

Transported to Botany Bay

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# Introduction

AT a climactic moment in Charles Dickens's novel *Great Expectations* (1861), the reader, along with the protagonist, Pip, learns that the benefactor who has provided the working-class boy with a gentleman's education and the promise of a fortune is actually a transported Australian convict named Abel Magwitch. Although we never actually see this iconic nineteenth-century convict in Australia, he has become wealthy there in a way he could not have managed in England. That an exiled convict like Magwitch could be represented as reformed and successful in Australia but not in England has important implications for notions of social class and national identity in both nineteenth-century England and Australia. Dickens's portrayal of Magwitch and the transformation of Pip can be read as a metaphor for the way the figure of the transported convict in nineteenth-century literature helped construct an English national identity that could include both the English gentleman and the respectable working classes. To do this, though, figures like Magwitch, who rejected or deviated from their assigned role in the imagined British polity, had to be banished. This book explores such interconnections between the English metropole and the Australian colonies in terms of social class negotiations and national identity in published narratives about English convicts transported to Australia between 1788 and 1868.

Most of my past research has focused on various issues related to social class in the long nineteenth century in Britain and British colonies. In this project, I take up the issue of how social class worked in

conjunction with the continuing process of forming national identity in both England and Australia. All of the settler colonies formed their identity specifically in relation to immigrants who left England because they were not successful there in some way. Relatively few aristocrats or gentry emigrated—and those mainly were younger sons, had financial troubles or limited capital, or were disgraced in some way. All of the settler colonies ended up with societies that were more democratic in their class systems than the parent country. Australia is unique even among the settler colony/nations, though, because its first settlers were the absolute rejects of Britain—most of them the very lowest in class position of any British citizens because of their status as convicted felons. This makes literature about Australia a good place to examine social class in relation to national identity.

The idea for this project came to me when I saw a performance of Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good*, which is a dramatic version of Thomas Keneally's novel *The Playmaker*. Not only did Wertenbaker's play feature a cast of convicts transported on the First Fleet and recently landed on the virtually unknown continent of Australia, but it also foregrounded the use of literature to bring about a more cohesive society among these felons and their warders. The plot concerns a group of convicts, organized and directed by one of the officers in charge of them, putting on a play for the king's birthday, ironically a celebration of English identity by those who had just been banned from there. This idea of a country whose earliest European population was composed of England's rejects, and their achieving a measure of redemption through literature, fascinated me. The next day I went to the campus library to discover whether more literary texts existed about transported English convicts in Australia. I found—somewhat to my surprise, since the only one I had heard of was *Great Expectations*—that there were a quite a few of them and that our library had several on the shelves, plus online editions of others. As I began reading, I discovered that each of them, in one way or another, engaged the way that social class functioned in the gradual process of forming a national identity, not only in an evolving Australia but also in England.

Also intriguing to me was the way in which this convict past had been repressed. I knew that all of the settler colonies had violently displaced indigenous people to establish first colonies and then nations

and that forming new nations involved repressing the violence done to these indigenous people. But in Australia there were two groups who had been repressed—the indigenous people and the convicts. I was vaguely aware that Australia had taken a lot of transported convicts once the American Revolution made it impossible to send them to Georgia or Maryland (as I had seen represented in Daniel Defoe’s *Moll Flanders*). And I was, of course, familiar with Dickens’s Magwitch, though I had never thought about the Australian implications of the character or the novel. I was not alone in my lack of knowledge about the Australian convicts: when I later taught a course on Australian convict fiction, my exchange student from the United Kingdom was outraged: “Why have I never heard of this? I went through the entire British school system without ever hearing a word about it! It’s a disgrace!”

The nineteenth-century novels I explore in this book, as I discovered when I visited Australia, seem not that familiar even in Australia, as suggested by their absence from the bookstores I visited in several areas of the country while trying to buy copies of some of them—though of course they can be found on library shelves and have been discussed by Australian literary critics. And they are not well-known in America, even by Victorianists. Thus, one of my intentions for this book is to introduce a new array of intriguing literary texts to a much wider international audience. But I also want to demonstrate how literary texts about nineteenth-century convicts transported to Australia were part of a significant transnational social experiment: creating a new society 10,000 miles away from the old one, out of the dregs of that old society.

Historically, approximately 160,000 men and women convicted of crimes ranging from poaching hares to murder—but mostly theft—were transported to one of the new English colonies in Australia between the years 1787 and 1867. Minor crimes such as shoplifting, which today would merit some community service and a fine, yielded a sentence of seven years, while more serious felonies brought sentences of fourteen years or life in exile. Literature featuring these transported convicts demonstrates how this figure could be deployed in the service of covering over English social problems related to class. This literature, of course, mirrored the way that convicts actually transported were banished from the nation. This left the ideal of a harmonious

traditional system of class relations—part of England’s idea of itself—in place without having to confront the radical changes that were actually occurring in the “mother” country.<sup>1</sup> For this “solution” to work, though, a new identity had to be developed in the Australian colonies that was somewhat more egalitarian so that the exiled convicts would be content to stay there and not return to England, as Magwitch does. Convicts who returned, in fact, would undo the social work that their banishment was supposed to accomplish.

When the convicts were transported from Britain to Australia, the new continent was to the British a desolate land populated only by the world’s most savage of savages. This combined those defined as the lowest people of England and the lowest of the world’s native races. Unimportant as both might have been deemed, though, they were part of a transnational negotiation that helped define both English and nascent Australian identity. Of course, the British defined themselves as civilized by their difference from indigenous peoples in many parts of the world. In Australia, though, even those British people who were rejected from England because their supposedly depraved natures threatened English social harmony were usually considered superior to the savages and could thus potentially be recuperated. Hence the convicts could both solve English social problems by being banished and be reformed by learning to be more civilized than indigenous Australians.

This banishment of convicts began during the Revolutionary period, when, as a result of the French and American Revolutions, some members of Britain’s working class began to question the naturalness of their subordinate positions in the traditional social hierarchy that characterized England and its early form of national identity. In addition, the transportation of British convicts to Australia roughly coincided with the Industrial Revolution, which resulted in the uprooting of many among the working classes from their long-established places in rural society and sent them to the cities or, if they stayed, condemned them to poverty in a capitalizing agricultural economy. Convict literature, which almost always included several working-class characters, tended to reinforce the social hierarchy and encourage working-class people to identify with it, even while the middle classes were successfully striving for a position of more respect, power, and wealth within a changing social system.<sup>2</sup> People of both classes in the

Australian colonies, meanwhile, were trying to find—or preserve—a national identity in a place that was not anchored to the geography and traditional social relations of England. In Australia, especially at first, the estrangement of Australian immigrants from England actually reinforced their identification with their homeland, in a process Benedict Anderson explains in “Long-Distance Nationalism.” In some of the literature I examine, especially the transportation broadsides, this distancing effect is fictional, with English readers imagining convicts looking back from Australia and thus reinforcing the Englishness of both convicts and readers. Gradually, however, a new and different national identity began to emerge in the Antipodes, one that was recognizably Australian yet definitely did not include the indigenous people. This need for a new national identity was especially true among those who had been officially expelled from England, and it happened decades before there was any real prospect of an Australian nation.<sup>3</sup> Thus, transported convict literature filled somewhat different functions for English and Australian readers at different times.

#### CONVICT TRANSPORTATION TO AUSTRALIA

The 736 British transported convicts of the First Fleet, as well as the officers and marines who accompanied them, had the barest idea of the place they were going to when they left Portsmouth in 1787 for the nearly unexplored continent of Australia. Even the commander, Governor Arthur Phillip, had only the maps, charts, and descriptions of a very small area on the eastern shore of Australia, made by Captain James Cook, and the advice of Sir Joseph Banks, a naturalist who had accompanied Cook. Almost as soon as they arrived with the convicts, officers such as Watkin Tench and David Collins began to record descriptions of the new land, the indigenous people, and the daily life of the convicts, guards, and administrators; these accounts were soon published in England. Despite the availability of these documents, however, few people in Great Britain knew more about Australia than that convicts were banished there, to the place popularly known throughout the nineteenth century as Botany Bay. In actuality, the First Fleet spent only nine days in Botany Bay before moving on to the harbor they named Sydney after Home Secretary Thomas Townshend, Lord (later Viscount) Sydney, who held authority in England



for both prisons and colonial affairs. Nevertheless, from the time the First Fleet set sail in England, the name Botany Bay became synonymous with convict transportation, though it signified a system more than a real place.

Transportation of convicted felons to Australia was instituted because the American Revolution prevented the English government from sending its convicts to the American colonies any longer, as had been the practice since the early seventeenth century. In the eleven years between the Declaration of Independence on the part of the American colonies and the voyage of the First Fleet, various plans for the convicts were debated, including Jeremy Bentham's now notorious Panopticon. In 1786, however, the Cabinet decided that the best solution to the increasing buildup of convicts, sentenced to transportation and imprisoned temporarily in the abandoned ships known as "the Hulks," was to resume the practice of transportation by sending the convicts to an unexplored, unmapped, almost unknown continent and using them to build a new colony—if they didn't die.<sup>4</sup> Although most historians have assumed that the primary motivation for the scheme was to get rid of the growing number of convicts by sending them somewhere out of England, the more optimistic officials of the time also hoped that the convicts' involvement in building a new colony would enable them to reform and become productive citizens of that colony.<sup>5</sup> Built into the notion of reform was the possibility of social mobility and a better life for the mostly working-class convicts—as long as they stayed in Australia. After 1815, when free emigrants began to arrive in larger numbers, this opportunity for social mobility for the convicts was hotly contested, and a long struggle ensued over how the convicts would be integrated into Australian society.

The treatment of and attitudes toward convicts changed with the various administrations, both in Australia and in England, that held sway at different stages during the transportation period.<sup>6</sup> The first governor, Captain Arthur Phillip, was enthusiastic about founding a new colony in Australia, and most scholars and writers consider him an effective administrator whose policies allowed the two small outposts in Australia—Sydney and Norfolk Island—to survive.<sup>7</sup> Although he did not look with favor on the idea of a colony built mostly from the convict population, he was fair to the convicts, insisting on equal rations for convicts, officers, and marines and offering small grants

of land to emancipists, or convicts who had fulfilled their sentences or received pardons, to encourage them to become industrious and self-supporting, suggests B. H. Fletcher in his entry on Phillip in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. After Phillip's departure, the colony came under the control of the newly formed New South Wales Corps, a military body assembled specifically for the purpose of policing the colony. The New South Wales Corps and its leaders, who were at odds with the succeeding London-appointed civil governors, overtly favored its own officers and troops over the convicts and other civilians. As Robert Hughes reports in *The Fatal Shore*, the corps is considered by many to have been corrupt and self-serving, making huge profits from the sale of rum, but nonetheless managed to make the colony self-supporting (109). In their view, according to Hughes, "the convicts were there to be used, not reformed" (III). In 1808, the New South Wales Corps staged a military takeover and ousted Governor William Bligh, better known for the famous mutiny aboard the HMS *Bounty*, which he earlier captained. Trying to clean up the illegal rum trade carried on by the New South Wales Corps, Bligh had angered both the corps and many influential settlers, sparking the "Rum Rebellion." For a short time, the colony was governed by officers appointed by the "Rum Corps."

In 1809, the New South Wales Corps was recalled and reorganized, and a civilian governor, Lachlan Macquarie, arrived in 1810. Macquarie, whose administration lasted until 1821, was known for his enlightened policies toward the convicts. He employed many of them on public works designed by the convict architect Francis Greenway, whom he patronized along with numerous other convicts and former convicts, even inviting them to dine at Government House and appointing them to such prestigious positions as magistrate. Although he believed in strict discipline and did not lighten the punishments for convicts under sentence (especially those at the penal settlements for secondary offenses), he was in favor of giving well-behaved convicts a wage and expiring a small grant of land to encourage them to become productive citizens (Hirst, *Convict*, 46). He was also liberal in extending tickets-of-leave and pardons to those considered deserving. Believing that once they were no longer under sentence, convicts should be allowed to work hard and prosper, he antagonized many of the free settlers of the colony. Consequently, though his policies allowed

many emancipists, or former convicts, to rise in society, they also led to a long struggle for power between emancipists and the free settlers, especially those who wanted to re-create a pseudofeudal hierarchy in Australia with a new gentry of free immigrants and a subservient peasantry made up of former convicts.<sup>8</sup> Governor Macquarie also had a more humanitarian approach to dealing with the indigenous people than any other governor since Phillip. Significantly, many of the convict novels that are the subject of this book are set during Governor Macquarie's regime, because that was the period that most offered the chance for success and a new identity for convicts that English ideology wanted to believe in.

Responding to complaints from wealthy free settlers, in 1819 the British Parliament sent a commission of enquiry into the state of the colony. The head of the commission, J. T. Bigge, was very critical of Macquarie and his policies toward convicts. Bigge spent eighteen months investigating, relying to a large extent on the opinions of free settlers, especially large landowners, and reported to Parliament that the convict system was not sufficiently punitive and that, if his stricter recommendations about treatment of convicts were accepted, "transportation could be made a matter of dread, and there would be fewer stories of ex-convicts accumulating wealth" (Hirst, *Convict*, 88). Macquarie was subsequently replaced and Bigge's suggestions implemented. With the change of regime and increasing numbers of free settlers emigrating, convicts became less likely to become wealthy and experience radical rises in social status. Yet, as historian David Meredith has argued, by 1837, when another parliamentary commission was sent to investigate the convict transportation system, convicts under sentence were still being fed well and paid wages to work and emancipists who worked hard and were frugal could become prosperous and even respectable (23). Summing up a long and contentious debate, Meredith explains that by 1837 the economic and penal motives for transportation, which had always been in conflict in some ways, were both failing: "Transportation had turned a full circle: from an economic perspective it had turned from being an essential element in the development and expansion of the colonies to being an obstacle to further growth of [the Australian] labour force and population. . . . Penally, it had turned from being a dreaded punishment sufficiently terrifying to deter crime, to being held out as a reward for

prisoners in Britain who behaved well” (24). Consequently, following the Molesworth Report of 1838, convict assignment to private masters was eliminated; transportation to New South Wales ended altogether in 1840.

During most of this period, convicts were also being transported to Van Diemen’s Land, or present-day Tasmania. Van Diemen’s Land was established as a penal settlement in 1803 and quickly grew to absorb even more transported convicts than New South Wales, especially after transportation to the eastern mainland was abolished in 1840. As in New South Wales, the treatment of convicts and the way they were employed changed over the course of its five-decade history as a penal colony. Like those in New South Wales, most convicts sent to Van Diemen’s Land either were assigned to settlers or worked on government projects. Lieutenant-Governor William Sorell had begun to institute reforms of the system, including keeping better track of the convicts and instituting efforts to more effectively control their working conditions, even before Bigge’s investigations in 1819–20 (Reid, *Gender*, 127–28). Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur, who became Governor Arthur in 1825 when Van Diemen’s Land was officially separated from New South Wales, had the longest tenure of any of the Australian colonial governors, serving from 1824 to 1836. A “devout Calvinist evangelical,” Arthur was also a “high-minded, autocratic but thoroughly efficient administrator” (Shaw, “Arthur”). He instituted strict rules for the assignment of convicts to private settlers, aiding the settlers with free labor but concerned with both the punishment and the potential reform of the convicts. His name is preserved in the notorious penal settlement Port Arthur, which was much dreaded by convicts and is featured in several convict novels. Arthur supervised the notorious Black War that virtually exterminated the Tasmanian Aborigines, although he later supported the conciliatory efforts of George Augustus Robinson and the setting aside of an island for the remaining indigenous people, most of whom died there.<sup>9</sup>

Port Arthur was one of several penal stations for convicts who had committed secondary offenses after leaving England. Besides Port Arthur, Newcastle, Moreton Bay, Macquarie Harbor, and Norfolk Island are the most well-known of these. Prisoners sent to these settlements were not expected to reform and were subjected to hard labor and brutal punishments, often for minor offenses. Flogging was

particularly common; most of the convicts in the penal settlements probably felt the lash more than once. At Port Arthur, convicts were used as beasts of burden to pull passengers in a “railway” up and down a steep mountainside. The secondary penal settlements were notorious in both Australia and England, and the physical and mental brutality inflicted there did effectively create dread of transportation, though only a minority of transported convicts were actually sent to them. These settlements became settings in several convict novels, notably Marcus Clarke’s *His Natural Life* (discussed in chapter 6).

Convict transportation continued in Van Diemen’s Land under Arthur’s successors, increasing after its abolition in New South Wales. In the early 1840s it took a different form, known as the probation system, in which convicts underwent a period of government-supervised hard labor before being allowed to work for pay for settlers. Transportation to Van Diemen’s Land was stopped in 1846, resumed in 1848, and finally ended in 1853. Overall, about 40 percent of transported convicts were sent to Van Diemen’s Land. Transportation ended there primarily because of major protests from free settlers who felt that the convict presence in their midst was an obstacle to further moral, economic, and civic growth in the colony. The name of the colony was changed to Tasmania in 1856, partly to erase its reputation as a penal colony.

What actually finished transportation, to both Tasmania and the east coast of the Australian mainland, was the Australian gold rush, which began in 1851 and lasted until the late 1860s. Once the gold rush was under way, sending convicts to the region at government expense seemed counterproductive. Many of the exiles and escaped convicts from Tasmania headed straight for the goldfields in Victoria, leading to protests from citizens there to add to the ones already lodged by Tasmanian free settlers. However, transportation continued at a considerable distance from the goldfields in the newer colony of Western Australia. Beginning in 1850 and continuing until 1868, nearly 10,000 convicts were transported there at the request of free colonists who needed the cheap labor.<sup>10</sup> Most of the convicts sent to Western Australia were first offenders who had already undergone imprisonment in England. Perhaps because Western Australia was so isolated from the major centers of population in the east, little convict literature focuses on the colony, although one former convict, John

Boyle O'Reilly, an American convicted for rebellion in Canada, wrote a novel entitled *Moondyne* (1879) that is partly set in Western Australia. After 1868, transportation to Australia ceased altogether, although many convicts were still living there under sentence through the rest of the century.

As this brief summary indicates, transportation of convicts to the Australian colonies provoked controversy, especially in Australia.<sup>11</sup> It was also a subject of heated discussion in the metropole, both within the government and in the British press, where numerous articles on transportation appeared from at least the 1820s on. Many focused on the question of the basic function of penal discipline: was it to deter crime through harsh punishment or to reform and rehabilitate already-convicted criminals? For instance, a writer for the conservative *Quarterly Review* in 1838 lists the functions of penal discipline: “first of diminishing crime by the dread of punishment, and secondly of relieving this country from the revisitation of dangerous criminals, without the extremity of capital punishment, and with the reasonable chance of eventual reformation” (“New South Wales,” 501). Here reformation comes last, with deterrence and getting rid of the convicts clearly paramount. For others, the priorities were different despite having the same aims: Archibald Alison, writing for *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, describes “the praiseworthy intentions of the first founders of the system of transportation and assignment, which had no less for its object reformation of character than a just infliction of punishment” (529).

As the Australian colonies prospered and reports of a few convicts achieving great wealth appeared, some worried that the working classes in England would deliberately commit crimes in order to be transported; Thomas Richards in the *Westminster Review* quotes Mr. James Busby, “late Collector of Internal Revenue in New South Wales,” as claiming, “I have known individuals . . . who have committed crimes to get to New South Wales,” though he is a little less certain about convicts urging others to do so: “I think I have known of people who have endeavoured to induce their relatives or connexions to commit crime, in order to get them sent out” (18). William Molesworth, who later went on to lead the investigation of transportation that resulted in its abolition in New South Wales in 1840, summed up the situation in an article he wrote for the *London Review* in 1835:

Great difference of opinion exists in this country [England] with regard to the condition of the convict in the colony: by some writers he is described as a miserable being; by others as a most prosperous and happy one; transportation is consequently considered by some as very severe, by others as a very slight, punishment. These apparent contradictions can easily be reconciled, and their origin can be traced to the following circumstances. Transportation is not, as it is generally supposed, the name for one species of punishment, but for a variety of species essentially distinct from each other, some of very slight, some of appalling magnitude. (31)

What everyone seems to have been able to agree on, though, was that “[t]he majority of transported convicts, when all that in strictness can be termed their punishment is at an end, remain in the colonies; and this is the only substantial advantage arising out of the present system” (Grey, 351). While some, like W. R. Greg, objected to “the plan of ‘swamping a new world with the refuse of the old one,’ as it was called” (578), all agreed that England greatly benefited from ridding itself of its troublemaking working-class citizens by sending them somewhere where they might be pioneers of empire but would not come back to bother England.<sup>12</sup>

Of course, other solutions to the problem of the convict, including the separate-and-silent prisons and penitentiaries, were debated and tried during the same period. Penitentiaries, which were first suggested as early as the 1750s by Henry Fielding and first built in the 1770s at the urging of prison reformer John Howard, gradually replaced transportation as the preferred solution for incarcerating convicted criminals.<sup>13</sup> As for Australia, there was much heated debate as to whether the purpose of transportation was to teach convicts to become independent, to be a labor force for the mostly middle-class settlers who had failed to get ahead financially in England, or to punish the convicts so severely that the prospect of transportation would deter crime at home. Not surprisingly, at various times and in different situations, it did all three of these things. From England’s perspective, though, the key thing about convicts and about Australia itself was that they were best forgotten; convicts were not to return and Australia did not spark much interest, except for the occasional joke, until it

became a focus of free emigration, which coincided with the inception of convict literature, especially the genre of the convict novel.<sup>14</sup>

#### NATIONAL IDENTITY AND SOCIAL CLASS

The amount of attention focused on national identity over the past four decades demonstrates that though it is a deeply divided and multiple term, with many different definitions, it is something that matters, that is part of people's sense of themselves at every level of society, but it is always felt in relation to their class position as well. Thus, what needs unpacking is this relation between national identity and social class and the way the two concepts work together in creating subjectivity, for transported convicts, people of various classes in England, and free immigrants in Australia. This can be accomplished only by ignoring the existence of the indigenous Australians, who were considered to be outside of any social system and incapable of ever belonging in one.

Both national identity and social class, of course, are unstable, shifting, and highly malleable terms that have been defined differently by a host of scholars in multiple disciplines. Benedict Anderson's still-famous 1983 definition of national identity as "imagined community" is especially useful for my purposes. Although Anderson's *Imagined Communities* was published many years ago, more-recent scholars, such as John Breuilly (introduction, 4), have pointed out that all succeeding scholarship on national identity follows from Anderson's book and from Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism*, published the same year. If, as Anderson's title announces, a nation is an "imagined community," then it makes sense to pay attention to imaginative literature as a source for and creator of the community that is imagined. Etienne Balibar, for instance, maintains that all social communities are imaginary because they are "based on the projection of individual existence into the weft of a collective narrative" (93) and Patrick Parrinder asserts that novels create this imagined community or collective narrative (14).

Other scholars from a variety of disciplines have used a bewildering number of related terms for national identity, sometimes loosely or antithetically defined.<sup>15</sup> *National identity* is often also used as a synonym for *nationalism*, a term and concept used by so many writers,



scholarly and not, that listing all or most of them would be almost impossible.<sup>16</sup> Although national identity is often conflated with nationalism, as I use them they are separate terms and concepts. Nationalism, according to many scholars, arises in support of the formation of a nation-state and is dated by scholars of English history and culture at different times ranging from the Early Modern period to the Revolutionary period of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century to the early twentieth-century rise of the welfare state to the aftermath of World War I.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, I am not trying to identify an origin for the English nation or English nationalism per se. Instead, I am examining one facet of one moment in what Allen Carey-Web describes as “national identity formation in motion” (12). Likewise, the identity that gradually developed in nineteenth-century Australia was only an embryo of what later developed into something more like full-blown nationalism.

What I discuss in several examples of transported convict literature, then, is not strictly defined nationalism, which tends to be associated with political movements. Instead, the kind of national identity that I examine is an integral part of a person’s identity or sense of self, an emotion or affect that has more to do with the individual and how he or she identifies himself or herself in terms of geography, culture, and social relations than in terms of the state, though attitudes toward the state are part of it.<sup>18</sup> Angelia Poon describes English national identity as “a model of national belonging and connection” wherein “Englishness appears less a conspicuously and self-consciously embraced political ideology, a list of political beliefs pertaining to nationhood, than a way of being and seeming that seeps and permeates the political, social and cultural domains” (5). Sociologist Norbert Elias’s term *we-identity* is useful in expressing this version of national identity, although Elias claims that the working classes in Europe and England did not have such an identity until the emergence of a nation-state, which he dates much later (205–6, 208).<sup>19</sup> For Julia M. Wright, “The people belong to the land and the land belongs to the people, a sense of belonging rooted in affection that is emotionally powerful, intrinsic and embedded in their daily lives through language. To separate people from the homeland or ask them to reframe their affection for it is to violate their sense of self” (164). This sense of “belonging rooted in affection” that is part of the “sense of self” is why I use the term

“national *identity*.” People who live in a country like England (plus many who do not) *feel* that they are English and assume that they share this feeling with a whole community of people (à la Benedict Anderson) that may be represented by the village or region in which they or their parents live (or have lived) but includes people around the world that they do not know personally but imagine as also being English. Such an identity, being imaginary, is of course varied and diverse and not, as Julian Wolfreys reminds us, “unified, absolute and written with the immanence of transcendence” (3) but it is rooted in language. It is in and through language that people develop a sense of themselves as individuals who have a certain place in the social order that is part of the nation with which they identify.

Anderson also maintains that “[f]rom the start, the nation was conceived in language, not in blood”; the particular form of language in which nations are conceived, he asserts, is print capitalism (*Imagined*, 145). For Anderson this means primarily newspapers and literary novels, but I argue that other texts such as broadsides and memoirs, as well as popular novels, were also important engines of print capitalism because they, too, could construct “a deep horizontal kinship” with imagined, rather than known, people (*Imagined*, 7). What is important about literature that prominently features the figure of the transported convict is that readers have to envision communities both in England and in Australia; the two identities build on and construct each other, and both are also imagined in terms of social class.

Many scholars have addressed the issue of social class in the nineteenth-century English novel. While most recognize that social class was involved in the formation of national identities, few have given the conjunction more than passing attention.<sup>20</sup> Scholars often speak of national identity as a part of the self along with class, gender, sexuality, and so forth.<sup>21</sup> Conversely, I argue that national identity is not separate from class; rather, class is *included* in national identity. Thus, what I demonstrate here is that imaginative literature of several types—including novels—helped people in both England and Australia to imagine themselves as part of a national community: not a fully fledged nation-state, not simply a national character, but a community of which social class relations were an essential component. The literature I have examined created this sense of community not just in the middle classes, where one might expect to find it, but in

the lower ones as well, much earlier than many scholars have thought. Even though it is called a “national identity,” this sense of place and community looks different from different class positions, and the literature shows how it does so. In some ways these texts seem to create a class solidarity that appears to be in conflict with national identity. In the convict broadsides, for instance, some of the working-class speakers of the ballads clearly do not trust national institutions such as the law and the penal system. Most of these ballads nonetheless work hard to try to balance English national identity with class solidarity—admittedly an uneasy balance wherein the speaker may definitely identify as English but also mistrust the government and people with authority. For most of the writers from the English middle classes, social class fit more easily into national identity; not unexpectedly, they imagined a peaceful, obedient working class that identified itself as part of a harmonious English social hierarchy, thus ensuring obedience and loyalty to middle-class people as superiors. Most white writers in or from Australia, in contrast—even middle-class ones—often imagine a more egalitarian society as part of their emerging national identity. Thus, while national identity is differently defined and constructed by different theorists and historians, it may also be defined differently by the people living it according to their social class standing.

The urgency of the intersection between social hierarchy and national identity arose in this period precisely because of an increase in class antagonism that occurred largely as a result of industrialization; imagining a national identity that included class as social hierarchy was an attempt to cover over class antagonism by making social harmony part of national pride for all classes in England.<sup>22</sup> Although I am concerned with the effects of class antagonism, I use the term *class* not in a strictly Marxist sense but rather as a description of status and social position. Granted, the economic and material circumstances are certainly relevant, as is the thinking of some Marxist scholars, especially Antonio Gramsci. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels theorized that people in nineteenth-century industrial societies like Britain would identify most strongly in a horizontal way, with others of their own class; Marx and Engels envisioned an international community of workers rather than a national one. However, an older model of class relations—a vertical or hierarchical model characterized by paternalism

and, at least in imagination, stretching back to feudalism—was still very much in place throughout the nineteenth century in England, especially outside the industrial cities.

Thus, the model of class relations I rely on contradicts the Marxist model, which most people in nineteenth-century England found alarming. As Immanuel Wallerstein has pointed out, the Marxist model of class relations cannot logically be part of a national identity: “Classes are really quite a different construct from peoples, as both Marx and Weber knew well. Classes are ‘objective’ categories, that is, analytic categories, statements about contradictions in an historical system, and not descriptive of social communities” (84). Of course, I am interested in social communities and thus use the term *class* in a different sense than the “analytic categories” Wallerstein identifies. What I mean by the term *social class* is the relations between different ranks of people within a social hierarchy, based more on the various types of capital that Pierre Bourdieu identifies than on the notion of economic capital as the primary determiner of class.<sup>23</sup> The writers I examine imagined a different model of social class relations than the Marxist one, in response to the same pressures from social inequality and class antagonisms that Marx and Engels tried to address.

Of course, the traditional hierarchical model of class relations that more-conservative writers believed would remedy England’s social problems had changed radically since its supposed origin in the medieval period. Yet many English writers, including several of those I discuss herein, represented this system as descending directly from the Anglo-Saxons, their putative racial ancestors. Krishan Kumar notes that nineteenth-century English society featured an “‘improving’ aristocracy and a dynamic entrepreneurial middle class” rather than “an oppressive feudal aristocracy,” but when some of the writers I discuss trace this “improving” aristocracy to their Anglo-Saxon ancestors, they tend to ignore the “oppressive” part (*Making*, 155). Patrick Brantlinger comments on the tendency of Victorians to categorize themselves as the “conquering, colonizing, but supposedly humane ‘Anglo-Saxons’” (*Taming*, 19).

It is because so many writers thought of the contemporary English social hierarchy in terms of feudal relations, especially those of the Anglo-Saxons (though some are willing to include the Normans), that I use the term *pseudofeudal* to describe the hierarchy of ordered ranks

with interlocking duties, loyalties, and responsibilities that supposedly characterized England's agricultural past, as Raymond Williams has famously described in *The Country and the City*.<sup>24</sup> This ordered and supposedly ancient hierarchy is the idealized notion of social class relations that was built into many English people's sense of national identity and that the figure of the transported convict worked to reinforce. In this imagined system, both those who owned the land and those who worked on it and contentedly, even proudly, filled their allotted place in the hierarchy were English: all subject to the same laws with the same basic rights of safety, independence, property, and justice, which were protected by the state, as well as connected to the geography and landmarks that characterized the island and its purportedly ancient culture. The convict disrupted this system and so had to be expelled from it.<sup>25</sup>

Although I am talking about imagined social communities, the state was necessarily part of the community during the period I discuss, if for no other reason than that it was the state that transported convicts. Scholars differ on what constitutes a state, a nation, and a nation-state. I use the term *state* here as the legal, penal, legislative, and bureaucratic systems in place in the first half of the nineteenth century. The bureaucratic systems, especially, grew larger and more influential later in the century, when many say the English nation-state and actual nationalism came into existence. Elias suggests that people, especially the lower classes, did not identify with the state until the rise of the Labour Party and the welfare state (206), but for my purposes, acknowledging that there was a British state in the first half of the nineteenth century is important; of course, those who still believed in the "timeless" pseudofeudal hierarchy saw the state's role primarily as supporting that system.<sup>26</sup> In this period, middle-class people generally assumed the state was working to protect what they did identify with (national sentiments together with traditional class relations), as did many in the working classes, though some of the latter were more ambivalent about it, as some of the broadsides indicate.

By the nineteenth century, of course, the agrarian economy in which this idealized social hierarchy was based was in tension with new urban and industrial economies in which the older pseudofeudal social model seemed no longer to fit (if it ever did). It is because, as Homi Bhabha reminds us, of the "metaphoricity of the peoples of

imagined communities” (202) that I use the prefix *pseudo* in front of the more common *feudalism*. The social model that I argue was a crucial part of national identity for many English people of all classes is a metaphor, not a historical reality. In fact, historians long ago abandoned the concept of feudalism to describe medieval relationships, let alone nineteenth-century ones, yet it still held power in many English people’s imaginations because of its suggestion of a connection with a long-distant past.

Certainly, a nineteenth-century revival of interest in feudalism idealized and romanticized the medieval age and its supposedly paternalistic relationships between the classes. This was done most famously by Benjamin Disraeli and the “Young England” party in the 1840s. The “belief in vertical personal relations, in mutual obligation and loyalty, in control and independence,” as historian Boyd Hilton puts it (49), was by no means unique to this short-lived and somewhat naïve movement but was a vital premise shared by most Tories, the High Church, and much of English society;<sup>27</sup> indeed, it was so widespread that it can be called part of the typical English person’s sense of national identity, even if any individual person did not actually advocate a return to a medieval past as the Young England movement essentially did.<sup>28</sup> Richard Faber claims that throughout the century Toryism had a “popular appeal” that was “not confined to the upper classes” and that some of Young England’s principles would have been influential in politics even if there had been no Young England movement (257).<sup>29</sup> Fundamentally, however, I would argue that the imagined community of the majority of English people is not a historical one but a literary one; most of the transported convict literature I discuss here, whether written by English or white Australian authors, associates a pseudofeudal model with Englishness, while a more socially mobile and egalitarian society is envisioned in the Australian colonies.

The prototypical national subject in the pseudofeudal hierarchy, as represented in most of the literature I look at, was the gentleman-citizen, along with his partner and counterpart, the gentlewoman or lady, the creator of the domesticity that guaranteed the respectability of both. The gentleman was distinguished not only by his ownership of property, or his economic capital, but also by his social and cultural capital—his breeding, his manners, his education, and his honor, as well as his relatives and social peers, as Bourdieu has theorized. As

Poon puts it, “Bourdieu explains how seemingly insignificant details about appropriate conduct, bearing, carriage, and taste have in effect great symbolic importance” (15). As many have noted, of course, the position of the gentleman in nineteenth-century England was expanding to include most middle-class men, many of whom were not technically involved in the agrarian paternalist relations I am calling pseudofeudal. Nonetheless, few, even among the newcomers to the category of gentleman and lady, would have contested this model, which gave them both power and status. Importantly, the existence of this system, of which the gentleman was the linchpin, required a large working class, not only to do the work that supported the genteel classes but also to define gentility by its difference from those who did not have it. To be content with their subordinate place in this system, however, the working classes needed to feel that they too belonged to the national community; the respectable working classes were, in this idealized version of a stable social system, characterized as sturdy, independent, home-loving, hard-working, and respectful of their superiors—and thus also recognized as quintessentially English.

Thus, like Disraeli and the Young England party, many English writers also tried to map the land-based model of pseudofeudalism onto the new urban industrial working class, imagining the workers as respectable English peasants turned to another kind of work.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, they show the new industry-based and professional middle classes adopting many of the values of the aristocratic gentleman and lady, attempting to acquire the social and cultural capital to match their new wealth, and thus stepping into the role of the benevolent patriarchy of pseudofeudalism through charity and, in some cases, political reform. Because of the imposition of a supposedly ancient model of social relations on a new kind of society, tensions inhered not only in actual social relationships but also in the popular imagination of the relations between classes. For those who adhered to the pseudofeudal model, such tensions could be represented by the “Chartists” and criminals who refused to accept their place in the ideal stable social hierarchy of reciprocal bonds and loyalties, whether by striking and rebelling or by violating the sacred laws of property, because they threatened the imagined harmonious hierarchy that ensured social stability and constituted an important tenet of England’s conception of itself.<sup>31</sup> Applying a model devised by Mary Poovey for

another context, one could say that the English subject counted on social harmony as part of what defined national identity. However, the urbanization and industrialization of England constituted a source of perceived danger to that identity, which thus created an often unarticulated anxiety. This anxiety in turn generated narratives that filled the role of Freudian protector by featuring convicts safely banished (Poovey, "Structure," 155).

In *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837*, historian Linda Colley convincingly argues that the Napoleonic Wars created a cross-class national identity like the one I am describing; my argument does not contradict hers but adds transported convict narratives as another factor that contributed to this process. Colley implies that the national identity she attributes to the working classes may not have continued after the wars were over (289–325), while convict narratives were written throughout the century and after. Also, contrary to Colley's argument about British national identity, my argument is about a specifically English or Anglo-Saxon identity. Given the fact that convicts were sent to Australia in large numbers from Scotland, Wales, and especially Ireland, some may wonder at my use of the term English, rather than British, national identity. Though many, especially in Scotland and Ireland, would disagree, Kumar claims that "English" was often used by those actually residing in England as a "short-hand expression for the whole of the United Kingdom and its inhabitants" (*Making*, 186), and Simon Gikandi argues that this is still the case (xi). Almost all of the literary materials I have been able to gather for this project, specifically those featuring the figure of the transported convict, were published in England, most of them in London.<sup>32</sup> In addition, aside from a few of the broadsides, these literary works are set almost exclusively in England or Australia.

There are other reasons for using the term "English identity" as well. Colley argues that the various wars with France in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries worked to unite the identities of Scotland, Wales, and Ireland as British by their mutual definition of the French as the Other, making Britishness hybrid because it contained the other members of the United Kingdom as well as the other colonies belonging to the British Empire. However, Englishness, contends Ian Baucom, could be identified with Britishness but could also define itself "*against* the British Empire" by "privileging the *English* soil,"



or “certain quintessentially English locales, as its authentic identity-determining locations” (12; emphasis in original). Virtually all the literary representations I examine similarly rely either on English soil or on the racial claim about the importance of Anglo-Saxon racial roots to identify Englishness as the island’s true national identity.<sup>33</sup> Thus, whether they imagined locale or racial purity as the standard for national identity, the English tended to acknowledge their Britishness but insist on Englishness as their primary identity. Therefore, while the name British is more technically accurate, it does not reflect the way the English generally thought of themselves or imagined their identity, at least as represented in the literary texts I examine, and it was the English reader that most of the texts about convicts implicitly addressed, with Australian readers, in a sense, reading “over their shoulders.”

The reason for my focus on English identity and not Irish identity—given that approximately a third of the historical convicts transported to Australia were Irish—is that the literary representations I examine, with the exception of some of the broadsides, do not generally distinguish between English and Irish convicts. When they do, they tend to represent the Irish as the most brutal and least reformable convicts, with only a few exceptions. Irish identity, given that island’s already colonized status and the distinct economic and political conditions there, was decidedly different and more complicated not only in Ireland but also in Australia, where the Irish often congregated together, when possible, to maintain their Irish identity separate from the other convicts or former convicts. There is considerable historiography on Irish convicts but not much literary discussion of Irish identity in Australia.<sup>34</sup> Like the authors of the texts I analyze, I focus on English identity in relation to Australia, though, as in the literary texts, Irish people may occasionally appear as yet one more marginalized group fighting for an identity.

#### THE TRANSPORTED CONVICT AS A GUARANTOR OF IDEAL ENGLISHNESS

Because dissidents and criminals demonstrated that social relations between the ranks of the social hierarchy were not always harmonious and accepted by all, they posed not only an actual threat to property and peace but also an ideological challenge to the association of what I

am calling pseudofeudal class relations with English national identity. The quickest and easiest way to meet both challenges without having to consider changes to the traditional social or economic systems was to get rid of these resistant members of society. Hence, in 1800 there were over two hundred capital crimes that, in theory, permanently disposed of such deviants. However, actually executing the majority of criminals and rebels was not consistent with England's notion of itself as a just, humane, and civilized society.<sup>35</sup> Transportation, or forced exile, to the American colonies (and a few other places) had been an alternative since the seventeenth century but had, of course, become unavailable to the English after the American colonies declared their independence in 1776.<sup>36</sup> Because transportation had the advantage of being a way to remove undesirables from England without killing them and even offering them a potential second chance at a new life, English penal officials were hesitant to abandon it. Thus, transportation to Australia replaced earlier methods of disposing of those who jeopardized its supposedly harmonious social relations. This worked to preserve both England's peace and its national conscience—as long as the convicts agreed to give up their Englishness and stay in Australia.

The English belief that transportation could reform criminals poses something of a challenge to Foucauldian readings of criminality and discipline that are relatively easy to map onto the penitentiaries and separate-and-silent prisons that coexisted with and later replaced transportation.<sup>37</sup> Writing on policing and prisons, Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee mentions that in the nineteenth century “the source of crime [needed to be] *inside* the individual”; if not, it “negated the possibility of reforming him though punishment” (93; emphasis in original). The penitentiaries and separate-and-silent prisons aimed to work on the criminal's psyche and turn him or her to penitence (hence the name *penitentiary*) and thus to abandoning crime and becoming law-abiding citizens. Michel Foucault says it succinctly: “[I]n penal justice, the prison transformed the punitive procedure into a penitentiary technique” whereby “the individual is carefully . . . fabricated in [the system], according to a whole technique of forces and bodies” (*Discipline*, 298, 217).<sup>38</sup> Additionally, Jeremy Tambling explains that in the Foucauldian system “a personality type is thus created; the change Foucault marks is towards the creation of an entity: a mind to be characterized in certain ways” (*Dickens, Violence, and the Modern State*,

19). Transportation removed the criminals from the environment that motivated their crimes—rural poverty, industrial conditions, or the criminal underworld—and gave them a chance to reform by providing opportunities to support themselves and succeed in a lawful manner once they finished their sentences or even before. Thus, in a subtle way, transportation contested the pseudofeudal social system's success at managing social problems by instead locating the motivation to commit crime in the social system and not in the individual.

One of the problems with the system of transportation as a method for eliminating dissidents was that, in most cases, transported convicts did not die and thus could return again (legally or not) to challenge England's notion of social stability and national security by going back to the environments that led them to commit crimes in the first place. Thus, it was important for the convicts to *want* to stay in Australia, that is, to develop a new identity as Australian rather than English. While exiling convicts to a settler colony could be a way to reinforce or even inspire an English identity,<sup>39</sup> at the same time, an identity that was new and different from England's began gradually to develop over the course of the 113 years between the arrival of the First Fleet in Australia in 1788 and the establishment of the Australian Federation in 1901, when Australia officially gained its own national status and had an easily recognizable nationalist movement.<sup>40</sup> However, a potential Australian identity began to appear quite early in the period, well before the Australian Federation and official independence from England at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>41</sup> In fact, as early as the arrival of the First Fleet carrying British convicts, Governor Phillip imagined an Australian nation with its own national identity (qtd. in Hughes, *Fatal*, 68).

#### IMAGINING AN AUSTRALIAN IDENTITY

The literary texts about Australian convicts that I discuss in this book worked not only to reinforce an English identity, then, but also to create an Australian national identity that consisted of national feelings—though not yet nationalism as most scholars describe it. Not surprisingly, the first literary works featuring transported convicts mostly functioned to bolster English, not Australian, identity; many of the convict characters in those works do return to England, usually

not with much success (except in the broadsides). What I also trace here, though, is the (uneven) growth of an affective Australian national identity in convict literature as it arose at least by the middle part of the century. Works considered authentically Australian, though some were written by English immigrants and others by expatriate Australians, were a necessary precursor to the more strictly defined nationalist works that arose in the last decade of the century as an accompaniment to aspirations for an actual nation separate from England.<sup>42</sup>

This evolving Australian identity, like England's, included notions of social class, but in a somewhat different way. Because colonial Australia was, especially at first, mostly a land of people who had failed, in one way or another, in England, class status there was somewhat more fluid, with social mobility common and English status—particularly the lack (or loss) of it—often disguised or deemphasized. For one thing, because such a large percentage of the population were or had been convicts, they and their children had to be assimilated there. As in England, there were conflicts and negotiations between different social groups, especially between former convicts and settlers who had come free to the colonies, with different models of Australianness arising and competing. On one hand, the rough, independent, and resourceful bushman became a symbol for Australianness among many, especially the former convicts and the laboring classes. On the other hand, the large-scale cattle and sheep station owners tried to reinvent themselves as an Australian pseudofeudal gentry with convicts as their serfs.<sup>43</sup> Once the convicts' sentences expired, however, they did not often stay with their masters unless they were paid a good wage, so this model was not overly successful in the long term, especially at defining the "squatters" as the national subject. The majority of the population of Australia lived in the cities along the east coast of the continent, and this urban society exercised the most power both economically and politically; significantly, it included both former convicts and free settlers, not necessarily in the same class configurations one might expect based on their former positions in England.<sup>44</sup>

One apparent contradiction between the literary history and the historiography of nineteenth-century Australia is that most of the convict literature, especially the novels, did not see print until convict transportation had already been ended or was about to be abolished. Because the whole point of settling Australia in the first place was to

get rid of convicts and not hear from them again, there seems to have been not much interest among the British public in reading about these mostly working-class banished people, except among the lowest classes, until free emigration became more common; this came to a head with the advent of the Australian gold rush in 1851. The broadsides, a couple of convict autobiographies, and a few novels were published before that, but for the most part, Australia in English literature before the 1850s appeared as a joke about “Botany Bay.” In the 1850s, however, both journalism and novels about and even set in Australia began to emerge with more regularity. Many of these works featured transported convicts, either freed or still under sentence. By that time, many readers would have been more interested in Australia because they were more likely to have family, friends, or acquaintances who had emigrated or were considering it. Such readers needed reassurance that the Australian colonies were no longer only depots for English felons but desirable places to settle.<sup>45</sup> The convicts needed to be portrayed as having died, returned to England, or reformed into respectable or even rich prospective neighbors and citizens for Australia to seem like an appealing place for emigrants to resettle.<sup>46</sup>

Of course, some of the convict narratives published after 1850 featured convicts, like Abel Magwitch, who still felt themselves to be English and whose greatest desire was to return to their native country.<sup>47</sup> However, other material about transported convicts portrayed them as finding a home in Australia. By at least the 1840s, fictional convicts, as well as free settlers, were taking pride in Australia as their homeland. Thus, the novels and other types of writing that featured Australian convicts had two functions: they helped reinforce a notion of Englishness by its difference from convict-ridden Australia, but they also began to construct a positive sense of Australianness, including its former convicts, as distinct from England and the English. This feeling of Australianness was only embryonic at first; even many children born in Australia who had never been to England referred to the mother country as “home.” Nonetheless, the idea that Australia could be its own homeplace did gradually take root, and popular novels and other narratives about transported convicts played a role in this change. In fact, narratives written and published in England held out the promise of a new Australian identity before this was actively imagined in Australia; initially it was England that most needed this new

identity for its unwanted subjects. Yet the books published in England were also read in Australia, and Australians, too, began to be proud of their own identity.

Although historically the transported convicts were overwhelmingly male, outnumbering women six to one, in the literature the issue of gender was crucial in forming both English and Australian national identities that included social class as a key component. Gender is relevant to this project in several ways. One is that although women were relatively few in number historically, there are several important literary representations of transported female convicts. Like their male counterparts, they faced the threat of losing their Englishness and their place in the English class system when they were exiled to Australia. However, since female convicts were usually portrayed as fallen sexually, their place in the English social system was even more complicated than for male convicts, though Australian society was somewhat more forgiving, especially for working-class women. Another way that gender is important both historically and literarily is that women are crucial for creating families, which were seen by authorities from the very early days to be the surest way to reform male convicts. In fact, convict authorities pleaded with the English government to send more women convicts. Further, because most female convicts were assigned as servants once they reached Australia, they are usually represented in the context of the domestic sphere of the home, defining the femininity and social status of their mistresses and masters—sometimes themselves former convicts. Domesticity was an important marker of social status for male convicts as well, and their treatment of women and the men's desire—or lack of it—for a properly domestic home was a measure of their fitness for return to England or for social mobility in Australia.

Many other literary critics who have written about English national identity have addressed the ways that the indigenous peoples of the various colonies constituted an Other against which the English could define themselves.<sup>48</sup> This was of course particularly true in Australia, where the indigenous people arguably suffered even more at the hands of English conquerors than they did in many of the other colonies; the Aboriginal people in what is now called Tasmania, for example, were almost exterminated in the Black War of the late 1820s and early 1830s.<sup>49</sup> The English tended to view the Australian indigenous

people as the most backward and least civilizable of all their subject peoples.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps because of this, in most of the nineteenth-century literature about Australia, the Aborigines are not represented as particularly threatening; even more than in other settler colonies, claims David Pearson, they were simply invisible (31). Rather, the convicts are more often portrayed as the alarming Other of the respectable English. The existence of two major but distinctly different oppressed groups, one of them technically British, makes Australia and literature about it unique in imperial and colonial studies (America, of course, had both Native Americans and African slaves, but neither of these were British, as the convicts were).

While there were a few attempts to equate the convicts and the indigenous Australians, some English administrators believed that even England's criminal rejects were civilized enough to model European behavior and attitudes toward the "savage" Aborigines. In the twenty-first century, the historically prior and continuing existence of the Australian indigenous people is a fact that cannot be ignored, but overt racism virtually erased their existence in many of the nineteenth-century texts I examine. Despite the fact that many of these texts do not mention the indigenous people, the presence of the Aborigines underlies and informs all of them and points to settler guilt about the conquest and slaughter—amounting to genocide in places like Tasmania—of the original inhabitants of the land. Relations between Aborigines and convicts varied in different places and at different times, of course. There are numerous stories of convicts "going native" but an equal or greater number of accounts of convict hostility toward the indigenous Australians. Some of this hostility may be traced to convict anxiety about being likened to the native people. For instance, the convicts were frequently characterized as "savages," like the Aborigines, and were often even represented in racial terms, with a convict "stain" or "taint" that was supposedly ineradicable. This extension of racism to convicts, alongside the indigenous people, erased Englishness as a possible identity for both of them, but it still left the convicts with the option of adopting a new national identity, even if at first this was only vaguely imagined. Aborigines, in contrast, according to Bruce Buchan, were not considered as potential citizens of an Australian nation nor as having any sovereignty with which to negotiate self-determination until at least the late twentieth century.<sup>51</sup>

The figure of the convict transported to Australia was, as one might expect, used in multiple ways in literary representations of various types, just as there were multiple and competing racial, gender, class, and national identities among the diverse groups of settlers who went there in the nineteenth century. This figure, of course, was obviously only one of many representations involved in imagining a national community in England or Australia. In most accounts, the national community imagined for England was led by a British gentleman who could be trusted to be honorable and humane. Most English people believed that their society was held together by the interlocking bonds of a paternalist pseudofeudal class hierarchy. The convict banished to Australia could be used to represent and solve challenges to this system by creating a new identity within a different class system elsewhere for those who threatened the imaginary stable national community in England. This system removed the threatening figure from England and resituated it in a new environment where what was a problem in England could become a productive force that was still part of Britain but was not English. A problem arose, however, when Australia became a destination for free English settlers who did not want to be defined as deviant or as working class but instead wanted to create an Australian identity free of the taint of “convictism,” which many commentators called it, as its defining quality.<sup>52</sup> This led eventually to the abolition of transportation, which began to happen in the late 1830s and was finally accomplished in 1868. Even so, the cultural work accomplished by the figure of the transported convict did not end with the cessation of criminal transportation. Certainly transportation was still a vital issue in Australia, where living convicts and convict descendants were a reality that had to be incorporated into its emerging we-identity. But English and Anglo-Australian writers continued to write convict literature for English audiences that represented the creation of Australian identity as a solution to British social problems well after the historical practice of enforced exile had been abandoned in the major settlements of the Australian colonies. Doing so enabled readers in England to continue to imagine England as free of poverty, dissent, and crime, even though by the 1830s there were more voluntary emigrants arriving in Australia than forced ones. In other words, voluntary transportation of problematic English people still served a similar function to forced transportation, and the two could be represented in similar terms in fiction.



## THE LITERARY FIGURE OF THE CONVICT IN AUSTRALIA

I mention Dickens's *Great Expectations*, the most famous nineteenth-century representation of the figure of the transported convict, at the beginning of this introduction, and I focus on it in more detail in the next chapter. This novel is, however, by no means the first or the last portrayal of this figure. Many other cultural productions, including broadsides, poetry, memoirs, letters, travel narratives, journalism, and popular novels, featured convicts banished to Australia. Most of these works struggle with the interrelated issues of class and national identity.<sup>53</sup> The chapters that follow explore the questions I have outlined here in some of these cultural texts, mostly produced in England, which was the center of the publishing industry, but shipped to Australia for Australian readers as well. Texts written in Australia usually appeared only in serial form in local journals or newspapers until quite late in the century, when novels began to be published there more regularly.<sup>54</sup> As in the history of nineteenth-century Australia, representations of the convict in popular culture there varied at different times and in different places. Despite such variety, a historical narrative does gradually arise when looking at these texts, one in which Englishness as the predominant and desired national identity is gradually supplanted by a new and separate identity for Australians in both English- and Australian-produced texts.<sup>55</sup> By midcentury at least, around the time that England began to grant self-government to the Australian colonies, fictional narratives began to imagine Australianness not as a colonial identity but as a national one.<sup>56</sup> This was a crucial step in preparing the way for an actual independent Australian state some fifty years later, though one that would still be closely allied with Britain. Beyond the period that I discuss in this project, from 1788 to 1881, the figure of the convict became less prominent in Australian literature until the late twentieth century; yet the central issue of the relation of social class to national identity remained as Australia was officially founded and nationalism imagined it as a less socially stratified society than England.

While the figure of the transported convict and how he or she is represented in the various texts I examine is my primary focus, I am also concerned with the forms in which this figure was presented. Many of the narratives I explore are novels with familiar novelistic conventions. The earliest printed representations of transported convicts, however,

took other forms, including broadsides and autobiography or memoir. These forms accomplished cultural work in terms of constituting national identity through their assumptions about or representations of social class relations. Even the novels about transported convicts used generic conventions in particular and distinctive ways such that a new genre—or at least a subgenre—of convict novels arose in midcentury England. These novels assimilate existing novelistic conventions with new ones unique to this genre or subtype, and these new conventions convey meanings that further emphasize the interrelation of social class with national identity. Although a large body of unpublished convict narratives exists, mostly located in Australia, I focus on those that saw print and thus are arguably a part of print capitalism, because I am interested more in the cultural work these texts accomplished than I am in documenting what the convict experience was like for those who experienced it.<sup>57</sup> Thus, the literary form in which transported convicts appeared is a central focus of several of the chapters that follow.

Several notable scholars have addressed Australian convict literature, especially the novel. Coral Lansbury's *Arcady in Australia: The Evocation of Australia in Nineteenth-Century English Literature* was published in 1970 but is still relevant and often quoted. Lansbury shows how representations of Australia in English literature, including many works from or about the convict period, changed across the course of the century depending on the historical and cultural context, though her focus is not primarily on convicts. A. W. Baker's *Death Is a Good Solution: The Convict Experience in Early Australia* (1984) treats convict literature specifically. The charts in his appendixes are especially useful because he carefully lists the plot conventions associated with convict narratives, both autobiographical and fictional. Noted Australian scholar Laurie Hergenhan's *Unnatural Lives: Studies in Australian Convict Fiction* (1983) was the first book-length critical study of the convict novel. It considers in some depth a few of the major nineteenth-century convict novels, as well as several twentieth-century ones, although Hergenhan does not consider the cultural work these novels helped accomplish, especially in terms of class and national identity. A chapter (109–33) in Patrick Brantlinger's *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914* (1988) was the first major consideration of Australian convict literature in what could be called

a postcolonial context, which Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra also do in their 1990 *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind*. These important books have provided the building blocks for my more-extensive study of published transported convict literature in a transglobal framework.

Since the 1970s, numerous articles dealing with individual novels or other works featuring transported Australian convicts have been published by Australian critics, especially on the most famous nineteenth-century convict novel, Marcus Clarke's *His Natural Life*, as well as Henry Kingsley's *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn*. A good selection of Australian literary criticism, edited by Delys Bird, Robert Dixon, and Christopher Lee, appeared in 2001, though its focus is not so much on individual novels, especially convict novels. Most histories of Australian literature have a section or two on nineteenth-century novels about or written in Australia, though only a few focus on convict novels.<sup>58</sup> Especially interesting is the work of scholars such as those in Lucy Frost and Hamish Maxwell-Stuart's edited collection *Chain Letters* (2001) and Ian Duffield and James Bradley's *Representing Convicts* (1997). Both volumes have careful examinations of less traditional genres, including love tokens, tattoos, convict indents, and prison interviews. These studies, however, seek primarily to find authentic convict voices and to discover how Australia's convict heritage has shaped contemporary Australian society. In this project, in contrast, I am looking not for authenticity or texts that record the actuality of convict lives but rather at how literary representations of transported felons worked to shape social relations and national identity in both Australia and England.



The organization of this book perhaps requires a little explanation. Because I discuss both canonical and little-known literary works, I have not followed a strict chronological pattern in examining them. In general, both in the order of the chapters in the book and within the chapters themselves, I begin with the most canonical work (if there is one) or with an explanation of the work of a genre, followed by a consideration of less well-known texts that add to or differ from it, in basically chronological order. Where I vary from this sequence,

I explain why. Thus, I begin the numbered chapters with the most canonical convict figure in nineteenth-century literature, Abel Magwitch from *Great Expectations*, read in conjunction with Dickens's *Household Words*. After that, I return to working-class broadsides that were printed from early to midcentury, working from there in roughly chronological order until the early 1880s, just before the political pre-Federation movement really began and after convict transportation to Australia had completely ended.

In *Great Expectations*, as well as a few of his other novels, Dickens deploys what had become a common nineteenth-century literary device of transporting temporarily unneeded characters to the "green room" of Australia (Litvack, I:26). I argue that the transported convict figure in Dickens's writings did important ideological work and that he sets up in his novels and his midcentury journalism many of the issues discussed in this book. *Great Expectations* is something of an anachronism (as are most of the other convict novels) because it was published in 1861, at least a decade after transportation to the east coast of Australia and to Tasmania had been abolished. *Great Expectations* and some of his other novels portray transported convicts as returning to England, refusing therefore to be repressed and do the cultural work expected of them by the practice of exiling malcontents to the Antipodes. Dickens's journalism, published in *Household Words* in the 1850s, calls attention to this anachronism by following many convicts to Australia and showing how they are integrated into Australian society and identity. With its pro-emigration stance, the journal generally works to show that Australia is no longer just a depot for convicts but is now a safe and desirable place for the working classes, and others who have failed to thrive in England, to prosper. Chapter 1, then, examines the way that Dickens's novels imagine the convict as a sympathetic but discordant emblem of England's social problems whom the legal system tries to banish but who almost always returns, refusing to be forgotten. While Dickens does not often directly represent the rural countryside with its Anglo-Saxon pseudo-feudal hierarchy, he nonetheless assumes a traditional paternal model for class relations, frequently applied to an urban environment. He also addresses the issue of social mobility, especially in the character of Pip in *Great Expectations*, and how the changing notion of what constitutes the English gentleman is imbricated with the problem of

the nonconforming members of the working class that transportation hoped to, but ultimately could not, rid the nation of, thus putting the harmonious social hierarchy of English national identity into question. The journalism, recognizing that transportation is no longer an option, attempts to solve the same social problems caused by industrialization and urbanization by encouraging voluntary transportation—assisting emigrants before their problems lead to felonies rather than after. Thus, the novels use transported convicts to reinforce English identity, while the journalism helps readers imagine an Australian identity. This distinction mirrors the historical trajectory of the works I examine in the succeeding chapters.

In the second chapter, I take up what many would consider a nonliterary genre, the popular broadside marketed primarily to working-class people in Britain. I use a selection of the broadsides that specifically address transportation to Australia to explain how they allowed the working classes to imagine themselves as part of a more-inclusive English national identity. The broadsides, which usually included not only text but also illustrations and tunes, reached both those who could read and those who were illiterate, thus extending the reach of the imagined community beyond that which Benedict Anderson describes. Broadside that feature convicts transported to Australia simultaneously call up Australia and erase it, failing to envision it as an alternative identity but instead enabling the working-class “readers” to perceive themselves as part of the English nation. The form, as well as the contents, of the broadsides contributed in an essential way to this ideological project. The amalgamation of earlier broadsides about transportation to America with those about Australia also served to muddy the working classes’ imagination of Australia as a place or transportation as a punishment, instead reinforcing the desirability of an English national identity even if the readers themselves played a subordinate role in the social hierarchy.

In the third chapter, “Writing Convicts and Hybrid Genres,” I focus on the earliest published memoir written by a convict while under sentence, along with two autobiographical novels, Henry Savery’s *Quintus Servinton* (1830) and James Tucker’s *Ralph Rashleigh* (written around 1845 but not published until 1920), also both written by actual convicts. Although historically all three ended their lives in Australia, two of them certainly and possibly all three still convicts

under sentence, they used their literary productions to maintain their difference from other, working-class convicts and to maintain their English identity. Employing conventions of autobiography, all three of these convict writers used their texts to establish themselves as men who, though they made mistakes, were still unquestionably not only English but gentlemen. They did this by capitalizing on and displaying the cultural capital of knowing the literary conventions that enabled them to write books for publication, as well as by stressing the ideal of domesticity that characterizes the English middle-class subject.

Chapter 4 defines the new genre of the transported convict novel, placing its form and the cultural work it accomplishes in relation to other forms such as travel narratives and ethnography. The chapter examines three novels by popular English novelists: G. P. R. James's *The Convict: A Tale* (1847), Richard Cobbold's *Margaret Catchpole* (1845), and Charles Reade's *It Is Never Too Late to Mend* (1856), all with transported convicts as protagonists. The discussion shows how these novels portray an idealized pseudofeudal social class hierarchy as the stable base of an English national identity that is threatened by nonconforming working-class convicts. Whether portrayed as dissidents or common criminals, these convicts need to be expelled to maintain a stable hierarchy back home in England. At the same time, each of these novels portrays working-class convicts reforming in Australia and consciously taking on a new Australian identity—one that involves a measure of social mobility. Thus, this chapter shows that those who called themselves gentry clung to their English national identity, while those who were convicts or tainted with convictism had to accept their Australian identity.

In chapter 5, "Convict Servants and Genteel Mistresses in Women's Convict Fiction," I take up the role of female convicts, who were almost always assigned to domestic service in Australia, in forming a new identity for a potential new Australian nation. These female convicts appear in philanthropic reform narratives, tales for servants, and novels, all by middle-class female authors, who had their own agendas for writing about their criminal sisters. The works I discuss in this chapter include George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859); Mary Vidal's short story, "The Convict Laundress" (1852); Caroline Leakey's *The Broad Arrow* (1859); and Eliza Winstanley's *For Her Natural Life* (1876). Although the female convict is usually portrayed by these English

women writers as both sympathetic and reformable, her main function is to serve as the sign of her Australian mistress's social position as part of the dominant class in a new social hierarchy. As in most mainstream English novels, the aberrant convict women usually die, though at least one minor female convict character is allowed to marry, assist in forming a successful business, and become part of this potential new and different nation. The female authors, taking on the role of the ethnographer exploring female convict life, are enabled not only to join but also to take a much more active role in political and social debates about Australia and the convict system through their writing.

Chapter 6, which looks at three very different post-transportation novels, focuses not on English identity but on the formation of a permanent Australian identity for their characters by either repressing or accepting former convicts. These novels can be characterized as Australian because two of them were written and published by authors born in or permanent residents of the colonies, and the third was based on personal experience of Australia and self-consciously written to a permanent Australian immigrant. All of them are about transportation but were written after all forms of transportation to Australia had ended, and all achieved popular success in both England and Australia. One of these is the most famous nineteenth-century Australian novel, Marcus Clarke's *His Natural Life* (1870–72; 1874). It includes fictionalized versions of many incidents in Australian convict history, as well as almost all the conventions of the convict novel, to locate the convicts securely in the past, leaving the future for a nonconvict Australian identity. Another important nineteenth-century Australian novel, Rosa Praed's *Policy and Passion* (1881), represents the child of a former transported convict who literally has to lay to rest the convict past to create an Australian future in which she can achieve social mobility and participate as a respectable member of its new social hierarchy. The third, a novella by Anthony Trollope, *Harry Heathcote of Gangoil* (1874), teaches a young English gentleman-pastoralist that he must accept the presence of former convicts and treat them with a modicum of respect if he is to succeed in Australia. It is significant that of these later nineteenth-century convict novels, only the one by an Englishman can imagine integrating the acknowledged convict into an Australian identity.

What ties together all these different texts—beyond the figure of the transported convict—is the way that figure brings to the fore the

centrality of assumptions about social class to both English and Australian national identities, both of which were contested and changing as a result of the imperial mission of Great Britain, as well as of industrial capitalism in the metropole. Because Australia was a settler colony, in some ways unique because of the large population of transported convicts, focusing on its nineteenth-century past reveals some of the contradictions inherent in that imperial project. Australia, like all the other British colonies, was represented both as fundamentally Other and as reproducing English notions and assumptions. That Australia began as a place designed for the rejected members of the working classes, however, complicated its relation to England and Englishness, foregrounding issues of class in ways that were almost as problematic as the more well-known problem of British subjection of the indigenous people. A key difference is that the convicts, despite being expelled, were still in some way English; thus they—or at least their children—could be reincorporated into a Commonwealth country, though not into England itself. As Australians, the convicts took their places in a new and different classed society, no longer filling the role of the rejected English residue.