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***Examining the Transformation of
Australian Folk Poetry into Song:***

A Case Study into the Poems of *Banjo Paterson* and their
Transformation into Songs by Australian band, *Wallis and Matilda*
within the context of Australian National Identity

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Examining the transformation of Australian folk poetry into Song:

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“...and he sees the vision splendid...”

As a music student of the University of New England with a great appreciation for Australian history, I have taken the opportunity to utilise the final unit of my music degree, *ARTS301 Research and Professional Practice Project*, as a way and means to conduct personal research into a topic that combines both my passions and enthusiasms for music and the cultural heritage of my country. The examination of Australian folk poetry into song has led my research into the heart of ideals about the development of Australia's national identity as the commercialisation of both art forms has played a significant role in communicating stereotypes that are uniquely Australian. As this has proven to be a rather large area of research, I have chosen a specified case study to investigate not only the transformation itself but the relevance of the actual process of the transformation within the context of national Australian identities. The case study I have chosen involves the transformation of a poem, published in 1889 by one of Australia's most noteworthy literary figures, Banjo Paterson, into a song released in 1980 by iconic Australian country music band, *Wallis and Matilda*. The poem at the core of this investigation is none other than the nationally popularised, *Clancy of the Overflow*. The goal will be to uncover the social and cultural context of *Banjo's* poetry

and *Wallis and Matilda's* songs as commercialised, tangible art forms. A musical analysis of the compositional devices used to transform *Clancy of the Overflow* into its song setting is also instrumental to this investigation as it will outline certain qualities that make both art forms worthy of commercialisation.

Wallis and Matilda is a Banjo Paterson Tribute band that began their success in the 80's. What started out as a project of personal interest by founding member John Wallis, became a successful enterprise within the Australian Country Music scene as they not only forged a link between two different art forms, poetry and song, but used one to re-instate certain cultural and historical values of the other in regards to Australian national identities. Before the age of music records in Australia, poetry proved to be a popular social medium as it provided a form of entertainment that was accessible and tangible through its distribution in newspapers, magazines and books. Due to its popularity, poets had just as much chance in assuming a celebrity status as other authors and various calibres of performers. The success of *Wallis and Matilda* can largely be attributed to the fact they transformed the works of one of Australia's most noteworthy poets, *Banjo Paterson*, into songs. As songs are an art form that better resonates with modern day audiences, *Wallis and Matilda's* musical re-interpretations of his poetry resultably facilitated a way for the modern Australian to re-connect with a piece of their cultural heritage that lies within Paterson's verse and legacy.

Andrew Barton Paterson (1864-1941) has gone down in Australian history as one of Australia's finest literary figures; most commonly known for his poetry that inspired romantic and patriotic ideals about the Australian 'bush' and Australian ways of life. Growing up in a family of *squatters*, a rural class said to be the 'pioneers of the rural Australia', in outback NSW, Paterson witnessed life first hand in such remote conditions and was subject to many different

characters who worked hard on the land.¹ The property his parents owned out near Yas, *Illalong*, was situated along the main road to Melbourne from Sydney which opened his eyes to a world of bush traffic; Cob & Co coaches, stockmen droving cattle, gold escorts and other parties travelling for numerous reasons. From the age of ten Paterson travelled to his Grandmother's home in Sydney to attend Sydney Grammar School from which he graduated at the age of sixteen; all the while returning back to the station during holiday periods. It was through such times that his Grandmother, being a well-read woman, nurtured his poetic talents.² At the same time, his visits back home to the station contributed to his enthusiasm for outback horsemen as he witnessed their talents and competencies during Polo competitions and Picnic Race meets or simply working the stock.³

While Paterson was a man with many talents and honourable occupations, it was his published poetry that solidified his status as a national celebrity and even more importantly, an iconic contributor to the development of Australian Literary Nationalism due to his poetic contributions to the *Sydney Bulletin* during the 1890's. The 1890's was distinctly a transitional period during Australia's timeline where the nation was searching for ways and means to establish and develop their own identity; severing their ties from British colonial rule.⁴ An important medium for the transition was literature as it was believed that Australia had none of its own national heroes and other identities worthy of basing an Australian folklore on. In 1880, *The Bulletin*, a weekly news magazine dedicated to generating prose by

¹ Clement Semmier, "Paterson, Andrew Barton (Banjo) (1864-1941)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 11, 1988

<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/paterson-andrew-barton-banjo-7972>

Accessed: 15/04/13

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ "The Bulletin and the Rise of Australian Literary Nationalism- Introduction", *Nineteenth-Century Literary Criticism*, Ed. Lynn M. Zott, Volume 116, Gale Cengage, 2003

<http://www.enotes.com/bulletin-and-rise-australian-literary-nationalism-essays/bulletin-and-rise-australian-literary-nationalism>

Accessed: 15/04/13

Australian writers, began publication and proved to be a key driving force behind this transition. Any noteworthy writer who had something to say about either the land or the future of Australia was able to be voiced through the magazine's publications.⁵ While the content of the *Bulletin* was informative of issues and events regarding national development, it also contained sections of creative writing which proved of equal importance in contributing to the new literary style. Poems, stories and ballads about the Australian 'bush' became popular 'cultural artefacts' as their wide spread commercialisation drew attention from audiences nation wide; proving to be a vital link between the cities and rural communities.⁶

Ideals about the Australian Bush played a large role in identifying a new sense of nationalism as it was a completely unique landscape with raw beauty and harsh conditions; in turn generating equally unique characters that could only be identified as *Australians* as a result of their exposure to it. Paterson was a key contributor to this creative section of the *Bulletin* as it often featured his poems about the 'bush' and character's who worked in these rural and remote settings. His sentimentality for this way of life; a life he was a part of as a child, was reflected through his poetic prose containing vivid imagery about the landscapes and unique qualities of the lives who endured it. His pen-name, *Banjo*, became a popular identity through the commercialisation of the *Bulletin's* publications as his poetry generated iconic 'bush' hero's such as *Clancy of the Overflow* and *The Man from Snowy River* who served as identities that helped to define Australian traits. As his popularity continued to grow, publishing company Angus and Robertson decided to publish a selection of his works in a

⁵ "The Bulletin and the Rise of Australian Literary Nationalism- Introduction", *Nineteenth-Century Literary Criticism*, Ed. Lynn M. Zott, Volume 116, Gale Cengage, 2003

<http://www.enotes.com/bulletin-and-rise-australian-literary-nationalism-essays/bulletin-and-rise-australian-literary-nationalism>

Accessed: 15/04/13

⁶ Garry Wotherspoon, "The Bulletin", *Dictionary of Sydney*, 2010

http://www.dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/entry/the_bulletin

Accessed: 15/04/13

book called *The Man from Snowy River and Other Verses* in 1895 which served as a means to “establish the bushman in the national consciousness as a romantic and archetypal figure”.⁷ The commercialisation of this book brought major success; the first edition selling out within weeks of its release and was even well received by audiences back in England. As it also unveiled who the *Banjo* really was, Andrew Paterson became the national celebrity author and poet, still recognised and praised today as *Banjo Paterson*.

Although *Wallis and Matilda* did not deliberately set out to be commercialised as an Australian Country Music band, the industry was quick to claim them because of the cultural significance of what they were achieving in transforming *Banjo Paterson's* poetry into songs.⁸ Australian country music is a more relevant art form in modern Australian culture which has proved to continue the tradition of communicating Australian identities by popularising ideals about the ‘bush’ and country folk through a more expressive, tangible medium; music. The historic significance of *Wallis and Matilda's* re-creations of Paterson's poetry into songs created a niche within the industry that had some cultural substance to it; their songs engaging modern attention towards Paterson as a national icon giving new life to his legacy.

It was founding member of the band, John Wallis who had an interest in Paterson's poems and despite not being aware that other country music artists had similar ideas of what he was doing, his compositional style is what set *Walls and Matilda* apart; making his transformation a more marketable product for that niche. As Wallis is a drummer with experience playing in a variety of genres from orchestras to rock covers bands, his compositional style not only

⁷ Clement Semmier, “Paterson, Andrew Barton (Banjo) (1864-1941)”, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 11, 1988

<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/paterson-andrew-barton-banjo-7972>

Accessed: 15/04/13

⁸ John Wallis, Personal Interview (11 June, 2013)

exudes a good sense of rhythm but also incorporates classical text setting devices.⁹ Paterson was infamous for the way he could paint a picture, have a ‘yarn’, or tell a story through the vivid imagery generated by his creative writing and so Wallis felt it important to reflect these traits through the use of text setting devices as they enabled a more engaging reception. A better understanding of these devices and the important role they play in the transformation of the poetic art form into a song can be obtained through an investigation and analysis of one of the key, iconic poems written by *Banjo Paterson* that John Wallis chose to re-interpret. This poem is none other than the infamous *Clancy of the Overflow*.

Paterson first published *Clancy of the Overflow*, in the *Bulletin* in 1889. It is a poem set in Australia during the 1800’s about a shearer/drover by the name of *Clancy*. The narrator (Paterson) in the poem celebrates *Clancy’s* ‘splendid’, ‘wondrous’ lifestyle in the outback in comparison to his own life in the ‘dingy’, ‘uninviting’ city (See Appendix 1.); a place where Paterson found himself confined to as a solicitor & journalist. His aim as such was to provoke a sense of patriotism towards the beauty of the bush and encourage the ‘townsfolk’ of his era to become aware of the uniqueness of the land by heralding the life of a character working in such settings. The poem became a popular piece of literature as it resonated with a vast range of audiences; those who were living the life of a drover and/or working on the land, and those searching for Australian literary identities; heroic figures on which an Australian folklore could be built on.

It has been said that *Clancy of the Overflow* was written about a specific drover by the name of Thomas Gerald Clancy; a man who Paterson had come across in his life and travels growing up in outback NSW. While there is some truth to these assumptions, a descendant of

⁹ John Wallis, Personal Interview (11 June, 2013)

Thomas Gerald Clancy, Eric Gerald Clancy, mentions in his own writings that because there were several drovers in their family it is likely that Paterson could have met, and wrote about any one of them.¹⁰ He also points out that because his family name was relatively renowned among the droving class, “Clancy” became a household name in regards to workmen of that region and calibre and this identity was further established and popularised through the commercialisation of poems and writings by Paterson and other iconic Australian writers; directly and/or indirectly contributing to the development of Australian literature.¹¹

Clancy of the Overflow was one of the first of Paterson’s poems John Wallis put music to.¹² As he had an understanding about the statement Paterson was trying to make he felt it important to develop a melody that could be widely received and engaged with by the vast majority of Australians. Having a good sense of rhythm enabled him to develop a melody that not only fit within the parameters of the poem’s punctuation and syllabic pulse but could also be applied to every verse.¹³ This repetition resultably ensures the melody can be easily sung along to as the audience can absorb and memorise the tune; encouraging their engagement and participation. In the same way Paterson wanted to share his poetry, Wallis also wanted to share his songs as he recognised the importance of spreading Paterson’s legacy. He achieved this by providing the song with a steady, moderate tempo set to a simple 4/4 time signature and applied basic chords to support the melody; allowing musicians and singers of all levels to be able to learn the song for themselves. The melody and chords for each line of text within the first verse, makes up the musical structures that define the internal form of the verses

¹⁰ Eric Gerald Clancy, “Chapter 8: The Clancy Drovers”, *The Story of Thomas and Anne Clancy and their Descendants*, Brian Powell, 2002-5

http://www.webcore.com.au/clancy/08_ch8.html

Accessed: 2/05/13

¹¹ Ibid

¹² John Wallis, Personal Interview (11 June, 2013)

¹³ Ibid

throughout the entire piece. These musical structures within the first verse have been identified and transcribed in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Identification of Musical Structures (Labelled ‘A’-‘D’) within Verse 1 that Define the Micro-Form within the Rest of the Verses. Displays a Transcription of the Chord (Harmonic) Progression and Melody that Generates the Tune Repeated in Each Verse.

A
 Harmonic Progression: I - IV - I
 I HAD WRIT-TEN HIM A LET - TER WHICH I HA - D FOR WANT OF BET - TER KNOW-LEDGE

B
 Harmonic Progression: IV - I - V
 SENT TO WHERE I ME - T HIM DOWN THE LACH - LAN YEARS A-GO—

C
 Harmonic Progression: IV - I
 HE WAS SHEAR - ING WHEN I (ME - T HIM) SO I SE - NT - A LET-TER TO - HIM

D
 Harmonic Progression: V - IV - I
 JUST ON SPE - C AD-DRESSED AS FOL-OWS CLA-N-CY OF - THE O - VER FLOW

Detailed description of Figure 1: The figure displays four musical structures labeled A, B, C, and D. Each structure consists of a short melodic phrase on a five-line staff with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. Chord symbols are written above the staff, and lyrics are written below. Section A: Melody starts on a quarter note, followed by an eighth note, a quarter note, and a half note. Chords: Ab (measure 2), Db (measure 4), Ab (measure 5). Section B: Melody starts on a quarter note, followed by an eighth note, a quarter note, and a half note. Chords: Db (measure 6), Ab (measure 7), Eb (measure 9). Section C: Melody starts on a quarter note, followed by an eighth note, a quarter note, and a half note. Chords: Db (measure 10), Ab (measure 12), Ab (measure 13). Section D: Melody starts on a quarter note, followed by an eighth note, a quarter note, and a half note. Chords: Eb (measure 14), Db (measure 16), Ab (measure 17).

The letters ‘A’ through to ‘D’ that label the musical structures in Figure 1, correspond to the table in Figure 2 which presents a more in depth analysis of the over-all piece.

Figure 2. Table of Analysis: Text Setting Devices used by John Wallis to transfer Banjo Paterson's Poem, *Clancy of the Overflow*, into a Song.
The Analysis has been conducted on a recording of the song that was uploaded to you-tube on November 27, 2009.

Source: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZB6K85PuQ_M

Song Form	Verse No.	Lyrics/Text	Internal Verse Form	Characteristics & Observations	Instrumentation	Vocal Textures
A	1	I had written him a letter which I had, for want of better	A	Sets the pace and rhythmic structures of music and lyrics. Compositional phrasing outlines appropriate pauses within the poem's punctuation. (Rests. Pauses where commas or and full stops lie)	Rhythm Guitar strumming simple 4/4 rhythm. Bass guitar develops slowly- playing one note per bar in first 2 lines and then moving on to 2 per bar in last 2 lines.	Single male vocal until very last phrase "Clancy of the Overflow" where male backing vocals highlight the first statement of the main character's name.
		Knowledge, sent to where I met him down the Lachlan, years ago,	B			
		He was shearing when I knew him, so I sent the letter to him,	C			
		Just 'on spec', addressed as follows, 'Clancy, of The Overflow'.	D			
A	2	And an answer came directed in a writing unexpected,	A	Same material repeated music wise- chord progressions and melody relatively the same which is suggestive of a strophic form.	Less focus on the bass as Recorder enters. Recorder part lies at forefront of music as it plays a melody counteracting the vocal melody.	Single male vocal until last line where male backing vocals come in to highlight the doubling of voices in the content: 1st voice represents narrator reading the letter out loud, second voice is of whoever wrote the letter and
		(And I think the same was written with a thumb-nail dipped in tar)	B			
		'Twas his shearing mate who wrote it, and verbatim I will quote it:	C			
		'Clancy's gone to Queensland droving, and we don't know where he are.'	D			
A	3	In my wild erratic fancy visions come to me of Clancy	A	No Major changes at this point so as to allow the variations of recorder and vocals drive the musical narrative.	Recorder continues on with counter melody however it is not identical to verse 2 which may mean it is improvised	First 2 lines have only single male voice, last 2 lines have male backing vocals either to provide aesthetic variation or to enhance the narrator's imaginings within the narrative of the text.
		Gone a-droving 'down the Cooper' where the Western drovers go;	B			
		As the stock are slowly stringing, Clancy rides behind them singing,	C			
		For the drover's life has pleasures that the townsfolk never know.	D			
A	4	And the bush hath friends to meet him, and their kindly voices greet him	A	Main difference is the addition of the banjo and the continuity of the vocal harmonies- possibly creating a musical setting for the beauty of the bush begin depicted in the text	Banjo is introduced and remains in foreground. Recorder continues to play but exposes the melody in a lower register. Bass guitar still not prominent. Guitar still providing musical backbone.	Every line is harmonised by backing vocals might be a way of depicting the texts within the narrative "and the bush has friends to meet him"
		In the murmur of the breezes and the river on its bars,	B			
		And he sees the vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended,	C			
		And at night the wond'rous glory of the everlasting stars.	D			
A	5	I am sitting in my dingy little office, where a stingy	A	Change in instrumentation assists change in narrative's setting- the laid back atmosphere of the bush represented by an acoustic ensemble changes to a busy city setting represented by conventional amplified band ensemble.	Recorder drops out. Banjo continues in 'pizz' style to add kitch value in replicating city noise. Drum kit is introduced and plays alongside appropriate ensemble of Bass and Electric guitar- replacing acoustic ensemble.	Vocals begin with 1 male voice to delineate a change in setting and narrative context- reflections of a single narrator "I am sitting in my dingy little office..". A second male voice appears at end of 1st line and continues on to the second line and by the last 2 lines more male backing vocals appear- creating a gradual growth in vocal textures and dynamics.
		Ray of sunlight struggles feebly down between the houses tall,	B			
		And the foetid air and gritty of the dusty, dirty city	C			
		Through the open window floating, spreads its foulness over all.	D			
A	6	And in place of lowing cattle, I can hear the fiendish rattle	A	Verse seems to be broken up into 2 sections. 1).The first 2 lines contain recorder part again in conjunction with only 1 male voice- suggestive of the narrator's comparisons of the bush and the city life. 2).The last two lines do not contain the recorder and vocal harmonies return as a way of depicting an 'uninviting' scene in a city setting	Banjo is prominent in first 2 lines, with picking style reflective of the pace and sounds of traffic (trains/trams in particular). Banjo Dissappears in last 2 lines as electric guitar licks come to the foreground. The recorder is present in first 2 lines where mention of the bush lies however it is non-existent in last 2 lines.	1 male voice present for first 2 lines where the narrator is again isolated in thought. The last 2 lines contain vocal harmonies creating textures to enhance the "language uninviting" and noise of city setting.
		Of the tramways and the 'buses making hurry down the street,	B			
		And the language uninviting of the gutter children fighting,	C			
		Comes fitfully and faintly through the ceaseless tramp of feet.	D			
A	7	And the hurrying people daunt me, and their pallid faces haunt me	A	The use of heavily amplified instrumentation and thick vocal textures in this verse create a climatic point in the overall piece. The dynamics are louder than other verses, the rythm is driven by a drum kit instead of acoustic guitar and thick vocal harmonies are evident on every line- all of these contributing to a sense of 'all in', contributing to the climax and also providing a sense the end is near.	Electric guitar stands out in foreground of amplified band ensemble (drums, rhythm guitar, bass & lead guitar). No Banjo or Recorder.	Every line has rich male harmonies assiting the rise in dynamics. Also helps portray the husite and bustle of the 'hurrying people' being portrayed in the narrative.
		As they shoulder one another in their rush and nervous haste,	B			
		With their eager eyes and greedy, and their stunted forms and weedy,	C			
		For townsfolk have no time to grow, they have no time to waste.	D			
A	8	And I somehow rather fancy that I'd like to change with Clancy,	A	Concluding verse. Strips back to acoustic ensemble for first 2 lines where the Narrator portrays his final thoughts about the character in the text. Last two lines are joined by amplified instruments again as a final statement is made about the character.	Banjo and Recorder feature in the foreground together again in first 2 lines. Amplified instruments dissipate in first 2 lines to allow acoustic ensemble to create imagery. Amplified ensemble rejoins in last two lines.	First 2 lines revert back to only 1 male voice. Backing vocals return for last 2 lines to enhance the final statement of the Narrative.
		Like to take a turn at droving where the seasons come and go,	B			
		While he faced the round eternal of the cash-book and the journal —	C			
		But I doubt he'd suit the office, 'Clancy, of 'The Overflow'.	D			

This table outlines the overall form, the number of verses, the lines of text within each verse and the ‘verse form’. The ‘verse form’ column provides a visual aid as to the order of musical structures, ‘A’ to ‘D’ that define the tune of each verse; providing evidence for the song’s over-all strophic form. The table also helps to identify other more creative elements such as the changes of instrumentation and the placement of different vocal textures. Although the simplistic elements outlined in the table form the backbone of the song and make it easy to be shared, it is these more creative devices that drive the transformation and communication of the imagery and narrative within the poem; something Wallis felt importantly about due to his appreciation and comprehension of Paterson’s poetic style.¹⁴

Wallis achieves this transformation mainly through his clever application of personified instrumentation; informing his band members of the need for their instruments to replicate characters or traits, settings and emotions within the text.¹⁵ While his choice of instrumentation is nothing out of the ordinary for typical country and/or rock bands (acoustic, electric and bass guitars, recorder, banjo, and drums) all the instruments within the ensemble are wielded to create a musical delineation between the contrasting settings of the ‘bush’ and the ‘city’. Using a mix of typically acoustic and amplified instruments, Wallis was able to separate the instrumentation into two different ensembles to create this delineation.

One contrast these two ensembles create is a shift in dynamics. In verses 1-4 of the poem, the ‘bush’ comes across as a harmonious, peaceful environment:

“...And the bush has friends to meet him, and their kindly voices greet him

In the murmur of the breezes and the river on its bars...” -Verse 4, *Clancy of the Overflow*

¹⁴ John Wallis, Personal Interview (11 June, 2013)

¹⁵ Ibid

As a way to replicate this in a song setting, Wallis only chooses the more typically 'quieter' instruments such as acoustic guitar, bass (very minimal), banjo and recorder. In contrast, verses 5-7 identify the 'city' as a noisy, unpleasant environment:

“...And the language uninviting of the gutter children fighting,

Comes fitfully and faintly through the ceaseless tramp of feet...” -Verse 6,

Clancy of the Overflow

To create this imagery within a musical setting, Wallis introduces the drum-kit and electric guitar and increases the volume of the bass. This not only provides a shift in dynamics but also sets a contrasting atmosphere in comparison to the 'bush' ensemble previously identified in verses 1-4.

Assisting these contrasts (as mentioned before) is Wallis instruction for his band members to make their instruments take on personified traits, characteristics, sounds and emotions within the text. This is especially evident within the recorder, banjo and electric guitar parts as they play an important structural role that drives the narrative and further enhances the events that unfold. The recorder and electric guitar are important as they are specifically applied to one of the contrasting settings; the recorder representing the 'bush' and the electric guitar representing the 'city', whereas the banjo is more interrelational as it defines certain characteristics within both settings.

In its representation of the 'bush', the recorder plays a countermelody to the main vocal melody within any lines of text where the imagery of the 'bush' is prominent. While this is mainly throughout verses 1-4, it also makes a quick appearance within the first 2 lines of verse 6 which makes another quick reference back to the ideals about the bush:

“...and in place of lowing cattle I can hear the fiendish rattle...” -Verse 6,
Clancy of the Overflow

A basic transcription of the recorder’s ‘bush’ countermelody can be seen in Figure 3 however it is important to point out that the transcription serves mainly as a representation of its composition as the countermelody is likely to be an improvised tune; given that it varies from verse to verse.

Figure 3. Transcription identifying the relationship and interactions between the Vocal Melody and the Recorder’s Countermelody.

"CLANCY OF THE OVERFLOW"

(TRANSCRIPTION OF RECORDER & VOCAL MELODIES)

BANJO PATTERSON, 1889

WALLIS & MATILDA, 1980

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with two staves: Treble Recorder (top) and Voice (bottom). The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system shows the initial vocal melody and recorder accompaniment. The second system, starting at measure 7, shows the vocal melody continuing with a more active recorder accompaniment. The third system, starting at measure 12, shows the vocal melody concluding with a final recorder accompaniment. The recorder part is written in a style that suggests a specific 'bush' countermelody, with various rhythmic patterns and melodic lines that interact with the vocal melody.

In contrast to the recorder, the electric guitar is played in a way that represents the unpleasantness of the 'city'. Being left slightly out of tune is one way Wallis sought to achieve this as it creates a timbre that listeners can associate the city's 'foulness' with.¹⁶

“...and the foetid air and gritty of the dusty dirty city,

Through the open window floating, spreads its foulness over all...” -Verse 5,
Clancy of the Overflow

Due to its associations with the context of the 'city', the electric guitar doesn't appear in the song until verses 5-7. While its activity is presented in a 'lead guitar' style with licks and melodic ideas, a transcription of this is not necessary or easily achievable as not only is the out-of-tune timbre its most important characteristic but the melodic ideas are not presented as a tune with a definitive composition.

The banjo part is different again as Wallis uses its timbres to depict specific characteristics within both settings. As the banjo is an instrument that is typically used in country music ensembles, its connection with the 'bush' setting is a reasonably obvious one. It does not appear in the song however until verse 4, where Paterson solidifies his final stance on the beauty of the 'bush'; setting up the contrast that occurs with the introduction of the 'city' in verse 5.

“...And he sees the vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended,

And at night the wondrous glory of the everlasting stars.

I am sitting in my dingy little office where a stingy ray of sunlight struggles feebly

down between the houses tall...” -End of Verse 4 leading into start of Verse 5,
Clancy of the Overflow

¹⁶ John Wallis, Personal Interview (11 June, 2013)

The banjo's introduction during this particular verse not only enhances the contrast that occurs within the text but it also assists with the transition in instrumentation as the recorder exists and the electric guitar enters at the start of verse 5 while the banjo continues on into the 'city'. It is at this point that the identification of the banjo's relationship with the recorder and the electric guitar in their representation of the two settings is recognised. When the banjo is played with the recorder, the 'bush' is what is being described, whereas when the banjo plays alongside the electric guitar it enhances the musical setting of the 'city' as the sounds generated from its picking style resembles traffic noise (like the tramways being depicted in verse 6). The table in Figure 2 identifies another instance, in verse 6, where the two settings interchange and overlap through the banjos application. In the first two lines of this verse the recorder re-enters to join the banjo as the text briefly refers back to the bush ("...and in place of lowing cattle..."). During this time the electric guitar falls out of the ensemble but it returns to the foreground for the last two lines; in a way pushing the recorder (the 'bush') out again as the text reverts back to Paterson's criticisms of the 'foul', suffocating 'city'.

As previously mentioned, the table in Figure 2 also helps to identify Wallis' application of vocal textures that acts as another text setting device working in with the instrumentation to drive the narrative. While Wallis himself is the main, lead singer and carries the melody all the way through, he deliberately uses male backing vocals to harmonise various parts of the lyrics; creating a second, homophonic vocal texture. Backing vocals, in the context of most bands, are generally used for aesthetic purposes as harmonies add a bit of 'colour' and variation to the melody; usually within the song's chorus to retain the focus and attention of the listener. However in the context of *Clancy of the Overflow*, there is no verse-chorus structure so Wallis utilises this second, homophonic texture to not only provide the necessary

aesthetic variation to maintain the listeners engagement, but to also act as text setting device by highlighting certain aspects of the narrative.

While the table goes into more detail on the use of vocal textures throughout the piece, one obvious example lies in verse 1 where the homophonic texture is not used until the very last line; purely to highlight the first initial statement of the main character's name and title of the poem- "...*Clancy of the Overflow*..." . Another example of this in a more structural manner is evident in the major transition that occurs within the instrumentation across bars 4-5. Here the homophonic texture helps to exaggerate the sudden change of setting as its presence remains throughout the entirety of verse 4 (like the banjo) and then is suddenly absent for the first line in verse 5 (like the recorder).

While the compositional material within verse 8 (the final verse) has yet to be discussed, it is important to first address the devices used in verse 7 that sets up the final scene that follows. Due to the combined presence of all instruments and voices (except the recorder), verse 7 presents as a climatic point in the song as it is the loudest and richest by way of dynamics and textures. Much the same as verse 4 sets up the final statement about the 'bush' before the change of setting in verse 5, verse 7 is where Paterson makes his final statement about the 'city' which is why all the instruments and voices are present except the recorder as it is solely a 'bush' text setting device. From a more aesthetic point of view, this build in dynamics so late in the song also provides the listener with a sense that the end of the piece is near; setting up the final statements about to occur in verse 8.

Verse 8 can be discussed on its own as it is the final verse where all these text setting devices come together to create one last comparative statement about the 'bush' and the 'city'. In the

first two lines of this verse Paterson basically expresses his ‘fancies’ for trading places with *Clancy* and taking on the life of a drover. As this provides a brief reflection of the sentiments previously expressed within the text of verses 1-4, Wallis emphasises this compositionally as the instrumentation changes back to the ‘bush’ ensemble with recorder and banjo in the foreground and the absence of the drum kit, bass and electric guitar. This supported vocally through the absence of the backing vocals as the monophonic texture reflects the aesthetics of the introductory material within verse 1. The final two lines of verse 8 however create the final shift in setting as Wallis brings in back in all the instruments and backing vocals. This is to highlight Paterson’s final depictions of ‘city’ life and his over-all conclusion that such an unpleasant lifestyle would not ‘suit’ a drover like *Clancy*. Having all the instruments sounding at once is also a typical aesthetic technique for concluding a song, so this served a double purpose in not only creating a final definitive contrast between the ‘bush and the ‘city’ but to also provide the song with a strong, declarative ending.

As can be seen, Wallis went to great lengths to honour Paterson’s style in his transformation of *Clancy of the Overflow*. He manages to bring out the contrasting atmospheres and sentiments within the text’s settings not only through the deliberate placement of the presence or absence of the instruments, but also through specific instructions as to the role each instrument needs to play in representing certain elements and structures within the narrative. As mentioned earlier, there were other artists who had put one or two of Paterson’s poems into a song setting however the versions presented by *Wallis and Matilda* were special in that they engaged their audiences on a more emotive level as they applied specific sound qualities to Paterson’s descriptive language; giving life to the imagery and creative elements.

Resultably Wallis's creative efforts paid off as *Clancy of the Overflow* was a huge hit when they released it as their first single in 1980.¹⁷ It was received with much appreciation from a vast demographic of young and old Australian audiences; from retired drovers and cattlemen to teachers and suburban Australians.¹⁸ In the same year *Wallis and Matilda* also released *Clancy of the Overflow* as a track in their first album, *Pioneers*, which sent them platinum in weeks as it also featured the hit track *The Man from Snowy River*; another infamously iconic poem by *Banjo Paterson*. In the same way that Paterson utilised popular, commercialised mediums to share his poetic art forms and communicate a sense of national pride, Wallis too proved successful in achieving his goal of commercialising Paterson's legacy through his songs. While it then becomes easy to suggest that their national recognition is predominantly a result of the commercialisation of their works through popular, tangible mediums; their works not only fulfilled a cultural need but also proved to be worthy as commercially marketable art forms due to the level of professional quality within their creativity abilities.

My investigation into the case study of Wallis and Matilda's transformation of Banjo Paterson's poem, *Clancy of the Overflow*, into a song setting has successfully addressed my broader research topic: *Examining the transformation of Australian folk poetry into Song*. The purpose of this research topic was to investigate the transformation of one socially popular art form to another within the context of Australian National Identity. By refining my area of research to this specific case study I have allowed for a more intimate approach in addressing not only the cultural relevance and importance of this transformation but also the internal processes and devices used to re-communicate the level of quality within the artistic designs that make these cultural artefacts worthy of commercialisation. From the iconic "Clancy"

¹⁷ <http://www.wallisandmatilda.com.au/>

Accessed: 20/03/13

¹⁸ Ibid

through the poetic verse of Banjo Paterson and the compositional applications of John Wallis
we see “...the vision splendid...”

Appendix 1: Complete Copy of *Clancy of the Overflow*, first published by Banjo Paterson in the Bulletin in 1889. The Copy below has been taken straight from the Australian Poetry Library website which has sourced the poem through its publication in Paterson's Book *The Man from Snowy River and Other Verses*; published by Angus and Robertson Pty Ltd in 1985.

Website Source: <http://www.poetrylibrary.edu.au/poets/paterson-a-b-banjo/clancy-of-the-overflow-0001006>

Clancy of The Overflow

by Paterson

From book: The Man from Snowy River and Other Verses

I had written him a letter which I had, for want of better
Knowledge, sent to where I met him down the Lachlan, years ago,
He was shearing when I knew him, so I sent the letter to him,
Just 'on spec', addressed as follows, 'Clancy, of The Overflow'.

And an answer came directed in a writing unexpected,
(And I think the same was written with a thumb-nail dipped in tar)
'Twas his shearing mate who wrote it, and *verbatim* I will quote it:
'Clancy's gone to Queensland droving, and we don't know where he are.'

In my wild erratic fancy visions come to me of Clancy
Gone a-droving 'down the Cooper' where the Western drovers go;
As the stock are slowly stringing, Clancy rides behind them singing,
For the drover's life has pleasures that the townsfolk never know.

And the bush hath friends to meet him, and their kindly voices greet him
In the murmur of the breezes and the river on its bars,
And he sees the vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended,
And at night the wond'rous glory of the everlasting stars.

I am sitting in my dingy little office, where a stingy
Ray of sunlight struggles feebly down between the houses tall,
And the foetid air and gritty of the dusty, dirty city
Through the open window floating, spreads its foulness over all.

And in place of lowing cattle, I can hear the fiendish rattle
Of the tramways and the 'buses making hurry down the street,
And the language uninviting of the gutter children fighting,
Comes fitfully and faintly through the ceaseless tramp of feet.

And the hurrying people daunt me, and their pallid faces haunt me
As they shoulder one another in their rush and nervous haste,
With their eager eyes and greedy, and their stunted forms and weedy,
For townsfolk have no time to grow, they have no time to waste.

And I somehow rather fancy that I'd like to change with Clancy,
Like to take a turn at droving where the seasons come and go,
While he faced the round eternal of the cash-book and the journal —
But I doubt he'd suit the office, Clancy, of 'The Overflow'.

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