



# FRIENDS, ENEMIES, STRANGERS

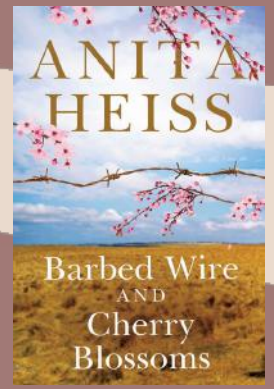
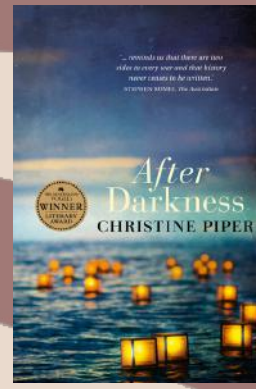
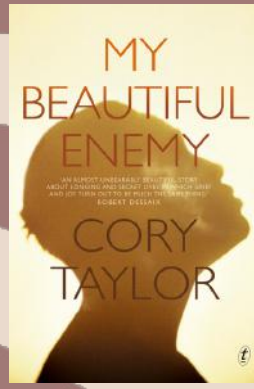
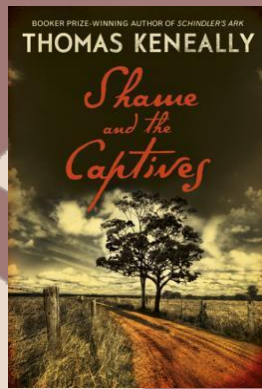
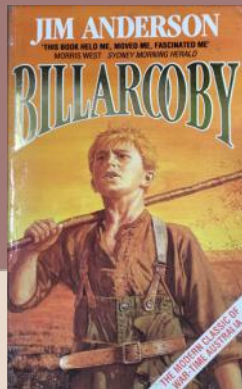
*Fiction that looks back to explore the present*

1941

## During WWII Australia imprisoned thousands of Japanese

civilians and military personnel in internment camps in several remote locations across the country. Unlike the selective policy for European internees, the government took a “collar the lot” approach (Nagata 49-50). This policy extended to Japanese born in Australia and those from multi-racial marriage/families. **Almost all Japanese civilians were arrested within 24 hours of the attack on Pearl Harbor (45).** The internment of POWs commenced following the bombing of Darwin in 1942, with thousands more imprisoned in later years. Deportation of detainees occurred from 1946-1948 (212).

1948



1951

## In the following decades, Australian authors looked back

to the internment of the Japanese during these wartime years. **Since 2013 there has been a significant spike in the number of works produced by both Japanese and Australian writers.** These writers provide **new explorations of this underemphasized chapter in Australian history.** This presentation forms part of my PhD research on fictional re-imaginings of Japanese internment in Australia. **This poster focuses on the inter-cultural relationships portrayed in several Australian novels, examining and critiquing those which exist between texts, nations, and cultures.**

2016

### Interactions with “the other”: Relationships that cross the line

Several of these texts use **cross-cultural relationships to critique historical and contemporary issues** of race, gender, power, and discrimination.

#### Examples include:

- *My Beautiful Enemy* (Taylor 2013)
  - A homosexual relationship between a guard and a teenage internee.
- *After Darkness* (Piper 2014)
  - Homosocial relationships between internees of differing racial backgrounds.
- *Barbed Wire & Cherry Blossoms* (Heiss 2016)
  - A heterosexual romance between an Indigenous woman living in a Christian mission, and an escaped Japanese P.O.W.
- *Billaroooby* (Anderson 1989)
  - A fanciful friendship between a young boy in a drought-stricken town and a captive Japanese P.O.W.

### An “alternative to the clash of civilizations”?

Through **textual analysis and close readings**, this research highlights the ways in which authors approach Japanese internment to create narratives from alternative perspectives which bridge historical and cultural divides.

This analysis is informed by **transcultural theory**, with a focus on the way in which these **texts overcome the contemporary and wartime narratives espoused by national canons.** Transculture implies a diffusion and dissemination of culture through individuals, providing an “alternative to the clash of civilisations” (Epstein 328).

#### Transcultural literature...

“transcend[s] the borders of a single culture and nation, but they also promote and engage with a wider global literary perspective” (Dagnino 2). Texts thus **engage with a variety of languages, cultures, races, and ethnicities**, disrupting traditional notions and definitions, and moving towards a new understanding or reflection on these terms.

### Looking forward by looking back: History that predicts the future

These fictional works provide a strong literary response to the **ongoing cultural conflict in Australian society.** These texts **juxtapose historical attitudes** towards certain ethnic or national groups against contemporary concerns in Australia, **highlighting parallels between them.**

#### Contemporary issues in Australia:

- Racial discrimination
- Sexual orientation discrimination
- Diasporic populations
- Racial identity / National identity

#### So... Where are we now?

The various relationships portrayed in these literary works allow for **critical reflection on both Japanese internment’s place in Australian history, and how issues depicted in these novels comment on social, political and human rights concerns** which are particularly relevant within a contemporary Australian context.

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