

Write4Children

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We are delighted to be able to hand the editorship of the November edition of the journal over to the author and academic, Dr Anthony Eaton, University of Canberra, Au., who has compiled an excellent Australasian edition. It is the first of what we hope will be other such collaborations. Anyone interested in proposing a special edition for the future, from the USA for example, should contact us directly at write4children@winchester.ac.uk

Andrew Melrose and Vanessa Harbour
Editors
www.write4children.org

Write4Children special Australasian edition – Foreword

In his book *Land's Edge*, Tim Winton makes the observation;

Australians are surrounded by ocean and ambushed from behind by desert - a war of mystery on two fronts. What worries us about the sea and the desert? Is it scale, or simply silence? (1993:21)

It might be possible to suggest that concern about and preconception with boundaries and thresholds has long been a feature of Australian cultural pursuits - Australian narratives abound with characters who dwell on the margins of things, and this is no less the case in Australian Children's Literature. The first published Australian children's book, *A Mother's Offering To Her Children*, published in *The Sydney Gazette* in 1841 and attributed to Mrs. Charlotte Barton was, in the fashion of the time, a didactic work largely concerning itself with the difficulties and perils of life lived at the most far-flung extreme of the British Empire.

It is, of course, pure speculation but I feel it possible to argue that from these earliest Australian writings 'for children' emerged a deep fascination with the ins-and-outs of life lived 'on the borders', and this has continually revealed itself in almost every aspect of Australian cultural creative practice.

The papers submitted for this Australasian special edition of *Write4Children* cover a diverse range of topics and ideas, and hopefully provide a glimpse of the breadth and depth of creative and academic practice in the area of children's writing and literature studies in this region of the world. Contributors include practicing and award-winning writers, scholars of both the theory and practice of children's writing, and those who sit in both camps, as it were.

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Lucy Christopher examines, from the perspective of an adult reflecting back upon her childhood, her own relationship with Australian land and landscape as it is expressed in her novel *Stolen*; Lilli Wilkinson explores the notion of heterotopic space in relation to her novel *Pink*; poet Mark Carthew considers the role of children's poetry in the contemporary Australian publishing space; Rosanne Hawke considers questions of faith, identity and boundaries in the construction of her novels, which wrestle with often very thorny areas of agency and belonging; Anna Kurian examines the burgeoning growth and cultural significance of Indian young adult fiction in a paper which mirrors many of the common concerns and reflections evident in the other articles; Kate Deller-Evans examines the rise of verse novels for children and young adults in Australian awards. There is also a fascinating paper by Adele Wessell and Donna Lee Brien, in which they examine conceptions of childhood through an analysis of the history of Australian cookbooks published for children.

While, on first reading, this collection might appear to be an extraordinarily eclectic and diverse gathering of offerings, I cannot help but be struck - from an editorial perspective - by the idea that they have one underlying similarity; preoccupation with boundaries and thresholds in one form or another. In these papers we can see awareness of boundaries of faith, interest in the popularity of 'threshold literatures' such as poetry and verse novels, fascination with the multiple spaces of heterotopic theory, interest in the shifting boundaries of childhood expressed in cultural artifacts across time and space, concern with the problem of where boundaries lie within a vast and imposing landscape, and awareness of the developing, shifting and intersecting boundaries of a young and fresh literature in a rapidly developing economy.

This modest collection of papers is, of course, in no way a comprehensive analysis of the importance of thresholds in the region and I wouldn't presume to offer it as any more than, perhaps, an echo of a much wider and more deep-seated concern than can be examined here.

I would, however, make the bold suggestion that there might be found in all of this some unconscious awareness within in the Australasian worldview of the notion that the Antipodes and surrounding regions have, for some centuries, been, perhaps, the liminal spaces of the world; equatorial, primal, dangerous, beautiful, isolated, wealthy, sitting across hemispheres, encompassing a multitude of cultures - including some of the oldest in the world and some of the youngest. Australasia is, in many ways, a global crossroads, where multiple spaces often lie over the top of one another, and many who live and practice their art here cannot help but find it at once both attractive and repellent. This, I think, is what Winton is referring to when he talks about 'worries of scale and silence', and clear elements of this notion lurk, I believe, in the background of each of the papers presented here for your consideration.

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I do hope that you enjoy this collection, and would like to take this opportunity to thank all the contributors for their efforts, and of course to thank *Write4Children* for presenting us with this marvellous opportunity.

Anthony Eaton
University of Canberra

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STOLEN : THE LOST CHILD
***Exploring my relationships with Australian land
and Australian narratives, and how they
influenced the development of my first novel.***

Lucy Christopher
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Abstract

My PhD in Creative Writing explores the development of my novel, *Stolen*, tracing an intellectual, geographic and literary journey. I have retraced the threads that, partly deliberately, but also in many ways unconsciously, knitted themselves into this novel. This article focuses on one of these strands: the influence of emigrating to Australia at a young age. I explore my early relationship with Australian land, and with Australian narratives, paying particular attention to Mitchell's *The Silver Brumby* and to Gross's animated adaptation of Pedley's *Dot and the Kangaroo*. I explore my readings of these texts, both from the remembered perspective of myself as a young person and as a published author. I suggest how these texts offered a kind of template for *Stolen*, and compare the relationships that the texts' protagonists have with Australian land with my characters' relationships, and with my own relationship, with Australian land.

Keywords

Stolen, Australia, land, lost, narrative

Nature still informs our years...[it]...offers healing for a child living in a destructive family or neighbourhood. It serves as a blank slate upon which a child draws and reinterprets the culture's fantasies. Nature inspires creativity in a child by demanding visualisation and full use of the senses. (Louy, 2006: 7)

Direct experiences with Australian land, as well as interaction with Australian landscape, shaped me as a young person, contributing to my sense of personal and cultural identity and sense of belonging. These experiences shaped me as a writer too, most particularly as the writer of *Stolen*.

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Stolen is a novel for young adults. It was written during 2008 and published by Chicken House in 2009. I say the novel was written during 2008, but I merely mean 'written down'. *Stolen* was years in the making and, as I have discovered, was influenced by countless factors, one being the impact of moving to Australia at a young age.

Stolen is the story of Gemma, a sixteen-year-old British girl, who is kidnapped by Ty, an older, white Australian male. Ty takes Gemma to an isolated location in the Great Sandy Desert in Western Australia and expects her to love both him and the place he has brought her to. She begins her narrative journey ignorant about the desert. She is a white outsider, feeling she does not belong. Over time, however, Gemma's perception of Ty and the desert changes, moving from fear to a kind of love. At the conclusion, her sense of identity and belonging has strengthened and changed too.

While the terms 'land' and 'landscape' are often interchangeable, for the purposes of this paper I will make a delineation. When I use 'land' I am referring to the actual, physical matter of the earth we walk upon; 'landscape' refers to a representation of the word land. So, as an author, when I write about the desert I am creating a 'landscape', but the desert itself is the 'land'. The 'landscapes' authors create are always different, even when representing the same 'land', and are always influenced by authors' experiences, thoughts and purpose.

The Early Years / The Lost Child

Australia...is the country of lost children. (Chatwin, 1998: 116)

By the time I was nine years old, I had already lived in three countries and seven houses. My mother and new stepfather were moving to Australia, where I had lived previously with my parents when I was a few months old. We were moving for a better way of life and so I could see my father again. I did not want to go. For the first time, I had made meaningful friendships in my home in Wales.

I remember vividly the feeling of awkwardness, of feeling disjointed and peculiar in my heavy cardigans amidst the smoothly hanging cotton of my new classmates' school uniforms. To fit in with a different school year, I'd been put up a year-level and had to take extra lessons to catch up. I was shorter than everyone, with an accent too rounded, and I'd never been to a pool party. There are photographs of me on my first school camp, at a ramshackle property in south-eastern Victoria, where I am standing aside from the others, hunched into myself in front of thick bushland. They are sad images of a lost child in an unfamiliar landscape.

My first friend was from a Sri Lankan family but she, like me, had been born in the UK. Also like me, she had a separateness from the other girls. We would spend hours in the library, dodging the sun of a summer playground by hunkering down beside the bookshelves, burying ourselves in leaves of narrative. Perhaps due to a kindly school

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librarian, or because of a deeper urge to fit in, I read a lot of Australian stories during those first years. I raced through Mitchell's *Silver Brumby* series (1958-2003), Turner's *Seven Little Australians* (1894), Gibbs' overwhelmingly popular *Snugglypot and Cuddlepie* (1918), and Southall books such as *Josh* (1971) and *Ash Road* (1966). In hindsight, I see that these are all texts very much concerned with Australian land.

This focus was echoed in my new school's curriculum. When I was ten, less than a year after I had arrived in Australia, our class memorised MacKellar's poem *My Country* (1908): a poem famous for exploring the differences between loving an English land and an Australian one. Even now, the words to the most famous stanza are still in my head:

I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.
I love her far horizons,
I love her jewel-sea,
Her beauty and her terror -
The wide brown land for me! (MacKellar 1908)

I still remember the images this poem gave me of Australian wild land both beautiful and terrifying: land that is challenging and unpredictable, producing "flooding rains" and contradictions, one to be battled, yet also one to be loved.

This poem evokes many aspects of *Stolen*. The idea of simultaneous beauty and terror could easily apply to Gemma's views about the desert and also to her thoughts on Ty. MacKellar's stanza could also relate to Ty's views about Australian land, and might even be seen as his personal mantra. Like MacKellar, Ty wants to "capture this, all this beauty" (Christopher 2009: 220) through his painted representation of the desert. Like MacKellar, Ty also sees 'terror' within the land, repeatedly telling Gemma she'll "get lost and die" (2009: 134) if she explores it alone. This idea of simultaneous beauty and terror is key to many layers of *Stolen*.

I also became quickly acquainted with the beauty and terror of Australian land in a more physical sense. After a few months, we moved to a house on the edge of a nature reserve. A thin wire fence separated our tended garden from the wilderness beyond. This land was overgrown, covered in brambles, and seemed wild to me. I was terrified of it, but fascinated too. It was the first time I could remember living so close to something so untamed. Yet, for the first few months there, I was too nervous to go beyond the garden fence and explore.

Around this time, I became acquainted with the animated film, *Dot and the Kangaroo* (Gross 2001), which is based on the earlier text of the same name (Pedly 1899). Both versions tell the story of Dot, a settler's young daughter, who becomes lost in the 'cruel,

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wild bush' (Pedley 2008: 3). Terrified of the land's unfamiliarity, Dot is befriended and helped by a kangaroo and explores the bush while seated in the kangaroo's comfortable pouch. Throughout, the kangaroo tells Dot about the destructiveness of European-Australians towards her bush habitat, explaining that 'nobody listens' to the animals. Lost Dot comes to understand that the bush is a place of beauty and excitement, rather than merely loneliness and fear. The cultural importance of this text can be attributed to the way it captures the feelings of loss and confusion that early settlers felt towards their new surroundings, as well as a journey to viewing the land as beautiful, unique, and as home. The narrative's enduring appeal, seen through its numerous reprints, as well as film and stage adaptations, is perhaps due to the resonance this notion still holds for Anglo-Australians: of wanting to view Australian land as 'home', but also feeling loss and confusion towards it. In this way, Dot's relationship with land mirrors, as Hunt suggests of the function of children's literature, "...what society wishes itself to be seen as, and...subconsciously and retrospectively, what it is actually like..." (Hunt 2001: 8)

Images from this film have remained with me for twenty years. I remember the real, not animated, Blue Mountains backdrops, highlighting the film's message about the importance of this land even further. I remember how the animated kangaroo turns into a real kangaroo at the film's end, and how upsetting it was when the kangaroo leaves Dot in the final scene. But the image I most strongly associate with this film is perhaps its most famous. It is of Dot riding in the kangaroo's pouch as they travel swiftly through the bush.

The image is happy and exuberant, full of the joys and excitements of travelling through this land. I remember the jaunty song that accompanies it: "I curl up inside, just enjoying the view, as I ride in the pouch of a red kangaroo" (Young 1977). I also remember desperately wanting to be Dot in that pouch, wanting a creature as friendly as the kangaroo to show me this strange new land. As Rahbek states of Pedley's text:

...it strikes me that Dot is not so much lost as *found*. Over the course of five days Dot is not only offered the wisdom and generosity of the Kangaroo, but the 'berries of understanding' also open her ears to the kookaburra, the platypus, the opossum, the koala, the emu and several other types of birds. Dot learns...the importance of security and a sense of place from these animals... (2007)

Coincidentally, one of my early title ideas for *Stolen* was *Found*. It remains my imagined title for a possible sequel. Perhaps the nature of this title suggests a growing, or 'post-*Stolen*', comfort within Australian land for both Gemma and myself.

There is no doubt that during my first years in Australia, I felt lost: like Dot without her kangaroo. Gemma, too, is a lost child. Like Dot, she initially thinks of the land as hostile. She also needs a friend to reveal its beauty. Ty does just this. As Gemma rides with Ty in his car or on his camel, he points out the wonders of the land and, like Dot's kangaroo, he also tells her of the destructiveness of European-Australians. Unlike Dot's kangaroo,

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however, Ty does not shy away from telling Gemma of the inherent dangers within the land; Ty's interpretation is not as pious.

Lost children in Australian fiction are not unique to *Dot and The Kangaroo*. As Pierce writes in *The Country of Lost Children*, "the lost child is an arresting figure in the history and the folklore of colonial Australia." (1999: xi). He examines numerous examples of lost children in Australian paintings, poetry, fairy tales, theatre, adult fiction, true stories and film adaptations. As a young person, I had a powerful connection with many of the examples he gives, having read, studied and acted in several of these texts. The image of the lost child within Australian land is something I have thought about and identified with for a long time. It is no surprise that it crept, unconsciously perhaps, into my writing of *Stolen*, and, in particular, the character of Gemma.

Finding the Land / Finding my 'Kangaroo'

Gradually, my fear of the land beyond the garden fence began to recede. I made two new friends who lived locally. Claire was a year older than me and her sister, Sarah, a year younger. They swam like fish, their family car was a Holden station wagon and, best of all, during school holidays their dad took them camping in the bush. It wasn't long before I started coming on these trips. They remain some of the happiest times of my childhood and are my first memories of truly enjoying Australian land.

It was during these trips that I saw my first wild snake and laughed at finding fresh wombat poo outside our tent. Sometimes we stayed in campgrounds, other times we camped wild. We would listen to the same CD on every drive - the quintessentially Australian, *John Williamson's Family Album* (1992), with its songs about long drives on dirt roads, bush Christmases and staring at the Southern Cross. I still listen to it now on long journeys.

In my memory, Claire and Sarah's broadly Australian-brogued dad, John, was always kind and patient, never tiring of showing 'his girls' the natural wonders of his country. Perhaps in this sense, he was a little like Dot's kangaroo, gently opening our eyes to the Australian land while remaining in charge of what he showed us. Perhaps, in this way, he was a forerunner for Ty, too. Like Dot's kangaroo, or Ty, John could be authoritative or stern but he always had time to answer any questions we had. Each camping trip added to my understanding of Australian land, and excited me to explore it further. There seemed so much to learn, and for the first time I was starting to connect with the country I so desperately wanted to love. My tightly-wound roots were beginning to feel a tentative path through the Australian dirt.

When we first moved I had few friends and a fear of Australian land. Soon I was starting to make deep connections not only with children my age, but with the land around me. I would spend hours collecting blackberries 'down the creek'. It was during these years where I learnt to love the bush.

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This growing connection with land was echoed in the fiction I was reading, most notably within Mitchell's *Silver Brumby* books. There are thirteen novels in the series, published from 1958 until Mitchell died in 2003. They are hugely popular and culturally significant texts, not least because of their vivid evocation of place and their strong theme of Australians' relationship with land. The books capture "the pioneering history of the high country ... (and are) ... valued as an important part of the construction of the Australian identity" (Australian Heritage Database 2007).

The first in the series, *The Silver Brumby*, stays with me most vividly and acts as a template for my own novel. Its images of land are particularly memorable, as seen in the novel's opening:

Once there was a dark, stormy night in spring, when, deep down in their holes, the wombats knew not to come out, when the possums stayed quiet in their hollow limbs, when the great black flying phalangers that live in the mountain forests never stirred. On this night, Bel Bel, the cream brumby mare, gave birth to a colt foal, pale like herself, or paler, in that wild, black storm. (2003: 3)

Looking at this almost twenty years after I first read it, I see many words that would have been strange and unknown: *wombats*, *possums*, *phalangers*, *brumby*. I wonder how I understood enough to continue reading. Perhaps the power of Mitchell's imagery pulled me on, or my desire to read about horses, or maybe there was something more. For a curious child, desperately wanting to fit into a new country, these words were like crumbs on a pathway leading me deeper into the bush: small trees of knowledge. Furthermore, the horse character of Thowra represented an older, wiser, authoritative figure to help deconstruct the land: a character like Dot's kangaroo, or John or, later, Ty. Indeed Thowra, much like John or Ty, is an environmentally-sensitive male who assists in opening the heroine's eyes to a more positive vision of Australian land.

I loved something else about *The Silver Brumby*: its wildness. Nature here is not calm, green, tamed, or English - as it is in my first favourite horse book, *Black Beauty* (Sewell 1877). Instead, Mitchell's "wind roared and howled through the granite tors" (2003: 3). Mitchell's landscape is untainted by humans and ruled by wild horses. The horses understand and identify with its wildness, as we can observe through their names:

'I will call you Thowra,' she said, waking him with her nose, 'because that means wind. In wind you were born, and fleet as the wind must you be if you are to survive.' (2003: 5)

Throughout the series, the environment determines the horses' names and personalities, as well as the plots. The novels are about survival: against man, against other brumbies, and, ultimately, within land. The brumbies also struggle for freedom, inextricably linked to survival. As Saxby observes, the brumbies want "to be able to continue to roam

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unshackled and with dignity over a country which is theirs by birth and possession. This is the theme of each book.” (2002: 657) This is a theme within *Stolen* too, expressed through Ty’s beliefs.

Ty, like Thowra, is obsessed with survival and freedom within a harsh land. He is also afraid of being caught by man. Ty’s dream is to live with dignity and without restraint within the Great Sandy Desert: “Australia’s most hostile and least populated area” (Barca, Ohlsson and Pitts, 2005: 200). Like Thowra’s Snowy River country, the ‘Sandy’ is also a place of extreme conditions, few humans, and treacherous terrain. Ty is also named after elements of the environment he was born into: “I was called Ty after the creek my parents fucked next to” (Christopher 2009: 87). Furthermore, I wanted his name to suggest a direct connection or ‘tie’ to the land he is from. Like Thowra, I wanted Ty to be part of it - inextricably linked. I also wanted Ty to physically and metaphorically tie Gemma to this place: to be the link that connects her to land.

There are still more connections between these characters of wild Australian horse and wild Australian boy. Firstly there is the obvious connection of masculine strength and sexuality. Mitchell’s Thowra is full of “vital courage” (2003: 52) and is also “beautiful” (2003: 52). Gemma’s first impression of Ty is that he is “beautiful in a rough sort of way.” (Christopher 2009: 4) Both horse and boy have a sexual energy. They are sensual creatures who interact physically with their land, attracting the attention of the females around them. While Thowra is “both proud and embarrassed by the size of his herd” (Mitchell, 2003: 97), Ty easily attracts and holds the sexual interest of Gemma. Even though Gemma knows Ty’s actions are wrong, she tells him: “What I really wanted was to have your hard, hot arms around me again” (Christopher 2009: 239). Mitchell’s books also contain a “sensual undercurrent...” (Saxby 2002: 658) and her “...brumby fights throb with sexuality” (2002: 657).

Thowra and Ty define themselves by their physical relationship with land, and their functionality as males is determined by how well they do this, as well as how well they protect their ‘herd’. These characters, however, are only successful males in the natural environments of their childhood, neither are as confident in an urban environment. We see this in Ty’s struggle for belonging during his time in London and in Thowra’s refusal to go near man’s dwellings. The sentiment Ty feels towards the desert he finds for himself and Gemma is similar to how Thowra feels towards his secluded valley: “At last, Thowra had found a home for himself and whatever mares he wanted to bring” (Mitchell 2003: 167).

There is another comparison between how male horse and male human relate to their females. Like Ty, Thowra also steals his “greatest prize” (Mitchell 2003: 151) - the domesticated and beautiful mare, Golden - and he is possessive:

Thowra knew he would not be able to bear to let her be far from the herd, or far from him. He still had no understanding of how Golden was often torn between all

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the training and security of her former life, and the freedom of the wild life with him. (Mitchell 2003: 152)

Ty is incredulous when Gemma reveals that she dreams about her former life in London: “How can you dream about that place?...How do you love it so much?” (Christopher 2009: 218). Thowra’s belief that Golden is “lovely, and she was his” (Mitchell 2003: 123), could also be Ty’s thought about Gemma. And while Thowra knows that “he would steal her all over again if he had to” (Mitchell 2003: 123), Ty answers Gemma’s question of “knowing me as you do now...would you still steal me?” with the answer “Yes...I can never let you go” (Christopher 2009: 237). Both Ty and Thowra are confident in their abilities to keep their females attracted to them and safe, and in their right to take them. They also believe their females can only ever be truly free with them. When Golden jumps the fence to be with Thowra, he believes she is “over and free” (Mitchell 2003: 106). Ty’s rationale for stealing Gemma is to give her freedom from her city life: “you don’t get freedom in your parents’ lives, you just get fucked” (Christopher 2009: 111). While Mitchell’s “stallions are domineering” (Saxby 2002: 658), Ty is similarly controlling. Both Ty and Thowra are ‘alpha-males’, fulfilling traditional male gender roles of protectors and providers. An idea that took time to develop within the writing process was the realisation by Gemma that she does not have to fulfill a gender role of obedient, accepting female. This makes Gemma’s narrative and role different from the mares in the Brumby books.

Another link between how Ty and Thowra react to the females in their ‘herd’ is in how they interpret the environment for them. Similar to the way Ty regards Gemma, Thowra thinks Golden “was not sufficiently bush-wise to be alone” (Mitchell 2003: 151). Thowra teaches Golden about his environment, particularly how to hide her tracks so that the stockmen will not find her. He teaches all his mares this, including his daughter, Kunama:

He taught her to leave no track with her tiny, neat hooves; to hide herself in trees and shrubs; taught her to read the tracks of other horses; to know how old they were, how fast they were going. He showed her the tracks of the sleepy wombats, the dark wallabies and the sweet silver-grey kangaroos, and he showed her where the wedge-tail eagles nest. It was Thowra who taught her to recognise all the weather signs... (Mitchell 2003: 170).

Ty also explains his environment, showing Gemma plants that aid survival:

“Turtujarti...gives you sweets, salt, nuts ... shelter too. She’s your friend out here, if anything is.” (Christopher 2009: 99)

Just as Thowra shows his mares how to respect the land to survive within it, it is Ty’s talking about the environment that prompts Gemma to appreciate it. In her defining moment of submission to Ty, she thinks:

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You whispered stories about how the desert was created, sung up by the spirits of the land. You told me how everything was twined together, the whole world around me balancing on a moth's wing. I shut my eyes and let your voice lull me. (Christopher 2009: 238).

The more I think about this, the more I wonder if Ty is actually the fictional human embodiment of Thowra, subconsciously dragged and adapted from the memory of books read over and over. It was not a deliberate and conscious part of *Stolen's* writing process, but something I see with hindsight.

There are wider, cultural comparisons between these characters and their texts. One can read aspects of both as racial allegory. When Ty is first 'stolen' by the authorities from his childhood farm, he tells Gemma that "in the end they caught me with a net, just like an animal" (Christopher 2009: 92). Similarly, as a foal, Thowra narrowly escapes being caught by stockmen. Being violently removed from their 'homeland' is Ty and Thowra's greatest fear. Ty has nightmares about it and Thowra "learnt to recognise - and dread - the whistling sound of a rope flying through the air" (Mitchell 2003: 52). Saxby states that "the wider racial application of the brumby's plight must be plain to the present-day reader" (2002: 657). Both Ty and Thowra, with their connections to land and fear of being caught by white men, could be read as characters presenting Aboriginal perspectives, or at least, Aboriginal perspectives as perceived by a white, female writer. The title of *Stolen* has further connotations. *Stolen* is a heavily weighted word in Australia. It is often associated with the Stolen Generation, which refers to Aboriginal children who were removed from their birth families and made wards of the state as part of the Aboriginal Protection Act of 1861-1969. When Gemma states that "they kind of stole you too" (Christopher 2009: 93), she is linking Ty's childhood experience of being 'stolen' by the authorities to her own experience of being 'stolen' by Ty. Yet one could read this as linking Ty's experience to the forcible removal of the Stolen Generation from their homelands, too.

It is important to note, however, that both of these characters are, in reality, non-Indigenous. Ty Macfarlane has British heritage and all brumbies originally descend from horses brought from England on the First Fleet. Both are 'introduced species', and as such, are bound to have a fundamentally conflicted relationship with the land they love. I don't know whether Mitchell considered the ideological problem of having English-descended horses fiercely identifying with Australian land, but I thought carefully about the decision to make Ty of Anglo-Australian descent rather than Aboriginal. There were several reasons for this, but mainly, I wanted to link the feeling of being simultaneously attached to and estranged from Australian land to an Anglo-Australian situation. As I am also Anglo-Australian, and very much an 'introduced species', I felt validated in exploring this from a viewpoint that was not Aboriginal. I was anxious not to contribute to "Aboriginal stereotypes which ... are reproduced in book after book" (Lucashenko, 2000: 8), and am aware, as Lucashenko argues so brilliantly, that I have a "near-impossibility of understanding" (2000: 8) an Aboriginal relationship with desert land. I can, however, think

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more deeply about the issues of being forced from and pulled towards a particular Australian environment from a white perspective. Furthermore, I wanted my novel to explore my own complicated feelings of longing, loss and attraction for Australian land. I wanted *Stolen*, in some small way, to emulate the experience of loss, longing and adaptation that I went through as a young person.

Conclusion

Writing and researching *Stolen* has been illuminating for looking at my own relationship with Australian land, realising, like Gemma does, it will always be “something that pulls at me.” (Christopher 2009: 299) My unique background as a young immigrant to Australia, and the images of land I received through my early reading of Australian narratives, have resulted in continuous and heightened physical and creative engagement with Australian land. Furthermore, as a new immigrant, my absorption and understanding of portrayals of land has never been passive, as the process might have been for a native-born Australian. Instead, I have consciously engaged in understanding portrayals of land as part of a process of self-formation and in order to adapt. I believe this process has helped hugely in being able to write the environmental threads of this novel. Being aware of the well-established literary narrative that Anglo-Australia has in regards to its land - of being simultaneously scared and excited by it - has influenced the themes I have chosen to explore in *Stolen*. It can be seen in how I portray land as both terrifying and beautiful, and in how I portray Ty and the novel’s central relationship as both seductive and dangerous.

Writing *Stolen* has helped me to realise the powerful impact of place: upon the way characters can be written, upon readers’ understanding of theme, and upon an author’s creative process. Most of all, I have understood the sense of security provided by being lost, when ‘being lost’ is a set of central, shared, cultural assumptions and beliefs. Hughie, the New Zealander Barrister in Chatwin’s seminal, meditative text on Australian desert, *The Songlines*, also remarks “dreamily” on the concept: “Yes, it’s a lovely place to be lost in. Being lost in Australia gives you a lovely feeling of security.” (1998: 47)

The concept of ‘being lost’ within a strange land is central to Anglo-Australia’s historical and cultural narratives, to its cautious hopes and dormant fears. This has stemmed from the early settlers’ relationship with land and still continues to the confused, dualistic position of how Australia views its environment. Today, Australian wild land is simultaneously praised and glorified as ‘home’ in patriotic advertisements, like the famous Qantas ‘I Still Call Australia Home’ advertisements (1998-2009), and lambasted in fear-mongering news stories when there is a missing person within it. Pierce talks about a relationship between Australia, loss, and land: “the lost child is the symbol of essential if never fully resolved anxieties within the white settler communities of this country.” (1999: xi)

Ultimately, I can view *Stolen* as a symbol of essential if never fully resolved anxieties of my own: anxieties about adapting to a new land, and anxieties concerned with notions of

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belonging and home. Both Gemma and I are the lost children: *Stolen* is the vehicle that helps us find ourselves.

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Lucy grew up in Australia, but now works at Bath Spa University, where Stolen was part of her PhD in Creative Writing. Stolen won the Branford Boase Award, the Gold Inky Award and received a Printz Honor Award. It was shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Literary Awards and the CBCA Book of the Year for Older Readers, and longlisted for the Carnegie Medal.

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Pink and the Queer Heterotopia

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ABSTRACT

This paper will examine notions of identity and sexuality in contemporary YA literature, through the writing and reception of the author's young adult novel *Pink*. Much existing young adult fiction exploring sexuality adheres to the essentialist binary of "gay or straight", focussing primarily on "coming out" narratives. *Pink* views the question of teenage sexuality through a queer lens, eschewing identity politics and opening sexuality – and more broadly teenage identity – up to reinterpretation and resignification. The paper will argue that it is a series of heterotopic spaces in the novel that allows the protagonist to transform and become liberated into an empowered, queer subject.

Keywords

Queer theory, adolescence, sexuality, heterotopia, creative practice, young adult literature

Introduction

It has always been my aim to write literature about intelligent, funny, flawed young women. I see the romantic comedy as an ideal vehicle for exploring complex notions of identity and community, without resorting to the 'problem novel' bleakness and melodrama that dominated the YA market in the 1970s and 1980s. Literature doesn't have to be sad to be serious, neither does it have to be obfuscatory in order to speak profoundly about the nature of self and Other. This paper will explore my own novel, *Pink*, through the lens of Foucault's theory of heterotopia, situating the book within the wider framework of queer texts for teenagers, and detail my attempts to offer a model for identity that is fluid and liberatory.

Pink was published in Australia in 2009 by Allen & Unwin, and in the USA in 2011 by HarperCollins. It is the story of Ava, a sixteen-year-old girl who, at the beginning of the book, has decided to move to an academically outstanding school to escape her rebellious, controlling girlfriend Chloe. Ava tries to force herself into a mould of typical heterosexuality, falling in with a new group of preppy friends (the Pastels) and setting her sights on a good-looking boy (Ethan). But a failed audition sees her joining the school's stage crew, where she is drawn to an unlikely group of misfits (the Screws). Ava attempts to maintain three distinct identities to fit in with these three social groups - Chloe and her

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friends from her old school, the preppy Pastels, and the misfit Screws, but is ultimately unsuccessful, forcing her to define herself.

With *Pink*, I wished to explore the idea of teen sexuality, and craft a response to the traditional YA coming-out novel. In these stories, the binary of sexuality is upheld. Even in more recent examples of YA fiction dealing with bisexuality, such as Alex Sanchez's *Boyfriends with Girlfriends* (2011), the characters are consumed with finding the answer to that one question: *Am I or aren't I?* Frequently novels flirting with ideas of bisexual attraction resort to a *Twelfth Night*-style revelation that the seemingly-same-sexed object of affection was cross-dressing, and the protagonist is ultimately reassured that their affections were heterosexual all along, such as in Meg Rosoff's *What I Was* (2008). Maureen Johnson's *The Bermudez Triangle* (2004) explores a particularly intense female friendship that is initially heterosexual, but becomes briefly homosexual before imploding, concluding with one girl identifying as gay and one as straight. Although the novel features shifting sexualities, it ultimately implies that while you can *experiment* with sexuality, you are ultimately in one category or another. There are few YA novels that genuinely interrogate the sexuality binary, and offer an alternate view of fluidity.

Pink attempts to subvert the gay/straight binary (with *gay* always assuming the role of Other) by placing rigid definitions of sexuality in heterotopic spaces, allowing them to transform and become fluid. Loathe as I am to identify a "message" in *Pink* (I am not of the belief that YA literature should be any more morally instructional than any other kind of literature), if there is one, it's that you don't ever have to put yourself in one identity box, and you *really* don't have to do it when you're sixteen.

The Gay Utopia

David Levithan's *Boy Meets Boy* (2003) is set in a utopian town where homosexuality is not regarded as Other. Protagonist Paul explains that the straight and gay culture "got all mixed up a while back, which I think is for the best" (2003:9). Everyone is accepted and celebrated for who they are - even the homecoming queen is also the school's star quarterback. A utopian text, explains Ruth Levitas, describes "how we would live and what kind of a world we would live in if we could do just that" (2010). The agony of defining one's own sexuality and expressing it for the first time to one's friends and family is absent from *Boy Meets Boy*, or at least it is for the characters who can comfortably fit into a box of their own choosing.

Utopian literature cannot help but reflect the 'real' world outside the novel. When an ideal, utopian society is presented, the reader cannot help but view it in comparison to reality (Pattee 2008:157). By presenting us with a world where homosexuality is celebrated and normalised, we call into question the conditions in our own society that prevent this from happening. Thus, without validating the existence of the heteronormative binary, novels like *Boy Meets Boy* nonetheless acknowledge that it exists.

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The one character who genuinely struggles with his sexual identity in *Boy Meets Boy* is Kyle, a boy who had a brief relationship with protagonist Paul, but rejected him for a string of girls. On three occasions in the novel, Kyle comes to Paul for advice and comfort, explaining his confusion. Paul admits in the narration that bisexuality is not as acceptable in this utopian town, even though he personally has no problem with it. He attempts to comfort Kyle:

‘We could call you an ambisexual. A duosexual. A—’
‘Do I really have to find a word for it?’ Kyle interrupts. ‘Can’t it just be what it is?’
‘Of course,’ I say, even though in the bigger world I’m not so sure. The world loves stupid labels. (2003:108)

It seems that even in Paul’s utopian world, there is no place for a fluid sexuality. The novel ends with a hint of a possible relationship between Kyle and Paul’s friend Tony, but Kyle’s confusion and frustration at being labelled are unresolved. While a utopian novel like *Boy Meets Boy* can invert a real-world Same/Other binary, in order to truly interrogate the existence of that binary, we must turn to a heterotopic model.

The Queer Heterotopia

Vanessa Wayne Lee identifies three categories of novel that deal with lesbian sexuality; educational texts which attempt to normalise homosexuality, “coming out” texts which seek to formulate a homosexual identity, and finally ‘queer’, postmodern texts that “de-center, while problematising, issues of information and identity” (Lee 1998:152). It is in this latter category that I have attempted to situate *Pink*.

Queer theory repositions and deconstructs the idea of a “subject” or individual, “affirming the indeterminacy and instability of all gendered and sexed identities” (Salih 2002, quoted in Mallan 2009:9). Queer texts offer situations, characters and spaces which “undermine the fixed ‘natural’ status of the identifiers ‘heterosexual’ and ‘homosexual’, and thereby expose the reductiveness and constructedness of binarily defined sexual identity, ‘orientation’, and/or classification systems.” (Hall 2003:149-50)

Michel Foucault identifies the binary spaces in our society - private/public, family/social, cultural/utilitarian. He then identifies a space *between* the two binary poles, a space that is “in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralise, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror or reflect” (Foucault 1986:3). These spaces are not utopic or imaginary - they are heterotopic - real, physical spaces in which reality is subverted and transformation can occur. Rhiannon Bury highlights the liberatory nature of the heterotopic space - stating that even though it is often a space created to isolate deviance (such as a hospital, prison, brothel or school), the deviant individuals possess agency of their own, and the space of deviance also becomes a space of “resistance, inversion, subversion or perhaps simply a space in which active consent to normative practices is suspended.” (Bury 2005:17). It was this liberatory definition of

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heterotopia that informed the writing of *Pink*. I was intrigued by the idea that physical spaces could produce changes in people - by experiencing spaces that reject definition, that invert the everyday practices of reality, individuals could experience a similar challenge and inversion, freeing them from the rigid constraints of fixed identity. The link between heterotopia and queer theory has been made before (see Rambukkana 2007; Munt 2008; Pattee 2008; Jones 2009), and combining the two theories emphasises the empowering, emancipatory nature of the heterotopia.

In *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* (2000) Roberta Seelinger Trites explores the distinction between the *bildungsroman* - a literal coming-of-age novel where the protagonist moves from “error to truth, from confusion to clarity, from uncertainty to certainty (Tennyson, quoted in Trites 2000:12) and the more postmodern *entwicklungsroman*, a ‘novel of development’ where the transcendent goal of adulthood is not attained at the end of the novel. Instead the novel “self-consciously explore[s] the individual’s power in relation to the institutions that comprise her or his existence” (Trites 2000:19).

These three concepts - queerness, heterotopia and *entwicklungsroman* are central to *Pink*. The heterotopic spaces that the characters encounter provide opportunities in which queerness can be explored, resulting in development and transformation and thereby fulfilling the literary contract of the *entwicklungsroman*. I have attempted to write a novel that challenges the heterosexual/homosexual binary and allows young adults to see themselves as fluid and not defined by predetermined roles or labels.

Pink Heterotopias

In *Pink*, four overlapping heterotopic spaces form the spine of the *entwicklungsroman*: the Undercroft (the school stage crew’s storage/workshop space), a train station platform, the school theatre, and a cinema. Each of these spaces allows Ava to progress further on her journey of development, and ultimately allows for her transformation, subversion and liberation.

At the beginning of *Pink*, Ava is locked into a somewhat clichéd lesbian identity. Her academic parents are delighted to have such a subversive daughter and her femme girlfriend, Chloe, controls the way Ava dresses (black), the books she reads (intellectual) and the films they watch (French New Wave). But Ava is uncomfortable with her prescribed identity, and embarks upon a clandestine personal makeover - buying a pink cashmere jumper, washing out her black hair dye and moving to the ultra-progressive Billy Hughes School for Academic Excellence.

Billy Hughes was the Australian Prime Minister from 1915-1923, and during the course of his political career he changed political parties five times, was expelled from three, and represented four electorates in two states. Despite the school having such an itinerant namesake and progressive environment (the students share a common room with the

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teachers and call them by their first names), Ava finds Billy Hughes just as repressive as ever.

Instead of occupying a space outside the gay/straight binary of sexuality, Ava attempts to exist in both states simultaneously, withholding her relationship with Chloe from her new friends and lying to Chloe about her new straight identity. It isn't until she joins the stage crew that she begins to glimpse the possibility of a space *between*, a fluid, heterotopic space that allows for transformation, fluidity and development.

The Undercroft

Foucault identifies two main types of heterotopia - the crisis heterotopia, a “privileged or sacred or forbidden place, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis”, and the heterotopia of deviance, where “individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed” (Foucault 1986:3). Adolescent spaces are almost always both - teenagers are in a state of crisis, existing in an uncomfortable state between childhood and adulthood, and they are also often seen as deviant and in need of control and suppression. It can be argued, then, that adolescents are placed in these spaces because of their deviance, and their subsequent state of crisis allows for transformation and development.

The stage crew students spend most of their time in self-imposed exile, in the school Undercroft, the storeroom and workshop underneath the theatre. The Undercroft is where the sets are assembled and costumes are stored, a strange kind of no-place, sitting between the real world and the fiction of the stage. The Screws (as they call themselves) reject the rigid identities dictated by their sexuality, gender, race and upbringing. Jules is gay and loves musical theatre, but is careful not to align himself with the other gay students at Billy Hughes:

‘There’s two kinds of gay,’ Jules explained. ‘There’s normal-gay, which is people like me who happen to like boys, but are otherwise functioning members of society. And then there’s ghey-with-an-h. Gheys-with-an-h have shiny, shiny skin from too much exfoliating. Gheys-with-an-h constantly apply lip gloss - not lip *balm*, but lip *gloss*. Cherry flavoured... in conclusion, just because I’m a homosexual, doesn’t mean I’m a mincing queer.’ (55-56)

Kobe, similarly, rejects Billy Hughes’s Asian cliques. Ava realises that visual identifiers such as race result in associations and exclusions beyond the individual’s control:

When I’d wanted to change boxes and become pink and perfect, all I needed to do was change schools and buy some new outfits. Kobe couldn’t do that. People would always put him in the Asian box, along with everything that went with it. (150)

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The only Screw who is not comfortable with her self-defined identity is Jen, who is harbouring the secret that she is gay. She cannot truly develop until she has constructed her identity through discourse - the act of 'coming out' to Ava legitimises her homosexuality, and allows for a physical expression of sexuality to take place (starting a relationship with Bree). Trites notes that this identity-through-discourse is common in YA texts, stating that "words matter far more than actions in [the characters'] eventual self-affirmation" (Trites 2000:115). This, argues Trites, is one of the primary features of YA literature. Whereas children's literature focuses on largely on the Self, YA tends to interrogate the relationship *between* Self and society (Trites 2000:22). In YA literature, the 'coming out' process is fundamentally tied to identity - "a movement into a metaphysics of presence, speech, and cultural visibility... Or, put another way, to be out is really to be inside the realm of the visible, the speakable, the culturally intelligible" (Fuss 1991:4). When her newly-physical relationship with Mel is made public in Johnson's *The Bermudez Triangle*, Avery begins to question its legitimacy, and her own sexuality. Happy to experiment in the privacy of her own bedroom, Avery is uncomfortable with being labelled by her peers as a lesbian, and the relationship ends soon afterwards. Conversely, in *Pink* Jen knows who she is, but she must acknowledge it publicly before she can experience the heterotopia's transformative effects.

Ava finds the Undercroft and its denizens disturbing, as they seem to undermine the familiar constructs of Ava's world. The Screws are intelligent, but not academically successful. They are a clique comprising different sexualities, genders and ethnicities. Even their speech undermines the formality of language itself - they communicate using their own unique slang and verbal tics. They attempt to include Ava in their discourse, but she is uncomfortable and embarrassed for these individuals who so clearly sit outside the normal order of things. Ava finds her own syntax shattered - firstly when she confuses inches with centimetres, resulting in carpentry as skewed and distorted as the reality of the Undercroft - and secondly when she confronts Jules, calling him sexist for using the word *homosexual*, which she believes means *man-sexual*.

Sam shook his head. 'You're wrong. I mean, you're right in the sense that *homo* does mean *man* in Latin. But the *homo* in *homosexual* comes from the Greek *homo*, not the Latin *homo*.'

The History teacher hadn't mentioned that. Neither had Chloe.

'So?' I asked, suddenly not feeling so sure of myself.

'So *homo* in Greek doesn't mean *man*, it means *same*. Like *homogenous* or *homonym*. *Homosexual* means *same-sexual*.'

I tried to think of a witty comeback, but all I could come up with was *I know you are, but what am I?* (2009:68)

Ava's confusion around the discourse of sexuality and identity mirrors her own inner confusion. Her reaction to the Screws is hostile, embarrassed, uncomfortable. Jules, as the only openly gay member of the Screws, is a particular source of discomfort.

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I didn't understand Jules at all. He didn't fit in anywhere - with the gay kids or the straight ones - but I'd never met anyone who looked so... comfortable... I felt oddly jealous. (2009:65)

Although the transformative power of the heterotopia is already at work on the other members of Screw, Ava refuses to acknowledge its liberatory potential, remaining locked into rigid definitions of identity and struggling to maintain her dual, contradictory personas.

Dennis Station

Foucault identifies six principles of heterotopias, all of which are reflected in the idea of the train station. The train station is firstly a place of crisis, the point *between* the binaries of private/public and domestic/professional. Secondly, Foucault tells us that the functions of a heterotopia vary, and can be social. The third principle of heterotopia is that it "is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (1986: 4). Foucault singles out trains in particular as identifying this principle, as a train is "something through which one goes, it is also something by means of which one can go from one point to another, and then it is also something that goes by" (p.2). Fourthly, the heterotopia is linked to "slices in time" (p.5), operating via a rigidly determined timetable yet providing fluid, ongoing motion. Fifthly, heterotopias have "a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable" (p.5) - on a train station this is literally represented by ticket barriers and fences. The final principle of heterotopia is that it has "a function in relation to all the space that remains":

Either their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory (perhaps that is the role that was played by those famous brothels of which we are now deprived). Or else, on the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled. (1986:6)

When Dennis, the teacher in charge of the Screws dies, Ava is invited on a mission to honour his memory. The Screws travel to a small suburban train station, also called Dennis (it is a real train station in Melbourne). It is late at night and the station is empty but for the occasional passing train, surrounded on both sides by a strip of parkland. The Screws set to work, transforming the station into a festive celebration- with balloons, fairy lights, streamers and laminated photos of Dennis bearing the words *May He Rest in Awesome*. The Screws then picnic with ginger beer and cucumber sandwiches. In this festive-yet-functional, liminal-and-liberatory space, the normal binaries of everyday life start to unravel, and Ava begins to recognise the transformative power of the heterotopia;

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And then I knew what it would have been like... that feeling of being a part of something. Something wild and beautiful and a tiny bit wrong. It made me cry even harder, because I knew it wouldn't last... Tomorrow morning I'd wake up and go to school and pretend to be a Pastel with Alexis and Ethan, and I'd come home and pretend to be a lesbian with Chloe. (2009:180)

Although Ava returns home to her own confusion and rigid categories of identification, she has been affected by the power of the heterotopia, and her own process of transformation has begun. She still sees the Screws as deviant, but she is beginning to recognise the value of deviance, and its potential for liberation and becoming.

The theatre

Foucault identifies the theatre as a prime example of the heterotopia, bringing “onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another” (1986:6). But it is the backstage area of the theatre that is the *true* heterotopia, as this is a place *outside* the fiction of the stage and the reality of the audience. It is backstage where both reality and fiction are “simultaneously represented, contested and inverted” (1986:2). It is the place where scenes and costumes are changed, transforming place and character. It is also the liminal space where actors wait, somewhere *between* their everyday selves and the role they will assume when they walk out onto the stage.

Ava is seduced by the romance of the theatre, wishing herself on stage instead of behind it. Although she has glimpsed the transformative potential of the heterotopia, she still longs for a fixed identity. But Sam is aware that it is behind the scenes that true development and creativity happens:

‘They’re like children. They need the applause and the laughter and the lights shining on them. Our job is *much* more romantic. *We* are the strings that move the puppets. *We* make it all happen, silent and invisible. *We* don’t need the cheering or the flowers or the lights.’ (2009:207)

But despite the pull of the heterotopia, Ava still resists. She doesn't embrace her own transformation into a queer, fluid state, rather instability is thrust upon her when her lies are exposed.

The theatre is the space where the three social groups identified in the novel - the Pastels, the Screws and the lesbians, are overlaid upon each other, meeting and mingling in the same arena. The theatre exposes previously hidden secrets and connections within these three groups, and nobody leaves it untransformed. It is in the theatre that Jen comes out to Ava and reveals her erstwhile friendship with Alexis. Ava's own myriad secrets are revealed in front of the Screws, the Pastels and Chloe, and her refusal to

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accept the transformative power of the heterotopia results in her returning, once more, to exile.

This moment of “forced coming-out” is not a particularly unique or original one, featuring in virtually every same-sex romance story ever told. It is interesting, however to note that this moment often takes place in a heterotopic space. In Levithan’s *Boy Meets Boy*, it is at the top of a mountain, a place where suburban Tony sought refuge after his parents discovered he was gay. In Johnson’s *The Bermudez Triangle*, it is in the changing room of a shopping centre. Nina, the third friend in the group, who has been away all summer, walks in on Mel and Avery making out. The changing room is undoubtedly heterotopic - it is a place that is simultaneously private and public, where one literally *changes* - can take on another guise or identity. Willing or not, the heterotopia brings people’s secrets out into the open, allowing for growth and transformation.

The cinema

Despite her resistance, Ava leaves the theatre transformed. She has been rejected by all three social groups - the Pastels and the lesbians because her identity performance was revealed to be false, and the Screws because she couldn’t acknowledge and subvert her own performativity. In an act of desperation, she throws herself at Ethan at the cast party, but discovers that even his identity as the school’s Casanova is false - he is a virgin. Ava realises that regardless of her orientation, she doesn’t want an empty sexual experience with Ethan, and flees the party.

Left completely alone and unprotected by the walls of her self-constructed identity box, Ava is finally ready to accept the transformation offered by the heterotopic space. Determined to win her friends back, she reconciles with Alexis and together they attend a 24-hour science fiction marathon at a local cinema, where Ava knows the Screws will be in attendance.

Before the first film starts, estranged friends Jen and Alexis both appear miserable and uncomfortable, not speaking or looking at each other. But once the film (*Plan Nine from Outer Space*) begins, the space transforms:

‘Now!’ yelled Alexis and Jen together, and the theatre exploded into cheers and screams as the air filled with paper plates tossed high into the air, spinning and falling and whirling. The sleepy, quiet, morning-hating nerds erupted in an explosion of joyful activity. Everyone clapped and yelled and pounded their feet until I thought the whole place might come down. (2009:263)

In the cinema, the walls between the three social groups dissolve. Screw Kobe explores romantic possibilities with Pastel Ella-Grace. Jen starts a relationship with Chloe’s friend Bree, as well as rekindling her friendship with Pastel Alexis, who rediscovers her love of nerdy science-fiction. Ava’s social exile is lifted, and she is welcomed into this new,

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unstable social group that is fundamentally queer, as it “denaturalise[s] gender, sex and sexuality, [and] introduces an acceptance of diversity, and disrupt[s] the fixity of self-identification and community” (Hall 2003:165-66). It is in this space that Ava truly experiences the power of the heterotopia, accepting its power and becoming an active participant in her own development when she shares a lingering moment with Sam:

For a moment, I forgot all about Chloe and Jen and the Pastels and all the questions. For a moment, maybe for the *first* moment, I just felt like *me*. Sam was really *seeing* me, not some fake version of me. (2009:271)

Becoming-fluid

Several days later, Ava returns to the site of her first heterotopic encounter - the Undercroft. The Screws celebrate Ava’s triumphant return by wearing pink - a colour that Ava has variously rejected and embraced - initially seeing it as a symbol of heterosexual girlishness. The Screws have taught her that pink represents myriad and contradictory things, from pink elephants to pink slips to pinkeye, to the origins of the colour as an identifier of homosexuality in Nazi concentration camps during the Second World War. To Ava, the colour pink now represents fluidity and multiple sites of identification, as well as a visual representation of her new ability to embrace the things she loves because she loves them, not because they are signifiers of her membership in a particular social group.

Ava takes a moment to apologise to Sam, and to try and explain her confusion around her sexuality. It is during this discussion that she finally completes her transformation, and reaches the “empowering understanding that [she does] not have to fit [herself] into labels that are not comfortable” (Lee 1998:155).

I stared at Sam’s freckles. Maybe I didn’t have to choose for sure now. Maybe I never did.

‘I don’t know,’ I said.

It felt good, so I said it again. ‘I don’t know. I thought I wanted to date boys... Then I thought that because I didn’t really like Ethan, it meant I was definitely a lesbian. But now I think maybe he wasn’t the *right* boy. And I don’t want to *be* with Chloe anymore, but I think that’s also because she’s not the right *girl*.’ I sighed. ‘It took me a really long time to figure that out.’ (2009:287)

The conclusion of *Pink* was perhaps the most difficult part of the book to write, and went through many drafts. To be true to the traditional narrative form of the romantic comedy, Ava would have to end up romantically entangled with Sam, but this would undermine the queerness of the book by situating Ava within the heteronormative paradigm. The binary would have been similarly upheld if Ava had reunited with Chloe, as well as undermining the transformative effect of the heterotopias - as Chloe has no experience of the heterotopic spaces of the novel, she remains static and undeveloped, and it is difficult to imagine how Ava’s own transformation could continue with Chloe by her side.

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I was initially reluctant to leave Ava unattached, for the dual reasons that the narrative might seem romantically unsatisfying, and that I didn't wish to imply that Ava *couldn't* be in a relationship until she had a more fixed sense of identity. But ultimately it was the path of least compromise, and I've been delighted to find that feedback and reviews have been pleasantly surprised that the book doesn't end with a happily-ever-after style romantic conclusion.

Kimberly Reynolds posits that there are three "spheres" of YA fiction: "(1) books that trivialise adolescents, (2) nihilistic fiction, and (3) books that celebrate adolescent creativity and agency" (2007:77). Reynolds asserts that this third category of YA fiction has the potential to be transformative and offer "radical responses to culture" (2007:77). Like Trites and Reynolds, Bradford et. al. argue that YA novels about alternate world orders employ "transformative utopianism", and perform crucial cultural work by "challenging and reformulating ideas about power, identity, community, the body, spatiotemporal change, and ecology" (Bradford et al. 2008:2). It is in this third sphere that I have attempted to situate *Pink*.

The process that Ava undergoes in *Pink* isn't a movement towards a fixed, immutable goal - instead it is a process of development - the goal of the *entwicklungsroman*. Ava doesn't become a superhuman bastion of perfection at the novel's end - she still has many roads to travel, but her transformation has made her more capable of traveling them in an honest, empowered way. By the end of the book she has reached a place where she can acknowledge the open-ended nature of her own identity, and can move forward and explore the world and herself with liberated self-awareness and fluidity.

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Poetry in motion? Reality versus rhetoric in Australian children's poetry

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Abstract

Poetry is a literary niche that generates passionate advocacy in both children's and adult literature; yet it is the tenet of this paper that in Australia there is a disconnect between this advocacy and corresponding low levels of traditional print publishing, especially in relation to poetry for children and young adults. This apparent gap also leads me to ask a related question; how many young people truly connect with or have knowledge of the literary lore of poetry? Practitioners and lovers of poetry will no doubt concur with the view that the profile and value of both traditional and contemporary poetry from Australia and all countries and cultures is something worthy of being championed. In order to achieve effective sponsorship and valuing of the genre, however, I argue that we need to target funding for creators and publishers in ways that encourage publication, improve knowledge of poetry in schools and teacher education and stimulate poetry's appeal in popular culture. It seems logical to suggest that if communities and individuals are to be encouraged to value poetry as adults, then encouraging the appreciation and enjoyment of poetry in the younger years is crucial.

*Author's Note: While the focus of this paper is on children's poetry, many of the issues raised pertain equally to poetry in general as a genre.

Keywords

Children's literature, poetry, publishing, education, funding, anthologies.

Firstly, let me foreground my interest in poetry. I am a writer, poet and editor with a number of trade and education publishers in the children's verse and poetry genre; advocacy for literacy and creative arts education is a significant focus of my life as a teacher and educator. I have therefore taken great interest in what appears to be an upsurge of poetry events and activities in the programs and discourse of writers' centre blogs, literary websites and in the general discourse of both Australian and international

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literary fraternities. In Australia, this increased activity has synergy with the Australian Poetry Centre's metamorphosis into Australian Poetry and the combined efforts of passionate individuals and organisations as such as The Wheeler Centre, *If Books Australia*, the Australian Society of Authors and various regional and state literature groups and event organisers.

While this increase in poetry's profile is heartening for those who practice and enjoy the *poetic*, I am concerned that it perpetuates a fictional stereotype; that being the image of the independent writer / poet financially and creatively sustained by the practicing of their craft. While some might imagine and wish this scenario were true, I can't help but question if the enticing image of poets 'getting up and reciting three-minute poems to a rapturous audience' (Baker 2010:16) fits the reality for those struggling to achieve recognition, remuneration and publication in their *poetic* niche, particularly children's poets.

Recognition is a constant battle for those in children's literature and I have become increasingly aware of how 'lack of appreciation can lead to feelings of artistic insecurity' (Carthew 2010). It could certainly be argued that creating a successful children's book (defined here as a publication with first print run sales of at least 4000+ and available in established bookshops) is one of the more difficult tasks in publishing.

In addition, my personal experience with publishers' response to the consideration of children's poetry manuscripts (echoed in anecdotal conversations with author colleagues and children's poets) points to poetry, and especially children's poetry, being one of the harder areas in which to achieve publication. I suggest that this situation highlights the dichotomy between the literary community's championing of the importance of poetry as a genre, and publishers' lack of commitment to publishing in the genre. One example of this 'championing' is the proliferation of contemporary poetry prizes (with over fifty recently noted on the Australian Poetry Centre's (2011a) website), yet this positive promotion and profile contrasts with a view that mainstream publishers and booksellers are unwilling to support poetry with corresponding enthusiasm. Australian independent poetry publisher Brandl & Schlesinger comment:

Publishing poetry, as everyone knows, is not a profit making proposition, even with the kind support of the Australia Council, yet ...it makes a cultural contribution to our society. The print runs are too small to cover costs, often rarely over 500 and booksellers, with few exceptions, do not like to stock contemporary Australian poetry. (n.d.)

While quantitative figures of poetry publishing in either children's or adult genres in Australia are difficult to obtain, my own experience, echoing Brandl & Schlesinger's perspective is that children's poetry books nestle in a neglected backwater and are possibly only saved from drying up completely by the passionate efforts of dedicated educators, literary practitioners, small presses and an ever diminishing number of

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specialty bookshops or library suppliers. The Australian Society of Authors advice on *Writing for the Poetry Market* (Purcell 2009) reinforces the bleak picture:

The situation has also been harmed by the penchant for publishers to embrace economic rationalism, and abandon their commitment to areas now considered unprofitable - ie. poetry. Recently, even prize-winning poets with a book or two in the marketplace have had difficulty placing subsequent manuscripts (p. 5).

It is therefore worth reflecting on Michael Benton's pertinent question, 'How do we know that poetry is a neglected art?' (1978:112). Benton's question implies poetry has been previously 'successful'. Looking back, there can be no disputing the influence of literacy figures such as Edward Lear, C.S. Lewis, Lewis Carol, Michael Rosen, Dr Suess, Spike Milligan, Roald Dahl and Australasian legends such Max Fatchen, C.J. Dennis, May Gibbs, Dame Mary Gilmore, Henry Lawson, Colin Thiele, Michael Dugan, and Margaret Mahy. These authors and many others have had a significant impact on the literary psyche of children and adults alike, with their work being incorporated into courses studying both literature and writing technique. But where are the new and emerging poetic voices? And how many Australian children's poets would Australian children be able to name, let alone their teachers or their parents?

It could be argued that one reason for this is that marketing machines of major publishers and outlet franchises favours distribution practices that support the tried and tested appeal of familiar international names such as Roald Dahl or Dr Seuss. My regular activity of scouring children's poetry sections in Australian bookstores and retail outlets more often than not reveals a focus on the works of popular overseas poets and anthologists. Even though many of these authors are among my personal favourites, it nevertheless raises the question; does this apparent scarcity of contemporary and emerging Australian children's poets and anthologists on the shelves point to a lack of commitment to Australian voices?

While part of a much larger debate, such a question certainly adds weight to the suggestion that the answer in Australia and New Zealand is synchronous with market forces aligned with profit and multi-national distribution networks. This claim is central to concerns about product dumping in the recent parallel imports debate and fears that a focus on overseas products 'can make it much harder for new talent to come through' (Earls 2008:3). It also seems reasonable to suggest that the recent trend to celebrity publishing and movie tie-ins, no doubt influenced by the attraction of profit, is making literary-oriented genres such as poetry increasingly difficult to justify in Australian publishing proposals and acquisitions. This trend is arguably another factor adding further to poetry's demise in publishing lists and not just in Australia. In a recent interview, American poet and anthologist Lee Bennett Hopkins notes the decline of poetry anthologies:

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Anthologies of poetry for children have seen a dramatic decrease ...and certain publishers who once published collections simply will not take on additional anthologies (Hopkins, cited in Vardell 2011).

Similarly in Australia, a study by University of Queensland Press poetry editor Bronwyn Lea, 'uncovered a fall of more than 40 per cent in the number of poetry books published' (Lea, cited in Neil 2007). Discussing reasons for poetry decline in the USA, Hopkins goes on to say that permission costs, a trend to celebrity publishing and lack of commitment are all contributing to poetry's lack of list profile; and 'for a collection to work it has to have a strong backing from the house' (Hopkins, cited in Vardell 2011). Is this implied lack of backing based on a lack of faith in poetry's market appeal? A basic chicken and egg argument could be raised as an answer ie: marketing *can* and *does* create appeal with suitable business will and prioritisation; a look around an airport book shop or retail chain book department clearly demonstrates that principle. Having said that, I am certainly not advocating a form of simple popularism, but rather I am suggesting that one of the fundamental challenges for poetry advocates both in and outside of publishing houses is to explore ways of encouraging publishers to take on new poetry projects, take risks, publish new voices and to support those voices with due regard.

Contrasting the idea of the decline of poetry publishing however – is the notion of a revival, creating a situation identified by McCooey as paradoxical, where poetry is both 'thriving and merely surviving' (2005:24).

Lea's (2007) comprehensive analysis of poetry publishing in Australia reflects this contrasting viewpoint. Lea identifies a significant reduction in the number titles published over the period 1993-2000, evidenced by a reduction of 'about 100 titles' (2007:250); this however was juxtaposed with a strong sense of 'resurgence of poetry' (2007:251). Lea indicates that this resurgence is fostered by the belief in poetry by self-publishers and emergence of small presses with a commitment to the genre.

In discussing pockets of publishing industry belief in poetry, McCooey (2005) draws attention to the strategic positioning of passionate and committed poet-publishers in the small presses and literary journals such as *Salt*, *Black Pepper*, *Meanjin*, and *Blue Dog*; a situation interpreted as a dedicated literary vanguard fighting the reality of larger trade publishers, such as Angus and Robertson, Penguin and Heinemann dropping poetry and even established poets from their lists. Placing this viewpoint in an international as well as academic context, a recent Varsity College review of 'Poetry and Childhood' (Whiteley, Joy & Styles 2011) also notes that increasing 'academic interest is combined with growing enthusiasm among poets and fans of children's poetry' (Griffin 2011).

Citing an example of poetic proactivity, Griffin observes that in the UK, 'ex-Children's Laureate Michael Rosen has gone to considerable effort to keep poetry alive in a world where the way we read is constantly changing'. The effect of a similar laureate scheme (Australia Council for the Arts 2009) to be fashioned as part of the recent Australian

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Children's Literature Alliance initiative will be interesting to watch. Griffin's enthusiastic hope for the future of children's poetry, however, is also tempered with a reality check that notes a decline in the way that students and teachers perceive poetry in UK schools:

A UKLA survey of 1200 British primary schools found that 22 percent of teachers could not name a single poet and only 3 per percent reported that they had read poetry aloud to a class (Griffin 2011).

In Australia similar concerns are being raised. David Campbell, in a recent *Age Newspaper* article; *In a Land of Sweeping Plains, Poetry is Hardly Thriving*, raises questions about contemporary Australia's lack of interest in poetry, while drawing attention to education's role, claiming that 'some blame generations of teachers for being afraid of verse' (2011:11). Kelly likewise reinforces the pivotal nature of inspiring educative experiences, saying that in the past 'some children enjoyed their teacher's passion for poetry, while others were at the mercy of their teacher's indifference' (2005:129).

Both Campbell's and Kelly's observations of variation in teacher knowledge and passion for poetry highlights the importance of a much broader pedagogical discussion about the role of education and teachers in nurturing and developing student interests such as poetry. A point taken up by Ashley Capes and Graham Nunn (2010):

In too many Australian schools, poetry seems to be either optional in curriculum, ignored by teachers altogether, or misrepresented by a narrow field of focus. Perhaps worse than this, when poetry is presented in a classroom, it is often explored with a cold, analytical emphasis that does much to close off a reader's interaction.

If we accept these assertions the question is; how do we improve the situation? Initiatives such as poet laureate schemes, artists-in-schools programs and the push to re-affirm the value and role teacher librarians in literacy and literature education, (Gillespie, International Association of School Librarianship & School Library Association of Queensland 2010) are all part of the pro-active nurturing tapestry that has the potential to influence poetry's profile and public appeal. The establishment of Australian Poetry is a particularly exciting development and signposts the importance of strong and vibrant advocacy not just in education, but in the broader community. Launched in 2011, Australian Poetry is:

A merger between the Australian Poetry Centre and Poets Union based in NSW. It is the peak industry body for poetry in this country, based at the Wheeler Centre in Melbourne, with a charter to promote and support Australian poets and poetry locally, regionally, nationally and internationally (Australian Poetry 2011a).

With an expanding Poetry in Education Program and a range of innovative programs designed to engage and build audiences; writers, poets and literary advocates from around Australia will be hoping that Australia Poetry will encourage publishers and distributors of

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the *poetic* to invest in the genre. Essential to the success of poetry orientated education programs and initiatives is the belief ‘that for poetry to flourish in this country it needs to be taught and read from an early age’ (Australian Poetry 2011b), a notion central to overseas programs such as the Scottish Book Trust’s Writers in Schools program (Scottish Book Trust 2011). The value and benefits of exposure to poetry at an early age was demonstrated in a recent project with Eltham North Primary school in Victoria, where as guest poet and writer I was part of a program designed to raise awareness of poetry and stimulate interest in both poetry reading and writing. The children at the school were visited by poets and guided by their teachers to explore poetic forms, with the end result comprising not only the engagement with the *poetic* embedded in the learning experience, but the joy of a series of illustrated publications - *Building Bridges* (Eltham North Primary School 2010) - featuring examples of every child’s work:

Imagination

Imagination is sparkles
It smells like the pages of a book
It tastes like a sprinkle sandwich
It sounds like the wind whistling in my ears
It feels like flying
It lives in my pencil drawings

(Ally Collins, ‘Imagination’, first published in *Building Bridges*,
Eltham North Primary School 2010:52)

Original verse created by children is also a focus in events such as the Ipswich Poetry Feast (2011) in Queensland, an event attracting substantial support from the local council, library, business, schools and community:

Two Sticks and a Stretched Cowhide

I go out in the open air, with
Nothing but
Two sticks and a stretched cowhide

A flick of the wrist, a twitch of the arm and a stick moves through the air.
This just makes an ordinary sound,
But. ..

When I make some more of those plain sounds, I put them in a
Special order.
When I do that in the right way,
Something else begins to slip out from under the sounds.
Something in the rhythm that appeals to my whole,

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There's a wonderful, magical thing
And I feel
I am not alone.

Nature is with me, the grass, wind and trees
I feel them
Sway and rustle and blow,
As if in time to my
Two sticks and a stretched cowhide.
I have the world at my feet,
I have

My Drum.

(Jonah Myers, 'Two Sticks and a Stretched Cowhide', [First Prize - Ipswich District Teacher Librarian Network Award, 8-10 Years, 2010], in Ipswich Poetry Feast, 2011)

Such examples of engagement with word smithing from children provide hope for the future appeal of poetry— for those who read it *and* those who write it. Pro-active school and community programs also underline the importance of the educators who nurture creative risk taking and enjoyment of the form. Common sense tells us that children are the future creators, appreciators and consumers of artistic endeavour and these programs are the seeds from which ideas and understanding will grow. Kenneth Koch (1999) aptly describes the synergy between the educative and creative imperative:

Learning the language of poetry may be described as getting a “poetry base”. Once one has it, good things follow: one can read better, and, if one is a poet write better (1999:1).

This synergy is similarly highlighted in the advice to young poets provided by the late Michael Dugan, one of Australia’s most respected contemporary children’s poets:

Letter to a Young Poet

Love words,
play with them,
find the meanings of those you don’t know.
Learn to recognize
descriptive words,
reflective words—
all manner of words
for all manner of purposes.
Decide whether you like to write in rhyme
or in other forms.
Experiment,

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invent words,
invent forms,
harness ideas,
fish for images
and metaphors.
Express your ideas
in words and forms
that suit you.
Find your own voice
even if it takes hard work
and many hours.
Traveling to a poem
is a journey to be enjoyed.

PS: I meant to start with this but decided to finish with it:
Read other poet's poems, learn from them, and delight in them.

(Dugan, in Janeczko 2002:14-15)

While the propagation of poetry prizes, events and activities across age groups seems to be creating a sense of momentum in Australia, I suggest much more needs to be done at the product development and promotion end to help young readers and new audiences find delight in poetry. Well balanced educational programs need contemporary, regional and Australasian material as well as historical and culturally significant material from around the world.

A key issue for all concerned may lie in convincing Australian publishers that children's and young adult poetry can be attractive to the market and consequently a worthwhile investment. Australian author and children's poet Lorraine Marwood's achievement in winning the 2010 Prime Minister's Literary Award [Children's Fiction] for her verse novel 'Star Jumps' (Marwood 2010) is a strong indication that literary interest can compliment and stimulate market interest in poetic forms. As reported by Clark:

Ms Gillard acknowledged the important role books played in our creative culture, saying so often books gave life to other artforms, such as film, theatre, dance and opera. [...] She said new book sales stood at \$2.5 billion per annum, and 84 per cent of Australians were regular readers, including one in five who read poetry. (2010: np)

Such optimistic reporting of 'reading interest' seems strangely juxtaposed with the scarcity of poetry titles emanating from our major Australian publishers. Lea remarks:

It is important to note that the majority of poetry books are presently being published by small presses (including self-publishers) that often do not have

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sufficient access to resources, distribution and marketing to have their books noticed by readers. (2007:251)

Poetry slams, e-zines, festivals, workshops and writers blogs would appear to both creating and perpetuating an air of confidence about poetry, which is of course a good thing. The reality however is arguably less optimistic, leading to Lea's observation that 'the situation for developing and established poets *remains* [my emphasis] impoverished' (2007:251).

Writers in all genres are increasingly part of a global market and as such need to be internationally competitive and entrepreneurial; it seems, however, that the juxtaposition of positive promotion of poetry prizes, events and workshops against poor levels of mainstream publishing support is becoming even more noticeable as we move to an increasingly open market, with distribution networks of overseas products increasingly gaining market share. It could be argued that in order to foster and maintain our creative future, aspiring and existing Australian poets and publishers need a subsidy scheme molded in fashion of the NZ Translation Program (Publishers Association of New Zealand 2010) in order to provide publishing incentives.

On the other hand, it could also be argued that the propping up of any genre flies in the face of self-sufficiency and the natural selection processes of market forces.

The global resonance of this view is highlighted by Canadian arts commentator Michael Lista's (2011) call for 'a culling' of the overabundance in literary output and subsidy. In relation to Australian children's poetry however, I see little evidence of 'overabundant' publication subsidy, yet what does exist could certainly be argued as a crucial for encouraging some artists to practice their craft. A recent report into the effectiveness of subsidy from the Australia Council by Mclean, Poland & van den Berg notes, 'There is little doubt that Literature Board subsidies play a vital role in sustaining the publication of Australian poetry' (2010: 27). Furthermore, the report cites Giramondo publisher Ivor Indyk:

But it's the individual collections that mark out the stages of a career and that are essential to the poet's development ... and they are fundamentally uneconomical without a subsidy. So, in poetry, the relationship between the subsidy and the career is absolute and direct. (Indyk cited in Mclean, Poland & van den Berg 2010:27)

I suggest that there would be little disagreement with the view that arts funding schemes administered through the Australia Council and Australian State Governments and Territories are extremely competitive and as a consequence hard to obtain. Grants, however, are about targeted priorities and it is worth noting this year's Government of Western Australia (2011) website statement for their Publishing Assistance Program that 'applications supporting poetry are encouraged'.

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Discussion on this topic would be enhanced with greater access to industry facts and figures. Nielsen Bookscan and RMIT's School of Media and Communication's project to statistically map retail book sales in Australia from 2002 -2011 should provide a clearer view of book industry statistics:

It will provide year by year information and cross-year comparison for the top 500 books sold over the period, the top 250 books in each of the three level 1 categories (fiction, non fiction, children's/young adult), as well as the top 100 books in each of a number of other nominated categories (AustLit 2011).

Poetry, however, is difficult to track, as publication of individual poems occurs in such a broad a range of forums including magazines, newspapers, anthologies and increasingly in non-remunerated online blogs, zines, e-zines, websites and a multitude of non-traditional forums.

It will be informative in this context to see if data relating to these new media outlets can be meaningfully quantified. Regardless of facts and figures, the key point here is that publishers need to be supported to promote a variety of literary genres the market place, as publishers are still a vital part of the 'career landscape' for authors and creators in all genres. Traditionally publishing's end product is *publication* – and that, in all its modern day variations, is both a potential income stream and a way of providing artists with a public profile. Publication therefore performs a vital function in the personal career aspirations of creators as well as being a means of distributing information, artistic and literary ideas to the broader community. It is therefore essential that schemes to assist publication by Australian publishers and artists be continued and extended.

In Australia, traditional educational publishing outlets such as *The School Magazine*, published by The NSW Department of Education and Training, are also vital points of exposure for children's poets; but recently even this historically significant distributor of literature into the lives of Australian school children 'faces the threat of cutbacks' (Gwyther 2010). Now more than 95 years old, *The School Magazine* has supported the talents of a huge range of award winning and internationally regarded writers, artists and poets including Colin Thiele, Patricia Wrightson, Doug Macleod, May Gibbs and Max Fatchen. If publishers and distributors of children's poetry such *The School Magazine* disappear due to lack of funding or support, then so do opportunities for promoting poetry to children as our future readers and consumers.

Am I advocating artistic protectionism? Possibly, although I prefer to have it understood as a form of cultural and artistic investment that encourages Australian poetic talent to shine. I am not alone in this idea. Australia's Copyright Agency Limited (CAL) Director Brian Johns observes:

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Publishing has declined, critical attention has declined, but there is a good deal of public interest in poetry. The reality is that poetry's like opera; it has to be subsidised. (Johns cited in Wyndham, 2006).

It is well understood that one of the key functions of Arts and Literature support bodies is to encourage new ventures. Without assistance from these bodies and in the shadow of diminishing support for poetry in the lists of major commercial publishers, it is my fear that we will watch children's poetry in traditional print forms at least, placed on an endangered species list.

It is not, however, all gloom and doom;

There are significant rays of light evident in innovative activity focused on increasing the distribution and profile of Australian poetry for all ages. The commitment of independent poetry publishers, writer's organisations, educators and parents who propagate poetry, combined with the emergence of exciting new ways of sharing creative work via digital media, online forums and journals, websites and apps etc all provide alternatives to traditional print publishing. This is in turn opening up opportunities within an expanding raft of distribution platforms.

It could certainly be argued that new technologies associated with contemporary ways of thinking about marketing and modes of distribution is creating a far more level playing field for emerging, as well as established voices; an argument driven by the empowering of individuals to 'publish' and to access broad audiences in ways previously unheard of. Whether these new outlets and forums can adequately provide the opportunity for any sort of livelihood or career path for poets remains to be seen. One thing is assured, however; digital and contemporary ways of sharing creative experience and output challenge creators, business, education and literary communities to re-conceptualise 'publishing' as much more than just paper based books.

As I head to the UK to join practitioners and advocates of children's and young adult poetry at the 18th IBBY /NCRCL Poetry Conference (2011), I am buoyed by the energy evident in places such as Sedbergh Book Town where 'Poetry takes centre stage ... highlighting the growing interest in reading and writing poetry' (NAWE, 2011) and in organisations like Australian Poetry (2011b) with its marvelous array of programs, events, publications and prizes linked to local and global literary initiatives such as the city of Melbourne's designation as one of the UNESCO Cities of Literature (2008). Recent visitors to Melbourne may have even experienced poems accompanied by art on trains, trams or installations (*Moving Galleries: Melbourne Moving Through Art*, 2007), another example of empowering and innovative ways of promoting the *poetic*.

As we move into the National Year of Reading 2012 in Australia (2011) with a range of programs and activities designed to focus attention on the importance of books, literacy and reading; Australian writers and poets of all ages can be encouraged by initiatives that

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encourage the valuing of literature and poetry and with any luck, can find ways to have their words heard.

An excerpt from Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard's speech at the 2010 Prime Minister's Literary Awards provides a clear example of high profile advocacy extolling the value of Australian literature and why words and ideas matter:

I want every Australian to have the power of words and ideas at their command so that together we can "nudge the world a little." That is why it is so important to celebrate Australian writing and also Australian publishing. And to ensure that in Australia, books and ideas always have a home (Gillard 2010).

My hope, albeit tempered by pragmatic concern about the commitment to children's poetry in the commercial priorities of traditional publishing houses and distribution networks, is that publishers, arts funding organisations, educators and governments alike will match pro-active activity and rhetoric with publishing enterprise, programs and initiatives that encourage poetry written both for and by children.

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Crossing Borders in Faith and Culture: Writing *Marrying Ameera*.

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Abstract

Knowing one's cultural background helps with self-identity, and young people who have a high level of ethnic identity are less likely to be prejudiced towards others. This paper explores issues of cultural identity in relation to multiculturalism within my novel *Marrying Ameera*. I also draw examples from my other work, especially Cornish identity in *Zenna Dare* and Afghan identity in *Soraya the Storyteller*. The effects of displacement, culture shock, assimilation and racism become part of this discussion. Faith-informed writing is explored and how faith and culture impact upon each other, for example: Is it faith or culture which causes Ameera's father to arrange a marriage without her consent? The writing practice used to convey these themes effectively to young people such as character building with use of folktales, voice and audience is a pertinent area of the craft discussed with special reference to writing *Marrying Ameera*. One could ask, why write for children about asylum seekers, forced marriages and child trafficking, yet these themes have risen naturally from my own Australian identity and faith, and experiences of working in the Middle East.

Keywords

faith, culture, identity, Pakistan, *Marrying Ameera*, folktales

I was crossing the Azad Kashmir border on an Asialink Fellowship when the idea to write the young adult novel, *Marrying Ameera* was given to me. My husband and I had hired a flea-infested taxi with an English couple as the border was open due to a recent earthquake. 'We know the guy from the British Embassy who coordinates the Forced Marriage Unit in Islamabad,' the lady said. I stared at her in shock. 'Yes,' she continued, 'they make the run up here to Kashmir every week. They rescue a hundred British-Pakistani brides a year.' I could see it in an instant: a sixteen-year-old Australian girl with a Pakistani father and Australian mother, how she would become interested in an unsuitable boy and her father would send her to Azad Kashmir for a wedding she knew nothing of. Rarely does the initial creative inspiration hit me so hard or so clearly.

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This commentary of my observations and research on faith and culture with reference to *Marrying Ameera* and other YA works is written from the perspective of a practitioner rather than a theorist. Also, since the field of cultural studies is so broad, I use some definitions to narrow the discussion. By referring to culture I will mean learned and shared attitudes, values and ways of behaving (Grunlan & Mayers 1988:39). I will presume that worldview determines values (Hiebert 2008:28). Hiebert also states that basic assumptions about reality which lie behind the beliefs and behaviours of a culture are sometimes called a worldview (2008:45). Gallagher (1997) states that culture has an enormous impact on the quality and tone of religious faith, and also since culture involves an entire way of life shared by people, it is a source of solidarity and identity (1998:22). These statements and the one following show the close relationship between worldview, culture, faith and identity.

Religion plays a different role in different cultures but both influence one another: religion shapes a culture's system of beliefs and practices, while culture influences the way religion is interpreted...despite this close connection they can be separated in thought and practice (Parekh cited in Arweck & Nesbitt 2010:72).

The ensuing discussion will show how such a distinction can be made.

Ethnic Identity

Ivey & Payton (1994:153) suggest that ethnic identity can be defined as an acquired sense of oneself and/or group as cultural beings, both emotionally and cognitively. It is part of the process of making meaning in cultural and social contexts and involves varying degrees of identification and commitment. Ethnic identity development often refers to the process of increasing individual and group understanding of one's own cultural background. In the construction of a Cornish identity theory, Ivey and Payton argue that the development of Cornish cultural identity should enable a Cornish person to feel proud of self and proud of Cornwall, but also proud and respectful of relationships with other groups (94:155).

I am a fourth generation Cornish-Australian, just as Ameera is a second generation Pakistani-Australian. Exploring one's cultural background fosters self-identity development and this idea fired the young adult novel, *Zenna Dare* (Hawke 2002). In *Zenna Dare*, sixteen-year-old Jenefer successfully unravels a family secret and in doing so, finds a Cornish identity that she never knew she had. In the children's novel, *Soraya the Storyteller* (Hawke 2004) the ethnic identity explored is Afghan. Twelve-year-old Soraya keeps her Afghan identity alive through stories, but also learns to belong in multicultural Australia.

Research evidence suggests that people of all cultural backgrounds who have reached higher stages of ethnic identity development are more likely to have better mental health and to possess lower levels of prejudice and racism (Ponterotto & Pedersen 1993:88). I have observed that people less sure of their cultural background are more likely to express

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prejudiced attitudes towards others. Jenefer in *Zenna Dare* (2002) realises and addresses her own prejudice once she develops a stronger ethnic identity. Psychologist Germain (2004) also notes that minority culture individuals who have not examined and resolved issues relating to their cultural identity will exhibit lower self-esteem and may experience adjustment problems (2004:135). In *Marrying Ameera*, Ameera believes she has a Pakistani identity which includes being a Muslim, but throughout, she undergoes an adjustment in this thinking as she grapples with distinguishing between faith and culture. Although she is not prejudiced, for the reasons the research above outline, her father is.

Culture and Faith

In Pakistan I observed that Islam permeated every aspect of a person's life, from politics and education to what clothes were worn and what food was eaten. I saw no evidence of faith and culture being distinguished from each other. This is supported by Fazal (1989) in discussing ethnic identity of Afghans in Australia: 'Social and political lives are always influenced by their [Afghans'] religious beliefs (1989:126). It has also been shown that Muslims have problems forming an ethnic identity in a country where the dominant religion is not Islam (Constant et al. 2006:11). This certainly echoes the experience of Ameera's father. He sees his faith as his way of life; he teaches Ameera of his faith and culture by telling her folktales, sharing the Qur'an and traditional literature in an effort to keep her Pakistani and Muslim. In this way Ameera learns how important submission, obedience and virginity are, and how she will have an arranged marriage. She is physically and morally protected: she can only watch certain films and none with sex scenes, and is not allowed to date. Yet she subliminally absorbs influences from Australian media, music and attitudes from friends.

Once Ameera crosses the border into Azad Kashmir she discovers how little she actually knows of Pakistani culture. She has been taught values of obedience and respect but doesn't totally understand honour and shame. Pakistani culture emphasises a public group/family-orientated open hospitality which she isn't used to. Nor does she appreciate the Pakistani way of ignoring the individual's rights in favour of the family's benefit. Even Shaukat, Ameera's groom, criticises her, for being so Western. Ameera, despite her father's efforts, has assimilated into Australian culture more than she realises and finds herself in a state of culture shock in Pakistan. Experiences such as being beaten by her cousin and having her passport and phone confiscated further give Ameera the sense of her freedom being stifled.

Culture Crisis

Immigrant youth are often caught between two worlds in a clash of cultures (Ngo 2008:4). Ngo also states that culture and identity are in a continuous process of change (2008:10). Pearce (2006) agrees in that Muslim girls in Australia struggle for an identity which is not fixed but continually evolving and adapting to new circumstances (2006:60). Although modernity in a Western culture means social freedom, Ameera's father does not want this freedom for his daughter as, in his understanding, this could prove to be morally deficient

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for her. The secular Western society in which he is raising a teenage daughter becomes a source of stress. Worldviews usually provide a source of security that the world is truly as we see it but people experience a crisis in worldview when there is a gap between their worldview and their experience of reality (Hiebert 2008:30). Ameera believes her father has become so strict because of culture stress. Even though she becomes a victim in a clash of values, Ameera states 'I still love Papa, even after what he did. I understand enough to know he was acting out of his fear and insecurity within a Western environment' (Hawke 2010:283). Activist Ayan Hirsi Ali, who also refused an arranged marriage and now lives with a fatwa on her life, would go further than this. She believes Muslims like Ameera's father can easily revert to traditionalism because 'the prehistory of radicalism is a soft brainwashing in submission - the real meaning of Islam - from birth' (2010:142).

Faith or Culture?

Jacobson's (1997) research into faith and ethnicity among young British-Pakistanis shows enlightening results which highlight Ameera's situation. It was found that many young British-Pakistanis believed faith and ethnic identity offered different modes of self-definition (1997:239). There is a growing tendency to emphasise a distinction between faith and ethnicity as sources of identity. Just as respondents in the research stressed that faith plays a more significant role than ethnic identity in their lives so Ameera comes to this conclusion. One of the justifications for this distinction is that Islam has universal relevance and is not tied to any particular culture, and also that ethnicity is perceived as an attachment to traditions or customs (1997:240) which are often non-religious in origin, such as arranged marriages. One respondent said 'Most things we tend to do are culture, not religion. Religion is five times a day prayer, being good, whereas culture is getting married in red and arranged marriages' (1997:242). By observing prayer times and abstaining from alcohol or pork the young British-Pakistanis are engaged in a collective process of faith-boundary construction (1997:251). In this way they maintain a sense of difference and distance from non-Muslims, and the social boundaries outlining ethnic identity are less clear-cut (1997:253). I suggest it is the young people born of Diaspora and who need to negotiate new ways of coping in a host country who are more able to make this distinction. Ameera's counselor says 'So far, only Western girls like you have the strength or resources to leave a forced marriage' (Hawke 2010:268). After much soul searching about whether, as her father warns, she would lose her faith, Ameera is forced to give greater credence to her faith and thus to distinguish between the universalism of Islam and her Pakistani culture.

I asked a Pakistani-Australian teenager if Ameera was correct in thinking a Muslim could distinguish between faith and culture. She said 'God gives us permission to defy our parents if what they are saying is going against the true teachings of Islam. You can definitely achieve the idea of a separate faith and culture - but it is very hard. But in the end: faith and culture are two totally different things' (2011, pers. comm., 26 Jan). Faith doesn't exist in a vacuum as the research evidence here shows; faith, culture and identity are closely intertwined. As academic Graham Buxton states, 'Faith finds

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expression in culture; culture expresses diversity of human life. Faith may even arise from culture but not necessarily be culture-based' (2011, pers. comm., 20 Aug). Ultimately, Ameera decides that certain practices her father enforced on her, such as a forced marriage, are cultural rather than faith-based.

Mixed Marriage

Not only is Ameera the product of a mixed-culture marriage but of a mixed-faith one as well. This is an added complication for Ameera, and one which other, similar protagonists, such as Amal in *Does My Head Look Big in This?* (Abdel-Fattah 2005), don't have to deal with. Amal is a sixteen-year-old Palestinian-Australian and both her parents are strong Muslims. She struggles to find her identity in a host culture with non-Muslims friends, yet manages to explore her faith-identity to the extent of wearing the hijab full-time. Ameera, on the other hand, has the influence of a sub-culture within the home: her mother's Christianity. This is one of the reasons Ameera does not wear hijab full-time as her friend Raniya does. Neither Raniya, nor I suspect, Amal, would contemplate using her mobile phone to ring a boy as Ameera does.

Arweck & Nesbitt explore religious transmission in British families where the parents have different faiths. Transmission concerns the way parents pass on their religious attitudes and behaviours to their children (2010:68). They found transmission of faith to be strongly linked to 'socialisation - the process of acquiring core beliefs and practices of a social or religious community (2010:68) and decided the family remains the primary influence on religious preferences (2010:70). When we returned from Pakistan our children ranged in age from fourteen to ten. They missed Pakistan so we joined the Pakistan Association in Adelaide. At that time in the early 1990s there were approximately thirty Pakistani families in the association and I observed that in any mixed marriages the children were raised Muslim. Arweck & Nesbitt also found that the more religious spouse has more influence over the direction of change in the other spouse (2010:83) and therefore, I suggest, over the children's faith as well. This is the case in Ameera's family; although her mother has not converted to Islam she has consented not to confuse the children by openly disagreeing with her husband. This didn't always work as Ameera can remember when 'Mum had tried not to let her beliefs influence Riaz and me, but it was impossible not to see the flickers of disbelief that crossed her face at times' (Hawke 2010:21).

Arweck & Nesbitt also found also that grandparents had an important role in faith transmission in a family. In this case Ameera is influenced more by her mother's Christian parents, as her father's mother is in Azad Kashmir. Ameera also finds, to her surprise, that her paternal grandmother is not Muslim, but Hindu, and she gives Ameera advice on how to handle an unwanted groom that I suspect a Muslim grandmother would not have offered.

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Forced Marriage

Arranged marriages can work well. Even my eldest daughter, who grew up in Pakistan, could see the benefits. There were variations on the theme in Pakistan. Ideally, marriages were arranged between families with similar educational, social and economic backgrounds. I knew women who had not met their husband before marriage, and a few who coyly said their husband ‘asked for them’. I only met one who married ‘for love’ and that couple was ostracised by their families. Abuse of the system occurs when young people are forced to marry when they haven’t given their consent. There has been a law against this in Pakistan since 2007, but it still occurs. In many areas of Pakistan there is a clan or cultural honour system where a family is shamed if a girl doesn’t obey her parents or if she does anything they consider immoral. So there is much emotional, psychological, and often physical pressure on the girl to marry the family’s choice (Hawke 2010:289).

Every year the Forced Marriage Unit in Britain has thousands of enquiries, and saves 300 people from forced marriages (Richings 2006). About a third are under eighteen years of age, some as young as eight, and fifteen percent of cases involve young men (Manchester 2007). In 2007 the British Forced Marriage Unit in Islamabad rescued 131 girls from forced marriages (Buchanan 2008). In Australia in 2005 tough laws were introduced to prevent young people being sent abroad to engage in forced marriages. A dozen girls under the age of eighteen, one only fourteen years old, sought help from the Australian consulate in Beirut (Mercer 2005). More recently a seventeen-year-old girl contacted police to be put on the airport watch list as she didn’t want to go to Lebanon for a marriage (Overington 2010).

The British Forced Marriage Unit’s slogan is ‘You have a right to choose.’ This is a Western value and not a Pakistani one and yet, Ameera finally chooses to disobey her father by leaving the marriage. Her Pakistani family believes her mother’s influence caused this; her father also blames her Christian ‘boyfriend’, Tariq. The British-Pakistani girls I researched (for examples, see Walsh 2006) may not have had Christian mothers but they went to British schools, had British friends, and many had boyfriends. And even though I hadn’t read Jacobson’s research when writing *Marrying Ameera*, it supports the decision that Ameera makes to distinguish her cultural identity from her faith. Added to this is the assurance given by the Pakistani counselor once Ameera is rescued, who asserts Ameera did no wrong by refusing to submit to domestic abuse.

Ameera’s father found a suitable husband for Ameera but I knew her husband shouldn’t be a caricature or stereotype. The adult novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (Hosseini 2007) describes a forced marriage in Afghanistan with the husband as distant and brutal. The book was reviewed on the Australian Broadcasting Commission’s *First Tuesday Book Club* (2007) and one reviewer thought the husband, was a stereotyped character. Probably Hosseini was writing the truth he saw, though Baranay (2004) states that the novelist is ‘well advised’ to disengage from any discourse based upon ideas of the Other that inhibit the characters that desire to be written (2004:7). Shaukat, Ameera’s husband, is not an

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evil man, thus complicating her internal struggle with her faith. An evil man would have made it easier to choose freedom. Other young adult texts including a forced marriage are Suzanne Fisher Staples' *Daughter of the Wind* (2002), which portrays an arranged marriage in rural Pakistan; Frances Hendry's *Chandra* (1995), which is based on a true story of a woman the author met in India. Gloria Whelan's *Homeless Bird* (2001) is set in India and depicts character Koly's forced marriage to a sickly boy who dies. Yet *Marrying Ameera* (2010) is the first young adult novel I know of to show a forced marriage within a contemporary Western cross-cultural context.

Creative Choices

As in all fiction, choices had to be made in order to tell Ameera's story; One was to decide whether I, as a non-Muslim, could cross a boundary from my faith and culture to tell it. As Sallis points out 'Discomfort with lack of authenticity and lack of authority could easily dominate a readership which searches too rigidly for one's right to write' (1999:4). I decided the research I had undertaken plus seven years of living in the culture would suffice, along with Ameera's mixed parentage. Baranay states 'Writing an Indian character as a non-Indian raises issues that arise out of this cultural moment of anxiety over representation, appropriation, identity politics and so on' (2004:4). It can be beneficial to have a distance of observation. 'Empathy and intimacy are two types of inquiry into the other...having empathy and having the distance that comes from not being a member of whatever groups can be a powerful tool for observing' (McDonnell, cited in Baranay 2004:7). This is encouraging for, even though Ameera has an Australian mother, I was concerned about the authority some readers believe an author should possess. Also encouraging is this message from a Muslim teenager: *Marrying Ameera* is 'a truly life-changing read ... A perfect depiction of the Pakistani culture and all other attributes of a Pakistani-Australian teenage girl' (2011, pers. comm., 26 January).

'To realise our cultural others requires that we live behind the context and the slang and beyond ourselves...we must become the observer from within' (Sallis 1999:3). Writing across a cultural border demands more than getting the setting or cultural details right. To write Ameera's anguish I needed to feel her pain in wanting to marry for love, while understanding this view isn't considered a Pakistani value. Even though I try to honestly record what I see, I was concerned lest my worldview try to sneak underneath Ameera's, but I decided any 'mistakes' Ameera makes could be blamed on her mother who isn't Muslim. Certainly Ameera's cousin Haider attributes Ameera's 'Western-ness' to her Christian mother and therefore a 'kacha' (faulty) upbringing. Above all, Ameera's story had to be paramount. The research would not allow the story to be believable if it interfered with the fiction, but I hope that, to borrow a phrase from Madeleine L'Engle (1980:23), it served the story as I tried to do. Over two years I developed the characters and plotline using my creative journal and mind maps, writing, selecting, and re-writing the story with layers of cultural nuances, like watercolour wash.

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Voice & audience

It took some time for Ameera's voice to come to me. I couldn't start without it so I experimented with both third person and first person by having her write in my journal. I knew Ameera did not have a slangy, upbeat voice. Her voice would be her own: the product of her upbringing in a mixed marriage within a host culture that neither of her parents totally embraced, her father least of all. Most of her friends are from minority groups as well. She knows a little Urdu but not enough to feel at home in Pakistan. When her voice finally appeared on the page (I don't know how this happens except to work at knowing the characters so well they will define everything: voice, plot and even structure) I decided to write Ameera's story in first person. In so doing the text engages with the sympathies of many of the other characters as well.

Young adult novels often deal with identity and coming of age themes, which may be, as Aronson (1997) suggests, a better way of defining YA literature than by the age of the readership. It is rare to find a unified agreement on what that YA readership is. Owen (2003) states 12-18 is the group YA literature is written for and within this are two categories: 12-15 and 15-18 years. There are also the crossover novels, such as Markus Zusak's *The Messenger* (2002) that are marketed as YA as well as adult.

My work in progress, *Mountain Wolf*, tells the story of fourteen-year-old Razaq from tribal Pakistan who is sold into slavery. The themes of trafficking and abuse in this story as well as the marriage and rape scene in *Marrying Ameera* enable the novels to fit easily within the more challenging contemporary writing in this field. The rape is the ultimate betrayal for Ameera who has been brought up to value virginity; in every way she is forced. When she dons the burqa her husband insists she wear, she watches herself vanish. 'I had disappeared in so many ways since I left home; this was just one more (Hawke 2010:255). The rape is the symbol of all that is taken from her and so in a creative and narrative sense the story demands it. I tried to avoid it, but then realised I had no choice either: this is what happens to Ameera, and has probably happened to other forced brides even though they rarely admit it.

Folktales in *Marrying Ameera*

The imagery in the novel grew from the folktales. The tales are included to gain an understanding of Ameera's upbringing, how she thinks, and why she makes her decisions. The way people view the human story are embedded in their myths, ie the grand narrative in which history is embedded (Hiebert 2008:27). In this way the cultural stories Ameera's father told gave meaning to her identity and showed the power of love and how it can cross borders of culture and faith.

Ameera's paternal grandmother's account of the Sikh singing a verse from 'Hir and Ranjha' on a train during the 1947 Partition shows the power of a story to affect others across cultures. The folktales are not only sources of entertainment and show heritage but

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promote communal harmony among people of different faiths by creating shared understandings of life and providing common frameworks for moral and cultural discourses (Asani 2004:32). On one level all the stories are one story, a universal story of love, hope and perhaps the mystical idea of the lovers' reunion with the divine (Quraeshi 2004:59). 'Hir and Ranja', the story included in the beginning of the novel, echoes Ameera's own story and is often spoken of as a mystical allegory within Islamic mysticism (Asani 2004:32).

A recurring theme in the folktales is the conflict between law and love. Each tale Ameera remembers tells of a love that defies the traditional boundaries of faith and culture. 'The overwhelming power of love breaks all fetters with which the traditional law surrounds the individual and society' (Schimmel 2004:17) and so the lovers must pay with their lives if they cross the borders that lawful society imposes on them. Family honour is strictly observed in Pakistan and so the true lover is an outcast, and the woman, as custodian of the family honour, who follows the path of love must pay with her life. When Ameera crosses this border by choosing to love Tariq she becomes an outcast to her father and Pakistani family.

The Indus River dominates the tales. Even in the desert tales water or the lack of it is evident in the plot. Sand is seen as water's opponent as in the story, 'Sassi and Punnu' (Quraeshi 2004). Water is the source of life and of growth and of identity, yet it can take life as 'The Girl Who Cried a Lake' depicts (Pomme Clayton 2004). Water is a sign of God's blessing; monsoon rain is evidence of this blessing and so it rains as Ameera is taken from the marriage. *Marrying Ameera* has a motif of water throughout just as the Indus flows through the folktales and Pakistan itself. Music and love are also intertwined in the tales, however Ameera's father has an aversion to modern music as it distracts the listener from his/her religious or social duties.

In my creative journal Ameera ponders the tales: 'Tariq and I may not die in a sandstorm or drown together in a river but there will be sacrifices for the trials our forbidden love will set for us' (Hawke 2007:52). She is correct about the trials and sacrifices, but she doesn't realise the extent of them. There are no easy answers for Ameera: whatever she chooses she will lose someone she loves.

Faith-informed writing

Faith-informed scholarship is a more inclusive term to use than Christian or Islamic scholarship. 'It is more modest and less likely to accentuate differences among faiths' (Marsden 1997:10). Since, as Marsden points out, faith in something or other informs all scholarship, so 'faith-informed' emphasises that belief systems built around religious faiths should have equal standing with other worldviews (1997:10). I have applied Marsden's term to creative writing and now call my own writing faith-informed, writing with characters following genuine paths, with some like Ameera, making faith-informed choices and conclusions.

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Randa Abdel-Fattah (2006) in her young adult novel *Ten Things I Hate About Me* also displays faith-informed writing. Jamie is a 'bottle' blond hiding her Lebanese-Muslim heritage at school. *The Last Virgin in Year 10* (Hawke 2004) has a similar theme where a Christian fourteen-year-old girl, Caz, hides her talents and faith-identity at high school so as to fit in. Catholic novelist Flannery O'Connor states that Christian dogma is not a hindrance to the writer but it respects mystery and sets the fiction writer free to observe (1984:178). Since I believe in the worth of every human being I endeavour to write the truth of what I see, as I attempt to create beauty and leave room for hope. These traits grow from my faith heritage.

Concluding remarks

Through observation and research in faith, culture and identity I have written stories which show characters' explorations of culture and faith, whether it be finding a sense of belonging and identity as in *Zenna Dare*, or learning how to deal with prejudice as do Soraya in *Soraya, the Storyteller* and Jaime Richards in *Borderland*. I have usually written of displaced characters ultimately finding this identity and belonging. Ameera, however, begins her story in *Marrying Ameera* with a healthy, ethnic identity but the trauma of a forced marriage drives her to rethink the effects of faith and culture in her life as she struggles to distinguish between them and so finally becomes displaced. Ameera's story became a journey of my own in what Sallis (1999:5) calls the process of inner transformation. That journey for Ameera, as well as for me, involved crossing borders in culture and faith.

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Playing at Growing Up: YA Fiction in Contemporary India

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Abstract

This survey essay on Indian YA fiction focusing on the 'growing-up' novel in contemporary India first examines the two main sub-genres: what I call the 'feel-good' novel and the 'problem' novel. It argues that 'Indian' in these texts translates into urban middle-to-upper class and the novels tend to sanitize the worlds inhabited by the YA. Some problem novels grapple with social issues, while most strive to show the dominant political ideologies of a secular and multicultural India by presenting YA characters whose cultural markers are either completely erased or muted. The genre, overall, seems at variance with the contexts of YA life in India – contexts that are documented extensively in public culture.

Keywords

YA Fiction, Contemporary India, Growing-up, Teenage life

In this essay I offer a survey of young adult (YA) fiction in India. In the first section I suggest a short inventory of the major forms, genres and themes visible in Indian YA fiction today. My focus is mainly the 'growing-up' novel in India (the Indian *Bildungsroman*), examining the two main variants in the genre: the 'feel-good' growing-up novel and the 'problem novel'. In the second section I juxtapose the world of the Indian teen with the worlds presented in YA fiction thereby contextualizing the latter, in order to offer a framework within which one can read this new genre of Indian writing in English.

I

Fictions of Growing Up

The boom in YA fiction and literature in India is attested to by the number of news items that have appeared in 2010 - 2011 alone: a piece in *Mid-Day* in April this year (Ratnam 2011) another in *News One* in March 2011 (Chatterjee 2011); and earlier ones in July 2010 in the *Telegraph* (Basu 2010) and September 2010, by the Press Trust of India. (Nofil 2010) The institution of an award for Children's and YA fiction, the *Vodafone Crossword Award*, which in its first two years has gone to YA novels, further testifies to the genre's rising popularity. Devika Rangachari's essay on the genre (2009) and a special issue in July 2011

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of *Muse India*, an e-journal (Muse India 2011), seem to indicate some academic attention to the genre in more recent times.

YA fiction's rise in India may be dated since the year 2000. The anterior moments for the genre were, however, visible from around 1996 when Paro Anand published *School Soup* with one of the earliest imprints for teens in India, *Teen Storm* from A 'n' B Publishers, New Delhi. This was followed by her *I'm Not Butter Chicken and Other Stories for Teenagers* (2003). In 2005 Anand's *No Guns at My Son's Funeral* released. Set in Kashmir, Anand's novel and its sequel *Weed* (2008) along with her early work constitutes the first major body of work in the genre of Indian YA fiction. The determined and sustained creation of YA lists in recent years and the publishing of 'problem novels' such as those by Ranjit Lal is one of the features which makes contemporary YA fiction a recognisable phenomenon in India.

The appropriation of the YA/teen label and the resolve to wear it evinced by publishers at HarperCollins (India) and Puffin Young Adult (India) is another marker of the trend. Sudeshna Ghosh, editorial director of Puffin Young Adult in India, drawing attention to the "gaping hole in the Indian publishing scene for books for people between 15 and 20" (Chatterjee 2011) emphasizes the need for such a publishing programme. Despite the keenness to publish, the program is still in its infancy, as evidenced by the dilemmas of labelling. Puffin India issued a line of books tagged 13+, following it up with their 'Teen fiction' label (though, surprisingly, neither tag shows up on their website); Scholastic India categorises their books as meant for 'Older readers'; Young Zubaan has a 'Children and Young Adults' listing (emphasis mine), publishers such as Rupa, Popular Prakashan, Mango books only have a 'Children's fiction' listing and it is only Harper Collins India which has a 'Young Adults' list.

Indian YA fiction, even in this nascent stage, exhibits a variety of forms, genres and themes, though there are certain limitations in the treatment of these themes. The first-person narrative voice is seen in books such as *Potato CHIPS* (Mohan 2010), the Foxy Four adventures (Sengupta 2008; 2010), and *Faces in the Water* (Lal 2010), giving an immediacy and intimacy to the narrative, drawing the reader into the world of that particular book. The diary form is utilised in Meenakshi Reddy Madhavan's *Confessions of a Listmaniac* (2010) and Deeptha Khanna's *The Year I Turned 16* (2006), while the third person narrative voice dominates in other works. Turning to the variety of genres, the Foxy Four adventures are school and adventure stories; Mohan's *Potato CHIPS* is also a school story; Sarma's *Grasshopper's Run* (2009) conflates the historical thriller with a war narrative; Ranjit Lal's *Faces in the Water* is a family story (incorporating a ghost story), as are Khanna's and Anand's novels, while *The Beast with Nine Billion Feet* (2009) is an exercise in sci-fi/fantasy fiction. As even this minimal inventory shows there is the same variety to be found in the genres and forms of YA fiction in India as elsewhere. In this paper I intend to focus primarily on the 'growing up' theme in Indian YA fiction before turning to 'problem novels' where this theme is addressed differently.

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The traditional coming-of-age in a 'normal' set of circumstances is a thematic concern common to Khanna, Krishnamoorthi and Madhavan. This trope is fine-tuned to explore growing up in circumstances peculiar to India: terrorism in Kashmir (Anand), female infanticide (Lal) and questions of tribal religion and community (Srivastava).

Madhavan, Shobhaa Dé and Khanna present in their narratives a young girl's life during the mid-teens: representing the protagonist's increasing interest in boys (although 'sexual awakening' might be too strong a phrase to use, given the diluted sexuality motif in all these works), the friendships and first crushes and also the attempt to forge a 'self' in the face of intense peer pressure. Thus Madhavan's seventeen-year-old protagonist experiences the traditional *Bildungsroman* moment when she discovers that popularity and being part of "the group" "isn't what it's cracked up to be"(2010:113). Khanna's sixteen-year-old protagonist, Vinita, learns to evaluate people realistically, instead of being overwhelmed by their appearance and surface charms. These books, however, present a world wherein 'Indian' translates into urban middle-to-upper class families, with no recognisably Indian characteristics apart from their names. These are teenagers as conceptualised and defined by the West and these are the teenagers who are increasingly finding recognition in the media worldwide ("Secret Life of Indian Teens" 2011, Chakraborty 2011). They could belong to any culture, anywhere, in the production-line of teen-protagonists.

In contrast to these representations is Anshuman Mohan's picture of school life in Kolkata, which focuses not on first crushes and dates but the stress which accompanies parental expectations regarding studies and future careers, and also the marked class inequalities which are a common feature of Indian society but which are rarely reflected in YA fiction. (It must be kept in mind that Mohan is himself a teenager, as opposed to the other authors discussed herein, though whether this contributes to greater verisimilitude is disputable.) Thus Aman has to cope with a new school and learn to find his own place in it amongst the various "packs" of schoolmates, whom he classifies into canine groups (2010: 36). The desire for popularity and leadership is central to this novel as well, though eventually Aman has his moment of recognition when he learns that to "keep trying" is more important than becoming a hero (2010: 231).

Suchitra Krishnamoorthi's *Swapnalok Society* (Swapnalok literally meaning 'Dreamworlds') books (2008, 2009) also dwell upon growing up but, in a far more nuanced portrayal, they demonstrate the difficulty inherent in reconciling appearances and reality. Take, for instance, her debunking of the myth of the happy family. Chitrangada and Smita live with their dysfunctional mother in *The Summer of Cool* and even as the younger Chitrangada dreams of, and hopes for, a loving, happy family she knows a different reality:

Chitrangada knew how the next few days would pass. First, Amma would be stormily angry and not utter a word. Every time they tried to tell her something or even talk in her presence she would silence them with her 'shut up' look. . . . Days would pass in stony silence.

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Then it would go to the ‘tell her’ stage. . . . After a few days of this ‘tell her’ nonsense, where she did not address Chitrangana or Smita directly, Amma would go back to her angry ways, and all the yelling and screaming would start all over again. (2008: 33-4)

Krishnamoorthi’s work is especially interesting because she depicts a large canvas of characters, rendered realistic with weaknesses and foibles, yet also redeemed by their positive characteristics. There is no attempt to whitewash these characters, or the family: they revert to their occasionally mean, spiteful, petty selves once the crisis has passed.

Sengupta’s *Foxy Four* (2008, 2010) adventures may be placed on a continuum with the *Swapnalok Society* books. The characters are older girls in their mid-teens who solve mysteries and have adventures. Sengupta, like Krishnamoorthi, is a realist and is particularly skilful at blending reality with adventure and at demonstrating that there are no black or white characters. Even central characters are often unpleasant and sometimes devious as they cope with their quotidian troubles. Thus, for example, the precarious nature of single-parent family finances is a detail adeptly interwoven with the main story of a girl who goes missing from school:

Jahan , who is often short of cash, gave a curved smile. Her parents are divorced and her father, who has married again, often forgets to send money on time. Once when we were all broke, Jahan had borrowed a hundred bucks from Simran to get her watch repaired and she was really nasty when Jahan was late paying up. I know it’s mean, but we all sort of liked the idea of Miss Filthy Rich and Stupid getting into trouble. (2008:7)

Sengupta’s fiction does not easily fit the ‘adventure novel’ genre and might thus be seen, however minimally, as fitting into the conventions of the ‘problem’ tale genre as well.

In addition Sengupta creates in these tales a milieu which is verifiably Indian: from the characters’ names (Jahan, Padma, Mandy [short for Mandeep] and Charu) to the geography of Delhi (*Double Click* 2008) and Benares (*Star-Struck* 2010), the food they eat, whether it is *rajma* or pakoras or double cheese and pepperoni pizza (a detail which makes it even more authentic in post-1990s globalised India), to the transport they use. If it is in the details that Sengupta evokes an Indian atmosphere, it is not a stereotypical India that is created; rather it is contemporary India with its changing dress codes, ubiquitous cyber-cafes and cell-phones and gleaming foreign cars. The teenaged protagonists show minimal interest in the acquisition of either boyfriends or popularity: more comfortable in their own skins, they come to terms with the world around them with its paradoxes and instabilities and find constancy via their mentors, Jahan’s Aunt Razia, a college teacher, and Sister Rose, their school principal.

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Thus, even when writers like Sengupta or Krishnamoorthi offer realist depictions of society there still appears to be a dominance of feel-good teen-lit that eventually ends up sanitizing its worlds. There are, in contrast, novels that constitute the polar opposite to such fiction within the ‘growing-up novel’ sub-genre. In this category we can include ‘problem novels’ such as *No Guns at My Son’s Funeral* (2005), Lal’s two novels and *The Grasshopper’s Run* (2009).

Paro Anand’s *No Guns...* narrativises the birth of a ‘terrorist’ and his eventual death, caught in the violence that he has himself initiated and perpetuated. But Anand does not just write a ‘problem’ novel: the book transcends that narrow classification. Anand thematises the peer pressure and hero worship that is paramount in the lives of young adults and teens, pressures that cause them to make choices that eventually prove detrimental and in this case fatal. Aftab, the protagonist of *No Guns...*, joins a terrorist gang to prove his masculinity to, and equality with, his peers because “he hated being laughed at” (2005:2). His search for peer- and senior-validation initially motivates him and eventually it is his intense hero-worship of his mentor that drives him. Thus at the outset, Anand focuses on his feelings *vis a vis* his peers: “Aftab glowed. He was part of the inner circle. He was sharing a joke with the seniors. He. Not Imran, not Javed. He.” (2005:8) Finally he arrives at the point when; “he kneels next to the body. ‘Akram Bhai,’ he can barely get the words out from his tear-choked throat... And Aftab, with tears blinding his eyes, finds the button and draws the string. Just as Akram Bhai has taught him” (2005:165).

The teenagers in *No Guns...*, both Shazia and Aftab, are hemmed in by circumstances which they believe they can alter, but which eventually alter them. It is only after her brother is killed and she is left alone, carrying her dead terrorist-husband’s baby, that Shazia finally understands the evil that they chose and which conquered them:

She’s torn into pieces. Her brother is gone. So is her husband. Both have died horrible, violent deaths. . .What will she do now? Where will she go? She knows now that she doesn’t want her child to choose the path of violence. She couldn’t bear it....(2005:167)

The world of the teens here is a bleak world, starkly brutal and violent and one which offers them little agency and very few moments of pleasure or happiness. It is a world unfamiliar to most Indians but one which is also constitutive of contemporary India. And it remains a crucial setting for teens to find out about the gravity of certain choices which they might otherwise make with little or no thought.

Ranjit Lal’s novels, *The Battle for No. 19* (2007) and *Faces in the Water* (2010), both deal with, again, specifically Indian problems and themes. The first is set in the anti-Sikh riots of 1984, with a sub-plot of discrimination against girls. The latter tackles a harrowing theme: female infanticide as practised by a rich, educated family. The novels explore the lives of privileged middle and upper class children in metropolitan Delhi. But Lal demonstrates how class privileges do not necessarily imply a problem-free life. Decisions

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made in the face of possible death are crucial in *Battle for No. 19*, as it fixes the spotlight on otherwise privileged and sheltered girls who have to discover ways to survive in a riot-torn world. Horrifically, for an Indian YA novel, the girls have to watch their Sikh driver being killed by a mob:

The rods rose and fell. She heard the sickening dull crunch as ribs and bones and skull cracked and splintered and then he - big, belly-laughing Kartar Singh - was screaming like a schoolgirl - like one of them, as the knives went in and out and the blood began gushing.... (2007:8)

Lal's deftness in terms of tone renders this novel gripping and deeply disturbing but avoids the merely sensationalist. *Battle for No. 19* is particularly nerve-wracking towards the end, as the heroine has to decide whether it is indeed possible for her to kill a rioter, one who holds a little girl hostage and might possibly kill her father:

In a second now, the gun would explode in her father's face. Puja saw the finger hook the trigger and the sneer of triumph stretched across the man's mouth, fragments of Simi's face through the light and shade of foliage, her skin going sickly blue, her eyes terrified as the man's arm nearly choked her To save her own world, she would have to enter his.... (2007: 176)

The dilemma of 'kill or be killed' might be extreme but it is a heightened version of the reality faced by young adults in some sections of contemporary Indian society today (as we have seen in the case of Anand's *No Guns* and which I shall reference again later in the essay).

Faces in the Water (2010), Lal's second YA novel, and the winner of the Vodafone Crossword Book award for 2011, addresses an appalling subject - female infanticide - which is of particular relevance to India today, given the 2011 census findings which have indicated a constantly falling sex ratio. The fifteen-year-old protagonist belongs to a family in which "only boys have been born . . . for generations - they say no one can really remember when a girl was born the last time" (2010:1). Gurmeet discovers this bizarre family history is entirely human in origin: the family, including his parents, has successfully practiced female infanticide over the decades. Though the novel dilutes the terrible nature of the problem and offers a simplistic solution, proposing that the parents can be reformed through their ghostly daughters' love, *Faces* assumes significance because it showcases the reality of female infanticide among the Indian middle classes.

Set in 1944, *The Grasshopper's Run* (2009) by Siddhartha Sarma presents a theatre of World War II that is usually overlooked in history textbooks: the North East of India where the Japanese and British clashed, with devastating results to the local population. Sarma's novel is, effectively, a coming-of-age novel but Sarma conflates it with a war story as well as a revenge saga, adds sufficient heart so that it does not remain just another action story and transcends that genre to create a provocative 'problem' novel. In some ways

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akin to *Battle for No. 19* Sarma also questions the rightness of killing and the reasons it might be necessary to kill. Yet it also shows the 'boy', Gojen, realising the futility of revenge: "It would not solve anything. It would not change anything" (2009: 185). *Grasshopper's Run* presents the maturing of a young boy, his need for companionship and mentoring, until finally he has learnt both to grow up and accept life's upheavals. In a significant passage Sarma writes:

But no matter what happened, his life would not be the same. A large part of it, the best part so far, had been taken away and would not be returned. The past seems a long way off, and a haze was already beginning to fall on things he had thought would remain forever. . . . The hunter wanted to put his arm around the boy and say something comforting, but when he pulled Gojen around to face him, the boy had opened his eyes. Imnuk could see nothing in them, nothing at all, except a ferocious determination lurking just around the corner. The hunter changed his mind about comforting the boy, and they sat side by side, just two friends, waiting for the dusk. (2009:194)

While Sarma brings together varied perspectives, that of the British, the Japanese and the Indians, the last caught in someone else's war, he uses these to illumine a common humanity which makes the book of particular value in these insular times.

II

The Contradictory Contexts of YA Fiction

If adolescence is seen as "a period of self-reflection, identity development and increased abstract reasoning capacity" alongside physiological changes (Pattee 2004), it also must be kept in mind that 'teenage' carries certain cultural connotations with it, which might differ depending on geographical location. According to *The Guardian* India now has its "first generation of *real* teenagers", brought into being by "malls, money and mobiles" (Chakraborty 2011). This caused a reader to ask "The only 'Real' teenagers are like those in the west, you mean?" (Godownbrook). Clearly the 'nature' of Indian adolescence is the matter of both contest and conjecture. It is also one where the homogenization of the 'Indian teen' as a condition or category is prone to such charges as the one cited above for concealing the historical and social specificities of growing up in India.

Indian YA fiction presents a multicultural and secular world: a reflection of the ideology that independent India has adopted in its constitution and (arguably less successfully) in the everyday. (It could be argued that secularism is a political ideology but not a civil/civic one, as its existence in everyday life and society is always fraught.) Thus Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs coexist peaceably in *Swapnalok Society* (Krishnamoorthi) and the *Foxy Four* girls are from diverse religions and study at a Christian boarding school (Sengupta). The novels also present a growing distanciation from overtly religious observances and rituals: the protagonists are largely oblivious to their religious identities

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and do not construct themselves in terms of religion. In Sengupta's *Star Struck!* Razia Khan, the mentor to the Foxy Four, visits the Benares temples and steepers herself in Hindu religious traditions as "she's curious about everything Indian" (2010:148). Indeed, the authors seem to exert considerable effort to show the protagonists as evading or erasing their religious identifications in order to acquire newer markers in a "secular" India. Thus, in *No Guns...*, in which Aftab turns terrorist in Kashmir, a context which would appear to imply a religious overtone, religion is not, strangely, critical to the plot or the characters' development. The arguments the terrorists employ are cast *not* in the discourse of religious identity but in the rhetoric of individualism and achievement: "Go, my brave soldier. You alone, can make the name of the Kashmir Action Group shine for eternity." (2005:159) The rhetoric of a unified, peaceful Kashmir, as elucidated by Aftab's mother is one which appeals to a shared cultural memory of a long-gone Kashmir where people, irrespective of their religion, lived together amicably *as* Kashmiris: "There was a time when we were just Kashmiris. And that was enough. . . .Religion did not matter. . .". (2005:17) This multiculturalism is problematic, however, in that it demonstrates both an assimilatory politics and a certain minimalism. A community or culture's distinctive features are emptied out and the characters seen as only children or teens, surrounded by peers and their families but with significant identifying cultural practices or markers relegated to the background, thus re-marking them in entirely new ways.

Even a cursory glance through articles on teens in India in contemporary newspaper reportage and journalism shows adolescence as fraught with problems, and the stresses of Indian teenagers are connected to not just peer and parental pressure but also teen violence, drinking, and other issues. Thus BBC reports "Mumbai's teenage suicide trend" (Ahmed 2010); the *Times of India* reports a survey in which it is proved that "45% teens drink excessively" (Priya Menon 2010); *India Today* finds that "1 in 5 teen watches porn before age 13" ("Secret Life of Indian Teens" 2011); the *Telegraph* reports that "Youth violence is a cause for worry" (Mishra 2010). (Sociological and ethnographic studies of young adults in India have been somewhat more limited). One also reads of considerable violence against teenage girls initiated by their classmates and peers, and also of incidents of murder and mutilation committed by thwarted young suitors. Indian newspapers frequently report shocking incidents where thwarted/jilted men throw acid on their 'chosen' girl's face, scarring her for life, and even, on occasion, killing her. These victims are, very often, teenagers ("Bangalore: Jilted lover attacks girl with acid" 2011; "Jilted Lover Throws Acid on Girl, Family" 2011; "Wake Up Girls..." 2010). The juxtaposition of YA reality and fiction in India, however, reveals a deep chasm between the two, as I shall argue.

The previous section of this paper demonstrated how many Indian YA books, especially those with teenage girls at the centre and growing up as a theme, tend to depict a safe picture of Indian society and teenage life (Madhavan, Khanna and De, also to a lesser degree Sengupta and Krishnamoorthi). They represent a sterilised world in which there are neither drugs nor alcohol, where the maximum physical proximity is a hug and maybe, a kiss. This is in stark contrast to the *India Today* feature which paints a teen

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world wherein experimentation with drugs, alcohol and sex is the norm rather than the exception (“Secret Life of Indian Teens” 2011). The world inhabited by the teens in YA fiction in India is that of the middle and upper classes: English-speaking, privileged and moneyed, and mostly urban, but also a world marked by innocence regarding sex, teen violence, teen suicide and teen substance abuse. Ironically, this latter is the world which, in public debates such as those cited above would seem to be the reality for many Indian adolescents. YA fiction in India, therefore, seems to inhabit and represent a world that is at complete variance with the worlds we read about in journalism and other forms of public culture.

Indian YA fiction does not foreground the complicated relationship between society and the individual, a feature identified by Roberta Trites as one of the distinctive elements of YA fiction (2004:20). Much of it is still at the point of the discovery of the self and a hesitant entry into the world. Even if an engagement with the accepted social constructions of success (Mohan) and gender (Madhavan, Khanna, Sengupta, Lal) is apparent, it does nothing to challenge accepted notions and norms. The fiction thus perpetuates the dominant ideology in Indian society. Accordingly success for a middle-class Indian teenage boy necessitates getting into the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT, the premier engineering institution in India), or at least preparing to do so. So Aman, in *Potato CHIPS* (2010) does not rebel against the ‘accepted’ life trajectories even though these are chosen for him by his father. He does however engage in some benevolent social work even as he works towards his parents’ goals for him. The gender construction in Madhavan’s *Confessions of a Listmaniac* is simplistic in its stereotyping while Ranjit Lal’s *Faces in the Water* surprises by its formulaic characterisation: thus the drowned girls’ ghosts are all-forgiving and loving; the gynaecologist aunt who drowns them (with the connivance of their parents) is a monster; the parents themselves are unhappy individuals constantly evading the truth. If traditional roles are contested, as they are in Lal’s *Battle for No. 19* where the defending force comprises *girls* (with one very young boy), there are nonetheless other stereotypical elements; Puja’s father is contemptuous of her as she is not the desired son. At the end of the novel she wins his heart through her archery skills and is seen as equal to, or better than, any son (2007: 178). The family unit is thus reinstated by Lal as a place where affection reigns. The family is still central and though peers are important, teens in these books do not rebel against familial or societal structures. Individualism and the standoff between society and the individual is *not* an aspect that enters into YA fiction in India. The fictions that do engage with the harsher aspects of Indian reality are distanced in time and space: thus the 1984 riots, WW II and Kashmir present disturbing pictures of the violence that is an integral part of contemporary Indian life, but they, by virtue of their spatial or temporal distancing/locations, do not strike the reader as immediately constitutive of their world.

If YA fiction is a location wherein the cultural coordinates of teenage experience are shaped and polished, and through which a process of teen socialization takes place, then the question that follows is what *kind* of adolescence is being defined by Indian YA fiction. If the mass media reportage of and consequently, social understanding of Indian young

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adults' experience is even partially true, then why is it that YA fiction (ostensibly created specifically for them), bears no resemblance to their world? If YA fiction represents YA concerns and provides a recognisable reality it also works at constituting that reality, as all literature does. The socialisation of young adults into the dominant ideology of contemporary India and the dissemination of a 'positive' set of values and an affirmative image of their own world appears to be the agenda that underlies YA fiction in India. If that reality and ideology has already been rendered suspect in the 'real world out there', it is a suspicion/wariness that is elided in the YA fiction that is available. The collusion among adults - writers, editors, publishers and parents - appears to be programmed towards keeping Indian teens child-like, unquestioning of the structural problems and tensions in Indian society as well as the dilemmas peculiar to their teenage lives. (Another instance of this is seen in the withdrawal of certain books from the Childrens and YA section of the local British Library in Hyderabad where I live, and their placement in the main fiction section, based upon the objections voiced by several parents. These books include Alan Garner's *The Owl Service*, Celia Rees' *Witch Child* and *Pirates!*, Anne Cassidy's *Looking for JJ*, Adele Geras' *Troy* and some of David Almond and Gillian Cross's work, in addition to several others.)

My over-arching argument regarding YA fiction, then, is that Indian teens are cocooned in a fiction which protects them from the ruthlessness, inequality and grim aspects of everyday life. The Indian *Bildungsroman* thus offers the teenager a world in which happy endings are always possible, even if your parents have been responsible for killing three infants because they were female. The bleak endings of *No Guns* and *Grasshopper's Run* are aberrations in a field which otherwise invents a safe world of endless possibilities. These fictional representations are an antidote to the daily actuality which surrounds young adults in India today (an actuality more or less visible daily through public culture forms, as noted earlier) a means of offering hope to those who might otherwise see themselves as struggling to survive in a world with the odds ranged against them. They are also one more mode of creating a homogenised 'teenager', different from the Western teen in colour, geographical location and name but recognisably similar.

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Out of the drought: Australia's junior verse novels

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Abstract

After the first flush of verse novels for young adults (YA) in the 1990s has died down, verse novels in Australia for junior readers have sprouted. In 2010 Lorraine Marwood won the inaugural Children's Fiction category of the Prime Minister's Literary Awards for *Star Jumps*.

Key Words

Verse novels, awards, Karen Hesse, Lorraine Marwood.

Australia is a land of climatic extremes, where droughts and bushfires may be ravaging one part of the country at the same time floods are devastating elsewhere. Such cycles of drought can be difficult enough for the urban dwellers who live in the cities that hug the coast, but particularly so in the rural communities, where making a living can become touch and go. The first winner of the Australian Prime Minister's Literary Award for Children's Fiction was poet Lorraine Marwood, with a story set in the 2000s drought. *Star Jumps* (2009) is her second junior verse novel. Just as her novel features the first flush of wildflowers out of the drought, so verse novels for junior readers appear to be sprouting. In the US, a book about the terrible dustbowl era of the Depression was the first verse novel for children or YA readers to win a significant prize, in this case, the 1998 Newbery Medal. Karen Hesse says of her historical novel *Out of the Dust* that she endeavoured to write from grant funding on 'agricultural practices on the Great Plains' (1998 n.p.). Instead, her theme was of forgiveness: '[t]he whole book. Every relationship. Not only the relationships between people but the relationship between the people and the land itself' (1998 n.p.). It was a highly-awarded book, and it was a different sort of book and one not written in the way the author imagined she would: with Hesse telling the story 'in a way that is as spare and emaciated as the bare bones of the poems themselves' (1998 n.p.). *Out of the Dust* reads like diary entries with sections following the progress of seasons (beginning Winter 1934 and ending Autumn 1935) told by protagonist Billie Jo. In it, 'Hope Smothered' could almost be considered its title piece:

While I washed up dinner dishes in the pan,
the wind came from the west
bringing—
dust.

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I'd just stripped all the gummed tape from the windows.
Now I've got dust all over the clean dishes.

I can hardly make myself
get started cleaning again.

Mrs. Love is taking applications
for boys to do CCC work.
Any boy between eighteen and twenty-eight can join.
I'm too young
and the wrong sex
but what I wouldn't give
to be working for the CCC
somewhere far from here,
out of the dust.

May 1935 (1998:181).

Where Hesse's protagonist feels blighted by the times, in the contemporary Australian context Marwood's three younger children characters in *Star Jumps* display a range of responses to the drought that threatens their dairy farm:

Connor comes back then
And sees what we are doing.
"Useless," he says.
"How can we help? This is bigger than us. Bigger."
He slumps in a chair.
Keely looks as if she is about to burst into tears.
"But we can help, Connor, we can.
What about tidying up the machinery shed
Or digging the vegie patch for Mum?
It will make a difference. I'm not giving up.
Ruby's not giving up
And I bet Mum and Dad aren't either.
What's wrong with you, Connor?
Don't you want to live here any more?"

Connor looks Keely in the eye.
"No," he says. "Soon as I get to Year 10,
I'm moving on,
Getting a job building,
Or something with money.
No more calves to feed,
Or dying cows to put down,

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Or watching Dad looking
At the sky all the time.”
Connor hiccups on the last words
And he races out.
We are silent.
Then Keely types in some extra points:
dig vegie patch
tidy machinery shed.
“Tomorrow,” I say, “tomorrow, first thing,
I’m starting on hay bales.”
Keely isn’t listening now,
She’s answering her emails.
So I say goodnight to everyone
And go to my room.

I watch the moon make shadows.
No other lights around,
Just the moon dancing

(2010: 81-83).

Youngest sibling Ruby is the first-person protagonist and observant narrator for older sister Keely who has instigated ‘star jump (in the US called straddle hops) Saturdays’. These are the special days that denote the coming of spring. Just as the sap rises in the weeds, so the children emerge from indoors to create their own outdoor world. This is when the two girls and their middle brother Connor create a network of tunnels and private mazes in the thickly filled paddock (what fields are called in Australia) of marshmallows. This is common name for the plant, *Malva palviflora* of the Hibiscus family, though the weeds closely resemble hollyhocks. In *Star Jumps*, rather than the earlier form of verse novels where each page is formed by separate pieces or entitled poems, the verse is set out in chapters that have continuous verse and section markers within them. In *Star Jumps* these are graphically represented by drawings of what should be the marshmallow weed, though the cover illustration and section markers look more like Queen’s Anne’s lace, (wild carrot), at the least something botanically umbelliferous rather than the marshmallow. This fast-growing weed is found across much of Australia. In my own childhood on the Yorke Peninsula’s Copper Triangle my twin brothers, two years my junior, would join with me to play exactly as described in *Star Jumps*, where we created private landscapes flattened out with games of hidey and chasey that have become the tissue of memory.

The rapid appearance of marshmallows in the paddocks often coincides with the calving season. Though the siblings in *Star Jumps* can run riot and play, as farm children they are not free to merely relax on a weekend, but are called upon to help move the cows and provide human barriers as the new calves are shifted around. Dairy farming seems an unrelenting job. Chapter 3 sees the entire family on hand to help with a midnight crisis in the calving shed:

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The light bobs
as Dad gives orders,
tells Mum to fetch the rope
and I know
it's a difficult birth,
maybe breech,
maybe the calf is too big,
the cow trying too long.
Can't live on a farm
where birth happens so much,
without death hitching along too.

(2010:38)

Ruby, considered too young to yet be helpful, nevertheless genuinely contributes to the effort, and is rewarded by a rare treat from her father:

I catch a quick smile from Dad
In the tractor beam,
Like a moonbeam'

(2010:45).

Early in the novel it is clear the Dad is not happy and it quickly proceeds to him contracting stock agents to purchase the farm's cattle. Despite water enough for weeds to grow, the enduring drought has not yet broken and the entire herd cannot be supported. If they are lucky, they will be able to keep at least the remaining breeding stock. The children were sad when they realised the cow they helped at midnight will nevertheless die, but they learn that's not the worst of it; that their family's very livelihood is at stake. Where Keely is angry, and Connor wants to leave, Ruby acts to fight by creating miniature hay bails. Though these would be eaten in a few gulps by the cows, they symbolise a youthful dogged spirit that will not give up. In order to create the enemy, Ruby personifies Drought 'with cracked lips and long legs / like a bleached wand of couch grass' (2010:100) and more menacingly, 'with a spear / out to drink my blood' (2010:101), yet she sets out on her own to gather the grass. Dangers can lurk on the farm, like the redback spiders that hide in the shed, or the poisonous snakes in the undergrowth, though they might need warmer weather to emerge. As Ruby recalls:

I try not to think of last summer's
long brown snake
hunting those mice, under bags.
Snake as long and thin as an extension cord,
as old as me, maybe' (2010:91).

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Early in the tunnel-building of the marshmallows in Chapter 2, Connor has screamed out there's a snake, and though Ruby had seen the black cat, Stinky, flash by, and called out they were safe, such thoughts of dangers cannot be far away.

Just as US dustbowl territory attracts the verse-novel form where its 'frugality of life, the hypnotically hard work of farming, the grimness of conditions... demanded an economy of words...[with] rawboned life translated into poetry... with spare understatement' (Hesse 1998) so a time of drought in Australia inspires an author to write a junior verse novel like *Star Jumps*. Where Australia may not have ghettos like the ones found in contemporary YA verse novels selling today in the US, by writers like Ellen Hopkins or Virginia Euwer Wolff, an analogy may be drawn with the portrayal of impoverished rural communities who are 'doing it tough'. Similar ideas can be seen in the earlier YA work of Australian verse novellists Catherine Bateson or Steven Herrick. This appears a theme that runs through a number of verse novels for both younger and older children; hardships on the land, whether today or in the past.

Verse novels have been considered a new 'genre' (Murphy 1989:64), 'hybrid' (Addison 2009), 'form' (Mallan & McGillis 2003) or 'sub-genre' (Van Sickle 2006) of writing for children and young adult (YA) readers. They feature pared-back prose fragments set out as if for poetry but they tell a story, or number of stories in first- or third-person narrative, either in single or multiple points of view. Awarding prizes for writing goes a long way back, as far as Ancient Greece (English 2005) although the first award in the world specifically intended for children's literature was established in 1921 - the Newbery Medal, which was first awarded at an American Library Association (ALA) conference (ALA online). Prize-giving has been identified as 'proliferating' (Aronson 2001:62), and it is also crucial to note that awards can be seen as a significant tool in the scholar's kit, as evidenced by Junko Yokota's underscoring the importance of the debates, selections, and implications when he notes:

Children are often required to read award-winning literature in school, adults often view award winners as credentials determining worth, publishers see them as moneymakers, and authors and illustrators bask in the recognition (2011:467).

In the field of children's literature, winning a big award can reap undreamt success, as it is one of the 'few fields of cultural consumption... in which prizes have a more direct and powerful effect on sales' (English 2005:97). It is said that winning a Newbery Prize for Children's Literature "guarantees 10,000 in hardcover sales in the first year" (English 2005:360). Much research in the field focuses on books that have received awards, for a researcher may find it convenient to use a methodology selecting texts on the basis of merit, as recognised by awards (for instance, to compare reading strategies) (Marshall 2008). In this paper, the first verse novels to be awarded (in the US) and the most recent in Australia are noted as a means of drawing attention.

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While verse novels written for young adults are not new in Australia, there now appears a flush of junior verse novels on the scene. In the US, verse novels for children and YA began to garner awards at a national and regional level beginning in the early 1990s and this continues. While it has been postulated that verse-novel writing for teens in Australia arose spontaneously (Alexander 2005:269), there is evidence that Australian authors were influenced both by local adult verse-novel writing and children's and YA verse novels in the US. The first contemporary verse novelist published in the Australian (YA) market was Steven Herrick (Herrick n.d., online), and he has written that he was inspired by Australian poet (erstwhile children's author) Dorothy Porter's adult verse novel, *The Monkey's Mask*. Herrick also commented that he had read *Out of the Dust* and Robert Cormier's *Frenchtown Summer* (Pollnitz 2002:62).

By 2002 it was reported that around a forty per cent of verse novels published in the prior quarter century were YA (McCooley 2007:200); that is, in proportion to those written for adults. Australia recognised a verse novel for young adult readers as a contender for the Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) awards as early as 1997 with Herrick's 1996 publication, *Love, Ghosts & Nose Nair: A verse novel for young adults*, which was short-listed in the Book of the Year. Only two years later his 1998 verse novel *A Place Like This* was shortlisted for Older Readers category. His work was again in the 2001 Shortlist for *The Simple Gift* (2000). His verse novel *Cold Skin*, features a murder mystery and it is in a way a cross-genre effort analogous to *The Monkey's Mask*.

Of note in Australia more recently has been the flowering of verse novels for readers younger than YA. Sherryl Clark's junior verse novels, for instance, have met with success with the 2005 title, *Farm Kid*, winning the NSW Premier's Patricia Wrightson Prize for Children's Literature, and her 2008 *Sixth Grade Style Queen (Not!)* awarded Honour book in the CBCA awards for Younger Readers. Western Australian children's writer and reviewer Sally Murphy has also recently turned to writing junior verse novels. Her 2009 junior verse novel, *Pearl Verses the World* won acclaim, including being shortlisted in 2009 in the Western Australian Premier's Book Awards for Children's Books, and *Toppling* (2010) won the 2010 Queensland Premier's Literary Awards, and is shortlisted for the 2011 CBCA Awards.

Lorraine Marwood's first verse novel, *Ratwhiskers and Me* (2008) is historically-based, set in the minefields during Victoria's goldrush. Like Murphy and Clark her work is aimed at children rather than YA. In the 2010 Australian Prime Minister's Literary Awards Marwood's *Star Jumps* was awarded \$100,000, at the time the richest prize in Australia for an author of junior fiction. In a form that looks more novel-like with its segmentation into 'chapters' and extensive use of dialogue, it is another Australian verse novel employing a rural setting. Yet, by novel's end there is no redeeming rain. The newborn calf forgets its mother. Most of the dairy herd is sold off to go to another farm that uses irrigated water to protect it from the drought. And the marshmallow world has a short-life span. The thick woody weeds stand proud for the few days then will be trampled as the new calves are sent into that paddock. There may be no flooding rains descend to rescue the farm but,

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like wildflowers, verse novels for junior readers are reinvigorating the form in Australia, and promise a renewal.

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Australian cookbooks for younger readers: From Flora Pell to Junior MasterChef

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Abstract

Food writing has become a significant genre of contemporary writing, comprising a surprising proportion of the texts written, published, sold and read in English today. In term of writing for young people, cookbooks purporting to address children's obesity, diabetes and diet in general take a prominent place. Beside these, there is a growing sub-genre of cookbooks intended as guides for children to use themselves while preparing food. Working from a selection of Australian cookery books such as those for girls by Flora Pell in the first half of the last century, through Margaret Gossett's landmark *Children's Picture Cookbook* (1947) to today's plethora of children-targeted volumes, this paper will address this Australian publishing phenomenon.

Keywords

Food writing – cookbooks – food history – Flora Pell – Margaret Gossett – *Junior MasterChef*

Introduction: Beyond cooking

Food writing currently makes up a significant proportion of the texts produced and written each year in English, with thousands of cookery and other books about food and its preparation published each year. While the food writing in cookbooks has often been thought of as providing useful but relatively banal, practical skills-based information, recent reassessments have suggested that this food writing is much more influential and important than this. In terms of their use as cultural resource, culinary bibliographer Elizabeth Driver (2009: 258) has written: "Cookbooks are tangible, printed records that illuminate many aspects of the past; however, to interpret accurately what they tell us about their time, I believe that it is important to keep the books themselves at the centre of the story". In the contemporary context, when the mere mention of food engenders considerable anxiety, cookery writers play a number of roles beyond providing information on how to buy, store, prepare and serve various provisions. They provide information of

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personal interest (such as on diet, health and beauty), with social ramifications (in terms of their input into debates on what and how we eat), and of global significance (in addressing such issues as environmental sustainability and food security).

As scholarship on cookbooks continues to grow, and concerns about children's food and eating habits increase, cookbooks written for children are beginning to attract academic interest (see, for instance, Black 2006; Hersh 1997; Hertzler 2005; Longone 2003). In terms of young people, cookbooks purporting to address children's diet and such health issues as obesity and diabetes take a prominent place in Western publishing. Beside these, there is a growing related sub-genre of cookbooks intended as guides for children to use in food preparation. Jan Longone (2003: 104) indeed divides the genre of children's cookbooks into "books that teach adults how to teach children to cook" and those "addressed directly to children", the latter including television tie-ins such as the globalised *Junior MasterChef* series alongside those written by dietitians, chefs, food activists, popular writers and parents. Working from a selection of Australian cookery instruction books for girls such as those by Flora Pell in the early part of the last century, through Margaret Gossett's landmark *Children's Picture Cookbook* (1947) to today's plethora of children-targeted volumes, the following will address this Australian publishing phenomenon from the point of view of writers-as-producers as well as the intended consumers for these volumes, the various messages they convey, and what they reflect about ideas about food, society and writing for children. We are taking this case study approach to look at three different moments of publishing history, as there is no complete bibliography of Australian cookery books, let alone children's cookery books.

School textbooks for life outside the school

Internationally, the domestic science or home economics movement has received attention from researchers (see, for example, Weigley 1974). The integration of food into the educational site and context has also recently stimulated considerable interest and public attention. Consider, for example, the popularity of the television series *Jamie's School Dinners* and spin off cookbook from the show (attempting to reform the quality of the UK's school luncheon program), and the involvement of high profile chefs such as Stephanie Alexander in Australia and Alice Waters in the US in edible classroom projects. The use of food to engage school students in productive and active learning also has a long history. John Dewey (1859-1952) founded the University of Chicago Laboratory School on the principle that engaging students in growing, preparing and eating food would provide the best learning opportunities. Louis Menand (2001: 323) has described how food was used in this curriculum to teach mathematics, chemistry, physics, biology, geography and so on. The philosophical rationale was clear; "preparing a meal is a goal directed activity, it is a social activity, and it is an activity continuous with life outside the school". School textbooks were, indeed, often produced to serve a range of purposes outside, as well as inside, the school. A sample of cookbooks used in schools attests to both the power of food and how the morality with which it is infused provides some of that strength. While the moral imperatives around what is 'right' for children (to do as well as to eat)

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have changed over time, the utility of food making for social and moral purpose has an uninterrupted history since the foundation of domestic science or domestic arts classes. This is not the place for a discussion of the politics behind the various names used by this movement. Until recently, home economics was widely accepted as heir to the domestic science movement, which began in the 19th century. More recently, classes in New South Wales in Australia have been conducted as food technologies courses, although this is not consistent in all states or territories. For a discussion about naming, albeit related to the USA, see McGregor 2010.

The international arena provided both a context, and inspiration, for the development of cooking literature in Australia. While the distinctive features of Australian food production and its historical circumstances produce particularities in published works, the historical impetus for the production of cookbooks has been shared across different locales (nationally and globally). The domestic science movement was, for instance, a transnational one, but the historical and cultural contexts within which it developed varied considerably. The beginnings of the home economics movement in the United States are, for example, traced to 1841 when Catharine Beecher published *Treatise on Domestic Economy for the Use of Young Ladies at Home, and At School*, considered by some to be the first home economics cookbook (see, Weigley 1974). Beecher agitated for instruction in domestic economy to be part of the education of all women, for the household to be recognised for its importance as a social institution and for improving women's status by reorienting their gender roles from the private to the public sphere:

Let the women of a country be made virtuous and intelligent, and the men will certainly be the same. The proper education of a man decides the welfare of an individual; but educate a woman, and the interests of the whole family are secured (1842: 37).

This required a shift in the perception of domestic economy from that of manual labour, which was perfected through practice to a profession which could be studied and learned. As George B. Emerson, “one of the most popular and successful teachers” in the US, who introduced Beecher's *Treatise* as a textbook in his own school, wrote in the preface:

Why may not the healthiness of different kinds of food and drink, the proper modes of cooking, and the rules in reference to the modes and times of taking them be discussed as properly as rules of grammar, or facts in history? (Emmerson, cited in Beecher 1842: 7).

Critics of domestic science, on the other hand, argued that cooking was something girls could, and should, learn at home from their mothers (Kingston 1996: 99). Nevertheless, in Australia, domestic economy was integrated into the Victorian and New South Wales curricula by the end of the nineteenth century. Colin Bannerman (1998: 19) explains the rise of domestic science in Australia as a product of growing interest in Australian cultural development and the curse of bad cookery, which encouraged support for teaching girls

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and women how to cook. Placed in a broader framework, however, it is possible to see the support for a modern, scientific approach to food preparation as part of both the elevation of science and systematic knowledge in society more generally and a transnational movement to raise the status of women's role in society.

The domestic-science movement in England can be traced to the Congress on Domestic Economy, held in Manchester in 1878, approximately the same time as the movement was gaining strength in Australia. By the 1890s, domestic economy was widely taught in both British and Australian schools, however, Australia's first cookery teachers were from Britain. Harriet Wicken, for example, who was in charge of the Department of Domestic Economy at Sydney Technical College, migrated from England in 1886. In 1913, she revised and enlarged an Australian edition of her *Kingswood Cookery Book*, which proved to be extremely popular.

Cooking textbooks for children from this period can also be read in terms of anxieties over gender roles and the contradictions inherent in the field of domestic science itself. On the one hand, it was stated that a knowledge of cooking would reinforce and ensure a woman's place in the home, however, on the other, it was also assumed that basic training in cooking and household skills would provide opportunities for employment outside of that home. Indeed, if cooking and food preparation was such a natural and fulfilling activity for women, then the teaching of domestic science to girls should have been redundant. Another way of reading these cookbooks then, is not just as evidence of contemporary attitudes about women's role and the security of domestic ideology, but also as an articulation of uncertainty about these norms and anxiety about their endurance.

One of the stark differences between the books written for children—or more specifically at this time, for girls—and general cooking literature was the level of specific foundational detail provided, suggesting that girls were not learning such skills from their mothers. The books made no assumptions about the skill level of the reader or the equipment they would be expected to have access to. Flora Pell's *Our Cookery Book* (1916) included such simple information that one of its readers joked that the instructions were so clear they should have included: 1) walk into the kitchen, 2) approach stove (Stevens 2011). Recipes for boiling eggs or rice and making cups of tea would undoubtedly have been unnecessary for many girls, but their inclusion in such books was important to enable completely beginning cooks to start with the basics.

According to Pell, then paid Supervisor of the Domestic Arts in Victoria, public opinion had begun to demand that:

...schools shall provide for children such training in citizenship and home-making as shall raise up a strong race of well-nurtured people, skills not alone in the right conduct of their own lives, but impatient of the existence of any conditions unfavourable to the health of the community. Among these conditions would rank

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decline in household skills and a weakening of the maternal instincts ... traceable results of the employment of women outside their homes (Pell 1913-14: 80-1).

Schools should, Pell asserted, supply the training for home life that was being eroded by a tendency for girls to become 'clerks, typists, shop-assistants, or the like, rather than housekeepers, home-makers, or helps' (Pell 1913-14: 80). Pell, however, personally resisted a total commitment to home life. Like her contemporary Lucy Drake, a Domestic Arts Teacher at Swinburne Technical College in Melbourne, Pell forged a successful career in domestic science education and achieved economic independence and a degree of fame through her writing.

Both Drake and Pell were authors of popular textbooks on cookery produced for students and for popular consumption. Their books ran into many editions, and were in publication from 1912 to the 1950s, at a time when cookbook publication was a small fraction of the considerable creative industry it is today. These cookbooks can be read not only as blueprints for meals, but also as interventions in the diet of the nation and as part of the ongoing debates around both food and home. When *Our Cookery Book* was first published in 1916, for instance, options beyond marriage or domestic service were opening up for many young women. Jobs were becoming available for girls in such roles as factory work, serving in shops and in dressmaking and millinery. While these opportunities were limited, they challenged the long established and traditional notion that a woman's place was in the home. With girls leaving school at the age of 14 and allowed to enter the workforce at age 15, they did not have as much time at home with their mothers to learn how to cook and run a household. Pell and women such as Mrs. Stella Allen, who wrote as 'Vesta' in Melbourne's prominent *Argus* newspaper, decried the fact that girls were not displaying the same aptitude for domestic duties as their mothers and grandmothers, and argued strongly for cookery and needlework lessons in schools and the development of domestic arts colleges ('Vesta' 1922: 4).

Support for formal domestic training for girls also came from Australian women's organisations such as the National Council for Women, suffrage groups and wealthy upper-class families. The motivation of upper class supporters was not purely philanthropic or educational. Holding a strong commitment to upper class values of order, propriety, hygiene and household management (Reiger 1985: 61), they hoped that girls trained in domestic science might choose to become their domestic servants, and thus stem the flow of girls away from their homes and into factory and shop work.

In 1915, the Victorian Education Department responded to the public pressure for more domestic training for girls and established two domestic arts colleges—specialised high schools just for girls—in Bell Street, Fitzroy, and in Collingwood. Girls aged from 12 to 14 years of age spent half the week learning cookery, laundry work, needlework, millinery, dressmaking, personal and domestic hygiene and practical household management. For the other half of the week, they received instruction in academic subjects (Prospectus of Schools of Domestic Arts c.1917). The domestic arts course, providing "systematic and

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comprehensive training that should enable them [students] to become efficient homekeepers”, was regarded by the Education Department as far more relevant for girls than ordinary secondary school, as they were likely to marry, which in the 1920s meant forfeiting one’s place in the paid workforce (Prospectus of Schools of Domestic Arts c.1917) The initial experiment with domestic arts colleges must have proved successful as, by 1931, there were twelve colleges in Victoria—ten in metropolitan Melbourne and one each in the Victorian regional centres of Ballarat and Bendigo.

As Inspectress of domestic arts colleges from 1924, Pell was ultimately responsible for the operation of these colleges, and was passionate about her position. She firmly believed that a girl’s education was incomplete if she hadn’t been trained in the principles of “True Household Economy”, cookery and nutrition (‘Vesta’ 1924: 6). These three elements are covered in detail in *Our Cookery Book* and Pell’s other two cookbooks, *Miss Flora Pell’s Tested Cookery Dishes and Valuable Home Hints* (1925) and *A Sunshine Cookery Book with 50 Dried Fruit Recipes for the Modern Table* (c. 1926). For Pell, girls were “the guardians of the future” (cited in ‘Vesta’ 1924: 6). She believed that there was a link between training girls to be wise mothers who ran efficient and effective households and cared for the physical, mental and moral health of their children and the prevention of juvenile crime (cited in ‘Vesta’ 1924: 6). Women might be allowed to work outside the home in a limited range of occupations but their most important work would take place in the home. At this time, although Pell was not a wife or mother herself, she was a proponent of ‘domestic feminism’ and upheld socially conservative gender roles.

Other teachers and writers in the field of home economics tended to be traditional in their concept of women’s roles. The dominance of women as cookbook writers throughout the period in Australia, the UK and the USA attests to the strength of the concept of separate spheres, although the consequences of this are ambiguous. The growth in publications dealing with “women’s topics” also provided a forum for women’s voices. But while this popular genre can be linked to changes in women’s roles, at the same time they were providing a series of well used recipes and were, thus, equally important in producing a domestic culinary culture, and the changes and developments within it.

One final aspect to be underlined here is that although these texts were written for girls, these girls were understood as prototypical “little women” (as in the title of the Louisa May Alcott classic), with largely little or no difference in the text, except for the basic level of information and instruction included, from cookery books written for an adult audience. So although the genesis of *Our Cookery Book* certainly came from Pell’s extensive experience as a cookery teacher in Victorian schools, it was the household cook who was the intended reader, whatever their age.

A new era: Margaret Gossett’s *Children’s Picture Cookbook*

Pell’s and other instructional cookery textbook cookbooks were produced and reprinted in Australia in new editions, and popular with readers, until the post-war period, when a

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revolution in publishing technologies and growing domestic affluence led to a change in the way books of all types were produced, marketed and consumed. Although there is evidence that Pell's cookbooks continued to be used, and indeed, promoted to new generations after the second world war—in the way, for instance, that they were given as wedding presents by mothers to their daughters into the 1960s (Rousseau 2011)—the late 1940s saw the development of a new Australian market for printed material about food that is more in line with current consumer behaviour and concerns. Although this development was significantly slower to take off in Australia (which had some food rationing until 1950, as in the UK which continued food rationing until 1954) than in the USA—where *Gourmet* magazine was first published in 1941—the first specialist Australian post-war food and wine magazine was launched in 1956 and illustrated cookbooks with a gourmet slant were commissioned and published. These book and serial publications were, however, firmly targeted at adult cooks, with the main recognition of children in the subject of family meals and some invalid cookery in community cookbooks and those produced by women's magazines, industry groups and food manufacturers.

In terms of publishing for children, most of the cookbooks that were produced in the first half of the twentieth century largely understood children as consumers, rather than producers, of food, and cookery publications targeted to the specialist gourmet market at mid-century certainly did not mention children. As in the USA, however, Australian food companies did produce illustrated advertising materials with recipes and how-to-cook instructions for both mothers and their daughters (Longone 2003: 107). Moreover, Sarah Black (2006: 346) has investigated how in community cookbooks from 1900 to 2000 “children appear ... as recipe contributors, as consumers, as arbiters of good taste, and as budding literati” and how “community cookbooks themselves contain some unusual insights into Australian childhood”. These community cookbooks are not largely, however, intended for children to use when cooking until, as Black (2003: 350) notes, the post-war era and then mostly from the 1960s onwards.

Margaret Gossett's *Children's Picture Cookbook*, published in Brisbane by The Strand Press in 1947, therefore, provides an unusual case study in this context. There are, indeed, only two other volumes in this category (of 'Cooking—Juvenile Literature') catalogued in the deposit National Library of Australia during the 1940s: the (Australian) Boy Scout Association's *The Cook's Badge* (1948), one of the very rare publications at this time for boys about cooking and certainly in the Pell instructional model, and Angela Carter's *Every Child's Cookery book*, published in London in 1949. There are no books at all catalogued in the subject area for the 1950s and only four in the later 1960s. The limited number of children's cookbooks published before the 1970s internationally has, indeed, been noted (see, for instance, Hertzler 2005: 347) and this certainly seems the case in Australia. In addition, and with the exception of cookery books published by women's magazines and newspapers and community cookbooks, many early post-war cookery books for adults were either fully imported into Australia, or were texts by British or American authors republished or reprinted in Australia.

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This latter situation was the case with Gossett, an American author of a number of books for children including two cookbooks, whose *Children's Picture Cookbook* was first published in the New York in 1944. It was lauded in Columbia University's *Teachers College Record (TCR)* as one of 1944's "books of the year for children" (Gilbert 1945: 320-8) and described in another review in this influential serial as "A delightful and practical cookbook for beginners, including recipes for food which youngsters like to eat, and which they can prepare themselves" (Earl 1945: 326). Although the book clearly has been edited for Australian readers—with Australian flags in one picture—Americanisms have slipped through this process. A recipe for Taffy (pp. 24-5) is, for instance, included, but this would have been called 'toffee' locally. Some ingredients are used that were just not available in Australia—such as corn syrup which has never been easily obtained in Australia—and others are suggested which were certainly not to Australian tastes, such as serving a dill pickle with a sandwich (p. 32). There are also some American expressions, such as the use of "hard cooked eggs" (p. 32) instead of the Australian 'hard boiled'.

Despite these oversights, with its use of bright pink and orange, bold illustrations and design by Elizabeth Dauber, and lively, direct address, Gossett's forty-seven page volume was a landmark publication in children's cookery literature in post-war Australia. The innovative use of child-friendly illustration as instructional text was noted by American reviewers: "information is conveyed largely through pictures", wrote Earl (1945: 326) in the *TCR*, while *Harper's Magazine* (1944:190) described how the "simple but fun recipes [were illustrated] with a picture for each step" of their making. The reviewer for the *Catholic World* (Paulist Fathers 1944: 280) found the book's "ingenious, clear arrangement" which was sure to "turn the most un-domestic child into a zestful and successful cook".

Gossett's recipes are in keeping with 1940s and earlier mainstream thinking regarding children's food in the USA, UK and Australia. In these countries, children's food (sometimes called 'nursery food') was usually nourishing but bland, featuring what were thought to be easy to digest meals, as children were believed to have delicate digestions (Black 2003: 349). Today we would describe these foods as stodgy and uninspiring, with starchy and sweet foods predominating. Heavily sweetened foods also catered to children's supposed preference for these (Longone 2003; Black 2003: 349). Ann Hertzler notes in her study of nutrition trends in American children's cookbooks from 1850 to 2000, children's cookbooks throughout this period "have a preponderance of high-calorie dessert and party/fun recipes and limited vegetable recipes" (2005: 347). Gossett certainly follows this trend, with only a handful of savoury recipes among a large range of very sweet drinks, cakes, slices, icings, cookies, muffins, desserts, pies and sweets. There are, for example, a date cake slice that not only includes one cup of sugar and a pound of pitted dates for each cup of flour, but which is rolled in more icing sugar before serving; an Apple Sauce that includes half a cup of sugar for each pound of apples, and instructions that it can be eaten with cake or with cinnamon flavoured candies melted into it for flavour; and for popcorn balls that use two cups of sugar and a half cup of molasses or corn syrup to make the toffee that holds them together. The recipes for cakes, muffins

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and other baked goods are similarly heavily sweetened with sugar, honey and/or corn syrup.

Each recipe includes an illustrated list of cooking equipment including spoons, bowls, measuring cups and cooking pans, and methodologies are not only clearly described, but developed and shared across recipes. The recipe for the Date Sticks mentioned above, for example, includes the following instructions: “You make this cake by the same rules as muffins. See page 34. You mix all the drys, then the wets. Then you add the wets slowly into the drys” (p. 22). One of the authors (Brien) has tried a number of recipes from this book, utilising only the instructions given (rather than her own knowledge of cooking) and following the ingredient list exactly, and found that they did result in successful food items, which were, moreover, popular with the children who were asked to taste test them. There are also instructions on how to use the book incorporating tips on time management, as well as how to successfully prepare for each cooking session. This latter includes sound advice such as having equipment ready and clean and reading the entire recipe before beginning (p. 6). There is also a page about cleaning up and first aid (p. 46). The page on cooking “tricks” (p. 47)—what we would characterise as cooking tips for how to use up sour milk, separate eggs, slice bread and freeze fruit in ice to make drink garnishes—is illustrated with a magician and performing circus animals, underlining both the magical and entertaining nature of cooking. All the recipes are similarly described in the text and illustrations as fun to make and eat, as if every meal is a party or other celebration. There are pictures of groups of children (and their pets) playing, engaging in sports and other activities, and eating at picnics and tea parties and around campfires and barbeques. Apart from some parents following a marching band with their children, no adults are pictured in the book. They are certainly not consuming any of the foods their children make. Both boys and girls are featured both cooking and consuming food, and playing, throughout the book.

Contemporary trends: the rise of ‘eatertainment’

Until quite recently, Australian cooking literature for children written by Australian authors has been dominated by writers who were also teachers. The growth in ‘eatertainment’, however, is motivated by quite contrary concerns. This is a phenomenon that Charlene Elliot (2010) describes as part of a broader shift in children’s roles from producers to consumers, and from them having a meaningful and central place in the household to an isolated and boring one. One of the reasons for this growth in children’s eatertainment may be that it allows busy parents to maximise their limited time with their offspring. The family has to eat anyway, so if cooking can be made a group activity, then parents get to spend time with their children while also doing the housework—in this case, the cooking. Elliot suggests that playing with food (and this includes toys in packaged meals) partly compensates for the dull lives children in dual-career family homes live, where they experience life as consumers rather than contributing to household production. Citing recent literature on children’s culture, Elliot argues that there have been radical changes to children’s lives over the past few decades which include a

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proliferation of child-oriented products and more ‘solitary lives’ due to smaller families and dual income or single-parent families (Elliot 2010: 544-45).

Accompanying the proliferation of cookbooks aimed at the adult market has been an increase in specialised books for children. In the context of the popularity of culinary culture, this is no surprise, but the books are also written in the shadow of increasing anxiety about children’s health and their lack of knowledge about food preparation. Stephanie Alexander’s *Kitchen Garden Cooking with Kids* is, for instance, the “story of a kitchen garden for kids and the recipes they cooked with the food they grew” (Alexander and Dollard 2006, cover). Lamenting the upsurge in the availability of packaged and pre-prepared food and increasing hours parents spend at work, Alexander declares, “It is the fate of the children that concerns me” (p. 5), explaining:

Statistics show that more than one-quarter of our children are overweight. Few children eat the number of serves of fruit and vegetables recommended for optimum health. Many children are leading more and more sedentary lives. The intake of snacks featuring high levels of fat, sugar and salt is widespread and cross all socioeconomic boundaries. Education about food choices has almost entirely disappeared from school curricula and in too many homes nobody is offering positive examples of healthy eating (2006: 5-6).

For Alexander, unless children are involved in pleasurable food activities from an early age, we will fail to have an impact on their food habits. Hence, the Kitchen Garden at Collingwood College (on the same site as Pell’s Domestic Arts School) and the associated book and DVD of recipes to be read/watched and cooked by children. Alexander’s *Kitchen Garden* recipes are built on fundamental principles, quite unlike the concern for frugality and utility that underpinned Pell’s *Cookery Book*, or the idea of sweet, fun nursery food in Gossett’s *Children’s Picture Cookbook*:

- It makes sense to build on what we know the children enjoy
- Reinforcement of technique is very important
- Try again with dishes that seem unpopular
- Sweet dishes are offered regularly but not every week
- It is important to offer food that is good to eat
- Ensure the recipe explanations are very clear
- Identify new or unusual ingredients
- Involve everyone
- Surprise them from time to time
- Stand back (Alexander 2006: 32-3)

These principles have more to do with food itself than culinary education, but like Pell, they aim to have an impact continuous with life outside the school.

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Alexander participated in Australia's *Junior MasterChef* in 2010, a competitive cooking program built on the popularity of the adult version. Anticipation was fuelled by the way the show was promoted: "If you think you know *MasterChef*, think again. Soon everything you know will change". *Junior MasterChef* (which is running again in 2011) is pitched to its audience as a transformative pedagogical moment—proving that when it comes to quality cooking, age doesn't matter and nor does a long apprenticeship. Over 5,000 children from around Australia applied to be part of the 2010 series. Eventually, fifty 8 to 12 years-olds competed for twelve places in the program. "What they plate up", the promotion declared, "will blow you away", and in many cases, it did surprise. The program fell between the two conventions in culinary entertainment that Pell and Gossett denote. On the one hand, it was didactic like Pell's work offering the promise of improvement but, on the other, it was a demonstration of the enjoyment of cooking that Gossett suggests. It took this notion of enjoyment much further, however, employing the rhetoric of artistic integrity and autonomy that elevated the children to the level of the (adult) celebrity chefs they cooked with and competed against. The show's pedagogic nature was clearly revealed in how the series promoted itself as a learning opportunity, and how the format of the program allowed for cook-a-longs and master classes. This neatly aligns with the generic conventions of Australian cookery television, which have tended towards a didactic approach to culinary skills, and has continued even in the more recent preoccupation with lifestyle in TV cookery. In this way, *Junior MasterChef* did include a number of segments that provided information that could teach viewers how to cook. In the cook-a-long, for instance, viewers could download the recipe ahead of time and cook with the judges, contestants or guests. The masterclasses were also paced to allow techniques and food knowledge to be learnt. But it could be said that the educational function of the program extended beyond cooking tutelage. The program was also a site for the transmission of cultural knowledge, the most obvious being that of culinary knowledge, but which also other encoded forms about age, class, gender, ethnicity and national identity. Alongside this, and underpinning the competition at the heart of the program, was the celebration of individual creativity and artistry that transcended all these elements. At times, for instance, the child contestants could exceed the abilities of the adults who were supposedly teaching them.

Although *Junior MasterChef* was pitched as a transformational pedagogical moment for viewers, at the same time, these junior chefs were widely acknowledged as unique. In the cookbook from the program titled the 'Official Recipe Collection', for example, the editor explains:

There's no doubt that the standard of cooking on *Junior MasterChef* surprised everyone who watched, which is why putting together this recipe collection was something of a challenge. Of course we wanted to feature the best recipes from the show, but we also wanted to create a guide for the vast majority of kids who aren't quite up to recreating George and Gary's prawn tortellini with marron and pumpkin puree just yet! (Jenkins 2010: 3)

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The collection thus includes Isabella's hand-crafted gnocchi and Stephanie Alexander's leg of lamb plus "easy dishes such as vanilla biscuits and mango ice blocks" (3). Both the children on the show and the guest chefs joining them—a list that included a who's who of Australian celebrity chefdom including Stephanie Alexander, Margaret Fulton, Kylie Kwong and Matt Moran—were thus all distinguished from home cooks of any age. The young television chefs were featured, for instance, in magazine cookery articles including their own recipes and how to make them. The show, therefore, also acted as a vehicle for consolidating the brand of the 'chef', marking a break with both the conventional didactic and the 'cooking is fun' approach to culinary skills for both children and adults.

Both the guest chefs and the children who competed on the *Junior MasterChef* series expressed themselves, and were represented, as autonomous artists, but this was negotiated within the field of television entertainment. The cookbook thus included brief biographies of each of the children who made it to the finals. Each of the biographies reinforced the exceptional talents of the children who participated and contributed to the sense of the children's autonomy as culinary artists, transforming the television chef from a skilled artisan to an entrepreneur with an artistic vision. Anthony was, for instance proclaimed an "absolute star", while one of the judges told twelve-year-old Isabella, "You need to open a restaurant" (quoted in Jenkins 2010: 17).

Conclusion

Philosopher Elizabeth Telfer (1996) suggests that individuals with ample food resources and leisure time devote more attention to food than is necessary for survival because they believe food will give them pleasure. In many ways, the instruction manuals for the home cook from the early twentieth century appeared uncomfortable with the idea of the pleasures of eating, focusing instead on professionalising home cookery. By mid-century, youth—a new category of both consumers and the social world—were clearly seen as a market for both cookery books and food products, and the approach they took was to image cooking, and eating, as play. For Stephanie Alexander, in this century, rousing a fulsome pleasure around food (not only in its preparation and consumption, but also its growing) is a valuable pedagogic tool in the pervasive discourse generated around obesity that may indicate that the two threads in culinary narratives for young people have been developed and usefully merged.

The changes in cooking literature for children have not, however, been so clearly defined across all publications. Although the *Junior MasterChef Collection*, for instance, contained health advice and nutritional information, it featured far fewer vegetables than either Alexander or Pell would have found acceptable. It, indeed, has more in common with children's cookbooks from the post-war period with their preponderance of high-calorie desserts and focus on food as fun. The way to a man's heart might be through his stomach, but sugar specifically, it appears, has long been seen as they the way to a child's. Cooking, to many (for generations) a chore without glamour or choice, is thus presented to these children readers as sweet, optional and a form of play. As time has passed, cooking

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for children has become even more recreational, and continuous throughout the history of children's cooking literature has been the need to occupy children—whether usefully, healthily or through entertaining them.

Cookbooks are a useful component of the historical record. They can be used as evidence of gender roles, societal change, economic discourse, and ideas about health and well-being. Cookbooks written for children, however, also illuminate other trends related to broader societal issues about our anxieties about the present and sense of the future. As the examples discussed here show, when cookbooks for children first appeared at the end of the 19th century, the moral imperative was preparation for the future—as both mothers and citizens. By the middle of the 20th century, cooking had changed from a necessity to a pastime for children and the shift in children's roles away from production to consumption was apparent.

As cookbooks have diversified in number and form in the contemporary period, children's nutrition has received special attention in the context of concerns over children's health. The recreational and highly creative cooking promoted in the context of *Junior MasterChef* also certainly reflects a wealthier and prominently urban audience where cooking is an entertainment option for children. In this context, the cooking games available for portable game consoles and online mean that children can even transcend cooking with actual food and operate in a purely virtual, imagined world. As these trends merge and develop, this type of 'playing with your food' might well change the relationship we all have to food in the future. It certainly reflects changes in our relationship with food, and its preparation, through history.

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Write4Children

Call For Papers



The 2012 Biennial Conference of the Australasian Children's Literature Association for Research (ACLAR)

At the National Library of Australia, Canberra ACT, June 20 – 22, 2012

Debates about notions of honesty, openness, innocence and agency have abounded in both the study and practice of children's and young adult literature. The 2012 Biennial ACLAR conference will explore the contemporary tensions between some of these key debates, with particular emphasis upon the role of children's literature in the digital world. Confirmed keynote speakers include **Prof. Clare Bradford** (Deakin University) and writer/illustrator **Shaun Tan**.

Presenters are invited to submit abstracts exploring aspects of the conference theme; **'If We're Being Honest: The Facts and Fictions of Children's Literature'**. Such explorations may address one of the following strands:

- **Making It Up** (fictionality, the dynamics of truth and fiction)
- **To Educate and Protect** (didacticism, ideology)
- **The Glass Half Full** (optimism/pessimism and the future)
- **Drawing the Lines** (readerships, social change, boundary transgressions)
- **Writing the iChild** (technology, shifting modes of narrative)
- **Sex, and Me.** (sexuality, gender, identity)
- **Let Us All Rejoice?** (Australian identity, national consciousness)
- **Powered by History** (steampunk, Victoriana, the role of the past in the narratives of the present)
- **The Death of the (Children's) Author** (the author as 'personality', the implied author, the children's or YA writer as arbiter of public discourse)
- **This Imperfect Tomorrow** (Dystopia/Catastrophe literature)
- **Places and Spaces** (landscape, liminality)

Applicants are also welcome to submit abstracts exploring alternative strands that relate to the overall conference theme.

Abstracts should directly address the conference theme and should identify specific texts, theoretical and/or methodological approaches to be discussed. For an individual, 20-minute paper, abstracts should be no more than 250 words. Groups wishing to collaborate on the presentation of 60 or 90-minute panels should submit an abstract of up to 500 words, detailing how the overall presentation will fit into the conference theme, the individual critical and theoretical approaches to be taken by each speaker, and the envisaged structure for the session. All panel sessions should include time for Q&A with each speaker, and 90-minute panels would ideally include some time for a discussion with the entire panel.

Papers can address both critical and/or practice-led approaches to the study of children's literature. Abstracts should be submitted by email to: tony.eaton@canberra.edu.au with the heading 'ACLAR Abstract'

Submissions Open: August 1, 2011

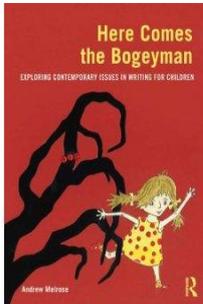
Submissions Close: 29 Feb, 2012

For more information about ACLAR, visit www.aclar.org

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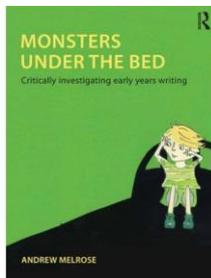
FORTHCOMING BOOKS:



Here Comes the Bogeyman, written by Write4Children editor Andrew Melrose, is an essential text focussing on critical and contemporary issues surrounding the cult and culture that is writing for children. Containing a critically creative and a creatively critical investigation of the cult and culture of the child and childhood in fiction and non-fictional writing, it also contains a wealth of ideas and critical advice to be shared with writers, students of children's writing and students of writing. With scores of published children's fiction books and films to his name, Andrew Melrose shares his extensive critical, teaching, writing and research experience to provide:

- a critical and creative investigation of the cult and culture of child-centred writing for the early, middle and pre-teen years
- an accessible and critically important challenge to the latest international academic research and debates in the field of children's literature and creative writing.
- an evaluation of what it means to write for a generation of media-savvy children
- encouragement for critics, writers and students to develop their own critical, creative and writing skills in a stimulating and supportive manner
- guidance on writing non-fiction and poetry
- creative writing craftwork ideas which could be used as seminar topics or as individual reflections

http://www.amazon.co.uk/Here-Comes-Bogeyman-Exploring-Contemporary/dp/0415617537/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1309266575&sr=1-2



Monsters Under the Bed, also written by Andrew Melrose, is an essential text focussing on the cult and culture of picture books, exploring image related texts and writing for children in their early years. Andrew Melrose encourages academics, researchers, students and cultural practitioners to examine the critical questions in child-centred culture. Accessibly written and lively in its approach to critically creative and creatively critical ideas, this textbook includes:

- a critical and creative investigation of early years writing and reading creative writing craftwork ideas which could be used as seminar topics or as individual reflections
- a road map to developing critical awareness of children's literature, allowing students to develop their critical and writing skills
- a fully up-to-date exploration of critical approaches to children's writing, including theories of creativity and creative writing.
- encouragement for critics, writers and students to develop their own critical, creative and writing skills in a stimulating and supportive manner

Pre order here: http://www.amazon.co.uk/Monsters-Under-Bed-Critically-Investigating/dp/0415617502/ref=sr_1_4?ie=UTF8&qid=1309266379&sr=8-4

Both these critically creative and creatively critical texts will be indispensable resources for critics, writers and students interested in the cult and culture of writing for children; on Creative Writing BA and MA programmes; Children's Literature BA and MA programmes; English BA and MA programmes; Teacher Training, PGCE students and for those studying at Doctoral and Post-Doctoral level who are interested in writing for children.

Write4Children

Call For Papers

Next edition is 1st April 2012.

Submission Deadline 1st December 2011

Instructions for Authors

1. Articles should be between 2000 and 5000 words. They should be accompanied by an abstract of not more than 200 words, and six keywords for indexing purposes.
2. All papers for the Write4Children must be submitted via an email with attachment to write4children@winchester.ac.uk.
3. Papers should be submitted as one file with, where possible, all tables and figures in the correct place in the text.
4. Footnotes should be avoided. Essential notes should be numbered in the text and grouped together at the end of the article. Diagrams and Figures, if they are considered essential, should be clearly related to the section of the text to which they refer. The original diagrams and figures should be submitted with the top copy.
5. References should be set out in alphabetical order of the author's name in a list at the end of the article. Please use the Harvard Referencing style.
6. Once the refereeing procedures are completed, authors should supply a wordprocessor file (on disc, CD-ROM or by e-mail attachment) containing the final version of their manuscript. Files should be saved in Microsoft Word. Tables and Figures (TIFF or EPS format preferred) should be saved in separate files from the rest of the manuscript.
7. The author of an article accepted for publication will receive page proofs for correction, if there is sufficient time to do so. This stage must not be used as an opportunity to revise the paper, because alterations are extremely costly; extensive changes will be charged to the author and will probably result in the articles being delayed to a later issue. Speedy return of corrected proofs is important.

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