Land and Language in Australian Romanticism
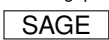
Michael Falk[1]

Abstract

Eliza Hamilton Dunlop (1796-1880) and Charles Harpur (1813-1867) were two of the most important Romantic poets of colonial New South Wales. In this article, I consider their engagement with Indigenous Australian languages. In 'Native Song' (1848), Dunlop provides a transcription and translation of verse composed by her informant Wulatji (fl. 1840s), a famous Awabakal poet. In *The Kangaroo Hunt* (c. 1844), Harpur enriches his description of Australian landscapes with a dozen words learned from Darkinyung, Gamilaraay and Wonnarua informants. I contrast Dunlop's universalist approach to Indigenous langauge with Harpur's particularist approach, and contextualise their poetry in British philosophy of language. Dunlop and Harpur use Indigenous language to present Australia as a land steeped in poetry, but their recognition of Indigenous poetry undermines their own attempts to make themselves at home in the colony.

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[1] University of Melbourne

Corresponding author:

Email:

0.1 Introduction

To occupy Australia, its European invaders had to name it. This was not merely a matter of naming places, though that of course was crucial. They also needed to name the things that made the places. They needed to name the trees that dropped their autumn bark, the deer-like creatures that hopped on two legs, the fires that ripped through crackling scrubland. They needed to name the fickle weather, the whirling dust, the intermittent streams. They needed to name hundreds of parrots and pigeons and snakes and dragons. They needed to name the people from whom they took the land. To conquer Australia, they "conquered space." With a touch of the namer's wand, they changed a strange land "into a familiar world of routes and places" (Tuan 1977, 83).

The invaders mined Indigenous languages for names. Indigenous names had the advantage of establishment. The Indigenous name is the "real and proper" name, thought Lachlan Macquarie (quoted in Carter 2010, 328). But what the invaders found "real and proper" was not always what the conquered found "real and proper." In Australia, the Europeans debased words such as *gin* and *lubra*, while mixing myriad other words from myriad tongues into the new Australian English.

In the 1840s, two invader-poets observed this situation and attempted to rectify it. Eliza Hamilton Dunlop and Charles Harpur were humanitarians who recognised the value of Indigenous poetry. They praised Indigenous Australian languages, and borrowed Indigenous words to enrich their poetic diction. Thus they attempted to conquer space and make themselves at home, while also recognising the prior claims of Indigenous Australians to the land.

Eliza Hamilton Dunlop (1796-1880) was the Irish wife of the Protector of Aborigines in Wollombi (see Figure 1). She befriended a local poet, Wulatji (fl. 1840s), learned his tongue, and published a transcription and translation of his poetry in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Wulatji 1848).[*] Twenty-first century critics have praised Dunlop's appreciation for Indigenous cultures, while noting her "colonialism" and "cultural appropriation" by more recent standards (O'Leary 2004; Johnston 2021, 47). Wafer (2017) has verified the accuracy of her translation, and used it to reconstruct Wulatji's song-writing practices. He also highlights a remarkable fact about Dunlop's translation, which has hitherto escaped literary analysis: she translates many of Wulatji's words by *other* Indigenous words, often from far-flung languages.

Charles Harpur (1813-1867) was a currency lad, born to convict parents on the banks of Deerubbin (the Hawkesbury-Nepean; see Figure 1). His poetry is voluminous and varied, but the violence of the frontier, the ignorance of the settler, and the brutality of empire are key themes in many of his poems. He has been judged complicit in the imaginative expropriation of Aboriginal lands (Van Toorn 1992), and some of his poems do imagine Australia as a place of "solitude profound" before European settlement (Harpur 2019, h665a).[†] In *The Kangaroo Hunt* (1843-1867), Harpur reckons with his own contradictory impulses. He acknowledges Indigenous Australians as the "former lords of the soil," and

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[*]She later adapted the poem for Isaac Nathan's song collection, *The Southern Euphrosyne* (Dunlop and Wulatji 1848).

[†]Paul Eggert's variorum edition of Harpur's poetry provides an 'h-number' for each version of each poem. I refer to Harpur's poems by h-number throughout. Each of *Kangaroo Hunt*'s six parts has its own h-number.

includes 12 Indigenous words in the text of the poem. In a series of footnotes, he localises the words to particular Indigenous groups, and argues for the appropriateness of Indigenous words to poetry. The poem has a complex textual history—as do nearly all Harpur's poems (Eggert 2016). The earliest evidence for the poem is an excerpt published in the *Weekly Register* in 1843 (Harpur 1843). At that time, Harpur was living at Jerrys Plains, in the upper Hunter Valley. All the surviving complete versions of the poem, however, date to the 1860s, when Harpur was living far to the south in Eurobodalla. Although Harpur revised the poem considerably, *The Kangaroo Hunt* retains is character as poem of the 1840s, extolling the beauties of the "loud Nepean," "old Hawkesbury" and "rapid Hunter" rivers where Harpur spent his youth and early adulthood (h209-bf). It is nonetheless tricky to precisely localise the poem's Indigenous vocabulary.
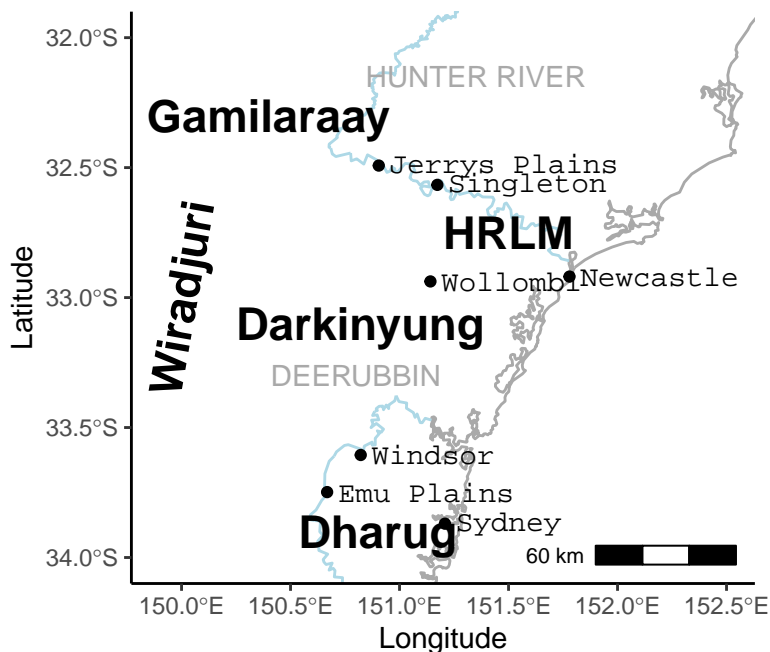
Figure 1. Deerubbin and the Hunter in the 1840s, indicating languages, settlements and rivers mentioned in the text. Sources: Geoscience Australia (2003); Nominatim; Lissarrague (2006); Lissarrague et al. (2003); Jones (2008); Austlang.

Source: Article Notebook

My comparison of Harpur and Dunlop has two aims. The first aim is to contrast Dunlop's and Harpur's poetics: I argue that Dunlop is a *universalist*, while Harpur is a *particularist*. The second aim is to clarify the problem of *linguistic representation*—or more verbosely, the *literary representation of Indigenous languages*.

Both Dunlop and Harpur represent Indigenous language for humanitarian ends. Although Dunlop was highly sensitive to the differences between people, her "sentimental" poetics relies on the universality of human feelings to justify the universality of human rights (Rudy 2021). Thus she attempts to demonstrate the universality of the poetic impulse by transcribing and translating a sample of Awabakal poetry. By contrast, Harpur attempts to do justice to Indigenous ecopoetics by drawing a link between the euphony of particular Indigenous words and the ecological knowledge of particular Indigenous people. Dunlop's universalism and Harpur's particularism have both been subject to scholarly critique, but have never been compared. I perform the comparison in sections 2 and 3.

Dunlop and Harpur also raise the broader question of how to represent a language. Both Harpur and Dunlop wish to represent Indigenous languages as *poetic*, but they do so in different ways. Dunlop produces a *transcription*, *translation* and *glossary*; Harpur produces *words* and *philological footnotes* embedded in an original poem. These different forms of representation convey different ideas about the nature of Indigenous language. Dunlop presents Wulatji's language (the Hunter River Lake Macquarie language, or HRLM), as *syntactic* and *literary*. Harpur presents the various languages of his poem, namely Darkinyung, Gamilaraay and HRLM, as *verbal* and *oral*. Despite these differences, Dunlop and Harpur draw on a similar stock of ideas about human language, rooted in the empiricist linguistics that then reigned in the English-speaking world. I demonstrate this shared background in section 4.

0.2   Eliza Hamilton Dunlop: Universalism

> Since morning stars first sang in prayerful praise,
> Since Adam's hymns resounded over space,
> Or Sinai's hill trembled in glory's blaze;
> Immortal song hath had acknowledged place. (Dunlop 1872b, ll. 1-4)

For Dunlop, "song" is a universal feature of human nature. In the opening lines of "Poesy," she hears song in three places: in nature (the "morning stars"), in oral tradition ("Adam's hymns"), and in written literature ("On Sinai's hill," where Moses receives the tables of the law). In all these places, the same force of "song" is heard. At all *times*, too, this "song" is heard, for it is "Immortal." Song is immortal and ubiquitous, Dunlop continues, because it is an "Essence inherent of the sentient mind" (Dunlop 1872b, l. 5).* Always and everywhere, humans are poets.

Dunlop's belief in the universality of song had deep ethical and intellectual roots. She was a "sentimentalist," whose poetry teaches that "the emotional experiences of others are similar to our own" (Rudy 2021, 91). She was an "internationalist," whose poetry describes the struggle for freedom among all the oppressed peoples of the British Empire (Wu 2021, 60; Johnston and Webby 2021, 9). She was a polyglot, whose poems speak in many tongues (Wafer 2021, 158-159). Thus she expressed her humanitarian ideals in the rhetoric, content and vocabulary of her poetry.

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*In another poem of the same year, she extols the universality of "IMPERIAL MIND!", which compels "Obedience" throughout its "boundless realm" (1872a).

As Rudy (2021) insists, Dunlop's universalism was not naive. She grew up in Ireland in the wake of the United Irish uprising and the abolition of the Irish parliament. She visited India, where she befriended her "half-caste" sisters.* She settled in Australia, where she displayed an exceptional facility for Indigenous languages, particularly their phonetics (Johnston 2021, 46), and where she campaigned publicly for the rights of Indigenous Australians. In all these places, she was sensitive to local conditions. She published some 100 poems in Irish and Australian newspapers; when she did so, she chose her words carefully for local readers, especially when republishing Irish works in Australia (Rudy 2021, 94). Her universalism was modulated by her pragmatic sense of audience.

It is in this context that we should understand her transcription and translation of Wulatji's poetry. The transcription is short enough to quote in full. Its language is Awabakal, recognised today as a variety of the Hunter River Lake Macquarie language (HRLM):

> Nung-Ngnun
> Nge a runba wonung bulkirra umbilinto bulwarra;
> Pital burra kultan wirripang bunto
>
> Nung-Ngnun
> Nge a runba turrama berrambo, burra kilkoa:
> Kurri wi, raratoa yella walliko,
> Yulo Moane, woinya, birung poro bulliko[.]
>
> Nung-Ngnun
> Nge a runba kan wullung, Makora, kokein,
> Mip-pa-rai, kekul, wimbi murr ring kirrika:
> Nge a runba mura ke-en kulbun kulbun murrung. (Wulatji 1848)

It is difficult to say what precisely this is a transcription *of*. O'Leary (2004, 92) argues from manuscript evidence that Dunlop fashioned a single poem from "three short songs" by Wulatji. In a manuscript she prepared in the 1870s, she does indeed label the three sections "Song 1," "Song 2" and "Song 3" (Dunlop, image 60; printed in Dunlop 2021, 194). In both the published version and the manuscript, she gives each section the heading "Nung-Ngung" (*nannguyn*, "song"). Despite this evidence, Wafer (2017) argues that Wulatji's poetry should actually be seen as four "verses" of two lines each. He gives two arguments: the four-verse interpretation makes the poetry more metrically consistent (2017, 204); and the textual evidence cannot be trusted, because there is no record of Dunlop and Wulatji's conversations (2017, 202). Did Wulatji produce one or more discrete texts at Dunlop's request, knowing they might be published? Did he perform at a ceremony or gathering that Dunlop observed? Did he produce a series of verse-examples to try and teach her about Awabakal versification? Did he improvise a performance to impress her?† Dunlop herself provides evidence that it may be foolish to precisely number the poems in Wulatji's text. In the manuscript version of the poem, she notes

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*Her brothers were not so friendly. They refused to acknowledge their Indian half-sisters, and denied them their inheritance (Johnston 2021, 39; Wu 2021, 63)

†According to Threlkeld, Wulatji was a popular guest, whose humourous 'gibes' and 'song and dance' routines were highly appreciated by Indigenous people throughout the region (quoted in Wafer 2017, 200).

that Indigenous songs are short and "often repeated in a variety of cadence" (2021, 194). How many different verses would a poet like Wulatji "repeat" in a single performance? It is not necessarily the case that his poetry could be neatly divided into discrete "poems" independent of one another.

Dunlop preserves this ambiguity in her transcription and translation. Her title, "Native Poetry," does not specify the number of poems. When she adapted her translation into an original song for Isaac Nathan, she used a similarly indeterminate title, "Pialla Wollombi," which she glosses as "the poetry or language of Wollombi" (Dunlop and Wulatji 1848). All this is to suggest that Dunlop does not transcribe a *text*, but rather a *corpus* of Awabakal verse. She provides the reader a sample of Wulatji's poetry, and shapes it into a single translation for readerly consumption—for the *translation*, unlike the transcription, certainly comprises a single text:

> Our home is the gibber-gunyah,
> Where hill joins hill on high;
> Where the turruma and berrambo,
> Like sleeping serpents lie;
> And the rushing of wings, as the wangas pass,
> Sweeps the wallaby's print from the glistening grass.
>
> Ours are the makoro gliding,
> Deep in the shady pool;
> For our spear is sure, and the prey secure. . .
> Kanin, or the bright gherool.
> Our lubras sleep by the bato clear,
> That the Amygest's track hath never been near.
>
> Ours is the koolema flowing
> With precious kirrika stored;
> For fleet the foot, and keen the eye,
> That seeks the nukkung's hoard;
> And the glances are bright, and the footsteps are free,
> When we dance in the shade of the karakon tree.

There are many remarkable features of this translation, but for our purposes, the most important aspect is its vocabulary (Table 1). Dunlop includes 15 Indigenous words in her translation. Five of these had already been incorporated into Australian English by 1848: "gibber-gunyah," "wallaby," "wanga," "lubra", and probably "koolema" (Dixon et al. 2006). She nonetheless includes two of them— "gibber-gunyah" and "wanga"—in the poem's Glossary. The other 10 words probably appear here in English verse for the first time, and probably all originate in Wulatji's speech ("gherool" and "Amygest" being the difficult cases).

Table 1. Indigenous vocabulary in Dunlop's translation of Wulatji. Sources: Wafer (2017); HRLM (Lissarrague 2006); Darkinyung (Jones 2008); Gamilaraay (Lissarrague et al. 2003); Sydney (Troy 1993); Dixon et al. (2006)

Dunlop's translation	Wulatji's text	Dunlop's definition	HRLM equivalents	Other equivalents
gibber-gunyah		Cave in the rock	kuyung ~ kuyang *camp, camp fire; also town*	giba *stone or rock*, gunya *hut* (Sydney)
turruma	turrama	War arms	TaRama *war boomerang*	
berrambo	berrambo	War arms	pirampu *waddy; club (Wafer)*	
wanga		A species of pigeon		wungawunga *Wonga pigeon* (Sydney); wangawanga *Wonga pigeon* (Darkinyung)
wallaby	buntoa		walapi ~ walapay *wallaby*; paNTarr *kangaroo*	wulaba *rock wallaby* (Sydney)
makoro	Makoro	Fish	makurr *fish*	magura *fish* (Sydney)
kanim		Eel	kaNiyn ~ KaNang *freshwater eel*	
gherool		Mullet		djirul *mullet* (Darkinyung)
lubra	mura ke-en		marr[a]kiyn *young maiden, woman, girl*	[The etymology of *lubra* is unknown; possibly from a Tasmanian language] (Dixon et al)
bato	kokein	Water	paTu, kukuyn *fresh water*	
Amygest		White fellow		
koolema	wimbi		wimpi *vessel made from the knots of trees and used as baskets or bowls*	guliman *coolamon* (Gamilaraay)
kirrika	kirrika	Honey	kiR[i]ka *white honey*	
nukkung		Wild bee	Nakang *native bee*	
karakun		Oak Tree	karakaNpa *place of swamp-oaks*	

Source: Article Notebook

What is remarkable is the relationship between Dunlop's words and Wulatji's. We might expect Dunlop only to introduce Indigenous words in her poem if they are present in Wulatji's text, or common in Australian English. But this is not her practice. In just four cases, Dunlop incorporates a word from

Wulatji's text into her translation: "turruma", "berrambo", "makoro" and "kirrika." In the other cases, she either inserts a new word into the poem (e.g. "wanga," "nukkung") or translates one of Wulatji's words by a *different* Indigenous word (e.g. "kokein" → "bato", "wimbi" → "koolema"). Her translation ultimately incorporates vocabulary from at least three or four Australian languages, but in neither the text nor the Glossary does she indicate which languages they are. Dunlop effectively develops her own poetic language, combining English, Wulatji's own speech, and the speech of other Indigenous peoples across Eastern NSW. She confers unity on Wulatji's verses, combining them into a single poem, and she confers unity on the languages of the colony, combining them into a single tongue. How should we interpret this unity?

Dunlop's translation is a representation of Indigenous speech. Thus it has two interlinked aims: it must capture the lyrical qualities of Wulatji's verse; and it must signal its Indigenous Australian origin to the reader. In this light, the inclusion of familiar words such as "gibber-gunyah" and "wallaby" makes sense. These words signal to the reader that this is an "Australian" poem. The choice to translate Wulatji's words by other words sometimes serves this purpose of familiarisation (e.g. "mura ke-en" → "lubra"), and sometimes seems to be an aesthetic decision: e.g. Dunlop presumably found "bato clear" more euphonious than "kokein clear" or alternative phrasings. The poem's rhyme and metre also serve these dual purposes of familiarisation and exoticism. The rhymes follow the familiar scheme of *Venus and Adonis* (*ababcc*). Meanwhile the accentual metre emulates the old ballads that represented "tradition" for Romantic readers: The number of beats follows a fixed pattern in each stanza (3-3-4-3-4-4), while the rhythm shifts freely between binary and ternary. In sum, Dunlop presents Wulatji's poetry as though it is an ancient ballad in an "invented tradition" of Australian verse, the kind of poem you might encounter in Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1775) or Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802).

To turn Wulatji's poem into a "Relique" of Australian verse, Dunlop amplifies the text. Wulatji's original text is not remotely ballad-like. It has a terseness that bespeaks its rich metaphysical background. Wafer (2017, 206) translates the first verse thus:

> Ours is the place where the mountains cohabit with the heights
> The eaglehawks and wallabies are happy

When she chooses, Dunlop captures the literal sense of Wulatji's verse well, e.g. "wonung bulkirra umbilinto bulwarra" → "where hill joins hill on high." But she generally amplifies the verse to conform with European expectations of the lyric. Human embodiment is implicit in Wulatji's poem. Dunlop makes it explicit, indicating that the mountains are Wulatji's "home." The senses are muted in Wulatji's poem. Dunlop invokes the senses, so that the birds have "rushing wings," and the wallabies play on the "glistening grass." She also, inexplicably, turns Wulatji's "wirripang" ("eaglehawk") into a Wonga pigeon. These amplifications are typical of Dunlop's translation. She inserts individual persons into the poem, placing their bodies in the landscape and invoking their sensory experiences of nature.

Dunlop thus presents Wulatji's verse as *syntactic* and *literary*. It is not the individual words of his poetry that matter, but their connection into smoothly-flowing verse. And though Wulatji's verse is oral rather than written, Dunlop presents it as implictly literary, like the ancient "Reliques" of English verse preserved in book and manuscript. Dunlop emphasises the syntax and literacy of Wulatji's verse in her introduction to the poem:

> There is a god of Poesy, Wallatu, who composes music, and who, without temple, shrine, or statue, is as universally acknowledged as if his oracles were breathed by Belus or Osiris: he comes in dreams, and transports the individual to some sunny hill, where he is inspired with the supernatural gift. (Wulatji 1848)

Wulatji's poetry is syntactic because it does not comprise individual words. Instead it comes complete, in the form of "oracles" delivered by divine inspiration. Wulatji's poetry is literary because the god of his inspiration, Wallatu, is the same in kind as the gods of the Celts (Belus) and Egyptians (Osiris), whose writings lie at the origins of Western civilisation.[*] Dunlop the Irish writer recognises in Wulatji a fellow Celt. And this is unsurprising, because "Poesy" is universal, and can be recognised as easily in Australia as anywhere else. Thus the freedom of Dunlop's translation. She does not translate the literal sense of the words, but communicates the "Poesy" that inspires them.

0.3 Charles Harpur: Particularism

> A thousand bright particulars are given,
> And they outshine the very stars of heaven! ("Ideality", h185b)

Harpur's poem is on a grander scale than Dunlop's. *The Kangaroo Hunt, or A Morning in the Mountains: A Descriptive Poem in Six Parts: By Charles Harpur. An Australian* is a long and ambitious work that has been described as "Australia's first epic poem" (Gelder and Weaver 2020, 81). It describes an "idealised" kangaroo hunt that lasts from sunrise to sunset. As the youthful party of white hunters harry the kangaroo, Harpur describes the sights and sounds of the Australian bush, expanding on the verse in detailed footnotes. The poem pulls in two directions. In one direction, Harpur seeks to "idealise" the hunt, blending the details of many possible hunts into "one Eden-piece embathed with a luminous atmosphere of sentiment" (h209-af). In another direction, Harpur seeks to capture specific details of land and language, to capture the particular qualities of each bird, tree, geological feature—or Indigenous word. We will see that in his hunt for particularity, Harpur presents Indigenous languages as primarily *oral* and *verbal*. A language comprises words that are spoken by particular people in particular places.

Harpur uses 12 Indigenous words in either the body of the poem or its footnotes (Table 2).[†] Generally speaking, Harpur's transcriptions are sound, and it is not difficult to look up the words in a modern dictionary. It is nonetheless difficult to identify the languages of Harpur's poem, for two main reasons. The first reason is lack of biographical evidence. Harpur does not name his informants, nor does he describe precisely where he encountered them. The only geographic detail he provides is in his footnote on the words "jimbuc" and "whirring", which I discuss below. The second reason lies in the textual record. Harpur began the poem in the 1840s, while living on the Hunter, and completed it in the 1860s, while living in Eurobodalla. With the exception of a single extract published in the *Weekly Register* in 1843, all the surviving versions of the poem date to the 1860s (Harpur 1843). Only *one* Indigenous word, "duaralli," appears in the 1843 newspaper extract. When did Harpur learn and insert

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[*]On the coincidence between Wulatji's name and Wallatu's, see O'Leary (2004, 91) and Wafer (2017, 199).

[†]I am indebted to Jim Wafer for sharing his notes on Harpur's Indigenous vocabulary, which helped especially with the difficult *teleltella*.

the other words? Despite these problems, it is possible to find all but one of Harpur's words in modern dictionaries.

Table 2. Indigenous Vocabulary in *The Kangaroo Hunt*. Sources: Darkinyung (Jones 2008); HRLM (Lissarrague 2006); Gamilaraay (Lissarrague et al. 2003); Wiradjuri (Grant et al. 2010); Dhurga (Ellis et al. 2020); Sydney (Troy 1993); also Jim Wafer, personal communication.

Harpur's word	Harpur's definition	Referent	Darkinyung	HRLM	Gamilaraay	Other
Euroka	"an aboriginal name of the sun"	the sun		panyal	yaraay	yurraga (Wiradjuri); yuraga (Dhurga)
bidawong	"flying squirrel"	glider		pitjang	bagu	budha-rang (Wiradjuri)
kindyne	"ring-tailed possum"	ring-tailed possum	**gindang**	wilay *possum*	garrawir	
gooburra	"the large kind of king-fisher which is commonly known by the tasteful and poetic sobriquet of the Laughing Jackass"	kookaburra		**kukaparr**	gugurrgaga	guuguubarra (Wiradjuri)
teleltell	"a large and solitary kind of bell-bird"	crested bellbird			banbanduluwyi	dilbi *ring–to ring as a bell* (Sydney)
warragl	"an aboriginal name of the native dog"	wild dog	miri *dog, wild dog*	**waRikal**		wuragal (Sydney)
yerowa	"blue-mountain parrot"	rainbow lorikeet	**wagarala** *parrot*	wakalarr ~ wakilarr *red parrot; rosella*		wiragala *australian ringneck* (Wiradjuri)
duaralli	"the kangaroo-rat;" attributed to "the blacks of the Hunter" in 1843, but to "blacks of the interior" in 1867 (h209-df)	eastern bettong	dhurawayi		**dhurrawaay**	
maroo	"a sort of brush iron-wood"	?grey box		**maru** *thorny bush*		
wallaroo	"wallaroo"; "the male … [is] almost black, and the female … [is] a sort of cream color"	eastern wallaroo	**walaru** *black kangaroo*		yulama	wularu (Sydney)
jimbuc	"a little shag-haired species of kangaroo;" metaphorically, "sheep"	brush-tailed rock wallaby			**dhimba** *sheep*	
whirring	name for "jimbuck" among the people of "the Hawksbury mountains"	brush-tailed rock	**wirayn**	wayiring *wallaby*		wan.guy wirrang (Wiradjuri)

Source: Article Notebook

The linguistic evidence suggests that the language of the poem is primarily Darkinyung, HRLM and Gamilaraay. This finding is consistent with the one biographical clue that Harpur provides in the poem. The clue lies in the word "jimbuc," which Harpur attributes to the "Blacks of the Hunter," as opposed to the "blacks of the Hawksbury mountains:"

> Jimbuc is an aboriginal name of little shag-haired species of kangaroo which is peculiar to mountain copses. It may be called the mountain wallaby, being in relation to the wallaroo what the common wallaby is to the kangaroo proper. The jimbuc is the least elegant in its form, and the dullest in its nature, of all the kangaroo kinds—of all such at least as I happen to be acquainted with. The Blacks of the Hunter call the sheep jimbuc, no doubt from a resemblance, however remote, arising out of the hairy shagginess of the one and the woolliness of the other. But this, like most other of our indigenous animals, is named variously by the aboriginal tribes of different localities: and is (or was) known amongst the Hawksbury mountains by the native name of *whirring*. (h209-gf)

By the "Hawksbury mountains," Harpur presumably refers to the rocky highlands that lie between Deebrubbin and the Hunter Valley. If this is so, then the language he would most likely encounter in that region is Darkinyung. The first road between Sydney and the Hunter Valley ran through this region Harpur calls the "Hawksbury mountains," so Harpur is likely to have traversed the region numerous times when moving between the Hunter, Deerubbin and Sydney.

The case for "the Blacks of the Hunter" is more difficult. In the 1840s and 50s, Harpur spent most of his time moving around Singleton and Jerrys Plains. According to Lissarrague (2006, 13), this was a bilingual zone. Towards the east, the Wonnarua and Geawagal spoke varieties of HRLM, Wulatji's tongue. Towards the west, the people spoke another language, and the available sources are unclear what it was. Lissarrague suspects it was either Gamilaraay or Darkinyung. Since Darkinyung is the most likely candidate for Harpur's language of the "Hawksbury mountains," his language of the "Hunter" is more likely to be Gamilaraay. This is broadly consistent with Table 2, which shows that there is a compelling Darkinyung, HRLM, or Gamilaraay equivalent for nine of Harpur's 12 Indigenous words (marked in bold).

The example of "jimbuc" supports this general picture. Today, *jumbuck* is cherished by settler Australians as a slang word for sheep, immortalised in the popular song *Waltzing Matilda*. Dixon et al. (2006, 56) suggest that the word may derive from English *jump*, or perhaps from the Gamilaraay word *dhimba*, but admit that neither hypothesis can be "confirmed." Harpur's footnote provides concrete support for the hypothesis that *jumbuck* derives from Gamilaraay *dhimba*. The hypothesis gains strength given the specificity of Harpur's description: Harpur insists that the word referred specifically to the "mountain wallaby," which from his description is clearly the brush-tailed rock wallaby (*Petrogale penicillata*). The compilers of the modern *Gamilaraay-Yuwalaraay-Yuwaalayaay* dictionary were unable to find a word specifically for the brush-tailed-rock wallaby, and record the word *dhimba* solely in its meaning of *sheep* (Lissarrague et al. 2003, 62). If we can trust Harpur's testimony on this point, then the old riddle of *jumbuck* is solved, and we can be surer that some of Harpur's informants in the Hunter spoke Gamilaraay.

Although it seems certain that Harpur learned most of the words directly from Darkinyung, Gamilaraay and HRLM speakers, some of the words present problems. It is of course quite probable that Harpur learned the words "wallaroo," "gooburra" and "warragl" simply by learning English: these words had passed into Australian English from Wiradjuri and the Sydney language by the 1830s (Dixon et al. 2006). The real problem words are "Euroka," "bidawong" and "teleltella."

The origin of "teleltella" is most obscure. Wafer (personal communication) suggests that *dilbanyi*, a word in the Sydney Language, could be a possible source. Gamilaraay *banbandhuluwi* has a promising number of syllables and the correct meaning, but the vowels and consonants differ considerably from Harpur's transcription. It is possible that "teleltella" represents a hitherto unattested Darkinyung or HRLM word: no word for "crested bellbird" appears in either dictionary.

The other problem words, "bidawong" and "Euroka," are attested in Wiradjuri, a language spoken in regions bordering Darkinyung, HRLM and Gamilaraay. "Euroka" is also attested in Dhurga, the local language of the south coast where Harpur was living in the 1860s. The data suggest three hypotheses: (1) Harpur had Wiradjuri informants; (2) "bidawong" and/or "Euroka" were present in Darkinyung but are hitherto unattested; (3) Harpur inserted the word "Euroka" into the poem after he learned it from Dhurga speakers in the 1860s. If hypothesis (1) is true, it would suggest that the area west of Singleton may have been trilingual, with speakers of Wiradjuri, HRLM and Gamilaraay all frequently present. If hypotheses (2) and/or (3) are true, this would be consistent with Lissarrague's surmise that the area west of Singleton was a transitional zone between HRLM and Gamilaraay. These hypotheses are hard to adjudicate, given the lack of corroborating evidence, but all are consistent with the general impression that Harpur learned most of his Indigenous vocabulary directly from local Indigenous informants in the 1830s and 40s.

While the *facts* of the case are murky, the *poetics* are clear. In sharp distinction to Dunlop, Harpur presents each word as a particular word spoken by particular people in a particular place. "Jimbuc" and "whirring" are only the most obvious instances. Consider these lines from Part II, when Harpur describes the sunrise:

> Uncovered no longer the forest dog prowls,
> Though so bold in the dark;
> And the kindynef and bidawongg haste to their holes
> In the spouts of yon old ironbark:
> While on its one bare blasted limb
> The gooburrah sits in the fog-wreath dim,
> Glorying loud with a laughter-like glee
> In the march of the dayspring's victory [. . .] (h209-cf)

In each footnote, Harpur identifies the word as "an Aboriginal name", emphasising the indefinite article in footnote *g*: "I say *an* aboriginal name, because almost every tribe of Blacks has a different set of names for our indiginous animals." (h209-cf) His precision about language is linked to his precision about nature. He places each animal in its ecological niche: the dog's hunting patterns change in the daytime, the "bidawong" (glider) and "kindyne" (ring-tailed possum) nest specifically in the "ironbark," and the kookaburra sits on a "bare" branch where it can see its prey. Dixon (1980, 322) compares the poem to a "natural history painting," which presents a "typical and comprehensive cross section

of the forest environment." Natural history provides a ground-truth for Harpur's analysis of names. Each animal or plant can be classified by species, then an appropriate name for the species can be selected from colonial English or local Indigenous languages. In one case, Harpur invents his *own* word for a species, having failed to locate an appropriate name. His invented name for the eastern whip-bird, "Jehu," alludes to the bird's colonial nickname of "coachman's whip" (h209-gf, note d).[*]

Harpur chooses Indigenous names because they are more "poetic." For instance, to justify the choice of "gooburra" as a name for the kookaburra, he sarcastically dismisses the "the tasteful and poetic sobriquet of the Laughing Jackass" conferred on the bird by white settlers (h209-cf). His discussion of Indigenous names is most pregnant in the case of "Euroka," which he invokes in Part I of the poem:

> Or while Eurokab first displays
> His burning rim on the ancient hill,
> [. . .]
> He floods abroad his golden light
> In one unbroken mass immense
> Of life-essential influence [. . .]
>
> b Euroka is an aboriginal name of the sun. It is at once euphonious and robust, and has therefore a certain sounding adequacy as a vocable, and thence somewhat of ideal unison with the golden progression and godlike port of that paramount luminary. (h209-bf)

Harpur makes two claims for "Euroka." First, the word itself is "euphonious and robust" as a "vocable." Second, the word's euphony means it can achieve an "ideal unison" with the reality it denotes—namely, the sun. For Harpur, the "ideality" of poetry arises from the unification of word and world.[†] To idealise the world, the poet must see each particular thing correctly, and then the select the word that will communicate that particularity. Harpur thus makes a strong claim for Indigenous poetics. Twelve times in *The Kangaroo Hunt*, Harpur claims that Indigenous people have properly seen the world, and found the ideal word to communicate what they have seen (Webby 2013, 5). In the case of Euroka, Harpur emphasises the point by using Euroka himself as a symbol of ideality. Euroka illuminates the earth, uniting all things in the "one unbroken mass" of his "life-essential influence."

Harpur observes Euroka rise, but does not actually invoke him as the muse. Instead, Harpur compares himself to Euroka: as Euroka rises to illuminate the world, so the poet walks to the top of a hill to survey the scene. At this point in the poem, its troubling colonial elements come into view:

> While thus Euroka riseth red,
> Up, even to the kingly head
> Of some proud eminence, we climb,
> Where high amid the crags sublime,
> Australia's yet unchristened Muse,

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[*]Harpur's name never caught on, although Henry Kendall borrowed it for his own kangaroo hunt poem. Kendall was apparently unaware the "Jehu" is a colloquial term for a coachman, and changed the spelling to "echu," emphasising its onomatopoeia (Gelder and Weaver 2020, 73).

[†]The word is Harpur's. See for instance h185b.

> A wandering Spirit of beauty rare,
> Loves oft to gem her streaming hair
> With heaven's selectest dews,
> And scarf her bosom bright and bare
> With a robe of Morning richest hues;
> Giving the while to all objects there,
> All sounds,—the water drip just heard—
> The hum of insect—voice of bird,—
> To every echo and every air
> A poetry unfelt elsewhere. (h209-bf)

In this image, Harpur illuminates the world with the ideal beauty of poetry, just as Euroka illuminates the world with his light. But the introduction of "Australia's yet unchristened Muse" complicates things. What does "unchristened" mean? Does it mean that the Muse is unnamed, or simply that she has not "yet" been named by the Christian settlers? In either case, what is the significance of her naming? Harpur defends Indigenous speech as "euphonious" and "poetic." He suggests that the poetry of the forest can be seen in the "dew," heard in "All sounds," and "felt" in the air. He suggests that the Muse is solar-powered, as Euroka "robes" her in beauty. Harpur himself refrains from naming the Muse in this very poem where he foreshadows her "christening." Does all this mean that the Muse of Australia is eternal, and freely available to any human being to happens to walk in her domain? Or, more darkly, does Harpur propose that the white settlers will one day expropriate the Muse from the first Australians, by "christening" her? Harpur does not resolve these issues. *The Kangaroo Hunt* is a poem of futurity, and Harpur looks forward to a time when the poem's own questions may be answered.

In the final lines of the poem, however, Harpur does recur to the Muse. In these lines, Harpur describes himself as an "uncouth" poet, and apologises for his lack of education. He then aligns his own "uncouthness" with the "virginity" of the Muse:

> Thus nurtured,—self urged, first he knew
> Australia's virgin Muse to woo,
> And of Song's bright mysteries 'gan to guess
> With a lone self-cherished studiousness [. . .] (h209-gf)

Again the imagery is ambiguous. Does the virginity of the Muse imply that one day, she will marry the white settlers? Or does it imply that she is *always* a virgin, and that the poetry of Australia truly belongs to no-one, neither settler nor Indigenous? Harpur forecloses a third possibility, that the Muse was already married when the white settlers came. He is anxious to secure his poetic authority. Without the benefit of education, he claims authority from his connection to the land. But he realises full well that Indigenous Australians already have this connection. In Part III, Harpur acknowledges Indigenous Australians as "the former lords of the soil." He praises their wise husbandry, which prevented the mass "extinction" of native birds brought about by white settlement (h209-df, note e). The wise husbandry and poetic speech of Indigenous Australians are both a problem and a solution for Harpur. Indigenous Australians have proven there is an Australian poetry inherent in the land, but

they also threaten the white settler's right to compose that poetry. The unnamed, unmarried "Muse of Australia" is Harpur's attempt to resolve this contradiction.

Where Dunlop's translation is smooth and familiar, Harpur's epic is craggy and difficult. He enjoins the reader to pause on each word, each image, and appreciate its robustness. Thus in the poem's *language* as well as its plot, Harpur dramatises the struggle to comprehend the Australian environment. This struggle reflects broader themes in Harpur's work: his struggle to cement his authority as the colony's "first" poet (Mead 1990); and his interest in the struggle between "nature and intellect" in cognition (Ackland 1983, 460). Harpur adopts particular Darkinyung, Gamilaraay and HRLM words whose sound and meaning allows him to comprehend the landscape more fully. This is why I say his representation of Indigenous language is *verbal* and *oral*—he sees language as a collection of *words* that are *spoken* to denote particular things.

0.4 Linguistic representation and the conquest of space

Both Dunlop and Harpur claim poetic authority, and seek to write an Australian poetry which somehow reconciles the rights of white settlers and Indigenous Australians. In both cases, however, the white poet asserts the right to choose: to open the pantry of Indigenous poetry, and select the choicest morsels for their own compositions. Today this might be condemned as cultural appropriation (O'Leary 2004, 85; Johnston 2021, 47), but neither Dunlop nor Harpur seem to have been concerned that linguistic "borrowings" could be a kind of theft. It was simply obvious to Harpur and Dunlop that words don't belong to anybody. Why not? In this section, I sketch the linguistic philosphy that justified their attitudes.

In Harpur and Dunlop's time, the empiricist philosophy of language predominated in the English-speaking world. Dunlop was well-versed in British empiricism, having read David Hume by the age of 12 (Hansord 2021, 76). Harpur's education is not well attested, but he was a close reader of Percy Shelley, whose debts to radical empiricism are well known.

In the empiricist theory of language, language is made up of "signs," and these "signs" are simply labels that we apply to objects we perceive (Bergheaud 1985, 159). As Locke (1975, 405) argues, signs are arbitrary: words become signs for our ideas through "voluntary imposition." Initially, we label "simple ideas," such as *red*, *wood* or *water*. Later, we stitch together simple ideas to build up "complex ideas," and label these complex ideas with signs such as *government* or *religion* (1975, §3.2). Locke's view is psychological and individualistic. My perceptual system delivers sensations into my mind, and I choose to label them with other sensations, namely sounds and visible characters, which then become signs. Locke was accordingly sceptical of abstract concepts. Ultimately a word is only meaningful if it can be reduced to simple, perceptible ideas such as *hard* or *round*. But when we use abstract words such as *power*, it is easy to forget the complex of particular sensations that the word refers to. Thus we often "have very good and approved Words in [our] Mouths, and Writings, with very uncertain, little or no signification" (1975, 438).

In Harpur and Dunlop's time, the most famous proponent of Locke's ideas was John Horne Tooke (Aarsleff 1967, chap. 2). Tooke (1805, vol. 1, p. 18) begins with the proposition that "Words are the *signs* of *things*," and then poses a difficult problem: there are many words, such as prepositions and articles, which do not refer to perceptible things. You cannot smell *an* or touch *of*. To save the empiricist

theory of language, he attempts to prove that words such as *an* or *of* are "abbrevations" of nouns and verbs, offering some very inventive etymologies to illustrate his theory. He justifies the theory by observing that the human mind has an innate love of "*dispatch*" (1805, vol. 1, p. 27). We wish to speak quickly, therefore we abbreviate, and generate all the abstract words of a fully grammaticizised language. Tooke's ideas were later promulgated by the utilitarians, who in turn influenced the young Tennyson and Browning (Cooper 2006, 642-643). In his posthumous writings on language, Jeremy Bentham (1843) argues that every "sign" in language stands for some "entity," and distinguishes "real" from "fictitious" entities. A "real" entity is "an object, the existence of which is made known to us by one or more of our five senses"; a "fictitious" entity is "an object, the existence of which is feigned by the imagination" (1843, 325). A word denoting a "fictitious" entity can only be meaningful if the fictitious entity can be broken down into real, perceptible entities: to every word with an "immaterial import there belongs, or at least did belong, a material one" (1843, 329). For Tooke, Bentham, and their empiricist forebears, human language is universal. Everywhere the operations of the mind are the same. Everywhere the mind encounters the same kind of material things. Since words are names for things, I can always understand the meaning of a word by learning what things it refers to, even when the word seems to denote an abstract concept.

This analysis reveals that Dunlop's universalism and Harpur's particularism are two sides of the same coin. Harpur's particularism would be impossible without the universality of the mind. Dunlop's universality would be impossible without the particularity of the senses. Harpur asserts the universality of the human mind in mystical poems such as *The Tower of the Dream* (1851-53, h642a) and *Cosmoplasticus* (1857, h696c). In the major work of his maturity, *The Witch of Hebron* (1867, h689-gd), he suggests that each person originates alike in an "aboriginal inception, / [. . .] A self-producing knot of living shoots[.]"* Thus Harpur's particularism has a universalist substrate. By contrast, Dunlop's universalism expresses itself in particularism. We have already seen how she amplifies Wulatji's text with sensory images, explicitly evoking the sounds, sights and feelings that Wulatji himself leaves implicit. In other poems, she describes particular places in loving detail, as in this stanza on her home at Mulla Villa:

> Deep, silent water—water dark and still,
> Bowered in the desert, lonely lot is thine!
> For thee, no courtly Bard, essays his skill
> At thy cool font inspired—"sweet Mulla mine." (Dunlop 2021, 198)

In this stanza, she evokes the sights and sounds of her home ("silent water—water dark") in order to particularise it: her "Mulla," the creek behind her home, is *not* the "Mulla" where the "courtly bard" Edmund Spenser lived in the sixteenth century.

Harpur is traditionally labelled "Romantic" (e.g. by Kane 1996; Kelly and Fotheringham 1987), while his female contemporaries such as Dunlop are labelled "sentimental." Harpur and Dunlop's shared empiricism, however, suggests that this distinction is illusory. Like earlier Romantics, such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge or Felicia Hemans, both Harpur and Dunlop seek the "One Mind" that is immanent in

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*This image does suggest a "developmental" viewpoint that is superficially similar to Herder's historicism; but Harpur's view of development was more teleological that Herder's (Falk 2019, 6-10).

experience. Wu (2021, 69) is therefore quite correct when he writes: "Dunlop realised as clearly as any of the Romantic poets that art lives in the realm of the ideal" (see also Minter 2021, 109; Hansord 2021, 79).

What does Dunlop and Harpur's empiricism have to do with the ownership of words? We can answer this question by comparing the then-dominant English theory of language with the then-dominant German theory. In Harpur and Dunlop's time, German scholars had rejected the tradition of "philosophical grammar" represented by Locke, Tooke and Bentham, and were pursuing the new discipline of "historical philology" (Foucault 2002, xii; Aarsleff 1967, 3-6). In historical philology, the sign is no longer an arbitrary label for a sensation. Instead, words themselves are objects that have their own histories, can they cannot simply be detached from the languages of which they form a part. As Foucault (2002, 256) puts it, in historical philology, language has an "interior 'mechanism'" that determines the distribution and interrelations of words. If this is the case, then linguistic borrowing becomes problematic. One of the early proponents of historical philology, Johann Gottfried Herder (1993, 38-39) illustrates the problem:

> You must first enter the spirit of a nation in order to empathize completely with even one of its thoughts or deeds. You must discover a characterizing word through which you can understand everything in depth. Otherwise, you simply read a word.

A word is not a name applied by an individual to a sensation; it is the expression of the "spirit of a nation." If you do not know this "spirit," you do not "understand" the word, you simply "read" it. Herder's argument invalidates Dunlop's procedure of swapping one word for another in her translation: "bato" (*paTu*) cannot translate "kokein" (*kukuyn*): these are different words, even if they refer to the same object of perception. Herder's argument also invalidates Harpur's procedure of selecting words for their "euphoniousness:" Harpur has merely "read" the word for its sounds, rather than grasping its spirit.

One implication of historical philology is that human nature changes. Human nature is "a pliant clay, which assumes different shapes under different circumstances, needs, and burdens" (Herder 1993, 43). This view of human nature undermines the metaphysical presuppositions of Harpur and Dunlop's poetry. There is no one mind that expresses itself in song, as Dunlop believed. We do not live in a shared world of particulars that guarantee the meaning of words, as Harpur believed. Herder and the historicists could not endorse Dunlop and Harpur's programme.

This analysis indicates precisely why it is anachronistic to accuse Harpur and Dunlop of "cultural appropriation." In their view, words were labels for perceptions, and it was open to any person at any time to invent or adopt a new label.* Since words do not belong to a "culture," they cannot be stolen from one. When Dunlop and Harpur conquered space, they did not do so by stealing its names, but by enriching the English language so its speakers could name Australia. To enrich the English language, they produced representations of Indigenous language: a transcription, a translation, a glossary, and philological footnotes. This does not absolve them of imperial ambition. When they named Australia, they helped to take the things they named, even if they did not mean to take the names themselves.

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*How Wulatji and other Indigenous informants viewed these linguistic "borrowings" I do not know.

0.5   Conclusion: Agony

Dunlop and Harpur make themselves at home in Australia only in an agony of conscience. Other colonial poets were not so agonised. Emily Manning (1877, 43), for example, ends her otherwise beautiful poem "From the Clyde to Braidwood" on this dismissive note:

> —no legend old
> Adds softening beauty to the Buddawong Peak,
> Or near home-ranges with too barbarous names.

Manning can read no "legend" in the landscape, and dismisses the local names of the Braidwood district as "barbarous"—even though she uses three Indigenous Australian words in the poem, namely "Currawong," "Kurrajong" and (in these very lines) "Buddawong." She describes the road from Clyde to Braidwood in wonderful detail, but the only human activity she can see there is the activity of the white man who has "cleft the rock" to build the road (Manning 1877, 42). The poem is a mature expression of a Australian tradition inaugrated by Barron Field, who established in both law and poetry the doctrine of *terra nullius* (Ford and Clemens 2023). To Manning's eyes, the land is empty, its past is untold, and if it has names, they are "barbarous." Braidwood itself is therefore "new, new, too new / To foster Poesy" (Manning 1877, 43).

Neither Harpur nor Dunlop were members of this tradition. Both found poetry in the Australian landscape, and acknowledged that Indigenous Australians had found it first. They attempted to convey this poetry to colonial readers by setting forth the riches of Indigenous speech and writing. Dunlop presented Wulatji as a bard in the tradition of world poetry, and treated Awabakal (HRLM) as a classical language of civilisation. Harpur presented his Darkinyung, Gamilaraay and Wonnarua informants as skilled workers of the land, who had seen and named myriad beauties of the world. Though Dunlop and Harpur adopted different means to represent Indigenous languages, their underlying philosophy was similar, as was their agony, which was to "[reinscribe] the logic of colonisation" in the face of their own humanitarianism (Minter 2021, 113). They wrote vexed and contradictory poetry, whose vexation has lost none of its pertinence in the third century of Australia's colonisation.

Wulatji, meanwhile, can speak for himself.

0.6   Acknowledgements

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