



A Pint-sized Cliff Hardy: Dorothy Porter and the Niche Marketing of Australia

PENNY JONES
Canberra, ACT

FOR THE FIRST TWENTY YEARS OF HER WRITING LIFE, Dorothy Porter was an obscure Australian poet, trying to make a living from an unprofitable vocation. Then, in 1994, with the publication of *The Monkey's Mask*, her lesbian detective thriller in verse, she suddenly found financial success, and both local and international renown. Her subsequent work attracted reviews in major Australian newspapers, and interviewers often commented on her "pop star status." Porter's promotion as a celebrity has received much critical attention, yet I would argue that it is only one of several factors which has helped increase her book sales. As Porter's work gains an increasing market share, it retains its Australianness of language and subject matter, thus avoiding the tendency of some Australian writing to lose its local qualities in order to appeal to a geographically broader readership. It clearly demonstrates, however, a trend towards packaging poetry as accessible verse novels and focusing on issues of concern to lesbians, thus increasing its appeal to niche markets all over the world. This article compares two of Porter's earlier collections of poetry, *The Night Parrot* (1984) and *Driving Too Fast* (1989), with two of her recent verse novels, *The Monkey's Mask* (1994) and *Wild Surmise* (2002). It begins by examining the Australian poetry market from the 1970s (when Porter's work first appeared) to the 1990s and finds very little change in an industry reliant on always insufficient government handouts. Then, it turns to some possible explanations for Porter's sudden marketing success. It considers whether Porter might have reduced her writing's Australianness in order to appeal to overseas audiences, but finds that all the texts retain a focus on Australia and a consistent use of Australian English. It challenges the most common hypothesis, that Porter's genius for self-publicity brought about her increased book sales. Then, it demonstrates that while Porter's early work is sold as collections of poetry, her later writing is packaged as more saleable novels in verse. Finally, it draws attention to the growing prominence of lesbian content in the later volumes and argues that this increases their niche market potential.

Unlike the markets for fiction and drama, the Australian poetry market did not undergo especially significant changes between the mid-1970s and the 1990s. Poetry aficionados of the '70s and '80s learned to find the poetry shelves in back sections and obscure corners of bookstores. In the mid-'90s little had changed, with David Gaunt, co-owner of Sydney's Gleebooks, remarking that "there are few bookshops in Sydney in which poetry sells consistently, and it is still terribly difficult to get poetry into bookshops at all."

Educational institutions remain the only financially significant buyers of poetry. Furthermore, from the 1970s through to the present day, the vast majority of Australian poets and their publishers have depended on grants from the Literature Board of the Australia Council—grants that are always under threat. As Porter argues, the lack of markets and the paucity of government funds combine to create conditions even more difficult for poets than for writers of prose. It is a rare Australian poet who makes a living from writing, whether on the local or the international market.

Dorothy Porter is an exception. Initially, her career followed the trajectory familiar to many Australian poets. Her first collection, *Little Hoodlum*, was published in 1975 by a small press, and she found herself living the frustrated life of "a broke and overlooked and unread poet." Yet in the mid-1990s, when Hyland House agreed to publish *The Monkey's Mask*, she experienced a reversal of fortune: "The first noise I heard was a very alien one for a poet—the sound of a publisher's brain whirring. In its melodious footsteps came ringing telephones, the sweet suck of media interest and even the tinkle of real money."

In 2000, *The Monkey's Mask* was made into a film, directed by Samantha Lang and starring American actor Kelly McGillis of *Top Gun* fame. McGillis's presence may have sparked American interest, because the film was screened and reviewed in many cities across the United States. *The Monkey's Mask* won the Age Poetry Book of the Year award, the National Book Council's "Banjo" Award for Poetry, and was nominated for *The Times'* Best Book of the Year. It was published in America and Canada in 1995, and in Germany and England in 1997.

Porter's later work has also won significant recognition, including Miles Franklin Award shortlistings for *What A Piece of Work* in 1998 and *Wild Sumrise* in 2003. This article attempts to understand Porter's sudden success.

The first issue considered is whether or not Porter's depictions of Australia have changed throughout her career. Some Australian writers have reduced the Australianness of their work as they move into the global market, arguably to appeal to international readers. David Williamson's writing, a particularly pronounced example, moves away from strongly Australian locations, characters and language, to become increasingly performable for overseas audiences and by non-Australian actors. In 2002, his *Up For Grabs* was performed in London's West End; the lead role was played by Madonna.

Porter, however, in her early and later work, retains the unmistakable imprint of the Australian landscape. *The Night Parrot* refers to many Australian place names, geographical features and birds. The favorable comparison of the princess parrot with the skylark (21) even has nationalistic overtones. Similarly, in *Driving Too Fast*, a majority of the poems are set in Australia, and many refer to Australian brands, place names and wildlife.

In *The Monkey's Mask*, the poem which began Porter's overseas career, the Australian landscape is similarly prominent. Furthermore, familiarity with the politics of Australian geography enriches a reader's understanding of the poems, particularly their exploration of class differences. In "Mr Diana," the reference to "North Shore brats" (33) would have greater significance to a reader aware of the perception of Sydney's North Shore as an upper-middle class enclave. "Dyke Othello" (73-4) is another poem replete with loaded references to Australian places, including a sly poke at the national capital's sex industry, and a contrast between "ex-Mulawa koories" (referring to a correctional center near Sydney, and the high incarceration rates of Aborigines) and the "lipstick dykes" from the privileged Melbourne suburb of Toorak. As Porter herself has argued, *The Monkey's Mask* is "such a Sydney book." *Wild Sumrise*, too, emphasizes its Australian setting, evoking the Australian landscape in detail, though with fewer expectations of reader familiarity than *The Monkey's Mask*.

Porter's characters, furthermore, resist the temptation to shed their Australian aspects in order to appeal more easily to overseas audiences. In fact, the issue of Australianness increases in significance in Porter's later work. In *The Night Parrot*, the nationality of the characters is given very little importance. The narrator of the title sequence lives in modern, suburban Sydney, but the text does not question or problematize her Australianness.

The lack of emphasis on nationality continues in *Driving Too Fast*. In the "In Extremis" sequence, Bizer's characters are transplanted to Australia, and the question of their nationality does not arise. Mrs. Fern-Smith is from Sydney, but her Australianness is less significant than her identity as a woman, an artist and an outcast. The excep-

tion is "December / Hobart," which stresses the characters' identification either as white Australians or as Aborigines, and explores their understandings of each other. It contrasts Trucanini's "flash brown eyes" (35) with the narrator's "blond" partner (36), and describes Robinson's conception of Trucanini as a "dirty, black princess" (36). Yet this concentration on different interpretations of Australianness is an anomaly in *Driving Too Fast*.

The Monkey's Mask, by contrast, explores the characters' different reactions to Australianness. Protagonist Jill Fitzpatrick, a private investigator, is a female incarnation of the battler (32), with her brawn (17), suspicion towards poetry (24), and working-class upbringing (17, 32). Nick compares her to Cliff Hardy, the fictional Sydney detective noted for his tough, down-to-earth attitude (33). Yet Jill also departs from the battler image, as exemplified in "I'm female":

I'm not tough,
droll or stoical.
I droop
after wine, sex
or intense conversation.
The streets coil around me
when they empty
I'm female
I get scared. (4)

Jill attempts to imitate the macho gruffness of the typical battler, but recognizes that "like a boy / trying to hold his own / with a man" (34), she cannot quite perform the stereotype. As a physically small woman taking on a gruesome job, she objects to Nick's questioning of her abilities as a detective:

Us real ones
come in all
shapes and sizes. (33)

Jill is not a simple reincarnation of the battler, but rather a feminist rewriting of the stereotype and a questioning of its limitations. Such an examination is likely to appeal to those already familiar with Australian gender politics and would probably do little to increase the book's overseas appeal.

Mrs. Norris, unlike Jill, is upper class and associated with England. She drinks English tea (10) and wears a "frock" (10, 138), a rather English word for a dress. Her Englishness is a symbol of her sociocultural status, as shown in "Twinings," when she makes tea for Jill:

Twinings
I bet myself
before it arrives
set out on a tray
a plump silver pot
my mother
would be proud of me. (10)

For upwardly mobile Aussie battlers, such as Jill's mother, Mrs. Norris, Anglo ways are a symbol of upper-class refinement to aspire to.

Jill's lover, the academic Diana Maitland, is neither a battler nor an aristocrat; she is part of what Charles Jencks would call the cognitariat: "the information elite in the contemporary Western world, where "knowledge, not ownership, is power." A denizen of the era of globalization, she drinks French champagne (66) and reads French and Latin American novels (70). As the running Diana / Dracula metaphor suggests, she is so intimate with overseas culture that she can be represented by a non-Australian cultural icon. Samantha Lang's film reads her as such a global citizen that it casts in her role an American actor, Kelly McGillis. Yet paradoxically, the book's Diana interacts with other countries as an Australian, as illustrated when she is too excited at receiving a research grant from an American university to express concern at Mickey's death (51). To this Australian academic, success is recognition by the United States. Porter's detective novel, then, uses a range of characters to investigate notions of Australianness. Jill's sense of powerlessness faced with Anglicized aristocracy and flashy globalized savoir-faire, as well as Mrs. Norris and Diana's imitations of the foreign, may have broader implications for the position of Australians in today's world. These implications are more part of a local debate about Australian identity than any international discussion.

In *Wild Surmise* the nationality of the characters is again important. The protagonist, Alex, is "a Sydney girl" (20). Caught between her lover, Phoebe, and her husband, Daniel, she faces a choice not only of partners but also of cultures. Phoebe is emphatically rendered as an American. The bitter poem "America—The Adjective" is illustrative, listing all the "American" characteristics that Phoebe, as Alex sees her, embodies. She is articulate, territorial, vulgar, Puritanical, narcissistic and insular. The poem concludes:

Everywhere, everyone
is just waiting
to become America.
Even your mighty quasars
on the fiery edge of time
will learn to wear
their galaxy-gorging jets
base-bloody-ball
backwards. (58)

To the Australian Alex, Phoebe, like America, symbolizes dominance and the destruction of local cultures. Yet Alex cannot resist this "brilliant foreign lesbian" (48), and

lets the rapture
in Phoebe's softly American
spider voice
hold her in its spinning silk. (73)

Phoebe, and America, are seen in this passage as predatory but irresistible. Like Diana in *The Monkey's Mask*, Phoebe is also likened to the foreign cultural symbol of the vampire (139). Daniel, by contrast, is described as an Australian, albeit one who favors European poetry. He enjoys Melbourne coffee shops (20) and finds solace in his garden rich with Australian wildlife (275, 279). "Married" explicitly contrasts "Phoebe's / good-natured Yankee / self-content" with "the salty savagery / of his jokes" (47). The choice Alex faces between an American lover and her Australian husband is a metaphor for the dilemma of many contemporary Australians caught between the global and the local.

The emphasis on Australian locations throughout Porter's work and the oblique references to their socio-economic implications, as well as the increased concentration on Australian national identity, show that Porter did not reduce her work's local content in order to achieve international success.

Nor does she appear to have "toned down" her use of Australian English. Unlike the globalized characters in David Williamson's later plays, which barely emit even a single Australianism, Porter's characters and narrators retain a language strongly inflected with Australian words. In *The Night Parrot* these include colloquial expressions, such as "spunky" (13), "quick quid" (21), "bucks party" (40) and "bush-bash" (53). Some, such as "sacred dreaming sites" (52), or the book's first word, "Myrrlumbing" (9), derive from Aboriginal cultures or languages. Other expressions refer to elements of nature, such as "white pointer" (31), "bombora" (32), "gum" (54) and "bush gully" (56). The collection also employs the Australianism "poker machine" (40).

Driving Too Fast similarly uses a moderate number of Australian expressions. Many of these are colloquial: "rat-bag" (19), "roos" (37), "hosties" (57), "kero" (59) and "chookhouse" (61). Others include "gum" (3, 50), "dreaming" (50), "home unit" (62), "[I]ollies" (68) and a reference (in inverted commas) to the Australian brand "Fantaes" (72).

The language in *The Monkey's Mask* contains a large number of Australianisms. The narrative, from Jill's perspective, includes some formal Australian expressions, such as "laminex" (19), "gum" (25, 206), "brumbies" (90) and "bush" (175). It also employs many "relatively" formal Australian expressions including "uni" (17, 24), "daggy" (21, 182), "pollie" (22), "Cracker Night" (30), "grog" (31, 88, 145), "perve" (68, 77), "rollies" (76), "mate" (employed ironically, 88, 159), "middies" (160), "barbie" (174), "Buckley's" (175), "poofy" (182), "lairy" (195), "chook" (236) and, with great regularity, "bloody" (84, 88, 145, 172, 189, 247). Jill's speech is similarly colored with Australian colloquialisms, and appears not to change in register for different audiences. Jill attempts to establish rapport with Bill McDonald as part of her investigation, yet slips up when, "without thinking", she employs the biting Australianism "mate" (91). Colloquial

Australian expressions also appear in her conversation with Lou ("bloody", 124), Nick ("mate", 71) and Diana ("jack of", 61, "bludging", 72 and "perve", 76). Many of the other characters employ colloquial Australian English—at least when addressing Jill. Nick is one such example, conversing with Jill in a street café:

"G'day" he says
"you're not too busy
dobbing in migrant Workers' Comp. cheats
to join two lefties for lunch?" (71)

Lou, in her conversations with Jill, uses "bloody" (142), "good-on-ya" (150) and "deadshits" (151). Jill's male colleagues refer to "Mediterranean back" (57). Detective Sergeant Wesley tells Jill, "Let ya lezzo mates shout you a demo" (50). Even the upper-class Mr. Norris employs the omnipresent Australian colloquialism "bloody" (11), a word Tony uses after downing a six-pack, "his working-class origins / raring to go" (195). The class aspect of Australian colloquial language receives another mention when Jill interviews Mickey's friend who

pauses
to let in the Western Suburbs
with the tidbit
"he's married but." (20)

This casual use of "but" is associated with the Western Suburbs—a working-class area of Sydney. Significantly, Australianisms—colloquial or formal—do not occur in the speech of the privileged characters, Mrs. Norris and Diana. Australian English is mostly associated with blokes and battlers. This linguistic choice enables the text to comment subtly on class and gender roles in Australian society, a topic with more local than international relevance.

Wild Surmise employs quite a large number of Australianisms. Alex mentions a "gum" (189) and "gum trees" (287), but the Australianisms she employs are generally more informal, such as "spruiking" (57), "bloody" (58, 262, 268), "two-pot screamer" (62), "uni" (69), "pash" (97) and "ratbags" (277). A man who identifies deeply with Australia, Daniel employs numerous Australian terms. The relatively non-colloquial among these include "bush" (92), "schooner" (126), "lollies" (194), "musk stick" (194) and "gum tree" (256). Daniel's vocabulary also takes in the informal "blokey" (131), "cactus" (131), "grog" (141), "poof" (148), "bloody" (152, 188, 204, 251), "root" (168, 172), "mate" (employed ironically, 170), "stubbie" (176), "dunny" (177), "deadshit" (205) and "daggy" (212).

Remembering that the latter two books are longer than the former, it can be concluded that all four employ at least a moderate frequency of Australianisms, with Australian expressions particularly prevalent in *The Monkey's Mask*. That Porter's most financially and internationally successful work is also the most mired in Australian language and its politics demonstrates that,

unlike David Williamson, Porter has not broadened her appeal by adopting a more global English. Another explanation must be found for her suddenly skyrocketing sales.

A common theory of Porter's success is that her ability for self-promotion has helped increase her book sales. As Leigh Dale argues: "Porter's superb live performances are consistently used to sell her work, and relatively few reviews or stories about her aren't accompanied by photographs."

Lyn McCredden suggests that Dorothy Porter's career exemplifies how literary reputations are formed in turn-of-the-millennium Australia. She claims that "[T]he small but well-oiled publicity machine of Hyland House has met and coupled with a highly receptive and, one might argue, highly suggestible literary media."

Dale and McCredden write as part of a broader trend in Australian literary scholarship, which argues that the rise of mass media reviewers has favored writers comfortable in front of the camera. Many newspaper articles do tend to dwell on Porter's personality, rather than her books. Georgina Safe, in *The Weekend Australian*, likens her to a pop star. Jane Freeman, in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, describes her celebrity status: "What she's got is book sales beyond the usual poetry audience, media attention and her face on T-shirts at the Adelaide Arts Festival." A much-quoted article by Jane Wheatley in *Good Weekend* perhaps sums up this trend:

[T]he truth is, if any Australian poet were to make the cover of a glossy magazine it would be 44-year-old Porter. She is a kind of literary Madonna, the sexy, daring mistress of erotic verse, a virtuoso performer of her own work with a following of enslaved fans, half of them girl groupies who fancy themselves in love with her.

Porter has undeniably benefited from her abilities as a performer. Yet as she points out in "the Sounds of Obscurity", she was actively promoting her work well before her sudden rise from obscure bard to "literary Madonna." It is highly unlikely that, with *The Monkey's Mask*, Porter suddenly developed into a skilled performer and shot to fame as a result.

Unlike Porter's publicity skills, her books underwent a dramatic shift midway through her career. Her early publications consisted exclusively of collections of poetry, such as *The Night Parrot* and *Driving Too Fast*. These volumes often included narrative poetic sequences, but they were interspersed between individual poems. The early 1990s, however, marked a shift in genre. Porter published her first prose book in 1991, a work of young adult fiction entitled *Rookwood* (to be followed in 1993 by *The Witch Number*). She published her first verse novel, *Akhenaten*, in 1992. *Akhenaten* heralded the arrival of three more verse novels—*What a Piece of Work* (1998), *The Monkey's Mask*, and *Wild Surmise*.

The genre shift of the early '90s coincided with Porter's increased book sales. In 1993, she described *Akhenaten* as,

"the most popular and most successful book of poetry I've ever written." She went on to add: "And I think the fact that it is perhaps loosely a verse novel, in that it tells a story and a very compelling one, has made it popular, and the fact that it's clear and exotic and sexy."

This indicates an awareness of the relative popularity of fiction compared to poetry, and a realization that "telling a story" in verse might attract a greater numbers of readers. Porter candidly admits that the sales potential of fiction was what lured her to write *Rookwood* and *The Witch Number*:

I'd sold out. I was writing for money.

I was sick and tired of being a broke and overlooked and unread poet. I wanted an audience. I wanted some money in the bank.

With *The Monkey's Mask*, Porter produced a book that was packaged and sold as an attractive novel. *What A Piece of Work* and *Wild Surmise* were both shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Award. The resultant publicity increased their visibility and acceptance as works of fiction rather than poetry. Thus, the success of Porter's verse novels appear to be intimately related to their being marketed as fiction.

Another shift in Porter's work coinciding with its increased popularity is its growing emphasis on lesbian characters and concerns. The early 1990s saw the publication of perhaps the first overtly lesbian scene in Porter's work. Occurring in *Akhenaten*, amidst descriptions of varied and often transgressive sexual activity is the poem "sauce" (62-3), in which the "sauce-for-the-geese / Nefertiti" visits a female prostitute. While hardly a major exploration of lesbian concerns, *Akhenaten* marks a step away from Porter's earlier work with this frank description of a lesbian encounter.

In Porter's earlier writing, references to lesbian themes are rare and understated. *The Night Parrot* does not contain any readily detectable lesbian poems, although the "Auroral Corona" sequence explores love between male explorers, with sequences as frank as:

until you wake up
and love me with your shivering
hands
and tell me
how free we are. (73)

In *Driving Too Fast*, most of the poems are directly and unambiguously heterosexual. Porter has argued that the avoidance of gender references in "The Amulet" sequence of love poems suggests a homosexual relationship. Yet coming as it does after a series of heterosexual poems, "The Amulet" is not immediately visible as a lesbian sequence. The narrator can be read as female, identifying as she does with the "bare-breasted goddess [. . .] with feminine hands" (73). But the lover is almost totally ungendered, referred to as "you." The only unarguable indicator

of femaleness occurs in "Lollies Noir", in French, "ma chérie" (69) rather than "mon chéri." This is a subtle distinction, easily missed by a reader unfamiliar with French.

The Monkey's Mask, however, presents a lesbian main character and explores several topics of specific relevance to lesbians. It highlights the prevalence of stereotypes, as illustrated by Diana's inability to forget that Jill is gay (29, 68, 72, 119), as well as her narrow notion of what constitutes a lesbian. When Jill tells Diana that a former employer is a "dyke," Diana replies:

"Christ, is she?
Doesn't look like onc." (72)

Another of the text's concerns is the taut relationship of some gay people with their family. Jill dreads family barbecues under her mother's "tolerant, anxious eye", and asks herself, "why didn't they reject me / when I came out?" (59) Her mother expresses concern at her daughter's butch appearance, and says:

You don't have to be
so conspicuous
we all know what you are. (60)

The text also depicts violence against lesbians. Detective Sergeant Wesley attacks Jill in a police cell, and tells her:

Whaddya call it, love?
Stop police attacks on women,
gays and blacks!
Let ya lezzo mates shout you a demo
for Christmas. (50)

When Bill McDonald pulls a knife on Jill, he refers to Jill as "lesbian filth," telling her that Jesus "came with a sword [. . .] to cut up vermin like you" (165).

This verse novel's detailed exploration of lesbian concerns, combined with the publicity it received through Samantha Lang's film, has made *The Monkey's Mask* a familiar text and Dorothy Porter a familiar name to many Australian lesbians. *Lesbians On The Loose*, a magazine aimed at a general Australian lesbian readership, described *The Monkey's Mask* as an uncharacteristically accessible book of poetry:

For all those dykes who have ever said "I don't like poetry, it's too hard," this is the book for you. Dorothy Porter has turned the genre on its head and produced a snappy, engrossing, exciting crime thriller in an entirely readable format. The narrative is seductively compelling enough to captivate the most reluctant poetry reader.

The Monkey's Mask was the best-selling work of fiction at The Feminist Bookshop in Sydney in October 1994, and the second best seller in November. Furthermore, *Lesbians on the Loose* highlighted Porter's star status, ranking her as the only writer among "Australia's favorite dykons," detailing her relationship with writer Andrea

Goldsmith and describing her as "the pin-up girl of the lesbian literati." The film, while it attracted less favorable reviews (*Lesbians on the Loose* criticized it for poor acting and editing) probably further raised the profile of Porter's verse novel among Australian lesbians.

Wild Surmise also examines lesbian concerns, though less exclusively than *The Monkey's Mask*. The main character, Alex, has loved both her husband, Daniel, and her lover, Phoebe, but her relationship with Daniel is ultimately given more value than her affair with Phoebe ("I never loved Phoebe / as I loved you," 282). Phoebe refuses to categorize Alex as a "dyke," instead calling her a "shit-awful lesbian" (102). If Alex's actions fall short of those required of the heroine of a typical lesbian novel, lesbian ideas are nevertheless prominent. One example is the high value placed on things butch—Phoebe's "shorn pretty head / like an Emperor's clever / bemused catamite" (38) and her "ultra-butche" scientific project (45). The text also explores the question of lesbian credentials, when Phoebe dismisses Alex as "a very nice man's philandering wife" (102). Through Alex's uncertain identity, the text challenges fixed notions of sexuality, exploring as it does so a prominent, if awkward, topic for many lesbian readers.

This exploration of lesbian themes, and Porter's relationship with writer Andrea Goldsmith, have been enough to make *Wild Surmise* a marketable lesbian commodity. *Lesbians on the Loose* published side-by-side, page-long reviews of *Wild Surmise* and Andrea Goldsmith's novel *The Prosperous Thief*. The Feminist Bookshop in Sydney ranked Porter's text third on its "Lesbian Best Seller" list in February and March, 2003. At Canberra's 2003 SpringLit event, a "celebration of gay and lesbian writing," Porter read from *Wild Surmise*. She also mentioned that it was enjoyable to relish the lesbian aspects of the novel with a gay audience, instead of emphasizing the more "straight" aspects for a predominantly heterosexual public. This is perhaps a clue to the best way of understanding the reception of *Wild Surmise*: although its portrayal of sexuality is ambivalent, it contains enough lesbian content to attract gay readers given the limited representation of lesbians in Western literature.

One reason people read is to understand their own lives. They often seek out literary representations of people like themselves, particularly, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues, if they feel themselves at odds with the dominant culture. Mainstream cultural products rarely give prominence to lesbian concerns. When they do, they often attract a niche following. Globalization has expanded the market for niche cultural products, including those from smaller countries. Elizabeth Guzik looks at the case of *Heavenly Creatures*, a New Zealand film portraying a lesbian relationship between two schoolgirls. Released the same year as the book of *The Monkey's Mask*, the film achieved similar success locally and internationally. It found great popularity among United States lesbians, many of whom discussed it on the Internet. Guzik shows that global communications and

overseas markets have increased the film's profitability. She also cautions that these forces of globalization can lead to the reduction of local content in niche-market films, encouraging the production of texts that "can cross over and reach a broader audience internationally and, thus, bring home more profits."

Porter's work has avoided this trend towards decontextualization. It has benefited, however, from the niche market of the global lesbian community, achieving popularity among lesbians in Australia and making the front windows of bookshops in New York's queer enclave, Greenwich Village. The film version of *The Monkey's Mask* followed a similar path. As predicted by American entertainment industry magazine *Variety.com*, it did not attract huge crowds outside Australia, but found audiences though "[f]ests of all kinds, notably gay and women-oriented events" and "enterprising small distributors in sophisticated international markets." *The Monkey's Mask* (book and film) is discussed and advertised on a number of overseas queer websites. This demonstrates that writing for niche audiences within a global market can be profitable, and that local content need not be sacrificed for financial success.

Dorothy Porter's work represents a successful mode of adaptation to a globalized cultural marketplace. It has achieved popular acclaim both in Australia and overseas while emphasizing Australian locations, characters and language. Porter's increased sales are not the result of her self-promotion as a literary star. Rather, they appear to derive from her move to the more saleable genre of the verse novel and her appeal to lesbian markets in Australia and around the world. This shows that, with the expansion of niche markets brought about by globalization, writers can successfully attract readers worldwide while producing work with a distinct, local identity. □

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PENNY JONES received an honors degree in English from the Australian National University. Her thesis studied the ways Australian writers have adapted their work and their language for the global marketplace. As a researcher at the Australian National Dictionary Center, she edited the pronunciations in a new edition of the Australian Oxford Dictionary. She currently works at Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.