A Kindness Cup* (1974) Astley acknowledges "the report of the Select Committee on the Native Police Force, Queensland, 1861," but with this acknowledgement goes the note: "this cautionary fable makes no claim to being a historical work. Liberties have been taken with places and names, and the author happily admits possible anachronisms." Thus a fable with anachronisms is happily admitted. It would be possible to abstract enough specific historical detail to put together an outline of a social sketch of past times in a part of Australia, but such a historical sketch would have dubious value as

history, and more important, would reveal little of the literary nature of the fictions from which the detail had been abstracted.

There is history in another, and more important, sense in Astley's fiction. Her fictive persons are defined with poignant sense of their temporality, their finiteness. Thus we can say with philosophical rightness that they possess historicity. One of Astley's major themes is the human struggle to find redemption from time. This can be seen in the two novels mentioned above and in other works, particularly *Reaching Tin River*. Most historians will say that the story of history ends when events have run their course, when the noise of battle falls into lasting silence, when migration reaches the land's rim and settles into a stable social order. But this is simply a historiographical stop. There is no eschatological meaning in this conclusion, no redemption from time.³⁴ Two geographical images in the final sentence of Robert Hughes's *The Fatal Shore* suggest this modern note: "the barely penetrable labyrinth of space" and "the wide, wrinkled, glimmering sheet of our imprisoning sea."³⁵

In contrast, many American novels that deal with the dream and social reality of western experience carry a metahistory of a different sort. A. B. Guthrie's Pulitzer Prize novel *The Way West* offers a paradigmatic example. After much "sweat and grief along the way," Lije Evans has reached Oregon. "And now he looked on home. . . . Yonder it was, yonder was home, yonder the rich soil waiting for the plow, waiting for the work of hands, for the happy cries of children. They'd made it."³⁶ For more than two centuries the way west had been the way to a new beginning. Frederick Jackson Turner gave this metahistory its classic formulation: "Western democracy has been from the time of its birth idealistic. The very fact of the wilderness appealed to men as a fair, blank page on which to write a new chapter in the story of man's struggle for a higher type of society."³⁷

Many novels of the West, even novels of the Great Depression, conclude with an image or a dream of a new beginning. Steinbeck's

The Grapes of Wrath closes with a sentimental action, but the previous chapter ends the larger narrative with a hopeful image: "Tiny points of grass came through the earth, and in a few days the hills were pale green with the beginning year."³⁸ *Far from Cibola*, by the Pulitzer Prize winning historian Paul Horgan, ends with the death of Leo curled on the back seat of an abandoned burned-out Ford, but his death is transcended by his dream of reaching California. "He dreamed that the sea was breaking at his feet on a shore of warm sand, and beautiful women crossed his dream, familiar in the black and white of the movies; American goddesses never before within his grasp."³⁹

Of special importance in defining and distinguishing the sense of history in novels of the American West is the view of Wallace Stegner, historian and Pulitzer Prize winning novelist. Near the beginning of *Angle of Repose*, the narrator says, "I believe in Time, . . . and in the life chronological rather than the life existential."⁴⁰ He speaks here, I believe, for the novelist himself. And, as far as I know, most other novelists of the American West would agree, whatever their individual ways of delineating the chronology of living, whatever their mix of moments that can be construed as existential. One can generalize that western writers assume, with such distinguished critics as Georg Lukacs and Erich Auerbach, that literary reality is ultimately grounded in a sense of objective time.

In contrast, none of the major Australian writers I am citing will say, as an article of literary faith, "I believe in Time." Time is an important element in their fiction, but it is subjective time, used expressionistically. One might call it time existential.

If time is subjective in Astley's fiction, so is landscape. Whatever the objective geographical background that may be found on maps of Australia, Astley's world is rendered metaphorically. It is "a landscape skinned to the bone," "a no-hope landscape," a "bull-hide landscape." It is a "landscape . . . measureless" with "no horizons." It is a "desert saucer where the towns have been chucked like the losing toss

of dice on a vast baize of dead felt." The narrator speaks of "the upland country of the Australian nightmare," with "dream canvases of droughtrind." The narrator says at one point: "I know it's not nature that abhors a vacuum but man, the little bitzer who doesn't harmonize with space. It's the space. It grinds us all down till we're crumbs on the floor, terrified little messes that have to be swept away or burnt out of existence." In a recent novella, *Inventing the Weather*, Astley puns on the term *terra Australis* by changing it to *terror Australis*.⁴¹

Astley's world (in the existential sense) is a mythic world, or perhaps one should say an anti-mythic world. The American literary imagination has often read the westward movement as a quest for Eden, for a chance to renew innocence and begin again. The dream of Eden also functions in Astley's fiction, but usually in sardonic irony. The narrator of *An Item* says,

I realized the liar globe offers itself fresh this way to every new generation, a pro whore with eternal youth, each new orb glistening with red green yellow and purple countries and untravelled spaces that the newcomer strains to like a wind.⁴²

Another major writer who uses Australian space subjectively is Randolph Stow. A study of his literary works, *Strange Country*, opens with a chapter titled "Landscape of the Soul."⁴³ One easily remembers Laura's observation in Patrick White's *Voss*: "Knowledge was never a matter of geography. Quite the reverse, it overflows all maps that exist. Perhaps true knowledge only comes with death by torture in *the country of the mind*."⁴⁴

Stow's Australia is a country of the mind. While there is an outline of objective geography and a somewhat tenuous time frame of objective history, what matters finally is the human condition realized in a setting in which space evokes existential awareness. The novel *To the Islands*, first published the year after *Voss*, uses a setting that, like the *terror Australis* of

Astley, becomes a big world of emptiness, loneliness, and loss. Early in the novel *Normie*, an Aborigine, speaking of the country toward the far blue hills, says, "He real lonely, all that country." Mrs. Way, of the mission, says, "This country—so vast." Heriot, the protagonist, quotes Pascal, "Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie."⁴⁵ This idea (*pensée*) not only defines the literary sense of Australian space but universalizes that sense as well. "The Lands's Meaning," one of the poems in Stow's *A Counterfeit Silence*, tells of certain young men who have made the trek to "the difficult country" and are "sending word that the mastery of silence alone is empire. What is God, they say, but a man unwounded in his loneliness?" Here, as elsewhere in Stow's writings and in the novels of White, the anthropology has become philosophical. This is not a report of field study or historical research; it is an imaginative insight into the human condition. In another line from the same poem, Stow internalizes the silent difficult country with a striking, complex image. The eyes of one who has returned are "blurred maps of landscapes still unmapped."⁴⁶ With an artistic conviction counter to much western American realism, the poet asks for no visual authentication. The metaphoric logic proves itself.

Finally one comes to the modernist use of fictive space in the novel *Voss*, by Australia's Nobel laureate, Patrick White. Published in 1957, this novel featuring the explorer Johann Ulrich Voss might seem to be a recreation of the daring historical venture of Ludwig Leichhardt, who sought to cross the Australian continent from east to west. Leichhardt said, "I will not leave Australia until I have crossed it."⁴⁷ Voss says, "I will cross the continent from one end to the other. I have every intention to know it with my heart."⁴⁸ Leichhardt, a historical person, did not leave a historical track on the great breadth of Australia. There is no Leichhardt Track as there is a Lewis and Clark Trail. Thus when Patrick White launched his fictional party westward, he set them moving into a world of the imagination. Once they crossed the rim of the known, they were in an

unmapped, undocumented space. Its reality must come from the literary power of the novelist. As White's biographer puts it, "Once the expedition left Jildra, Voss was on an expedition to the outer limits of his [White's] imagination."⁴⁹

This is not to say that history was unimportant to White the novelist. At Cambridge he had begun to read history before changing to modern languages, but, his biographer notes, "he never lost his interest in history, researched keenly, and was determined that historical details in his work were always correct." While stationed in the Middle East with the RAF, White wrote in a letter to a Sydney paper, "I have to go to Central Australia for some reason," but he was never to see "the dead heart" of the continent. He had read the journal of Edward John Eyre, and in further research he read some of Leichhardt's records and letters, and A. H. Chisholm's *Strange New World*, but what he drew on when he created the desert setting of the novel were his memories of desert Africa and the Australian paintings of his friend Sidney Nolan. He based his explorer on the historical Leichhardt, but, he said, "I did not want to limit myself to a historical reconstruction (too difficult and too boring)."⁵⁰ What is important here is that the strange world of the novel is of White's making. Unlike Cooper's prairie, White's plain is rich in specifics, though they may not be the specifics of historical geography. And if Cooper's prairie is impressionistic, White's plain is expressionistic. Voss, like Leichhardt, fulfills a fatal destiny, but his fictional death is vastly more meaningful than the historical death of Leichhardt, if that death could be known and documented.

CONCLUSION

In spite of well known similarities between American and Australian cultures, geographical circumstances led to different patterns of exploration and settlement of the two countries. Particularly different has been the degree to which vast open spaces have been

claimed by history. American space has become thoroughly historicized. Australian space, at least until relatively recent times, has not. The literary consequences have been an imaginative submission to history in the landscape of the American West and a freedom from that submission in the creative settings of Australian space. Perhaps for a number of reasons contemporary Australian writing has been receptive to the experiments and radical visions of modernism. The literature of the American West has resisted such innovations with heroic stubbornness. Certainly it can be argued that the spatial world of Australia, less conditioned by history, has been more freely open as a setting for use by the modern Australian imagination.

NOTES

1. Cooper Creek "becomes a virtually continuous sheet of water tens of kilometers wide during such floods as those of early 1974, but . . . changes to a braided channel at low flows and a dry stream bed for most of the time." I. Douglas, "Fluvial Landforms," in *Australia: A Geography*, ed. D. N. Jeans (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), p. 109.
2. Philip C. Shelton, "Beaver," *The Reader's Encyclopedia of the American West*, ed. Howard R. Lamar (New York: Crowell, 1977), p. 83.
3. There were gold discoveries in southern New South Wales and Victoria and later in both the southern and northern parts of Western Australia. The gold rushes to southeastern Australia and the lesser discoveries in Western Australia did little to cause a historical occupation of the great interior, however. In our own time deposits of other minerals would be found throughout the continent. Australia ranks third in the western world in reserves of uranium oxide. The largest of these reserves is in the Northern Territory, where it was discovered in 1970. C. Duncan, "Mineral Resources and Mining Industries," in *Australia: A Geography* (note 1 above), p. 445.
4. Ernest Favenc, *The History of Australian Exploration from 1788 to 1888* (Sydney, 1888), pp. 146-47.
5. C. M. H. Clark, *A History of Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1978), IV, 100.
6. John Neihardt, *The Splendid Wayfaring* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), p. 31.
7. Douglas Stewart, *Collected Poems* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1967), p. 140.
8. M. Williams, "More and Smaller is Better: Australian Rural Settlement 1788-1914," in *Australian Space, Australian Time*, ed. J. M. Powell and M. Williams (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 61.
9. See Frederick Jackson Turner's citation of a density of over two persons per square mile as defining frontier in his classic essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1958), p. 3.
10. P. D. Phillips and G. L. Wood, eds., *The Peopling of Australia* (1927; rpt. London: Dawsons, 1968), p. 74.
11. Douglas Stewart, "Birdsville," *Collected Poems* (note 7 above), p. 141.
12. Joe A. Stout, "Cattle Industry," *Reader's Encyclopedia of the American West* (note 2 above), p. 177.
13. Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore* (New York: Knopf, 1987), p. 1.
14. C. V. Wedgewood, *The Spoils of Time* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985).
15. Charles Sturt, *Narrative of an Expedition into Central Australia* (London, 1849; facsimile edition, Adelaide: Libraries Board of South Australia, 1965) 1: 379-80.
16. Hughes, *Fatal Shore* (note 13 above), pp. 7, 8, 9.
17. Randolph Stow, *To the Islands* (London, 1958; rev. ed. New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1982), p. 126; Ken Barratt, "Burke and Wills," in *Modern Australian Verse*, chosen by Douglas Stewart (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965) 2: 48.
18. D. H. Lawrence, quoted in T. Linglis Moore, *Social Patterns in Australian Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 67; A. G. Stephens quoted in Moore, pp. 66, 89.
19. Patrick White, *Voss* (New York: Viking, 1957), p. 358.
20. Roderick Nash, "John Bradbury," *The Reader's Encyclopedia of the American West*, ed. Howard Lamar (New York: Crowell, 1977), p. 118.
21. James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), quoted by Allan Nevins in Introduction to *The Leatherstocking Saga* (New York: Modern Library, 1966), p. 12.
22. Carl Van Doren quoted by Allan Nevins, Introduction, *ibid.*, p. 10.
23. Nevins, *ibid.*, p. 11.
24. Dale Morgan, *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), p. 9, (quoted); Dale Van Every, *The Final Challenge* (New York: Mentor Books, 1965), p. 211-12.
25. A. B. Guthrie, *The Blue Hen's Chick* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956), p. 186.

26. Allan Cunningham, "Allan Cunningham's Explorations," contribution to the *Geographical Journal*, 1832, rpt. in *Australian Discovery*, ed. Ernest Scott (London: J. M. Dent, 1929) 2: 62, 60-61, 82.
27. *Australian Historical Landscapes*, ed. D. N. Jeanes (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1984).
28. Alan Moorehead, *Cooper's Creek* (New York: Dell, 1965), p. 11.
29. H. M. Green, "Literature," in *Australia*, ed. C. Hartley Grattan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1947), p. 293.
30. Henry Lawson, *The Bush Undertaker and Other Stories*, selected by Colin Roderick (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1970), p. 18.
31. Favenc, *History of Australian Exploration* (note 4 above), p. 424.
32. Ernest Favenc, *The Secret of the Australian Desert* (London: Blackie & Son, 1896), pp. 95-96.
33. Three of Astley's novels have won the Miles Franklin prize, and in 1989 she was awarded the Patrick White Prize for distinguished achievement in Australian letters.
34. Philosopher Karl Löwith concludes: "Historical processes as such do not bear the least evidence of a comprehensive and ultimate meaning. History as such has no outcome." *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 191.
35. Hughes, *Fatal Shore* (note 13 above), p. 603.
36. A. B. Guthrie, *The Way West* (New York: William Sloan, 1949), p. 340.
37. Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (note 9 above), p. 261.
38. John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (New York: Viking, 1939), p. 592.
39. Paul Horgan, *Far from Cibola* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974), p. 162.
40. Wallace Stegner, *Angle of Repose* (New York: Doubleday, 1971), p. 18.
41. Thea Astley, *An Item from the Late News* (St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1982), pp. 3, 43, 136, 165, 15, 63, 99; "Inventing the Weather," second novella in *Vanishing Points* (New York: Putnam, 1992), p. 210.
42. Astley, *An Item*, *ibid.* p. 134.
43. Anthony J. Hassall, *Strange Country: A Study of Randolph Stow* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1986).
44. White, Voss (note 19 above), p. 440.
45. Stow, *To the Islands* (note 17 above), pp. 35, 55, 60. In 1979, Stow received the Patrick White Award.
46. Randolph Stow, *A Counterfeit Silence* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1969), p. 36.
47. Leichhardt, quoted by J. F. Burrows, "'Voss' and the Explorers," *AUMLA* 26 (1966): 235. For a comparison of Leichhardt and the American explorer Jedediah Smith, see Don D. Walker, "The Western Explorer as Literary Hero: Jedediah Smith and Ludwig Leichhardt," *The Western Humanities Review*, 29 (Summer 1975): 243-59.
48. White, Voss (note 19 above), p. 29.
49. David Marr, *Patrick White: A Life* (New York: Knopf, 1992), p. 316.
50. *Ibid.* pp. 316, 211, 316, 313.