

# **Plainsong or Polyphony?**

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

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**Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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## **Certificate of Authorship / Originality**

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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.

## Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis investigates two aspects of the award winning Australian novels of the 1990s for adolescent readers, their explicit portrayals of adolescent voices and their implicit calls to adolescent readers. Each of these novels has been judged to have both literary merit and to meet the particular needs in content and style of adolescent readers. To what extent do the structure and style of these narratives suggest that the authors hold, or appear to hold, similar beliefs about their readers? Are the representations of adolescence they depict the same or different and do they address a readership with similar or different levels of sophistication and emotional development? If analysis reveals that these texts reiterate a monophonic address, suggesting that these authors seem to hold similar beliefs about their readers, the award-winning YA novels of the 1990s can be likened to plainsong. If however, the voices of adolescent characters and calls to readers convey a rich texture of perhaps discordant voices, this sample can be described as polyphonic. If so, it can be argued that the acclamation accorded these texts also recognises diversity in the interests and abilities of Australian adolescent readers.

Voice is a significant aspect of all texts but particularly YA texts. McCallum aligns the notion of voice in a novel with an author's representation of ideology or beliefs. She suggests that authors of novels addressed to adolescent readers can encourage their readers to refuse a passive subject position by incorporating diversity in their narrative techniques and voices. Authors who use a range of narrative techniques and voices are able to convey diversity in their representations of social and ideological beliefs, Bakhtin's notion of polyphony. McCallum argues that authors who create this diversity 'potentially construct a multiplicity of implied reader subject positions' (1999, p. 259), enabling rather



than controlling the readers. This study seeks to discern whether such polyphony is evident as a characteristic across a sample of texts rather than in an individual text, although a single text considered here might itself be polyphonic. The depictions of adolescent voices in the novels considered in this study reflect not only the authors' beliefs about their readers, but also the judges' beliefs about the interests, maturity and abilities of Australian adolescent readers. Authors structure their novels to communicate a tale that they believe is both relevant to the readers' interests and suited to their abilities. Authors' beliefs about their readers are revealed in the first few pages of the novel, through the ways they attempt to hail readers. An author's call or hail (the term will be explicated a little later) to readers indicates both the sort of novel that has been written and how it should be read. Figuratively, in texts that are deemed to address adolescent readers, authors construct adolescent readers by shaping their call with the intention of engaging their attention.

There is a clear relationship between an author's beliefs and the notion of ideology, a system of beliefs. This relationship is particularly significant in the critical assessment of YA literature: 'YA fiction ... allows the protagonist to describe events and convey perceptions, feelings and emotions from a highly subjective point of view which is constructed by the author (and accepted by the author's culture) as an ideology of adolescence' (Johnston 2001, p. 426). As the novels considered in this study were judged the best Australian novels written in the 1990s for readers aged 13-18, it can be argued that they reflect a culturally sanctioned ideology of Australian adolescence. Stevens reminds us that ideology need not be intentional because it reflects beliefs and assumptions of which these authors (and these judges) may be unaware (1992, p. 9). Unexamined beliefs and assumptions may be more pervasive than an ideology that is consciously applied. Prince argues that an author inevitably attributes to readers 'certain qualities, faculties and inclinations according to his opinion of

men in general (or in particular) and according to the obligations he feels should be respected' (in Onega & Landa 1996, p. 191). The adolescent readers of this sample of texts have been attributed with qualities of sophistication and emotional development that have been socially endorsed, although some of the texts considered in this study are regarded as controversial, particularly Hartnett's *Sleeping Dogs*.

Whilst some of the texts considered in this study have won multiple awards, international as well as Australian, the specific criteria for determining their inclusion in this study are that they have won either the Australian Children's Book of the Year for Older Readers Award or the Victorian Premier's Award for Young Adult Fiction. Both of these awards recognise literary merit in texts written by Australian authors for readers between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, a point to which I will return later. Although the titles of the awards may imply that they are deemed to address different audiences, this difference was not evident in the 1990s. *Deadly Unna?* won both the Australian CBC award and the Victorian Premier's Award. Three novels, *Strange Objects*, *Foxspell* and *The House Guest* either won or were short-listed for both awards. Four novels, *Pagan's Scribe*, *Sleeping Dogs* and *Night Train*, either won or were included as an Honour Book for both awards. This overlap may be partially explained by the fact that the market for Australian novels for adolescent readers is relatively small as is the number of individuals who act as judges for such awards.

Texts that win these awards are significant Australian cultural artefacts. It must be acknowledged that the chronological criterion of these awards means that in an exceptional year texts that deserve acclaim will miss out. However, this thesis argues that a sample that spans a decade of these awards is a significant sample in the context of Australian culture. By winning these awards, whatever the intention of their authors, these texts become YA novels. They are made

available to adolescent readers through school and public libraries and they are automatically included in Australian booklists of recommended texts for adolescent readers. Their availability to adolescent readers, if not their popularity with these readers, makes their representations of adolescence significant.

These awards endorse literary merit in novels addressed to adolescent readers, an endorsement that encourages close textual analysis from a literary critical perspective. The Australian Children's Book of the Year for Older Readers Award or the Victorian Premier's Award for Young Adult Fiction prioritise literary merit above all else (see Appendix A). In this respect, they differ from the awards sanctioned by the American Library Association, which prioritises the needs of teens and selects novels of acceptable literary quality (see Appendices B and C).

YA novels are expected to act as a bridge between novels addressed to children and novels addressed to adults. This expectation can be described as a pedagogical purpose and this will be discussed later. Adult concerns about YA novels generated much debate in Australia the 1990s. This debate revealed contradictory adult impulses, a desire to protect adolescent readers whilst providing rich literary experiences. This genre must encompass diversity in order to fulfil the expectation that it will span the distance between children's and adult texts. Yet my experience as a Teacher Librarian in a variety of schools, large and small, independent and government, single sex and co-educational, is that there is also an expectation that a YA novel addresses all adolescent readers. This expectation conflates expectations of difference, both in the genre and in adolescent readers, whilst asserting the cultural importance of YA novels and the vulnerability rather than the developing maturity of adolescent readers.

The texts considered in this study are (in chronological order, by award):

- Came Back to Show You I Could Fly* by Robin Klein (ACBC – Older Reader 1990)
- Strange Objects* by Gary Crew (ACBC – Older Reader 1991)
- The House Guest* by Eleanor Nilsson (ACBC – Older Reader 1992)
- Looking For Alibrandi* by Melina Marchetta (ACBC – Older Reader 1993)
- The Gathering* by Isobelle Carmody (ACBC – Older Reader aeq. 1994)
- Angel's Gate* by Gary Crew (ACBC – Older Reader aeq. 1994)
- Foxspell* by Gillian Rubinstein (ACBC – Older Reader 1995)
- Pagan's Vows* by Catherine Jinks (ACBC – Older Reader 1996)
- Sleeping Dogs* by Sonya Hartnett (VPA – YA Fiction 1996)
- A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove* by James Moloney (ACBC – Older Reader 1997)
- Night Train* by Judith Clarke (VPA – YA Fiction 1997)
- Eye to Eye* by Catherine Jinks (ACBC – Older Reader 1998)
- Pagan's Scribe* by Catherine Jinks (VPA – YA Fiction 1998)
- Deadly Unna?* by Phillip Gwynne (ACBC – Older Reader 1999 & VPA – YA Fiction 1999)

A list of the sample showing their bibliographic citations can be found in Appendix D whilst Appendix E details each text's awards, translations and reviews. A list of all of the award winning Australian texts for adolescents from the 1990s, and the criteria for those awards, is included in Appendix A. The winners of the Western Australian Premier's Award for Writers of Poetry or Prose for Young Adult have been excluded from this study because this award is only presented to writers who were born, live or base their work in the state of Western Australia. Similarly, the winner of the NSW Premier's Award, the Ethel Turner Prize for Young People's Literature, has been excluded because it was awarded for the first time in 1999.

## **Voice**

The terms plainsong and polyphony, used in the title of this thesis, relate to voice in both music and literature. Plainsong is a monophonic melody in which multiple voices echo a single melodic line without supporting harmonies (Bennett 1995, p. 249). Musical polyphony denotes melodies that have a diverse texture with two or more melodic lines 'mainly of equal importance and independence weaving along together' (Bennett 1995, p. 252), allowing more than one vocal part to be heard. Bakhtin's description of Dostoevsky's novels as polyphonic reflects his perception that these texts represent a struggle of opinions in incomplete dialogues (1986, p. 151) and seems to allude to the musical notion of more than one part. Literary polyphony has subsequently acquired different shades of meaning and increasing complexity but the notion of multiple voice expressing different beliefs remains paramount. McCallum describes novels that deploy a range of narrative strategies, voices and discursive styles as polyphonic (1999, p. 265) and argues that authors of novels with these attributes position readers to consider different beliefs.

Nikolajeva suggests that polyphony is a feature of modern children's literature. In making this comment she focuses on the absence of a didactic authorial voice, which 'disappears completely' as the novel becomes 'an endless discussion of various issues, a battlefield of ideas and existential questions' (1996, p.99). Authors of polyphonic novels addressed to adolescent readers appear to be willing to trust their readers' ability to consider alternative viewpoints. Polyphonic YA texts position readers to reflect upon alternative and perhaps opposing points of view without offering a commitment to culturally sanctioned values and knowledge. Caddon (2000) argues that double voiced (or polyphonic) discourse is important in YA novels if the author wants to avoid communicating a singular and thus limited awareness of the world. In

his view, double-voiced discourse provides adolescent readers the tools they need to grow as readers.

Studies of Australian YA novels from the 1990s did not perceive the features described by Nikolajeva but they did note that some YA novels did employ a range of narrational strategies, McCallum's polyphony, challenging their readers. To put the sample considered in this study in a broader Australian context, Kneale (1996) suggests that a few Australian YA novels from the 1990s use complex metafictional devices to challenge traditional concepts. He cites Victor Kelleher's *To the Dark Tower*, Margo Lanaghan's *The Best Thing*, and Anna Fienberg's *Ariel, Zed and the Meaning of Life* to illustrate his argument. Michaels (2004) adds Jenny Pausacker's *What are Ya?*, Caroline MacDonald's *Speaking to Miranda* and Nadia Wheatley's *The Bleeding* to this list.

This study does not focus on a particular author or a single novel; it considers a sample of novels that have been selected on the criteria previously explained. If the voices of their adolescent characters convey a variety of adolescent identities expressing different concerns, interests and beliefs, then this sample can be likened to a polyphonic melody and to Nikolajeva's and McCallum's literary polyphony. Whilst it is hoped that the representations of adolescent voices heard in this sample will be inclusive it is not expected that it will be comprehensive. If the authors woo different kinds of adolescent readers with incomplete dialogues in open ended-texts, then this sample exemplifies Bakhtin's polyphony. Such polyphony implies a culturally sanctioned recognition of, and respect for, the diversity of Australian adolescent readers and demonstrates that Norst's description of Australian YA novels (1989) is no longer valid. Analysis may reveal that individual novels can be described as polyphonic but the focus of this study is on whether the sample of texts is polyphonic.

This study uses the idea of voice as a metaphor for the power of the author. Foucault defines the relations of power that permeate society as producing and functioning as discourses (1980, p. 93). Authorial power is evident in both the voices heard in a discourse and the voices that are absent. Kenway & Willis (1997) use voice as an indicator of power as it is located in the individual. They measure the voices of powerful individuals in terms of their strength, authority, force, might, stamina, domination, ascendancy, vigour, potency and command. The author establishes a novel's framework by creating the voices and shaping its discourse. Only the author can allow a character to have a say, to express beliefs with vigour. Muted or absent voices have no power.

Adolescent characters speak with voices that their authors have created to act as authentic adolescent voices. These voices express the concerns, needs, experiences, interests, capacity and potential that the author attributes to adolescence. The connection between these images of self-hood and the readers whom these texts address is complex. Adolescent readers may or may not identify with these characters' traits, but these voices acquire additional resonance. Whilst the novel is a discrete, concrete piece of discourse that can be analysed to elicit the capacity of agents (characters) to affect outcomes, the novel is not simply a discourse between its characters; it is primarily a discourse between the author and the readers. Bakhtin describes a novel as an authorial monologue (1981, p.274) in which 'all characters and their speech are objects of an authorial attitude (and authorial speech). But the planes of the character's speech and that of the authorial speech can intersect, that is, dialogic relations are possible between them' (1986, p. 116). The dialogic relations between an adolescent character's speech and authorial speech can create an illusion that a character has an independent voice, but of course each character is an explicit construction of the author. This illusion of independence is shaped by the author's voice, by the ways in which they situate and develop that character in

their text. Adolescent voices in novels for adolescent readers assume a particular relationship with adolescent readers; it is a relationship between peers and assumes recognition and acceptance. Caddon (2000), whilst noting the irony that adolescent voices in YA novels lack the authenticity they purport to depict, also notes the significance of narrative structure in establishing the context in which they are heard.

It is a common convention in YA novels that the voice of the protagonist is usually an adolescent voice heard in the context of the voices of other minor adolescent characters. It is assumed that if adolescent readers do not recognise themselves in that adolescent voice, they accept that it reflects the voices of other adolescents. Authors' representations of adolescence and their calls to adolescent readers are inextricably entwined. Representations of adolescent voices in fictional settings reflect beliefs about the strength, stamina and authority of adolescents and their role in society. If adolescent voices are silenced or ineffectual then the author offers adolescent readers representations of adolescents that illuminate the difficulties of adolescence. Muted, isolated or absent adolescent voices convey images of adolescence as a state that is limited or controlled. This may not be intentional, although intent is often an integral aspect of some definitions of power. If adolescent voices are strong and capable then the author offers the adolescent reader representations of adolescents that illuminate the capacities of adolescence. McCallum (1999) expresses a concern that YA novels may present adolescent readers with a worldview that is unattainable through representations of powerful individuals acting independently. This would appear to support a belief that explicit representations of adolescents in YA novels speak directly to adolescent readers and have the potential to shape their perception of what is possible.



Voice is also a metaphor for the authors' calls to their adolescent readers. In YA novels, the authors create another kind of representation of adolescence in the interests, sophistication and understanding they attribute to their adolescent readers. The author's hail to their readers in YA texts speaks more indirectly to adolescent readers but is no less important. Authors imagine a readership, an audience for their authorial monologue, and they structure their texts in ways that they believe will appeal to that readership. They select techniques that they believe will position these readers so that their understanding will approximate the understanding of their ideal readers. Their choices are significant. Do they align their readers with their adolescent protagonist or encourage their readers to remain aloof? This aspect of the author's voice reflects their perception of what is possible in addressing adolescent readers, in effect the capacities and potential of adolescent readers.

This study explores these two aspects of the authors' voices separately: their articulations of adolescent identities and the ways in which they hail their adolescent readers, exploring patterns of similarity and difference in each. It does not compare a text's images of adolescent identities with the adolescent readers it appears to address. It is beyond the scope of the literary analysis employed in this thesis to make a comparison with census data about Australian adolescents from this decade, although this may be an interesting area for future exploration.

## **Theoretical Perspectives**

Culler notes that 'theory does not lead to a set of solutions but rather to the prospect of further thought' (1997, p. 122). This thesis uses multiple theoretical perspectives to facilitate analysis and stimulate further thought as each perspective highlights differing aspects of a text. The novels in this study have

distinctly different patterns of commonality when considered from different perspectives. Whilst no data is being measured, analysing a text from different critical perspectives can be likened to triangulating data in attempting to ensure a more reliable measurement.

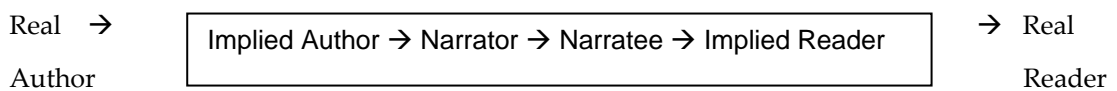
In order to better understand how the authors of this sample have tried to engage adolescent readers, this study relies on Althusser's notion of the significance of an author's interpellation of their readers and Pecheux's work which differentiates a range of subject positions that readers can adopt. Althusser argued that reading and writing are rituals of ideological recognition. In his view, a writer transforms readers into subjects by interpellating them (hailing them) through a text that the writer has constructed according to his or her beliefs about their readers (1976, p. 48). Readers become subjects when they respond to the author's hail because in doing so readers recognise and accept that they are the audience the author is addressing (p. 47). Following Althusser, this study considers how the authors have hailed adolescent readers by looking closely at the techniques the authors have used to attract their readers' attention, to position those readers and to guide their understanding. All of these techniques reflect an author's construction of their readers.

Pecheux's work on subject positions builds on Althusser's, with the significant difference that he suggests that there is more than a singular subject position available to a reader. Pecheux describes three different forms of subject position: that of an obedient subject, that of a resistant subject and that of a transformational subject. Such a framework allows the facility for considering a range of responses to a text that adolescent readers may have. Pecheux's subject positions are a very useful tool in textual analysis because they refute the assumption that a particular response to a text is inevitable. McCallum (1999) warns of the dangers of overemphasizing the construction of subjectivity within

society, a belief that reduces the individual to a mechanism. Pecheux's framework of subject positions is helpful in this instance but it should be noted that the responses of actual readers do not fit neatly into these categories. In considering these types of subject positions this study acknowledges that actual readers may consciously or unconsciously adopt different subject positions as their perspective alters. They are useful to the critical reader however as they demand that the critic consider alternative subject positions and acknowledge that readers can make choices. Similarly, they allow a focus on an author's intention, which may be to encourage the reader to read resistantly. Crew (*Strange Objects*) challenges his readers by offering them a variety of text types and narrative perspectives to consider.

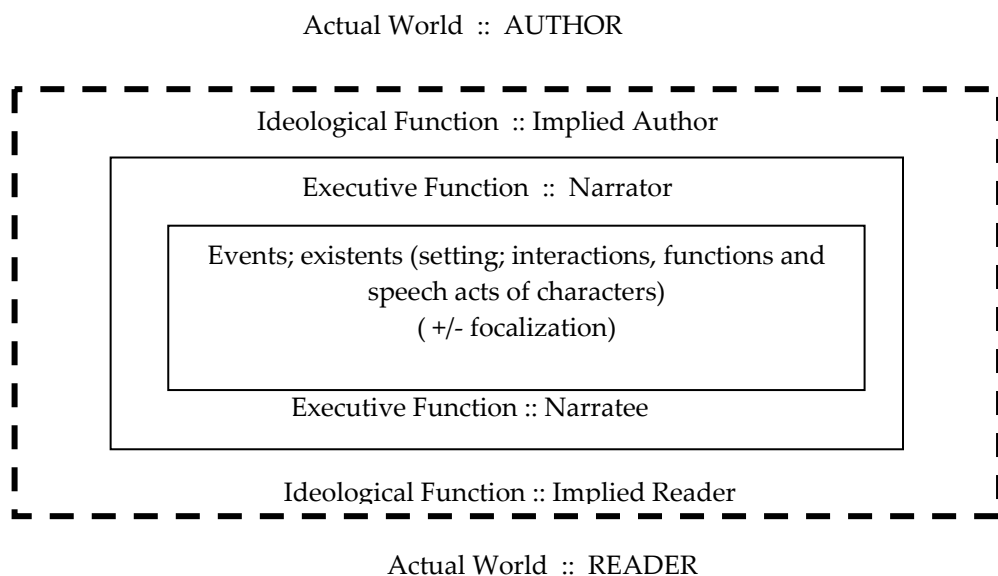
Pecheux's framework allows for the possibilities that an individual may either resist a discourse yet continue reading or that they may arrive at a new understanding that was not the author's intention. The obedient subject suspends 'the independent existence of the real as external to the subject' (1982, p. 20); obedient readers suspend disbelief and comply with the author's guidance. The resistant subject 'turns against the universal subject of ideology and counter-identifies with it' (p. 165); resistant readers read with a degree of scepticism. The transformational subject 'dis-identifies' with the subject position offered by the discourse. Pecheux described this subject position as one that seems to exist outside of a particular discourse and leads to the individual being able to articulate 'new knowledge' (p. 159). Transformational readers gain a knowledge that was not part of the author's intention. This reader gains an insight or a new understanding that could be as significant as an epiphany. One of the critical perspectives used in this study is a form of narratology, which Bal suggests offers 'a perspective on culture' (1997, p. 222). If so, then it would seem to be particularly appropriate to use it as a tool for examining beliefs about adolescence, itself a cultural construction. A precise focus on a

narrative allows different aspects of an author's use of voice to emerge, specifically through their narrator/narratee constructs and their manipulation of narrative time and space to create the context in which these voices are heard. The relationship between a fictional work and its readers is described in the model of narrative communication created by Chatman shown below. Chatman added the construct of a real author and a real reader as an external pair located outside of the text:



(Chatman 1978, p.151).

This model represents a narrative as a linear communication between the real author and the real reader, reinforced by the relationship between the internal pair constructs (implied author/implied reader and narrator/narratee). Stevens' frame of narrative transactions implies a similar relationship between authors and their readers. Authors are positioned at the top and readers at the bottom, however the broken lines separating them suggest a more mutable relationship:



(Stevens 1992, p.21)

Stevens' model illustrates the importance of the narrator/narratee function as a means for examining the explicit ideological assumptions of a novel. The omniscient narrator tries to guide the reader's reaction to the novel. The effaced narrator purports to show events as they happen, to tell the true story, guiding the reader's reaction more subtly.

Culler suggests that there are key questions that can identify meaningful variations in a narrative (1997, pp 87-92). This study does not examine all of these questions as Culler has framed them, yet it is reliant on these ideas for its structure. Chapter Two (Who Speaks?) and Chapter Three (Who Speaks to Whom?) follow Culler's suggestions. Chapter Four (Freedom to Speak?) reframes Culler's 'Who Speaks with what Authority?' to consider the protagonists' relationships with figures of authority, another aspect of the authors' representations of adolescence. Chapter Five (Who Speaks When and Where?) has adapted Culler's question (Who Speaks When?) to include place and thus consider the chronotopes in these novels. This chapter considers both the authors' construction of adolescent voices and their beliefs about the sophistication of their adolescent readers.

Analysis in response to the question 'Who Speaks?' reveals the authors' manipulation of the voices of their narrators and protagonists. Considering this question leads to a close study of the type of narrator the author has constructed and how that narrator frames the depiction of adolescent characters. In novels addressed to adolescent readers the chief protagonist is frequently an adolescent character. If the adolescent protagonist is also the narrator then whether they are reliable or unreliable is very significant. Readers may wonder if the protagonist's unreliability or reliability is particular to that character or an attribute of adolescence.

The question 'Who Speaks to Whom?' leads to a consideration of the voices of the minor adolescent characters as well as the author's manipulation of the narratee. Such analysis yields deeper insights into the nature of the narrator. A novel may have multiple narrators, each addressing a different narratee or the same one, but these multiple narrators may offer only an appearance of diversity. Encouraging actual readers to adopt the position of the external narratee - the narrator's confidante - may cause them to align themselves with the narrator and discourage them from questioning that narrative.

Chapter Four (Freedom to Speak?) reveals the status adolescent characters enjoy within their communities. This aspect of the authors' representation of adolescence is further investigated by considering the notion of whether adolescent characters have the freedom to speak. This study does not attempt to measure the ways in which reading YA Fiction enables or nurtures adolescent readers. Yet notions of power can be useful when considering representations of the adolescence. The literary notion of agency intersects with the notion of agency as 'the stabilizing and fixing factor in circuits of power' (Clegg 1989, p. 27). Clegg coined the phrase 'circuits of power' to describe how power operates within organisations. Analyses of organisations that employ this methodology focus on the questions of who speaks to whom, why and with what purpose. In that context there are two circuits, one of system integration and one of social integration. One circuit is based on a notion of power as facilitative and dispositional, employing techniques of discipline and production. The other is a circuit of social integration which is conceptualized in terms of rules fixing relations of meaning and membership (1989, p.19).

If we consider Clegg's theory in a literary context, it has a limited application. It can be conceded that a novel is an artefact carefully crafted and constructed by an author employing specific techniques in order to produce an effect. In

creating a narrative an author seeks to fix relations of meaning and to define their audience. Yet a novel cannot be represented by A (the author) getting B (the reader) to do something that B would not otherwise have done: an author cannot control a reader's interpretation of a novel. The notion of circuits of power can, however, be useful in considering the interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships represented in a novel. How is the protagonist represented in the context of their community? Does the novel imply that their role is fixed, determined by a circuit of social integration, or does it suggest that the protagonist has agency as Prince defined it (1987, p. 4)? If so then that representation of adolescence is a powerful adolescent, an adolescent who not only can make choices but also effect change in their community.

Analysis of the authors' manipulation of time and space in Chapter Five (Who Speaks When and Where?) reveals aspects of the authors' perceptions of their readers. Perhaps predictably the majority of novels in this sample are set in a contemporary period in an Australian landscape. However, in each novel the author has constructed time in two distinctly different ways, both through their sequencing of the narrative and their choice of a chronological period. The narrative sequence reflects an author's beliefs about their reader's literacy skills and interests. Although most of these novels are set in a contemporary context, the sample does include constructions of mythic time (a time that is associated with myth, legend or ritual) as well as past and future time. Some texts also integrate allusions to Australia's history and cultural links in representations of a distinctively Australian environment. This study will look for patterns of similarity and difference in these chronotopes and the demands they make upon adolescent readers.

Chapters Six, Seven and Eight focus on the authors' attempts to attract and engage their adolescent readers. Reader Theory examines the possibilities for

interplay between an author and a reader. Iser (1978) draws our attention to reading as a process when he suggests that the interpretation of a novel is always a result of dynamic interaction between a novel and reader. This interaction is dynamic in that the author cannot control the reader's response but their choice of narrative technique attempts to guide that response. The relationship between a reader and an author can be likened to that of a social contract. Readers freely and independently cede part of their liberty by entering into the world of the novel and subjecting themselves to the authority of the author for the sake of the benefits to be derived from reading the novel.

Reader Theory also provides a particularly relevant critical perspective when the texts being considered are defined by the age of their readers. Chambers (1977) urged researchers to redirect their focus from child readers' responses, their interpretations of a text, to consider how these texts construct their readers. Chamber's call for a focus on authors' manipulation of texts is echoed by Scutter in her study of Australian novels for adolescent readers (1999, p.9). Scutter urges researchers to scrutinize the configuration of values and the balance of power represented in these novels. Reader Theory allows a focus on how a novel reflects the author's beliefs about their readers, in particular the degree to which authors trust their adolescent readers' ability to engage with complex literary styles or controversial content.

McCallum extrapolates a theory of reading from Bakhtin's work, one that is based on adolescent readers making active choices, using a range of strategies for reading and response (1999, p. 258). Studies of reading behaviour emphasise the significance of the reader's role as an active reader. Myszor (1993) suggests that readers oscillate between certainty and uncertainty whilst Mackey (1995) suggests that readers strike a balance between momentum (getting on with the reading) and accountability (reading accurately). Mackey concludes that



individual reader preferences determine which way that balance is skewed; and suggests that a 'shared understanding' develops between the reader and their construction of an implied author. Authors, through the act of writing, address their story to someone other than themselves. So too readers, through the act of reading, attempt to understand the author's intention, although this understanding is highly subjective and reflects a reader's experience, ability and disposition.

Phrares' study supports Stevens' suggestion that all authors consciously try to control and shape the reader's response and hence the reader's attitudes (1992, p. 48). Phrares (2002) investigated the power relationship between author and reader after noting that author intention and audience response did not always match. He found that an author perceives the reader through the lens of self, attributing to readers his or her own characteristics whilst the actual readers in this study exhibited variations in the degree to which they connect to the author. Importantly, however, most of the readers did speculate about the author's intentions relative to the content and textual features of the novel and their responses consciously acknowledged the authority of the author. Their engagement with the text can be described as quest for the author rather than death of the author. In a discussion between author and readers, held after the texts had been read, the author attempted to re-direct his readers' responses and correct them. His focus was on discovering which features of his novel had led the readers to unintended meanings. Yet the readers persisted with their personal understandings even after this discussion. This would suggest that at some level these readers find their understanding of the meaning of the text more satisfying than that provided though the author's guidance.

As was mentioned earlier, the ideas of Althusser and Pecheux are useful in the context of Reader Theory. The obedient subject can be likened to an obedient

reader; the resistant subject can be likened to a resistant reader; and the transformational subject can be likened to a reader who, whilst not distorting a text, reads for purposes which its author never envisaged. This study argues that these reader positions are neither fixed nor mutually exclusive. They can be consciously or unconsciously adopted or discarded by readers according to their mood or purpose at any time. An actual reader may adopt the subject position of an obedient reader, shift to that of a transformational reader, and back again. An obedient reader may become a resistant reader or vice versa. Extrapolating from Pecheux's ideas allows the consideration of alternative responses to a text in a context that also acknowledges that reading is a dynamic process.

Whether a reader's subjectivity is effaced as part of the reading process is a problematic issue that this study does not address. However, Stevens does suggest that readers who align themselves with a protagonist do risk matching 'their own sense of selfhood with ideas of self constructed in and by the novel' (1992, p.68). It is a common characteristic that YA novels have an adolescent protagonist. This study will try to discover how these authors have positioned their adolescent readers and to what extent they are encouraged to align themselves with the protagonists. Stevens argues that 'the optimum enabling state for a reader is to have a number of available reading strategies, including an interrogative engagement with the implied reader' (1992, p. 70). Stevens' notion of a number of reading strategies aligns with Pecheux's framework of subject positions. The concept of an 'interrogative engagement with a text' also correlates with Iser's notion of reading as a process in which a reader can make choices.

If a reader's position is subjective and mutable then a reader's response can vary whilst reading a text as well as after reading the final sentence:

At first Gunno hadn't known either what was being taught. It made him think of the credits at the pictures where he just wanted the meaningless words to drift away and leave him with the picture which they seemed only to obscure. He had just wished that the speaker would leave the music to wash over him as he was used to: not study it, not try to understand what was going on in the composer's mind.

But as he listened and got pulled further and further into the teacher's [author's] framework he changed his mind. He could see what was being taught: ... (*The House Guest* 1993. p. 52)

This quote from Nilsson's *The House Guest*, one of the texts considered in this study, describes the moment when her adolescent protagonist consciously realises that his understanding of a piece of music has been altered by a new awareness. Nilsson appears to support Steven's contention by representing her protagonist's understanding as being enriched. Gunno's earlier enjoyment is not replaced or destroyed by this new understanding. Nilsson depicts Gunno as able to make choices; he can reflect upon his initial response, he can contrast it with his new understanding and he can draw his own conclusions. Perhaps unintentionally this extract also illustrates how an author attempts to position readers and guide their understanding to approximate that of the author's notion of an ideal reader.

YA fiction is sometimes popularly defined as texts that empower adolescent readers to become independent, mature readers. The notion of an adolescent reader as an autonomous reader is complex; it conjures notions of subjectivity and authorial control. Marshall offers a definition of autonomy as the autos, or self, adopting a nomos, laws or principles, independent of the judgements or manipulations of others so that the person is self-governing (1995, p. 367). Adolescence can be defined as a period of transition from the dependent state of childhood to that of an independent adult. Marshall states that personal autonomy is a fundamental aim of modern education but he qualifies this when he adds that the needs and wants of a child usually depend on underlying

values. Foucault (1980) argued that concepts of personal autonomy are mistaken, as the self is a social construct. This is further complicated when the concept of autonomy is being applied to adolescent readers, as adolescence is a cultural construct. Stevens suggests that all authors consciously try to control and shape the reader's response and hence the reader's attitudes (1992, p. 48). By applying Pecheux's descriptors this study seeks to avoid the assumption that adolescent readers will necessarily respond in the same way to an author's address. Not because an individual reader lacks the necessary skills or experience, but because that individual may choose to resist the author's guidance or they may see significance in a text that was not part of the author's intention.

Foucault describes power as situational, only existing when power relationships come into play. Authors create both situations and power relationships in their fictional worlds. Lewis Carroll describes the power relationship between author and reader thus:

'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.'

'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you **can** make words mean so many different things.'

'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master – that's all.' (*Alice Through the Looking Glass* 1871 reprinted 2005, p. 128)

Alice quite rightly questions Humpty's assertion of mastery or control. Yet in communicating to their readers, authors establish a discourse and try to guide readers' responses to that discourse. Power produces discourse (Foucault 1979, p.36) which is represented through the narrator and in conversations between characters. Foucault suggests that we should base our 'analysis of power on the study of the techniques and tactics of domination' (1980, p.102). The novels in this sample offer examples of discourse addressed to adolescent readers that

illuminate adult beliefs about adolescence, through the choices made available to these readers, if not the tactics of domination.

Iser suggests that a literary novel must position implied readers in such a way that they are 'able to view things that would never have come into focus as long as his own habitual dispositions were determining his orientation' (1978, p. 35). In saying this, he makes a distinction between what he calls a literary novel and popular fiction, a distinction that not all critics agree with. His notion is interesting in that it prescribes the roles of author and reader, emphasizing the authority of the author and assigning to the reader the role of an obedient reader. Adolescent readers may not readily accept either the authority of the author or the role of an obedient reader. Biason (1994) concludes that the responses of the adolescent readers he studied are very subjective and that they did not seek to 'negate their habitual dispositions'. He suggests that their enjoyment of a story was a key factor in motivating adolescent readers to try to understand an author's intention. Biason's findings would seem to affirm the importance of an authors' interpellation of their readers, in particular their attempts to woo adolescent readers through their hail.

### **Adolescent Readers**

Although this study explores the authors' beliefs about adolescent readers, there is no consensus on how to define this group. The term 'adolescent' is derived from the Latin 'adolescere' meaning 'to grow to maturity' (Slee 1993, p. 528) and this begs the question of how to define maturity. Similarly, adolescent readers cannot be defined as developing readers because when do we cease to develop as readers? However, the criteria of the awards won by the novels considered here endorse a definition of an 'adolescent reader' as an individual

between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, a definition also endorsed by the American Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA).

Adolescence, unlike puberty, is a concept that is 'historically, socially and culturally dependent' (Nikolajeva 2002, p. 3). Anxiety would seem to be the dominant emotion felt by adults about adolescence: anxiety about a child's ability to safely transit adolescence into adulthood. Keats describes adolescence as a darker space between infant contentment and balanced maturity, a time when the adolescent's intelligence drives him into a state where his:

New-found delight in ideas, the joyous liberty of speculation, is shadowed by his perception of the world's misery and pain, an awareness that gradually darkens the bright chamber and at the same time opens new doors ... all leading to dark passages. (Keats in Buckley 2000, p.2).

A desire to protect adolescents as they open these 'new doors' from the possible consequences of entering 'dark passages' is consistent with the responsibilities of a parent or mentor. Yet, Kristeva's notion of adolescent novels as a means for emotional growth and adolescent health implies a confident belief in the capacity of adolescent readers to meet the challenges offered by texts that are 'living discourses' rather than 'what if' novels. A living discourse moves as well as entertains readers. Put another way, it challenges the 'confident unawareness' (Caddon 2000, p. 147) of youth in order to encourage growth into adulthood. Hollindale, however, reiterates a warning of the dangers of YA texts that impose a premature adulthood on their readers by evoking 'epicurean nihilism' in fictive worlds that are incoherent and confused (1997, p. 120).

Kristeva sees an essential similarity between the notions of the adolescent and the child in that they are both 'mythical figures of the imaginary' (1995, p. 135). Kristeva makes the distinction, however, that adolescent novels in modern societies may fulfil a particular purpose by inviting their adolescent readers to

engage in imaginary activities that replace the rites of passage required by other societies. The notion of YA fiction as a literary rite of passage also contextualises adult concerns about this genre. Adolescent readers can be conceived as vulnerable because they are in-between, they have almost left children's literature behind and yet they are not ready for adult literature. Van Gennep's investigation of rites of passage in a variety of cultural contexts found that they involve three phases, separation, transition and incorporation (in Corsini 1996, p. 793). If we conceive of YA fiction as a literary rite of passage, it must offer adolescent readers a range of texts that connect to children's fiction (separation) and adult fiction (incorporation) as well as texts for the dangerous space in-between (transition).

It has been suggested that in the 1990s Australian parents were more anxious about books than any other form of media believing that 'books can change lives in a way that individual television programs don't' (Matthews 1997, p. 60). This belief perhaps reflects the period before access to personal computers and the internet had become commonplace in Australian homes. Nonetheless, Hunt (1997) suggests that the opposing desires of adults who control children's literature imply a conscious or unconscious acceptance of the important role literature has in passing on cultural mores to children and adolescents.

The pedagogical element is always present [in texts for children and adolescents], not only as didacticism and puritanical censorship but as a commitment to certain values and knowledge that the individual or community feel needs to be handed on. (Norst 1989, p.748).

These values and this knowledge may be implicit or explicit, intentional or unintentional. Norst's suggestion raises the question of whose values and what kind of knowledge are being taught and the possibility of contradictions, contradictions that Hunt alludes to when he describes children's literature as reflecting a 'texture of paradoxes' (1997, p. 103).

McCallum defined adolescence as a 'cultural fiction through and against which individual subjects define and construct their subjectivity' (1999, p. 257). In her view an individual's subjectivity, or sense of self, is established in dialogue with other people and the discourses that belong to the society and culture in which they live. The novels used in this study reflect the cultural construction of Australian adolescent readers in the last decade of the twentieth century. Meek (2001) notes the role that children's literature plays in developing children's understanding of belonging and differentiation and expresses a concern for evidence of multiculturalism in British culture. In a multicultural society such as Australia, adolescent readers bring to literature a range of understandings that reflect their particular cultural context. This makes the task of evaluating what is appropriate or desirable in texts that address such a diverse group more problematic. In seeking evidence of polyphony, this study is also seeking evidence of diversity, a diversity that allows for individual differences amongst adolescent readers from a range of cultural backgrounds.

Muss has stated a belief, controversial in some quarters, that authors interpellating an adolescent reader should create an adolescent protagonist. Muss argues that identification with an adolescent protagonist is beneficial for adolescent readers, because they benefit from vicariously experiencing the problems of adolescence depicted in YA Fiction. He believes that this reading experience assists the personal development of adolescent readers (1988, p. 83). His belief is consistent with Kohlberg's theory of moral development, which suggests that individuals can learn through role-play to restructure their own moral schemata and incorporate those of others. Muss' beliefs imply that adolescent readers will find reading fiction useful only if the characters and themes are centred in adolescent lives. An adolescent protagonist would thus seem to be an essential characteristic of novels addressed to adolescent readers.



Erikson's model of human development supports the usefulness of vicarious experiences for adolescent readers. Erikson, a Neo-Freudian, posits adolescence as a crossroads between childhood and maturity when individuals struggle with the question of who they are. In his model, adolescence is the crisis of 'Identity versus Role Confusion' and it lasts from the age of twelve to twenty. During this period, the adolescent experiments with various roles in their quest to find a niche for themselves in society (Rotter & Hochreich, 1975). Recent studies building on Erikson's work suggest that identity formation takes longer than Erikson assumed. These studies also argue that only a minority of adolescents, those who find it difficult to establish their own identity, experience an identity crisis (Shaffer, 1996).

Elkind's work, within Piaget's model, agrees that adolescent readers are more likely to be interested in novels with adolescent protagonists. However, it questions the assumption that adolescent readers identify with adolescent protagonists. Elkind argues that adolescent readers are protected from identifying too closely with adolescent characters because of their belief in their own uniqueness. Elkind suggests that adolescents commonly display two types of egocentrism. The first type is that of an imaginary audience, the feeling that everyone around is as concerned with and critical of the adolescent's actions as they themselves are. The second is a belief in the uniqueness of oneself and one's experiences that Elkind describes as a personal fable (Shaffer, 1996); the adolescent is absorbed in a unique journey of personal growth. The personal fable of the adolescent reader is a unique fable.

Elkind's notion of the personal fable is in direct contrast with the literary fable, traditionally a brief narrative pointing out a moral (Cuddon, 1991). Elkind's adolescent reader may believe that literary fables explain the actions of others but perceive no personal relevance. Narratives recounting the experiences of

other adolescents would be of great interest to adolescent readers, but they do not threaten them because of their belief in their own uniqueness. Novels focussing on the lives and activities of adolescent protagonists do, however, reinforce a belief that the activities of adolescents are of pivotal importance.

Piaget's model of human development suggests that adolescent readers are able to engage with complex texts. The period of Formal Operations begins at age eleven. In that stage, an individual's cognitive operations are reorganised in a way that permits them to think about thinking. Logical thinking is no longer limited to the concrete or observable. In this model, adolescents, unlike younger children, are capable of systematic deductive reasoning that permits them to consider many possible solutions to a problem. Later theorists, building on Piaget's work, divided the period of Formal Operations into two stages, 11-15 and 14/15+ (Muss, 1988) to reflect the differing levels of maturity between adolescents at age 11 and older adolescents.

Piaget's model suggests three characteristics for YA novels. Firstly, adolescent readers are ready to engage with novels that require abstract thought and have open-ended resolutions. Secondly, the sub-division of the period of Formal Operations corresponds with suggestions that YA Fiction be subdivided to create sub-genres of junior and senior YA Fiction to meet concerns about the suitability of some YA texts for younger adolescents. Thirdly, the period of Formal Operations is open-ended, it extends from eleven years onwards, suggesting that novels addressed to adolescents may equally appeal to some adult readers. There is a growing demand for crossover YA novels in the adult market. The term 'Crossover Novel', denoting young adult novels which have been repackaged for adult readers, was used in Australia in discussions in the Victorian Youth Literature Festival in 1995 (Nimon & Foster, 1997, p. 15). Beckett (1999) has since published more extensive research in this field.

## **Australian YA Novels**

Australian culture incorporates the notion of a boundary rider, a rider who periodically checks the perimeter of a property (farm), undertaking any maintenance required to ensure that fences are secure. Do, or should, Australian adults assume this role in the context of YA fiction, patrolling the perimeters of the genre to ensure that YA novels do not infringe boundaries created by cultural and social beliefs? If so, this practice would support Stevens' assertion that the emergence of YA literature in the middle of the twentieth century can be interpreted as an example of the use of story as 'an agent of socialization', a 'conscious and deliberate practice' (1992, pp. 8-9). In the context of this study, analysis would then reveal plainsong rather than polyphony.

Defining YA literature is not a simple task. Novels for adolescent readers are both a 'bridge between children's and adult literature' (Chambers 1979, p. 11) and an 'inferior type of literature' (Hanzl 1993, p. 94). Moloney, author of one of the novels considered in this study, appears to endorse limitations in the style and content of YA texts. He argues that authors of YA novels should avoid both writing in a style that is too complex and including material that is more appealing to adults (Jermolajew 1998, p. 34). Other authors of YA novels suggest that the limitations that they perceive as applicable to this genre create particular artistic challenges: 'In a YA novel of 40,000 to 70,000 words, every scene must be essential to illuminating character, moving plot, or working on a symbolic level. To do two of these at once is good, to do all three is impressive.' (Charbonneau 1995, p.18). Critics may agree with Charbonneau but concede that Moloney's opinions are supported by popular perceptions that novels for adolescent readers are only suited to that readership if they employ characterization that is less deep, subject matter that is less challenging, and

language and images that are less strong than novels addressed to adult readers (Lynch 1994, p.37). Such perceptions could create a genre that is formulaic and repetitive, at best bland and at worst patronising.

YA Literature is frequently characterised as a genre that is defined by its confrontation of social issues in texts that have hopeful resolutions. This of course begs the questions of what is real, whose truth is being depicted, and what sorts of issues might be considered realistic. As a definitive characteristic, it is confounded by the popularity of fantasy novels amongst adolescents. Stevens suggests that there is a universal need for closure in fiction but it is our beliefs about the needs of the adolescent reader that determines whether the resolutions of YA novels need be hopeful (1992, p.42). The notion of hopeful resolutions as a characteristic of the genre is perhaps connected to the readers it interpellates. Without hope there is no 'becoming', with which adolescent readers (who can be described as Becoming Adults) are assumed to identify.

Hollindale challenges any belief that an abridged or formulaic type of literature is appropriate for adolescent readers. He argues that child (and adolescent) readers are best served by a genre that incorporates diversity: 'Each child needs and deserves a literature, but the literature that meets their needs is unlikely to be a homogeneous one' (1988, p. 8). In Hollindale's view, novels for adolescent readers must address 'a multitude of themes from the everyday-realistic to the abstract, theoretical and conjectural'. They must use 'a range of modes from parochial urban naturalism to cosmic fantasy'. They must enlist 'narrative procedures from simple linear story to complex multi-voiced, multitemporal, intertextual strategies' because their 'implied readership embraces a wide range of maturity, education and intellectual competence' (1995, pp. 84-85).

YA novels have been compared to Bildungsromane as novels of education in the widest sense (Drabble, 1993 p. 54). In his essay *The Bildungsroman and its*

*Significance in the History of Realism* Bakhtin described Bildungsromane as images of man in the process of 'becoming' (1996, p. 19) and he proposed five sub-categories. In each of these there is a hero who is variable, whose character is emerging; the plot is interpreted in the context of changes in that hero; and time is fundamental to the story. Bakhtin suggested that the most common form of a Bildungsroman is that which depicts the hero's journey from youthful idealism and fantasies to mature sobriety and practicality. The hero of a Bildungsroman is a hero who successfully bridges the space between childhood and maturity. Bildungsromane always end with the end of adolescence and the construction of the image of a fully mature hero whose education or apprenticeship is complete.

Both genres have been criticised for an overemphasis on social issues that results in the neglect of the hero. In Buckley's examination of modern English Bildungsromane he deplored the degradation of the 'chronicle of self-discovery' into 'a sad testament of modern anomie' (2000, p. 269) in which the hero's emergence has become incidental to a focus on social issues. Scutter supports Buckley's beliefs and identifies a similarity between this form of Bildungsromane and Australian YA novels of the 1980s that 'envisage a future world whose dystopic features are terrible exaggerations of the social, political and ecological present' (in Bradford 1996, p. 3). Scutter asserts that some Australian young adult novels of the 1980s build up a construct of childhood/adolescence that can be likened to a lamb being 'thrown to the slaughter' (p. 9). Such novels she believes offer adolescent readers a didactic voice expressing nihilistic beliefs in inferior texts.

Trites suggests that many contemporary young adult novels are Entwicklungsgromane, novels of development, rather than Bildungsromane. The character of the adolescent hero emerges through change, indeed the plot of the

YA novel is often interpreted in the context of these changes. Time is an essential element to the story, the time of the journey. The hero protagonist of young adult novels usually undergoes personal growth during the period the novel depicts but his/her growth is incomplete, the resolution depicts a hero who is still becoming rather than one who is fully mature. Nikolajeva suggests that the hero's reluctance to pass over into adult life is a definitive characteristic of a genre she describes as the young adult novel (2002, p. 4). The young adult novel depicts a segment or slice of the hero's education; it ends with an expectation that the adolescent protagonist will continue his/her journey.

Some Australian YA novels of the 1990s challenge the belief that YA novels must have hopeful resolutions, these texts met with a mostly negative response. Niewenhuizen (1996) praises this trend but other critics, notably Enright (1997) and Macintyre (1997), fear that Australian YA novels had lost their balance and become uniformly bleak focussing on representations of social ills to the exclusion of all else. Elliott (1996) deplores an absence of optimism and asserts that the novels short-listed for the Sheaffer Pen Prize for Young Adult Fiction (texts considered in this study) are almost uniformly pessimistic and bleak. Yule (1997) argues that this imbalance is so marked that it constitutes a danger to adolescent readers. Legge (1997) is concerned that the trend towards nihilism in YA novels is so strong that it destroys any possibility of balance in YA texts published in this decade. The notions of inclusiveness and balance seem to imply an acceptance of nihilistic or bleak YA texts, however, critical responses focus on the dangers such texts posed to adolescent readers and reject them.

These fears reflect two beliefs, firstly that Australian YA texts had become a monophonic dirge and secondly that adolescent readers are passive recipients of not only the subject position offered by the author but also the beliefs expressed in that text. These beliefs can be expressed as a fear for adolescent

readers and a fear of adolescent readers. Yule's concerns are based on her experience as a clinical child psychologist. She fears that readers in a Piagetian mode of assimilation and accommodation will not question a nihilistic novel. Adolescent readers reading such texts would inevitably accept the values they represent. Yule argues that YA authors have positioned their readers as voyeurs in their depictions of suicide, homelessness, death, psychological disorders, eating disorders and physical, mental and sexual abuse. Addressing adult fears, Martin (1997), himself an adolescent at the time, argues strongly that some adolescent readers are not only able to mediate such texts but that these bleak texts are beneficial. He suggests that an adolescent reader can experience catharsis through reading bleak literature, supporting Waugh's belief about the importance of fearful fiction to readers. Waugh asserts that readers are always conscious that they are alive outside the novel and the vicarious confrontation of the fearful is a positive experience for a reader (1984).

The call within Australian society for a tighter control over what adolescents read expressed in the 1990s (Enright 1997) affirms the pedagogical role some attribute to this genre. The call for control, or censorship, led to a vigorous debate about the needs of adolescent readers. Irving, editor and critic, suggests that only gratuitous violence must be excluded from YA novels, to protect the adolescent reader (1997, p. 60). Niewenhuizen argues that restricting the scope of novels for adolescents will result in the repression of adolescent readers (1996). Harboe-Ree declares that censorship should be mandatory because writers of novels for adolescents have a duty of care for their adolescent readers (1996). Kroll, an academic and author, asserts that authors of YA novels had come to resent the 'burden of worrying constantly about non-literary matters' (1996, p. 345).

The debate about the need for hope in YA Fiction was exacerbated by the popular success of John Marsden's *Dear Miffy*, Margaret Clark's *Care Factor Zero* and Maureen Stewart's *Shoovy Jed* but it reached a crescendo with the critical acclaim for Sonya Hartnett's *Sleeping Dogs*. Hartnett's novel had been recognised for both its literary merit and its suitability for adolescent readers but adult concerns about its nihilistic themes led to its exclusion from many school libraries. Hartnett's response to these concerns was to define her award-winning young adult novel as a non-traditional young adult novel (1995). She argues that her novel addresses adolescent readers who are 'capable of understanding complex issues and a complex format' (1995, p. 5); Hartnett clearly articulates that she does not intend to address all adolescent readers, only adolescent readers such as Martin, the adolescent critic mentioned earlier. *Sleeping Dogs* is one of the novels considered in this study so it will be examined in more detail later.

Scutter notes a trend in the 1990s for novels for adolescent readers to depict nihilistic fictional worlds that lacked any sense of hope, 'horrific narratives of children and teenagers in extremis' (in Bradford 1996, p. 6) but disputes that it was a homogenous trend. Scutter also disputes that the adolescent readers are too naïve or inexperienced to engage with bleak texts and cites Gary Crew's *Strange Objects*, another text considered in this study, as an example of how a skilful author can deal with bleak themes in texts that address adolescent readers. Commenting on Australian novels for adolescents published prior to the 1970s, Scutter suggests that they reflect a belief that the child's journey to adulthood is based on a principle of accretion: 'The child begins as a lack, and adds to self to create a unity of parts equivalent to notions of completed adulthood.' (1996, p. 1). Commenting on Australian YA novels published in the 1980s and 1990s, Scutter suggests that this lack is relocated to the context of the



novel rather than the protagonist and that in these dystopian novels the child has but one choice, to refuse the values of the flawed adult world.

Scutter goes on to discuss what she perceives is a more significant problem with YA texts in the 1980s and 1990s, that authors place their readers in a subject position which encourages adolescent readers to read uncritically by discouraging alternative readings. Scutter urges the judges of the Children's Book Council of Australia in particular, and adults in general, to consider not only the values that are expounded in novels for adolescents but also those values that are marginalised or ignored. She suggests that the focus of analysis should move from a consideration of the 'emotion, contemporaneity and accuracy of voice' (1999, p. 34) to a consideration of the narrative style, the expressed beliefs that are articulated in a novel and the unexpressed beliefs that are unexamined in a novel.

Trites (2000) contends that sameness in YA novels belies their superficial appearance of diversity. She asserts that novels for adolescents are fundamentally about power, about the adolescent learning their place in the power structure of their society (2000, p. x). The adolescent quest for identity is actually a quest for a place. Trites' concerns about the authority of the society depicted in YA novels align with Scutter's concerns about the authority of the author over the reader. Trites concludes that the genre of novels for adolescents, Young Adult or YA Fiction, was created to simultaneously empower and repress adolescents. Goodson (2004) supports Trites' assertions about sameness. Goodson found that the typical protagonist in (American) contemporary YA Fiction is an upper/middle class white girl who is linguistically intelligent. Such protagonists may discourage adolescent readers who fail to recognise themselves as the reader the author is addressing.

## **Addressing a Dear Child or a Becoming Adult?**

Nikolajeva expresses the inherent tensions in YA Novels in using the phrase 'Dear Child' (2002) to describe the adolescent reader. This phrase may seem condescending or patronizing but Nikolajeva argues that it is an apt description of adult desires to protect adolescents from the anxiety which she suggests is the dominant emotion of novels for adolescence (2000, p. 205). The Dear Child can be likened to Hans Christian Andersen's Kay and Gerda, who arrive safely at adulthood, 'grown-up and yet children' able to enjoy a 'warm and glorious summer' (1980, p. 119). An adolescent's transition to adulthood is inevitable and irreversible. The desire of adults to prolong their protection of a vulnerable adolescent may be indicative of benevolence rather than condescension.

In a later article Nikolajeva interrogates this assumption of adult benevolence. She questions whether novels for adolescent readers reflect the needs and interests of adolescent readers or rather the prejudices of their authors (2002, p. 7). Nikolajeva warns that adult prejudices may restrict the genre to a 'conventional notion of problem-oriented, social-realistic, and not seldom didactic prose' (2002, p. 6). Hollindale quotes William Golding's belief that the fables of the twentieth century are perhaps not for children at any level. Yet he argues that it is precisely these types of fables that are the stuff of some 'excellent YA novels' (1995, p.94).

Hollindale perceives the adolescent reader as a Becoming Adult rather than as a Dear Child. His notion of the 'Adolescent Novel of Ideas' (1995, pp. 83-95) reflects his belief in the strength and abilities of adolescent readers. The adolescent novel of ideas invites the reader to engage with the poetry of ideas in novels that have the properties of fable. Authors of YA novels are, in his belief, free to select literary techniques and devices that will both engage sophisticated adolescent readers and establish a dialectic in fictional worlds

which confronts the adolescent reader with alternative or conflicting points of view which may be left unresolved in novels with open-ended or ambiguous endings. Hollindale describes a genre that not only encompasses polyphony but also demands it. It demands a diversity that refutes a formulaic set of requirements based on adult beliefs about adolescence, beliefs that could create a genre that is formulaic and repetitive, at best bland and at worst patronising. Authors of YA novels that can be described as 'Adolescent Novels of Ideas' interpellate mature adolescent readers who possess sophisticated literacy skills rather than Dear Children. Trites agrees that modern young adult novels allow 'for post-modern questions about authority, power, repression, and the nature of growth' (2000, p. 19).

Kristeva has written of the 'fluid frontiers' of adolescence describing it as less a developmental stage than an open psychic structure. She suggests that adolescent novels can apply filters that may lead to 'a stereotyped writing of clichés' rather than a 'living discourse that is not empty' (Kristeva in Fletcher & Benjamin 1990, p. 9). The belief that YA novels must inevitably have adolescent protagonists, a restrictive belief, assumes that this is the best way to engage the interest of adolescent readers, all of whom need to identify with the protagonist. This belief is, however, consistent with Erikson's notion that the quest for personal identity is an integral part of adolescence. Scutter notes that the content of recent Australian YA novels, those published after the 1970s, is more diverse than a reiteration of a protagonist's quest for identity. This can be interpreted as reflecting a belief that an adolescent's quest is not only to understand his/her own identity but also to understand his/her world. Kristeva's living discourse generates renewal through interaction, an apt description of novels that challenge their readers and encourage reflection. It is not expected that analysis of a sample of award-winning YA fiction will reveal

stereotyped clichés but it may reveal that an unconscious application of these filters has resulted in a creative uniformity that denies polyphony.

This is not a study of an author's body of work; it is a study of award-winning novels that belong to a particular time and place, the 1990s in Australia. It must be noted that different beliefs about Australian adolescents and adolescence may have been evident if other Australian texts from this period had been considered. The study considers only the award-winning texts because of the broader significance they derive from being nationally acclaimed as being the best Australian novel for adolescent readers written in that particular year.

Thus this study undertakes close textual analysis of fourteen prize-winning YA novels using the critical perspectives previously outlined. It is expected that this analysis will reveal whether the patterns of representations of adolescence and patterns in the authors' interpellations of adolescent readers are analogous to plainsong or polyphony. Plainsong, whilst beautiful to the ear, constructs a homophony that excludes difference. In the context of YA novels, the melody of plainsong may meet adult concerns about YA Fiction but it may also result in a genre that limits rather than nurtures adolescent readers. Textual analysis from multiple critical perspectives may seem repetitive but it is hoped that this methodology will lend validity to a critical opinion as to whether the authorial voices in these novels orchestrate a polyphonic melody with a rich texture of voices and open-ended dialogues - a rich texture that is Bakhtin's polyphony.

Chapters Two, Three and Four consider the authors' representations of adolescent voices. Chapter Two examines the question *Who Speaks?* focusing on the protagonists (usually, but not always, an adolescent in YA novels) and the narrators. Chapter Three examines the question *Who Speaks to Whom?* This allows a consideration of how the authors have portrayed adolescence through

subordinate adolescent characters and in the relationships between these characters and their protagonists. It also allows a consideration of the narratee. Chapter Four considers the degree to which the protagonist has Freedom to Speak? as conveyed through the authors' representations of the adolescent protagonists' relationship with figures of authority. In YA fiction these figures of authority are usually actual or surrogate parents. Is the adolescent protagonist able to voice beliefs that are different from and perhaps challenge the beliefs of their actual or surrogate parents?

Chapter Five reflects the connection between the two aspects of the authors' voices that this study considers to be representations of adolescence and addressing adolescent readers. Considering the question "Who Speaks When and Where?" allows a focus on the authors' constructions of time and place in their narratives. This reveals both the contexts in which adolescent voices are heard (representations of adolescence) and the narrative sequences the authors have constructed. The ways in which the authors manipulate narrative time reflect their beliefs about the capacity and sophistication of the readers they address.

Chapters Six, Seven and Eight consider ways in which the authors hail their readers in order to better understand the authors' implicit beliefs about their readers. Michel Pecheux's framework of reader positions will be used in order to consider a range of responses from the implied reader. This does not reflect an assumption that these subject positions are absolute and fixed. This study would suggest that Pecheux's types of subject positions would prove to be fluid and mutable in studies of actual readers. Nonetheless they are a useful framework for considering possibilities in a study based on close textual analysis. Chapters Six and Seven analyze those texts which work within the

conventions of texts for adolescent readers. Chapter Eight focuses on those texts that challenge these conventions.

Referencing in this study departs from the standard referencing format in two ways. Direct quotes from the sample texts are acknowledged with reference to the title of the texts rather than the author, e.g. *Night Train* p. 54 rather than Clarke 1998 p. 54. Comments that are based on specific sections of a text are referenced even if a direct quote is not made. For example, a comment referring to a section of *Came Back to Show You I could Fly*:

This address is moderated by the omniscient narrator's account of Angie's visit to home to see her mother (pp. 62-71).

Such references are intended to allow readers to evaluate comments on the texts when no direct quote is made.

## Chapter Two: Who Speaks?

This chapter explores the sameness or otherwise of the authors' representations of adolescent protagonists and their construction of a narrator. As YA fiction is defined by the age of its readership, the protagonists' voices are categorised according to their age. This reveals the multiplicity of age groups represented in the sample. Their characteristics are then compared to the characteristics attributed to that age group by Piaget. Vygotsky's notion of inner and outer voices is raised because some authors have depicted their protagonist's development through a closer alignment of the inner and outer voice. This sample of novels depicts a stage in the development of their protagonists rather than their arrival at adulthood and in this respect, they depart from the characteristics associated with Bildungsromane.

The response to the question 'Who speaks?' leads to a consideration of the narrator's voice and the voice of the protagonist, which in YA fiction is usually an adolescent voice. The significance of the authors' construction of a narrator as an aspect of their interpellation of adolescent readers will be considered in more detail in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight. The focus of this chapter is on discerning patterns of similarity and difference in the authors' representations of adolescence through the voices of their narrators and protagonists.

The narrator's voice is a tool that allows an author to establish the context in which we hear their protagonist's voice. Prince describes the narrator's function in a novel as being to explain the world inhabited by the characters, the motivation for their acts, and to justify their thoughts (in Onega & Landa, 1996, p. 196). The omniscient narrator may impress readers with their reliability and encourage them to trust the narrator's account of events. There are further subtleties in this construction. The voice of an unobtrusive omniscient narrator and the author's voice may actually appear to be identical. Whilst the voice of an intrusive omniscient narrator draws readers' attention to their presence and persona by commenting directly on the events and characters, they are still

reliable. The author encourages readers to assume that their explanations of an adolescent protagonist's motivation, thoughts and actions are trustworthy.

There is an inevitable discrepancy in YA novels between the perspective of an adolescent protagonist and that of the author unless the author is also an adolescent. In such texts, the novel may become semi-autobiographical. The author of one text considered in this study, Melina Marchetta, was twenty when she wrote *Looking for Alibrandi*. Her protagonist/narrator, Josie, is seventeen and she shares her creator's cultural background. These similarities have led some critics to ascribe a semi-autobiographical quality to this text. More usually, in novels addressed to adolescent readers there is a significant age difference between authors and their adolescent protagonists. Their constructions of adolescent narrators and adolescent protagonists interpret events according to beliefs and values that are attributed to youthfulness. These perspectives portray ways of being an adolescent. YA novels in which the adolescent protagonist is also the narrator can resonate with powerful representations of adolescence.

If authors create an unreliable narrator, they demonstrate that the narrator perceives and interprets events within a context that is limited by the narrator's beliefs and values. Peck and Coyle suggest that this technique hints at 'the complexity of experience' by emphasising the gap between 'life itself and any reading or interpretation of life' (1984, p. 113). If the unreliable narrator is also an adolescent protagonist, then authors may choose to exploit this difference as a way of conveying the protagonist's youthful inexperience. The term 'unreliable narrator' is the one traditionally used but perhaps it would be preferable in the context of an adolescent protagonist to describe them as being fallible because change is to be expected during adolescence. An unreliable narrator relates events through the prism of his/her own perspective. In novels



addressed to adolescent readers, an unreliable adolescent protagonist/narrator can evoke a powerful representation of the vulnerability of adolescence. If an author foregrounds discrepancies between events and the protagonist's perception of events then adolescent readers may be encouraged not only to interrogate the protagonist's beliefs but also perhaps to interrogate their own beliefs and perceptions. Authors may exploit this structure to offer their adolescent readers reassurance that as they mature they will become more reliable.

The first person narrative form, common in novels for adolescents, allows the reader privileged insights as protagonists reflect on past events and re-interpret their significance. This revised perspective also allows authors to represent growth, a vigorous potential for change that is a strength rather than a weakness. Authors may choose to portray the naivety of youth being moderated by experience or the enlargement of a protagonist's perspective. The altered perspective of adolescent protagonists may suggest that their heightened maturity makes them more reliable, if not omniscient, narrators.

The significance of the attribution of reliability to an intradiegetic narrator is evident in Crew's manipulation of his pre-pubescent narrator in *Angel's Gate*, the youngest protagonist in this sample of texts. Kimmy stands apart from the other characters in this text; readers are told that he is unique 'all of his own' (p. 213). Kimmy's observations of his sister Julia and Leena suggest that adolescence is a period in which all adolescents are pressured to conform. Kimmy wonders if he will ever have the courage to follow his sister's example, of flying away (p. 274). Crew subtly suggests to his readers that that the bravery Kimmy showed in confronting Ben Cullen, an armed policeman, (p. 264) pales in comparison to the courage Kimmy will need if he chooses to defy this pressure to conform. Crew neither affirms nor condemns the choice made by

Julia and Leena in depicting the consequences of their actions. Kimmy's awareness that he has the capacity to make a choice, albeit a difficult choice, is portrayed. Kimmy's reliability substantiates this belief and thus Crew moderates his theme of captive wild children and adolescents with a powerful representation of adolescent potential.

In the discussion that follows, texts are grouped by their type of narrator in the belief that this effectively reveals patterns of similarities and differences. It will be shown that even when authors have chosen the same narrational strategy they can manipulate it to achieve quite different effects.

### **Omniscient Narrators**

Four texts manipulate the device of an omniscient narrator to produce distinctly different effects. This not only illustrates the authors' creativity, it also demonstrates that using the same narrative device does not inevitably lead to a formulaic narrative, a criticism that has been made of YA novels. Nilsson and Moloney use an omniscient narrator to tell the story of an heroic adolescent protagonist, whilst Rubinstein and Hartnett's omniscient narrators tell the stories of vulnerable adolescent protagonists who fail to survive. Nilsson and Moloney diminish the differences between the perspectives of protagonist and narrator to convey their protagonist's heightened maturity. This is not to imply that these perspectives merge, but that they become more closely aligned. The resolutions of these novels suggest that the adolescent protagonists have altered their perspectives as a consequence of becoming more mature. Hartnett and Rubinstein do not align the perspectives of narrator and protagonist; they establish multiple perspectives in open-ended novels that individually could be described as polyphonic. Rubinstein's omniscient narrator establishes that Tod has choices, but does not reveal which choice he makes. Hartnett's omniscient

narrator constructs a context in which readers 'hear' each member of the Willow family.

Nilsson's *The House Guest* relates the story of an adolescent protagonist whose perspective alters to reflect a heightened maturity that is a direct consequence of the events depicted in the novel. Nilsson's narrator represents adolescence as a stage when individuals test the boundaries. Immorality is depicted as a phase that most of the HBS gang, except for Pete, outgrow. Their criminal actions are thus excused by their youth. The HBS gang are thieves; they break into houses to steal money. These actions are neither deplored nor regretted they are simply narrated. Although the gang disregards the laws of their community, they are not lawless; they have their own rules:

Rule 1: Appear mildly friendly with each other at school (p. 2)

Rule 2: Leave everything as you found it. (p. 8)

Rule 3: Don't take anything but money, and don't take it all from any one place.

No radios Pete, cassette recorders Wally, wallets Gunno. Only money. (p.9)

Rule 4: No dogs. (*The House Guest* p. 6)

Nilsson normalises the actions of these adolescents by firmly situating them within the community. One of their chief concerns is how to conceal their wealth from their parents and yet still use it to buy things (p. 29). As the novel progresses, as Gunno matures, the narrator describes Gunno's increasing discomfort about his actions (p. 89). Nilsson's omniscient narrator represents adolescence as a stage in an individual's journey in which youthful excesses are examined and left behind.

The narrator presents Gunno as a vulnerable adolescent who fears that he may become obsessive and that he shares his mother's madness, her ability to see the dead (p. 12). These fears are confirmed. Gunno's obsession with a house leads to a course of action that isolates him from his peers and endangers his life. Gunno's inheritance of his mother's psychic sensitivity allows him to connect

with Hugh's ghost. Nilsson's narrator portrays the adolescent Gunno as a boy who comes to accept his individuality and in doing so endorses this individuality. Gunno wants to be free, free of his fears, free of the obligations of the HBS gang, and free to think his own thoughts (p. 46) and he is successful. In the resolution Gunno has become Gunnar (Gunno's proper name). The implicit significance of this is that Gunno has achieved this freedom (p. 157). Gunno is cautious about this freedom however. The narrator tells us that his letter to his mother (p. 153) whilst not perfunctory (as his previous letters had been) does not reveal all that Gunno is feeling, '... this might only be the beginning. One day – but not now, not yet - one day he would tell his mother.' (p. 153). Gunno's caution echoes his earlier reserve with his father (p. 106). Gunno's freedom is located within a conventional social network of support and obligation. Gunno acknowledges the importance of Anne's support (p. 157) as part of this network by refusing her offer to give him Hugh's dog, although he is very fond of the dog, because he recognises the significance this dog has for Anne.

Moloney uses an omniscient external narrator because his fifteen-year-old protagonist is inarticulate and shy. The narrator depicts Carl as a noble adolescent who is compelled to assume adult responsibilities. In the prelude to *A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove*, the narrator describes an anonymous woman sneaking onto a bus. Readers are left to assume that this woman is Kerry, Carl's absent mother, in the act of abandoning her family. Kerry has a history of abandoning her children (p. 4). This time, Sarah, the eldest sibling, refuses the role of surrogate mother and tricks her aunt Beryl into accepting her brothers (for a holiday) with the bribe of the boys' social security payments. These details construct an image of Carl as a heroic adolescent, abandoned by his mother, deserted by his sister and unwanted by his aunt. As the novel progresses, Carl is shown to be reliable, responsible and resourceful (qualities his mother, sister and aunt clearly lack). Unlike the other (adult) Matts, Carl

tries to nurture a child (his younger brother) whilst attempting to win acceptance and a place in the small community his mother had run away from as a girl.

Carl's perspective is unreliable, however, because it is coloured by his low self-esteem. This is paradoxical in an adolescent protagonist whose chief characteristic is his reliability. Carl's unspoken fear is that if he is unlovable and thus he is responsible for his mother's desertion (p. 36). This lack of self-belief is reinforced by Aunty Beryl, 'there's something wrong with you' (p. 32). Carl's stoicism is linked to his belief that he and his feelings are worthless. The narrator conveys Carl's transformation by describing his tears after being told that Kerry was returning to her children (and him) when she died (p. 241). Carl's changed perspective allows him to acknowledge his emotions.

By contrast, the unintrusive narrator in *Foxspell* poses questions rather than offering answers, pointing out inconsistencies rather than describing the protagonist's growth towards a more mature perspective. Rubinstein's narrator leaves readers questioning what is real. The narrator leaves unexplained the discrepancy between the world of Tod's family and friends and the world of Dan Russell, a spirit world that lies 'all around them' (p. 184). Similarly, conflicts between different perspectives are left unresolved. The narrator in *Foxspell* blends mythology with the portrayal of Tod who, like Carl, craves friendship, acceptance and love.

The omniscient narrator's voice in this text is detached from the events and characters, both human and animal, in describing the fallibility of adults as well as adolescents. The adults in this family are portrayed as being essentially selfish. Tod's father has abandoned the family; Tod's mother exploits her children to establish her career as a comedian (p. 159). Grandma seems reliable

(she has provided a home for her daughter and her three grandchildren) yet she is wilful, 'I'm allowed to! I'm an adult. I've earned my right to swear when I want to. You're just a kid. So no swearing out here, okay?' ( p. 7). Grandma's notion of adulthood offers no comfort to Tod, the adolescent protagonist, 'Sometimes he almost liked her, other times she scared him' (p. 7). Rubinstein's narrator implies rather than states Tod's vulnerability:

'He felt adult and mature as he contemplated life. There were good times and bad times. He knew that much already, even if he was only twelve, two years younger than Charm and five years younger than Dallas. You just had to sit it out through the bad times because things always got better in the end.'  
(*Foxspell* pp. 5-6).

The narrator presents Tod with choices that test this belief. Tod can align himself with his middle sister, the rebellious Charm, and join the gang led by her boyfriend. Alternatively, he can reciprocate his Grandma's affection and align himself with his older sister, the dutiful Dallas, and her boyfriend, the police officer. A third choice is to leave this world and enter the world of the Fox Spirit, Dan Russell. Doing nothing and sitting it out does not, however, seem to be an option; Tod cannot be passive. The narrator relates the fatal consequences of the wrong choices by depicting the deaths of the young fox (p. 3) and Adrian (p. 188) but does not reveal Tod's choice or its consequences.

In *Sleeping Dogs* Hartnett uses an intrusive extradiegetic narrator to depict an abusive dysfunctional family and acts of incest and filicide. The narrator contextualises the events of the text from the perspectives of the Willow children, their mother Grace, and Bow Fox to build an image of the Willow children as individuals for whom conventions are irrelevant because they exist outside conventional morality. Michelle wears her second-hand clothes to town (clothes she hopes are the clothes of deceased residents of the town) in the hopeful expectation that her actions will distress and is irritated rather than

disappointed when this does not happen (p. 11). Hartnett's narrator represents matter-of-factly the outcomes of being raised in a family where physical and emotional abuse is the norm. The life and death of the protagonist is the most extreme example of these consequences. The narrator locates the tragedy of Jordan's life and death firmly in the context of the tragedy of the Willow family.

## **Multiple Narrators**

Klein, Jinks, Crew and Clarke construct multiple narrators (an external narrator supplemented by one or more characters). The beliefs of adolescent protagonists are expressed directly and indirectly in broader societal contexts. This narrative technique creates multiple points of view but does not inevitably create an open-ended text.

Angie's voice in *Came Back to Show You I could Fly* is primarily contextualised by the voice of the narrator, but readers also hear the voices of Angie and her mother directly, through their letters and lists. Klein's omniscient external narrator portrays Seymour's complexity, a complexity that suggests youthful naivety, 'Someone as nice as Angela couldn't possibly be a thief' (p. 54) rather than a lack of intelligence. Seymour's intelligence is evident in his awareness of his parent's flaws. His father is a thief, who steals Seymour's savings to spend at the pub (p. 14); his mother's helpless persona is a veneer for her manipulative personality (p. 7). Seymour's failure to recognise Angie's deliberate deceits and her addiction is a consequence of his desperate desire for a friend (pp.41-42). Klein uses her narrator's description of Angie's friendship with Seymour to demonstrate Angie's kindness. It is the narrator's description of this relationship that makes Klein's representation of the possible rehabilitation of an adolescent protagonist who is both pregnant and an addict, credible.

Angie's vulnerability is conveyed through her lists, which document her impractical attempts to take control of her life. These lists are contextualised by the narrator's voice. The narrator makes it clear that Angie's voice cannot be trusted because her interpretation of events is shaped by her addiction whilst conveying her charm to readers, a charm that Klein reinforces by allowing Angie to address readers directly. Klein uses letters and lists to construct multiple perspectives for her readers to consider. Whilst Angie's lists are intended to appeal to readers' sympathies, they do not show any evidence of change or development in her character. Her first note ends '**HARD TIMES!!!!!!**' (p. 31) and her last note ends 'Oh God!' (p. 147). This change is conveyed through the narrator's voice, her letter to Seymour and Seymour's letter to her. Angie's letter to Seymour reassures him (and readers) that she is getting along fine and that she will not neglect her baby. Angie believes herself to be almost at the top of her mountain but declares that she has yet to look at the view (p. 183). Klein creates this image to imply an open-ended resolution in this text and to reinforce the perspectives of her narrator and Seymour.

In *Eye to Eye* both narrator/protagonists are equally prominent and each narrates events from a singular perspective. Neither character is omniscient nor are they reliable. Jansi is a 13-year-old boy, the illegitimate result of an incestuous relationship; PIM is the artificial intelligence controlling the spaceship. Readers are conscious that they enjoy a position of privilege, comparing different perspectives of the same events. Jinks' narrative can be described as post-human because it poses the question of what it is to be human. PIM is not human yet his compassion for Jansi displays his humanity. The relationship between machine and boy develops to the degree that PIM's concern for the adolescent's welfare becomes his paramount concern, causing him to act in a way that subverts other programmed directives:



'And you would be sad if I were destroyed?'

'Of course I would.'

'Then I shall give the matter some thought.' PIM is speaking very softly. 'It is a view that I have never considered. If your happiness depends on my wellbeing, then my own rules of conduct force me to look carefully at any action that may affect that wellbeing.' (*Eye to Eye* p. 113)

The resolution of the novel depicts an adolescent protagonist who has experienced great personal and emotional growth. Jansi is healthier, better educated and emotionally more stable. He has learned that he can trust and rely on PIM because PIM, unlike all the human adults, has attempted to look after him. Yet Jansi's future remains uncertain, despite PIM's reassurance that Rodan will be a safe haven, because Jansi's only security is his relationship with PIM.

The transformation that has occurred in PIM is suggestive of traditional Bildungsromane. His education is complete and he is returning home. Jinks illustrates the remarkable transformation that has occurred in the machine by focusing on its concerns for the boy:

'Sayeh, Jansi.' Dance, Jansi. Laugh. Strut. Throw up your arms. You should be pleased with yourself. ... It is Jansi's favourite music. It travels across the desert, in pulsing waves of sound, as Jansi twirls and sways on my viewer. As Jansi watches himself dancing, and smiles a small, uncertain smile.

Dance, Jansi. Laugh, Jansi.

Show them what you can do. (*Eye to Eye* pp. 150-1)

From this quote we can infer that despite its dual narrators (and although PIM's development is extraordinary) Jansi is the chief protagonist in this text. It is his image, and the possibility of his future achievements, that is the final image of the narrative.

Crew creates a remarkable range of adult and adolescent voices in *Strange Objects* in narrative fragments that illustrate a variety of text types.

Paradoxically rather than making Crew's control recede this may heighten readers' awareness of Crew's art. Crew foregrounds the context and perspective

of each narrative sequence and encourages adolescent readers to question the reliability of each speaker or writer as the novel unfolds. Again, readers have a position of privilege in that they are able to compare differing accounts of the same events. Crew's adolescent protagonist, Steven Messenger, is framed in a complex narrative that links past, present and mythic time. It can be argued that this is a novel of education for its readers rather than for the protagonist. Steven Messenger is physically, socially and emotionally isolated. The ambiguous resolution of the novel, if not anticipated, is made tolerable because it is consistent with Crew's narrative style.

Crew begins the narrative with a puzzle: what caused Steven Messenger to disappear two years earlier? The mystery of Steven's Messenger's disappearance is, however, subsumed by the mystery of Steven Messenger's illness. Steven's story is framed within a detective novel that encompasses multiple mysteries. Readers are provided with clues and a series of accounts from a variety of perspectives. Steven Messenger is introduced as a loner, positioned off to one side of the group in the cave where the relics are found (p. 8). His initial perceptions seem reliable, he senses that something is wrong about that cave and he is correct. As Steven reveals more of his beliefs, however, his reliability becomes questionable:

The Abo kids from near the town were OK and clean enough, but the ones who came in from the properties weren't the same. They needed a wash and looked as if they'd cut your throat. If one came near me I'd move. They didn't care. After school (that is if they turned up at all) they disappear back into the bush where they came from. In my opinion it was better that way.

*(Strange Objects p. 19)*

Steven hates all of the other students, but especially Kratzman, who 'Never took my side, even though we were neighbours' (p. 23). Steven retreats to his room and his behaviour becomes more bizarre. He decides to build a 'skeleton maker' renamed as the 'life frame' (p. 93). He plans to trap a living creature and let the

ants devour it because using a dead piece of road kill in the life frame would not have been the same (p. 94). Steven does not think about the cruelty of what he is contemplating; he has an almost scientific detachment, perceiving the creature as a specimen. Similarly, he objectifies the Aboriginal elder Charlie Sunrise: 'But I got rid of him. I hit him with the back of my hand. He was nothing, only bones. I heard his skull crack against the rocks.' (p. 157).

Crew uses multiple narrators and the device of a ring to link the disintegration and descent into paranoia of a contemporary adolescent with a historic tale of madness and murder associated with another adolescent. This re-directs the focus of the narrative away from the fate of its protagonist, Steven Messenger, to larger issues. Crew diverges from this mystery to pose questions about an individual's responsibility for his/her actions; Australian society's treatment of the mentally ill; the existence of evil; the treatment of Australian Aboriginals and what is reality?

In *Night Train*, Judith Clarke uses multiple narrators to portray the impact of the death of her adolescent protagonist from a variety of perspectives. Clarke begins the novel with Luke's sister narrating her impressions of his funeral. Clarke constructs Luke as a bright adolescent who is deeply depressed by his inability to cope with the pressures of school and his feelings of isolation. He yearns to return to childhood because, 'He'd been solid back then. Now he was all bits and pieces; worries and doubts and fears and little hopes all jumbled up together, like bits of a puzzle rattling around in a box' (p. 11). Clarke confirms Luke's fears, his vulnerability is apparent to the Year 7 students who call him 'loopy Leman' (p. 35). Clarke's use of multiple narrators validates Luke's perception of his isolation whilst the contrast she establishes between the separate perspectives of each character implies that all humans are isolated to some degree. Each narrator reveals his or her own difficulties, weaknesses and

vulnerability constructing a strong image of an imperfect world. Clarke represents Luke's depression as singular because of its degree, but implies that it is not unique. Readers hear echoes of his unhappiness in the voices of other narrators. Luke's sister Molly is sad because she believes that Luke is all her father cares about (p. 97) and is angry that her mother is unable to sense her concerns (p. 98).

Luke's death is not suicide although this is what his parents fear and other adults believe. Tragically, his attempt to take control and consequent search for proof of his sanity led to his death. Luke seeks the night train hopefully:

'Luke staggered and went down. The brakes screamed and the wind roared and there was a strange flat thump like a sack of flour thrown out onto the road.

Luke heard that thump. They always said that it didn't hurt, the blow that smashed you up for good, that made your soul come flying out – but it did hurt, it did.

"No!" he heard a voice say somewhere and he saw Naomi standing in a darkened street, her hand on the latch of someone's gate. The wind blew and a shadow fell across her fingers like a mark. He felt himself rise and then fall again as if on the crest of a mighty wave, sucked under into a darkness which filled his mouth, his ears and nose, his eyes.' (*Night Train* p. 168).

The reference to Naomi shifts the focus from Luke's death to Naomi's vulnerability. Naomi is silent in a resolution that depicts Luke's parents and Molly expressing their grief. Naomi's fear that she is responsible for Luke's death (p. 156) is not expressed. The resolution leaves readers fearful for Naomi.

Clarke represents Luke's death as the consequence of an accumulation of missed chances, misinterpretations and bad luck. As a child, Luke had not understood that he could talk about the fears he developed after watching a TV documentary (pp. 161-2). As an adult, Luke avoids speaking to his father by feigning sleep (p. 160-3). Luke misses a chance to hear Molly tell him how much he is admired (p. 149). The letter that Luke dreads bringing home is only an invitation to the Year 12 Parents' Dinner (p. 166). This accumulation of missed

opportunities creates an impression that Luke's death was preventable. Nonetheless, Clarke uses the voice of an omniscient external narrator to convey the ordinariness of this tragedy. The adolescents who go the scene of Luke's death to 'look for blood and signs' (p. 170) are shocked to find instead that 'It was just so ordinary; that was the scary thing' (p. 171).

### **Reliable Adolescent Narrator/Protagonists**

Authors who construct reliable adolescent protagonists create images of powerful adolescents. Only two authors in this sample of texts do this, Gwynne and Carmody.

Blacky's belief that 'Grown-ups didn't solve problems, they made them' (p. 214) is supported by Gwynne in *Deadly Unna?* Adult characters perpetuate racism rather than challenging it. Blacky's father is not a loving and supportive father who acts as a role model for his children; he is an abusive and violent drunk. Blacky rebels and defies adult beliefs, albeit discreetly, by attending the funeral of an aboriginal friend and painting out racist graffiti in the town. At fourteen, Blacky is conscious that he is leaving childhood behind and is nostalgic for its simplicity (p. 163). Adults offer no solutions and there is no solace in religion, only more questions. Mrs Ashburner cannot say whether Dumby Red and Victor McRae, the man who shot him, will both go to heaven (p. 219).

Blacky's admiration for Dumby Red, the talented Aboriginal athlete who is shot whilst participating in a robbery, is based on Dumby Red's skill as a footballer. Gwynne contrasts Blacky's life and that of the Aboriginals who live outside of town. Blacky is fourteen, the oldest boy in a 'tribe' of siblings (p. 31). His actual name is Gary, but his nickname reminds everyone that he is a Black, the son of a drunken and abusive father. The Blacks are part of the Port community but

they are accepted rather than respected. Dumby Red's skill as a footballer earns him respect but not acceptance, because he is an aboriginal. Gwynne refers to football to impress readers with Gary's honesty and his self-awareness. Gary knows his limitations; he knows the theory of football but cannot play intuitively (p. 16). His first reaction to Dumby Red is jealousy:

I suppose in the beginning I was jealous, because he was so talented. He could do it all, all the clichés – take the big grab, snap goals from impossible angles, kick equally well with either foot, run past people like they were standing still. He could have kicked ten goals every match if he wanted to, but he gave out heaps of handballs. If you called for a ball he'd pass it to you. He was a real team player.

Dumby was totally up himself, there's no denying that. He couldn't walk past a mirror or shop-window without stopping. I'd even caught him looking at his reflection in a puddle, giving that white comb of his a good work-out.

Despite this I still like him. Probably because he was mad. Really mad. Madder than a cut snake. Life was never boring when he was around.

So I stopped hating Dumby's guts. Except I still acted like I did. I was used to it, I suppose. It was easier to stay like that. (*Deadly Unna?* p. 26)

Gary lies to others, but not to himself or to his narratee. Gwynne's narrator is a heroic figure who acts despite his fears. Gwynne establishes that Gary is not eager to flout popular opinion; when Blacky decides to retire from football, he is circumspect (p. 140). The question of whether or not Blacky should attend his friend's funeral is made complex by the fact that Dumby Red died whilst he was attempting to rob the local hotel. Attending this funeral will flout community sympathies that lie with the publican. Blacky is also nervous about the Aboriginal community's reaction to his presence (p. 218). Blacky defies his fears and attends the funeral because of his feelings of loyalty to 'his mate' (p. 30).

By constructing Blacky as a reliable narrator Gwynne endorses his pragmatic views. The climactic confrontation between father and son in this text has a mythical quality. One night Blacky steals the keys to the shed from his sleeping father and deliberately takes his father's favourite brush to paint out some racist graffiti. His father is depicted as a sleeping ogre, who treats his paintbrushes

better than he does his children (p. 262). Predictably, the ogre wakes before Blacky can make good his escape. Gwynne conveys Blacky's development in the ensuing confrontation. Previously Blacky had lied to avoid or defuse confrontations with his father. When he wanted to go to the funeral, he told his father that he could not go fishing because he was going to a barbeque (p. 213). Now he rejects this course of action. Happily, Blacky wins this confrontation. He and his siblings vanquish the ogre and they all go down to the jetty together to paint out the graffiti. Gwynne ends the novel with a peaceful image of the siblings contentedly asleep but this image is tempered by Blacky's pragmatism, 'I closed my eyes. Tomorrow there'd be hell to pay, but at that moment, down there at Bum Rock, my brothers and sisters around me, I was happy' (p. 272).

Carmody constructs her adolescent protagonist, Nathaniel, as both narrator and 'author'. The resolution of *The Gathering* reveals that Nathaniel has a higher purpose for ensuring that his narration is both accurate and reliable, 'That's why I decided to write this whole thing down. Because books can live forever and as long as this book lives with my name on it, the dark will sleep. *May the Chain Prevail Long!*' (p. 266). Nathaniel uses the benefit of hindsight to try to ensure that his account of the events is accurate. Carmody must support Nathaniel's veracity to create a hopeful resolution.

Carmody depicts Nathaniel as an adolescent who learns to trust his perceptions. His premonition about Three North (p. xiii) is confirmed. Indeed, Nathaniel predicts the resolution of this text in beginning of Chapter Two (the abattoir, the coven and the sacrifice of The Tod). Nathaniel learns to trust his ability to see the truth:

I looked up as a grin spread over Mr Karle's face. There was something unpleasant about the smile. I thought a maniac who killed people for fun might smile like that. Then it disappeared and I wondered if I had imagined it because Mr Karle looked concerned and sympathetic. (*The Gathering* p. 30)

When Nathaniel's mother sides with Mr Karle against Nathaniel (p. 33), she demonstrates her unreliability. This is significant in that Carmody shifts the notion of unreliability from the perspective of her adolescent protagonist to that of his adult parent. This image of maternal unreliability is compounded by images of paternal murderous rage. Nathaniel's reliability is both recognised and rewarded by his mother's decisions to tell him the 'whole story of his father' (p. 263) affirming Nathaniel's memory that his father had tried to kill him (p. 264). Carmody prepares readers for these revelations by linking Nathaniel's first impression of Three North with his memories of his father (p. xiii). After confronting and defeating a mythical evil in the Kraken, Nathaniel is able to confront his father's obsessive jealousy and violent rages. Residual memories of a trip to the zoo (p. 147) surface, and nightmares of his father attacking him (p. 171) are acknowledged:

'So that's why we moved so much,' I murmured.  
I wanted to ask why she hadn't left him sooner, but I knew the answer to that. Like the little monkey in the zoo, she had simply been too frightened. I even knew why she had taken me to see his body. Not for me to get over him, as I had imagined, but so that she could be sure he was dead; that the nightmare was really over. (*The Gathering* p. 265)

Nathaniel's admission that he had misunderstood his mother's motivation is both a criticism of his mother (for concealing the truth) and evidence of his maturity (shown by his ability to view events from her perspective).

Carmody emphasises the contrast between the fallibility of adults with the reliable instincts of her adolescent protagonist. Nathaniel resists the appeal of the Gathering (p. 3) and chooses to become a member of the Chain (pp 34-43). His mother's fears that Nathaniel has inherited his father's madness, that he has become an arsonist and that he killed his dog are demonstrated to be false. Her willingness to consider having Nathaniel institutionalised on the advice of Mr Karle, the adult persona of the Kraken, endangers her son (pp. 230-233).



Nathanial's mother admits past mistakes in the final pages but her fallibility is perpetuated:

'I was wrong,' She hesitated. 'Nathanial, I'm sorry I believed you ... hurt The Tod.'

'It's all right,' I had murmured, hugging her, because I knew it hadn't been her. It had been Cheshunt, working on the darkness in her.

'It's over now,' she whispered into my neck.

But she was wrong too. (*The Gathering* p. 265)

Carmody's protagonist is a representation of an adolescent who successfully assumes authority and responsibility.

### **Unreliable Adolescent Narrator/Protagonists**

In her two novels, *Pagan's Vows* and *Pagan's Scribe*, Catherine Jinks constructs two adolescent narrators, Pagan and Isidore, with remarkably similar characteristics. Both narrators are orphans, both have found a place within the medieval Catholic Church, both have tainted blood (Pagan was born an infidel while Isidore was born with epilepsy) and both acquire a surrogate father figure. For Pagan this man is Lord Roland, and for Isidore it is Father Pagan. The adult Pagan's relationship with Isidore is plausible because he is following the model established by Lord Roland. Both adolescent narrators are intelligent and critical of their elders, yet their perceptions are flawed by their insular focus.

Jinks represents adolescence as a period when an individual's judgement is not to be trusted, however intelligent that individual may be. The adolescent narrator is too self-absorbed, too naïve. In these two novels, her adolescent narrators become more reliable as their perspectives broaden with experience. Pagan's comments about the monks and his fellow novices are revealed as being inaccurate, 'How can this be happening? How did I get all these friends?

And Clement – Clement never told me –’ (*Pagan’s Vows* p. 198). Isidore is also portrayed as becoming aware of his fallibility, ‘I didn’t realise ... how could I fathom such depths? He must have loved him as his mother and father. He must have loved him as his own soul. How could I know that?’ (*Pagan’s Scribe* p. 203). The resolutions of these novels depict an adolescent narrator who has developed a greater knowledge of his own value and his dependence on others. In *Pagan’s Vows*, the adolescent Pagan is enabled to leave his surrogate father to pursue further studies under the aegis of the Church. In *Pagan’s Scribe*, Father Pagan offers Isidore similar support, reassuring the adolescent Isidore that ‘you’re worth saving’ and ‘Lean on me, and you’ll be fine’ (p. 210).

Melina Marchetta also constructs an adolescent narrator whose voice is subjective and unreliable in *Looking for Alibrandi*. Josie may declare ‘I’ll never do anything I don’t want to do’ (p.162), yet her life is full of small and large compromises. She participates (against her wishes) in the annual Tomato Day at Nonna’s (p.171) and she does not go home to Mama (despite her wishes) when she hears about John’s death but stays to sit the Economics exam instead (p. 232). Josie is contradictory. She tells the reader that she craves normality (p. 219) but refuses to be adopted by her father (p. 247). Josie wants to escape tradition and carve her own path (p. 46) yet the resolution depicts her celebrating the ties of family and friends:

‘I’ve figured out that it doesn’t matter whether I’m Josephine Andretti who was never an Alibrandi, who should have been a Sandford and who may never be a Coote. It matters who I feel I am – and I feel like Michael and Christine’s daughter and Katia’s grand-daughter; Sera, Anna and Lee’s friend and Robert’s cousin.’  
(*Looking for Alibrandi* p. 261)

Marchetta does not fulfil Josie’s expectation that she will ‘start university with a fresh mind and no problems’ (p. 165). Instead, she maintains her subjectivity and begins university with an awareness of the complexity of life.

## **An Eclectic Mix?**

The adolescent protagonists of these novels represent a range of ages, from ten to twenty. It is a wider range of ages than that usually associated with adolescence although it closely approximates the period Erikson called 'Identity versus Role Confusion', the period of twelve to twenty years (Shaffer 1996, p. 52). Erikson described this period as the crossroads between childhood and maturity, when the individual confronts the question Who Am I? a common theme in YA novels. In a Piagetian framework, eleven years and beyond corresponds with the period of Formal Operations where the individual develops the ability to think about thinking, to consider the abstract rather than the concrete, to consider the issue rather than the event. This study groups the fifteen protagonists into three age-defined categories: under fourteen, under eighteen, and over eighteen. Under fourteen corresponds with early adolescence. Under eighteen corresponds with late adolescence, and over eighteen with young adulthood. Viewed in this context, similarities and differences in the voices of the adolescent protagonists quickly become evident. Do these voices articulate different and contrasting ways of being an adolescent or do they reiterate and reinforce a singular way of being?

The characteristics of the voices of protagonists under the age of fourteen are consistent with those proposed by Erikson and Piaget. Collectively their voices illustrate a progression from acceptance of an assigned identity to a concern about their unique characteristics. Their voices also demonstrate an increasing comfort with symbolism and an ability to vocalise issues abstractly. The group of protagonists between the ages of fourteen and eighteen are the largest group of protagonists and, as would be expected, their voices create images of adolescents that are more mature than the voices of the younger protagonists. They are more self-reliant and eager to assert their independence. With the

exception of Steven Messenger (*Strange Objects*), these protagonists represent adolescence as a period when individuals cope with pressures, meet challenges and achieve successful outcomes. Crew's representation of an adolescent protagonist who fails to cope recurs in those novels whose protagonists are over eighteen. The authors of these novels construct protagonists who are victims: victims of despair, victims of addiction, or victims of their families. These authors represent the life of a young adult as harsh and painful, with no guarantee of survival or a successful future.

### **Protagonists under Fourteen**

The protagonists under fourteen reiterate the same belief in the value of difference based on an acknowledgement that each individual is unique. Each protagonist learns a measure of self-respect. Collectively this category represents individuals from a wide range of social groups; from the privileged and protected son of the town doctor, Kimmy, to an abused street waif, Jansi.

Kimmy (*Angel's Gate*) and Seymour (*Came Back to Show You I could Fly*) are both under twelve years of age but their voices resonate with the maturity of the narrator's voice and this creates a dissonance that makes the two protagonists seem improbably mature but also perhaps more interesting for adolescent readers. Seymour's inner voice uses language that is distinctly different from his outer voice and Kimmy's voice seems prematurely adult. Kimmy (age ten) is the youngest protagonist, but his voice seems to resonate with the voice of the adult he will become. Kimmy is a pre-adolescent child who is isolated from his community by his family's status (his father is the town doctor, his mother the town nurse) and his individual traits. Isolation and feelings of alienation are common themes in adolescent novels but the child Kimmy seems oblivious to his differences and accepts the protection offered by his sister Julia and her boyfriend Bobby. Kimmy observes his family and his community without

questioning it or becoming conscious of the symbolism of the wild children. Seymour (age eleven) is well aware of his isolation and of his differences from the other children. He has developed coping strategies to allow him to survive but like Kimmy, he accepts his life without question. Whilst Seymour's physical needs are met, his emotional needs are neglected, so he is grateful for Angie's kindness and friendship. As the novel progresses Seymour tries to parent Angie, tries to protect her, but still he does not question Angie; his mien is one of passive acceptance. In her resolution, Klein reinforces Seymour's development through his use of symbolism when he challenges Angie with her responsibility to her unborn baby.

Tod (*Foxspell*) is twelve when he faces the challenges of moving school, state and community. Tod is a child dependent on others but one who is trying to establish his own identity. Like Kimmy he is the little brother and like Kimmy he is fascinated by his sister's friends. Unlike Kimmy, Tod is aware of a level of existence beyond the concrete. He has met the fox and has experienced a world where the borders between the physical and the mythical have become blurred. Gunno (*House Guests*) is also twelve and an only child. He is a member of a gang but feels isolated because he wants to keep the reason for his mother's absence secret. His mother's psychic ability has led to her absence from home so she can receive therapy. Gunno's father is caring, but pressures of work mean that he too is usually absent. He communicates with his son via notes left in the kitchen. Gunno is forced to become self-reliant. This construction of maturity is reinforced by the degree of authority he has within the gang; although he is not the leader, the other members of the gang listen to him and they respect his opinion. Gunno is very conscious that he is different from the others and as the plot develops he becomes aware that this sense of difference is not unique as he recognises the particular needs and wants of other gang members. Like Tod, Gunno interacts with a creature whose existence is not real, and he too is

comfortable doing so. Gunno, however, assumes responsibility for the ghost and tries to intervene to prevent Hugh's death. In doing so, he confronts his fears and comes to accept his differences.

Jansi (*Eye to Eye*) is thirteen and although Jinks does not confirm that he is a human, he is represented as having characteristics consistent with those of a human child. Jansi is an orphan living on the fringes of a community. The product of an incestuous relationship he is tolerated by the community only so long as he is useful. Jansi longs for an identity that will bring him acceptance in the tribe but he is continually reminded of his differences. His voice is the voice of the outcast, trying to prove his worth to the tribe; in that community he does not need to ask the question Who Am I?; his social status has pre-empted the question. As the novel develops, Jansi is forced to undergo a rapid process of education to enable him to move beyond his community and his world. He is confronted by abstract concepts that are terrifying and challenge all of his previous beliefs. Jinks depicts Jansi's development as a painful but rewarding process. Jansi's development is a neat image of the turmoil commonly associated with adolescence. He is successful in meeting all of these challenges and his voice grows in confidence as does his sense of self worth. PIM's devotion to Jansi's safety and well-being leave him no alternative other than to acknowledge both his achievements and his potential.

### **Protagonists 14-18**

Most of the protagonists in this category are representations of adolescents trying to establish their own identity. In this, they are consistent with Erikson's model of human development (Schaffer 1996, p. 482). Each protagonist tries to establish a role within their community that demonstrates their value as individuals. The degree to which they are comfortable with articulating issues

varies, reflecting the individual differences of the characters. The majority, but not all, of these adolescents successfully meet the challenges of adolescence.

Blacky (*Deadly Unna?*) is a clever boy and his voice is gently humorous. He mocks himself and those around him, particularly the coach of the football team. He is comfortable with his role as part of his family unit but Gwynne also depicts his successful struggle to defy his drunken, domineering father. As the novel progresses, Blacky vocalises questions about the ethics of the community in which he lives. Blacky is represented as an adolescent who is beginning to develop a social conscience. He has a tentative relationship with a girl, Cathy, but his understanding of women is shallow. Women are mothers, sisters, girlfriends, not individuals.

Carl (*A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove*) seeks to redefine his own identity and the identity of his family. Carl is a complex adolescent, one who is both proud and humble. He is proud of his ability to earn money and his ability to take care of his younger brother, but he is humble in his estimation of his worth. Carl demonstrates his maturity in the empathy he has for the needs of his brother, his sister and his mother; he is enraged when his Aunt ties Harley up, like a dog; and he accepts his mother's disappearance and his sister's abandonment without blaming either woman. Carl understands that individuals are subject to pressures that may be beyond their capacity to cope with. Carl's actions are philosophical but his voice is grounded in the physical world where his body can make a concrete contribution.

Isidore (*Pagan's Scribe*) is the antithesis of Carl; he prefers the world of the intellect. Isidore's voice clearly demonstrates that he is comfortable in the world of abstract thought; his epilepsy has established a difference that isolates him within his community and compels him to demonstrate that he is more than his

illness so he has a clearly defined sense of who he is. Jinks confronts Isidore with the reality of war and death, realities that are painful for Isidore but she does not focus on the development of Isidore; rather the focus of the novel is on the historical events of the period in which it is set. Isidore's voice does not demonstrate any significant development.

By contrast, the voices of Nathaniel (*The Gathering*) and Josie (*Looking for Alibrandi*) reflect significant development as they confront the ethics of their communities and family secrets. Nathaniel is a self-reliant boy who is used to frequently moving to new communities. At the outset of this novel Nathaniel demonstrates his independence by questioning his mother's decision to move yet again. Carmody confronts her protagonist with evil forces that are symbolic as well as actual, with no assurance that he will emerge from this struggle successfully. The struggle is indeed painful, and potentially fatal, but Nathaniel is true to his sense of himself and his loyalty to the group. He and the Chain successfully overcome the Kraken. The novel is embedded in symbolism but Nathaniel is unfazed. With the benefit of hindsight he is able to reconstruct his story as a seamless narrative.

Josie is equally resourceful, but the evils she confronts are more mundane. These evils are racism, the stigma of illegitimacy in a close-knit Australian Italian community and intolerance of ethnic diversity in the broader Australian community. As the novel progresses, Josie deepens her understanding of her identity and develops her ability to view an issue from alternative perspectives. Her focus moves from her needs and desires to an awareness of the needs of others. Josie is a skilled debater, suggesting that her capacity to analyse abstract concepts and argue from different perspectives was well developed before the time span of the narrative. Her ability to apply these talents to her personal life develops during the course of the narrative. Josephine Alibrandi is unusual



amongst the adolescent protagonists in this sample in that she is articulate and confident in her speech transactions; she plans to study law and is a confident public speaker. Jacob Coote describes Josie as having the biggest mouth of anyone he had ever met (p. 154). This description is reinforced by Josephine's sarcastic voice when she meets her father for the first time (p. 124). As a lawyer, her father is impressed by her smart mouth and adversarial style, proud that his daughter is never lost for words (p. 125). Instead of encouraging her protagonist to speak up Marchetta has constructed a protagonist who learns how to moderate her voice. Her relationship with Jacob is often fraught because Josie had spoken 'without thinking' (p. 206). In Josie, Marchetta has constructed a strong, intelligent adolescent who comes to realise that becoming an adult is not a question of reaching a particular age but rather an ongoing process of development.

Pagan (*Pagan's Vows*) is another intelligent adolescent who has embarked on an education that will be a lifelong commitment. Unlike Josie, Pagan had an insecure and turbulent childhood, so his devotion to Lord Roland who gave him security and affection, is fervent. In this novel, which is one of a series, Jinks develops her protagonist so that he assumes an almost parental role towards his mentor. At the outset of the novel Pagan is well aware of his identity; he is Lord Roland's servant, and although their circumstances have changed, Pagan's attitude has not. Pagan has entered the monastery not because of his religious devotion but out of a sense of duty to his Lord. As the plot develops, Jinks develops Pagan's realisation of his intelligence and talents. By the end of the novel Pagan is aware of his own value and that in some ways he is superior to his father figure, Lord Roland. The resolution of the novel allows Pagan to demonstrate that he can now perceive a series of events from more than one perspective, so he demonstrates his capacity for abstract thought. Pagan reappears in *Pagan's Scribe*. In this text, Jinks' protagonist is the

adolescent Isidore, discussed earlier, and there is little development in the character of the adult Pagan. Father Pagan is confident and successful, he has fulfilled his youthful promise.

Steven Messenger (*Strange Objects*) is radically different from the other protagonists in his age group. He is inwardly focused and oblivious to the needs of others. Crew establishes Steven as a loner who chooses to be separate from the other adolescents (p. 7) yet who resents his isolation. Steven hates his closest neighbour Kratzman in particular because Kratzman 'never takes his side' (p. 23). Steven's beliefs lead him to retreat to his room where he exhibits physical symptoms, such as fevers and wheezing, and sensory delusions. The reader is left to speculate about the causes of these symptoms. As Steven's condition worsens (p. 111), he becomes aware that he is unable to distinguish what is real (p. 144). Steven's voice is an odd mixture of pathos and power, but he attributes this power to a ring rather than to his own innate abilities or talents. The ring shows Steven things. He tells the reader that when he wears the ring he is lifted up and taken away (pp. 73-74). In this maelstrom of confusion, Steven has no opportunity to establish an independent identity. His spirit is subsumed by the symbolism of the ring and the actual events to which it is linked. Steven changes from an orderly adolescent trying to control his environment (p. 27) to an adolescent who is lost in his dreams. He begins to exhibit signs of a split personality; there are two Steven Messengers (p. 57). Crew depicts an adolescent protagonist whose personality is disintegrating. The death of Steven's father prior to the outset of the novel may have been a trigger for this disintegration but Crew does not offer this as an explanation. Rather he implies a mystical cause, the ring. Crew documents Steven's disintegration and leaves the reader to speculate as to its cause.

### **Protagonists over Eighteen**

It is notable that this group of protagonists represents a bleak view of young adulthood that at first appears to be uniform but on closer examination is not. Luke (*Night Train*) and Jordan (*Sleeping Dogs*) die. These bleak images of late adolescence/early adulthood are somewhat mitigated by Angie (*Came Back to Show You I could Fly*). However, Klein does not promise a bright future for Angie, only the prospect of change. Angie is a pregnant drug addict trying once more to overcome her addiction. At best, Klein's resolution conveys a note of guarded optimism. Jordan and Luke both represent gifted individuals who are lost to society but Angie represents a gifted individual who still has the prospect of fulfilling her promise. Luke and Jordan are depicted as victims, but Angie can choose her future. These characters represent different social backgrounds. Angie and Luke come from suburban families who have tried and failed to support them. Jordan belongs to a rural family that is abusive and dysfunctional. Angie and Luke's families strive to conform, to belong, to be respectable. Jordan's family seeks isolation and cares nothing for the opinions of anyone outside the family.

In Luke (*Night Train*), Clarke constructs an adolescent protagonist who is introspective, seeking to return to his childhood because at that time in his life he felt that he belonged. Luke vocalises these thoughts directly (p. 11). His awareness that he is not coping and his subsequent low self-esteem is exacerbated by his academic failures (p. 59). Luke is losing his sense of identity, becoming more confused about his role rather than less. Clarke makes it clear that Luke does not survive his crisis at the outset of her novel but offers no single cause for his death. Luke's problems as an adolescent are not attributed to adolescence. As a child Luke did not vocalise his fears, he kept his secrets to himself (pp. 161-162). This pattern of behaviour is maintained into adolescence and he falls deeper into despair. Clark softens the impact of Luke's death by

suggesting that it was not intentional. Luke was the victim of a tragic accident. Luke was trying to act positively in leaving the house to confront the night train. He was trying to seek affirmation that he was not crazy, an affirmation that would give him the strength to endure his confusion (p.164).

Jordan's misery (*Sleeping Dogs*) is as extreme as Luke's, but unlike Clarke, Hartnett has constructed a protagonist with no possibility of hope. The tragedy of Luke's life builds to an inevitable climax. In *Jordan Willow*, Hartnett constructs a twenty-year-old protagonist who appears unable to take control of his life or to establish a role for himself outside his family. Jordan's voice is habitually unexpressed (p. 60); years of abuse have convinced him that he is damned (p. 100). His behaviour does not fit into a stage of human development; rather it is the logical consequence of his abusive childhood. Jordan's voice is submissive and his character is passive. He has been physically and emotionally abused by his father, neglected by his mother and sexually exploited by his sister. Jordan is a talented artist but he has no sense of his self worth and is unable to assert his right to a life other than the one he has. He dreams of sailing away but recognises that birds are active in a way that he is not (p. 43). When he thinks of a practical plan of escape, catching a bus, the possibilities that arise scare him (p. 119) and he rejects the possibility. Jordan does not question his father's authority, unlike the younger Blacky (*Deadly Unna?*). He is a young adult with no separate identity. Jordan demonstrates a degree of self-knowledge, but this self-knowledge reinforces his passivity, telling him that his dreams of escape are futile (p. 91). Although Hartnett does not begin the novel with Jordan's death, she does imbue the novel with images of hopelessness so that the reader is forewarned that Jordan is doomed. Like a sacrificial lamb, Jordan is sacrificed to the selfishness and jealousy of others.

Angie (*Came Back to Show You I could Fly*) is the only protagonist in this group with hope for a future. Klein introduces Angie as a nineteen-year-old addict whose addiction began when she was fourteen. She is constructed as a complex character, a liar and thief who is kind to a young boy, yet Klein illustrates how Angie's actions have hurt her family and friends. Her parents cling to the hope that she will be cured 'because they have to have something to hang on to' (p. 160). Her younger sister describes the changes wrought by Angie's addiction as 'she doesn't live there any more, it's like someone came and stole her away ...' (p. 161). Klein offers no guarantees of a successful outcome for Angie and her baby but she does end the novel on an optimistic note. In her final letter to Seymour Angie is making plans for her new role as a mother. Angie wants to take control of her life and meet her responsibilities. Klein does not promise her readers a happy ending, but she allows them hope.

### **Dangerous Spaces in Between**

It is clear that the authors have created a diverse group of protagonists; this sample represents a broad cross-section of adolescent voices. Some protagonists experience growth, others transit into adulthood, a few die. This diversity aligns with Van Gennep's notion of adolescence as a period of transition, a space in between childhood and adulthood during which the adolescent explores the differences between childhood and adulthood. Such explorations involve taking risks, constructing adolescence as a dangerous space in which the adolescent is vulnerable, being in between the particular protection accorded to children and the maturity born of experience associated with adulthood.

Only one novel, *A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove*, depicts a protagonist who successfully establishes a mature identity that is separate from that of their

childhood and thus can be described as a Bildungsroman. Carl moves from adolescence to adulthood by assuming responsibility for his younger brother and coming to terms with both his and his family's past. Carl's education is demonstrated by his newfound ability to express rather than suppress his feelings. These skills allow him to come alive and forge a mature identity. Although Carl does not complete a formal course of education, he does successfully complete a form of practical education in life skills. Whilst *Looking for Alibrandi* does incorporate the education and development of a protagonist written in the form of an autobiographical novel (a characteristic of Bildungsromane), Josie's development is not complete. Josie (*Looking for Alibrandi*) completes her secondary education but the text ends with her looking forward to the next stage of her education, university. Marchetta's text ends with Josie on the brink of adulthood having completed her adolescent apprenticeship but her (more mature) identity is firmly located within the roles (and bonds) of being a daughter, granddaughter and friend. Josie relies on these bonds, she has not forged a new role as an independent woman. Jinks' texts (*Pagan's Vows* and *Pagan's Scribe*) conform to the style of Bildungsromane only if they are considered as a series of novels that depicts Pagan's maturation. When these texts are considered individually, each protagonist is an adolescent serving an apprenticeship, receiving an education, but neither protagonist transits into adulthood.

Protagonists in English Bildungsromane may often be an orphan or a fatherless child (Birk, 2003) but an orphaned, or effectively parentless, protagonist is also a common feature in children's books as a device that allows an author to establish the independence of their protagonist. To differing degrees, Jordan (*Sleeping Dogs*) and Blacky (*Deadly Unna?*) are orphaned by neglect. Jordan submits to his father's abuse. He seems unable to establish his independence and accepts passively whatever identity the other characters in the novel

construct for him. The Willow children could be construed as being motherless children, their mother Grace has retreated deep inside herself, but this has not allowed them to establish their independence. Their father Griffin's dominant will, and his demands for obedience and loyalty, bind his sons and daughters and perpetuate his abuse. Blacky's mother, in contrast to Grace, does nurture her children, only occasionally retreating to the laundry, in an attempt to ameliorate the damage done by their drunken and abusive father. When she goes to Adelaide (p. 250), and the children are effectively orphaned, the older children (Gary and Sharon) are able to demonstrate their potential to take charge (p. 256). Gary (Blacky) is then able to assert a degree of independence and leadership but his actions are an indicator of his future development rather than evidence that his education is complete.

Birk (2003) notes that English Bildungsromane often incorporate a remove from the restrictions of a small town to the freedom of a large city which offers the protagonist new opportunities for fulfilment, often including love affairs or sexual encounters. Some protagonists in this sample do leave familiar surroundings and new opportunities arise, but there is no common theme of seeking opportunities by leaving a small town for the city. Similarly, whilst many protagonists experience the stirrings of love, only Jordan in *Sleeping Dogs* and Jan in *Strange Objects* consummate their relationships and neither of these novels can be read as novels of education. Angie in *Came Back to Show You I could Fly* deals with her pregnancy but she is not in an active sexual relationship during the period the novel covers.

Collectively this sample of texts supports Trites' suggestion that although YA novels may have evolved historically from Bildungsromane (2000, p. 10), contemporary YA novels can be more aptly described as Entwicklungsromane, novels of development (p. 14). Indeed, Trites suggests that the young adult

novel can be regarded as a specific subgenre of *Entwicklungsromane* (p. 18). How then, can we reconcile the depiction of an adolescent protagonist who fails to develop in a YA novel? Some of adolescent protagonists in this sample of texts not only fail to develop, they fail to survive. This contradiction can be resolved if we reflect upon Trites' suggestion that the YA novel teaches its adolescent readers 'how to exist within the (capitalistically bound) institutions that necessarily define teenagers' existence' (p. 19). In this, she distinguishes two types of development, that of the (usually adolescent) protagonist and that of the adolescent reader. Trites' remarks allude to the dual focus of this study, (the authors' representations of adolescents and their beliefs about their adolescent readers) and Kristeva's notion of adolescent novels having the potential to be literary rites of passage for adolescent readers. The notion of how YA novels teach their adolescent readers about the potential of adolescence (through representations of adolescents) will be considered in Chapter 4, *Freedom to Speak?* The texts in this sample that depict protagonists who fail to transit adolescence in bleak fictive worlds will be discussed in Chapter 8, *Confronting Adolescent Readers*, to consider the demands these texts place upon their adolescent readers.

### **Conclusion:**

The constructions of the narrator and the protagonist in this sample of texts reflect the authors' creativity rather than a formulaic approach to this genre. Their representations of adolescence offer readers different images of adolescent lives. The protagonists' voices represent a range of educational, social and family backgrounds. This is not surprising; these novels address a readership aged 13-18. What is notable is that when the protagonists are grouped according to their age, they convey contrasting representations of adolescent voices in each stage. Rather than echoing a singular adolescent voice



that endorses a stereotype for Australian adolescents, these authors portray multiple ways being an adolescent. Across the sample, these different adolescent voices convey a discordant diversity that is polyphonic.

An author's narrative technique and his/her manipulation of it is significant in YA novels. These techniques not only contextualise the adolescent voices (assumed to be authentic voices), but can suggest complexity in these voices.

The notion of a fallible rather than an unreliable adolescent

narrator/protagonist, most clearly evident in Josie (*Looking for Alibrandi*), is interesting. In the resolution of this text Josie is more reliable but perhaps no less fallible. Some authors chose to construct static adolescent voices which maintain a consistent perspective. An example of this is Blacky (*Deadly Unna?*) who is consistently reliable throughout the narrative. Other authors choose to gradually align their protagonist's voice with that of the narrator to illustrate their protagonist's heightened maturity, such as Pagan (*Pagan's Vows*), whilst the authors of *Strange Objects*, *Foxspell*, *Came back to Show You I could Fly* and *Sleeping Dogs* allow contrasting and dissonant voices to be heard.

This sample supports Trites' suggestion that contemporary YA novels are novels of development, *Entwicklungsromane* rather than *Bildungsromane*.

Protagonists may become more mature as a consequence of the events depicted in a novel but the resolutions suggests that this process is ongoing. These novels depict individuals who are in a period of transition, qualities that are associated with adolescence and adolescent readers. It is significant that in some texts the protagonists decline rather than develop, depicting lives cut short and youthful potentials that are unfulfilled. This seems to contradict the notion of YA novels as *Entwicklungsromane*, but it can be argued that by depicting the vulnerability of the protagonist these authors are focusing on the development of adolescent readers. This will be considered further in later chapters.

The diversity of the voices of the narrators and the protagonists in this sample of novels do not endorse a cultural archetype. Rather than seeking to minimise difference they depict an eclectic group of adolescent voices as 'authentic'. That is not to say that this sample is comprehensive in its depiction of adolescent voices; but it does offer readers aged between 13 and 18 a variety of role models with whom they may empathise or identify.

## Chapter Three: Who Speaks to Whom?

The various types of narrators in this sample of novels address narratees that are not fictive characters, creating the illusion that they address readers directly. This creates a semblance of intimacy between the narrator and those adolescent readers who assume the role of narratee. Whilst the use of this technique may be unintentional, the authors have manipulated it to create different and sometimes contrary effects. The construction of subordinate adolescent characters and the depiction of interactions between these characters and the adolescent protagonists both enhance the scope of the authors' representations of adolescence and highlight absent adolescent voices.

This chapter will consider two aspects of this question. The first is the authors' manipulation of the narratee function and the second is the authors' depiction of minor adolescent characters. Each of these aspects reveals the authors' representations of adolescence in more detail.

Friendships are a significant aspect of an adolescent character's persona; friendless protagonists are vulnerable in their isolation. Luke (*Night Train*) articulates the significance of friends:

He'd never found another best mate like Alex Hamilton. He'd had mates all right: Danny and Tom at Riversdale, Mark Conlan at St Crispin's, kids he'd lost touch with since he'd come to Glendale Secondary, but he'd never really found anyone like Alex. They'd understood each other; they'd thought in the same way.  
(*Night Train* p. 11)

Without a mate, a best friend, in whom he can confide, Luke is lonely. His sister Molly is almost the same age as Luke but she remains aloof because she fears that she will become like him (p. 97). One interpretation of this text is that loneliness triggers the sequence of events that lead to Luke's death. Social status does not preclude social isolation. Kimmy (*Angel's Gate*) is isolated by his parent's social position. His parents discourage from confiding in his peers

because 'we don't want any rumours starting' (p. 107). Kimmy's loneliness is however ameliorated by his relationship with his sister Julia.

In *Strange Objects* Crew creates an angry adolescent protagonist whose only confidante is the narratee. Steven Messenger chooses not to interact with his peers:

... but then a kid called Nigel Kratzman who lived next to me at the time, started to talk about his trucks - favourite subject – and since that didn't interest me, and I was just getting over a cold, I thought I'd better slip away and get some sleep.

None of the others saw me move, I was in the dark, well outside the bright ring of firelight (*Strange Objects* p. 8)

Steven's disconnection from his peers led to his discovery of the *Strange Objects* but this discovery does not lead to acceptance from his peers. Steven resents being an outsider:

Later, on the way home, the bus kids said it was my fault the meeting ended and they had to go back to class. They said that one look at me would make anyone sick. Kratzman said nothing. He never took my side even though we were neighbours. He just sat in the back seat, grinning. I hated the lot of them. (*Strange Objects* p. 23)

Kratzman comes to reciprocate Steven's hatred and writes:

I am sorry I ever met you and I hope I don't meet anyone like you ever again in my life. You think you are better than everybody but you are not. You're like a thing that lies on its guts in a dark hole, just lying there watching and waiting. You are a bastard and no friend (*Strange Objects* p. 170)

Steven's response to this note is to retreat further into what appears to be a psychotic episode.

## **Narratees**

In narrative theory, regardless of an author's conscious intent, the creation of a narratee is an inevitable consequence of the creation of a narrator. The narratee is a textual construct that exists at the same diegetic level as the narrator (Prince

1987, p. 87). As the recipient of the narrator's address, the narratee is the narrator's confidante. A relationship of intimacy is established even if the narrator is constructed or revealed as being unreliable. The narratee need not be a fictive character located in the text but it can be located outside of it. This non-specific type of narratee is described as an extradiegetic narratee. Genette suggests that potential readers are likely to identify with this role and substitute themselves as the recipient of the narrator's address (1996, pp. 138). Perhaps unintentionally, by constructing an extradiegetic narratee authors place their readers in an intimate relationship with their narrator.

Genette states a preference for the term 'potential reader' over 'implied reader'. The narratee is inscribed in a text whilst the implied reader is inferred from the text. The term 'potential reader' has a pleasing sense of open-ended possibilities, whilst the implied reader can become a reified reader through critical analysis. Stevens warns that the term 'implied reader' can conceal assumptions that readers will inevitably internalize a text's implicit ideologies (1992, p. 10). Yet Iser argues that the term 'implied reader' is useful for literary analysis because this construct cannot be identified with any real reader. He defines the implied reader as having two roles, firstly as a textual structure and secondly as a structured act (1978, p. 35), and he likens these roles to intention and fulfilment (p. 37). The implied reader when considered as a textual structure can reveal an author's intention; authors construct a novel with the intention of communicating with their readers. Close study of the author's techniques elicits an implied reader but not an actual reader. The implied reader when considered as a structured act explores the notion of the fulfilment of the author's intention and takes into account a reader's possible responses to the author's intention. This chapter examines the implied reader as a textual structure, in particular the relationship between the implied reader and the extradiegetic narratee. It explores the authors' intentions.

The authors have constructed a variety of different types of narrators to suit their different purposes yet all of these narrators address an extradiegetic narratee and thus appear to address their readers directly. The uniform use of a technique may appear formulaic but close consideration illustrates that these authors have used the same construct with the intention of eliciting a variety of responses from their readers. This is not to suggest that all readers will inevitably respond in a way that the author appears to wish. By encouraging their adolescent readers to assume the role of narratee, these authors have also invited their potential readers to engage with an idea (issue) and consider the perspective of an alternative identity (the narrator) in an intimate context. This structure is compatible with beliefs that fiction is a safe context for an adolescent reader to engage vicariously with ideas and alternative identities. It is also consistent with those theories of human development that denote adolescence as a period when an individual is engaged in a search for his/her identity. This structure invites adolescent readers to 'try on' accepting the narrator's point of view. This is not to imply that adolescent readers are unaware that they have entered a fictive world. This narrative structure diminishes the boundary between the worlds of the novel and the reader, but the boundary still exists.

The immediacy between the narrator and the potential reader that Genette described is evident in *Deadly Unna?*, *Pagan's Vows*, and *Pagan's Scribe*. The intradiegetic narrators constructed in these novels address their extradiegetic narratees directly. These authors encourage their readers to empathise with and support a reliable narrator. The age of the narrator varies but each addresses the narratee as a friendly confidante rather than an observer. The narrator confides his/her story to the narratee in a manner that conveys an assumption that the narratee and potential reader both share and understand the narrator's interests and beliefs. The narrative structure of these texts is less prominent and its

fictive qualities are de-emphasised. The authors intend that their potential readers will relinquish an objective or critical perspective.

Adolescent readers whose development is consistent with Piaget's period of Formal Operations are aware that when they read a novel they have entered a fictive world. Hollindale's notion of the shared knowledge between author and reader, that they are constructing and reading fiction, is another way of expressing this knowledge. These authors have used an extradiegetic narratee to break down this distance and encourage the potential reader to agree or identify with the narrator. They have used the device of an internal monologue addressed to an extradiegetic narratee to invite the potential reader to establish an intimacy with the narrator, an intimacy that does not encourage detached critical observation. This effect, of establishing a sympathetic intimacy, can however still be achieved when an author constructs an extradiegetic narrator and one of the texts in this sample illustrates how an author can achieve this.

In *A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove* Moloney has constructed an extradiegetic narrator in a monophonic text that encourages a potential reader to agree with the narrator's sympathetic portrayal of the protagonist. Carl is depicted as a noble youth and the extradiegetic narratee is aligned with his point of view. The narrator urges the narratee to identify with Carl's emotions and Carl's quest to establish a sense of self worth. Moloney's narrator describes Carl's world using commonplace language and imagery. It is not a literary world, it is mundane: it is a world of service stations, single parents and poverty. The narrator presents Carl to the narratee/potential reader as a neglected adolescent who strives to care for his younger brother and to earn a place in the local community. The narrator suggests that Carl's motivation to belong is generated by his desire to prove that he is worthy of love, a love he believes that his mother did not feel. Carl is unable to articulate these feelings until the resolution:

'Why didn't she come back, same as she always did? It would have been okay then. I could have forgiven her everything if she'd said she was coming back. Just one word,' he pleaded across the gully. 'I though she was happy somewhere, without me. It hurt so much to think of her, my own mother.' His voice rose even higher, defying the rain. 'She shouldn't have done that to me. That's why I'm angry. All the time it was that one fear. That she didn't love me.'  
(*A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove* p. 232)

Carl describes a fear that that readers may not share but would probably find appalling to contemplate.

The narrator conveys the intensity of Carl's emotion without comment. It is not moderated but allowed to erupt with an immediacy that aligns the sympathy of the narratee/potential reader with Carl. The narrator tells the narratee/potential reader that Carl is alone, portraying him as a solitary hero, 'Once again he was abandoned. Carl headed to the tiny porch to drink his tea. They were all gone then. ... It always came to this is you were a Matt. He was tired of resisting what had been set in his bones at birth.' (p. 235). The narrator moderates this image of loneliness by narrating Joy's concern and compassion for Carl. It is this concern that leads Joy to pursue the story of Kerrie's death (Carl's mother) until she has all the details. The narratee/potential reader may infer that Joy cares about Carl but he/she is not encouraged to question Carl's feelings of isolation. The narrator ends Carl's story with an image of a hero finding release, 'The tears he craved welled in his eyes. With them came the longed-for ache of his mother's death, and he knew that at last he was alive to feel it' (p. 241). By aligning the sympathies of the narratee with Carl, Moloney also encourages his readers to experience Carl's joy.

The invitations that these authors pose to their readers raise the question of the need for censorship in novels for adolescent readers. Hollindale has described novels for adolescent readers as 'novels of ideas' (1995). If adolescent readers are vicariously exploring controversial ideas and opinions, then it can be



argued that the author's choice of narrative techniques is significant. If, as Genette suggests, the functions of the extradiegetic narratee and the potential or implied reader merge, then close study of the authors' construction of the narratee is significant when considering their depiction of controversial content. Three of the texts in this study explore controversial ideas. The authors' creative choices establish the context of their narrator's address and suggest an appropriate response from their implied or potential reader. *Sleeping Dogs* explores themes of incest, child abuse and filicide. Hartnett would seem to address adult concerns by issuing warnings to potential adolescent readers in her opening paragraphs that *Sleeping Dogs* is a disturbing and contradictory fictive world:

The dogs do not ever really sleep. Sometimes they close their eyes, often for long periods of time, but always there are one or two watchful in the dark, and while these are so the pack can be considered to be awake. They lie on their sides and their ribs rise and fall with the heat, their tongues hang out and collect the dusk. They stroll and the chains come after them, making an irregular music. Occasionally they meet in swift and snarling collision, the noise worse than the damage done: they do this simply to relieve the boredom. (*Sleeping Dogs*, p. 1)

The narratee who observes rather than befriends the narrator is a common construct in this sample, and it suggests that these authors believe their potential readers are mature adolescent readers. Mature readers do not need to identify with a protagonist; they enjoy the challenge of analysing and reflecting upon the significance of a novel, and they can tolerate contradictions and uncertainties. The narrative styles of the novels *Sleeping Dogs*, *Night Train* and *Strange Objects* are diverse. Hartnett (*Sleeping Dogs*) constructs a single narrator, Clarke (*Night Train*) constructs multiple narrators and Crew (*Strange Objects*) constructs multiple narrators and multiple text types. Yet in each text, the narratee is positioned as confidante rather than friend. The effect of this is to allow readers to observe the events and characters of the text from a distance.

This is not to say that readers may not imaginatively engage with the events of the text but that the author is guiding them towards a tempered response.

In *Sleeping Dogs*, Hartnett's use of imagery and literary allusions highlights the fictive qualities of her narrative. The narratee merges with the potential reader in such a way that the act of reading is foregrounded. In *Night Train*, Clarke constructs multiple narrators to express different perspectives of the same narrative events. Each account positions the narratee and the potential reader as an adjudicator. Their task is to balance the validity of each account against the whole. Crew's use of multiple text types in *Strange Objects* lends a factual appearance to a fictional narrative. The task of considering the context of the narration is added to the narratee's task of considering the narrator's perspective. The illusion of factual reporting of actual events simultaneously encourages readers to perceive the relevance of Crew's fictional world to their own and demands distance. Crew demands that his readers evaluate the various narrative accounts and reflect upon their significance.

Hartnett foregrounds the literary qualities of the world she constructs in *Sleeping Dogs*. The effect of this is that despite her use of an extradiegetic narratee, her potential readers are encouraged to remain aware that they are engaging with a fictive world. Hartnett prefaces her novel with a quote from Cervantes, 'Fear has many eyes and can see things underground'. Readers are invited to reflect upon the significance of this quote as they enter a novel in which the first sentence contradicts its title. The statement 'The dogs do not ever really sleep.' (p. 1) requires readers to question the world of this novel. Readers may be the narrator's confidante but they are distanced from the events that unfold because an intellectual as well as an emotional response is required. Hartnett's use of symbolism and her construction of multiple points of view

challenge her readers to pay close attention so they may better understand the factors that led to the tragedy of Jordan's death.

*Sleeping Dogs* begins with the puzzle of dogs that do not ever really sleep and ends with the conundrum of Bow Fox. Bow Fox, unaware of Jordan's death, ends the novel imagining Jordan and Michelle 'off and running and free' (p. 129), 'And Bow actually smiles to remember the Willow family: he is gracious enough to wish them luck.' (p. 129). Bow Fox's revenge, his letter to Griffin, is the direct stimulus for Jordan's death (pp. 120-121). It is a conscious action, 'He wants his revenge to come swiftly, quick as a dog can bite.' (p. 120). Later, when he recalls his action, he does so reluctantly. Before leaving, he returns to the Willow house and confronts its decay and trail of abandoned possessions. Bow Fox is relieved to find no sign of 'true violence' (p. 129) but the narratee and the potential reader have heard and read the signs. Hartnett ends her text by depicting Bow Fox's wrongness, his false beliefs and false comfort.

Throughout the novel, the narrator consistently recounts events and characters with compassion. One instance of this is the depiction of Edward Willow. Edward is the older brother who has failed and will fail to protect his little brother from their father's rages. He is a powerful man, the slaughterman, who approached the sheep armed with knife and hammer and swiftly dispatched it (p. 3). Yet he struggles to control his inner rages rather than allowing himself to submit to them. The narratee is told that this struggle is not easy, it reduces Edward's voice to 'lip-bitten hysteria' (p. 2). The narrator's disclosure transforms Edward into another kind of victim, a victim who, unlike his father, struggles to contain his rage. Whilst the potential reader may not sympathise with Edward, he is not a flat stereotype, 'Tired and hot and overworked, if Edward thinks anything it is that Jordan deserves what he is going to get [a

beating from Griffin], and, if this is an unreasonable thing, that is just the lay of the land.' (p. 14.) The harshness of Edward's life, and his acceptance that this is the norm, discourage any hope that he will confront Griffin. Edward's struggle to fight and control his own nature and his work around the farm leave him no energy to fight Griffin. Potential readers may not agree with Edward's beliefs and opinions but Hartnett's narrator ensures that they are aware of the complexity of his point of view.

The creative impulses of the authors are evident in this sample through the ways in which they have constructed the narratee. This challenges beliefs that novels for adolescent readers are formulaic issues novels. Nimon and Foster note a body of commentary which asserts that Australian YA novels in particular are 'simplistic and limited in form, vocabulary, content and implicit ideology' because they address an 'inadequately skilled' readership (1997, p. 54). The novels in this sample focus on their readers and their representations of adolescence in narratives of varying degrees of complexity. In *Sleeping Dogs* Hartnett introduces her reader to issues and problems that hopefully are foreign to them. Hartnett explores these issues, with a primary focus on her potential reader's response, in a subtle and sophisticated tale. The issues of racism and domestic violence are integral to *Deadly Unna?* but it is Gwynne's representation of adolescence depicted in his protagonist/narrator Blacky's emerging independence and self-reliance that is the focus of this text.

An author's manipulation of the narratee construct may not be the result of a conscious decision yet it still suggests the kind of response the author desires from the potential reader. Hartnett guides her potential reader's engagement with a fictional world of monstrous parents and incestuous love by encouraging the narratee to remain distant from that world. Gwynne guides his potential reader's response by encouraging the narratee to befriend his protagonist.

Three texts, *Came Back to Show You I could Fly*, *Looking for Alibrandi*, and *Eye to Eye* illustrate how an author can subtly manipulate the extradiegetic narratee construct. Their construction of the narratee reflects their beliefs about the interests and abilities of their readers, the readers they address through their notion of the potential reader.

In *Came Back to Show You I Could Fly* the narrators address an extradiegetic narratee but each address is distinctly different, and each address seeks a different response. Klein's narratee is privileged, because it is the recipient of multiple narrators. Klein's extradiegetic narrator is sympathetic in describing Seymour:

'At ten minutes past seven he sprang thankfully out of bed and went into the kitchen to make Thelma a morning cup of tea. He wasn't being ingratiating – it was just something his mother had told him to do before she left, and Seymour had a quiet and biddable nature.' (*Came Back to Show You I Could Fly* p. 1)

The recipient of this address, the narratee, observes the quaint young boy rather than identifies with him. The stoicism of quiet and biddable Seymour lacks charisma. Seymour is a sad protagonist; he may be neglected, but he does not appear to be at risk:

Everything was always temporary, always in a state of flux. He [Seymour] supposed dully that one day the tiresome see-saw of his life would stabilise, and he'd know for certain just where he was supposed to live, and with whom. (*Came Back to Show You I Could Fly*, p. 7).

Readers observe Seymour and note the details of his coping strategies rather than his desperation. This encourages a moderate emotional engagement that tempers a desire to comfort a ten-year-old boy. Seymour's passive acceptance may indeed evoke irritation from readers rather than sympathy.

Klein allows Angie to assume the role of narrator/author through her notes and lists. These notes create a de facto diary through which Klein creates an illusion

of a different authorial voice. The potential reader's response is framed by the intensity of Angie's emotions and the intimacy of seeming to read her personal writings. Klein's Angie demands the potential reader's attention as she reveals her hopes and fears. Klein's evocation of Angie's despair makes it difficult to remain aloof:

I WON'T go round there and see him! I won't go round there and  
Make a fresh start I can do it what if S. [Seymour] ever found out I can do it I can  
do it Jas wish you were here make Mum and Dad proud of me hang in there I can  
do it I don't need

I WON'T GO ROUND THERE  
Take it five minutes at a time Angie take it easy now lots of other people get there  
Judy did my baby think of my baby wonder what colour hair it will have OH GOD  
IN HEAVEN I CAN'T STAND THIS ONE SECOND LONGER  
(*Came Back to Show You I Could Fly* p. 131)

Klein tries to minimise the distance between her narrator, Angie, and the potential reader. Angie's immoderate emotions represent and perhaps encourage an immoderate response from the potential reader, either positive or negative.

The complex narratee function that Klein establishes in her text demands able readers. This complexity is illustrated in Klein's portrayal of Angie's family. Readers are invited to infer the love Angie's mother feels for her daughter from the letter she sent to Angie's friend Judith:

Dear Judith,  
I'm sorry to trouble you, but I wondered if you have any idea where Angela is living now? She really is very inconsiderate about not letting us know when she moves, and some urgent mail (bills etc) has turned up for her here.

...

If she does get in touch with you, would you please ask her to phone me immediately? I've tried all her other places and they don't know where she is. We're so terribly worried about her.  
(*Came Back to Show You I Could Fly* pp. 20-21)

This address is moderated by the omniscient narrator's account of Angie's visit home to see her mother (pp. 62-71). This account depicts Mrs Easterbrook as a

stiff, unyielding and cold mother. The omniscient narrator tells the narratee that Mrs Easterbrook is 'uncomfortable with her daughter' (p. 62). Angie's place in her family seems to have been painted over; just as her mural on her bedroom wall has been painted over, so too has Mrs Easterbrook attempted to control Angie's contact with her siblings. Readers have to decide whether this reflects a desire to protect her other children from Angie's influence or to protect their memories of Angie. It is not an easy decision; Klein has portrayed a complex relationship using a complex narrative style.

Readers' sympathy for Angie is moderated by Lynne's account of the pain her older sister has caused her (pp 160-61). As Lynne explains to Seymour, her family has not ceased to love Angie. They express their love through their grief:

'Angie ... she doesn't live there any more, it's like someone came and stole her away ...'  
'She still is nice! You talk about her all the time as though she's ... dead.'  
'Well, sometimes that's exactly how it feels. There's a lot of things you don't know about her, the things she does to get money ...'  
(*Came Back to Show You I Could Fly* p. 162)

Lynne's pain tempers the potential reader's reaction to Angie's pain. Yet because Lynne addresses Seymour rather than the extradiegetic narratee her pain is muted, it lacks the immediacy of Angie's direct address.

Klein expects that her readers will recognise that each narrator has a particular perspective. Seymour's friendship for Angie implies a loyalty that demands that he continue to believe in her, yet his confrontation with her is the climax of the novel. Seymour articulates the facts of Angie's addiction and its possible consequences for her unborn baby (pp. 172-180). Seymour's courage in risking their friendship lends weight to his belief that, 'There would never be any little winged horse plunging splendidly from the sky to land at your feet and carry you away from things not to be borne. That was something you had to learn to

do all by yourself' (p. 180). Readers may however remember that this was exactly what Angie had done for Seymour earlier in the novel. Angie had descended into his life like a fantastical creature and the experience of being her friend had been the stimulus for his emotional growth. Whilst Seymour's belief is an assertion of the need for independence, Klein has constructed a complex network of relationships that temper his point of view. Whilst a belief in his inner strength is essential for Seymour to have a successful life, this self-belief does not negate his need for friends.

Marchetta's narratee is the recipient of a complex address from an unreliable narrator. However, the narrative shift that occurs in the resolution of this text suggests that Marchetta believes her readers need a simpler narrative style. In *Looking for Alibrandi* Marchetta creates a narratee who is both confidante and critic. As Josie's confidante, the narratee/potential reader is placed in the role of a sympathetic friend but this stance is moderated by Marchetta's construction of Josie as an imperfect, unreliable narrator. Marchetta does not appear to trust her potential readers' ability to understand her meaning. The last chapter is an extended monologue in which Josie moralises to the narratee. In this address Josie summarises the text, listing all the things that she has learnt during the last year. Experience has transformed the adolescent Josie into a reliable narrator who seems almost omniscient. Marchetta's inclusion of this monologue suggests a lack of confidence that her readers will respond to the text in the way she intends. Josie's voice has been transformed to become a more direct reflection of the author, Marchetta's voice. This novel, whilst not autobiographical, is grounded in Marchetta's personal experiences as an Italian-Australian (Ridge 2002).

By contrast, Marchetta leaves the ending of the second-last chapter open, allowing her readers to arrive at their own interpretations. She portrays Josie



and her girlfriends Lee, Anna and Sera meeting for pizza at Harley's to celebrate the end of exams. The chapter ends with Lee saying to Josie:

'I wish I was a little girl again,' she whispered quietly.

'So do I,' I whispered back.

We put our arms around each others shoulders and followed the others home.

(*Looking for Alibrandi* p. 256)

Readers may identify with their desire to return to childhood. The end of secondary school signals the end of adolescence and the beginning of adulthood. Confronted with the prospect of the freedom and uncertainty of adulthood, Josie and Lee are nostalgic for the certainty of childhood. Josie's lack of confidence reflects her awareness of her own fallibility and paradoxically this self-awareness makes her a more reliable narrator and perhaps this supports and links to Marchetta's last chapter. Readers may find the last chapter reassuring because it provides a neat resolution. They are positioned to have faith in Josie's strength and courage, qualities that are evident in her ability to negotiate successfully the obstacles in her path. Marchetta invites her readers to return to the certainty of childhood, to trust Josie's point of view without reservation.

Jinks' narrative techniques in *Eye to Eye* create a consistent role for the narratee so her demands upon her potential reader do not change. Jinks has constructed two intradiegetic narrators, PIM and Jansi, and she alternates their address to an extradiegetic narratee in alternate chapters. Whilst the two characters are quite dissimilar, one a thirteen year old boy and the other a sentient spaceship, they are very similar in that each undergoes considerable personal growth. Their changing relationship with each other is the means that Jinks uses to convey this development. The narratee observes their interaction and their consequent development as a trusted confidante who is aware of their background and their limitations. Jansi is an abused and neglected child who

has struggled to survive. PIM is a sentient spaceship caught in a situation for which his programmers had not prepared him. The narratee/potential reader may be inclined to identify with Jansi rather than PIM but Jinks complicates this by depicting how closely PIM has bonded with Jansi:

'PIM?'

'Yes?'

'Show me your face. Please. Just once.'

*'I have no face.'*

Oh yes you do. I know you do. You must. 'I want to see you. I want to see who you are.' Or what you are. 'If you show me your face, PIM, I'll go. I'll go with you to the stars, and I'll make sure that you're safe. But I need to know who I'm going with.' The Eye is still blank. If I put my hand up ... if I touch it ... there. It feels smooth, like silk, and hard, like rock. It feels warm, like somebody's skin. 'Please, PIM, I need to know. Please.'

Silence. But the smooth, warm, hard surface begins to grow hot; something's happening! I'd better move my hand away. I'd better step back ...

The Eye blinks. A face appears.

It's my own face. (*Eye to Eye* p. 149)

This image not only depicts the bond between Jansi and PIM, it also expresses the role that Jinks has created for her narratee. Jinks encourages her narratee/potential reader not to give preference to one narrator over the other but to note that despite the particular qualities of each they have much in common. This role does not vary during the course of the novel.

Jinks does however challenge her potential readers with complex ideas. Unlike Marchetta, she does not deliver a neat resolution, suggesting a belief that her readers can tolerate uncertainty. Jinks encourages them to reflect upon what it is that makes humans human. The machine PIM comforts the nervous Jansi and communicates this reassurance through language, music and recorded images, 'Dance, Jansi. Laugh, Jansi. Show them what you can do.' (p. 151) Jansi is not performing at PIM's command, he is not subservient to the machine: PIM is acting as his mentor. PIM and Jansi view the image together and Jansi's look of fear is replaced by an uncertain smile. Jinks' image expresses PIM's devotion to the boy and substantiates the hopeful resolution that some critics assert is an

essential feature of novels for adolescent readers. It is also an image of her trust in her readers. Jink's narrative technique demands thoughtful readers. Her resolution guides these readers to demonstrate what they can do (tolerate uncertainty) in a resolution that moderates concerns about Jansi's future.

### **Subordinate Adolescent Characters: Friends and Foes**

Subordinate adolescent characters enhance an author's depiction of an adolescent protagonist. Adolescent protagonists who are able to interact with their peers are depicted as successful. Pagan (*Pagan's Vows*) and Isidore (*Pagan's Scribe*) have no status in their communities; they are both illegitimate orphans. Their ability to form relationships illustrates their ability to influence others and their ability to negotiate obstacles by working with others. Subordinate characters are neither necessarily flat nor superficial but their development may be minimal or negligible. Such characters are usually only lightly sketched in by the author and the beliefs they represent are either unexplored or static. Their interactions or dialogic exchanges with the protagonist can, however, result in the portrayal of opposing and contradictory beliefs. When these alternative and conflicting points of view are separately articulated and the author does not offer a 'correct' point of view, a polyphonic text emerges.

Nathanial (*The Gathering*) is one of a gang of adolescents that exists outside of a much larger gang of adolescents. Nathanial assumes a leadership role in order to bind the Chain together so it can fulfil its purpose (p. 255). As the events of the novel unfold, the members of Chain first expose then confront and accept their individual weaknesses. With this experience, Nathanial is able to have an open dialogue with his mother (pp. 263-5). Whilst Carmody depicts opposing points of view, they converge in her resolution. In Rubinstein's fictive world of opposing forces (*Foxspell*), choices appear to be mutually exclusive and

Rubinstein does not indicate which is correct. Tod can choose to align himself with Dan Russell, with Shaun and his gang, with Martin or with Dallas and his Grandmother.

Gunno (*The House Guest*) makes a choice and decides he no longer wants to be a member of the HBS (Home Burglary Service) (p. 91). Gunno's rebellion had been predicted by Jess, the leader, who believes that Gunno 'might one day prove to be a problem' (p. 2). Wally is forced to choose between his loyalty to his brother and his admiration for Gunno (p. 89):

'I don't want to talk,' said Wally. 'I want to fight. Why won't you fight me?'  
'Because ...' Gunno paused and looked at him quite kindly. He knew that Wally was waiting for him to say something that would really enrage him: because you're smaller than me, because you're younger, because you're not worth fighting with, or even worse, perhaps, because fighting never solves anything.  
'Because,' said Gunno at last, 'you are my friend.'  
He saw that Wally could have killed him for that. He wouldn't even let him hate him with a pure hate ... (*The House Guest* p. 90)

This friendship saves Gunno from sharing Hugh's fate, of dying in a mineshaft. The resolution depicts Gunno engaging in dialogues with Hugh's mother, his own mother and with Jess. Each dialogue is created to reveal Gunno's emerging ability to negotiate successfully relationships with adults, his family and his peers.

Similarly, Klein depicts Seymour's emotional development (*Came Back to Show You I Could Fly*) through his ability to establish a friendship that can survive a heated dispute (pp. 172-180). Seymour wins his argument with Angie but Klein conveys the complexity of Angie's compromise rather than simply endorsing Seymour's point of view. Moloney (*A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove*) hints at no such complexity when he depicts Carl's recognition that his point of view is inaccurate:

'And there's more,' Joy went on, moving in front of him now, demanding that he face her. 'The bus was heading north, towards the city. North, Carl. Towards you and Harley. She was coming home like she always did.'

The red barge ploughed on across the strait, the land slipping away on either side as though the whole world was opening up before them. And there on the deck of the red barge, Carl Matt opened up too, letting go and feeling a freedom flood into him. The tears he craved welled into his eyes. With them came the longed-for ache of his mother's death, and he knew at last that he was alive to feel it. (*A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove* pp. 240-1)

Joy is correct, Carl is wrong. The complexity of this text lies in the way that Moloney establishes the significance of their interactions by manipulating absent dialogues in the same way that authors of children's books have created absent parents to establish a 'lack'. Absent dialogues imply unresolved issues. Carl does not engage in any significant interactions with either of his siblings, Sarah or Harley, suggesting that his relationships with his siblings are unchanged.

Josie's dialogues (*Looking for Alibrandi*) are rarely superficial. She explores her world, her family and her relationships with vigour and intensity. Marchetta establishes Josie's leadership potential by depicting her confidently explaining to Sister Gregory why she needs to read a magazine in Religious class (pp. 3-4). Josie has three close friends, Anna, Lee and Sera. She describes her group as:

'There are four of us who hang out together and we make the most unlikely group. Most of the other students in the school are in clone groups. They all look similar. Either blond yuppies or European trendies. Either intellectuals or 'the beautiful people'.'

Our group represents all types, yet we hadn't fitted into any of them in Year 7. (*Looking for Alibrandi* p. 18)

Anna is shy, Sera is 'brazen' (p. 19) and Lee is a beach babe. Josie is the 'intellectual' (p. 22), the scholarship girl who is also the Vice Captain. Sister Louise, the Principal, describes this diverse group of adolescents as, '... the trendsetters. The girls look up to you. They copy what you do.' (p. 183). Marchetta conveys Josie's maturation through her admission that her perception of herself and her friends as the outsiders is untrue:

'Everyone loved Anna and everyone wanted to be Lee's friend and although Sera got on everyone's nerves she still managed to make people do the most incredible things and nobody ever called her a wog because she didn't give a damn.

And me? I was voted school captain [vetoed by Sister Louise] Socially we weren't as shitty as we thought we were.' (*Looking for Alibrandi* p. 184)

Marchetta tries to avoid a stereotyped representation of adolescence in *Looking for Alibrandi* by creating a range of adolescent characters from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. Whilst this careful balance may seem contrived, it also attributes a rich diversity to adolescence. These characters reiterate, in various ways, the same belief, a rejection of stereotypes. John Barton, the son of a wealthy and influential family feels smothered, 'My father lived his life his way. I should have the same choice. The future is mine, to do whatever I want with it' (p. 229). Jacob Coote, Josie's working class boyfriend, unintentionally echoes John's sentiments, 'I don't want to do what other people think I'll end up doing. I don't want to be stereotyped because of the school I attend or the district I live in.' (p. 251). Josie resents and resists the stereotype of being illegitimate (p. 233). Sera defies the stereotype attributed to Italian girls from good families by being promiscuous (p. 19).

The subordinate adolescent characters have been grouped using the same age categories as those used to consider the adolescent protagonists, to reveal similarities and differences.

### **Under Fourteen**

Considering subordinate adolescent characters in this context reveals that this sample of texts consolidates an implicit belief in the value of each individual's unique qualities through their creation of subordinate characters. These voices represent different backgrounds and different ways of being a child or adolescent.

Keithy (*Angel's Gate*) and Martin (*Came Back to Show You I could Fly*) are flat characters with identical functions who are the protagonist's friend. Crew creates Keithy as a country kid who offers Kimmy acceptance from his peers (p. 106). Klein introduces Martin in the resolution to illustrate Seymour's development. Martin's appearance implies that Klein's protagonist has found acceptance. Nilsson creates a large circle of subordinate adolescent characters in *House Guests* representing individual differences and different socio-economic groups. Jess is the strong female leader of the GBH gang. She is intelligent and capable. Wally is the follower, the little brother who is loyal to Pete but is aware of his brother's failings. He is devastated when he believes that Gunno, whom he admires, has also let him down.

Six of the authors in this study construct characters in this age group who represent a childhood or early adolescence that is not an idyllic time of innocence and safety. Two characters do not survive their risk-taking behaviours. Rubinstein's Adrian dies because he wants to copy the actions of his older brother, Sean. Rubinstein constructs Adrian as an ordinary boy, not particularly smart and not particularly bright (p. 27). He is outgoing, however, and makes the rest of the class laugh (p. 25). His death is tragic. Nilsson's Hugh is the dead son of relatively affluent middle-class parents. His accidental death is a stark contrast to what seems to be a privileged life. Through this character, Nilsson suggests that no child, however carefully nurtured, can be totally protected.

Three authors create characters in this age group who are emotionally isolated. Clarke's Naomi is a five year old who is subject to the usual constraints placed upon very young children, she is not allowed out by herself (p. 155). Naomi breaks this rule because she feels compelled to try to protect Luke, 'She had to

close the gates. She had to. Each night she had to close all the gates along the street, otherwise – otherwise something would happen to Lukie’ (p. 86) Clarke validates this compulsion; Naomi is prevented from closing the gates on the night Luke dies. Naomi’s inability to share her fears is disturbing, it intensifies the tragedy of Luke’s death by suggesting that Naomi (at age 5) is subject to the same loneliness. Rubinstein’s Martin is also an anxious, over-protected and lonely child whose social isolation is heightened when his attempts at friendship are rejected by Tod. Hartnett’s Speck is quite different; she is only nine years old but her behaviours reflect her abusive family background. She likes witnessing emotional and physical pain; when two small children brush the electric fence Speck’s ‘gaunt body shakes with laughter’ (p. 11). She enjoys the distress experienced by a child when her brother Oliver cut the head off a chicken (p. 26). The local community believes that Speck is ‘surlly and likely to bite’ (p. 48) but Hartnett suggests that Speck is much more dangerous than they realise.

#### **Fourteen to Eighteen**

A similar diversity is evident in these subordinate characters. Characters who successfully meet the challenges created in the novel can be found in Leena (*Angel’s Gate*); Justine and Maddie (*A Bridge to Wiseman’s Cove*); Nigel Kratzman (*Strange Objects*); and Seth, Danny, Nissa, Buddha and Indian (*The Gathering*). Despite their minor roles, some characters in this age group imply a depth that precludes them from being categorized. They are neither wholly one thing nor another. Examples of this are Julia and Bobby (*Angel’s Gate*), Lynne (*Came Back to Show You I can Fly*) Pickles and Dumby Red (*Deadly Unna?*), Molly, Liz and Caro (*Night Train*), and Oliver (*Sleeping Dogs*). Two representations of subordinate characters exhibit behaviours that place themselves and others in danger of harm, Sean (*Foxspell*) and Jan Pegrom (*Strange Objects*). Their behaviours range from being rebellious (Sean) to sociopathic (Jan).



Representations of characters who are victims of their environment can be seen in Sharon, Clarry and Cathy (*Deadly Unna?*). All of these representations are female but they come from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Sharon is a poor white girl. Her role model is her mother, an intelligent woman whose refuge is her laundry where she reads romance novels. Sharon's only attribute is her sexuality, which is advertised in graffiti around the town (p. 57). Clarry is an Aboriginal girl from the Point who is subject to discrimination on the basis of race and gender. Cathy is the indulged daughter of an affluent family but she is treated as a trophy by the protagonist who decides that she is a 'phoney' (p. 175). Gwynne demonstrates that Cathy has more depth (p. 179) but she is depicted as both racist and elitist (p. 188 & p. 192). The implication is that this is an inevitable consequence of her privileged background.

### **Over Eighteen**

In these characters there is a uniform representation of fragile adolescents from abusive or neglected family backgrounds. Sarah (*A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove*) resents being forced to assume adult responsibilities to compensate for her mother's inability to fulfil her parental role. Edward (*Sleeping Dogs*) accepts his father's abusive treatment of Jordan (p. 14). He tries to atone for his father's actions (p. 84, p. 92 and p. 112) but he does not know how to comfort or help his brother (p. 93). Michelle (*Sleeping Dogs*) aligns herself with the dominant male, Griffin. She admires her father's courage (p. 77) rather than despising his brutality. Michelle appears to be incapable of affection for her siblings or her mother. Life beyond the farm and the family is slightly unreal (p. 78). She is powerful in her ability to manipulate Griffin; she can convince her father of anything (p. 97), yet she is also powerless because of her need to please her father.

## Conclusion

Each author has constructed an extradiegetic narratee but the deliberate or accidental use of this technique has not resulted in a formulaic narrative structure. The authors invite their readers to assume a role, but it is not the same role. Analysis has shown that these authors have made very different assumptions about their readers' maturity, interests and literacy skills. They write for a diverse readership that belies the belief of some adults, a belief reflected in the criticism of Australian YA novels of the 1990s mentioned in the introduction, that YA books are addressed to all adolescent readers.

Examining the question Who Speaks to Whom? reveals the significance of a protagonist being able to engage in meaningful dialogues with other characters. This suggests that the authors share a belief that adolescents need the emotional support of a community, friends and family for their well-being. Texts that depict adolescents as emotionally or physically isolated also depict the emotional toll of that isolation.

Their voices reflect differing states of physical and emotional isolation, differing stages of maturation and differing socio-economic groups. The minor characters constructed in these novels include representations of adolescents who are physically and emotionally isolated, Nigel Kratzman and Jan Pegrom (*Strange Objects*) and Indian, Nissa and Danny (*The Gathering*). There are leaders Jess (*House Guests*) and Shaun (*Foxspell*) and there are followers, Tim (*Deadly Unna?*), Oliver (*Sleeping Dogs*) and Wally (*House Guests*). There are representations of dutiful adolescents who conform to adult expectations in Dallas (*Foxspell*), Lynne (*Came Back to Show You I could Fly*) and Poison Ivy (*Looking for Alibrandi*); and representations of rebellious adolescents, Shaun (*Foxspell*), Julia (*Angel's Gate*) and Sera (*Looking for Alibrandi*). There are representations of death

amongst the minor adolescent characters, Adrian (*Foxspell*), Hugh (*House Guests*) and John (*Looking for Alibrandi*).

The representations of adolescence that are conveyed through subordinate characters illustrate diversity but it does not convey the richness that is implied by McCallum's 'multiplicity of social voices' because some voices are either silent or marginalised. The image of Australian culture that is conveyed in this sample of texts is predominantly an image of Anglo-Australian culture, with the exception of Marchetta's *Looking for Alibrandi*.

The absence of references to ethnic diversity in texts set in Australia in the 1990s is odd. Cultural diversity is a core theme of Marchetta's novel yet it is largely absent from the other texts. Only Crew's *Strange Objects* refers, in passing, to the existence of Asian and Malay ethnic groups (p. 19). This absence, or lack, implies a homogeneous Australian culture rather than an ethnically diverse Australian culture.

It can be argued that the voices of Aboriginal adolescents are marginalised in this sample because they are only heard in *Deadly Unna*? The authors' cultural sensitivities may be the reason why they are diffident about creating Aboriginal characters, yet if the consequence is that there are no representations of Aboriginal adolescents then this is a cause for concern. In *Strange Objects* Crew constructs the voice of an Aboriginal elder but the voices of the adolescent Aboriginals who attend the school are absent. Steven, Crew's protagonist, shuns these students so their voices are silenced (p. 19). Two authors, Crew (in both *Strange Objects* and *Angel's Gate*) and Rubinstein (*Foxspell*) allude to the translocation of British culture to Australia and the consequent disruption of Aboriginal society. In *Strange Objects*, Jan Pegrom brings fear and death to the Aboriginal tribe (p. 173). *Angel's Gate* is set in a community that grew up after

the local Aboriginal tribes were dispossessed. In *Foxspell* Rubinstein portrays the dispossession of Aboriginal culture. British colonists introduced foxes to Australia and they preyed upon the native animals. The folklore that Rubinstein constructs around foxes in this novel illustrates how Australian culture has marginalised Aboriginal culture. This marginalisation of Aboriginal culture as represented in this sample may be an accurate reflection of contemporary Australia.

## Chapter Four: Freedom to Speak?

The authors' constructions of their protagonists' relationships with figures of authority are another aspect of their representation of adolescence. In novels for adolescent readers, these figures of authority are usually the adolescent protagonist's parents or adult characters who assume that role. It is to be expected that these characters will seek to guide the adolescent but their voices are neither necessarily reliable nor benevolent. If we define power as the capacity to effect change then the ability to express ideas that are different or controversial is intrinsic to that end. Powerful adolescent protagonists are able to voice beliefs that are different from the beliefs of their actual or surrogate parents and perhaps challenge these beliefs. The voices of the adolescent protagonists in this sample reflect three types of behaviour: acquiescence, rebellion and estrangement.

The ultimate voice of authority in a novel is of course that of the author. The author is the creator of the text and all of its voices. Readers have freedom in their response(s) to these voices, but the author creates the context in which this freedom is exercised. The authorial voice ascribes power or authority to specific characters within a novel. A character with authority can be defined as having the 'right to enforce obedience' (Fowler 1974, p. 78). Their authority is sanctioned by the social structures of a fictive world created by the author, yet the author may not endorse these social structures and may seek to undermine these figures of authority. In novels that are addressed to adolescent readers, an author's depiction of the relationship between the adolescent protagonist and figures of authority is crucial. These relationships frame their representations of adolescence, constructing the adolescent as powerful or powerless. This chapter will examine the relationships these authors have created between adolescent protagonists and their parents or adults who assume a parental role towards the protagonist. Adult characters who fulfil parental roles are placed in a position of authority, an authority that may be ceded willingly or through a sense of obligation. These relationships reveal not only the independence of the

adolescent but also suggest their potential to achieve authority within the fictive world the author has created. Across the sample, these sometimes subtle and always complex relationships represent different ways of being an adolescent. It is to be expected that a character fulfilling the role of a parent will seek to guide or perhaps moderate the protagonist's voice as part of that role. Power is not simply a matter of enforcing obedience through prohibition or repression.

Representations of parents are significant because they illuminate both the adolescent protagonists' independence within the fictive world and the options that are available to them. Novels addressed to adolescent readers are characterised by their focus on the interpersonal relationships of fictive adolescents. YA fiction is a genre that is defined by the age of its readers. This is obviously problematic: adolescent readers read a variety of genres as well as or instead of YA fiction. More accurately, YA novels are assumed to be read by adolescent readers and YA novels depict an adolescent protagonist's emerging awareness of the world. They illustrate the adolescent protagonist's emerging awareness that their world of family, friends, school and local community exists within a larger social institution. That larger social institution sanctions the immediate framework of the protagonist's experience. Parents are figures of authority within the immediate framework of the protagonist's experience. Adolescent protagonists indicate their emerging independence of parental figures of authority by engaging with issues that reflect a larger social institution.

Trites suggests that the chief characteristic that distinguishes Young Adult literature from children's literature relates to how social power is deployed during the course of the narrative. Rebellious adolescent protagonists can question their society, its framework and its hierarchy yet the author depicts their realization that all power lies within that social institution. In order to be

able to exert control over their lives adolescents must negotiate a place in the social hierarchy; this is their only avenue to exert power. If this is so, the adolescent protagonist has no choice other than to acquiesce and conform. Such texts would portray rebellious adolescent voices being muted or moderated. Representations of adolescent protagonists learning to negotiate an independent voice within their community are necessarily complex and often subtle. Marchetta's Josie (*Looking for Alibrandi*) is a rebel who chooses to conform to the mores of her family yet rebels against the stereotypes applied to her by the Italian and the Australian communities. Marchetta's adolescent protagonist is a representation of an adolescent who asserts her right to a place within both her ethnic community and the broader Australian community. A community in which she must learn:

... to negotiate the levels of power that exist in the myriad social institutions within which they must function, including family; school; the church; government; social constructions of sexuality, gender, race, class; and cultural mores surrounding death. (Trites 2000, p. 3)

Marchetta's Josie is a complex character. She accepts the constraints imposed by her family's love for her but continues to rebel against what she perceives is her exclusion by sections of her community.

Most of the texts in this sample depict adolescent protagonists who choose to acquiesce. Their choice is not depicted simplistically. These texts represent the protagonist learning how to work within existing social structures. This implies a tacit acceptance that this is the protagonist's only possible path yet it can demand personal sacrifice as much as personal growth. Klein depicts an assertive and rebellious adolescent, Angie, who chooses to comply with her parents' wishes. Perhaps ironically, Klein indicates that Angie's choice is driven by her desire to be a good parent to her unborn child. Klein's novel is subtle and open-ended. Angie seems to be compliant but readers may wonder if she

will eventually have to rebel because Klein suggests that the price of Angie's compliance may be a denial of her flamboyant creativity, a denial of herself. The resolution leaves readers anxious about Angie's future.

Some texts in this sample depict adolescent protagonists who challenge the mores of their parents or actively rebel against them. These authors endorse this behaviour and accord their protagonist freedom to speak. Carmody depicts a group of adolescents who successfully challenge the authority of parents, police and teachers. Gwynne indicates that Blacky will suffer for his actions but depicts Blacky as a successful rebel rather than a victim. Nilsson's protagonist ceases to subvert the law regarding theft but accepts his innate ability to subvert the laws of science. Moloney's protagonist rebels against a family history of irresponsibility. Moloney and Marchetta depict the paradox of parental power, the ability to shape a child or adolescent through giving or withholding love. Carl's rebellion against the stereotype he attributes to the Matt family is fuelled by his need to prove that he is worthy of his mother's love. Josie is able to rebel against the stereotypes applied to her by both the Anglo Australian and the Italian community because she is secure in the knowledge that her parents love her.

Crew and Rubinstein depict their adolescent protagonists, or child protagonists on the verge of adolescence, as vulnerable. They are vulnerable in that their safety is reliant on the benevolence of their parents from whom they are rebelling. Rebellion puts the adolescent at risk with no certainty that they can or will survive. These adolescents are partially estranged from their communities. Crew represents adolescence as a time when the adolescent is tamed or caged. The more timid child, Kimmy, may never dare to rebel against that cage; the bold child, Julia, does so at her own risk. Rubinstein depicts a vulnerable adolescent protagonist who rebels against the parents whom he believes have



ignored his needs. Rubinstein positions Tod as being able to choose between two worlds, the world of the Fox Spirit, Dan Russell, and the world of his family. Both choices are risky. Crew and Rubinstein depict the relationship between an adolescent and their parent as one of struggle and rebellion. The strident voices of strong adolescents, those of Julia and Shaun, are vulnerable in their bravado.

Clarke, Crew and Hartnett have exaggerated the vulnerability of adolescence and created adolescent protagonists who are estranged from their parents and their community, either voluntarily or involuntarily. The voices of these protagonists are silenced by their deaths. Failing to negotiate a relationship with actual or surrogate parents means that the adolescent has no place in that community. These authors suggest a variety of causes for this failure. Steven Messenger in *Strange Objects* refuses to concede his dependence on any figure of authority and isolates himself, first emotionally and then physically. He refuses to accept the death of his father. In *Sleeping Dogs*, Jordan's father is a figure of evil who abuses and isolates his son. In *Night Train*, Luke's depression and eccentric behaviour isolates him from his parents.

Trites suggests that novels for adolescents seem to 'delegitimize adolescents' (2000, p. 83) because they represent adolescence as a phase that adolescents should grow out of as rapidly as possible. As adolescents mature, it is inevitable that they leave adolescence behind but Trites suggests that this inevitability is accelerated in YA novels. The significance of an author's construction of an adolescent narrator/protagonist who is unreliable in a YA novel was discussed in Chapter Two.

This chapter will analyse the sample texts to elicit in more detail how their authors have portrayed the relationship between their protagonist and their

parents or characters who have assumed that role of parental authority. The focus in this analysis is on the protagonist. The descriptors acquiescent, rebellious or estranged are not absolute; the relationship between the protagonist and actual or surrogate parent is rarely static but they are useful to describe patterns of behaviour.

### **Acquiescent Protagonists: Muted Voices**

These representations of acquiescent protagonists support Trites' argument about the power of social institutions. The authors depict their protagonists learning that in order to achieve their goals they need to mute their voices in order to succeed. This does not mean that these protagonists are compliant, they may want to effect change in their society, but they intend to do so from within. Similarly, these characters make choices as to the degree to which they moderate their voices. In some texts this is an active choice made by the protagonist; in others it is the only path available to the protagonist. Some of these protagonists are actual or virtual orphans, but all of these texts endorse an adolescent's need of the support of a benevolent mentor to help them successfully negotiate their place within their community.

In considering the voice of a character, distinctions between the language of their inner and their outer voices should be noted. The inner voice is represented in unshared, internal, monologues. The outer voice is represented in dialogues with other characters. The notion of an 'inner' and an 'outer voice' is associated with the work of Vygotsky. Vygotsky agreed with Herder's thesis that the language of thinking, the inner voice, is the language of freedom (in Van der Veer, 1994 p. 269). The inner voice allows characters to express their thoughts without fear. If an author constructs a significant difference between their protagonist's inner and outer voices it can convey a range of meanings.

The protagonist may wish to assert a degree of privacy by keeping silent; it may reflect their limited vocabulary; or it may reflect an acceptance that no one is listening to them.

Seymour's inner voice (*Came Back to Show You I could Fly*) uses a vocabulary that is unusual for an eleven year old. Seymour is 'tired of living in a state of flux' (p. 7); 'it was best to keep quiet and not obtrude at all' (p. 10). When confronted by a gang of other children he is silent, 'trying to make himself as secret as a lizard' (p. 16). His voice is inarticulate in dialogues with Angie, 'No! I mean, no thanks. Thelma ... the lady I stay with, she'd go bananas if I came home wearing black nail polish. Geeze, blokes don't wear nail polish!' (p. 24). Klein's narrator tells the reader that Seymour had had 'eleven years of experience in the futility of arguing with adults or expecting his opinions to be listened to' (p. 5). Seymour's muted outer voice implies resignation, it is as 'insubstantial as the movement of a leaf' (p. 33). Klein indicates change in her protagonist by ending her text with a letter from a chatty and confident Seymour to Angie (pp 187-189). Seymour's voice is no longer subdued or insubstantial, suggesting to readers that his response to the events of the novel has heightened his feelings of self-worth.

Angie does not experience a similar degree of growth; Klein's resolution suggests that she is only marginally less vulnerable than at the outset of the novel. Angie's inner voice is expressed through her notes to herself, recording tasks, purchases and goals. These reveal her fragility to readers, her impractical nature and her desperation. The lists of items she believes she must purchase for her baby reveals her love of colour and design. Her limited budget must stretch to include nappies and a ceiling mobile of a cow jumping over the moon. Angie has the best of intentions. She lists alternative names and possible means of supporting herself but ends her list with a poignant 'Oh God!' (p. 145) as she

realises the enormity of the challenges she faces. Angie's final note to herself is a poem in which she expresses her desire for refuge and simple comforts. The image of a 'new broom' (p. 164) suggests her desire for order and a fresh start. Angie's final letter to Seymour is determinedly optimistic but she is not completely honest. Angie is able to refer to her fragility, 'I think maybe I'm going to make it this time around' (p. 182) but she is unable to admit to her addiction. Readers may speculate that she does this to protect Seymour, implying her strength, but it may well be that she simply fears losing his friendship, implying fragility. Klein has created three voices for this character, her spoken voice and two written voices. The distinctions and dissonance between these three voices (conveying the complexity of this character) pose a significant challenge to adolescent readers.

In *Looking for Alibrandi* Marchetta depicts an adolescent who is caught between cultures that have different expectations of adolescents. This conflict is resolved by her protagonist's love of her mother and her family. Josie is a strong, vibrant adolescent who decides to acquiesce to the loving demands of her family. Josie's epiphany (p. 260) expresses her understanding of the sacrifices an individual can choose to make for love, love of family and of friends. Through the events of the novel, she learns that she had only a superficial understanding of adult figures of authority, her Nonna and her School Principal. Josie's new understanding moderates her rebellious voice. She is not defeated; her acquiescence is not a passive acceptance but rather an active recognition of the importance of the support of family and friends in enabling individuals. With their support, she can challenge stereotypes and powerful social institutions. Josie understands that maturity does not bring independence, it brings recognition of the ties of family and friends, bonds she values and sacrifices she is happy to make.

The parental voice of authority in this text is grounded in a European heritage of an extended family culture rather than the nuclear family structure common in contemporary Australian life. Josie is a strong adolescent who has been nurtured by a loving mother and a watchful grandmother. During the course of the novel she forms a close relationship with her father. Nonna is her grandmother and the mother of Christina. Nonna's voice articulates the influence of the Italian community on those who wish to belong to that community, 'One day you will understand Jozzie. One day you will have children and you will understand what sacrifices really are.' (p. 225).

The sacrifice Nonna made was to remain in a loveless marriage to protect her child, the result of her affair with an Australian farmer. The reader may interpret Nonna's compliance as old-fashioned but the same pressures to conform also apply to Josie. Josie tries to explain this to Jacob, her boyfriend, who is an Anglo-Australian:

'I can't explain it to you. I can't even explain it to myself. We live in the same country, but we're different. What's taboo for Italians isn't taboo for Australians. People just talk and if it doesn't hurt you it hurts your mother or your grandmother or someone you care about.' (*Looking for Alibrandi* p. 152)

The Italian community in Australia enforces its cultural mores through familial obligations. Josie's knowledge of the sacrifices made for her by her mother and Nonna gives her both a sense of security and a sense of obligation. If she chooses to ignore these mores, Josie knows that her actions will also affect the reputations of her mother and grandmother.

Marchetta's depiction of these cultural mores in her portrayal of Christina, Josie's mother, is complex. As an adolescent, Christina defied the conventions of her community but she has gone on to live a successful life. She has a job as a medical secretary and she is paying off her own home, she has achieved the Australian dream (p. 5). However, her adolescent rebellion has placed Christina

and her illegitimate daughter on the fringes of their community. When Josie confronts Nonna with her knowledge that Christina is also illegitimate, Nonna defends her decision to stay in a bitter and loveless marriage by insisting that she did so to protect Christina (p. 226). Josie's anger at Nonna's hypocrisy is replaced by an admiration of Nonna's devotion to her daughter. Christina seems to endorse her mother's actions by urging Josie to seek respect rather than satisfaction (p. 138), in effect urging Josie to conform.

The relationship between Josie and Christina is portrayed as affectionate:

My mother and I have a pretty good relationship, if a bit erratic. One minute we love each other to bits and spend hours in deep and meaningful conversation and next minute we'll be screeching at each other about the most ridiculous thing, from my room being in a state of chaos to the fact that she won't let me stay overnight at a friend's home. (*Looking for Alibrandi* p. 5)

Josie may be expected to help around the house (p. 11) but Christina does not expect blind obedience from her daughter, she explains and justifies her actions:

'But you do understand why I hesitate, Josephine? You spent half your night alone on the streets. Anything could have happened to you. Do you understand me when I say that nobody looks after you like I do?'

'Yes I do,' I said honestly. 'I mightn't like it but I do understand'.  
(*Looking for Alibrandi* p. 130)

Christina's rules stem from her love for her daughter and her desire to protect Josie. Marchetta's depiction of a good contemporary parent/adolescent relationship is one in which adolescents make informed decisions to comply with their parent's wishes out of love and respect for their parents. The resolution of this text depicts an adolescent who is confident of her place in the love of her family and friends:

But the important thing is that I know where my place in life is. It's not where the Seras or the Carlys of the world have slotted me. (pp 258-259)

I've figured out that it doesn't matter whether I'm Josephine Andretti who was never an Alibrandi, who should have been a Sandford and who may never be a Coote. It matters who I feel I am – and I feel like Michael and Christina's daughter

and Katia's grand-daughter; Sera, Anna and Lee's friend and Robert's cousin.  
(*Looking for Alibrandi* p. 261)

Marchetta's final image is of a resolute Josie whose strength is founded on Josie's willing acceptance of her position within her family.

In *Came Back to Show You I Could Fly*, Klein creates disparate representations of adolescence in rebellious Angie and obedient Seymour, who both acquiesce to their mothers' wishes. This may seem formulaic but Klein also illustrates the complexity of their decisions. In Seymour Klein represents an adolescent who has been taught by his mother to fear the world. Seymour's actions do not defy his mother but he does challenge her authority by making new friends and continuing to love his father. Klein depicts this character learning how to negotiate successfully with his mother to achieve a measure of independence. In Angie, Klein represents an adolescent who has defied parental authority. Angie's bold spirit inhabits a colourful world that embraces a culture of drugs and petty crime, a world that is remote from the respectable suburbia inhabited by her parents and siblings. The rebellious Angie enters a rehabilitation program in order to conform to her desire to be a good mother to her unborn child. Angie acquiesces to her mother's wishes in order to be a 'good mother' herself, not to please her mother. In making this choice to conform, she suppresses her creativity, eccentricity and originality, qualities that are the essence of her charm. Klein intends that her readers will want Angie to succeed, (there are no other healthy options) but her resolution is ambivalent. Angie may not have the skills to negotiate an outcome that will allow her body and her spirit to survive.

Klein constructs images of powerful mothers. Seymour both admires and is ashamed of his mother's strength:

His mother, he realised with shame, was adept at imposing on people, and making them feel sorry for her. In reality, she didn't need that sort of help from anyone. Behind her disguise of pastel-framed glasses, floral dresses and thin martyred face, she was a born survivor, as tough as any street fighter. (*Came Back to Show You I could Fly* p. 7)

Angie demonstrates her mother's significance to her and thus her authority over her by stealing a gift that she hopes will please her mother:

'Well, I wanted to get you something really fabulous and outdo David and Lynne,' Angie said. 'Why don't you put it up on the mantel? No one will be able to see it stuck away in the china cabinet. It would look great up on the mantel, Mum.'  
'Dust would only collect on the petals,' Mrs Easterbrook said. (*Came Back to Show You I could Fly* p. 63)

Mrs Easterbrook's dismissive response reinforces this image of maternal power. The narrator tells the reader that 'Angela and her mother weren't quite comfortable with one another' (p. 62), emotions that echo Seymour's relationship with his mother. In both of these relationships, the powerful mother is able to exert her power by withholding approval. The concerns, real and imagined, that the two mothers express about their children suggest that their desire to control their children's actions is an expression of maternal love:

Don't climb on things Seymour, you'll rip your good shirt. Be careful, don't go near strange dogs, you never know if they'll bite. Did you remember to take your anti-histamine tablets? Don't do this, don't do that ...'  
(*Came Back to Show You I could Fly* p. 10)

Mrs Easterbrook may be aloof, yet her face is 'filled with what seemed to be inexplicable, helpless pain' (p. 67) when she talks to her daughter. Her voice is in turns angry, anguished and resigned:

'Look at you, dressed like a little tramp! Those clothes, you can't even make the effort to look respectable when you come to visit. ...'  
'It never is your fault is it? We've just about reached the end of our tether with you, Angela. ...'  
'Oh, Angela ... oh my darling ... it doesn't have to be like this! ...'  
'Angela, I've heard the same pathetic lie so many times I'm not prepared to listen to it any more ...' (*Came Back to Show You I could Fly* pp. 69-70)



Angie's defiant response, 'I think I'd better just take myself off now, okay?' (p. 71) is belied by the fondness of their farewell. Angie's future seems problematic at the end of the novel. However, the reader knows that Jeanette Easterbrook is a tenacious parent and her tenacity offers hope for her daughter and her grandchild.

Klein represents parental authority as valuing conformity and conventional behaviour and repressing difference. Jeanette wants Angie to overcome her addiction, to stop stealing, to stop telling lies. All of these desires seem very reasonable, but she also wants to suppress Angie's creativity. The mural Angie created on her bedroom wall in her parents' home has been covered by pale silken paper (p. 64). Jeanette Easterbrook rejects her daughter's clothes because they are not respectable (p. 69), they are physical statements of her daughter's rebelliousness. Mrs Easterbrook worries about what her neighbour, Margaret Duke will think of Angie (p. 69). She tries to protect her two younger children by restricting their contact with Angie, just as she protected her ornaments from dust by confining them in a cabinet:

There were some beautiful ornaments in the cabinet, but they had the air of being locked away, not to be touched, and it seemed a pity that the rose, even if Angie – no she must have paid for it – it seemed a pity that the elegant gold rose had to join them. (*Came Back to Show You I could Fly* p. 63)

The rose can be interpreted as a metaphor for Angie. She has no other choice other than to confront her addictions and accept the protection offered by her family.

Klein's voices of parental authority are united in applying coercive or repressive power to protect or confine their baby, child or adolescent. Mrs Easterbrook's voice expresses a belief that adults (parents) are in control (p. 20). Jeanette Easterbrook's attitude to Seymour is politely condescending:

'Seymour, would you get a jug of water and some glasses from the kitchen please? And some ice cubes, there's a tray in the freezer, (p. 66). And Seymour, ... if you have finished lunch, dear, you might like to play out in the back garden for a while. Do you like cats? Ours should be around somewhere out there.'  
(*Came Back to Show You I could Fly* p. 68)

Klein's resolution reinforces this image. Seymour may be able to help Angie but his life is framed by decisions made by his parents. His new life in Carrucan, with a new friend and a 'terrific job', is dependent on his mother's ability to please her employer.

Klein's depiction of other adult characters reinforces her image of parental control. Klein tells readers that Thelma's brusque manner is simply her way and thus Thelma is neither unkind nor affectionate towards her guest. Thelma does not resent Seymour but 'his presence was inconvenient' (p. 8). She accepts this inconvenience because, 'We all have our crosses to bear in this world, every one of us. You can't start too early in life to learn what is in store and people make a big mistake thinking that everything should be fun.' (p. 32). Thelma is an adult who has taken control of her life by limiting her expectations as to the goals she can achieve. As a surrogate parental voice of authority Thelma represents a belief that individuals must expect disappointment. Compliance is to be expected, not rewarded. Seymour has certainly learned to have low expectations of parents or adults, '... he'd had eleven years of experience in the futility of arguing with adults or expecting his opinions to be listened to' (p. 5). Through the events that follow Seymour's defiance of Thelma's authority Klein reinforces her representation of repressive or coercive power. Seymour leaves the confines of the house to explore the world beyond. There he faces the impersonal authority of the shopkeeper: 'Don't fiddle with around with the lock, dear, unless you're planning to buy that trunk' (p. 13). Seymour's response is to retreat, 'anyone who spoke to him with authority seemed to have that effect' (p. 13). When Seymour's retreat leads him to a park, the repressive

authority of a gang of children who deride his clothing confronts him, 'Hey you, new kid round here, where'd ya score that shirt, off your grandpop?' someone sniggered.' (p. 16) Seymour retreats once more. Klein has extended the repressive and coercive authority of Seymour's mother to Aunt Thelma and then to the world beyond.

Klein conveys Seymour's maturation by repeating this confrontation to illustrate that he has acquired the skills that are essential for him to achieve a degree of freedom. Seymour confronts the same gang and he is still intimidated, '...he felt sickened by his cowardice but he couldn't help it.' (p. 168). Yet he is able to control his fears and, inspired by his experience of going to the races with Angie, he is able to talk [lie] his way out of a potential confrontation: 'Outwitted, he thought, with pleased surprise. You don't always have to roll over and offer up your throat, there are other ways you can get out of things. Other ways where you come out the winner.' (pp 169-70). Seymour has become a winner but he achieves this by devious means rather than through rebellion and confrontation.

Moloney's *A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove* portrays his adolescent protagonist's struggle to win acceptance and respect from his community. The resolution of this text establishes that without the intervention of a benevolent adult Carl would have failed. Joy assists Carl to get, and keep, a job and releases him from his belief that his mother had abandoned him. She is a minor character in this text, but she has a crucial role in the plot.

Effectively, Carl is an orphan. His father, his mother, his older sister and his Aunt Beryl all fail to fulfil the role of a benevolent parental figure of authority. Aunt Beryl offers her nephews a cool welcome, no beds and scant affection:

'I don't mind you boys coming. You are Kerry's kids. My own sister after all. There's nobody else.' She watched them eat. The words were indulgent but her eyes counted the mouthfuls, judging the cost of two hungry boys, especially Carl, who must enjoy a feed to be the shape he was.

'You'll have to pull your weight here, though. Clean up after yourself. Only fair. I'm not your mother.'

Carl took the hint, cleared away the plates and washed them, setting the pattern for the weeks to follow. (*A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove* p. 17)

Carl is a Matt, and the Matt family have a bad reputation. When Carl's younger brother Harley is caught shoplifting no-one is surprised:

'Nugent's been here since Noah built the ark. Says he knows all the Matts from years ago and your brother looks the same as the lot of them. Acts the same as well.' (p. 22)

'If Sarah [their older sister] wasn't away, I'd send you both home this minute. It's going to stop, this stealing, you understand, Carl. That boy's your responsibility. Not mine. Uncontrollable you lot are. Same as all the Matt kids were. I can see why Kerry [their mother] ran off and left you.' (*A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove* p. 24)

Stung by Beryl's words Carl represses his grief at his mother's absence and works to win acceptance from the Wattle Beach community.

The absence of a parental voice of authority in Moloney's text does not prevent the absent parent from exerting power over the adolescent. Carl is deeply wounded by his belief that his absent mother abandoned him. Aunt Beryl loved her little coffee plunger so she took it with her (p. 235); Carl's mother left him behind. Moloney creates a possible surrogate parent, Joy, who attempts to nurture Carl's self-esteem but he resists her efforts. Joy lists all of the people in the community who care about Carl (p. 229) but her efforts are futile. Justine articulates the effect of Carl's self-imposed abnegation:

'You don't have to be like that.' She snapped. 'I like you. Really I do. But you know what you remind me of. You're like a tick sucking the blood out of people. Only instead of blood, you suck up all the misery. Out of that useless Aunt of yours and your mother and Maddie and Skip, everyone. You're all bloated with it. You better watch out, Carl, or one time you're going to explode.'

(*A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove* p. 208)

Carl 'plays dead' (p. 208) to hide his fear that he is unlovable, so unlovable that even his own mother could not love him:

'It's your mother. That's where the pain is.' [Joy]

'Yes I keep hearing something Beryl said, months ago. *Who's going to love you if your own mother doesn't.*' [Carl] (*A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove* p. 230)

Carl does not release himself from his regime of self-imposed loathing until Joy tells him that his mother was on her way back to him when she died. This news gives him permission to acknowledge his pain (p. 241). Knowledge of Kerry's intention to return is, in effect, an act of parental power in that it frees her son. Moloney's novel represents the power that even absent parents can exert over their adolescents. Moloney depicts Carl as a heroic protagonist who assumes the responsibilities of an adult, protects his younger brother, redeems his grandfather's crime and earns a place in Wattle Beach. Yet this hero is emotionally crippled by feelings of insecurity that are explicitly connected to his need for his mother's love.

Jinks' two historical novels represent different adolescent protagonists and different adult surrogate parents yet the relationships between these pairs of characters share many common features. In both novels, the adult character who assumes the role of the parental voice of authority has no familial relationship with the orphaned adolescent protagonist. In both novels, the relationship between the surrogate parent and the adolescent protagonist is a benevolent one. The actions of the surrogate parent result in the adolescent being placed in a context that enables them to continue his education and improves their place within the dominant social structure of the period, the medieval Catholic Church.

The chief difference between these texts is their representations of the surrogate parental voice of authority. *Pagan's Vows* depicts Lord Roland as an adult who

has relinquished his authority over his adolescent squire: 'Pagan, you're not my squire any more. You are my brother.' (Gently) 'It's not your place to serve me, but to serve Christ.' (*Pagan's Vows* p. 7). This novel represents a belief that parental figures of authority must relinquish their authority over their adolescent charges. By relinquishing his authority, Lord Roland recognizes both his limitations and Pagan's potential. In *Pagan's Vows*, Jinks depicts Pagan as a tenacious and courageous adolescent who is critical of his community. He challenges figures of authority (he uncovers crime and corruption) yet he does not leave the Church. Jinks positions her adolescent Pagan with only one way to channel his energy and intelligence. Pagan's future lies beyond the sphere of Lord Roland but it is still within the community of the Catholic Church. Pagan may question the Church but does this from within. He has exchanged the authority of Lord Roland for that of the Lord.

The mature Pagan depicted in *Pagan's Scribe* is an adult who is used to exercising his authority; the novel begins with a demonstration of this authority, Archdeacon Pagan decides that Isidore will be his new scribe. Pagan invites Isidore to refuse but their relative status and Isidore's unhappiness mean that Isidore has no choice but to accept:

But it won't be easy, serving this little Archdeacon. Not only is he a profane, bossy, discourteous man – he's a former Infidel, too! How can I bow my neck to his yoke? It will be difficult. ...

However I'm in no position to pick and choose ... (*Pagan's Scribe* pp. 9-10)

Pagan's voice is a powerful weapon:

But the crowd has fallen silent. The crowd has yielded, drinking down the honey of his rhetoric. What a mighty gift! When I am old, I shall say: In my youth I saw the Archdeacon of Carcassonne tame a thousand raging souls with words as sweet as the bread of angels. (*Pagan's Scribe* p. 155).

The adult Pagan demonstrates the skills the adolescent Pagan has developed.

Pagan is a benevolent figure of authority who is later demonstrated to be motivated by a desire to protect others. He does not ignore the feelings of his new scribe although Isidore would rather he did, 'Did I **like** it? What's that got to do with anything? Why can't you leave me alone? Why can't you ignore me, the way everyone else does?' (p. 14) Slowly Pagan develops a relationship with his adolescent scribe, a relationship that leads to mutual affection and concern. Archdeacon Pagan is also Father Pagan (p. 209). His actions create a bond of affection and respect between he and his scribe Isidore, a bond that saves his life:

"**Father!**" Look at me damn you, listen to me! I'm Isidore, I'm here, I'm not dead, I'm alive! I'm alive, and I need you! "Answer me! **Answer me!**" Pounding on his back, but he doesn't make a sound, nothing, not a single word –  
(*Pagan's Scribe* p. 208)

The epilogue describes a future in which Isidore follows a similar path to that of Pagan, finally surpassing his mentor. Pagan dies with his book unfinished but Jinks implies that his life has been successful because Isidore is with him. The beliefs represented in this text reiterate those represented in *Pagan's Vows*. The adolescent protagonists are firmly situated within the Church community.

Human voices of parental authority are not benevolent in *Eye to Eye* so Jinks creates a machine to assume the role of benevolent mentor. Jinks' adolescent protagonist is an orphan who leads a miserable existence on the fringe of his community:

But I'm all alone. There's no one – no living family, no dead family. I have no ancestors; their spirits turned away from me when I was born. Why was I born? Why did Emen save me – just to treat me like a dog until his tiny shrivelled heart gave out and he died without leaving me anything but his clothes? Oh Shaklat, have pity on me in my wretchedness.  
There is no hope left for me. (*Eye to Eye* p. 27)

Jinks constructs the relationship between PIM and Jansi as one of mutual benefit. In some respects, it parallels the relationship he had with Emen. PIM is

reliant on Jansi's hands to repair the spacecraft (p. 6), yet Jansi's hands can and do damage the spacecraft (p. 12). The stark difference is that PIM is a benevolent figure of authority. Jansi places PIM in that role. He first assumes that PIM is the voice of Shaklat, his God (p. 38). When he realises that PIM is not Shaklat and is not from his world, he still assumes that PIM is the boss of the shuttle crew (p. 103). Their relationship is based on mutual need but it also reflects PIM's respect for Jansi. PIM learns to communicate with the boy and then negotiates with Jansi to achieve its goals.

Jinks has situated Jansi in a context that challenges his cultural beliefs as well as challenging her reader's assumptions about the innate humanity of humans. The reader may note that Jansi always refers to PIM as Pim (p. 91); Jansi uses the word as a name rather than as a label. As their partnership develops, PIM assumes the role of a surrogate parent in their family, '... Jansi is in his room; he seems quite content playing a game of MasterShot. I shall have to send him to bed shortly.' (p. 104). PIM resists Stelcorp's order to destroy itself because of its sense of responsibility to Jansi:

'And you would be sad, if I were destroyed?'

'Of course I would.'

'Then I shall have to give the matter some thought.' PIM is speaking very softly.

'It is a view that I have never considered. If your happiness depends on my wellbeing, then my own rules of conduct force me to look carefully at any action that may affect that wellbeing.'

'Meanwhile, Jansi, I suggest that you should go to sleep. I shall wake you when I have made my decision.' (*Eye to Eye* p. 113)

In the ensuing battle, PIM demonstrates his perception of his parental responsibility for Jansi. PIM tells Jansi not to play with Righe's weapons, refuses Jansi's offer to gag the prisoners and asks him to go into the big room where he will be safe and where PIM has placed food for both Jansi and his pet lizard, 'I shall be very busy for a short while. Can you remain silent, and eat



your food until I speak to you again?' (p. 122). PIM's voice is that of a harassed parent.

Jinks explicitly questions assumptions about humanity by contrasting PIM's response to Jansi with that of his actual parents, 'They tried to kill me you know. They left me to die. But I didn't. I wouldn't. They thought I didn't have a right to live, But I fought them.' (p. 112). Jinks implies that Stelcorp would be equally brutal in its treatment of Jansi, 'Oh, we'll take care of Jansi,' says Righe, with a crooked smile, and Serrial flashes him a quick, fierce, frowning look.' (p. 108). When Jansi helps PIM to resist Stelcorp the Commander's attitude is clear, 'Gas that little abortion! What's his name? Jansi? Gas him! Stop him!' (p. 116). PIM is Jansi's only source of comfort and protection in the novel, a source that enables him to meet future challenges.

The resolution of *Eye to Eye* depicts Jansi as a powerful adolescent who has made a conscious choice to accompany PIM to Rodan. He has formed an emotional attachment to PIM that goes beyond gratitude. In the context of the novel, boy and machine have imprinted on each other. Jinks uses this principle to explain the transformation of PIM (pp 104-108). RS4T-PIM speaks with Jansi's voice (p. 104); and when PIM shows Jansi his 'face', the face Jansi sees is his own (p. 148). Jansi has become PIM's 'exemplar' (p. 105). Jansi's relationship with PIM has led to a transformation that saves both him and PIM. PIM tells Jansi that it is not omnipotent, 'my capacity is not limitless' (p. 122), and this allows Jansi to assume the role of protector/mentor:

I can see it all now; I can see why I'm here. I was brought here to save Pim from the Armies of Darkness. To fight for good against evil. Perhaps that was why I was born in the first place – why I was rescued by Emen. Perhaps everything that's happened so far in my life has been directed towards this very moment, the way it was with the Heroes of the Tenth Age.

Why not? It's all magic isn't it? (*Eye to Eye* p. 113)

Jansi's mentor has enabled him to find a role and claim his place.

## **Rebellious Protagonists: Speaking Out**

Adolescent protagonists who are able to express opinions that differ from those of their community are representations of powerful adolescents. Speech can be considered a form of action because it is an act of expression, alluded to in the term 'speech act'. Emerson expressed this belief in his essay *The Poet*: 'Words are also actions and actions are a kind of words' (1844 reprinted 1993 p. 67). Protagonists who have freedom to express different or opposing opinions may decide not to take any further action. In *The Gathering* Carmody depicts a group of adolescents brought together because their ability to speak is censored. In *Deadly Unna?*, one of Blacky's acts of rebellion is to paint out racist slogans.

*The Gathering* represents the power of adolescents acting collectively. In this text, the parental voice of authority is peripheral. The primary representation of parental authority, Nathaniel's mother, is anonymous. Nathaniel's mother has fled an abusive and violent husband to protect herself and her child. Carmody depicts her as a responsible parent whose actions are based on an explicit desire to do what is best, 'You think I enjoy moving so often? I do what's best for us both' ( p. 3) . This statement implies a belief that only adults can be trusted to know what is best. Nathaniel's mother believes the Vice Principal, Mr Karle, rather than Nathaniel when Nathaniel is given a detention for bad behaviour (p. 32); she believes that Nathaniel is responsible for the death of his dog (p. 232). Nathaniel's mother is a powerful parent who does not physically abuse or coerce her son; her weapon is silence and her weakness is her inability to trust her adolescent son (p. 33 and p 233).

Carmody portrays a well-intentioned but fallible parent:

'Evil and good are potentials in all of us. You have a choice whether or not to be evil because you can choose not to do evil things. ... Anyway even the terms good and bad are too black and white because they don't take into account the greys in life.' (*The Gathering* p. 149).

Nathaniel scornfully dismisses his mother's beliefs and the events of the novel validate his response, 'It was just the sort of explanation an adult would have. My mother could only see evil in a mundane way, like stealing or lying or cheating on your income tax.' (p. 149). Carmody represents a parental voice of authority that is misguided. Mr Karle is not what he seems, and the Kraken, the elemental evil that exists within him, is wholly evil. Yet Nathaniel's mother is not wholly wrong. Carmody's representation of the adolescent Seth supports a belief that humans have an innate innocence that can be warped by bad experiences (p. 150). Seth is a golden youth who has been marred by his father's lies and brutality. Nathaniel's mother defines power as the ability to control others:

'I think anyone who has power over others can be evil. "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely", she quoted. I think it is easier to be evil when you have power, when you're strong. ... But I suppose they don't set out to be evil. It's just that the power they have to control ends up making them want to control everything. I think wanting to control things is where evil begins.'  
(*The Gathering* pp 151-152)

Nathaniel successfully opposes the power of the Kraken. He refuses to comply with Mr Karle's wishes and aligns himself with the other members of the Chain. Nathaniel trusts his own perceptions and his trust is validated.

The adolescent protagonists who form the Chain question parental voices of authority. Authority rests elsewhere in this novel. Authority rests in animals. Nathaniel's dog is able to scent danger (p. 170), he leads Nathaniel to the Chain (p. 184), he is attracted to Anna's notebooks (p. 203) and he howls a warning when Nathaniel places him in danger (p. 206). Carmody contrasts the virtue of the Tod with the evil of the feral dogs (p. 223), yet asserts that feral dogs have 'uncanny abilities' (p. 224). Authority rests in magic and mysticism, and this

authority is embodied in Lallie, the adolescent figure who is 'eerily older' than her appearance (p. 83). It is through Lallie's voice that Carmody voices the explicit ideology of this text and foreshadows the resolution of the novel:

'Danny, extinguish the dark flame of the past lest it consume you.'  
'Nissa, strength without compassion is soulless and cruel. Weakness, too, has its place, for it brings understanding.'  
'Seth, see the sorrowing earth. Seek your own vision. Trust it.'  
'Indian, only a wound brought into the light can be healed. That which is hidden will in darkness fester.'  
'Nathanial, time is a circle, without beginning or end. Seek beyond the shadows of the past to know the truth of the future.' (*The Gathering* p. 83)

By following Lallie's instructions, the individual members of the Chain ensure the success of their quest and learn that they have the capacity to wield power. Carmody represents her adolescent protagonists, who resist repression and refuse to be diverted from their quest, as being integral to the survival of their community.

In *Deadly Unna?* Gwynne's resolution depicts his adolescent protagonist defeating his father after taking a stand against the racism that unites his community. The novel portrays an adolescent confronting his fears and developing confidence in his point of view, without the support of an adult mentor or his community. Gwynne depicts the voices of parental authority as either abusive or ineffectual. Gary's father drinks heavily and is a symbol of masculine toughness. He does not flinch when the fishing line cuts deeply into his skin (p. 70). He expects his sons not to show fear, either on the boat (p. 76) or on the football field. His mother is powerless to protect her sons from the brutality of her husband (p. 76). Gwynne suggests that Blacky needs his father: he is anxious for him to attend the football final (p. 89) and unhappy when his father fails to appear. Blacky's courage on the football field leads to a brief reconciliation but in the climax of the novel Blacky rejects his father's authority,

both moral and physical (p. 241). He understands however, why Greggy, his younger brother, still loves their father:

Poor Greggy, I was the same at his age. Hey, everybody! My dad's the best. My dad's the biggest. My dad's the strongest. The best of them all. I used to believe it too. I really did. But then again I also believed that every year a fat man in a red suit used to squeeze down the chimney with a sackful of toys (and we didn't even have a chimney). (*Deadly Unna?* p. 241)

Gwynne depicts a strong adolescent who realises that he no longer needs the mythologies of childhood. He can accept that his father is a violent and abusive drunk. This acceptance is evidence that Blacky is following the guidance of his own intellect and conscience.

The resolution is open-ended in that Gwynne makes it clear that Blacky's victory is not absolute, but it also demonstrates Blacky's leadership abilities. Sibling rivalries are forgotten as his siblings unite in supporting him. They lie to Darcy and insist on helping paint over the racist slogan daubed on the shed. Gwynne makes it clear that their achievements are only momentary: more slogans will be painted on the shed and they will have to return home to confront the old man. He reinforces his image of Blacky's awakening maturity by ending the novel depicting Blacky making a conscious decision to enjoy the moment rather than spoil it by worrying about the problems that lie ahead.

In *The House Guest*, Nilsson challenges the conventions of the adventure story by depicting a group of children whose gang is based on a criminal conspiracy. The HBS gang are a gang of thieves, united by their raids on unoccupied homes. Nilsson also blurs the boundaries between the normal and the paranormal because her plot is reliant on a theme of paranormal powers handed down from mother to son. Nilsson's resolution restores order but it leaves questions unanswered. The HBS gang are never punished for their crimes; they feel remorse, but they do not make restitution to their victims.

When Gunno decides to leave the gang it dissolves, becoming only a phase in the lives of Gunno, Jess and Wally who seemingly no longer need to test the boundaries and order is restored within their friendships and the community. Order within Gunno's family is also restored when Gunno accepts that visions are the essence of his individuality. By accepting this, he is able to be reconciled with his mother.

Nilsson situates her adolescent protagonist, Gunno, in a world where his visions of the past acquire corporeal substance. The dead Hugh becomes real, making it possible for Gunno to locate his body. In doing so, he brings comfort to Anne and Geoff, Sam's parents. Gunno's mother, from whom he seems to have inherited his powers, had proved herself unequal to the challenge of dealing with her visions. She is described as 'fanciful' (p. 108); her oddness is nurtured by reading until she becomes 'unbalanced' and is institutionalised:

'And you mean Mum got locked up for seeing Mr Watchman trying to look after his dog?'

'No one ever locked your mother up, Gunno. And he was **dead**. Haven't you been listening? Your mother's just one of these people who can't cope with ordinary life and invents things, maybe, to make it more bearable. It hurt her to think of that old dog ...' (*The House Guest* p. 108)

In Gunno, Nilsson depicts an adolescent who is equal to the challenge. Gunno is not subjected to repressive power but rather the opposite; Nilsson depicts an adolescent who chooses to follow his own convictions rather than suppress them. He does this without the support of an adult mentor. His father is a caring voice of parental authority, but he is unaware of his son's gift and his actions. Gunno is forced to be self-reliant and determine his own moral code. In this, he is guided by an innate sense of morality.

Nilsson's explicit belief is that morality supersedes contemporary laws. Gunno is a thief but he is noble. His name is a variant of Gunnar, a traditional Icelandic

hero who was also an outlaw. Sam is a name shared by both Hugh's dog and Gunnar's dog. There are also allusions to the moral superiority of animals, a theme that I shall not explore here. Nilsson depicts her adolescent protagonist developing his own moral code, independent of adult direction.

Nilsson's voices of parental authority are ineffectual: Gunno's mother is absent and Gunno ignores her letters; Gunno's father is caring but ignorant of Gunno's activities; Anne and Geoff love Hugh but are incapable of keeping him safe. In such a world, adolescents must be self-reliant. By encouraging her adolescent readers to identify with Gunno, Nilsson encourages them to rely on their own strength and their own innate sense of morality, independent of adult authority. By accepting his difference, Gunno claims his place within a community beyond the HBS gang. In doing this, he does not repress his difference; rather he integrates it into his sense of identity in a way that demonstrates his superiority over his mother. From that position of strength, he is able to re-establish contact with his mother. Not only does he have powers, he is powerful. In Gunno, Nilsson depicts the autonomy of an adolescent who breaks conventions and conforms to an independent moral code.

### **Vulnerable Protagonists**

Vulnerable adolescent protagonists are those who are to some degree isolated or estranged from their family or community. In this sample of texts, the degree of isolation or estrangement determines the survival of the protagonist.

Vulnerable protagonists can choose to acquiesce to parental voices of authority and if they so they become less vulnerable.

Crew's setting for *Angel's Gate* depicts a small rural community, Jericho, which is both elitist and racist. Crew explicitly states that Jericho has a class structure;

Julia's boyfriend Bobby is not suitable because he is not one of 'ours' (p. 9). Jericho is built on land that has been alienated from the local Aboriginal tribe (pp17-19) after Cephas Winch found gold in the Jericho Hills. Themes of racism and elitism are however only subordinate themes in this novel; the central theme is the vulnerability of adolescents. Crew portrays adolescents at opposite ends of the social spectrum: privileged middle class children and wild children. Whatever their social status, they must fight society's desire to entrap them.

Crew represents a seemingly benevolent parental authority that traps adolescents within existing social structures for their own good. Julia wants to leave school and get a job at the Empire working for Ruby, her parents want her to go to boarding school. Her mother explains:

'You are going to college. I realise that Ruby has impressed you, and I can understand why. I admire her too, it might interest you to know – and I've known her a lot longer than you have - but you're our daughter not hers, and until you reach an age when you can live independently, you will do what we say. That's our parental responsibility. That's how we show we love you. Is that clear?'  
(*Angel's Gate* p. 142)

Julia, Leena and Bobby all challenge the roles that their parents and society have accorded them: Julia takes a job; Leena plans her escape from institutionalised care; and Bobby plans to sell the family farm and go back to school. Their desires seem reasonable. The title of this novel is also the name of the pass that breaks through the smoky blue hills that surround Jericho and leads to the western plains beyond (p. 5). To succeed these adolescents will have to break through social conventions. Crew does not portray their success in doing this, only their longing to do so.

Crew depicts a parental voice of authority in a variety of contexts: affluence, poverty and institutional care. In none of these contexts is the parental voice of authority adequate. Kimmy and Julia's parents, the town doctor and his nurse,



represent middle class respectability and middle class values. Their privileged position ensures that their children have a privileged position. They have a social conscience, and they model this for their children: Kimmy is rebuked for being 'cruel and irresponsible' (p. 118) and Julia is rebuked for her simplistic reaction to the Flanagan children's problems (p. 127). Kimmy and Julia's parents are brave and principled people. They take first Leena and then Micky into their home; even though they know that the man who killed their father is hunting them. Yet they fail to recognise their own children's dreams and wishes and give them expensive Christmas presents that they do not want instead of the presents they hope for (p. 185).

Paddy Flanagan, the father of the wild children, represents the opposite end of the social order. He too cares for his children; it is only after his death that they become scavengers and raid the local farms (p. 67). He protects his children from the *Mister* and from the authorities until his death. Leena accurately predicts her fate without his protection, 'We're gone now. They'll take us away now' (p. 261). Crew depicts institutional care as the worst form of parental authority. He creates a teacher who likes to see children suffer (p. 67). The representative from Social Welfare, Mrs Cutler, is disinterested. She does not speak to Leena by name, referring to her to her as 'the girl', and focuses her attention on whether Leena has been sexually abused rather than Leena's grief for her father and fears for brother (pp 168-9).

Crew emphasises that it is will rather than circumstance that determines an individual's path. Crew strengthens this image of difference between the siblings in his description of the two laurel trees that grew in the front yard of the house. Only one tree survives. The tree that threatened to knock down the wall has been removed, the other tree adapted its growth to meet its conditions, and flourished. Some readers would recognise the metaphor. Julia has to devise

a subtle strategy in order to break free of her parents' control. Similarly, Kimmy's decisions will decide his future. Crew ends *Angel's Gate* with Kimmy standing in his eyrie wondering whether he will ever break free, 'The west wind swept through the Angel's Gate, cooling my face. Turning towards it, I lifted my arms. As I did, I heard a voice call from far away, "Would you fly, Kimmy? Would you?"' (*Angel's Gate* p. 274) Although his father has acknowledged his heightened maturity by calling him Kim (p. 264), he is uncertain. Kimmy/Kim wonders whether he has the courage to follow his sister's example. The cage of privilege his parents have created is very comfortable, and life beyond that cage is risky. Crew suggests that if Kim acquiesces he will have failed. This imagery is not simplistic, leaping off the eyrie had proved fatal for one man (p. 23), and Crew offers his readers no reassurance that Kim's figurative leap is any less dangerous.

*Foxspell* has as its core the theme of displacement. Rubinstein depicts a fragmented family in a fragmented community. The fox symbolises the introduction of British people and British culture into Australia. Tod's family has been removed from their familiar suburban environment and inserted into an unfamiliar environment, their mother's childhood home. The cause of their dislocation is the father's longing for England. Each parent has returned to his or her childhood home. The fact that one of these is in Australia and the other is in the United Kingdom reinforces the themes of dislocation and fragmentation. Rubinstein's community is anything but cohesive, but its divisions do not tolerate diversity, each sector struggles for ascendancy. Dallas, the eldest sibling is aligned with Rick the town police officer. Charm, the middle sibling is aligned with Shaun, who cheerfully predicts 'I'll do time for this one, if they get me' (p. 187). Tod yearns to go back as well, to his life in Sydney, to 'life as it should be' (p. 9).

Tod seems to be surrounded by voices of parental authority but he lacks a reliable benevolent male figure of authority. He has his Grandma, his mother and his older sister Dallas. Rubinstein uses each character to model different ways of being or being an adult, but her models are all female. His father's absence creates a space in Tod's life, a space that can be filled either by the physical representation of the mythical fox figure, Dan Russell, or by Shaun, the leader of a gang of graffiti artists. Rubinstein offers her adolescent protagonist choices, but both of these choices will lead to estrangement from his family. Laurie, Tod's father, promises to return to his son (p. 175) but his experience of family conflict has made Tod distrustful. He fears that his mother will prevent his father from returning and he rejects his Grandmother's attempts to comfort him (p. 176).

Tod chooses to rebel and becomes part of Shaun's gang but Shaun is a bully (p. 113) who cares only for himself. His younger brother, Adrian, Tod's friend, dies trying to follow him (p. 188). The shock renders Tod unable to speak:

His human was making strange sounds, no longer screaming but panting in a heavy anguished way that made Dan Russell want to snarl and run. He wanted to save his cub. He wanted to take him away from whatever it was that made him pant like that. (*Foxspell* p. 190)

Tod's grandmother is a figure of stability, a conventional figure of parental authority, but Tod does not see her as a source of guidance. Grandma defies the stereotype of the frail elderly woman, her voice is 'amazingly loud' (p. 6) and she dresses like a man. Despite her individuality, she applies a stereotype to Tod, 'boys will be boys' (p. 49), and Tod comes to believe that her 'shiny dark eyes' do not see him as he really is (p. 177). Rubinstein subverts any differences between kids and adults and the privileges of age:

'I'm allowed to! I've earned my right to swear when I want to. You're just a kid. So no swearing out here, okay?'

She grinned at him, making him unsure. Sometimes he almost liked her, other times she scared him. It was hard to tell what she was thinking, but her shiny dark eyes seemed to see right through him. He wondered if she minded having the whole family descend on her. She probably hated it. (*Foxspell* p. 7)

Rubinstein demonstrates that Grandma lacks authority over her daughter, grandchildren, Dan Russell and Shaun.

Rubinstein portrays Tod's family life as chaotic; his family is an eclectic group of disconnected individuals. Tod's mother, Leonie, is a 'Surry Hills eccentric' (p. 23), trying to carve out a career as a comedian. She uses her family, particularly Charm, as the basis of her routines. Leonie is striving to be an individual, to express her creativity, even if this is not what her family wants:

'At least I'm doing something,' she went on, getting more serious when she saw that no one else was smiling. 'I'm trying to do something with my life, something different and interesting. I'm trying to express myself and find a meaning in things.' (*Foxspell* p. 53)

Grandma believes that Leonie is still an adolescent at heart, 'You haven't changed since you were seventeen' (p. 53). If so, then Leonie is an adolescent with three adolescent children. Leonie is not a voice of authority. She believes that her only course of action is passive, to 'wait and see what happens' (p. 530).

Through Dallas, the eldest sibling, Rubinstein depicts an adolescent who tries to assume a parental role, 'Dallas mothered everyone, even Mum' (p. 10). Dallas worries about meals, tidiness, Charm's truancy, Tod's literacy, her parents' separation. She tries to exert control, to restore order in her life. She rejects her mother as a role model, 'I'm never going to end up like this,' she said quietly. 'I will never, ever go back to my mother with three children. I'm going to be rich if it kills me.' (p. 11). Dallas believes her mother Leonie is an 'irresponsible' parent (p. 97) and that she has no choice other than to try to fulfil her mother's responsibilities. Her beliefs generate resentment:

'It's so unfair,' she said, her hands cupped around the mug of strong tea Grandma has made for her. 'I shouldn't have to worry about all this. I'm in my last year of school. I've got assignments and assessments all the time. I'm falling behind with my work. I never have time to do my homework. I'm never going to get the marks I need.' (*Foxspell* p. 132)

Rubinstein makes it clear that Dallas has created her burdens. Dallas deflects her Grandma's response that she does not have to assume this worry and slips back into the role she has chosen. Ironically, Dallas's decision to marry is a repetition of her mother's actions (p. 174).

Rubinstein ends the novel with her protagonist standing between two worlds, that of his family and another. He had sought protections from the charismatic leader of the gang, Shaun, because he believed that Shaun would look out for him in high school (p. 157) but Shaun has abandoned his gang, his girlfriend and Tod. Dan Russell, the Fox Spirit, offers Tod protection, but the price of this protection is estrangement from his family and community. Tod is not alone when he witnesses Adrian's fall under the train; his sister Charm is with him. He can choose to remain with his family or accept the protection of Dan Russell, but the resolution does not reveal his decision.

## **Silenced Protagonists**

Three authors create adolescent protagonists who die or disappear. These protagonists are all estranged from their family and sequestered from their community. The causes of their estrangement vary but the consequences are the same. The authors resolve the dilemma of an adolescent protagonist who cannot become, one who has no hope of a place within their community, by depicting their actual or presumed death.

Death is a recurrent theme in this sample of texts. *A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove* and *Angel's Gate* depict the death of a parent. *Pagan's Vows*, *Pagan's Scribe* and

*Eye to Eye* are tales of orphaned protagonists. *Looking for Alibrandi*, *House Guests*, *Foxspell*, and *Deadly Unna?* portray the deaths of a child or an adolescent. These depictions of death illustrate its finality, a finality that Trites suggests is a characteristic of YA literature (p. 118). Readers are not comforted with representations of death as part of a natural cycle but confronted with images of grief and loss. Those texts that depict the accidental death of a child or the suicide of an adolescent most obviously subvert any image of death as natural.

Clarke, Crew and Hartnett depict the death, or presumed death, of their protagonist. These deaths symbolise an emotional isolation that Crew and Hartnett reinforce with images of physical isolation and horror. Perhaps ironically, the ordinariness of the death of Clarke's protagonist makes his death more disturbing. Luke's death occurs in an ordinary Australian suburb; he is part of an ordinary Australian family. Death is seemingly inevitable if a protagonist lacks a parent or mentor to assist them to safely managing the transition from adolescence to adulthood. The context in which a protagonist's voice is silenced differs in each text, but all of these texts suggest that without a parent or mentor an adolescent protagonist has no possibility of 'becoming' and thus no possibility of survival.

In *Night Train*, Clarke depicts the loss of a gifted adolescent as a tragedy for himself, his family and his community. The novel explores the factors that contributed to this tragedy and allows readers to consider questions of responsibility in a text that does not attribute blame to a single individual. Luke is trapped on the train tracks when the Night Train passes, by ill luck, by poor judgement or by a combination of both of these reasons (pp. 167-168). Up until this point in the text Clarke is ambiguous about whether the Night Train actually exists, or whether it is a delusion that is product of Luke's instability.

Clarke is unambiguous, however, in depicting Luke's emotional isolation. In this fictive world, adolescents who do not respond appropriately have no place:

'These children!' she [Mrs Lewis, the school counsellor] wailed. 'They just throw things away. You give them everything, you give and give and give – and they just throw it all back in your face!' (*Night Train* p. 106).

Mrs Lewis' comment refers to Luke, but she is also alluding to her feelings about her own daughter. Luke's father, Dan, shares her frustrations. He fears the consequences of Luke's eccentricity: 'Think before you act!' ... 'You're ruining your bloody life' (p. 42). When Luke fails to behave appropriately, Dan ceases to speak to him altogether. Clarke depicts a parent who has effectively abandoned his parental role. Luke tries to break through the barrier his father has erected but his attempts fail. Clarke tells her readers that Luke feels liberated by his failure:

He used to wait for a moment then, hanging in the doorway, still hoping, because he could never quite believe his dad would keep on doing this to him. Then he'd walk away, treading lightly, and actually **feeling** lighter, as if something inside him had melted away.  
He didn't bother with Dad any more. (*Night Train* p. 90)

Luke's freedom compounds his isolation because the physical presence of a father masks his emotional isolation.

Clarke portrays Dan as an ineffectual parent whose neglect of his son is the response of a parent who cannot understand his child. Dan is not, however, an abusive or monstrous parent. Luke tells readers that when he was a child both of his parents had listened to him and supported him (p. 17). The adolescent Luke does not receive any support from Dan. Dan has not only ceased to listen to his son, he grows angry when Luke's name is mentioned (p. 33). Luke is not the only member of his family whom Dan ignores, he tries to minimise his contact with all of his family, 'He had gone out of range, she [his wife] thought,

like a lone blip vanishing from a radar screen' (p. 80). Yet Dan is not portrayed as callous, he tries to block out his feelings:

'Please talk to Luke,' Margaret [his wife] had pleaded, but what good would talking to him do? Margaret had accused him of being cruel, but she had got it wrong; she didn't understand that he avoided Luke to save **himself**, to keep his distance; getting up close was the way he had been hurt before. Talking to the boy would only start the hopes up all over again.

He wished he didn't have to actually **see** him. Because sometimes, looking at Luke, a terrible pity would wrench at him and he couldn't stop himself thinking that somehow, somewhere, it might just be their fault. His fault.

*(Night Train p. 115)*

Dan fears being overwhelmed by an awareness of his failure as a parent and he resents having to beg the Deputy Principal for another chance for Luke (p. 115).

Clarke's use of the word 'beg' alludes to an earlier remark of Luke's:

His mother would be scared of the Deputy Principal. His father might dislike the man but he'd be very careful with him because Stringer had the power to affect his son's place in the world. Dad would believe him too. He'd believe anything Stringer chose to say. *(Night Train p. 17)*

Dan is uneasily aware that his talented and troubled son has no place in this ordinary suburban community. He retreats from this awareness and its source, his son. Dan's relationship with his son is dysfunctional but Clarke does not offer a sequence of cause and effect as a rationale for its deterioration. Dan does attempt to speak with Luke, in the last hours of Luke's life, but Luke protects himself from this encounter by pretending to be asleep. Readers may wonder whether father and son are alike rather than dissimilar.

Clarke's image of ordinary but inadequate parents intensifies the tragedy of Luke's death and implies that it is not an aberration. Luke's mother, Margaret, also feels defeated (p. 53). She had tried to learn how to be a better parent by attending a course but 'the strategies she had learned there hadn't worked at home' (p. 53). She has accepted that 'there was nothing to be done about Luke now' (p. 47). Readers may worry about his baby sister Naomi, who at age five



has assumed responsibility for her adolescent brother: 'Naomi screamed. Because now she would never be able to close all the gates again, ever – and now something bad would happen to Lukie.' (p. 168). In her resolution, Clarke compares Luke's parents to fledglings, 'small birds peeping over the edge of their nest into the scary world' (p. 170). They seem as vulnerable as Luke; they too need mentors who can assist them to fulfil their roles in Clarke's scary fictive suburbia.

Luke's teachers, possible mentors, also fail him. Vice Principal Stringer has no patience with Luke because students like Luke let the school down (p. 13). The school provides Luke with access to a counsellor, Mrs Lewis, but Luke fears her. He fears that if he gives the wrong answers to her questions she will believe he is crazy, so he refuses her help and stays silent. Clarke suggests that Luke's fears are reasonable; Jennifer Brady has suffered this fate. Clarke supports his distrust of Mrs Lewis whilst alluding to the counsellor's personal problems. Mrs Lewis' daughter Phoebe, only speaks to her mother to tell her that she is a 'silly bitch' (p. 70). Rosa Brennan is the teacher who is most sympathetic towards Luke:

Oh God, she'd spoiled it. She shouldn't have mentioned university, she shouldn't have said that word. It meant exams, it meant everything. It had slipped out before she thought. Force of habit.

'Luke!' she called, but he was already running, he was halfway down the hill.

She **should** have told him not to worry, that it wasn't the end of the world if he failed. She should have. As Rosa turned into her gate she felt a chilling sense of something missed, slipped sadly from her hand. Let go. (*Night Train* p. 112)

Clarke uses this character to reiterate her theme of missed chances, lost opportunities. Glendale is Luke's third school. Luke interprets this as a personal failure, his failure rather than that of his community but Clarke does not appear to support his belief.

Luke wants to belong to his community; he does not want to be one of the night people, 'The train for the night people, for all the ones who couldn't go to sleep, who lay awake and thought and thought, who had whirligigs inside their heads – and padlocks, great shiny padlocks, just like him.' (p. 61). Luke's death occurs because he seeks to prove to himself, and to others, that he is not crazy. If he is not one of the night people, he can claim his place in his community:

There was something wrong with him. Hadn't Mum just said so, in the room next-door? Mrs Lewis thought so, didn't she? Even Mrs Brennan might think so, although she'd hidden it like Mum had done. And they didn't mean wrong like failing exams or getting chucked out of schools, nothing so ordinary as that. They meant wrong in the head. Crazy.

They might be right.

He switched on the light and grabbed his clothes from the chair. He had to be sure about this, he had to see. Because they could be wrong, too, and if there was a night train then they were wrong; it was as simple as that. (*Night Train* p. 164)

Clarke places Luke's death firmly in the context of his community by depicting the reactions of strangers as well as friends and family. The young adolescents who go down to the railway line to scare themselves are scared, not by the blood and signs of death, but because, 'It was all just so ordinary; that was the scary thing.' (p. 171). They relieve their fear by running, 'straight for home' (p. 171). With this image Clarke conjures the traditional connotations of home as being a place where you belong. Clarke suggests that communities should be inclusive but that in practice they exclude those who fail to acquiesce.

In *Sleeping Dogs*, Hartnett portrays a family isolated and controlled by the personification of a mythical monster, Griffin. Even though three of his five children are adults, they all fear his wrath. Griffin has successfully isolated his family physically and emotionally to reinforce his authority over them:

No one knows much about the Willow family: most of them can remember their sudden arrival in the town and many of them resent the closeted existence that the family lives, feeling their goodwill to have been snubbed. At first rumour had flown around the town – that the Willows were oddly religious, that Grace Willow suffered some crippling or perhaps disfiguring disease, that there was an element

of a criminal past – and it was not until the speculation crumbled under the inspection of several years that the Willows were left in some degree of peace. Attitudes towards them range widely: some cling obstinately to the belief that there is a dark mischief afoot at the farm and will not let the fact that the farm takes in paying guests dissuade them, swearing that the guests must be mischievous too. The more sensible, and the more easily bored, understand the family to be merely peculiar. Everyone knows that Griffin Willow is strange and thinks that Grace Willow has been cowed by him to the point of idiocy, or else she is naturally even stranger than her husband. The most generous of the townspeople feel sorry for the children, as victims of their parents, but there are those who think the children most disquieting of all and find their aloofness utterly chilling. ... six years has served to teach the people that Willows have no interest in anyone beside themselves. (*Sleeping Dogs* pp. 47-48.)

Griffin establishes traditions, even a secret language, to define the inner sanctum of the Willow family (p. 104). The paying guests are an unwelcome but necessary intrusion, tolerated only because their money makes the farm viable (p. 38). The Willow children have been trained to comply with their father's authority. Hartnett's imagery appears to dehumanise them but dehumanises Griffin more. He 'has trained his family in the way that a horse breaker trains a horse' (p. 51). Griffin Willow has broken his children. Their mother, Grace, is also broken. She has retreated inwards, literally and emotionally shutting out the world. The windows in the house are always closed and the curtains drawn (p. 17). Grace has been trained to accept the brutal beatings of Jordan that began when he was a small child (p. 16).

Griffin's dominance has ensured that his beliefs have been inculcated in all of his children. Even Jordan, the scapegoat, has to make an effort to question Griffin:

Appalled, he wonders how deeply his father's ideology runs in them, how it has infiltrated all they have thought and done. They know their father's sorrows and joys, dreams and ideals, hatreds and pleasures, probably better than they know their own – if indeed, they have any to truly call their own. We're poisoned, he thinks, we're infected, nothing about us is **pure** – and it is with relief that he recalls his sailing boat for that, at least, is clean, and Griffin hasn't caught up with it yet. (*Sleeping Dogs* p. 114)

Jordan had once tried to challenge Griffin. At eighteen, he had hit back when his father struck him and he had knocked Griffin off his feet. His rebellion was brief. Michelle, his sister and lover, defended Griffin's actions (p. 18). Jordan loved two people, Grace and Michelle, but neither offered him any support. Jordan has accepted that 'Willow children were born for the sake of their father's farm' (p. 19). Jordan's only refuge was his art and his dreams of a sailing boat:

Jordan lies awake on his bed, listening to the noises in the house. Everyone is laughing and talking but this house, he knows is filled with fear. Under all they do and say skims a fear that runs and runs, afraid to stand still for only by moving do they protect themselves, by twisting, darting, turning. Their distrust extends as far as the world, comes as close as each other. When they laugh, it isn't real: all that's real is the hard core of privacy they've each built inside themselves, sanctuary, truth, the only place where life ceases to be coarse and sinister and strange.  
(*Sleeping Dogs* p. 119)

His dream of a sailing boat becomes a plan to catch a bus but fear unnerves him and prevents him from taking any action. Jordan has accepted his life, 'he can never leave because this is where he was made to stay' (p. 123). Hartnett confirms Jordan's belief. He is the only Willow to stay on that farm, the rest of the Willow family move on after his death.

Hartnett's text is nihilistic. Recurring images of decay reinforce this theme. Hartnett frames the plot with images of death, the death of the sheep and the deaths of Jordan and Applegrit. Griffin's slaughter of his son seems almost inevitable, as inevitable as the slaughter of the sheep that Hartnett depicts in the opening pages of the novel. Hartnett suggests that the eldest son, Edward, may become like his father. Readers are told that Edward sounds just like his father when he gloats about the way he has treated Bow Fox (p. 113). Hartnett implies that there is no glimmer of hope for Michelle:

What she doesn't know or understand she despises. It is only at home that she feels assured. ... She never thinks of leaving. She wants no outside occupation and no other company. She is pleased to know that she will stay here forever. (*Sleeping Dogs* p. 78).

Similarly, Oliver sees the opportunity of leaving the farm and his family as a punishment rather than an escape, retribution for speaking and thus betraying his family:

Forlorn, Oliver realises that he is now free to go; indeed, that he has no alternative but to go. He has lost what would otherwise have kept him here. Hankering for friendship has cost him everything, including a future that was comfortably foreseeable to the end.

He feels an intense bitterness towards Bow Fox, and the morsel of pity he had felt for the artist on the cliff's edge is gone. (*Sleeping Dogs* p. 118)

The behaviour of the youngest child has none of the possibilities associated with youth, Speck's behaviour is sociopathic, she 'howls and shakes and yells' with laughter at Bow Fox's fear (p. 118) and the fear of the lost children (p. 11). Their family is their norm for the Willow children and they do not seek to change it. Jordan's passive acceptance of Griffin's brutality seems almost reasonable in the context of his siblings' acceptance of Griffin's ideology.

Whilst Clarke and Hartnett set their novels in a contemporary context, Crew links the present with the past. In *Strange Objects*, Gary Crew links historical events and images of the supernatural with the presumed death of his protagonist, Steven Messenger. Crew's integration of historical fact into his fiction suggests that a twentieth century community is no better equipped to cope with aberrant adolescents. Neither Jan nor Steven has a place in their community. Steven's actions exclude him from his community just as Jan Pelgrom's actions had excluded him from both the Dutch and the Aboriginal communities.

Irene, Steven's mother, is portrayed as well meaning but ineffectual; hers is an insignificant voice, and Steven rebuffs her attempts to care for him (p. 37). Crew shows his readers that Irene is trying to do her best to nurture Steven. She tries to entertain him by bringing home the newspapers and magazines that 'the people leave behind' (p. 24). Irene knows that Steven is ill; she worries about his fever and dreams (p. 94), and calls a doctor to come out and check his chest but her efforts are futile. She attributes Steven's eventual disappearance to his inability to accept the death of his father:

*Answer: He was sick. And what happened to his father. So far nobody has said a word about that. How I was left to bring that boy up by myself. I did my best to ...*

*Question: His father?*

*Answer: That's right. His father. Killed in a rig accident on the highway up north – 6 January this year – a good three months before all this hand business you're going on about. (Strange Objects p. 183)*

Through Irene's character, Crew establishes that Steven had retreated into a fantasy before the events depicted in the novel. The knowledge that Steven is an unreliable narrator encourages readers to be sceptical about his interpretation of events.

Steven's beliefs lead him to cultivate an emotional isolation that compounds his physical isolation. Steven chooses to live in his delusions, a place where his father is still alive and where the power of the ring enhances his own power. Acts of coercive power by the authorities fail to compel him to give up the ring. Attempts at persuasion also fail. Steven is guided by his delusions and Crew depicts his descent into paranoia and madness as inevitable. Before Steven leaves the Roadhouse he writes to Dr Michaels:

I saw Kratz leave the other day, and his mother. They took the Greyhound south. The way things are I think I should do something the same, but head north, and hitch. (I might get picked up by my father.)  
Up north I could wear the ring every day, on my hand, fight out in the open. Then I would find out what we can really do. (*Sleeping Dogs* p. 177)

Crew constructs an image of two adolescents heading in opposite directions. Kratzman heads south to an apprenticeship, an education, and a future. Steven heads north and vanishes.

The title of this novel refers to a quote from H.P. Lovecraft that Crew includes as a preface, 'For there are strange objects in the great abyss, and the seeker of dreams must take care not to stir up, or meet, the wrong ones'. Crew creates an artefact, a ring, to link the lives of a lonely adolescent living on the fringes of a small community and an adolescent who is described variously as either 'a psychopathic killer' (p. 39) or at best 'an unstable, impressionable and vulnerable disciple' (p. 43). The ring is, however, also a 'strange object' and triggers the actions that led to the death of Ela and the probable death of Steven. By alluding to supernatural forces that are both beyond our control and are eternal Crew removes a measure of responsibility for these crimes from individuals, parents, adults and their communities. If individuals cannot control their actions, Crew questions whether they can be held responsible for these actions. Crew encourages his readers to consider this question without offering an answer.

### **Conclusion**

This analysis illustrates the complexity of these representations of adolescence. Adolescent narrator/protagonists are simultaneously powerful and vulnerable, powerful in their youthful vigour yet vulnerable through their need for a role within a community. They are free to speak, but the voices of successful protagonists are firmly situated within their communities. This sample depicts multiple ways of being both an adolescent and a parent in a diverse range of family and community structures but these voices articulate an essential unity.

It is not unsurprising, given the pedagogical basis of this genre, that almost all of the adolescent protagonists acquiesce to the authority of their parents and learn how to negotiate within existing social structures. What is surprising is that all of these novels represent adolescents as vulnerable. In this sense, the sample is monophonic. Three adolescent protagonists rebel against parental authority but their well being if not their survival depends on their successfully negotiating the consequences of their rebellion. Gwynne's Blacky is the most successful adolescent rebel, yet he is defined by his role in his family and his community. After his confrontation with his father, Darcy (a friendly adult) helps him put his unconscious father to bed (p. 269) and Blacky is reassured by the knowledge that his mother will be back soon. Within this safety net, Blacky can relax:

I closed my eyes. Tomorrow there'd be hell to pay, but at that moment, down there at Bum Rock, my brothers and sisters around me, I was happy. Happier than a pig in mud. I was as happy as Larry.' (*Deadly Unna?* p. 173)

Gwynne has subverted the values of the powerful through his support of Blacky's morality and values, but his protagonist is not isolated. Analysis of this sample of novels supports Trites' suggestion that YA novels generally depict protagonists learning to negotiate the social mores of their community. Gwynne's novel suggests that a protagonist can successfully negotiate these mores without accepting them. Blacky is a representation of an adolescent who chooses his battles but does not anticipate an easy victory.

The texts that depict the death of the adolescent protagonist reinforce a belief that an adolescent protagonist must learn to adapt, to fit in with the social structures, in order to win a place and therefore a future in their community. These protagonists cannot be categorised as rebels, choosing to challenge social structures, their common feature is that they are individuals who are alienated



from their communities. Authority does not repress these voices; they are ignored until they are silenced by death.

The causes of this alienation are varied. The setting of *Night Train* both demonstrates that alienated adolescents are not always physically or geographically isolated and suggests that such instances are not uncommon. Hartnett depicts an abused protagonist who cannot escape from his violent father in a setting that is anything but ordinary. Crew links his protagonist's delusions to a supernatural ring of power but he also tells his readers that Steven had chosen to distance himself from his community by refusing to accept the death of his father. The deaths of the protagonists are inevitable because they have no place and no possibility of becoming. They cannot successfully transit from adolescence into adulthood because they lack a mentor to guide them. These authors endorse the importance of the protagonist's relationship with a parental voice of authority (either actual or surrogate) as a critical factor in the protagonist's development. In this sense, the sample is monophonic.

Australian novels from the 1990s for adolescent readers have been dismissed as bleak novels of social ills (Macintyre 1997). Certainly, some of the texts in this sample are bleak but they are not monophonic, as this description seems to imply. The values of the powerful, as represented by parental voices of authority in these texts, are demonstrably not always true. Parental voices are depicted as powerful voices varying from benign to malevolent, from indifferent to obsessive. It can be argued that these texts illustrate Bakhtin's notion of polyphony in their representations of incomplete and unsatisfactory dialogues between the protagonists and their parents.

## Chapter Five: Who Speaks When and Where?

Analysis of its chronotope informs our understanding of a novel and its author's perception of his/her readers. In this sample of novels, judged to be addressed to adolescent readers, analysis of the chronotope informs our understanding of perceptions of Australian adolescent readers in the 1990s. In each novel, the author has constructed time in two distinctly different ways, both through their sequencing of the narrative and their choice of a chronological period. The narrative sequence reflects the authors' beliefs about their readers' literacy skills and interests. Perhaps predictably, the majority of novels in this sample are contemporary texts set in an Australian landscape. The sample, however, also includes constructions of mythic time as well as past and future time. It also includes novels that integrate allusions to Australia's history and cultural links in representations of a distinctively Australian environment. It is noteworthy that in a sample of texts written at the end of a millennium only one novel is set in a future time and place.

Collectively the novels in this sample represent a particular time and place in that they are the award-winning Australian novels for adolescent readers from the last decade of the twentieth century. In their fictive constructions of time and place, this sample represents past, present and future times; and places as diverse as medieval France and a primitive planet that could be Earth or somewhere else. This sample illustrates the interdependency of time and place. *Looking for Alibrandi*, *Strange Objects*, *The Gathering*, *The House Guest* and *A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove* are all set in a contemporary Australian setting, yet each text evokes a different Australian landscape. Even texts that are set in contemporary suburban Australia, as is the case in *Looking for Alibrandi*, *The Gathering* and *The House Guest*, differ markedly because the authors have each created a unique chronotope by including or excluding elements of mythic time or supernatural time.

These differences illustrate Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope, 'an intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature' (1981, p. 84). Time and place in a novel are not simply a background against which a novel develops. They are interdependent constructs within which characters and events acquire significance. This interdependency can be multi layered as Crew illustrates in *Strange Objects*. Crew plays with notions of time and space in this novel to imply a supernatural connection between contemporary events, historical events and mythical evil. The aberrant behaviour of a contemporary adolescent is linked to the aberrant behaviour of a seventeenth-century adolescent, and both fall under the spell of a golden ring. Crew encourages his readers to speculate upon a mystical connection between Steven and Jan and the ring they both coveted. Sceptical readers may dismiss such speculations, but Crew has established a chronotope in which such things are possible. Crew's conclusion reinforces the elements of mystery and history embedded in his chronotope in a reference to a mysterious Hitchhiker. Readers are told that the tale of the Hitchhiker has long been a part of the Murchison District folklore (pp. 184-185), before the events that the novel describes.

The chronotope is intrinsic to helping us understand the significance of a novel. An author creates characters, events and themes in a time and space that they then manipulate with the intention of achieving a literary effect. Time and space establish the frame of reference in which readers perceive the significance of characters, events and themes. By setting *Eye to Eye* in a future time and place, Jinks is able to create a compassionate machine in a novel that can be described as post human. The relationship between Jansi and PIM parallels the relationship Jinks depicts in her medieval series the *Pagan Chronicles*, two texts from which are included in the study. In each of these texts, an adult with whom they have no familial connection nurtures the orphans Pagan and

Isidore. Jinks' chronotope in *Eye to Eye* shifts the reader's focus from human relationships to a speculation about what it is that defines the quality of humanity. The adult human characters in this novel abandoned Jansi, if they did not exploit or abuse him. It is PIM, the machine, who shows compassion and assumes a parental role. The chronotope of *Eye to Eye* is an integral component of Jinks' literary purpose rather than a background. Jinks intends that her chronotope will both dramatise and clarify the issue of interrogating what it is that defines humanity. She has manipulated time and space in an attempt to better communicate this issue to her readers.

Genette suggested that the temporal determination of a narrative is more important than its spatial determination because a story is inevitably located in a time but its place can be indeterminate (in Onega & Garcia 1996, p. 175). The narrator inevitably locates a novel in time; be it in the past, present, future or some mythic time. Yet the place of the novel may be omitted. If a place is not indicated, readers may either assign a particular place or assume that the narrative has a relationship with all places. In either case, the significance of the text is altered. Each of the novels in this sample has established a particular place as the setting, even if that place is an Australian suburb that could be described as a stereotype (*Night Train*) or an imaginary world (*Eye to Eye*). Some novels have implied the dominance of time over place through depictions of the same place at different times. In *The Gathering*, Carmody created an evil threat that must be confronted again and again by the Chain. The members of the Chain grow old and die but evil is immortal. Carmody's time is a force that erodes human achievement. When the memory of the Chain's victory is forgotten, the evil force will re-appear. The landscape, the place, has been affected by this struggle but time dominates because peace is ephemeral. Time, unlike the Kraken, cannot be defeated. After the victory, the Chain assumes the

task of prolonging the memory of that victory. Yet the last sentence in this novel 'May the Chain Prevail Long!' (p. 266) conveys the inevitability of their failure.

Critical study of a chronotope can be useful when seeking to determine whether a novel can be considered polyphonic. Nikolajeva links Bakhtin's ideas of chronotope and polyphony to what she perceives as the developing sophistication of children's literature (1996 and 2000). She suggests that modern children's novels with a chronotope which is 'an intricate network of temporal and spatial relationships' (1996, p. 151) are polyphonic. These novels have moved away from an epic narrative structure with a classical plot and a stable genre-determined place of action (1996, p. 96). Events are no longer related in chronological order and the message of the novel is not clearly defined.

Nikolajeva concludes that polyphonic novels are characterised by multiple voices in a chronotope that reflects 'our own chaotic existence' (1996, p. 151).

Through representations of multiple voices, an author invites readers to consider alternative perspectives reflecting alternative values and beliefs.

Nikolajeva suggests that polyphony is most likely to be conveyed through a complex chronotope that encourages reflective reading rather than a simple chronotope that is characterised by a single chronological order of events in a stable place and conveys a clearly defined message.

## **Narrative Sequence**

In every novel time passes according to its author's artistic intention. The author's construction of time in a linear narrative may be imperceptible to the reader, yet it reveals the author's art. The author's manipulation of time reflects the importance they have ascribed to events. Time can be compressed or accelerated to eliminate or gloss over scenes that are less important. Carmody glosses over the minutiae of the events that immediately follow the fire at the

abattoir and jumps forward in time to the point when the Chain 'gather to finish what the fire had interrupted' (p. 261). An author may use ellipsis, leaving out an event entirely, to achieve a more arresting expression. Jinks omits a description of Pagan and Lord Roland's journey to the Abbey of St Martin and begins her novel with a vivid description of the abbey, 'Monks, monks, monks. Monks everywhere, as far as the eye can see. Rows and rows of them, crammed together in their chapter house like bats in a cave. Like crows around a corpse.' (p. 1). Time can be paused, to add emphasis. The opening paragraphs of Sonya Hartnett's *Sleeping Dogs*, when Hartnett halts time, are an example of an artistic pause. Hartnett achieves two effects: she focuses her reader's attention on the fictional quality of her narrative and she emphasises the particular characteristics of place in her narrative.

Three authors have constructed retroversions, disrupting the chronological order by depicting past events (Bal 1997, p. 84). Carmody jumps back in time in *The Gathering* to depict the abuse suffered by Nathaniel as a baby. Nathaniel appears to relive his memories of that time rather than simply recollecting them (p. 247). Carmody signals this subversion of time by italicising this passage of the narrative. In *Angel's Gate*, Gary Crew frames the entire narrative as a retroversion. The adult Kim narrates events from his childhood from the perspective of the ten-year-old Kimmy.

Judith Clarke begins *Night Train* using a narrative device that Bal calls an anticipation (1997, p. 84). The novel begins with Luke's funeral, then goes back in time to relate the sequence of events that lead to that tragedy. The time sequence that follows is in chronological order, but the narrative does not end when it has caught up with the events of the opening chapter. It continues, adding more evidence of the effect Luke's death has had on his family and on his peers. Clarke's subversion of time both consolidates core elements of her

narrative and softens the starkness of its subjects, adolescent depression and the death of an adolescent. There is no suspense, the reader knows the outcome, and the focus is on the events that contributed to that outcome.

Gary Crew's chronotope in *Strange Objects* is the most complex construction of time and space in the novels included in this sample. Like Clarke, Crew begins his narrative with an anticipation. The novel opens with a preface that announces the disappearance of Steven Messenger. Crew then goes back in time to narrate the sequence of contemporary events that culminated in Steven's disappearance. This sequence of events is subverted or disturbed by a further series of retroversions. Crew incorporates events from the seventeenth century, using extracts from Wouter Loos' diary, in a narrative that includes a variety of text types told from different perspectives. By interleaving future, present and past time in a complex narrative sequence, Crew forces his reader to acknowledge time as well as narrative perspective.

Two authors have folded time to create a time that exists in parallel with chronological time. In *House Guests*, Nilsson allows her protagonist Gunno to move between the planes of time. She explains this ability by attributing it to a gift Gunno has inherited from his mother. In this parallel time, Gunno is able to befriend Hugh, a boy who is dead in Gunno's present. Nilsson does not allow Gunno to change the sequence of events that led to Hugh's death, but she does allow him to lessen the pain of that death for Hugh and for Hugh's parents. Nilsson has created a chronotope where past and present can exist simultaneously. She lends credibility to her distortion of time by portraying the danger associated with it. Gunno's actions endanger his own life in the present. Time switch is a popular theme in children's literature but Nilsson's construction of parallel times is a more complex representation of time. No magic is involved, only Gunno's innate sensitivities.

Rubinstein's parallel time, the fox time inhabited by Dan Russell, is a time that is associated with both mythical creatures and the colonisation of Australia. The title implies that magic is intrinsic to that time, although a more prosaic explanation is offered. Tod's grandmother explains to him that foxes can mesmerize their prey, causing chickens to submit to their fate. Dan Russell is the Fox Spirit, an inhuman creature who is trying to lure Tod away into fox time. Tod is not Dan Russell's prey, he is his human-cub (p. 190), and Dan Russell wants to save him by taking him away from a painful present. Rubinstein's resolution positions her protagonist to choose between accepting the protection offered by Dan Russell or remaining in the time-space inhabited by his family and friends. By selecting a fox as her animal spirit, Rubinstein connects her mythical time-space with Australia's colonial past and multicultural present. Tod's father misses his country, the place of his childhood, so intensely that he describes the sensation as a 'huge hollow space inside him which was homesickness for the landscape he grew up in' (p. 19):

'If I don't see it again, I think I'll die,' Tod remembered him saying. And then his father grabbed a handful of flowers from a vase on the table and shook them in the children's faces. Water dripped on the floor as he shouted, 'I'm like these bloody flowers. I'm cut off from everything, and there's nothing left to do but die.'  
(*Foxspell* p. 19)

Tod's father leaves his family and returns to his childhood landscape. Dan Russell, the transported Fox Spirit, has survived and thrived in the alien Australian landscape.

Unlike his father, Tod feels a connection with Australia when he goes to live in his grandmother's house. This place was his mother's childhood home:

He put his finger in the water and tasted it. I'm drinking the country he thought, just like the fox does., and he had a sudden flash of how it felt to be wild and to live directly off the earth, without food in shops or water coming out of taps, without the whole superstructure that made up the world he lived in and that had nothing whatsoever to do with the life that the wild creatures lived.



He scooped up mud from the creek and rubbed it into his clothes. Then he rubbed it all over his face and hair in a kind of frenzy. (*Foxspell* p. 43)

Tod mimics the fox so closely that he is able to call the fox to him. He chooses to flee with the fox from Shaun's gang. In the resolution, Rubinstein suggests that Tod can choose to enter the chronotope of the Fox Spirit. Tod had rejected an earlier opportunity to do so and chosen to return to his family (p. 46).

Rubinstein suggests that the barrier between the time-space of the Fox Spirit and the time space of Tod's world is permeable.

The chronotope of *Foxspell* illustrates the characteristics of the fantasy chronotope as Nikolajeva describes it (Nikolajeva 1996, p. 122). Rubinstein's fantasy world is connected to contemporary urban Australia. The world of the Fox Spirit exists separately to Tod's world and the quarry provides a passage between these worlds (p. 71). Dan Russell is able to move between these worlds, assuming the form of a fox or the form of a human (p. 115). Rubinstein uses this alternate time and space to encourage her reader to reflect upon the qualities and values of the real world. Dan Russell exhibits compassion for his human-cub yet he also exhibits a ruthlessness that parallels Sean's in his attitude to his prey. Rubinstein encourages the reader to compare the two characters. The fox's ruthlessness in hunting his prey is excused by Grandma, 'You can't blame the old fox. It's just his nature.' (p. 79). Readers may wonder if this excuse applies to Sean's wanton destruction of her plants and his tagging of the garden fence (p. 80).

Most, but not all, of the novels in this sample have followed a linear sequence with events related in chronological order. Stories have a clear beginning and end, with an initial situation, conflict, climax and resolution. When past events are referred to, it is because these events are important to the reader's understanding of present events. In *Eye to Eye*, *Pagan's Vows* and *Pagan's Scribe*

Jinks tells her readers of the circumstances that caused her three protagonists to be orphaned, but she does not go back in time to depict these events. In *Came Back to Show You I could Fly*, it is important to Klein's plot development that readers understand the background to Angie's addiction, and its effect on her family. Yet Klein does not go back in time to depict these events as they happened. Marchetta's protagonist Josie discovers the secret in her grandmother's past in *Looking for Alibrandi*. This secret is included only because it adds a layer of complexity to Josie's ethnic heritage; and it explains Nonna's difficult relationship with Josie's mother. Moloney refers to past events in *A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove* because these events create a trap for his protagonist in the present. Gwynne constructs a similar connection in *Deadly Unna?*

Hartnett's *Sleeping Dogs* demonstrates that the use of a linear narrative sequence need not necessarily lead to a neat resolution or a clearly defined message. Past events are referred to, such as Jordan's previous injuries, because they are important to the reader's understanding of present events. Yet Hartnett does not construct a simple relationship of cause and effect between these events. Readers are encouraged to reflect upon the responses of Grace (his mother) and his siblings to Griffin's (his father's) brutality. These responses are depicted through their relationships with Jordan, with each other and with the visitors who stay at the farm. The spatio-temporal relationships Hartnett establishes are intended to disturb her readers. As her narrative develops, Hartnett tries to heighten or develop a sense of uneasiness. The chronotope in Hartnett's world is one of decay and corruption, a theme that is repeated on many levels: the physical decay of the farm and farmhouse; the physical and emotional decay of Grace Willow; the corruption of Jordan Willow; the moral decay of Michelle Willow and the implied corruption of Edward who is so like their father, Griffin. Hartnett constructs a complex network of images of place and time to convey a pervasive sense of bleakness. Hartnett does not even allow the world

of the novel, the world of the imagination, to offer an escape for the Willow children. They are compelled by their father to read the texts he sets and examines.

## **Period**

All nine novels wholly or predominantly set in a contemporary context establish a connection, if not a causality, between the events depicted in their narratives and prior events. Some authors use these prior events to explore links between generations of the same family, connecting the adolescent protagonist with his relatives. Moloney's *Bridge to Wiseman's Cove* explores Carl's feelings of responsibility for events that occurred before his birth and his belief that he is trapped by his heritage, 'It always came to this if you were a Matt. He was tired of resisting what had been set in his bones at birth' (p. 235). Clarke does not suggest that the explanation of the events of *Night Train* can be found in Luke's childhood or his parenting. Clarke depicts Luke's illness as a slow and steady decline, from a 'bright little boy' (p. 45) to an adolescent who is 'all bits and pieces; worries and doubts and fears and little hopes all jumbled up together, like bits of a puzzle rattling around inside a box' (p. 11). Clarke suggests that Luke's death could have been avoided; but does not suggest a means for doing this. Molly's action in just missing out in contacting her brother is only the last in a long series of missed chances culminating in Luke figuratively and literally turning 'another corner down the road' (p. 149). Luke turns away from his family and his peers, turns away from the possibility of help and hope. Unlike Moloney Clarke does not suggest that another choice, a hopeful choice, is possible.

In *Looking for Alibrandi*, Marchetta explores the paradox of the richness and the interconnectedness of time and place through the difficulties posed by being an

Australian adolescent of Italian descent. Marchetta's narrative illustrates the family connection between past, present and future through her depiction of Nonna, Josie's mother Christina and Josie. She also illustrates Australia's cultural links in a narrative that incorporates representations of first, second and third generation immigrants. Her construction of Josie illustrates the effect of the passage of time. Josie, even more than her mother, is 'in the middle of two societies' with other 'confused beings' (p. 7). Josie's feelings of confusion are evident in that, whilst Australian children of Greek or Italian descent were common in Josie's primary school, she persists in categorising students in her secondary school by their origin, as either European or Anglo-Saxon (p. 6). Josie's present is shaped by decisions made in the past by her grandmother and her mother. Josie's grandmother remained in a loveless marriage to protect her daughter from the stigma of illegitimacy at the price of alienating that daughter. Josie's mother's decision to keep her child flouts the values and conventions of her community but affirms her commitment to her daughter. Their decisions frames Josie's childhood:

I don't know what the logic is but back then [in primary school] no one was allowed to come and stay at my house. I know they wanted to, yet I never understood why they couldn't. God knows what their parents thought my mother would do or say to their children. (*Looking for Alibrandi* pp 7-8)

Josie's feelings of confusion and resentment express a deep sense of alienation from both worlds. Situated in the middle, she feels neither wholly Australian nor wholly Italian. In her resolution, Marchetta's chronotope is a present that is grounded in the past yet looks hopefully to the future.

Themes of invasion and migration are incorporated into depictions of the past in these novels. The theme of invasion is portrayed through references to the displacement and isolation of the original inhabitants of Australia, the Australian Aboriginals. The theme of migration is conveyed through references

and allusions to the immigrants who came to Australia from Britain and Europe. Rubinstein absolves the Fox Spirit from any responsibility for the extinction of local fauna, 'But humans grew restless **snarrul**. They wanted to wander over the whole earth. They took animals and plants with them. Spirit beings must follow their children **yarp**.' (p. 121). Rubinstein suggests that all humans are rapacious. The actions of the Breakers, the graffiti gang who tag their environment at will, reflect the way European settlers altered the appearance of the Australian environment by introducing non-native species of plants and animals.

Crew's *Angel's Gate* is set in and around the small town of Jericho. The town's name is both a biblical allusion and a reflection of the displacement of Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal people had lived in the valley of Jericho long before the arrival of Cephas Winch in the 1860s (p. 3, p. 17). Cephas Winch discovers gold in the hills around Jericho and this leads to an influx of miners and the settlement of the town, a common event in nineteenth-century Australia. The impact of this displacement is portrayed through the character of Queenie Geebung, a descendant of the original tribe. Her name suggests that she is a woman of status amongst her tribe, yet she is a waitress at the Paradise Café. She has a relationship with Kimmy's mother, the wife of the town doctor, but it is an unequal relationship rather than a friendship between equals. Crew injects a note of irony in the resolution of this novel. The doctor's daughter achieves her independence by getting a job as a maid in a hotel. The novels *Deadly Unna?*, *Strange Objects* and *Foxspell* also incorporate the theme of invasion and *Looking for Alibrandi* depicts the consequences of twentieth century migration in inner-city Sydney.

Only two novels in the sample follow the format of traditional historical narratives, *Pagan's Scribe* and *Pagan's Vows*. Both are set in Medieval Europe, a

time and place that would seem to have little connection with twentieth-century Australian life, yet many Australian adolescents would have learned about it as part of their studies of history. This connection is an indicator of the cultural connections between Australia and Europe, connections based in the migration of European and British citizens to Australia that continue to frame contemporary Australian life. The plot of *Foxspell* relies on these connections in its relocation of the Fox figure to an Australian context and its implied references to the European invasion of Australia, an invasion of symbolism and mythology as well as people and fauna. In *Deadly Unna?*, Gwynne implies an historical context to his tale of contemporary racism and abuse. The Point, an Aboriginal Reserve, is the place in which the dispossessed Aboriginals have been resettled. Gwynne also alludes to Australia's history of participating in European conflicts:

Kaiser Bill you bastard  
Why did you start this war  
And send us all a-fighting  
You dirty rotten whore. (*Deadly Unna?* p. 49)

Australia supported the British Empire in both World Wars, a participation that Marchetta's novel also mentions. Josie's Nonna experienced war from the perspective of an Italian immigrant living in Australia. This actual war between Australia and some immigrants' countries of origin heightened intolerance and distrust of immigrants. Marchetta demonstrates the connections between the past and the present by portraying Josie's need to integrate her cultural heritage into her present.

The plot of *Strange Objects* is dependent upon connections between Australia's colonial past and its present time. An emotionally disturbed Steven Messenger becomes even more disturbed after uncovering some relics from the Batavia, a Dutch ship that had been wrecked off the coast Western Australia. The violence

and murders that occurred amongst the survivors of that wreck are well documented. Crew's use of multiple narrative styles not only establishes a connection between Steven Messenger and Jan Pelgrom, one of those murderous survivors, it also explores the notion of how we explore our past, attempting to establish historical 'fact'. Crew encourages his reader to question what is real and to question the idea of progress. Crew's depiction of the relationships Jan and Steven have with Australian Aboriginals suggests that there has been little progress. Jan and Wouter brought death to the local tribe by introducing diseases to which they had no protection, 'A great illness has come upon them. The camp is thick with bodies' (p. 173). Charlie Sunrise, a contemporary Aboriginal elder is respected by the police Sergeant and by Nigel Kratzman but he is just as vulnerable to Steven's obsessions as his ancestors were to Jan. Steven attacks Charlie and mortally wounds him, 'But I got rid of him. I hit him with the back of my hand. He was nothing, only bones. I heard his skull crack against the rock.' (p. 156). Charlie survives because of the efforts of another adolescent, Kratzman, yet the reference to his fragility leaves the reader anxious about his future.

Whilst most of the texts in this sample represent or imply a future life for their protagonist, no text constructs images of a future time that is specific to Australia. These novels were all published during the last decade of a millennium, yet in all texts but one their focus is on the past, the present or on a mythic time. Catherine Jinks' *Eye to Eye* is the only novel in this sample of award-winning novels that is set in a future time and the future it describes is a non-specific future that has no specific link to contemporary Australia. *Eye to Eye* is set in a colonial future. The planet where PIM has crashed and Jansi has been born supports a primitive society governed by superstition and fear. The citizens buy relics from the past because they believe that they are imbued with

'an ancient power' (p. 2). They are relics of a technological society that has been consumed in a great fire:

Shaklat ... Had a tongue of flame, and he was a Servant of the Sun, and when the Armies of Darkness rose up against him he defeated them by bringing the sun down to earth and scorching the land until it was a desert. (*Eye to Eye* p. 3)

Jink's future is a post-apocalyptic future, a chronotope that encourages readers to question the virtue of progress.

Although Jinks' future may seem to be radically different from our present it is only superficially different. Jansi's people are a superstitious people who struggle to survive in their desert landscape. Readers may liken their struggle to that of contemporary desert peoples. The more technologically advanced culture represented by Stelcorp does not demonstrate a more advanced sense of morality or ethics. Jansi's world is expendable, it has been abandoned in much the same way that he has been abandoned, and is therefore deemed to be useful as a testing ground for the prototype PIM (p. 49). The technician, Righe, treats Jansi as badly as the adults from his own culture did. Righe lashes out when Jansi annoys him (p. 101), a reaction that Jansi is used to 'because I was the best person to hit. I was small and I had no family' (p. 102).

Five of the fourteen novels in this sample incorporate mythological symbols or allusions to a supernatural power. This introduces a sense of time that belongs to the past, present and future; a mythic time that exists in parallel with the present or enriches our perception of the present. Carmody's *The Gathering* presupposes a future, but that future is framed as part of an ongoing cycle. The battle between good and evil is inevitable and eternal. The evil that the Chain thwarted will re-emerge once the memory of its defeat is forgotten, 'May the Chain Prevail Long!' (p. 266). *Foxspell* alludes to a fox spirit that transcends time and space to link contemporary Australia with its British past and symbolises



its successful colonisation. It assumes human shape yet 'barks' to communicate with its cub (p. 190). The Fox Spirit offers Tod a chance to escape from the pain of Adrian's death and the pain of dealing with a fractured family. It offers Tod a chance to escape from contemporary reality. Nilsson allows the barrier of time to be fluid for gifted individuals in *House Guests*. She attributes to Gunno the ability to go back in time but does not allow him to prevent Hugh's death. 'I came to save you. Why else would I have got to be here?' (p. 143). Gunno's ability does allow him to bring comfort to Hugh's parents. His gift has a purpose although he cannot discern it. This realisation allows him accept both his gift and his mother's gift. In bringing comfort to Hugh's parents, he brings comfort to himself.

*Strange Objects* links Australia's Aboriginal and European communities, both past and present, to the supernatural force of the Ring. The local Aboriginal community records and preserves the memory of the ring in their art. Jan Pelgrom was obsessed with the ring in the seventeenth century and Steven Messenger is obsessed with it in the twentieth century. Nigel Kratzman attributes Steven's disappearance to a mythical Hitchhiker (p. 192). Charlie links Steven with 'the pale one who walks at night' (p. 155), a legendary figure that is also recorded in Aboriginal art. Crew links mythical figures past and present to construct a mythic time that permeates all times.

In *Sleeping Dogs*, Hartnett introduces a mythical beast into a contemporary context and in doing so introduces additional layers into the image of a distorted, corrupted family she is depicting. The griffin is fabled to be the offspring of a lion and an eagle, an impossible combination. The legs of a griffin and its body from the shoulders to the head were like an eagle, the rest of its body resembled that of a lion. The griffin is also:

An emblem of valour and magnanimity, as being composed of the Eagle and the Lion, the noblest animals of their kinds; and so it is applicable to Princes, Presidents, Generals and all heroic commanders ...  
(Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase & Fable 1970, p. 490)

Hartnett's Griffin is not magnanimous; his behaviour is monstrous. His leadership of his family is marked by brutality, hinted at in his domination of his wife Grace and demonstrated in his treatment of his son Jordan. By naming her character Griffin, Hartnett reverses conventional meanings just as her novel reverses the conventions of the family story. Griffin's retribution, when he learns of Jordan's incestuous relationship with Michelle, is swift and comprehensive. Jordan is erased from the Willow family. Jordan first suffers the emotional pain of seeing his father kill his pet dog Applegrit (by blowing the dog's head off), then the physical pain of being shot in the chest. Jordan's death is not merciful, 'It takes him some seconds to die' (p. 124). Griffin does not allow anything of Jordan has to remain alive. His art, his drawings, are left behind when the Willows leave (p. 128).

## **Place**

The majority of the texts in this sample are set in Australia. Australia is predominantly an urban culture clustered along a coastal fringe with a sparsely populated rural or desert interior landscape. Representations of place in this sample, however, are diverse and can be categorised as 'other' (than Australia), the coast, the rural interior and the city. What is striking is the predominance of small communities as the context of these novels. This use of place focuses readers' attention on individuals and their relationships within that community. As has been suggested in other chapters, finding one's place is a common theme in novels for adolescent readers and it is easily portrayed in the context of a small community. Equally striking is the absence of technology in representations of domestic life in contemporary Australia. The lives of protagonists living in Australia in the 1990s seem little different from those

living in earlier decades. Urban Australia is characterised by its social issues. Issues of addiction, crime, promiscuity, loneliness, pressure placed upon individuals to conform and homeless children are all portrayed in domestic detail that is located by images or references to a context that is peculiarly Australian.

Three texts in this sample create images of the Australian coast as their place. *A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove* is set in the seaside town of Wattle Beach. This name is distinctively Australian, combining references to its popular culture and its floral national emblem. Carl and his brother Farley return to the childhood home of their mother, to a place where they are neither locals nor visitors (p. 26). Moloney constructs images of heat, sand and outdoor cafes:

By now he knew that each day had a certain routine. The boys surfed, hitting the waves at dawn, the early hour and their black wet suits giving them the look of an army assault team as they set out from the beach in twos and threes. They returned to bed at mid-morning, leaving the beach to the girls. It wasn't until after lunch that the two groups sought out each other. The usual gathering place was a grimy outdoor café on the corner of the main street. Metal chairs and wobbly tables, empty cans and ice-cream wrappers belching from the solitary rubbish bin. Laughter, Coke, cigarette smoke twirling grey and dreamlike in search of a breeze. (*A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove* pp. 26-27)

This place is a common feature of Australian books and films. *Puberty Blues*, a popular novel and subsequent film, created similar images of adolescents in the actual Sydney beachside suburb Cronulla. The long-running Australian television soap opera *Home and Away* is set in the fictitious setting of Summer Bay.

Moloney ends his novel with the plan to connect Wattle Beach to Wiseman's Cove by the construction of a bridge. The bridge also reflects Carls' emotional integration: his developing self-esteem and the integration of his past and present with the promise of a future:

I was sitting here thinking about that. I finally got a chance to be like all the other Matts, started packing up to go and I saw these hands stuffing junk into the bag. They weren't Sarah's hands or Beryl's. They were mine. I thought, at least I am packing up for myself instead of standing back while someone else tries to move me on. But when I got to the middle of the room and I saw myself in the glass, I realised I didn't want to leave. If I am going to be happy anywhere, it's here.  
(*A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove* p. 238)

Carl's acknowledgement of the importance of place echoes the significance that Moloney has ascribed to it. Carl's epiphany occurs in a place that would be familiar to Australian adolescents, from popular culture if not from experience.

Gwynne sets *Deadly Unna?* in the Port. The Port is simultaneously particular and generic. It is a coastal town on a South Australian peninsula. The closest town is the Point, where the Aboriginal community lives. The Port's chief claim to fame is that it once won second prize in the S.A. Tidy Town's Competition [Section B]. It is a mediocre town, 'hopeless' (p. 3) in Blacky's estimation. In this coastal setting Blacky vocalises the frustrations of living in small town:

A gutless wonder is about the worse thing you can be in our town. If you are a girl then it is a slack moll. Slack boys, gutless girls – nobody cares. Once you have been labelled a gutless wonder, then that's it, the label sticks. Like it's been superglued to your forehead. It's there for life, no matter what you do. (*Deadly Unna?* p. 9)

Gwynne's place is a community that is insular and isolated. The generic names he has given his places implies that this insularity may be a feature of Australian culture. Australia, if not a peninsula, is geographically isolated.

Blacky fears that he is a 'gutless wonder'. In his dreams, he wrestles with a monster shark and saves the lives of twelve kiddies. The predatory shark has no significance in this text but the issues of racism and domestic violence do. Blacky's shark is his drunken father who carelessly endangers his sons' lives on a fishing trip (p. 75). Blacky proves his courage by acknowledging the racist beliefs of his community and by confronting his abusive father. He paints over the slogan 'Boongs piss off' that has been painted on the jetty (p. 270). He may

not be able to change a popular belief but he can stop it from being disseminated and he can explain why it is wrong to his younger siblings. Blacky's decision to 'persevere with the truth' (p. 264) leads to a confrontation with his father. It is then that the real predator emerges, 'He was smiling now but it wasn't a happy smile. It was a mean smile, a my-son's-a-complete-moron-what-can-I do-about-it smile. Behind him stood the siblings, all of them looking at me.' ( p. 265). In the ensuing confrontation, his siblings go to Blacky's aid. This is so significant that names change. Blacky becomes Gary and his brother Team-man becomes Tim because each is asserting their individuality. Blacky does not save twelve kiddies from a shark but his actions may save his siblings from unquestioningly perpetuating a cycle of racism and family abuse. Blacky's struggle to assert his individuality is inextricably linked with the place Gwynne has created.

In *Strange Objects*, Gary Crew creates a coastal fringe that is a physical reflection of the isolation and alienation of his protagonist, Steven Messenger. The contemporary landscape is essentially unaltered from the landscape that confronted the two Dutch sailors in 1629. Steven's description of the coast is:

... 200 metres of red sand and pebbles and low bushes before the cliff edge. Because of the wind the sand would sting my [Steven's] legs, and the bushes were dry and stunted and bending over, away from the sea. I used to wonder what the place was good for. No-one could grow anything there. Nothing productive anyway. (*Strange Objects* p. 49).

In 1629, Wouter Loos had been optimistic when he and his companion were cast away on that coast but the physical challenges they confronted prove to be almost fatal. Many of their trade goods and possessions are lost in their landing (p. 62) and they quickly run out of water and food, 'It is now sixteen days since we were left by the mother ship and I fear our lives are lost. We have no supplies but for a few mouthfuls of wine. The boy remains alive by filling his mouth with mud from the pond.' (p. 71). Crew layers his text with images of

the harshness of their existence. The boy, Jan, kills and eats his puppy. Loos is revolted by the physical changes his body undergoes in this landscape:

I rest my head on the earth and place a mirror between my face and the sea. This is not myself. This is another's face. Flies hover at the gaping mouth. Open sores thicken the lips. Vile matter seeps from the hollow eyes. This is a stranger's face. Should I touch it, flesh falls. (*Strange Objects* p. 172)

Jan Pegrom is likened to an animal who creeps into camp at night 'crying as a night beast' (p. 173). Steven Messenger dreams of leaving the coast and heading north, 'Up north I could wear the ring every day, on my hand, right out in the open. Then I would find out what we can really do' (p. 177).

Steven's dream is a dream of freedom and power, a dream that can be likened to the dreams of abundance in undiscovered lands, dreams that lured Dutch sailors to the Spice Islands, dreams that led to the discovery of Australia.

The two novels that have a rural setting, *Angel's Gate* and *Sleeping Dogs*, do not depict pastoral idylls. Crew and Hartnett portray communities which are regulated by social standing and in which children can suffer neglect if not abuse. The rural setting does not convey a theme of freedom but rather one of constraint. The adolescent protagonists dream of leaving their rural communities. Jordan dreams of sailing away, 'The ocean seems to him something that would heal these cuts and bruises faster than does the patched and dusty air of the farm' (Hartnett 1995 p. 44). Crew concludes his novel with an echo of Julia's challenge to her brother Kimmy 'Would you fly, Kimmy? Would you?' (Crew 1995, p. 274). Neither Crew nor Hartnett creates a rural utopia, but Crew creates a well-meaning albeit imperfect community. Hartnett's rural setting is a dystopia of abuse and neglect flourishing in rural isolation. Kimmy and Julia's parents (Crew) are not abusive but their best intentions stifle and subvert their daughter's desires. Julia's struggle to assert herself contrasts with the passive role adopted by her younger brother. The question is not whether Kimmy can fly but whether he will ever attempt to do so. Crew and

Hartnett use place to suggest that fulfilment or healing are located away from the restrictive ties of place and family.

Crew constructs Jericho as 'a country town that has seen better days' (p. 3), a town in decline if not decay. Like the walled city of Jericho, after which the town is named, Julia and Kimmy are surrounded and enclosed in the social structures of their community. They are defined by their parents' status within that community and the consequent conventions of behaviour. The doctor's family occupies the highest social strata of Jericho. Julia must go to boarding school because she is the doctor's daughter. Her parents reluctantly allow her to keep her holiday job at the local hotel but impose conditions (p. 142). Julia rebels against her parents' beliefs, but to some extent she has accepted their prejudices. Crew demonstrates Julia's fallibility in her belief that Bobby is not a suitable partner for her because he is 'too much of a farm boy' (p. 272). Kimmy disproves that belief when he tells her of Bobby's plans to sell the farm and go back to school.

Crew firmly locates his text in Australia by using images of native birds, such as blue mountain lorikeets (p. 11). Readers are invited to extend this image of wild birds to wild children. Flanagan, the father of the wild children, brings Kimmy's father two dead mountain lorikeets as payment for medical treatment, a payment that appals the doctor. He despises the deliberate killing, stuffing and displaying of wild birds (p. 11) although taxidermy is his hobby. As the events of the text unfold, Crew reveals that the doctor is as powerless to prevent Leena and Mickey being taken into care, as he was to change the fate of the birds:

'But I wanted you to know that I tried. As your father's brother, he's your next of kin, the closest relative that you have. I just wanted to be sure that he wouldn't take you – or that he wasn't fit to take you – one of the two. It turned out to be both, I'm afraid. But I wanted you to know that I tried.' (*Angel's Gate* p. 266)

Being taken into care is a fate Leena dreads and one that Kimmy's father had promised would not happen (p. 261). When she realises that it is inevitable, Leena is forgiving:

'You did the right thing, Doc. And you always did. Even for our Fadder. I saw what you did when he cut his arm. You stitched that up real well. And I know that I called you for everything when I got brought in, but I was wrong. I know that now.' She looked around at us all. 'You all did the right thing. Even you in the end.' [To Julia] (*Angels' Gate* pp. 266-267)

The final image of Leena is of a creature trapped by the bars of the metal grille that is fitted to the rear window of the station wagon (p. 268). Her only chance of freedom is reliant upon her own intelligence and Kimmy's gift of the bribe that Ben Cullen had offered his father, 'She [Leena] was smart. She would know what to do with it.' (p. 267).

Both wild children and carefully nurtured children may have a chance to escape, but it is a problematic chance. Financial independence, her job as a night maid at the Mayfair Hotel, may give Julia an opportunity for freedom but she will have to subvert the will of the school authorities just as Leena will have to subvert the will of the Welfare authorities. When Julia descends the stairs, dressed in silver and red, Crew conjures an image of an exotic bird. This image is reinforced by the final sentence of the text 'Would you fly, Kimmy? Would you?' (p. 274). Leena and Julia are physically dissimilar, 'Her yellow hair was cut short and even, the exact opposite of Julia's' (p. 151), but the challenges they face are equally daunting if they are to avoid the fate Julia predicts in the opening chapter of this novel, 'They get all of us sooner or later' (p. 2).

Hartnett's dystopia is not obviously Australian. It is a rural setting but it has no images that are uniquely Australian. The Willow children believe that they have no chance of escape. Edward articulates their plight:



'We must be ruthless,' Edward snarls, 'because we lead ruthless lives: you, of anyone, should understand that. This is our existence, Jordan, This house, this land, that father, that mother – there's no pity, no mercy, there's probably no escape. It is *hard*, Jordan, and we have to be hard to survive it, and the best we can do is fight anything that threatens to make it worse.' (*Sleeping Dogs* p. 114)

Jordan is appalled by his brother's words. His silent acceptance masks his realisation that he and his siblings have no hope, 'We're poisoned ... we're infected, nothing about us is pure' (p. 114). Jordan's dream of sailing away is futile, nothing can heal the injuries that have resulted from 'their father's ideology' (p. 114).

There are some parallels between *Angel's Gate* and *Sleeping Dogs* beyond that of the rural setting. The most obvious one is the image of wild children. The children of Hartnett's Willow family can be described as wild children; as 'dangerous delinquents' (p. 13) they are excluded from their community. Hartnett tells her reader that attitudes to the Willows vary from beliefs about dark mischief to a tolerance of a peculiar family but her imagery emphasises their isolation:

'People in shops lift their heads to watch them walk by, but the Willow children look at and talk to no-one.' (p. 46)

'No one knows much about the Willow family: most of them can remember their sudden arrival in the town and many of them resent the closeted existence that the family lives, feeling their goodwill to have been snubbed.' (p. 47)

'The more generous of the townspeople feel sorry for the children as victims of their parents but there are those who think the children most disquieting of all and find their aloofness utterly chilling.' (p. 48)

'They [the Willows] arrived without warning and left without warning.'  
(*Sleeping Dogs* p. 129)

Those Willow children who articulate an awareness of a possible life outside of the Willow family, Jordan and Oliver, reject it. Jordan accepts his role as a sacrificial lamb. Oliver is too frightened of the possibility of being excluded from his family (p. 80) to contemplate the possibility of escape.

Domestic interiors are important images in both texts. The Australian setting of *Angel's Gate* is reinforced by the description of Kimmy's home. Crew links Australia's past with its present through his descriptions of how the function of the house has changed over time. The Laurels is a big sandstone building typical of Australian colonial architecture. It was built as a military barracks in the 1860's and a sandstone wall encloses the contemporary Laurels (p. 5). The building reflects our British cultural heritage with its cellar, two floors, stables and observatory. The observatory, a bronze cupola, was used as a lookout when the house had been a barracks (p. 5). The cellar had been used as cells for 'claim jumpers, drunks and murderers' (p. 3) and as a lunatic asylum after the fever for gold waned. Graffiti gouged into the sandstone walls and floor joists remains as an echo of the past but the cells are now used as a temporary morgue by Kimmy's father. Of the two camphor laurel trees planted in the front yard, only one survives. This image can be interpreted as an image of the two siblings (only one child remains at home) or it can be read more simply as an image of the damage Europeans have done to the native Australian environment. Camphor Laurel trees are now regarded as a noxious weed. The Laurels is important physically and symbolically. It is Kimmy's observation post, from which he can look out over Jericho and beyond. From his home Kimmy can see the pass through the hills, the Angel's Gate, that leads to the world beyond Jericho.

Hartnett's rural dystopia is not peculiarly Australian. Indeed, Hartnett alludes to Australia's colonial past by layering her text with references that reflect the significance of English literature to Australian readers. Her farm is called Bonaparte Farm, an allusion to *Animal Farm* (p. 27). The living room of the farmhouse where Grace Willow waits for oblivion evokes images of Miss Havisham's dining room in *Great Expectations*. Grace has retreated to the lounge room where she sits in her chair:

She has forgotten the weather, the town, the world. The day will come when she will forget her girlhood, her marriage, her years with Griffin, the arrival of her children, their names. She awaits this day with resignation and unadmitted curiosity. (*Sleeping Dogs* p. 15)

The neglect of the house, in which 'plates and old rubbish litter the floor and the furniture' (p. 128), is one of the images of neglect and decay that permeate the text. It is a grey 'broken down house' complete with chopping block, wrecked gutted cars, shed and a toilet block (p. 9). Hartnett's detailed description of the house in the resolution evokes its absent family. The screen door tilts on broken hinges; the hand towel is nailed to the wall; and the bathroom is rank with dampness. The house smells of 'animals, food and dust' (p. 128) but these smells are not particular to Australia. Bonaparte Farm is a caravan park that could be located in any English speaking country. The country Hartnett has created may be 'going down the drain' (p. 130) as Bow Fox states; but it is an image of a country that could be British, North American, Canadian or Australian.

## **Urban Australia**

Six novels in this sample construct images of contemporary urban Australia. They form three groups: one set in a suburbia that is located on the fringe of the city; one in a suburbia that has an intense interior focus; and one that attempts to locate suburbia in the complexity and diversity of a large city. It is interesting to note that none of these groups raises the issue of the plight of urban Aboriginals and that only the latter group raises the issue of tolerance of ethnic diversity, issues that feature in contemporary news stories.

In *Foxspell* Rubinstein constructs an Australian urban setting on the fringe of the city of Adelaide and on the fringe of the real world. Her setting is aligned with her protagonist Tod, who is on the fringe of adolescence. A map is provided for

readers so they can locate the events of the narrative more easily. Rubinstein incorporates diversity in the images that evoke her urban setting. Quarries surround it and the rumble of passing freight trains shakes the house; yet the sea is on the horizon and there is a chook shed in the back yard (p. 8).

Rubinstein introduces an element of fantasy to her novel by making the physical location of the quarries a doorway between Tod's world and the mythical world of the Fox Spirit. This setting is a temporary home for Tod. He, his sisters and his mother have returned to his grandmother's house because his father has left them to return to his home in England. The passenger trains that rumble past his Grandmother's house remind Tod of his real home, 'He thought of jumping the train and riding it out of here, riding it all the way to Melbourne, and then another train, back to Sydney, back to life as it used to be.' (p. 9). Rubinstein depicts a protagonist poised to jump, to make choices, so she has created a setting that maximises his potential to choose. Rubinstein suggests that place is important; each of Tod's parents have chosen to return to the place of their childhood, but we can choose our place. In the setting Rubinstein has constructed, Tod has a complex choice to make. He can stay with Sean and Charm; he can accept Dallas' protection; or he can follow Dan Russell. He cannot go back to life as it used to be but he can choose how to go forward.

Nilsson links paranormal and mythical themes in *House Guest*, which is set in an Australian suburb on the fringe of a National Park (p. 3). Nilsson locates her novel in Australia through her language. The 'scrub', rather than forest, is made up of a 'melaleuca hedge' close to 'three huge red gums'; Pete breaks off all of the 'black dead branches from last year's bushfire'; and Jess' voice 'had droned on with the flies, with the heat' (p. 3). The bush has lemon-scented gums, rainbow lorikeets, Adelaide Rosellas and wattlebirds (p. 32). As in *Foxspell*, the beach is close by (p. 20). Nilsson recognises Australia's European heritage in the name of her protagonist and her description of gardens as being a mixture of

native and introduced trees and shrubs (p. 55). The name of Nilsson's protagonist, Gunno, reflects the Australian habit of adding 'o' when a name is shortened. Gunno's proper name is Gunnar, a link to both a European place and mythology that is explained in the novel's epilogue. Nilsson's chronotope links the present and the past; Gunno goes back in time to help another boy, yet her resolution makes Gunno's choice about his future clear. Her chronotope is a background against which she explores the theme of acceptance. Her resolution depicts Gunno accepting his particular talents; accepting his mother's difference; and forging new relationships with his friends.

Carmody's *The Gathering* depicts a suburb that is insulated from its surroundings. Cheshunt is 'a good safe neighbourhood' (p. 4), with an appearance of normality that intensifies the terror as Carmody's narrative unfolds. Cheshunt has industry, an abattoir is sited in the low hills behind the school and sometimes its odour permeates the suburb, 'as if the whole place [Cheshunt] was rotting (p. 5). Cheshunt has a park 'like a thousand parks you'd find in any small suburb anywhere in the country' (p. 6). Cheshunt is close enough to the beach for the protagonists to cycle there. This pleasant image is tempered by that of the factories that line the road to the beach, 'They were operating, but they looked old and derelict' (p. 130). The interior focus of the novel is intense but the setting is not located in a particular city or country. Nathaniel and the other members of the Chain do not protect a nation or even a city; they protect a particular place, Cheshunt.

Clarke creates an inward focus of similar intensity in *Night Train* but her novel is firmly located in Australia. Clarke's use of Australian idiom is limited but significant. Luke refers to a backyard (p. 8) rather than yard or garden; and he is studying for his HSC [the final exam for secondary students in NSW] (p. 10). Clarke's focus on a community reflects the inward focus of her protagonists as

they try to understand themselves and Luke who is absorbed in trying to understand how he became, '... all bits and pieces; worries and doubts and fears and little hopes all jumbled together, like bits of a puzzle rattling around inside a box.' (p. 11). The physical location of Luke's neighbourhood is not distinctive. Luke's death is not attributed to characteristics that are unique to a particular place thus readers are encouraged to wonder whether this tragedy could actually occur in their suburb.

In *Came Back to Show You I could Fly*, Klein constructs contrasting images of urban spaces. *Came Back to Show You I could Fly* is set in Melbourne during the long Australian summer holidays. It is a Melbourne that is linked to its colonial past. Seymour is staying in a house on Victoria Street (p. 4) and Angie and Seymour ride trams (p. 12) in a heat that is so intense the 'sun sizzled on the concrete path' (p. 7). It is Melbourne's weather during mid summer that Klein creates most vividly, 'Yesterday's stored heat undulated from the concrete yard outside' (p. 1) and 'the air shimmered with heat' (p. 180). Angie's parents live in Merken, a Melbourne suburb which is 'a gridwork of quiet streets lined with tidy, unexceptional houses, each set in a garden very much like the one next to it.' (p. 61). Klein inserts a reference to Australia's native flora by calling the street Angie's parents live in Acacia Avenue. This contrasts with Klein's images of Seymour's temporary home, with its rear alley, small backyard and papery hydrangeas (p. 4). It is one of a row of identical houses 'single-fronted red brick, each with a miserly sliver of front garden and one window beside the door' (p. 8). In her resolution, Klein moves Seymour to yet another suburb of Melbourne, Carrucan. Carrucan seems similar to Merken in some regards because Seymour cycles to a part-time job at a plant nursery and swims at the local swimming pool but in Carrucan Seymour lives in a flat constructed underneath a house. This image of adaptation conveys Seymour's escape from the singular housing styles of Thelma's little house and Angie's parents' home.

Marchetta also creates an inner-city environment in *Looking for Alibrandi* but one that is located in Sydney. Marchetta gives her readers clues that locate her text in an actual Sydney suburb, near Glebe. To get to Josie's house you go down George Street to Broadway and turn left onto St John's Road (p. 60). Most of Marchetta's images of Sydney are images of summer: the sun is shining, the weather is perfect (p. 253) and the temperature in the high thirties (p. 8). Josie participates in a debate in Martin Place (p. 43) and goes to Darling Harbour for a cappuccino (p. 139). Cold weather is not mentioned, even in July, which is the middle of Sydney's winter. Marchetta creates a background that is almost a tourist promotion as a context to explore multiculturalism.

Australia's multicultural heritage had been raised by Klein in *Came Back to Show You I could Fly*, 'no spikka da English' (p. 16) is a familiar Australian insult offered to immigrants, but Marchetta explores it in much more detail.

Marchetta suggests that the difficulties of tolerance and acceptance are not unique to Australian culture but they confront all Australian adolescents. Apart from Australia's indigenous peoples, Australia is a nation of immigrants. As has been previously discussed, many of the settings reflect Australia's colonial past. Tod's father in *Foxspell* is an example of a more recent British immigrant who still missed his home (p. 19) although sufficient time has passed for him to marry and raise a family in Australia. It is notable that Australia's indigenous people are not represented in those novels that are set in urban areas. The absence of their voice in that context, the context in which most Australians live, is significant.

## **Elsewhere**

Jinks is the only author in the sample to create places in her novels that are not Australian. Her creations challenge the adolescent reader to perceive

connections or similarities between contemporary Australia and the Middle Ages and between contemporary Australia and a future world. By representing time that is other than the present, time past and time future, Jinks explore the richness of time as a concept. Time is constant whilst place changes in a cycle of growth and decay. Medieval history is commonly included in secondary curricula, but Medieval France is an exotic setting for Australian adolescents. In the first novel (the second in the series) Jinks uses a map to define her location. The map of the Abbey of Saint Martin, the setting for *Pagan's Vows*, establishes the physical space in which the narrative takes place. Pagan and Lord Roland have retreated from the outside world in search of salvation within a cloistered community. The events of Jink's narrative establish that the isolation of this community, dedicated to the service of God, offers no protection from sin or murder. The community does however offer a haven to Lord Roland and a new place in society for both him and Pagan.

In *Pagan's Scribe* Jinks repeats this theme in a setting that incorporates the world outside of the cloister. Again, she includes a map to locate events. Pagan is now Archdeacon of Carcassone, which is 100k from the Pyrenees. Jinks has created a heroic figure in the character of Pagan in the *Pagan Chronicles*. This may imply a belief that a heroic figure will make it easier for her adolescent readers in order to perceive the relevance of a historical events narrative to life in contemporary Australia. Pagan and his scribe Isidore journey across Languedoc to Carcassone. A physical journey symbolises their spiritual journey. In both texts Jinks creates settings that are imbued with insular attitudes and a desire to maintain established order and beliefs. Pagan's shame over the treatment of Saurimunda (1995, p. 200) is echoed in the frustration he feels at the prejudice and religious intolerance displayed against the Cathars. Pagan's challenge to the dominant culture is not adolescent rebellion but it is a rejection of the status quo. He urges the defenders of Carcassone not to succumb to 'base fear and the



counsels of cowardice. To fear your opponents is to grant them the victory they seek.' (p. 156). The hero's call for bravery is timeless.

Jinks' *Eye to Eye* is set in a future world that may or may not be Earth. Jinks creates a complex setting which contrasts the primitive world of Jansi's people with that of Stelcorp, the organisation that created PIM. Yet almost all of the narrative centres on the domestic interior of the Stelcorp starship otherwise known as PIM. PIM is both the setting and a protagonist. Jinks explores a complex issue through domestic details. She allows the abstract notion of the PIM's humanity to emerge through domestic trivia. This technique suggests that Jinks believes that a domestic setting will encourage her adolescent reader to perceive similarities between their world and the fictional world she is describing. The reader will then perhaps accept PIM in the role of adult carer and reflect upon the significance of a machine fulfilling a parental role, without rejecting the notion as absurd.

## **Conclusion**

Collectively these novels exhibit diversity in the scope of their representations of time and place and in the narrative techniques the authors have deployed to that end. It is interesting that this sample focuses on the past and the present rather than the future, given that these are the prize-winning novels from the last decade of the twentieth century. It seems surprising that the authors' interest lay in examining the present and looking back to the past rather than forward to the future at the end of a millennium. The resolution of a novel may position the protagonist to look forward to their future, as most of these novels do, yet it is a future that seems little different from the present. Individuals develop but Australian society seems relatively static. The bridge may come to Wisemans' Cove but the essence of that community will be unchanged.

This static quality in time and place focuses the reader's attention on the individuals who inhabit that time and place. Carl changes greatly during the course of Moloney's text. A focus on character development is perhaps appropriate in a genre that is defined by the belief that its readers are no longer children but not yet adult; they are changing. It implies a focus on personal development.

The one novel in this sample that is set in a future time and place, *Eye to Eye*, depicts the development of an artificial intelligence that exhibits human characteristics. The abstract issue is explored through a character that is unique, PIM. The 'issues' that some critics argue are the chief characteristic of novels for adolescent readers (Scutter 1996) may cloud the actual focus of YA novels, their readership. The chief characteristic of YA novels may be that adolescent readers (as distinct from child readers) are able to think in the abstract and are pre-occupied with their own identity. The issue may simply be a ploy to engage the attention of adolescent readers. The perceived focus on social realism in YA novels, leading to the disparaging categorisation of this genre as 'Issues Books', is misleading. It is perhaps more accurate to suggest that YA Novels depict an adolescent protagonist's engagement with an issue and the consequences of that engagement for the adolescent protagonist. In a Piagetian framework, 'Issues Books' are more likely to appeal to an adolescent reader's developing capacity for abstract thought if they focus on how the abstract affects the individual.

Nikolajeva's thoughts that a novel whose chronotope is an intricate network of temporal and spatial relationships is most likely to also be a polyphonic novel may be true in most instances but two novels in this sample indicate that that this is not inevitable. The chronotope of *The House Guest* is intricate. Nilsson folds time to allow her protagonist, Gunno, to see that his psychic talent is not

an indication of madness. He is not godlike, he cannot prevent Hugh's death, but he can ease it. To portray this, Nilsson allows Gunno to be simultaneously in the same place at different times, a chronotope that fits Nikolajeva's description. Yet the novel is not polyphonic, its message is clearly defined. By contrast, Hartnett constructs a simple chronotope in *Sleeping Dogs*, a text that is polyphonic. Time progresses in chronological order, past events are incorporated as memories, and the place is constant. The simplicity of Hartnett's chronotope allows her readers to focus on the complex and conflicting beliefs expressed in the text. The ambiguity of this novel makes it an uncomfortable and disturbing text. It invites readers to reflect upon the nature of tragedy and responsibility but it offers them no solutions.

## Chapter Six: Hailing Adolescent Readers

Authors need to attract, appeal and retain their readers' attention in order to communicate their stories. Althusser's notion of interpellation is analogous to the literary techniques that authors use to hail their readers. The techniques authors use to hail readers reflect their beliefs about the interests and abilities of those readers. The authors of the novels considered in this chapter engage their adolescent readers by constructing a protagonist, usually adolescent, who is also the narrator. Despite this similarity, it is evident that they hail different types of adolescent readers, most noticeably by affirming or challenging the beliefs of their adolescent protagonist.

Although the readers interpellated by these texts are culturally constructed as adolescent readers, it must be noted that this may not have been a conscious decision of the author (Hartnett 1997, p. 84). Their publishers, however, have decided that the most likely audience for these novels are adolescent readers, and subsequent literary awards have supported these judgements. It seems reasonable, therefore, to conclude that in these texts, intentionally or unintentionally, the authors hail adolescent readers. The focus of this chapter and Chapters Seven and Eight is on the techniques the authors have used to attract their readers' attention and engage their interest. In discussing these techniques, some aspects of these novels that have been previously considered will be revisited, although from a different critical perspective. The representations of adolescence considered in previous chapters are only one aspect, albeit a very significant aspect, of the authors' hail to their readers. Whilst representations of adolescence are very significant in texts addressed to adolescent readers, texts that attempt to woo adolescent readers, these characters and readers should not be conflated.

Althusser's notion of interpellation allows us to consider authors' beliefs about their readers by focussing on the techniques they use to hail them. By

interpellating readers, an author also constructs a subject position for those readers. The authors' construction of a subject position for their readers and the critic's construction of an implied reader differ in that the notion of an implied reader extends beyond Althusser's focus on the authors' attempts to hail their readers. Whilst analysis of authors' interpellation of their readers should align with a critic's notion of the implied reader of that text, a consideration of the implied reader may or may not include the notion of the interpellated reader.

Althusser suggests that ideology operates through interpellation because hailed individuals become subjects when they respond to that address (1984). If this is so, then it is possible to better understand these authors' beliefs about adolescence by examining how they hail their adolescent readers. This study considers individual texts selected on the basis that they are award-winning texts, rather than a number of texts written over a span of time by a single author. Any conclusions that are drawn apply to the text individually and to the text as part of that decade of award-winning novels.

As Stevens has noted in his remarks about the implied reader (1992, p 21), the author's beliefs may not acknowledge the reader's active role in perception (p. 15). A reader can engage with a novel, in response to the author's hail, without necessarily adopting the author's beliefs. Readers can choose to suspend disbelief when they enter the fictive world of the novel and engage with that world without adopting the author's beliefs:

...the reader begins to negate his disposition – not in order to revoke it, but temporarily to suspend it as the virtualised base for an experience of which he can only say that it seems self-evident, because he has produced it himself through his own discoveries ... (Iser 1978, pp 219-9)

Iser's suggestions leads to the possibility that a tension can be created within readers, a tension caused by a conflict between their desire to experience a

novel in the way they believe the author intended and their disposition. Iser goes on to suggest that when a reader reads literature as opposed to light reading a secondary negation occurs, 'the assembled meaning of the text runs counter to the reader's familiar modes of orientation, and these must often be corrected if the new experience is to be comprehended' (p. 221). When reading a work of literature, it would seem that a reader's own disposition is more likely to be transcended if the reader ascribes to the author a superior moral or intellectual capacity and in their attempt to assimilate that superior understanding they are willing to change their previous orientation. This approach can be described as that of an obedient reader and will be considered in more detail later, in the context of the work of Michel Pecheux. Iser's notion that readers negate their usual disposition when reading a literary text connects to adult concerns about novels addressed to adolescent readers mentioned in the introduction. Such concerns would suggest that Althusser's notion of an author's creation of a subject position for the reader is very significant when literary texts addressed to this readership are being considered.

An author recruits readers by hailing them. If readers recognise themselves as the audience for a novel then they continue to read. If readers choose not to read a text, they fail to respond to the author's hail. Althusser's term helps to clarify the relationship between the author and the reader by considering how the authors' desires and expectations of these readers are evident in the creative choices they have made in attempting to attract them. That these readers are adolescent readers has been acknowledged both by their publishers and literary judges, so it can be argued that these texts reflect generally held beliefs about adolescent readers. A successful author correctly interpellates readers' interests and needs. Success can be measured by a reader completing reading a text, by book sales, by awards or by a combination of all three measures. The novels considered in this sample are all successful if awards indicate success. These

awards also guarantee a high level of sales and circulation; they may not be popular amongst adolescents but adolescent readers are encouraged to read them.

The work of Pecheux (1992) considers Althusser's notion of the author's interpellation of a reader, 'The interpellation of the individual as subject of his discourse is achieved by the identification (of the subject) with the discursive formation that dominates him ...' (p. 114). Pecheux's description of a dominant author seems to deny the reader any choice. Yet, he describes the reader as being complicit rather than compliant:

... aesthetic theory of the classical novel speaks in this connection of the novelistic "transmutation" of "everyday" contents ... as a means by which the novelist creates his "world", "outside reality", with its own objects, their specific qualities and properties, etc, in complicity with the reader. (p. 119)

Pecheux describes three types of subject position that readers can adopt. The first is that of an obedient reader, who 'suspends the independent existence of the real as external to the subject' (p. 120) and identifies with the subject creating an interdiscourse between author and reader. Next is that of a resistant reader, who counter-identifies with the subject, refuses the identity offered and engages in an intradiscourse. Both stances are shaped by a reaction to the subject position created by the author (p. 161). A third type is that of a transformational reader who dis-identifies with the subject and engages in a discourse that leads to the articulation of new knowledge. It is a subjective appropriation of concepts leading to knowledge of a new type (p. 159). The stance of the transformational reader can be likened to that of the literary analyst or critic.

Pecheux's descriptors are useful in that they enable an analyst to consider that readers can respond to a text in a range of ways and in doing so they

acknowledge the individuality of a reader's response to a text. Althusser's notion of interpellation when applied to a sample of texts addressed to a defined readership reveals wider assumptions about that readership. Pecheux's refinement of interpellation, differentiating readers' subject positions, evokes the notion of an active reader, an idea that is central to Reader Response theory. Pecheux's refinement demands that analysis based on interpellation consider a range of possible responses.

Readers have the capacity to cease reading at will. As well as if and when, readers have the capacity to decide how they will read the text. It is their choice whether to suspend disbelief and if so, to what degree. That choice may vary according to a reader's literacy skills and mood, whilst reading a text and/or with subsequent re-readings of the same text. As Stevens has noted, a reader can actively engage with a novel whilst refusing the subject position of the implied reader (1992 p. 64) a choice 'that cannot be dismissed as invalid' (p. 67). Stevens' work applies Althusser's notions of ideology, interpellation and subject in a literary context whilst stressing that the effacement of a reader's subjectivity is not inevitable (p. 4). Although readers may suspend disbelief when they engage with a novel, they are able to make the transition from a reader subject position to a dialectical position. From this stance, they are able to interrogate the text and the society that produced it.

Meek (1980) suggests that many articles about the act of reading apply to very few [child] readers. Most child readers do not have heightened literacy skills and therefore have a limited ability to determine how they will read a text. Meek concludes that for the imagined child reader, the surface level of a text is very important, as this may well be the only level available to that imaginary child reader. Meek's remarks are applicable to a consideration of the texts in this study as they are deemed to address older children as well as young adults.



Her remarks also speak to adult concerns about novels addressed to adolescent readers. However, the rebelliousness commonly associated with adolescence may make the stance of a resistant reader amenable to adolescent readers. It must be noted that Meek's remarks would suggest that the position of a transformational reader might only be available to some adolescent readers.

Readers begin reading a novel, or not, because of a belief as to whether it addresses their interests and abilities. In arriving at this belief, readers may not address the techniques of the author's craft, but may phrase their response to the novel quite informally. Their response may not be shaped by the author's hail but by other extraneous factors such as its packaging, over which the author may have little control. Readers' assumptions about the author's purpose for writing the text may also be shaped by its placement in the bookshop or the library, or by the context in which they engage with it, the classroom or the supermarket. Their response is likely to be influenced by the author's popularity or reputation, an opinion shaped by other texts. Stevens describes the meaning of a text as 'a dialectic between textual discourse (including its construction of an implied reader and a range of potential subject positions) and a reader's disposition, familiarity with story conventions and experiential knowledge.' (1992, p. 59). Readers' responses to an author's hail are determined by their choices. These choices are specific to an individual and similarly an author's attempt to engage their readers' interest is specific to that text.

Reflection, subsequent readings or formal critical analysis can alter or consolidate a reader's expectations of an author to a greater or lesser degree. That the novel is a literary artefact carefully constructed and crafted by an author, is tacitly understood by the reader. During the process of reading, a novel, readers have the opportunity to refine and modify their understanding

of the implied author, their purpose in writing, and their intended audience. Abrams describes the experience of reading in the context of reader response theory as 'an evolving process of anticipation, frustration, retrospection reconstruction and satisfaction' (2005, p. 266). Pecheux's notion of three subject positions become even more useful if one considers them as fluid rather than fixed subject positions and as having degrees within each. Readers, depending on their literacy skills and inclination, can exchange one for the other at will. The position readers choose to adopt when approaching may change whilst reading the novel, between reading sections of the text, or in subsequent re-readings of the same text; their responses are mutable not fixed.

When discussing an author's bond with a reader, Meek describes it as a quasi-social relationship (1980, p. 30) that is evident in the very first page of a novel when authors, as storytellers, signal to readers how they wish their novel to be read. The notion of these signals links to Althusser's notion of interpellation. Meek goes on to note the difficulty of the author's task. Readers may rush through the opening pages, anxious to get on with the story, regarding the text as an experience to be consumed for immediate gratification rather than one to be savoured through reflection. Alternatively, readers may lose interest and cease to read. The successful author, the author whose novel is read, must persuade readers that it will be a rewarding experience: interesting, enjoyable or entertaining or perhaps all of these. The author's desire to communicate with readers is self-evident. The techniques they use to shape this communication reveal their expectations of the readers they address.

As Stevens notes, text-focused analyses actually project the analyst's own responses upon a 'reified reader' (1992, p. 59). Pecheux's types of reader position provide the analyst with a useful framework to try to avoid assuming a singular response from adolescent readers. Pecheux's descriptors demand that

the critic consider a range of possible reader responses, not only diverse but also contradictory responses. The following chapters interrogate the authors' beliefs about their readers by examining how they try to attract their attention and guide their responses. This analysis will attempt to consider diverse and contradictory responses to each novel. It must be emphasised that this analysis does not assume that actual readers would neatly assume the discrete subject positions described by Pecheux. Nonetheless they provide a useful framework for critical analysis of possible responses to a novel.

Six novels in this sample, the majority, have created an intradiegetic narrator who is also the protagonist. This is not to say that these texts are formulaic and thus lack literary or creative merit. It does, however, suggest an unwitting consensus that this narrative style is the one most likely to appeal to adolescent readers. These narrators represent a transitional developmental stage, from childhood to adulthood. The novels depict their development through changes in their perspective. The analysis that follows will consider whether the authors' constructions of adolescent intradiegetic narrators encourage their readers to align themselves with singular perspectives.

The structure of these novels conforms to a common belief about adolescent readers, that they prefer texts that have a protagonist with whom they can identify. Yet the narrator/protagonist constructs in this group of novels are not formulaic. In *Foxspell* Rubinstein interpellates adolescent readers who want to engage with the perspective of twelve year old Tod; in *Looking for Alibrandi* Marchetta interpellates adolescent readers who want to listen to the opinions of seventeen year old Josie; other narrator/protagonists fall between these ages. Four authors have constructed narrator/adolescent protagonists for their readers to emulate but two authors have represented adolescence as a period when their protagonist becomes aware of his/her fallibility. These authors of the

latter texts interpellate adolescent readers whom they believe wish to reflect upon the perspective of an unreliable narrator.

## **Heroic Adolescent Narrators**

Four authors have constructed heroic intradiegetic adolescent narrators who strive against their opponents. These opponents vary: a brutal father and a racist community in *Deadly Unna?*, a primordial evil in *The Gathering*, a murderer in *Pagan's Vows* and religious beliefs that sanction slaughter in *Pagan's Scribe*. The beliefs of the heroic protagonist, who is a reliable narrator, are clearly supported by these authors. Other beliefs may be expressed, heroic narrators may temper their beliefs, but these authors hail adolescent readers with representations of adolescence that affirm the strength of adolescents.

### ***Deadly Unna?***

Gwynne begins his novel with his adolescent narrator/protagonist speaking in the first person, confiding in his readers, and by implication asking for their support:

We've made the grand final.  
Next Saturday we play Wangaroo for the Peninsula Junior Colts Premiership. The whole town is talking about it, it's the biggest thing to happen here since the second prize in the S.A. Tidy Towns Competition (Section B). Just shows what sort of town I live in. Hopeless. (*Deadly Unna?* p. 3)

Blacky is sporty, confident and funny. He is also critical of his community and questions authority. Gwynne invites his readers to share Blacky's joke when he explains how he derived the nickname Arks for his coach. Adolescent readers are encouraged to align themselves with Blacky, his sense of humour and his opinions. Gwynne thus encourages his obedient adolescent readers to accept Blacky's explicitly anti-racist and implicitly sexist beliefs.

Gwynne chooses to make his protagonist believe himself to be ordinary so that when Blacky defies both the prejudices of his community and his violent father he sets a precedent that adolescent readers can emulate. Blacky is one of the team, not the team captain. He is one of the rucks, not the first ruck. Blacky is also a paradox: intelligent, self-deprecating, observant and resigned to being second best. He knows his limitations and he accepts without rancour that he is redundant as the second ruck when Carol is playing (p. 4). He wants to mimic Carol Cockatoo and Dumby Red but knows that their sporting skills are beyond his reach. He accepts that as the inferior ruck his role is to hang around and hope that his mate will give him a chance to kick a goal. Blacky's sporting success is a tribute to his tenacity and resilience rather than to his innate talent. These qualities are also evident at home, where Blacky is uncomplaining and stoic. He accepts his father's cruelty just as he accepts his limitations. He does not complain when an innocent, albeit stupid, question causes his father to punch him; he simply resolves never to make that mistake again (p. 4).

Having established his narrator as an everyman figure who does his best, Gwynne develops Blacky's self-awareness. Once Blacky is conscious of his strength, this knowledge allows him to take action, 'They had no time, but I did. I had heaps of time. I couldn't tell the cops. I couldn't confront Slogs, but I could get rid of that stupid graffiti. And I could do it straightaway. Well, maybe not straightaway. After tea.' (p. 254). Blacky defines himself by his sporting talent rather than his intelligence and courage, but it is these qualities that allow Blacky to confront his fears (as a football player, as a son, and as a member of a racist community). When Blacky decides to defy his father (p. 265), this decision is not an act of a hero, but an act that seems possible for Gwynne's intelligent adolescent readers.

Gwynne interpellates sophisticated adolescent readers who will notice and appreciate his use of irony. Blacky belongs to the white community; he is not black (Aboriginal), he is just one of the Blacks (family). No one remembers his name correctly (p. 6) suggesting that all of the Blacks are the same, just as all blacks are the same, 'Boongs piss off' (p. 253). Cathy is scared of the Aboriginals on the jetty (p. 191) yet she applies Tropical Deep Tanning Oil to help her to darken her skin colour. Blacky's mother pities Dumby's mother because her son has died (p. 204) yet Clarence's mum pities Mrs Black because she has eight children (p. 232). Blacky is conscious of the irony in his life: he despises the television series 'The Brady Bunch' yet he acts on the advice Mike (the father) gives to Greg (his oldest son) 'do what your heart tells you to' (p. 214).

Gwynne interpellates male adolescent readers; Blacky's world is a masculine world. Blacky's sexist attitudes are unchallenged, girls do not write graffiti, 'only us boys' (p. 56) although they are its subject, 'Monica is a slut, Josie is slack, Sharon B gives head' (p. 57). Carol, the girl of Blacky's dreams, is a flat rather than a rounded character who seems to exist only as the object of Blacky's affections. Blacky can sympathise more readily with Dumby Red than he can with Clarence (Dumby's sister) although Clarence, the Aboriginal girl from the mission, is a more rounded character. When Blacky and his siblings are left alone they assume traditional roles. Sharon assumes her mother's role and cooks dinner 'well done, sis' (p. 255). When Blacky finally confronts their father, he is aided by Team Man not Sharon. The other siblings arrive (p. 267) to help but it is Tim, formerly Team Man, who is Blacky's support. Blacky's mother is represented as an intelligent woman who spends a lot of time in the laundry doing the washing and reading Mills and Boon novels (p. 79). Mrs Black may have had the potential to be a better coach than Arks (p. 31) but she will never have the opportunity to assist as a tactical advisor: 'you had to be a

bloke for that' (p. 32). Mrs Black fails to protect her sons from their abusive, drunken father and is absent from the confrontation in the resolution.

Despite this overt sexism, Gwynne interpellates adolescent readers who want to believe that they can change things. Blacky tells the reader that 'in his experience adults don't solve problems, they cause them' (p. 214). Gwynne validates this opinion. The brutal behaviour of his father makes Blacky's life miserable and adults have caused the problems faced by the Aboriginals living at the Point. Hope for change lie in the actions of adolescents like Blacky, who is the sole non-Aboriginal to attend Dumby Red's funeral (p. 234). Blacky is a role model of an adolescent who dares to effect social action and this consolidates his appeal. It accords obedient readers the hope that they too have a degree of agency in their life.

Alternative responses to this text are possible but not encouraged. Blacky's charm is intended to make it difficult for adolescent readers to read resistantly. Very sophisticated adolescent readers, those who recognise Gwynne's use of irony may, by comparing and contrasting their experiences with those of Blacky realise that Blacky's distinctive point of view is grounded in his physical environment. A transformational response may then emerge leading those readers to reflect upon the extent to which their perspective has been shaped by their physical environment. Such a response may mean that the particular issues of the novel, racism and confronting an abusive parent, lose their importance.

### *The Gathering*

Carmody interpellates reflective adolescent readers with an adventure story in which the adolescent protagonist and his friends are pitted against evil. She begins *The Gathering* with a passage in which Nathaniel is reminiscing,

addressing himself rather than the readers. Carmody differentiates this paragraph from the rest of the text by italicising it and separating it from the narrative that follows. This technique both frames and emphasises the significance of Nathaniel's words, 'Sometimes you get a feeling about a thing that you can't explain; a premonition of wrongness. Mostly you ignore it the way you would a little kid tugging at your sleeve. You think: what do little kids know anyhow?' (p. xi). The force of Nathaniel's direct appeal almost compels readers to identify with him. Nathaniel's monologue is an appeal to a sense of humanity's shared frailty or folly. Carmody aligns her readers with her narrator in this weakness, the singular 'you' stands for both Nathaniel and them. Carmody encourages her readers to be Nathaniel's friends and allies by appealing to their sympathy for an outsider who never stays long enough in one school to make friends (p. 3). Nathaniel is worthy of the readers' trust. Carmody uses Tod, Nathaniel's dog, as a device to demonstrate Nathaniel's integrity; he trains his dog using rewards rather than pain (p. 7). Carmody seeks to engage her readers' curiosity through her reference to a supernatural 'wrongness'. Readers who continue to read are promised a vicarious confrontation with evil. Carmody simultaneously flatters and warns her readers: like Nathaniel they are no longer little kids, they have superior knowledge; but they may not survive this wrongness if they do not learn to trust their instincts.

Carmody reveals the complexity of this text in her prelude; she seeks the attention of adolescent readers who are comfortable with allusions to other texts although they may not be comfortable or familiar with the term 'intertextuality'. Carmody hails readers who are familiar with comic book heroes, like the Phantom and Superman and fantasy tales in which animals talk. Carmody's readers believe they have outgrown children's books, and this is mirrored by her narrator/protagonist, Nathaniel, who is bored by childish texts



and prefers factual texts such as National Geographic magazines. Perhaps ironically, Carmody constructs many links to children's books in this text. The plot of *The Gathering* follows the conventions of a children's adventure story. In some respects it is like a story from Enid Blyton's Famous Five series. A gang of children accompanied by a loyal dog bravely confront danger. The Tod dies, but the children win through. Nathaniel is the fifth and last of the gang to be chosen (p. 43). Nathaniel, Danny, Seth, Indian, Nissa and Lallie have a clubhouse, the attic; they solve a mystery; and they vanquish their common foe, Mr Karle the Kraken, as well as their personal demons. Carmody links her text to children's literature, fable and folklore. The Kraken is a sea monster that has been compared to the Loch Ness monster (Brewer 1974, p. 615). Her labels for the four parts of the narrative (The Choosing, The Gathering, The Forging and the Binding) imply a mythical quest.

Carmody encourages her readers to suspend disbelief by challenging the assumption that schools and suburbia are places of safety. This may be a calculated appeal to adolescent cynicism. Carmody layers her ordinary setting with references to the inexplicable. A wind tugs at the hairs on Nathaniel's arms and whips at his mother's hair even though the car vents are sealed. Nathaniel senses that Three North, his new school, contains something dead, wrong, and unnatural; he relives a nightmare of monsters and bloody full moons. He 'knows' this yet he has no proof of it. Nathaniel's attempt to reject his feelings, memories and sensations reinforces his reliability as a narrator. Obedient readers will suspend disbelief and engage with the text as a tale of a supernatural and primordial evil that is bound within a suburban context. Three North is ordinary, it is a drab grey complex set in a neglected landscape of stunted and shrivelled bushes. Its very name suggests that it is one of a series of similar schools. Obedient readers may infer a similarity between Three North and their own school, an inference that will heighten the horror to come.

Carmody melds a monstrous evil, only temporarily confined by the Chain, with a figure that is part of every student's life, the School Principal. By combining the monstrous with ordinary domestic life, Carmody has created a symbol of evil that can be transposed across cultures and across societies. The Kraken/Mr Karle can symbolise the evil of a Holocaust or war, the potential for government-sanctioned evil. Three North colour codes its students according to age, repressing individuality. The Kraken/Mr Karle creates a school environment that permits and encourages bullying and brutality amongst the students. Once the bond between the Kraken and Mr Karle is broken, Mr Karle becomes a spent force, 'But his face registered neither fear nor anger. It was completely devoid of expression, his eyes empty but for twin reflections of the flame.' (p. 258). His Gathering loses its coercive and cohesive power and becomes a group of individuals. The Chain is free to openly declare their difference, they are 'from another tribe' (p. 259). Carmody appeals to adolescent readers by acknowledging the diversity of adolescents. The Chain achieve their victory through co-operation rather than coercion. After defeating the Kraken most of the members disperse their symbols of power: Nathaniel buries the circle with The Tod, Nissa leaves her sword behind in the attic, Seth and Indian return their symbols.

Resistant readers may reject Carmody's lure and choose to read this text as a horror story grounded in fantasy, a heterocosm that has no connection to their own world. References to ordinary creatures such as The Tod, Nathaniel's dog, may fail to balance the surreal image of the little kid in the park who warns Nathaniel about the monsters that come out at night (p. 8). Carmody tries to embed her surreal fictive world in the ordinary through multiple references to the smell that permeates Cheshunt. Yet references to concentration camps and to living things being burned alive (p. 73, p. 204 & p. 214) may have the effect of overloading her readers' willingness to suspend disbelief. Carmody's suburbia

is an evil place that may be too incredible for adolescent readers. A resistant response allows her readers to distance themselves from the notion of evil in their society, in their suburbia. Such readers can still engage with this text, but as a type of popular horror story or urban myth.

Carmody rewards obedient readers with a story that depicts powerful adolescents. The Kraken exploits the power of his adolescent followers, The Gathering, but is defeated by another group of adolescents, The Chain. A clear distinction is drawn between adolescents and adults. Seth is portrayed as an adolescent who is being destroyed by his father (p. 144). Isolated from the support of his mother and unable to meet the expectations of his father he is emotionally scarred. Nathaniel declares that Seth's strength lies within himself:

'Seth! Listen to me – you are what you are,' I yelled. 'Lallie chose you because we need you. The Chain needs you. Not as perfect golden boy Seth who can do no wrong, but as Seth as he really is. As Seth who knows the dark. Who can fight it because he knows what it looks like! We need you to help us bind the dark.'  
(*The Gathering* p. 255)

Nathaniel's declaration is premised on an implicit belief that adolescents have an innate capacity for courage, unselfishness and loyalty. Carmody's construction of Nathaniel as a reliable narrator is integral to the force of his beliefs.

Carmody encourages a thoughtful response from her obedient readers, a thoughtfulness that also encourages a transformational subject position. Carmody creates contradictions, affirming the courage of the Chain whilst warning of the dangers of wanting to be part of a gang. Nathaniel tells readers that all humans are capable of savagery:

I thought he was probably right about power making people savage, but not that it turned them into animals. Animals are better than people. Humans are the real savages. That's what people don't understand. Those police who bashed Danny weren't acting like animals. They were acting like humans. (*The Gathering* p. 123)

Nathaniel's thoughts echo his mother's words, 'But I suppose they don't set out to be evil. It's just that the power they have to control ends up making them want to control everything. I think wanting to control things is where evil begins.' (151-152). Their beliefs are complex rather than simplistic. Humans make choices that can have unforeseen consequences, yet they assert that a desire for power is inextricably linked to evil consequences. Under the control of Mr Karle, the Gathering had developed from a teen group into a youth militia, 'Something told me this was how Mr Karle planned to spread the darkness once he had disposed of us. The school patrol and the Gathering, set up to control kids, were only part of it. The other side were the gangs he sent out to cause trouble outside of Cheshunt.' (p. 196). Carmody demonstrates to her readers that the Chain's potential power has been actualised (by portraying its defeat of the Kraken) yet she also suggests that this power could become a force for evil if the Chain makes the wrong choices. Danny chooses to retain his torch after the defeat of the Kraken, perhaps an allusion to his difficulty in extinguishing the flame of his past (p. 83). Carmody hails adolescent readers who want to explore the notion of power by explicitly connecting this notion with secondary students in an ordinary Australian suburb.

### *Pagan's Vows* and *Pagan's Scribe*

Jinks interpellates adolescent readers with depictions of intelligent orphaned adolescents who exist on the fringe of their communities. These two texts are part of a sequence of novels set in the Middle Ages. In both of these texts Jinks creates a strong intradiegetic adolescent narrator/protagonist, Pagan in *Pagan's Vows*, and Isidore in *Pagan's Scribe*. Both narrators are adolescents who are minor servants of the Catholic Church. Both are intelligent orphans who are dissatisfied with their lives and pessimistic about their futures. Both protagonists are physically different from their communities. Pagan is a Christian Arab, with a dark complexion and slight build. Isidore is the son of

northern pilgrims, cursed with red hair and epilepsy. When the opening paragraphs of these two texts are compared, the similarity between the narrator/protagonists is almost repetitive:

Monks, monks, monks. Monks everywhere, as far as the eye can see. Rows and rows of them, crammed together on their chapter-house seats like bats in a cave. Like crows around a corpse. The rustle of their black woollen sleeves, as they point and nudge and whisper. The coughing and gurgling of old men with clogged lungs. (*Pagan's Vows* p. 1)

Hear my cry, O God: attend unto my prayer.  
Lord I am sitting here like a pelican in the wilderness. Like an owl in the desert, Lord is it truly your divine wish that I should spend the rest of my life in this miserable village? In this howling wasteland? Did you look at this dungheap and say: That's where I am going to send Isidore, so he can eat the bread of sorrow. Because that is what I've been doing, Lord, ever since I arrived. I've been eating the bread of sorrow and licking the dust of the serpent.  
(*Pagan's Scribe* p. 1)

Both protagonist/narrators address the reader directly with a litany of complaints conveying both self-pity and a sense of humour. Jinks invites her readers to identify with her narrator/protagonists, to laugh at their humour and by implication to adopt their perspectives.

Jinks reinforces the implicit beliefs of the two texts (the values of courage, endurance, loyalty to friends, a willingness to question authority, a willingness to accept responsibility, respect for others, kindness, and tolerance) by using the likeability, frailty and intelligence of Pagan and Isidore to encourage readers to adopt their moral stance. Jinks foregrounds the similarities between Pagan and Isidore both through her choice of setting and her narrative style. She reinforces this in *Pagan's Scribe* through Lord Roland's comments (p. 188), and by constructing similar futures for Pagan and Isidore (pp. 222-212). There are differences between the protagonists, a minor one being that Isidore is a younger narrator than Pagan was in *Pagan's Vows*. A more important difference is that at the outset of *Pagan's Scribe* Isidore shows little compassion for others, he tells readers that he hates everybody in the village of Merioc (p. 1). From this

point of difference Jinks depicts Isidore's education in a novel that repeats the themes of *Pagan's Vows*.

Jinks hails her adolescent readers with heroic adolescent narrator/protagonists and lauds their standards of personal responsibility. Pagan may lie when he believes it is necessary, but he tries not to lie to himself. Even though he appears to be overwhelmed by emotion in the scene of his departure, he still acknowledges that he never liked Gaucher (p. 198). Pagan's espoused philosophy may be to look out for himself (p. 31), but his actions belie his words. His compassion for others is evidenced in his reaction to Amiel, 'Obviously has a bad chest, poor soul' (p. 13). His concern for others is further evidenced in his feelings of guilt over Raymond's death (p. 197) and his compassion for Saurimunda (p. 200). He recognises his inability to help her and he punishes himself for this failure by looking back at her forlorn figure. Pagan's actions imply a strong sense of community, of compassion and tolerance. Pagan and Isidore are depicted as courageous and intelligent human beings who live long and useful lives. In doing so, Jinks interpellates adolescent readers who crave hopeful resolutions.

Jinks' expectations of her readers are, however, contradictory. It can be argued that she hails obedient adolescent readers who, lacking expertise in this historical period, must accept her authority. She then guides their response by providing maps and a glossary. Those readers who glance at the notes on the inside cover of the text affirm their trust in her authority, since it tells them that Jinks has spent four years studying medieval history at the University of Sydney. By implication, the historical authenticity of her texts can be relied upon and notions of historiography and bias do not apply to her perspective. Yet Jinks encourages her readers to identify with protagonists who both question authority and appearances. Brother Clement challenges Pagan to

reflect upon the deeper meanings of texts not merely to recite them (p. 44).

Pagan's capacity for independent thought is repeatedly demonstrated through his exchanges with Clement.

Resistant readers, exerting their right to independent thought, may refuse to recognise any relevance between these tales of medieval bravery and their lives, placing Jinks' texts in the realms of adventure stories. Transformational readers may be diverted by Jinks' contradictions into a search for further contradictions. One such contradiction is evident in Pagan, who is both reliable and unreliable. When he expresses feelings of isolation (p. 174), of being picked on (p. 141), of being stalked by trouble (p. 54) Jinks encouraged her readers to trust these perceptions by portraying Pagan being pushed by Clement, taunted by Raymond and falsely accused. Yet Jinks also offers her readers an alternative point of view through Durand, who describes Pagan as very clever but sometimes stupid (p. 139). Jinks supports Durand's opinion by portraying Pagan as experiencing an epiphany, an awareness that he had been oblivious to the fact that individuals in his community had held him in great esteem. The depiction of flawed adolescent narrators is even more evident in the next two novels.

### **Fallible Adolescent Narrators**

The unreliable narrator is a common literary device. In texts addressed to adolescent readers, however, its use is significant, because representations of adolescence are pivotal in these texts. If the narrator proves to be unreliable, is this only indicative of that character, or an indication that vulnerability or fallibility are attributes of adolescence? Paradoxically, encouraging adolescent readers to question the narrator's perspective suggests that the author trusts their maturity. A representation of a fallible adolescent protagonist may also

enhance the appeal of that protagonist/narrator to adolescent readers because it may elicit a sympathetic response from readers who identify with the character's frailty. If so, it may actually encourage adolescent readers to justify rather than question the protagonist's perceptions.

### *Looking for Alibrandi*

Panic was my first reaction to the multiple choice options which lay on the desk in front of me. I glanced at the students around me before turning back to question three. I hated multiple choice. Yet I didn't want to get any of them wrong. The outcome would be too devastating for my sense of being.

*(Looking for Alibrandi p. 1)*

In her opening sentence Marchetta foreshadows both the central theme of the novel, Josie's struggle to find an answer, and her concerns as an author. The structure of this novel demonstrates Marchetta's desire for her adolescent readers to get it right. The final chapter lacks the dramatic tension of the previous chapter, which ends with:

'Are you going to see Matt again?' I asked.

Lee shrugged.

'You know what I wish?' [Lee]

'What?'

'I wish I was a little girl again,' she whispered quietly.

'So do I,' I whispered back.

We put our arms around each other's shoulders and followed the others home.

*(Looking for Alibrandi p. 257)*

Marchetta invites or perhaps challenges her readers to reflect and arrive at their own interpretation. The final words in this novel, 'Because I finally understood' (p. 261) pose no challenge because they are preceded by a long list of reasons that explicate Josie's statement.

In her opening scene, Marchetta encourages her readers to identify with Josie and be on Josie's side, both in this challenge and in the challenges that will follow. Yet Marchetta subtly encourages her readers to be cautious. Josie says



that she is panicking but her actions do not confirm her words. After a quick glance at the other students, she immediately addresses the test. Marchetta then reveals that the test is not a serious test is just a pop quiz from a 'Hot Pants' magazine. Marchetta woos her readers with a protagonist who is a clever and comic rebel albeit one prone to exaggeration. Josie is an attractive character with strong opinions who does not emerge victorious from her exchange with Sister Gregory (pp. 1-4) and this perhaps enhances her appeal, Josie is not second best, as is Gwynne's Blacky, but neither is she always the winner.

Marchetta consolidates her depiction of her protagonist before demonstrating to her readers that Josie is an unreliable narrator, a revelation that is not intended to diminish Josie's charm. When Sister Louise tells Josie that the younger girls in her school try to emulate her and her friends, Josie denies it:

'You're wrong. We're not trendsetters and they don't look up to us. They think they're more superior than us.'

'Believe that, if that's what you want to believe ...' (p. 183)

Trendsetters. Examples. School captain. Leaders. The words kept on running through my head and I began to see that maybe Sister wasn't lying. (p. 184)

I was wrong, I thought to myself. I honestly believed it. Not because Sister Louise told me or because she made me believe that I was. I knew deep down that I was wrong and I think that my emancipation began at that moment.

(*Looking for Alibrandi* p. 185)

Josie had perceived herself as an outsider not a leader. This exchange both illustrates Josie's capacity to accept criticism and conveys her fallibility, yet paradoxically, it is also evidence of her strength. Yet Josie's unreliability encourages adolescent readers to question her beliefs rather than to accept them. Marchetta encourages this response from her readers by connecting Josie's maturity with her ability to revise her opinions of Sister Louise, her father, Jacob, Poison Ivy, Nonna, and John.

Marchetta uses an unreliable narrator to represent to her readers the virtue of personal integrity and the belief that this should be maintained. Josie had assumed that after her HSC [Higher School Certificate], when she was at university and was an eighteen-year-old adult, she would know the truth (p.5). This text depicts Josie exploring the truth, an exploration that makes her stronger. Although Josie can be mistaken, she tries to be honest in expressing her ideas and beliefs (p. 153). Whilst distressed by the end of her relationship with Jacob, she is able to rationalise her feelings, 'Life is not a Mills and Boon book. People fall out of love.' (p. 198). Change is not to be feared. Josie accepts her father's reassurance that she cannot be responsible for other people, and thus accepts that she is not responsible for John's death (p. 236). Josie asserts that living is more challenging than dying, 'Living is the challenge. Dying is easy.' (p. 236) and follows this belief to the conclusion that John Barton's suicide was cowardly.

Marchetta tells rather than shows her reader but her narrative style moderates her didacticism. Marchetta creates a series of communities within the world of her text, Josie and her friends, Josie and Jacob, and Josie and her family. Josie's friends are a means for Marchetta to depict different types of human frailty. Sera is sexually active and demonstrates her ability for deception in her manipulation of her parents. Her appetites seem gross compared to the romance that Josie and Anna experience. Lee is pessimistic and defensive in her interactions with the world. Lee expects the worst, 'He'll break your heart' (p. 141). Her behaviour seems brittle, implying emotional scars, but this does not prevent her from being supportive of Josie, 'You did right ... You're different to me' (p. 256). Anna is a sentimental romantic, happily enjoying her relationship with Anton, confidently expecting that he will be her one and only love. Poison Ivy is jealous of Josie but admirable in her honesty in admitting it to Josie (p. 241). Marchetta's implicit belief is that every individual, whatever their faults,

has the potential to make choices in their lives; and her explicit belief expressed to her readers through this text is that we are responsible for the choices we make.

Resistant readers may resist allying themselves with Josie; they may resist following the leader, however admirable, because this text is centred in the experience of women and girls and they perceive it as sexist. Resistant readers may reject the stance of obedient reader because they reject Marchetta's portrayal of men without reflecting more deeply. Josie, her mother and her grandmother are indeed self-reliant women. Christina coped without the support of Michael Andretti and Nonna coped with the cruelty of a loveless marriage. This implies that Josie will cope without Jacob. Yet the men in their lives are and were important, and Josie's father does play a significant role in enriching Josie's life. While Josie may angrily declare her animosity and declare that she never wants to meet him (p. 16), her childhood was shaped by the absence of a father and the stigma of illegitimacy (p. 35). Lee confirms this when she tells Josie that Josie's ambition to be a lawyer has been shaped by her father's career as a lawyer (p. 144).

Jacob is Josie's love, but their relationship is often strained due to differences that Josie perceives as being purely cultural differences. Marchetta does not portray Jacob as exploitative or selfish; they break up because he believes that he is not good enough for her (p. 249). Resistant readers may lose patience and regard her as self-centred or narcissistic. Josie grieves when the relationship ends, but she is also depicted as looking inward, observing her own reactions. Marchetta tries to temper this response by depicting Josie's distress at her recognition that losing Jacob has upset her more than the death of John, 'what kind of person am I?' (p. 252). Yet, resistant readers who have chosen to align

their sympathies with Jacob may continue to view Josie as superficial and self-centred.

Resistant readers may also reject Josie's insistence on her ethnicity:

'I'm emotional remember, Jacob. Emotional people can sometimes be irrational and I'm not an Australian. I'm a wog. I'm only an Australian when you people want to label me one and when you don't I disappear or I go back to limbo. That's what all of this is about, Jacob. My blood is too foreign for you.'  
(*Looking for Alibrandi* p. 250)

Josie is proud of her ethnicity; proud of her family, but Marchetta depicts the complexity of this heritage by alluding to the ways in which Josie and her mother have been shunned (p. 35) and linking a woman's decision to suicide to her experience of being shamed (p. 200). Josie's response to these pressures is inconsistent, she mocks Nonna's certainty that marriages between Australians and Italians can never work (p. 37) but she identifies cultural differences as the cause of her problems with Jacob. Resistant readers may identify with Jacob's hurt at Josie's insularity:

'Forget it, Josephine. We'll both be happier. I can associate with my kind and you won't have to put up with some cultureless Aussie with no heart or soul.' (p. 208)

'I'm not a racist, he argued angrily. Don't you dare label me one. You're just so confused about who you are that you feel that everyone is labelling you. I like that culture in you, Josie...' (*Looking for Alibrandi* p. 250)

Resistant readers may reject all of Josie's opinions, including her belief that racial prejudice is endemic to Australian culture, as exaggerations.

Transformational readers may overlook the explicit beliefs expressed in the text and focus on Josie as a representation of a bright, articulate girl trapped within a culture that seeks to restrain and control her impetuous nature and channel her talents within defined boundaries. Josie defines herself by her ethnicity; readers responding in this way may define her by her youth, courage and

intelligence. Transformational readers who have read widely may see this text as a variation on the themes of Henry Handel Richardson's novel *The Getting of Wisdom*, a text that was first published in 1910. The setting is similar, a wealthy Independent Girls School; the protagonist is similar, an outsider who feels isolated in that setting; and both texts express an individual's need for freedom and a desire to shatter the bonds of conformity. Each of these texts is embedded in a particular time and place but the particular hardships the protagonists face recede when the texts are considered as narratives depicting adolescents struggling to establish their place and their rights. Josie is conscious of the pressures of the Italian community to which her family belongs and she is made aware of Sister Louise's expectations, 'I swear to God that if there is something I am going to escape in this life of rules and regulation it will be my dreaded rituals.' (p. 33). Transformational readers may choose to focus on this image of escape.

Yet Marchetta's text ends with her protagonist firmly embedded within her family and community. Josie finds freedom in her decision to welcome the ties of family and friends. She believes that will allow her to realise her potential, potential that includes the possibility of leadership. This is markedly different from the ending of *The Getting of Wisdom*, which is an extended description of a young girl running wildly, running freely, and disappearing from the gaze of the reader and her sister. This protagonist finds freedom by breaking both social conventions and family ties. A transformational response to this text may focus on a consideration of what constitutes individual freedom and question Josie's perception of emancipation. Alternatively, readers who empathise with the frustrations of Marchetta's adolescent characters may be diverted into reflecting on the constraints that exist in their own lives.

### *Angel's Gate*

Crew lures his readers in with his narrator/protagonist, but then challenges them with contrasting opinions that he does not resolve. Crew allows his obedient readers to reach their own conclusions, but he constructs a narrator/protagonist as the best way to attract them. The narrator/protagonist's role is that of an observer. He engages with the events of the novel from a safe distance, a role similar to that of the readers. The narrator's anonymity (until page 5) can be variously interpreted. It may suggest aloofness, impartiality or an invitation to readers to assume Kimmy's point of view.

Kimmy watches the capture of the 'first wild child' (p. 1) from the safety and security of his bedroom. Kimmy is curious rather than fearful, 'They've caught one,' I whispered. 'Haven't they?' (p. 2). Kimmy does not identify with the captured child although his sister Julia does, "They get all of us sooner or later," she said, then vanished into the darkness of the hall.' (p. 2). Julia's belief establishes her dissatisfaction, a dissatisfaction that Kimmy does not seem to share. He watches his sister vanish but does not follow her lead. The image of the wild child, an image that may trigger a sympathetic response from readers, is tempered. The small figure is 'bundled up in a rug' (p. 2) and carried into Kimmy's father's surgery. The child is being cared for; Julia's response appears to be melodramatic. Kimmy provides a very detailed description of his surroundings and the events of that night without succumbing to Julia's pessimism, yet he does not challenge her pessimism.

Crew hails adolescent readers with a complex novel that depicts Julia's resistance to her parents' wishes and the protection they offer. He subverts the usual connotations of the context for this rebellion, a middle-class family home, with images of violence rather than safety. This home has served as prison and an asylum for the insane. The family sleep in the bedrooms above, but how can

they be removed from the images of confinement and death associated with the rooms below? The ground floor rooms of their home have bars at the window because it was once a military barracks. Thus, the family's daily life is conducted behind bars, a physical expression of Julia's beliefs. More bizarrely, the cellar under the house which had been used to 'confine claim jumpers, drunks and murderers' (p. 3) is now used as a cold-storage room for the laying-out of corpses. Kimmy loves the observatory, from here he can survey the town, the hills, and the plain beyond. Kimmy's love can be variously interpreted as reflecting his desire to be aloof, his desire to escape or his feelings of isolation. Crew leaves this to his readers to decide.

Crew hails readers who like a challenge by depicting incidents where characters hold different perspectives and values and leaving the clash of values unresolved. He demands that his obedient readers read reflectively. Crew ends his description of an encounter between Kimmy's father and the father of the wild children, Mr Flannagan, without depicting their final conversation. The doctor, whose hobby is taxidermy, is horrified when Mr Flannagan shoots a pair of birds as payment for medical attention. The doctor prides himself that he does not use animals that have been deliberately killed; he does not kill for his collection. Mr Flannagan is also proud; he owes the doctor money and is determined to pay his debt, in kind if not in cash. They engage in a conversation that readers have to infer, as Kimmy cannot hear it. Crew intends that his obedient readers will reflect upon the ethical values of the two men but does not offer them a solution.

Kimmy's ten-year-old understanding is imperfect, but Crew does not intend that his readers will distrust his narrator. In Chapter Two Julia states her belief that her parents disapprove of her boyfriend because he is not one of 'ours' (p. 10). Julia's remarks imply that a class divide exists in Jericho, an implication

that is later confirmed by her father's refusal to allow her to work as a waitress, 'Because I want you to grow up a lady' (p. 140). Kimmy misunderstands his sister's remark. He thinks Julia may be correct because her boyfriend was not one of ours, one of the many babies his father has delivered in the rooms at their house (p. 10). Kimmy is not stupid however and this is evident in his account of how gold was discovered in the Jericho Hills. There are two versions of the story: one is a romantic tale of a lovelorn man seeking 'spiritual healing' (p. 17); and another is the tale told by the local Aboriginals of a man who was both lucky and stupid. Crew make it clear that the latter tale is the truth. Kimmy's scepticism and thus the appearance of maturity is evidenced by his description of how the town gossips 'dolly up' (p. 17) [manufacture or embroider] their stories if his mother starts to look at their accounts.

Crew challenges his readers with the parallel he establishes between Julia and Kim, the children who are raised in the security and constraints of a conventional family unit, and Leena and Micky, the wild children. As Kim points out to Leena, 'Your brother's name and mine, they're nearly the same if you turn them around. Kimmy and Micky. See?' (p. 153). They are the same, but also different. Micky is capable of surviving in the wild but Leena worries that he will not survive when is taken out of that environment. Kimmy lives largely confined within his house because his parents want to protect him from the world outside. Bobby describes the effect of Kimmy's seclusion:

'I felt sorry for you, always stuck in the house. I'd suffocate, I would.' (p. 199)  
'You'll see. It's got a character all of its own ... it's a bit like you, hey Kimbo?'  
(*Angel's Gate* p. 213)

Both boys are vulnerable outside of their usual environments. Julia's mother declares the similarity between Leena and Julia; they both have 'troubles' (p. 119). Physically the two girls are opposites (p. 151) but they are also the same. They have a common dream to escape the futures that have been planned for



them. Julia agrees to go away to College, but subverts her parents' plans by using this as an opportunity to further her experience in the hotel industry. Leena accepts that the Doc and his family have done all they can to help her, but she is desperate to subvert their plans for her. Leena believes that her brother will not survive outside the wild; being taken into care will be a death sentence. Her belief is supported by Crew's description of Leena's interview with the Welfare officers. Kim gives Leena the means to subvert the Welfare officer's plans when she secretly hands her five hundred dollars (p. 269). Crew does not promise a happy outcome for either Julia or Leena; each has a chance of achieving her goal but each will have to outwit adult authority figures to do so. Julia has to defy her parents and the rules of the College; Leena has to elude Ms Cutler and Dr Tiffin, and the Department of Child Welfare.

Through this extended image of parallel lives, Crew poses questions to his readers that he leaves unanswered. Are all children and adolescents 'wild children' who are tamed by actual or surrogate parents? From Julia's perspective, her supportive family unit only supports her in achieving the plans it has made for her. Her ambitions for her life are unimportant. Both she and Kimmy did not get the Christmas presents they really wanted, instead they got the presents their parents decided they should have (p. 185). The doctor declares his beliefs about parental responsibilities:

' – but you're our daughter, not hers, and until you reach an age where you can live independently, you will do what we say. That's our parental responsibility. That's how we show that we love you. Is that clear?' (*Angel's Gate* p. 142)

In the doctor's view, parental responsibility is synonymous with parental power, and it is a repressive, coercive power. Crew positions his obedient readers to wonder whether parental responsibility is as oppressive as the authority of the Welfare Department. Kim's father fails Leena and her prediction that 'They'll take us away now' (p. 261) is fulfilled. Kim's father had

tried to find an alternative option but his attempts failed. Leena acknowledges his efforts and re-assures him that he, and his family, have done the right thing. Yet Leena's meaning is ambiguous. Leena may mean that in trying to avoid putting the children into care, he did the right thing; or she may mean that he did the right thing in contacting the Welfare. The latter meaning is the one that Kim's mother chooses to infer but readers may respond differently.

Crew appears to intend that his obedient readers will infer that an individual's future and their identity are not pre-determined by environment or social status by establishing differences between siblings: Julia and Kimmy, Leena and Micky. Julia's boyfriend Bobby plans for a life that does not involve remaining on his parent's farm:

'I'll go back [to school]. I'll do Science. I'd find out why all those snails died. And what went down with them, like that crayfish, and how come those mountains got pushed up there. That's what I want to know.'

'But you can't just study. You would have to earn some money, wouldn't you?'

'Kimbo I'll have money. When my folks sell that farm, they'll make a fortune.'

(*Angel's Gate* p. 212)

Julia's assumption that Bobby will be a farmer, that environment is the key factor in determining an individual's future, paradoxically echoes her father's beliefs. Crew explicitly refutes her assumption (p. 273). Underlying Crew's explicit theme of the points of similarity between the wild child and the suburban child, is an implicit belief that humanity has a common bond that is independent of nurture. Once the wild children are forcibly brought back within the social order, Crew demonstrates that Leena and Julia, Micky and Kimmy have much in common.

Crew provides a role model for a resistant reader in Julia, who chooses to resist her parents' ambitions for her just as a resistant reader chooses to resist the author's intentions. Crew does however intend that his readers will follow his

guidance and to read his text carefully, considering and reflecting upon its opposing perspectives. There are many instances of this intention, the discovery of gold at Jericho (p. 3); Kimmy's description of Leena (p. 118); and Keithy lies by telling the truth (p. 75). Even the villain, Ben Cullen, has a chance to express his version of events, a version that is endorsed by his victims (p. 260). In this Crew demonstrates his trust in his adolescent readers and his belief that they are capable of meeting this challenge.

Nevertheless, resistant readers who reject Crew's images of childhood, who find nothing likeable in either Kimmy or Julia, may choose to read the text as a tale of snobbery and elitism. Readers who are unwilling to empathise with Kimmy may reject his sympathies for Leena and Micky and perceive them as condescension. Julia is certainly condescending in her attitude to Bobby, 'He's too much of a farm boy for me.' (p. 272). This reader may choose to focus on images of the class divide that exists within Jericho, the class divide that is portrayed in the characters of Bobby and Keithy.

Another stance available to resistant readers is to read the text as an illustration of the inevitable corruption that is a consequence of the European settlement of Australia and the introduction of their social structures. Greed for gold was the factor that determined the settlement of Jericho; the workers of the dam supplement the present economy of the town. The local Aboriginal tribes were the losers on both occasions, 'I heard Queenie tell my mother that her people's tribal land had gone under, and her dreaming cave, which was sacred.' (p. 26). Whilst Crew acknowledges the injustices done, it is not a dominant theme in his text, unless the subversive reader deems it so.

A transformational reading of this text is made difficult because Crew has constructed the text around the issues that are central to the lives of pre-adult

readers: a desire for freedom and a growing awareness of perspectives other than their own. Crew encourages his readers to reflect on these issues and draw parallels with their own lives. Thus, readers are encouraged to translate the text into the framework of their own lives and reflect on how these issues are enacted in their own lives. If readers are inclined to reflect and become introspective, they are acting as obedient readers.

### **Conclusion:**

The authors of texts considered in this chapter all hail their adolescent readers with narrator/protagonists with whom they are intended to identify, agree, or to emulate. In this respect, their authorial voices appear to emulate plainsong but analysis also reveals the authors' creativity in their manipulations of their narrator/protagonists, which suggests that these authors hold different beliefs about the degree of control or guidance they need to exert over their adolescent readers. These differences in this aspect of their authorial voices emulate polyphony rather than plainsong.

Gwynne, Carmody and Jinks offer their readers representations of heroic adolescent protagonists whom they encourage their readers to trust. In these texts, readers are encouraged to align themselves, almost uncritically, with the protagonist. These authors appear to have conflated their representations of adolescence with their beliefs about their readers.

Crew and Marchetta offer their readers fallible narrator/protagonists to achieve different artistic effects. Crew is content to allow his reader to speculate about the significance of his text whilst Marchetta is not. Crew's *Angels' Gate* represents conflicting perspectives through the siblings Julia and Kimmy. Crew trusts his readers to draw their own conclusions and his open-ended resolution, leaving his readers to speculate about Kimmy's decision and its possible

consequences. Marchetta challenges her readers by creating an unreliable narrator and a range of contrasting and independent adolescent voices. Yet she guides her readers to the response she desires by offering a summary of her central themes in the resolution. This suggests either that Marchetta does not trust her adolescent readers or that she wants to deny any response that differs from her authorial intention.

## Chapter Seven: Challenging Adolescent Readers

In this group of novels, the singular voice of the adolescent narrator/protagonist is moderated by the voice of another narrator, or the perspective of an extradiegetic narrator. Adolescent readers are invited to consider contrasting and sometimes conflicting alternative perspectives. The authors' choice of narrative technique suggests that they are hailing a reader whose literacy skills make such novels an attractive challenge rather than a daunting challenge.

### Multiple Narrators

By constructing two intradiegetic narrators, both Klein in *Come Back to Show I can Fly* and Jinks in *Eye to Eye* pose explicit challenges to their readers. Readers are forced to recognise these differing perspectives and to evaluate them. Adolescent readers may find the task of vicariously experiencing conflicting perspectives relatively easy because the narrator addresses an extradiegetic narratee, the significance of which has been previously discussed. These authors challenge their adolescent readers to integrate separate accounts into a cohesive narrative.

#### *Eye to Eye*

Jinks interpellates adolescent readers who enjoy autonomy and a challenge with an adventurous science fiction story which dual protagonists take turns to narrate. Her readers are able to enjoy a degree of autonomy by comparing these differing perspectives. Jinks seems to assume that her readers are more likely to empathise with a child than a machine, so it is Jansi, the child, who begins the tale. Jansi is an orphan who struggles to survive against the odds. Jinks' second narrator is a space ship, PIM, who is humane if not human. Jinks sets her adolescent readers puzzles to solve and questions to ponder. What caused Jansi's world to decay from a technologically advanced society to its present primitive state? Where did PIM come from? What is the relationship

between their worlds? Will Jansi survive? Readers are enticed to read on, looking for clues to resolve these mysteries. Readers are also enticed to reflect upon what it is that defines humanity. PIM, the machine, is the only character in this text who expresses any concern for the child Jansi, and his welfare.

Jinks begins *Eye To Eye* as a first person narrative with her narrator/protagonist under attack. No details about Jansi are offered; even his name is non gender-specific. Yet Jansi is a protagonist who is calculated to appeal to a pre-adult reader's emerging desire for independence. Jansi's actions suggest that he is intelligent and capable of independent thought, living in a place where running away is a survival trait and not a sign of cowardice. Jansi is thoughtful. His decision to enter the egg is not rash but carefully reasoned (p. 2). Jansi's caution is justified, he lives a difficult life of heat, dust, sandfleas and thirst (p. 3); his caution is a pre-requisite for his survival as a scavenger. Jinks intends that Jansi will appeal to her readers' sympathies. Jansi has no right to a place in his community, his value and his life is determined by the items he scavenges (p.4). Jansi's struggle to establish a place for himself is an unsubtle allusion to the adolescent quest for identity. Jinks urges her adolescent readers to take risks in a novel that affirms the abilities of her pre-adult protagonist.

Jinks has set this novel in an alien world that may or may not be a future Earth. She urges her readers to explore her text in the same way that she positions her narrator/protagonist to explore the 'huge thing' with 'smooth, grey skin' (p. 1). Jansi's attempts to deduce what the thing is establish his credentials as a protagonist whose perspective is trustworthy. He is depicted as intelligent, brave and logical, the plot moves forward with him as he presses ahead to have a closer look. Jansi is also willing to question the conventional wisdom of his world: the Black Dragon he encountered earlier did not turn him into a lump of wood; relics have no power to fulfil wishes. His idea that he might throw a

stone at the thing [PIM] reinforces both his youthfulness and the primitive setting of the novel, as does his intention to run away 'like a hunting-hound' if anything bad happened (p. 2).

Jinks encourages her readers to identify with a narrator, who like Hansel and Gretel or Pandora, creatures of fairy tale and myth, succumbs to his curiosity. Jansi enters the egg just as Jinks hopes the reader will enter her novel, 'for one quick look ... just to make sure' (p. 4). As the novel develops, Jansi is shown to be an intelligent, brave and resourceful individual. In her resolution Jinks has created a context in which Jansi is both the protector and the protected. Jansi is still bravely questioning the authority of the star people, he is still attempting to kick the door down (p. 146), but he has learnt to trust PIM, a symbol of adult authority. Jansi follows PIM's advice and surrenders to the star people. In doing this, he acts as an obedient child. Yet at the same time, he also assumes the role of PIM's protector.

Although the theme of reciprocity (an adolescent assuming the role of caregiver to his mentor) reiterates the theme of Jinks' 'Pagan Chronicles', in this novel Jinks makes the reversal of the roles of protector and the protected more concrete. PIM assumes Jansi's appearance:

'Pim?'

'Yes?'

'Show me your face. Please. Just once.'

*'I have no face.'*

Oh yes you do. I know you do. You must. 'I want to see you. I want to see who you are.' Or what you are like. 'If you show me your face, PIM, I'll go. I'll go with you to the stars, and I'll make sure that you are safe. But I need to know who I am going with.' The Eye is still blank. If I put my hand up ... if I touch it ... there. It feels smooth, like silk, and hard, like rock. It feels warm, like somebody's skin.

'Please PIM, I need to know. Please.'

Silence but the smooth, warm, hard surface begins to grow hot; something's happening! I'd better move my hand away. I'd better step back ...

The Eye blinks. A face appears.

It's my own face. (*Eye to Eye* p.149)



This perhaps sums up Jinks' implicit belief in her adolescent readers. Obedient readers are intended to reflect and transpose the issues depicted in a science fiction novel into their lives. Jinks urges her readers to reflect on what it means to be human through her representation of a non-human but humane authority figure. Her representation of an adolescent who uses his innate abilities to develop a moral code and, with benevolent guidance, overcome the neglect of his childhood implies a belief in the potential of the adolescents. Resistant readers may choose, however, to reject Jinks' optimistic resolution and interpret the ending as an affirmation of the powerlessness of the individual. Stelcorp and its employees are no more benign than the culture that produced Jansi's father and the caravan master. Jansi and PIM may survive, but for how long? Readers may also be diverted and adopt the stance of a transformational reader who reads the text as a fable, one that questions attributing humane qualities to humanity.

### *Came Back to Show You I Could Fly*

Klein interpellates adolescent readers who want to engage with a challenging text that incorporates drugs, adolescent pregnancy, child neglect, and dysfunctional families in a tale that is told from multiple perspectives using dual protagonists and an extradiegetic narrator. She intersperses conventional third person narration with letters and lists to create differing perspectives. To enrich the mix still further, she challenges her readers' vocabulary with unusual adjectives and rich imagery. Klein's able readers are encouraged to be self-reliant, 'There would never be any little winged horse plunging splendidly from the sky to land at your feet and carry you away from things not to be borne. That was something you had to do all by yourself.' (p. 180). Klein hails her readers with a fictive world that is neither unendurable nor an idyll of easy self-fulfilment. She urges her readers to accept the imperfect nature of life and to adopt Seymour's pragmatic attitude, 'I still can't swim very well, but I can

sort of get around in the water now without drowning' (p. 188). An imperfect life, a life of challenge, is not only to be expected, it should be relished.

Klein's title poses two questions to her readers: who came back and in what sense can they fly? Is this a flight to freedom, a demonstration of independence or an indication that something will be fulfilled? It is not until page 31 that 'T' speaks and the reader realises that 'T' is Angie. Klein's metaphor is richly laden with symbolism. Angie and Seymour can be viewed as fledglings flying the nest, assuming the responsibilities associated with maturity. The winged horse 'plunging splendidly from the sky to land at your feet and carry you away from things not to be borne' (p. 180) is a reference to a pilot earning his wings (p. 189). This image is enriched by an allusion to Greek mythology, a complex illusion intended to stimulate her readers' curiosity. Pegasus is formed from the blood shed by Medusa when Perseus beheads her. If Angie's medusa is her addiction then is Seymour's medusa his fear? Klein's title can be interpreted as offering a promise to her readers that it is possible to confront your medusa. Angie the 'angel' (p. 22) may learn to fly by completing a rehabilitation program and accepting her responsibilities to her family (as a daughter, as a sister and as a soon-to-be mother). Seymour may learn to fly by making more friends, re-establishing contact with his father, and earning some money of his own through a part-time job. Each of these accomplishments gives him a degree of independence from his mother's control.

Klein's novel has a semblance of simplicity, yet her readers are rapidly confronted with different text types and multiple perspectives in a carefully constructed sequence. Klein focuses on Seymour in the opening chapters and the resolution, yet Seymour is not the chief protagonist in this text. Angie has less dialogue, but she dominates the novel. Her mother's concerns about Angie trigger her letter to Judith (Angie's friend) before Angie is even introduced.

Klein encourages her obedient readers to share these concerns, Angie seems fated to crash and burn, and does not promise them a happy outcome. Angie may be optimistic that she will be able to climb to the top of her 'big mountain' (p. 183) but there is no surety for the reader. Klein ends her novel with Seymour assuming the role of Angie's comforter. Seymour has his wings, a plastic silver badge, proof that he can fly. 'When you get back home, maybe I'll give it to you as a medal. But I'll have to wait and see' (p. 189). Seymour has navigated the events of the text successfully and this success places him in a position of power; he will not pass the badge on to Angie until she proves to him that she is worthy of it.

On the opening page of *Came Back to Show You I Could Fly*, Klein positions her readers as observers, watching Seymour. Events are focalised through the observations of an external narrator who notes objectively the physical conditions Seymour endures, confined as he is in the hot fibro-cement extension that is not even a 'proper' (p. 1) room. The narrator's emotive language encourages readers to sympathise with Seymour, but the image of passive obedience is not an attractive one, discouraging readers from identifying with him. Klein has created a regulated home where Seymour's wishes are subordinate to those of the adult Thelma who is introduced in the second sentence. Klein uses the personal names of both characters but this does not signify equality between Seymour and Thelma. It does however suggest that her readers are equal to Thelma and thus superior to Seymour. Klein represents Seymour as an underdog who lacks confidence, is anxious to avoid causing trouble, and has no expectation that he should be thanked for bringing Thelma a cup of tea (p. 2). Klein hails adolescent readers who are Thelma's equal; who are tolerant of long sentences and a third person narrative style; and who are content to have their vocabulary challenged and extended: 'cellulose',

'undulated', and 'ingratiating' (p. 1) are some examples of Klein's use of uncommon language.

Klein anticipates that her readers may reject Seymour and defends him directly. The narrator tells readers that Seymour is not ingratiating, he simply has 'a quiet and biddable nature' (p. 1). She also tries to elicit readers' sympathy for Seymour by suggesting that his experience of life is unjust. His presence in Thelma's house is inconvenient (p. 8). He is the 'remnant of family life' that his father clings to (p. 10). Seymour has no expectations of comfort in his life, 'No place Seymour had ever lived had been particularly pleasant as far as he could remember.' (p. 9). Yet Klein's narrator prevents readers from regarding Thelma as a stereotype of a cranky older woman. Thelma is old and she is tired from her full-time job (p. 6), but nonetheless she is helping Seymour's mother. By suggesting that her readers should feel sympathy for both Seymour and Thelma, Klein establishes the complexity that is a feature of this text.

In her opening paragraph, Klein presents Seymour to the reader as a very bland character, defined by what he does not do rather than what he does. Despite his passivity, Seymour may have considerable appeal to pre-adult readers who believe that their wishes and needs are always secondary to the wishes and needs of the adults around them. Klein urges these readers to read on, to discover what else Seymour has to endure. By aligning her readers with the adult voice of the narrator, Klein appeals to their perception of themselves as mature and objective. Ironically, if readers adopt this stance they are aligning themselves with Seymour's behaviours. They are biddable readers, sensible readers who accept the authority of the narrator's voice. Nothing dramatic or exciting happens in the first paragraph, but readers who persevere, trusting in the author, are rewarded when Klein introduces the beautiful, charismatic and flawed Angie. At this point, readers are accustomed to the role of the observer

and so she too is observed from a distance. Readers infer the nature of Angie's character from her dialogues with Seymour, her actions and her lists. Klein has constructed a fictive world in which order, responsibility, thoughtfulness and moderation are valued. Angie tries to establish order through her lists but readers know, because they have been shown and told, that she lacks discipline and it seems probable that her attempts will be futile.

Klein interpellates able adolescent readers and encourages them to question adult authority. Adult characters are flawed; they can be selfish, superficial and unfair. Seymour knows that Thelma lies about his father (p. 5); Angie knows that her mother worries about what the neighbours will think (p. 71). Seymour's father buys him a watch, a gift he did not want, in 'a fit of maudlin remorse' (p. 8) for his neglect of his son. Parents are depicted as manipulative; Seymour knows that his mother is 'adept at imposing on people and making them feel sorry for her' (p. 7). Seymour jokes about adult selfishness. He jokes about how Marty's Dad takes advantage of his work ethic by promoting him from sweeping paths to the harder task of stacking bags of fertiliser in the shed (p. 187). Klein urges her readers to believe that adulthood is not a stage when the flaws of adolescence have been overcome; adults are individuals who continue to struggle. Klein seemingly believes that her readers will not find this daunting, but liberating.

Klein challenges her readers by focusing on Angie the mother rather than Angie the adolescent, whose needs are not being met by her family or by any of the rehabilitation programs she has attempted. By constructing Angie as a potential mother, Klein reinforces her theme of mothers who are inadequate, simultaneously diminishing Angie's appeal for the pre-adult reader and supporting Seymour's beliefs about the frailty of adults. To win Seymour's plastic pilot's badge Angie must find the strength to overcome her addiction.

Yet by complying with her family's wishes, she may lose her creative identity and individuality. Throughout the novel, Angie's charm has been her extremes of generosity and kindness, demonstrated in her initial friendliness to Seymour and her creativity, demonstrated in the costumes she creates. The mature Angie will have to moderate her extremes and in doing so, the qualities that were the basis of her appeal to readers may be lost.

Klein makes it difficult for readers to adopt the position of a resistant reader by establishing a framework that invites them to compare and contrast the two protagonists and their circumstances. Neither protagonist is represented as a character with whom the reader should identify, although some readers may align themselves with Lynne, Angie's sister. It is difficult for a reader who continues to engage with this novel to resist a narrative in which the protagonists are such opposite and extreme representations of adolescence. As readers contrast the perspectives of Seymour or Angie, they are drawn into the text because the oddness of this friendship is engaging. Klein depicts Angie's denial of her friendship with Seymour but this is a brief aberration:

'You rotten little creep! I never asked you to come in here and lecture me! You get the hell out of here – I didn't want to see you even! I never even ... liked you!' (p. 179)

'Guess you never thought you'd get a letter from me after all this time, hey, especially after that big fight we had. You should be so lucky, pal!'  
(*Came Back to Show You I Could Fly* p. 181)

The transformational reader may focus on the representations of parents in the text, particularly mothers, although these characters pale beside the timid Seymour and the charismatic Angie. Yet Klein's novel depicts a dialogue at cross-purposes between Angie and her mother and implies a dialogue that is yet to begin between Seymour and his mother, gaps that may divert transformational responses.

Klein's resolution encourages her readers to be warily optimistic. Angie may be able to stay clean. Seymour may be able to stay in his new home, 'I hope Carrucan's going to last longer than all those other places. I think it will.' (p. 188). Seymour's hopes are not certainties. Klein positions her adolescent readers to wait and see, just as Seymour has learned to wait and see. Seymour makes a life for himself at Carrucan and hopes that Angie will complete the rehabilitation program. Seymour changes, his parents do not, but that is enough. Angie returns to her family, not as an errant daughter but as a woman willing to endure the pains of detoxification for her unborn baby. Angie believes that she is almost through the worst stages of withdrawal and Klein does not refute this. Klein's narrative suggests to her able obedient adolescent readers that adolescents are strong, albeit imperfect, individuals.

### **Extradiegetic Narrators**

The extradiegetic narrators constructed by Nilsson, Rubinstein and Moloney challenge readers with a perspective other than that of an adolescent narrator/protagonist. They hail adolescent readers who do not need, or want, to identify with the protagonist.

#### *The House Guest*

In her novel, Nilsson subverts the orthodox pattern of children's adventure stories, that of a child or a group of children confronting wrong and righting it. Her gang of children do not right wrongs; they create them by breaking into houses to steal money. Nilsson begins her novel with the narrator relating a detailed account of the HBS gang planning a raid. Their crimes are not accidental, stealing by finding; they carefully plan and execute their robberies. Unlike Robin Hood, they do not steal in order to give to the poor and their self-imposed discipline is intended to ensure that they avoid the consequences of

their actions. Jess is the leader of the gang but it is Gunno who is the narrator's focus. Gunno is a paradox, the loner who is a member of a gang. Nilsson hails readers who like engage with novels that subvert conventions.

Nilsson appeals to her adolescent readers' sense of drama and curiosity by posing questions that are not immediately answered. Nilsson begins her text with an ambiguous statement: 'It had almost been too easy' (p. 1) and proceeds to describe a plan the gang had been working on. Gunno is both reliable (the gang relies on him to draw up the plan) and unreliable; Jess is worried that Gunno 'might one day prove to be a problem' (p. 2). The gang meet at Gunno's house and the absence of his mother is unexplained whilst the reader is told that Gunno's Dad is safely out of the way. The reader is encouraged to seek answers to these questions: where is Gunno's mother, why are the gang so secretive and what exactly is the HBS? The plans that the gang are concocting have the aura of the forbidden if not the illegal. Nilsson maintains the mystery of what the gang does and what the HBS is until page three when readers are told that the gang *do* houses, and this is their fourth that morning. Readers are also told that this well organised, successful gang is departing from its established practices. Nilsson intends that her adolescent readers will intuit from this that the novel will narrate the story of the dissolution of the gang. Nilsson has positioned her reader to want to engage with the text in order to find out the answers, both to specific questions and to the larger moral issues.

Whilst readers observe the events leading up to the raid, Nilsson establishes a complex image of the HBS gang. The protagonists of the text are petty thieves but they are also, 'Gunno [who] was cool, very cool, and sensible.' (p. 2) and 'Jess, capable and calm, Pete a bit jumpy, and Wally as he always looked – a failed version of Pete.' (p. 4). This is not an anonymous gang. Nilsson portrays them as individuals with particular strengths and flaws. The reader knows that



the gang is successful. Their strengths have enabled them to commit these crimes for over a year without being caught (p. 3). Each member has a defined area of responsibility according to their abilities: Jess is the leader who ensures that they co-operate, Gunno does the plans, and Wally is the scout and can be used as a decoy if needed. Only Pete's particular skills, and hence his role, are undefined. Wally, the youngest member, can assume an image of vulnerability that allows him to exploit adult sentimentality:

'I've lost my puppy, 'he'd say to softish-looking people, or, and he'd be practically weeping, 'I've lost my white rabbit. He was there at teatime but he's gone this morning. Big ears.' He would make pathetic shapes of ears in the air in front of them, then, when the people shook their heads, he'd walk off up the path, his shoulders drooping. (*The House Guest* p. 4)

Nilsson portrays the Gang as a group of clever and capable individuals who consciously exploit adult weaknesses. They are not children so much as rebels, intended to appeal to adolescent readers rather than alienate them. Nilsson glosses over the outcomes of their crimes; the money they have accumulated is a burden; they cannot spend it without attracting the attention of their parents (p. 22). This makes their 'raids' (p. 13) seem like a game, a game that is played against adults. Their crimes seem petty when weighed against the power of their opponents.

Nilsson intends that her readers will reflect upon the notion of power. Gunno introduces this notion directly when he reflects upon the importance of names:

'He liked the idea that people had a "use" name and a "true" name. The use name was one that people used to name you; but your true name was something kept hidden. If people knew your true name then they had power over you.'  
(*The House Guest* p. 46)

Gunno compartmentalises his life to conceal his true self: he conceals the HBS from his father, and he conceals his visits to Hugh's house from the HBS. Through the character of Wally, Nilsson echoes her theme of individuals

concealing their strength. As the novel progresses, Gunno realises that Wally is more complex than he first appeared. Rather than being a faded version of his older brother Pete, 'Pete might just be a faded version of Wally. Wally was sharp.' (p. 60). Gunno's realisation that Wally is sharp is confirmed by his ability to solve the code on the back of Hugh's photo (p. 64) and his identification of the location of the photo (p. 78). Gunno realises that he prefers working with Wally rather than Pete, 'Pete was jerky, unpredictable. With Wally Gunno could work in a rhythm, steady, calm; but with Pete he felt increasingly uneasy and restless' (p. 69). Wally's calmness is reassuring. In the resolution, Wally rescues Gunno and Gunno is forced to acknowledge that Wally has succeeded where he failed (p. 145).

Nilsson hails curious readers who can tolerate unanswered questions. Gunno, and the reader, are left to wonder about Wally's secrets. Why does he feel so sorry for the fifteen-year-old boy who died in 1889 that he tends his grave? Why does he need to go raiding by himself (p. 88)? Questions about other characters are also left unresolved: is Gunno's mother fanciful or psychic; why did Jess initiate the raids; and why is Pete so weak?

Nilsson moderates these unanswered questions by portraying the restoration of order. The gang members end their twelve-month spree of raids and most of the members abandon their criminal behaviours. The elements of the paranormal are resolved. Gunno fails in his attempt to save Hugh's life, but he succeeds in bringing comfort to Hugh's mother. Gunno's actions restore order to the lives of Anne and Geoffrey. Whilst they believed that their son Hugh was dead, they could not move from the house or try to rebuild their lives until they had buried him. Gunno's actions also restore order to his own life, his relationship with his father improves, and he re-establishes his relationship with his mother. The text ends with Gunno seemingly following his father's

advice to 'put it all behind you' (p. 153). Nilsson resolves the events of the text with a focus on the normal rather than the paranormal; her last image of Gunno emphasises his steadfast nature (p. 157).

Nilsson's explicit belief, conveyed through her narrator, is that the members of the gang are decent human beings. Their raids are an aberration, an experimental phase, not a predictor of their future. The gang can be likened to a club in the rules it has for its members:

Rule 1: No damage to property (p. 17)

Rule 2: Leave everything the way you found it. (p. 8)

Rule 3: Don't take anything but money and don't take it all from any one place. No radios Pete, cassette recorders Wally, wallets Gunno. Only money. (p. 9)

Rule 4: No dogs. (*The House Guest* p. 6)

Gunno knows he has hurt his friends when he leaves the gang, but he has no choice once he feels uncomfortable about doing raids (p. 72). He complies with his internal sense of morality. Jess follows his lead and dissolves the gang because, 'We knew it was wrong' (p. 155). Nilsson's portrayal of these changes in the gang members is consistent with Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development. Anne echoes the narrator's stance of a sympathetic adult. She is angry when she discovers Gunno in her house but describes his actions as 'babysitting the house' (p. 99). Anne describes Gunno as having an 'essential goodness' (p. 152); and retells the story of the legendary Gunnar, a noble outlaw in the epilogue. Nilsson voices a different perspective through Anne's husband Geoffrey, 'Sentimental claptrap. The boy is just a common thief.' (p. 104) but she subverts this because her plot relies on Gunno's uncommon abilities.

Adolescent readers may choose to resist Nilsson's intent and focus on Gunno's betrayal of his peers in the HBS gang. Nilsson tells her reader that Gunno feels guilty, like a traitor, when he tells the gang of his decision to leave (p. 75). Rather than feeling sympathy for Gunno, the reader's sympathies may be with

Pete, Jess and Wally. All of the members of the HBS are hurt by Gunno's decision that they interpret as a betrayal and a criticism. They appeal to him to change his mind and are angry when their appeals fail, 'Why you conceited bastard,' said Pete, changing tack at once. 'Don't think we won't manage, for we will. Heaps of kids'd want your job.' (p. 75). The gang secretly follow Gunno and discover him in Hugh's house, 'Listen to him,' sneered Pete 'how dare we! Who does he think he is, the hypocrite. I thought you said no more stealing from houses' (p. 84). Nilsson explains Gunno's motivation to the reader, but the resistant reader may choose to reject her explanation. Wally and Jess are reconciled with Gunno and their friendship is restored, but Pete remains estranged.

A transformational response may focus on the images of estrangement and isolation in the text. Mothers are isolated from their children: Gunno's mother is institutionalised and isolated from her family and Anne is isolated by the death of her son, Hugh. Gunno becomes estranged and isolated from the HBS and his mother. Jess is isolated within her family (as the only girl she is compelled to look after her siblings) and Wally is isolated by his secrets. Although Nilsson resolves most of these issues, transformational readers may be deflected into a consideration of isolation and estrangement in their lives and in the communities to which they belong.

### *Foxspell*

Rubinstein frames her novel with a Beginning and an Ending, promising a resolution that she does not provide. The text is paradoxical, seemingly simple but difficult to categorise. It is a family story with mythical overtones.

Rubinstein interpellates adolescent readers who have outgrown texts that have neat resolutions. She hails reflective adolescent readers, suggesting that an ending is a new beginning but it need not be a resolution.

Rubinstein illustrates these ideas in her *Beginning*. This section relates the story of a young fox that meets its end in the *Beginning*. The narrator makes a direct appeal to the reader's sympathy and compassion. The young fox lives on the fringes of society, starving in a garbage depot. He may still be young but the 'carefree cub days' (p. 1) are over. He and his siblings have been driven away from the den to fend for themselves, a challenge that proves fatal. Rubinstein intends that her adolescent readers will sympathise if not empathise with the young fox. His death seems almost inevitable, none of his siblings have survived, but Rubinstein tempers any sadness by declaring that in death the spirit of the young fox survives, 'He took one last breath and then his spirit ran on, and hurled itself back into the earth it came from.' (p. 3). The spirit of the young fox survives by returning to the earth. His life and his death are part of the cycle of life and death. Whilst this belief may offer some comfort to adolescent readers it is a philosophical consolation rather than a hopeful resolution.

Rubinstein hails adolescent readers who want to reflect upon the significance of what they are shown rather than told. She links her protagonist, Tod, to the fox through his dreams (p. 5). This spiritual link is strengthened as the text proceeds. Rubinstein appears to predict a similar fate for Tod. His dreams are disturbed by images of violence, violence to animals and to humans, 'He dreamed of gunshots and hurt animals yelping, and a mechanical voice that went on and on. 'You have violated a protected area. The police were called. Leave immediately.' (p. 5). The mechanical voice is not a dream; it is the alarm at the depot (p. 15). Rubinstein's narrator blurs the boundary between dream and reality to imply her protagonist's vulnerability.

Rubinstein's adolescent readers may not be aware that the word 'Tod' is a variant of 'Todd' which means fox, but they may be familiar with the Disney

film 'The Fox and the Hound' (1981), in which the young fox is called Tod. Tod's life, his natural order, has been disrupted by his parents' separation followed by his mother losing her job and her decision to return to her childhood home. Tod optimistically perceives this disruption as just part of a cycle, 'There were good times and bad times. He knew that much already, even if he was only twelve ... You just had to sit it out through the bad times because things always got better in the end.' (pp 5-6). Rubinstein's *Beginning*, which precedes Tod's statement, belies her protagonist's optimism. It depicts the cycle of the young foxes' lives and deaths. Their lives did not get better and the reader may fear that Tod will share the young foxes' fate.

Rubinstein continues to challenge Tod's beliefs and assumptions. His grandmother is not the figure he expects. Instead of being gentle and living quietly in a retirement home, she dresses like a man and has more energy than her granddaughters. Tod is forced to revise his beliefs:

He remembered how, when they first came to Grandma's in the winter, things had seemed so black and white – either good or bad. Now they were all mixed up and he couldn't tell which was which. Perhaps it was part of growing up.  
(*Foxspell*, p. 93)

Tod's confusion is exacerbated by his removal from his childhood home. Rubinstein establishes the earth as a symbol of belonging. Tod's father had left because of his 'homesickness for the landscape he grew up in' (p. 20). Tod recognises the significance of the earth when he buries the young fox:

'It was back in the earth again, it came from the earth and now it was back in it. Down among the bushes in the gully, his hands covered in dirt from digging the grave, mud on his shoes from the creek, he felt as if he belonged to the earth too.'  
(*Foxspell*, p. 21)

Rubinstein encourages her readers to believe that Tod's world may never be restored and to respond sympathetically to his determined optimism.

Tod's talent for drawing rather than writing or reading places him at a disadvantage in the classroom, and leads to physical and social isolation. The narrator explains that from Tod's perspective, reading and writing seem a slow way to deal with the world compared with the possibilities of a drawing. This both establishes Tod's intelligence and precludes him from success at school. However talented he, like the fox, is on the fringes of the class; his poor maths and English skills place him in a group of one (p. 27). Socially he is left with Adrian and Martin, the other loners in the class (p. 29). Although Tod is amused by Adrian and feels a kinship with Martin (because of his fear of being bullied) he does not align himself with either boy. Tod aligns himself with the foxes, 'He tried to listen to Mrs Linkman explaining the weather experiments the class had been doing, but inside his head he was roaming the quarries with the foxes.' (p. 30). Rubinstein's suggestion that Tod feels a kinship with the fox community is reinforced by her description of Tod's first sighting of the old dog fox:

'It heard Tod, turned its head and looked him straight in the eye.

Tod stood frozen and looked back at the fox. He felt as if something wild leaped from the animal's eyes and planted itself deep inside him. It was the most exciting moment of his life. He could feel his heart beating. Then the fox's sharp face softened – almost as though it recognised me, Tod said afterwards. He felt he could just step forward and the fox would allow him to touch it. But before he could move the fox turned and trotted calmly away. It stopped once on top of the bank and looked back at Tod, and then it padded across the railway line.

(*Foxspell* p. 34)

The recognition is mutual but the distance between Tod and the fox is maintained.

Tod fulfils the suggestion established in the title of the text, as he falls under the fox's spell. Rubinstein elaborates on their connection, 'Their eyes met and the wild feeling jumped between them as it had done before. Tod sat stock still, enraptured.' (p. 45). This moment ends with Tod being hunted by the Breakers, the gang of boys who warned him away from their territory, who have mistaken him for a fox. In describing Tod's flight, Rubinstein blurs the

boundaries between the real and the unreal. The landscape darkens into 'the mysterious darkness of the quarry that shouldn't have been where it was' (p. 47). In this place, there is movement, which could be the fox, but there is also a campfire (p. 69) and this implies the presence of man. Tod is not afraid of confronting the fox but he is afraid of confronting a stranger so he retreats and heads for home (p. 46). Rubinstein reinforces the changes in Tod through the description of his sense of smell. It is sharper and he can scent humans. The smell fades after he corrects himself and describes it as the smell of people. Tod's identity is reinforced however, when his mother tells him that although he was not named Tod by choice (his father had spelled Todd wrongly when registering his birth), his name means fox in Scottish dialect (p. 51), 'Tod stretched his legs in his sleep as if he were running, and his teeth showed as he snarled.' (p. 55). Tod has become a fox in his dreams.

Rubinstein challenges her Australian adolescent readers with a fictive world that is paradoxically ancient and new:

The earth had existed for millions of years, long before people evolved. He had seen its ancient bones in the quarry.

For millions of years the earth had been spinning, turning every day to meet the sun again, supporting its cargo of plant and animal life. No matter what humans were doing, or worrying about or scheming, the earth went on with its business of supporting life, and life went on doing what it always did. (*Foxspell* pp. 84-85)

Rubinstein suggests that the earth knows no national boundaries. Introduced species like foxes have learned to live in this new land because of their spirit guides (p. 121). This belief invites her obedient readers to wonder why Tod's father feels alienated in Sydney, and why Tod's sisters feel disconnected from the Sydney suburbs of their childhood in their grandmother's house near Adelaide.



Rubinstein urges her obedient readers to accept that individuals have choices. Charm articulates this belief when she rebukes her mother for smoking (p. 98). Tod's father chooses to go to England; his grandmother chooses to remain whilst her sister flees to the Gold Coast after their mother dies; Leonie has to choose where her family will live (p. 53). Choice of course implies consequences and responsibility, notions Rubinstein illustrates through her minor characters. Her family is unable to make Charm feel better, but Charm can make herself feel better by deciding to stop hating their new life (p. 99). Adolescent readers who choose to respond to Rubinstein's hail engage with a subtle text. Her protagonist may be young, but he is powerful. Tod can choose to resist the Breakers because he has the capacity to be as immovable as the earth (p. 62). His motivation in choosing to join the Breakers (p. 162) subsumes the questions of his responsibility for his actions. Rubinstein's most powerful image of choice lies in her resolution: will Tod choose to remain human or will he call out to the old dog fox?

Rubinstein tempers her appeal to her readers' notions of magic. If Tod calls out to the fox, he escapes his pain at witnessing Adrian's death. Readers are told that in the fox world, death is of no importance (p. 164), the spirit simply returns to the earth. Rubinstein tempers this with her description of the deaths of the young fox cubs (pp. 1-3). When Tod goes looking for the old dog fox, he meets Dan Russell, the Fox Man, the Fox Spirit (p. 116). Dan enables Tod to experience life as a fox and explains the laws of the spirit beings (p. 120). Rubinstein uses this figure to explain how human power is limited, 'All human things affect spirit world,' he told him [Tod]. 'And all spirit things human world. No creature escapes that snarrul.' (p. 121). Rubinstein explains this balance with an image of Yggdrasil (in Norse Mythology, the giant ash tree that links and shelters all the worlds) co-existing with Athene (in Greek mythology, the goddess of wisdom who gave Athens the gift of the olive tree) (p. 122).

Rubinstein moderates this image with the clear inference that spirit guardians do not always co-exist peacefully, the ash and olive trees flourish at the expense of gum trees.

Rubinstein hails pragmatic readers in a contradictory text. Idealistic adolescent readers may resent Rubinstein's implicit acceptance of unfairness. Bullying behaviour occurred at Tod's previous school (p. 29), and the Breakers use it as a means of coercing boys to join their gang (p. 59). Rubinstein does not condone bullying (the gang is not to be admired) but she does imply that it is an inevitable part of life. Rubinstein also implies that there is a fellowship between children and adolescents against adults. When Adrian accuses Tod of being a traitor (p. 87) the accusation is not that he has been a traitor to the Breakers (he is not a member) but that he has been a traitor to his kind. This does not mean that children and adolescents are noble: just as Shaun has been cruel to Luke, Tod is mean to Adrian. Rubinstein's explicit beliefs about generational conflict are articulated in Tod's description of his mother's comedy act, a description that mocks both parent and child:

'And she said that teenagers were nature's way of making sure people grow old – that's why they are called agers, because they age you – and they work as a team so it really should be called teamagers. The 36ers. All sorts of stuff like that. And you should have seen what she looked like!' (*Foxspell* p. 160)

Resistant readers may focus on the contradictions of this text. Tod declares, 'Books are always telling you things that aren't true,' ... and remembering stories of foxes that wear clothes. 'That's why I don't like them much.' (p. 157). Rubinstein does not dress her foxes in clothes, but her fox spirit does light campfires and he speaks English. Pre-adult resistant readers may choose to regard this as an example of adult hypocrisy and reject Rubinstein's attempt to blend fantasy with reality as being childish and unworthy of their further attention. Like Tod, they may feel insulted by an adult assuming that they

could be interested in fairy stories (p. 176). The ecologically aware reader may be angered at the text's focus on introduced species and Rubinstein's appropriation of Aboriginal legends. Unlike obedient readers, who accept Tod's admiration of the foxes' tenacity and cleverness, resistant readers may instead reflect upon the toll the foxes have inflicted on Australia's native fauna.

Transformational readers may focus on the text's portrayal of relationships between parents and children, particularly mothers and their children.

Rubinstein has portrayed two actual mothers, Grandma and Leonie; and one de-facto mother, Dallas, in detail. References to Martin's mother provide yet another image of mothering. Rubinstein depicts Tod as resenting Dallas's attempts to mother him (p.127 & p.171); being embarrassed by Leonie's unconventional behaviour (p. 23 & p. 161); and feeling alienated from his Grandma because he wasn't who she thought he was (p. 177). Transformational readers may speculate about the significance of adults as mentors to adolescents, mentors who determine which choices are available to Tod rather than on these choices.

### *A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove*

Moloney begins *A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove* with a prelude that positions readers as external observers watching at first dispassionately but then compassionately as the opening scene of the novel unfolds. The novel begins with a lengthy description of a woman sneaking on board a bus. Whilst it may seem as if Moloney is allowing his readers to interrogate the text, Moloney is actually positioning them to wait patiently for the story to unfold, much as the anonymous woman waits patiently for the opportunity to sneak on board the bus. Moloney engages his readers in a mystery and gives them no clues as to how the prelude will relate to the text that follows. The obedient reader's task is to view the scene, absorb the evidence and withhold judgement.

Moloney shows rather than tells his readers, posing the questions: who is this woman and why is she leaving? By referring to her as 'the woman' (p. 2) Moloney makes her anonymous, creating a blank space for his readers' imaginations. She is a woman, but not a figure of adult authority. She is a thief because she evades paying the fare, but she is also pathetic, a 'lonely figure who shunned the bright light' (p. 1). Yet the final sentence moderates this image of pathos by depicting her establishing a measure of control, celebrating her success she 'permits herself a smile' (p. 2) as the bus pulls away from the roadhouse.

The setting of the prelude is non-specific, a petrol station with a snack bar attached. The travellers are weary but they are dismissed; the narrator's focus is on the lonely woman (p. 1). Moloney draws his readers' attention to this figure; she is both lonely and alone. Although she is a woman and not a teenager she is not a figure of adult authority, she lives on the fringe just as she waits on the fringe of the tarmac. She is someone to be pitied; unable to afford the fare she waits patiently for an opportunity to sneak aboard the bus. When she creeps on board the bus, using two teenagers as cover for her actions (p. 2), her skill at both deceiving the driver and establishing which seat is likely to be vacant suggest that she has done this before. A car sweeps past the bus (p. 2) an image of power and relative affluence that reinforces the image of this woman's precarious position.

The prelude is important in establishing the readers' trust in the external narrator; Kerry is neither condemned nor excused for her actions that are simply described with an understanding that belies clinical detachment. Moloney uses the device of labelling each chapter with the name of the character who is its focus, creating a one word abstract that accentuates his use of an external narrator. The following chapter introduces Kerry Matt not as a

lonely woman but as an inadequate mother. The image of Kerry as a lonely woman recedes as Moloney encourages his readers to empathise with her children. The mystery of where Kerry has gone (this time) is subsumed into the impact of these absences (p. 4) on her children. Moloney encourages his readers to shift their focus from Kerry, to her children, to the 'slow moving target' (p.4) quiet fifteen-year-old Carl. Carl tries to help his siblings; he saves whatever money he has to give to Sarah (p. 5). Like the readers, Carl watches (p. 4) but his terror makes him sick and he is lonely because he has no one in whom he can confide. He is dependent upon the narrator because he cannot name his fears (p. 6). By constructing a protagonist who is a mixture of opposites, physically strong and emotionally vulnerable, Moloney acknowledges the complexity of adolescence. He urges his obedient readers to align himself with the responsible Carl, the watcher, the boy who tries to placate Sarah and take care of Harley. Moloney depicts Carl's stoicism and courage as admirable qualities, and his attempts to save what remains of his family as heroic.

Moloney intends to subvert stereotypes. Moloney suggest to his readers that gender roles are simplistic or sexist. Kerry is an inadequate mother and her sister is an inadequate surrogate parent, but Moloney balances this representation of motherhood with the unconventional character Joy.

Moloney's protagonist subverts the stereotype of a strong and silent man. Carl is a silent, sensitive, caring and wounded adolescent who is 'nearly six feet tall [...] and square' (p. 4). In the resolution of the text, when Carl gains a sense of self worth, actual strength, he breaks his silence. Sarah refuses the challenge Carl accepts and Moloney does not condemn her, although he depicts her sense of guilt (p. 11). Carl is presented as an individual not a representation of superior masculine strength; as an individual he is stronger than both his sister Sarah and his brother Harley. Moloney uses a simple narrative style to invite

his readers into a tough fictive world where imperfect individuals struggle to survive.

Subversive readers may however choose to regard Carl as a stereotype and reject his stoicism, and willingness to placate his awful relations as indicative of a cowardice born of stupidity or naivety. It would require determination to maintain this reading of the text because Carl is beset by so many obstacles that are not of his making. As a result Moloney may manoeuvre his readers into a position where compassion if not empathy is almost inevitable. Transformative readers may elect to read this text as a paradigm of social injustice where the Matt family are the innocent victims of inadequate social infrastructure, although Moloney tries to dissuade readers from this interpretation by depicting Bruce and Aunt Beryl as unlikeable characters, self-centred and selfish.

In attempting to align his adolescent readers with his adolescent protagonist, encouraging them to emulate Carl's courage and strength, Moloney's text follows the pattern of the texts considered in the previous chapter. He conflates his readers with his protagonist. Moloney's text, although it attempts to subvert stereotypes, reflects the belief (itself a stereotype) that adolescent readers are attracted to texts with adolescent protagonists.

## **Conclusion**

In this group of novels, the authors interpellate adolescent readers who are willing and able to engage with texts that consider alternative and perhaps conflicting perspectives without the lure of a single adolescent narrator/protagonist. In most of these texts, readers are not aligned with the singular perspective of an adolescent protagonist. Moloney's text does

encourage his reader to do this, however, so this analysis concludes that even when authors use multiple narrators or different types of narrators, they may still hold to a belief that in order to appeal to adolescent readers the best way to do so is with a representation of a strong adolescent protagonist. Because one text holds to this belief, this section of the sample illustrates polyphony rather than plainsong.

The resolutions of these novels also exhibit a diversity that implies polyphony. Most of these authors have interpellated readers who want a positive, if not a happy, ending. Two authors however, Klein and Rubinstein, challenge their adolescent readers with resolutions that offer no certainty of hope for the adolescent protagonist. Klein tempers her readers' anxiety by depicting Seymour's development, an image that individuals can change, but she offers no surety about Angie's future. Rubinstein ends her novel with Tod in a state of crisis. Klein and Rubinstein hail adolescent readers who are willing to tolerate uncertain endings in polyphonic texts.

## Chapter Eight: Confronting Adolescent Readers

These texts interpellate adolescent readers who desire confronting novels that portray vulnerable protagonists in contexts that offer them no refuge and no hope. These texts expose the tensions inherent in a genre that addresses both Nikolajeva's *Dear Child* and Hollindale's pre-adult reader. Do these award-winning texts betray their readers' trust by inviting them into nihilistic fictive worlds? Alternatively, do they expose an inevitable conflict between the pedagogical purpose some adults ascribe to YA literature and the diverse needs, abilities and interests of *Becoming Adults*?

Adult concerns about children's literature are neither particular to Australia nor to contemporary times:

Then shall we simply allow our children to listen to any stories that anyone happens to make up, and so receive into their minds ideas often the very opposite of those we shall think they ought to have when they are grown up?

No, certainly not.

It seems, then, that our first business will be to supervise the making of fables and legends, rejecting all which are unsatisfactory; and we shall induce nurses and mothers to tell their children only those which we have approved, and to think more of moulding their souls with these stories than they now do of rubbing their limbs to make them strong and shapely. Most of the stories now in use will have to be discarded.

(Plato, *The Republic* 360 BC in *The Republic of Plato*, Cornford 1945, p. 69)

In Australia in the 1990s, these concerns focused on fears that novels for adolescent readers that depict bleak fictional worlds are inherently unsuitable for adolescents because of the risk they pose to naïve and vulnerable adolescent readers. Plato's words reflect a desire to control rather than to protect children; this desire is based on a tacit belief in the power of stories. It is inevitable that YA fiction addresses adult concerns as well as adolescent readers; adults dominate the genre as writers, publishers, critics and judges. The defining characteristic of children's literature and YA fiction is that these genres are addressed to adult perceptions of childhood and adolescence. What is contentious is the disparity between adult desires to protect adolescents and



beliefs about the need or the degree of need for such protection. As we have seen, Nikolajeva describes an adolescent reader who is assumed not to be ready for the freedoms accorded an adult reader, as a 'Dear Child', who requires the protection afforded by censored content or a simplified narrative style. Are all adolescent readers necessarily Dear Child readers?

Chall (1983) describes stages of reading development that are analogous to Piaget's stages of cognitive development. Whilst Chall's framework may be not be supported by a wide consensus, it is indicative of a belief that child and adolescent readers need specific genres to meet their specific developmental needs. It is interesting to note that Chall suggests that it is not until late adolescence that readers are able to understand polyphonic texts. There is a contemporary instance in Australian literature that supports Chall. Jaclyn Moriarty rewrote *I Have a Bed Made of Buttermilk Pancakes* to suit adolescent readers. Moriarty describes the YA adaptation (*The Spell Book of Listen Taylor*) as 'the same book but I restructured it so the story opens with the girl and then other things start to shift' (Wyndham 2007, p. 30). Moriarty denies that she has simplified the story but she has simplified the structure and language she used to tell it so 'librarians wouldn't ban it from libraries'.

In Australia, the 1990s was a decade of debate about community standards and the need for censorship in YA fiction, a debate that continues today (Nimon 2005). Lawrinson (2004) warns that this debate has resulted in conservative YA novels that address adult concerns rather than adolescent readers. Skyjonsberg (1992) repeats Chambers' metaphor (1979) in suggesting that YA fiction can best be defined as a bridge between children's literature and adult literature and those novels that demand too much of adolescent readers may not harm but will discourage their readers' interest in reading. Skyjonsberg's position is that the interests and needs of adolescent readers with sophisticated literacy skills

are best met by adult fiction. This subtle form of censorship, or adult control, Skyjonsberg defends by asserting that sophisticated adolescent readers would rather read adult literature anyway (p. 13) and they are free to do so. It is a belief that is not universally held. Other critics argue that censorship of adolescent reading is an act of disrespect for adolescent readers and their capacity to observe the world (Phelan 1997). The appeal 'cross-over' YA novels have for adult readers suggests that the distinction between YA and adult novels is not a simple one.

Moloney, author of *A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove*, agrees with Skyjonsberg (Jermolajew 1998). Moloney's *A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove* addresses adolescent readers who are Dear Children, it offers a hopeful resolution, it has a simple narrative style and it encourages adolescent readers to admire a heroic adolescent protagonist. Moloney's speech, 'So Many Sleeping Dogs', given at a conference for librarians, teacher librarians, English teachers and parents at the Fremantle Children's Literature Centre, criticises YA texts like Sonya Hartnett's *Sleeping Dogs*. Moloney argues that many young adult novels are (due their complexity or their content) more appropriate for adult rather than adolescent readers. His argument is not that these are bad books, but that they are inappropriate for adolescent readers. He suggests that adults should impose more controls to protect adolescent readers, and another genre should be developed, one that could act as a bridge between YA and Adult literature. Moloney's stance reflects a desire to protect rather than trust adolescent readers, yet it is disrespectful. It imposes a uniformity of maturity, ability and interests on adolescent readers. In doing so, it excludes adolescent readers who may wish to engage with complex novels or confronting subject material.

Hartnett (1995) concedes that *Sleeping Dogs* addresses able and mature adolescents, but argues that these readers can appreciate complex issues in

complex formats. Yet Hartnett does impose limitations on herself. This acknowledgement is implicit in her agreement that in addressing these readers in *Sleeping Dogs* she was 'pushing it as far as I could go' (p. 6). *Sleeping Dogs* is an overtly literary text that encompasses themes of incest, child abuse and filicide. Hartnett trusts that able and mature adolescent readers are able to experience her nihilistic fictional world without being overwhelmed. The judges who awarded this text the Sheaffer Pen Prize for Young Adult Fiction in 1996 appear to support her confidence. Applying the metaphor of YA fiction as a bridge between children's literature and adult literature, one would expect that one end of this bridge would incorporate complex or controversial YA novels such as *Sleeping Dogs*. Hartnett's phrase 'pushed it' indicates both her awareness (as a young writer) of the conventions usually ascribed to YA novels and her respect for adolescent readers. This awareness was explicitly stated in a later interview (Thorn 2002).

### **Patrolling Boundaries or Extending Boundaries?**

Authors of the books in this study have a particular relationship with the society in which their book was published. Their fictive worlds are socially sanctioned by virtue of the awards their novels have won. Novels that win these awards can be found in almost every Australian school and public library. They are cultural artefacts of Australian society.

The relationship between authors and their readers can be viewed as a form of social contract. Social contract theory expounded by philosophers Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jacques Rousseau suggests that individuals agree to cede power to a state in return for protection. Individuals willingly subjugate their independence for the sake of the advantages provided by civil society (Mautner, 1997). The state, then, has the right to rule and the individual the

obligation to obey. Readers who adopt the stance of obedient reader cede some of their ability to freely imagine in order to experience the fictive world that an author has created. Their response is constrained by their desire to understand the author's intention, and this desire fetters their imaginations. Such readers attempt to respond appropriately to the novel, within the bounds of their experience and skills as a reader. The stance of an obedient reader who has accepted the authority of the author is consistent with Iser's notion of the secondary negation that occurs when reading a literary work (1978, p.221). It is this voluntary abrogation of power that Sterne alluded to in his plea for a reader with a 'generous heart' (1759-67 reprinted 1949, p. 198).

An author's right to rule and a reader's obligation to obey are, however, not absolutes. Pecheux's descriptors suggest this, as does the notion of authors having to hail their readers. Authors must woo their readers. After engaging their interest, authors try to guide their readers through their novels in order to communicate the ideas that were the creative genesis of the works. In their response to the stimulus of the text, readers determine a balance between interpreting the author's intentions and their own creative responses, a balance that Biason (1994) documents. The creative response of an actual reader is fluid, emerging and altering over time. Pecheux's descriptors are useful in that they acknowledge a variety of possible responses, but it must be emphasised that they delineate possible rather than actual responses. An actual reader's response to a novel is a complex relationship determined by their purpose in reading as much as their reading experience and skills. It develops as they read, as the act of reading confirms or challenges their assumptions and expectations. The reader's response may cease to alter once the reader has finished reading a novel or it may continue to change after reflection, discussion or re-reading. This is not an argument to validate every reader's response to a novel as being equally valid but it is an attempt to acknowledge that whilst Pecheux's

descriptors do not define a type of response they are useful in attempting to consider a range of possible reader positions.

The anxiety experienced by adults confronted by YA novels such as Hartnett's, echoes the anxiety that Nikolajeva suggests is the dominant emotion in YA novels (2000, p. 205). In this article, Nikolajeva considers the representation of death in YA fiction, and concludes that it is not the representation of death or suicide that is contentious, but rather the representation of a chaotic society that offers no hope to an adolescent reader. All but one of the novels in the sample of YA novels this study considers represents death in some manner. The single exception, *Came Back to Show You I Could Fly*, represents Angie considering and rejecting having an abortion. The lack of adult concern about Marchetta's portrayal of John Barton's suicide in *Looking for Alibrandi* supports Nikolajeva's argument. His suicide is an important element in the plot, but he is a minor character in an orderly fictive world; his actions are an aberration. The reader's focus is on Marchetta's representation of Josie and her response to John's actions. Her protagonist has a strong supportive family and an optimistic attitude about the future although Marchetta does not represent Josie's parents as conventional. Their relationship could be described as chaotic but this is irrelevant in the context of their actions, which demonstrate their love and support for their daughter.

Belief in an author's obligation to offer hope to adolescent readers can be interpreted as a creative constraint. Some critics reject the notion that authors of novels for adolescents should be constrained by any conventions (Irving, 1996). Nadia Wheatley, an Australian author of books for adolescents, also firmly rejects adult anxieties about content in YA fiction. She argues (1997) that Australian YA novels of the 1990s challenge their readers in ways that are relevant to contemporary Australian society. In this argument, she notes the

diversity of YA novels published in the 1990s. This notion of diversity is intended to address criticisms that all YA novels from the 1990s are bleak nihilistic tales, that the fictive worlds of YA novels had become predominantly bleak, and the genre lacked balance (Legge 1997).

This thesis supports Wheatley's remarks. Only three of the fourteen novels in this sample represent a vulnerable protagonist in a context where they have no hope. This sample therefore reflects the balance that Legge disputes. The acts of violence, neglect and cruelty depicted in these three novels are certainly depressing. Yet analysis reveals that whilst these authors encourage their adolescent readers to reflect on the purpose, causes, consequences and significance of these violent acts, they do not encourage their adolescent readers to identify with either the protagonist or their fate. Their challenge to their readers' understanding is based on an implicit belief that their adolescent readers are mature and resilient.

John Marsden, a popular contemporary Australian author of YA novels, suggests that Australia needs to challenge its adolescents and Australian authors should be encouraged to take risks (1998, p. 95). His belief is that authors who take risks enable adolescent readers to gain a greater understanding 'of their own lives, the lives of others and their society as a whole' (p. 96). Marsden's remarks do however imply a belief that fictional representations of violence in Australian society are accurate reflections of that society. They also imply a belief that it is a legitimate risk to invite adolescent readers to engage with fictional worlds that are violent and nihilistic. This alludes to Hollindale's notion of a shared understanding between author and reader, a shared understanding that novels are fictive worlds in which readers can safely engage with challenging ideas.

Some psychologists oppose this belief. Eckersley's Youth Partnership Study of 1996 (an Australian study) suggests:

The failure to provide a broader cultural framework of hope, meaning, purpose and identity in young people's lives could be weakening their resilience, making them more vulnerable to these problems [depression].  
(Eckersley in Legge, 1997, p. 14)

Eckersley's remarks assert a pedagogical purpose for YA fiction. They also assume that adolescent readers are inevitably naïve, vulnerable readers who have no choice other than to be obedient readers.

By contrast, McCallum describes YA Fiction as a genre that uses the narrative form to 'represent and communicate ideas of such complexity and of such significance for any young reader's quest for meaning and self-definition' (1999, p. 260). Alderman notes that the mood and tone of Australian YA fiction challenges readers with, 'Unresolved endings, pessimism and disillusionment with self and society all appear and call upon the adolescent's ability to consider alternatives.' (1987, p. 305). The authors of the three texts that will be considered in this chapter show more than they tell and their readers are encouraged to consider alternatives. These texts are calculated to move and perhaps to shock their readers. The risks the authors take imply their trust that their adolescent readers are able to reflect and consider alternatives without damaging their identities or sense of self. These readers are encouraged to ask to what extent these fictional worlds represent reality and to consider what factors were pivotal in causing this sequence of events to unfold. The authors of these three novels have interpellated adolescent readers who are both able and willing to engage with polyphonic novels that incorporate bleak themes of madness, murder and incest.

These authors hail mature adolescent readers who are able to take Marsden's legitimate risks. Adolescent readers seeking texts that offer reassurance rather than challenges are discouraged; these texts do not promise their readers light entertainment. Clarke signals this by beginning with an account of her protagonist's funeral made more poignant because it is narrated from the perspective of his five-year-old sister; Crew and Hartnett preface their texts with quotes warning their readers. Their protagonists are depicted as vulnerable figures who are powerless to save themselves. Adolescent readers are encouraged to empathise with these characters, but not to identify with them. These authors do not conflate their adolescent readers with their representations of adolescence. Novelist Andrew O'Hagan, delivering the opening address at the Sydney Writers' Festival in 2008, asserted that we read literature not to pass the time, but to feel the time. In his view, literature celebrates the life of the imagination and in doing so helps us to live our lives. These authors both trust that their adolescent readers are ready for this challenge and encourage them to take risks.

Each of these novels challenges its readers with multiple narrators and thus multiple perspectives. All three authors develop their narratives in short chapters, extracts or sequences and their resolutions do not provide their readers with solutions, but they differ markedly in other aspects. Clarke's novel uses multiple narrators to interrogate the impact of the death of an adolescent; Crew uses both multiple narrators and multiple text types to construct a narrative style that links the past, the present and the supernatural; Hartnett's novel is an overtly literary text, which is a tale of horror. Clarke and Crew both incorporate themes that involve the supernatural. Hartnett does not blur the edges of her fictional world with allusions to psychic abilities or rings of power.



Although for the purposes of this study these three novels have been grouped together, it should not be assumed that this reflects a belief that they will all appeal equally to the same adolescent reader. These texts have been grouped together because of the challenges they pose to adolescent readers. Their creative differences are analogous to the individual differences of adolescent readers. Adolescent readers who respond to Crew's call may reject Hartnett's overtly literary style and prefer the apparent simplicity of Clarke's novel.

### *Night Train*

Clarke's narrative style is deceptively simple. Clarke uses short segments of text, 3-5 pages long, and her unobtrusive omniscient narrator relates events in everyday language albeit from the point of view of a variety of characters. This use of multiple points of view reflects the complexity of her protagonist's life and death. Luke is the focus of the gaze of every character and this makes Clarke's challenge to her readers, to try to understand Luke, unavoidable.

Clarke attracts her readers' attention by allowing five-year-old Naomi to speak directly to them, an appeal to their sympathy and their maturity. How can they not resolve this child's confusion? They must read on and make sense of Luke's life as a son, a brother, a friend, and a student. Clarke does not simplify this task; she does not offer a singular sequence of cause and effect to link the events of her narrative. She positions her adolescent readers to consider alternatives, to question connections and to reflect upon inevitability. Her readers' understanding of Luke's death is developed through her portrayal of its impact on his family and friends. Molly is angry and apologetic:

'Luke I didn't mean it,' she said, 'the way I was with you. I didn't mean any of it. You know I didn't, don't you. Don't you Lukie?'  
The strange boy just lay there. He looked like he didn't care about a thing.

A wild anger seized hold of Molly. 'Why didn't you **say** something?' she cried at him. 'Why didn't you **say**?' She kicked at the platform beneath the box. She kicked and kicked at it. (*Night Train* p. 6)

Having managed to make her own way to the funeral home, Naomi fails to recognise the corpse as her brother, asking 'Where's Lukie gone?' (p. 7). Clarke invites her readers to reflect upon the where and the why of Luke's death.

Probably unconsciously, in Naomi's obsession to protect her brother, Clarke has constructed a metaphor for adult desires to fix the boundaries of YA fiction to protect the adolescent reader. Naomi's obsession about having to close all the gates in order to protect her eighteen-year-old brother (p. 168) is clearly futile. Luke symbolise the complexities and contradictions of adolescence and thus the adolescent reader. He is a gifted student to Mrs Brennan (p. 103) and a troublemaker to Mrs Tully (p. 137). He is an embarrassment to Molly, a 'a mess' (p. 52) who wanders around 'like a dero' (p. 96). He is 'hopeless' (p. 144). Yet Luke is also the hero who stood up to Gosser (p. 148) and became a legend at St Crispin's. Luke is a larrikin hero who registered Vice Principal Stringer on a web site (*The Chain of Love*) with the profile of a youth whose interests were leather, bikes, hard rock and dope (p. 131). Clarke's compare and contrast technique demands critical thinking. It discourages adolescent readers from aligning themselves with Luke and encourages them to adopt a more detached, analytical stance.

Luke's point of view is questionable, at best unreliable, at worst psychotic. Certainly, his state of mind prevents him from being able to function in the way he would like. Clarke tells her readers that Luke had once believed in himself:

Always, even when he had started failing at school, even when the padlock had snapped shut on his brain, deep down Luke had felt he was clever. He'd believed that one day, when he really put his mind to it, things that seemed so difficult now might become easy, and everything would change, like Mrs Brennan had said. (*Night Train* p. 137)

Clarke portrays Luke as an intelligent eighteen year old who is failing at school and is alienated from his parents (pp. 10-11) and his peers (p. 23). As his self-belief disintegrates, Clarke depicts Luke's loss of faith in his ability to distinguish between what is real and what is imaginary. His desire to resolve these contradictions leads to his death. Clarke depicts this tragedy in the belief that her readers can and will distinguish between what is real and what is imaginary

Nothing is simple in this text, superstition and notions of pre-destination cloud Luke's death. Naomi's obsession with closing gates (p. 156, p.168) seems to stem from a premonition that this will ensure Luke's safety. This obsession seems absurd, yet Clarke validates it by linking Luke's death with the actions of an interfering neighbour who prevents Naomi from fulfilling her task. This seems to establish an irrational sequence of cause and effect. Clarke also establishes an aura of the supernatural in Luke's visions, in one of which he sees the face of the train driver who will eventually kill him (p. 129 and p. 167). This is reinforced by Naomi awakening at the instant of Luke's death, knowing that something is wrong (p. 168). Luke's parents fear that he intended to take his own life. Molly, his other sibling, argues that he would not have committed suicide because 'He wasn't that kind of person' (p. 170). Close reading of the text supports Molly's belief. Luke staggers and falls into the path of the train. Yet the issue of why he ended up at that place at that time remains. Was Luke pre-destined to die and if so, why?

Clarke challenges her readers by subtly weaving 'facts', beliefs and opinions into her story and requiring them to read closely in order to justify any conclusion they reach. This text is relatively short and each chapter is usually less than ten pages, giving it the appearance of slightness. However, readers must evaluate the reliability of each character's perspective by comparing them

against each other, against Luke's own account, and against their own judgement. Clarke interpellates adolescent readers who seek the challenge of reflecting on a complex problem that is a matter of life and death. She encourages her readers to identify and evaluate the factors that they believe contributed to the tragedy of Luke's death without offering them the reassurance of an answer.

Luke's death is depicted in terms of its immediate effects; the events that led up to it; and its possible long-term consequences. Clarke portrays the end of Luke's suffering in *Night Train* but she intends that her readers will understand that the impact of his death will be ongoing. She intends that her readers will experience the same emotions as the Year Seven boys (12-13 year olds) who visit the scene of the accident, 'but each had a funny, scared lonely feeling he didn't tell about ... It was all just ordinary; that was the scary thing.' (pp. 170-171). Clarke addresses mature adolescent readers who want to engage with complex issues: human frailty and the ordinariness of tragedy.

There is no suspense in this novel; it begins with Luke's funeral (p. 4). This simplifies the complex time frame of the narrative because the reader knows where the narrative is heading. After Naomi's monologue, Clarke's narrator shifts to the perspective of Molly and then the narrative jumps back in time to enable the narrator to shift to Luke's perspective. By delaying his appearance, (Luke's is the third narrative point of view in three chapters and only eight pages) Clarke foregrounds the living rather than the dead. Clarke intends that the focus of her readers' interest will be on why Luke died, just as Luke is wondering why he had returned to the gazebo in the backyard where his friend Alex used to live (p. 8).

Clarke reassures her adolescent readers that character traits, and perhaps vulnerability, can be innate. Five-year-old Naomi exhibits the rebellious traits associated with adolescence when she rages against an omnipotent 'They': 'They wouldn't let her see Lukie! They'd told her that Lukie had gone somewhere far away and none of them would see him for a long, long time.' (p. 1). 'They' removed Luke from Naomi's world. Readers are encouraged to empathise with Naomi's frustration, her feelings of powerlessness and her anger. Clarke intends that her obedient readers will admire Naomi's determination and courage as she skilfully deceives Mrs Richards and slips away:

Naomi forgot about the lights and ran straight out across the road, dodging the cars that hooted and shrieked and squealed all around her. She reached the other side and ran on again, her heart thudding in her chest, the blood beating loud in her ears. (*Night Train* p. 3)

Clarke hails adolescent readers who can be likened to an older Naomi, independent and self-reliant. Naomi runs a gauntlet but she eludes Mrs Biber and arrives at her goal. The opening chapter describes a successful journey and forms a deliberate contrast to the second last chapter that describes Luke's fatal journey. Luke believes that adolescence has brought about a loss of control, 'Why had he come here? It was like his feet had just started walking of their own accord.' (p. 9). Clarke questions whether Luke ever was in control. The 'witch', Luke's fourth grade teacher Mrs Tully, had predicted that Luke Leman would always be in trouble (p. 137). Readers can interpret this as proof that Luke was always a problem child, or as proof that society began failing Luke in his early childhood.

Clarke tries to encourage her obedient readers to feel sympathy for Luke by depicting a confrontation between him and Clyde B. Stringer, The Deputy Principal of Glendale Secondary. Clarke would expect that her adolescent

readers would support Luke's refusal to accept the petty authority of an unreasonable adult. This confrontation also allows Clarke to provide her readers with a reason for Luke's despair, a fear that he will fail his final exams, his HSC. Stringer has the power to expel Luke. Luke fears being expelled because it will mean further disappointment for his parents (p. 20). In this confrontation with The Deputy Principal Luke is presented as the more mature, more understanding individual. Stringer is represented as a mean, narrow bully who enjoys exercising his limited powers. Luke may be losing it but Clarke does not represent him as a loser although he is powerless.

Clarke accentuates the drama of *Night Train* by setting it against a suburban backdrop that would probably be familiar to her readers. Luke's depression and confusion are depicted against a background of domestic trivia. Clarke represents the Lemman family as a family in crisis. She creates a breakfast scene in which Luke is roaring at Molly 'What about me?' whilst Margaret scolds Naomi for allowing the milk to overflow, spilling over the top of her cereal bowl and on to her lap. Dan Lemman responds to this chaos by rebuking his daughter but avoids his son:

He didn't even look at Luke; his gaze swerved round him, like an elegant lady skirting a beggar in a busy shopping street. He looked at a picture on the wall instead; a big white sailing ship breasting stormy waves. (*Night Train* p. 101)

Dan's inability to confront Luke is a tacit recognition that Luke's problems are beyond him. His refusal to look at Luke can be interpreted as an expression of his fears for Luke's future rather than a gesture of disdain (p. 117).

Clarke's text expresses a conviction that Australian society should be inclusive; it should have a place for Luke. Clarke's implicit belief is that a community is not a collection of individuals but rather an accumulation of relationships. Every individual, however flawed, is an important part of the community. The

loss of an individual is a loss that resonates beyond their family, friends and acquaintances. By implication then, a community has a duty to nurture individuals because of the contribution they make to that community. There is an irony in this belief that insubstantial relationships have such substance. Luke's family is the focus of Clarke's depiction of the impact of his death, but his death also resonates upon the adults who failed to help him, of whom Rosa Brennan is one:

She should have told him not to worry, that it wasn't the end of the world if he failed. She should have. As Rosa turned into her gate she felt a chilling sense of something missed, slipped sadly from her hand. Let go. (*Night Train* p. 112)

Clarke does not portray adults as powerful creatures who, when they fail, do so though callous neglect. Clarke's final image of Luke's parents, described by their adolescent daughter, likens them to baby birds (p. 170). That they failed Luke is undeniable. Clarke challenges the obedient reader with the question of whether it was ever in their power to protect him.

Clarke's challenges to her readers to reflect on the role of individuals within a community, to consider the interconnectedness of a community, suggest that she intends that her obedient readers read as transformational readers. Resistant readers may refuse to adopt a sympathetic stance towards Luke in the belief that an individual who has Luke's abilities and privileges should be capable of overcoming his internal conflicts. Readers who respond in this way may be applying their own sense of balance. They may justify their response by arguing that Luke lives in a comfortable home. His mother may be inadequate but she is concerned about him. He fights with Molly but Naomi adores him. His father ignores him but he does not physically abuse him. He is lonely but so are many adolescents, and bullies, such as Stringer and Gosser, can be ignored.

Resistant adolescent readers may conclude that Luke's response to his problems is his fault, he is overreacting, and direct their sympathies towards his family and friends. Resistant readers may also temper the tragedy of his death by arguing that Luke's family will be better off without him. Obedient readers may perceive Luke's death as a consequence of his uncertainty and insecurity but resistant readers may perceive it is a direct consequence of his self-obsession and selfishness. Resistant readers may choose to read the text as an affirmation of their own resilience if they believe themselves to have coped with pressures that they perceive as greater than, or equal to, Luke's. If their response to the novel is to intensify their inward gaze, this response may be counter to Clarke's intention but such a response would indicate that these readers have adopted the analytical, critical, reflective reading style that Clarke desires

Clarke's novel may well be too challenging or too confronting for some adolescent readers, but its style and content is calculated to appeal to adolescent readers who wish to engage with complex issues through a novel that allows them to consider multiple perspectives. Clarke's resolution does not offer a neat solution. She challenges the archetype of YA fiction by tackling the taboo topic of adolescent suicide in a subtle text that does not depict a suicide, but an accidental death that people fear may be suicide. In doing this, she encourages her adolescent readers to question their beliefs and assumptions. That her protagonist did not commit suicide is reassuring, but this reassurance is overshadowed by Clarke's depiction of Luke's feelings of alienation and despair. Clarke intends that her obedient readers will gain an understanding of depression and of human frailty. Her careful structuring of this text suggests that Clarke interpellates readers who may need to pause in order to reflect at frequent intervals. Clarke makes it clear, almost from the outset that the novel will end in tragedy in order that her readers will not suffer any false hope about



Luke's survival. The multiple points of view, of characters who do survive, provide a balance that some adult critics may find reassuring.

### *Strange Objects*

Crew seems to intend that his readers' response to the characters and events of his novel will mimic that of his character, Professor Hans Freudenberg, to Wouter Loos' diary:

'... it is neither his badness nor goodness which concerns me; it is his humanity, his involvement in the business of living, in sharing the hopes and fears experienced by all of us, irrespective of personal past or present circumstances.'  
(*Strange Objects* p. 79)

Crew encourages his obedient readers to perceive the humanity of his protagonist rather than judge his failings. Another character, Dr Michaels, with the authority of her academic status, supports this belief in her declaration that every individual is equally significant, 'We are all involved in making history every moment of our lives.' (p. 54). Crew conveys an implicit belief about a community's obligation to support each individual, a belief that is very similar to that expressed by Clarke in *Night Train*.

Crew demands that his obedient readers participate in an illusion that they are not reading a novel by suggesting that the boundaries between fact and fiction, between the present and the past, and between sanity and insanity are complex rather than simple. Like Clarke, Crew lures his readers in with the challenge of solving a mystery. *Strange Objects* consists of a variety of text types, letters, diaries, newspaper articles and statements of interview that Crew manipulates to encourage the illusion of fact rather than fiction. Crew's opening pages interpellate adolescent readers who want to assume an active role in engaging with a novel. Crew encourages his readers to read critically, evaluating the evidence he provides. Crew frames his text with a foreword and an afterword

by Dr Hope Michaels. The foreword consists of 'notes' on a 'disappearance', lending the novel the tone of a factual report rather than a fictional construct. As the novel develops, Crew intersperses reports with newspaper articles, diary entries, and monologues, each attributed to an 'author'. The variety of text types can be interpreted as promising a variety that Crew hopes will engage his readers' interest. Crew interpellates sophisticated readers with well-developed literacy skills. The 'items' are generally brief but the diversity of narrative styles, and the complex time sequence, fragment the narrative structure. Crew hopes that this diversity will stimulate his readers' curiosity.

Crew's promise of mystery and excitement tempers the demands he places upon adolescent readers through this juxtaposition of first person narratives with extracts from other sources. Crew hails readers who want to assume the role of researcher. Rather than suspending disbelief and immersing themselves in a work of fiction, readers must evaluate independent and contradictory evidence from a variety of individuals in a variety of formats. Crew flatters his readers by challenging them to accomplish the task that Dr Michaels was unable to do, to solve the mystery of Steven Messenger. Crew signals his readers' role through his use of the term *notes* (p. 1) rather than 'account'. Dr Michaels' notes leave questions unanswered. Crew challenges his readers to evaluate each 'document', each 'item', according to the reliability or authority of its source in their quest to resolve the disappearance of Steven Messenger. By alternating between a first person narrative style and extracts from a selection of 'non-fiction' sources, Crew encourages his readers to maintain their detachment from his protagonist, Steven Messenger. This technique also foregrounds the artifice of his text, signalled on page two by an intrusive editorial footnote. However, this is not an arid historical account; this is a tale of brutal crimes from the past that impinge upon the present.

Crew layers and deepens the mystery, demanding that his readers pay attention and remain alert for any inconsistencies. Readers are told that the facts of Steven's discovery explained in Item 3 do not fit with what is currently known about white settlement in Australia. A superficial reading of this text is overtly discouraged by the debunking of the 'Cannibal Pot' as sensationalism, an image created by the media (p. 6). This image is replaced by a serious scientific study of the pot in which the hand was found: composition, physical description, hallmark (or lack thereof), and analysis of the timbers it rested on. Crew foreshadows one of the themes of the text, a scientific investigation of inexplicable phenomena. The suggestion that Steven could have been responsible for an elaborate hoax (p. 16) strengthens the mystery.

'Documents' contain 'items', seemingly intended to reinforce the readers' expectation that this novel is an objective and factual account of very strange events. Dr Hope Michaels' academic success lends her notes the appearance of objectivity and reliability:

On 29 August 1886, when 16-year-old Steven Messenger was reported missing from his mother's trailer unit at the isolated Midway Roadhouse, Highway One, Western Australia, local police treated his disappearance as a routine case of a 'short-term run-away', believing that he would probably return when his limited finances had been exhausted. (*Strange Objects* p. 2)

The age of the missing boy may be calculated to arouse the interest and empathy of adolescent readers. Although he lives in an isolated geographic area Steven Messenger's life is in some respects typical of many Australian adolescents. He lives with his mother, his father is absent, and he attends the local high school. Crew creates a protagonist whose behaviour becomes increasingly bizarre. Item 1 describes Steven's discovery of a human hand in a cannibal pot. Steven's behaviour may be a product of his isolation, 'The wilderness region of the Murchison basin has a history of unexplained disappearances.' (p. 6). Yet Crew encourages his readers to question this. In

Steven's first journal entry *Crew* establishes him as a loner, separate from the other students on the field trip, he is positioned 'off to one side, watching' (p. 7). *Crew* layers images of alienation, 'None of the others saw me move; I was in the dark, well outside of the bright ring of firelight' (p. 8) and 'I perched up on the ledge, out of the way, watching.' (p. 11). *Crew* contrasts Steven's behaviour with that of his peer and neighbour, Kratzman to reinforce these images. Steven is as remote from other adolescent characters as he is remote from the adolescent reader who observes him observing the others.

*Crew* challenges his adolescent readers with an unlikeable protagonist. Steven's attitude towards the local Aboriginals is patronising:

The Abo kids from near the town were OK and clean enough, but the ones who came in from the properties weren't the same. They needed a wash and looked as if they'd cut your throat. If one came near me I'd move. (*Strange Objects* p. 19)

This racist statement reinforces his assertion that Chinese students all look alike (p. 19). *Crew* encourages his readers to challenge Steven's beliefs. In this statement, Steven describes the effects of isolation; the Aboriginals who live in town are different from those who live out of town. Readers know that Steven and Kratzman both live some distance from the town, yet they are very different. *Crew* invites his readers to consider the effects of isolation as he portrays them in the behaviour of the crew of the *Batavia*; of Jan Pelgrom and Wouter Loos; of Steven and of the relationship between Steven and Kratzman. Like Jan and Wouter, Steven and Kratzman try to get on but their attempts fail. Entrenched in his isolation Steven's delusions flourish unchallenged. *Crew* suggests that isolation may not trigger eccentric or aberrant behaviour but encourages his readers to wonder if it is a significant factor in enabling this behaviour.

Crew conveys the complexity of personal beliefs through his depiction of the behaviour of Sergeant Norman who brings Mr Charles Sunrise, an Aboriginal elder, to the local school to talk to Steven and his peers about Aboriginal history (Item 4). Sergeant Norman's attitude to Charlie could be interpreted as protective, respectful or patronising. Protective in that he is pleased when Kratzman stands and offers Charlie a seat (p. 20) and in his attempts to help Charlie when he falters. Yet Sergeant Norman is also patronising in that he uses Charlie for his own purposes, although he is honest in acknowledging this (p. 22). Kratzman's courteous response to Charlie contrasts with Steven's 'old abo' (p. 20), yet Kratzman too displays racism and ignorance in his comment about Aboriginals: 'They live in car bodies and have dogs with rabies' (p. 115). Whilst Crew's adolescent readers may have limited personal knowledge of Aboriginals, many would be aware that rabies is a disease that is unknown in Australia.

Crew explicitly debunks some beliefs, telling his readers there is, 'not a single documented eyewitness account of an Australian Aborigine (Loos' Indian) having killed and eaten a white person exists. However, cases of white men eating members of their own race abound.' (p. 99). Crew portrays the hardships endured by contemporary Aboriginals through the image of their dormitories at Neuland Mission, 'they look like concentration camps' (p. 116) and through the article by Professor Hans Freudenberg (Item 30 p. 158). He also refers to historical crimes against the Aboriginals, the kidnap of two sisters by a captain who is searching for two white children (p. 143).

In a sense, Crew adopts the role of a teacher in some of the questions he poses to his readers. He challenges his obedient readers to explore the notions of ownership and appropriation in another context through his depiction of the sale of the publication rights to Wouter Loos' journal. The National Heritage

Minister sells the publication rights for Wouter Loos' Journal to a newspaper for \$50,000. In doing so, he dismisses the rights of the finder, the rights of the State in which the journal was found, and the rights of the Netherlands to an artefact belonging to one of its citizens. To ensure that his readers have appreciated the significance of these notions, Crew introduces a third issue: that of whether the British Museum should return the Elgin Marbles to Greece. Adopting the role of a teacher, Crew introduces a question, gives a few examples to illustrate it, and leaves the reader/student to reflect and draw their own conclusion.

This mode of discourse is representative of the text as a whole. The mystery and savagery promised in the opening sections are fulfilled as the novel develops, fulfilled on a scale that spans centuries and positions obedient readers as diligent students who must interrogate the text to determine what is 'real'. The resolution is ambiguous. Steven Messenger's primary delusion, that his father is alive, is revealed to be false; but the facts of his disappearance are undisclosed. The obedient reader may conclude that Steven is an unstable adolescent descending into madness. Certainly, he is shown to be an unreliable narrator whose journal represents the perceptions of a deluded individual. On the other hand, obedient readers may link the madness of Steven to that of Jan Pelgrom and accept the journal as a description of Steven's journey into a landscape that incorporates supernatural powers and beings. Crew allows his readers to arrive at their own interpretation, but he demands that they read closely and reflect on the relative significance of events in order to support their interpretation.

Resistant readers may regard the references to the supernatural, intrinsic to this text, as being too implausible. Rather than reading the text closely, searching for clues to justify or dispel their interpretation, resistant readers may read the text as a tale of weird events that are illogical or irrelevant to their urban world.

Instead of blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction, the inclusion of a range of text types may serve only to highlight the implausibility of Steven's dreams. This response is made easier by the remoteness of the setting, by the historical references, and by the depravity of the actual crimes that occurred after the wreck of the *Batavia*. For a post-Tolkien reader/viewer, the theme of a ring of power that is accidentally found and deliberately concealed (pp 27-28) may set this novel firmly in the realm of fantasy. They may refuse to interrogate the text, carefully evaluating the evidence, and relish a sense of the macabre.

Transformational readers may see further similarities to Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. The ring appears to gain control over Steven until he becomes a Gollum-like creature, attacking Charlie without conscience (p. 156); Jan Pelgrom attacks Ela to gain the ring (p. 174). With references to past evils, and a severed hand [finger], the intertextuality is complete. This may encourage transformational readers to reflect on other tales that explore the theme of power by using a symbol that corrupts the bearer or a substance that corrupts those who wield it. The references to Aboriginal culture into this novel also provide a link to a consideration of mythical figures associated with other cultures.

### *Sleeping Dogs*

Whilst Crew hails readers with a novel that is composed of multiple text types, Hartnett hails readers who are attracted by novels written in a more conventional, yet overtly literary style. Less able or less sophisticated readers may be deterred by the style of this novel and this may be Hartnett's intention. Hartnett uses an eloquent and lyrical style to construct a complex representation of a horrific tale which alludes to the traditions of children's literature in that it is also a family story. In doing so, Hartnett deliberately creates a stark contrast between the beauty of her writing and the depravity she

describes. This juxtaposition of beauty and horror avoids being sensational because it demands that readers have sophisticated literacy skills, suggesting that Hartnett does not intend to hail all adolescent readers, only some. Hartnett deliberately seeks to confront her adolescent readers, to make them aware of the novel's potential to engage and move them (Thorn 2002). Her intention echoes O'Hagan's belief that we read literature to experience life and not to pass the time. Hartnett's fictional world connects her readers with the rich literary heritage that is part of Australian culture. The fictive world of *Sleeping Dogs* evokes the oppressive atmosphere of Faulkner's world in *As I Lay Dying*; Jordan's fate seems as inevitable as the fate of Hardy's Tess. Jordan's father, Griffin, conjures mythical monsters. Jordan's mother, Grace, who sits surrounded by the ruins of her hopes and treasures (pp 14-15), alludes to Dickens' Miss Havisham.

Hartnett and her publisher disturbed the world of children's literature when this novel was released and it continues to be a contentious text. Hartnett writes for adolescent readers who are not Dear Children but Becoming Adults. The literary merit of the novel is not disputed; its many literary awards (Appendix B) defuse any such objections but its content aroused controversy. Hartnett invites adolescent readers to engage with incest, filicide, madness and child abuse in a novel that offers no solutions and no reassurance. Yet Hartnett denies that she has reneged on the social contract between author and adolescent reader (Hartnett 1995). Hartnett's title warns her adolescent readers that engaging with this novel will be disturbing. Her extradiegetic narrator begins *Sleeping Dogs* with a contradiction, 'The dogs do not ever really sleep' (*Sleeping Dogs* p. 1). Hartnett invites her reader to consider these contradictions in the relative safety of a fictive world. Hartnett argues that engaging with *Sleeping Dogs* is a legitimate risk for mature adolescent readers, readers like herself at that age.



The quote from Cervantes that Hartnett has chosen to preface the novel, 'Fear has many eyes and can see things underground', suggests that only by looking fearfully are her readers able to see or imagine the horror that can exist beneath a surface. Yet paradoxically, Hartnett hails bold readers, confident readers, rather than fearful readers. The notion of looking fearfully is an apt description of adult concerns about this novel. Adult readers fear that *Sleeping Dogs* exposes the adolescent reader to themes and ideas that will mar them because the adolescent reader is inevitably and intrinsically vulnerable. Hartnett does not offer these adult readers any reassurances, except that her writing style is so overtly literary she has excluded all but the most able adolescent readers. This readership may well be emotionally vulnerable, but they are also well aware that Hartnett's world is a fictive world.

Hartnett frames her novel as a literary artefact. She does not invite her readers to immerse themselves in the novel; rather she invites her readers to observe the characters and events of the text from a safe distance, conscious of the author's craft. Hartnett hails adolescent readers with imagery that is complex, she shifts swiftly and abruptly from a description of a pack of dogs to a description of two individuals whom the reader later discovers are two of the Willow children. The novel unfolds with an 'irregular music' (p. 1) demanding a patient reader. Hartnett addresses adolescent readers who are willing to engage with a text that starts slowly rather than those adolescent readers who require a 'swift and snarling collision' to 'relieve the boredom' (p. 1). In Hartnett's fictive world, the violence and horror of the Willow family is matter-of-factly presented and her resolution evokes notions of man's inhumanity.

Each member of the Willow family is scarred from the damage inflicted by their father and leader, Griffin Willow. Hartnett establishes a deliberate contrast between the Willows and the dogs, who meet in 'swift and snarling collision,

the noise worse than the damage done' (p. 1). Jordan, the third child of the Willow family, bears both physical and emotional scars, 'a vague smile and a scar under his left eye' (p. 3). The imagery associated with dogs is complex, dogs are noble creatures, faithful and loyal, man's best friend; yet to die like a dog is a metaphor for an ignoble death. Hartnett exploits this complexity: Jordan is loyal to his family and he dies an ignoble death. Hartnett develops an extended image of the Willows as being like their dogs:

The dogs do not ever really sleep. Sometimes they close their eyes, often for long periods of time, but always there are one or two watchful in the dark, and while these are so the pack can be considered to be awake. They lie on their sides and their ribs rise and fall with the heat, their tongues hang out and collect the dusk. They stroll and the chains come after them, making an irregular music. Occasionally they meet in swift and snarling collision, the noise worse than the damage done: they do this simply to relieve the boredom. (p. 1)

... the entire Willow family has in them an incurable, lifelong insomnia. Two or three of them are always awake, no matter what the time, sentinels watching over nothing, waiting for nothing to happen. (*Sleeping Dogs* pp. 22-23)

The bonds of family metaphorically chain the Willow family just as their dogs are chained in the yard. Hartnett creates complex images for her readers to ponder. Chains can restrain an animal's freedom but they can also restrain it from doing itself harm. Hartnett extends this image of restraint, and the need for restraints in her description of Edward. Readers are told that Edward Willow has always suffered from irrational attacks of rage, 'starting in his stomach and flowing quickly into his limbs, making him twitch the stick he holds with jerky irritation and impatience.' (p. 2). Edward Willow and his dog need to be restrained. His dog, Creed, who snarls at Jordan's dog, Applegrit (p. 3), echoes Edward's mood. Hartnett connects each dog with its owner; the climax of this novel depicts the deaths of Jordan and Applegrit.

Hartnett's protagonist is a contradiction. Jordan is the victim: of his father's brutality, his mother's neglect and Michelle's exploitation; yet he is also an

adult who is a willing participant in an incestuous relationship. Hartnett describes a moment of physical intimacy between Jordan and Michelle with great delicacy:

... she knows that the caravans will be flaring in the sun, the dam glittering like a diamond, the trees bowed breathless, but that her bedroom is dark and chill, dewy with its own shade. (*Sleeping Dogs* p. 2)

The tenderness of this moment is brutally disrupted with a reference to the slaughter of a sheep, just as the tenderness of Jordan and Michelle's relationship becomes abhorrent. After describing the very surreal Willow family, the narrator tells readers that Jordan is different from the other Willows because he has inherited their mother Grace's fair hair (p. 11). She then mentions Jordan's skill as an artist and later, his father's determination to negate that talent by focusing his attention on hurting the hand his son uses to create his drawings. Hartnett provides no further elaboration. Her subtle disclosures and the questions they invite is another indication that she interpellates skilful, attentive and mature adolescent readers.

Hartnett disturbs her readers and subverts the conventions of novels for adolescent readers by depicting an incestuous relationship, albeit subtly. She disturbs these conventions further by depicting Griffin's murder of Jordan. Griffin is a father whose emotional and physical abuse of his son (begun when Jordan was an infant) only ends when Griffin deliberately shoots first Jordan's dog and then Jordan. Yet Hartnett encourages her adolescent readers to regard the surreal Willow family with compassion. She exposes them to human depravity in order to extend their experience of the possibilities of literature. Hartnett challenges her adolescent readers to consider alternatives. Her challenge implies her belief that the world of *Sleeping Dogs* is remote from the experience of her actual adolescent readers. Hartnett hails readers whose

imagination allows them to view Jordan and the Willow family compassionately but from a distance, from the distance of their own lives.

The Willow family enjoy disturbing the peace, subverting the conventional morality of life outside of the family farm. Jordan and Michelle enjoy their incestuous relationship. Jordan slips 'uninvited' into her bed; wearing overalls 'and nothing else'; he is a man not a boy 'up and working early', he is tender, kissing her and touching 'her closed eyes' (pp. 1-2). Michelle is a willing participant, 'she curls her hand around his, lets his hair tickle her face without becoming cross for it.' (p. 2). When Michelle wears her second-hand clothes to town, she is irritated when she does not cause distress by wearing 'some dead grandmother's clothing' (p. 11). Oliver seems to be an exception amongst the Willow family. He tries to create an air of conventionality in his welcome to the guests but he is conscious of their difference:

Well this is a farm: whoever saw a sparkling farm? A spotless farm? People came to a farm, Oliver's father says they should see a farm. Farms are places for working not preening. But Oliver, watching with his weak eyes, sometimes thinks that people look a little ... **disturbed** ... when they first arrive. It is something that makes him flush or annoys him, depending on his mood. He can feel ashamed or disdainful. (*Sleeping Dogs* p. 7)

Oliver's loyalty to his family is asserted in the resolution. Oliver will choose to be disdainful rather than ashamed because he fears exclusion from his family and a 'future that was comfortably foreseeable to the end' (p. 118)

Hartnett grounds her novel in death, blood and drought; she has not created the Willow farm as a pastoral idyll. Hartnett depicts the slaughter of a sheep and the break up of its carcass in explicit detail (p. 3). It is a docile creature and shows no fear when confronted by the sight of the knife and hammer. Outside of the shed, the farmyard is 'cracked and peeling like something archaic' (p. 5). Jordan's death echoes the slaughter of the sheep. He is taken unawares and

shows no fear when he hears his father's voice. The beauty of a praying mantis (p. 124) engrosses him. His father first blasts Applegrit's head off and then turns the gun on his son. Unlike the sheep, Jordan goes to his death knowingly; but like the sheep, he is docile and shows no fear. The reader experiences the last moments of Jordan's life from his perspective. His death is quick and brutal, it releases him but it is bloody. Readers are told that Jordan had come to believe:

... that he can never leave because this is where he was made to stay. And perhaps that is not such a dreadful thing, for everyone has a future made for them long before they are born, and Jordan is doing nothing but accepting his fate.  
(*Sleeping Dogs* pp. 123-4)

Hartnett may intend this image of release will reassure her readers. Yet the demands she places upon them suggest that she is not encouraging them to emulate Jordan's passivity.

Hartnett ensures that her readers are aware that each member of the Willow family has a separate perspective. Characters have the opportunity to explain themselves, even Grace and Griffin, in a polyphonic text. Readers see Jordan through the eyes of other members of the Willow family. Hartnett neither excuses nor condones Jordan's life. She presents it to her readers and allows the Willow family to offer their individual explanations without endorsing any one in particular. Jordan's experience of life, the basis of his expectation of life, is that he will be beaten. His mother will not protect him, his older brother Edward will look away and Michelle will say nothing (p. 13). The narrator supports Jordan's expectations, 'Tired and hot and overworked, if Edward thinks anything it is that Jordan deserves what he is going to get, and, if this is an unreasonable thing, that is just the lay of the land.' (p. 14). There is no point in debating the fairness or otherwise of Jordan's treatment in the context of the Willow farm and family. Griffin asserts that the beatings are necessary because Jordan lacks a sense of duty to the family (p. 15) and the narrator supports this

view. Jordan does lack a sense of duty; he tests the bonds of family. Jordan roams in his dreams and Griffin is maddened by what he sees 'as a lack of devotion' (p. 19). To crush this disloyalty he targets Jordan's means of escape, his drawing hand.

Griffin's status as the master of the pack is declared when the narrator states that the Willows live their lives in anticipation of Griffin's 'command to pack and leave' (p. 23). Griffin has control over all of his family, adult and adolescent alike. Although he 'does not like people he loves a crowd' (p. 19). Griffin has decreed that tonight is fancy dress, exerting his control over his guests. His children are watchful, alert for his signals, just as the hounds are alert for their masters' signals. Oliver knows that his father is pleased for he has described the costumes as 'marvellous' (p. 20); his inner voice criticises his father's language. Edward is embarrassed by Griffin's behaviour, that of a 'grotesque buffoon' (p. 21) but cedes his father's right to beat Jordan if he is late. Michelle is flattered by unexpected attention from Griffin and seizes the chance to select the winning costume. Her choice annoys Speck who will confront her sister later because she 'wants nothing pleasant to happen to such a stupid creature' (p. 22), demonstrating a desire to exert control over the people in her environment. Griffin's pleasure in this moment arises from his perception that he has 'made this moment all by himself' (p. 22). His children's efforts: slaughtering the lamb, cooking the lamb, selecting the prize, publicising the competition and judging the winner are all due to him. As their father, their creator, they belong to him. This ideology also gives him the right to destroy one or all of his creations if they displease him. The chapter ends ominously, depicting another tryst between Jordan and Michelle. Hartnett depicts her two protagonists not only flouting conventional morality but also, and more dangerously, flouting Griffin Willow's authority. That danger is greatest for Jordan, Griffin's whipping boy.

In *Grace Willow*, Hartnett represents a woman who is the emblem of nihilism in this text. Grace Willow is introduced to readers as a woman who treasures things, her porcelain teapot, her children and her husband. Yet she neglects these treasures and the narrator tells the reader that the teapot is not the valuable antique that Grace believes it to be (p. 14), suggesting that Grace sees only what she wants or needs to see. Grace has abandoned the task of caring for her family and retreated within herself. Her momentary choice, to collapse in to a chair and pray for a brief respite from responsibility, has developed in to a perpetual state of mind. The readers are left to determine for themselves the particular cause of Grace's withdrawal, but the consequences for her family are clear, she is physically present but emotionally absent. Grace likes the 'quiet, dim place' (p. 15) that she found in her mind. Even in this place, however, Grace is still conscious of Griffin's brutality towards Jordan and tries to distract Griffin (p. 16), implying that Grace would like to protect her 'treasures' but recognises the futility of her desires. Grace's dialogue with Jordan, in which she confides her fears about conceiving children by a drunken father, suggests that she once had some notion of what a mother should do but she did nothing. Griffin dominates her. Grace may have anxiously checked her babies after their births and worried about this 'all the time' (p. 17), but readers know that Grace has come to accept and perhaps look forward to the time when she will forget everything: her youth, her marriage and her children (p. 15). Grace awaits her future with curiosity, with no hint that she may have the capacity to change it. Obedient readers are positioned to blame the disintegration of Grace and the Willow family on Griffin.

Oliver and Speck are adolescent characters, but Hartnett discourages her obedient reader from identifying with them. The pretty sight of the ponies frolicking in the paddock is replaced by the image of Oliver's toes slipping through the rotten floorboards to brush 'the damp body of a dead newborn

kitten' (p. 6). Oliver is intelligent, enjoying the sound of words, and lonely, looking for companionship from the guests:

He sometimes wishes he could go to university one day, but these are idle thoughts and he know the unlikeliness of it. He knows he is clever and understands that ignoring this is something of a crime, but he fears the isolation that leaving the farm would bring, the loss of what is familiar to him. (*Sleeping Dogs* p. 7)

Oliver's fear negates his potential. Hartnett urges obedient readers to feel compassion for 'quiet and unobtrusive' Oliver's loneliness but she also confronts them with this paradox, 'Although he loves his siblings dearly, he is not yet old enough to consider them friends.' (p. 7). Jordan has shown affection for Michelle, but there seems little affection between Jordan and Edward. The reader may not question Oliver's affection for his siblings, but they may question his assumption that they will be his friends.

In her depiction of Speck, Jordan's younger sister, Hartnett creates perhaps the most dysfunctional Willow. Jennifer, or Speck, aged fourteen is one year younger than Oliver. Speck is a loner by choice, secluding herself within the family to such an extent that she has been 'known to forget her real name' (p. 9). Jordan has been beaten from early childhood but Jennifer has been ignored to the extent that she barely has an identity. The narrator tells the reader of her pleasure when 'her mother remembers anything about her existence at all' (p. 9). Speck stalks the children of the guests in the caravan park, shaking with laughter when she witnesses the pain and fear two small children experience after touching the electrified fence (p. 11). The narrator tells the reader that Speck 'cannot stand the sight' but nonetheless 'her gaunt body shakes with laughter' (p. 11) suggesting that it is not revulsion that causes Speck to bury her face in the earth but rather the exquisite pain of extreme pleasure.



Jordan is guilty of incest, but Hartnett establishes him as a victim. In the Willow family he is the runt of the litter, the odd one out (p. 11); he is 'a favourite with his mother and attracts his father's evil eye' (p. 12). Readers know that Griffin had always beaten Jordan, even when he was a small child (p. 16). The scar under his left eye is only one of many wounds his father has inflicted upon him. Michelle's defence of Griffin's abuse of her brother and lover seems sadistic:

'Never, **ever**, hit him back," she hissed. "That was horrible, seeing him fall over. He's our **father**, remember. I couldn't look at you if you always did that to Dad. I hate it when he hurts you, but don't you see that it makes things **better**?' (*Sleeping Dogs* p. 18)

Readers may wonder why only Jordan deserves to be beaten in atonement for the siblings' incestuous relationship. Michelle emerges as the dominant partner in their relationship; Jordan is a sacrificial lamb, sacrificed to her pleasure. Jordan's response to Michelle's argument is to smile and acquiesce. As Jordan has been a battered child for all of his twenty years, his submission seems inevitable, yet his passive acceptance of his own death may anger readers because it is such a tragic waste of his talents. Hartnett offers no simple alternatives to her readers other than to depict this tragedy. Jordan's death seems to have an inexorable logic: his father killed him, but his mother allowed it to happen.

The lyrical style of this text subverts the notion that YA novels are for unsophisticated readers just as its themes subvert the notion of the need for hope in YA novels. Hartnett's text is lyrical and logical in its evocation of ugliness. Hartnett does protect her readers; firstly, by distancing them from the text, she foregrounds the narrator and thus introduces a mediator between the reader and her protagonists. Secondly, although Hartnett layers the text with images of brutality - the slaughter of the sheep, the dead newborn kitten under the rotting floorboards - she does this in a setting that is remote from suburban

life and thus remote from the world of her readers. Thirdly, through her use of symbolism, the Willow family is a family under the control of a mythical monster, Griffin; and lastly through the unrelenting nihilism of the text. Hartnett does not position her reader to question the brutality she represents in the text, but rather to acknowledge it. For each of her protagonists there is no sense of hope, no sense of a future that is other than a refrain of the themes established in the text. Oliver may leave his family but rather than an escape into freedom, it will be a journey into exile, punishment for betraying the Willows.

The structure of this novel forces adolescent readers to pay close attention to the development of the story without the aid of conventional clues. Chapters are neither named nor numbered (which could be confusing) yet by grouping paragraphs to create sub-sections, Hartnett breaks her text into small sections. This technique allows her readers frequent breaks should the content become overwhelming. The narrator alternates between showing the bloody details of the life lived by the Willow family and describing complex characters and relationships which Hartnett hopes will engage her readers' interest and invite their reflection.

Hartnett interpellates transformational readers who can both engage with her novel and appreciate her allusions to other texts. Hartnett does not try to engage a resistant reader. The overtly literary qualities of her novel seem intended to discourage those readers who prefer a simpler style. Hartnett addresses sophisticated adolescent readers who can tolerate contradictions and appreciate the terrible beauty of her writing. Hartnett urges her readers, if sufficiently bold and strong, to look beneath the surface of her novel and disturb the sleeping dogs. It is her explicit belief that through art an individual, however repressed, can escape their physical surroundings. It is through

Jordan's art that he is able to escape the Willow farm and family, which maddens Griffin (p. 44). This novel suggests that Hartnett believes that art is the appropriate medium to confront issues, to disturb sleeping dogs, because it offers a time and space to think. Hartnett's novel supports a belief that through literature a reader can safely engage with all manner of ideas, a belief that able and mature adolescent readers can safely engage with controversial themes in texts such as this.

### **Conclusion:**

These three texts confront the boundaries of the content, style and structure associated with novels addressed to adolescent readers. They interpellate skilful and mature adolescent readers who are unlike the adolescent protagonists they create. This difference is evident in the contrast between the confused and vulnerable Luke (*Night Train*) and the capable readers that Clarke hails; a reversal of the contrast between the confident and capable Josie (*Looking for Alibrandi*) and the less able readers hailed by Marchetta.

These authors also demonstrate their concern for their adolescent reader's youthfulness. Clarke signals Luke's death at the beginning of the text to protect her readers from any false hope. Crew's use of multiple text types distances his readers from the cruelty and madness that he depicts. The supernatural element that is interwoven into the plot lends a surreal quality to his protagonist's delusions. Hartnett signals in her introduction that her fictional world is a nasty place and deliberately uses a style that would discourage all but the most able adolescent readers. Sensitive able readers may be deterred from reading further by the detailed description of the killing of the sheep (p. 3).

These novels subvert the archetype of novels for adolescent readers in that they depict vulnerable protagonists who by failing to survive lose any possibility of fulfilling their potential. By doing so they make a clear distinction between their representations of adolescence and the adolescent readers they hail. They interpellate adolescent readers who do not need to identify with protagonists in order to empathise with their pain. These authors do not believe that adolescent readers need to assume the identity of a protagonist in order to engage with a text. This allows them to create texts in which the protagonist dies rather than a surrogate, their pet (The Tod in *The Gathering*) or their friend (John Barton in *Looking for Alibrandi*). They interpellate adolescent readers who understand literary conventions and are willing and able to risk entering problematic fictive worlds that do not offer them any reassurance. These novels explore themes of dysfunctional families, conflicting social responsibilities, mental illness and murder in texts that do not pander to readers seeking sensationalism.

The authors' focus on their readers is consistent with a genre that is defined by its readers. These three texts illustrate one end of the broad spectrum of texts required by able and sophisticated adolescent readers who choose to escape the protection of being a Dear Child in order to engage with the freedoms accorded Becoming Adults.

## Chapter Nine: Plainsong or Polyphony?

This study has explored the construction of adolescent voices and interpellation of readers in the award-winning Australian novels for adolescent readers of the 1990s. Its aim was to determine whether, across these texts, these two aspects of authorial voice could be described as being more like plainsong than polyphony. Analysis has shown that these novels convey a rich texture of voices that explore the possibilities of YA fiction and hail a heterogeneous group of adolescent readers - polyphony rather than plainsong.

Hollindale describes novels for adolescent readers as addressing a readership with a 'wide range of maturity, education and intellectual competence' (1995, pp 84-85), a description that acknowledges both individual differences and the developmental changes associated with adolescence. This sample of YA novels falls within this definition; it hails a diverse group of adolescent readers, including Nikolajeva's *Dear Child* and those who are more aptly described as *Becoming Adults*. Kristeva notes that the subject is no longer structured according to rigorous prohibitions in adolescent novels, thus blurring the boundaries between adolescent and adult fiction (1995, p. 136). This blurring is evident in contentious texts such as Hartnett's *Sleeping Dogs*. Yet it should be noted that this sample illustrates that the boundaries between children's and adolescent fiction are also blurred; aspects of Nilsson's *The House Guest* follow the format of Blyton's 'Famous Five' novels. As award-winning novels, the diversity of this sample suggests a broad recognition of the complex and perhaps contradictory attributes and interests of Australian adolescent readers in the 1990s. Rather than reinforcing or creating an archetype for Australian YA novels, these judges have chosen texts that illustrate a range of ways of addressing adolescent readers.

This study suggests that polyphony is indicative of an author's trust in readers' ability to reflect on multiple perspectives and willingness to tolerate an open-ended resolution. It is perhaps paradoxical that when authors relinquish some of their authorial control they also make more demands upon their readers. This sample does not offer any certainty about, or archetype for, the features of novels for adolescent readers. Each text in this sample reflects its author's beliefs about the maturity, ability and interests of the readers they address, individual beliefs and therefore multiple perspectives. Some but not all of these texts evoke Bakhtin's notion of polyphony, open-ended dialogues and unfinished conversations (1986, p. 151).

Pecheux's framework has proved to be a useful tool in considering possible responses to these texts precisely because it allows the critical reader to consider not only an author's intention but also a range of responses to their hail. This study suggests, however, that Pecheux's descriptors should be regarded as mutable rather than fixed. In this study, these descriptors facilitated a consideration of differences between the adolescent readers these texts address and the representations of adolescence they depict. Further studies could investigate whether Pecheux's frame of subject positions aligns with theories of transformational learning and whether it is applicable to digital narratives. It would also be interesting to explore Pecheux's frame of subject positions in a study of younger readers, to discover the degree to which child readers are able to resist the spell of the storyteller.

It is perhaps inevitable that a sample of award-winning YA novels would include texts that arouse concerns amongst some adults. Chapter One noted the fears expressed in the 1990s that Australian YA novels were carelessly endangering their readers by exposing them to nihilistic fictive worlds. These fears reflect a concern that adolescent readers will be overwhelmed if exposed

to nihilistic novels. If we apply the analogy of a literary rite of passage still further, at its completion, the norms of social life are re-instated. This sample of YA novels interprets and depicts this re-instatement in various ways. Most construct fictive worlds in which the protagonist gains a place and has a future. Crew, Hartnett and Clarke have chosen to confront their adolescent readers with representations of young adults who have no hope. These authors do so seemingly in the belief that the adolescent readers they address recognise that a fictive world is a safe context in which to engage vicariously with ideas and values that may disturb their innocence and challenge their beliefs. These authors invite some, not all, adolescent readers to enter dangerous fictive spaces in the expectation that their readers will not be overwhelmed. The readers they address are not only cognizant of the distinction between the real and the imaginary, but are also aware that each fictive world is the creation of an individual author and that there are more worlds to explore.

It is evident that the authors of the novels in this sample have made different assumptions about their readers' willingness and ability to take risks. *Looking for Alibrandi*, *Deadly Unna?*, *A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove*, *The House Guest* the Pagan Series and *Eye to Eye* offer their adolescent readers hopeful resolutions in novels that affirm the strength and resilience of adolescent protagonists. *Foxspell* and *Came Back to Show You I could Fly* afford much less protection to younger adolescent readers than Jinks' Pagan novels. Rubinstein's *Foxspell* hails younger adolescent readers but challenges her younger adolescent readers with open-ended dialogues and literally unfinished conversations. Klein's *Came Back to Show You I Could Fly* offers younger adolescent readers a range of perspectives and ambiguous resolutions. The authors of *Sleeping Dogs*, *Strange Objects* and *Night Train* invite their adolescent readers to engage with bleak fictive worlds in the belief that their readers both want and are able to engage with such worlds. *Night Train* is perhaps the most challenging text of these three because Luke's

death occurs in an ordinary Australian suburb that seems more factual than fictive. Clarke seems to intend that her readers should believe that such tragedies could occur in their suburb, their school. This novel engages adolescent readers' emotions without offering them the salves of an obvious villain, an evil father (*Sleeping Dogs*) or a mythic ring (*Strange Objects*). Clarke's *Night Train* interpellates readers who can manage a text that offers tragedy (Luke's death), anxiety (Naomi's future) and hope (Molly's unexpected kindness) whilst identifying with the three skinny Year 7's who go to the railway line to 'look for blood and signs' (p. 170). Clarke confronts her readers but she does so in the belief that this risky reading will move but not overwhelm them.

### **Who Speaks?**

Consideration of this question reveals the authors' creativity in their construction of the narrator and protagonist. The authors' depictions of adolescent narrators are significant because the adolescent protagonist is the most important representation of adolescence in a YA novel. This sample portrays adolescents from a diverse range of educational, social and family backgrounds through the voices of the protagonists - polyphony rather than plainsong.

The author's manipulation of an adolescent protagonist/narrator who is also an unreliable narrator is significant in a YA novel. Marchetta (*Looking for Alibrandi*) creates an adolescent protagonist/narrator who is fallible rather than unreliable. Josie's strength, loyalty and intelligence make her admirable even although her perspective is flawed. Gwynne (*Deadly Unna?*) creates the strongest depiction of an adolescent protagonist/narrator. His construction of Blacky suggests that the perspective of an adolescent protagonist/narrator can be distinctive without necessarily being unreliable. Blacky's cheerful pragmatism, his resilience and



determination, are remarkable traits. Gwynne allows his protagonist to fulfil his potential for leadership in a context that illustrates the complexity of this character and his fictive world.

### **Who Speaks to Whom?**

Exploring this question revealed three features of the sample. Firstly, that these texts are monophonic in their depiction of the importance of community, friends and family in the lives of adolescent protagonists. Isolated adolescent protagonists do not survive. Secondly, that whilst the authors create an appearance of diversity through their construction of subordinate adolescent characters, these representations of adolescence are predominantly Anglo-Australian. These depictions of subordinate adolescent characters are not monophonic but they do lack diversity. Those novels that are set in contemporary Australian culture, with the notable exception of *Looking for Alibrandi*, do not reflect the cultural diversity of Australian society in the 1990s.

The third and most interesting aspect that this question revealed is that all of these authors, possibly unintentionally, have constructed an extradiegetic narratee thus encouraging their readers to become the confidante of the narrator or the narrator/protagonist. The role of a confidante is not synonymous with that of a friend; in this sample it varies along a continuum from uncritically to observer. The narratee is invited into the classroom with Josie (*Looking for Alibrandi*); lured by Blacky's charm and humour into the community of the Port (*Deadly Unna?*); coaxed into a medieval monastery with Pagan (*Pagan's Vows*); warned off the Willow Farm (*Sleeping Dog*); and left to wonder which world is better for Tod (*Foxspell*). These variations are further evidence of the authors' creativity and suggest that the authors have made very different assumptions about their readers' interests, ability and maturity. Yet these authors seem to agree that the best way of communicating with their readers, regardless of their

maturity, ability or interest, is for the narrator to appear to speak directly to them.

This commonality is not immediately obvious. Plainsong reflects the free rhythm of speech (Scholes 1965, p. 819) when individual voices come together to represent the voice of the church (Kamien 1988, p. 93). All of the voices of these authors come together in creating the appearance of speaking to their adolescent readers directly. In this sense, the sample of novels does resemble plainsong, although unlike traditional church music individual melodies assert themselves when the content of each author's address is examined. This common feature suggests a relationship between author and adolescent reader that can be likened to that of a benevolent adult or mentor earnestly trying to communicate to their charge.

### **Who Speaks When and Where?**

The sample is polyphonic in both the scope of its representations of time and place and in the narrative techniques the authors have deployed to that end. It is, however, notable that *Eye to Eye* is the only novel that speculates about a future that is radically different from the present. The authors' interests appear to lie in examining the present and looking back to the past rather than forward to the future. This was unexpected given that these novels were published at the end of a millennium, a time when such speculation was a recurrent theme in Australian culture. In the texts that are set in contemporary Australia, its society is depicted as static. Moloney suggests that the seaside community of Wisemans' Cove will be largely unchanged by the building of a bridge. Clarke suggests that the flawed essence of the suburban culture of *Night Train* will require more than just the mere passing of time to resolve. Marchetta suggests that Josie (*Looking for Alibrandi*) will continue to struggle against the prejudices of the Australian and the Italian/Australian communities. This static quality in

time and place has the effect of focusing the reader's attention on the individuals who inhabit that time and place. This focus on character development is perhaps appropriate in a genre that is addressed to readers who are between childhood and adulthood. It implies a focus on personal development. The YA novels in this sample are characterised by an individual's exploration of an issue, with a focus on the individual, and in this respect the sample is monophonic.

### **Freedom to Speak?**

The sample depicts different ways of being an adolescent in a variety of familial and social contexts but it is monophonic in its representation of the vulnerability of adolescents. Adolescent protagonists are vulnerable because of their need for support in various forms, peers, family, benevolent adults or a machine that has accepted the role of mentor. The majority of the adolescent protagonists in this sample acquiesce to the authority of their parents or mentors and accept that in order to thrive they must learn how to negotiate within existing social structures. To use Trites' imagery, they recognise that fulfilment does not lie in disturbing the universe, their community. Instead they accept that they must temper their energy and enthusiasm in order to have a place within that universe. Gwynne's Blacky is the most successful adolescent rebel yet he too is defined by his role in his family and his community. Although Gwynne subverts the values of the powerful through his support of Blacky's morality and values, which oppose those of his community, Blacky's defining attribute is his role as the oldest boy in his family, the leader of his siblings and a member of the football team.

This sample illustrates the complex consequences of Trites' notion that novels for adolescent readers depict the importance of protagonists learning to negotiate the social mores of their community. Successful adolescent

protagonists learn to negotiate the social structures of their fictional worlds, but in doing so they mute their voices. Klein (*Came Back to Show You I could Fly*) does not suggest to her readers that Angie has any choice other than to conform but she encourages them to wonder whether this will stifle Angie's creativity. Texts that depict the death of the adolescent protagonist certainly reinforce a belief that adolescents must learn to adapt, to fit in with the social structures of their family and their community, although Hartnett and Clarke appear to be critical of these pressures.

The depictions of the relationships between protagonists and their parents or mentors are complex rather than superficial. The authors endorse the importance of the protagonist's relationship with a parental voice of authority (either actual or surrogate) as a critical factor in the protagonist's development. In this sense the sample is monophonic, although these powerful parental voices are portrayed in a variety of ways, from benign to malevolent and from indifferent to obsessive. The values of the powerful, as represented by parental voices of authority in this sample, are demonstrably not always true. In this sense, the sample illustrates Bakhtin's notion of polyphony, as a struggle of opinions and ideologies.

### **Hailing Adolescent Readers**

Hailing adolescent readers through a narrator/protagonist could be described as formulaic, but the ways in which these authors apply this technique illustrate their creativity. The narrator/protagonists they construct are very diverse in age and attributes; some are heroic whilst others are flawed. These texts neither trivialise adolescence nor adolescent readers, a criticism Reynolds makes of some YA novels (2007, p. 77). These narrator/protagonists are complex characters and youth culture is not represented as puerile. The belief these authors seem to share, that novels for adolescent readers should have

adolescent narrator/protagonists, aligns with Erikson's theory of human development, that adolescence is characterised by a quest for identity. These authors offer their adolescent readers the opportunity to try on different identities and perspectives through their vicarious experience of a fictive adolescent character.

### **Challenging Adolescent Readers**

Authors who have created dual narrators or extradiegetic narrators extend the range of perspectives they make available to their readers. They hail adolescent readers who have both the ability and the desire to read reflectively. By inviting their readers to observe, or to balance the perspectives of more than one intradiegetic narrator, these authors appear to hold in common the belief that adolescent readers do not need to identify with the protagonist in order to imaginatively engage with a text and empathise with its characters. Most of these texts provide adolescent readers with a positive, if not a happy, ending. Klein and Rubinstein, however, challenge their readers with resolutions that offer no certainty for the protagonist. They interpellate adolescent readers who are able and willing to tolerate this uncertainty. This section of the sample offers another illustration of the authors' creative use of the same narrative technique to address an incongruent rather than a congruent readership.

### **Confronting Adolescent Readers**

Three novels in the sample interpellate readers who desire challenging and confronting texts and yet they do so in distinctively different styles. These authors address adolescent readers who understand literary conventions and are willing to risk entering problematic fictional worlds. The authors interpellate adolescent readers who are sophisticated but it cannot be assumed that they interpellate the same readership. They illustrate one end of the broad spectrum of texts required by adolescent readers who choose to escape the

protection of being a Dear Child in order to engage with the freedoms accorded with becoming an adult. Readers who enjoy the variety of text types offered by Crew may not enjoy Hartnett's overtly literary style and vice versa. Similarly, readers who have engaged with Hartnett's tale of incest and filicide may reject Clarke's choice of a child narrator for her opening chapter and go no further with *Night Train*. The suburban horror of *Night Train* may also be too challenging for readers who are happy to engage with violence that is set in another time, the past; or in another setting, an isolated rural area.

The common factor these texts share is their depiction of a vulnerable protagonist who dies. They explore themes of dysfunctional families, social responsibilities, mental illness and murder but they do not explore these themes gratuitously in texts that offer adolescent readers no sense of agency or hope. Reynolds describes YA fiction as operating in three spheres of activity, books that trivialise adolescence, nihilistic fiction and books that celebrate adolescent creativity and agency (2007, p. 77). These texts relate disturbing themes in texts that celebrate the agency of their adolescent readers. In challenging their readers, the authors demonstrate a concern for their readers' sensitivity. Clarke protects her readers from false hope by describing Luke's funeral at the beginning of the text thus focusing her readers' attention on the why of Luke's death rather than the possibility that he may survive. Clarke tries to engage her readers' intellects as well as their emotions by presenting them with a puzzle; she does not allow them to hope that this tragedy may be averted. Crew's use of multiple text types lends a prism like quality to his novel that also engages his readers' intellects. Importantly, whilst both of these texts portray the deaths of their adolescent protagonists they also portray survival and strength of adolescents, Molly (Luke's sibling) and Kratzman (Steven Messenger's neighbour).

The survival of Jordan's siblings in *Sleeping Dogs* is neither a symbol of hope nor of adolescent strength. *Sleeping Dogs* is nihilistic, but Hartnett does not seek to impose Hollindale's 'premature adulthood' on her readers. Rather she hails mature adolescent readers on the verge of adulthood who will not be daunted by her manipulation of literary devices to evoke the terrible logic of her fictive world. Her nihilistic text is not intellectual abandonment of adolescent readers, but an invitation to a deeper understanding of the possibilities of the novel. Hartnett seeks a compassionate response from her adolescent readers, compassion for the entire Willow family not only Jordan, as she tries to develop their understanding of the psychology of both victim and abuser. Whilst Hartnett denies Jordan the possibility of growth, she encourages emotional growth from her readers. This text is not a denial of the vitality of the adolescent reader, but rather evidence of Hartnett's confidence in this vitality. Hollindale uses the metaphor of a suspension bridge between childhood and adulthood to describe youth (1997, p. 116), developing Chambers' metaphor (1977, p. 11). Hartnett hails readers who are at the edge of that bridge, stepping towards adulthood.

### **Plainsong or Polyphony?**

The cultural purpose associated with YA literature, to provide 'a coherent set of accepted goals and values, together with images by which we and our children can define them [selves]' (Hollindale 1997, p. 120) can seem to imply the discipline of plainsong. Such a conceptual framework suggests that the purpose of YA literature, as a literature for youth, is to convey the voice of a culture. Analysis of this sample of award-winning Australian YA novels suggests that this is not the case. Whilst these authorial voices all articulate the importance of belonging to their adolescent readers, they offer their readers such diverse and different images of belonging that they challenge the notion of a singular set of accepted goals and values.

Marchetta (*Looking for Alibrandi*) and Moloney (*A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove*) reassure their readers by situating their protagonists within the context of an actual or surrogate family. Gwynne (*Deadly Unna?*) celebrates adolescent agency in a setting that emphasizes the challenges and constraints it imposes upon his protagonist. Klein (*Came Back to Show You I can Fly*) constructs two protagonists, Seymour and Angie, to encourage her readers to reflect upon the complexity of the notion of belonging. Rubinstein (*Foxspell*) leaves her readers wondering which path Tod will choose. Jinks (*Eye to Eye*) both challenges and reassures her readers. She challenges them to contrast the inhumanity of man with the humanity of a machine whilst reassuring them that Jansi is not alone. Jinks' texts celebrate the actual and potential power of adolescents in settings that range from the Middle Ages to a post-apocalyptic future. Hartnett (*Sleeping Dogs*) and Crew (*Strange Objects*) challenge their readers to navigate and mediate the meanings of their texts. Hartnett (*Sleeping Dogs*) relies on compassionate understanding from her sophisticated adolescent readers. Clarke (*Night Train*) ends her text by offering her readers an image of adolescent strength and understanding. Molly's considered response to her parents' grief and bewilderment offers them comfort rather than criticism:

'He [Luke, her brother] wasn't that kind of person,' she told her mum and dad, who sat staring at her with newborn looks upon their faces, like small birds peeping over the edge of their nest into the scary world. Baby chicks who didn't know a thing, thought Molly, and she was about to shout, 'You didn't know a thing!' when the sight of those poor faces stopped her and instead she said gently, 'Luke was a legend back at St Crispin's. A *good* legend.'  
(*Night Train*, p. 170)

The hope that is implicit in Molly's act of strength and kindness tempers the tragedy of Luke's death, and the subtle suggestion that five year old Naomi may be equally vulnerable.



Kristeva suggests that modern polyphonic novels embody the effort of European thought to resist a framework and lead towards 'another modality of thought that proceeds through dialogue' (1986, pp 55-56). This sample of texts exemplifies this resistance in its rich texture of authorial voices. These authors have different and sometimes conflicting beliefs about their adolescent readers and this has resulted in a collection of texts that address an incongruent readership using a variety of narrative techniques, a collection that evokes polyphony rather than plainsong. This study concludes that this selection of award-winning novels does not reflect a desire to homogenise the 'myriad and confusing tonal inflections of human speech' (Arnold 1983, p. 1445) as plainsong did in the early Christian church. Collectively these award-winning novels resist a narrow framework of attributes that some associate with novels addressed to adolescent readers. Rather than reiterating a singular address, analysis of these texts encourages further dialogue about the needs and interests of adolescent readers and the artistic freedoms allowed to authors who address this readership.

## Appendix A: Australian Awards for Novels for

### Older Children or Adolescents 1990-1999

#### ▪ Australian Children's Book of the Year Awards 1990-1999

These annual awards are for books with an implied readership under the age of eighteen, and are presented in five categories. The Judges assess entries for the Awards primarily on their literary merit, including cohesiveness in significant literary elements; language chosen carefully for its appropriateness to the theme and style of the work with proper regard to the aesthetic qualities of language; and originality in the treatment of literary elements as they apply to the form of the work. Judges also consider quality of illustrations, book design, production, printing and binding.

The Publisher's Guidelines state that the Book of the Year: Older Readers will be made to outstanding works of fiction, drama or poetry which require of the reader a degree of maturity to appreciate the topics, themes and scope of emotional involvement. Generally, books in this category will be appropriate in style and content for readers in their secondary years of schooling.

#### Winners Australian Children's Book of the Year: Older Readers

1990	Klein, Robin	<i>Came Back to Show You I Could Fly</i>
1991	Crew, Gary	<i>Strange Objects</i>
1992	Nilsson, Eleanor	<i>The House Guest</i>
1993	Marchetta, Melina	<i>Looking For Alibrandi</i>
1994	Carmody, Isobelle	<i>The Gathering</i>
	Crew, Gary	<i>Angel's Gate</i>
1995	Rubinstein, Gillian	<i>Foxspell</i>
1996	Jinks, Catherine	<i>Pagan's Vows</i>
1997	Moloney, James	<i>A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove</i>
1998	Jinks, Catherine	<i>Eye to Eye</i>
1999	Gwynne, Phillip	<i>Deadly Unna?</i>

▪ **The Victorian Premier's Award for Young Adult Fiction 1996-1999**

This prize is offered for a published work of fiction or collection of short stories written for a readership between the ages of 13 and 18. Publishers may consider submission of books that are appropriate to young adult readers but not published under a young adult imprint. Literary merit is the major judging criterion. In the case of illustrated books, the additional criterion of literary and artistic unity is considered.

<http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/programs/literary/pla/yaprize/index.html>

**The Shaeffer Pen Prize for YA Fiction**

1996	Sonya Hartnett	<i>Sleeping Dogs</i>
1997	Catherine Jinks	<i>Pagan's Scribe</i>
1998	Judith Clarke	<i>Night Train</i>

**The Cross Pen Prize for YA Fiction**

1999	Phillip Gwynne	<i>Deadly Unna?</i>
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▪ **The NSW Premier's Awards 1999**

Premier Neville Wran established the New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards in 1979 to honour distinguished achievement by Australian writers in a range of writing genres and age groups. The Children's Literature section began as a single award at that time, but was redefined in 1999 to create the Patricia Wrightson Prize (a primary school audience) and the Ethel Turner Prize (a secondary school audience). The Ethel Turner Award was also given to all previous winners in the Children's Literature section. <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/childlit/Awards/NSW.htm>

**The Ethel Turner Prize for Young People's Literature**

1999	Gary Disher	<i>The Divine Wind</i>
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▪ **WA Premier's Award 1999**

The Western Australian Premier's Book Awards are presented to writers born in that state, live in that state or base their work in that state. The Children's Writing section was originally a single award first given in 1990. Since 1998, it has had two sections

relevant to children's literature: the **Children's Book Award** for a work of prose and/or poetry written for children, and the **Young Adults Award** for a work of prose and/or poetry written for Young Adults. An Overall winner can also be awarded from all the books in the adult and children's categories.

<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/childlit/Awards/WAPremier.htm>

### **Dymock's Young Adults Award**

1998	Deborah Lisson	<i>Red Hugh</i>
1999	Glyn Parry	<i>Scooterboy</i>

### ▪ **YABBA Awards 1990-1999**

This is awarded on the basis of popularity. Students from Prep to Year 9 are eligible to nominate books and to vote. Organisers determine the section (category) in which a book is placed. Section 3 is described as being for 'Older Readers'. YABBA's aims are:

- To encourage and promote children's reading.
- To give children the opportunity to vote for their favourite books each year.
- To develop children into discerning readers, who will express their opinions about books.
- To promote an awareness of Australian children's fiction

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~yabba/>

1990	Gillian Rubinstein	<i>Space Demons</i>
1991	Paul Jennings	<i>Round the Twist</i>
1992	Paul Jennings	<i>Unbearable</i>
1993	Paul Jennings	<i>Unmentionable</i>
1994	Emily Rodda	<i>Rowan of Rin</i>
1995	John Marsden	<i>Tomorrow When the War Began</i>
1996	Tim Winton	<i>Lockie Leonard, Human Torpedo</i>
1997	Elizabeth Honey	<i>45 + 47 Stella Street</i>
1998	Paul Jennings & Morris Gleitzman	<i>Wicked</i>
1999	Morris Gleitzman	<i>Bumface</i>

## Appendix B



### YALSA Fact Sheet

#### Our Mission

YALSA believes strongly that teens deserve the best, yet many libraries have too few trained staff and resources to address the needs of teens. Studies also indicate that teens are reading less and fewer of them possess critical literacy skills. Therefore, YALSA's mission is to advocate, promote and strengthen library service to teens, ages 12-18, as part of the continuum of total library services, and to support those who provide library service to this population.

#### *Facts about YALSA*

- Current membership is more than 5,500 (a 76% increase from 2000).
- Founded in 1957 and headquartered in Chicago, YALSA is a financially stable 501(c) 3 charitable association.
- YALSA is the fastest-growing division of the American Library Association (ALA), which is the oldest and largest library organization in the world.

#### *What We Do*

- **Nurture teen literacy**
  - **Teen Read Week:** Work to increase the number of teens who are skilled and avid readers through this and other initiatives. Learn more at [www.ala.org/teenread](http://www.ala.org/teenread).
  - Encourage adults to help teens select books that are a good fit for them and their families.
- **Promote young adult literature**
  - **Awards & Lists:** YALSA is the world leader in evaluating, selecting and recommending books, audiobooks, and films for teens via its annual selected lists, four literary awards, Web site, and publications. Recommended reading, listening, and viewing for teens can be found on YALSA's Web site at [www.ala.org/yalsa/booklists](http://www.ala.org/yalsa/booklists).
- **Foster computer and information literacy in teens:**
  - **Teen Tech Week:** The purpose of the initiative is to ensure that teens are competent and ethical users of technology, especially those that are

offered through libraries. To learn more, visit [www.ala.org/teentechweek](http://www.ala.org/teentechweek).

- **Support young adult librarianship:**
  - **Continuing Education:**
    - **Conferences & Institutes:** Provide training for library workers serving teens at ALA's two annual conferences and nationwide via our licensed institutes, [Power up With Print](#), [Get Graphic](#), and [A Beginner's Guide to Teens in Libraries](#).
    - **Training:** With our [Serving the Underserved](#) program, YALSA has trained more than 100 librarians in 33 states and 3 countries to reach out and train other library workers how to serve teens effectively.
    - **E-Learning:** Deliver [e-courses](#) on key issues relating to serving teens in libraries
  - **Awards and Grants:** Each year we administer more than \$30,000 in underwritten grants and awards, including the [Great Books Giveaway Competition](#).
  - **Research:** We encourage related research through various means, including the [Frances Henne/VOYA Research Grant](#) and our [publications](#).
  - **Advocacy:** YALSA represents the interests of librarians and staff who work with young adults to relevant organizations, agencies, and industries and promotes the expansion of library services to young adults.
  - **Publications:** Besides books relating to teens and libraries, we publish a quarterly journal, [Young Adult Library Services](#), and the online members-only newsletter, [YAttitudes](#). Developed and disseminate national guidelines for serving teens in libraries, called [Young Adults Deserve the Best: Competencies for Librarians Serving Youth](#).

From: [http://www.ala.org/ala/yalsa/aboutyalsab/ALA\\_print\\_layout\\_1\\_357988\\_357988.cfm](http://www.ala.org/ala/yalsa/aboutyalsab/ALA_print_layout_1_357988_357988.cfm)

Accessed 06/05/2008

## Appendix C:



### **Best Books for Young Adults Policies and Procedures**

#### **Charge**

To select from the year's publications, significant adult and young adult books; to annotate the selected titles.

#### **Purpose of the List**

The list presents books published in the past 16 months that are recommended reading for young adults 12 to 18.

It is a general list of fiction and nonfiction titles selected for their proven or potential appeal to the personal reading tastes of the young adult.

Such titles should incorporate acceptable literary quality and effectiveness of presentation. Standard selection criteria consonant with the Library Bill of Rights shall be applied.

Librarianship focuses on individuals, in all their diversity, and that focus is a fundamental value of the Young Adult Library Services Association and its members. Diversity is, thus, honored in the Association and in the collections and services that libraries provide to young adults.

Fiction should have characterization and dialog believable within the context of the novel or story.

Nonfiction should have an appealing format and a readable text. Although the list attempts to present a variety of reading tastes and levels, no effort will be made to balance the list according to subject or area of interest.

#### **Target Audience**

The list is prepared for the use of young adults themselves and annotations will be written to attract the YA reader.

#### **Eligibility Time Frame**

The Committee will consider and vote on books published within their assigned calendar year, January 1 to December 31, in addition to those published between September 1 and December 31 of the previous year. Nominations may be accepted from the field and Committee up to November 1 of that calendar year.

Field nominations require a second from a BBYA committee member. Nominations must be submitted on the official form, which is available on the YALSA [web site](#) or from the YALSA office or the current chair.

The chair informs the committee of field nominations, which remain active until all nominations are closed. If no committee member seconds the field nomination, the title is dropped from consideration.

Nominations from authors or publishers for their own titles are not eligible for the list.

### **Discussing the List**

After observer comments, the Chair will provide each book's nominator with the first opportunity to address that title if he/she so desires.

### **Committee Members**

Members are appointed by the Vice-President/President-Elect of YALSA for a one-year term renewable for a two-year consecutive term. Members are expected to attend all committee meetings and read widely from books eligible for nomination. Reappointment is not automatic, but instead is based upon participation.

Members will be appointed on a staggered basis so that the ideal committee will have five new members appointed each year. Each term begins at the conclusion of one Midwinter and ends at the conclusion of Midwinter at the end of the term. Members who have served two consecutive terms may not be reappointed to the Committee for 5 years from the conclusion of their last term.

If someone resigns, the current President of the Association appoints a new person to fill that particular term.

There are 15 personal committee members. The Editor of the "Books for Youth" section of Booklist is a non-voting member of the committee and serves as an advisor.

### **Chair**

The Chair is appointed by the Vice-President/President-Elect for a one-year term; and, as such, has the right to vote, to validate titles (by a vote) for consideration on the list and to enter into discussion of titles. It should be understood, however, that the primary responsibility of the Chair is facilitator of the Committee's charge, including all business matters. The Chair should only discuss a title after other committee members have had an opportunity to speak so as not to unduly influence the decision. Furthermore, the chair has sole responsibility for publisher contact.

An administrative assistant will be appointed in consultation with the Committee Chair by the Vice President/President-Elect of YALSA. The administrative assistant will assist the Chair in duties which may include the following: maintaining the nominations' database, tabulating votes, and other such duties assigned by the Chair. The administrative assistant is a non-voting member of the Committee.



## **Voting Procedures**

Final selections are made at the Midwinter Meeting during an intensive series of meetings. After comments from observers and discussion by committee members, a vote is taken to determine if a title should be included on the final list.

A book must receive a minimum of 9 "yes" votes to be placed on the final list regardless of the number of the 15-member committee present and voting. Only members attending the Midwinter meeting will be allowed to vote. Members can only vote on books they have read. If a committee member must leave before the final vote, that member must give a signed ballot to the Chair who will designate a voting proxy for the absent member. The final vote will be counted by the Advisor and the Administrative Assistant.

After the final discussion and selection, titles are then annotated by the committee. These annotations must be completed at the last meeting of the committee.

## **Michael L. Printz Award Titles**

In June of 2002, the YALSA Board voted to include all Michael L. Printz Award titles, including Honor titles, on the Best Books for Young Adults Committee final list of selected titles for their respective year. The Michael L. Printz Award Committee must provide titles, draft annotations and bibliographic information to the Best Books Committee immediately after they have been announced at the ALA Press Conference during the Midwinter Meeting. If the Committee has not already included these titles in the final list, they must do so before the list is provided to the ALA Public Information office as specified below.

## **Availability of Lists for General Distribution**

The list of nominations will be updated monthly. The cumulative list will be available electronically on YALSA-BK on a monthly basis. The final list of nominations will be available after November 1st.

Following its last meeting, the committee will provide the ALA Public Information Office with the final list of selected titles. PIO will make the full list available as a press release. The press release will be posted on YALSA-L, and also made available on the YALSA web site at [www.ala.org/YALSA](http://www.ala.org/YALSA). The list will also appear in a spring issue of Booklist and the ALA publication ALA's Guide to Best Reading.

## **Comments from Observers**

All Committee meetings will be open to ALA members and persons with guest badges. Persons with guest badges may speak if recognized by the chair.

**Guidelines for observers are:**

Before the committee discusses each suggested title, an opportunity will be given to observers to make short comments about the books (two minutes or less per observer, with the exception of the special teen session) but the Chair reserves the right to cut short the discussion if necessary.

Publisher's representatives are requested to refrain from participating in discussion or asking for comments about their own books.

Approved by YALSA Board, July 1991.

Revised by YALSA Board, June 1994, June 2002 and June 2003.

From:

[http://www.ala.org/ala/yalsa/booklistsawards/bestbooksya/ALA\\_print\\_layout\\_1\\_211901\\_211901.cfm](http://www.ala.org/ala/yalsa/booklistsawards/bestbooksya/ALA_print_layout_1_211901_211901.cfm)

Accessed 06/03/2008

## Appendix D: Sample

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- Clarke, Judith. 1998, *Night Train*, Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria.
- Crew, Gary. 1991, *Strange Objects*, Reed Books, Port Melbourne.
- Crew, Gary. 1995, *Angel's Gate*, Reed Books, Port Melbourne, Victoria.
- Gwynne, Phillip. 1998, *Deadly Unna?*, Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria.
- Hartnett, Sonya. 1995, *Sleeping Dogs*, Viking Penguin Books, Ringwood Victoria.
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- Jinks, Catherine. 1997, *Eye to Eye*, Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria.
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- Nilsson, Eleanor. 1993, *The House Guest*, Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria.
- Rubinstein, Gillian. 1996, *Foxspell*, Hyland House, South Melbourne, Victoria.

## Appendix E: Bibliography of Sample

- Awards; Adaptations and Translations; Reviews;
- Criticism and Commentary

- Carmody, I. 1993, *The Gathering*, Penguin Books Australia, Ringwood, Victoria.

### Awards:

- 1994 Children's Book Council Book of the Year Award: Older Readers, Joint Winner  
1993 Children's Peace Literature Award, Joint Winner

### Reviews:

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**Awards:**

- 1998 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards, Sheaffer Pen Prize for Young Adult Fiction  
 1999 Children's Book Council Book of the Year Award: Older Readers Honour Book

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Also available in sound recording format.

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- 1993 Mystery Writers of America Edgar Allan Poe Award Shortlist
- 1994 Children's Book Council Book of the Year Award: Older Readers, Joint Winner
- 1994 Festival Awards for Literature (SA): National Children's Literature Award
- 1996 American Children's Book of Distinction Prize

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- Swanwick, J. 1998, 'Exciting Writing: Gary Crew', *The Courier-Mail*, 12 May, p. 5.

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**Awards:**

- 1999 Children's Peace Literature Award
- 1999 Children's Book Council Book of the Year Award: Older Readers
- 1999 Family Therapists' Award for Children's Literature: Older Readers (Commended)
- 1999 New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards: Ethel Turner Prize for Young People's Literature Shortlist
- 1999 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards: Cross Pen Prize for Young Adult Fiction
- 2000 Festival Awards for Literature (SA): National Children's Literature Award

**Adaptations and Translations:**

- 2002 Adapted for a screenplay, *Australian Rules*
- 2002 Adapted for the film, *Australian Rules*

**Reviews:**

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▪ **Hartnett, S. 1995, *Sleeping Dogs*, Penguin Books Australia, Ringwood, Victoria.**

**Awards:**

- 1996 Children's Book Council Book of the Year Award: Older Readers Honour Book
- 1996 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards: Sheaffer Pen Prize for Young Adult Fiction
- 1996 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards: Writers of Youth Literature
- 1996 New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards: The Ethel Turner Prize for Children's Writing Shortlist
- 1996 Kathleen Mitchell Literary Award

**Adaptations and Translations:**

- 1996 Finnish translation, *Hundene Sover*
- 1997 Danish translation, *Sovende Hunde*
- 1998 German translation, *Schlafende Hunde*

**Reviews:**

- 'Book of the Year Older Readers', 1996, *The Weekend Review*, 25-26 May.
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### **Criticism and Commentary:**

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- Elliott, L. 1996, 'Bleak House, or The Sun Also Rises : A View of Young Adult Fiction', *Viewpoint: On Books for Young Adults*, vol. 4, no. 4, pp. 3-4.
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- Hartnett, S. 1997, 'Hope Schmope!' *Viewpoint: On Books for Young Adults*, vol. 5, no. 2, p. 11.
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- McPherson, J. 1997, 'Electr(a)ic Realism : Part 2 : Idealised Reality' in *Making It Real*, Burwood, Victoria, Deakin University. School of Literacy and Communication Studies, pp. 27-30.
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- Messina, A. 1996, 'No Fear of Writing Dangerously', *The Age*, 7 October, p. B5.
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#### **Awards:**

- 1996 Children's Book Council Book of the Year Award: Older Readers
- 1996 Festival Awards for Literature (SA), Children's Literature Award Shortlist

#### **Adaptations and Translations:**

- 2003 German Translation, *Pagan und Die Schwarzen Monche*

#### **Reviews:**

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**Criticism and Commentary:**

'The Children's Book Council of Australia Annual Awards 1996', 1996, *Reading Time: The Journal of the Children's Book Council of Australia*, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 3-11.

England, K., McCann, D., & Starke, R. 1996, 'The Festival Literary Awards: 1996', *Viewpoint: On Books for Young Adults*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 8-10.

Jinks, C. 1996, 'Older Readers', *Reading Time: The Journal of the Children's Book Council of Australia*, vol. 40, no. 4, pp. 7-8.

▪ **Jinks, C. 1996, *Pagan's Scribe*, Hodder Headline Australia, Sydney.**

**Awards:**

1997 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards: Sheaffer Pen Prize for Young Adult Fiction

1997 Children's Book Council Book of the Year Award: Older Readers Shortlist

**Adaptations and Translations:**

Also available in sound recording format.

**Reviews:**

Adams, J. 1996, 'Untitled', *Reading Time: The Journal of the Children's Book Council of Australia*, vol. 40, no. 4, pp. 38-39.

England, K. 1996, 'Pagan, Pace and Passion', *The Advertiser*, 17 August, p. 8.

Harboe-Ree, C. 1996, 'Why Died Not I from the Wounds?' *Australian Book Review*, no. 184, p. 57.

Morrow, R. 1997, 'And the Winner Is . . .' *The Weekend Australian*, 9-10 August.

Robinson, N. 1997, 'Coming of age', *Australian Bookseller & Publisher*, June, pp. 26 - 31.

'Untitled', 1996, *Santana Children's Books Newsletter*, no. 1, p. 7.

**Criticism and Commentary:**

'The Children's Book Council of Australia Annual Awards 1997', 1997, *Reading Time: The Journal of the Children's Book Council of Australia*, vol. 41, no. 3, pp. 4-13.

Matthews, S. 1996, 'Jinks Closes the Door on Pagan', *The Canberra Times*, 17 August, p. C11.

Pausacker, J. 1996, 'Catherine Jinks Pagan's Scribe', *Viewpoint: On Books for Young Adults*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 16-17.

Stevens, J. 1997, 'Making Realism Possible: Realist Narrative Strategies and Individual Subjectivity in 'Pagan's Scribe' and 'The First Book of Samuel' in *Making It Real*, Burwood, Victoria, Deakin University. School of Literacy and Communication Studies, pp. 31-39.

▪ **Jinks, C. 1997, *Eye to Eye*, Penguin Books Australia, Ringwood, Victoria.**

**Awards:**

1997 Aurealis Awards for Excellence in Australian Speculative Fiction: Joint Winner Best Novel Young Adult Division

1998 Children's Book Council Book of the Year Award: Older Readers

**Adaptations and Translations:**

Also available in sound recording format.

**Reviews:**

Cerabona, R. 1997, 'Thoughtful teen read', *Australian Bookseller & Publisher*, June, pp. 26 - 31.

Copping, L. 1998, 'The Adventures of an Outcast', *The Canberra Times*, 22 August, p. 22.

- Debowski, S. 1997, 'Untitled', *Reading Time: The Journal of the Children's Book Council of Australia*, vol. 41, no. 4, p. 34.
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- Gregg, M. 1997, 'Untitled', *Magpies: Talking About Books for Children*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 38-39.
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- On, T. 1998, 'Five Tempting Teens', *The Age*, 31 January, p. 9.
- 'Telling voices see it eye to eye, eventually', 1998, *The Weekend Australian*, 22-23 August, Review, p. 14.
- Tovey, D. 1999, 'Untitled', *The Courier-Mail*, 15 June, p. 2.

**Criticism and Commentary:**

- Brice, C., & Archdall, S. 1998, 'Starry-Eyed Author Honors Mr Spock', *The Advertiser*, 22 August, p. 13.
- 'The Children's Book Council of Australia Annual Awards 1998', 1998, *Reading Time: The Journal of the Children's Book Council of Australia*, vol. 42, no. 3, pp. 3-13.
- Hope, D. 1998, 'Words Don't Fail Her', *The Weekend Australian*, 22-23 August, pp. 2-3.
- Jinks, C. 1998, 'CBC Acceptance Speeches: Catherine Jinks', *Reading Time: The Journal of the Children's Book Council of Australia*, vol. 42, no. 4, pp. 4-5.
- Schwartz, L. 1998, 'Tortuous Tale Tortures Not', *The Age*, 22 August, p. 9.

- **Klein, R. 1989, *Came Back to Show You I Could Fly*, Viking Kestrel, Ringwood, Victoria.**

**Awards:**

- 1989 Australian Human Rights Awards for Literature and Other Writing
- 1990 Children's Book Council Book of the Year Award: Older Readers
- 1992 COOL Award: Secondary Division

**Adaptations and Translations:**

- 1991 Spanish translation, *Volvi Para Mostrarte Que Podia Volar*.
- 1993 Adapted for the film *Say a Little Prayer* directed by Richard Lowenstein.
- 1996 Japanese translation, *Tsubasa Hirogete*.

**Reviews:**

- Aitken, M. 1990, 'Untitled', *The Age*, 28 July.
- Best, P. 1990, 'Untitled', *The Herald*, 27 July, p. 11.
- Clarke, J. 2001, 'Sunday's Child', *Viewpoint: On Books for Young Adults*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 3-5.
- Connor, J. 1990, 'The Children's Book of the Year Awards Shortlists', *Magpies: Talking About Books for Children*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 22-24.
- Copping, L. 1990, 'Emphasis on Fantasy for Adolescent Readers', *The Canberra Times*, 28 July, B, p.8.
- England, K. 1989, 'Myths of Fearful Forests, Sea and Shore', *The Advertiser*, November 11.
- Goodman, J. 2005, 'Jo Goodman Revisits the Work of Robin Klein', *Magpies: Talking About Books for Children*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 10-13.
- Jones, M. 1990, 'Untitled', *Reading Time: The Journal of the Children's Book Council of Australia*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 24-25.
- McInerney, S. 1990, 'Everyone's a Winner, For Nomination's the Prize', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 April, p. 40.
- McIntosh, D. 1990, 'Untitled', *The Sun-Herald*, 30 September, p. 145.
- Morrow, R. 1989, 'Focus on Females With Character', *The Australian Magazine*, November 4-5, p. 6.

- Nieuwenhuizen, A. 1989, 'Teenage Stories of the Streets', *The Age*, October 21, p. 10.
- Robinson, M. 1990, 'Social Realism and Singing Prose', *Australian Women's Book Review*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 18-19.
- Saxby, H. M. 1990, 'Untitled', *Magpies: Talking About Books for Children*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 32-33.
- Sheahan, R. 1990, 'Award Books for Children', *The Courier-Mail*, 28 July, pp. 6-7.
- Sorensen, M. 1989, 'Children's Books', *Australian Book Review*, no. 114, pp. 45-46.
- Tyle, L. 1990, 'The Pick for the Children', *The Courier-Mail*, 24 March, pp. 7-8.
- White, L. K. 1991, 'Untitled', *School Library Journal: For Children's, Young Adult and School Librarians*, vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 81-82.
- 'Untitled', 1990, *The Junior Bookshelf*, vol. 54, no. 2.
- 'Untitled', 1991, *Horn Book Magazine*, vol. 67, no. 1, p. 74.

#### **Criticism and Commentary:**

- Goodman, J. 2005, 'Jo Goodman Revisits the Work of Robin Klein', *Magpies: Talking About Books for Children*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 10-13.
- Hillel, M. 1997, 'Representations of Mothers and Mothering in Contemporary Australian Children's Literature', *La Trobe Library Journal*, no. 60, pp. 97-107.
- Hillel, M. 2001, 'When the Voices of Children are Heard on the Green: The Innocent Child in Literature', *Children's Literature Matters*, pp. 42-54.
- Foster, J., Finnis, E. J., & Nimon, M. 1995, 'The City: Multiculturalism and Other Urban Issues'. in *Australian Children's Literature: An Exploration of Genre and Theme*, Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, Charles Sturt University, Centre for Information Studies, pp. 87-104.
- Masson, S. 1993, 'Fairytale Realism: Robin Klein's Came Back to Show You I Could Fly', *Reading Time: The Journal of the Children's Book Council of Australia*, vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 5-6.
- Nimon, M. 1997, 'Robin Klein: Seeing Beyond the Obvious'. in *The Adolescent Novel: Australian Perspectives*, Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, Charles Sturt University, Centre for Information Studies, pp. 155-164.
- Plank, S. 1996, 'Follow the Leader: Subject Position and Focalisation in "Came Back to Show You I Could Fly"', *Papers: Explorations into Children's Literature*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 31-42.

- **Marchetta, M. 1992, *Looking for Alibrandi*, Penguin Books Australia, Ringwood, Victoria.**

#### **Awards:**

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|--------|---|
| 1993   | Australian Multicultural Children's Literature Awards: Senior Section   |
| 1993   | Children's Book Council Book of the Year Award: Older Readers   |
| 1993   | Family Therapists' Award for Children's Literature  |
| 1993   | KOALA Awards  |
| 1993   | The Variety Club Young People's Talking Book Award: Book of the Year  |
| 1994   | Western Australia Young Readers' Award  |
| c2000  | BILBY (Books I Love Best Yearly) Awards, Older Readers  |
| 2001-2 | South Carolina (USA) Young Adult Book Award: Young Adult Book Shortlist   |
| 2004   | Ranked 88 in a poll listing the top one hundred favourite books of the Australian general public. (Poll conducted by the Australian Broadcasting Commission.) |

#### **Adaptations and Translations:**

- Also available in sound-recording format
- 2000 Adapted for the film *Looking for Alibrandi*

#### **Reviews:**

- Aitken, M. 1993, 'Old favourites, New Talent, but No Dinosaurs', *The Age*, 21 August, p. 7.

- Copping, L. 1993, 'Untitled', *The Canberra Times*, 20 March, C, p. 10.
- Copping, L. 1993, 'Sensitive, Honest Portrayal of Teen's Problems', *The Canberra Times*, 21 August, p. C10.
- Crowe, C. 1993, 'Kicking Goals', *The Courier-Mail*, 21 August, p. 6.
- Dunkle, M. 1992, 'Forecasts', *Australian Bookseller & Publisher*, vol. 72, no. 1029, pp. 29-31.
- Elliott, H. 1993, 'In Praise of the Inquiring Mind', *The Sunday Age*, 22 August, p. 8.
- England, K. 1992, 'Joys of Festive Reading', *The Advertiser Magazine*, 5 December, p. 7.
- Goodman, J. 1993, 'Untitled', *Magpies: Talking About Books for Children*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 32-33.
- Johnson, M. 1993, 'Untitled', *The Newcastle Herald*, 12 June, p. 44.
- Matthews, S. 1993, 'From the Word Go: Books for Younger Readers', *Australian Book Review*, no. 149, pp. 57-58.
- McNerney, S. 1992, 'Coming to Grips with the Trials of an Ethnic Adolescence', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 October 1992, p. 47.
- McNerney, S. 1993, 'A Celebration of Stories', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 August, p. 45.
- Morrow, R. 1992, 'Facing Up to Teenage Trauma', *The Weekend Australian*, 5-6 December, rev. p. 6.
- Neary, K. 1993, 'The Children's Book of the Year Awards Shortlists', *Magpies: Talking About Books for Children*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 19-21.
- Nowicka, H. 1993, 'Untitled', *Reading Time: The Journal of the Children's Book Council of Australia*, vol. 37, no. 1, p. 29.
- Sheahan, R. 1993, 'Farm of Intrigue', *The Courier-Mail*, 20 March, p. 7.
- Stone, D. 1993, 'Another Look', *The Sunday Age*, 5 December, p. 7.

#### **Criticism and Commentary:**

- Austin, K. 2003, 'The Girl Most Unlikely To ...' *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 5-6 April, pp. 4-5.
- Barrowclough, N. 1993, 'The Two Worlds of Melina Marchetta', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 January, p. 2.
- 'The Children's Book Council of Australia Annual Awards 1993', 1993, *Reading Time: The Journal of the Children's Book Council of Australia*, vol. 37, no. 3, pp. 2-8.
- Conde, S. 1998, 'Datelines: Melina Marchetta', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 October, p. 2.
- Couch, S. 1994, 'Great Expectations: Melina Marchetta', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 April, p. 4A.
- Fernandez, M. 2001, 'Multiculturalism and Social Values in Australia Fiction: Allan Baillie's Secrets of Walden Rising and Melina Marchetta's Looking for Alibrandi', *Papers: Explorations into Children's Literature*, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 39-46.
- Gandolfo, E., & 1998. 1998, 'In/ Visible Presence: Halo-Australian Women Writers', *Australian Women's Book Review*, no. 10, pp. 11-12.
- Hawker, P. 1994, 'The Guilt on the Gingerbread'. in *The Written World: Youth and Literature*, Port Melbourne, Victoria, D. W. Thorpe, pp. 48-54.
- Hicks, I. 1993, 'Old, New and Revisionist', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 August, p. 17.
- Horsfield, D. 1993, 'Taking the Best from Two Cultures', *The Canberra Times*, 22 August, p. 28.
- Marchetta, M. 1993, 'Melina Marchetta', *Reading Time: The Journal of the Children's Book Council of Australia*, vol. 37, no. 4, p. 3.
- Masson, S. 1993, 'An Interview with Melina Marchetta', *Reading Time: The Journal of the Children's Book Council of Australia*, vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 6-7.
- McNerney, S. 1993, 'Best Children's Books Named', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 August, p. 14.
- Ridge, J. 1993, 'Judith Ridge Interviews Melina Marchetta', *Viewpoint: On Books for Young Adults*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 18-20.

- **Moloney, J. 1996, *A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Queensland.**

**Awards:**

- 1997 Children's Book Council Book of the Year Award: Older Readers
- 1997 Children's Peace Literature Award
- 1997 Family Therapists' Award for Children's Literature: Older Readers

**Adaptations and Translations:**

- 1999 Dutch translation, *De Veerpont*.

**Reviews:**

- Ballinger, C. 1996, 'Untitled', *Magpies: Talking About Books for Children*, vol. 11, no. 5, p. 38.
- Hunter, L. 1996, 'Tears and Triumphs', *The Weekend Australian*, 16-17 November, p. rev 8.
- Lees, S. 1996, 'Untitled', *Viewpoint: On Books for Young Adults*, vol. 4, no. 4, p. 40.
- Matthews, S. 1997, 'Rich Characterisation, Generosity [sic] of Spirit', *The Canberra Times*, 16 August, p. C10.
- McInerney, S. 1997, 'Stories True and Tall', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 March, p. 11s.
- Nelmes, M. 1997, 'Untitled', *Reading Time: The Journal of the Children's Book Council of Australia*, vol. 41, no. 1, p. 30.
- Starke, R. 1996, 'A Sense of Loss', *Australian Book Review*, no. 187, pp. 88-89.

**Criticism and Commentary:**

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## Appendix F: Glossary

This glossary explains how these terms have been interpreted and used in this thesis.

### **Adolescence:**

- A prolonged period of immaturity (Heins 2001, p. 259)
- A term for teenagers derived from Latin *adolescere*, meaning 'to grow to maturity' (Slee 1993, p. 528)
- Duality of adolescence – looking backward/looking forward; marked by epiphanies (Hollindale 1997, p. 119).

### **Adolescent:**

- Sexually charged, sceptical of authority, and hungry for experience (Heins 2001, p. 259)
- Hollindale prefers the term 'youth' as it blurs the boundaries between childhood and adult life (1997, p, 116).

### **Agent:**

- An individual who has the ability to initiate, direct, manage or control his or her own behaviour (Slee 1993, p. 528)

### **Agency:**

- The term narrator imputes agency (Bal 1997, p. 11).
- Butler locates agency in the variations of action, the possibilities of variation in repetition that carry meaning and create identity (Culler 1997, p.119)
- How far we can be subjects responsible for our actions and how far are our apparent choices constrained by forces we do not control? (Culler 1997, p. 46)

### **Anomie:**

- A term denoting a personal state of isolation and anxiety resulting from a lack of social; or the lack of moral standards in society; or the loss of direction felt in a society when social control of individual behaviour becomes ineffective. First used in 1896 by Emile Durkheim.

### **Archetype:**

- Denotes recurrent narrative designs, patterns of action, character-types, themes and images which are identifiable in a wide variety of works of literature (Abrams, 2005, p. 13)
- A basic model from which copies are made (Peck & Coyle 1984, p. 130). Useful in that it informs the reader about what the author has added to the basic pattern to make his/her work distinctive; and it informs the reader as to the basic concerns of literature.
- In epistemology, Locke uses the term to mean that to which our ideas must conform in order to be adequate but he also holds that most complex ideas are archetypes of the mind's own making (Mautner 1997, p. 37)

**Authorial monologue:**

- The novel is an example of the authorial discourse that Bakhtin proposed, a privileged language that approaches us from without (in Holquist 1981, p. 424).

**Autonomy:**

- **Of the text:** refers to Jameson's idea that the isolation or autonomy of the printed text is undermined by its significance as a cultural artefact. (Leitch p. 1948).
- **Of the reader:** In a political context can mean self-government or self rule. In ethics it can mean a person's capacity for self-determination. Hence Kant defined autonomy as an individual who freely decides to act morally, independently of any external incentives. Rousseau viewed individuals as both sovereign and subject – bound by laws they themselves have made.

**Autonomy Principle:**

- Rational individuals should be self-determining. There is an obvious tension with the Paternalism Principle, the autonomy of an individual may be restricted if such a restriction is in that individual's own interest. (Matthews 1994, p. 70).

**Bildungsroman:**

- A term applied to novels of education (Drabble & Stringer 1987, p.54). One of the most common patterns in a novel is that of the education novel, this takes a rebellious character through a sequence of testing situations. By the end of the novel the character has matured, or at least discovered something about himself or herself (Peck & Coyle 1984, p.111).
- The classic Bildungsromane deals with the psychological and emotional development of a central character, and traces his or her evolution from youthful naivety to maturity. ... associated with the idea of the cultivation or formation of the self (Macey 2000, p. 43)

**English Bildungsroman** (Birk 2003, pp 10-27)

- A novel of the development of a young man (or in some cases a young woman). It is characterised by the growth, education and development of a character both in the world and within themselves. Through the stages of development the protagonist achieves a personal niche in the adult world.

**Heterophony:**

- The simultaneous performance of different versions of the same melody. (Bennett 1995, p. 139)

**Ideal Reader:**

- That imaginary person who, the writer hopes, will understand completely the experience he is trying to convey, and respond to it as he wishes. (Cuddon 1991, p. 439)

**Ideology:**

- A shared system of beliefs (Stevens 1992, p.148)
- In its most common sense a system of belief or political creed. (Quinn 2004, p. 163).

- In relation to literature, this hidden ideology is in evidence whenever there is an emphasis on formalism or aesthetics as the governing principles of literature or art. Marxists generally regard limiting a text to its formal elements as an attempt to separate a poem or story from its social/historical context. (Quinn 2004, p. 163)
- Expressed in the significance deduced from the text (themes, morals, insights into behaviour) (Stevens 1992, p. 2)
- Ideology is established through discourse which calls upon an individual to take up a pre-established subject position, 'a person with certain ideas and values'. A great work of literature is 'not a mere product of ideology, because its fiction established for the reader a distance from which to recognize, hence expose "the ideology from which it is born ... from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it alludes."' (Abrams quotes Pierre Machery in Abrams 2005, p. 158).
- 'Ideology interpellates Individuals as Subjects' (Althusser in Leitch 2001, p. 1502).

#### **Identities:**

- Are points of temporary attachment that 'suture' an actor to a variety of subject-positions in the divergent social locations of his or her life. These subject-positions and social locations exist only within a specific cultural and historical context, which provokes situational ego-investments and fosters situational strategies. (Hall in Mageo 2002, p. 3)

#### **Interpellation (Althusser)**

- The ideology of each mode of state apparatus is different, and operates by means of a discourse which interpellates (calls upon) the individual to take up a pre-established subject position – that is, a position as a person with certain views and values, which, however serve the ultimate interests of the ruling classes. (Abrams 2005, p. 158)

#### **Interpretation:**

- An interpretation of a text is never anything more than a proposal based on available data (Bal 1997, p.11)

#### **Monophonic:**

- A term describing musical texture that consists of a single melodic line without supporting harmonies. (Bennett 1995, p. 194)

#### **Narratology**

- An instrument for making descriptions and thus opening interpretations up for discussion (Bal 1997, p.11)

#### **Narratee**

- A term invented by Gerald Prince to denote the person whom the narrator addresses. It is distinct from the reader (Cuddon 1991, p. 565)
- Established by a particular text as someone who is expected to respond in specific ways to the 'response inviting' structures of the text (Abrams 2005, p. 266)
- Is sometimes explicitly identified but at other times is an implied auditor, revealed only by what the narrator implicitly takes for granted as needing or not needing

explanation or justification and by the tone of the narrator's address. (Abrams 2005, p. 227)

**Narrator:**

- Tells the story of the novel, may or may not be a character in the novel. (Peck & Coyle 1984, p.111).
- The mediating instance between the author and the reader, the one who tells (or shows the events) (Onega and Landa 1996, p.146)

**Nihilism:**

- A word invented by Turgenev in his novel *Fathers and Sons* (1862). It denotes a radical or extreme radical attitude which denies all traditional values, and, not infrequently moral values as well. (Cudden 1991, p. 585)
- When this term is used there is often a suggestion of loss or despair. The term has been applied to various negative theses or attitudes. (Mautner 2002, p. 388)

**The Novel:**

- Is not a social documentary but rather a picture of how people relate to society. (Peck & Coyle 1984, p. 104).
- The text is a subjective representation of the objective world, an expression of consciousness, a reflection. Understanding of a text can be defined as a correct reflection of a reflection (Bakhtin 1986, p. 112)
- The novel (genre) can be defined as a diversity of social speech types and a diversity of individual voices artistically organised (Bakhtin 1981, p. 262)

**Omniscient narrator:**

- This narrator can see everything that relates to the novel. Their voice may be intrusive, commenting directly on the events and characters; or their voice may be unintrusive describing events and characters without explicit comments or judgements. (Peck & Coyle 1984, p.112).

**Personal fable:**

- The delusion of adolescents that their own experiences and feelings are unique and cannot be understood by others (Slee, 1993, p. 533)

**Plainsong:**

- The traditional monophonic melodies to which the texts of the Roman Catholic liturgy are sung. (Bennett, 1995, p. 249)

**Polyphonic:**

- A term describing a musical texture which consists of two or more melodic lines, mainly of equal importance and independence, weaving along together. Music composed in this type of style and texture is called polyphony. (Bennett 1995, p. 252).
- Bakhtin: Only a polyphonist like Dostoevsky can sense in the struggle of opinions and ideologies an incomplete dialogue on ultimate questions (1986, p.151). All characters and their speech are objects of an authorial attitude (and authorial

speech). But the planes of the characters' speech and that of the authorial speech can intersect, that is, dialogic relations are possible between them. In his (Dostoevsky's) texts the speeches of the characters differ essentially from authorial speech.

- Nikolajeva: manifold voices present their own ideas and viewpoints (1996, p.99). Not a monologue, not an omniscient author. Characterised by the writer's voice disappearing behind the voices of the characters; text is open, ideas are implicit and unuttered. Leaves scope for a hidden text to be discovered by the scholar and invites the reader's active participation. Merging of genres is the most radical example of the interplay of different voices (1996, p.113)
- McCallum: Many-voiced; multiplicity of social voices; deploying a range of narrational strategies, voices and discursive styles (1999, p. 265)

### **Reading (Iser)**

- The experience of reading is an evolving process of anticipation, frustration, retrospection, reconstruction and satisfaction. (Abrams 2005, p. 266)

### **Social Contract Theory:**

- Individuals, by nature free and equal, agree to renounce part of their natural liberty by entering into civil society and constituting a political authority to which they subject themselves for the sake of the advantages provided by a civil society. The right to rule and the obligation to obey derive from the agreement; such a contract is called a social contract (Mautner 1997, p. 526)

### **Social contract between author and reader:**

- Reader voluntarily suspends disbelief; voluntarily subjugates the unlimited potential of their imagination in an attempt to understand the author's will or intent.
- The reader begins to negate his disposition – not in order to revoke it, but temporarily to suspend it as the virtualised base for an experience of which he can only say that it seems self-evident, because he has produced it himself through his own discoveries. (Iser 1978, pp. 218-19)

### **Subject positions:**

- Are galvanized by fields of cultural value and power that are embraced or resisted through the work of subjectivity. (Mageo 2002, p. 3)

### **Subjectivity:**

- A sense of personal identity an individual has of his/her self as distinct from other selves encompassing position in society, relationships with others, capacity to think and act (McCallum 1999, p. 3).

### **Time:**

- According to Ricoeur: time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of narrative; narrative in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience. (Mautner 1997 p. 486)

### YA Literature:

- YA lit is a genre that is culturally situated and constructs an implied audience position inscribed with the values and assumptions of the culture in which it is produced and received. Implicit distinction between the implied reader and the actual reader. The themes of adolescent fiction are the relationship between the self and others; and the influence of society, culture and language on cognition and maturation. (McCallum 1999, p. 9)
- In the United States commercial impetus defines the market for YA fiction as 11-13/14 year olds (Cart 1996, p. 150).
- Early Australian children's novels depicted adolescence as a brief interlude between childhood and adulthood. Post WWII novelists depicted a lengthened period of adolescence in which ties with family were loosened and conflicts between adolescents, parents and society were depicted. Modern fiction depicts adolescents in a society that is not simply changeable but one that may be less accepting and difficult to overcome. (Lees 1993, p. 12).

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