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Colonial ghosts: the use of non-Australian western literature in contemporary Australian young adult fiction.

Abstract:

Modern Australian literature developed from a colonial past and now exists in relation to other national literatures. Intertextuality tells us that the ghosts of past literatures haunt newer works; past literature is referenced, changed, and developed in the construction of a new text, which is never completely original.

Australian young adult literature's young adult readers are in the process of identity construction formed by, amongst other things, representations of various subject positions. These readers can find representations of Australian culture in the characters, settings, and plots of Australian young adult fiction. However, it is interesting to consider the role of intertextuality in providing representations which influence identity formation when the literature referenced is from a different country and culture to that of the young adult reader.

This paper is a preliminary study of this consideration, using two contemporary Australian young adult fiction novels: *Jasper Jones* by Craig Silvey and *The Messenger* by Markus Zusak. The paper will highlight the non-Australian western literature intertextual references within these texts and explore reasons for their use, including Australia's literary past and its development into a postcolonial literature. It will suggest that by using non-Australian western literature intertextually, authors are relying on these works as benchmarks of quality and worth. The paper will examine the effects of the use of non-Australian western literature intertextual references on both the narratives and young readers in the process of identity construction.

Biographical note:

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Keywords:

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Introduction

Australian literature does not exist in isolation. As Robert Dixon says, 'national literatures are relational, not singular phenomena' (2007: 25). The use of literature intertextually in contemporary Australian young adult fiction brings forth the ghosts of literatures past, and allows the narrative and the reader to enter into a dialogue with literature from prior times and other places.

The use of literature intertextually in young adult fiction is not surprising given that the construction of meaning is a defining feature of intertextuality, young adulthood, and in books written for young adults. Readers construct meaning through engagement with both literature and the world around them, as John Stephens (1992) says:

The production of meaning from the interrelationships between audience, text, other texts, and the socio-cultural determinates of significance, is a process which may be conveniently summed up in the term intertextuality (84).

The information presented in this paper forms part of my practice-led Masters research into literature used intertextually in contemporary Australian young adult fiction. This research seeks to identify and understand links between intertextuality and identity formation, particularly in relation to questions of national identity. The research has indicated a prevalence of non-Australian western literature used intertextually as opposed to Australian literature, and this is interesting to consider in relation to young readers in the process of identity construction, who are looking for reference points or positions from which they can construct their own identities. If the literature they read looks away to another country or culture, what does this tell them about their own country, culture, and ultimately, themselves?

As a way of illustration, this paper will explore literature used intertextually within two contemporary Australian young adult fiction novels: *The Messenger*, by Marcus Zusak, and *Jasper Jones*, by Craig Silvey. It will examine the intertextual references in each novel, highlighting the non-Australian western literature used and explore possible reasons for the prevalence of non-Australian western literature including the development of Australian literature from its colonial past, how literature is approached in Australian education system, and Australian literature's place in global literature. It will also discuss whether Australian fiction could be used intertextually in these novels.

These two texts are by no means the only texts that could have been presented to demonstrate the dominance of non-Australian western literature used intertextually. Even though my research is still at a preliminary stage it indicates that this is a common occurrence. I do not suggest that these texts reference literature subconsciously or subliminally, as they are clearly narrative devices. I do not claim that Australian young adult literature is lacking a sense of Australian cultural identity because it is evident throughout both books, in areas such as setting and dialogue. Australian literature is fortunate that its young adult authors paint nuanced and distinct references to Australian culture. My focus though is specifically on how the Australian young adult novels use literature intertextually and what this tells us.

This paper frequently uses the terms intertextuality, hypertextuality, and metatextuality. Julia Kristeva first proposed the term intertextuality, saying ‘any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another’ (1986: 37). Roland Barthes states that an author can’t create something original; his power is in his ability to mix and counter writings and that ‘the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet *already read*: they are quotations without inverted commas’ (1977: 160). Gerard Genette (1997) writes that intertextuality is one of five types of transtextuality within a text, the others being paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality, and archetextuality. Genette defines hypertextuality as the relationship uniting Text B (hypertext) with Text A (hypotext), upon which it is grafted in a way other than commentary. It is essentially the rewriting of an anterior text. Genette suggests metatextuality involves a text speaking to another without necessarily citing it, sometimes without even naming it. Daniel Pape says that metatextual references in fiction refer to the self-awareness of the book in the text. ‘Metatextuality refers to a persistent self-reflexiveness which the book evinces, a quality which emphasizes the fact that it is a book, was written, is read’ (2008: 1). Importantly, intertextuality is not simply locating quotes and direct references or suggesting that an author has been influenced by another text. As Maria Nikolajeva explains, intertextual study involves exploring the dialogue between texts. Texts which use intertextual references most successfully are those that use them in ways that diverge from the original to create new, exciting literature and ‘the meaning of the text is revealed for the reader or researcher only against the background of previous texts, in a clash between them and the present text’ (1996: 153).

Another term that will be used in this paper is non-Australian western literature. This will describe literature from western countries other than Australia, which in this paper includes nations such as Great Britain, the United States, and Russia. Australian literature, for the purpose of this paper, includes literature written by Australian writers and set in Australia.

Literature used intertextually in *The Messenger* and *Jasper Jones*

These books were selected for analysis for three reasons. Firstly, in both *The Messenger* and *Jasper Jones*, literature features prominently and is used as a narrative device as it develops character identities, builds relationships between characters, and progresses the plots. Secondly, the way that the intertextual references support and construct the narrative occurs differently in each book. Finally, both books have also attained a level of merit by being both shortlisted for and winning various literary awards. *The Messenger* is about Ed Kennedy, a 19 year old who says he has ‘not a whole lot of prospects or possibility’ (6). When he starts receiving playing cards with instructions he must follow, his life is given purpose and direction. The story is the hypertext of *Crime and Punishment*, evident in the planning and committing of a crime driven by an external, unknowable power, however it develops and places the narrative in a modern Australian context. Its metatextual aspect – the discovery of a discourse between the main character and the author – is reflective of texts such as

J.M Coetzee's *Slow Man*. Additionally, there are a number of direct literary references: six to non-Australian western authors (Graham Green, Sylvia Plath, James Joyce, Charles Dickens, Joseph Conrad, Shakespeare), and one to an Australian author (Morris West). There are 15 references to non-Australian western texts (*Wuthering Heights*, *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*, *Barren Woman*, *Macbeth*, *The Human Factor*, *Brighton Rock*, *The Heart of the Matter*, *The Power and the Glory*, *Our Man in Havana*, *The Winter Ship*, *The Colossus*, *Ariel*, *Crossing the Water*, *The Bell Jar*), and five to Australian texts by Morris West (*Gallows on the Sand*, *The Shoes of the Fisherman*, *Children of the Sun*, *The Ringmaster*, *The Clowns of God*). There was also one quote by Raskolnikov from *Crime and Punishment*.

Jasper Jones is nestled firmly in the grasp of Southern American Gothic fiction but it also contains references to texts from other genres such as comic books. Its narrative is the hypertext of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and the book is referenced in a variety of ways. The main character is Charlie Bucktin, a 13 year old bookish boy pulled by the town outcaste Jasper Jones into the scandal surrounding the death of Laura Wishart. There are 35 non-Australian western literature references (authors, characters, and books) in *Jasper Jones*, including allusions and direct references. And despite its setting in a small, Australian country town and the time period it is situated in—1965, during Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War—there are no references to Australian literature.

I found 12 references to authors (Mark Twain, Eudora Welty, William Faulkner, Harper Lee, Flannery O'Connor, Truman Capote, Norman Mailer, Charles Dickens, Ernest Hemingway, Jack Kerouac, Ken Kesey, Neal Cassady), 11 direct references to texts (*Puddin'head Wilson*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *The Sound and the Fury*, *Nancy Drew*, *The Naked and the Dead*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *The War of the Worlds*, *Innocents Abroad*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Franny and Zooey*) and 12 references to fictional characters (Huck Finn, Atticus Finch, Holden Caulfield, Rip van Winkle, Spiderman, Batman, Superman, Lex Luther, Oliver Twist, the Artful Dodger, Clark Kent, Dr Moreau).

The use of non-Australian western literature intertextually

This article does not argue that Australian literature is superior or inferior to other western literatures. Like other national literatures, Australia's literature is reflective of its culture and environment.

Clare Bradford says that Australia has been gradually moving away from the dominance of imperial European literature and has been developing its own cultural identity. However, she notes that:

The colonial past is, however, still powerfully present in many attitudes and ideologies that appear natural until they are subjected to scrutiny, and Australian texts offer a rich field for such scrutiny. Writing for children has so far been ignored in discussions examining the construction of 'Australia' in Australian texts, yet children's texts function in a particular way as agents of socialization, inscribing ideologies concerning social and cultural norms (1996: 92).

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffen ask why is coloniality still relevant, given post-colonial societies have achieved political independence (1989: 6). However, political independence does not block the flow of cultural influence. John Stephens identifies a change in the make-up of Australian society in the second half of the 20th century, from predominantly Anglo-Celtic with a European alignment, to one that is ethnically diverse and aligned with the Asia-Pacific. Stephens says that after the Australian government's policy of assimilation changed, children's literature embraced multiculturalism and attempted to suggest it had always occurred in Australian society. He argues that children's literature could be expected to reflect local ways of a changing society, however he also highlights how the past influences present literature:

We narrativize the past to keep it accessible to the present; we assert a metonymic contiguity of the past with the present to retain a sense of tradition, to articulate links between our present and our origins, to suggest a national identity (2003: xii).

This concept of a national identity could be considered a reason for the prevalence of non-Australian western literature used intertextually in contemporary Australian young adult literature. Although this paper focuses on two novels only, preliminary analysis of a wider range of Australian young adult fiction novels shows the same trend of British and North American dominance with regard to intertextual references. The number of intertextual references to British and North American literature in particular suggests a reliance on and a familiarity with this colonial and imperial literary past, with North America's influence possibly considered imperial rather than colonial. Heather Scutter's discussion of Peter Hunt's, *Children's Literature: An Illustrated History* (1995) notes that North American children's literature is considered almost the equal of British and that the two cultures recognise their 'imperial status with a degree of mutual self-congratulation (although with a hint of anxiety that England might be subject to colonization by the USA)' (1997: 30).

This literary past is still influencing Australia's literature and therefore its culture and discourse. It suggests that it is used as a benchmark of literary quality, which Ashcroft *et al.* support by asserting that it is because the British literary canon is considered the 'touchstone of taste and value' that it maintains its relevance in post-colonial nations, and that the attitudes to post-colonial literature as merely an 'off-shoot' of English literature see national literatures, like Australian literature, relegated in status (1980: 7). As a result, Australian texts could be seen by young adult readers not only as different to those of Britain and North America but less than, and this could influence how they see themselves.

This is evident in both *Jasper Jones* and *The Messenger*. In *Jasper Jones*, the protagonist, Charlie Bucktin, is told by his father Wesley that Mark Twain was 'the single reason he taught literature' (p.8). This not only tells the reader about the character of Wesley, but it also encourages the reader to see Mark Twain's work in this way. Additionally throughout the story when Charlie faces a challenging time he considers what Atticus Finch would do, a character that both Charlie and the reader can see resembles Wesley himself and which again highlights to the reader the importance of the literature and in particular, *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

In *The Messenger*, the protagonist Ed Kennedy uses classic literature as self-validation device when speaking with a librarian who makes him feel bad for not knowing how to conduct research. Ed says:

‘But I’ve read Joyce and Dickens and Conrad.’

‘Who are they?’

Now I have the upper hand’ (225).

Ed’s knowledge of these texts in contrast to the librarian’s ignorance (which seems unlikely) not only bolsters Ed and furthers his developmental arc but promotes to the reader the importance of these texts. Ed relies on Joyce, Dickens, and Conrad and the reader can do the same.

Australian literature does not exist in isolation and the way it is used intertextually indicates that neither does it hold a position of prominence. This is despite the fact that many Australian authors, such as Morris West, are popular and well thought of internationally. Dixon says Australia’s literary history has always been connected with the rest of the world through its colonial origins and that Australian writers are read differently overseas to how they are read in Australia, which fosters different views of the novels and the authors internationally to that which they hold at home (2007: 20).

Ashcroft *et al.* note that from their beginning, the literature in British colonies was dominated by Britain and that North America was the first post-colonial society to develop its own distinct literature. This stance leads to consideration of how literature relates to place, nationality, and whether the inherited ‘mother’ literature is still sufficient to represent contemporary cultures. Further, Ashcroft *et al.* suggest that creating literature different to that of the colonising nation was a key way for a colony to show progress to nationhood and the American experience of creating a new kind of literature could be seen as the model for other post-colonial literatures. After the American Revolution the issue of a separate nation was more prominent and American literature became more accepted. Yet even after they gained independence, their literature was still seen as an off-shoot of British literature, with metaphors used like ‘parent-child’ to position this new literature:

Such organic metaphors, and others like ‘parent-child’ and ‘stream-tributary acted to keep the new literature in its place ... they implied the same distinctions as those existing between metropolis and frontier: parents are more experienced, more important, more substantial, less brash than their offspring. Above all the are the *origin* and therefore claim the final authority in questions of taste and value (1989: 16).

This ‘parent-child’ metaphor fits with the use of non-Australian western literature within contemporary Australian young adult fiction. Perhaps though the relationship between Australia and North America could be considered differently; more of a sibling relationship, albeit an imperial sibling with a culture that is said to dominate not only literature culture but world culture. Does Australian literature look to Mother England for validity, legitimacy and taste, and source Sister/Brother North America

because of common experiences that occurred in the building of the respective nations?

Erica Hateley describes this Mother/Sibling concept when relating the use of Shakespeare in Australian children's literature to Australian identity, noting that Australian identity is tracked through cultural formations including children's literature. Exploring the use of Shakespeare in a postcolonial context, she cites Michael Neill as saying that the use of Shakespeare in imperialised cultures has meant that 'ways of thinking about such basic issues as nationality, gender and racial difference are inescapably inflected by his writing' (2003: 11). Hateley identifies a parent/child concept to contextualise Australian literature with its colonial origins and suggests that America can be viewed as the 'elder sibling' embarked on an 'Oedipal relationship with the father figure of English culture, Shakespeare,' whereas Australia is the younger sibling:

still involved in a maternal-symbiotic relationship with England. So, where America is negotiating a postcolonial cultural relationship with England, Australia would seem to be engaged in a colonial one (2003: 13).

Indeed, Craig Silvey was able to use *To Kill a Mockingbird* in *Jasper Jones* because Australia and North America have experienced similar historical issues in relation to race and class, and these shared themes directed Silvey to intertextually reference Southern Gothic fiction:

There's something very warm and generous about those regional American writers like Twain and Lee and O'Connor, and it seemed to be a literary ilk that would lend itself well to the Australian condition. It was only after the themes announced themselves, and I realised where the book was headed that it seemed so apt and important to have these literary elements (Kostakis, 2009).

If these books lend themselves to the Australian condition, are there Australian books that could also lend themselves to this? Are there Australian books that Charlie Bucktin could have been introduced to by his father? Australian literature does have its own Gothic fiction genre; indeed, there is a long tradition of Australian Gothic literature which has been addressed by recent scholarship including that by Gerry Turcotte, Ken Gelder, and Rachael Weaver.

However, the use of Australian Gothic in place of Southern Gothic might be problematic, although arguably the isolation experienced by Charlie, Jasper and Mad Jack Lionel is a feature that aligns with Australian Gothic.

Important to the story is the concept of home and away. The non-Australian western fiction shows that there is a world outside the small town and the people in it. For example, Charlie and Eliza fantasise about escaping their town and moving to Manhattan, after talking about *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. The non-Australian western fiction used intertextually allows readers to view events within the narrative in relation to and in contrast with the world.

Also, it is Charlie's father Wesley who supplies Charlie with the Southern Gothic fiction. This is important because while Wesley perhaps would not be unaware of Australian fiction (indeed, as a well-educated man it could be expected), he would not

have been as highly influenced by it. Wesley studied literature at university but Dixon says the subject of Australian literature was not studied at universities in Australia until the 1950s and it did not take off as an academic discipline until the 1960s and 1970s (2007: 18).

Finally, a feature of Australian Gothic fiction is the Australian bush and the terror and loneliness it creates. However, in *Jasper Jones*, the bush is not a place of terror; it is a place of safety and security. For Laura Wishart and Jasper Jones the bush is their safe place where they can be together, and it is the place where Laura chooses to stop her father's abuse by ending her life. The bush is where Charlie and Jasper's friendship is forged. Eventually it is where Charlie takes Laura's sister Eliza to share the secrets they hold close, secrets that bind them to the outcaste Jasper. It is where Charlie begins to understand who he is and where he stops comparing himself to his literary masters, including his father:

What would my father have done? Or Mark Twain? Or Atticus Finch? It's likely they wouldn't be in this mess. But I'm not them. I'm an idiot. And a child. And I've done this all so very, very wrong (353).

This growing self-awareness shows Charlie is maturing into a young adult. This is also evident in Charlie's increased awareness of the fallibility of adults both generally and particularly in relation to his parents, which fits Perry Nodelman's belief that the knowledge that adulthood offers no more security or control over the world than childhood does opens novels up to teenage readers (2008: 58-59). Because in *Jasper Jones* horror lurks in towns and cities; specifically in the people who abuse their children and partners, who hurl hate at those they don't understand, and who cheat those they are supposed to love.

The horror in the non-fiction crime that Charlie researches is another indication of his maturation and growth. No longer is he only relying on fiction to understand the world. When approaching the house of Mad Jack Lionel (a narrative thread that is a clear imitation of the Boo Radley house situation in *To Kill a Mockingbird*) instead of consulting Atticus Finch or Mark Twain, Charlie thinks of the real-life violent criminals he recently read about (2009: 299).

The horror of the real world is also evident in *The Messenger*. Ed is threatened by the bank robber. His father was a drunk and his mother seemingly hates him. He listens to the rape of a wife by her husband, sees the effect of this on both the wife and daughter, and then nearly kills the husband in response. He must beat up a young boy and then suffer a beating from the boy and his brother. Ed has to harshly confront the depression and emptiness in one of his closest friends, and also in himself:

Ritchie's pleading with me but I don't let it get in the way. I can't let him slink off to that darkness place inside him, where his pride is strewn all over the floor in some hidden room. In the end I talk completely devoid of emotion.

I say, 'Ritchie – you're an absolute disgrace to yourself.'

He looks at me like I just shot his dog or told him his ma died. (2002: 327-328).

However, Ed is almost an adult. Despite his somewhat juvenile attitude to life, he has a job and lives out of the family home. He understands the world in a way that Charlie Bucktin does not yet. Ed is in control of the text, as the narrator of the book, and he controls the literature he is exposed to. He directs himself to the texts referenced intertextually. His more mature position is evident in the choice of literature referenced intertextually as they are more worldly and darker than those in *Jasper Jones*. There is the Russian *Crime and Punishment*, the English novels of Graham Greene (with their international locations and focus on crime, espionage, religion, and world events), and the North American works of Sylvia Plath (particularly *The Bell Jar* which examines mental illness and the search for identity). And despite its modern day setting, despite its well-read protagonist, they are still noticeably and primarily not Australian. I believe that is scope for more Australian literature to feature intertextually in this novel, acknowledging that works by Morris West are used. The themes prominent in the literature referenced intertextually such as identity, an omniscient or external power, and coming of age are quite universal and no doubt available in Australian literature.

This is not to say that Zusak chose the wrong texts to reference intertextually; the books used are suitable to the text and useful in the construction of its meaning. They are also indicative of Zusak's own literary influences and culture, and those of his intended readers. Stephens explains that the meaning of a text is not only constructed in its textuality but also in the culture it is situated in and how it is 'negotiated' by readers (1996: 165). In other words, meaning is context dependant. Additionally, he says that children's literature 'predominantly deals with how people live, interact and forge their own identities in a social community' (ibid). Schwarz's assertion that 'understanding others like ourselves helps us to understand ourselves' (1990: 3) expresses a major assumption that underlies both the production and mediation of texts for children (1996: 163).

Yet, if this is correct, how do Australian young adult readers understand themselves when the 'others' mentioned in the texts written for them are from another country, another culture, or another time? Stephens examines this when discussing the use of texts within the Australian novel *Thunderwith*, by Libby Hathorn, noting the use of texts by J.R.R Tolkien and Susan Cooper within the text and questions how this challenges reader's understanding of the world (1992: 49).

This question could also be asked of *Jasper Jones*. The Southern Gothic fiction used intertextually, while addressing issues similarly found in an Australian historical context, encourage Charlie and by extension the reader to look at the world through the eyes of the authors and characters referenced intertextually, such as Mark Twain and Atticus Finch. Wesley has promoted this by providing Charlie with the books. Yet this does not equip Charlie to understand the Australian society he is growing up in. After the beating of An Lu is stopped, Charlie asks his father why someone would do that to An Lu. Wesley's response does not make it clear to Charlie and the books that Charlie is reading do not help him understand the situation.

Ed in *The Messenger* spends the whole narrative unsure of what is going on his world. He is forced into a state of uncertainty by the arrival of the cards, however literature

(suggested to him by his writer self in the metatextual aspect of the text), assists in him in clearing up this uncertainty. Ed views the world through the eyes of the canon he has read. The works of Joyce, Conrad, and Dickens are known to him. He is able to quote Raskolnikov. This is how he sees the world and it is what he compares himself to, and this literature influences the reader's views as well.

Both Silvey and Zusak reference literature that they have been influenced by. What role might Australian education play in this though? Australia's attitude to literature has partially been developed in educational institutions that have perpetuated a colonial, non-Australian western value of literature. Larissa McLean Davies, Brenton Doecke, and Philip Mead argue that the discipline of English in Australian education was bound together with imperial settlement and that while Australian classic authors such as Henry Lawson and Banjo Patterson were valued, it was in terms of their role and place within the British literary heritage. From there, this attitude has continued because what is taught is what is known and then re-taught, reinforcing the canon. (2013: 225). McLean Davies, in reviewing what books her Masters students prescribed for their students, says that the texts taught were most likely what her students had been taught themselves when they were at school:

Those who had been taught a range of Australian literature were for the most part keen to see it represented in their classrooms; those more suspicious of Australian literature had generally been fed on a more traditional diet of British or American literature and thus located texts with worth or 'capital' in these places (2008: 26).

Additionally, Michael Heyward blames the gatekeepers of literature for not curating a strong and diverse literary history saying that, 'our universities have failed for more than a century to create any kind of enduring tradition for the teaching of Australian literature' (2012).

These concepts are supported in both *Jasper Jones* and *The Messenger*. Charlie is exposed to literature that his father was taught at university, reads for pleasure, and teaches to his own students. In *The Messenger*, Ed admits that the only subject he was good in at school was English, so his knowledge of literature is both guided and limited by that. Also, the metatextual reveal of the novel suggests that Ed is perpetuating the teaching of non-Australian western literature himself. The Messenger indeed becomes the message.

Therefore it could be proposed that by using non-Australian western literature intertextually, contemporary Australian young adult authors are continuing colonial and imperial literatures strong influence on Australian literature. This, while not reflective of a modern Australian multicultural society, supports the notion that Australian literature should not be considered distinct from other world literatures, highlighting Dixon's concept of relational national literatures mentioned at the beginning of this paper. Further, McLean Davies *et al.* note a common view across contributors to the essay collection, *Teaching Australian Literature: From Classroom Conversations to National Imaginings* was that Australian literature should not be seen as distinct and its use should not evoke the suggestion that it speaks to a distinct Australian identity. Instead it should be studied in relation to other texts, as part of a 'global literary community' (2013: 226). The prominence of non-Australian western

literature intertextually in contemporary Australian young adult fiction suggests that Australian authors are aligning their works with global, international literature. Yet it could also be said that it is evidence that Australia literature is still grasping for the support of its literary past.

Conclusion

Contemporary Australian young adult fiction is still a new kid on the block in comparison to the literature of many nations, including Britain. By using non-Australian western literature intertextually, contemporary Australian young adult authors are looking for western literature to provide support, validity, legitimacy, and meaning. Additionally, in using non-Australian western classic literature and their authors intertextually, Australian authors are improving the accessibility of the text, using their global familiarity as Stephens says to provide access points for readers (1992: 58). Authors such as Dickens, Twain, and Shakespeare hold enough global significance that readers are likely to have a basic understanding of the text, even if they have not read the work. This cannot be easily said of Australian authors or their texts.

Australia's educational institutions play an important role in developing literary culture and capital in Australian society. While they acknowledge the importance of Australian literature and its position as a part of global literature, the dominance of non-Australian western literature used intertextually in contemporary Australian young adult fiction suggests that it is still more influenced by its colonial past than it is by Australia's own literary culture. Australian authors are presenting diverse, excellent literary representations of Australian culture, nevertheless it is interesting to consider how greater use of Australian literature intertextually might shift perceptions of the value of Australian literature, as well as providing an historical mirror in which Australian and international readers can examine questions of Australian national identity.

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