Here's looking at youse: Understanding the place of *yous(e)* in Australian English

4.1 Introduction

While the second person plural pronoun (2ndPL) form *youse* (or *yous*)[1] is recorded in a number of contemporary Englishes, where in each case it is most likely to have entered via historical Irish immigration and Irish English influence (Hickey 2003), within Australia *youse* is often considered amongst non-linguists to be uniquely Australian (Penry Williams 2011). This study builds on previous research on *youse* in Australian English (AuE) by considering in detail its occurrence in Australian literature, drawing on data from OzCorp, the Macquarie Dictionary's in-house database. It contemplates its form(s), stigmatization, and indexicality, and how these are employed in constructed dialogue.

The study begins with a sketch of present understandings about *youse*'s origins, use and social evaluation (Section 4.2). This is followed by a discussion of how insights can be gained through investigating the voices authors give to their characters (Section 4.3), along with a description of the data and analysis (Section 4.4). We then validate that *youse* has developed a singular (SG) usage in AuE (Section 4.5) and examine the indexicalities evoked in this type of data by studying the details of use in characterization (Section 4.6) before briefly concluding (Section 4.7).

4.2 Background

As it is widely acknowledged, going back at least to Trudgill (1986), the distinctive 2ndPL forms in many Englishes are recompense for the historical loss of a 2nd SG / PL distinction. The conundrum has been accounting for the prevalence of such forms across varieties of English; namely, whether the widespread occurrence of distinctive 2ndPL forms is due to a tendency to fill paradigm gaps by innovating on existing forms, or to historical language /

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[1] Henceforth *youse* refers to either spelling.

dialect influences, or some combination of such factors (Wright 1997). In the case of AuE, the origins of *youse* have generally been considered to ultimately lie in Irish English (e.g. Lonergan 2003; Moore 2008; Wright 1997), with the Irish language feature of distinctive 2[nd]SG and 2[nd]PL pronouns assumed to have motivated the analogical development of the plural form *youse* from *you + -s* (and *yez* from archaic Irish English *ye + -s*) (Corrigan 2010; Hickey 2003). Subsequently, Irish English, as well as Irish itself, and various northern English varieties in which *youse* was established, was transported to Australia with its speakers (cf. Trudgill 1986, Hickey 2003, Leitner 2004). Thus, as both Hickey (2003) and Burridge and Musgrave (2014) establish, 'Irish-inspired' *youse* was present in the formative period for AuE. However, Burridge and Musgrave's investigation of 337 texts in COOEE (Corpus of Oz Early English) from 1788–1900 and written by Australians of Irish origin, and 116 literary representations of Irish characters in 19th and 20th century Australian novels from the AusLit corpus, provided little evidence for a transfer of *youse* from Irish English (both corpora are part of the Australian National Corpus collection, see www.ausnc.org.au for details). Thus, they conclude, it can be difficult to assess if forms in AuE are truly indicative of Irish inheritances or if they are independent developments, especially with a form like *youse* which uses a standard plural process for paradigm regularization.

In addition to providing a distinctive 2[nd]PL form, in AuE, *youse* appears to have developed a singular usage. This has been recognized by the *Australian National Dictionary* (Ramson 1988) and the *Macquarie Dictionary, 3rd edition* (Delbridge 1997) onwards; *The Cambridge Australian English Style Guide* (Peters 1995) and *The Cambridge Guide to Australian English Usage* (Peters 2004); also the rare linguistic study, such as Wright (1997), and commentary on contemporary AuE usage, such as *Modern Australian Usage* (Hudson 1993). A *Macquarie Dictionary Blog* post (Pluralising 'You' to 'Youse' 30 August 2013), gives four examples of singular usage, including (1) from a 1913 newspaper cartoon by Norman Lindsay:

(1) Rev. Foodle: 'Why is it, my boy, that your father always avoids me? You should tell him not to be afraid of me.'
Young Bill (amazed): 'Afraid o' **youse**! I'd take yer on meself.' (Wingrove 1987: 183)

This development might seem counter-intuitive or counter-productive to some as it would seem to contradict the motivation for the development of a distinctive 2[nd]PL form.

Despite such noticings, singular *youse* remains virtually unacknowledged in both folklinguistic commentary (e.g. *The Aussie Slang Dictionary* (Stewart 2017); *The Mudcat Café: Aussie Glossary* n.d., https://mudcat.org/aussie) and linguistic studies (e.g. Burridge and Musgrave 2014; Hickey 2003; Pawley 2004; Penry Williams 2019). Curiously, some studies even give examples that seem to require a singular reading; perhaps singular reference is not being documented, because it is not being considered.[2]

In terms of social position in AuE, *youse,* in-line with reporting in other varieties of English, is understood as a stigmatized feature. This is so much so that dictionary and guide entries include restrictive labels or cautionary notes (e.g. Peters 1995, 2004), and the *Macquarie Dictionary* has had to repeatedly defend its inclusion (Butler 2014). Furthermore, the stigmatization of *youse* was likely originally reinforced by associations with Irish people, who were locally stigmatized both linguistically and socially (https://www.macquariedictionary.com.au/blog/article/148/).

There is reference in the literature to it being associated with traditionally stigmatized groups, those commonly considered as the keepers of 'bad language' and attributes associated with them. For instance, Peters (2004: 589) notes it is 'still associated with a shortage of education'. Pawley (2004), in discussing *youse* (and *yiz*), comments on the role of covert prestige, especially amongst men socializing or working together. These accounts can be understood as part of one picture via indexical orders (Silverstein 2003), with Irishness being reinterpreted in Australia via evaluations of this minority population. However, as with many 'nonstandard' features, this enregisterment (Agha 2007) and the strong association with informality and 'Australianness' also provide a resource in identities some speakers want to claim for themselves. Interestingly, Pawley (2004: 365) also observes that 'The emergent Australian working-class vernacular had probably stabilised by the mid-19th century, some two generations after the British colonisation of Australia.' As he firmly places *youse* within this vernacular, this suggests a time frame by which the reinterpretation of associations of *youse* would likely have taken place. In turn, this may account for why Burridge and Musgrave (2014: 33) found that a number of their *youse* examples from the AusLit corpus 'appear to be used to index uneducated speech in general without any other stereotypical Irish features.' These associations of *youse* are further

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2   Comparatively, in discussions of singular *y'all / yall* in Southern American English, it has been observed that some linguists (e.g. Butters 2001) are insisting on no singular usage in the face of data which shows community variability in singular/plural use (Tillery and Bailey 1998).

supported by studies of social evaluations of *youse* within AuE (viz. Ferguson 2008; Mulder and Penry Williams 2014; Penry Williams 2011, 2019; Severin 2017; Sheard 2019). Severin (2017), based on questionnaire data from 307 participants, had 8.8% report that they did use sentences like *Yous shouldn't have done that*. A further 19.9% indicated that it was 'acceptable' but it was rated as 'unacceptable' by the remaining 71.3%, making it fifth most unacceptable of the 25 items surveyed and just (0.3%) more unacceptable than the highly stigmatized example of negative concord (*I don't know nothing*).

In interviews, Penry Williams (2011, 2019) found her young-adult participants discussed the form without prompting (4/15). In these data, it was noted as incorrect but further stigmatized and linked to undesirable social types, low education, being less intelligent, Frankston, Broadmeadows and the western suburbs of Melbourne (and implicitly, via these suburbs, social class (Penry Williams in preparation)). These evaluations and associations tally with accounts of 'bad language' more generally amongst young Melbournians (Penry Williams 2011, 2019). In Sydney, Sheard (2019) asked her young participants directly about *youse*, like Severin (2017), presenting them with an example sentence. She found that while some interviewees from Western Sydney did state that they or their friends used the form, those from the more prestigious and socio-economically advantaged Northern Beaches area did not (6/9 vs 0/9) (see Sheard (2019) regarding socio-economic advantage data). Based on her analysis of the metapragmatic discussion, she creates an indexical field (Eckert 2008) for self-reported *youse* users (*n* = 6), with the form both *normal* and linked to their local regional identities. For those who reported that they and their friends did not use the word (*n* = 12), *youse* indexed negatively evaluated characteristics, places, social and regional types, or linguistic incorrectness. As Sheard notes, the findings echo Penry Williams's and, combined, they illustrate that *youse* is stigmatized for many young speakers. In addition, Sheard's research shows that for some speakers *youse* is unmarked. The two interview-based studies also demonstrate that it is not frequent in speech, at least in some contexts, with no examples of use within the interviews.

4.3 Insights via literary or scripted dialogue

When a feature is rare in speech, or the speech usually captured in linguistic research, insights may be gained from other sources. Works of fiction are often a source of stigmatized language forms, as writers use them as a quick way to establish character via (assumed) reader / viewer evaluations (Lippi-Green 1997; Mulder and Penry Williams 2018). Leitner (2004: 250) has suggested that while in some literatures this may be achieved

through regional varieties, in AuE, due to the lack of such clearly-recognized differences, 'nonstandard' forms are used to create 'localness'. While this is important for establishing 'Australianness', as he has argued, differentiation between characters within a work of fiction is also key (Mulder and Penry Williams 2018).

Of course, fiction is fiction, and linguists are warned that representations of AuE may be far from 'natural' and restricted by authors' experiences with different varieties of AuE (see Taylor 1997). On the other hand, writers may be trying to add a 'flavour' the implied reader/ viewer will recognize rather than targeting reproduction, with accessibility for an unfamiliar audience a consideration (Blake 1981; Leech and Short 2007: 135–6). Importantly, in the hunt for distinctiveness, representations may underestimate other elements (White 1981). We argue, based on analyses around final *but* (Mulder et al. 2009), that while such data does have limitations, and it is certainly not speech, representations of speech can provide insights into language variation and its sociocultural life (Mulder and Penry Williams 2018), as well as into the world of a film, piece of literature (Hodson 2014), or television program (Bednarek 2017). This works through implied readers' (or viewers') understandings of constructed dialogue, against the diversity of speech in communities and other possible ways of speaking (Agha 2007; Bakhtin 1981; Blake 1981).

Given its level of stigmatization, but understanding as essentially Australian, an examination of uses of *youse* within a corpus of Australian literature may not tell us about everyday use but it could reveal authors' interpretations of everyday understandings.

4.4 Data and Method

OzCorp currently sits at around 24 million words, including 12.5 million words of fiction, ranging in date of publication from 1788 to 2004 (Susan Butler, personal communication, 23 October 2019). The interrogation of OzCorp was limited to the strong form *youse* / *yous* as this is the form referred to in social comment; however, authors also employ forms such as *yez*, *yehs*, *yuhs*, and *yahs*, as in (2):

(2)   "How **yuhs** goin'?" I said, still a bit upset at Croker. (Dick 1965: 237)[3]

These alternate forms were not included in the final analysis.

The initial search provided 371 'hits'; that is, extracts containing at least one token of *yous* / *youse*. For the purposes of comparability, analysis was limited to prose hits from the

[3] Details for the works of literature cited can be found in Table 4.1.

fiction genre, thus excluding poetic verse (*n* = 323). Out of these, titles with five or more hits were then considered by publication date, and titles with lower numbers of hits were added in to create a corpus with at least two titles published in each decade and as many potential *youse* tokens as possible (*n* = 263 hits). The extract contained in each OzCorp hit was then examined as to whether there was more than one token of *youse* (*n* = 39 hits), and whether each was an actual instance of second person pronoun use, with instances in which it was a contraction (*n* = 30 tokens), as in (3), excluded:

(3)   You'd soon show 'em what **yous** worth as a fitter, and be boss of the shop in no time.
       (Herbert 1938: 337)

Another three tokens which appear in the third novella in *Pig's Blood and Other Fluids* were excluded, as the novella is set in Brazil with no connections (including characterization) to Australia and 'Australianness'. Finally, where feasible, texts were also examined for additional tokens of *youse* and in one case, *Rusty Bugles*, two additional tokens were found and included in the analysis. This manual inspection supports the overall accuracy of the corpus search.

As summarized in Table 4.1, the final number of second person pronoun tokens of *youse* analysed was 308; *youse* was found to occur in the speech of 120 different characters across 25 titles, attributed to 26 authors. (Note that *Across Country*, the sole collection of short stories by different authors, was counted as a single title and that two authors – Xavier Herbert and John Clark – each have two title entries.)

Table 4.1 Distribution of *youse* by year of publication, title, attributed author and character

Year	Title	Attributed Author	Text Type	*youse* tokens	Characters using *youse*
1898	Below and on Top: Below and on Top	Edward Dyson	short stories	1	1
1901	My Brilliant Career	Miles Franklin	novel	1	1
1902	Bush Studies	Barbara Baynton	short stories	2	2
1911	Jonah	Louis Stone	novel	47	9
1913	A Curate in Bohemia	Norman Lindsay	novel	2	1
1921	Back to Billabong	Mary Grant Bruce	novel	18	1
1923	The C. J. Dennis Collection: Bowyang is Candid	C. J. Dennis	newspaper fiction	10	1
1933	Stories by 'Kodak'	Ernest O'Ferrall	newspaper fiction	4	3
1938	Capricornia	Xavier Herbert	novel	10	6
1944	We were the Rats	Lawson Glassop	novel	17	6
1948	Rusty Bugles	Sumner Locke Elliott	play	18	8
1957	Summer of the Seventeenth Doll	Ray Lawler	play	6	3

1958	The Pea-Pickers	Eve Langley	novel	28	8
1963	Legends from Benson's Valley	Frank Hardy	short stories	5	2
1965	The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea	Randolph Stow	novel	5	5
1965	A Bunch of Ratbags	William Dick	novel	11	9
1973	Crow on a Barbed Wire Fence	Harold Lewis	novel	20	13
1975	Tim	Colleen McCullough	novel	55	6
1975	Poor Fellow My Country	Xavier Herbert	novel	7	4
1981	Jack Rivers and Me	Paul Radley	novel	4	3
1983	Mr. Scobie's Riddle	Elizabeth Jolley	novel	2	1
1990	The Kadaitcha Sung	Sam Watson	novel	7	7
1991	Cloudstreet	Tim Winton	novel	11	9
1998	Across Country: The Wool Pickers	Alf Taylor	short story	1	1
1998	Across Country: Snow Domes	Janice Slater	short story	1	1
1998	Across Country: The Black Rabbit	John Clark	short story	3	3
1998	Across Country: Johnny Cake Days	John Clark	short story	1	1
1999	Pig's Blood and Other Fluids	Peter Robb	novellas	11	5
Total	25	26		308	120

Authors included in our analysis were Australian-born, with the exception of Lewis, Jolley and Stone, who were born in England. The only criticism of linguistic authenticity we are aware of is Taylor (1997), which asserts that Stone's representation of Sydney working-class speech in *Jonah* has been unduly influenced by his UK origins, and that Stone has misinterpreted the function of *youse* when he uses it in a singular context (1997: 268–9). However, this may be another instance of dismissing possible singular use.

For the analyses, each token of *youse* was coded for singular / plural reference and any sociolinguistic characteristics available from the text such as sex, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status of character and location.

4.5 Singular and plural

As stated in Section 4.3, much of the discussion of AuE, whether academic or popular, does not acknowledge singular *youse*. However, citations such as that in (1), argue that the possibility of *youse* with a singular reference in AuE cannot be ignored.[4] To learn more about the occurrence of singular *youse*, each of the 308 tokens was examined in terms of reference.

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4   To support the occurrence, we note further that the first author has recently heard *Happy birthday to youse, happy birthday to youse* and *Remember when youse ran off by yourself* with one referent.

With the exception of one token which was a metalinguistic comment about *youse* not being American or English, the tokens could be analysed into one of four categories for reference:

– plural (as in (4));

– singular non-specific (where, like 'indefinite', 'impersonal' or 'generic' you, it is non-referential and an informal substitute for one, as in (5));

– singular → plural (where it appears to be used to address one person, but it can also be taken as representing others as well, as in (6));[5] or

– singular (where the referent is definite and unambiguously singular, as in (7)), including one token of *youse* used as a 2nd possessive pronoun with singular reference.[6]

(4)   "If **youse** care to wait around here till spring," Jim told us, that night, as we sat around the fire at Wilson's, "I'll get a job for both of **youse** and me down at Metung on the Gippsland Lakes, pickin peas." (Langley 1958: 38)

(5)   OT: How'd it be to go crackers? Would **yous** know you was nuts or would **yous** think every other joker was?

GIG: **Yous**'d think every other friggin' joker was troppo but yourself. (Elliott 1948: 87)

(6)   The cop behind the desk spoke. "O.K., boys, what can I do for you?" …

"Well, sir," (I thought I had better call him sir) "we've found a bloke we think's dead and we thought we orta come and tell **youse** about it." (Dick 1965: 75)

(7)   'Hey, Tim, what **youse** got on yer sandwiches this morning?' Mick asked, winking heavily at the others. (McCullough 1975: 16)

The results are summarized in Table 4.2, with the number of characters using singular or plural forms given in parentheses.

As shown in Table 4.2, 122 tokens, that is 40%, have singular reference, of which 91 (75%) are unambiguously singular; although heavily distributed across two titles, *Jonah*

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[5]   Peters (1995, 2004) observes that '*Webster's Dictionary* [of American English] notes [*youse*'s] occasional use to address one person as representing "another or others"' (2004: 878).

[6]   The *Australian National Dictionary* (Ramson 1988) also recognizes the use of *youse* as a possessive pronoun, giving two illustrative citations.

(Stone 1911)[7] and *Tim* (McCullough 1975), the singular tokens occur in the 'speech' of 32 different characters, across 13 titles (52%) from 1911 onwards. Overall, the data from OzCorp authenticate that there is a perception that *youse* has a singular usage in AuE and

Table 4.2 Distribution of *youse* by singular / plural reference and number of characters

Year	Title	Plural		Singular				
				Sg-non-specific	Sg → Pl	Sg definite	Total	
1898	Below and on Top: Below and on Top	1	(1)	0	0	0	0	(0)
1901	My Brilliant Career	1	(1)	0	0	0	0	(0)
1902	Bush Studies	2	(2)	0	0	0	0	(0)
1911	Jonah	4	(3)	0	1	42	43	(9)
1913	A Curate in Bohemia	2	(1)	0	0	0	0	(0)
1921	Back to Billabong	18	(1)	0	0	0	0	(0)
1923	The C. J. Dennis Collection: Bowyang is Candid	1	(1)	0	7	2	9	(1)
1933	Stories by 'Kodak'	4	(3)	0	0	0	0	(0)
1938	Capricornia	8	(4)	0	0	2	2	(2)
1944	We were the Rats	13	(5)	1	3	0	4	(2)
1948	Rusty Bugles	12	(8)	4	2	0	6	(4)
1957	Summer of the Seventeenth Doll	6	(3)	0	0	0	0	(0)
1958	The Pea-Pickers	25	(7)	0	1	2	3	(2)
1963	Legends from Benson's Valley	5	(2)	0	0	0	0	(0)
1965	The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea	5	(5)	0	0	0	0	(0)
1965	A Bunch of Ratbags	10	(9)	0	1	0	1	(1)
1973	Crow on a Barbed Wire Fence	19	(11)	0	0	1	1	(1)
1975	Tim	7	(2)	2	6	40	48	(6)
1975	Poor Fellow My Country	6	(3)	0	1	0	1	(1)
1981	Jack Rivers and Me	3	(2)	0	0	0	0	(0)
1983	Mr. Scobie's Riddle	0	(0)	0	0	2	2	(1)
1990	The Kadaitcha Sung	7	(7)	0	0	0	0	(0)
1991	Cloudstreet	11	(9)	0	0	0	0	(0)
1998	Across Country: The Wool Pickers	0	(0)	0	1	0	1	(1)
1998	Across Country: Snow Domes	1	(1)	0	0	0	0	(0)
1998	Across Country: The Black Rabbit	3	(3)	0	0	0	0	(0)
1998	Across Country: Johnny Cake Days	1	(1)	0	0	0	0	(0)
1999	Pig's Blood and Other Fluids	10	(4)	0	1	0	1	(1)
Total		**185**	**(99)**	**7**	**24**	**91**	**122**	**(32)**

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[7]   As discussed in Section 4, the results for *Jonah* (Stone 1911) may need to be treated judiciously.

provide evidence that this usage has been used in writing since at least the early 20th century.

Although interpreting fictional dialogue as language requires caution (see Sections 4.3 and 4.4), the results in Table 4.2 suggest two avenues for future investigation. Firstly, the analysis of singular / plural reference suggests that the grammaticalization pathway from 2[nd]PL to 2[nd]SG will likely include non-specific reference and singular $\rightarrow$ plural as significant waypoints, with contractions with singular verb agreement (*youse < you + is/has*) also being a contributing factor. Secondly, the development of singular *youse* alongside plural *youse* within AuE calls into question the original motivation for a distinctive 2[nd]PL form and suggests that, for some speakers, the use of *youse* may have less to do with being able to tell whether one or more than one person is being addressed, and more to do with the social meanings of *youse* and the informality it signals (Hickey 2003) *and,* via these, potentially indexing solidarity or intimacy.

4.6 Social evaluation through characters

The analysis of characters 'using' *youse* revealed that it was attributed to a range of 'people': in relation to sex, there was a stronger association with male characters (78.6%) but there were also many more males across the texts (in fact, some had no female characters); it was used by children, teenagers, and adults of all ages; and in texts that included Indigenous Australian characters, they used the form but not exclusively. Furthermore, there were not clear associations with Irishness or Irish people, suggesting that this is not understood as the source of the form by the authors; that is, it appears that the reinterpretation of associations of *youse* had taken place by the beginning of the early-20th century, which would support Pawley's (2004) timelines (see Section 2). *Youse* was employed particularly by authors who seemed to be trying to capture something unique in Australia or casual ways of speaking, often found alongside other stigmatized features such as possessive '*me*' and *ain't*, as well as, in the company of spellings reproducing fairly standard pronunciations but implying 'nonstandardness' via respelling, and noting 'missing' elements, a common strategy due to the re-constructability of apostrophes at the beginning or end of words (Blake 1981).[8] Reduced form spellings are interpreted as indicators of lower social class (Preston 1985). Examples (8)–(10) briefly illustrate these tendencies in works

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8   Note also that *ain't* is not a feature of contemporary AuE.

from the early-, mid-, and late-twentieth century with informal lexis also reinforcing the imagery.

(8)   I dunno 'ow I'd get down to orderin' the pair of **yous** about. An' I ain't got no 'comodation for **yous**; an' the tucker's not what **yous** 'ave bin used ter. (Bruce 1921: 124)

(9)   He don't uphold the camp spirit. I got no time for them that don't uphold the camp spirit. What I say is, no matter where you are **yous** can still behave like a sport. (Elliott 1948: 40)

(10)   If **youse** blokes, Damion began firmly, want a bit of help finding your way about, why don't **youse** just lay off the bar staff and let them geddon with their job? (Robb 1999: 80)

There is some support for Blake's (1981: 13) assertion of 'nonstandard' language in general that, when it not used for comedy, is often used to indicate lower social class, but this can be difficult to separate from other elements and the contrast between narrator and speaker, and between speakers is not always so clear cut.

In a more detailed examination of *who* uses *youse*, we concentrate on texts which contained more than 10 tokens, to allow for meaningful discussion within our space limitations (note though that one use could achieve a lot, and the works of fiction were of varying lengths). This reduces the focus to 11 texts published from 1911 to 1999.

In an effort to explore what *youse* is seen to index, we ordered the higher-instance text-based distribution across characters, as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Distribution of *youse* by frequency in relation to number of characters

Year	Title	*youse* tokens	Characters using *youse*
1921	Back to Billabong	18	1
1923	The C. J. Dennis Collection: Bowyang is Candid	10	1
1975	Tim	55	6
1944	We Were the Rats	17	6
1938	Capricornia	10	6
1948	Rusty Bugles	18	8
1958	The Pea-Pickers	28	8
1965	A Bunch of Ratbags	11	9
1991	Cloudstreet	11	9
1911	Jonah	47	9
1973	Crow on a Barbed Wire Fence	20	13

While Table 4.3 does not attempt to account for the total number of characters in a text, those texts at the top would seem to show *youse* as part of the speech of some specific AuE speakers while those at the bottom, more likely see it as a general feature amongst the types of people who inhabit the fictional world.

Due to limitations of space, we discuss the extreme points of this distribution as exemplified in two texts each, beginning with the top two, both of which were written in the 1920s. In *Back to Billabong* (Bruce 1921), there is one character who is a *youse* user: Joe Howard, an old farmer. While the characters Jim Linton and Bob Rainham go to work for 'Old Joe' as farm hands, they are there for the experience and the unusualness of the situation is highlighted by Joe as shown in (8) previously. The social inversion is negotiated in fact with Joe no longer addressing *Mr. Jim* as such so that he can feel comfortable issuing him orders in the way he usually would those working for him (*wot am I to call **yous**? I can't order you about as Mr. Jim. It wouldn't seem to come natural* (1921: 120)). Joe's speech is markedly differentiated from that of the young men as illustrated in (11) which relates to the two returning to the Linton's grander and more comfortable home after their 'education' with Joe.

(11)   "Well, we're off to-morrow, Mr. Howard," said Jim on Saturday night. They were seated round the fire, smoking.

  "I s'pose so. Didn't think **yous**'d stick it out as long," the old man said.

  "We've had a very good time," said Bob; and was astonished to find himself speaking truthfully. "Jolly good of you to have me; I know a new-chum isn't much use."

  "Well, I wouldn't say as how you weren't," said old Joe deliberately. "I ain't strong on new-chums, meself – some of them immy-grants they send out are a fair cow to handle; but I will say, Captin, you ain't got no frills, nor you don't mind puttin' your back into a job. I worked you pretty 'ard, too." (Bruce 1921: 124)

In this text, *youse* is one of a number of 'nonstandard' features and respellings that position Joe as of a different social background, in addition to numerous explicit references to this by Joe. As the extracts show, *youse* is very common in Joe's speech, with the 18 tokens occurring over about seven pages and no further tokens elsewhere in the novel. Jim's family lives in the same area so this difference in language is not about place (e.g. rural vs urban).

In *The C. J. Dennis Collection* (Dennis 1923), the one speaker who utters *youse* is Ben Bowyang, a 'rural filosofer and spelin reformer' (Hutchinson 1987: 5). The text 'Bowyang

is Candid', first published in *The Herald* (Melbourne), takes the form of a letter from Bowyang to his 'dere frend'. Again, there is a lot of 'nonstandard' language and respellings which represent speech including standard pronunciations (e.g. <no> for *know*) as shown in (12).

(12)   so I no **yous** ull take it in good part an not rekin ime slingin orf when i points out 1 or 2 littel brakes **yous** made when **yous** was up ere. (Dennis 1923: 13)

   The last two texts listed in Table 4.3 are from very different times but employ *youse* in the creation of a range number of characters. *Jonah* (Stone 1911) depicts inner working class and semi-criminal Sydney. Unlike the previous texts discussed, in this novel 'nonstandard' language forms, including *youse*, characterize the world of the book rather than providing a contrast between characters, as exemplified in (13).

(13)   "**Yous** git round, an' 'elp Mum wi' the clothes," snapped Jonah.
       "Me? No fear!" cried Ada, with a malicious grin. "I didn't knock off work to carry bricks. **Yous** married me, an' yer got ter keep me." (Stone 1911: 65)

Here the contrast is seemingly anticipated between the fictional world and that of the reader but does less work in differentiating characters. While *Crow on a Barbed Wire Fence* (Lewis 1973) was written much later, it is set in 1910. *Youse*, is attributed to both 'outback' and working class 'types' (all male). The text dwells on 'Australianness' especially in contrast to the 'Englishness' of the narrator (and author). In (14), there is again an *ain't* nearby.

(14)   "The kid's improved, I tell yer," said Mick with some enthusiasm. "Most of **youse** newchums can't fight a damn, but now and again one comes up with everything. That's how it is with Bluey. Maybe he ain't a cert to win. But I give him a chance…" (Lewis 1973: 144)

In fact, the 'Australianness' of *youse* is suggested by the narrator saying that he is trying to sound local as shown in (15).

(15)   "Here he is," he announced. "All the way from the Old Country just to play fer **youse**."
       "Tell me what **youse** want me to play for **youse**," I said, in my best Australian. (Lewis 1973: 32)

While it could be suggested the second part of (15) relates to an accent, there is no evidence for this. For instance, *for* is not spelt <fer> as it is for the publican in the previous line; thus it seems that the two occurrences of *youse* are his *Australian*.

Blake (1981: 13) suggests that 'nonstandard' language forms in general are used by authors to index 'urban working class' rather than 'rustic poor' after the Industrial Revolution. However, it seems that in the texts in our corpus, which are all post Industrial Revolution, we find both with *youse*. While earlier discourse in Australia focussed on rural imagery as a locus of Australian uniqueness in the creation of nation, later discussions of life in Australia increasingly moved to the suburbs: from 'national type' (rural) to the 'Australian way of life' (suburban) (White 1981). Works set and written earlier and later seem to engage with these two different sets of Australian imagery. They depict life in Australia as rural (e.g. *Back to Billabong* (Bruce 1921), 'Bowyang is Candid' (Dennis 1923), and *Crow on a Barbed Wire Fence* (Lewis 1973) or suburban (e.g. *Tim* (McCullough 1975), *A Bunch of Ratbags* (Dick 1965) and *Cloudstreet* (Winton 1991)) but *youse* has found a place in the continuation of both the older and newer imaginings.

The interplay between authors and their styles could be a factor influencing later works (Bakhtin 1981; Blake 1981), especially as some of the earlier texts remain highly regarded pieces of literature or noted for capturing something Australian and therefore may have influenced later writers. Overall, the analysis supports a folklinguistic view, as found in Sheard (2019), that for some speakers it is understood as unmarked and everyday talk whilst amongst others, it indexes social difference. These authors utilize both understandings to indicate difference but on different scales (text to world vs within text).

4.7 Conclusions

Studying the place of *youse* in AuE via our sample of OzCorp, we believe, has reconfirmed that dialogue in literature can be a valuable source for insights into everyday understandings of particular forms (Mulder and Penry Williams 2018). The study has shown that there is an awareness that *youse* can be both plural or singular, challenging the original reasoning for such a form and illustrating its reinterpretation. The analysis of characters associated with *youse* suggested, overall, that it is attributed to a range of people, with limitations relating to equal representation in texts. Texts with high occurrences associated with a small number of characters and the greatest distribution, both orient to the rustic rural and suburban working class, with these both tied to previous descriptions of the use of 'nonstandard' language in fiction and depictions of Australia. It has also illustrated something of the life of

'nonstandard' features amongst those utilizing them in stylization rather than vernacular speech. While this chapter has added to our understandings of *youse* it has also satisfyingly left us with new questions to explore about its use and its social meanings in AuE.

Acknowledgments

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