

Shadow of The Archers

and

Crossing Over: Writing Young Adult Fiction  
and Finding the Contemporary Reader

Kezia Perry

A novel and exegesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Creative Writing  
Department of English and Creative Writing  
School of Humanities  
University of Adelaide  
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Volume 2:

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## Abstract

The notion that crossover fiction has changed the way books are written and the way we read has been addressed in studies increasingly since 1997, the year when the first Harry Potter novel was published. Attention and credit has been paid to the Harry Potter series as the genesis of crossover books while questioning the emergence of a standalone genre separate to young adult fiction.

As a young adult writer, I am most interested in this form and whether young adult novels have been eclipsed and impacted by this changing structure and whether the reader has also changed. Young adult fiction has been a wide and fluid category since it was first identified in 1802 by critic Sarah Trimmer who wrote of a young adult age between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one. Young adult fiction has been read and enjoyed widely since the early Nineteenth century but has not enjoyed favourable reviews from critics. However, young adult fiction and crossover novels alike have found a place in this period of digital and social change and found a large and enthusiastic contemporary readership.

In this exegesis I attempt to address the debate about what a crossover novel is and how it differentiates from young adult fiction by asking the following questions: Has this genre emerged because of certain texts and influences? What separates this genre from young adult fiction? What purpose do crossover novels have in the current publishing and writing climate? And, how did researching and investigating crossover novels affect my writing?

When I started writing my creative novel, I had one goal in mind: to create an entertaining and engrossing story. As the project grew in length and eight years passed, the work reflected this aging process. I became less sure of my original goals and determinations in the understanding of the crossover novel as the literary landscape had changed from 2011 to 2018. There had begun a downturn in crossover publishing and a return to purer young adult fiction. I began to examine my own changing and evolving relationship to young adult fiction. My story was not a crossover novel. It had each of the constructs I had identified as being necessary to the genre of crossover fiction but crossover fiction is unable to be determined by the page but by its readership. The story in *Shadow of the Archers* began as a spy novel for young adults. The story was written to explore the constructs I had valued in books I read growing up. Near the end of this project, I was satisfied I had written a young adult book and not achieved the interconnection of a crossover novel, as this could not be determined before the book was published and in the hands of readers. It is readers that cross read as books cannot embody a set of constructs to appeal to a wide, cross generational audience nor be influenced by publishing and marketing. There have been emergent problems in books attempting to be crossover books: writers attempting to write crossover books. I have investigated the complex aspects of the nexus between young adult fiction and crossover novels in this work. Sandra Beckett describes crossover fiction as blurring the borderline between two traditionally separate readerships: children and adults (3). This is a definition that describes young adult fiction and my approach as I explored themes and characters to guide the reader through the narrative, a specific young adult reader. In analysing other young adult writers, I discovered my story is resolutely embedded in rich, powerful narrative and informed by conventions I have identified in young adult

fiction *and* crossover fiction. By looking at crossover novels and the literary debate about these books, I was able to understand my ideas and the influence of both forms on my writing.

## Thesis Declaration

I certify this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any other university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in future be used in submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any other university or tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

I give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

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KEZIA PERRY

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## Introduction

In 2011, I wanted to write about the idea that crossover novels were a publishing trend and explore the reasons that they had become successful. Many academics were focusing their writing on popular series and franchises such as *Harry Potter*, *Twilight* and *The Hunger Games* and there were many articles, books, conferences, university courses, bloggers and journals published on the phenomenon of these books and the way they were resonating with readers of all ages. Since then, there has been a movement away from this type of populist series. Filmmakers did not complete *The Divergent Series* due to poor box office returns and declining interest from audiences. Vanity Fair proclaimed that the star of *Divergent* Shailene Woodley was officially done with the *Divergent* films (Chi). Australia's Government funded network the ABC were unable to finance a second season of *Tomorrow, When the War Began* as it could not sustain viewing numbers. Publishers and film makers move on quickly from crossover books if they cannot sustain audiences and readerships. So where does Young Adult fiction (YA) fit into this wide, literary expanse of blended genres and booming franchises? More importantly, to me, a YA author, how does a novel written for a specific audience of adolescents relate to cross-readers and to no longer writing for age-defined audience? The new crossover fiction genre is suitable for YA stories because its thematically similar. YA Fiction explores identity, growing up, and environmental, social and political concerns, often portraying violence and sexuality with startling precision and empathy (Seymour and Beckton). It seems possible that YA and Crossover Fiction can exist in the same genre with the same conventions I have attempted to define in my exegesis but separated by readers. Authors cannot write crossover books but they can write YA stories. There has been such a change in

the landscape of publishing since I began my thesis that looking back, trends and patterns become apparent. The strong and undeniable influence of marketing and traditional publishing houses have on books has increased. Stories that have become current obsessions are carried over into new books and franchises so for example, vampire books are popular and many vampire-centric books are published and then the audience shifts to a new topic and the trends continue to undulate. In 2018, I remain convinced that crossover fiction defines the gap between childhood and adulthood and that it is the description and essence of YA fiction. Through discussion of textual examples and discussion of critical studies and publishing practices, I have attempted to examine the emergence of the crossover novel, the interconnection of YA fiction and the characteristics of successful YA/Crossover Fiction. Narratives that appeal to the adult reader and the child reader. In the case of my creative novel, a reader that enjoys spy and action genres. I was resolute in creating a crossover novel until I changed direction in 2016. There had been a large push for nostalgia at the time in the media and revivals of past television series (Gilmore Girls) were becoming very successful for streaming giant Netflix. I considered why I chose to write a novel about a sixteen year old male protagonist and the books that had influenced me. My mother handed down treasured copies of *Little House in the Big Woods*, *The Little White Horse*, *Malory Towers*, *Spellhorn* and *The Secret Garden*, in the same way parents now hand down copies of *Harry Potter*, *His Dark Materials* and *The Hunger Games* to be embraced by the younger generations. ‘A whole generation of fans are reading Harry Potter to their kids’ (Phipps). A YA book can be born-again as a classic through enough time and cultural saturation.

Crossover novels *do* exist today but few fit the standards that came before them that I discuss in this work. Trying and experimenting with my own writing resulted in failure to create a successful crossover novel and instead created a YA work that adhered to interconnection of the crossover novel model. Is the crossover novel formed by success alone? Do readers decide what becomes a crossover novel? Can an author write a book aimed at no one and everyone? ‘Their decisions as a reader would not change the outcome or the story, only their individual reading experience’ (Washington 13).

What this determined for me is that the story you create as a writer cannot be predetermined to suit a particular genre or convention or written to become a bestseller. Crossover novels can only be deemed a crossover novel after they have been published for several years. Little, Brown published *Twilight* in 2005. Several years would pass before wealth, fame, Hollywood and high sales made their way to author Stephenie Meyer.

As a writer, I have a responsibility to my audience and it is what has driven me throughout this doctorate to think about who this audience might be. ‘Knowing that our readership includes children- notice, I don’t say consists of children, because every children’s book is also read by adults- knowing that there are children reading us, what should our attitude be? (Pullman)

Readers should find in books answers to questions they don’t know, narrative and language to stir their imaginations, dreams and the reflection of the writer’s experience to their own. While publishers control the marketing aspects of a book, a writer controls the story. Crossover fiction *cannot* exist without YA fiction. Its literary place is fortified *within* the YA genre and they are connected by story.

In the first chapter of this exegesis I discuss stories and their intended audiences, and outline YA fiction and its history. I examine emergent problems with the rising popularity of YA fiction such as appropriateness, content and audience and the concept of a young adult. The second chapter of this study looks at a critical text and focus of the debate between crossover fiction /YA fiction- the publishing juggernaut of Harry Potter and the influence and impact on the development of crossover fiction. I hope to demonstrate the conventions of crossover fiction using this text and the response by writers and publishers to the overwhelming monetary success of the series and the detrimental effect on the YA genre. Three Australian YA novels – John Marsden’s *Tomorrow, When the War Began*, Melina Marchetta’s *Looking for Alibrandi* and Margaret Wild’s *One Night* are examined individually with in-depth chapter analysis of text and narrative to determine what strategies and conventions these best-selling writers have employed in their books. Chapters 6 and 7 discuss two outstanding and controversial texts that were marketed as children’s books and caused sensational protests about content and readers of YA books due to their subject matter containing violence, death and sexual exploration. The final chapter of this exegesis discusses and explores my own creative work and creative choices in the shared space of YA and crossover fiction. ‘...to appreciate these works for their formal attributes: their characterisation, emplotment, style, structure and all the other distinctive aspects of the ways these texts work as fictional narratives (Falconer).

## Literary Genres – ‘A book for whom?’

Writer C. S. Lewis once said ‘a children’s story which is enjoyed only by children is a bad children’s story.’ Lewis was stating the fact that there is no clear line dividing children’s fiction from that of adult’s literature. Instead, there are very blurred classifications and fluidity between all contemporary fictional genres. The eclectic definition of young adult fiction is explained as a construct ‘a contemporary term used to define a market, an audience and a developmental category’ (Beckton)

Many hybrid forms of YA exist now that it is hard to find a novel not marketed as crossing over into genre blends. Or as Falconer says, in her foremost text on the subject of crossover novels ‘contemporary cross-reading highlights how children’s literature has never existed in a truly separate sphere’ (9). Looking at contemporary fiction there is a boundary between childhood and adulthood. This gap identifies a literary ‘crossing over’ for readers who read books of fiction involving young protagonists. What creates a crossover book and are crossover books considered a part of children’s fiction, YA or a separate genre? What makes these books popular with many readers? What characteristics do these books have in common?

Young adult fiction is a genre that is marketed for 12-18 year olds and can be found in the teen section of the bookstore, in the adjacent section to children’s picture books and children’s junior fiction. Crossover books are often placed in this section as well as the premium reserved space at the front of the store for popular, bestselling adult fiction. Crossover fiction is often bestselling and promoted heavily by publishers and writers. Hollywood adaptations soon follow. Why are these books

being written for other readers as well as teenagers? The teen market is small. More readers equal higher sales and success for the writer and publishing house.

Crossover fiction blurs the borderline between two traditionally separate readerships: children and adults (Beckett 3). But is it still considered children's fiction? Writer Philip Pullman, traditionally a children's writer, explains the need for these kinds of tales: 'Stories are vital...Children know they need them, and go for them with passion, but all us adults need them too.'

Crossover novels were accidentally created in large part due to Harry Potter, this has changed how authors write and create. Authors are trying to write books that will appeal in a similar way to readers of Harry Potter. While crossover novels have evolved into a category with a style, structure and individual features, they are still linked to young adult fiction (YA). The problem with the construct is that it excludes readers instead of embracing a wider reach. It is a term that has negative associations to readers through the decades. YA fiction marketed as crossover fiction has broad appeal due to the unrestricted and undefined nature of the category.

Has the crossover novel developed exclusively as a modern marketing tool, a trend and a sign of a crumbling immature society when YA has always been an indistinct category? Were there precedents in literature, before *Harry Potter* was published?

Before YA fiction, there were two categories- adult and child. With the start of young adult fiction in the 1960s, teenagers were identified as a category in their own right. There was a desire and market for books with teenage protagonists and narratives involving issues relating to this age group such as rites of passage, drugs, alcohol, first love and sex. Crossover novels originated in the late 1990's with the publication of Melvin Burgess's controversial drug love story

*Junk* in 1996. The following year, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was published. Defining the crossover reader is difficult. Even crossover novelists flounder trying to define the readers of this genre. Meg Rosoff, a crossover novelist, defines the crossover novel as 'a book suitable for adults and teenagers.' This is based on the existing idea that young adult fiction has always had a lower literary place in the publishing landscape and was non-existent before the mid-sixties and not read at all by adults. Veteran young adult writer Burgess, says on the subject:

Fiction for teenagers is a comparatively new affair. When I was in my teens no one wrote any at all. You had to go straight from children's books to adult books without a pause. Even when I started writing in the 1990s, what was called teen fiction was really only for the first two or three years at high school at the most... (The Guardian)

YA is a relatively new genre and crossover fiction can be considered in its infancy as a literary category. There are many YA literary precedents in fiction and many books today are told from the perspective of children or about children. Sonya Hartnett- a writer for both children and adults wrote, *Of a Boy* (2002) from the narrative voice of a nine year old child, however, it is not a children's book or crossover text. Lisa Genova's book *Love Anthony* (2012), and many of Ian McEwan's novels including *Atonement* (2001), *The Cement Garden* (1978) and *Nutshell* (2016) feature child protagonists and are widely celebrated, award-winning, critically acclaimed novels but they do not have crossover appeal, marketed as YA or to a young readership. Crossover fiction is YA read by a wide audience.

Other complexities in the crossover phenomenon are the role and influence of marketing and publishing. 'YA category would not exist without marketing' asserts Kerry Spencer. With the rise of interactive community social media such as Twitter,

Facebook, Instagram and new technologies including Smart Phones and tablets and subscription services like Netflix, have and are having big impacts on the book industry. Production costs are rising and now there are new ways of generating money from books such as theme parks, food, merchandise, movie deals, and the book is now a brand complete with book trailers and many different ways a reader can interact with the book and the author. The traditional ways of publishing have also changed. This has proven very lucrative in the area of crossover fiction. Authors are now able to self-publish on a variety of platforms and reach readers successfully outside of the traditional marketing and literary methods. This has upturned the publishing landscape and changed how readers are accessing novels and the way authors are marketed. Crossover novels are commercially viable for publishers and marketers because they are profitable and popular. *Harry Potter* is a \$25 billion dollar franchise (Wells and Fahey). This does not include the as yet unreleased films in the *Fantastic Beasts* Trilogy and the money made from future syndication. The influence of marketing on books has impacted another aspect of writing and the creative process: quality literature and what will make money. Modern marketing has evolved into a sophisticated system of inquiry involving multilateral approaches: algorithms, mathematics, statistics, and computer modelling are used as often as focus groups, ad-making and other aspects (Spencer).

The crossover novel has two audiences- children and adults: capturing two markets with one product. (Gunelius 15). The term ‘crossover novel’ defines a wide audience reach. Crossover could be considered a marketing term for YA fiction. A genre that is accessible, memorable and easily understandable.

They (the authors) haven’t forgotten the central importance of story, even though their prose style is often elegant, often beautiful. They haven’t

forgotten you need to care about the characters, and that you need some sort of point to the whole thing. And that above all you need pleasure in the reading experience too (Masson).

In short, crossover novels are having it all.

Classifying crossover novels as tools solely for marketing gains is placing too much emphasis on the marketers and not on the idea that writers are attempting to author books about popular and bestselling themes: vampires, magic and dystopian societies to name a few. Crossover fiction has not broken away from its YA origins to become something autonomous as a result of clever marketing but has grown the categories readership exponentially. With so many books adapted for film or in the process of being adapted for film there is a huge demand for crossover books and sequels to existing ones. Authors are paid higher advances for books in trilogies or series and given increased marketing budgets. In the case of *Harry Potter*, new films are being developed in the same magical universe bringing new characters and plots into an already existing franchise and satisfying new and existing audiences.

Harry Potter is considered the demarcation point for crossover fiction's beginnings. When *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was published, YA literature underwent a dramatic overhaul from this point in time. Book prices changed, with the advances of internet, online shopping became more prevalent, books got cheaper online for wholesale prices such as Amazon and The Book Depository and overheads for bricks and mortar bookshops went up with many bookshops closing during this period. Now any reader can be a reviewer, and can publicly comment on books through news articles, personal blogs, web pages, Facebook, Goodreads and Amazon. Writers can sell their crossover books themselves on aps and access readers without

booksellers and publishing houses. Stiefvater explains the reason crossover novels are so popular is 'that adults and teens are very often identical readers.' Before *Harry Potter*, there was no middle ground except for the grey area of fantasy cross appeal such as *Lord of the Rings*. If you look at Text Publishing or University of Queensland Press or the bigger publishing juggernauts Penguin Random House they do not have a section for crossover books. They accept traditional submissions in children's fiction, young adult fiction and adult fiction without an official crossover section. Concluding that a crossover novel can be found and placed in any of the three categories.

From a writer's perspective the idea of making money from books is appealing, looking at the success stories of J. K. Rowling, Stephanie Meyer, Veronica Roth and Suzanne Collins, it is the pinnacle of success. Everyone wants his or her book read. Some books no matter how well written or positively reviewed will not become blockbusters snapped up by bidding wars and Hollywood deals. There is a somewhat negative 'trash' element tarnishing the YA/crossover genre, following the past undesirable qualities once associated with teen fiction. Despite this, the genre continues to grow at an exorbitant speed.

While I discuss the seminal book series of Harry Potter, I have veered away from typical, well-known and discussed crossover books including *Twilight* by Stephenie Meyer, *His Dark Materials* by Philip Pullman and Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* to instead focus on Australian novels aimed initially at a mixed young adult market to determine if my crossover conventions can be used as a marker to define less known novels as crossover books. I have also looked at books that are considered to be controversial crossover texts to examine why they are controversial and why these novels were written and for whom. Considering what a crossover book is, how one is written and designed, and its

interconnection to YA fiction forms the basis of this paper.

## J.K. Rowling's '*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*.'

*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* changed the way books reached readers on a global level. Eliza Buzacott-Spears calls this 'the Harry Potter Effect.' Is there a formula? If so, could it be reproduced to create other successful stories?

When *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was published in 1997, it broke all the standard publisher's rules for children's fiction- it was longer than the standard 40,000 word novels expected for twelve-year-olds and the plot was more frightening fare than had previously been published and acceptable as children's literature. It was without a place, it wasn't suitable as junior fiction but it wasn't considered a young adult novel because it blended fantasy and adventure. Harry Potter would go on to be the most famous series of books ever written and redefine young adult fiction and transform the idea of reading to multiple generations. Harry Potter traversed the previously strict boundaries of children's books by becoming the first crossover novel.

In her book 'Crossover fiction' Sandra Beckett determines that *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was the beginning of crossover fiction and the start of the genre that would not be marketed to children alone. 'Harry Potter is considered *the* crossover title, a kind of prototype of the genre' (Beckett). Harry Potter is a crossover novel because it is read by adults as well as children and is equally enjoyed by adults

and children. It is a book marketed to children but read by everyone. Publishers and writers considered if there was a formula that could be reproduced? ‘The phenomenon can’t be explained and sometimes just happens,’ offered Booklist editor Ilene Cooper. (Buzacott-Spears ABC). However, the phenomenon of Harry Potter hadn’t happened before. Harry Potter was the first of its kind. It changed the publishing landscape in every way- ‘it’s hard to imagine how the publishing industry will ever replace the sensation that spawned midnight parties and all-night lines to get the books the moment they went on sale’ (Rich and Bosman). The original seven books in the series sold more than 450 million copies. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* is, as of 2018, the fastest selling book in history with a first initial print run of 12 million copies (Rankin E-Online).

Like most crossover fiction, there are many different ways a reader can engage with the text. Apart from the seven published novels in the series, there is a theme park, E-books, audio books, interactive website, illustrated editions, graphic novels, adult editions with different covers and costumes. Examples of other successful crossover franchises that have followed Harry Potter include *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent*, *Maze Runner*, and *Twilight* by Stephanie Meyer, the popular vampire romance novels. Crossover fiction, like YA fiction is unique because it gives readers a sense of community and belonging. Readers bond over their shared interests and involving themselves with the various communities each book has created both in real life and online.

The first book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, is the shortest novel in the series and is quick to read and simply expressed. The books grow increasingly complex, longer in length and ‘adult-like’ as the series progresses.

If we consider Harry Potter the father of crossover fiction, we must consider all that came before it as precursors and accept crossover as a genre in its own right.

‘Many folks believe Harry Potter is not just a children’s book because it does not only concern itself with the matters of children. It’s not an adult’s book because it does not concern itself with the matters of adults. It is, like our real world, concerned with many things and so therefore, many different sorts of people can be concerned with it. I don’t think that’s it. That theory requires you to believe that people only want to read books about people who are like them. Children only want to read about children. Adults about adults. Single women about single women. That’s just not true. Otherwise the market for *Silence of the Lambs* would be entirely compromised of serial killers.’

(Stiefvater).

Stiefvater makes a confused argument about the term crossover. She considers herself a young adult writer but her readers include a large, loyal contingent of adult women. However, she is clear about the reason crossover novels are successful. It’s because they ‘speak to everyone.’ It is this special quality that crossover novels achieve and the reason that the novels belong in their own group. The *Harry Potter* series are school adventure novels containing fantasy elements. They are wholesome and moralistic sharing more in common with Enid Blyton than dystopian successors like *The Hunger Games*. The *Harry Potter* series demonstrates most effectively the elements and conventions I have identified in a crossover novel.

The series is modern high-fantasy and features a quest adventure. Quest adventures are stories with a search motif (Brown 68). Harry Potter is searching for a family and a place in the world, looking for answers to his heritage and history as he is an

orphan. The series focuses on the universal theme of growing up. Rowling creates a master villain in the character of Voldemort and a sub-villain per book.

Like all crossover novels, the main character is on a journey of self-discovery and growth.

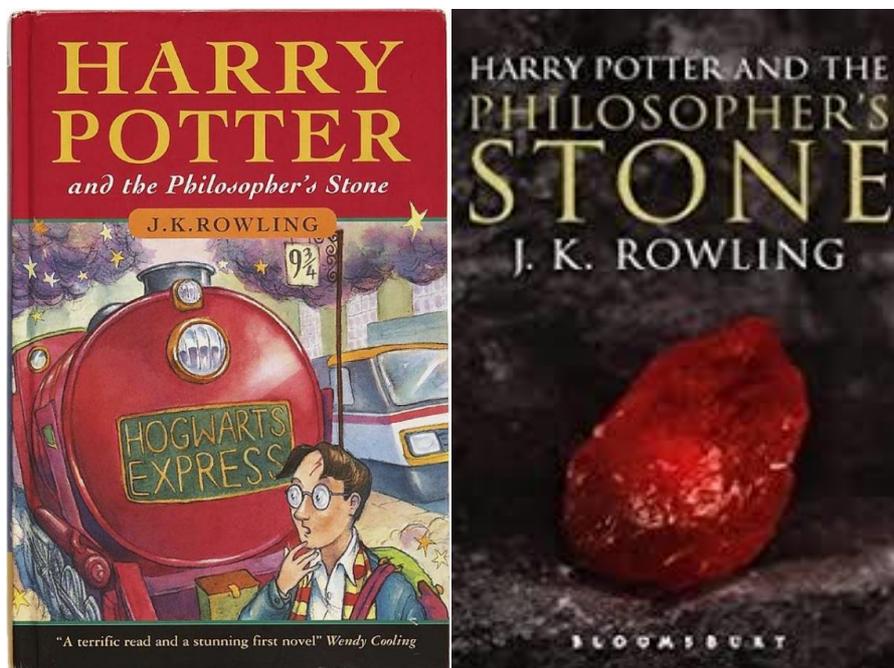
### Multiple Editions

The first element of a crossover novel is the production of dual editions. Bloomsbury published each *Harry Potter* book with two different covers. The dual edition is a single text published separately for adults and children. Distinguishable from each other only by their differing dust jackets (Falconer). It solves the problem of where to place the book on the bookshop shelves and encourages the adult reader to buy a copy whereas they might feel uncomfortable buying a book from the children's section or with a cartoon of a young boy on the cover. The dual editions enable readers to engage with crossover novels, as they have no specific reader defined. *Harry Potter* is not the first time publishers released dual editions. John Marsden's *Tomorrow, When the War Began* (1993) was published in two editions with different titles for marketing purposes.

### Protagonists are ageless

The second element concerns protagonist and the way they are created by the writer. The protagonist of the crossover novel crosses age barriers. During the series Harry Potter ages from 11 years old to 36 years of age. While age is sometimes unspecified or ambiguous in the crossover novel even when it is explicitly stated like Harry and

his corresponding school years, the actions are no longer restricted to age rights. For example when Ron and Harry drive a car across London at 12 years of age in the second book. Crossover novels break these age rules leaving the reader with an identifiable protagonist regardless of age because the characters behaviour disregards age restraints and laws. It is one of the things that allow the crossover novel to traverse many readerships.



*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone Dual Editions 1997 (Bloomsbury)*

No generic length

The fourth *Harry Potter* book is seven hundred and thirty-four pages long with thirty-seven chapters. It does not have the typical publishers requirements for young adult fiction - short chapters and a fast pace. There are numerous subplots and distractions. As popularity increased, the books lengths increased as the story grew increasingly

complex. All crossover novels that have followed the success of *Harry Potter* have broken from previous publishing rules regarding length, style and content with more mature themes and multipart narratives.

Narratives are complex

Crossover novels often use complex narrative techniques, such as genre blending, metafiction, and polyfocalization. Polyfocalization is the use of different narrative voices, multiple narrative perspectives, multiple stories or parallel stories. *Harry Potter's* realistic depiction of universal themes of identity, love, family, loss and evil has been embraced by readers. Mark Haddon, another crossover writer said of writing the *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* that he wanted to eliminate the optimistic safety of children's fiction and give a message that this is the real world, bad things might happen. YA and crossover novels are considerably more liberated than children's fiction allowing the writer to explore darker themes. Harry Potter experiences a pseudo-death in the last book and contains adult themes including betrayal, depression, loss, unrequited love, jealousy, crimes such as murder and attempted murder, serious injury, stealing, neglect and bullying. At times Harry Potter does things that the reader could acknowledge were morally low or even "bad" such as retaliating against Draco Malfoy and harming him on numerous occasions with spells.

Crossover fiction excels at increasing a reader's awareness of the areas of overlap between children's and adults fiction (Falconer 27). Interpreting this as content and theme links the child reader to the adult world and vice versa.

## School stories

Like YA fiction where emphasis is placed on a protagonist's journey within school boundaries, Harry Potter stays within a school story culminating in graduation and 'growing up'. While school is present, it is not a main focus, a secondary set or feature. In Harry Potter the school is the narrative starting point to draw the reader into the magical world Rowling creates. A school setting has been chosen as it provides a clear set of rules, expectations and understandings between the reader and the writer. However, crossover fiction often steps away from traditional school rites of passages and events.

## Series

Harry Potter, like many other books, is part of a series. There are seven books and 'so many Harry Potter fans now in their 20's and 30's have such a great attachment to it because every year when they were younger another book would come out' (Smith). There are a several reasons for this- readers want story, writers have more story to tell and publishers benefit considerably from successful series books as marketing is cheaper.

Of course, not all crossover books or YA fiction possess these conventions as the category is known as wide and evolving but this gives a small but general framework to some of the elements that appear often in popular YA/Crossover novels.

## Stark Realities: Narrative Strategies in Australian Crossover Fiction

The novels I discuss in the next three chapters are written by Australian young adult writers and look at different narrative strategies of realism/fantasy in YA/crossover fiction. The narrative of an Australian young adult book differs from young adult novels published in America and Britain. The tone of Australian protagonists is light hearted, cynical, realistic and raw. John Marsden in *Tomorrow, When the War Began* writes in the first person as a girl (Ellie) who is thrown into war when Australia is invaded and takes place in the Australian bush while *Looking for Alibrandi* centres on a Italian-Australian girl in Sydney and deals with issues pertaining to race and identity. The third novel breaks traditional novel form in the style of narrative poetry or verse novel. *One Night* by Margaret Wild is told entirely in poems and is a very effective structure engaging the reader with the story with its immediacy and intimate style. All three writers have chosen a different narrative style and technique and I will explore the strategy of writing a realistic narrative in the broader area YA fiction and crossover fiction.

The young adult novel is being redefined in the current crossover trend (Becket 120). In Australia it has become quality literary fiction, real, and full of wonderment. It is no longer negatively associated with melodrama and hyper reality. It is not sentimental, old fashioned or sanctimonious.

## Tomorrow, When the War Began

When *Tomorrow, When The War Began* was published the shoutline on the front cover was ‘the most powerful book ever written in Australia for teenagers’. This was, in fact, suggested by Marsden himself and not the publisher, because he believed his narrator, Ellie Linton would resonate strongly with teenager readers. He was right but he underestimated just how much the book would mean to adult readers as well. In fact, Marsden did not think adults would read his novel. His publisher recognised the books cross-appeal and dual editions were published. It quickly became a best seller and sold over three million copies.

‘Everyone’s got their own way and this is mine’ (3) says sixteen-year-old protagonist, Ellie at the beginning of the novel. She is talking about writing down her story but it could also be said of John Marsden’s approach to writing a crossover book whose protagonists are teenagers in year 12 at school in a small fictional Australian town. It is a stark adventure novel where the plot revolves around an unnamed foreign country invading Australia and taking over, imprisoning the townspeople and parents leaving a group of teenagers to fight back. It is a realistic novel although the elements of war are fantastical at times. No longer can fantasy and realism be considered two discrete and opposing genres, but rather, a hybrid twinning of two constructs that are closely tied together (Meyers).

Marsden throws his reader headfirst into action, with Ellie’s first person narration of events and the series is told completely in her voice and account. Children’s author Philip Ardagh said ‘Crossover books seems to cross in one direction only, upwards being novels intended for young readers that adults consider worthy of attention.’ This pulls into question who the book is written for and the

author's intentions for readership. When writing a book, does the author think of a specific reader or demographic? Does an author classify their own work to a marketable group only?

*Tomorrow, When the War Began* was first published in 1993 by Pan MacMillan Australia. Pan MacMillan is a children's publisher. The book was also written with funding support from the Literature Board which looking at Marsden's previous work, would have awarded him the grant based on the fact that he was a children's author producing work for children. However, the series grew in popularity and spawned a Hollywood adaptation and most recently, a televised series on the ABC.

Marsden compares his characters to Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* 'So that was the Famous Five. I guess Corrie and I made it the Secret Seven. Hah!' (16) This tongue in cheek dig at Marsden's more demure predecessors seems fitting considering the adventures both groups will undertake. This meta-comment further increases the realistic nature of the narrative. Ellie, like us, is aware that *The Famous Five* exists in fiction but that she, unlike them, is real. She is referencing them to prove that she, unlike the naïve and saccharine *Five* exists. Marsden is so self-aware as a writer, he foreshadows his narrative when the character of Lee says a throw away commentary 'it's probably the start of World War Three' as they hear planes flying overhead at the beginning of the story.

Later, in the novel, Marsden makes it clear that Australia has been left to its own devices and that no help is coming from America or Britain. His narrative insists to the reader that this is a plausible scenario, not fantasy. Ellie says 'This is real life' (232) when sarcastically explaining why the group don't charge in guns blazing to rescue their parents from the showground.

Like *Harry Potter*, *Tomorrow, When the War Began* is a fantasy story, however, it is a gritty, realistic narrative fantasy based on war and the supposition of ‘what would you do if Australia was invaded tomorrow?’ The title, conflates future and past tense and this positions us to read the text as speculative fantasy. This is what might happen if this scenario occurred tomorrow.

Having begun to read the series at fourteen, the teenagers were older than me and it was my grandmother who introduced me to the books. She was a 62-year-old school teacher at the time who loved the series. She would lend me the books as they were released. By the time the last book in the *Tomorrow* series was published I was old enough (with a part time job) to buy them myself.

Ellie Linton, narrator of the *Tomorrow* books is nominated by the group to become the witness and record the events as they unfold. Ellie is the authorial voice and a wonderful character because she is so strong. She is strong, physically and mentally fit, able to carry and lift and drag and fight. Marsden writes Ellie with no stereotypical femaleness and she is never a damsel being rescued. She is the rescuer. Ellie’s friend, the prim but loyal character of Fee, a girl raised in the city with little knowledge of farm life juxtaposes this divide between spaces. The country/city divide is important in the novel. The characters are able to survive and fight because they are country farmers. They are kids at home on bikes, horses and on the land. Without this knowledge, they would surely have been killed or imprisoned. Marsden relies on this to explain many plot points about why the teenagers are so capable without adults present. They had already been given a lot of responsibility in their former pre-war lives. This is an important element in crossover fiction. Ellie, like all crossover protagonists, acts outside of her numeric age and expectations.

The novel is told in first person. ‘As with every novel, I couldn’t write until I had the right voice for the main character’ (Marsden). Ellie’s voice is mature, honest and flawed. She is stubborn and bossy and resourceful. The tone and style is relatable to readers. She is humorous, questioning, simplistic and responsible. She guides the reader into her narrative.

‘There’s only one way to do it and that’s to tell it in order, chronological. Recording what we’ve done in words, on paper, it’s got to be our way of telling ourselves that we mean something, that we matter’ (2)

From the start the reader is thrown into the adventure. He/She is on the journey accompanying Ellie, completely fused together into the narrative. Marsden uses a lot of repetition in Ellie’s language and discourse, she frequently repeats herself and this lends the text a realistic sound- *like real life*. Marsden has imagined the situation as a narrative strategy of realism.

On the topic of Australian being at war, Marsden says that he ‘imagined a situation where kids were in charge of everything (67). Certainly one of the main themes of the novel is the scenario of war, invasion and the meaning of sacrifice. Marsden does not shy away from realities, injuries and death. War, historical or imaginary, is dotted throughout successful children’s fiction, which has crossed over and appealed to adults- Michael Morpurgo’s *War Horse* (1982), Philip Pearce’s *Tom’s Midnight Garden* (1958) and the bestselling *How I Live Now* (2004) by Meg Rosoff. In almost all crossover books there is a war being raged, against parents, rules, society constraints, armies and fantastical creatures and beings (*Harry Potter*, *His Dark Materials*, *The Hobbit* and *The Narnia Chronicles* features both). Readers

are ready to draw sword or fight to the death and defend alongside the protagonists and deuteragonists.

It's an incredibly dramatic series and the narrative is heavy with action scenes set against the backdrop of the Australian bush. Marsden sets his story in the rural, farm, Australian lifestyle instead of the cityscape and suburban houses. The landscape in *Tomorrow, When the War Began* is almost a character itself. It protects and shields the characters and they give their bush home a name 'Hell' but it is ironic as they love it for its wildness, safety, independence, isolation, refuge and protection it offers. 'Hell' is a world of their own, which moves the narrative into a magical-like topography. 'The use of the word cauldron sets up the anticipation of a bewitched land (Mayers 20). Like the enchanted castle in *Beauty and the Beast*, the townsfolk of Wirrawee are unaware of the existence of a magical and uncharted land so close to their town. Hell exists as a separate world, the foreign invaders will never find, closed to anyone not deemed worthy enough to find it. Marsden gives his reader a realistic illusion- a narrative presented as a real life without the limitations of one. Ellie, is larger than life- a superwoman, and the narrative an action adventure fantasy. Marsden mixes up stark realities with illusion creating an enduring crossover text stretching his narrative boundaries and taking the reader along for the ride. This directly contrasts the novel to *The Hunger Games* conceit of children fighting to the death for food in a cruel dystopian world because it is a plausible situation, a frightening possibility. Marsden's characters create a sort of hopeful wish that today's young generations, no longer defined to teenagers alone might be capable of sacrifice, courage and heroism in their modern lives.

When *Tomorrow* was published it was released in two editions- one aimed for children and one intended for adults. McMillan, at the bequest of book store owners

worried that they could not sell the same book in two sections of the store, altered the title, shortening it to *When the War Began*. The adult editions also sold out and the book was reprinted. This alone makes the book a crossover book- right from the start, before the book was sent to stores to sell, the writer and publishers knew it would and could find a dual audience and readership. And it did.

Marsden would go on to write another six novels in the *Tomorrow Series* and then another three sequels entitled the *Ellie Chronicles*. There was a huge demand for the books to continue. Sequels are successful because the reader gets to immerse themselves in the characters again and again. ‘Writing across several titles and building up a series is a process associated with popular fiction, but in the case of crossover literature that popularity has been translated into more literary works’ (Beckett 159). This is a win-win for readers, publishers and writers. It can be explained easily that readers, like all addicts, after finding that voracious and addictive rush from reading something they like, want more.

‘I wanted a big book’ (Marsden 77) in way of explanation. The series has been adapted time and again so there is still a great fondness and love for the series and the character Ellie Linton.

## Looking for Alibrandi

Melina Marchetta’s debut novel *Looking for Alibrandi* is a semi-autobiographical story about an Italian-Australian girl growing up in Sydney’s inner west and her relationships with her friends, her traditional Italian grandmother, her single mother, family secrets, falling in love and meeting her father for the first time. It is an

autobiographical book dealing with the deep search for identity and place in the world. This alone, would typically make the work classifiable as young adult fiction and yet the book is known for its popularity and adoration with adult readers.

The book's narrative voice is Josie Alibrandi, a seventeen-year-old girl in her final year at school. Josie is a loving, smart, self-conscious, emotional narrator as the book is first person, the reader is privy to Josie's inner thoughts and turmoils 'Sometimes I feel like a junkie. One minute something happens in my life and I'm flying' (240).

*Looking for Alibrandi's* central theme is one of identity. The popular novel sold well and rocketed Marchetta to a position as one Australia's top writers. She, like Marsden is recognised as a children's writer and yet their work is read and enjoyed by a cross audience. While Marsden writes realistic-fantasy, Marchetta is firmly grounded in the real and her decisions about her narrative reflect this difference.

We are introduced to Josie by the character herself, 'My name, by the way is Josie Alibrandi....' (5) and this authorial voice immediately invades our reader space and we subconsciously begin to form a relationship, if not friendship with Josie. The reader is made aware that Josie is from a migrant family with Josie referencing rich Australian kids at her school whose heritages aren't problematic, like hers. 'Mostly Anglo-Saxon Australians, who I can't see having a problem in the world (6).

Marchetta also takes great effort to make sure we understand that Josie does not fit in by also mentioning that her family are not rich Europeans but something altogether *different*. Her cultural heritage and its differences in Australian culture are the subject of the novel. Josie is an outsider in many ways- she is from a single parent family, she is poor and on a scholarship at a rich Sydney Catholic girls school and she is governed by two sets of culture- Italian and Australian.

‘I wanted to go to a school in the inner west where all my friends had gone. They were Italian and Greek and we ruled primary school. They were on my level. I related to them. They knew what it meant not to be allowed to do something... I looked like them. Dark hair, dark eyes, olive skin. We sounded alike as well. It felt good being with other confused beings. We were all caught up in the middle of two societies’ (7).

In this paragraph, Josie tells the reader exactly why she is different and why she is confused. Marchetta doesn’t wince in explaining the racial differences or prejudices at any given moment in her book. It is this honesty in the narrative that makes Josie so approachable and warm. We accept Josie’s search for answers and her place because she is relatable. Marchetta puts her heroine in stereotypically realistic situations- falling in love, getting a part time job, school worries, parental difficulties, bullies, etc Alibrandi might be a different sort of narrator but we accept that because we understand and have lived or are living the conditions and landscapes she experiences. It is crossover fiction because Josie’s inner voice isn’t the typical authorial voice of a teenager. She is relatable to adults as well as teenagers and her struggles are mature ones.

At the end of the book, Josie hasn’t found all the answers but she has accepted that she is free to be who she wants. ‘I thought maybe I’d wake up one morning and see the light. Feel liberated from everything’ (258). But she doesn’t get the liberation she seeks as she realises that she was always free. The burdens of confusion over her heritage was of her own making. Marchetta tells the reader pessimistically that Australia does not understand multiculturalism. It is a country of immigrants and yet while we might never understand what it feels like to be a different nationality-

Italian/Australian or walk in their shoes that is the essential question of being human, perhaps not understanding others differences but accepting them for what they are. On the subject, Josie says.

‘If someone comes up and asks me what nationality I am, I’ll look at them and say that I’m an Australian with Italian blood flowing rapidly through my veins. I’ll say that with pride, because it’s pride that I feel’ (259).

This is crucial to YA/crossover novels. They do not always end happily. The novel is complex with its protagonist struggling with profound issues deeper than school life and events.

The book is structured as the passage of time over one year of Josie’s life from her seventeenth birthday until her eighteenth celebration at the close of the book. It is a mistake for publishers to think the journey of learning who you are begins and ends in young adulthood. This journey lasts a lifetime and explains the appeal of a cross reading audience. The popularity and embracement of *Looking for Alibrandi* would suggest the opposite to what Marchetta says about multiculturalism, that readers are extremely tolerant and understanding of the ethnic identity or at least attempting to comprehend it. The novel’s overt theme of Josie’s maturation has her grow from articulating her desire for money, popularity and prestige to a position, where, ostensibly, her desires are more wholesome (McInally 60).

The books displaces parents like most crossover fiction- her mother is absent from events and one of the central plots is Josephine meeting her father, a lawyer who she has never met before the scenes in the novel take place. The absence of parents is an essential element in crossover fiction. Here the parents take a subliminal or near-invisible position. They are present in some capacity but are not involved in the

protagonist's inner journey. In *One Night*, parents are ignored and kindly neighbours act as advisors and guardians. Parents are imprisoned and taken away in *Tomorrow*, *When the War Began*, in need of rescuing by their children. This narrative strategy - inverting the role of parents is important to the structure of the crossover book. Unlike young adult fiction, parents have a place but it is not as ogres, bullies, neglectors or enforcers of rules, crossover fiction gives a realistic representation of parents. In *Looking for Alibrandi*, Josie's relationship with her mother Christina is loving, functional and full of respect if occasionally a little fraught with realistic arguments and disputes.

Josephine Alibrandi is a perfect crossover protagonist because she is so flawed. She is realistically indecisive, quick-tempered, and fraught with angst about decisions and confusion about life. She makes many mistakes and the book does not end with her getting everything right. She does not 'get the guy' or the friends, money, success or answers she has been demanding and expecting in the novel. Instead, she ends the novel with questions and a sense of the unknown. She, like the reader, is facing uncharted landscapes and that is an essential crossover theme.

## One Night

Margaret Wild's novel *One Night* is a multi-voice verse novel about a young woman who falls pregnant told in the form of non-rhyming poetic monologues. This style gives the novel the ability to narrate from many points of view. Like other crossover books *One Night* ventures far outside the traditional conservative realms of children's

fiction. The story is about a character, a teenage girl called Helen who has unprotected sex with a boy at a party and gets pregnant. The themes are complex and the style is a non-traditional narrative told in verse. On the verse novel, Candida Gillis observes 'fiction with many voices conveys a strong sense of realism' (68). On the pregnant young adult narrative, 'Young adult literature that adheres to stage models of adolescence is often didactic. It has in mind certain lessons that all adolescents need to learn' (Sulzer and Schmidt 52).

Wild does not pander to a sense of didactic morality or hold back in her depictions of thoughts and lives. The book has elements considered controversial in YA, elements such as swearing 'Fuck him' (90), unprotected sex, and pregnancy. All considered topical but previously restricted in young adult books. Crossover fiction has no restrictions on subject matter or authorial style and voice. Wild is not interested in the 'right' novel. It doesn't 'tell [readers] students what to do rather than allow them a space for grappling with the complex issues in their current and future lives (Sulzer and Schmidt 52).

*One Night* has multiple perspectives and is voiced by more than one person. The narrative voice changes between characters and the reader is privy to each of their individual thoughts- Helen, the protagonist, Gabe, the boyfriend, parents, friends and neighbours. This is important because it tells the story from numerous viewpoints. Each page is a different poem voiced by a different person and a different style. This format, along with the verse poetry, is non-traditional storytelling.

Helen's character's strength in the face of an adversity which all women, and to an extent men, can understand or imagine themselves facing is appealing to a cross reader. There are elements in Helen and Gabe that all readers can universally

empathise with and understand. Helen is an admirable protagonist. She says of the growing baby inside her.

Only when my stomach  
starts to swell  
do I truly understand.  
This is *real*.  
There *really* is someone  
Growing inside me,  
Someone who's going to depend  
On me  
Me (117).

This is not the voice of a teenager girl. The depiction and experience is wider than that of a young adult novel. Most crossover texts contain thought-provoking concepts that engage the reader-adult or child- on an intellectual level as well as an emotional one. They are stimulating and enlightening for, and accessible to, both adult and young readers (Beckett 270). Beckett is talking about the book accessing readers and engaging with them regardless of age. *One Night* breaks down many stereotypes, in fact, Wild goes out of her way to create anti-stereotypes. Helen, is deemed by herself as an 'ugly girl', when a boy asks her name with a joke about the beautiful Helen of Troy she replies 'No...Helen of Gordon who face *wrecked* a thousand ships' (84). It is this insecurity and flaw that the reader enjoys and relates to. Other stereotypes are also broken down- in Wild's characters -boys are mean and insecure and 'cliquey' instead of girls, parents are understandable and not mean or enforcing rules, step-

parents are not Disney-like evil stepmothers but motherly and gentle. Boy can be cruel and jealous to each other and you can be good looking and unhappy inside. Helen is not traditionally feminine, instead she is depicted as strong willed, brave and courageous in the face of her pregnancy and homelessness. She is honest and opinionated about her situation. She is analytical like an adult, wise beyond her years. It is this that makes her such a strong crossover protagonist. She is not insecure or written as clingy, spoiled, insecure, attractive or rich. She is the antithesis of *Twilight's* fragile heroine Bella. Helen is grounded and realistic. Helen, faces single parenthood, familial abandonment, poverty, study, fulltime work, pregnancy and labour alone and without support. The events are written and conveyed through poetic text and the reader is invested in Helen.

Identifying with characters in novels is the essence of reading. It is the purpose and lifeblood of books- readers discover that other people experience similar events and thoughts to themselves. This is a crucial component in crossover fiction and explains how this genre appeals to so many readers. *One Night* is not a coming of age tale. It is not a teenage novel even though the characters in it are teenagers. *One Night* does not fit the standard category of young adult fiction because the narrative voice relegates it to the unfixed boundaries of crossover fiction. If young adult fiction traditionally dealt with questioning identity and working out 'who you are', Helen already has this self assured and comfortable sense of self. She is not working out who she is. Stories in crossover fiction deal with the uncomfortable and difficult issues of growing up, regardless of one's stage of life.

The narrative is constructed as a verse novel. Each page contains a free-verse poem with a title and a character name. Verse novels have gained some traction and popularity in Australian fiction with Stephen Herrick's verse novel books *Lonesome*

*Howl* and *The Simple Gift* being shortlisted for the NSW Literary Awards and Children's Book Council of Australia prizes. They are easier to read for reluctant readers (of any age) and are fast paced and instantly immersive. Wild writes chronologically but the form deviates from the standard narrative trajectory- beginning, middle and end.

*One Night* has teenaged aged protagonists but the ages are vague and rarely mentioned. The characters, like all crossover novel protagonists, seem ageless even though the reader is given a number. Parents occupy a minor role in *One Night*. Wild invents her characters as the adults in her narrative.

The most important aspect of crossover fiction is the reader's ability to identify with the characters. The verse novel is the best and most effective way to structure the narrative in *One Night*. The story is realistic. There are no elements of fantasy or fable here, rather, Wild's book might have become grim or depressing except for the likability of Helen. Helen's self-awareness and her authorial voice is that of a much older person with cultural and life experience. She is not a simplified representation of a teenage girl. This is very modern of Wild and exactly why the book could be attractive to cross-over readers. 'Stereotypical narratives have social importance when they find their way from books to the real world by affecting how readers relate to others and themselves (Kokesh 141). I would argue against Kokesh and state that untraditional narratives have more social importance to the reader because they are able to step outside of their own individual narrow experience, which forms the basis of why people read.

Wild inverts the teen stereotype frequently to remind the reader that her characters are not tropes. Helen has a friend, Barb. Barb has a trundle bed in her room for when Helen stays with her 'We're little kids again, having a sleepover, but in the

morning my parents won't be coming to pick me up' (97). A sleepover is a typical event in a teenager's life except that here, Helen is pregnant and has left home. Wild steps so intimately and confidently into the experience of life in the novel. The narrative is realistic and even if the book challenges readers' beliefs or they were unable to identify with the experience of pregnancy, they would understand Helen because the narrative voice resounds with conviction and authenticity.

The popularity of crossover novels depends on this relationship or contract between the reader and the characters. Wild uses distinct crossover narrative strategies including the form of verse novel to engage with the reader. The verse novel enables the voices to step outside the boundary of traditional narrative and a kind of realism that could not be captioned by conventional, straightforward text. Beside being a verse novel, the structure of the novel is nine months from conception to birth and what many people colloquially call 'the fourth trimester of pregnancy' - the three months following a birth. It is a book celebrating life, yet Wild does press on the reader morals or viewpoints in a demanding way. There are many gaps in time, the way the novel time jumps is enabled by the form and gives the reader a character history. These are literary techniques Wild uses to guide the reader, she has used the verse novel to write a complex emotional journey about pregnancy usually regulated to women's topics, or 'women's fiction' and make it broadly entertaining and meaningful. The reader is strongly attached to Helen Gordon. Narrative realism strategies are employed by the author's choice to move between characters. Gillis asserts that 'the quick jumps from perspective to perspective are like a cinematic montage, creating atmosphere, revealing relationships and building tension' (53).

Berlie Doherty's *Dear Nobody* (1991) is a complimentary precursor to *One Night*. It is a story narrated by dual narrators and written in the form of letters to their

unborn child. The novel similarly features a teenage girl called Helen who falls pregnant to her boyfriend, Chris. Both writers have employed a narrative strategy of monologues from narrators to give the stories added dimensions and realism. What a character says in only part of the story; how he or she says it reveals much about the character as about the subject (Gillis 56). How the character speaks is as important as what they speak about.

The poetry in *One Night* does not rhyme but there is a rhythm to the prose. Wild uses many poetic conventions including repetition.

My father speaks.

My mother nods.

My father lectures.

My mother nods.

My father criticises.

My mother nods (75).

This repetition makes the language smooth and beautiful to read aloud but also gives a realistic tone to the characters. Wild has chosen a difficult authorial style in the form of poetry. Poetry for teenagers is rare and unpopular. Poetry in the larger publishing market is small with many publishing houses have phased it out altogether and avenues for poets are performance based or regulated to literary journals with members or the tiny space reserved for a poem in a section of *The Weekend Australian*. Wild's choice of verse poetry means the characters 'speak for themselves, and about their experiences' (Letcher 87). Helen's predicament and her feelings about it are powerful for the reader. 'Because of the immediate and visceral nature of poetry, many writers utilize the genre when dealing with extremely emotional topics' (89) surmises Letcher on the reason why this structure is adopted.

The tone of the verse novel is romantic and dramatic. The setting is modern day Australia set against the backdrop of the working class in pockets of Sydney suburbia. Wild has a natural and instinctive style and the verse –novel lends itself to a lyrical and personal narrative enabling the reader to ‘see from the inside’ of each character. What could become a conventional teen pregnancy narrative becomes emotive and heavy here. In terms of poetic length, the novel is a short poem. It is divided in part by voices. Wild is succinct with language and accomplishes much from very few words,

Mrs. Evans gets well fast.

She’s scared of nursing homes.

She tells me why.

A stroke took her husband...

One summer morning

A young nurse wheeled him

Into the garden for a few minutes’ sun,

And forgot him.

Mrs. Evans weeps again now,

Remembering his raw face and head and hands.

‘No one admitted responsibility,

And he was mute, he was *mute*.’ (209)

In looking at *One Night*, the broader meaning and effect of poetry cannot be separated from the book’s narrative. On the effect of poetry, the French poet Paul Valery said

‘the power of verse is derived from an indefinable harmony between what it *says* and what it *is*. Indefinable is essential to definition’ (Hirsch 1). *One Night* is specifically a lyric poem. According to Edward Hirsch ‘the lyric poem is the most intimate and volatile form of literary discourse (1). It has a sense of urgency and provokes a deep response in the reader. I believe Wild chose this form, as it is reflective and intimate for the reader. At times, the novel is confronting and emotional and yet, continues a sense of rhythmic beauty and peacefulness in its language. Wild takes the experience of pregnancy and sets the reader on the journey as well. The verse novel connects to the reader. Walt Whitman in his seminal work, *Leaves of Grass* ruminates thematically on how the poet and the reader experience the same feelings about life and existence because they are one, joined together through the act of reading. Wild’s work connects the reader and the poet through the mutual experience of the tenderness, joy and pain of birth. The relationship between writer and reader is an element of crossover fiction. Wild uses the ancient form to her advantage. ‘The lyric poem is a highly concentrated and passionate form of communication between strangers- an immediate, intense, and unsettling form of literary discourse (Hirsch 4). Wild, herself said *One Night* (and *Jinx*, her other verse-novel) was the most difficult to write. ‘Because each piece is so short- just like a snapshot- each word has to count. The wrong word or jarring rhythm will stand out right away’.

Ellen Hopkins is an American writer whose verse novels have appeared on numerous best-selling lists including the New York Times. Her books have dealt with very gritty themes including incest and prostitution. There is, with the verse novel format, ability for the writer to be very intimate and unremitting with the reader. This is due to the first person approach.

‘The format’s relentless first-person point of view and minimal word count strips a story down to the raw inner monologue of the main character. This creates the sensation of being trapped inside a character’s head, an effective technique in building tension.’ (Friesner)

In *One Night*, the characters are realistic but there is a sense that they operate beyond their years within their inner monologues. This is perceptive of Wild and broader crossover genre because in crossover fiction teens embody the maturity and responsibility of adults.

The layout of the book is simple and attractive. The poems are aligned to the left of each page and never more than two pages long.

The verse novel allows narratives that do not fit prescribed notions about books to find readers and readers to find them. Without the device of poetry the emotional narrative voice of Helen would have lost meaning. Narrative voice is central and important in YA/crossover fiction and controls how the writer and reader to connect.

Marsden, Marchetta and Wild have, by using realistic narrative strategies, created crossover fiction outside of magical fantasy. While an abundance of crossover fiction features fantasy, these novels have chosen realistic stories that their readers can relate to without fantasy aspects.

Realistic crossovers have not received nearly the same level of hype and media attention as fantasy crossovers, but they constitute an exciting and thriving dimension of the genre (Beckett). Their crossover appeal is created by the authorial voice and existing narrative blending of autobiography, reflection and personal history. Marchetta, because of personal motivations stemming from her own

experiences of being a migrant writer, Marsden, firmly believing that his books are realistic and teenagers *should* be capable of the things he writes and Wild, writing an imaginative poetical account of teenage pregnancy and finding joy. Marchetta, Marsden and Wild demonstrate three very different ways YA/crossover fiction can be written as realistic fiction. A reader can experience things that are not in their realm of experience and be entertained and educated.

## Narrative Responsibility: Sex and Death in Crossover Fiction

Children's literature, does *not* exist in an ivory tower; I take it that we're inextricably part of the world, the whole world; and that we (writers) have several kinds of responsibility that follow from that. (Pullman 7).

Philip Pullman is talking about 'the responsibility of the storyteller- how far it extends, and what directions it extends in, and where it stops.' Before Judy Blume's groundbreaking novel *Forever* was published in 1975 with its frank descriptions of sexual intercourse, condoms, oral sex and birth control, there was another book aimed at a teen market by Pulitzer winner and writer Paul Zindel. His book *My Darling, My Hamburger* was published in 1969, seven years before Blume's book would be written. Zindel writes about teenage life in the frank and honest way we have to come to expect YA fiction. The main protagonist, a girl called Mandy goes out with a boy she doesn't really like. As predecessor to *Forever*, it features abortion and a sexual assault. Zindel was writing about teen interests ahead of his time by thirty years or more.

Zindel and then later Blume were acknowledging that teenagers were interested in sex and accessing sex in fiction. The controversy surrounding *Forever* highlights the longtime understanding with parents and upheld by publishers that certain topics are considered taboo or inappropriate in children's fiction. This is still the case today and gatekeepers (teachers, parents, publishers, shopkeepers, booksellers and librarians) are still guarding realms of children's literature landscape. Television series like *13 Reasons Why* (2017) has eclipsed the censorship on novels because of the graphic nature of digital technologies and a no holds barred approach. There are so many points of access now including online, that gatekeepers are easily outmaneuvered if desired.

*Forever* is a contemporary novel because Blume wrote about an ordinary couple having sex for the first time. While the topic is much more commonplace in narrative fiction and television today (*The Fault in Our Stars*, *Touch Me*, *On the Jellicoe Road*) it was unique in its time. The character of Katherine possesses agency over her body and experiences a positive first sexual experience. It is important to highlight in the discourses surrounding sex in fiction, not many of it is positive. *Forever* is about people. It's about feelings. It is not a sex manual (Blume). The crossover genre is full of hard hitting, grim, upsetting psychological books and the landscape of publishing is incredibly changed. Once swearing was considered a special and rare event with curse words limited by publishers. Nowadays there are no such prohibitions in the realm of YA/crossover fiction.

Sex is not the only thing being represented differently in fiction nowadays. Violence, death, parents, domestic violence, disability, gender fluidity, murder, mental illness, cancer are all being written about in honest, realistic sometimes disturbing ways. This mirrors how our society has changed and how our views on sex,

sexuality and violence have also been altered. Modern fiction has taken a no holds barred approach, which is oftentimes disturbing and complex. Gripping violent, sadistic stories are also likely to net the author a prize, big sales, movie deals and success. In 2017, gatekeepers are not censoring writers and if they are trying, writers have the modern option to self-publish their work instead. Technologies including Smart Phones, Internet, E-books are there, making it easier for children and young adults to access entertainment and information.

Crossover fiction is more realistic than ever with or without the fantasy aspects. The traditional journey of finding an identity is gone. Contemporary readers understand that the concept of identity is fluid, constantly changing. The conventional coming of age tale, the *bildungsroman* has been replaced with open-ended narratives. There is immediacy in crossover fiction: a state of being fixed in the now. There is only the present moment not the sense that who you become at the end of a novel is who you will be. This is evidenced in the huge movement away from school-aged stories. Books are no longer culminating at graduation from high school. Most protagonists in the crossover genre are aged 16-18. If they are younger, they act in terms of maturity and experience older than their years. This reflects our present society and the ways teenagers are being exposed to 'adult' issues earlier than ever before.

Judy Blume says she receives letters from readers aged ten who have read *Forever*. On whether the book is for children or adults she says, 'I didn't want anyone to be told what it was.' This is critical to crossover texts. They are appealing to a wide audience.

No longer are simplistic, sweet narratives permissible. Local libraries are now placing crossover novels next to children's junior fiction and placing a second copy in

the adult section of the library. Every book on the shelves is a harrowing, digestible piece with an excellent cover typography and blurb. Melvin Burgess instructs ‘treat young readers like adults dealing with difficult subjects such as drugs and sex.’

Most young adult books published now appeal to a mixed market. Before Rowling and Haddon, it wasn’t embraced and acceptable as it is today. Beckett postures that this can be explained by new awareness of books that span the gap between children’s and adult fiction (120). People have the context of their own lives. Crossover fiction provides honesty and a bridge to deeper understanding and experience. Sara Hutchinson argues that ‘their [writers] protagonist has to be relatable and has to share their story in a recognizable manner through language, behaviour or situation (318). She is talking about the contract between writer and reader and how the characters will mirror real life and knowledge.

It is a critical time to have writers being bold and taking risks on the page as today’s young people are exposed to many new ideas and technologies. I will explore and discuss two crossover texts that break their narrative contract with readers for two very different reasons and purposes and highlight controversial issues surrounding content and appropriateness in the YA/Crossover genre.

## Charlotte Roche’s *Wetlands*

Veering very far from the modest, chaste pages of Judy Blume is a German best selling contentious book. Charlotte Roche’s *Wetlands* (2009) is a brooding, twisty comic narrative told in the first person by eighteen-year-old female protagonist Helen.

The book has a strange foreword where the authorial voice, presumed to be Roche, states that looking after the elderly well is important and that although her parents are divorced they will eventually require care and she will put them together in a bed until they die. At first glance, a reader might skip this page believing it is a lengthy dedication. Upon further observation, it is written in the first person and is the voice of the main character Helen who the reader has not met yet. It is an unsettling joke on the reader. *Wetlands* breaks the narrative contract between reader and writer because the book is not a story, rather it is an essay on the female body as radical as Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* masquerading as fiction.

*Wetlands* was published in Germany in 2008 to huge acclaim and popularity. The international deals were quick to follow and the English translation was published by Fourth Estate, London in 2009. Crossover fiction had long been established by *Harry Potter* in 1997 and was thriving in 2009 with the publications of sequels to *Harry Potter* and *Twilight* and the release of *The Hunger Games*. Crossover fiction was mainstreaming, trending and prominent.

In *Wetlands*, the character of Helen is extremely sexually confident and open about her body, bodily functions and sexual activity. The book opens with an engaging and gross discussion about the narrator's hemorrhoids-

‘Before I had the salve I would scratch at my butthole in my sleep so much that I’d wake up in the morning with a brown stain in my underwear the size of the top of a cork. That’s how much it itched, and that’s how deep I’d stick my finger in. So yeah, I’d say it’s very unladylike (1).

‘Unladylike’ and open are the foremost concerns and motivation of Roche in her writing. Helen veers crudely and honestly from one bodily function to a sexually

explicit encounter and a shaving accident that lands her in hospital for the length of the novel. Yet her approach to these incidents is positive and upbeat. She is funny and warm and engaging while discussing ‘shaving her ass’ in preparation for anal sex, inverting feminist ideologies as she rushes through the mental preparations of women’s hygiene and preparations for a romantic encounter.

‘...since the ass is obviously part of sex for me, it’s also subject to the modern shaving regime, along with my pussy, my legs, my underarms, the upper lip, both big toes and the top of my feet as well (3).

Helen is an unreliable narrator. ‘*Wetlands*, in the tradition of Plath’s *The Bell Jar*, is a remarkable novel about mental illness that has been mistaken for feminist literature (Roche 1). The reader is never certain of the events that transpire and there is no other perspective presented except Helen’s. A quarter of the way through the novel Helen tells the reader.

‘Mom trained me to be a good liar. To such a degree that I believe most of my own lies. Sometimes it can be fun (60).

With this comment Roche immediately destroys the foundation of her novel that we can believe everything Helen says to be true. Unlike Ellie in *Tomorrow, When the Began*, Helen’s account may or may not be incorrect or worse, fiction. Helen has questionable authenticity as a narrator. Helen’s sanity is never analysed by the narrator but there are dark undertones of Helen suffering child abuse but she cannot remember if it is a true or imaginary memory. Helen remembers her mother cutting off her eyelashes out of jealousy (61) and her mother trying to attempt suicide with

Helen's brother. A sentence before this, the narrator has said she is a liar so the reader is left to draw his or her own conclusions. This narrative device stops the narrator's odd behaviours being explained stereotypically as mental illness or damage as we are never sure of their origins. We can, perhaps, assume that Helen is telling the truth because of the frankness in which she narrates her thoughts. The abuse she has suffered is not mentioned in the novel again.

In *Wetlands*, the clinical setting of the hospital becomes the metaphor for the clinical real world. It is not surprising for a novel centered on body issues and functions that a hospital is the author's choice of location. There is nowhere more acceptable for body functions, expressions, and bodily discourses than a hospital. The body, not the mind or the heart, rules and the physical is the narrative essence. I would argue that the novel has a larger-than-life, hyper real quality because no one before Roche has written a book about female anatomy in such a disgusting, confident and realistic way and the topics are still taboo in most societies for example anal sex, anal shaving, enjoying anal sex, enjoying nakedness, exhibitionism, farting, masturbation and smells. There is a celebration of the female body in *Wetlands* as well as abject horror. By talking about it, reveling in it, the body becomes less grotesque. As the novel progresses the reader becomes desensitised to Helen's bold language and intimacy. There is a fascination in the honesty of the character and the crossover narrative.

The use of sense of smell is constant in the novel. This is a powerful but often neglected sense in writing and it allows Roche to shock the reader with boldness. Roche has written about all the things 'good' women don't do- like fart. *Wetlands* is a 'bro-book' for females. Films like *The Hangover*, *Dumb and Dumber*, *Knocked Up* and *Bridesmaids* have long been affecting audiences with crude bodily functions,

nudity, awkwardness and humor. Roche has labelled her work a manifesto on the female body wrapped up in a crossover text. The crossover genre has no fixed boundaries so it is the perfect literary setting for this book. It is refreshing to read frank thoughts about the female body.

Roche when asked about the feminism in the book said-

‘I’m convinced that in contemporary society a lot of women have a very messed-up attitude to their own bodies. We’re obsessed with cleanliness, with getting rid of our natural excretions and our body hair. The juices of the female body. Smegma. In order to tell that story, I created a heroine that has a totally creative attitude towards her body- someone who has never even heard that women are supposedly smelly between their legs. A real free spirit (6).

Roche’s manifesto is clear. She will debunk every myth about the female body and ruminate on the origins of society’s apparent misconceptions about female organs, pleasure and sex. The reader is never introduced to the world outside of the hospital, the novel revolves solely around Helen’s openness about her bodily functions and her inner monologue. The tone of the book is diary-like, confessional and has assertiveness reminiscent of television hosts and weather presenters. (Roche is a well-known television personality in Germany).

The first person narrative is employed to mask Roche’s style of lecturing to the reader. The book opens with the discussion of hemorrhoids to educate the reader and guide them through the experience. Helen delights in the presumed naivety of the reader and her refusal to be shamed by her body or normative culture. Her progressive sexual ideologies transgress society’s acceptable limits for women’s bodies and yet women’s bodies are continually subjected to events like periods, menopause,

childbirth and breastfeeding. 'Written on the body is a secret code only visible in certain lights; the accumulations of a lifetime gather there' (Winterson). Comparisons can be drawn to Jeanette Winterson's literary masterpiece *Written on the Body* (1992). Beliefs about life, love, sex and death are projected through and onto the body. Like *Wetlands*, *Written on the Body* addresses the way bodies are affected and controlled by society's constraints.

*Wetlands* offers a realistic representation of the female body through the eyes of an 18 year old narrator. Helen is free. It would be a negative aspect to the novel, if the price of such freedom and insight came from the trope of mental illness.

Like *Forever* (1975), *Wetlands* is explicit in its depictions of sex and the body and consumed with these experiences and translating it into accessible information for the reader. The language is conversational and colloquial. The depictions of bodily functions and the body engross the reader at the beginning of the novel but lose their shock value halfway through the narrative, as there is little to no plot. Roche doesn't focus on events as the novel is thought driven.

*Wetlands* is not easy to read, its sensory descriptions alone, the rawness, is disgusting at times. It does not give the reader a sense of joy or pleasure but the text is relatable through its honest approach to the subject at hand. It is a jaw-dropping, original book. It attempts to describe the modern female experience to a broad unisex audience and the feelings within.

We accept this book about femaleness because it is written by a female author and yet it breaks its contract with the crossover reader because it has such a strange and unusual narrative structure. Roche's motivation is not to entertain, it is to educate on the misconceptions of womanhood and women's bodies. When questioned on how

much the book is autobiography, she says there is slight autobiographical element to the novel (“Interview” Granta).

Can Roche write a book about being a woman just because she is a woman? Can she *speak* for all women? *Wetlands* redefines the literary essay but breaks its contract with the crossover reader by simply being something else. Even within the wide and untethered genre, this might be pushing crossover too far. As fiction, the story is weak, vague and repetitive, frequently stalling and drifting with limited plot action amid the narrators many opinions and rambling thoughts. Framing *Wetlands* as a non-fiction crossover book may redefine crossover texts. Perhaps that is exactly what Roche intended. *Wetlands* is highly original crossover narrative with a headstrong, creative narrator. ‘I wanted to write about the female body: exploring it, but also making it strange’ (Roche). The first person narration frames the narrative. There is a personal and autobiographical sense to first person storytelling although Helen is a limited and capricious narrator. Can we accept it as it is? If we read *Wetlands* as a story, the contract is destroyed and yet if we read it as non-fiction autobiographical experience/crossover then the contract between reader and writer is valid.

The book, regardless of definitions, is important. There is so much honesty that a contemporary crossover reader could not help but find refreshing. *Wetlands* is a shivering, shining philosophy liberating women’s bodies in the guise of a crossover book.

## The Case of the *Bunker Diary* and the Rise of Imprisonment

### Fiction

#### The Bunker Diary

The most disturbing and worrying trend in this new genre of crossover books is the realistic and dark stories about abductions, trauma and rape and the struggle to survive such horrifying crimes. Imprisonment fiction is winning awards such as Carnegie Children's Award, nominations for the Orange Prize, Commonwealth Writer's Prize, Man Booker Prize and being made into big Hollywood, award winning, Oscar nominated films such as *Room* (2015) adapted from Emma Donoghue's uplifting and delicately written book of the same name based on the shocking case of Joseph Fritzl. However, Donoghue's book, aimed at adults, is not centered on the kidnapping aspects as much as the relationship between her two protagonists. *Room* is told from the perspective and narrative voice of 5 year old Jack. However, *Room* is not a crossover book. It is not marketed for children. Like Sonya Hartnett's *Of a Boy*, the book does not crossover to a wider audience. The themes are mature. The story revolves around a mother and son imprisoned by a male captor in a tiny room; an outdoor garage equipped with a toilet, bath and rudimentary kitchen. There is a skylight where Jack looks out and sees the sky. They are routinely visited by the captor, who brings supplies and rapes the mother while Jack hides in the wardrobe. The beauty of *Room* is the strong and loving bond between mother and child in the face of extreme and horror filled circumstances. Donoghue has said her

novel is a universal story of parenthood (“Interview” Economist). *Room* blends genres creatively including mystery, horror, detective fiction, philosophy and religion.

From the start I saw this novel as having elements of fairy tale, horror, science fiction and those wonderful 18th-century novels with wide-eyed traveller narrators (“Gulliver’s Travels”, “Robinson Crusoe”, “Candide”). I designed “Room” to work on several levels simultaneously. First and foremost to be a clean book: straightforward, clearly and linearly narrated, and realistic. But also with lots of extras smuggled in for readers (like my professor partner) who relish that kind of thing: echoes of texts from Plato, to the King James Version, to “Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man”, to “Catcher in the Rye”.  
(Donoghue, Economist)

Jack’s limited worldview and confusion helps the novel navigate some of the darker aspects of the work as action occurs off page and out of Jack’s realm.

Yet, in this new style of imprisonment writing, YA/crossover fiction takes on adult themes. Perhaps, if *Room* wasn’t known as and based on such a shocking, heinous world famous crime, it could have transcended this divide as so much crossover fiction deals with mature themes. As it is, *Room* is not a crossover narrative but a work of note and relevance as it has influenced the work I discuss below.

Kevin Brook’s Carnegie winning novel *The Bunker Diary* (2013) is a disturbing and dark story about a boy, Linus, who is kidnapped by an unseen and unknown captor and imprisoned alongside five other victims in an underground cell complete with video cameras and surveillance. The book has been controversial since it was published for the sinister implications, the scenes involving torture, despair and death, the fact that one of the kidnapped victims is a nine year old girl and most

importantly, because the ending is grim and unexpected. Everyone is killed but unlike the melodramatic, heightened horror films produced by Hollywood, *The Bunker Diary* is devastating in its finale. Linus, along with the child character Jenny, succumb to starvation after the kidnapper tires of them or leaves. It is never explained why the kidnapper has abandoned them. The reader and Linus know the captor is a man because on the first page, Linus is tricked by a blind man into helping load a suitcase and is kidnapped. The reader experiences the bunker through Linus's experience and so the reader's knowledge is restricted to what the character knows. This narrative device creates tension, frustration and elements of horror.

*The Bunker Diary*, like so many crossover novels, is told in the first person, in the form of Linus's diary. There are times and dates and reflections in the voice of Linus.

‘I sat there for awhile in the petrified darkness, listening hard for the sound of the lift coming down. I don't know what I was expecting, a miracle maybe, or perhaps a nightmare (6).

Kevin Brooks excels at making us relate to Linus with the use of language. The character is ordinary and innocent. He could be anyone. This gives the book a heightened tension from the start and the bunker is created so effectively, a reader becomes claustrophobic too.

Linus will not survive, he will not win the day or be rescued or escape with Jenny. I found this book distressing from the first page to the last because Linus dies. And this death is so unfair, so uncalled for, so useless and cruel in its execution that Brooks breaks his contract with the reader because of his inappropriate content and the destruction of hope. *The Bunker Diary* is not the only book published in this new theme of child abduction crossover fiction winning awards and reaping huge sales-

*Wither* by Lauren DeStefano, *Mercy* by Rebecca Lim and most recently, *The Cellar* by Natasha Preston. Imprisonment fiction is gaining literary reaction and credit and also a large readership. Why do people want to read these upsetting mysteries and thriller with more prevalence than ever? Is there a purpose to this type of narrative?

The answer originates in the real world, imprisonment fiction is imitating and exploring these real life nightmares. There have been some notable, high profile true crime abduction cases around the world like Natascha Kampusch aged ten, in Austria, who was abducted and kept in a cellar for eight years and then escaped in 2006. The case of Jaycee Lee Dugard, missing for eighteen years before being rescued in 2009 and Elizabeth Smart in 2002 who was abducted from her bedroom aged fourteen, rescued after nine months, the ongoing search for Madeleine McCann who was abducted at the age of three in 2007 and has never been found and The Cleveland Ohio kidnappings in 2002 who were rescued in 2013 and closer to home, the abduction of Sunshine Coast teenager Daniel Morcombe from a bus stop in 2003. All harrowing, heavily media covered, famous cases of child/teenager abduction.

*The Bunker Diary* is a reflection on these cases in the guise of fiction, where we are all left pondering the horror. Simon Mason calls these kind of books Agatha Christie 'locked-room mysteries' but that ignores and trivialises the darker aspects of the book including heroin use, attempted rape, murder, violence and lack of hope. If Brooks' motivation in writing this abduction narrative is to tell the reader something profound about the cruelty of the world or create an allegory for our frightening world, *The Bunker Diary* falls short as there is no message. No point, as realistically there are no answers. *The Bunker Diary* does not answer the questions that sit at the heart of this dread- why does this happen, how does it happen, how can we stop it

from happening? If looking for answers is key to understanding a novel, the reader will not find it here. There is no cathartic relief to be found.

Simon Mason ponders whether the novel is a ‘horrific parody of a reality TV show in which the six victims are observed through cameras and microphones and given “games” to play for reward or punishment. An evil *Big Brother* or a fresh season of *Survivor* except hosted by an unseen, chilling kidnapper. A critique on the culpability of bystanders, the people who just stand by and watch? Brooks’ novel highlights a complex problem within the broad, inclusive genre of crossover fiction, what is appropriate and for whom? And how does Brook’s novel break the narrative contract between crossover reader and writer?

Firstly and most critically, *The Bunker Diary* is aimed at children/young adults although it has attracted a considerable adult readership. When *The Bunker Diary* was published by Penguin, it was marketed as a young adult novel and awarded the prestigious British Carnegie Medal for outstanding book for children. Lorna Bradbury, in her review for *The Telegraph*, called the novel ‘a vile and dangerous story’. Brooks, accepting the Carnegie explained how publishers for a decade would not publish the work without a change of ending. It was not published for children in 2003 because there was no hopeful ending, fast forward ten years later to 2013, and the landscape had changed. Penguin published the ending as is, in its original, shattering conclusion. At the end of the novel, Linus is alone, everyone has died, and he is delirious with thirst and unable to write in his diary legibly anymore.

‘this is what I know  
it doesn’t hurt anymore  
this is’ (259)

Linus dies, surprising the reader in the process with the abrupt conclusion. For the last twelve pages there are no page number, dates, punctuation or description. The pages are designed to look realistically like a diary of a dying, ill man, only a few words to each page as if each word has taken an enormous effort to write. As the reader is reading the diary, this means it has been recovered and the events have already transpired. The reader is reading a story that has already happened. However, the reader should not be surprised by the way the novel ends. Brooks, throughout the narrative has told the reader not to hope. Earlier in the novel, when Linus finds Russell, another victim dead, he says.

‘This is it. This is what happens and what will happen. This is where you’re going, Linus. This- this silence, this stillness, this lack of feeling- this is where you’re going (216).

*The Bunker Diary* is ‘extremely close to real life... all of it presided over by our anonymous captor, the “dirty old man” upstairs who it’s difficult not to imagine masturbating as he surveys the nubile young bodies [including a girl of nine] (Bradbury 2014). The realism is an accomplishment. It’s been lauded as strong, original storytelling, moving away from the slushy romantic love triangles, fantasy and dystopian alternative worlds of YA/crossover stories. The writing is tense, fast, spare and energetic. The words rush from the page and are easy to read. Even murder, under the extreme circumstances is narrated realistically devoid of melodrama or hysterics.

I look at Bird. ‘Did you do this?’

He doesn’t answer me.

‘Hey, Bird.’

He blinks and looks at me. ‘Hmmm?’

‘Did you kill her?’ (202).

Conversely, I cannot see the purpose of imprisonment fiction. On the purpose of the book, Kevin Brooks describes his motivation as good storytelling ‘Obviously I was aware that some readers might find some of the story shocking or disturbing, but the aim was never just to shock...What I set out to do was tell a powerful story that would hopefully create equally powerful emotions in the reader’ (Guardian). Carnegie judge Helen Thompson said that Brooks has written ‘an entirely credible world with a compelling narrative, believable characters and writing of outstanding literary merit’ and that the book was ‘absolutely the book Carnegie should be championing-superbly well written, atmospheric, and loved by readers (Flood 2014).

*The Bunker Diary* indulges in perversities, borders on lines that are uncomfortable, even for readers familiar with nihilistic narratives. This controversy has only added to book sales and led to more readers. The book contains sensitive subject matter and the book is magnificently executed. To exist in crossover fiction, the book must appeal to a broad audience of children and adults. *The Bunker Diary*, ignoring for a moment questions about suitable content, meets this requirement. The narrative is executed in first person to assist its grip on readers, without the soothing, calm, kind, mature and quiet narrative voice of Linus, the book’s subject matter would be ghastly. Narrative strategy here is deliberate. Brooks keeps the tone and style of the novel straightforward and warm. In a book full of despair there is humour, glimmers of light, love and hope due to the strength of the protagonist. Linus, the crossover protagonist is also the hero, the narrator, the warrior, the protector, the adult, even when there are older people in the bunker with him and Jenny. It is Linus who holds it together. He becomes a parent-like figure to Jenny, looking after her, feeding her, spending all his time with her and protecting her. Brooks guides the

reader to care deeply for Linus, and then delivers the fatal crushing blow of his unfair and unjust death. Criticism of *The Bunker Diary* is not singularly about the problematic content but anger at the writer for breaking the humble contract between reader and author that the protagonist will survive.

*The Bunker Diary* is written from an imaginary-realistic perspective addressing a difficult subject in our society, abduction. Brooks by writing about abductions in a fictional setting, creates a space in which to ask and ponder complex moral questions about our humanity and how savage it can be. This is complex territory to be in as a crossover writer, let alone a young adult author. *The Bunker Diary* does not set out to answer the *why*, and leaves the reader in the dark about the motivations of the man upstairs.

The outcry about the book was not from parents distressed about the book's plot, but from critics. This highlights a problem, larger than *The Bunker Diary*. Parents no longer know what their children are reading. Attitudes to reading have changed. It's harder than ever to get kids reading books instead of watching screens. 'As long as my kid is reading, I don't care' is the attitude from grateful parents happy with whatever book they can get their child to read.

From the seat of reality, the book is much less palatable than if it were masked in a dystopian *other* worlds or fantasy. Those imaginary worlds create a barrier between the truth, standing between the reader and the unsettling feeling that 'this could be me' and that this crime could happen or has happened. If *The Bunker Diary* is considered crossover fiction then Brooks has not broken his contract with the reader, but if it is considered for an audience of children, the contract is questionable. This does not mean that all books must end happily, or have comfortable content but narrative strategy of shock does not serve the narrative without literary purpose.

*Wetlands* and *The Bunker Diary*, regardless of literary merit, are fraudulent YA/crossover novels better suited for alternative adult audiences. Romantic Imprisonment fiction like Lucy Christopher's implausible *Stolen* (2010) about a girl who is stalked from childhood and then kidnapped at the airport and taken into the Australian outback by an unstable, frightening, delusional man. It is told in the form of a letter from Gemma to her captor Ty.

'Dr. Donovan thinks I've got Stockholm syndrome. They all do. I know I scare Mum when I say something good about you, when I say you're not as bad as people think, or that there's more to you than what the papers write. And if I say anything like that in front of Dr. Donovan, she just makes lots of notes and nods to herself. So I've stopped saying these things. Instead, I tell them what they want to hear. I tell them you really are a monster that you are screwed up. I tell them I don't have any feelings for you other than hatred (292).

This is a gothic, imprisonment narrative. It is unrealistic and alarming to an extreme. Reviews of *Stolen* approved and affirmed this imprisonment romance motif- 'complicated and beautiful', 'emotionally raw', 'disturbing, heartbreaking and beautiful all at once'. *Stolen* adopts the themes of fairytales *Beauty and the Beast* and *Little Red Riding Hood*. 'Let's face it, you did steal me. But you saved my life, too' (292). 'I want much more than this provincial life' sings Belle in Disney's version of *Beauty and The Beast* (1995).

The maiden-beast imprisonment narrative is similarly at work in Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series- but in this case the beast is a vampire and brings in elements of the supernatural. The romantic imprisonment narrative is popular and flourishing in crossover fiction. Unlike *Stolen*, *The Bunker Diary* is not romantic or vapid. It is an

action novel, a thriller, a tragedy but it is so much more than the sum of its narrative premise. It is, in the vehicle of entertainment, an exploration of hope in the darkest of all human conditions and experiences. At its essence is the story of a brave young man in the face of horror. In Sara Schwebel's article on rewriting captivity narratives, she talks about 'its central themes- identity and belonging, civilization and savagery' (318). She is talking about it in terms of American Fiction but I think these themes are also the central themes in imprisonment narrative. It cannot be called abduction narrative because the novels in this subset of the crossover genre are not interested in the details of the abduction itself, often revisited in flashback, told in the prologue or left until mid-way through a novel. Imprisonment fiction is focused on the details of the imprisonment itself, the survival, and the mentality of the individual in these circumstances.

'[C]aptivity narratives fascinate young readers. Since at least the eighteenth century children have found the stories' awful violence and terrifying suspense titillating. For twentieth- and- twenty-first century readers, moreover, captivity narratives present resilient young protagonists who model competencies (Schwebel).

Here, Schwebel suggests the captivity narratives purpose is entertainment and contextualizing the place of it in the literary cannon as interesting fiction. I would add, that imprisonment fiction does not appeal exclusively to younger readers but includes readers of all ages, especially adult readers, given the success of literary and box office darling *Room*.

As previously mentioned the novel is narrated through the form of a diary, so the audience understands this is *after* the events have occurred, although the book is written in present tense. The didactic purpose of *The Bunker Diary* is the survival

narrative and the ability to possess hope, empathy, human ingenuity and love in the scariest 'world' of all, ours. *The Bunker Diary* asks the reader, engaging in moral and empathetic questioning- how would I feel, what would I do?

Edna St. Vincent Millay said 'Childhood is the kingdom where nobody dies. Nobody that matters, that is.' The poem, at first glance, is about the innocence of childhood where life is simple, idyllic and the serious issues and realities of adult life like death are kept at bay. The irony of this is that Millay is talking about the fact that there is no kingdom where nobody dies. Even in gentler crossover books than *The Bunker Diary*, there is the issue of death and dying. These 'death books' are a new phenomenon in this wide category of fiction. Death books are about the protagonist dead or dying from the outset of the story and the reader is aware of this fact. Crossover books like John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars* and *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold and Gayle Forman's *If I Stay* are narratively driven by death. It would be hard to find a young adult or crossover book not in some way narratively contemplating death. *The Bunker Diary* works against YA conventions- school issues, parental disagreements, romantic drama, dystopian and utopian societies, no swearing and a happy or didactic ending. It is dystopian crossover fiction reflecting the state of the real world. It is not about being kidnapped as much as it is about human emotions and identity. When discussing dark books, Kristen Randle says ' "Bleak" books allow only one focus, often claiming that they do so in order to offer comfort to the wounded and introduce compassion to the uninitiated (128). To break this down, firstly we must discuss the use of the word bleak. Bleak is an adjective and when discussing a situation, like the captive one in *The Bunker Diary*, it means a state where it is unlikely there will be a favourable or positive outcome and there is little hope or encouragement. Throughout the novel, until the very last pages, the reader

hopes that Linus will be rescued or escape the bunker. “Now we’re starting down the trail of doubts (241). Linus, along with the reader, is becoming aware that the situation is desolate for the three remaining people in the bunker including the child character, Jenny. All this time, Linus has held onto the tiny, remaining shred of hope that he will escape this situation.

‘There was a lot to talk about. Options, risks, outcomes. Hopes, fears, maybes. Optimism, pessimism, don’t-get-too-excitedism. It was hard work. 1) because we’re all half-dead and can’t think clearly. And 2) because we have to assume He’s still up there, watching and listening.

Linus and the others *have* to hope the captor is still there because without him they will perish. He has rendered them helpless and incapable of surviving without aid in the conditions he has placed them in. Because the captor has played games earlier in the novel- leaving them without food or cutting off the water, torturing them when they’ve disobeyed, leaving them to their own devices and playing God, they hope it is one of his games. The waiting. It’s all they can do. Linus, however, tells us

‘Now I’m alone, with you, listening to the hum of the walls, and I’m beginning to doubt myself. I want to tell you something, but it’s best if I don’t. Let’s just say I can see the end of something, the end of a trail of doubts. And it doesn’t look good. (239)

Throughout the novel, Linus has been strong, mature, adult like, rational, capable of making decisions and leading the group, playing peacekeeper and taking on the father-figure role to Jenny. The adults have been portrayed as mentally ill, dangerous, selfish, dishonest, and capable of murder and deceit to survive. Only the ‘children’ have remained pure. When the captor disappears, the irrationality of them being left to starve to death in the freezing conditions is imminent and hits the reader with a

heavy blow of despair. For the first time in the novel, the page has no day marked at the top for Linus has lost all tracking of time and place that kept him grounded by hope. There are just three question marks instead. This loss of hope is critical to resolving the question of the novel's purpose. The dark is literal and figuratively featured here as Linus and the others are plunged into blackness. 'I was nothing. Existed in nothing' (242). Fred, the last surviving adult drinks bleach and dies and then Jenny, dies in Linus's arms. It is so painful he cannot speak, the death of hope is Jenny. How could a child die? Childhood is the kingdom where nobody dies. The novel ends as Linus grows weaker and is unable to write, his words begin to break up until the final page,

'this is what I know  
it doesn't hurt anymore  
this is'

No punctuation or page number, the sentences are incomplete and the reader is left alone, midway through a sentence, never knowing what Linus was going to say.

Would we like Linus, outside of his situation? We know he has been living rough on the streets, drinking and drugs are mentioned. Through his point of view, we view the narrative. The world outside the bunker doesn't exist and yet matters most.

YA/Crossover writer John Green says,

'What is the purpose of your being alive, if there is one? What matters more than your life? For what would you sacrifice the well-being of your family? What is the role of suffering in the world? How do you respond to the radical injustice inherent to the human experience?  
(Barkdoll and Scherff).

Brooks asks these big questions in his disturbing novel. Appropriate, inappropriate, dark, hopeful or disturbing, it is impossible to dismiss *The Bunker Diary*. It's a meaningful book about human life, even if the meaning is wrapped up in an imprisonment narrative.

Looking at the two novels, *Wetlands* and *The Bunker Diary*, it is apparent that crossover is a wide and unclassified genre with some inappropriate, difficult content. These writers have both written 'good' books, they are best sellers, but are the writers and narrative responsible for their readers? Both books have successfully found a crossover readership and awards and reviews have commended the author's literary styles and language but what is the purpose of these novels except to shock, awe, horrify, frighten and disgust amid all the horror and gore of real life, do we need to see it reflected in fiction too?

'The aim must always be clarity. It's tempting to feel that if a passage of writing is obscure, it must be very deep. But if the water is murky, the bottom might be only an inch below the surface- you just can't tell. It's much better to write in such a way that readers can see all the way down. (Pullman 11)

*The Bunker Diary* successfully transcends genre and narrative restraints to create a novel of light in utter darkness. *Wetlands*, however, is an irresponsible book with questionable narrative purpose. How do we measure crossover books for meaning and value? How do we judge authorial style and age-appropriateness? How can writers tell their stories responsibly?

# Crossing Over: My Journey as a Writer

## Shadow of The Archers

The question I have most asked myself on this journey is why did I write a young adult novel? Why did I write a novel that blends spy and action genres to create the narrative voice of a teenage male protagonist? The answer is clearer to me after eight years of attempting to find my creative voice. I wanted to write a book like the books I had admired, the books that followed, chased and helped me into adulthood and the books I like to read. I wanted to investigate how YA/crossover novels are dissolving boundaries between writers and readers, writers and publishers and of course, the blurry line between a book for a child and a book for an adult. I was fascinated by the ability of a book series like *Harry Potter* to be so universally loved and admired.

I believe the essence of this is a particular and important trait that belongs entirely to genre of crossover fiction and I see this as the most vital and important distinction in separating it from its parent- young adult fiction. I am not a sixteen-year-old boy spy. Why would I write my novel in Heath's voice? I am distanced from espionage, war, experiences such as torture and from the horrors that befall the character like a terrorist attack and missing parents.

Heath Callahan becoming a spy is less important in my novel than Heath's journey to adulthood and the ability to make choices and decisions with a weight of maturity and understanding of death, life and responsibility. This transition to adulthood is the nucleus of the YA/crossover novel. It is not the journey itself but the awareness of growing up that is an element of crossover.

My first exposure to young adult novels and adventure was when I received a book called *The Forestwife* in 1996. It was a retelling of Robin Hood from the perspective of Maid Marian and I was obsessed. It had adventure, romance, death, torture, loneliness, injustice, secrecy and murder. I knew it had affected me at the time. *The Forestwife* contained a fantastical 'real' story and I was hooked. I had always been an avid and mature reader, I read whatever my mother was reading as well as anything from school, the library and anything my friends were reading so it makes sense, that twenty years later I would be researching and writing my thesis on YA.

Around this time, I was gifted a book from my mother that would greatly alter my perception of age and maturity. It was Katherine Paterson's Samurai novel *Of Nightingales That Weep*. In it, a young girl Takiko escapes her stepfather's farm to find a place at the Japanese court. Takiko falls in love with an enemy spy and is forced to choose between love and country. However, it was the ending of the novel that I found perplexing. Takiko does not marry a handsome Samurai and the novel concludes with her returning to the family farm, marrying her much older stepfather (now windowed) and bearing a child. Possibly now, due to the changes in publishing and a pervasive political correctness, the novel would end differently.

The strange family arrangement is Takiko's own idea 'Goro, I have been thinking that you should marry again. Now there is no one but me to help you in the fields or with the pottery. You don't even have an heir. A man like you needs to have

many sons. If you marry someone else, I will have no place to go. Besides, we are used to each other. I am strong and at a good age for child-bearing. It is only sensible that we should marry' (168). The influence of Paterson's novel and narrative voice has remained with me today.

When I was in grade 7 I was lent a book, it had arrived from England highly recommended. My friend's mother had ordered it after reading a promising review. It was a first edition, a small print with a simple, coloured illustration on the front and a long title. It was about a boy who becomes a wizard and his adventures at a magical wizardry school. Those first editions are now worth the price of a house but to my friend and I, it was the best book we had read and we treated the book quite roughly re-reading sections aloud to each other. I could not put it down, nor could I stop discussing it. It would not become well known until many years later. I regard *Harry Potter* now with a bit of cynicism. I no longer dress up for the film premieres like I did with my high school peers or enjoy the novels like I once did with a child's sense of wonderment although I do admire the plotting and pace. I hold a fondness for *Harry Potter* but not in the same way I feel towards books like *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* and *Little House in the Big Woods*.

When I thought about the book I wanted to write- I wanted to write a fantastic, melodramatic, romantic, action adventure and place it in the real and raw world of espionage. I wanted to mix the experience and reality of spy life with the Famous Five-like escapades and camaraderie. As a PhD student, I was able to take my obsessions with young adult fiction that had followed me into adulthood and look at the theories and narrative genres and constructions of the books that had shaped who I was. I would write my thesis about how adult fiction/crossover fiction determined my inner self. Is it naive to believe that reading can change the course of a life? There is

no better or easier way to understand others or obtain knowledge outside of oneself or feel that someone understands your experience than what a person can gain from books no matter the age of the reader nor the age of the writer. Attempting my own YA novel, I hoped it would contain everything I had felt about these books in my youth. Revisiting them again for my work, was a great pleasure.

As I child, I did not write stories as much as act them out. My favourite game was spies. I invented names, guises, jobs, and histories and would become Kip Walker (inspired unoriginally by the comic *The Phantom*) and my initials being KIP. Games aside, it makes sense that this passion would come out again. When I was in university, the security services in Australia were recruiting from our year level, one boy I knew who was bilingual with advanced computer skills was offered a position, highly classified of course. He told everyone he had turned it down because the money wasn't good. This further increased my fascination as did the BBC series *Spooks* (2001). Reading everything I could on spies I found a distinct difference between the pages of novels and entertainment and the real work that these security agencies do. In real life, it seemed boring, dull, dangerous, unaccredited and dull. In real life, spies could work in normal offices and no one had any of the exciting technology of James Bond. In my creative work, I tried to keep this fairly normal sense of espionage married to an equally weighted sense of adventure and the fantastic. Mostly, the fantastical parts of my novel are for my enjoyment and so I could place, my new knowledge about it, into words.

In every draft I wrote, I knew Heath Callahan was going to be young and inexperienced. At once point, I was questioned about the unrealistic nature of a boy spy and I wanted Heath to be adult enough, mature enough to weather this questioning. Like Bella from *Twilight* and Harry Potter, his naiveté would not place

him into the simplistic, childish category of junior fiction. This proved harder to do than I anticipated. Finding a narrative voice that was believable as a sixteen-year-old boy who is thrown into an extreme situation, was extremely difficult to be realistic. Many times I wanted to throw out the entire spy storyline but that is what I liked about my novel. It was as intrinsic to me as writing a novel in the first place. I attempted to make him older, there was many drafts where Heath was twenty-two and a newly graduated university man, nevertheless this did not work for my story because the voice I had for Heath was younger than that. The character sat in the space between adulthood and childhood. If I am honest, I wrote the book with a specific reader in mind. Throughout this paper, I have questioned whether that matters, whether writers write for specific readers and what systems are in place to help a book find its readership and whether crossover fiction does really mean everyone? My specific reader is not a grandmother or a mother of two. I wrote this with a twelve-year-old reader in mind. Not a boy or a girl. Just a 12 year old reader because I would have liked this novel then, and I know I would have carried the fondness for it through to now. I think after this paper, that is how I would answer the question of crossover novels. People enjoy reading. People enjoy reading something that other people like reading. People like discussing things together, it creates a sense of community whether at home, in the office, at school or on the internet. *Harry Potter* enabled people to share a passion for a book.

I made choices in my narrative. I wanted it to be in Australia. I was very specific about setting in Sydney for the bombing of Circular Quay because this is a fear that would resonate with every Australian, regardless of age. I wanted to ask the question, what would you do? In this specific set of circumstances, how would the reader react? Like John Marsden, throwing his sixteen-year-old protagonist into

waging a guerilla war, I knew anything could be believable if the writing is convincing.

Researching enhanced interrogation techniques and the moral ethics of torture was one of the toughest parts of this journey. I wanted those scenes to be realistic but not give any reader nightmares. I had to imagine both sides of the situation to write those scenes, putting myself in the position of victim and interrogator. What kind of person can perpetrate torture- be it tickle torture or water torture or ice baths or sleep deprivation? What kind of person can harm another person and what reasons can you give that would excuse torturing someone? I wanted to look at the complex dynamics and choices faced by governments when dealing with terrorists. I wanted the government to be complicit in the intrigue and to refuse to fall back on current, ideologically charged stereotypes of foreign terrorists and to use interpolated journalistic reports to utilise media discourses. I wanted there to be a real sense of danger in my book. I wanted the reader to worry about Heath from the very beginning. I wanted my character to have empathy and get things wrong but to keep trying. I endeavoured to instill in my protagonist a journey where he would learn things and gain deeper understanding and maturity, leaving him and the reader wiser and grown up because that is the essence of a crossover novel. To help guide and teach and entertain and to tell us, we are not alone.

I was intrigued by something I read, a man who had been Head of the CIA, talking about the fact that the hardest part of the job is the lies you have to tell, the toll that takes on you when you are an active agent in the field. The great stress of the job and the reasons one does it. I wanted to understand why people become spies. I wanted to know them, the costs and the little stars on the walls at Langley, where the names of agents are never known. That you could die, in service to your country, you

could be murdered or tortured or missing and no one ever knows who you were or your contribution. I wanted to create the fanciful spy life but also balance it with the authentic experience. It was a fine line to walk and required many drafts.

There is a level of corruption we expect and accept from our politicians, from our phone companies, our telemarketers and medical community. I placed my villains in the credible arms of these societal pillars because a good story is only as good as its villains. Crafting a believable yet frightening villain was almost as hard as creating a teenage spy because evil is not simple. This is not Disney and bad people are as complex as the good. In my research I read a lot of documents about spies that were traitors and why they become disenfranchised with their profession. All were motivated by money or became disillusioned with their agencies and purpose.

To write credible spy training, I had to learn the skills I instilled in Heath. In the novel, Heath can change a tyre, ride a motorbike, use a gun and pick a lock. Writing these realistically means that research is required and also a certain level of hands on experience. I didn't want Heath to be specially skilled or talented. I wanted him to be as ordinary as possible while being in this extraordinary adventure. Like successful crossover protagonists before him, one of the things they have in common is a sense of ordinary. 'I *should* be tan, sporty, blond-a volley-ball player, or a cheerleader, perhaps.' (Twilight).

There is a distinctive difference between nostalgically reading a once treasured book and actively being a crossover reader of newly published works. In my search to discover what makes a crossover book appealing to so many readers and why, I have re-read many books from my childhood and youth. Some, I have revisited with joy for the simple act of remembering things I had forgotten like the descriptions of the house and garden in *The Secret Garden* and how that would shape a later

obsession with keys and interiors. Feeling scared and indignant again in Gillian Rubenstein's *Galaxarena*, crying tears at deeper meanings in Robin Klein's bruising *Came Back to Show You I Could Fly*.

There are elements in Heath Callahan, where I have taken imaginary elements and meshed them with reality. There needed to be a sense of enjoyment in the novel and also a sense of profound duty. The journey Heath takes was really important in crafting the character as well as his inner voice, which I created for the reader with italics breaking the third person narrative when fitting. This meant the reader could connect to Heath's inner monologue as well as the action occurring around him. This narrative device worked to give me more depth and more meaning to the scenes and shape a more intimate portrayal of my protagonist.

I kept with the crossover demands for sequels and trilogies by adopting a narrative where I did not explain every detail, leaving some openings for returning characters Gabe, Heath's mother, Olivia's backstory about her time in jail. This is so the story could be continued in another book or more. The book closes with Heath sending the information on the microdot into the newspaper and disappearing into the shadows after receiving a message. The agency – The Archers is a combination of secret/semi-secret agencies in Australia. In writing an action, adventure story, the scenes are busy, filled with noise, movement and events. At times, the chapters can be quite short and powerful. I think this works to make the book fast paced and dramatic. It also keeps the attention of the reader.

There is a high blood count in Heath Callahan and this something I considered with sensitivity and was careful to make sure the violence had a purpose for being there. Many of Heath's family and friends die or betray him and this becomes an opportunity for character and plot development. It gives Heath motivations for his

actions in the book. Drafting the violent deaths and acts of violence required research into techniques used by the CIA in interrogation and reading real accounts of civilian bombings and acts of terror. Losing his father and finding a sense of self at the end would echo the journey he had begun at the start of the book. It is about finding inner strength amid terrible times. I believe that it is realistic to show a sixteen year old who acts like a reliable, trustworthy, extraordinary citizen. The more chapters I wrote the less I questioned the responsibility I place on sixteen-year-old shoulders.

In the first ending to *Heath Callahan* the character addressed the reader and this broke the climactic tension and effort I had built up to in the previous chapters. To come to such a sugary conclusion was disappointing for myself and for the reader. I drafted a new ending and this concluded the novel in a satisfying way while leaving room to continue the story. It was important to conclude the story well and I struggled with the final chapters for a long time.

After giving it to several readers, the feedback was similar. “Ending this way, ruins the book for me,” “it doesn’t make sense,” “it makes the book ridiculous.” In the final product, the solution was addressed within the realms of the story I had written.

When I set out to write the novel, I had written the chapter on the train when it explodes and had the basic idea of a character in my mind. This chapter is largely unchanged but the character of Heath has evolved enormously since the original creation. I set out to write a spy novel and I think I have accomplished more than this. I have written a story about a boy who goes on this incredible journey and experiences profound loss of ideals, loss of family and loss of security. I wanted the spy life to be given equal weight in its portrayal of the fantastic, tongue-in-cheek, expensive and flashy and also the invisible, grimy, slog of reality. Finding a believable and frightening villain was the toughest thing to do. Creating David Smider

was so critical to the success of the story. I wanted Smider to be the most successful, power hungry, grandfatherly, tycoon type I could create so that his unveiling as a villain would be credible and also horrific. I wanted my villains to be three-dimensional, to always be understandable, to be frightening in their actions. I think I was ambitious with creating this book and reading the many drafts and chapters I wrote early in my degree, it has come so far.

The most difficult task that falls to us in intelligence is to see the world as it is, not as we- or others-would wish it to be.

DCI Robert Gates, CIA.

## Conclusion

The *Harry Potter* series has proven with longevity that Young Adult Fiction has become a highly popular and beloved genre in its own right. The successful series is the definitive example of a YA/crossover novel, an achievement that may never be reproduced. More specifically, because of Harry Potter, YA has now extended to a much wider mixed market of contemporary readers. YA will continue to evolve and change as new series and trilogies are written and Harry Potter remains in popular culture as a historical turning point for writers and publishers. Research is beginning to accept and engage with YA as an authentic, literary genre filled with rich, inventive narrative and new voices. Publishers will continue to influence what books are published and marketed and what writers write. In my exegesis I examined the

interconnection of YA and Crossover fiction through a discussion of five crucial texts and examples and a list of conventions. In my final chapter, I discussed my own writing and creative process. *Shadow of The Archers* and *Crossing Over* explores the crossover novel, what one is, how one is written and what is its place in fiction.

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