

***‘A Spirit of Eclecticism’:
Critical Engagements with Australia’s
Innovative New Nineties Poetries***

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ABSTRACT

In the 1990s Australia's poetry milieu was enlivened by the emergence of a number of new poets and their poetry. This study groups these poets together under the title of 'new nineties poets and poetries'. For the purposes of this study 'new nineties poets and poetries' refers to poetry written for the page by poets who published their first collection between 1990 and 2000 and who continue to write into the twenty-first century. New nineties poets and their poetry are not a new 'movement' or 'school' of poets; the poetry is characterised by diverse forms, styles, approaches and practices. Within these eclectic poetic practices emerge shared concerns with the issues of embodiment, language, cultural difference and violence.

As John Leonard discusses, the "new poets evade categorization" (*New Music* xv) and it is the premise of this study that appropriate poetry criticism needs to respect and celebrate the eclecticism of new nineties poetries by resisting the convenient application of categories and divisive labels. This study attends to the critical question of what type of poetry criticism is appropriate for new nineties poetries. One answer to this question emanates from what Leonard describes as the "spirit of eclecticism" that characterises this new poetry (*New Music* xv). Criticism that works *with* this "spirit of eclecticism" will be as eclectic as the poetry itself. Antithetical to critical approaches that homogenise poetry with unifying frameworks, this study advocates multiple critical approaches. Working respectfully in relation and in conversation with new nineties poets, the eclectic critical engagements of this thesis are connected by the equally eclectic theories of postmodernism.

CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

Signature of Candidate

Date

ENDORSEMENT

Signature of Supervisor/s

Date

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