

Plainsong or Polyphony?

**Australian Award-Winning Novels
of the 1990s for Adolescent Readers.**

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Certificate of Authorship / Originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of the requirements for a degree.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged.

In addition, I certify that all information resources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

Plainsong or Polyphony? Australian Award-Winning Novels of the 1990s for Adolescent Readers.

Using a musical metaphor of plainsong (to allude to monophonic sameness) and polyphony (to allude to multiphonic difference) this thesis seeks evidence of similarity (plainsong) or difference (polyphony). The texts considered are judged to have both literary merit and to meet the particular needs of Australian adolescent readers. Adult concerns about the suitability of particular Young Adult (YA) novels imply that there is an agreed archetype for this genre; an implication that this thesis explores using variety of critical perspectives, chiefly Narrative Theory, Reader Theory, Althusser's concept of the hail and the work of Pecheux.

Bakhtin (1981) applied the musical metaphor of polyphony to describe the novel as a genre in which an author orchestrates its themes through 'the social diversity of speech types' and 'the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions' (p. 263). This study considers both polyphony and its opposite, plainsong, in its inquiry into two aspects of individual authorial voices. The first relates to the authors' representations of adolescence as portrayed through their protagonist[s]; the second to the authors' beliefs about their adolescent readers as reflected in the various ways each author tries to attract and engage their audience.

This study finds that whilst patterns of similarity exist in the texts, these patterns shift when the novels are viewed from different critical perspectives. This thesis demonstrates that whilst the authors appear to share similar ideas about adolescence, they have different perceptions about what they can and cannot do in novels addressed to adolescent readers.