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Poets on the Air: Authorial Presence and National Identity in ABC Radio National's *Poetica*

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Abstract

This thesis examines the adaptation of contemporary Australian lyric poetry by ABC Radio National's *Poetica*, with a focus on the extent to which institutional models of national identity inflected the program's aesthetic choices. *Poetica* was a pre-recorded program broadcast weekly on ABC RN from 1997 to 2014. It featured readings of poetry—in the voice of the poet or an actor—embedded in rich soundscapes and framing interviews. The program worked to a quota of 60% contemporary Australian poetry and 40% drawn from other sources from around the world. One of its aims was to make Australian poetry accessible to a broad national audience, and it operated under the ABC Charter of 1983, which stipulates that the ABC's programs should "contribute to a sense of national identity." National identity representation has long been a focus in scholarship on Australian arts such as poetry, novels, film and TV—including adaptations across media. This thesis undertakes such research on radio poetry, which is an aesthetically complex form of adaptation that has been comparatively less studied.

Lyric poetry—the form of poetry most often featured on *Poetica*—is known for its intimate evocations of the author's presence, as embodied in the voice of the poem. Due to this aesthetic of the lyric, the author is at the core of radio adaptations of lyric poetry, more so than in adaptations of novels into film, or of plays into radio drama. As I show, *Poetica* adapted the authorial presences of Australian lyric poetry into radio sound, and also into the national identity ethos of the ABC. I demonstrate this through a theoretically-informed close reading of four *Poetica* episodes on Australian poets (this theoretical framework is interdisciplinary, and allows sensitivity to each of the different layers—poetics, radio aesthetics, and institutional ethos—operating within *Poetica*). The case study episodes are "Ouyang Yu" (1997) on the Chinese-Australian poet Ouyang Yu, "John Forbes: A Layered Event" (1999) on the Australian poet John Forbes, "Vicki's Voice – Remembering Vicki Viidikas" (2005) on the Australian poet Vicki Viidikas, and "Little Bit Long Time" (2010) on the Indigenous Australian poet Ali Cobby Eckermann. Through close readings of these episodes, I show that *Poetica*'s manner of adaptation differed, depending not just on the themes of the source poetry, but also on the poet's social politics, their belonging or not belonging to accepted notions of Australianness, and narratives of national identity circulating in the lead up to each broadcast.

The thesis seeks to deepen our understanding of the aesthetic complexity of radio poetry programs. The framework I develop in the thesis can also be applied to the many poetry podcasts that have sprung up in Australia in recent years, at a time when public service broadcasting models are in

flux, and as radio listening moves more and more online. The thesis sheds light on the complex nature of aesthetic adaptation in institutionally-situated radio poetry programs. It shows how institutional policy may shape artistic representations given to the public, even when a program existing within such a structure is not overtly political nor invested, on a day-to-day basis, in narratives of national identity.

Declaration by author

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

I have clearly stated the contribution of others to my thesis as a whole, including statistical assistance, survey design, data analysis, significant technical procedures, professional editorial advice, and any other original research work used or reported in my thesis. The content of my thesis is the result of work I have carried out since the commencement of my research higher degree candidature and does not include a substantial part of work that has been submitted to qualify for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution. I have clearly stated which parts of my thesis, if any, have been submitted to qualify for another award.

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Publications during candidature

Peer-reviewed papers

Varatharajan, Prithvi. "John Forbes, the Australian Poet: Representations of National Identity in *A Layered Event* on ABC Radio National." *Adaptation*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2016, pp. 1-11.

Book chapters

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Part of this article has been incorporated into the close reading of the *Poetica* episode "John Forbes: A Layered Event" in Chapter 6. I am the sole author of the article.

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Contributions by others to the thesis

No contributions by others.

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Australian poetry, radio, adaptation, *Poetica*, John Forbes, Vicki Viidikas, Ouyang Yu, Ali Cobby Eckermann, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Australian national characteristics.

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Table of Contents

List of abbreviations used in the thesis

ABA. Australian Bicentennial Authority

ABC. Australian Broadcasting Corporation

LNP. Liberal National Party

NAC. National Advisory Council, or ABC Advisory Council

NAIDOC. National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee

PSB. Public Service Broadcasting

RN. ABC Radio National

SBS. Special Broadcasting Service

1. Introduction

1.1 The adaptation of the lyric voice in *Poetica*

Imagine you are in a car, driving on a Saturday afternoon, and you turn on the radio. You set it to the AM band and browse various local stations, tuning through intermittent static, before settling on ABC Radio National. You are familiar with the broad style of Radio National—being an occasional listener—but not with all its individual programs. You are expecting to hear an announcer reading the news, or music, or a documentary-style program, or simply voices in conversation about current affairs, offering detailed analyses on a topic. But on this occasion you hear a voice speaking in a different kind of language. Your attention is arrested by the artfulness of the speech, which deviates from usual conversational and journalistic syntax. You are also captivated by the unusual aesthetic composition of this program: it features polished vocal performances of poetry, embedded in music, sound effects, and framing commentary. You feel transfixed not just by the performed words, bringing someone else's thought-pictures to you, but also by the soundtrack that accompanies the words—all of which takes you to another landscape besides the one outside your windscreen.

This would have been the experience of some listeners tuning into *Poetica*, ABC Radio National's weekly poetry program that was broadcast on Saturday afternoons at 3.05 pm between 1997 and 2014[1]. Others would have listened through kitchen radios while pottering around the house, or through earbuds while commuting, but in each case—more so for the incidental rather than the intentional and regular listener of *Poetica*—the form of the program would have stood out as aesthetically unusual compared to most other popular radio forms such as news, music, and talk-back. In fact, feedback to *Poetica* episodes points to listeners' appreciation of the sonically unusual character of the program; listeners often expressed delight at hearing poetry adapted[2] as it was on *Poetica*. Here is one such response, as recounted by the Australian poet and broadcaster who founded *Poetica*, Michael Ladd:

> … a wheat farmer in Western Australia … wrote to say that he was listening to a broadcast of the poems of [the modern Turkish poet] Nazim Hikmet while harvesting. He liked the poems so much that he stopped work in the middle of the field to listen in silence. This image intrigues me: the farmer listening in a field of wheat, the poems and their

[1] The program also had a repeat broadcast on Wednesday evenings at 9.05 pm; this repeat timeslot was moved to Thursday evenings at 9.05 pm in the last two years of its operation.

[2] In the third chapter I define what I mean by "adapt" and "adaptation," with reference to Linda Hutcheon's *Theory of Adaptation* (2006). Here I am using it, in brief, to mean the creative rendering of one medium (print poetry) in another (radio).

> performance heard by chance at an extreme distance from their source, via a portable transistor. The poetry stopping the machine. Who says poetry makes nothing happen? ("Radio" 227)

Here the technology of radio, which allows a listener to hear an artful program of poetry thousands of kilometres away from its broadcast origin, is highlighted. The passage also alludes to aesthetic qualities of the poems and of the program that captivated this particular listener, and that are a point of focus in this thesis.

This thesis is concerned with what *Poetica* added to poetry by producing it for an Australian radio audience. For the farmer in the above passage is not just captivated by a singular voice reading poetry, but one that has had other voices folded into it. *Poetica* usually drew on contemporary lyric poetry in print, which is notable for the intimacy of its rhetorical voice—for the highly personal way in which it represents the subjectivity of the poet. Such a voice is redolent with the author's presence, and its intimate evocation of authorial presence was arguably central to *Poetica*'s success and popularity[3]. In *Poetica,* this lyric voice was layered into performers' readings (into their actual, mediatised voices), into a radio soundscape, and into the institutional ethos of the ABC—with each layer inflecting the other. It is the objective of this thesis to understand how these different layers shaped the lyric voice in *Poetica*.

My starting point in the thesis is with authorial presence in lyric poetry, which is embodied in the voice of the poem**.** Readers experience authorial presence when they feel a sense of connection to the poet through the poem. Indeed, contemporary lyric poetry is characterised by its seemingly embodied and sonorous utterances, as though the poet were actually there in the poem, speaking directly to the reader. While this is an effect crafted by the language of the poem, as I explore in the next chapter, the voice of the lyric imbues the poem with a heightened sense of personality. Listeners responded effusively to these qualities of lyricism in radio, as attested by online feedback to particular, intensely lyrical episodes of *Poetica*[4] (see Appendix A). *Poetica*'s preference for lyric poetry was also apt given its working medium. For radio, like lyric poetry, is known for its intimacy of presence—in both cases this intimacy is grounded in voice. As John Potts notes:

> Radio is often referred to as the warm medium, the intimate medium; this characteristic of radio is due in large part to its transmission of the voice. With no image to distract the

[3] *Poetica* had 90,000 listeners at its peak per Saturday afternoon broadcast, and averaged around 60,000 listeners, which is far greater than the sales of an individual poetry book in Australia—see Lea.

[4] Listeners responded with enthusiasm and in great numbers to certain episodes: for instance, "Little Bit Long Time" on Ali Cobby Eckermann (2010); "Gull in a Green Storm," a two-part feature on the twentieth century Australian lyric poet Francis Webb (2011); and "One Million Flights," on the poetry of the Iranian-Australian refugee Roshanak Amrein (2011). See Appendix A for listeners' comments on these episodes.

> listener, the announcer's voice acquires a deeper dimension than is present in the other media. Voices on radio comfort the listener, they soothe, they seduce. Bonds of intimacy and loyalty are formed between announcer and listener. (100)

Poetica did more than simply feature voices reading poetry, however. It was aesthetically unusual in relation to other English-language radio poetry programs around the world, which are often stark, and feature only the poet reading, with minimal other sound[5]. *Poetica* was pre-recorded, and in contrast to its peers, featured edited recordings of both poets' and actors' voices reading poems in a studio (under direction from a producer), with framing commentary from those knowledgeable about the poet's work and life. This was all situated in music and sound effects that were intended to evoke a sense of mood and place. The combination of these aesthetic qualities places *Poetica* within the genre of radio features. As Mia Lindgren and Siobhan McHugh note:

> Long-form radio stories are described as features or documentaries. These two forms are sometimes distinguished by level of truth, but the terms are often used interchangeably. The documentary can be described as wholly factual, telling stories of "real life" through interviews and written records (Lindgren, 2011), whereas the feature can hold the "many forms of radio: poetry, music, voices, sounds" (McLeish, 2005, p. 274). (104)

These classifications are not mutually exclusive, however. Indeed, this is the case in John Drakakis's definition of the feature as having a "documentary nature" but with "the possibility of dramatisation" (8). The radio feature descends from a European tradition which took hold in Australia from the 1970s onwards[6] (Lindgren and McHugh 106; Brettle pars. 8-9). Paddy Scannell has noted that features appeared in the BBC as early as 1928[7], and that the term seemed to be borrowed from the cinema (the "feature film"): "broadcasting might combine techniques drawn from cinema with a poetic style to build 'sound pictures' that appealed to the listener's inner eye" (2). Lindgren and McHugh have noted that since the early 2010s there has been a significant turn away from features on RN, towards sonically minimal, narrative driven radio documentaries (107). In explaining this shift they cite the popularity, among new generations of Australian listeners, of *This American Life* and *Radiolab*: "The heavily scripted, spoken-narrator style privileged by American radio producers is increasingly being favoured in Australia" (107-08). *Poetica* has antecedents in the European feature tradition rather than the new American documentary tradition. As Ladd noted in 2006:

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[5] I give examples of such programs in chapter three.

[6] *Surface Tension* and *The Listening Room*, on ABC RN and Classic FM, were sound-rich features that emerged in this period. Both programs regularly featured poetry, as Ladd notes (Ladd "75th Anniversary of ABC Radio" par. 14).

[7] Although as Virginia Madsen notes:

> The golden age of the British radio feature really begins here with the war years, and the BBC's investment in the form was demonstrated in its resourcing and support of more than 20 writers and poets on staff (not to mention the more than 40 composers on contract in 1946 …) ("A Call" 397)

> We believe that poetry can best reach the general Radio National audience if it is presented in an imaginative, radiophonic[8] way. *Poetica* aims not simply to report the rich world of poetry on radio, but to re-create that world in radio terms. This involves the use of voice, sound effects, environmental and actuality recordings, music and, importantly, silence to help "place" the poetry in an acoustic "mental space." ("Radio" 214-15)

In short, *Poetica* was concerned with bringing poetry to life in radio, with care given to the sonic—not only vocal—composition of individual episodes. The lyric voice was shaped by this attentiveness to sound in *Poetica,* and it was shaped again by the ethos of the broader institution within which the program operated.

In Ladd's account of the farmer's letter, the spatial distance between the source (Radio National programs go out nationally from Sydney) and the receiver is emphasised. There is a fascination in this account with the fact that a lone farmer has received a poetry broadcast sent out across the whole nation[9]. In fact, the nation is an important consideration for the ABC, in that it is a national public service broadcaster with a Charter that emphasises its cultural commitments to the audience, including shaping a sense of national identity[10]. *Poetica's* own program brief[11] included stipulations that respond to the Charter's aims, such as that the program "represent Australian and international poetry to a national audience" and "support Australian performance" (see Appendix B; Ladd "*Poetica* Brief" 1). The brief also states that *Poetica* work to a rough quota of 60% contemporary Australian poetry (1)—the program's focus on contemporary Australian poetry was an obvious way in which it sought to meet the national cultural requirements of the institution that housed it.

At the end of Ladd's account of the letter, there is an allusion to W. H. Auden's much-cited line, "poetry makes nothing happen," which is commonly interpreted to mean poetry is apolitical and purely aesthetic (Auden 89). The thesis addresses the interrelation between aesthetics and politics in *Poetica*'s adaptations of the lyric voice, by suggesting that these adaptations were often also political because the program was embedded in an institutional structure that was receptive to

[8] The radiophonic encapsulates radio content that engages fully with radio as a medium with its own sonic possibilities. Nicholas Zurbrugg defines the radiophonic as content "created in studio time" (that is, in a sound editing studio, rather than in a live public setting) and involving the orchestration of "sound, music and speech in an art exclusively for the ears" (28).

[9] The media scholar Elizabeth Jacka has addressed this fascination in her claim that the ABC likes to think of its importance to a "broad audience scattered over the vast and sparsely populated land mass of Australia" and that "this is one of the ABC's favourite pieces of self-representation" (*ABC of Drama* 7).

[10] The ABC Charter of 1983 stipulates that the ABC's programs should "contribute to a sense of national identity" and "take account of… the multicultural character of the Australian community" (ABC 4); I examine this in more detail in chapter four on ABC cultural policy.

[11] I am citing the latest *Poetica* Brief, of 2012. The description of *Poetica* at the start of the Brief changed slightly over the years, but the Brief's core statements remained the same; in the 2012 Brief a significant addition, however, was the inclusion of online streaming and podcasting as new methods of delivery.

contemporary politics of identity. It argues that in the process of adapting lyric poetry from page to radio—a process which is often experienced (by listeners) and thought of (by media producers and theorists) in terms of aesthetics—the voices it adapted gained new dimensions informed by national identity discourses in contemporary politics, popular culture, and media. In short, the thesis considers the relationship between aesthetics and politics within *Poetica*, and reveals the extent to which the lyric voice was "made national."

It is worth noting here that despite Auden's claim, there is a long tradition of poets using their voice in political ways, to write nationalistic verse. In Australia this is the case in the work of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century poets Dorothea Mackellar and A. B. "Banjo" Paterson, whose poems "My Country" (Mackellar), "The Man From Snowy River" and "Waltzing Matilda" have been widely taught in primary schools as exemplars of the Australian spirit. From the 1890s onwards Australian poets such as Henry Lawson, Mackellar and Paterson were publishing nationalist ballads in the Sydney *Bulletin* magazine; many of these poems engaged with the theme of Australian identity as embodied in the bush[12]. At this time the poets used a widely-distributed nationalist paper to cultivate a sense of Australian identity in poetry; other groups of poets have since written lyrically about Australian identity. In the 1930s and 40s, the Adelaide-based Jindyworobaks, led by the poet Rex Ingamells, sought to turn modern Australian poetry away from overseas cultural influences and connect it to the land and to Aboriginal languages and cultures (see Gifford 6-7); in this they sought to locate an essential Australianness that they believed pre-dated colonisation.

Many modern Australian lyric poets express their sense of national identity through engagements with land. As Kathryn Wells notes, in an Australian Government webpage dedicated to modern Australian poetry, "The richness, strength and vitality of Australian poetry is marked by its prodigious diversity. Yet themes persist through this diversity. An abiding interest is the Australian landscape and how to relate to it" (par. 2). Prominent Australian landscape poets in the late twentieth century include Judith Wright, Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Robert Adamson, Robert Gray, and Les Murray. Representations of urban and rural landscapes were often prominent in the work of the Australian poets *Poetica* featured. This thesis examines how the voice of late-twentieth-century and contemporary Australian lyric poetry, which often articulates a relationship to place, was shaped by its *adapting medium* and *institutional context*, adding to its aesthetics and identity politics.

[12] See Peter Kirkpatrick's "New Words Come Tripping Slowly" (200-201). I expand on this reflection on Australian poets' (particularly Australian lyric poets') engagements with national identity at the end of chapter two.

It does this through a close reading (or, indeed, a "close listening") of three *Poetica* episodes, which it uses to examine how contemporary Australian poetry was adapted by the program. These case studies are the episodes "Ouyang Yu" (1997) on the Chinese-Australian poet Ouyang Yu, "John Forbes: A Layered Event" (1999) on the Australian poet John Forbes, and "Vicki's Voice – Remembering Vicki Viidikas" (2005) on the Australian poet Vicki Viidikas. In the concluding chapter, I also make a close reading of the *Poetica* episode "Little Bit Long Time" (2010) on the Indigenous Australian poet Ali Cobby Eckermann, to bring my analysis of the program to its final years on Australian airwaves.

I was drawn to these episodes because of the way that, in each, the lyric voice is rendered artfully in sound and entwined with images of Australian identity. Each of the chosen episodes is remarkable for its personal point of view, the sense of place it evokes, and how it seems to convey something ambivalent about belonging—an ambivalence about one's place in the world that is arguably at the heart of Australian national identity[13]. Two of the poets represented in the case studies, Forbes and Viidikas, are part of the Generation of '68, which was concerned with the insularity of modern Australian poetry[14]. These poets rejected the English poetic models handed down to them, and were determined to look outwards for their cultural influences, particularly to contemporary America. Ouyang is also preoccupied with an identity that is outward-looking, split across China and Australia, while Eckermann looks to Australian country and to its ancient cultures for her sense of identity.

While some of *Poetica*'s anthology episodes on a theme (which were a minority in comparison to episodes on individual poets), such as those made especially for ANZAC Day, offered a selection of work by different poets on the topic of Australian identity, the episodes on individual poets were not bound to engage with this topic. It is especially striking when an engagement with national identity does occur in episodes on individual poets, because it is not always a prominent theme in the poetry: this suggests that such engagements have occurred in the adaptive process. Moreover, these episodes are often more narrative-driven than the anthology episodes, and their framing commentary offers ample opportunity for storytelling about place and identity. I chose to examine *Poetica*'s episodes on individual Australian poets for these reasons.

[13] I discuss this in more detail in chapter four, in the section on narratives of Australian identity that the ABC has drawn on in its programming.
[14] I say more about the Generation of '68 in chapters six and seven, on the Forbes and Viidikas episodes. The term is defined in John Tranter's *The New Australian Poetry* (1979), which first applied the label to these poets.

The three main case studies, in chapters five, six, and seven, feature different constructions of Australian identity. "Ouyang Yu" focuses on the poet's Chinese-Australianness, selecting poetry that engages with this theme—with the poet having migrated to Australia in the early-1990s from China; "A Layered Event" explores John Forbes' Anglo-Australian identity; "Vicki's Voice" represents Viidikas as the child of an Estonian migrant and an Australian, and moreover as a feminist; and the episode analysed in the conclusion, "Little Bit Long Time," represents Eckermann's Indigenous identity, her status as a mother, and her experience of being part of the Stolen Generations of Indigenous Australians. The episodes were broadcast at various points in *Poetica*'s career—in 1997, 1999, 2005, and 2010—and my analysis of each episode reveals *Poetica*'s engagements with national identity discourses at the time. I examine the extent to which these episodes absorbed, reflected, and/or manipulated contemporary discourses of national identity in their representations of authorial presence for an Australian audience.

Of the case studies, one ("Ouyang Yu") was produced by Ladd, the second ("A Layered Event") was recorded by a junior freelance producer, Clea Woods, and co-produced by Ladd, and the third ("Vicki's Voice") was produced by broadcaster and poet Robyn Ravlich; "A Little Bit Long Time" was also produced by Ladd. The predominance of case studies with Ladd involved is intended to reflect his position as the founder and head producer of *Poetica*—as the person who steered *Poetica* throughout its career. While not representative of all of *Poetica*'s Australian episodes (which number in the hundreds), I intend my range to be wide enough to support a rigorous analysis of *Poetica's* adaptations of lyric authorial presence in contemporary Australian poetry.

1.2 Aims and significance of research

Because the thesis examines the intersection of disparate aspects within *Poetica*—of poetry, radio aesthetics, and institutional ethos—it is by necessity interdisciplinary in its methodology, and draws on the tools of literary studies, media studies, and cultural studies. While having a foot in each of these broader disciplines, it is situated specifically in radio studies, and seeks to make an original contribution to this scholarly field. Radio studies is a relatively new field of scholarship that emerged much later than television and film studies. A sign of the relatively late consolidation of the field is that the first academic journal dedicated to radio, *The Journal of Radio Studies,* was founded in 1992, seventy years after the advent of radio broadcasting. Moreover, Todd Avery notes that Edward Pease and Everette Dennis's *Radio: The Forgotten Medium* (1995) was "one of the inaugural contributions to the burgeoning field of radio studies—that is to say, to its expansion

beyond the boundaries of the relatively narrow field dominated from the mid-twentieth century on by a handful of scholars" (2). The field has expanded rapidly since then, and there is now a substantial body of scholarship on many facets of radio broadcasting, including its institutional histories, genres, and creation of listening communities[15]. The American radio scholar Christopher Sterling acknowledged this when he called British academic Hugh Chignell's *Key Concepts in Radio Studies* (2009) "a solid indicator that an academic field was thriving both here and abroad" (229).

There has been scattered scholarship on radio since its inception as a technology, however, and here I canvass some of these contributions to show where my own research is situated. Early radio scholarship, in the 1930s and 40s, focused on the uniqueness of radio as a medium in contrast to other mediums; such research often focused on radio's so-called "blindness" in relation to theatre and film[16]. Early radio research in Europe also focused on the potential for the technology to be used—particularly by fascist regimes—to control the masses, as well as (in North America) on its broader political and economic possibilities[17]. These were instrumental studies of the technology, of its capabilities to transform culture for better or worse. In the second half of the twentieth century, North American scholars such as Walter Ong, Marshall McLuhan, and Harold Innis studied radio as a medium of "secondary orality," which had the potential to bring oral culture back into a modern existence that was dominated by literacy and literate ways of thinking and perceiving (Ong 11). Radio's sonic materiality (meaning the medium's particular composition in sound) was among the subjects of such scholarship; there was also a cross-over into literary studies, as these scholars were thinking about technologies of secondary orality in relation to literacy.

From the mid-twentieth century onwards, scholarship was emerging on how literary figures such as Louis MacNiece and Samuel Beckett used radio to disseminate their writing[18]. These were textually-focused studies that treated radio as a tool through which literature might flourish, and did not attend to the sonic properties of these broadcasts. Vivian Smith's article on the four-part *Poetica* series "A Celebration of Australian Poetry" (2003) largely adheres to this approach: following his opening remarks about the role of the ABC in broadcasting important Australian literature (152-53), Smith confines himself to reviewing *Poetica*'s selection of poetry, except for a brief comment on

[15] See for example Crisell's landmark three-volume *Radio* (2009), and Susan Squier's *Communities of the Air: Radio Century, Radio Culture* (2003).
[16] See Lance Sieveking's *The Stuff of Radio* (1934) and Rudolph Arnheim's *Radio: An Art of Sound* (1936).
[17] The Princeton Radio Research Project (PRRP) in the US, and the Frankfurt School in Europe, published scholarship on radio along these lines in the 1940s; while the PRRP research addressed the positive and negative aspects of radio's reach and consumption see Cantril; Lazarsfeld), the Marxist-informed Frankfurt School criticism was much more wary of the potential for radio to be misused by fascist regimes (see Adorno *Current of Music*).
[18] On MacNiece, see Coulton. On Brecht, see Zilliacus; Esslin.

soundscapes under poems by Les Murray and Gwen Harwood (157). I note here that radio drama scholarship—a substantial area within radio studies—has consistently bucked the trend of focusing on the textual aspects of more literary radio. Texts such as John Drakakis' *British Radio Drama* (1981), Ian Rodger's *Radio Drama* (1982), Dermot Rattigan's *Theatre of Sound: Radio and the Dramatic Imagination* (2002), and Neil Verma's *Theater of the Mind: Imagination, Aesthetics, and American Radio Drama* (2012) combine literary, dramatic, and (in the case of Rattigan and Verma) medium-specific analyses in their studies of broadcast radio plays. Jacob Smith and Verma's edited collection *Anatomy of Sound: Norman Corwin and Media Authorship* (2016) combines these trajectories, and is a study of a renowned American writer who worked across radio, theatre, film, television, and journalism; the essays often have a joint interest in the literary, dramatic, and medium-specific dimensions of Corwin's work for radio and other media. Overall, however, radio studies has tended not to feature much interdisciplinary research that transcends the methodological tools of literary studies, media studies, or of any one field such as sociology[19].

This thesis's focus on the intersection between literary aesthetics, radio aesthetics, and politics in a national radio poetry program is unusual, and places the thesis within a relatively new subfield of radio studies that is more open to interdisciplinary scholarship. Whittington has recently labelled this subfield, which offers a way to group scholarship that looks at literary radio programs through interdisciplinary frameworks (often a joint literary studies and media studies one), as "literary radio studies." I note that while the thesis belongs to this field, it is also related to scholarship that considers the adaptation of poetry across media more generally. This includes work by the Australian literary scholars David McCooey and Philip Mead on representations of poets and poetry in film (see McCooey "Visions and Sensations"), and on "the networks that connect poetry and cinema" (Mead 35), as well as American scholarship on recorded poetry; I cite the latter in chapter three[20]. I take inspiration from the confluence of poetics and media analysis in such research. The thesis also has analogues in scholarship on other Australian arts that is institutionally situated, such as Jacka's study of ABC television drama, *The ABC of Drama 1975-1990,* and Charles Fairchild's study of music on Australian community radio, *Music, Radio and the Public Sphere: The Aesthetics of Democracy* (2012).

[19] For a landmark sociological approach to radio, see Cantril and Allport's *The Psychology of Radio* (1935), which is a study of radio listening practices in the US in the early-twentieth century.

[20] There have recently been a series of publications on digital poetry, such as Adalaide Morris and Thomas Swiss's *New Media Poetics: Contexts, Technotexts, and Theories* (2006), Eduardo Kac's *Media Poetry: an International Anthology* (2007) and Daniel Morris's *Not Born Digital: Poetics, Print Literacy, New Media* (2016). However, scholarship on the adaptation of poetry in "old" media such as film is more pertinent to my thesis on poetry on the radio.

However, the thesis is situated most precisely in the field of literary radio studies. This field was created through developments in modernist literary studies, and modernist scholars' close attention from the 1990s onwards to the intersection between technologies of modernity and modernist artistic practice. As Whittington notes:

> As a popular medium of avant-garde potential, as a physical appliance that could be both disarmingly quotidian and spectacularly luxurious, and as a technology that often reproduced vocal markers of class, gender, race, and region, radio emerged as a medium that no properly "thick" description of the early- to mid-20th century culture could ignore. It did not hurt the case for radio within this redefined modernity that, for roughly 30 years (1922–1953), it served as the preeminent electronic mass medium, an acoustic interface between wielders of discourse and listeners. (367-68)

Key works in literary radio studies, which often address the modernist period, include: Douglas Kahn and Gregory Whitehead's *Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio and the Avant-Garde* (1992); Adalaide Morris's *Sound States: Innovative Poetics and Acoustical Technologies* (1998); Avery's *Radio Modernism: Literature, Ethics and the BBC 1922-38* (2006); and Debra Rae Cohen, Michael Coyle and Jane Lewty's *Broadcasting Modernism* (2009). There is an overlap between literary radio studies and sound studies[21], another new interdisciplinary field including work by literary scholars, cultural studies scholars, media studies scholars, and musicologists. However, sound studies does not limit itself to radio, and encompasses all sound media and sound performance.

An obvious limitation of literary radio studies—one that has so far defined it—is that it insistently frames the intersection between literature and radio in relation to modernist practice, and is centred on explicating the technology's effect on writing (and vice-versa) at the advent of radio broadcasting in the early-twentieth century. There is a lack of literary radio scholarship that is vigorously interdisciplinary, focusing equally on literary and radio aesthetics, with existing work tending to be more concerned with the literary than the sonic aspects of literary radio. Moreover, there is a lack of attention paid to the wider social and political contexts for particular literary radio broadcasts. Whittington describes such scholarship as that which "listen[s] closely to the formal particularities of its auditory medium while addressing the pressures attendant on that medium by

[21] Kahn and Whitehead's *Wireless Imagination* and A. Morris's *Sound States*, for example, may be situated in both literary radio studies and sound studies. Key texts in sound studies, as distinct from literary radio studies, include Kahn's *Noise/Water/Meat: A History of Voice, Sound, and Aurality in the Arts* (1999), Emily Thompson's *The Soundscape of Modernity* (2002), Jonathan Sterne's *The Audible Past* (2003), Jacob Smith's *Vocal Tracks: Performance and Sound Media* (2008), Neumark, Gibson, and van Leeuwen's *Voice: Vocal Aesthetics in Digital Arts and Media* (2010), and John Mowitt's *Sounds: The Ambient Humanities* (2015). There are also several texts which straddle literary studies and sound studies without contributing to radio studies, such as Marjorie Perloff and Craig Dworkin's *The Sound of Poetry/The Poetry of Sound* (2009) and Matthew Rubery's *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies* (2011).

proximate systems that are both technological and socio-political" (643), and also notes that, "the value of such work … is belied by its relative rarity" (639). This rarity is apparent in scholarship on radio poetry, which is one form that may be studied by literary radio scholars. Scholarly texts on radio poetry tend to focus on: the aesthetics of the form and how it could be produced more artfully (Gallo; Ladd "Notes"; Spinelli "Analog Echoes"; Street); how radio can be used as a platform to achieve a wider audience for poetry (Cordman; Gioia; Ladd "Radio as a Medium"; Kaplan; Orwell; Phillips; Schreiber; Spaulding); or its effect on national poetic cultures (Breiner; Kirkpatrick; Houghlum).

However, two texts in radio poetry scholarship that do balance an analysis of aesthetics with an analysis of socio-political contexts are George Orwell's "Poetry and the Microphone" (1958) and Martin Spinelli's "Not Hearing Poetry on Public Radio" (2003). These texts engage with the poetics, media aesthetics, and institutional contexts of particular radio poetry programs. Orwell's essay is about a BBC radio program he co-produced that broadcast English poetry to India in the 1940s. While the essay addresses "the possibilities of the radio as a means of popularising poetry" in a culture that Orwell claims was hostile to poetry (108), it also examines in brief the aesthetic of the broadcasts (including which poetry they chose to feature and the sonic composition of the episodes), their audience demographics, what was formally permissible within the BBC at that time, and the wider cultural context that made broadcasting poetry difficult[22]. It is significant in its interdisciplinary approach to radio poetry—in the way it gives careful thought to the wider institutional and socio-political culture that, to a large extent, dictated the aesthetic of the radio poetry broadcasts.

Spinelli's "Not Hearing Poetry on Public Radio" addresses poetry featured on US National Public Radio's *Fresh Air* program. Spinelli argues, with close readings of the poetry and interviews featured on particular episodes of *Fresh Air*, that the program selects poetry that is formally bland and close to prose—or otherwise strips the poetry of its formal aspects in the way it is read and edited—and then reduces it to biography; he argues that the program does so to make the poetry accessible rather than challenging (195). He argues that the public service broadcaster is doing a disservice to both the poetry and the audience, by effacing the formal particularities of poetry, and by pitching programs to an audience that is imagined as incapable of consuming aesthetic and

[22] Orwell argues that there is a preference for reading and writing—as opposed to speaking and listening to—poetry in modern Western cultures that are highly literate. He also discusses the unpopularity of most forms of poetry—of everything but populist verse—suggesting that these are hindrances to radio poetry that the radio poetry producer should take into account (108).

thematic complexity: "[*Fresh Air* uses] a method of audience conceptualisation that neither anticipates complex individual listener interaction with the poetry nor facilitates literary exchange or literary community" (195).

Both of these texts consider the ethos of public service broadcasting institutions when making aesthetic analyses of radio poetry programs, in the colonial British and American contexts, respectively. This thesis builds on such interdisciplinary approaches to radio poetry, but in the Australian context, where such an analysis has never been attempted. The thesis shares with Orwell and Spinelli's studies an interest in making formal analyses of adapted poetry in radio, and in examining how these adaptations have been shaped by their institutional context. But it differs from these analyses in the particularity of its foci, in that it traces the evolution of a particular aspect of poetry—authorial presence in the lyric voice—within the medium of radio, and within the institution. Moreover, it addresses one prominent aspect of institutional ethos above other aspects: the national identity aims of the ABC. The thesis also differs in its scale, by devoting entire chapters to historicising lyric authorial presence on the page, to historicising lyric authorial presence on radio, and to charting shifts in ABC cultural policy pertinent to the case study episodes, before making close readings of these episodes. By focusing on very specific aesthetic and institutional aspects, and by allowing space in which to consider these aspects in detail, the thesis expands significantly on the approaches taken up by Orwell and Spinelli.

In doing this, the thesis addresses a significant gap in literary radio scholarship. There is currently nothing in this field that takes into account both the aesthetic and institutional dimensions of Australian radio poetry programs. Nor is there scholarship in any national context that does this at length, allowing the space that such a multi-disciplinary analysis demands. Without such scholarship we cannot comprehend the fullness of a program like *Poetica*, which is engaged in complex aesthetic adaptations while existing within an equally complex institutional structure. Without this scholarship, we are not able to gauge how extra-aesthetic influences—namely ideas about national identity in contemporary media and political discourse—may filter through to the Australian public in a program that may appear focused on aesthetic considerations. The thesis argues that there are lines of influence between political discourses of Australian national identity, the ABC as an institution, and particular episodes of *Poetica.* It sheds light on the complex nature of aesthetic adaptation in institutionally-situated radio poetry programs. The thesis seeks to deepen our understanding of how different layers of representation and intention—in the poets' work, in the programs' producers, in the broadcaster, and in the political climate in which the broadcaster translated its own policy—intersect and act on one another in a radio poetry program made for a

national audience. It aims to show how institutional policy may shape artistic representations given to the public, even when a program existing within such a structure is not overtly political nor invested, on a day-to-day basis, in narratives of national identity.

1.3 Methodology

The thesis opens by examining the three layers working on the lyric voice in *Poetica*. Because these layers are quite different to each other, they demand distinct disciplinary approaches. The following three chapters (chapters two, three, and four) address the phenomena of lyric authorial presence on the page, lyric authorial presence on radio, and the ABC's national identity aims. These chapters historicise these phenomena, revealing the deep dynamics that have shaped our understanding of each, to better illuminate how they function in the contemporary moment of *Poetica*'s adaptations.

Chapter two, "Authorial Presence in Lyric Poetry," defines lyric poetry—the main form of poetry that *Poetica* adapted—and posits authorial presence as a key feature of the lyric. I review Romantic, modern, and postmodern approaches to authorial presence in the written lyric poem, and argue that despite the eschewal of Romantic notions of presence in the movement known as the death of the author, modern lyric poems continue to evoke an author figure—meaning that the poems continue to be imbued with authorial presence. Here Foucault's ideas about the "author function" of a text are central to my engagement with theories of authorship (Foucault 14). I also argue for the continued relevance of the concept of poetic voice as a vehicle for authorial presence in the lyric poem; this concept was undermined in postmodern literary criticism. I use author function and voice to conceptualise the relationship between the lyric poem and the author, and the way in which, aesthetically, the lyric poem conjures a sense of the author for the contemporary reader.

Chapter three, "Authorial Presence in *Poetica*," extends Foucault's text-based theory of the author function to electronic communications media, and asks how the radio voice reading lyric poetry conjures a sense of the poet for the listener. Here I situate *Poetica* among other English-language radio poetry programs, and show that the program was unique in the way it represented authorial presence in radio sound. I draw on media and literary studies scholarship on poetry recordings and live poetry readings, in order to address notions of authenticity surrounding the poet's physical voice reading lyric poetry, and to consider *Poetica*'s frequent use of actors to read poems. I also draw on my interview with Ladd, and include his thoughts on *Poetica*'s use of actors, as well as the program's use of sound more generally. In discussing *Poetica*'s use of music and sound effects to

dramatise readings of poetry, I describe the program as *adapting* lyric poetry, drawing on Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation.

Chapter four, "Authorial Presence Made National: *Poetica* and ABC Cultural Policy," examines the extra-aesthetic factors that may have influenced *Poetica*'s representations of authorial presence for a national audience. I foreground the banal nationalist functions[23] of national public service broadcasters like the ABC, in contributing on a daily basis to narratives of national identity. The chapter examines in particular reviews of ABC cultural policy—which are focused on the ABC's implementations of sections of its Charter to do with national identity—from 1981 to 1997, leading up the formation of *Poetica* and the broadcast of the first case study. Here I quote extensively from my interview with Ladd on how he sought to interpret and implement these aspects of the ABC Charter as he worked on *Poetica.* And in the final part of the chapter, I review twentieth-century narratives of Australian identity that were available to the ABC to draw on in its mission to contribute to a sense of national identity through its programming.

Chapters five, six, and seven examine particular episodes on *Poetica* through this tri-disciplinary theoretical framework, looking at how authorial presence in lyric poetry was adapted, and to what extent it was "made national," in these episodes. These case studies reveal the various aesthetic and political currents in *Poetica*'s adaptations. As an epilogue to these three analyses, in the first part of the concluding chapter (chapter eight) I make a close reading of "Little Bit Long Time" (2010) in order to bring my analyses of *Poetica*'s adaptations to close to the end of its career. Through my close readings, I show that while *Poetica* seemed to be driven by aesthetic rather than political considerations (as evident in my descriptions of the show's format, along with comments made by Ladd in published essays and in our interview in chapter three), it was clearly sensitive to contemporary Australian politics of identity. Reflecting on the case study chapters in the conclusion, I reiterate that *Poetica*'s institutional context had a bearing on its representations of lyric authorial presence for a national audience. Here I also note further avenues for research in the field of literary radio studies—research that would better illuminate the complexity of literary radio programs such as *Poetica* (research on radio poetry, but also including forms such as radio drama and literary radio talks). I call for more research that takes into consideration the literary-aesthetic, media-aesthetic, political, and institutional dimensions of literary radio programs in Australia.

[23] That is, the way in which media routinely circulate ideas about national identity, without this always being overt; here I am using Michael Billig's term, which I expand on in chapter four.

2. Authorial Presence in Lyric Poetry

Poetica typically looked to poetry published in books, literary journals, and magazines as its source (as is the case in my case studies), and remediated that poetry from page to radio. And as I have noted, it often featured lyric poetry from these sources. Australian lyric poets featured by the program include Francis Webb, Robert Adamson, Judith Wright, Kathryn Lomer, Robert Gray, Josephine Rowe, Fiona Wright, Samuel Wagan Watson, and Judith Beveridge, among many others; the program also broadcast much lyric poetry from around the world. While *Poetica* did feature experimental poetry, sound poetry, and some slam and spoken word poetry, Michael Ladd acknowledges the popularity of lyric poetry among *Poetica*'s audience:

> Written and telephone feedback suggests to me that listeners respond most strongly to poems with a clear personal point of view and powerful emotional content. Often these are lyric poems that create strong visual images in the mind of the listener. They can be "received", understood on the first hearing[24]. ("Radio" 223)

Poetica's listeners were captivated by lyric poetry, which is why the program featured it so often. In this chapter I focus on an aspect of the lyric that Ladd describes as being central to its popularity: I explicate the lyric's evocation of authorial subjectivity in the voice of the poem, which presents a "clear personal point of view."

One of the most common definitions of written lyric poetry highlights its special relationship to the author, as a way of distinguishing it from other forms of poetry, and from literature more generally. Lyric poetry often features a speaking "I," with the pronoun repeated throughout the poem; even when the "I" is not scripted, it features a sense of a first-person narrator, of one "person" speaking in a confessional and self-consciously high literary mode. This has led to the common perspective that the author is represented in a special way in the lyric poem, and that, of all literary and artistic forms, the relationship between the lyric and its author is especially strong. This conception of the lyric, while historically produced, endures even today, and largely informs readers' approaches to lyric poetry in contemporary culture. Here I trace the historical formations and reformations of this particular conception of the lyric, in order to characterise the precise ways in which the written lyric poem may evoke a sense of "the author" (whether that is imagined as a real person, or as an author figure that remains more nebulous), to move towards answering the question, "how does the lyric poem invite us to imagine its author?" This will be followed, in the third chapter, by a connected

[24] Ladd wrote this before podcasting was common, which is why he stresses lyric poetry's accessibility on radio—the fact that it can often be understood on the first listen—which was part of *Poetica*'s rationale for featuring it so much. He later qualifies: "In the future, if our programme is streamed on the Internet, there may be an opportunity for listeners to 'turn back the page,' to halt the programme and re-listen—but at the moment that opportunity does not exist for us" (223).

analysis of how *Poetica* episodes invite us to imagine the authors of the lyric poetry they feature.

I begin with a definition of the lyric—particularly the contemporary English lyric, which evolved with a focus on authorial presence in Romanticism—before considering the relationship between the contemporary lyric poem and the poet. Definitions of the lyric are often indefinite, as the form has undergone many transformations in Western cultural history. The modernist poet T.S. Eliot claimed that the lyric "cannot be satisfactorily defined" (*On P oetry* 96), and Daniel Albright argues in *Lyricality in English Literature* that, "A lyric is a poem in which one notices a certain shiftiness or instability, a certain slipping and sliding of things" (viii) and that "the individual lyric poem often treats the breakdown of discursive categories," implying that the lyric falls between poetic genres (4). Indeed, Albright claims that "it is wrong … to speak of the lyric as a genre" because it does not meet the requirements of genre, such as "an evolving corpus of rules governing composition," and that "a given work resembles its predecessors in a genre" (2).

Wolf Werner expands on these thoughts in his more recent essay "The Lyric: Problems of Definition and a Proposal for Reconceptualisation". Having echoed Albright by stating that "the lyric seems to be a notoriously elusive category" (21), he clarifies: "'Lyric' has become an umbrella term for most versified literature (except for epic and verse drama) and has thus become a synonym of 'poetry' … for better or worse, this is the state which we must take into account when searching for a definition of the lyric" (23). He traces this expansion of the lyric's definition to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who in the nineteenth century proposed an influential triadic scheme for poetry—building on the work of French philosopher Charles Batteux—a scheme that has since been taken up by many Western critics: Goethe divided poetry into "lyric," "epic" and "dramatic"[25] (21). The historical effect of this scheme was that lyric began to encapsulate everything that was not dramatic or epic poetry:

> As a consequence of this terminological situation, the lyric covers a vastly heterogeneous text corpus that is moreover in a continuous process of development and ranges from traditional lyric form such as the sonnet to free verse and various experimental forms, of which the twentieth century with its notorious transgressive tendencies has produced so many. (23)

[25] As Wolf notes:

> Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, did not use a single term to denote the manifold forms of the poems of his day. The history of subsuming various types of poetry under one term did not begin until the Alexandrinian period, 'when "l[yric]" became a generic term for any poem which was composed to be sung' (J. W. Johnson 714). After a prolonged disuse of the term in the Middle Ages it re-emerged with the Renaissance, together with the former link with music. This musical connotation was, however, gradually abandoned again, thus clearing the way for Batteux's and Goethe's triadic redefinition of poetic genres. (Wolf 22-23)

Despite this, Wolf attempts a comprehensive definition of the lyric, listing characteristics including its: "shortness"; "general deviation from everyday language and discursive conventions"; "general foregrounding of the acoustical potential of language" which he also refers to as its "musicality"; "self-referentiality"; the "relative unimportance or even lack of external action and (suspenseful) narrative development" (38-39). Two characteristics in this list that are typically foregrounded by critics as dominant or "defining" characteristics[26] are its musicality, which is often linked to its origins in song in Ancient Greece[27], and its concentrated representation of subjectivity[28], making it the most personal form of poetry. Wolf refers to the lyric's concentrated representation of subjectivity as the "existence of one seemingly unmediated consciousness or agency as the centre of the lyric utterance or experience" (39).

I am particularly concerned here with the lyric's manifestation of a seemingly unmediated subjectivity ("consciousness or agency"), as this was central to the appeal of lyric poetry for *Poetica*'s audiences. In seeking to understand this aspect of lyric aesthetics, I historicise how this aspect—and how it has been understood—have evolved over time, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

2.1 The lyric poem's relationship to the poet

What is the relationship between the subjectivity that is represented in the lyric poem and the author of that poem? This has been figured differently over time, and tracing the shifts in perspective on this topic allows one to better understand the common, contemporary view of lyric poetry as essentially an experience of the author, one couched in special language—language that "[deviates] from everyday language and discursive conventions" and, often, foregrounds "the acoustical potential of language" (Wolf 38-39). Oren Izenberg has classified theories of the relationship between lyric poem and poet as "post-Romantic" versus "postmodern" (1). In describing one school of thought on the poem-poet relationship as post-Romantic, Izenberg alludes to the lyric's transformation in the relatively recent past, in the nineteenth century. The Romantic lyric has cast a long shadow, and has had a lasting impact on how lyric-author relations are conceptualised in modern literary criticism.

[26] For Wolf the privileging of certain aspects of the lyric is problematic, as these aspects eclipse others which apply to the various kinds of poetry grouped together under lyric (32).
[27] See Albright ix; J. W. Johnson 713; Nielsen 129.
[28] See Adorno "On Lyric Poetry" 38; Eliot *On Poetry* 92; Hegel 214.

The Romantic period of the early- to mid-nineteenth century was one of intense artistic and cultural transformation in England, France and Germany: it was a revolution in literary and artistic sensibilities. The nature of this revolution had to do with a refocusing of creative and critical thought on the creative individual, as the ultimate source of an artwork, as well as a preoccupation with notions of originality, individual genius, imagination, feeling, and nature—the latter in contrast to an increasingly industrialised and de-individualised external reality in the major cities of Europe. There was also a widespread belief in "natural" and "spontaneous" approaches, as opposed to artificial or reasoned approaches, to artistic creation[29]. However, these features of Romanticism arguably did not develop uniformly across Europe. In his landmark essay "On the Discrimination of Romanticisms," Arthur Lovejoy distinguishes between three kinds of Romanticisms that he argues occurred, in a roughly chronological and overlapping order—and in various stages of completeness—in England, Germany and France from the late-eighteenth to the early-nineteenth centuries (69). By contrast, Michael Ferber argues that aspects of Romanticism were common across Europe, including an artistic interest in "exploring one's self"; the privileging of "the imagination as a faculty higher and more inclusive than reason"; a desire for "solace in or reconciliation with the natural world"; a belief that "God or the divine [was] inherent in nature or in the soul and [that] theological doctrine [should be replaced] with metaphor and feeling"; and "rebell[ion] against the established canons of neoclassical aesthetics and against both aristocratic and bourgeois social and political norms in favour of values more individual, inward, and emotional" (10-11). As Ferber alludes to here, Romanticism has often been defined against classicism, which, in the wake of eighteenth century Enlightenment, idealised a reason-based, objective approach to artistic practice; Romanticism by contrast opened up individual and subjective imagination, as opposed to the faculty of reason[30]. The French Romantic poet Victor Hugo referred implicitly to the Classical/Romantic scheme when he wrote: "Romanticism, so often ill defined, is in the final analysis … nothing other than liberalism in literature" (30); here the liberalism of Romanticism is defined against the strictures of classicism. Whatever the precise definition of Romanticism, the term "individual" keeps arising, and the focus on the individual artist, with his or her subjective, imaginative and emotional experience (as opposed to a focus on reason, and the quest to represent things "objectively") is central.

Individuality is also commonly paired, in this discourse, with the "natural," referring both to an

[29] Critics have contested whether or not all of these characteristics were fundamental to Romanticism, but there is at least agreement that it was first a European phenomenon (see Wellek "The Concept" 181, Williams 275), and that it was concentrated across the arts in England, Germany and France in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries (Furst *Romanticism* 47–48; Grierson 47; Lovejoy 69, Praz 89–90).

[30] See Pater; Grierson; Hulme.

interest in representing external nature, and an interest in representing internal nature or subjectivity. Furst describes this dual Romantic impulse:

> [Romanticism's] "return to nature" implied a totally new conception of the outer world. The fundamental change can be summarised in two words: from a mechanistic to an organic view. For Descartes and his fellow rationalists the world had been a machine, engineered by God in the beginning and functioning according to set principles; man, with his intellect, was the king of this universe, taming that savage object, nature, by ordering it into symmetrical flower-beds, neat hedges and straight paths in the manner of the formal French gardens. The fashion in the mid-eighteenth century for the picturesque English style of landscape gardening was symptomatic of, and also instrumental in the change of attitude. From being a mere tool of man, nature was first granted an autonomous existence, and poets, instead of using vague, standard phrases, began actually to observe and to describe what they had seen. (*Romanticism* 32)

The reference to poets observing and describing what they had seen, in a personal way, highlights the emphasis on subjective experience, which was expounded not only by scholars, but by Romantic poets such as Wordsworth in his preface to "Lyrical Ballads" (410). Furst summarises the centrality of subjectivity to the Romantic ethos: "That the personal feelings of the imaginative individual form the basis of art was unanimously accepted by the Romantics. There is indeed hardly any other tenet in the Romantic credo on which so remarkable a degree of agreement is found throughout Europe" (*Romanticism in Perspective* 228).The focus was squarely on the individual artist's perceptions, and on so-called natural and spontaneous expressions that were intimately bound up with individuality.

The idea that the lyric poem represented the essence of individuality was widespread in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century Europe, and was expressed in different ways: Georg Hegel wrote, for instance, that "inasmuch as in lyrical composition what is self-expressed is the individual person, a content, which is extremely slight, will primarily suffice for this purpose. It is, in other words, the soul itself, subjective life simply, which is the true content" (197). Lyric poetry was seen as an exemplary art in this period, being a natural extension of the individual who created it—in Keats' words, "like leaves on a tree"[31]. With regards to lyric poetry's special status in this era, critics have claimed that: "the lyric is undoubtedly the chief glory of the Romantic movement" (*Romanticism* Furst 52); that "we are … familiar with the idea of lyric as the dominant mode of

[31] Keats put it this way in a letter to the publisher John Taylor when he stated: "if Poetry comes not as naturally as the Leaves to a tree it had better not come at all" (107).

nineteenth-century literature" (Fowler 206); and that, "no characteristic of Romanticism is more prominent than the prestige, even glory, which it confers on the poet. He acquires the stature of prophet, priest, and preacher, of hero, law-giver, and creator; he grows almost into a god" (Ferber 32). This is because at that time the lyric poet exemplified the Romantic idealisation of individuality, subjective imagination, and feeling.

Mutlu Blasing has argued that "lyricism," understood to be synonymous with self-expression, spans millennia, and that it should therefore not be located narrowly in the late-eighteenth to early-nineteenth centuries (Blasing 4). However, I am dealing here with the written lyric poem rather than with lyricism as a category, or "genre" as Blasing calls it, of expression writ large across the arts (4). I highlight the Romantic enmeshment between the written lyric poem and the poet, as though there were nothing separating the words on the page from the individual who produced them, because the words on the page were seen as an unmediated self-expression. Samuel Taylor Coleridge put this succinctly when he wrote: "What is poetry? is so nearly the same question with, what is a poet? that the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other" (12).

In Romanticism authorial presence was taken as being intrinsic to the lyric poem. The lyric poem on the page evoked the author with immediacy, as though language and the page were immaterial. Eva Müller-Zettelmann and Margarete Rubik note that a problem with this conception is that it "leads to an equation of the situation staged in the text with the biography of the real-life poet and to a neglect of the ontological gulf which separates the author and the fictional lyric persona" (8). Twentieth-century criticism became increasingly sensitive to what Müller-Zettelmann and Rubik call "the fictional lyric persona," viewing authorial presence as a construct of the text, rather than as a consequence of any real connection to the poet. This shift has pivoted around the concept of the poetic "voice," an examination of which forms the basis of my theory of how the contemporary lyric poem invites us to imagine the poet.

2.2 The "voice" of the poet: subjectivity in the written lyric

> "When poets, readers, and critics identify voice in a printed poem, they often mean that it creates an illusion of authorial presence"—Lesley Wheeler (40)

There has been a gradual movement in literary criticism of the twentieth century towards thinking

about the subject of the lyric poem as a figurative construction of the text, rather than viewing the lyric text as an extension of a real person. For some critics this movement has not occurred fast enough: Blasing for example claims, with a note of frustration, that "the lyric is … still understood to be the self-expression of a prior, private, constitutive subject" (4), while Anthony Easthope, riffing off Coleridge's statement one-and-a-half centuries earlier, argues:

> Conventional literary criticism, because it assumes poetry is to be read as the expression of an author, sees poetry as above all a matter of subjectivity, as though the question "what is poetry?" was still nearly the same as "What is a poet?". But on Derrida's showing, discourse is a "sort of machine," and subjectivity in poetry—"the Poet"—can never be more than an effect of discourse, a god or ghost produced (by the reading) from the machine. (30)

This move towards understanding subjectivity in the lyric as a figurative construction of the text, which is activated in the reading process, has been facilitated by postmodern critical theory, as Easthope argues. However, in many ways the movement towards treating subjectivity as a textual manifestation, which implies reading the text as a standalone object independent of an author/poet, began in the early-twentieth century, with the critical schools of Russian Formalism and New Criticism in America. These schools reacted against prior critical approaches to literature, such as those of the Romantics, where "people used to write essays speculating about the number of Lady Macbeth's children and passing judgments about the moral fibre of authors"; by contrast, New Criticism taught that "it was our job as readers to look at The Work, the words on the page, and the patterns of imagery and tone and sound that defined the cosmos they created" (P. C. Smith 276). New Criticism—propagated by critics in America and the UK in the early-twentieth century such as John Crowe Ransom, William Wimsatt, Cleanth Brooks, and I. A. Richards—has been regarded as being disinterested in the historical and social contexts for a work, of being "radically anti-historicist" (Bové 162) in that it "isolates the work of art from its past and its context" (Wellek "The New Criticism" 55), thereby "cutting it loose from its author [among other contexts]" (Brooks *My Credo* 46). While more recent criticism has challenged the idea that New Criticism was solely focused on the text, to the exclusion of everything else[32], New Criticism was widely regarded as wanting to sever the text from a seemingly natural connection to the author, and from the search for authorial intent, which they termed "the intentional fallacy": Monroe Beardsley and William Wimsatt argued that the intentional fallacy is "a confusion between the poem and its origins … it begins by trying to derive the standard of criticism from the psychological *causes* of the poem and ends in biography" (21). There have been a string of critics who have argued vigorously against what Eugen Simion calls "biographical criticism," starting even before New Criticism—from the

[32] The reader's role as interpreter, for instance: see Brooks *My Credo* 47; P. C. Smith 288; Spurlin 231.

late nineteenth century—with the French poet Arthur Rimbaud, and with Marcel Proust's critique of the literary critic Charles Saint-Beuve's method, and then in the early-twentieth century with the poet Paul Valéry and with Russian Formalism and New Criticism (Simion 15). Thus in Europe and America there was an intensification of anti-biographical criticism during the twentieth century, leading to an attempt to sever the author from the text completely—and to view the author, eventually[33], as a total irrelevance.

To this end, Mark Jancovich has argued that the New Critics "shifted the emphasis from historical scholarship and source hunting to a concentration upon the forms of language and style within the text," by focusing on such elements as irony, paradox, and tone or attitude (138). Likewise, Fredric Jameson has argued that the Formalists and the New Critics "aimed at disentangling the literary system [of the text] from other extrinsic systems" (*Prison-House* 44). Contemporary populist criticism, outside of academia, often combines both Romantic and New Critical approaches to reading poetry: a cursory glance at national and international forums for the reviewing of poetry, such as *Australian Book Review* or the *Times Literary Supplement*, reveals that critics tend to focus both on biographical details—in the vein of the Romantics—as well as on the poem as an object in itself; these methods are often used together as a way of explicating the poem**.** The latter approach to reading (focusing on the poem as an object in itself) was established in the early- to mid-twentieth century by New Critical scholars, and demonstrated in texts such as Brooks' *The Well Wrought Urn* and Brooks and Robert Penn Warren's *Understanding Poetry*.

New Criticism's move towards isolating a text from its context has recently been viewed as the beginning of a long twentieth-century struggle; critics have argued that there is a tradition of literary criticism starting with New Criticism and continuing through to deconstruction and poststructuralism: for example, Paul Bové argues that "[neither] New Criticism nor deconstruction bothers to account for its own function and position historically in society—precisely because they are both radically anti-historicist" (162). Jancovich has also identified the impetus behind New Criticism as the same impetus behind more recent poststructuralist theory:

> Post-structuralism has a tendency to isolate literary activity from society and history and define it as "a system with its own order," a system which can only be understood in terms of its internal organisation rather than in its relation to other social activities. This tendency was already present in the work of Frye [whose *Anatomy of Criticism* was a key New Critical text], and it has two aspects: it

[33] I am referring here to the later movement, in the 1960s and 70s, known as the death of the author—I address this in the next section.

> challenges representational theories of language and literature [i.e. the idea that language can represent a pre-existing reality—such as an author's state of mind]; and it defines literature as a system with its own rules, a system which is "autonomous" from other activities. (7)

So critics have argued across the twentieth century—reacting against the enmeshment between work and author in Romanticism—that the representation of subjectivity in a text, such as in a lyric poem, ought to be considered independently of the author, and that we should abandon the old reading habit of "source hunting." However, I argue that there is a parallel critical tradition which considers the way texts tend to evoke sources, regardless of how we may try to read them. Modernist critics such as Eliot, who were contemporaneous to the New Critics, were considering how the text may relate to the author, without wanting to seal the text off completely as a reaction against prior, excessively biographical criticism. This discussion of how the text may insistently evoke the author is tied to nineteenth-century Romanticism, but in the early-twentieth century was centred on the concept of "voice."

Voice in poetry harks back to pre-literate cultures, when poetry was an oral art, transmitted by the physical voice: in oral societies the voice came out of a poet's mouth, and was seen to be a physical extension of that poet. Paul Zumthor, in *Oral Poetry*, highlights the way that the physical voice was seen to be an extension of a body in many cultural contexts across history, ranging from Hinduism's *Upanishads* to the Bible, to medieval and baroque European art, to Bantu folklore in Africa (8-9). However, in the burgeoning modernist movement of the highly literate early-twentieth century, poet-critics such as Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, and Eliot were concerned with the vocal properties of writing, and spoke of the figurative or metaphoric "voice" of a written poetic text, as these related to speech[34]. Eliot wrote in "Little Gidding," in his *Four Quartets*: "our concern was speech, and speech impelled us / To purify the dialect of the tribe" (*Collected Poems* 204). Pound's *Cantos,* written in dialogue with Dante's *Divine Comedy* in which cantos (Italian for "song") originally featured, shared a similar impulse: he drew on and idealised vernacular speech in the poems. And Carlos Williams wrote: "It is in the newness of a live speech that the new line exists undiscovered" (134)**.** A seminal modernist text on textual voice and its relationship to the poet was by Eliot, who argued that there are three voices in written or printed poetry:

> The first voice is the voice of the poet talking to himself—or to nobody. The second is the voice of the poet addressing an audience, whether large or small. The third is

[34] For a detailed account of the modernists' preoccupation with speech in poetry, see Mark Morrisson's "Performing the Pure Voice: Elocution, Verse Recitation, and Modernist Poetry in Prewar London" (1996).

> the voice of the poet when he attempts to create a dramatic character speaking in verse; when he is saying, not what he would say in his own person, but only what he can say within the limits of one imaginary character addressing another imaginary character. (*On Poetry* 89)

At this historical moment, "voice" is being used by Eliot in a barely figurative way (in a way that implies that we can accurately locate the "voice" in the text, as we are able to locate the grammar), but it has proved influential. Blasing picks up on Eliot's definition of the lyric when he argues, nearly a century later, that the lyric is "where an 'I' talks to itself or to nobody in particular and is not primarily concerned with narrating a story or dramatising an action" (2). The idea of a textual voice has also entered poetry criticism through writing about the sonic aspects of poetry. I should pause here to note that I will be using Lesley Wheeler's terms "textual voice" and "voiced text" throughout the thesis, to distinguish between the physical and the figurative poetic voice: as Wheeler says, "*Textual voice* refers to voice as a metaphor employed by poets and critics in and about works in print. In contrast I refer to *voiced texts*; these include poems recited, read aloud, performed by authors, actors, students, and others" (2).

The relationship between sound and voice in poetry is often characterised in the following way: poets use language, which in writing is at least part-sonic, including musical elements such as rhythm and rhyme—elements which defined much of pre-twentieth-century English metrical verse[35]—although modern English poets have sometimes tended to eschew sonic aspects in favour of the visual, or in favour of sonic aspects that are less strictly patterned[36]**.** In this sonic context, "voice" becomes a way of thinking about how the sonic aspects of language are shaped by an individual. In contemporary print poetry, language is crafted by an individual author, who inscribes text in sonic patterns onto a page. To this end, Wheeler has emphasised that, "to address sound in poetry is to invoke a body" (23). Susan Stewart has described the relationship between sound, voice, and body in a similar vein:

> Sound production and reception in poetry always carry an image of the particularity of human voices. It is not just sound that we hear; it is the sound of an individual person

[35] Indeed, sound is fundamental to the system of poetic analysis known as prosody, which attempts to "read" poetry, particularly metrical poetry, for its sounds. Lines of poetry are read for their sonic patterns—which syllables are stressed and which unstressed; what rhythm the sequence of stressed and unstressed syllables creates, and where this deviates; and, as a final step, the reason for rhythmic choices, in relation to the meaning of the words (see Shapiro and Beum's *A Prosody Handbook* (1965)).

[36] Derek Attridge places this shift towards the visual in modern poetry in the context of the wider shift from orality to literacy in Western cultures: he writes,

> Once poems started to be circulated in print as well as recited from memory or from a precious manuscript, their look on the page became significant, and the history of English poetry could be written as a history of the gradually increasing importance of its visual dimension—but always as this interacts with its aural dimension. (2)

> speaking sounds. The diffuseness of sound, the problem of invocation and the specific consequences invocation bears regarding the impossibility of closure, our need to attribute source or causality to sounds when we hear them—in the production of lyric all of these amorphous qualities of sound production are traced to the situation of the speaking person. (109)

In short, and returning to the relationship between the "voice" and the author who produced it, I highlight in Eliot's and Blasing's definitions of the lyric the notion of written poetry as a kind of written vocalisation or speech, and the lyric as speech in the poet's own "voice." This notion, though subsequently undermined by postmodern theory, haunts readings of lyric poetry even today; its use in a non-figurative sense—as though the "voice" of the text could be verified to be the poet's own voice, as a physical voice can be—has proved resilient, and this has provoked renewed critical attacks on it (Wheeler 36). Charles Bernstein has argued with a note of frustration that, "Much of the spirit of modernism has been involved in the reassertion of the value of what has come to be fantasised as subjectivity," in relation to "voice" (*Content's Dream* 28-29); he also argues, referring to the old Romantic notion of a "natural" and spontaneously expressed poetry, that,

> The sanctification of the natural comes up in terms of "voice" & has been extended by various excursions into the oral … there is the assumption that poetry matures in the location of "one's own voice" which as often as not is no more than a consistency of style & presentation. "The voice of the poet" is an easy way of contextualising poetry so that it can be more readily understood (indiscriminately plugged into) as listening to someone talk in their distinctive manner (i.e., for the person beyond or underneath the poem); but this theatricalisation does not necessarily do the individual poem any service & has the tendency to reduce the body of a poet's work to little more than personality. (45)

The voice, then, became crucial to the modern understanding of a text's relationship to its author—but it is also a problematic concept. Late-twentieth-century postmodern criticism has been concerned, firstly, with emphasising the figurative nature of textual voice, and secondly, with critiquing and undermining the concept of voice in relation to subjectivity, particularly in writing.

The critique of voice in postmodern criticism and poetics can be better understood through a close reading of a poem on precisely this subject. The poem is called "Voice," and was published by the contemporary American poet Ron Padgett in 2000. I introduce the poem here as it offers a way of grasping ideas around voice, subjectivity, and authorship as they relate first-hand to poets, in an imaginatively engaging way. The poem satirises the idea that the voice of the written lyric poem is

intimately tied to the poet who produced it. Padgett approaches the voice not from the reader's side, but from the writer's, through the creative writing workshop cliché that young writers should try to "find their voice" (Stewart 110)—that is, that they should try to find a style of subjective communication that will come to be identified as uniquely and individually theirs. Padgett's poem begins:

> I have always laughed
> when someone spoke of a young writer
> "finding his voice." I took it
> literally: had he lost his voice?
> Had he thrown it and had it
> not returned? Or perhaps they
> were referring to his newspaper
> the *Village Voice*? He's trying
> to find his *Voice*. (12)

In the middle part of the poem, Padgett expresses surprise that "so many young writers / seem to have found this notion / credible," the notion being that there is a singular voice in writing that belongs to a writer, that they must uncover (12). At the end of the poem, Padgett states, "I hope I never find mine. I / wish to remain a phony the rest of my life" (12). The reference in the concluding lines is to the Romantic preoccupation with naturalness, where a writer strives to distil himself directly into the text, so that it is an extension of him. Padgett decides he would rather reject voice as "a single thing" that may be traced back to the author, and in doing so, "remain a phony" in contemporary critical culture (12). The subtext is that if a poem does not steer the reader safely back to the author, through the textual "voice," then it is a fake. This is essentially a Romantic idea that has proved to be remarkably durable.

2.3 The critique of voice in poetics and literary theory of the 1970s

While the Confessional poetry movement in America in the 1950s and 60s—which included poets such as Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, and W. D. Snodgrass—was indebted to Romanticism and continued cultivating this tradition, postmodern poetics of the 1970s strove to dislodge Romantic ideas. Marjorie Perloff argues that there was a shift in American poetics of this decade, from considering the lyric as an authentic, natural self-expression (which, as Bernstein argues, "comes up in terms of 'voice'" (*Content's Dream* 45)), to considering it as artifice (Perloff *Radical Artifice* 45). Expanding on this, Perloff has argued that, "One of the cardinal principles—

perhaps *the* cardinal principle—of American Language [L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E] poetics (as of the related current in England, usually labelled 'linguistically innovative poetries') has been the dismissal of 'voice' as the foundational principle of lyric poetry" ("Language Poetry" 405). Perloff argues that this shift in poetics is tied to larger theoretical currents around authenticity and authorship:

> The critique of voice, self-presence, and authenticity [in poetics in the late-twentieth century] … must be understood as part of the larger poststructuralist critique of authorship and the humanist subject, a critique that became prominent in the late sixties and reached its height in the U.S. a decade or so later when the Language [L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E] movement was coming into its own. (406-07)

The critique of voice in lyric poetry that Perloff describes here has its roots in theories of the death of the author, in the work of Barthes, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida in the late 1960s and 1970s. This body of theory critiqued authorial presence in a work of art—such as Eliot's notion of the "voice of the poet" speaking through the written lyric poem. In this body of theory, known collectively as "the death of the author" after Barthes' essay of that name, the idea that the textual voice of a lyric poem is a natural extension of the poet is viewed with extreme scepticism. Such theory threw into question not only whether an author's "natural" self-expression was possible in a mediatised text, through language, but also whether there was a unified and locatable "author" or authorial "self" to begin with: these critics "questioned the whole notion of the unified subject, the centre, the self. Individuals cannot be authors, in part, because there is no such centre or integrated core from which one can say a piece of literature issues" (Walker 142).

The issue that is central to this chapter is not whether a single, unified authorial subject exists (which would perhaps be a question for phenomenology or philosophy of mind), but how the poetic text *evokes* some form of subject, which the literary concept of "voice" had previously sought to convey, though it had often done so anachronistically by reverting back to Romantic notions of an enmeshment between the text and the author. These postmodern theorists sought to break the stranglehold that "author" and "voice" had on the text; Barthes was perhaps the most extreme, arguing that, "writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing" ("The Death" 3). In his formulation, the text is detached from the "identity of the body writing" as soon as it is written down, because writing is seen as the moment when the "voice," with whatever connection it may have had with a subject (an authorial body), is divorced from that subject and circulates in the world as an independent textual object. This body of theory is, on a spectrum of authorship criticism, at one extreme end: at the

other extreme lies the biographical criticism of nineteenth century, which insists that one must know the author's life inside out to understand the work, or else—proceeding the other way, from the work back to the author—that fictional experiences/events in a text must have actually happened to the author: in short, that fiction/poetry does not stand outside an author's life (Simion 24).

Barthes argues that the text should not be seen to point to anything outside or beyond itself (such as to an author), and that all we have when we read is the writing before us, nothing beyond; in his description the act of writing appears mechanical, with none of the mystique that the Romantics imbued it with: "the hand, cut off from any voice, borne by a pure gesture of inscription (and not of expression), traces a field without origin—or which, at least, has no other origin than language itself, language which ceaselessly calls into question all origins" ("The Death" 6). For Barthes, "The author becomes pure rhetoric, a 'paper being'" (Simion 56). Barthes' position is reflective of a broader current in postmodernism, which Frederic Jameson has described as a final dismantling of so-called "depth models" of subjectivity, upon which concepts such as self-expression were based; Jameson argues that these depth models include essence/appearance; inside/outside; latent/manifest; authenticity/authenticity; and signified/signifier (*Postmodernism* 12). He argues that in modernism, these depth models continued to bolster the concept of expression, with writing seen to come from inside a person and outside onto a page:

> The very concept of expression presupposes indeed some separation within the subject, and along with that a whole metaphysics of the inside and outside, of the wordless pain within the monad and the moment in which, often cathartically, that "emotion" is then projected out and externalised, as gesture or cry, as desperate communication and the outward dramatisation of inward feeling. (11-12)

"What replaces these various depth models," Jameson argues, "is for the most part a conception of practices, discourses, and textual play … depth is replaced by surface, or by multiple surfaces", which is an echo of Barthes' hand, tracing "a field without origin—or which, at least, has no other origin than language itself" (Jameson 12; Barthes "The Death" 6). In postmodern theory, the "voice," as a manifestation of authorial presence in a written text, is dismissed, as part of the dismantling of depth models of subjectivity, and the reader is advocated to read the text in a "liberated" state that is free of authorial presence. Jameson declares that this is also "the end … of style, in the sense of the unique and the personal, the end of the distinctive individual brush stroke (as symbolised by the emergent primacy of mechanical reproduction)" (15). In summary, postmodernism loudly and emphatically announced the death of the author, as a source entity that served to needlessly constrain reading and interpretation; this also entailed the end of voice—along

with related concepts such as authenticity and naturalness of expression, if those concepts had not already been extinguished[37].

But in a complete rout of a critical trajectory that began a century ago, late-twentieth-century and early-twenty-first-century criticism has begun to express concerns that the death of the author—and the author's irrelevance to reading—was prematurely announced. Sean Burke claims, in *The Death and Return of the Author*, that "everywhere, under the auspices of its absence, the concept of the author remains active, the notion of the return of the author being simply a belated recognition of this critical blindness" (154). And Gérard Genette, focusing on the relationship between author and text in modern and postmodern literary theory, states that such theory cannot efface the author because the author is inextricably linked to the text:

> In its debate with the history of literature, modern criticism has endeavoured for half a century to separate the two concepts of work and author, hoping to make them face each other, both being responsible for so many excesses and useless operations. We are now beginning to realise that the two concepts are related, that all forms of criticism are necessarily influenced by this mutual relationship (10).

Critics have articulated this in different ways—Simion, for example, argues:

> By denying the author's existence, the essayist renders the author all the more present, as a matter of fact. The *absence* and the *place of absence* suggest the opposite—the plenitude, presence, an organising force. Even seen as an exile, the author resembles those *blanks* in modern sculpture, unspeakably more meaningful than *shapes*. The author's absence is suspicious, an interrogative absence, an exile arousing thoughts and inciting us. It incites us to think of the author's absence, exile. Here is, then, one more form of presence, after all. Concealed, murdered like the *father* of psychoanalytic literature, the author is still there. (69; emphases in original)

In other words, while there has been a crisis in twentieth-century literary criticism in regards to authorship, emergent criticism in the wake of poststructuralism posits that the author, and the text's evocation of the author, is inescapable. To bring this back to the lyric poem, this is because Romantic ideas, with their preoccupations with individuality, identity, naturalness of authorial "voice," spontaneity and emotion, have been remarkably difficult to dispel, and have continued to reinforce the relationship between author and text. But while twentieth-century criticism may not have dispensed with the author, it *has* deepened our understanding of lyric-author relations: that

[37] Simion has argued that psychoanalysis remains an exception to this rule, however: "Psychoanalysis refuses to separate the self that writes from the self that lives. On the contrary, they appear connected like a cause to its effect. Consequently, the distinction of the two selves [the textual self and the authorial self] is strongly opposed by psychobiography, psychocriticism, and … even by existential psychoanalysis" (72).

relationship is certainly not as "natural" as the Romantics portrayed it. As Sabine Coelsch-Foisner notes, "What characterises the multi-faceted landscape of postmodern, in fact twentieth-century, theorising about poetry is not a surrender of the self, but a groping for alternative concepts and terms … mask, persona, voice, the author-function" (61).

I will now seek to characterise the lyric poem's contemporary relationship to the author, proceeding from the historical context I have sketched, through romantic, modern and postmodern/poststructuralist literary theory. In doing this, I draw on a set of ideas put forward by critics since the poststructuralist critique of authorship, and argue that authorship is still used as a way in to critically reading lyric poetry—albeit in a manner quite different to earlier ways of reading. Moreover, I argue that "voice" remains a crucial concept to understanding the lyric-author relationship in contemporary poetics. I draw on the following characterisation of lyric-author relations throughout the thesis, when speaking of authorial presence, both in a written lyric text and in a lyric poem broadcast on the radio.

2.4 The author function of the contemporary lyric voice

Foucault's essay "What is an Author?" was published in 1969, two years after Barthes' "The Death of the Author." Foucault both reinforces and revises Barthes' argument. He advocates, as Barthes did, a complete break with the author in the reading process, claiming that an indifference to the speaker of a text was one of "the fundamental ethical practices of contemporary writing [in the late 1960s]" (9). He echoes Barthes and foreshadows Jameson in arguing against the Romantic concept of expression:

> Today's writing has freed itself from the dimension of expression. Referring only to itself, but without being restricted to the confines of its interiority, writing is identified with its own unfolded exteriority. This means that it is an interplay of signs arranged less according to its signified content [i.e. something outside or beyond itself, such as an author] than according to the very nature of the signifier. (10)

However, Foucault argues that while it may be the case that the writing of his time was indifferent to the speaker or author, texts continued to undermine this, most significantly through the use of the author's name, printed with the text—which called up that author in the reader's imagination (12). Foucault also points to internal textual elements that continue to evoke an author figure (he is careful not to say evoke a person, as the Romantics were inclined to), such as the personal pronouns

"I" (especially common in the lyric poem) and "you" (17). Foucault calls this property of a text—its propensity, through signs embedded in it, to evoke an author figure, even in an age that is supposed to be indifferent and often inimical to the author—the "author function" (14). This is a crucial moment in critical discourse around authorship, as it allows the reader to think about how the text may evoke an author without crudely reducing that evocation to a "person," "poet," "self" or even "soul," in the Romantic vein. Foucault is also more pragmatic than Barthes, in that he recognises that the scholarly ideal represented by the "death of the author" may be out of pace with actual, contemporary ways of reading.

Foucault's theory is useful in thinking about which texts evoke author figures, and how they do this. He argues that not all texts have author functions:

> In a civilisation like our own there are a certain number of discourses that are endowed with the "author function," while others are deprived of it. A private letter may well have a signer—it does not have an author; a contract may well have a guarantor—it does not have an author. An anonymous text posted on a wall probably has a writer—but not an author. The author function is therefore characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses within a society. (13-14)

Foucault implies that the author function is active in texts where the source plays strongly on the reader's imagination, through particular signs within it, such the repetition of the pronoun "I" within more literary forms (such as a lyric poem, rather than a private letter): in other words, the author function operates within artistic contexts (17). Foucault also argues that the author functions of different kinds of texts (novels versus poems, for instance) will necessarily operate slightly differently: "We do not construct [imagine] a 'philosophical author' as we do a 'poet,' just as, in the eighteenth century, one did not construct a novelist as we do today" (15). In regards to the lyric poem, the author function has been shaped by centuries of Romantic influence, so that readers of the lyric are led to imagine or construct a single source which resembles a person—whether or not that is actually the "real person" who wrote the poem. Moreover, the author function is guided by the language of the poem: that is, certain elements within the text shape the reader's imagination of the author. Critics have argued this in different ways: Denis Donoghue suggests that what we imagine as the author is a product of the limitations of a text's form (99), while Valéry argued that all authors are the "daughters" of their form, meaning that they are a product of them, rather than standing outside them as a person (Simion 57).

I should highlight here that my analysis of the way texts function to evoke a source is in line with a

critical trajectory—which, as I have shown, developed in the twentieth century through New Criticism, deconstruction, and poststructuralism—that focuses on the text itself. This is somewhat at odds with another critical trajectory that developed in parallel, though slightly later, through Reader Response theory. Reader Response theory advocated (to differing degrees) a focus on the reader as the locus of meaning, and argued that the relationship between the text and the reader—rather than the text and its authorial source—was of primary importance in understanding meaning making and interpretation[38]. Several critics have argued that such criticism arose in direct opposition to the New Critical injunction to focus on the text itself, free of both author and reader (see Beach 15; Tompkins "An Introduction" ix; Tompkins "The Reader" 201). Terry Eagleton describes this shift when he argues that modern literary theory has had three rough stages: "a preoccupation with the author (Romanticism and the nineteenth century); an exclusive concern with the text (New Criticism); and a marked shift of attention to the reader in recent years" (64).

Reader response theory gradually moved from focusing on the relationship between the text and the reader, to the reader's self, and finally (in structuralism) to the "interpretive communities" that the reader is positioned in, which were seen to determine the way that readers make meaning, or *read* (Fish 183-84). As Tompkins writes, "Relocating meaning first in the reader's self and then in the interpretive strategies that constitute it, they assert that meaning is a consequence of being in a particular situation in the world" ("An Introduction" xxv). In contrast to this later theoretical turn, my approach to understanding how the lyric poem evokes a source, through the author function, proceeds from the idea that the text itself invites a particular response from the reader, and although that response need not be taken up completely by the reader, some readings are more likely than others, because of the properties of the text itself. That is, I argue that the text guides the reader's experience of an author figure *within a particular context of reception.* Patricia Clark Smith, a student of New Criticism, has cautioned against assuming that all readers of English poetry are more or less alike, in her essay "Icons in the Canyon": here she describes how her Navajo students in the rural communities of Toadlena and Sanostee came up with readings of poems that were radically different to her Anglo students' readings at the University of New Mexico; Smith says that this experience forced her to revise her adherence to New Critical methods (291). Culler echoes this argument, in structuralist terms, when he writes that, "To read a text as literature is not to make one's mind a *tabula rasa* and approach it without preconceptions; one must bring to it an implicit understanding of the operations of literary discourse which tells one what to look for" (102). By speaking of how the text guides the reader's response, I am assuming for the purposes of this thesis that the reader is Western or Western-educated, and, more particularly to this thesis, resembles the

[38] See Iser; Fish; Culler.

"Australian" listener that ABC Radio National has traditionally targeted—I will address this in more detail in the following two chapters.

With regards to the theoretical debate on the relationship between text and author, I argue that by looking at the author function of a lyric poem, we can examine how it evokes an author figure, without equating that author figure with the poet, a real person, or a self. Foucault describes this aspect of the author function when he argues:

> Everyone knows that, in a novel narrated in the first person, neither the first-person pronoun nor the present indicative refers exactly either to the writer or to the moment in which he writes, but rather to an alter ego whose distance from the author varies, often changing in the course of the work. It would be just as wrong to equate the author with the real writer as to equate him with the fictitious speaker; the author function is carried out and operates in the scission itself, in this division and this distance. (17)

Likewise, Simion argues that, "Out of a writer's works we may, at best, infer a biography of the creative mind (a *figure of the spirit*, in the terms of more recent criticism), a biography that feeds primarily on the imagination" (137). And Valéry has argued that the author, as evoked by the text, was "not anyone" [i.e. not a person] (*Collected Works V.7* 20), and that "it's *my error* that plays the author" (*Collected Works V.14* 562). This may also be put the following way: the reader's imagination, through an "error" of reading (since the author does not exist in the text, nor have any real, tangible relationship to the text, as poststructuralist critics so persuasively argued), creates an author figure.

Besides the first-person pronoun, which Foucault cites, what other properties of the text serve to evoke an author figure? Critics such as Donoghue, Susan Stewart and Wheeler have gone part of the way toward answering this question, by focusing on the sonic properties of written lyric poetry, including the rhetorical voice. This focus on sound (and voice) in poetry goes against the grain of the poststructuralist dismissal of the author, as Wheeler notes: "it is difficult to discuss sound in poetry without invoking someone's body, and the attendant implications of presence and identity are troubling for readers schooled in poststructuralist critique"[39] (21). The concept of voice in lyric poetics—which combines an attentiveness to sound and source—is fundamental to the author function of the lyric. The route that the reader's imagination takes, from text to author, passes through voice, which is a sonic attribute. Voice in a written lyric poem—the speaking "I"—is sustained by language, which is part-sonic, and the sound of the language suggests a physical voice,

[39] See also Stewart (109).

which belongs to a speaking body. Wheeler suggests this path I am describing between text and author figure, and the role of voice in triggering the author function, when she writes:

> Poetic voice is, among other things, a metaphor: it refers to literary qualities that evoke physical qualities. Specifically, the syntax, vocabulary, and visual characteristics of a printed poem may suggest the timbre/pitch/volume/intonational rhythms of a specific person's voice, often the poet's own, but sometimes the imagined voice of a persona or character. (38)

Thus the text's sonic properties are crucial to understanding the author function of a lyric poem. Wheeler also refers here to the text's visual characteristics, but I would argue that they are secondary to the text's sonic characteristics, which more directly evoke a physical voice and therefore an originating source.

Donoghue's concept of "epireading" is also useful for thinking about how the author function operates through sound and voice. Donoghue argues that epireading is a way of reading in which the reader imagines something beyond the writing, namely a voice speaking the writing: he observes that "epi" comes from the Greek *epos* meaning speech or utterance (98). He highlights that this way of reading is part of an age-old Western tradition of considering speech as prior to—and superior to—writing (101); Derrida called this a tradition of "phonocentrism"[40]. Through history, speech may be said to be prior to writing in that, as a civilisation, we could speak before we could write, and it is superior to writing in its manifestation of "presence." Donoghue argues, moreover, that these statuses of speech are aptly demonstrated in the Bible, where the spoken word is considered as the ultimate manifestation of God's presence: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (93). He notes:

> Logocentric terms are founded on the assumption that 'in the beginning' was a word which was itself an act, an act of speech in which the divinely creative power uttered itself and the world, as one breath. Action and speech; the act of speech: these terms are privileged in the West. Epireading is reading which proceeds under these auspices, transposing the written words on the page into a somehow corresponding human situation of persons, voices, characters, conflicts, conciliations. (101)

He clarifies that this transposition is not from poem to individual person, but from poem to author

[40] Derrida, in short, critiqued the "phonocentrism" or sound-centredness of Western metaphysics, its obsession with a speaking source behind words and the way that this speaking source seemed more present than text; he also called this logic of reading/hearing *through* an inferior representation (written words) to the authorial source "logocentrism": for a concise summary of this see Culler 91; Norris 85-87. Having deconstructed the speech/text binary, and the obsessive focus on the authorial voice, Derrida argues that presence-in-voice is "no longer… the absolute matrix form of being but rather… a 'particularisation' and 'effect'" produced by a system of inter-dependent signs (147). Without being pulled too much into the gravitational field of this critique—for reasons of scope—I launch off from Derrida's argument that the presence of voice—in any medium—is an effect. I examine this effect in *Poetica's* poetry readings.

figure: "Epireading is not willing to leave written words as it finds them on the page; the reader wants to restore the words to a source, a human situation involving speech, character, personality, and destiny construed as having a personal form ... We read to meet the speaker. *Not the speaker 'absolutely,' or as he might be if separated from the poem, but the speaker in the limitations of his formal circumstances*" (99; my emphasis). He argues, in short, that when we read a poem we hear a speaking voice, which manifests the author to us, but it is not quite the author as he or she is "in real life" but a version that is given to us by the language of the poem ("the limitations of his formal circumstances"). Donoghue's theory of epireading reaches back to before the poststructuralist moment of the death of the author, and retains voice as a useful concept in thinking about how the author function operates. His theory also takes on board the poststructuralist critique of self-expression and discounts the idea that the lyric poem is tied to a real person. Following Donoghue and Foucault, I posit that the author function operates through the figure of voice—as a rhetorical construct of the text, often signalled by the pronoun "I," combined with sonic properties of the poem's language which evoke a physical voice, calling up in the reader's imagination a speaking author figure which does not, and cannot, correspond precisely to the actual authorial body/self/person who wrote the text.

In summary, then, the author function of a written lyric poem is activated by its voice, which works to manifest authorial presence through sound and through the rhetorical "I". This theory of the author function of lyric poetry is historically sensitive, as it carries the imprint of Romantic, modern and postmodern thought about the lyric poem's relationship to the lyric poet. I have argued that because of the influence of Romanticism—and the Romantic idea that the lyric poem is a "natural" and "spontaneous" extension of the poet—the voice of the lyric poem, triggered by a speaking "I," often calls up a single source. Twentieth-century criticism has, however, undermined the notion that the imagined source must be a person or self, which frees up criticism to think about personas or masks that this figurative voice may create. The author function of the written lyric poem goes hand-in-hand with voice, which is a figurative pointer to a source that speaks the text; that source may be imagined as being defined, or as more nebulous, but it is singular. Voice is fundamental to my subsequent analyses of authorial presence in lyric poetry on radio. In the next chapter, I examine how the figurative voice of the lyric poem, which triggers the text's author function, is remediated for radio in the physical (mediatised) voices of poets and actors reading lyric poetry.

2.5 Voice and nationhood in lyric poetry

Given the thesis's focus on the adaptation of the lyric voice in *Poetica,* including the layering in of images of national identity, it is pertinent to note that representations of national identity have conventionally been the domain of epic rather than lyric poetry. Epic poetry has historically represented battles with foreign peoples and landscapes that demonstrate an archetypal national courage, and form the basis for celebratory national identities. In contrast to the lyric, which represents authorial interiority, the epic articulates exteriority: in epic there is an omniscient narrator recounting historic events that evoke national pride. Homer's representation of the Trojan war in the *Illiad* is a famous example of this. In Australia, A.B. "Banjo" Paterson's "The Man From Snowy River" is a classic modern example of epic poetry that articulates a sense of national identity. The main character of Paterson's long poem is a pioneering stockman of the outback. The poem's representation of a robust masculine character, one who works on the land with skill and strength, represents (and has in the past been lauded as) an ideal of Australian identity. The national importance of this poem is evident in the fact that the poem and poet still feature on the Australian ten dollar note[41]. In my introduction I noted other nationalist verse in Australia, and some of this—such as Dorothea Mackellar's "My Country"—is in the lyric rather than the epic mode. There are also many Indigenous lyric poets, including Oodgeroo Noonuccal and Jack Davis, for whom relationships to land and a sense of identity are fundamentally entwined. Lyric poetry can and does articulate a feeling of connection to the land, and in this sense it can speak of a love of nation, as embodied in land. Indeed, Martin Harrison identified an affinity with land as a defining feature of modern Australian poetry. In *Who Wants to Create Australia?* (2004) he claimed,

> … it makes sense to say that Australian poetry is different from the work of many (not all) modern American and British writers because a disproportionately large number of Australian poets intuit that the theme of local feeling, place and placement is important to them and their readers. What such poetry deals with is not just a feeling about landscape or land in a romantic or nostalgic way. One thing that sets Australian work apart is a prevalent sense that "country" (definitely not countryside, nearly yet not quite what Americans and Europeans call land and landscape) is something you are part of, something which changes your senses of self and placement and which requires a change in envisioning if you are to see it and understand it. (54)

Ross Gibson traces this deep investment in rural landscapes back to the early settlers:

[41] There was a popular film adaptation of the poem in 1982, infused with national pride, called *The Man From Snowy River*: this also demonstrates the poem's enduring relevance to national identity discourse in Australia.

> The settlers brought with them an attitude about the otherness of 'empty' space. They arrived on the coastline and looked inland. Behind them, distantly, was safety and truth, because behind them was the world that their civilisation had ranged over and written over. In front of them, immediately, was an enormity with which they felt compelled to relate. (*South of the West* 9)

Land and landscape have remained central to Australian narrative art, including poetry: indeed, Gibson notes that, "Because it has been presented as so tantalising and so essentially unknowable-yet-lovable, the land has become the structural centre of the nation's myths of belonging" (67).

While it is far more common for epic to serve a nationalist function, lyric poetry (including modern Australian poetry) can and does articulate a love of, or deep engagement with, "country." Indeed, *Poetica*'s engagements with national identity were at times confined to selecting poems that engage with this theme—rarely in an overtly nationalist way, and more often through subtle and affectionate representations of Australia as a place—which I acknowledge in chapter four. However, it is my broader intention to show how lyric poetry featured by *Poetica*, poetry that revels in interiority without being overtly nationalist, may nevertheless be infused with images of national identity through the process of adaptation, as well as in the commentary that frames it. In these instances, the speaking "I" of the lyric poem may be made to speak for the category of the nation as well as the individual.

3. Authorial Presence in *Poetica*

3.1 The notion of authorial presence in poetry on the radio

On *Poetica,* poems were sometimes read by the poet themselves, and sometimes by an actor. If, in radio poetry programs, authorial presence is embodied in the recorded voice reading poetry, how should we differentiate between these two kinds of readings? I devote this chapter to addressing this question. I also consider how other elements in *Poetica*'s episodes—namely the music and sound effects layered under poetry readings, and the commentary which frames the readings—affect authorial presences in the radio voice reading lyric poetry.

By locating authorial presence in the recorded voice reading the poem, I extend upon my definition of authorial presence in lyric poetry on the page, and upon Michel Foucault's argument that only certain discourses in our society are imbued with an author function. Applying Foucault's text-focused argument to electronic communications media, we do not, for instance, use the term "author" to refer to someone speaking on the phone about their day (Foucault 13-14). While we might say "the poet/author Vicki Viidikas is on the line for you," Foucault would dispute the notion that Viidikas's voice in conversation manifests authorial presence, and I follow his lead in attributing authorial presence to the art. Only certain forms of literary communication, like poetry, have author functions in the Foucaultian sense[42]. Therefore, when I talk of authorial presence, I refer to the voiced poems in *Poetica*. In this chapter I use the notion of authorial presence to frame not textual voice, as I did in the first chapter, but voiced text, looking at how the recorded and broadcast voice reading lyric poetry manifests authorial presence for its contemporary audience.

My approach to authorial presence in radio sound combines a media studies focus, on human presence in the disembodied radio voice, with a literary studies focus on authorial presence in the textual voice of the lyric poem. This is an unusual conceptual intertwinement because of the two disciplines' disparate approaches to presence: in media scholarship there is a tradition of looking at how developments in sound recording technologies have enhanced the experience of human (rather than authorial) presence through mediation[43]. This has been catalysed by a push, by producers and

[42] And lyric poetry features a particularly strong sense of authorial presence, of all literary forms; I argued this in the first chapter.

[43] While media scholarship does not deal with authorial presence, it does look at authorship in auteur theory in film studies; this body of theory posits that the director is more properly the author of the film, rather than the writer of the screenplay. Radio studies has also tended to overlook authorial presence as a phenomenon in the broadcast of literary works. Studies of radio drama do look at the adaptation of literary works to radio, but without specifically examining

consumers of sound reproduction technologies, for greater sonic fidelity—of wanting to hear embodied utterances more clearly, and with less of a sense of a mediating technology[44]. A major focus in this field of scholarship is on how refinements to the quality of voice recordings (on radio, CD and phonographs) enhance the experience of human presence, in media which separate sound from its source. This includes aesthetic techniques such as miking up the voice closely, so that it sounds more intimate. It also includes technological improvements to radio, which early on—by the 1930s—resulted in less static intervening between the listener and the radio voice, thereby enhancing a sense of human presence in the medium.

By contrast, the literary studies focus on authorial presence treats the presence of an author in a poem or other literary text as a concept. As we saw in the previous chapter, authorial presence was critiqued by Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, and seen as oppressive to the act of reading—this is in contrast to Romanticism's affirmation of the same phenomenon. In literary theory around the time of the death of the author in the 1970s, there was less of an interest in how authorial presence is manifested in a literary work and more of an impulse to debunk the concept altogether[45]. So while literary studies has critiqued authorial presence as a constraining and oppressive element, in media studies, mediated human presence has been appraised as a phenomenon that may be refined in sound recording/broadcast technologies, as they develop technically and aesthetically[46]. My focus here is on authorial presence as a literary subset of human presence in radio; I use the notion of authorial presence that was critiqued in literary scholarship of the 1970s onwards, but without taking the same philosophical line of critique. I treat authorial presence as a real phenomenon in *Poetica,* and my analysis of it draws on media scholarship's interest in analysing the aesthetic factors that facilitate the hearing of human presence in radio. But for the media studies' "human" I substitute the literary studies "authorial", to mean the artful presence of the author in a literary work.

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authorial presence; this could be because authorial voice is diffused across many characters in radio drama, unlike the strong authorial presence in the single voice of the lyric poem.

[44] On this, see Jonathan Sterne's *The Audible Past* (2003) and Jacob Smith's *Vocal Tracks: Performance and Sound Media* (2008).

[45] This is not to deny that much late-twentieth-century scholarship on lyric poetry—which is quite saturated with the author's presence—continued to look at how effects of authorial presence are produced by poetic language; such scholarship goes against the grain of the poststructuralist critique of authorial presence. However, as my term "authorial presence" and my use of it comes from the poststructuralist era, via Foucault, I present this literary critical trajectory in contrast to its contemporary media studies trajectory.

[46] Media studies and performance studies have not been immune to the Derridean critique of presence, however. The spectre of the Derridean critique looms large when I speak of how radio sound manifests authorial presence, without commenting on the philosophical worth of a medium striving for this. Fully engaging with this debate would make for quite a different thesis. I am instead interested in tracing the aesthetic components that shape authorial presence in radio: the voice and, in *Poetica,* non-verbal sounds which dramatise this presence.

3.2 Differentiating *Poetica's* representations of authorial presence from its peers

Poetica was unusual among radio poetry programs in the English speaking world because of the way it adapted poetry into radio sound. Operating under the aegis of the Drama department in ABC Radio National, and with the use of actors and creative sound editing, it sought not just to transmit poetry through the broadcast voice, but to adapt it to the sonic materiality of radio. Contemporary radio and podcast poetry programs have tended to focus mostly on the poet's voice: I will describe some of these programs here in order to show, by comparison, how *Poetica* differed from them aesthetically—and, consequently, how authorial presence was represented differently in *Poetica*.

One of the most well-known of *Poetica*'s peers is the Chicago-based *Poetry* magazine[47]. *Poetry* produces regular podcasts that feature poets from the current print issue reading and speaking about their poems (occasionally someone with a connection to the poet reads instead), while the hosts discuss their work[48]. This focus on the poet's voice is common among twentieth-century radio poetry as well as contemporary poetry podcasts. For instance, George Orwell's "Poetry and the Microphone" (1958), Laurence Breiner's "Caribbean Voices on the Air" (2003), Lesley Wheeler's *Voicing American Poetry* (2008), and Derek Furr's *Recorded Poetry and Poetic Reception from Edna Millay to the Circle of Robert Lowell* (2010) all describe radio programs—broadcast in the Caribbean, India, the USA and the UK, through the twentieth century—that exclusively feature the poet reading their own work. *The New Yorker* poetry podcast also features the poet, but in a slightly different format: the magazine's poetry editor interviews a contributor about their poem, and also invites them to speak about a poem by another contributor. The *Guardian Books* poetry podcast is similar in its focus on conversation among poets, and features one poet discussing another poet's work. BBC Radio 4's *Poetry Please,* hosted by the poet and playwright Roger McGough, is distinct from radio/podcast poetry programs focused on the poet's voice. Broadcast in the UK since 1979, *Poetry Please* is structured around listener requests for poems, which are then read by actors—usually famous actors, such as Judi Dench and Ian McKellen.

Like *Poetry Please, Poetica* often used actors, which affected the way authorial presence was represented on air[49]; I examine the effect of actors' readings on authorial presence later in this chapter. But *Poetica* also featured music and sound effects that were layered under poetry readings

[47] *Poetry* magazine was established in 1912 and describes itself as "the oldest monthly devoted to verse in the English-speaking world" (Poetry Foundation par. 1). It is published by the large, non-profit Poetry Foundation in Chicago.
[48] It is a fast moving, magazine style program—multiple poets are featured in the same podcast.
[49] However, unlike *Poetry Please,* when *Poetica* used actors it rarely used famous ones, so that there was little chance of the voice's recognisability overshadowing the poem.

in quite expressive ways to create a sense of mood and/or context, as well as interviews with the poet, or with experts of the poet's work. Michael Ladd writes about these distinguishing features of his program in "Notes Towards a Radio Poetics" (2011). Ladd's article is mainly concerned with defining and advocating "poetic" radio production, which deploys radio sound in ways that mimic some of the musicality and lyricality of poetry. Some of this poetic radio has occurred in avant-garde radio art, such as the Neue Hörspiel or new audio play tradition in Germany in the 1960s[50]. While this particular style of radio production is not my primary focus here[51], Ladd's description of poetic radio does cover some of the sonic features of *Poetica* that distinguish it from other English-language poetry broadcasts/podcasts: "Its [poetic radio's] elements are spoken words, non-verbal sounds, music, and silence, and its grammar includes mixes, cuts, fades and special effects" (163). In *Poetica* music and non-verbal sounds are layered into the poetry reading, rather than used sparingly between poems as episode dividers or as punctuation, as in the *Poetry* and *Guardian* podcasts. All of these features mean that authorial presence was represented in unusual and complex ways in *Poetica.*

Ladd elaborated on these aspects of *Poetica* in an interview I conducted with him in May 2016:

> We kept it pretty concrete and image rich, so the listener could see something in their mind's eye from what they heard. *Poetica* privileged the ear. We were actively trying to develop "radio poetry" not just documenting poetry on radio, so we were looking for material that would work well in a mix of sound, music, readings and interview. (Varatharajan "Interview" 1)

I highlight here the statement that *Poetica* "privileged the ear," by "actively trying to develop 'radio poetry' not just documenting poetry on radio". What Ladd is describing is a process of adaptation, where a range of radio sound is used to represent poetry on air, so that what is broadcast is aesthetically distinct from the experience of reading poetry on the page, or of going to a live reading. In the penultimate section of this chapter, "Authorial presence dramatised," I detail *Poetica*'s adaptations of print poetry into the full spectrum of radio sound, with reference to Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation—but here I hone in on the radio voice reading lyric poetry as the most important vehicle for authorial presence in *Poetica*'s adaptations.

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[50] See Kahn and Whitehead's *Wireless Imagination* (1994) and Street's *The Poetry of Radio: The Colour of Sound* (2012).

[51] Ladd is interested in delineating poetic radio sound from other kinds of radio sound, and notes that, "Radio poems are relatively rare, and most have sprung up within radio features, documentaries or drama departments. But even within what would be described as features or dramas, not poems, you can find 'poetic radio'" ("Notes"166). His focus is on sound used "poetically" in the radio medium, as a specialised kind of radio production that requires a sensitivity to sound rhythm and "sound rhyme" (Ladd 167). My focus is instead on how poetry on the radio manifests authorial presence—this may exclude poetic radio programs that do not feature poetry as content. To speak of authorial presence in radio necessarily implies speaking of poetry, rather than the poetic more generally, as I have argued with reference to Foucault.

3.3 Authentic authorial presence? Critical contexts for the voice of the poetry reading on radio

If authorial presence is represented in the radio voice reading poetry, how does the chosen reading voice affect the authorial presence that is given to the listener? Do some kinds of voices diminish a sense of authorial presence, while others seem to deepen or enhance it? *Poetica* often used actors, which prompts the question of how that mode of presentation affects the authorial presence of printed lyric poems—or for that matter, how the poet reading their own work affects the authorial presence of printed lyric poems. There is a small but rich body of scholarship on recorded poetry that offers a way of addressing these aspects of lyric poetry readings. I use two texts from this area—Furr's *Recorded Poetry and Poetic Reception from Edna Millay to the Circle of Robert Lowell* (2010) and Wheeler's *Voicing American Poetry: Sound and Performance from the 1920s to the Present* (2008)—to advance my analysis of how authorial presence is represented in the poet's voice, compared to a voice that is not the poet's[52].

The idea that authorial presence in a recorded poetry reading is only authentic when a poet reads their own work figures often in scholarship. Furr—in his analysis of audience responses to recorded poetry in America through the twentieth century, focusing especially on the 1920s and 30s—argues that "to listen to poetry in the poet's voice is to seek a connection with the poet" (83). A useful study of this notion is found in Jacob Smith's *Spoken Word: Postwar American Phonograph Records* (2008). Smith examines the huge success of a vinyl LP that the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas recorded for Caedmon Records in 1952; it had sold 400,000 copies by 1960 (J. Smith *Spoken Word* 50). Smith attributes the success of the record to both the magnetism of Dylan Thomas's voice and his public profile, as people flocked to his public readings to see and hear the famous poet (70). He points to the authenticity of Thomas's recording in the rationale he gives for the recording's popularity, citing one of the founders of Caedmon records, Marianne Mantell, on why people were so interested in such recordings. Mantell claimed that, "[by listening to the poet reading,] you get an insight into the poem as the poet wrote it," which suggests that the poet's voice is capable of conveying true artistic intent,' through its particular intonation, pace, rhythm, and emphasis (J.

[52] These texts offer ways of thinking about the aesthetic dimensions of *Poetica*'s constructions of authorial presence—even if the national frameworks and historical periods for their studies are quite different. Their case studies are from the 1920s and 1930s in America, but the debates they trace, about which voice is most authentic, and what happens to a lyric poem when it is read aloud and recorded in different voices, are pertinent to my analysis in this chapter. Moreover, they look at the aural and mediated reception of poetry in English, in a highly literate society, in ways that are useful in the context of Australia at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Smith 65). The poet's voice is seen to hold true intention in that the poet knows the meaning of their work, and can convey that meaning in the way he or she reads. Because the meaning of lyric poetry is so entwined with its representations of subjectivity, an accompanying idea here is that the poet's physical voice not only conveys true intention, but also true authorial presence. As the poet's physical voice maps expressions of subjectivity in the lyric poem onto their own body, it seems to offer both an insight into authorial intent, and an enhanced experience of authorial presence in the poem, to the listener. Mantell states this explicitly in a company advertisement she placed in the *New York Times* in 1969, where she claims that Caedmon's poetry records give audiences an understanding "not only of the poem, but of the poet himself":

> Since a poet hears a poem in his mind's ear as he writes it, he knows how he wants it to sound. And you too will hear how the poem ought to sound—with a new understanding not only of the poem, but of the poet himself—when you listen to the great poets of our age reading from their own works on *Caedmon Records*[53]. (J. Smith 65)

This enhanced authorial presence is being framed here as most authentic: "how the poem ought to sound". It is pertinent to note, however, that in such advertisements Caedmon Records promotes the authenticity of presence in a *version* of a poem that the poet delivered in the studio. My point here is that each time a poet reads their work the performance is likely to be different, so there can never be a most authentic version of the spoken and recorded poem. A poem can also come to mean something different to the poet as their engagement with it changes over a lifetime; a poem once read sincerely may later be read ironically, or with less of a sense in the voice of an emotional attachment to the poem. This is perhaps another way of saying that each reading of a poem is an adaptation of it: the real conceptual puzzle then is to consider what the adaptation does with the poem, rather than considering one reading of the poem as intrinsically more authentic[54].

Poet and critic Charles Bernstein claims, in a poststructuralist vein, that "the poetry reading enacts the poem not the poet; it materialises the text not the author; it performs the work not the one who

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[53] Alessandro Mistrorigo has likewise argued, much more recently (2014), that recordings of the poet reading their work present a unique opportunity for understanding and interpreting their work:

> When an author reads one of her/his poems aloud, the written text is given a specific acoustic form through the gesture of the voice that emerges from the individual that produced it. The bond between that particular individual that is articulating through his/her own voice-gesture as a specific text, and the text itself is quite unique, and under these conditions, the author's acoustic expression or performance—her/his voice *vocalising* a specific text of hers/his—could have a crucial role in understanding that specific text—as well as perhaps her/his creative practice and poetic work… why not use authors' voices performing their texts to open up other paths of interpretation? (13)

[54] "Authentic" authorial presence is arguably not even present in the poem on the page, as each reader will read the poem differently in their mind, with different emphases and cadences. In that sense, the notion that the source text contains authentic authorial presence is also problematic, as the text is only realised when read (aloud or silently), and each person's rendition of it will be different to the next. I say more about adaptation's theoretical articulations in the penultimate section.

composed it" ("Introduction" 13). However, Furr states that authentic presence is always at issue for the listener of poetry—whether live or on record (9). Furr looks at a range of recorded poetry, including poetry that was recorded in the studio for commercial release by the likes of Caedmon in the US, and for Random House's *Voice of the Poet* series; poetry recorded for the Library of Congress's *Twentieth Century Poetry in English* project, under direction from the modernist poet Robert Lowell; poetry recorded in the studio for archives such as PennSound, The Academy of American Poets, and the UK Poetry Archive; poetry recorded and broadcast on radio by Edna Vincent Millay (NBC) and Dylan Thomas (BBC); and recordings made at Elizabeth Bishop's poetry readings. Reflecting on all of these, he argues that, "the poem in the voice of its author will speak to us in a way that another's reading would not" (14). He is cognisant of the poststructuralist critique of authorial voice that he is going against, but states, "post-structuralist scepticism of presence notwithstanding" (2), that:

> My research in the audio archive suggests… that the 'presence of the poet' is always at issue, at least for listeners and usually for the reader herself; that poetry readings (and, in different ways, recordings) materialise both text and author in ways that complicate twentieth-century literary critical insistences upon separating the two; that many important poetry performances in the modern era have been very much about 'the one who composed' the work as well as the work itself. (9)

He notes that in the English-speaking world there is a cultural interest in the poet as well as the poem. He cites as evidence the overwhelmingly positive response that the poet's voice, recorded and broadcast, elicited from its listeners: this comes across most strongly in the chapter on Edna Vincent Millay's radio broadcasts. In short, he argues that the particular timbre and intonation of the poet reading their own work manifests authorial presence in ways that another's reading would not: "the poet's voice is unique, her performance—whether artful, natural, or poorly executed—embodies the work and helps us understand it and connect to it, which is analogous to understanding and connecting to the poet herself" (2). Curtis Fox, in a *Poetry* podcast called "Actors vs Poets," agrees: "When you see a poet read his own work, or read her own work, you're sort of studying that person, and that's the element that I think people have hungered for in trying to experience the poet's own voice" (Fox and Share 9'23–9'35).

In contrast to the warm responses to a poet reading their own work, Fox notes there is a contemporary tendency to denigrate actors' performances of poetry:

> There's something [about an actor reading poetry] that feels off to us now, precisely because we do associate acting with a kind of schooled insincerity, that they're inhabiting a role, and therefore are adding a kind of middleman to the equation. (9'05–9'23)

For Furr, such readings by actors constitute "voice impersonation":

> Impersonation inevitably involves the reinscription of another's voice… Voice impersonation makes… [an] attempt at transparency through close imitation… On these terms, the ideal voice impersonation would be an echo, the inevitable distortion kept to a minimum by the quality of the poet's performance [as opposed to someone else's, where the distortion would supposedly be greater]. (115-16)

This suggests that *every* reading produces a "distortion" of the source text (but that the poet's does this to a lesser degree). Scholarship on audiobooks, however, invites thinking about how actors' readings may enhance rather than degrade authorial presence. In an introduction to his edited collection on audiobooks (2011), the first of its kind in media scholarship, Matthew Rubery critiques the notion that "the audiobook speaker interferes with the reader's reception of the text[55]" (13). Instead of being focused on interference and distortion, Rubery asks us to consider how the physical reading voice is overlayed onto the textual voice. Sara Knox addresses this perceptively in the same collection when she argues, following James Jesson (51), that when books are performed aloud, whether by the author or by a professional voice actor, a "doubling of authorship" occurs (128). That is, the performing voice lays claim to possessing the text, which is simultaneously claimed by the authorial voice[56]. The doubling of authorship that occurs in vocal performances of literature means that there are two presences in the voice: the author's (textual), and the orator's (physical). I suggest that this is the case in both poets' and actors' readings, which both offer versions of the text in the physical voice. The critic's task, then, is to consider how the grain of the actor's voice—to use Barthes' term (*Image* 181)—may produce a doubling of authorship that works with, rather than against, the authorial presence of the print poem.

3.3.1 The production of authenticity in the poet's voice

In Furr there is an uncritical conflation between the textual voice of the poem and the physical voice of the poet: "In an audio recording, the voice of the poet, regardless of her 'command of vocal variety' and however engineered by technology, is the *same* as the [textual] voice of the poem" (Furr 40). He considers the "engineer[ing]" of the voice "by technology" as being unable to affect

[55] The text that Rubery refers to here is the novel, which has a different sense of authorship attached to it. While the novel does not feature such an intense sense of authorial presence (its authorial voice is often dispersed across several characters, even when there is one narrator), scholarly work on its adaptation through vocal performance nevertheless offers useful ways for reflecting on mediated performances of lyric poetry.

[56] Anca Micheti has argued in her phenomenological approach to radio listening, "Images for the Inner Eye" (2005), that "the [radio] voice functions as a metonymy of the speaker's body and personality" (251). Knox problematises this in the case of the performance of literary texts on record, where there is a second voice (the authorial voice of the text) represented in the performer's voice.

the equality of authorial presence in the two media. The effect of voice editing on a sense of authorial presence ought not to be dismissed so completely, however. A listener may experience a voice recording that has had distracting noises edited out—the scrape of a book stand, or a mysterious throaty sound in the midst of a pause, present in the moment of recording—as being more authentic, because it feels that they are closer to the poet, listening to their "naked" voice. In the absence of the poet's body, these noises can seem to adulterate their presence, whereas without these noises the voice can, paradoxically (because such noises indicate a body's real movements in space, in front of recording equipment), feel "pure," much easier for the listener to absorb. As Ross Gibson puts it, "the [recorded] voice can be made to sound 'natural'" ("Carbon" 219). The aesthetic effects of the manipulation of a recording are overlooked in Furr's analysis.

Another more prosaic problem for the argument that the poet's voice is the most authentic one, and the one most pregnant with authorial presence, has to do with the nature of radio listening. That is, listeners of *Poetica* did not always know they were hearing an actor's voice. This would occur if they tuned in midway through an episode, and missed the opening announcements specifying who is reading the poetry; they may then have mistaken one voice for the other. In this case the experience of authenticity depends on the belief that the voice you are hearing belongs to the poet. The often haphazard nature of radio listening reveals some problems with asserting that one voice is intrinsically more authentic and necessarily carries a greater sense of authorial presence to the audience.

It is important to frame this preference for the poet's voice in historical terms—for the poet's voice has not always been desired as the ideal reading voice, but has been privileged at certain moments in Western history. Wheeler points out that in nineteenth-century England and America, poetry was often read by non-poets, as a way of practising the art of elocution, or persuasive public speaking, and not to revel in a supposedly maximal presence (4). This is striking in the context of Romanticism, with its common enmeshment between poem and poet: one might presume that the poet's voice was preferred in this culture, when there was such an emphasis on the person behind the poem. The fact that poets were not expected to read their own work during the Romantic era shows that the privileging of the physical voice of the poet was in fact a later development. Don Share, a senior editor of the Chicago-based *Poetry* magazine, has echoed Wheeler's observation of a cultural shift in regard to who should read poetry. In "Actors vs Poets", Don Share claims that, "About a hundred years ago what people would naturally have expected is that actors were good at reciting things, including poems" (Fox and Share 3'24–3'33). In this vein, Wheeler points out that early-twentieth-century modernist poets were schooled that the poet would rarely be the best oral

interpreter of her own work[57] (4). She notes the paradox, in the twentieth century, of the developing trend towards the poet reading, in the context of the "high modernists' theories of impersonality," which (somewhat like later post-structuralist theory, and moving away from Romantic notions of the poem-poet relationship) advocated a focus on the work as separate from the author who produced it (13).

The cultural development that gave rise to this twentieth-century preference for the poet's voice, Wheeler argues, was the spread of mass communication technologies such as radio and television, which she calls "distancing technologies"[58] (13). She does not mention that older technologies of reproduction, such as the gramophone and film, had already been operating in this way—separating the performer from the audience in space and time—as Walter Benjamin observes in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (219). However, while it is true that film, gramophone, and radio separated the actor/musician/poet from a direct encounter with the audience, performers could in fact be brought *closer* to that audience, through the microphone and the close-up film shot, thereby achieving intimacy at a distance. But Wheeler is thinking specifically of the disembodiment inherent in these technologies: in the case of radio, sound is severed from its physical source in the body. Radio cut the audience off from the physical, bodily source of utterances, and for Wheeler it is in this context that the quest for maximal authorial presence in the poet's voice becomes meaningful:

> As its audience shrank, poetry became even more intensely an art of authenticity, representing the opposite of the polished, distant televised world … Poetry readings as manifestations of authentic authorial presence, rather than as demonstrations of vocal skill, would become the mainstream mode of aural dissemination. Personality would become central as distancing technologies otherwise took hold of American culture. (12-13)

Like Furr, Wheeler cites Millay as an exemplary performer of personality: she "was among the most famous and successful poet-performers in this period [the 1920s to the 1930s]; in the United States, Vachel Lindsay, Amy Lowell, Robert Frost, and Carl Sandburg also won particularly large and appreciative audiences" (Wheeler 43). Both critics argue that Millay was very adept at

[57] She also notes that in the English speaking world, in the 1920s and 1930s, readers often read poetry aloud privately, in contrast to the dominant later phenomenon of the poet reading their work publically (4).

[58] Paul Zumthor has written perceptively on this phenomenon of distance in radio, drawing on Walter Ong's concept of "secondary orality"—that is, oral utterances that come via electronic mass media:

> [In radio] the spatiotemporal mobility of the message increases the distance between its production and consumption. The physical presence of the speaker is eliminated; what remains is the fixed echo of a voice… The senses alone are a concern, in service to a distant perception: sound and, for film and television, sight. Thus a lag time, a displacement of the communicative oral act, is produced. (19)

embodying her readings with presence, thereby fulfilling modern audience expectations[59]. Wheeler notes that Millay was already well known as a masterful and theatrical performer of her poetry on stage (she dressed in a range of attire, and went into character roles while reading her poetry), attributing her success on radio partly to her prior reputation (47). However, she also notes that, "Radio voiced poetry, as families and other small groups did, right into the living room, and Millay capitalised on that intimacy, scaling her trained voice down for domestic spaces, seeking a tone that mediated between publicity and privacy" (47). Moreover, Wheeler claims: "Millay… reveals intimacy as an illusion in any medium. Unlike many modernists and postmodernists, however, she regards this fragile *illusion of presence* as poetry's (and radio's) *sine qua non"* (47; former emphasis mine).

In crafting an illusion of heightened presence for her listeners, Millay cannily pitched her reading to suit the medium—as Wheeler notes, "Millay cultivated the potential intimacy of the situation. She seems to have understood the irony of a disembodied voice: a radio reading shorn of theatrical spectacle, strangely enough, brings the poet closer to her audience than when she recites work in a crowded hall" (55). Importantly, she notes that Millay had theatre training (56). I flag here the possibility that a strong sense of authorial presence in Millay's voice may have to do with the artfulness of her vocal performance, and her ability to adapt her voice to suit the medium. Not all poets, when faced with a microphone, could make their voice warm and resonant. It required pitching the voice in a particular way, and opening up the vocal chords and the throat so that the sound was not tight. This is something that is not exclusive to the author's voice, and may indeed be heightened in another voice more adept at bringing texts alive through vocalisation.

3.3.2 Poetic license: repositioning the actor's voice

Studies comparing readings of lyric poetry in an actor's voice to a reading in the poet's are rare. Fox attempts to make such a comparative analysis at the beginning of "Actors vs Poets." He plays the listener two readings of the poem "Branch Library" by the contemporary American poet Edward Hirsch: one by the poet, and one by the actor Ken Marx. He then reflects on which reading he considers best:

> As performance, I think that [the actor] Ken Marx did a better job delivering the poem. The pacing was better I thought; it was easier to understand as it unfolded. Hirsch on the other

[59] The cultural hunger for the poet's voice continued to grow through the twentieth century: the huge popularity of writers festivals—where the writer is expected to read their own work and talk about their life—is one piece of evidence for this. This has occurred even as criticism in the academy moved further from authorial presence, culminating in the deconstruction of the authorial voice and the so-called death of the author.

> hand moved through the poem a bit too quickly for my ear, but since he's the poet, that in itself makes his reading interesting. I knew the poem before we got him to record it, so I wanted to hear how he phrased it, where he broke his lines, basically, how it sounded to him in his own head. And I *loved* hearing the emotion in his voice in that very last phrase [of the poem]… So, I guess if I had to choose between hearing Ed Hirsch or an actor, I would choose Hirsch, even if Ken Marx gave the better reading. (2'22–3'16)

Fox's evaluation of the actor's reading is indicative of where the analysis typically starts and ends: the actor may be better at reading the poem, but we still prefer to hear the poet read. He does not specifically address authorial presence in the actor's voice versus the poet's, although he gestures to this by speaking of "emotion in his voice in that very last phrase" and of wanting to know how the poem "sounded to [the poet] in his own head".

How does authorial presence manifest in a voice that is not the poet's? I suggest that when the text is lyric poetry, the listener is guided by the language of the poem to imagine an authorial source. That is, lyric poetry read in a voice that is not the poet's will nevertheless, through the speaking "I" of the poem and its author function, invite the listener to imagine an authorial source that is mapped onto the poet. There may be cases when the actor's voice hinders the listener's experience of authorial presence, by being too theatrical or by introducing too strong a sense of the performer's personality in the voice, as distinct from the rhetorical voice of the poem. Here the second presence, the actor's, overshadows the first, the poet's. But this depends on the listener: just as *Poetica*'s audience needed to have tuned in to the start of an episode to know with certainty whose voice they were listening to, the audience also needed to know the source text in order to perceive the reading as unfaithful, or conversely, as distorting the textual authorial voice. There was some diversity within *Poetica'*s listenership, given that it went out to a wide national audience: some listeners (avid readers of poetry, and/or poets) would have recognised some of the poems being voiced from previously having read them, while many others would not have known the originals, and may have missed the dissonance in the "bad" readings. Audience responses to poetry readings on radio are obviously not uniform, and a lot rests on their prior knowledge of the text, the poet, and the format of the program.

Is there a more positive way of considering actors' performances of lyric poetry? We might think of song covers as being roughly analogous[60]: in contrast to actors' performances of lyric poetry, song

[60] There are significant differences between song covers and poems read by actors, which I flag here. One is that in pop music a cover is a recording that is adapted from another recording; this makes a contrast to the broadcasting of lyric poetry, where the print text is treated as the original. In the latter adaptation, any reading of the poem is a version of it, although, as I have shown, the author's version is currently privileged for particular reasons. Usually the author's

covers are not subject to such insistent critiques of their authenticity. In his book *Play it Again: Cover Songs and Popular Music* (2010), George Plasketes argues that good song cover performers, like Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald and Elvis, "possess a vocal knack and presence to make every song they sing sound as if it was theirs from the first note, the first lyric" (31). Ladd extrapolates on this ability of performers to bring a text, specifically poetry, alive in his account of *Poetica*'s use of actors. I asked why *Poetica* often chose to use actors, and he replied:

> Sometimes the poet wasn't available—either they were dead, or they were elderly and not available to come into a studio… or in some cases they weren't a particularly great reader. In cases where they were good readers we sometimes used actors plus poet, to give it some vocal variety. I would say we usually tried to have at least one poem in the show, if possible, read by the poet themselves, just so that people could hear the actual voice of the composer of the work. I think that was important, and gave them something special.
>
> But a good actor can really bring out the imagery of the poem, and the meaning of it, and the music in the language. Voice is so critical to poetry, and I think that's why poetry was successful on radio, in that that's what you've got: the focus is very much on the voice. On TV you have distractions: what image should we show while the poem's happening. But on radio the pictures are up to the words, the listener's mind, and the voice of the reader. Good actors are just excellent at bringing out the imagery within a poem, and the ideas within a poem … And I mean some actors aren't particularly suited to reading poetry, but some are very good at it. They're usually actors who read poetry. (Varatharajan "Interview for *Southerly*" 4)

The precise ways in which authorial presence is represented when actors read poems will emerge in the case study chapters. However, I offer a rough theorisation here, based on available scholarship. Many critics are clear about the failings of actors when they read lyric poetry, and what is to be avoided at all costs. These are: loading the voice with too much affectation; putting a musicality into the voice that clashes with the inherent rhythm of the poem; and generally getting the poem's meaning wrong through misplaced emphases (West 8'34–8'51; Fox and Share 5'06–6'12; Connolly pars. 74-76). The British playwright and actor Samuel West addresses these points when he says, "I live in fear of that singsong reverence [in actors' readings], which turns every word to the light until

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version (if recorded) has not circulated so widely that it is known as an original: the print text retains that status. Another difference is suggested by George Plasketes' claim that, "the essence of the cover song may be located in the sense of heritage that the form harbors, preserves, references and reveals. Like any adaptation, the cover song points to the past and profiles its predecessor" (35). I would suggest that a sense of authenticity in the poet's voice is so strong in the reception culture around lyric poetry that the notion of a cover, in Plasketes' sense—as a culturally sanctioned and respected tribute that is historically engaged—would seem strange in this field. The "covering" of lyric poetry gives rise to pejorative notions which I have been critiquing here: notions such as "voice impersonation," suggesting fakery.

its facets catch" (7'59-8'05). Richard Connolly, once head of the ABC Radio Drama and Features department, has echoed this sentiment in a paper he originally gave in 1982:

> You can get things wrong emotionally, so that the emotional qualities of the reading don't correspond honestly to the content of the poem. There are a thousand ways in which this can occur. The least offensive is probably the too-flat reading, when the reader, emotionally, doesn't come up to the mark of the words. Worst of all, and unfortunately much more common, is when the reader invests the words with emotion that they do not warrant. This spurious emotion is the hallmark of the bad reader, but it can happen to the best, too, when they get tired and their concentration starts to wane. I call it 'intoning'. It is the main reason why many poets and others say that actors should not read poetry. (par. 76)

This is not a criticism that is exclusive to actors, however. Critics have also noticed this overly intoned way of reading lyric poetry when poets read their own work to a live audience. In the article "Stop Using 'Poet Voice," Rich Smith criticises what he claims is a common style of vocal performance at poetry readings. This is where the poet adopts:

> … a precious, lilting cadence, to end every other line on a down-note, and to introduce, pauses, within sentences, where pauses, need not go …"Poet Voice" is the pejorative, informal name given to this soft, airy reading style that many poets use for reasons that are unclear. The voice flattens the musicality and tonal drama inherent within the language of the poem and it also sounds overly stuffy and learned. In this way, Poet Voice does a disservice to the poem, the poet and poetry. (R. Smith pars. 2-4)

He goes on to clarify that the use of this lilting cadence can suit some forms of poetry, but that this is not the case with modern and postmodern free verse poetry: "Poet Voice has, in the past, been a good drum. It was Yeats's drum. And E. E. Cummings's drum. I'm just saying that in the land of free verse many poets use this drum in a way that isn't in conversation with the rhetorical movements of the poem itself, and that's a missed opportunity" (par. 12). R. Smith is arguing that metrical verse and free verse place different demands on the reader, and that the reader may or may not be sensitive to these.

Annie Finch adds nuance to this argument by considering the different ways that free verse and formal verse constrain the reader:

> Most kinds of free verse … tend to be visually structured, with line breaks manifesting on the page rather than in the ear … Consequently, reading free verse aloud is a highly creative act. Without a metrical pulse marking off predictable linebreaks underneath the individual performance, for example, spoken enjambment remakes a poem's linebreaks for the listener … What would be interpretation, or at most counterpoint, in the performance of a metrical

> poem becomes more like a mode of performative co-authorship for a free-verse poem. Quite a responsibility for an actor; so if actors sound forced and anxious while performing contemporary poetry, and if we prefer the more relaxed sound of poets reading their own work, the hegemony of free verse (virtually invisible, as hegemonies are) may have something serious to do with it. (pars. 4-7)

For Finch, free verse poetry offers a greater challenge for the actor because the text does not indicate how the poem should be read (or does so in ways that are harder to grasp)[61]. Free verse made up the majority of *Poetica's* content, in terms of form: however, *Poetica's* actors always read under direction from a producer who was well versed in poetry; sometimes the producer was a poet, as in the cases of the poet-producers Michael Ladd and Robyn Ravlich. These producers imparted their poet's aesthetics, including styles of reading poetry aloud, to the non-poet reader of verse.

In short, there is a pithy discourse on how poets and actors definitely ought *not* to read, with less written on how contemporary free verse lyric poetry should be read. One consensus, however, is that the reader needs to be sensitive to the rhetorical voice of the poem, and go along with its cadences, as much as they can detect them. This is an important if nebulous aspect of conveying authorial presence in the voice: a reader who departs drastically and wilfully from the cadences of the text necessarily alters the authorial presence found there, in ways that the reception culture for lyric poetry does not allow[62]. The reader of the poem also needs to have a sense of the poet's meaning, and place their emphases in ways that convey that meaning. A performance that seems to contradict the meanings of the poem can also seem to be going against the authorial voice, giving the performance a sense of irony or subversion.

There is also the issue of how a poet or actor should read in a studio setting, into a microphone, as they did for *Poetica.* Actors are often more trained in making their voice sound full and present for the microphone. Because of this vocal skill in a studio setting, a general sense of presence may be stronger in the actor's voice, which can strengthen the authorial presence in the read poem. It has not been my aim here to come to a comprehensive theory of the good performance of authorial presence, but rather to sketch parameters for effective reading. This will aid in my analyses of

[61] Annie Finch has argued that actors are now generally worse at reading poetry than they used to be: even if this is so, I have been arguing that actors *may* read a poem well, in ways that enhance authorial presence. In an article analysing the Curtis Fox and Don Share podcast "Actors vs. Poets," she argues that: "actors used to be trained in Shakespeare and knew how to perform poetry properly, but they don't anymore" (par. 2). This perspective is skewed towards metrical verse—as in the case of Shakespeare—whereas a lot of modern poetry, such as most of what was featured on *Poetica,* is in free verse.

[62] Although *Poetica's* listeners did not always know the source texts, which may allow a reader to "get away with" more than if the listeners did know the source texts.

particular poetry readings in the case study chapters. A final theoretical consideration here, in relation to the authorial presences of read and recorded poetry, is accent.

3.3.3 Accents in poetry readings

Accent plays an important role in audiences' experiences of poetry readings—indeed, J. Smith's study of the success of Dylan Thomas's record invites thinking about the effect of accent on the audience's experience of the recording. I suggest that one of the vocal attributes that aided the popularity of Thomas's readings and recordings was his Welsh accent which, in comparison to the rigid Received Pronunciation (RP) of the educated classes in the UK, registers as being more down-to-earth and authentic. While the American audience that heard the Caedmon record may not have known about the social relationships between the various UK accents, they certainly would have registered that Thomas's was different to RP British: such difference would have had an aura of regional authenticity to it[63]. For RP was originally developed in the UK from the early nineteenth century onwards to be clear, "proper" speech modelled on speech among educated Londoners; it was supposedly designed to be widely understood and unmarked by region, ethnicity, or class (see Lynda Mugglestone's "The Rise of Received Pronunciation"). Mugglestone has noted that RP was further refined through radio broadcasting, as the BBC began practising and transmitting this idealised voice all across the UK in the early-twentieth century (par. 16). She notes however that,

> Broadcasting … eventually made its way into virtually every home in Britain, [but] even exposure to RP on this scale would not secure the national homogeneity of accent which many had desired … [T]he introduction of commercial broadcasting in the 1950s led to a far greater democratisation of purpose, coverage, and ultimately of accent too (even in the traditional and authoritative domains of news broadcasting). (par. 16)

The RP that often features on the BBC is mirrored by cultivated Australian speech in announcers' voices on ABC Radio National: speech that used to be modelled more closely on the BBC voice. In a personal essay about growing up in a lower-middle-class household in the country, the Australian historian Inga Clendinnen remembers that speech in her household was not at all intellectual: "I grew up in what a linguist would call 'an impoverished oral culture with a severely limited speech-code' … Speech acts [in the house] were emphatically instrumental: 'do the dishes, feed the dog,

[63] The Edinburgh-based slam poet Katie Ailes has addressed this in a different context—she argues that the American accent is considered most authentic in slam poetry competitions worldwide:

> Due to the globalising effects of the Internet, many slammers around the world learned the craft by watching American slammers on YouTube. This leads to an association of the slam genre itself with American culture and with the American voice (although, of course, there are myriad 'American voices': here I refer to the American accent as opposed to an English, Scottish, Irish, or other English-language accent). So, to some people, slam poetry sounds 'proper' and 'correct' when done in an American accent because it's being performed by a member of the culture where it originated. (par. 2)

stop that, keep quiet, go away'" (18). However, she notes that the voices she heard on ABC radio, which was left on in the house all day, were an exception to this rule:

> There was an unforeseen and emphatically undesired consequence [of listening to this radio speech]. Those were carefully spoken days (it was rumoured that ABC announcers donned dinner suits to read the news) so when I at last began to talk I spoke with much the same plummy accent and intonation as I do today, to the chagrin and enduring humiliation of my family. (If I did some research and listened to the ABC archives from about 1936 to 1938, I'd probably find the parents of my voice). (18-19)

Being a high cultural institution, an educated and urban (and at one time, "plummy" British) accent has been particularly evident on ABC RN[64]. With increased migration to Australia after WWII, regional and non-Anglo accents began to feature more frequently on ABC radio networks, and especially on SBS radio and television. The plummy accent that Clendinnen describes hearing on the airwaves in the 1930s gave way to a more Australian sounding but nevertheless educated and cultivated voice on ABC RN.

Accents powerfully convey a sense of identity to the audience, including regional identities within the same country. Within "white" accents there are social and geographical differences (rural Scottish vs. urban Scottish vs. Irish, vs. British[65] vs. American vs. Canadian, etc.), and these are signalled by the accent of the voice. Here I simply note the effect of accent, such as the regional accent of Dylan Thomas, on a sense of authenticity in poetry readings: this is something I examine in the case study chapters, in relation to the poets' recorded voices reading and speaking about their lives.

3.4 Authorial presence dramatised: The function of *Poetica's* music and sound effects

Poetica was a sonically rich program. Its program brief states, under the heading "Style and Sound," that the program should demonstrate an "awareness of the potential connexion between the poetry that is the subject of the program, and the style, shape and rhythm of the program itself, to create a more rewarding experience for the listener" (2). The broader description of *Poetica*, at the

[64] ABC RN was known by other names before the mid-1980s, such as Radio 2 from 1947 to 1985.

[65] In regard to the inter-relations between UK accents, Polly Clark notes that:

> T S Eliot prizewinner Jen Hadfield believes the notion of a poet's voice is particularly problematic in Britain, because we are such a small country and have so many languages, dialects and accents, each of which carries a political burden. British poets have an extra dimension to negotiate in their work, the largely unspoken political aspect of how they speak. An English accent in Scotland has a particular resonance; a Welsh speaker makes a statement unintentional or not every time they speak Welsh. Northern, Indian, Black Country… all these 'Englishes' cloud our audience's view of us and our work. (par. 7)

very beginning of the document, declares that, "the program's focus is on the contextualised performance and the imaginative experience of poetry" (1). Besides through vocal performance, how were readings of poetry made imaginatively appealing for listeners of *Poetica*? And how might these added elements affect their authorial presences? In this section I examine sonically creative adaptations that occur in *Poetica* through the use of non-verbal sounds, while in the final section I examine thematic contextualisations that occur through *Poetica's* use of interview material.

An initially useful question here is how verbal and non-verbal sounds usually relate to each other in radio productions, particularly artful ones[66]. In *Poetica*, non-verbal sounds bolster the dramatic effect of authorial presence in the recorded voice reading poetry. This has resonances with Linda Hutcheon's work on adaptation from a text medium to a sound medium, which she has described in *Theory of Adaptation* (2006). When produced in a way that dramatises the recorded voice, non-verbal sounds within and around the poetry readings heighten their impact as a mediated art. Hutcheon's work is insightful here—particularly her description of the different modes of representation in source texts and their adaptations. She differentiates between "telling" and "showing" as modes of representation in some adapted texts and their adaptations, respectively:

> In the telling mode—in narrative literature, for example—our engagement begins in the realm of imagination, which is simultaneously controlled by the selected, directing words of the text and liberated—that is, unconstrained by the limits of the visual or aural… But with the move to the mode of showing, as in film and stage adaptations, we are caught in an unrelenting, forward driving story. And we have moved from the imagination to the realm of direct perception—with its mix of both detail and broad focus. (23)

While she is speaking of narrative literature and partly visual adaptations of narrative literature, this is also a useful framework for characterising *Poetica's* adaptations of lyric poetry from page to radio. On the page the reader conjures up a sense of the author from the speaking "I" of the poem, the cadences and figures of speech that are particular to that "I", and from the speaker's self-descriptions or self-characterisations. As Hutcheon notes, this is both constricting and liberating (23): the language of the lyric poem guides the reader's perceptions of the author, but the reader is also free to imagine the author, as well as the poem's various layers of meaning, in their mind's eye and/or ear. By contrast, the performances of poems by poet or by actor, and especially the music

[66] Radio theorists have often claimed that speech is "radio's most significant code," most capable of carrying a meaning that is clearly understandable (Shingler and Wieringa 30; see also Rattigan 2). Such scholars talk about the primacy of speech on air because of the accuracy of its significations: Andrew Crisell has argued that relative to speech, music on radio serves only an "ancillary function" and is dependent on speech to give it meaning (*Understanding Radio* 48). Crisell has made this argument in a more semiotically rigorous way, by drawing on the work of the late-nineteenth century/early-twentieth century American philosopher and logician C.S. Peirce, in his essay "Radio Signs". Mine is not a semiotic analysis of radio sound. I am looking not at the accuracy of its significations, but at its capacity to represent authorial presence, a phenomenon I have described as part conceptual and part actual.

and sound effects that are layered under these performances, serve to interpret the poems for the listener—and in that sense the listener is "shown" more of the poems through sound[67].

In *Poetica,* sound effects are often related to the setting of the read poem. Sounds such as wind through trees, birds in a forest, or the sound of planes taking off at an airport, conjure up the poem's settings. They are used as ancillary to the words, to aid the listener's perception and comprehension of spaces that the words describe or inhabit. Music is often used to create a sense of mood that coheres with the mood of the poem—for instance, sparse strings or an ominous electronic drone to suggest darkness or melancholy. In other cases, music is used because it is thematically related to the poem or to the poet, and is intended to aid the listener to grasp these more quickly. For example the *Poetica* episode "Alan Wearne: The Australian Popular Song Book," produced by Anne McInerney and broadcast in 2010, adapts Alan Wearne's suite of poems that draw on popular songs from the 1880s to the 1980s. The episode includes various songs that were the basis for Wearne's poems, such as Men at Work's "Down Under" and Richard Clapton's "Girls on the Avenue" ("Alan Wearne" par. 4).

Poetica rarely used music to indicate a setting, except when the setting was musical: a poem about a Stravinsky performance, with a live recording of Stravinsky and quiet coughing layered on top of it, suggests a concert hall. On the other hand, the program often used sound effects to indicate a specific setting, as well as a mood. In the podcast-only episode[68] "Black Water: The Poetry of Robert Adamson," the sounds of a boat's putting motor, and the ebb and flow of river water over oysters, intimately convey the location (with the producer Libby Douglas and Adamson out on the Hawkesbury river, north of Sydney) but also the mystery and allure of the river for the poet. We hear these sounds along with the first poem "the speaking page," which builds on the mood that the sounds evoke (Douglas 2'08–3'34). In these examples, all the sounds are used to convey more of the poem to the listener. Ladd adds to this in our interview:

> We didn't always layer in sound—some poems were better off without—but I think the vast majority of the audience liked that sound mix … And in fact I think it helped bring the program to a bigger audience. To people who sat back and listened to it almost like a movie soundtrack. So they could see the images in the poems, and they could also get a kind of mood from the music around those images. I mean we chose the music very carefully, we

[67] I am using "shown" here to also describe aural illustrations. Scholars such as Alan Beck (pars. 22-24) and Anca Micheti (246) have pointed out that listening to dramatic speech on radio stimulates the visual imagination, appealing to the eye through the ear: in that sense poetry on the radio shows the listener their subject, through sound. This manner of showing is not the same as the "realm of direct perception" in film and theatre that Hutcheon mentions, as it requires the use of the imagination.

[68] This was part of a special *Poetica* series of podcasts on contemporary Australian poets, called "A Pod of Poets".

> didn't just put anything in, so the whole thing was like a mental movie. (Varatharajan "Interview for *Southerly*" 4)

Unlike the vision offered to the viewer in a film, however, text and sound involve so much more of the imagination. The poem on the page cues our imagination to hear and visualise the speech and spatial settings of the poetry. Poetry on the radio, in a show like *Poetica*, provides even more cues for our imagination, in that not only the words but the sound effects and music surrounding the words are cues, and—when produced in allusive rather than literal ways[69]—add to our mental interpretation and imagination of the poem. Moreover, when an actor performs a poem, and is guided by the producer to place their emphasis on one part of a poetic line and not another, or to try to sound contemplative or excited, they are helping demonstrate to the listener something important about the poem. In the adapted poetry readings, the listener is immersed in the poem through the materiality and performativity of voice, as well as through the creative use of non-verbal sounds. Sound effects and music in *Poetica* play a supplementary role as far as authorial presence is concerned. They serve to underscore authorial presence in the radio voice reading lyric poetry, to create a sense of mood (especially through music), and to aurally evoke the settings of the poems.

However, I make a critical distinction between radio sound's *dramatisations* of authorial presence and authorial presence in *Poetica*. *Poetica's* non-verbal sounds dramatise authorial presence, by giving the disembodied radio voice a setting and a mood—by showing the listener where the author walks in the poem—but these sounds, in themselves, do not represent the author's presence. It may be argued that in *Poetica* the non-verbal sounds are part of authorial presence, because they are part of the art, being layered under voice. But these sounds are often abstracted from the human (with the author understood here as a human author), though they can be given *specific* human connotations—as specific as being related to the poet Ouyang Yu, for instance—by being attached to Ouyang's voice. The twittering of birds, or the howling of wind, or the tinkle of a piano, may illustrate the setting and/or mood of the poem, but they cannot carry a sense of authorial presence, in the way that a voice reading poetry can; they can, however, dramatise the authorial presence in the voice. There is one more element that has a bearing on *Poetica*'s representations of authorial presence, and that is the interview material surrounding the adapted poetry readings.

[69] Producers would often shy away from literally interpreting a poem through sound—for instance, featuring footsteps in the adaptation just because the poem mentions footsteps—instead preferring to add to the poem through the use of other sounds that are related to, but not explicitly mentioned, in the poem.

3.5 Authorial presence contested: The function of *Poetica's* interview material

The recorded and edited interview material in *Poetica* is an element that offers a counterpoint to authorial presence in the poetry readings. These are not part of the programs' adaptations of the poetry, but are placed outside the poetry readings as contextual information**.** Interview material is often used to reveal to the listener more about the author, through recordings with the poet's peers (sometimes the poet themselves) talking about the poet's life, where they grew up, what influences they draw on in their work, personal relationships that have impacted on their art, etc. In our interview Ladd noted that, based on audience feedback—in "ratings, letters, and online": "we realised the audience liked to meet the poets and hear their voices, so we included biographical interviews particularly with poets who had an interesting life story" (Varatharajan "Interview" 1).

In seeming contrast to this statement, *Poetica's* website, while it was on air, stated that it was the aim of the program to "[allow] poetry to speak for itself in a rich radio environment, enhanced by sound and music" (Ladd "Poetica" par. 1). I clarified this with Ladd, asking, "The *Poetica* website used to say—until it was archived—that you wanted to let the poetry speak for itself. Can you explain what you mean by that? Because there was framing commentary around the poetry readings…" and he replied:

> Correct, yeah. A lot of *The Poet's Tongue* —an ABC radio program that ran from 1957 to 1986—was like this: here is a poem by Robert Browning. You hear the poem, and then: "In this poem, what he means by this is this, and this image means this…" There'd be more of an educational focus, whereas ours was more performative. Yes we would put things in context, but we did far less of actually explaining the poem line by line, or image by image, and would instead have an interview with the poet either side of a reading, which talked about the context in which it was written, or had an oblique connection with their biography, perhaps. So less of a lecture and more of a listening experience. (Varatharajan "Interview for *Southerly*" 3)

I suggest in this thesis that *Poetica* both "let the poetry speak for itself" in the adaptations, and also spoke about it (if not for it) in the interviews. It featured poetry readings enhanced by sound, and couched these adapted poetry readings in commentary, inviting the listener to draw links between the interview material (which often had to do with the poet's personality) and the authorial presence that came through their recorded work—to test one against the other and see if the poetry might speak for the life, or vice versa.

Poetry readings and interview material engage listeners' attentions differently, sometimes complementing and sometimes contradicting each other. These two elements intersected in particularly interesting ways in *Poetica*'s representations of national identity: my focus in the next chapter. But here I point out that, somewhat like music and sound effects, which serve to dramatise *Poetica'*s representations of authorial presence, these interview clips are used to reinforce, or—and this sets the interviews apart from the music/sound effects—problematise, images of the author that come through the poetry. The interview material is often where the listener finds out about the poet's sense of belonging to a place, their social and political views, literary and cultural peers, and so on. These may be coded in the adapted poems, but they are presented in the interview material in plain, edited language for the listener to absorb as fact. As such, the interviews are a powerful forum for conveying perspectives about the author that seem straightforward, when compared to the contrivance of authorial presence in the adapted poetry readings. In *Poetica* episodes images of national identity emerge through an interplay of authorial and human presences in the adapted poems and the interview material.

In this chapter I have shown how the authorial presence embodied in the voice of the lyric poem is adapted by the reading voice of radio poetry programs. The precise nature of this adaptation of authorial presence in voice varies depending on the type and nature of the reading voice, as well as the accompanying sounds, which in *Poetica* serve a dramatic function. I have also noted the role of interview material in *Poetica* in complementing or complicating the authorial imagery transmitted by the adapted poetry readings. In my next and final contextualising chapter, I consider how the voice of *Poetica*'s adapted poems may have further been inflected by varied interpretations of ABC cultural policy in relation to national identity, within the institution, as well as by actual narratives of national identity that circulated in Australian society during the period of *Poetica's* broadcast.

4. Authorial Presence Made National: *Poetica* and ABC Cultural Policy

4.1 The ABC Charter and Australian identity

The casual listener or viewer who tunes into programs on the ABC, either on radio, television, or iView, may not always be conscious of the ABC as a national public service broadcaster with particular aims written into its charter. But certain features of the broadcaster are obvious to its audiences: on TV the ABC makes a show of its accessibility to all Australians, through the slogan "It's Your ABC" (with the recorded voice emphasising the "your"), and as represented in its looped logo, which suggests unity; its muted silver-blue colour also suggests neutrality. As a taxpayer funded national cultural institution, the ABC projects an image of benevolence, which is reflected in the Australian public's pet term for it: "Aunty[70]." The ABC encourages a perception of it as a benevolent figure that is watching out for you, educating and entertaining you, and keeping "your" interest—that is the national interest—at heart.

As my brief preamble suggests, the ABC does have particular aims written into its charter that affect its programming choices, behind its outer image of benevolence and accessibility. Indeed the Charter of the Corporation, in section II of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983, continues to be invoked when questions are publically raised about the role and functions of the ABC. In 2008 the Australian media studies scholar Margaret Simons wrote, "Every time someone is cross with our national broadcasters, they ask, 'what about the charter?'" (par. 1). This occurred again in the wake of the Liberal National Party's announcement of a new round of funding cuts to the ABC and SBS in May 2014, prompting renewed scrutiny of the ABC's functions and costs (these funding cuts resulted in the axing of *Poetica* in 2015, among other programs on Radio National). In his provocative article, "We Must Ask Tough Questions About the ABC," the Chairman of *Crikey* went back to the charter, calling it a "fuzzy motherhood manifesto that, perhaps deliberately, fails to provide any detail about key directions… or any guidance about priorities or relativities" (Beecher par. 8; for similar critiques see Loukakis, MacKriell). Such "fuzziness" is a result of the Charter being a set of guidelines that allow interpretation, rather than a strict code dictating program content: this is also implied by the disclaimer in the Charter that, "Nothing in this section shall be taken to impose on the Corporation a duty that is enforceable by proceedings in a court" (ABC 5).

[70] This was originally the colloquialism for the BBC, where the term is widely used, and was adopted in Australia for the ABC, to signal a similar relationship of trust between audience and broadcaster, and a sense of benign care in the broadcaster.

But the Charter is central to the way critics of the ABC have thought of its functions. One of the most debated aspects of the charter is the clause requiring that the ABC "contribute to a sense of national identity" (4). Jennifer Craik and Glyn Davis have argued that this clause has been key to the ABC's continued sense of purpose, at certain junctures in the twentieth century when its role as a national public service broadcaster was questioned, and required clarification and redefinition (125). Another intimately related clause, which I also focus on in this chapter, is that the ABC should "take account of… the multicultural character of the Australian community" (ABC 4). These two clauses play an important role in the way the ABC imagines its "national" audience, and consequently in the way programs are made to engage that audience. Combined, they shape the ABC's approach to program content, with the ideology of multiculturalism being fundamental to the ABC's vision of the national audience, particularly in the nineteen nineties and at the turn of the twenty-first century.

In this chapter I frame the ABC as a national cultural institution that actively shapes and promotes particular images of Australian identity. I review literature on how the ABC has acted on the two Charter aims I mentioned above, in its programming in the last two decades of the twentieth century. This time period is important to consider as it immediately predates *Poetica*'s founding, and the broadcast of my first case study, in 1997. It is also a period that, in recent history, has produced the most critical dialogue about ABC cultural policy, with government-commissioned reviews of the ABC coming in rapid succession and responding to each other. Gay Hawkins highlights a narrative of crisis surrounding the broadcaster, stoked by constant budget cuts (and the threat of budget cuts), which constantly calls on the ABC to defend its coherence of purpose (15). This narrative of crisis/crisis of identity reached a new intensity in the mid-1990s, as the ABC extended its operations into the Internet ("uncharted" territory, so to speak, for the public service broadcaster). In this period of both cultural and technological change, its national functions were scrutinised anew.

In the middle part of the chapter I refer to an interview I conducted with *Poetica*'s founding producer, Michael Ladd, to examine how the program engaged with the ABC Charter. Ladd emphasises that he did engage with the Charter, but in a loose way, by recalling key terms from it such as "'innovation,' 'comprehensiveness,' the Reithian principles [after the first general manager of the BBC, John Reith] of 'inform' 'educate' 'entertain'." He notes that he "had in [his] mind the concepts of 'cultural enrichment,' and 'cultural diversity' and to form a 'sense of national identity'" (Varatharajan "Interview" 3). Citing this interview, I focus particularly on how *Poetica* interpreted and implemented the Charter's national identity clauses (3). Ladd describes *Poetica's* engagements

with national identity by speaking of the show's selection of poems, and what the poetry itself had to say about an Australian experience and identity. While he focuses on *Poetica's* source content, in my case study chapters I analyse *Poetica's* adaptations of poetry into radio as a significant way in which it engaged with questions of national identity.

Following this interview with Ladd, I address changes in how national identity policy was interpreted by the ABC in the decades leading up to the founding of *Poetica* in 1997. These changes provide a context for reading national identity representations in *Poetica* from 1997 onwards. At the chapter's end I turn from considering how *Poetica* and the ABC have interpreted Charter aims around the "national," to actual narratives of national identity that were circulating more broadly in Australian culture at this time—raw material for *Poetica's* adaptations of Australian poetry. I chart a broad cultural shift (beyond the ABC) from modernist conceptions of national identity, as singular and unified (exemplified by the White Australia Policy), to postmodern conceptions of national identity, which emphasised the plurality and mixed ethnic makeup of the nation. There was not, however, a linear and undisrupted progression towards plurality: for instance, after 9/11, there was arguably a push back towards conservative white images of Australian identity at various times, under then-Prime Minister, John Howard[71]. Until this time, governmental policies from the 1970s onwards had generally moved from wanting to assimilate migrants into a singular Australian identity (with a concomitant tendency to suppressing Aboriginal Australian identity) towards promoting multiculturalism. My three case studies sit at different points on this spectrum of "White Australia" to "Multicultural Australia." For instance, in the *Poetica* episode on Ouyang Yu (1997), the poet is presented talking critically of multiculturalism, as a flawed experiment, and of his feeling of being trapped between two national cultures; although Yu is critical of multiculturalism, the episode very much frames his identity through multicultural Australia. By contrast, the John Forbes episode (1999) is infused with the spirit of a unified Australian-ness in Forbes' personality: he is depicted positively as a quintessential Aussie "larrikin," although the American inflections in his work are acknowledged in the episode's adaptations of the poems. The Vicki Viidikas episode (2005) was broadcast at a time when the fervour around multiculturalism was on the decline, and it sits mid-way between the other two episodes in its representation of national identity in Viidikas: she is depicted as an Australian poet with hints of otherness arising from her Estonian heritage. The episode on Ali Cobby Eckermann (2010), analysed in the concluding chapter, explores the poet's Indigenous identity. Here Indigenous identity is recognised in its own right, as having an important history that is distinct from that of post-World War II migrants under Australian multiculturalism.

[71] One sign of the racial tensions at this time was the Cronulla race riots in 2005, in which "Anglo-Celtic" Australians bearing Southern Cross tattoos clashed with Lebanese migrant youth in a southern suburb of Sydney.

At the end of the chapter I make a case for focusing on the historical shift from singular to plural notions of national identity as a productive frame for reading the ABC's national representations between 1997 and 2010. This way of thinking about constructions of national identity, in the ABC and in wider society, allows a reading of *Poetica*'s episodes that is sensitive to a range of national identity constructions (modern, postmodern, gendered, racialised) at the turn of the twenty-first century.

4.2 Radio as a mediator of national identity

> What is this thing—this [national] identity—which people are supposed to carry around with them? It cannot be an object like a mobile phone … The problems start when one expects to find the 'identity' within the body or the mind of the individual. This is to look in the wrong place for the operation of identity. (Billig 7)

National identity is continually being reshaped by national cultural institutions like the ABC. The idea that national identity is constructed rather than "real," in any tangible sense (like holding a passport or a mobile phone), gained traction in the late twentieth century, especially after the publication of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983). Anderson wrote of the nation that:

> It is an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. (5-6)

Anderson was speaking about the nation, not national identity, but his argument has been applied to think of both as imagined, rather than as objects in the world (although Giddens argues that the nation has certain "real" institutions that ground it the world; I address this below). Catriona Elder has more recently built on Anderson's work on the nation, applying it to national identity in Australia:

> Anderson suggests that… citizens of a nation share a common imaginary—a common set of stories. Instead of meeting all the people in one's nation and thinking 'ah yes they are like me,' citizens are given—through education, popular culture and political rhetoric—images and stories, sayings and histories that encourage a feeling of connection and shared values, where they might not actually exist. (25)

I use two parts of this explication as sounding boards to my argument in this section. The first is that the "common set of stories" shared by citizens of a nation come through "education, popular culture and political rhetoric"; my focus in this chapter is on how *Poetica* participates in the circulation of these stories, as something that lives on the airwaves and is therefore a part of publically accessible, if not popular, culture[72]. The second is that this common set of stories is embodied in citizens. That is, for Elder as for Anderson, citizens are the nodes of national identity within the nation. Writing about the latter in a similar vein, the sociologist Anthony Giddens has described national*ism* as "a phenomenon that is primarily psychological," locating it in individual psychology, and implicitly in the psychology of the citizen (*The Nation-State* 116). He argues elsewhere, distinguishing between nationalism and the nation that, "nationalism is in substantial part a psychological phenomenon, involving felt needs and dispositions, in contrast to the nation-state, which is an institutional phenomenon" (*Social Theory* 178). In Giddens' account, although the nation and nationalism are quite distinct in their constitutions (the former is grounded in institutions such as Federal Parliament, while the latter is psychological and is kept alive in individual psychology), nationalism and national identity are related. He argues that nationalism has to do with the mobilisation of *nostalgic* narratives of national identity: "nationalism appeals to a desire for an identity securely anchored in the past" (*The Nation-State* 215; see also Dieckhoff and Jaffrelot 140).

In conceptualising national identity, I take my cue from Michael Billig who argues—in contrast to Giddens—that nationalism and national identity are not located in individual psychology; citing Anderson, he argues that, "because of this imaginary element, nationalism contains a strong social psychological dimension," suggesting that national identity may be grounded in a collective psychology, existing between citizens (19). Critics such as Billig, and the media studies scholar McKenzie Wark, problematise the view that consciousness of the "national," including a sense of national identity, has primarily to do with the psychologies of individual citizens:

> The latency of national consciousness does not depend on the vagaries of individual memory: if it did, then many more people would forget their national identity. Nor does national identity disappear into individuals' heads in between salient situations. The hypothetical Australian, while not consciously acting or thinking in an Australian way, continues to live in a nation-state and in a world of nations. Unlike the Galician peasants of former times, this hypothetical citizen of a nation-state will continually encounter, if not consciously register, flagged signs of nationhood... What this means is that national identity

[72] Poetry has traditionally been thought of as a high cultural form, along with other high arts such as opera and much theatre; a couple of exceptions are modern populist variants of poetry such as spoken word and rap. However, I consider it accurate to describe *Poetica* as an accessible cultural form, as it was broadcast nationally and was available to everyone in Australia who is in range of Radio National's network, free of cost.

> is more than an inner psychological state or an individual self-definition: it is a form of life, which is daily lived in the world of nation-states. (Billig 69; see also Wark 6)

Billig ultimately argues—despite what his above quote about the "social psychological" dimension of national identity may suggest—that national identity does not live in a collective psychology or hive mind, made up of the citizens of a nation. He is arguing instead that nationalism and national identity exist in and are continually related to citizens by mass communications media such as newspapers, radio, and television, which are the mediators of national identity in the postmodern era; moreover, in this conception national identity is continually reconstructed, enacted and reasserted through these media narratives. In short, national identity has a mediator in the mass media, rather than in individual psychology, and this mediator shapes individual psychology on a daily basis.

Wark extends Billig's line of thought, introducing the idea of a "virtual" republic or nation (6). By virtual, he means "an image I have [of the 'national'] that comes via a mediating source" (xvi). The opening analogy of his book is instructive of what he means by a virtual republic: he asks the reader to imagine citizens listening to car radios across the country, feeling a sense of connection to each other through the airwaves. Radio becomes an exemplary medium for this virtual republic; in this respect Wark's *Virtual Republic* mirrors scholarly work that considers radio's ability to foster communities of listeners: "For me at least, the radio is the image of this—the common world, the public sphere, the virtual republic" (Wark ix; see also Susan Squire's edited collection *Communities of the Air*). He argues that the function of the virtual, in mass communications media, is to "create a people aware of itself as a people[73]" (xvii). It is only in moments such as the one Wark describes in his analogy, when we are interpellated as Australians by media, that we keenly feel a sense of belonging to the nation (that is, we are not constantly aware of our relation to the nation, and mass media remind us of this relation). I will now seek to show how this premise—that national identity is constantly being constructed, and that radio is a significant mediator of this construction—was enacted by *Poetica* and the ABC.

[73] In mobilising Billig's theory of banal nationalism, I argue that the ABC's conceptions of the national audience and of national identity has a bearing on its audience's sense of national identity, as it absorbs programming. Elizabeth Jacka has criticised this way of characterising the effects of public service broadcasting, which she links to Foucault's theories of governmentality. She argues that in such accounts, "there is often a sense of a great leviathan, a great governmental machine grinding away and turning out new subjects like so many items on an assembly line" ("Don't Use the A-Word" 62). However, I am not suggesting that the ABC's implementation of national aims in its Charter creates national Australian citizens or "subjects" (as Anne Dunn has argued in the past—see Dunn 97), but that it encourages particular views of national identity. I use Wark's concept of the virtual in order to focus on the ABC as a mediator of national identity, which its audiences may be influenced by, rather than on the ABC's construction of national citizens.

4.3 Constructions of Australian Identity by *Poetica* and the ABC

Poetica was an adapter of poetry for a national audience, operating within an institution with a guiding Charter that asks it to "contribute to a sense of national identity" and take account of "the multicultural character of the Australian community" (ABC 4). *Poetica's* engagement with nationhood is also evident in its own program brief. Four of its seven "Program Mission" statements mention the nation: "to represent Australian and international poetry to a national audience;" "to support Australian performance;" "to introduce and promote emerging poets from around Australia;" and "to take poetry to parts of Australia where there is no access to poetry performance and events" (Ladd "*Poetica* Brief" 1). Even though there is no mention of national identity within *Poetica's* brief, it does engage with ideas of the national and of the Australian (and it operates under the broader ABC charter). The brief also states, under the subheading "Editorial Content," that *Poetica* should produce "60% contemporary Australian content; 40% drawn from other sources—classic and contemporary" (1).

In an interview I conducted in May 2016, Michael Ladd elaborated on some of these aspects of the Charter and the Brief. He responded to my question of how he interpreted the ABC Charter stipulation that programs "contribute to a sense of national identity" by speaking about the Australian source poetry for *Poetica,* selected from books and journals. He sees the poetry itself as representing what it is to be Australian: "I took seriously the old saying 'if you want to understand a country, read its poets.' In many ways I think simply by keeping a program on air for 18 years that was 60% Australian poetry, we were contributing to a sense of national identity" (Varatharajan "Interview" 4). This suggests he curated a sense of what being Australian was through poetry: "I did often ask myself when selecting poetry, 'what has this got to say about our times, our place, who we are?'" (4). Ladd mentions work by a diverse range of (overseas and local) poets, in response to my question about whether he was guided by the complementary Charter clause that the ABC "reflect the cultural diversity of… the Australian community":

> *Poetica* was internationalist and multicultural. We did approximately 40 bi-lingual episodes, in dozens of languages including Greek, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, Bahasa, but also languages such as Persian, Slovenian, Navajo, Welsh, Catalan and even Mayan! These were mainly poets from outside of Australia writing in their mother tongue, that then different language groups within Australia could appreciate. We also regularly focused on contemporary Australian poets with a non-Anglo heritage. Ouyang Yu was one of those, but there were many more: Roshanak Amrein, Lidija Cvetkovic, Afief Ismail, Dimitris

> Tsaloumas, Pi O, Ali Alizadeh, Omar Musa, Miriam Wei Wei Lo, to name some. We did an episode on middle-eastern and African refugee poets, and another on young writers from "NESB" [non-English speaking backgrounds] as it used to be called. We also featured Indigenous poets: Samuel Wagan Watson, Ali Cobby Eckermann, Oodgeroo, Kevin Gilbert and many others. We featured contemporary Asian Australian poets introduced by Adam Aitken and Michelle Cahill. One of our final episodes was to be "Southern Sun, Aegean Light," [on] the poetry of second generation Greek Australians, but we were axed before we could get it to air. A shorter version ended up on the RN feature program *Earshot* which became the new home for some poetry features after the demise of *Poetica*. (4)

The emphasis in Ladd's responses is on what the selection of poets from Australia reflects back to the nation about contemporary Australianness, and in this he appears to have been conscientious. In another part of the interview, he says in response to my request that he "mention any decisions you made yourself, unprompted, to interpret policy differently or to vary the composition of the Australian poets you broadcast" over the life of *Poetica*:

> From time to time I would check that we were running at 50 per cent male/female Australian poets over the year. Once or twice I realised we were running more men than women and consciously upped the female representation. Over the life of the program I think we came out pretty close to even on gender. Occasionally I discovered that poets from Western Australia, Queensland, Tasmania, SA or NT were under-represented, so we did a deliberate focus. Sometimes we needed more Australian content in general and I commissioned more productions to get our 60% quota up. Around about 2011, I realised that while we had been strongly representing classical Chinese and Japanese poetry, we were weak in our coverage of contemporary Asian poetry, and we set out to do something about this but this was more to do with international material, for example, we did some series on contemporary Singaporean, Chinese, Filipino, and individual shows on Indian, Korean and Indonesian poets. From time to time I thought we were sounding a bit "white and middle-class" in our Australian offering, so looked for alternatives. (5)

Ladd suggests in both of these answers that he tried to reflect the ethnic diversity in the Australian audience partly by featuring poets from Asia and non-Western countries abroad—that is, that by broadcasting poetry from other cultures, as well as from non-Anglo backgrounds within Australia, *Poetica* could engage with a listenership that they imagined as diverse. However what I wish to highlight here is that *Poetica*'s construction of national identity is framed in terms of what it selects and chooses to present to the nation *as Australian* (including, as just mentioned, a sense of poetry from non-Western countries and cultures, to give a sense of Australia as culturally diverse). This

emphasis on contributing to a sense of national identity through being attentive to the selection of poetry comes across again in the latter part of the interview, where I ask: "Did you consider *Poetica* to be political, in any sense of the term? (If yes, can you give some examples of episodes or themes or production choices that reflect this?)". Ladd responds in the affirmative, and answers by speaking about the leftist political persuasions of many of the poets they featured, and then about particular episodes that responded to contemporary politics (5). In regards to the latter, he says:

> We did some overtly political episodes: "What I Heard About Iraq" was an anti-Iraq war show for example. There was a lot of politics built in to some of the Indigenous poetry of say Ali Cobby Eckermann, Jack Davis, or Oodgeroo. Judith Wright's poetry had a strong environmental message as did Louise Crisp's Snowy Mountain episode "Grasses" (5).

This is again about selection of poetry—and what this selection says by implication about contemporary Australia and Australian identity—but also timing: the anti-Iraq war episode works politically because of its synchronicity with current affairs; it was broadcast on 17 March 2007, in the middle of the Iraq War. *Poetica*'s engagements with national identity and the political discourses that inform national identity are framed in terms of selection and the timing of the broadcasts. While these are undoubtedly important ways in which *Poetica* contributed to a sense of national identity, I focus especially in my case study chapters on showing how *Poetica's adaptations* of poetry—the way it represented Australian poets in its episodes, after having made its selection from the available stable of Australian poets—constructed images of Australian identity for the public. My thesis is focused on showing how *Poetica* used not only its source material, but also the sonic materiality of the radio medium, to construct particular images of contemporary Australian identity in the life and work of Australian poets.

My analysis in subsequent chapters shows that there are lines of influence that can be traced between *Poetica,* the ABC with its institutional aims, and contemporary discourses of identity in politics and in the media. I seek to situate *Poetica* not only within contemporary national identity discourses, but also within the ABC as an institution. For it is not a given that *Poetica* engaged with the ABC Charter, even though it came under the Charter and was notionally beholden to it. In one of my questions to Ladd I asked: "To what extent did you engage with the ABC Charter? Did you consult it often, or sometimes, or rarely? Did you have it in mind when you were producing and commissioning shows?" and he replied:

> When I first joined in 1983, we all had to read the charter as part of our induction. I don't know if they even do that these days! I can say in over 30 years of making episodes I never consulted it directly to see what to do next. However, I was aware and I think philosophically guided by some of its key ideas: "innovation", "comprehensiveness", the

> Reithian principles of "inform" "educate" "entertain". I also had in my mind the concepts of "cultural enrichment", and "cultural diversity" and to form a "sense of national identity". But it was in a vague, idealistic sense, rather than being very focused. I took seriously the line in there that says we must "encourage and promote the musical, dramatic and other performing arts." *Poetica* employed actors, musicians, composers and of course many poets. I always saw it as part of my job to get some of the ABC's budget distributed to these people! (3)

Virginia Madsen has argued that it is particularly the high-brow, "cultural radio" stations of public service broadcasters, such as Radio National, that strive to uphold the commitments of PSB to "the development of the 'public good'" ("Cultural Radio" 16). This is reflected in Ladd's remarks as an employee of Radio National who was asked to take the Charter seriously, even if he claims that such an engagement may no longer be common. The Charter has many stipulations, and Ladd here remarks on fulfilling another, on encouraging and promoting the dramatic and performing arts by employing artists. In my focus on the ABC's investment in shaping Australian identity, I take for granted that an institutional culture—as defined in an institution's charter of objectives—works through its programs, even if producers engage with the institution's charter loosely. *Poetica* did actively engage with the Charter: this is reflected in *Poetica's* own brief, and in how carefully they selected Australian poets to—as Ladd says—give a sense of what being Australian was at various times. But the program also absorbed and reshaped contemporary narratives of Australian identity in its episodes on Australian poets. The precise way it did this can be better understood with reference to the institutional culture leading up to *Poetica*'s establishment on ABC RN in 1997.

4.3.1 Reviews of National Representations in the ABC, 1981-97

In order to show shifts in discourses of nation building within the ABC, from 1997 onwards, I refer to three government-commissioned reviews of the broadcaster: *The ABC in Review*, which was headed by Alex Dix and is known as the Dix Inquiry (1981); the ABC National Advisory Council's *Multiculturalism and the ABC: A Report to the ABC Board* (1987), and Bob Mansfield's *The Challenge of a Better ABC* (1997). The Dix Inquiry and the Mansfield report were initiated by the Malcolm Fraser and John Howard LNP governments, respectively, while the NAC review was an internally conducted audit as a follow-up to the Dix Inquiry, prompted by Dix's criticism that the ABC had up until that point promoted a (white) mono-cultural national identity. The Dix Inquiry and the Mansfield report were prompted by LNP perceptions of the inefficiency and lack of focus of the broadcaster, and became nodes of debate about the functions of the ABC in relation to

national identity[74].

The ABC released a Cultural Diversity statement between the Dix Inquiry and *Multiculturalism and the ABC,* attempting to address Dix's criticism regarding its lack of engagement with ethnic diversity and Indigenous Australians:

> The ABC believes that to contribute to a sense of national identity as required by its Charter, its programs should present Australia as a racially and ethnically diverse society. This diversity should be reflected in the ABC's general program output; at the same time, specialised programs should provide a focus for the ABC's commitment to ethnic and Aboriginal radio and television. (cited in *Multiculturalism* 6)

However, the subsequent NAC review (1987) focused on two areas that it claimed still needed strengthening within the ABC: youth programming and multicultural programming, and that "the latter was chosen because the ABC had long been criticised, including in the 1981 Dix Committee report, for failing to recognise adequately in its programming and its employment practices, the changing nature of Australian society" (5). While the NAC review commended Radio National in particular for its implementation of multicultural programming, compared to an alleged lack of such programming on TV networks and on metropolitan and regional ABC radio stations, it stated that, "initiatives which have been made appear to reflect more a commitment on the part of particular executives and program makers to multiculturalism than a planned and co-ordinated management strategy for implementing the Board's policy" (8). There was a definite push in the 1980s for the ABC to consistently provide programs which reflected the lives of people of non-English speaking backgrounds in Australia, as well as Indigenous Australians. In other words, the ABC was urged to reform its image of Australian national identity, to change the way it interpreted its Charter in relation to the national. One of the main criticisms of the ABC in the NAC report was a tendency of the national broadcaster to paint broad-brush images, even when it sought to represent minorities:

> As a general point, the NAC emphasises the need to guard against perceptions of people of NESB [non-English speaking backgrounds] as an undifferentiated block (sometimes known as 'migrants') without due consideration of social class, educational, gender and political differences. Unless differences within—as well as between—different communities are recognised, there is a danger that broadcasting will focus on cultural stereotypes. The result is distancing and distortion: the specific culture is seen in a narrow way, devoid of its

[74] While the Dix Inquiry has been described as "entirely appropriate," occurring close to the 50th anniversary of the broadcaster as a corporation, and "a fruitful exercise, feeding into a process that culminated in a restatement of the ABC Charter and a bipartisan commitment to the ABC's institutional role" (Tiffen par. 8), the Mansfield Report has been criticised for having ulterior motives, as grounds for the Howard government to cut funding to the broadcaster; the report was overwhelmingly positive, however, and resulted in a small funding increase (Tiffen pars. 10-11; Jolly 33). I refer to these reviews in particular as they generated debate about the "national" functions of the ABC.

> complexities. A further danger is that cultures other than Anglo-Australian will be seen as exotic and strange. (5)

This policy review episode reveals that the ABC was informed by internal and external audits of its construction of a sense of national identity. The mid-1980s marked the beginning of an increasing sensitivity to minority voices within the nation (beyond the ABC), so that when the ABC spoke of a national audience they were required to take account of the mixed composition of that audience. One of the legacies of this push for more multicultural images of Australian national identity in the national broadcaster's programming was the audience's increasing belief in the importance of multicultural programming (which as I show later, was influenced partly by the enthusiasm for multiculturalism in the public sphere, following the Whitlam Government's introduction of multiculturalism as an official policy in 1973). In 1997, nearly two decades after the NAC review, Mansfield again advocated for greater diversity, although he called not for more ethnic diversity in programming, but for more programming centred on, and based in, regional and rural Australia: "The ABC could not adequately reflect the plurality of Australian views if it operated out of our capital cities alone" (Mansfield 24).

Over this period the ABC did shift from considering Australian national identity in the singular (under the rubric of White Australia) to the plural, and was increasingly required to represent the Australian audience not only as "white" and in the capital cities, but also as comprised of migrants, Indigenous Australians, rural Australians, the young, the elderly, the disabled—in short, it was required to represent national identity, as embodied by the national audience, as multi-faceted. This shift in the ABC's representations of the national audience was occurring even as SBS honed its functions to service individual ethnic communities on radio (through broadcasts in many non-English languages), as well as reflecting multiculturalism in its TV programming in English, by representing ethnic diversity in the community.

As I have tried to show here, multicultural broadcasting policy has produced a shift towards plural representations of national identity in the ABC's programming. Burns sees this turn towards plurality of national representations as also produced by the ABC's move into the trans-national (and nationally plural) medium of the Internet, from 1995 onwards. She argues that the ABC's activities online complicated its image as a national public service broadcaster that had tended to think of Australian identity in monolithic terms. For Burns, the creation of ABC Online posed an unprecedented challenge to the ABC's Charter aims of fostering a national identity and addressing a national audience:

> If the ABC, and the broadcasting nation, is imagined and/or defended as single, centred,

> unified, and continuous, productive of commonality in citizens, and forgetful of multiplicity (as has been suggested of the nation more generally by Connolly 2000: 73-96), what happens when a national Public Service Broadcaster introduces a medium [the Internet] with a 'global' reach which fragments 'audiences'? Surely the governmental rationale of producing a national identity undergoes a profound change? (28)

Burns argues that Australian public service broadcasting institutions, and public service broadcasting institutions more broadly, have historically operated through "arboreal" images of both themselves and of the nation—a perspective which I have highlighted above, in policy reviews of the ABC in the 1980s. She uses Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of the "arboreal" versus the "rhizomic"[75], which are metaphors based on plant structures, to differentiate between a common image of public service broadcasting and a common image of the Internet, in scholarship:

> Particular institutions notwithstanding, the Public Service Broadcasting *idea* is primarily an arboreal image of thought—that is, one based on unified elements, with clearly defined boundaries and parts connected according to a principle of unity (the national identity or the nation). By contrast, the internet *idea* (particular instantiations notwithstanding) is a primarily rhizomic image of thought which celebrates a network structure with multiple entry and exit points. (46)

She has elsewhere described the arboreal and the rhizomic as "the one-to-many interaction of the public service broadcasting idea and the many-to-many networked interaction of the internet idea" (2014: 329). Burns argues that the nation has in the past been theoretically imagined in arboreal terms, "as being composed of a centre and an other, and as inherently unified", and this has been a good match for the ABC, which has also imagined itself as arboreal, as a unified central trunk that feeds nutrients to its outer branches (22). She is careful to say that *in practice* the ABC has never acted in completely arboreal ways, nor the Internet in completely rhizomic ways, but that these are dominant "ideas" about how each functions (46). Her analysis reveals a struggle within the ABC over singular versus plural representations of national identity, in the period between 1995 and 2000, when it first went online; she links this struggle explicitly to its engagement with the new medium of the Internet.

In this section I have described a shift in the ABC's conception of the national audience from the singular to the plural. I have told this story by focusing on the aims of the ABC's Charter in regard to national identity (to "contribute to a sense of national identity" and to "take account of… the multicultural character of the Australian community"), and policy reviews which asked the ABC to

[75] This is Burns' rendering of these terms, which appear as "arborescent" and "rhizomatic" in Brian Massumi's English translation of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (7-8).

take new approaches to these same aims. In charting this shift from singular to plural in the ABC's conception of the national audience, I have not addressed the ABC's approach to specific ethnicities, or to gender. But an awareness of this broad trajectory will allow me to pick up on the ABC's representations of ethnicity and gender in the case studies, as part of its drive towards representing plurality in the Australian audience. In the following section I describe narratives of national identity that were available to the ABC to adapt at the turn of the twenty-first century, and those that had been superseded but nevertheless remained present in the culture.

4.4 Raw material: twentieth-century narratives of Australian identity

4.4.1 White Australia

Writing in 1997, the political historian Geoffrey Stokes argued that,

> Until the 1980s, many of the influential commentators on identity used the term in the singular. They generally assumed the existence or possibility of a single national identity. It was thought that a core of attributes, values and attitudes, albeit one that was slowly evolving, was discernible that marked things and people as authentically Australian. (2)

Stokes' observation about the discursive treatment of national identity in the singular reflects a historical reality in Australia. For in the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, a single ethnic image of Australian-ness was projected as a national ideal. This was the era of the White Australia Policy (1901-73), when British and "white" migrants from northern and (eventually) central and southern Europe were privileged above Indigenous Australians and non-white migrants. Australian immigration policies for filtering out migrants were based on this white national image.

One popular image of Australian national identity arguably dominated the public imagination during this time. This was the heroic figure of the drover in the bush, who was imbued with an anti-authoritarian, "larrikin" character. In *Being Australian: Narratives of National Identity,* Catriona Elder has called this figure, "one of the most stereotyped, out of date and yet long-lived and most popular narratives of Australian-ness" (4). Glossing Russel Ward, Donald Horne, and others, she identifies as attributes of the larrikin: "nonchalance and unpretentious courage" (5); "drinking" (33); "good humour" (43); and being a "knock-about single man" (86). The historian Melissa Bellanta adds that "to be a larrikin is to be sceptical and irreverent, to knock authority and mock pomposity", and to value egalitarianism, as exemplified in the term "mate" (xii). This image of

Australian-ness was immortalised in Ward's *The Australian Legend* (1958)[76]. Much earlier than this, the bush hero was celebrated in the work of late-nineteenth-century poets writing about the bush, such as A.B. "Banjo" Paterson:

> The "old" bush of the pioneers was rapidly retreating into the past, which is one reason why the poets of the 1890s were so keen to memorialise it. Paterson was nostalgic for pre-industrial frontier life because it offered freedom from the conformity of urban mass society. For the city-dwelling speaker of "Clancy of the Overflow", "the hurrying people daunt me, and their pallid faces haunt me / As they shoulder one another in their rush and nervous haste". His longing to "change with Clancy" and "take a turn at droving" completely neglected the hardships of the drover's life. The anti pastoral vision of Lawson, on the other hand, acknowledged the contemporary politics of rural labour: "Ah! we read about the drovers and the shearers and the like / Till we wonder why such happy and romantic fellows strike" ("The City Bushman"). (Kirkpatrick 203)

It is clear from Kirkpatrick's analysis of these two poets' renderings of the bushman that Paterson's bushman, who loomed large in the public imagination, was a romantic depiction: Kirkpatrick points out that Paterson "completely neglected the hardships of the drover's life."

It is Ward's later, equally romantic, depiction that I focus on here, as this had a significant effect on mid-to-late twentieth discourses of Australian identity. Jeff Archer notes that "Russel Ward's… account of the typical Australian is possibly the epitome of the modernist approach to national identity," meaning that he cultivated a singular image of Australian-ness, which was established as an ideal (29). Cultural critics in the mid- to- late twentieth century took issue with this figure, as an exclusionary national ideal. For instance, Elder and Moore note the extent to which this archetype, "a masculine figure who emerged from the space of the bush", has been critiqued:

> In the twenty-first century, this archetype has been thoroughly worked over and has emerged as a slightly battered and bruised trope that is more likely to be deployed ironically than with mid-twentieth-century fervour. Critiques of this mode of Australian identity have been made from the perspective of gender and sexuality (Biber et al. 1999; Lake 1986; Thomsen and Donaldson 2003) and race and ethnicity (Ang et al. 2000; Burke 2008). (Elder and Moore 2012: 4)

Such critiques have also come from within poetry scholarship; the poet John Kinsella, for instance, argues that this figure "is at the core of our national identity, the propaganda that has so effectively

[76] This archetype of Australian national identity heavily inflects the representation of authorial presence in the John Forbes radio episode, "A Layered Event" (1999), as I will show.

excluded outside interaction and marginalised Indigenous peoples" (19). The prominence of the larrikin bushman in the national imaginary has become interwoven with other modern archetypes of national identity, most notably the Aussie "digger," or soldier fighting wars abroad:

> The bushman myth [found] a potent reiteration in the Anzac legend of the citizen soldier during World War One, in particular through the experiences and mythologising of the failed Gallipoli campaign of 1915. Physical prowess, bravery, stoicisim in the face of adversity, mateship, anti-authoritarianism, innovation, and practicality were extolled as typically Australian virtues, and it has commonly been claimed, by political leaders, historians, and ordinary Australians since then that the Australian nation was born at Gallipoli (Inglis 1998). (Moran 2156)

The figure of the Anzac has had enduring appeal: Anthony Moran argues that "Anzac Day is Australia's *de facto* national day, more powerfully resonant than the official Australia Day (26 January)" (2157). These images of Australian national identity, in the larrikin bush hero and the war hero, are masculine, white, and heterosexual. Scholars have recently focused on whiteness as a historical phenomenon in Australia, looking at the way certain ethnicities were grouped under this label (the particular ethnicities being grouped together as "white" were different at different times), and how it was produced as powerful and normative, even in the later age of multiculturalism[77]. While there was a swing towards multiculturalism from the mid-1970s onwards, some scholars have argued that an image of whiteness as superior has remained ingrained in the national consciousness, with multiculturalism being viewed as a smoke screen for "business as usual". Most notable among these is Ghassan Hage, who in *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society* (1998)[78], identifies the unease which prompted him to probe multiculturalism in Australia more deeply; he writes that he is interested in "the way certain cultural forms of White-ethnic power relations remained omnipresent in a multicultural [Australian] society, and were reproduced by the very ideologies of cultural pluralism and tolerance that were supposed to transcend them" (15). A symptom of the omnipresence of White-ethnic power relations in multicultural Australia was the popularity of Pauline Hanson when she rose to power in 1996; in her maiden speech to parliament she called for the "abolishment" of the immigration policy and a return to the values of White Australia (Hanson par. 20).

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[77] See for instance Jan Larbalestier's chapter in Ghassan Hage and Rowanne Couch's *The Future of Australian Multiculturalism* (1999). In this she argues:

> Appeals to a collectivity of 'white' Australians are a means of constituting the historical and social space of a 'white' Australian culture and its subjects. Notions of whiteness then signal the idea of a continuing and essential homogeneity of a core Australian identity. Constructions of such an identity, among other things, serve to elide both the cultural diversity of Australia's population since 1788 and the contested and contradictory aspects of its construction. (146)

Larbalestier alludes in the last line to Indigenous populations and the Chinese, among other migrants, who lived in Australia prior to the twentieth century, and whose histories were obscured under White Australia.

[78] See also Jon Stratton's *Race Daze: Australia in Identity Crisis* (1998).

White Australian identity colours many icons of Australian-ness in the twentieth century, such as the pub, the beach, and the barbeque (on these, John Fiske et al.'s see *Myths of Oz* (1987)), and was evident for instance in Paul Hogan's "Shrimp on the Barbie" TV ad campaign, representing Australia to foreigners, from 1984 to 1990. Elder has highlighted the remarkable endurance of whiteness, and the way its older archetypes of identity keep cropping up in the postmodern, post-multicultural new millennium:

> These stories have all helped produce a legend of being an Australian that has built a picture of Australian-ness as golden youth, larrikin nonchalance and unpretentious courage. This meant that in 2002 a soldier could say it was his Australian-ness that helped him do his duty, and many Australians could make a link in their mind with the popular story about Australian-ness and masculine soldierly ability and understand its meaning. (5)

However, she also charts a shift in the way that many Australians engage with these archetypes of Australian identity at the turn of the twenty-first century. After claiming that "many Australians obviously disagree with the idea of typical Australian-ness deriving from this laconic bush bloke," she argues that Australians (presumably those who are familiar with the history of the archetype—so perhaps not new citizens) now often engage with this kind of national identity with a sense of irony. For Elder two cases in point were the aftermath of Steve Irwin's death, and the 2000 Sydney Olympics:

> When the wildlife entrepreneur Steve Irwin died unexpectedly in 2006 many Australians were sad at his early death while at the same time a bit embarrassed that Irwin was understood overseas as a typical Australian. This was also obvious in the closing ceremony of the 2000 Olympics in Sydney. The ceremony was a witty and gently mocking tribute to Australian symbols such as Kylie Minogue and the rubber thong. (4-5)

Irony has been identified as a feature of postmodern Australian identity: Ivor Indyk claims for instance that "What we have in abundance [in Australia] is irony, springing from a deep sense of limitation, and intractability" (87). In this vein, Elder refers to a critical engagement with traditional images of Australian national identity through irony (rather than an engagement that is purely celebratory) as being a new norm. A contemporary example of this is the Australia Day lamb advertisements, which are patriotic in an overblown, tongue-in-cheek manner. But such ironic engagements with national identity are surely not uniform across the population. The period Elder is speaking of (the late-1990s to the mid-2000s) was also the time of Prime Minister John Howard, who was critical of multiculturalism and denigrated multiculturalism as a policy that was liable to

divide the country. In this period there was a nostalgia for a white national identity, as multiculturalism fell out of favour under the Howard Government.

4.4.2 Multicultural Australia

> Two quite different stories of ethnicity have been central to ideas of Australian-ness. One is a very powerful story of Australia as white. This white Australia story covers a range of narratives focusing on Australia as an Anglo-Australian nation, a Judeo-Christian nation and a democratic nation. The white Australia story posits being Australian in terms of sameness. The second story is of Australia as a nation of immigrants. The notion of Australians all being immigrants implies that all citizens have come from somewhere else but are united in their commitment to their adopted country. This is the story of multicultural Australia; it posits Australian-ness in terms of difference and diversity. (Elder *Being Australian* 115)

Australia began dismantling its White Australia Policy from the 1950s onwards, and it was officially abolished by the Whitlam Government in 1973. The late twentieth century saw a shift in popular conceptions of Australian national identity, partly driven by the government's response to the waves of migration to Australia following World War II; they saw "assimilation" as a failed policy for integrating migrants into Australian society (Moran 2159). Multiculturalism took hold in migration policy in the 70s (multicultural policy has always been the responsibility of the Department of Immigration), but it also took hold in the public imagination. Perhaps an indication of this was the breakaway popularity of the song "I Am Australian," written by Bruce Woodley of The Seekers and Dobe Newton of The Bushwackers, in 1987. Its chorus, "We are one, but we are many… / We share a dream and sing with one voice: / I am, you are, we are Australian" (Woodley and Newton par. 2), describes the unity-through-diversity approach to Australian national identity in official and then popular rhetoric about multiculturalism. Moran notes that, "Just as mass immigration had always been constructed as nation-building in Australia, so too was multicultural policy conceived as a nation-building exercise" (2159). Jupp concisely summarises the historical circumstances that produced this new kind of nation building:

> The official adoption of a policy of multiculturalism followed a decade when attitudes and policies were coming to grips with new realities different from those based on previous experiences with British immigration. Multiculturalism queried the belief that all other cultures were inferior to, and incompatible with, the 'mainstream' culture of white British Australia. It accepted that immigrants would continue to speak their own languages and would try to pass on to their children a sense of pride in their origins. Those who had come

> as refugees would still follow closely the politics of their homelands, even while being anxious to become Australian citizens. ("The Institutions of Culture" 261)

Jupp argues that "the heyday of official multiculturalism at the national level was between the Galbally report on migrant services in 1978 (Galbally 1978) and the launching of the second multicultural agenda by the Keating Government in 1995" (260). A new spirit of Australian national identity emerged during this period, and has lingered into the twenty-first century. However, the multicultural reconfiguration of Australian national identity has always encountered resistance from pockets of Australian society. Criticism of multiculturalism has also occurred at times of high unemployment, such as in the early-1990s, when migrants were seen to be taking "Australian" jobs (Jupp 261). Multiculturalism sought to transform the white Australian identity, but this remains latent and has quickly re-emerged at times of crisis. For instance, Howard pushed against multiculturalism in the face of perceived threats from Islamist violence. Speaking after he had lost the Prime Ministership in 2007, Howard argued that:

> On the social front we emphasised our nation's traditional values, sought to resurrect greater pride in her history and became assertive about the intrinsic worth of our national identity. In the process we ended the seemingly endless seminar about that identity [in relation to multiculturalism and Indigenous history] which had been in progress for some years (Howard 2008, cited in Moran 2167).

It was during this period that multicultural Australia was eroded most. As Jupp notes in regard to multiculturalism, "Since [1995] there has been a marked decline of enthusiasm, a reduction of staffing, funding and functions at the Commonwealth, state and non-governmental organisation (NGO) level, and a less than encouraging atmosphere from politicians, public servants and populist journalists" ("The Institutions of Culture" 260). The beginning of this period saw Pauline Hanson come to power, in 1996, proclaiming that multiculturalism was harmful to Australian society and was causing national disunity. Multiculturalism has never been officially abolished since being introduced, but funding has gradually been reduced for its programs at a national level:

> Australia's national governments, both conservative and Labor, were less willing than in the past to promote the symbolism of multiculturalism, instead emphasising Australian citizenship. As in Europe, there was a symbolic retreat from multiculturalism, in part stimulated by the threat of Islamic extremism and terrorism. At the same time, most national multicultural policies remained in place, including funding (albeit reduced) for multicultural broadcaster SBS and for Ethnic Communities' Councils at both national and state levels, the 'access and equity' strategy aimed at full participation and equality among Australia's diverse population, anti-discrimination, and anti racial vilification policies, and promotion

> of national 'Harmony Day'. Unlike national governments, many state and local governments continued to promote the virtues of multiculturalism… (Moran 2167)

This trend, which Moran traces at work until 2010, is arguably still in effect[79]. The recent proposed repealing of section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act (an Act which was originally ratified by the Whitlam government, in the early days of multicultural Australia), in March 2014, and subsequent and constant debates about its amendment, is a symptom of a further retreat from the principles of multiculturalism[80]. The proposed amendment was prompted by charges laid against Herald Sun columnist Andrew Bolt, who was found to have breached the Act in his comments against Indigenous Australians (Marlow par. 18). That is, Tony Abbott's Coalition government reviewed the act in light of Bolt's prosecution under section 18C, on the basis that the act may be causing social disharmony. However, the Act was supposed to protect social cohesion by discouraging divisive language around race and ethnicity; it is also a symbol of what we as a multicultural nation stand for. Here the perspective offered by whiteness studies in Australia, that multiculturalism has been a cover for "business as usual" in relation to white-ethnic relations, is useful.

The story I have told here is of the underlying cultural power of whiteness in multicultural Australia. In telling this story I have addressed both the new and different story of Australian-ness that multiculturalism produced in the national imaginary, in the 1970s-2000s, as well as the scholarly position that multiculturalism was simply a more palatable guise for white dominance—that it appeared to challenge the status quo without actually doing so.

Multicultural Australia has produced few archetypes of Australian national identity to rival the nostalgic power of those produced under White Australia. The ambivalent figure of the "wog" is one such character which assimilates Greek- and Italian-Australians as Australian, using parody (the figure is an ambivalent image of Australian identity because it is both fondly acknowledged and mocked). This character started to feature in popular media in the 1980s, in widely-touring stage plays and television programs such as *Wogs out of Work* (debut in 1987), *Acropolis Now* (1989-1992), *The Comedy Company's* "Con the Fruiterer" sketch (1988-1990), and *Pizza* (2000-2007) which was adapted as the popular film *Fat Pizza* (2003). Asian-Australians and Lebanese-Australians have recently received humorous treatment in popular TV series such as *The Family*

[79] Although Moran noted, just before his article was published, that "In 2011, the Gillard government announced a halt to [the] symbolic retreat [from the principles of multiculturalism], praising the unique achievements of Australian multiculturalism, and promising a renewed policy" (2167). This policy never eventuated, and was impossible under Tony Abbott, who was voted in as PM in 2013.

[80] Not to mention the growth of the racist anti-Halal movement in 2014, and the re-election of Pauline Hanson, along with other One Nation senators, to the Senate in 2016.

Law (2016) and *Here Come the Habibs!* (2016). Multiculturalism has also had iconic moments that are more dramatic, such as when the Aboriginal athlete Cathy Freeman wrapped herself in both the Aboriginal and Australian national flags during her victory lap at the 1994 Commonwealth Games; this caused controversy and was a test of multiculturalism's embrace of Indigenous Australians[81]. But it remains to be seen whether multiculturalism will produce images of national Australian identity to rival the bush hero and the war hero**;** in the meantime the image of Australian national identity that comes through multiculturalism is ambivalent, featuring popular narratives that tend to satirise or parody their subjects.

In the first chapter I theorised the embodiment of authorial presence in the lyric voice. In the last two chapters, I have sought to reveal the various factors that shape this lyric voice in *Poetica*, adding new dimensions to it. This voice is shaped sonically within the radio medium—including the particular way that *Poetica* manipulated voice and sound—but also, significantly, by the national identity ethos of the ABC. In *Poetica* the lyric voice is shaped by all these factors, which are both aesthetic and political. In the following chapters, on the episodes "Ouyang Yu" (1997), "A Layered Event" (1999) and "Vicki's Voice" (2005), I examine the layering of voice, and the figuration of authorial presence in this layered voice. My close readings of these episodes reveal the complexity of the adaptation process in *Poetica*. Importantly, the close readings reveal, despite *Poetica*'s primary focus on aesthetic considerations, the surprising extent to which particular archetypes and narratives of national identity in the broader culture infuse the lyric authorial presences given to the public.

[81] This is perhaps a complicated example, as there are different politics involved in the white/Indigenous relationship versus the white/Euro-Asian migrant relationship, stemming from the violent history of white domination over Indigenous Australians prior to and during White Australia. On this see Stephenson's "New Cultural Scripts: Exploring the Dialogue between Indigenous and 'Asian' Australians" (2003).

5. Multicultural Australia in "Ouyang Yu" (1997)

The eponymous episode "Ouyang Yu" adapts the poetry of the contemporary Chinese-Australian poet Ouyang Yu; it was produced by Michael Ladd and broadcast on 23 August 1997. It was broadcast six years after Ouyang had arrived in Australia to undertake a PhD on representations of the Chinese in Australian literature[82] at La Trobe University, and following the publication of two books of his poetry in English: *moon over melbourne* (1995) and *Songs of the Last Chinese Poet* (1997). Ouyang was just beginning to publish in English[83], to translate contemporary Chinese poetry into English and vice-versa, and to make translations of his own work in Mandarin into English. In the following two decades, he would go on to establish himself as a major contemporary Australian writer: a poet, novelist, critic, and translator with more than seventy books of poetry, fiction, non-fiction and translations, in English and Mandarin, to his name.

"Ouyang Yu" was broadcast when Ouyang Yu was an emerging poet, however, and not yet well-known in Australian literary circles. As such, *Poetica*'s devotion of an episode to Ouyang's life and work was recognition of Ouyang as an interesting and important new poet in Australia. The episode was broadcast in the first year of *Poetica*'s operations on the network, when it was developing its identity: as Ladd says, "we tried really hard to be an exciting program in that first year, because we didn't know if we'd get another chance" (Varatharajan "Interview for *Southerly*" 3). The program was finding its feet and fine-tuning its content and format; this explains why, in "Ouyang Yu," several translations of contemporary Chinese poets, included in the episode along with Ouyang's poetry, are not credited in the body of the episode itself, as they would be in later episodes[84].

"Ouyang Yu" is a bilingual episode, with readings of poetry in Mandarin (by the poet) as well as in English (a few by the poet, but mostly by the actor Brant Eustace). It also features three of Ouyang's translations of poems by the contemporary Chinese poets Zhang Yougong, Yi Sha, and Shi Xiaojun, read in Ouyang's voice; extensive commentary from Ouyang; and the initial presence of Ladd as producer, walking with Ouyang and interviewing him. There is a contrast in the show between Ouyang's distinctly Chinese accent and the Australian accents of Eustace and Ladd, and

[82] This was later published as *Chinese in Australian Fiction 1888-1988* (2008).
[83] Upon arriving in Australia he also established the bi-lingual English/Mandarin literary journal *Otherland.*
[84] They appeared in the announcements for the live broadcast, and on the episode's web page. As Ladd notes when I asked him about this:

> Early on, and this was a very early show, we were a bit cavalier about titling and crediting every poem within a broadcast. I had this idea about just letting the poetry flow and then doing the credits at the end. I think it was a fashion really. Later we decided it was better to tell the listener exactly whose poem was being read at the time. The live introduction told listeners they would be hearing Ouyang's poems as well as his translations of some contemporary Chinese poets. The back announcement gave full credits to Zhang Yougong, Yi Sha, and Shi Xiaojun. (Varatharajan "Interview" 6).

this contrast in voices and accents is mirrored by the mix of sound effects and music chosen to accompany the poems: part-Chinese and part-Australian.

"Ouyang Yu" begins with the sounds of a Chinese mandolin, before and under the poem "moon over melbourne". Over the opening bars of mandolin, before the poem's title is announced, we hear the sound of dogs barking, and people walking over paved streets, speaking in muffled but recognisably Australian accents; a train passing over train tracks; and the pulse of a green pedestrian light (Ladd "Ouyang" 0'00–4'21). Through these sounds, the episode signals that the setting may be Australian—the sounds are identifiably from urban Australia—but the mandolin we hear first and most consistently through the opening sequence signals a significant element of difference in this episode. This long, five minute sequence layers the familiar and Australian over the unfamiliar and Chinese in its choice of sounds, foreshadowing themes that will be explored in the following half-hour: bi-cultural identity, Chinese ethnicity, multiculturalism, and the displacement or dislocation of migrants in urban Australia. This opening audio sequence is important to the construction of meaning in the episode; the opening of *Poetica* episodes are often curated to immerse listeners immediately in the emotional, social and political themes of the poet's work and life, to direct listeners' attention to what *Poetica* considered important aspects of the poet.

In this chapter I examine the layered poetic voice in "Ouyang Yu". I show that this voice has been adapted into a sonically rich environment, and that it is politically inflected. Place is a central theme in the episode, and the episode often signals this through sound effects and music that evoke particular locales—as in the opening sequence. The political inflection begins with the episode's curation of Ouyang's work—with which poems have been selected for adaptation. I therefore begin by looking at authorial presences in Ouyang Yu's poetry, particularly those concerned with national identity—a theme that is prominent in his poetry and especially prominent in the episode. In the second part of the chapter I examine the national identity discourse in Australia in the mid- to- late-1990s, because media—including the ABC as an institution—were saturated with questions of national identity at this time: these questions affected images of Australian identity in programming. In this period there was a waning of enthusiasm for multiculturalism, especially after the election of John Howard as Prime Minister in 1996, and with the rise of Pauline Hanson as leader of One Nation Party in April 1997, four months before the broadcast of "Ouyang Yu".

In the final part of the chapter I draw on both of these two contexts—Ouyang's self-representations of identity in his poetry and prose, and political and institutional discourses around national identity in Australia leading up to 1997—to examine how "Ouyang Yu" adapts the poet's authorial

presences into radio sound, and through the rubric of national identity. I show that in "Ouyang Yu" the national identity context tends to dominate. That is, the aesthetic qualities of the episode are subservient to the political inflections, due in large part to the pressure of contemporary events to do with Australian identity. The episode represents ambivalence around Australian multiculturalism at this time, and advances this discourse by using Ouyang's poetry to seek another model of national identity: not White Australia, not Australian multiculturalism (which Ouyang states in the episode is deeply flawed), but "a third alternative" that allows for more cultural fluidity to exist within Australian national identity (11'19–14'49). The episode resists the prevailing anti-multicultural rhetoric of the time, while also critiquing multiculturalism. It complicates the movement from the singular to the plural in late-twentieth-century discourses of Australian identity that I described in the previous chapter; the episode does this by problematising multiculturalism's status as a progressive form of nationhood that idealises plurality. However, in contrast to the calls for a movement back to a singular and white ethnic model of Australian identity in contemporary politics, "Ouyang Yu" seeks to imagine a better kind of plural national identity.

5.1 National identity in Ouyang Yu's poetry

Cultural identity, mapped onto the nation, is a prominent theme of Ouyang's writing; it is a major force that shapes his authorial presence. Having defined authorial presence as something that is particular to a poet's art and to the rhetorical voice to be found there, I focus on his poetry, but use his critical writing to supplement and further illuminate conceptions of cultural identity that infuse the authorial presences of his poetry. I focus on work prior to the broadcast of "Ouyang Yu" in 1997, but also bring in later creative and critical writing that is continuous with the themes he began to explore in the early years of his writing career in Australia.

Leading up to the time of the radio broadcast, Ouyang presented his authorial voice as being double, as having doubled through his movement across boundaries defined by language (Mandarin versus English) and nation (China versus Australia). Indeed, speaking in retrospect about his book *Songs of the Last Chinese Poet* (1997), he says:

> When I wrote that book, I literally heard voices. I became multiple, multiplied, turning into a multitude of voices. After China, it seems, the original integrity of my soul could no longer hold together but must break into pieces of self at fissures of intense cross-cultural conflicts, speaking in a voice ringing with a chorus of other voices. (*Beyond* 13)

Here "self," "soul," and "voice" are mapped onto nation: the premise is that there is one self, soul or voice per national citizen, and so being attached to two nations entails a doubling, with the suggestion here that more multiplications of self/soul/voice may later occur ("a voice ringing with a chorus of other voices"). The doubling of authorial voice, induced by "cross-cultural conflicts," is a recurrent thematic preoccupation of Ouyang's poetry. These cross-cultural conflicts also have to do with language: Ouyang has written about "turning from a pictographic person [in Mandarin] into a phonetic one [in English]" (*Bias* 113-14). That is, he grounds his sense of poetic multiplicity to the languages of Mandarin and English, which are starkly different, as well as to China and Australia, which he represents as culturally distinct places.

The theme of self-doubling through cultural and linguistic journeys is the focus of poems such as "Seeing Double," which is the second poem featured in "Ouyang Yu", and "In Lieu of Autobiography," the fourth poem of the episode (I focus closely on these adaptations below). This theme is continuous across the first decade of Ouyang's poetic career in Australia, cropping up in books published several years after *moon over melbourne,* such as in "The Double Man"[85] (*Two Hearts* 59). However, the poet also posits quite early in his career that he is looking to transcend the China/Australia and Mandarin/English binaries which produce these doublings; for instance, "Seeing Double" contains reference at the end to his self becoming "doubled, *tripled, a multiple double*," a plural or multi-self rather than a dichotomous one (Ladd "Ouyang" 6'10–7'00). The poet also makes this claim, about having transcended cultural binaries, in an essay he published in 2007, a decade after "Ouyang Yu" was broadcast:

> I have, or I think I have, long resolved the confusing but enriching identity issue, as evident in a poem I wrote years ago: 'my name is a crystallisation of two cultures/my surname is china/my given name Australia/if I translate that direct into English/my surname becomes australia/my given name china'. The border has been crossed and recrossed so many times that it does not seem to be there any more. (*Bias* 15)

Here Ouyang is referring to the fact that in the Chinese naming convention the family name appears first, followed by the given name—in the West this is reversed, so the poet's cultural identity is literally opposite in Australia. He also uses the China/Australia binary to argue that he has moved beyond this: "the border has been crossed and recrossed so many times that it does not seem to be there anymore." I suggest that earlier in Ouyang's work there is a preoccupation with dual national identities, but that this preoccupation dissipates over time as the poet embraces a hybrid identity that is numerically—and nationally—indeterminate. Most of the adapted poems in "Ouyang Yu"

[85] Self-doubling occurs less frequently in Ouyang's later work; however some of his earlier poems on this theme have been collected and republished in his *Self-Translation* (2012).

come from his first collection *moon over melbourne* (1995), which is invested in, and troubled by, the China/Australia binary. He expresses the desire for this more hybrid identity in this book, but his entrapment in a dual national identity at this time is the result of the national structures he inhabited in the late twentieth century. I highlight this movement from a single to a dual to a more hybrid cosmopolitan identity as an important thread in the poet's career—one that "Ouyang Yu" picks up on.

Ouyang's trajectory through his writing career, from embracing duality to plurality in cultural identity, also represents an ideal for national identity at a state level. That is, it suggests a model for national identity that is less attached to singular national identities which are then evoked in combinations of two (as evident in terms such as Chinese-Australian, which while functional and pragmatic in conveying someone's cultural backgrounds, confine identities to dualisms)[86]. What I want to highlight here is the feedback loop between personal cultural identity and national identity as constructed by the state. In his critical and creative work, Ouyang is sensitive to the fact that his sense of himself, as trapped between two national cultures, is partly produced by his status as a Chinese migrant in Australia, and the way that Australia dealt with this group of people—including or excluding them from its vision of an ideal Australianness—at this time. Multiculturalism as it developed in Australia from the 1970s to the end of the century allowed for the national composition to be "multi," much more than it was under the White Australia Policy, but tended to pin migrants to singular and static ethnic identities. It is to that historical context that I now turn, to examine the constructions of Australian identity—at a state level and as then realised in individuals—in the late 1990s, which "Ouyang Yu" puts itself in dialogue with.

[86] Vijay Mishra has contested the idea that multicultural Australia has even moved to thinking in terms of dual cultural backgrounds, instead of singular ones; in *What Was Multiculturalism? A Critical Retrospective* (2012) he claims:

> One of the great strengths of Australian settler history has been the nation's capacity to avoid giving its citizens hyphenated identities. To this day, hyphenations have not taken hold of Australian culture, as terms such as Chinese-Australian, Indian-Australian, Muslim-Australian are very rare [in contrast to other white settler societies like Canada and the USA]. People have, by and large, become Australians, with visible minorities, when confronted with the fact of ethnic difference, simply defining themselves in terms of their (historical) ethnic identities: 'I am a Fiji Indian', for instance. The success, however, has in fact created, especially in the aftermath of 9/11, a different kind of division, a division in which everyone except followers of the Muslim faith has been contained within an Australian post-Enlightenment ethos. (153)

In this final line Mishra refers to exceptions to what ethnicities and religions multiculturalism incorporated within the nation as Australian, in the context of domestic politics in Australia post-9/11. I refer to this selective inclusion of ethnicities by multicultural Australia, in relation to Chinese-ness, below.

5.2 Political and institutional images of Australian national identity in the late-1990s

The identity adaptations in "Ouyang Yu" (from Ouyang's poetry to the episode) occurred at a moment of flux in Australian identity, as it was being constructed at a political level. I theorised the broad shift from White Australia to multicultural Australia in the previous chapter, but in this section I focus on tensions in political discourse on multiculturalism immediately preceding the episode's broadcast, as the episode engages with these tensions. The episode was broadcast in August 1997, four months after the rise of Pauline Hanson as leader of One Nation Party, and after two-and-a-half decades since the implementation of multiculturalism as an immigration policy to replace the White Australia Policy. It was also broadcast after the previous year's election of John Howard, of the then new Liberal-National Party, as Prime Minister. The episode was broadcast at a moment when there was a push for a unified (white) national identity, fuelled by nostalgia for a supposedly homogenous Australia of earlier times, with multiculturalism being seen by Hanson and by Howard as contributing to national disunity. Indeed, in her maiden speech to the House of Representatives on 10 September 1996, Hanson infamously stated:

> I and most Australians want our immigration policy radically reviewed and that of multiculturalism abolished. I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians. Between 1984 and 1995, 40 per cent of all migrants coming into this country were of Asian origin. They have their own culture and religion, form ghettos and do not assimilate. Of course, I will be called racist but, if I can invite whom I want into my home, then I should have the right to have a say in who comes into my country. A truly multicultural country can never be strong or united. The world is full of failed and tragic examples ... Abolishing the policy of multiculturalism will save billions of dollars and allow those from ethnic backgrounds to join mainstream Australia, paving the way to a strong, united country. (Hanson pars. 20-27)

Hanson's final statement here regarding the abolishment of multiculturalism allowing "those from ethnic backgrounds to join mainstream Australia" recalls the assimilationist era of the White Australia Policy, following World War II[87]; here "mainstream Australia" means white Australia. James Jupp offers a gloss of this:

[87] Jupp talks about phases of immigration policy in Australia, from assimilation (1947-66) to integration (1966-72) to multiculturalism (1972-96), and then back to a version of integration under Howard (1996-2007) ("Politics" 44-47). Jupp notes that, "the Howard government (1996-2007) [attempted] to wipe the multicultural slate clean by substituting integration, as though it were opposite and superior. In practice the two [multiculturalism and integration] go together" ("Introduction" xx). "Integration," while a softer approach than assimilation (which was premised on "the hope and expectation that Europeans who 'looked like' Australians would rapidly become 'Australians', grateful for the freedom and prosperity of Australia and willing to forget the languages, behaviour and 'ancient' quarrels' of their original homelands" (Jupp "Politics" 45)), still upholds the privileged position of the white settler ethnicity, asking migrants to integrate themselves harmoniously into the mainstream while allowing them to retain their ethnic backgrounds.

> One Nation, in effect, rejected all forms of ethnic variety, favouring assimilation of immigrants and Aborigines, calling on multiculturalism to be 'abolished,' for mass immigration to be abandoned and for the ending of welfare services allocated on the basis of Aboriginality or ethnicity. ("Politics" 43)

In effect, Hanson called for changes to Australia in the last three decades of the twentieth century to be reversed. In the previous chapter I traced the shift from singular to plural conceptions of Australian identity, from the mid- to late-twentieth century. However, there is an ongoing tension between white Australian identity and a vision of Australian identity that celebrates difference and diversity, and "Ouyang Yu" and "A Layered Event" are positioned at heightened moments of tension between the two. "Ouyang Yu" arrived at a moment when Hanson and Howard were arguing that multiculturalism posed a threat to national unity, thereby privileging a singular Australian identity implicitly (Howard) or explicitly (Hanson) based around whiteness[88].

"Ouyang Yu" came after a push back towards singular conceptions of national identity in political discourse, on a public service broadcaster that was disseminating plural images of national identity. Artistic representations of national identity via media had, until a few years before *Poetica* began its operations in 1997, been promoting images of national identity that excluded certain ethnic groups, notably the Chinese. Jon Stratton highlights the lack of representation of Asians in Australian popular culture until the 1990s, in his book *Race Daze: Australia in Identity Crisis* (1999). He uses this observation to argue that it was not until the early- to mid-1990s that Asians entered the national imaginary as Australians, which he claims is when the white core of the nation started to see Asian-Australian-ness as a way of being Australian (17). In a chapter of *Race Daze* titled "National Identity, Film and the Narrativisation of Multiculturalism and 'Asians,'" Stratton writes:

> While Australia has had a non-discriminatory migration policy since the early 1970s, it is only in the 1990s, and only really in the problematic portrayal in *Romper Stomper* (1992), that any Asian people have been narrativised as a part of Australian society. These contexts form a backdrop for the political backlash focused on Hanson and, to a lesser extent, Howard. In particular, it is only in the 1990s that multiculturalism and non-discriminatory migration have become realised, as exemplified in narrative presentations, as aspects of the way Australians think about themselves. (17)

[88] While he may have been less forthright than Hanson in his opposition to Asian immigration, Howard was likewise invested in combating "the threat that multiculturalism and cultural diversity posed to white Australian culture and the Australian way of life", as Deirdre Howard-Wagner notes in "Governing Through Neoliberal Multiculturalism: Reconstituting Australian Culture and Cultural Diversity in the Howard Era, 1996-2007" (89).

Stratton doesn't mention *Floating Life* (1996), another relevant film from this period, which tells the story of a migrant family from Hong Kong grappling with isolation and alienation in Sydney—but he is considering popular and widely-watched films, which *Floating Life* was not. He suggests that it is partly in this context, of "Asians" finally appearing on screens—which he uses as a barometer for how Australians see themselves—that there was a political backlash by Pauline Hanson and John Howard, and calls by them for a return to a white Australian identity. While there had been representations of southern European migrants in popular Australian media, such as in *Acropolis Now* (1989-1992) on Channel Seven (as opposed to more pervasive representations of Asians on the less popular Special Broadcasting Service [or SBS, established in 1979]), the representation of Asians in popular television, radio and film in Australia came late.

It is pertinent to note here that this account of the belated representation of Asians in Australian arts has been challenged—in the context of Australian poetry—by Noel Rowe and Vivian Smith, in their introduction to the anthology *Windchimes: Asia in Australian Poetry* (2006). Indeed, they argue:

> Australia did not suddenly start to see itself as part of Asia in the 1990s. The different places understood as "Asia" have been part of Australian poetry at least since the 1890s. Nor did recent Australian poetry suddenly learn how to imagine "the Other." Contemporary writers may be more aware of issues of representation, difference and power, more likely to avoid obvious racism, but it could also be said that they continue to exhibit the diverse responses of their predecessors, writing in ways that make Asia seem exotic, erotic, funny, threatening, relaxed, enriching, even inscrutable. (1)

The anthology's selection of poems, beginning with James Brunton Stephens' "My Chinee Cook" (1873) and Banjo Paterson's "The Pearl Diver" (1902) bears out this argument. However, poetry has never had as wide a reach as film, and Stratton's account of Asians appearing in Australian film is more relevant to an examination of banal nationalist constructions of identity in Australia. Like national radio, film has always been capable of far-reaching dissemination of ideas about national identity.

Stratton's account suggests that there is something particular about white-Asian relations, historically, that meant that the narrativisation of Asians in popular media was difficult for multicultural Australia to achieve until well into the 1990s. Wenche Ommundsen, a prominent critic of Ouyang's writing, reflects on this historical relationship between Australia and China in her essay "Birds of Passage? The New Generation of Chinese-Australian Writers". She writes,

> Whatever notion of Chineseness is included in the migrant's baggage on arrival, it will have to negotiate powerful Western discourses and constructions. China has the doubtful privilege of functioning as the West's favourite "other"; burdened with an "excess of meaningfulness" (Ang 1992/1993: 8), it translates into accumulations of stereotypes, Orientalist dreams and racist fantasies. In Australia, where China, more precisely anti-Chinese discourse, has been "explicitly connected with the cause of nation-building" (Stratton & Ang 1998: 144), such constructions still exert a powerful influence after almost three decades of multiculturalism and anti-discriminatory immigration policies. (93)

The "anti-Chinese discourse" Ommundsen refers to is a history of racist depictions of Chinese going back to the gold rush era in the nineteenth century, when the anti-Chinese discourse functioned through exclusion to shore up a sense of a unified Australian identity (see Bill Hornadge's *The Yellow Peril: a Squint at Some Australian Attitudes Towards Orientals* (1971), or for a problematised account of this, Kane Collins' "Imagining the Golden Race" (2012)). This perspective on the Australia-China nationalist relationship has been echoed by Stratton and Jacqueline Lo**.** It is a historical context that sheds light on the seemingly extreme response to Asians in political discourse the 1990s, in a supposedly plural, accepting multicultural society.

Multicultural Australia downsized the older concept of race to ethnicity; as Lo notes of this period, "'Culture' [was now] located at the site of ethnic communities [rather than race] … The more flexible concept of ethnicity (which can include sexuality, religious beliefs, cultural practice and moral beliefs) re-presents difference as enriching the national body" (Lo 158-59; see also Stratton 10-11). However, Lo argues that for a long time such talk of ethnicity had to do with ethnic differences *within* the category of whiteness (158-59). This is pertinent to understanding the way that Australia excluded the Chinese, as Stratton highlighted with reference to its media representations, even up to the 1990s. Pertinent to the exclusion of the Chinese, Lo argues that in the post-1973 period,

> Multiculturalism … was seen primarily as a way of including non-Anglo-Celtic European migrants (such as Greeks and Italians) into the 'Australian way of life.' As Jon Stratton points out, ethnicity during this period, 'meant, in the first place, cultural diversity *within* a single white race' (1998: 44). (158-59)

Migration policy in the early decades of multicultural Australia was focused on diversifying whiteness, and this is reflected in institutional representations of multicultural Australia. This is a major historical context for the relative absence of the Chinese and other Asians in popular artistic media in the 1990s; this slow recognition of Asian Australians under multiculturalism also relates to the historical antimony between Australia and China that I have highlighted. Indeed, Lo argues that

"whilst [Asian] ethnicity is generally accepted as part of Australian culture, their collective status is often racialised as other whenever the political and economic power of the 'non-ethnic' centre is threatened" (159). And as Stratton argues, "The 'yellow race' has always been Australia's most important racial Other"[89] (12). It is in this context, of a white nationalism historically based on excluding the Chinese and other Asians, of burgeoning media representations of the Chinese in Australia in the 1990s, and of the problematic place of the Chinese in Australian multiculturalism, that I turn to my analysis of the *Poetica* episode "Ouyang Yu," broadcast on 23 August 1997.

5.3 "You put everybody to a multicultural sleep": "Ouyang Yu"'s representations of Australian national identity in the late-1990s

The opening adapted poem of "Ouyang Yu", "moon over melbourne," both concisely sets up the themes that are to be explored in the episode and also speaks to the historical contexts that I have highlighted thus far: Australian multiculturalism and the function of the Chinese in the Australian national imaginary. This adaptation of "moon over melbourne" explores the sense of unease that the poet feels as a Chinese migrant in Australia, and this unease intensifies as the episode develops. The episode is bookended by poems about the moon: the final poem of the episode is called "A Different Moon," and reminds the listener of what the poet had to say in "moon over melbourne" at the beginning of the show.

As described above, the episode opens with a long, one-minute musical introduction featuring the sounds of Melbourne (green pedestrian lights, footsteps, trains passing over train tracks, voices speaking with Australian accents) layered over the melancholy and contemplative notes of a

[89] This may seem contentious if one thinks about the significance of Indigenous peoples to settler Australia's image of itself as white. However, settler Australia arguably erased and ignored Indigenous peoples in ways that foreclosed a dichotomous relationship with them, whereas the Chinese were historically used to shore up a sense of a unified white Australian identity, conceived of as embattled by an Asian invasion. Indeed, Stratton notes that the *Immigration Restriction Act*, the founding document of the White Australia Policy, passed shortly after Federation in 1901, "was aimed, in the first instance, at keeping out Chinese and Japanese" (12). Howard-Wagner has argued by contrast,

> The White Australia Policy can leave no doubt in our minds that the objective of the newly formed Australian state was to exclude Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and particular migrant groups from Australian society. The White Australia Policy constructed a civilised hierarchy, in which the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia, peoples from Asia, Africa, and the islands of the Pacific were clearly placed at the bottom. (92)

Here the Chinese and Japanese would appear to be in the same category as Indigenous peoples, but she is speaking of what happened *after* the policy was established, rather than the impetus for it to be established in the first place, which Stratton addresses above.

Chinese mandolin. An actor, Brant Eustice, then announces the poem "moon over melbourne," and reads the opening lines:

> in a night without time
> when I mourn over the loss of
> an ancient Chinese poem
> a thousand years ago about now
>
> but moon over melbourne
> that knows nothing of *that*
> a young one just 200 seconds old
> … you mooch over melbourne (Ladd "Ouyang" 1'02–1'31; Ouyang *Moon* 8)

The authorial voice of the poem is made strange through the actor's Australian accent, reading a Chinese poet's words. This uncanny effect of voice translation suits the themes of the poem, which have to do with the poet's loss of identity in an alien culture. The setting is eerily timeless: "in a night without time." Or rather, Ouyang experiences a sense of temporal as well as spatial dislocation, as the city of Melbourne reminds him of Chinese landscapes and poetry from across thousands of years. Although the poem is set in Melbourne, the city is experienced as being less real to the poet than China, with its long cultural history that feels present to the poet. The Melbourne moon being "just 200 seconds old" is a reference to settler Australia being not much more than 200 years old, from 1788 to the moment of the poem. And the italics in "but moon over melbourne / that knows nothing of *that"* suggest disgust at the Melbourne moon's ignorance of other moons, other cultures, other times, and this becomes evident as the poem unfolds. I highlight these features to emphasise the binary between China and Melbourne/Australia that the poet is setting up, which the episode builds on.

The poet's self is diminished in this foreign landscape: having listed off the moon's significance for Chinese poets over the centuries—"Li Bai with your nostalgic light at his bedstead / "Li Yu with emotions so entangled he could hardly cut loose / because of you," etc.—he arrives at himself: "ouyang yu, with you wandering lonely across a heavenly desert" (1'47–2'26; 8). In Melbourne the poet has lost his cultural identity (symbolised in print by his own name being relegated to the lower case, in contrast to the other Chinese poets he cites (8)), producing melancholy. However, this note of sadness and loneliness is immediately followed by one of anger at the Melbourne moon, as the poet starts to look for the causes of his alienation. In the following stanza Eustace puts particular hostile energy into the words "bloody australian" in the first line, all of the laid back Australianisms in the second line, and the first "sick" in the third line:

moon over melbourne you bloody australian moon
you hang on you all right you no worries mate
you make me sick home sick for sure (2'28–2'38; 8)

He then pinpoints the source of his discomfort, alienation, and loss of cultural identity in the next stanza. This stanza sits mid-way through the poem, and acts to ground the poem to the political context in Australia in relation to migrants and national identity, which is a context that underpins this poem and the episode as a whole:

[moon over melbourne,] you put everybody to a multicultural sleep
who knows not what is meant by
one dancing with oneself and one's shadow under you (2'39–2'48; 9).

The sense here is that multicultural Australia is supposed to be interested in other cultures, but for the poet there is a fundamental ignorance in Australia about aspects of other cultures that go beyond the superficial. "How can Australia be multicultural if no one knows what the moon means to the Chinese? If no one cares that I am dancing with my identity under it?" is the implied question here. Ouyang has addressed what he sees as the superficiality of Australian multicultural engagements with the other in his article from 1997, "Lost in the Translation":

> When one's culture is only represented [in Australia] at its most superficial level—in the Chinese case, in lion and dragon dances, takeaway food, Peking Opera, acrobatics or simply as anything ancient, one is left with a sense of hopelessness that no one will ever go beyond this, not in 100 years. (10)

In "moon over melbourne" the poet does in fact offer ancient images of Chineseness (through his list of Chinese poets across the centuries), and grounds his identity to these images, but these are specifically about poetic beauty in the Chinese tradition, and not the more generalised ancientness that he criticises as being superficial. The final stanzas emphasise the absence of cultural understanding, which in Ouyang's view should not have occurred under multicultural Australia. Here the Chinese mandolin builds to a frenetic peak under the actor's voice, which is both plaintive and aggressive:

moon over melbourne
mourn over melbourne
for the irretrievable poems lost to you
for the sleepy souls who wouldn't care less
for the nights that are so displaced here
for the dogs that bark so loyally

for me

for me
who refuses to go out again
dreading the sight of you
dreading the slightest suggestion of a memory
dreading so bloody dreading to see
the bloody bastard moon

over melbourne (Ladd "Ouyang" 3'50–4'19; Ouyang *Moon* 9-10)

The word "sleep" is used twice in the poem, in ways that reinforce the poet's critique of multiculturalism. It is used first in "you put everybody to a multicultural sleep," and second in "mourn over melbourne / for the irretrievable poems lost to you / for the sleepy souls who wouldn't care less." Multicultural Australia, and the citizens it has produced, is depicted as being asleep to the cultural riches that have arrived at its doorstep. The dominant emotional tones of this adapted poem in "Ouyang Yu", then, are sadness for a loss of cultural identity through migration, and anger at Melbourne for the alienation produced in the poet. As I argue below with reference to the poet's critical work, the poet sees alienation as having been produced by multicultural Australia's fixation on ethnicity while at the same time refusing to be interested, at a deep level, in Chineseness. In the penultimate line of the poem the poet uses the derogatory term "bloody bastard" to turn an Australianism back on Australia, and to convey that the Melbourne moon is a bastard moon for him, that it is illegitimate.

Following the reading of this poem, we hear Ouyang talking about when he arrived in Australia, in 1991; Ouyang and Ladd then move off the street and into a restaurant (4'40–5'03). The interviewer and producer of the episode, Michael Ladd, then prompts Ouyang: "You're still pretty ambivalent in your poetry about Australia, about cutting yourself off from China, the culture", which is continuous with the China/Australia binary that has been set up by "moon over melbourne" (5'36–5'43). We then hear a response from the poet which acknowledges the binary and endorses it:

> Yes … I *was,* and I *am* still somewhere in between, not belonging *entirely* to Australia nor entirely to China. Because I've got my permanent residency, and I haven't made up my mind to become an Australian citizen *yet* [in 1997]. So you see, this is where I'm standing. (5'43–6'06; emphases in recording)

This is followed immediately by the adapted poem "Seeing Double" (1995), in which Ouyang develops the theme of displacement and loss of identity in "moon over melbourne," showing it as leading to the doubling of his self and his authorial voice. That is, this poem shows the effect of a loss of cultural identity on the authorial presences of his poems. The poem treats cultural identity as

singular, and those moving across nations as needing to translate their cultural identities; the poem shows a discomfiting doubling occurs in this process. Ouyang addresses himself in the poem—untypically—as "you" rather than "I," suggesting that he feels alienated from himself. The poem is read by the actor with the sound of a typewriter in the background, emphasising that what is being addressed is the fracture not only of self, but of the authorial voice, through migration to Australia:

> wherever you go
> china follows you
>
> like a shadow
> its ancientness
>
> recast in Australia
> you gaze at your own image
>
> on the computer
> its chineseness
>
> becoming strange
> like an imported antique
>
> newly painted with foreign colour
> a being of two beings
>
> you can't help but
> translate everything back and forth so many times
>
> that it becomes unrecognisably
> fascinating as a doubled, tripled, multiple double (6'13–6'55; 36)

The translation back and forth within the poet, between the two parts of his cultural identity, is again emphasised by the poem being read in an Australian actor's voice, not the poet's. And here again Ouyang capitalises things are significant to him in the moment of the poem, either because they are meaningful or intimidating. On the other hand, things that are devalued in the moment of the poem are relegated to the lower case. So here "Australia" is capitalised, as intimidating, and "china" and "chineseness" are typed in lower case, as disempowered in the context of multicultural

Australia. The poem emphasises the cultural identity binary between "chineseness" and being in Australia.

However, the end of the poem represents a movement beyond the China/Australia binary that has been played out in the episode so far. The "being of two beings" in the poem becomes more than two in the process of translation back and forth between "chineseness" and "Australia": the authorial voice becomes "unrecognisably / fascinating as a doubled, *tripled, multiple double*." There is a play with numbers in this poem in relation to authorial presence and self-identity as they are refracted through Australian multiculturalism, as a mode of national identity. By the end of the poem it is suggested that the poet has moved beyond the China/Australia binary to an authorial presence that is "tripled" or a "multiple double." This, I suggest, is an end trajectory for the poet, where individual cultural identity—as it is shaped by national identity—can be multiple in a way that Ouyang argues (in an interview clip which I address below) is not allowed by Australian multiculturalism.

This first section of the episode—including "moon over melbourne," the interview clip on when the poet arrived in the country and where he now stands in relation to China and Australia, and the poem "Seeing Double"—establishes the Australia/China binary. This binary informs the episode's choice of poems, representing the two halves of the poet's authorial voice, telling the listener that this is what the poet is preoccupied with. However, the episode establishes this binary in ways that both cohere with and depart from the poet's own treatment of this in his creative and critical writing. The episode's departure from the poet's own self-representation of cultural identity becomes evident in an interview clip eleven minutes in. Following the adaptation of "Seeing Double," and then a bilingual adaptation of an untitled poem set at Flinders Street Station in Melbourne[90], the poet goes on to discuss the China/Australia binary in his work and its relation to Australian multiculturalism. In this discussion the poet frequently cites an article he first published in 1997, and later re-published as "Turning from a Pictographic Person into a Phonetic One" in his book *Bias: Offensively Chinese-Australian* (2007). Ouyang speaks in the interview about "pushing forward" into English and Australian culture, in trying to leave China in the late 80s and early 90s, and being forcibly "pushed back" into his Chinese ethnicity:

[90] While unnamed in the episode, this is one of three poems by other contemporary Chinese poets, translated into English by Ouyang Yu; it appears from 9'23–11'18. In print this poem is titled "Morning of 21 June at Flinders Street Station," by Zhang Yougong. The other two poems featured in the episode are "Train Journey Across the Yellow River" by Yi Sha (17'38–18'58), and "The North" by Shi Xiaojun (25'33–26'43), both translated by Ouyang. The authors' names are credited on the website.

> To sum up, what I mean is that to be an English major [in China], we try to push into the area of English so that when one masters the language, one forgets about one's culture. That I take to mean the push forward. So [when] we are in China, we're pushed forward *into* English. However, as soon as we came overseas, we found that's not the case, because our features and our racial features … we are recognised right away by Australians, and people from other countries, as Chinese. And there's no mistake about it. And they will, even if you criticise your own country for many things that you found unpleasant at home, they will say: "look, this is a multicultural country. You should be proud of your cultural heritage, and China's good in many ways"—that sort of thing, people will say to you, which you won't hear people say in China. So in a way, when you are pushing forward, you're pushed *back,* by things like that, positive things.
>
> And … on the other hand, you also find that it's hard to survive in this country. Even when you get your doctorate in English, it's hard to find a job in academe. So you're sort of pushed back too in that sense, meaning being rejected. Then … the absurd thing is that, when you go back to China—which I did last year—I find that people do not accept me. You know, they thought, oh, you've already settled down in Australia, and in a couple of years you'll become an Australian citizen. So what have you got to do with us? (11'47–13'35)

Having highlighted his experience of a "double rejection" by the two nations, Ouyang anchors this in the Australian case to multiculturalism. He highlights the "push back" as a paradox of Australian multiculturalism at this time: we welcome those from non-white backgrounds, but want them to retain their ethnicity, so that we can celebrate it as different within the white mainstream. In the article he cites in this interview, he puts it this way: "My Chinese identity… was not accentuated until I arrived in Australia… Where is the way out for people such as me? Is our future predetermined to be Chinese no matter how long we reside overseas?" (Ouyang *Bias* 114-115). Multiculturalism's focus on ethnicity, even when it seemingly celebrates difference, produces a sense of alienation in Ouyang's work, for the reasons he mentions above. In the final part of the interview clip, Ouyang tries to imagine a "third alternative" to multiculturalism and to a white Australian identity, both of which construct stifling identities, grounded in ethnicity and race racialisation, respectively. He says:

> So eventually you try to find a third alternative. Maybe there's something somewhere out there for you. But what is it? You don't know. That for me is the predicament. I don't know what that third alternative is. It's better than multiculturalism. It's certainly better than One Nation, as proposed by Pauline Hanson. Because multiculturalism has its own problems:

> you know, the whole country is divided into many, many enclaves, so that people don't really interact with each other, except in a business sense. (Ladd "Ouyang" 14'10–14'49)

Here he offers another criticism of multiculturalism, which is that it does not necessarily facilitate meaningful cultural dialogue between people of different cultural backgrounds. However, most of his reflections on the subject have to do with the way that multiculturalism entraps non-white migrants in essentialised ethnic identities, through a national fetishisiation of difference. Significantly, this is where the conversation ends in "Ouyang Yu": beyond this point in the episode there are only adapted poems, no more commentary from the poet. But in the essay he cites in the episode, he gestures towards a way out of the China/Australia or ethnic-other/white-Australia binaries that are fundamental to multiculturalism:

> Gradually, I found my push forward turning away from its original direction, pointing towards somewhere uncertain, where neither culture could exert much control on me, and, in so doing, it became something like an inward push back on my own part. (*Bias* 115)

This is a somewhat indistinct (for being unexplained) but significant part of the essay which gestures towards a personal identity that is not grounded in national cultures: "I found my push… turning towards somewhere… where neither culture could exert much control on me". What would the state look like that facilitated and promoted such an identity in its citizens? It would need to be hybrid in a much more rigorous sense than multicultural Australia, which still had at its core a white settler majority welcoming non-whites into its fold. In the above passage, first published in 1997, the poet foreshadows the rest of his poetic career, in which he seeks to move beyond national binaries, and inhabits instead a multi-national life of the mind (this is most evident in his most recent collection, *Fainting with Freedom* (2015), and in an earlier book, *Reality Dreams* (2008)). His trajectory, from "pushing forward" into Australia to being "pushed back" into his Chinese ethnicity and feeling doubly rejected, to seeking for a "third alternative," suggests that what he is looking for in a national identity is a more fluid and hybrid one, where there is no "core" and "Other," no "us" and "them." His admission that this "became something like an inward push back on my own part" suggests that he has achieved this for himself without a national structure to produce this in its citizens—indeed, by ignoring the ideals of identity that the state sets up for its citizens.

The structure of "Ouyang Yu" can be read as a story of how racism is kept alive, a story of cause and effect which starts with the essentialist impulse in multiculturalism, tracing it through to ugly cultural outcomes. Following this final interview with the poet, we hear another adapted poem that reinforces the China/Australia binary, which preyed so strongly on the poet's mind at this time. A culturally doubled authorial presence is again presented to us through the reading of "In Lieu of

Autobiography," read this time by the poet, with sound effects evoking the Yangtze river. Having sketched a childhood spent "on the wide sandbar / that emerged deep from the yangtze in winter" (Ladd "Ouyang" 15'20–15'26; Ouyang *Moon* 38), Ouyang offers a sort of nutshell autobiography of his adult life:

> then the cultural revolution uprooted me
> and planted me into the alien soil of a mountain village
>
> what other revolutions moved me to places
> like wuhan shanghai guangzhou montreal new york melbourne
>
> I do not know except that i seem to have become
> a free agent of unwantedness writing forever with two tongues
>
> twisted together in love and hate,
> that can't understand each other except through lines (15'27–16'10; 38)

The poem speaks to the poet's statement in the interview preceding it that he has suffered a "double rejection," in its lines, "i seem to have become / a free agent of unwantedness." As in "Seeing Double," migration is represented as traumatic, fracturing his authorial voice into two, producing "two tongues / twisted together in love and hate." There are two strands to the story here: one about migration, and one about feelings of cultural difference exacerbated by the state, which with their combined emotional pressures result in a bisection of Ouyang's authorial voice. In the final line, the act of writing is figured as a way for the poet to try to connect these two fragments of authorial self and make them whole.

The rest of the episode unfolds as an analogy of modern racial history in Australia. The adapted poems "Word Prison: A Lesson" (22'05–25'32) and "A Lesson on Eyes" (27'56–29'32), both read by the poet, deal explicitly with racism, and the later poems "Alien" (32'26–33'59) and "A Different Moon" (34'00–35'17) deal with Ouyang's sense of being an outsider in Australia, of being made to feel alien. There are other poems interspersed that do not obviously appear to add to this story—namely three poems read by Ouyang that are his translations of contemporary Chinese poets[91]; "Birds," a nature/love poem; and "The Poet's Wife," about the effect of family on the

[91] When asked why these translations were included in the episode, Ladd replied:

> It was something Ouyang wanted to do and we discussed it before we made the show. He had sent me a whole lot of his translations of contemporary Chinese poetry. I selected only three because I wanted to spend the rest of the time focusing on his *Moon over Melbourne* book which I found really interesting. Translation was a big part of his identity and also a subject of his writings, so it seemed a good idea to include some. (Varatharajan "Interview" 6)

creative act ("Morning of 21 June at Flinders Street Station" 9'23–11'18; "Train Journey Across the Yellow River" 17'38–18'58; "The North" 26'48–27'54; "Birds" 19'00–20'44; "The Poet's Wife" 20'47–22'04). However, with the exception of "Birds," in the episode these poems serve to reinforce the China/Australia binary, which I have argued is the grounds from which the discussion of multiculturalism, essentialism, and racism, emerge. Even "The Poet's Wife," which seems not to be concerned with nation or ethnicity, mentions a wife who does not read or write English, whereas the poet does, evoking the China/Australia binary through Mandarin/English. "A Lesson on Eyes," read by the poet with no background effects or music, addresses racism most forcefully, responding to the Australian stereotype of "Asians" being identifiable by the shape of their eyes: "slit eyed almond-eyed slant-eyed and slopes / that unchanging view of the Western image of the East" (27'56–28'10; 78). Having canvassed the limited Australian view of "Asians", the poet responds with irony by being intentionally vague in his own categories, based on hair colour:

> you told your audience of blonde hair, yellowish hair and black
> that in your language there are at least a hundred ways
> of describing one's eyes… (28'23–28'36; 78)

He goes on to list some of these—"red-phoenix eyes"; "rat eyes"; "bulging eyes"; "golden-fish eyes"; "thousand-li eyes"; "watery eyes"; "scar eyes"; and many others—and concludes: "now look at me / which eyes have *I* got?" (28'47–29'01, emphasis in recording; 78). The lack of background effects and music renders this reading stark. While the poem has an earthy humour (the description of the audience's hair, followed by the list of eyes, is playful), the lack of accompanying sound gives it a serious undertone, putting the listener in mind of the episode's theme of racism. This adapted poem is a plea for attentiveness to the diversity that exists within a category of people such as "Chinese." The poet's reading of this poem (as well as "Word Prison," mentioned above) in a Chinese-English accent gives the plea for better cultural understanding more weight, as it seems the poet himself is imploring us.

Overall, there is a clear thematic trajectory in the episode which has to do with essentialism in multiculturalism leading to othering, intolerance, and the perpetuation of racism. "Ouyang Yu" contributes to discourses of critical multiculturalism[92], which envision a better way forward for Australian national identity through revealing multiculturalism's faults but not discarding it altogether, as Hanson and Howard sought to do. This way forward, although not clearly defined in

[92] By this I mean discourses of multiculturalism that do not simply celebrate difference superficially, through "eating ethnic foods and watching ethnic dance" (Howard-Wagner 89), but critique it as needing revision and improvement in order to empower minority groups and to facilitate equality and social harmony. Howard-Wagner argues that Australia had moved toward critical multiculturalism by the early-1990s (89), but "Ouyang Yu" suggests that multiculturalism still has a long way to go to be truly inclusive, and to allow for multiplicity and variation of the individual.

the episode—recall Ouyang saying that he does not know what the "third alternative" is, after multiculturalism and White Australia—is suggested as needing to be more rigorously hybrid, and to go beyond the dualisms of multiculturalism to embrace a true pluralism such as at the end of "Seeing Double."

5.4 "A Different Moon": "Ouyang Yu"'s vision for the future of Australian identity

The end of "Ouyang Yu" features a long three-minute musical interlude (Ladd "Ouyang" 29'33–32'24). This is a Chinese mandolin solo, reminding the listener of the ethnic Chinese theme of the episode (and of some of Ouyang's writing). After this interlude, the episode concludes with a reading of two poems, "Alien" (32'25–33'47) and "A Different Moon" (34'10–36'27), both read by actor Brant Eustace. "Alien" reinforces the poet's sense of being an outsider in Australia, but is also critical of settler Australians' claims to being insiders: "I stand on this land / that does not belong to me / that does not belong to them either" (32'32–32'39; Ouyang *Moon* 28). The poem shows the poet looking for an identity that is not grounded in the nation. To a backdrop of Chinese mandolin and the sound of cars going past on a country highway, the actor reads:

> I stand alone
> impervious to questions like
> when are you going home?
> how do you like it here?
> etc. etc. irrelevancies.
> can you ask the land, the planet the same questions? (33'04–33'20; 28)

The poem is concerned with migrant (particularly Chinese migrant) identity as othered by multicultural Australia, and shows the poet seeking a way out of this. It is fitting as the penultimate poem of the episode, given the trajectory I have sketched, moving from a critique of multiculturalism and its essentialism to the poet's search for a hybrid identity. The final poem, "A Different Moon," evokes the first poem of the episode, "moon over melbourne." However, there are significant differences between the two in their content and their adaptation through sound. Between "Alien" and "A Different Moon" a new musical element is introduced. At first it sounds like a western electric guitar, but as it changes its tone it is revealed to be a Chinese mandolin, just initially played in a less "Oriental" style. This sonic shift from Western to Eastern registers, and the confusion over what instrument is being played (guitar or mandolin), is a symbol of the "third alternative" sought by the poet: hybridity.

The setting for "A Different Moon" is Australia, as evoked by its flora. The poem begins, "Shining on the dark red tears of wattles / large beyond the sparkling line of moving cars / over gum spaced lawns," (34'20–34'35; 11). However, the soundscape makes it seem that we are in a place where many Chinese people live: we hear the sound of criss-crossing footsteps and voices speaking Chinese (the first time in the episode that Mandarin language has featured in the soundscape, locating the poem among Chinese people), layered over mandolin, which sounds first Western and then Eastern. In this adaptation of the poem, the soundtrack becomes nationally indeterminate. In contrast to the opening poem "moon over melbourne," there is a note of hope in "A Different Moon." Here the moon, which represents the poet, is both "less old solitary and forlorn" and "colder shinier and more impersonal". This moon seems to have found the beginnings of a sense of peace in the landscape. The final lines of the poem, and of the episode, are decidedly more hopeful than the bitter and angry ending to "moon over melbourne":

> the different moon
> that I'd been looking for so long
> will you smile tonight on this mechanical city? (35'07–35'15; 11)

The sound design under the poem indicates the changed conditions that may lead the moon to "smile tonight on this mechanical city": a hybrid culture, in which the moon/the poet feels his presence welcomed and nurtured, rather than alienated. This hybridity had not been realised through multiculturalism by the late 1990s in Australia, and is arguably still to be realised. Brian Castro, a contemporary of Ouyang's, writes about the ideal conditions of multiculturalism, which the adapted poem "A Different Moon" alludes to, in his essay "Necessary Idiocy and the Idea of Freedom" (1992):

> Far from seeing multiculturalism as a set of humanistic platitudes concerning culture-bridging (which derives from a soporific assimilationist ideology…), or a series of folkloric dances and ethnic festivals, I see it as the idealisation of pluralism. And the ideal pluralism is when everybody exists on the margins, because the centre, which is like the centre of writing itself, is an absence. (7)

This call for a more hybrid and inclusive national identity is still pressing, nearly two decades after the broadcast of "Ouyang Yu" and the so called "post-multiculturalism" phase that followed it[93]. Liu Shuang, in her book *Identity, Hybridity and Cultural Home: Chinese Migrants and Diaspora in Multicultural Societies* (2015), revives the concept of "cultural homelessness" to frame the feelings of not-belonging that still inform the experiences of Chinese migrants in Australia. As she points

[93] James Jupp, in his history of Australian multiculturalism, talks of a "post-multiculturalism" era, beginning loosely with the end of Howard's prime ministership in 2007, by which time the government had significantly eroded multiculturalism's place in federal political discourse ("Politics" 49). Mishra also speaks of a post-multicultural era in his chronology of Australian multiculturalism (153-54).

out, the notion of a "cultural home" and "cultural homelessness" were first coined in the field of psychology, by Vivero and Jenkins in 1999, "in their report of a study on identity confusion which was experienced by multicultural individuals" (5). The centrality of this concept of cultural homelessness to Shuang's book, in relation to Chinese migrants in Australia, indicates the persistence of this phenomenon of not-belonging in an Australia which has tried to move away from exclusion (under the White Australian Policy) toward inclusion (under multiculturalism). "Ouyang Yu" suggests that were the nation to be more rigorously hybrid and plural in its structure, without a hegemonic white core, it would alleviate feelings of cultural homelessness for members of ethnic minorities within multicultural (now post-multicultural) Australia.

5.5 Postscript: "Neither Red Flags Nor Peach Blossom" (2013)

"Ouyang Yu" was broadcast in the first year of *Poetica's* operations on ABC Radio National. Positioned at a moment of flux in discourses of Australian national identity, "Ouyang Yu" revealed a socially progressive aspect of *Poetica* at a time of political conservatism in Australia. Ouyang was an already prolific but still emerging poet at the time, and his inclusion in a public, national radio program was a symbolic designation of his importance as an (emerging) Australian poet. While "Ouyang Yu" was not broadcast again in subsequent years[94]—unlike the episodes on John Forbes and Vicki Viidikas—in 2013 *Poetica* broadcast the two-part episode "Neither Red Flags Nor Peach Blossom: Contemporary Chinese Poetry," based on Ouyang's translations of post-cultural revolution poetry in China; these episodes were produced by Ladd. The episodes are structured as a series of adapted readings with interspersed narration by Ouyang, sketching the social and political contexts for the poetry. Here Ouyang is very much in charge of the episode, narrating it rather than being interviewed for it; this is especially so in Part One. In fact, he is described in the podcast introduction to Part One as the "perfect guide" to Chinese poetry (for an Australian audience), as he divides his time between China and Australia (Ladd "Neither Red" 0'20–0'30). This choice by *Poetica*, to air a second episode on Ouyang's work, was a recognition of his significance to Australian culture in the twenty-first century—*Poetica* rarely featured the same poet twice as the primary subject of an episode.

There is a sense of continuity between "Ouyang Yu" and "Neither Red Flags Nor Peach Blossom" in terms of aesthetics, as the latter episode features two actors reading the poems, one of whom is Brant Eustace, the main reading voice in "Ouyang Yu" 16 years prior. The title "Neither Red Flags

[94] A podcast was made available in 2013, however.

Nor Peach Blossom" also signals that the poet is engaged in a similar struggle to the one he was engaged in sixteen years earlier: combating national stereotypes (red flags and peach blossoms are both clichéd images of China—of communism, and of the Chinese New Year, when peach blossoms are prominently on display). It appears that Ouyang still felt the need, in 2013, to question Australians' perceptions of China and Chineseness, this time looking abroad rather than at Chinese in Australia. In the nearly two decades after the broadcast of "Ouyang Yu", multiculturalism moved out of favour as an ideal of national identity that governments were willing to endorse. While multiculturalism may have ended during John Howard's prime ministership, as an official state policy, the work of critical multiculturalism continues in the public sphere, in broadcasts such as "Ouyang Yu" and "Neither Red Flags Nor Peach Blossom."

In this episode the sonic materiality of radio and contemporary politics of national identity both shape Ouyang's lyric voice, with contemporary politics of identity leading in its influence: the episode is structured by the themes of bi-cultural identity and Australian multiculturalism. As I show in subsequent chapters, the aesthetic and the political had varying degrees of influence on the lyric voice in *Poetica*'s adaptive process, with one more obviously influencing the structure and style of an episode than the other, at different times. "A Layered Event" (1999), the subject of my next chapter, is aesthetically distinct to "Ouyang Yu" in that it is composed of far more interview material, with a range of people, and is sonically sparser—there are several minutes of audio without background sound effects or music. Despite significant aesthetic differences between the two, there is a chronological continuity in their engagements with discourses of Australian identity in federal politics. As I show, this is because there were significant developments in national identity politics at the turn of the twenty-first century, due to a tension between a hybrid vision of Australia and a monocultural one.

6. Nostalgia for mateship in "John Forbes: A Layered Event" (1999)

The *Poetica* episode "John Forbes: A Layered Event," on the life and poetry of John Forbes, was broadcast a year and a half after the poet died unexpectedly, of a heart attack, in January 1998. Produced by Michael Ladd and Clea Woods, the episode presents artful adaptations of Forbes' poems, and is also a posthumous tribute to the poet, featuring interviews with more than thirty of Forbes' friends and peers in the poetry community. Forbes was somewhat of a marginal poet in his lifetime. His stature has since risen, and he is increasingly viewed as an important Australian poet of the twentieth century (see Porter 33). As with "Ouyang Yu", the *Poetica* feature on his work was an acknowledgement of the poet's national importance. The description of "A Layered Event" on the *Poetica* website states that:

> Australian poet John Forbes died in January last year, aged 47. Since then, there has been an upsurge of attention to his poetry. Forbes wrote poems about world politics, history, art, the media, the military, and also ironic, somehow despairing love poetry. His style was intellectual, laconic and consciously Australian. (Ladd "John Forbes" par. 1)

Forbes is framed here as writing about all kinds of topics, but in a "consciously Australian" way, with laconic delivery as one marker of this; this perspective on his poetry has also been reinforced in published criticism (see Hose "Instructions," Indyk).

In "A Layered Event" there is a curious transposition of the consciously Australian aspect of Forbes' poetry, away from the work and onto the person. One interviewee in the episode describes the Australian aspect of his verse as its "laid-back larrikin touch," invoking a nostalgic model of Australian identity, which I address below (Ladd and Woods 16'41–17'03). By contrast, the sound design in "A Layered Event" presents the adapted poetry as worldly, always infused with external cultural influences (particularly contemporary North American and continental European ones). Through the layering of sounds from different national contexts, the episode's adaptations of Forbes' poetry show that his authorial presences are culturally hybrid. This is a different kind of hybridity than in Ouyang's poetry, as Forbes' work primarily includes Australian, American, and Western European cultural influences—compared to the confluence of China and Australia in Ouyang's work.

In Forbes' poems, recognisably Australian cultural objects are part of a bigger cultural patchwork. Indeed, Ivor Indyk recognises this, and not the larrikinism, as a distinguishing quality of Forbes' poetry:

> Frocks and frigidaires, Alka Seltzer and soya sauce, lollies, bin liners, suntan lotion, television, venetian blinds, Spakfilla, toffee apples, the rumpus room, lamb and two veg—the stuff of suburban Australian life, though not, usually, of its poetry. (88)

While "A Layered Event" represents his poetry as culturally hybrid, it presents a unified national identity in Forbes himself, through edited anecdotes about his personality and life. This latter and seductive image of Australianness in Forbes is imbued with John Howard's talk of "mateship" and "battlers," which permeated public discourse on national identity leading up to the republic referendum of 6 November 1999, two months after the episode's broadcast. This image of Forbes is so persuasive that it eclipses the culturally hybrid authorial presence that comes through the adapted poems. But there is also a second element at work in the nostalgic rendering of Forbes' personality in "A Layered Event": the episode's position in relation to the poet's life. I suggest that the episode focuses quite generously on Forbes' personality because it is a posthumous tribute that was produced soon after the poet's death. Media studies scholarship on posthumous fame is useful in explicating this second nostalgic current, which works to consolidate the episode's politically-driven nostalgia for a more Anglo-centric national identity. For as Duncan Hose writes in his recent PhD thesis on the poets Frank O'Hara, Ted Berrigan, and John Forbes (2014): "Forbes' untimely death is still worked through as a kind of collective melancholia. Those who never knew Forbes gain charge from his signature poems which wrangle the production of 'self' and 'Australia' and render the myth actively charismatic" (318). In "A Layered Event" the site for this wrangling of "self" and "Australia" is as much in edited voice recordings of the person speaking about his life as it is in the adapted poetry.

6.1 Australian identity at the turn of the twenty-first century

David McCooey has claimed that, "Forbes' odes and public poems evoke and parody the project of originating a nation poetically" ("Australian Poetry" 194), and Meaghan Morris has likewise argued: "[Forbes'] *The Stunned Mullet & other poems* [1988] could easily be described as a 'critique' of the national myths of white Australian culture" (*Ecstasy and Economics* 88). This spirit of irreverence towards nationalism can be found across his work—for instance, in the poem "White Australia" from the older *Stalin's Holidays* (32). Given Forbes' parodies of nation building projects, it is ironic that there was a frenzy of nation building immediately before the broadcast of *Poetica*'s tribute episode. It is worth considering the nationalist mythography that Forbes' parodies were working against at this time. As I show, contemporary discourses of national identity—

particularly in federal politics—had quite a significant bearing on the episode's adaptations of Forbes' poetry.

In the years 1997-1999 multiculturalism was eroded by a new Coalition government who felt that the immigration policy was detrimental to national unity. Pauline Hanson's attacks on multiculturalism, in her maiden speech to parliament in 1996 and afterwards as a core One Nation value, had an influence on the antagonism towards multiculturalism within the Liberal-National Coalition (see C. Johnson 196). But there were also other events that contributed to tensions around Australian identity in the political sphere at this time. In the years 1996-1997 there were a number of events that were significant for Indigenous Australians. These included the first National Reconciliation Week, from 27 May to 3 June 1996; the High Court's Wik decision in December 1996, which stated that pastoral leases and native title could co-exist; and the tabling in federal parliament of the *Bringing Them Home* report on the Stolen Generations of Indigenous Australians (commissioned by the preceding Keating Government), on 26 May 1997. Such events came in the wake of the historic Mabo decision of 1992, and symbolised renewed hopes for reconciliation with, and justice for, Indigenous Australians. It was the prominence of Indigenous Australians in the national consciousness, combined with a suspicion of multiculturalism on the right of politics, that created a sense of embattled national identity for the Liberal-National Coalition—particularly for its new Prime Minister, John Howard.

It is against this historical context that Howard drafted a new preamble to the Australian constitution, which was voted on in the republic referendum of 1999. This referendum put two topics to a vote: whether Australia should become a republic, and whether the constitution should be amended to replace the old preamble from Federation, which mentioned the monarchy. Howard drafted the preamble together with Australia's *de facto* poet laureate, Les Murray. This draft included reference to core Australian values that he hoped would be endorsed by the referendum. Although Howard's version was rejected by parliament (a different version was considered at the referendum), its contents had a significant influence on national identity discourse in 1999; they were widely discussed in the media months before "A Layered Event" was broadcast. In the section of Howard's constitutional preamble on Australian values, it states that:

> Australians are free to be proud of their country and heritage, free to realise themselves as individuals, and free to pursue their hopes and ideals. We value excellence as well as fairness, independence as dearly as mateship. (Howard and Murray par. 5)

The most debated aspect of this draft was the inclusion of "mateship," a term that Howard continued to use throughout his prime ministership. Murray has claimed he included this term reluctantly, and protested to Howard that the inclusion of mateship "would get flak from women and be seen as blokeish, and … that it's not a real word" (Kitson par. 5). The same year, Miriam Dixson published a revisionist feminist history of Australia; her opening lines in this book seem to make reference to the draft: "Australian women, women in the land of mateship, 'the Ocker', keg-culture, come pretty close to top rating as the 'Doormats of the Western World'" (11). And the poet Judith Wright, then 83 years old, told *The Australian* that, "to use the term [mateship] in the preamble would seem to me to assert a pre-feminist stance for all Australia … We're all Men from Snowy River it seems. I hope women will stamp on this one[95]" (cited in Rintoul and Harbutt 5).

Despite his protests, Murray was a logical choice for Howard as drafter of the constitutional preamble. He lives in Bunyah in rural New South Wales, and has always expressed sympathy for bush dwellers and the bush—the old domain of mateship (see Murray *A Working Forest* 112-16). Murray's defence of the bush sprung from his rejection of multiculturalism, as Wenche Ommundsen notes with reference to his controversial *Subhuman Redneck Poems* (1996): "To the poet Les Murray, the most vocal of all Australian critics of multiculturalism, what is under threat is the 'vernacular' culture of Australia, associated with British heritage, but also with the land, with rural life and traditional social values" ("Backlash Country" 228). John Redmond also notes the tension between urban elites (whom Murray sees as the champions of multiculturalism) and the rural poor in *Subhuman Redneck Poems*: "'Redneck' is a powerful term of abuse mainly targeted at the rural poor … Murray's Redneck, however, is a cultural hero—misunderstood but straightforward, embattled but dignified" (par. 3).

There was a complex entanglement at this time between the politics of Murray, Hanson, and Howard, whose views on multiculturalism were underwritten by their performances of class allegiance. *Subhuman Redneck Poems* was published the year before Hanson made her speeches appealing to "ordinary Australians"[96]. Hanson's appeals to this group (and Howard's subsequent

[95] Wright had expressed her reservations about the romanticisation of mateship in Australian bush poetry several decades earlier, in *Preoccupations in Australian Poetry* (1965). She wrote, "The 'mateship' ingredient in Australian tradition was always and necessarily one-sided; it left out of account the whole relationship with woman" (132-34).
[96] For an insightful reading of Hanson's performances of class allegiance, see M. Morris's "'Please Explain?': Ignorance, Poverty and the Past" in *Identity Anecdotes* (2006).

appeals to "battlers"[97]), and her notion that they had been coerced by the urban elites into accepting multiculturalism, responsibility for Indigenous dispossession, and white privilege, would strike a chord with Murray. Not *my* privilege, Murray seems to argue. His idealisation of rural Australia, and his antagonistic attitude towards the cultural elite, was surely a large part of Murray's appeal to Howard when he approached him to draft the constitutional preamble. The prevalence of mateship in public discourse in 1999 is important to consider in reading adaptations of Forbes' poetic voice in "A Layered Event". So too is Forbes' satirising of mateship, along with other traits of national identity, in his poetry.

6.2 Forbes' poetic engagements with Australian identity

Murray's and Forbes' poetry engage in quite different ways with Australian identity as situated in its landscape. Forbes spoke about these differences in an interview published the year after the Australian Bicentenary celebrations of 1988:

> We're massively deluded about ourselves most of the time and I don't just mean about things like nationalism, I mean about how we see ourselves … Les Murray talks about Australians living in one quarter of Australia and keeping the rest empty for poetry, which is an example of how people like to see things. Actually, what the three quarters is kept empty for is mineral exploration. My poetry doesn't pretend. It is demythologising rather than mythologising. (quoted in Redford 40)

Forbes positions himself as opposing "mythologising" perspectives on the nation (especially through the traditional strategy of imbuing the bush with national significance), which he identifies in Murray's verse[98]. Indeed, some of Forbes' poems speak back to the images of Australia that Howard preferred and found in Murray.

The Stunned Mullet and other poems (1988), the penultimate book before Forbes' death[99], is emblematic of such critiques of nationalist mythography. The production context for this book is important: *The Stunned Mullet* was partly funded by the Australian Bicentennial Authority (ABA), and the ABA's logo, accompanied by the text "Australia 1788-1988," appears on the front cover.

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[97] He began to appeal sympathetically to "battlers" in his election campaign of 1996, and it became his favourite strategic term leading up to taking office as Prime Minister in 1996 (Brett 79, 83, 86-87). This term drew into the Coalition's traditional voter base Labor voters who had felt excluded by Paul Keating. This was a strategy he learned from Hanson, who appealed very successfully to ordinary Australians, as opposed to the cosmopolitan "latte-sipping" set represented by politicians such as Keating (M. Morris *Identity Anecdotes* 232).

[98] For more on the differences between Forbes and Murray in how they treat Australia in their poetry, see Ivor Indyk's "The Awkward Grace of John Forbes," p. 90.

[99] Excluding *Damaged Glamour*, which was published posthumously in 1998.

This book was positioned as a contribution to public discourses of Australian identity, with commemorations of the Bicentenary—the 200th anniversary of the British arrival in Botany Bay—playing out across Australia that year[100]. On the inside cover of the book, ABA funding to facilitate the publication of the book, and in order "to celebrate Australia's Bicentenary in 1988," is acknowledged.

Australianness is never celebrated straightforwardly in *The Stunned Mullet*, but critiqued, often through satire. From Forbes' portrayal of Paul Keating's media performances in "Watching the Treasurer" (10), to his portrait of Bob Hawke's hair and "Alan Bond's belly coloured airship / inspect[ing] Sydney like a stupid beach" in the poem "The Stunned Mullet" (32), the images of Australia he offers are always ambivalent. Moreover, the poems often resist a singular national identity. For instance, in "Antipodean Heads" the poet looks for an analogous nationalist monument to Mount Rushmore in the USA. But instead of being like the Americans, he writes that,

> … we are caught
> half-way between
>
> a European sense of style
> you can always be at home in
>
> & the aborigines' knack
> of passing the time—they know
>
> that nothing matters too much
> between now & forever, unlike
>
> the industrious American… (*Stunned Mullet* 23)

The industriousness he attributes to America—which was quite successful at cultivating a national identity and a sense of patriotic nationalism in the twentieth century—here amounts to a willingness to engage in making the nation monumental. Forbes suggests in this poem that Australia shouldn't engage in this type of conscious national mythography. The final lines are, "we are left to wonder / what shape another 200 years // will leave Ayers Rock in" (23). That is, since we are still "caught / half-way between" the Europeans and the Aborigines, in terms of our own identity, the poet

[100] This occurred through celebratory, dramatised re-enactments of the arrival of the British, offset by stories of hardship from the Indigenous and migrant communities (such as in Channel 9's four-hour celebration of the Australian Bicentenary, "Australia Live: Celebration of a Nation," broadcast on 1/1/88), and a large-scale protest of the 1788 invasion of Botany Bay by Indigenous Australians in central Sydney.

wonders what another bicentenary will do for the national character. He seems content at the thought of Ayers Rock or Uluru being shaped by nature and not by us, in contrast to the "chisel[led]" national monument that is Mount Rushmore (23).

In the title poem of the collection, "On the Beach: A Bicentennial Poem," Forbes satirises the task he is given by the ABA, to come up with a "formal / model of Australia" (*Stunned Mullet* 16). Indeed, the poem begins by recognising that the ABA has commissioned this project: "Your vocation calls / & you answer it" (15), but by the end of the first poem in the sequence, Forbes has already expressed doubts—even regret—in being involved in this nation-building event:

> your vocation looks
> more like a blurred tattoo
> or something you did for a bet
> & now regret, like a man
> walking the length of the bar on his hands
> balancing a drink on his shoe (15)

Under Forbes' gaze the whole exercise is tinged with absurdity: "consider / what model of Australia as a nation / could match the ocean" (131). The final stanzas again reference the ocean, and here the poet falls back on the clichéd image of the beach as the ideal scene for Australian activities, an image that then obliterates itself: "this model of the Ocean / … "slide[s], slowly at first, / down the beach & into the surf" (133).

Cynicism towards solemn nationalist occasions is also evident in his later poems such as "Anzac Day," which was published posthumously in *Damaged Glamour* (1998). In this poem Forbes offers stereotype-portraits of various nationalities on a battlefield during WWI, and arrives eventually at the Australians. "Not so the Australians," he writes: "unamused, unimpressed, / they went over the top [of the trenches] like men clocking on / in this first full-scale industrial war" (*Damaged Glamour* 59). The image of Australian soldiers "clocking on" to fight exaggerates the nonchalant bravery that Australian soldiers were reputed to possess in war. Immediately after this, the poem ends:

> Which is why Anzac Day continues to move us,
>
> & grow, despite attempts to make it
> a media event (left to them we'd attend
>
> 'The Foxtel Dawn Service'). But the March is

proof we got at least one thing right, informal,

straggling & more cheerful than not, it's
like a huge works or 8 Hour Day picnic—

if we still had works, or unions, that is. (59-60)

The "one thing [we got] right" is a blasé attitude towards nationalist occasions, such as the Anzac March, where the marchers are depicted as "informal, / straggling & more cheerful than not"—a contrast to the solemnness of the March at its inception, when it was a funeral procession for soldiers whose bodies had been left unburied in the European mud. In these final lines Forbes reveals a fundamental tension between the mateship that the Anzacs at Gallipoli are supposed to have embodied—which he links to a left-wing collectivist ethos in Australia, as represented by workers' unions—and the impending takeover of the Anzac mythology by right-wing nationalism.

Forbes' poetry often critiques Australian national identity through satire and parody. The ABA may have preferred him to celebrate Australia, but even when he seems close to doing this—the tonal levity of his poetry can give the impression of enjoyment of subject matter bordering on celebration—he reveals the contradictions inherent in any unified image of national identity. This is the reading of Forbes' poetry which underpins my analysis of "A Layered Event," broadcast on 4 September 1999.

6.3 The rhizomic poem versus the arboreal poet in "A Layered Event"

In my reading of the episode I draw on Maureen Burns' use of the Deleuze and Guattarian terms "arboreal" and "rhizomic," which I described in chapter four. Although Burns' use of these terms has to do with the function of the ABC in relation to national identity, and not with literary representations or with media adaptations, it maps usefully onto my analysis, as I demonstrate with close reference to "A Layered Event." The "arboreal" and the "rhizomic" become critically useful short-hands for discussing a homogenous (arboreal) versus a hybrid (rhizomic) outlook, whether this is in institutional conceptions of national identity; in representations of national identity in "A Layered Event;" in Forbes' adapted poetry; or in Forbes' personality[101].

[101] I note here that Simon Eales, in his Masters thesis, examines Forbes' use of satire in his poetry, and characterises it as rhizomic (15). This is less pertinent to my analysis, which is not exclusively about satire in Forbes, but I highlight his use of Deleuze and Guattari to read Forbes as a precedent to my own, even if our objects of study are quite different. Eales does place Forbes' satirising in the context of national identity, in stating that in his thesis he "predicates

Forbes' poetry is notably rhizomic, marked by a range of cultural references, particularly from contemporary American poetics and popular culture. In this he stayed true to John Tranter's placement of him among the "Generation of '68". Tranter placed Forbes in this category alongside other contemporary Australian poets including himself, Laurie Duggan, Martin Johnston, Michael Dransfield, Robert Adamson, and Vicki Viidikas. The phrase described the poets' rise to prominence around this time, and their shared belief that poetry in Australia had tended to be dominated by conservatism and insularity (Tranter 1979: xv); Ruth Feingold characterises this insularity until this time as Australia having looked "exclusively to Britain for its literary models … [and having written] exclusively in reaction to them" (69; see also McCooey "Australian Poetry" 192). According to Tranter, one of the most important features of the Generation of '68 was their openness to poetic influence from contemporary American poetry, exemplified in two anthologies published in 1960 and 1962—Donald Allen's *The New American Poetry* and Donald Hall's *Contemporary American Poetry*. There are obvious ways in which Forbes looked to contemporary American culture: he wrote his honours and unfinished Masters theses on the contemporary New York poets John Ashbery and Frank O'Hara, respectively, and drew on their poetry—as well as Ted Berrigan's—in his own. And more general American orientations in Forbes' poetry (as opposed to an orientation towards American poetry specifically) have most recently been highlighted by Kevin Hart, in his analysis of Forbes' poem "To the Bobbydazzlers" in *Reading Across the Pacific: Australia-United States Intellectual Histories* (2010).

The adaptations of Forbes' poems in "A Layered Event" demonstrate the culturally rhizomic nature of Forbes' authorial presence. On the other hand, the episode posthumously constructs Forbes' personality as Australian in an arboreal sense, one that is infused with Howard's nostalgic characterisations of Australians as battlers, and as valuing mateship. The contrast between the national identity that shines through the adapted poems, and the one embodied in the representation of the person, is a major source of tension in the episode. The fact that the arboreal image of Australianness is more persuasive, and eclipses the rhizomic one, implies that the pull of a unified national identity was strong at this time: moreover, it suggests that *Poetica*, and its interviewees for the episode, were responding to discourses on national identity in Australian politics and media that I have traced at work in the last years of the twentieth century.

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whiteness as a determining category and examines the textual places in which its poet-agents use satire, sometimes unwittingly, to interrogate and unsettle the identities in which they are implicated" (9). However, he uses the figure of the rhizome to develop a new theory of satire, demonstrating it at work in Forbes' poetry, whereas I use the rhizome (and the arbor) to critique representations of national identity in "A Layered Event"; in this approach I borrow more from Burns' use of these terms.

It is pertinent to note here that as an episode of radio poetry, "A Layered Event" has a journalistic feel in parts, particularly in the commentary about Forbes. The episode is comprised of many telephone interviews spliced together in blocks, in between adapted poems. In these recordings voices crackle slightly down a phone line, and they have a faint, recurring beep running through them, signalling that the calls are being recorded. This is an uncommon feature in *Poetica*: the program's interviews were normally recorded in sophisticated in-house studios (unless they were recorded on location, which is the case in sections of "Ouyang Yu" and "Vicki's Voice," and mostly the case in "Little Bit Long Time"), and have no media artefacts such as line noise and beeping. Due to these features, the episode has the feeling of breaking news—which is fitting, as it is a posthumous tribute. The fast aesthetic of the commentary is also reminiscent of contemporary media, which were busy reporting on Howard and Murray the year of the episode's broadcast.

"A Layered Event" begins with the sound of a single, sultry jazz saxophone—this is the sound, in jazz, of urban America, especially from the mid-twentieth century onwards[102]. The notes of the sax are rapidly faded into a commentary to a sporting event, and for Australian listeners it becomes immediately obvious, from the cadence and energy of the commentary, that they are listening to the broadcast of a horse race on Australian radio or TV. The episode opens with the start of this racing commentary, "Off and racing!" (Ladd and Woods 0'22–0'23), and closes with its end, "and the Phantom, a magnificent winner[103]! The Phantom has won it by three lengths…" (35'05–35'08). The use of these clips serves two purposes. One is to set the episode up as charting the course of Forbes' life: one producer of the episode has claimed that, "the horse race functioned as a sound metaphor for a person whose 'race was done'" (Ladd "Radio" 223). Its other function, I would suggest, is to contextualise Forbes as an Australian poet with a passion for horse racing and gambling; these interests are made clear through the course of the episode (Ladd and Woods 11'39–12'40; 23'02–23'30). In this way, the episode foregrounds the Australianness of Forbes at the very outset, while hinting, through the opening bars of jazz, that there may be trans-national elements—either to him, or to his poetry: it is not clear at this stage. The mind works to keep up with the overlay of horse racing on jazz, but before it can make sense of what it is hearing, both racing track and music are

[102] Bruce Johnson has argued in *The Inaudible Music: Jazz Gender and Australian Modernity* (2000) that jazz was very much an Australian phenomenon as well as an American one, and that it came in home-grown forms (modelled on American white jazz and hot dance records) from the 1920s, and contributed significantly to Australians' sense of themselves as modern (17). However, in "A Layered Event" jazz clearly symbolises quintessentially American culture (and Forbes' investment in it), in contrast to the sound of horse racing at the TAB, which is figured as quintessentially Australian.

[103] "The Phantom" evokes the very popular comic book series, created in America by Lee Falk (1936); this is another gesture towards Australian culture's absorption of American culture.

faded down into the recitation of a poem. A voice—which we may assume to be the poet's, given its unaffected Australian accent—begins reading.

The poem itself is a riddle, a kind of "who am I?" which begins with the line, "I am a layered event", and goes on to list a series of things that the poet is ("unimpressed / by a nervous, first-night cigarette"), is like ("Remember the noise on 2CH [a Sydney easy-listening radio station] you had / to guess? I'm not that"; "more a song you / can't remember or exactly forget"), or *likes* ("Brackets excite me, a cross between / maths & sentiment I guess") (0'57–1'25). The poem invites the listener to wonder, "*who is this person?*" It is ostensibly about the poet but evades any deep revelations about his personality.

An impression of personality and nationality inevitably come through Forbes' recorded voice, however. Forbes' accent is recognisably Australian, with middle class or lower middle class tones and an unaffected manner. Forbes worked as a furniture removalist for much of his life (Forbes "The Working Life" 171-72), and while it is an exaggeration to say that his accent sounds broad or working class, there is a hint of this in his relaxed vocal manner. The sound of his voice effectively places him among, or at least close to, the class of people Howard identified as authentically Australian at this time. Moreover, a female interviewee in the episode refers specifically and enthusiastically to Forbes' investment in so-called "low" culture, and the way that he formed his ideas about Australian identity from low rather than high social contexts:

> I think [Forbes'] canvas was not so much the world of the bookshelf, but Australian society as a whole—the world of the vernacular, and the idiom. Actually, John Forbes was *not* the type of person to switch on Radio National for the latest lowdown on what was going on in Australian culture. He knew that the best way to find out that was to get on his bike, and to stand in some crowded bar, or shop, or other kind of circus event, and to just listen and absorb the kinds of ideas that were going down. (Ladd and Woods 14'41–15'17)

One of the claims here is that Forbes preferred direct rather than mediated experiences of Australian culture—that he preferred to experience Australian culture viscerally in the vernacular. The reference to Radio National as a high cultural institution (with the implication that it is exclusive), in contrast to Forbes' more open cultural ethos, is telling. It is also deeply ironic, as this high cultural institution is, in this episode, just as eager to pay tribute to Forbes' ordinary Australianness.

The three poems in the episode read by the actor ("Lessons For Young Poets," "Love Poem," "Death, an Ode") in an Australian accent, but with an expressive manner reminiscent of established theatre (another marker of class), somewhat temper the impression of ordinary Australianness in

Forbes' reading voice. However, Forbes can also be heard commenting generously on his poems and his life, and here there is no second voice to counteract the impression of nationality (and as embodied in class) in his own. Other voices in the episode, offering commentary on Forbes' life and work, belong to a particular social milieu. They all sound white and urban, although mostly in a relaxed rather than a cultivated manner. They are also more male than female. The social milieu that the listener is entering is one that is quite obviously Australian, as defined by discourse on national identity at this time.

Sonically, "A Layered Event" opens in a way that is faithful to the rhizomic national representations of the poems; the listener is presented with sounds and with a speaking "I" that is made up of many elements—Australian (reinforced through the sound of Forbes' voice), American, European—but which evades identification: this is a complex "I" that revels in its inscrutability. However, as the episode unfolds, this is evasive "I" placed in dialogue with an arboreal national representation in Forbes' personality. Following the opening poem, the episode works to consolidate this second image of Forbes as essentially Australian. American elements crop up intermittently throughout the episode, but almost always (with a couple of exceptions) in relation to poems and poetics rather than to personality. I will briefly enumerate these here for the sake of clarity, before returning to my analysis of how the episode plays these national representations off against each other. The first American reference is to the New York poets John Ashbery and Frank O'Hara as important influences on his work (6'33); Frank O'Hara also appears in Forbes' poem "A Dream", which he reads (7'28). The poet Robert Adamson comments that Forbes was interested in both high culture and popular culture and mentions talking to him about Phil Spector, John Ashbery, and Jackson Pollock (13'32–13'43)[104]. The poet Ken Bolton, commenting on Forbes' appearance, says "he had a face that was somehow old-fashioned, so that he looked a bit like the original Superman, or Clarke Kent, sometimes" (20'56–21'04).

Besides the jazz at the outset, there are no iconic American sound effects or music until a third of the way through the episode, at 13'47, when the song "Be My Baby" by The Ronettes is played immediately after Adamson talks about Forbes' interest in pop culture. Two-thirds of the way in, a sound clip from CNN's coverage of the Gulf War is used in the lead up to Forbes' "Love Poem", which makes reference to that war (23'37–24'05). A different jazz track, featuring sax, piano and

[104] Interviewees are not identified by name in the radio episode, but I have identified interviewees by their voice. Ladd also names some of the interviewees' voices in my interview with him: "Barry Dickens, Malcolm Dow, Louise Huck, Viki Riley, John Tranter, Emma Lew, Kevin Hart, Cameron Shingleton, Tim Mitchell, Anne Findlay, Ken Bolton, Robert Adamson, Vivian Smith, Nigel Roberts, Robin Webb, Gig Ryan, Morgan Smith, Alan Wearne, and Owen Richardson" (Varatharajan "Interview" 7).

drums, comes back in from 27’25 and continues through to 28’34, under the poem “Missing Persons”, which mentions Tina Turner and Ike Turner, and superimposes them over an image of Sydney Harbour. And finally, following a sound clip from an unnamed Hollywood film from the mid-twentieth century, America is mentioned explicitly in the poem “Death: An Ode”, in the lines, “Death, you’re more successful than America, / even if we don’t choose to join you, we do” (32’30–33’35). The episode closes by repeating a few lines from the opening poem, accompanied by the horse racing track overlayed onto jazz saxophone (34’32–35’50).

There are other national elements, mentioned in interview clips—Forbes tells an anecdote involving the British poet Basil Bunting, for instance (22’04–22’24)—but these are scarce; the main dialogue in the adapted poems is between Australia and America. There is a notable contrast here between the episode’s references to American culture, represented as being rhizomically networked with the “Australian” in the adapted poems, and the arboreal image created by the biographical interviews.

It is worth pausing here to highlight the fundamentally rhizomic character of Forbes’ authorial presence, and not only in a cultural sense. Critics of Forbes’ poetry have widely acknowledged that there is not one unified “Forbes” to be found in the poems, but multiple, intersecting versions of his poetic self (see Henry; Hose 2010; Hose 2011; Urquhart). While Ouyang claims that his authorial self was divided through the process of migration to Australia, producing two Ouyangs, Forbes’ self-representations are multiple in a different sense. Readings of Forbes’ poetry that probe this have been situated in theories of the death of the author and, more broadly, in poststructuralist critiques of the (unified, arboreal) Romantic subject. As Duncan Hose writes of Forbes’ poetry,

> In these poetics we see the fleshing out of the poststructuralist philosophies of the de-centred, ecstatic subject that exists immanently and sensually within the materiality of language as an integer that is part of an (in)finite set of contingent possibilities. Poems are used as a specular techne of self-fashioning, not to describe the self but to create it with each reading. (“Tricked Myth Machines” 178)

The final line describes a prominent aesthetic characteristic of Forbes’ work, which is a seeming openness to new (personal, theoretical, national) connections; it is as though the poet discovers the poem line by line—almost haphazardly—as he writes, and leaves this sense of writerly discovery in the work for the reader to see. By contrast, the radio episode gives in to a “nostalgic impulse”, following the poet’s death, to “take over and deliver a preferred version” of Forbes as quintessentially Australian, “with what Forbes suggests [in his poems] are dubious production values” (Hose 175). To put this another way, the episode has understandably sought to convey a

defined image of Forbes in the biographical interviews, but this is at odds with the shiftiness of the poems' self-representations.

The representation of Forbes' Australianness in the biographical interviews conforms to an old archetype of Australian national identity I defined in chapter four: larrikinism. Several characteristics of larrikinism are foregrounded in the first 23 minutes of the episode, in relation to Forbes' personality. The first of these is his enjoyment of alcohol, which comes across in an anecdote he tells following his reading of "A Dream". Forbes recounts dreaming that he is on an Iron Man Run from Sydney to Wollongong and is handed a bottle of alcohol "like a baton"—like a duty—by Henry Lawson, the famous nineteenth-century Australian bush poet, known for his alcoholism, whom Forbes finds "washed out under the waves" (Ladd and Woods 9'55–10'53; Dutton 16-17). Another aspect of larrikinism highlighted in the episode is Forbes' casual attitude towards work, which is conveyed in anecdotes about his "ramshackle" and "unprepared" way of teaching at university (5'42–5'52); about how he would take his friend's children to the TAB and the pub to babysit them (12'41–13'15); and about him being "hopeless" with money and asking to borrow money from his friends, while entertaining them with stories from his personal life about unattainable women and horse racing (11'39–12'40). In the latter story, his friends come across as mates who are only too happy to help. The image of mateship depicted here is reminiscent of Russel Ward's definition of the Australian male being "very hospitable and, above all… stick[ing] to his mates through thick and thin" (2). In a thematically similar anecdote, Forbes is shown to reciprocate this kind of mateship: "whenever he brought a book out, he'd worry for months about the fact that it was going to win all the prizes, and [that] because of that, his friends would be upset if they had a book that might also be up for a prize" (Ladd and Woods 3'22–3'38).

The biographical material in the first two-thirds of the episode is strewn with arboreal and essentialist characterisations of Australianness, riding on the figure of Forbes as a larrikin. However there is a rare moment, nearly half way through the episode, when the representation of Forbes as a larrikin, and larrikinism viewed as a trope of Forbes' poetry, cross paths; here the episode seems to invite a conflation between the two, without a recognition that Forbes often satirised Australian national identity and the figure of the larrikin in his work, as I have argued. Ivor Indyk comments on Forbes' subject matter being drawn from "ordinary suburban and urban living" in Australia in "the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s" (16'05–16'10), and the next interviewee claims that Forbes' poetry is generally characterised by larrikinism: *"*An extraordinary quality in his work [is that] on the one hand there's a lot of elegance, of phrasing, and imagery, but there's also this very laid-back larrikin

touch that goes with it, you know, this sort of unimpressed, unimpressible… [attitude] that undercuts, you know, this other side of the work" (16'41–17'03).

This sequence is followed immediately by the poem "Europe: a Guide for Ken Searle", which is a satirical and irreverent take on the European continent. Here, Forbes reduces each European nation to a two-line summary, which is reminiscent of Hose's remark about "Anzac Day" that, "Each figure is a caricature of such thrilling economy that an Australian reader might recognize the kind of laconic quip that is credited as a national stylistic" ("Instruction" 9); Hose's comment suggests the reinforcement of a national archetype, which I argue is not the case in Forbes' work. Forbes plays with national stereotypes throughout the poem, in lines such as "The French invented finesse but it's / their self-regard that intrigues us" and "The Spaniards are not relaxed about sex / & tourists are attracted to this" (17'40–18'03; Forbes *Collected Poems* 119). And as he gets to the end of the poem, and to the end of his poetic tour of Europe, there is a growing sense of his disillusionment with the idea of Europe as a cultural centre. It is implied that he did not find the "Great Art" he expected, and that without this, Europe holds little interest for him as an Aussie larrikin; he also rather flippantly writes off America in the same breath—this may be surprising given his poetic indebtedness to American culture, but he is speaking of a hypothetically artless or cultureless America: "Besides, if you remove the art, Europe's / like the US, more or less a dead loss" (19'07–19'13; 120). The final lines play up *another* national stereotype, and the real subject of the episode as a whole, which is the larrikin that was referred to in the interview clip preceding the poem: "I know how I enjoyed myself: … / …I hung around / with other Australians & hit the piss" (19'29–19'40; 121). In this poem the archetype of the larrikin is satirised just as much as the other national stereotypes he canvasses.

The episode's representation of Forbes as Australian in a culturally unified sense, when his poetry is hybrid in its cultural influences and points of reference, is telling in relation to the political discourse on national identity at this time. 1999 might be described as "the year of mateship," despite the fact that theories of Australian identity at the turn of the millennium were increasingly receptive to the idea of a rhizomic, networked, Australian identity, considering Australianness as composed of diversity, and Australia as a "nation of immigrants," (Elder 115). Another reason for the episode's arboreal representations of Forbes is that arboreal archetypes of national identity appeal to what Burns describes as the institutional nostalgia for a unified Australia, whether or not this exists or ever existed (Burns 28-29). Robin Gerster and Jan Bassett have discussed this in terms of enduring cultural myths of identity, explicating Roland Barthes' writing on modern myth-making:

> Myths… assume lives of their own, uninhibited by historical and sociological fact. As disseminated through instruments of mass culture such as newspapers, film and popular fiction, advertising and magazines, they depoliticise and dehistoricise reality, 'naturalising' it and making it seem eternal. (5)

These myths are not only "disseminated through instruments of mass culture" but also shape those instruments; there is a feedback loop between contemporary images of national identity in public discourse, how public institutions like the ABC see national identity and publics, and what sense of the national they then promote. In "A Layered Event" there is a tug of war between unity and multiplicity in national representations. That the arboreal image of Australianness in Forbes is the more forceful one is a reflection of the nostalgia for an old model of Australian identity working on *Poetica* and on the poetry community at the turn of new millennium.

6.4 Posthumously Australian: the role of nostalgia in the representation of Forbes in "A Layered Event"

"A Layered Event" was broadcast soon after the poet's death, and I note the effect of the episode's timing on its representations of national identity. Media studies scholars have examined the frenetic image-making that sometimes occurs after a public figure's death, and how different circumstances of their death affect the way they are then remembered. This scholarship has focused on celebrities in the film and music worlds such as Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, Michael Jackson, John Lennon, and Kurt Cobain[105]. However, a similar dynamic is at play in "A Layered Event," one that actively shapes the quite forceful image of Forbes that is presented to the listener, alongside and in contrast to the image that comes through the adapted authorial presence in the poems.

A comparative example of posthumous memorialisation, which sheds light on the episode's handling of Forbes, is Alan Wearne's TV documentary on Forbes called *Conversations with a Dead Poet,* broadcast by the ABC five days after "A Layered Event". Peter Porter describes the treatment that the poet receives in this documentary:

> It would appear that Australians are waking up rather late to [Forbes'] quality as a poet. The TV documentary presented by Alan Wearne showed dangerous signs of hagiography. I would be happier seeing the poet and his life passed over quickly but the poems read and remembered. (33)

[105] See *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame* ed. Jones and Jensen (2005).

Porter suggests that appreciation of Forbes' poetry is at risk of being warped by the TV documentary's unduly reverential treatment of its subject[106]. As scholars of posthumous memorialisation have shown, such memorials typically function to idealise their subjects soon after their death. Janne Mäkelä writes about the "route typical of the posthumous careers of cultural heroes" that,

> The discussion starts with elegies, praise, and idealisation arising from the atmosphere of shared grief; it proceeds to a more distanced tone, criticism, and even iconoclasm, and, finally, results in some sort of reconciliation of the two positions. We can find such a pattern in Elvis Presley's posthumous career. After the waves of grief abated, more controversial interpretations about Elvis appeared, culminating in Goldman's major biography (1981) on a psychologically ill star. (177)

By contrast to *Conversations with a Dead Poet,* the book *Homage to John Forbes,* edited by Ken Bolton and published in 2002, contained more of a mix of critical and adoring takes on Forbes' life. But this book was framed as part-tribute to Forbes, part-criticism, so the critical perspectives on Forbes' personality (such as in Rosemary Dobson's "The Man Who Loved Women," Peter Porter's "Forbes in Europe," Bolton's "Some Memories of John Forbes," and peppered throughout) are to be expected. The delay between Forbes' death and the publication of the book does seem to conform to Mäkelä's second stage for posthumous conversation about a cultural hero, however: "it proceeds to a more distanced tone, criticism, and even iconoclasm". *Conversations with a Dead Poet,* and especially "A Layered Event," are strongly coloured with grief and present a loving portrait of the artist: the elegies, praise and idealisation stage. The untimely circumstances of Forbes death—a few friends have suggested that his early death by heart attack may have had to do with his various addictions, including to alcohol and codeine (see Duggan 70; Porter 25, 27)—also affected the poet's reception after his death. In this respect Forbes' memorialisation is (briefly) reminiscent of Michael Dransfield's: following the poet's tragic, heroin-related death at the age of 24, his life was mythologised, and his work acquired a new charge. In "Better Off Dead: Or, Making it the Hard Way" Steve Jones reflects on this occurring in the case of Kurt Cobain: "The narratives that formed in the wake of Cobain's suicide focused around authenticity, and served to solidify and stabilise Cobain's and Nirvana's place in the continuum of popular music's history" (13). Jones goes on to reflect on the narratives that are able to come into being after an unusual and tragic death (by suicide or drugs):

[106] Here it is not clear if Porter means the documentary's treatment of Forbes' poems, or his life, or both. I would qualify the evaluation of the TV documentary as being close to hagiography. While the readings of the poems by students certainly do seem grandiloquent and reverential, Forbes' personality gets its fair share of criticism in the last third of the episode, from interviewees such as John Kinsella and John Tranter.

> There is a 'finite' quality to the products that may come along after [such a] death, a quality closely linked to the sense of 'lost promise' often associated with the death of young artists whose best work, it is believed, was ahead of them. (13-14)

While I am not suggesting that the mythologising that followed Dransfield's and Cobain's deaths are the same as that which followed Forbes' death, the untimeliness of Forbes' death fuels the loving portrait of him in "A Layered Event." The image of the person that is constructed here is a combined product of nostalgia in the Australian poetry community (which powerfully concretises Forbes' personality through collective memory) and a cultural nostalgia at this time for white Australian identities, embodied in Howard's talk of "battlers" and "mates". In the following chapter I continue my examination of the overlap between posthumous memorialisation in media and the construction of national identity, in "Vicki's Voice – Remembering Vicki Viidikas." "Vicki's Voice" is framed more overtly than "A Layered Event" as an act of commemoration and shared grieving.

Nostalgia is a powerful retrospective shaper of identities, both personal and national. The convergence of nostalgia for white Australian identities, and the episode's immediate memories of Forbes, enacts a reversal of critiques of such identities in Forbes' poetry. This is despite Forbes' caution during his lifetime: "I'd make large claims for the poems but not for the poet. And I think that's an important distinction" (quoted in Kenneally 115). It is hard for a community not to make large claims for their cherished friend and peer, but in "A Layered Event" these claims were subsumed in other and larger claims that were being made for national identity at this time in Australia.

7. The personal and the political in "Vicki's Voice" (2005)

"Vicki's Voice – Remembering Vicki Viidikas" is *Poetica*'s tribute episode to the Sydney poet Vicki Viidikas, who died in 1998 at the age of 50; the episode was broadcast on 1 October 2005. Viidikas published three volumes of poetry during her lifetime: *Condition Red* (1973), *Knäbel* (1978), and *India Ink* (1984), as well as a book of short stories, *Wrappings* (1974). In 2010, Transit Lounge issued the posthumous collection of poems and prose, *Vicki Viidikas: New and Rediscovered*, edited by Barry Scott, which was an attempt to bring Viidikas's work out of the shadows. For while Viidikas is an important poet, her work has been neglected, and it occupies a relatively marginal position in Australian poetry, not to mention Australian literature more generally.

"Vicki's Voice" is a highly aestheticised adaptation of Viidikas's work. It seems more on the aesthetic than the political end of the spectrum, but this is not entirely the case, as I show in this chapter. The apparent aestheticism of the episode has to do with the way its producer, the poet Robyn Ravlich, has curated Viidikas's work, particularly in her quite artful use of voice recordings and other sound. Another reason for this apparent aestheticism is that, unlike "Ouyang Yu" and "A Layered Event," "Vicki's Voice" does not engage with contemporary politics of national identity in its adaptations of the poet's voice. The episode's title is apt, for it is indeed Vicki's personal voice, rather than a voice infused with both the personal and the national, that is represented. But despite its aesthetic and biographical focus, the subjects the episode articulates—in particular Viidikas's raw representations of female experience—and the context for this articulation give the episode a political edge. That is, by celebrating a relatively marginal but important feminist poet on a national media platform, "Vicki's Voice" critiques the gendered nature of literary recognition in Australia. And in celebrating a neglected female poet on a broadcaster invested in contributing to a sense of national identity, the episode implicitly speaks to a history of national identity discourses that have tended to feature masculine archetypes. The personal and the political are subtly entwined in "Vicki's Voice." In this chapter I shed light on the nature of this entwinement. I do this by considering the various tensions that run through Viidikas's work and its reception in Australia, and the way the episode negotiates these tensions, giving rise to a subtly political portrait of Viidikas.

7.1 Vicki Viidikas's insider/outsider position in Australian poetry

Viidikas's work was admired by her contemporaries during her lifetime, including the poets Robert Adamson and Robin Ravlich, and the short story writer and academic Michael Wilding. Tranter also designated Viidikas as one of the Generation of '68 poets in his *The New Australian Poetry* (1979). Her inclusion in this group reflects her investment in radical politics of the time, with the counterculture—including the Women's Liberation Movement and anti-Vietnam War protests—spreading to Australia from the USA in the 1960s. Critics such as Adrienne Sallay, Gig Ryan, and Ann Vickery have highlighted Viidikas's investment in contemporary politics and her work's (most obviously *Condition Red*'s) engagements with it (Sallay "These Words" par. 6; Ryan par. 1; Vickery "The Rise" 271-72). Likewise, David McCooey highlights gender politics as an enduring theme in her work:

> Ironically, given the putatively inclusive aims of the Generation of '68, women poets were often overlooked by male editors and anthologists in the 1970s and 1980s. Poets such as Viidikas, Jennifer Maiden (b. 1949), and Pam Brown (b. 1948) represented a radical poetics that was open to issues of gender while anthologies such as *Mother I'm Rooted* [1975] and *The Penguin Book of Australian Women Poets* (1986) attempted to redress the imbalance. Susan Hampton and Kate Llewellyn, the editors of the latter anthology, observe that the political speech of women poets has often been suppressed (16). Not surprisingly, the relationship between poetics and politics is often central to the work of many women poets of this era. ("Australian Poetry" 196)

Despite its interest in women's rights, the Generation of '68 was largely a male milieu, as McCooey notes. This is evident in the gender composition of Tranter's anthology: Viidikas was one of only two female poets selected[107]. In this context, Kerry Leves' claim that Viidikas "was indisputably a strong voice and perhaps the embodiment of the 'Generation of '68" is a big claim (*New and Rediscovered* 23). While she may not embody the masculine character of the generation—and in fact her work is consciously feminine, as I show below—Leves is referring to her bohemian lifestyle in the inner-Sydney suburb of Balmain (see Bennett 209; Wilding "Trenchant Writer" 16), and later in India; her feminism; her cosmopolitanism; and her countercultural politics—all of which cohere with the generation's spirit.

Balmain, where Viidikas grew up, was a hub for artists involved in the counterculture. Indeed, Wilding recounts in an obituary for Viidikas that, "Balmain… was home to a horde of writers and

[107] The pronounced gender imbalance in the anthology was perhaps a reflection of the times, although Tranter may have felt he collected only those poets he saw as being part of the Generation of '68, implying that female poets weren't much part of it. In its gender ratio Tranter's anthology mirrored an earlier overseas anthology by a similar name, *The New Poetry* (1962), a collection of post-war poetry in the English speaking world (mainly USA and UK). This anthology was edited by Al Alvarez and contained only two female poets: Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton. Australian Female poets responded with their own anthology, *Mother I'm Rooted* (1975), edited by Kate Jennings.

publications. Viidikas was a striking, effervescent figure around the pubs, the parties and the waterfront readings of those years" ("Trenchant Writer" 16). Ladd likewise remarks about the poetry publishing scene in Balmain, in speaking of the relationship between Ravlich and Viidikas:

> Their lives first crossed in the lively Balmain poetry scene of the late 1960s and early 70s, characterised by intense discussions and workshops, memorable poetry readings, and a flurry of little magazines and slim volumes of free verse. Vicki was a free spirit then and her poetry reflected it.[108] (Ravlich 0'42–1'00)

"Vicki's Voice" pays tribute not only to Viidikas's life, but to this artistic scene, with large sections of the episode set in and around Balmain. But while Viidikas was part of this group of Australian artists, she was arguably marginal to Australian society and also, later in her life, the poetry community. Here I use "marginal" to mean her position in relation to mainstream society and her relative lack of literary success, and not her importance, as she was an important poet. But her use of heroin situated her in the margins of society: in her later years she became increasingly dependent on the drug. As Pam Brown notes:

> Australian poetry presses supported Vicki Viidikas, publishing four of her books in a decade. Her last title appeared in 1984. She lived a further fourteen years without a new collection and with her writing appearing only scantily in a period when women's writing was booming. Sadly, as Viidikas's heroin addiction increasingly formed the basis of her modus operandi, she became marginalised and publishing and performing opportunities vanished. (par. 14)

Viidikas would not have been pleased for this aspect of her life to be highlighted: her poem "They Always Come" is aimed at those who would ask, posthumously, "Which drug did she take? / Which pain did she prefer?" (*Condition Red* 2). However, it is difficult to ignore the role of drug use as one factor in her retreat from the literary scene and from book publishing towards the end of her life[109] (*Condition Red* 2). Indeed, critics have made it a point of focus in their articles; Stephen Oliver's "A Day in the Life of Vicki Viidikas" and John Tranter's "Junkies in da House: Look Out!" both focus harshly on Viidikas's addiction. She also had an affinity for margins and subcultures, and actively sought them out, as she admits here:

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[108] In this chapter I cite times from the publically accessible podcast of "Vicki's Voice – Remembering Vicki Viidikas," which accompanied the repeat broadcast of 2008. The podcast has an introduction from Ladd, but otherwise the audio is identical to the original 2005 broadcast.

[109] Adamson has linked her heroin addiction to her experience of being raped as a young woman. Citing a line by Martin Edmond, 'There are many kinds of addict and many reasons why people become addicted; one, certainly, is that heroin is a great salve of mental pain' (Edmond par. 7), and with reference to her poem 'Punishments and Cures,' he writes:

> [The poem] draws from the experience and the trauma of a woman being raped. When I think back over my long friendship with Vicki, it seems to me this was a wound that didn't really heal. Being raped at a young age became more than a wound, or even a wound that healed as a scar, it became a source of hidden rage that lasted a lifetime. (par. 29)

> I like all writers who are out of step, and I guess that's what I try to write about myself, the realities of subcultures in Western societies such as bohemians, junkies, criminals, prostitutes, atheists, homosexuals, or people who are just plain amoral. (Viidikas "Statement" 155)

Wilding likewise notes that Viidikas "eagerly seized the opportunity to record what had rarely been written about explicitly before—a world of gays, lesbians, prostitutes, rapists and their victims, drug dealers and their junkie clients" ("Vivid Sketches" par. 4). Viidikas lived in India for over a decade, at least until 1984 (the dust jacket of *India Ink* mentions her decade-long residence in the subcontinent), and in this sense too she was—for a period—marginal to the poetry community in Australia, having chosen to remove herself from it in her late twenties.

These aspects of Viidikas's life exacerbated a marginality that was already felt by female poets in Australia. Indeed, in the last three decades of the twentieth century, there emerged a series of poetry anthologies and scholarly books that sought to interrogate the marginality of female poets within the Australian literary canon. These anthologies drew attention to the patriarchal structure of the literary establishment, and include *Mother I'm Rooted* (1975), *The Penguin Book of Australian Women Poets* (1986), *Poetry and Gender* (1989), and *Bridgings: Readings in Australian Women's Poetry* (1996). Ann Vickery's *Stressing the Modern: Cultural Politics in Australian Women's Poetry* (2007) continued this project into the twenty-first century, emphasising the modernism of critically neglected early-twentieth-century Australian poets such as Marie Pitt, Nettie Palmer, and Lesbia Harford. *Bridgings* begins with a quote from Joan Kirkby which arguably represents the starting point for all of these anthologies: "… the problem for a woman poet is that the traditions demanding remembrance and allegiance are male, and in invoking the ritual the poet becomes aware of the exclusion and humiliations involved" (cited in Lucas and McCredden ix). So Viidikas was already marginalised, as a female poet. Her inclusion within the Generation of 68 was an ambivalent sign of her recognition: while she was accepted by this male-dominated milieu, the milieu was itself in the margins of Australian culture, as it embodied the counterculture. A pertinent question here is whether modern poets can ever claim to be in the cultural mainstream. In any case, Viidikas's gender, her use of hard drugs, and long periods of stay away from Australia, served to heighten this marginal condition.

In examining how "Vicki's Voice" portrays Viidikas, I use the biographical context I have just sketched, along with contradictory approaches to her work in poetry criticism. In poetry criticism Viidikas's work has been represented as political, on account of its feminism (with occasionally a

suggestion that it also possesses anti-war politics of the 1970s[110]), or more often as apolitical and as lyric poetry informed by passionate experience. One of the rallying cries of second-wave feminism, which Viidikas was steeped in, was that the personal is political (Hanisch par. 1). However, there does seem to be a dichotomy between the personal and the political in criticism of Viidikas's poetry. This dichotomy can be seen for instance in Adamson's remark that Viidikas had moved away from "radical politics," and was "on her own journey," by the time *Condition Red* was published in 1973 (par. 32).

"Vicki's Voice" appears, on face value, to adhere most closely to the second of these two critical perspectives: that Viidikas's poems revel in interiority, drawing directly on her emotions and her experience rather than anything overtly political or historical**[111]**. It does this through the framing commentary which links her poetry to her life, and also through the episode's deeper aesthetic structure. The episode blurs representations of authorial presence, in the adapted poems, with representations of human presence in anecdotes about Viidikas's life. It does this by splicing and weaving biographical commentary through the poetry adaptations—in doing so, it suggests that Viidikas's life and art were entwined. This technique, which is unusual (it occurs rarely in *Poetica*, and certainly not in the other case studies), is a comment on Viidikas's poetics.

The blurring of authorial and human presences is quite plain to observe in the episode. More subtle is the episode's folding of the political into the personal. While the episode does not explicitly mention feminism, the way Viidikas is celebrated—as a strong woman unafraid to represent raw experience—exemplifies the second-wave feminist ideal that writers should present female subjectivity without self-censorship**.** In second-wave feminism the emotional content of women's writing, and its evocation of the female psyche and body, was reframed in French feminist criticism by Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and Luce Irigaray, and in the English sphere in texts such as Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1969) and Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970). Women's emotional expression was reframed as something to be celebrated, rather than denigrated as it had been previously. While feminists such as Monique Wittig and Adrienne Rich would later critique the universalist conception of women inherent in this approach to women's writing (women worldwide as one group with a shared subjectivity), as ignoring national, racial, and class aspects in female identity—and moreover of adhering too much to heterosexual notions of the feminine—

[110] See Gig Ryan's analysis of *Condition Red* in her article "Fuori Le Mura." The inclusion of Viidikas's poem "Shoreham, Victoria" in the anti-Vietnam War anthology *We Took Their Orders and are Dead* (1971), edited by Shirley Cass et al., is a sign that her work was perceived as having an anti-war politics.
[111] See for instance Wilding "Vivid Sketches" par. 1; Brown par. 11; Graham 87. Viidikas also states about her poetry, on the back cover of her first book *Condition Red*, "I want a poetry of the spirit/of the body/of the emotions."

"Vicki's Voice" celebrates Viidikas in the manner of 1970s feminism. In celebrating the feminist impulse in Viidikas's poetic voice, the episode collapses the dichotomy between the political and the personal in criticism of her work.

7.2 The immediacy of voice: the aesthetic structure of "Vicki's Voice"

"Vicki's Voice" treats the poet's recorded voice as raw material for organising memories of her in the radio medium. It manipulates recorded poems and interviews in creative ways. As Ladd notes, the episode draws on "two rare recordings: from a poetry reading at the Australian National University in 1989, and the Hazel De Berg oral history project of 1975," and in the episode these are often spliced together or collaged (Ravlich 1'39–1'48). In her adaptation of "Trying to Catch the Voice," Ravlich includes just the opening lines of this prose poem, acting as editor of Viidikas's work (1'51–2'23). Her adaptation of "red is the colour" switches back and forth between a live recording and a studio recording of the same poem (3'25–5'06), and in "Mad Hats of Desire" the reader's voice changes mid-way through the reading, from Viidikas's to one of her friend's, or to actress Susan Prior's (22'57–23'56). These are all ways in which Ravlich, and Viidikas's other peers, take an active part in the construction of her image through the materiality of voice recording.

The episode is a commemoration, infused with melancholic nostalgia for Viidikas, and captures the mood surrounding her death: Martin Edmond referred to this mood in his essay on the *New and Rediscovered* when he wrote,

> I was… aware of a flavour, indeed an aura, around her memory—several older writers I knew … sometimes spoke of her, always with an oddly wistful tone in their voice. It wasn't like they were recalling a companion or lover of their youth; rather it was as if something unique and irreplaceable had gone out of the world when Viidikas died, aged fifty, in 1998. (par. 3)

As in the posthumous tribute "A Layered Event", the listener enters the poet's milieu through the many friends featured in the episode, but unlike the former, "Vicki's Voice" consciously uses the recorded voice as a structural device, as scaffolding for the episode's affecting portrait of the poet. In "Vicki's Voice," Viidikas's peers can be heard responding to voice recordings of the poet reading and speaking. We hear Viidikas's voice reverberating in what might be a lounge room, and friends such as Robert Adamson responding affectively to her voice, experiencing it as making her present to them: "She comes back into the room so strongly when you hear her voice" (Ravlich

37’25–37’39). This seemingly direct method of engaging with Viidikas after her death mirrors engagements with her printed work while she was alive. For as Wilding recounts:

> Writing was part of a dialogue with the world for Vicki and other writers of the 1970s. Predating blogs and the web, it was a direct and instant medium of exchange, inviting rapid response. We used to respond to each other's stories and poems with stories and poems in reply.[112] (“Vivid Sketches” par. 6)

The key ideas here are immediacy and response. In a similar manner to what is described here, “Vicki’s Voice” presents immediacy as the preferred mode of responding to Viidikas’s work. This is achieved through voice recordings which seem to bring the poet back to those listening to her; the recorded voice is framed—paradoxically given its mediated status—as an immediate way of accessing Viidikas.

The episode uses the materiality of sound recording to convey a heightened sense of Viidikas’s human and authorial presences to the listener. I suggest that this indicates an awareness, on the producer’s part, of the capacity of sound recording to evoke a sense of physicality and immediacy in its listeners—as Susan Douglas puts it: “While sight allows us some distance and power—the power to gaze, study, dissect, to be removed, apart from our surroundings—sound envelops us, pouring into us whether we want it to or not, including us, involving us” (30). Ross Gibson echoes this with particular reference to the recorded voice when he notes that, “A recorded voice—particularly if it is processed without any emphasised special effects—sounds as if it comes from the flesh of the utterer and goes into and through the flesh of the listener” (“Carbon” 219). Such an experience of recorded sound, as more physical and intimate than sight, is foregrounded in “Vicki’s Voice”. Indeed, at the beginning of the episode Adamson says about a recording of Viidikas speaking: “God that’s amazing to hear her voice… she sounds so alive!” (Ravlich 2’44–2’48). And significantly, at the episode’s conclusion, Ravlich asks Adamson, “it’s [the recorded voice is] stronger than photographs, isn’t it?” (37’33–37’35) and he replies, “Yes there’s more of the person in her voice, isn’t there? Or certainly more of Vicki” (37’39–37’45). As indicated by the episode’s title, it is Viidikas’s voice, whether reading poems or discussing her life, that is the episode’s ultimate subject. Voice in this episode is a channel between the deceased poet and both her artistic community and *Poetica’s* wider audience.

The subject of the voice is introduced at the very beginning of the episode, where we hear Viidikas reading an excerpt from “Trying to Catch the Voice”:

[112] For a more detailed account of this “rapid response” mode of writing among Viidikas’s peers, see Don Graham’s *Michael Wilding and the Fiction of Instant Experience* (2013); see also Sallay “Virgin” 184-86.

> I'm not quite sure when it was, the first time I wanted to say something about myself, that I was quite definite I had to speak, and someone would listen. Whenever it was it was early, I wanted to run into the darkness and start talking to the night, standing in that black tent, a voice in dark veils, imagining an answer. (Ravlich 1'51–2'23; Viidikas *Wrappings* 7)

This excerpt reveals the poet's self-reflexivity in regard to her poetic voice, as well as the confessional impulse in her writing; it sets up aesthetic qualities of Viidikas's writing that are then explored in the episode. This excerpt also alludes to the episode's deep interest in voicing—in poetry, recorded poetry, and biographical speech.

Indeed, the episode's focus on Viidikas's recorded voice, whether reading or speaking biographically, is fundamental to its equation between her work and her life. The recorded voice is the medium through which we hear her poetry, and hear about her life, and the episode's foregrounding of voice above all else serves to tie these two halves of her existence together. As I have noted, this aesthetic equation between art and life in "Vicki's Voice" reflects a common critical perspective on Viidikas's poetry: that it drew directly on her life. For instance, Wilding claims that, "for Vicki Viidikas, life and writing were inextricable. She spun her writing out of the life she lived" ("Vivid Sketches" par. 1), and Brown claims that "Emotions were what she was trying to express," implying that her poetry revelled in the subjective (par. 11). In the following section I propose that while these may be fitting descriptions of Viidikas's poetry, such perspectives run the risk of obscuring other aspects of Viidikas's aesthetic, and, moreover, of stereotyping her poetry as female in a way that now seems dated.

7.3 Viidikas's gender politics and gendered readings of her poetry

The majority of the framing commentary in "Vicki's Voice" is biographical, and moves through these topics: Viidikas's beauty; her female intensity; her lovers; her life in the suburb of Balmain in Sydney; her artistic peers in Sydney in the 1960s and 70s; her adolescence; her Australian mother and Estonian father; her interest in drugs, spiritualty, and India. The poet is remembered mostly by men, with her physicality a prelude to discussing her poems. Interviewees also focus on Viidikas's male lovers[113], in a way that is uncommon in commentary on contemporary male poets. In the opening piece of commentary about Viidikas, a male interviewee remarks that:

[113] This focus in discussion of Viidikas is covered extensively in Don Graham's *Michael Wilding and the Fiction of Instant Experience* (2013). In "Vicki's Voice" a female interviewee makes reference to Wilding, and to the entanglement between her life and her art, when she notes:

> She had a particular glow about her. She was very good looking, she was very lively, she was very funny, she was very much alive as a young woman, and her work was always interesting and you always wanted to read the new thing she was doing. (Ravlich 5'07–5'23)

The interviewee talks in a short span about her good looks, her liveliness as a person, and her poetry. While there are comments in the episode about her writing—with Viidikas and Adamson offering the majority of these comments—most of the commentary is about Viidikas as a person, which is not unusual given that this is a posthumous tribute, like "A Layered Event". But in "A Layered Event" we hear more expansively from the interviewees about Forbes' influences, his manner of teaching, his poetic style and subject matter, and his various intellectual capabilities. This may be because there was a greater influence of Australian poetry in Forbes' work, and because he was active for a longer period, as a visible and practicing writer. However, the focus on Viidikas's beauty and her lovers is a gendered way of speaking about the poet. In fact, Ravlich proposes a gendered perspective on Viidikas's poetry to Adamson:

> **Adamson:** With Vicki it was more an organic consideration of the poem. She wouldn't like that term. Holistic. That's the way she approached poems. The words were connected to the meanings and the emotions as well as the intellect.
>
> **Ravlich:** Was it seen as female, also?
>
> **Adamson:** Yes! That's how Vicki saw it. (23'59–22'21)

Here we have a reported statement about aesthetics from the poet, and Ravlich's interpretation of this as a female aesthetic, which Adamson agrees with. This is in line with second-wave feminist ideas about women having distinct characteristics. A contested but powerful approach to women's liberation in the 1970s was that, in order to liberate women from patriarchy and from patriarchal notions about women, the essential femininity of women had to be identified and celebrated. As Estelle Freedman writes in her introduction to an essay by the French feminist scholar Cixous:

> Academic and literary feminists [of the 1970s] championed competing theories of women's liberation, some emphasising the social construction of womanhood and others the deep psychic structures that shaped female experience … Cixous belonged to the latter group … [I]n response to the erasure of women from a male-defined, phallocentric culture, she urged women to write, to unleash from repression a female unconscious deeply connected to the sexual. Cixous invoked 'a universal woman subject' with unique erotic potential. (318)

> She was never short of admirers, and she had relationships with a number of writers, like Bill Beard and Michael Wilding. So she was obviously living her passion for her writing in conjugal kind of ways as well as… it was part of her passionate life, in all senses of the word. (16'17–16'41)

Viidikas's mode of writing from the emotions and psyche seems to emulate this feminist approach to the representation of female experience. Indeed, this section from Cixous's essay "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1975) could be a description of how Viidikas negates the suppression of women's voices by articulating her embodied experience in writing:

> To write. An act which will not only 'realise' the decensored relation of woman to her sexuality, to her womanly being, giving her access to her native strength; it will give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal; it will tear her away from the superegoised structure in which she has always occupied the place reserved for the guilty (guilty of everything, guilty at every turn: for having desires, for not having any; for being frigid, for being 'too hot'; for not being both at once; for being too motherly and not enough; for having children and for not having any; for nursing and for not nursing…)—tear her away by means of this research, this job of analysis and illumination, this emancipation of the marvellous text of her self that she must urgently learn to speak. (323)

Cixous belonged to a group of feminists called Psych et Po, or Pychoanalysis and Politics, and her investment in psychoanalysis shows in her reference to the superego (Freedman 318). Cixous's suggestion that women unleash their subconscious is echoed in Viidikas's approach to writing: in "Vicki's Voice" the poet says she sought to write through the subconscious, in the vein of "French writers, and symbolist poets, surrealists" (Ravlich 19'28–20'05).

The emphasis in "Vicki's Voice" on the emotional in Viidikas's work, in concert with the focus on her beauty and her lovers, constructs Viidikas as a woman through a particular conception of liberated womanhood that emerged in the 1960s and 70s. While Adamson does remark on Viidikas's other literary traits, many of the interviewees focus completely on emotion in her work, and relate it to a female approach. For example a female interviewee remarks towards the episode's end:

> I think she did something very important for Australian poetry. Part of that was just talking very frankly as a woman about very intense emotions. Especially *Condition Red*, but the other books are marked by a certain intensity, and it's as though the poetry is working through powerful emotions. (35'00–35'26)

Adamson discusses Viidikas's approach to poetry as "holistic," drawing on both emotions and the intellect to synthesise meaning, but he does emphasise the emotional in her work. The other interviewees in the episode do this more emphatically, referring to her passionate life as the raw material for her poems.

While it is fitting that interviewees celebrate the unguarded female subjectivity of her writing, third-wave feminist criticism of the 1990s and 2000s sought to deconstruct the binary view of human relations—masculine versus feminine—that produces this perspective. This work posited that gender exists on a spectrum, and is performed: that femininity is a socially sanctioned performance, rather than an expression of a natural state of being. Indeed, Judith Butler, in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), argued that "the very subject of women is no longer understood in stable or abiding terms" (4), and that:

> If gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way. Taken to its logical limit, the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders. Assuming for the moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of 'men' will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that 'women' will interpret only female bodies. (10)

Butler goes on to critique the stability of binary sex, arguing that sex itself is gendered—that male and female anatomies are given cultural meanings that are not natural to them (33). Writing in the 1980s in this vein, Adrienne Rich argues that womanhood is socially constructed, and that the universal category of women popular in second-wave feminism may obscure differences of class, race, and gender within the female. Citing a line by Virginia Woolf, she argues:

> As a woman I have a country; as a woman I cannot divest myself of that country merely by condemning its government or by saying three times 'As a woman my country is the whole world' … I need to understand how a place on the map is also a place in history within which as a woman, a Jew, a lesbian, a feminist I am created and trying to create. (A. Rich 369)

Ideas about gender's social construction, its performativity, and its existence on a continuum—rather than being centred around masculinity and femininity as mapped onto male and female bodies—had well and truly entered popular culture by the 2010s, with stories of discrimination against, and celebration of, transgenderism in the news. But in 2005, when "Vicki's Voice" was broadcast—and with it looking back to Viidikas's youth in the 1970s—it was still common in popular discourse to speak about masculine and feminine traits as essential to male and female bodies, rather than as learned and performed, and therefore changeable. That is, in Viidikas's lifetime, and leading up to the broadcast of "Vicki's Voice," notions of an essential femininity were still common.

Literary criticism on Viidikas's work reflects this now-dated conception of female identity. Many critics have focused on the emotional aspects of Viidikas's work as representative of her aesthetic,

and Gig Ryan frames this as a problem with the reception of Viidikas's work in Australia. In an article titled "Fuori Le Mura"—which means churches outside the walls of a city, a reference perhaps to the spiritual dimensions of Viidikas's work as well as its marginal status in Australian literary culture—Ryan states:

> Most reviews and commentaries on Viidikas's work emphasise the anti-intellectualism of her poetry, its immediacy and transparency, in a way that is not used of contemporary men poets such as Michael Dransfield, and that in fact dismisses closer reading. (par. 2)

Her use of the terms "immediacy" and "transparency" is interesting in light of the aesthetic structure of "Vicki's Voice," which presents Viidikas to her audience in these ways, as I have noted. Ryan identifies a gender politics at play here, in that emphases on the "immediacy and transparency" of Viidikas's writing are a stereotype of female aesthetics, and while being celebratory, may in fact diminish the status of her poetry as art.

The poet Laurie Duggan recognises gender biases in Australian literary culture when he compares the reception of Viidikas's work to Dransfield's[114]. Dransfield died young of a heroin overdose (he was aged 24), and his poetry achieved huge posthumous success. Responding to Brown's review of Viidikas's *New and Rediscovered*, Duggan links the poets' lifestyles, their different ages at time of death, and their genders and the allowances made for them, to a tradition that informed both poets—Romanticism:

> Funny how sex and drugs and Gustav Mahler worked for Michael Dransfield but not for VV. He was a young romantic male who OD'd. She was merely a middle-aged junkie. What comes out of this I guess is that Romanticism doesn't work for women. I mean the Romantic discourse doesn't SEE women. (Comments on Brown par. 1)

Duggan seems to be arguing that Viidikas has no place in the Romantic discourse, and it is true that in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries this discourse did not include many female poets[115]. To celebrate the emotionality and heightened subjectivity of Viidikas's writing—as much criticism of her work does—is to include her in the Romantic tradition; however, she does not fit comfortably. Duggan uses these drug-related deaths to tell two opposing stories: a male Romantic poet is seen as tragically cutting his life short, leading to posthumous fame. By contrast, Viidikas's drug-related early death was a confirmation of her marginal status.

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[114] Viidikas's peers in the poetry community seem to habitually compare her to male poets, as a way of either praising or denigrating her by comparison. Another (controversial and difficult) example is a post on Tranter's blog, "Junkies in da house: look out!" The comparison of Viidikas to Forbes gives rise to a heated debate about their lifestyles and literary merits in the comments.

[115] Indeed many of the nineteenth century English Romantic poets that serve as models for later Romantic writing—William Blake, John Keats, William Wordsworth, Percy Shelley, Lord Byron, Samuel Taylor Coleridge—were male, although there were a few lauded female Romantic poets, such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

To return to Ryan's critique: the inclusion of Viidikas in the Romantic tradition, through the celebration of her poetry's emotional dimensions, seems to have had the side-effect of diminishing its artistic value. Emotional expression in poetry, for a female poet of her generation, was a risk: it implied that the work was prosaic, a too-direct account of experience. Close readers of Viidikas's work tend to write against this notion, in defence of the poetry's literary merits[116]. For instance, Kerry Leves writes in his introduction to the *New and Rediscovered* that, "Vicki tended to write about—her own words—'emotional experiences' and some of her poems could be declamatory, but her best poems are oblique and compressed" (16). Adamson expands on this when he notes, "Vicki thought a lot about what she was doing formally, she read widely… the French Symbolists, English Romantics, the modernists, various New American poets and even the Surrealists," referring to Viidikas's ongoing engagements with literary and cultural tradition (par. 30). And Ryan alludes to criticism which throws a negative light on the poet's emotionality when she claims that, in Viidikas's poems, "deliberate artlessness [is] composed into gradual assault or enigmatically drifting reflections" (par. 3).

There is a complicated relationship between Viidikas's gender politics and readings of her poetry. Viidikas is caught in a bind whereby the expression of emotion in her work is seen as feminist and celebrated on this account, while these same qualities, along with her drug addiction, seem to detract from her reputation as a serious writer. Because the perspective that her work is a conduit for her lived experience is so prevalent, it may have the unintended effect of framing her poetry as diarising. This is a consequence of a narrow reading which overlooks the poetry's other currents, such as its surrealism and its interest in popular culture[117]. In the final section of this chapter I consider how "Vicki's Voice" negotiates all of these tensions—between the marginal and the mainstream, between life and art, between the feminine and the masculine, and between the personal and the political—in its adaptations of Viidikas.

7.4 Feminist representations in "Vicki's Voice"

"Vicki's Voice" presents adaptations of Viidikas's poetry, often read in the poet's own voice, and accounts of her personality from those closest to her. The generous commentary and the adapted poems—eleven in total—shape an image of strong female identity. There are a few obvious themes in the episode. The first is counter-culturalism, which is alluded to in relation to Viidikas's first

[116] Such a defence which would likely be unnecessary for a male contemporary, as in the case of Dransfield.
[117] Viidikas's poems often made reference to rock and jazz; see for instance "Something for Janis Joplin" (*Condition Red* 44) and "Hot Poem" (*Condition Red* 45).

book, *Condition Red*: a male interviewee says that, "There's a sort of innocence about the book which I think is quite charming and certainly evokes the period" (Ravlich 3'00–3'10). The music then transitions into Miles Davis, conveying the spirit of the age: American-influenced counter-culturalism of the 1960s and 70s. This theme is signalled throughout the episode in the sound design: there is a lot of jazz (which evokes the free spirit and cultural unorthodoxy of the era) that runs under the interview material and some of the poetry readings; this is not only by Miles Davis but also by the French trumpeter Erik Truffaz. The episode alludes to Viidikas's bohemianism through the combination of these jazz artists, as bohemianism was originally a French phenomenon that became particularly prevalent in America during the cultural revolutions of the 1960s; in its blending of Davis with Truffaz, the episode sonically references the intersection between French and American influences in the counterculture.

Viidikas's bohemian lifestyle is highlighted quite early on. It is identified with reference to her domestic furnishings, and although they seem quite striking and interesting, the reference to them is a conventional way of situating the feminine:

> Vicki had hung a wall with Indian cloth: purple silk patterned with gold chevrons, gold lace at the corners. The made-up bed was covered in dark green and dark red velvet, scattered with cushions, covered in various materials. The cotton carpet was woven in blacks, reds, yellows, swirling up like a sunlight glimpse of exotic fish. (7'25–7'45)

Adding to this description, a male lover says about their flat that:

> … there were books all around the walls, there were jazz records to listen to, coffee to drink, and above all there was talk. Exhilarating free-wheeling talk that went on for hours, oxygenated by busy, observant walks around the narrow Balmain backstreets and the harbour foreshores, among the rusted boilers and the industrial detritus. Sheltering from rainstorms under giant Moreton Bay fig trees. Returning to the flat, *still talking.* (8'37–9'05)

The site for Viidikas's bohemianism is identified as Balmain, and this is consolidated in her reading of her first published poem, "At East Balmain" (9'12–10'34). Accounts of Balmain, bohemianism, and Viidikas's poetics are interwoven with each other in the first half of the episode. About mid-way through the episode, a second male interviewee refers again to her bohemian home furnishings when he says, "We're in her room there with its Indian bedspreads and gypsy shawls and mother-of-pearl hash boxes and beaded mirrored purses and tasselled shoulder bags" (17'37–17'48).

Viidikas comes across not just as a bohemian, but as cosmopolitan (the two are interlinked, as being bohemian means being open to cultural influences from afar). This is first evident in her accent, which the listener hears at the very start of the show. Her accent has an Australian quality to it, with

its rounded vowel sounds and relaxed pace, but it also contains an element of European difference which may be hard to pin down for the general Australian listener. A possible explanation for the sound of her voice is offered later, by Viidikas describing herself as the child of an Estonian violinist (her father) and an Australian nurse (her mother). Indeed, the poet adds a note to her reading of the poem "To My Father, Viidikas," explaining that her family name is the name of an Estonian fish (12'24–13'09). While the program presents this cultural difference in a positive light, Leves has argued that it contributed to her feeling of being an outsider:

> Some of her commitment to the out-of-step and to *being* out-of-step may have stemmed from her apperceptions of her father, an Estonian violin maker, a post-war refugee, never quite at home in the Australia of the 1950s, '60s or '70s. Vicki looked European—Slavic, really—and certainly responded enthusiastically to European novelists and poets: Beckett, as noted; also Akhmatova, Djuna Barnes, Baudelaire, Cavafy, Cendrars, Éluard, Grass, Herbert, Holub, Popa, Prévert. (22)

References to Viidikas's cultural difference abound in "Vicki's Voice." While this difference is initially represented by her bohemianism and her Estonian background, towards the end of the episode it is signified by her interest in Indian culture, mythology, and religion. Indeed, in the closing third of the episode there are readings of three poems set in India: "This is the road my bare feet touch," "Family Images," and "Harvest Festival" (Ravlich 25'32–31'53). There is also a recording of Viidikas talking at some length about her interest in India's religious culture, and what drew her to live there for over a decade (25'04–26'28). India is a dominant subject here; Viidikas and her peers speak for minutes at a time on the topic, starting with Viidikas: "My interest in India is a very complicated one, but primarily … I was very interested to live in a culture, to experience a culture, that was totally different from Western culture" (26'54–27'09). Viidikas's difference from mainstream Australian culture is a continuous theme in the episode: her bohemianism, cultural heritage, and deep interest in India all position Viidikas as having a different approach to life than mainstream Australian society of the 1960s, 70s and 80s. At the end of the episode we hear about Viidikas's drug addiction, and here the mood turns melancholic (31'55–33'41). Some of Viidikas's unusual lifestyle choices, which up to this point have been celebrated, are now recognised as being toxic to the poet, leading to her physical marginalisation.

Another aspect of Viidikas's personality and poetics that is continuously cited in "Vicki's Voice" is her femininity. Indeed, much of the commentary focuses on the womanly intensity of Viidikas. Early on we hear a male interviewee remark, "She was olive skinned, small and slim, with the intensest eyes I'd ever looked into. Long shaped, of a dark green colour in the muted evening light. Seemingly to look at me and through me at the same time." (5'51–6'04). This image of Viidikas as

an intense woman is repeated in different forms—mid-way through the episode one of her male lovers says, "I wouldn't use the study when she was in it. It was too intense. *Really* intense. And I mean that was an aspect of Vicki that is quite, quite difficult" (25'06–25'17). This is shadowed immediately by a female interviewee:

> She was adventurous, she was courageous, she was fool hardy, she was delightful in all of that as well. Absolutely admirable. She was unique, a unique voice. No, she didn't conform. She was *dangerous*. I think she was dangerous to know. (25'49–26'12)

Here the poet's intensity is experienced as shocking, perhaps because it was uncommon at this time for a woman to speak with such a strong voice, and to act out her desires with such strength. The adapted poem "Knives" precedes these comments and establishes this picture of female strength. The poem exemplifies Cixous' call for women to unleash their subjectivity through their subconscious. It is an important reading in the episode not only for its embodiment of this feminist ideal, but also because it presents another side of Viidikas's aesthetic to the listener: surrealism. Viidikas discusses this influence before reading the poem: having mentioned the French surrealist influences on her work, she says that for her surrealism means, "Giving your imagination full rein, and really letting yourself delve right into your subconscious and drag out what's in there, rather than having a concept which you're quite conscious of and put down" (19'48–20'05). She prefaces the poem by saying, "I'll read one of my poems, which is called 'Knives'. It was written in 1974, in a kitchen" (20'06–20'17). The domestic setting for the production of "Knives" gives it an intimate feeling, while alluding to conservative notions of women as belonging to domestic spaces, which Viidikas in fact subverts in the poem. In the adapted poem the surreal, the passionate, and the emotional are all products of the poet's progressive identity, an identity that is ironically signalled at the outset by the domestic setting. Viidikas seems aware of the irony of evoking feminist aesthetics by referring to a kitchen, as she laughs after mentioning where she wrote the poem.

The adaptation of the poem is affecting, and features a shimmering, dark jazz soundtrack under the preface to the poem and the poem itself. The poem uses surreal images and actions that seem to symbolise her melancholy and her determination to overcome it. The premise of the poem is that the poet possesses three knives which serve different functions:

> I take the first and scalp the sunlight from the sky.
> I take the second and carve a face within the moon.
> The third is more dangerous. Its work is for the heart.
> With this I cut away distortion through the night, so in the
> day the flesh will hold.
> …

With each knife there is a lesson. Wounds heal better when
left alone.
It is for you I offer these cuttings.
Undo honestly and the life will be visible. (20’21–21’20; Viidikas *Knäbel* 46)

Here the surreal image of the poet performing surgery on her own heart is a metaphor for resolving emotional trauma; the poem expresses a melancholic but matter-of-fact state of mind, using non-realist imagery. Immediately after this reading, Adamson remarks: “Vicki always wanted to have blood in her poems. To have something pulsing through them, some form of *life*. She wasn’t opposed to conceptual poetry but she was more interested in poems that were alive with some form of *passion*” (21’21–21’38; emphases in recording). Female passion is celebrated here. It is depicted as arising from Viidikas’s subconscious, from a desire to “give full rein” to her embodied condition. Such passion is represented as dangerous, like the instrument used for emotional healing in the poem: the knife. After Adamson’s remarks, Viidikas notes that that the poem was written spontaneously; this evokes the automatic writing that the surrealists were known for: “The poem ‘Knives’ was written straight out. I didn’t revise it, well I changed about two words in it, but it just came straight out in one piece” (21’39–21’50).

“Knives” exemplifies Cixous’ ideals for literary feminism, in its representation of the female psyche through the subconscious. Other poems in the episode act out Cixous’s ideals in another way, in their representation of female sexuality and desire. Indeed, four of the eleven poems included in the episode—“red is the colour”, “Absences,” “Mad Hats of Desire,” and “Oh woman of the moon”—are about sexuality and desire. The poem “red is the colour” opens with the lines:

red is the colour
when creation burst and the first physical thing
stepped amazed into itself

what the men with wordy heads
label “primitive” and “less intelligent” (3’25–3’39; *Condition Red* 14)

Here redness is physical, sensual, and female. In a rhetorical move that is concerned with gender stereotypes within a patriarchal culture, the imagined intensity of feeling in the Big Bang (“when creation burst”) is represented as female; the poet then represents male intellectuals—“men with wordy heads”—finding this “primitive” and “less intelligent.” These stanzas critique a male perspective on female subjectivity, represented by the colour red. Other stanzas continue to use the colour as a metaphor for desire, but also other feelings such as anger and grief:

red was the silence dispensed with his eyes

when his hands were mute with love
…
of the absence of the touch
knitting the body into waking

of the gaze of the wife
as she faced her husband's lover

the lament of that woman
under the tree of her desire (3'25–4'35; 14-15)

Shortly after the reading of this poem, a female interviewee says, "I saw her first through a window with red light," and then laughs, and goes on to describe Viidikas's house in East Balmain and her husband at the time (6'11–6'28). In this context, redness is a symbol of Viidikas's free sexuality: the comment puts one in mind of the phrase "red light district."

The adaptation of "red is the colour" is also quite revealing of the relationship between the personal and the political in "Vicki's Voice." The adaptation serves two functions in the episode. The first is to represent female desire, as I have noted. In this respect—given the meaning that redness carries in the poem—the title of *Condition Red* could be read as "condition female". The adapted poem's second function in the episode is to convey the relationship between life and art for Viidikas—this is implied in the introduction to "red is the colour":

> **Viidikas:** I might just read where this title came from, *Condition Red*, I think Lyn knows that term.
>
> **Male voice, overlayed:** It's a warning system for heart attack victims.
>
> **Viidikas:** I picked this term and the book sort of came after that [starts reading the poem "red is the colour…"] (3'11–3'24)

Because of the overlaying of recordings, we don't hear Viidikas's explanation of where the title came from: instead the term is located by the interviewee in the domain of the body, and as having to do with intense personal experience (a heart attack). However, while this interviewee associates the book's title with personal experience, Ryan offers a different perspective:

> Vicki Viidikas's first book *Condition Red* (UQP, 1973)—which most likely took its title from Kubrick's *Dr Strangelove* (1964) in which Condition Red means war—burst with unsettling depictions of contemporary life and the status of women, a year after Equal Pay had become law[,] … the intense political and social tumult of the 1960s and '70s, and the dynamically modernising upheavals wrought by the first Labor Government in 23 years

> (Australian troops withdrawn from Vietnam; Equal Pay legislation; Single Mother's Pension; voting age lowered from 21 to 18 years, free university education, etc.) (par. 1)

None of these political contexts are mentioned in "Vicki's Voice," and in that sense the episode seems more concerned with the aesthetic and biographical content of Viidikas's poetry. Instead of referring to contemporary countercultural politics, the interviewee's introduction to "red is the colour" alludes to the entwinement between life and art that is often seen as a defining feature of Viidikas's poetry.

The final poem of the episode, "O woman of the moon," continues the exploration of the aesthetic and biographical in Viidikas's work, while underscoring its darker, erotic dimensions. This closing sequence is a creative sound collage, including a reading of part of the poem by actress Susan Prior; commentary from Adamson and Ravlich about Viidikas's writing, and about memories evoked by voice recordings of her; and Viidikas speaking about her writing process as a religious experience (Ravlich 35'51–38'15). Throughout this sound collage, a song with the refrain "she's the harlot messenger" plays in the background; the refrain is a musical repetition of the same line from the poem. The crooning voice sounds like a more feminine version of Jeff Buckley's, which alludes to Romanticism in Viidikas's work, and its place within this tradition. Moreover, the repetition of this lyric under the remainder of the episode's voices, including Viidikas's, suggests that the "harlot messenger" is Viidikas herself, incarnated as an erotic female poet of the underworld.

While feminism is not explicitly mentioned in "Vicki's Voice," Viidikas is consistently portrayed as a feminist through the strength of her character and her writing's representations of embodied female experience. The voice we are presented with in "Vicki's Voice" is quite personal and lyrical, but it also exemplifies the ideals of second-wave feminism. Through this style of representation, the episode suggests that for Viidikas the personal is political. This portrait of Viidikas is conveyed to the listener through the selection of poems—many of which have to do with female subjectivity, desire, and the subconscious—and the generous commentary which focuses on Viidikas's gender politics without labelling them as such. By representing Viidikas as a feminist without overt references to contemporary politics, the episode achieves a subtly political representation of Viidikas that dissolves the confused dichotomy of personal versus political in criticism of her work.

"Vicki's Voice" adheres to ideas about female subjectivity popular in second-wave feminism; these ideas later came to be contested as restricting femininity (and masculinity) through a false conception of what is natural to male and female bodies. However, the episode's celebration of the distinctly feminine in Viidikas's poetry was radical in its contemporary cultural context. This was a

time when the Australian literary world remained dominated by male writers. Through its powerful representations of female poetic subjectivity, "Vicki's Voice" challenges this literary patriarchy[118]. As Leves argues:

> Some of Vicki's best writing seems to reverse Slavoj Žižek's question: "Why is a woman a symptom of man?" Read in the light of her candour, her ardent sensuous brilliance, the men of Vicki's stories and poems can seem symptoms of the female—of the feminine that Vicki both creates and doubts; affirms and undermines. (22)

"Vicki's Voice" also contributes to discourses praising women as making important contributions to national culture. While the episode does not engage with national identity, its explorations of feminism in poetry, on a national media platform, evoke a history of national identity narratives that have tended to privilege the masculine. By contrast, "Vicki's Voice" presents an Australian woman poet who is lauded because of her powerful representations of experience, in the changing but still male-dominated literary and national cultures of the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries.

[118] This intention is signalled clearly in Viidikas' prose poem "A Trunkful of Structures," where she writes: "I am in a library, my feet up on a chair, Great Lives, Great Men and Great Words confront me. I don't even flinch" (*Condition Red* 61).

8. Conclusion

8.1 Five Years On: Indigenous Australian Identity in "Little Bit Long Time" (2010)

On 3 July 2010 *Poetica* broadcast "Little Bit Long Time," an episode on the life and work of the Indigenous South Australian poet Ali Cobby Eckermann; the episode was produced by Michael Ladd. In this epilogue I make a close reading of "Little Bit Long time" as an annex to my case study analyses, and in order to bring my analysis of *Poetica* closer to the end of its career on ABC Radio National. "Little Bit Long Time" is distinct from the other discussed episodes in its aesthetics and its representation of Australian identity: as such it allows me to continue to reflect, in my conclusion, on aspects of *Poetica*'s adaptations, to do with authorial presence and national identity, that have been at the centre of this thesis.

Eckermann has Yankunytjatjara heritage, and "Little Bit Long Time" explores the poet's Indigenous identity—including her sense of belonging to the land on which she lives; her experience as one of the Stolen Generations of Indigenous children; and her experience as a mother. The episode is also focused on family relationships, and Eckermann's sense of belonging (or not belonging) to South Australia and to the Northern Territory, where she grew up. It is quite consciously centred on place, in a way that is different to "Vicki's Voice" and "A Layered Event"—with their foci on Sydney as the main site of Viidikas's writing, and Melbourne and Sydney as the main sites of Forbes'—and "Ouyang Yu" with its focus on Melbourne and China as the main sites of Ouyang's writing. The episode's difference has not only to do with the rural setting—it is set mainly in Koolunga in rural SA—but also with the way sound is used to adapt the poetry. While "Ouyang Yu," "A Layered" Event," and "Vicki's Voice" feature adaptations of poems that are rich in music and sound effects, "Little Bit Long Time" is comprised mostly of location recordings—bird sounds; the sound of the Koolunga general store where Eckermann lives; the sound of water flowing; of the producer or Eckermann driving and speaking in a car; of doors jangling open and shutting. Folky instrumental music is used sparingly, and two voices predominate: the poet's and the producer's[119]. Relative to the preceding three case studies, this episode is minimal in its use of music. As a result it has a sparseness which seems to reflect, in its sounds, the wide open spaces of rural SA.

[119] The Indigenous poet Lionel Fogarty appears briefly when Ladd first arrives at the Koolunga General Store; he mentions that Fogarty is the current writer in residence at Eckermann's store (Ladd "Little Bit" 5'13–5'32).

The episode is also different to the others in its focus on Indigenous identity, as opposed to white Australian, Chinese-Australian, and second-generation Estonian identity, in the other episodes. *Poetica* featured several episodes on Indigenous Australian poets, as well as anthology programs for National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week, such as in 2001 and 2004. Over its career *Poetica* featured Indigenous poets such as Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Kevin Gilbert, Lionel Fogarty, Samuel Wagan Watson, Maureen Walker, Archie Weller, Brenda Saunders, and Eva Johnson. "Little Bit Long Time" provides an insight into *Poetica*'s adaptation of Indigenous poetry, and engagement with the politics of indigeneity, at the time of its broadcast. It begins with Ladd's introduction, which serves to contextualise the broadcast:

> Hi, Mike Ladd with you again on ABC Radio National. Great to be here for another edition of *Poetica*. The first week of July is NAIDOC Week—NAIDOC being the National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee. It's an annual celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and an opportunity to recognise the contributions of Indigenous Australians. And today, we're going on a little road trip to the mid-north of South Australia, to meet Indigenous poet Ali Cobby Eckermann. (Ladd "Little Bit" 0'36–1'04)

The episode is framed as a special contribution to a nationally significant week; it is unusual for this reason. It is also somewhat unusual because it is based on Eckermann's debut book of poems: *Poetica* more often tended to focus on poets with a few books to their name. But as Ladd notes in his introduction, the book "sold out its print run—a rare feat for poetry —and it's now been republished by Picaro Press" (1'19–1'35). Like "Ouyang Yu," "Little Bit Long Time" signals the national importance of Eckermann, despite her relatively small output at this stage[120].

The poems are read and spoken about in the poet's home environment; this gives the episode an intimate, confessional feeling. The episode's intimacy is somewhat akin to that in "Vicki's Voice," where we are invited into the poet's world by the producer's re-creation of it through the poet's recorded voice, and through memories about Viidikas that interviewees share with the producer. The intimacy of "Little Bit Long Time" stems from slightly different sources: the episode centred on a meeting of one living person and another, at the poet's home, with the listener allowed to eavesdrop on this meeting. The fact that Ladd visits Eckermann at her home in rural South Australia is also significant to one of the program's main themes, which is Eckermann's search for her country, to locate where she belongs.

[120] Eckermann has since published another two poetry books, *Love Dreaming & other poems* (2012) and *Inside My Mother* (2015), and a verse novel, *Ruby Moonlight* (2012).

We seem to experience authorial presence directly in this episode, without an "intermediary" voice (an actor's) through which it passes, and this is reinforced by the commentary from Eckermann which is precisely aligned with the thematic concerns of the poems. The adaptations are produced in a way that suggests truthfulness, by being straight from the poet's mouth, and by featuring commentary which leaves no doubt as to how the poems should be interpreted by the listener. While "Ouyang Yu" also features commentary by the poet that is closely related to the poems, the commentary does not shadow the poetry as insistently, and that episode also features several readings by an actor; by contrast, "Little Bit Long Time" is driven largely by Eckermann's voice. While Ladd is initially prominent, leading us on the road to Eckermann's home, Eckermann takes over the narration once he arrives there.

Immediately after Ladd's introduction, and before the road trip, we hear a reverberating recording of Eckermann reading "Kumana":

> There is no life
> but Family.
>
> When I am young
> I live with my Family.
>
> When I grow up
> I leave my Family.
>
> When I am lonely
> I miss my Family.
>
> When I am drunk
> I reverse-charge my Family.
>
> When I pass away
> I unite my Family.
>
> There is no life
> but Family. (2'42–3'18; Eckermann *Little Bit* 27)

The choice of "Kumana" as the opening poem is significant, as it announces a major thematic concern of the episode: personal identity as it is embedded in family relationships. As the episode

unfolds, Eckermann conveys her Indigenous identity to the listener through reference to her mothers (both her birth mother and her foster mother), her grandmother, and her son. For instance she says six minutes into the episode that:

> My mother was born at Ooldea soakage. And my grandmother was born at Indulkana on the APY Lands, so my country is the north deserts south of the Territory border. And I've had the opportunity a couple of times to go out there … got to explore all around that country. And the old people used to come up from Yalata, to come back and visit the soakage. So I used to be able to meet with them, not realising that they were my family. (5'51–6'33)

Here Eckermann talks about her mother and grandmother's places of birth. This establishes the way the poet addresses her indigeneity throughout the episode, with reference to the land that her family are from.

After "Kumana" we hear Ladd's voice in his car, narrating his journey towards Eckermann in rural South Australia. The episode is structured by this road trip; it unfolds as a journey from Ladd's home city of Adelaide to Koolunga. We hear a recording of the interior of a car on the highway, as Ladd drives north from Adelaide and comments on the towns he's passing on the way: "Passing through Two Wells, Wild Horse Plains, Bowmans, Lochiel with its pink salt lakes, Snowtown, Redhill … Turning left off the highway to follow the Broughton river… a border zone of Kaurna, Nukunu and Ngadjuri land" (3'38–4'10). Here the sound of the car on the road, and Ladd's voice describing his location, signal to the listener that place is important in the episode. Upon Ladd's arrival at Koolunga we hear the ignition go off; the parking break go on; the car door open and shut; the voice of Ali Cobby Eckermann greeting Ladd; Ladd talking to Eckermann and Fogarty; and the trio walking into the Koolunga general store. This is followed immediately by Eckermann describing her mother and grandmother's places of birth, her country, and memories from her youth of visiting family and country. The poem that follows, "First Time (I Met My Grandmother)" is about identity as it is embedded in the body, in language, and in place. "Circles and Squares," the subsequent poem (the third in the episode), further explores the themes of family and Indigenous identity:

> I was born yankunytjatjara my mother is yankunytjatjara
> her mother was yankunytjatjara my family is yankunytjatjara
> …
> When I was born I was not allowed to live with my family I
> grew up in the white man's world (10'08–10'38; 20)

The sense here is that Eckermann's indigeneity goes back many generations, indefinitely, and that it is a fundamental part of her identity even though she "grew up in the white man's world." From this

point on "Little Bit Long Time" unfolds as a story of Eckermann's reconnection to her family after being removed from it forcefully as a child, through state policies targeting Indigenous Australians. The poem "Messages," which appears later in the episode, explicitly ties familial identity to the land—to the whole of Australia—and suggests that viscerally reconnecting to this land is part of a process of healing for Eckermann:

> Every grain of sand in this
> big red country
> is a pore on the skin
> *of my Family* (18'10–18'18; 44)

Through such poems, the episode links personal identity to family to land, offering a powerful representation of Indigenous identity—and modern Indigenous history—to the national audience.

The identity themes that emerge through the adaptations and the framing commentary, to do with indigeneity, family, and relationships to land, are often infused with traumatic memory. In fact the episode unfolds through family memory spanning three generations, and the various disjunctions (forced and voluntary adoptions) that have occurred over this time. This is explicitly placed in the context of recent Australian politics: Eckermann's traumatic memory plays out against the Northern Territory Intervention (2007) and the history of the Stolen Generations (which includes members from the late 1800s to the 1970s). In doing so, it situates the authorial presences of the poems in historical contexts that are nationally significant, and offers a provocative and often supressed Australian history to the national public. This historical context is consolidated throughout the episode by Eckermann's commentary—for instance, in this passage that precedes the poet's reading of "Circles and Squares":

> I was born in Kate Cocks baby home, in Brighton, in Adelaide. My mother had me there. It sounds like it was a really traumatic time for her… no-one knows what happened there. My aunty and uncles came to get me. They was gonna raise me—it was an arrangement that they'd made with my mum. But they was told that there was no baby, and my mum was pretty distraught. And initially they thought that I'd died, but then later on they realised that it was a trick, and sadly it's something that my mother has never really been able to talk about … My adopted parents come and pick me up from there, and brought me to the mid-north of South Australia, and I grew up on a little farm at Hart ... When we were really little, mum and dad were always honest that we were adopted. And I've got another adopted Aboriginal brother. And we were always told that we were a little bit special. (8'45–10'02)

The second major historical context is realised powerfully in Eckermann's reading of "Intervention Payback": this poem refers to John Howard's decision in 2007 to take the military into Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, responding to allegations of rampant child sexual abuse and neglect in Indigenous communities there. The poem is told through a male point of view, and begins, "I love my wife" and ends "I might hit her first time" (29'26–37'15). The poem suggests that the Intervention did more damage than good, by putting stress on the Indigenous communities it breached with force (Eckermann *Little Bit* 43). The middle part of the poem makes reference to the Government of the time:

> … John Howard
> he make new rules he never even come to see us
> how good we was doing already Mal Brough he
> come with the army we got real frightened true
> thought he was gonna take the kids away… (31'13–31'26; 39)

Ladd makes specific reference to this poem in his introduction to the program, signalling its importance in the episode: "Her long poem, 'Intervention Payback,' which we'll hear today, won the NT Red Earth poetry award" (1'35–1'41). Eckermann also embeds the poem in recent history in the commentary preceding it, saying: "One of the reasons I left the NT was 'cause I was living out at Titjikala when the Intervention arrived. And I found it really, really difficult to witness almost on a daily basis—with the public servants driving out from Alice Springs—all the hypocrisy" (28'55–29'12).

Many of the poems in the episode, and particularly the long "Intervention Payback," ground the episode in recent Australian history. "Little Bit Long Time" presents a moving portrait of Indigenous Australian identity through its adaptations of Eckermann's poems, and through the poet's frank commentary. Eckermann's depictions of her family's hardship, because of government policies, offer a sharp critique of twentieth- and twenty-first century Australian history. The episode is more pointedly about nationally significant events than "A Layered Event," "Vicki's Voice," and even "Ouyang Yu," in that it explicitly addresses a history spanning centuries—the history of modern Australia. It is also more obviously about subjects of interest to the whole nation because of the place that indigeneity holds in the national imaginary. Representations of Indigenous life on a national public service broadcaster immediately evoke national identity and challenge it to accommodate the First Peoples of Australia who have special claims to land, claims that have historically been supressed. While there were comparatively fewer feature-length *Poetica* episodes on Indigenous Australian poets, those that aired often served overtly national functions, directly speaking to notions of national identity (and conceptions of the "national" that exclude the

Indigenous) as a result. Through its clear representations of identity themes in Eckermann's poetry, the episode looks back critically on national policies in relation to indigeneity, and asks for a better place for indigeneity in the national imaginary. Moreover, being placed towards the end of *Poetica's* period of broadcast, it shows that the program continued to engage with discourses of national identity at this time.

8.2 Authorial presence and national identity in *Poetica*

Poetica's episodes differed in the extent to which they absorbed and reconstructed contemporary discourses of national identity, in politics and popular media, in their adaptations of lyric authorial presence. However, all of the episodes I have discussed notably engage with images of Australian identity in their adaptations. In the case study analyses, I showed that "Ouyang Yu" and "John Forbes: A Layered Event" were very sensitive to contemporary politics of national identity. These episodes engaged closely with contemporary national identity discourses informed by multiculturalism and by whiteness. The selection of poems, the way that these poems were adapted into radio sound, and the framing commentary in both of these episodes critiqued (in the case of "Ouyang Yu") and reflected back (in the case of the framing interviews in "A Layered Event", competing with the critical spirit of the poetry adaptations) contemporary politics of identity via the ethos of *Poetica* and of the ABC more broadly. "Vicki's Voice – Remembering Vicki Viidikas" does not explicitly engage contemporary politics of national identity: no contemporary or historical archetype of national identity is explicitly referenced by the episode. However, in celebrating a relatively neglected but important female poet on a national media platform, and by focusing on her feminism, the episode implicitly engages a history of national identity discourses that have tended to celebrate masculine archetypes. While "Vicki's Voice" was not as responsive to contemporary events pertinent to national identity, such as Hanson's maiden speech to parliament or the republic referendum of 1999, the episode nevertheless critiques the gendered nature of literary recognition, as well as the gender politics of national identity discourses, in Australia. "Little Bit Long Time" continues *Poetica*'s engagement with national identity in a strikingly direct way. The directness of the engagement with national identity politics in "Little Bit Long Time" is signalled by the fact that it was *Poetica's* special contribution to the nationally significant NAIDOC Week.

These episodes, being aesthetically, thematically, and temporally diverse, offer an insight into how *Poetica* responded to its institutional context at different points in time. I have argued that despite the predominantly aesthetic focus of *Poetica*'s production—as attested by listener feedback which

typically focuses on aesthetics, by the sonic complexity evident in each episode, and by the resources the program devoted to bringing poetry to life "in a rich radio environment, enhanced by sound and music" (Ladd "Poetica" par. 1)—its institutional grounding had a bearing on its representations of Australian poetry. I have made this argument by focusing on authorial presence, which is a key aesthetic aspect of lyric poetry, and by examining how this aesthetic aspect has been adapted in four instances on *Poetica*. My readings of these adaptations reveal not only the sonic but also the wider cultural and political currents that complicate the aesthetic composition of *Poetica*'s episodes.

A limitation of this study is its focus on showing how a particular aspect of the ABC's institutional ethos, embodied in its Charter, had a bearing on *Poetica*. That is, I have focused on the clause in the Charter stating that ABC programs should "contribute to a sense of national identity" and "reflect the cultural diversity of… the Australian community" (ABC 4). There are several other objectives stated in the Charter, including that the institution "provide within Australia innovative and comprehensive broadcasting services of a high standard," that it "broadcast programs of an educational nature," and that its programs "inform and entertain" (4). Indeed, as noted in chapter four, Ladd mentions that, along with national identity, he also kept in mind the Charter's stipulations about innovation and comprehensiveness, as well as the Reithian principals of informing, educating, and entertaining, when working on *Poetica* (Varatharajan "Interview" 3). In other words, the thesis does not theorise how the totality of the ABC's institutional ethos affected *Poetica*'s programming, but rather how the most publically debated aspect of its ethos—namely its aim to contribute to Australian identity—had a bearing on *Poetica*.

It is also pertinent to note that in my analysis I have treated the ABC as an internally cohesive institution, with a documented cultural mission that is capable of affecting individual programs. Elizabeth Jacka critiques this approach to the ABC in her review of ABC television drama from 1975 to 1990. Her argument is that the ABC is often treated as a monolithic institution with a singular agency, but that it is in fact a complex, messy institution made up of many inter-relations (among employees, and between employees and written policy), and moreover one that is constantly in flux (*ABC of Drama* 6-7). Jacka has elsewhere tried to account for the complexity of the ABC by using actor-network theory, as theorised by Bruno Latour; this entails interviewing a wide range of employees to show the coherences and contradictions between stated policy aims and what people are actually doing, on a day-to-day basis, within the institution (see Jacka "Don't Use the A-Word" 51). While I do include an interview with the founding producer of *Poetica* as part of my analysis, I have largely walked a different critical line to Jacka in this thesis, by treating policy

aims as part of the institutional culture of the ABC, and more importantly by taking a bottom-up approach to see how programming content reflects the aims of the institution. The close readings do presume that the aims spelled out in the Charter are capable of being communicated effectively through the institution to individual programs. However, rather than assuming that these policy aims are straightforwardly reflected in programming content, because the institution is internally cohesive and monolithic, my analysis has focused on discovering the *extent* to which this is the case, as part of a broader analysis of *Poetica*'s aesthetics. The bigger picture that I present is that *Poetica*'s adaptations of authorial presence are complicated by the institution within which it exists, resulting in poetic adaptations that are, in different ways, imprinted by contemporary narratives and politics of Australian identity.

This is an original contribution to radio scholarship, and particularly to literary radio studies. While literary radio studies is beginning to feature interdisciplinary research, such research is often focused on the effect of radio broadcasting on modernist literary practice, and vice-versa, as I have mentioned. The thesis has departed from this convention within literary radio studies by drawing on a rigorously interdisciplinary methodology, and by situating a radio poetry program not only in its aesthetic contexts (poetics and radio aesthetics) but also within its particular institution. By arguing that in *Poetica* there was not only a transformation of lyric poetry from page to radio, but also influence from discourses of Australian national identity, contemporary politics, and the ABC, the thesis deepens our understanding of how aesthetic and non-aesthetic factors work on each other in aesthetically complex radio poetry programs. Moreover, it shows how such aesthetics-focused radio programs may unwittingly be part of the ongoing project of national identity construction, serving to further shape public discourse and thinking on the topic.

ABC RN continues to produce content that engages with national identity. In late 2015 *RN Afternoons* featured the four-part music documentary series "I'm Here Now," in which:

> [The host] Jeremy Story Carter heads into pubs and gigs, share houses and sound checks to meet young musicians from around the country who articulate something specific to Australia and their place within it. "*I'm Here Now"* explores tensions around simultaneously loving and rejecting Australian culture, and where people turn to express and project their own sense of Australian identity. (Carter pars. 2-3)

The premise of the series—which features excerpts of live concerts, recordings of road trips, and on-location interviews with musicians—is that independent music in Australia possesses a deep sense of Australianness, and is worth studying in depth for this reason. And since August 2016, RN has hosted a documentary-style, online-only program about notable Australians, called *The Real*

Thing. This program describes itself as "a podcast in search of the real Australia" (Williams and Nicastri par. 1). While these programs are pointedly about national identity, literary radio programs like *Poetica* which are not as obviously oriented towards representing national identity would benefit especially from analyses of their engagements with a broader institutional ethos.

While RN continues to engage with national identity in new programming, it has simultaneously reduced its literary radio output. Recently there has been a shift away from sound-rich productions of literature on the network. Future literary radio scholarship might seek to show why this has been the case, and the implications of this for the broadcasting and podcasting of poetry and other literature in Australia. However, sound-rich literary productions do have an irregular place on RN's *Earshot.* This program was launched in 2015, and is a multi-purpose features and documentaries program that was created after the axing, over the preceding five years, of the sonically inventive programs *Poetica, Airplay* (a radio drama feature), and *360 Documentaries.* Ladd is one of the commissioning producers for *Earshot*, and poetry is occasionally featured in a 27 minute episode; it is often presented in the radiophonic style of *Poetica*[121]. RN's *Books and Arts* occasionally features adapted book readings and poetry[122], and the newly established personal storytelling podcast *This Is About* may feature some adapted literature[123]. There has also been a recent flourishing of poetry podcasts in Australia, such as Australian Book Review's *States of Poetry* podcast, *The Australian Poetry Podcast*, *Verity La's* poetry podcast (which is skewed towards discussion of contemporary Australian poetry rather than readings), and the Red Room Company's poetry recordings. These mostly feature poetry readings with minimal to no other sound, with the exception of the Red Room Company, which does feature some audio-visual adaptations of poems. These poetry podcasts would benefit from institutionally-situated analyses of their adaptations. In many of these cases the framework I have developed in this thesis would need to be modified to focus solely on their vocal adaptations of poetry. My analytical framework would also need to be modified to take into account the ethos of the particular organisation that produces each program.

Public service broadcasting models, in Australia and around the world, are currently going through rapid change, including a shift towards more online-only audio content. Institutional podcast

[121] For instance on 2 May 2016 *Earshot* broadcast an episode on Ali Cobby Eckermann's latest book of poems *Inside My Mother* (2015); this episode was produced by Ladd.
[122] Recent examples are their series of adapted short story readings from the anthology *Crossing Boundaries: New Voices From Indonesia*, broadcast from October to December 2016 (see Sloane-Lees), and two segments of adapted poetry broadcast on International Women's Day, 11 March 2017. These segments were on the English spoken word poet Kate Tempest (Jokiranta), and on Ali Cobby Eckermann after she won the prestigious Windham-Campbell literary prize (L'Estrange).
[123] So far there has been one episode, "Killing In the Name Of," broadcast on 12/10/16, that has featured adapted drama (see Cox and Lopez).

production is quite similar to institutional radio production in terms of the recording process, meaning that my approach to *Poetica* could be applied to new generations of literary podcasts on the ABC and elsewhere. Scholars studying the ABC's podcasting would need to be mindful, however, of the challenge posed to the conventionally national focus of public service broadcasting by the distribution of podcasts to a trans-national audience. There is a need for further considerations of literary radio and podcast production in Australia, and for more research that situates these programs not only in their literary/radio aesthetics, but also in their specific institutional or organisational contexts. There is scope for similar research to be conducted on forms besides radio poetry, such as radio/podcast drama, book readings, and literary talks. This thesis hopes to inspire further research in literary radio studies through its demonstration that interdisciplinary readings of literary radio programs can yield rich insights, shedding light not only on their aesthetic dimensions, but also on their dialogues with a wider world of institutional culture, contemporary politics, and narratives of national identity.

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10. Appendix A: online feedback to *Poetica* episodes

10.1 Online feedback to "Little Bit Long Time," on the poetry of Ali Cobby Eckermann, broadcast on 3 July 2010.

Phe Rawnsley:

03 Jul 2010 3:45:39pm

Ali–thank you so much for sharing your stories. I've just come back from my fist trip to Alice Springs. Your words have deepened my experience of this special country and its Indigenous peoples. Xx

Virginia Westwood:

03 Jul 2010 5:16:35pm

Loved listening to Ali Cobby Eckermann and her stories. Terribly disappointed the book is out of print. Would love to get a copy.

Moderator: Dear Virginia, the book is back in print from Picaro Press. Their web address is www.picaropress.com

Leith Maddock:

03 Jul 2010 5:40:39pm

I loved the interview with Ali Cobby Eckermann–what a great woman, and I loved the poetry & will look for the book

Andy P, Cairns:

03 Jul 2010 6:55:30pm

What a wonderfully evocative poet!
Andy, Cairns.

Eileen Burder:

09 Jul 2010 3:00:23pm

Ali Cobby Eckermann's "Little Bit Long Time" was a wonderful story. I was so impressed with the poems and story that I have actually delved into the ABC website to collect any details about her and her work.
Thank you Ali for sharing your talent and thank you *Poetica* for introducing her to me.

Fleur:

09 Jul 2010 9:52:08pm

Best poetry I've heard for years. Especially loved the one Intervention Payback. I'm going out to buy several copies to give to all my friends. Way to go Ali, thanks *Poetica*.

Brenda Buninyong:

12 Jul 2010 12:32:20am

I felt like crying with the truthfulness of Ali's poetry. Should be mandatory reading for all those ignorant pollies.

Enivea:

12 Jul 2010 9:53:22am

I was thrilled to hear this interview especially as earlier in the year I had given Ali's book of poetry to a friend visiting from overseas and had taken her to White Cliffs.

Poetica is a great program and it's wonderfully supportive of Indigenous writers. Well done!

Sharon Sills:

19 Jul 2010 5:09:14pm

This poet has an engaging "voice" and a wonderful use of simple language.

Lynne Sanders-Braithwaite:

17 Oct 2010 5:19:42pm

Just recently came across this lyrical beauty and love it.

Gyan Sagar:

31 Oct 2010 5:23:04pm

Message for Ali:
Wonderful stuff ... many thanks
Especially like Circles and Grade One ... bloody beautiful!
Will read them, with your permission, at our Tafe Aboriginal Studies "Poetry in the Park" day in November.
That's the Tafe Course in Coffs with Uncle Harry Mumbulla.

10.2 Online feedback to the two-part "Gull in a Green Storm: The Poetry and Letters of Francis Webb," broadcast on 12 March 2011 and 19 March 2011.

Sarah Hayman:

24 Mar 2011 4:21:34pm

thank you for this moving and beautiful program.

Mary Jeavons:

24 Mar 2011 7:13:40pm

I loved this show and found it very moving as well as disturbing to imagine what this poet's life must have been like.

Can you tell me what the music is behind the last poem, the lament for St Maria Goretti, a poem I thought showed an incredible level of empathy. beautifully read too.
Mary

Moderator: Thanks Mary. The music was Arvo Part, Spiegel im Spiegel (Tasmin Little, violin, Martin Roscoe, piano) from Arvo Part (EMI Classics for Pleasure).

Mercia Morton:

26 Mar 2011 12:41:04am

Thank you so much for bringing the profound and tender poetry of Francis Webb out of forgetfulness. When I listen to the beauty and depth of feeling in "Five Days Old" and "Ward two–Harry", I can only agree with Sir Herbert Read. A very sensitive and beautiful production and readings.

Clive:

29 Mar 2011 1:17:17pm

What jewels these two brilliant programmes were! Readers Humphrey Bower & George Shevtsov are to be heartily congratulated for performing Francis Webb's work with exceptional vocal nuance, great intelligence and enormous sensitivity–definitive readings which one doubts could ever be bettered, (except perhaps by the pitifully few recordings which the poet himself bequeathed to us.)
Part 2, particularly, was incredibly moving, and I was most grateful to hear those affecting letters read with such insight & depth of feeling, that both poetry & correspondence were enabled to shed light on each other, as they ought.
As a whole, these programmes had a rhythm & an internal logic which were wonderfully well-judged, and consummately realized.
Hats off to you, *Poetica*! You have done the work of one of Australia's great religious poets proud. Thank you so much.

Jonathan:

29 Mar 2011 1:22:20pm

This is a marvellous program. Thank you. All I had read of Francis Webb in recent years was Robert Adamson's touching account of meeting him towards the end of his autobiographical Inside Out, and Dorothy Porter's foulmouthed, misogynist psychiatric inmate named Frank in What a Piece of Work, which by implication was a portrait of Francis Webb; on the strength of this broadcast, a wildly misleading one.

Clive:

17 Apr 2011 10:51:37pm

A brief postscript.
I believe these two Francis Webb programmes were of such outstandingly high quality that they should be considered for some sort of radio-art award. Any seconders?

10.3 Online feedback to "One Million Flights," on the poetry of the Iranian-Australian poet Roshanak Amrein, broadcast on 18 June 2011 as *Poetica*'s tribute to World Refugee Day (20 June).

Mary Roediger:

18 Jun 2011 4:41:08pm

I live in South Australia. How do I contact Roshanak Amrein? I want to add my support to this brave woman and her associates.

Roshanak Amrein:

20 Jun 2011 8:34:30pm

Thank you Mary for your kind words. There is a dedicated Facebook page that you can like and then post your comments on. If you search for One Million Flights in your Facebook search box it should come up. Wishing you all the very best and thank you for listening to my poetry.

Roshanak Amrein:

19 Jun 2011 1:00:51am

Thank you Roshanak for presenting your important personal story and your comments about the need for many of us to recognise our excessive demand upon the environment.

I would like to think that at this time more young people especially, are starting to think about living simpler lives and need to surround less material items and wealth.

It was an inspiration to hear your voice. Your time on air was well spent.

Thank you for being in Australia.

David Marsh.....Alice Springs

Keiwan:

19 Jun 2011 10:22:49am

Wishing all the best for displaced peoples of the earth making new homes in places that are more receptive of human rights & dignity. Well done Roshanak.

RonPrice:

19 Jun 2011 2:37:38pm

Your interview and poetry reading with Roshanak Amrein did my soul good. I have been associated with and a member of the Baha'i Faith for nearly 60 years after becoming a Baha'i in Canada in the 1950s. The persecution of this Faith in Iran and other countries in the Middle East has resulted in a great deal of poetry written by this Faith's adherents in the last 170 years, but little ever gets air-play in Australia to say nothing of other western countries. Thanking you *Poetica*. -Ron Price, Tasmania

John Murray:

23 Jun 2011 9:06:07pm

Roshanak,

Thank you for sharing your life in poetry with us. Architecture, history, food, family and friends in exchange for freedom....I think you gave us some understanding of what that really means in the poems you have written. Too much indifference, injustice and suffering for the sake of material wealth.....how right you are! I look forward to holding in my hands my very own copy of "One Million Flights"....God Bless, John.

Roshanak Amrein:

24 Jun 2011 4:36:08am

Blessings to you and your Beloveds on the eve of The Feast of Rahmat. (Mercy). I live in Philadelphia, Pa. USA where we have a Regional Baha'i Center and are free to worship. My family escaped persecution during WWII and came to the US. Many family members were lost. I am also a poet. Your words so beautifully capture the longing of place of origin and gratitude of freedom in our adopted countries. Many Prayers for our Iranian brothers and sisters and Our Beloved Yaran. May they taste the Mercy of Justice and Freedom.
Ya Baha'u'llah Abha.
Chere Kjrsten-Kifer

Iraj Meshgin:

24 Jun 2011 10:49:44am

Enjoyed Deeply About This Super Talented Young Poet's Interview.
Please continue With Program Like This About The Persecution Of This Innocent Group Of People In Iran.
I Like To See An Audio Visual Interview With Dr. Roshanak On ABC TV. So It could Also be Shown To American Public Specially To Iranian There.
Thank You.

11. Appendix B: *Poetica* Brief (2012)

POETICA
1505-1545 Saturday

2105-2145 Wednesday (repeat)

DESCRIPTION

The only regular national program on Australian radio to address and reflect on poetry. A weekly feature program exploring poetry and poets through performance and sound. The program's focus is on the contextualised performance and the imaginative experience of poetry. Presented by Sarah Kanowski (as part of Saturday Weekend Arts) and Daniel Browning on Wednesday nights.

PROGRAM MISSION

- To represent Australian and international poetry to a national audience.
- To engage a wide range of listeners in the experience of poetry through broadcast, on-line streaming and podcast where possible.
- To explore poetry in fresh, intelligent and stimulating ways through a wide range of performance and production styles.
- To support Australian performance.
- To introduce and promote emerging poets from around Australia.
- To take poetry to parts of Australia where there is no access to poetry performance and events.
- To celebrate poetry as a living breathing contemporary form with a connection to the past, and to refresh the familiar through new performance.

TARGET AUDIENCE

- A broad, intelligent audience, for whom *Poetica* may be the major contact with poetry in any medium.
- A broad national audience of diverse social and educational backgrounds.
- An audience with a particular interest in poetry.
- Students of poetry and writing.
- Poets.

EDITORIAL CONTENT

- 60% contemporary Australian content; 40% drawn from other sources – classic and contemporary.
- A range of studio and location recordings, interview-based programs, acoustic features, “live” readings and actuality, archive recordings, broadcasts from festivals, bi-lingual programs, verse drama etc.
- Occasional series of programs with a connected theme.
- Programs may be based on certain themes or ideas, or on the work of particular poets.

STYLE AND SOUND

- A strong engagement with music and other sound elements.
- Performance by poets and by leading Australian actors.
- Awareness of the potential connexion between the poetry that is the subject of the program, and the style, shape and rhythm of the program itself, to create a more rewarding experience for the listener.
- Accessible and open presentation.