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"Curiouser And Curiouser": Margaret Mahy's Novels For Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the interconnections between Margaret Mahy's novels for adolescents. It argues that whilst interconnected networks infuse the *oeuvre* with appropriate material for adolescents, some textual elements exceed the limitations of all but the most sophisticated adolescents.

After an introductory chapter, Chapter Two proposes a typology of structure in New Zealand novels for adolescents. It finds that Mahy's novels are archetypes of the hope-inducing structures identifiable in New Zealand novels for adolescents generally. It also finds that Mahy adapts structure to the stage of adolescence she is writing for.

Chapter Three discusses the generic content and stylistics in the Mahy *oeuvre*. It argues that even though the content is eminently appropriate for adolescents, some elements of style are not.

Chapter Four argues that knowledge of the various networks enriches response, guides interpretation and highlights Mahy's ability to pitch content at an appropriate level for adolescence, but again argues that some subtleties of style are too sophisticated for an adolescent audience.

Chapter Five argues that understanding of each novel is expanded by identifying points which imply one reader at the expense of others. Hence, this thesis concludes that meaning and response multiply in Mahy's texts in proportion to (1) knowledge of Mahy's unique interconnecting textual elements and (2) the number of Mahy's implied readers inhering in the actual reader.

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CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

Ms Margaret Mahy has had nine novels published for the adolescent "stage" group. Her first, The Haunting, was published in 1982 and subsequently won the Carnegie Medal in Great Britain. The Other Side of Silence, her most recent novel to date, was published in 1995. Judging principally from the issues dealt with in these novels and the stages and ages of their central characters, I conclude that they are published for three stages of adolescence - early, middle and late - as follows:

Early Adolescence:

- The Haunting (1982)
- Aliens in the Family (1986)
- Dangerous Spaces (1991)
- Underrunners (1992)
- The Other Side of Silence (1995)

Mid-Adolescence:

- The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance (1984)

Late Adolescence:

- The Catalogue of the Universe (1985)
- The Tricksters (1986)
- Memory (1987)

A synopsis of each of these novels is provided in Appendix One as an *aide-memoire* for readers. This thesis shows how the Mahy *oeuvre* is composed of unique networks of interconnecting textual elements which become "curiouser" the more they are studied.

Chapter Two reveals structural interconnections between the novels, showing how they are archetypes of the hope-inducing *eucatastrophic* structures identifiable in New Zealand's Adolescent Novels generally. Additionally, this chapter explains Mahy's adaptations of *eucatastrophe* to the stage of adolescence she is writing for. Appropriately, the structures match the adolescent's need to deal with the past and to anticipate the future with optimism.

Chapter Three shows how the *oeuvre* consists of a network of thematic and stylistic similarities. Two broad topics receive ubiquitous thematic attention in these novels: family harmony and adolescent empowerment. The network of family harmony sub-plots become "curiouser" the more they are studied. All of the families in these novels are "broken families" in one way or another and all of the novels

conclude with the resolution of an important difficulty in the family. Even though the familial plot operates as sub-plot and setting, I show how it is of central significance. Secondly, I show how adolescent empowerment is the other driving force behind action and metaphor in these novels.

For the purposes of this thesis, I have limited my discussion of stylistics to the level of determination of narrative codes, diction, allusions, and the extended metaphors. Chapter Three shows that whilst some elements of Ms Mahy's stylistics defer to the abilities of adolescents, other elements of style will elicit different responses depending upon the reader's cognitive development. Curiously, other elements of style will almost universally exceed the limitations of the publishers' target audiences, especially Ms Mahy's sophisticated vocabulary, her sophisticated allusions and the metaphoric tenor of her texts. (I often refer to the publishers' target audience in order to differentiate between the popular view of the appropriate age of readership and Ms Mahy's own view of who she is writing for.)

Chapter Four explores the findings made in Chapter Three by applying them in more depth to two novels, The Haunting and The Catalogue of the Universe. I show what difference the knowledge of Ms Mahy's networks makes when analysing these texts. Additionally, I show how the texts become "curiouser" by virtue of the fact that whilst the networks infuse the *oeuvre* with eminently appropriate material for the publishers' target audiences, other textual elements exceed the same audiences' limitations.

Chapter Five further illustrates and expands on these conclusions by showing how a range of implied readers inhere in four texts: Aliens in the Family, The Changeover: a Supernatural Romance, The Tricksters and Memory. I show the presence of each of the following implied readers in these novels: the formal-operational reasoner, the publishers' target audience, the child who approximates to the sort of reader Mahy was as an adolescent, the educated adult reader, and the re-reader. Curiously, the findings indicate that understanding of each novel is expanded by identifying textual elements which imply one reader at the expense of others. When analysing Memory, this chapter shows how knowledge of the other novels in the *oeuvre* augments comprehension by adding extra levels of meaning.

CHAPTER TWO:
GENERIC NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

A superficial glance at New Zealand fiction generally could lead the observer to conclude that our writers portray the transition from childhood to adolescence as a negative experience, a movement from seeing life as a magical experience to realising it is a tragical experience. It is one thing to portray the transition itself as painful if that were the end of the pain, but so often our fiction suggests long-suffering as a fact of adult life as well. Many writers go so far as to ignore the magical phase, and present adulthood as the continuation of an agonising childhood. There seems to be something in the experience of growing up in New Zealand which casts many of its writers under a Fairburnian cloud that portrays life here as "a lump without leaven" (Fairburn 149). Adulthood itself may be the "second grade heaven" of Fairburn's poem, an experience that never reaches its promise, if one were deluded enough to even expect such promise. Well known examples that come readily to mind are Ian Cross's The God Boy, Maurice Gee's In My Father's Den, Bruce Mason's "The End of the Golden Weather", Steven Eldred-Grigg's Oracles and Miracles, Noel Virtue's The Redemption of Elsdon Bird, Keri Hulme's the bone people, Janet Frame's Owls Do Cry, and Alan Duff's Once Were Warriors.

Similarly, many authors of Adolescent Novels[1] beyond Australasia portray the transition from childhood to adulthood as painful, especially, it seems, those authors who have achieved some critical acclaim. Shelves of English and American Adolescent Novels picture adolescence as a time of powerlessness, of subjection to the caprice of domineering (or defaulting) parents and tyrannical governments, of dispossession from anything resembling a cheerful personal future. Frequently they portray the world as a temporary fixture with no serious hope of longevity. Such American novels are Glendon Swarthout's Bless the Beasts and Children, Robert C. O'Brien's Z For Zachariah, Bette Greene's The Summer of My German Soldier, S.E. Hinton's Tex, That Was Then And This Is Now and The Outsiders, and the novels of Robert Cormier and Paul Zindell. British counterparts are found in Jill Paton Walsh's A Parcel of Patterns, Barry Hines' A Kestrel for a Knave, Robert Westall's The Machine Gunners and Robert Swindells' Brother in the Land[2].

In commenting upon the mood and tone of Adolescent Novels in the 1970s and 1980s, Belle Alderman says, "Unresolved endings, pessimism and

disillusionment with self and society all appear, and call upon the adolescent's ability to consider alternatives" (Alderman 305). More recently, these novels portray adult life as unworthy of the pain of transition, leading Claudia Marquis to comment in 1991 that "Recent adolescent fiction [...], especially American, has exaggerated the conventional exclusion of the adult to a still more powerful, aggressive extreme" (Marquis 341).

However, in 1987 Stella Lees was able to say of the authors of Australian Adolescent Novels:

> Australian writers, so far, have avoided the seeming pessimism of Cormier's The Chocolate War. Rather they seem committed to the belief that the young do need reassurance, that resolution is usually to be found in our own hands, and that life is ultimately optimistic: security has not and will not disappear. (Lees 225)

As with Australia, if there is any distinction to be made between New Zealand adolescent fiction from that of America and Great Britain- other than the obvious geographical one as explored by Dr Diane Hebley[3] - it is that the structure of our Adolescent Novels matches what Tolkien, in his celebrated essay Tree and Leaf, called *eucatastrophe*. Tolkien describes *eucatastrophe* as "the Consolation of the Happy Ending." He claimed that "the *eucatastrophic* tale is the true form of fairy-tale, and its highest function." It results in a joy that arises out of the knowledge that the story could have ended in *dyscatastrophe* and the sense that it "denies [...] universal final defeat" (Tolkien 60). *Dyscatastrophe* is the opposite of *eucatastrophe*: it means final defeat. Where the vast majority of critically acclaimed American and British Adolescent Novels are *dyscatastrophic*, our critically acclaimed Adolescent Novels are almost universally *eucatastrophic*.

This is not to say that New Zealand texts shield their readers from the dark side of life and human nature. On the contrary, they shun idealism. However, they do these things in balance with the light side, thereby avoiding the cynical tone evident in the work of many of their American and British counterparts. New Zealander Sheila Jordan's novels Rocco and Winter of Fire are prime examples of stories in which human malevolence is integral to the post-apocalyptic settings, yet the characters triumph in both: nuclear holocaust is prevented by time-travelling Rocco, and the tide of oppression is turned by iconoclastic Elsha.

My reading suggests that New Zealand Adolescent Novels use six variations of *eucatastrophe* which form three binary opposites. I have given them the following labels:

* *functional eucatastrophe* and *dysfunctional eucatastrophe*, both using the classic fairy tale formula which arrives at a happy ending,

* *naïve eucatastrophe*, which denies the existence of the dark side of life, and *cynical eucatastrophe*, which denies the existence of the light side of life,

* *liberating eucatastrophe*, which liberates the text from earlier *dyscatastrophe*, and *non-liberating eucatastrophe* which does not liberate the central characters from the prospect of impending *dyscatastrophe*. Of these variations, the Mahy *oeuvre* uses the most hope-inducing structures: *functional*, *naïve*, and *liberating eucatastrophe*.

Mahy uses the *functional eucatastrophe* of the classic fairy tale in five of her novels. A classic fairy tale, in Tolkien's terms, would be one which rescues its central characters from possible disaster, hence providing "the Consolation of the Happy Ending" and denying "universal final defeat" to the forces of darkness. To succeed, the portrayal of evil needs to be as vivid as the portrayal of good, and the forces of good and evil must seem to be balanced in favour of the evil until the dénouement when good triumphs. This classic fairy tale formula is found as frequently in adult popular fiction as in children's literature. An example of the successful use of this structure is found in Margaret Beames' Early Adolescent Novel[4], The Parkhurst Boys. Beames' *eucatastrophic* ending is a triumph of geniality over the bestiality that has pervaded the story. Aspects of the misanthropic adult world are evident at every turn in the plot through this novel: suggestions of paedophilia, the harsh justice of the English courts, the Murgatroyds' treachery, Mrs Watchet's bigotry, and Crowder's mercenary viciousness. It is the same formula Mahy uses in her Early Adolescent Novels, The Haunting, Underrunners, Dangerous Spaces, and The Other Side of Silence, and in her Mid-Adolescent Novel, The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance. In each of these novels, *functional eucatastrophe* is employed: potential disaster is averted and life's light is not extinguished by its dark.

However, *eucatastrophe* is not an automatic recipe for success. Like all fiction, it must be handled skilfully and must be written credibly. Eve Sutton's Early Adolescent Surgeon's Boy contains unsatisfactory content that makes its *eucatastrophe* dysfunctional. It ends with its 15 year-old central protagonist anticipating future enjoyment and success:

> Tomorrow, I thought happily. Tomorrow, a house and a real bed.
> Tomorrow, a horse of my own.
> Next week, a feast, a hangi, with Wirihana and his brother and their people.
> Soon - I turned impatiently under my blanket - soon, the start of my real work with Dad, on the shore stations with the Maoris and the whaling men and the little squeakers.
> And next year, or the year after, England, Petherick Hall, the hospital...
> A whole new life was there, waiting for me. (138)

Despite the positive thrust of such a conclusion, the events in the novel do not encourage the reader to take its ideas seriously. The plot is a drift-net of colonial

high adventure that may appeal to its readers for its swift movement from one scrape with death to the next, but the same reader is unlikely to find these events plausible because they are seldom supported by more than a cursory acquaintance with the detail that makes for plausibility. Jamie Fenton himself is the literary stereotype of Public Schoolboy adolescence: he angers swiftly, is ever willing to use force to foil the villainous aims of hardened criminals, yet is willing to understand and forgive escaped convicts. Even his dialogue sounds written rather than genuinely experienced:

> 'Oh good. Thanks Dad. Now what'll we do first? See the Governor? Set the law on those villains?'
>
> Dad burst out laughing. He was looking down at me, and at himself. My eyes followed his, and then I too spluttered into laughter.
>
> 'Oh gosh, yes! We are in a bit of a mess, aren't we? We've had these same clothes on ever since we swam ashore to Kapiti. I can see the Governor holding his nose when he gets near us!' (65)

This is not the sort of writing that holds readers in Tolkien's "Secondary World" for long. Tolkien refutes Coleridge's idea that reading fiction involves the "willing suspension of disbelief"; instead, he says, the author creates a "Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is 'true': it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside" (Tolkien 36). Tolkien says that if the story's art fails, its readers will naturally return to the Primary World and will certainly have to suspend disbelief from that point on if they are to continue to engage with the story: "But this suspension of disbelief is a substitute for the genuine thing, a subterfuge we use when condescending to games of make-believe, or when trying (more or less willingly) to find what virtue we can in the work of an art that has for us failed" (Tolkien 37). He could be describing Surgeon's Boy. Its closing promise of a bright tomorrow is as sentimental as its perception of adolescence, as contrived as its dialogue, as distant from the modern reader as the thumb-nail sketches of a wild colonial New Zealand too inadequately drawn to be visualised convincingly. An ending which should have offered hope offers, instead, the suspicion that perhaps faith in a bright tomorrow, like the novel it has expediently concluded, is a fiction. Despite Surgeon Boy's *dysfunctional eucatastrophe*, there is no denying that the thrust of the dénouement is towards a hope in the future, even if the novel's effect is not equal to the author's intent.

The third variety of *eucatastrophe* evident in New Zealand novels, *naïve eucatastrophe*, is one in which the characters are involved in overcoming dark forces, only to discover that the dark forces were a mock danger rather than a real one. Therefore, they affirm the light side of life without revealing the dark. In such novels, the dark side is no more than human fear itself. Many non-New Zealand novels read widely by teenagers, such as William Golding's Lord of the Flies, reveal the dark side of human fear, but this type of New Zealand novel does not even do

that. Barry Faville's The Return is such a novel. It almost totally dodges the dark side of life. Not only is no wrong committed by the human characters, but the "return" of the title results in the arousal of Jonathan's latent mental telepathy which bodes well for the evolutionary development of humanity. Both the novel's aliens and its terrestrials are better off for their intergalactic exchange. The wrong perpetrated by the commander of the first alien visit cannot be changed, but its only surviving victim, Myra, is happier for the second visit. Mahy's Aliens in the Family is the only novel in her *oeuvre* that employs *naïve eucatastrophe*. Aliens in the Family has a clever cojoining of plot, setting and theme in which the central protagonist, Jake, copes with the feeling of alienation from her father and his new family by helping a literal alien, Bond, to be reunited in time and space with his intergalactic school. Bond believes he is in mortal danger from his people's arch-enemies, the Wirdegen, but after a series of narrow escapes he realises that the threat was never real. He was tricked into thinking that he was being pursued by Wirdegen, when in fact he was being tested by his own people.

The binary opposite of *naïve eucatastrophe* is *cynical eucatastrophe* which denies the good side of life. One of the few New Zealand Adolescent Novels which conforms to this pattern is Joy Cowley's The Silent One. It presents an almost relentless denial of adult benevolence. Adult superstition threatens the life of Jonasi, a deaf mute, who eventually rejects human society for the company of a white turtle. The novel ends with the suggestion that Jonasi metamorphoses into the shape of a turtle, such is the profundity of his rejection of humanity, in response to humanity's rejection of him. The plot has the *eucatastrophic* structure, but the outcome is an ironic triumph for the forces of catastrophe.

The fifth form of *eucatastrophe* evident in New Zealand Adolescent Novels, *liberating eucatastrophe*, qualifies a *dyscatastrophic* event by liberating the characters from being subsumed by the catastrophe. It serves to show that humanity may be "fallen", but is not resigned to evil; in other cases it may show that fate's blows can be dreadful, but they are not crippling. At the very least, such blows furnish the imagination with the hope that there is satisfaction and enjoyment in life, despite the worst that can occur. David Hill's See Ya, Simon is such a novel.

Hill uses first person narrative effectively to give rise to *eucatastrophe*, despite Simon's *dyscatastrophic* death. After viewing the body, Nathan sees the physical world with a new intensity: "Every little mossy crack and tyre mark on the footpath stood out" (125). He holds to the hope of eradicating his own "jealousy and bitchiness" (125) in response to Simon's example and he learns that friendship does not end with the loss of a friend when he realises that Nelita might appreciate the "headline jokes" he and Simon used to enjoy. It seems that Hill is threatening the authenticity of the ending when Alex calls "to say I'm sorry, eh? You've been a really good mate to him" (121). But Hill rescues authenticity from the jaws of

sentimentality as Nathan decides: "I'm not expecting big changes. For example, I know I'll never be real friends with Alex, but I'm going to try and be fair about him"(125). If that is coming dangerously close to sentimentalism, Hill comes within a mere hair's breadth of it by following these anagnorises with the return of Nathan's estranged father. Once again he avoids it, though, by finding a line between naïve hope and cynicism: "I'm not expecting any miracles with Mum and Dad [...] We'll have to see what works out. Life goes on, eh?" (125). Finally, Nathan expresses the value of Simon's life despite its brevity: "He was bad-tempered and funny. He was fierce-tongued and brave. He was my friend. I'm proud I knew him, I'll never forget him" (126). Hill validates a short life and injects meaning into death. Phoenix-like, Simon's spirit rises out of the ashes of despair to continue living in Nathan's memory; Hill rescues the reader from vicarious *dyscatastrophe*.

Despite this novel's uncompromising portrayal of the inevitably fatal outcome of muscular dystrophy, it concludes by acknowledging possibilities without relying on their realisation. Hill leaves us with the impression that Nathan's life will continue to be a series of ups and downs, but with Simon's help he has developed an attitude that enables him to perceive the downs in the light of the ups, and vice versa, thereby intensifying every up and moderating the impact of the downs. Three of Mahy's texts, The Catalogue of the Universe, The Tricksters, and Memory also employ this form of *eucatastrophe*. In each case it is not lives at risk, but emotional, relational and psychological well-being that are threatened.

The final form of *eucatastrophe* evident in New Zealand Adolescent Novels, *non-liberating eucatastrophe*, does not so much come on the heels of *dyscatastrophe*, as in the midst of impending *dyscatastrophe*. The triumph is isolated and does not cancel out the prospect of future catastrophe, hence the label of *non-liberating eucatastrophe*. Caroline Macdonald's Early Adolescent Visitors makes an interesting contrast to Sutton's Early Adolescent Surgeon's Boy. Rather than containing an antithetical subtext, it explicitly discusses opposites and presents them in balance. Those opposites are the light and dark of human nature: this novel does not present the dark in a way which undermines the *eucatastrophic* climax; neither does it present the triumph as a panacea for the problems which beset the central characters. The development of an unlikely relationship between 12 year-old Terry and his physically-handicapped neighbour, Maryanne Rice, leads to the climax. Despite Betty Gilderdale's comment in "Children's Literature" (Oxford History of New Zealand Literature, ed. Sturm) that Macdonald's aliens inadvertently assist family resolutions (Gilderdale 489), nothing of the sort occurs. At the novel's conclusion, Terry still has no love of family holidays and, worse, he suspects his mother has been making fun of Maryanne to his father (Macdonald 111). Earlier, when Terry had told his mother about the aliens, her response was to assume he was suffering a psychiatric disorder (89) and subsequent discussions about it between his parents were still adversarial. Similarly, the book ends with Mrs Rice, the harmless

neighbourhood busy-body, just as willing to divulge her gossip as she was throughout the story. As a paradoxical co-text to the final triumph, then, is the message that adults do not change, and that there is no conversion for a dysfunctional family.

A more invidious form of *non-liberating eucatastrophe* is expressed in Tessa Duder's Alex which condemns some of the worst aspects of the New Zealand culture. The *eucatastrophic* structure develops quite naturally from Alex's determination to honour her boyfriend after his senseless death. In this case the worst aspects of human nature are dealt with in a way that highlights the courage and mettle of the central protagonist, Alex, who has to deal with a teenage drink-driver, the tragic results of a hit-and-run driver, the willingness of adults to believe the worst (in the rumour about Alex's supposed liaison with Mr Phillips, 163-173), peer pressure to put male loyalty ahead of the concerns of female friends, and the tall-poppy syndrome. Duder uses these in a way which makes Alex's tenacity all the more remarkable. But the *eucatastrophic* triumph at the end does nothing to bring about solutions to this list of problems. They are portrayed as being as endemic to the New Zealand setting as victory is innate to Alex's personality. Eventual victory in the pool is an isolated relief from the *dyscatastrophe* that threatens to engulf her at all times. Even this isolated *eucatastrophe* offers considerably more hope than the *dyscatastrophic* Adolescent Novels from America and Great Britain. For example, there is no hope of emotional or occupational security for Billy in A Kestrel for a Knave, and even the theme of "stay gold" in The Outsiders is overwhelmed by Jonny's tragic death, the violent rumble, and Dally's suicidal brinkmanship.

It would seem that almost all New Zealand writers of Adolescent Novels share a common belief that for adolescents "the trick of standing upright here" [5] is hope. More pertinently, it is noteworthy that of the six forms of *eucatastrophe* identified, Mahy employs the ones that offer the most hope: functional, naïve, and liberating. In this way, the Mahy *oeuvre* employs a network of interconnected narrative structures that individually and collectively convey a sense that the difficulties of adolescence are vindicated, that the magic of childhood is not inevitably nullified in the transition to adulthood.

Catastrophe and *Eucatastrophe* in the Mahy *Oeuvre*

Eucatastrophe concerns a novel's ending. Treated teleologically, knowledge of the ending should infuse the beginning and the middle with understanding. If that is so, what does the *eucatastrophic* network help the reader to understand about the beginning and the middle of a Mahy adolescent novel? The answer to that question lies in exploring the relationship between the potential for catastrophe and the

eucatastrophic outcome. Almost universally, the potential for catastrophe in Mahy's Adolescent Novels arises from a pre-narrative secret that is revealed to the reader and to central characters in the dénouement. Mahy uses a form of delayed exposition in which she reveals a fact or an eventuality that is crucial to the dénouement, that has been in existence since before the opening time-space of the narrative and that has affected the events throughout the novel, yet has been previously unknown to the reader and most of the characters. In her Early Adolescent Novels, the event or fact that rescues the text from *dyscatastrophe* is the revelation of another pre-narrative secret. This network of interest in reconciling the past pervades Mahy's Adolescent Novels and distinguishes them from her pre-adolescent fiction, which is, as a rule, neither occupied nor preoccupied with the pre-narrative past [6].

The Haunting is Mahy's first Adolescent Novel. It provides a clear example of the relationship between potential catastrophe, eventual *eucatastrophe*, and the pre-narrative past. In The Haunting, the first pre-narrative secret to be revealed in the dénouement is that Great-Grandma Scholar is a magician. It is revealed that she had treated her giftedness as a curse rather than a blessing. Her knowledge of this giftedness had perverted her maternal feelings for Cole. Just as she had suppressed her own magic, so she had tried to squeeze it out of her son. Her attempt to repress Cole's gift of magicianship was what turned him into such a self-obsessive individual. Consequently, Cole was so lacking in empathy that it never occurred to him that his ghostly appearances to Barney would be frightening. By failing to empathise, he almost abducted Barney. Such abduction is the novel's potential catastrophe. *Functional eucatastrophe* results from Troy's surprising revelation that she is the magician. This revelation resolves two of the novel's enigmas. Firstly, it affirms the validity and nature of Barney's infant friends Bigbuzz, Mantis and Ghost; secondly, it explains why the Scholars can sense a magic presence at the mandatory Scholar get-together following the death of Great-Uncle Barnaby. Moreover, it is absolutely critical to keeping Cole from taking Barney, thereby playing a crucial role in the *eucatastrophic* conclusion. It is no wonder that at one point in his haunting, Barney decides that its cause lies in "things that happened before I was even born" (73).

Like The Haunting, dead ancestors haunt the present generation in Dangerous Spaces. Potential catastrophe arises out of the failure of brother ghosts Henry and old Lionel to deal with a pre-narrative past. In the dénouement, Flora explains that Henry died young, but his spirit waited for Lionel before crossing the sea to the spiritual after-life. Likewise, when Lionel died, he waited for Henry. As in life, Henry and Lionel occupied different imaginative spaces, precluding meeting. In this case the central protagonist, Anthea, narrowly escapes crossing the sea of death by asserting her right to say "No". Her new-found emancipation from dead Henry is a metaphor for her eventual ability to free herself of the vain hope that her parents, who had disappeared without trace on a yachting trip, would miraculously

return. Both the death of Henry and the death of Anthea's parents are pre-narrative events and Anthea must free herself from them in order to mature. Flora effects *eucatastrophe* by reuniting the separated ghosts; and she simultaneously resolves tensions that had spilled over into animosity between her and Anthea.

In Underrunners, live people (rather than dead ones) retain secrets. Tristram makes a series of discoveries in his climactic abduction. Not only does he realise that his abductor is the father of Winola and that Winola is his childhood friend, but he realises that Selsey Firebone, his alter ego, is definitely incapable of helping him when real danger intrudes into his life. Orson Tyrone, the deranged abductor, is an illustration of what happens to those who do not shed their childhood fantasies: "Orson had acted as if he too might have a Selsey Firebone of his own living inside him... a Selsey Firebone who took no notice of any rules except his own, who did not care whether he, or anybody else, lived or died" (135). He is a dangerous version of Frame's Daphne Withers and it is his pre-narrative psychological problems which create the environment for potential catastrophe. Mahy's weaving of pre-narrative events into already dramatic events makes for a very exciting and interesting dénouement in this novel. Mahy's wide-ranging use of underrunners as a psychological metaphor for the idea that there are perilous cavities hidden beneath the surface sanity of people like Orson, and even children like Tris, gives added impact to the idea that adulthood cannot be lived out successfully until childhood is dealt with retrospectively.

Hero, in The Other Side of Silence, is voluntarily mute. When the novel begins she has been silent for three years. The reasons for her silence are secreted in pre-narrative events which are revealed only falteringly throughout the course of the novel. Potential catastrophe arises out of Miss Credence's desire to sustain her pre-narrative secret about her feral child. Hero stumbles upon the secret child out of her own curiosity, thereby inadvertently putting herself in danger, but also creating the environment for breaking the spell of her own silence. In the *eucatastrophic* ending, readers are given the final clue that unravels Hero's silence: "my silence was the way in which I had made myself special, made myself powerful in a family in which everyone struggled to find their own power. 'Not talking's my way of being famous'" (151). Again, the revelations are made in the dénouement and they allow Hero to regain her voice and Miss Credence's feral child to receive human warmth.

As has already been discussed, the central enigma in Aliens in the Family is the identity of the Wirdegen. This is, however, the only pre-narrative secret from both the characters and the reader. It is of importance to the plot structure, but not to the thematic structure. However, the novel's dénouement also involves Jake's disclosure of the pre-narrative secret to her father that her mother has become even less competent as a parent since the marriage dissolved and that Jake has become the care-giver both to her mother and grand-parents. However, this disclosure is

between characters only; the reader already knew of it, so it does not conform as much to the rule as the disclosures in Mahy's other Early Adolescent Novels. Nevertheless, it supports my claim that the novels in the *oeuvre* are interested in resolving pre-narrative problems.

Mahy adopts *eucatastrophic* structures that match the age of the publishers' target audience. All but one of Mahy's Early Adolescent Novels use *functional eucatastrophe*; the other, Aliens in the Family, uses *naïve eucatastrophe*. Her Mid-Adolescent Novel, The Changeover: a Supernatural Romance, also uses *functional eucatastrophe*; whereas her Late Adolescent Novels use *liberating eucatastrophe*. It seems that Mahy decided, perhaps intuitively, that older adolescence requires a different type of hope to early and mid-adolescence. Later adolescence is a stage of life where people need to realise that failure and humiliation are not permanent and debilitating experiences. The three Late Adolescent Novels are similar in that the central protagonist goes through chiastic experiences: one set of experiences humiliates and depresses the main character, but out of that set of experiences arises events that elevate and empower.

The Catalogue of the Universe is Mahy's first Later Adolescent Novel. It provides a clear example of the links between *liberated eucatastrophe*, chiasmus, and the pre-narrative past. In Angela's search for her father in The Catalogue of the Universe, and in Jonny's need to clarify his part in his sister's death in Memory, the interest in uncovering the truth of past events is so strong that it would subsume all else if it were not kept in check by strong characterisation and the attention given to the adolescence of the protagonists. Angela's mother, Dido, has raised her on white lies about the supposed relationship between Dido and Angela's father, Roland. It is a romantic story that Angela has heard many times. She has never met her father, and has been given no reason for disbelieving the story. So when Angela finally meets him and discovers Dido's story to be false and Roland to be the antithesis of what Dido had claimed, it unsettles her as nothing has before. Angela felt her heart breaking because at the same time as her illusions about her father were crumbling, "she was also losing the mother she was used to" (93). Angela's subsequent sense that her mother had betrayed her conflates with her personal humiliation to create a psychological *dyscatastrophe*. However, it is this very *dyscatastrophe* that throws into sharp relief her feelings for long-time friend Tycho and so leads to the textual and sexual climax of the story. That climax leads Angela to greater independence from her mother, yet paradoxically becomes part of a number of events which cause her to reshape the mother-daughter relationship into something new. Hence, the pre-narrative past (in this case, the truth about Roland) triggers the *dyscatastrophe* (that is, Angela's humiliating confrontation with Roland and its immediate aftermath); the *dyscatastrophe* leads to depression and humiliation in the central protagonist; but rising out of that is a growth into elevated relationships and a sense

of personal empowerment, that form the *liberated eucatastrophe* of the dénouement.

The title of The Tricksters suggests that all is not what it seems. The reader may assume that it refers primarily to the Carnival brothers, but the climax reveals multiple tricksters. The novel's central secret is that Jack, the family's jolly father, had a brief affair with Emma, a friend of his eldest daughter. The affair resulted in the birth of Tibby. The generally-held view that Sam, an old boy-friend of Emma's, fathered Tibby and then fled to Canada is exposed as a specious misconception, used to protect Jack and Emma's guilt, and to protect Naomi, Jack's wife, from humiliation. The novel's tricksters include husband and wife, Jack and Naomi, in collusion with Emma, their daughter Christobel's friend. All three are protecting themselves from the shame of the affair between Jack and Emma; all three believe they have been successful in concealing the truth. It comes as a double shock to the reader to discover the truth and to have it revealed by Harry, the central protagonist, to whom the narrator has given the most attention in a limited omniscient narrative. Throughout the novel the reader is led to suppose that all of Harry's relevant secrets had been revealed, yet in the dénouement we discover that Harry had been planning to make the revelation to Christobel at some time: "she had always wanted to be the one to tell Christobel this secret "(230). The revelation, though, is only one of two *dyscatastrophic* events. The other is the discovery and subsequent pejorative criticism from the family of Harry's fictional writing. It is this humiliation that triggers Harry's revelation of the family secret. The revelation of the affair between Emma and Jack is so traumatic to Christobel that family unity is threatened forever. However, Harry learns to recover from her part in the trauma, while for Christobel it has the potential to make her into "a new kind of creature" [7].

In Memory, Jonny's discovery that his schizophrenic memory had deceived him into a false sense of culpability for his sister Janine's death, comes as an anagnorisis following the climactic events that began with his unsolicited fondling of Bonny and end with his violent victory over Nev, Spike and Don. Here the dénouement is a conflation of two pre-narrative events: firstly, Janine's death; secondly, the rejection and ridicule Jonny faced as a child in response to his part in the Chickenbits television advertisement. The latter led other boys to ostracise him. This was voiced poignantly by the acrimonious school-boy comment: "Everyone reckons if one of you two had to go over [the cliff in a fatal fall] it was a pity it wasn't you" (20-21). It is symbolised effectively in the image of Nev Fowler flushing the toilet over Jonny's bleached head and threatening to kill him (32-33). But it is also the catalyst for the opening of a permanent crevasse between Jonny and his father who said after the beating: "You'll never be a man until you learn to fight your own battles" (83-84). Prophetically, that is exactly how Jonny grows up. The text suggests that violence would not have been essential to Jonny's development but for his father's pre-narrative comments and for the fact that his

father had understood "the Colville boys better than he understood Jonny" (84). Of all Mahy's novels, Memory best illustrates the influence of the past upon the present; and of all her characters, Sophie West, because she suffers from senile dementia, best illustrates the present as a perpetual past. Yet Sophie is there as a thematic pointer to Jonny Dart, who, once released from amnesia by Bonnie's revelation of her pre-narrative secret, is able to forge a new future that is free of the constraints of the past. In this *liberated eucatastrophe*, the *dyscatastrophe* occurred before the novel's opening. This novel consists more of an extended denouement, than a classic Aristotelian beginning, middle and end. The pre-narrative *dyscatastrophe* consisted of Janine's death and Jonny's rejection by his peers; but it also includes Jonny's violence, his subsequent arrest, and his fight with his father. Jonny's journey on the downward stroke of the chiasmus is liberated from disaster because he confronts these problems and discovers the truth of the past. The text suggests that adolescence cannot be left behind until the past is dealt with.

The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance is an exception to the rule I have posited. Like the other novels, it is very interested in events that occurred before the narrative opened. These vary from those that are as lacking in crucial importance as the distorted perception Mrs Fangboner has of Jacko as a result of negative experiences she had with boys in the past; to one as critical to characterisation and theme as Sorry's rejection by his natural mother and his foster father. His nick-name acknowledges that he is in a "sorry" state. His near-catastrophic rejection contrasts well with Laura's sense of betrayal by her parents who rejected each other yet do affirm her. But it does not become a critical element in either the climax or Laura's changeover from mortal to witch; child to young adult. Those events are the results of crises that occur after the opening-point of the novel. It does, however, play a part in Sorry's conviction that Laura's intention of avenging Braque's malevolence will be as destructive to her as it will be to her victim. Sorry advises her with the knowledge of one who knows what it is to be truly bitter and to feel that the bitterness is justified. Laura assimilates the common sense of Sorry's warning and accordingly destroys Braque swiftly rather than torturously, thereby providing one of the essential events in the falling action of the novel. Hence, whilst this novel does not conform to the rule, neither does it contradict the central place I am suggesting should be given to the pre-narrative past in Mahy's Adolescent Novels. In this way, the exception proves the rule.

The structure of Mahy's Adolescent Novels mirrors the structure of adolescence as a transient stage between two more easily defined stages. It starts with a history (childhood) that contains problematic secrets. Until the secrets are revealed and the problems are dealt with, the end (the transformation to adulthood) cannot be reached. In The Haunting, Troy cannot accept herself fully until she is legitimised by her family as she is, not just as she has always pretended to be. In Dangerous Spaces, Anthea cannot reconcile her relationship with Flora until she has

reconciled herself to the fact of her parents' death. In Underrunners, Tris cannot take the step towards maturity without clearly differentiating between childhood fantasies and reality and without simultaneously integrating his alter ego into his own identity. In The Other Side of Silence, Hero cannot choose to communicate orally until she realises the immaturity - and even madness - of seeking to be special through silence. In The Catalogue of the Universe, Angela cannot accept herself until she clarifies the identity of her father. In The Tricksters, Christobel cannot be fully human until she sheds the illusions of childhood; Harry cannot have self respect until she sheds the effort of trying to emulate Christobel's image. In Memory, Jonny cannot reconcile himself to manhood until he buries the ghosts of his childhood. Even in Aliens in the Family, which does not have the potential for catastrophe in the dénouement, Jake cannot get on with growing up until she is prepared to openly admit to her jealousies and difficulties. Similarly, in The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance, Laura cannot make the changeover from child to adult while she harbours the same desire for revenge that was threatening Sorry's humanity.

In using the resolution of past events as a crucial key to emotional and developmental stability in the present, Mahy has reflected the developmental theorist Erikson's conclusions about the transition from childhood to adulthood. Of Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development, the one dealt with in adolescence, "identity versus diffusion", is pivotal. In it, a sense of personal identity is formed from synthesizing previous experiences. There are several aspects to this, but the crux is "being able to coordinate one's biological, social, and personal needs, interests and expectations and to construct an identity capable of accommodating them satisfactorily" (Berzonsky 340). According to Erikson, identity comes to those who can integrate their past with their present. Such individuals can accept past mistakes and the experiences of failure as ingredients of what makes them who they are. Such people will harbour few regrets about the past and will see themselves in the process of becoming, rather than as static beings (342).

On the other hand, failure to arrive at a "consistent, coherent, and integrated identity," which the teenager-cum-adult can call "myself", results in the problem of "identity confusion". Such adolescents develop a negative identity, or, in Erikson's terms, "a debased self-image and social role" (Offer, et al 13). They are often unable to commit themselves to vocational or ideological positions in late adolescence or they fall into the trap of premature commitment to a social role which results in its own set of problems (13). This describes Jonny Dart in Mahy's Memory to a tee. He is haunted by a schizophrenic memory and the confusing sense of being several people at once. So debilitating is this that he gets involved in pub fights, drinks irresponsibly, and fails to gain employment. When he takes on the role of caring for Sophie, who suffers from senile dementia, the task is almost too much for him, tempting him to theft and leading him to yet another violent encounter. Once he resolves his conflicting memories he gains employment, reconciles his personal

relationships, and is able to make a more realistic assessment of his ability to help Sophie.

Of course, life is not as clear-cut as it can be made to seem in fiction. As Tycho says in The Catalogue of the Universe: "actual truth wobbles and hides. [...] Truth's furtive [...]. The world's left-handed. Planets move in ellipses, parity isn't preserved, and the square root of two is an irrational number" (44-45). Accordingly, Mahy suggests that the path to maturity is uncovered by facing problems rather than by hiding from them. Moreover, she illustrates that, whilst the results of facing problems can be painful, they are also empowering. In this regard, her novels are built upon a cornerstone used by many critics to judge children's literature, encapsulated in Inglis's claim that: "it is surely a necessary virtue in children's novelists to offer their readers confidence and hope in the future" (Inglis 297). What is particularly meritorious is that she consistently expresses this theme by stamping her own style on two distinct and consistent narrative structures: *eucatastrophe* and delayed exposition. These structures form an integrated network that generates optimism, yet is flexible enough to withstand modifications to match the age of the publisher's target audience.

In The Other Side of Silence, Hero's narrative ends with the following paragraph:

> Once I used to pick up *Old Fairy Tales*, shut my eyes, put my blind finger blindly on a line, then open my eyes suddenly so that I could read whatever it was fate had to say to me. *Tell your sorrows to the old stove in the corner*, I read, because true life is timeless and the story already knew what lay ahead of me. And when the story gives you good advice, there's no way out. You just have to act upon it. (166-167)

There is a strong link between the ideas in this paragraph and the fairy tale structure of Mahy's novels. I infer from the above passage that for Mahy, fairy tale structure links fiction to the course that non-fiction runs; the passage certainly implies a curious mystical link between the fairy tale and the reader, so it indicates that Mahy is using fairy tale structure for thematic reasons as well as for the sake of employing a structure that readers will find satisfying. It is as though there is a psychological linkage between seeing a story through to *eucatastrophe* and seeing one's way through to adulthood and beyond.

The structural networks identified in this chapter are remarkable for a number of reasons. Firstly, they indicate Mahy's sensitivity to a variety of stages of adolescence. Secondly, they indicate the importance Mahy places on hope as a

foundation for growth towards adulthood, and her reluctance to present it as a simplistic panacea of ills. "Hope is necessary in human life," she says, "but it's got its dangers" (Mahy Interview MM30). Thirdly, they indicate that whilst adolescence may involve trial, loss and humiliation, these experiences can lead to growth, elevation and empowerment. Fourthly, the connections between structure, theme and audience indicate Mahy's consummate skill. Finally, the presence of structural networks suggests the possibility of further networks. It is to such networks that the next chapter turns.

Notes

1. In this thesis, the term "Adolescent Novel" refers to those novels written for the adolescent stage of life, normally for 12-18 year olds.

2. Because Gwen Gawith, in "Images of Electronic Adolescence", describes this bleak novel as one that ultimately makes "a positive statement" (Gawith 42), it seems necessary to defend my claim that it is pessimistic. Ironically, Gawith's own preface to the above comment correctly describes the novel as one which "confronts the worst of what people do in the name of survival" and describes the ending as "devastating". She says that it is positive because of "the part Danny plays in shaping the future". What she does not add is that, despite Danny's best efforts, he fails to ensure anyone's survival - including his own. This novel, like those it is listed with, diminishes its young readers' expectations of their own power and demeans the human capacity for benevolence.

3. See Diane Hebley's thesis, The Power of Place: Landscape in New Zealand Children's Fiction, 1970-1989. Thesis, Ph.D., University of Waikato, 1992.

4. By "Early Adolescent Novel", this thesis refers to novels marketed for 11-13 year olds. They share many of the stylistic elements evident in Adolescent Novels, but tend to be different in content.

5. From Allen Curnow's poem, "The Skeleton of the Great Moa in the Canterbury Museum, Christchurch" (Wedde & McQueen 199).

6. However, there is an interest in the past's influence on the present in The Dentist's Promise. Renata's aunt puts Renata through the College of Dentistry on the condition that she always be true to her surname, Oldmouse. By courtesy of improbable coincidence, the only suitor she falls in love with is a man who turns out to be a descendant of Renata's Great-great-great-uncle Gibbon Oldmouse. Of course, they share the same surname, allowing them to marry without compromising her promise to Aunt Tabitha.

7. From The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance, page152. Emerging from her changeover to a witch, Laura "saw plainly that she was remade, had brought to life some sleeping part of herself, extending the forest in her head. She was no longer formed simply from warring Stephen and Kate, but, through the power of charged imagination, her own and other people's, had made herself into a new creature."

CHAPTER THREE:
GENERIC THEMES AND STYLISTICS

When it comes to structure then, the Mahy Adolescent Novels seem to be shaped appropriately to meet the needs of adolescents. This is evident in their hope-inducing *eucatastrophic* structures, in their adaptations to suit the different stages of adolescence, and in their implication that maturation is preceded by reconciliation with the past.

If structural networks in the Mahy *oeuvre* match the needs of adolescents, do thematic and stylistic networks also match their needs? In answering that question, I argue that two themes receive ubiquitous attention: family harmony and adolescent empowerment. These are discussed separately before stylistics are addressed.

In commencing a discussion of the network of family sub-plots in Mahy's novels, it is worth noting that these novels avoid falling into the category of the "problem novel", despite the fact that all of them overtly deal with families that suffer unique and apparently irreconcilable problems. All of her families are "broken families" in one way or another. In Underrunners, Tris is embarrassed by his solo father, and he has not heard from his mother since she walked out of the marriage. In Dangerous Spaces, Anthea is an orphan living with her Aunty and Uncle and their two children. In The Haunting, the Palmer children have been bereaved by their mother's death, their father has remarried, and their Great-Uncle Cole was subjected to child-abuse. In Aliens in the Family, Jake's father has left her mother and remarried a woman with her own children, creating a "patchwork family" (39), whilst Jake mothers her mother. In The Other Side of Silence the family is nuclear, but into this comes Ginevra with a foster-son. The other family in the novel consists of Miss Credence and her feral child. In The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance, Laura's father is remarried and his wife is expecting a child to him, while Laura's mother is developing a relationship with another man. Additionally, Sorry was rejected at birth, abused by his foster family, and struggles to be human despite being taken back by his mother and grandmother. In The Tricksters, the apparent harmony of the vivacious nuclear family conceals the truth about father Jack's earlier affair with his eldest daughter's friend; and in the historical Carnival family, upon whom the novel's mystery is based, the father commits infanticide. In The Catalogue of the Universe, the nuclear Potter family is dysfunctional and Angela's mother has

never married. In Memory, Jonny's family is nuclear, but his sister's death has impacted upon family dynamics and Jonny has run away from home.

In the Mahy *oeuvre*, domestic life is portrayed with its sorrows, its arguments, its divisions, and its resolutions. Mahy consciously avoids the clichés that have been endemic to the portrayal of families in fiction, summing up her attitude in this statement: "I think when politicians get up and say 'Let's get back to basics, let's get back to true family life, [...] the way family life used to be,' I think that's a fictional thing" (Mahy Interview MM55). Mahy's families are fictional too, but their aberration from the nuclear unit illustrates their potential for dysfunction and division in the family on the one hand, and illustrates her belief that family is defined by interpersonal links rather than blood ties, on the other.

How does Mahy avoid the "problem novel" style, in which sociological realities dominate the thematic and narrative structures with issues such as sexism, racism, sexuality, ageism, disability and references to minority groups, when her families and seminal themes are archetypal "problem novel" ones? She does so simply by developing plots that foreground enigmas which are generally not concentrated on the family's problems. These foregrounded plots have the potential to interest adolescents by creating mystery, tension, suspense and excitement. In Underrunners, Tris gets involved in saving his new friend, Winola, from the threatening man who drives the yellow 1969 Lotus Elan. It is not until the anagnorisis in the dénouement that Tris realises his childhood links with these characters, discovering that the threatening man, Orson Tyrone, is Winola's father. In Dangerous Spaces, the central enigma concerns Anthea's vivid dreams which mysteriously cause her physical injury. In The Haunting, the central enigma concerns the nature of Barney's haunting. In Aliens in the Family, the pace and plot are driven by the children's attempts to help an alien. In The Other Side of Silence, the central enigma concerns Hero's odd experiences at Miss Credence's home. In The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance, the central plot-line is defined by Laura's efforts to free her brother from the fatal grasp of a lemure (a spirit which takes on a physical form by sucking the life from others). In The Tricksters, the central enigma concerns the link between Harry's incantation and the appearance of the Carnival brothers. In Memory, Jonny's efforts to assist Sophie deflect interest from his central problem with his sister's death and the conflict with his father. The Catalogue of the Universe is the only one of these novels to foreground a family problem as the central enigma. Angela's efforts to initiate a relationship with her father dominate the movement of the plot, but in this case the exception proves the rule, because it is the romantic suspense, not the enigmatic one, that sustains the plot's interest. Nevertheless, the dénouement of the plot concerning Angela's father sparks a series of events which result in a reconciliation in the May family.

Even though each familial plot operates as sub-plot and setting, the following summaries show how they are of central significance, either creating the catalyst for family harmony, or operating as the vehicle for a familial metaphor. In Underrunners, Tris's abduction by Orson creates the opportunity for Tris to regain pride in his father, who acts bravely as police negotiator and effects a peaceful outcome. In Dangerous Spaces, the nature of Anthea's dream world is revealed in concord with the resolution of Anthea's conflict with her cousin, Flora. Indeed, the whole household resolves disputes and eases tensions as a result of the resolution of mysterious events that only Anthea and Flora are aware of. In The Haunting, resolution of the central enigma triggers family honesty and affirmation of Barney. Aliens in the Family also uses the fantastic to aid the reconciliation of family relationships when time travel acts as a catalyst for communicating personal anxieties and affirming interpersonal concern. In The Other Side of Silence, Hero's incarceration is a catalytic agent for revealing that the source of her silence is familial, and assists her to choose to speak. In The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance, Jacko's illness is the leaven for Laura's renewed communication with her father and incipient feelings of sympathy for her father's new wife. Jacko's revival from the edge of death symbolises relational recovery for Laura and her father. In The Tricksters, the final act of the Carnival brothers is to precipitate family disunity. However, out of that situation arises the potential for genuine family harmony rather than the mere façade of it. By vanquishing the threat to Sophie posed by Nev and his gang in Memory, Jonny simultaneously deals with issues begun in childhood including the failure of his father to understand him. Even The Catalogue of the Universe, which foregrounds a family problem as the central enigma, deflects plot-centrality from the family issue to others when Mahy introduces a car accident in the dénouement that increases excitement while metaphorically dealing with a web of relationships. (Chapter Four below expands on the role of the car accident.)

Mahy clearly uses this same technique from one novel to another, but is there a difference in the type of principal-interest plot she uses from one age group to another (that is, from Early Adolescent, to Mid-Adolescent, to Later Adolescent Novels)? Underrunners and The Other Side of Silence use dramatic abductions which are each extreme examples on a continuum of family behaviour which is evident even in the novels' "normal" families. For example, Tris, in Underrunners, is a captive of his mother's rejection; Hero, in The Other Side of Silence, thinks of home as being a kind of prison and, through comments made by her mother, was brought to the point of preferring the attention created by silence to the inattention of speech. Aliens in the Family uses an alien as an obvious metaphor for Jake's sense of being an outsider in her father's family. Indeed, the pluralisation of alien in the title foreshadows Jake's sense of alienation from her new family. Dangerous Spaces uses ghosts to symbolise the division between Flora and Anthea. The Haunting uses magic to symbolise giftedness in families. In each of these Early Adolescent Novels, the vehicle for the family metaphor is appropriately

melodramatic for the age of the publishers' target audiences: abduction, incarceration, science fiction, ghosts and magic. If the publishers' target audiences are not linking the metaphoric value of the foregrounded plots to the family themes behind them, at least they are finding the novels interesting by virtue of plots which are engrossing in their own right; and family harmony is given clear determination[1] at times anyway, so the audience will be brought to consider family harmony as theme.

In her Mid-Adolescent Novel, The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance, the role of romance signals a change in audience, although the supernatural element is still there. Carmody Braque's spiritual and physical possession of Jacko is a powerful metaphor for the effect of family problems on some children, especially of rejection as is illustrated in the dehumanisation of Sorry Carlisle described in the novel. Similarly, both romance and the supernatural are elements in The Tricksters, which is written for older adolescents. Because he was killed by his father, Edward Carnival's triplicated ghost is a symbol of family disunity. The ghosts, Ovid, Hadfield and Felix are a metaphor for the effects of dividing the heart, the head, and instinct. In the other two Later Adolescent Novels, The Catalogue of the Universe and Memory, Mahy felt able to shed the supernatural as a means of attracting the reader and of indicating theme, replacing it with the magic of romance and foregrounding family issues. Just as the study of structure revealed that Mahy used *naïve* and *functional eucatastrophe* to respond to the needs of younger adolescents, so this study has revealed her application of different subjects for principal plots in response to different interests for a variety of age groups. For Mahy, the younger the adolescent, the greater the need to give primacy to a mystery. Nevertheless, the metaphoric tenor may be just as subtle as in one of her Later Adolescent Novels. Conversely, the older the adolescent, the greater the ability to foreground theme in plot and to dispense with a fantastical and magical Secondary World.

The second topic to receive ubiquitous treatment in Mahy's Adolescent Novels, is adolescent empowerment. In the Mahy *oeuvre*, adolescent empowerment is not defined by what others do for the adolescent in terms of releasing prohibitions and allowing more freedoms. Instead, adolescent empowerment is defined by what the adolescents can do for themselves that they could not have done before. It is an internal strength previously absent, or dormant, or merely incipient.

Mahy intertwines the theme of adolescent empowerment with that of family harmony and the dual themes interact with the resolution of central enigmas in the plot. Thus, in Underrunners, Tris is empowered by his discovery that he can effect success in dangerous situations with his own resources, rather than those of his imaginary ally, Selsey Firebone. His discovery contributes to the peaceful resolution of the kidnapping. In Dangerous Spaces, Anthea is empowered to say "No", thereby breaking the spell of Henry's haunting and saving her from crossing the sea

of death. In Aliens in the Family, the final events empower Jake to reveal her anxieties at the expense of the protection offered by her contrived image. In The Haunting, Troy's revelation of magic powers both saves Barney from being abducted, and symbolises the flexing of adolescent muscles. By burning the manuscript at the end of The Other Side of Silence, Hero shows that the decision to communicate orally is a positive choice she has made rather than an acquiescence to others' expectations. Her destruction of the manuscript is a positive action designed to retain power over her privacy. Laura's changeover from mortal to witch in The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance is a dramatic symbol of adolescent empowerment. The changeover gives her power in all her personal relationships; her literal power symbolises her considerable intuitive powers, and her new magic powers free Jacko from the fatal spirit-possession of Carmody Braque. In The Tricksters, Harry has the power of incantation, and although it results in destruction, her ability to create through writing is not impaired, and her final magical experience symbolises her personal force (see Chapter Five below). In The Catalogue of the Universe, Angela and Tycho are empowered in several ways which are dealt with in Chapter Four of this thesis. In Memory, Jonny is empowered with the knowledge that he was not responsible for Janine's death, and the final fight with Nev and his friends fills Jonny with the knowledge of his own capabilities.

Not only does adolescent empowerment conflate with familial harmony at the resolution of central enigmas, but, in some novels in the Mahy *oeuvre*, it is adolescence itself which drives action and metaphor. In Aliens in the Family, Dora's adolescent desire for melodrama and romance (as much as the mystical magnetism of the greenstone) makes her admit Bond into the car. Also, Jake's contrived self-image is as much an adolescent identity problem as it is a manifestation of familial problems. In The Tricksters, Harry's search for an identity that is independent of her family leads her to write, to utter the incantation that gives Teddy Carnival's ghost a physical life, to become romantically and sexually involved with Felix (because the romantic attachment requires a certain independence from parental control), and to reveal the family secret. In telling the family secret she reveals her power, just as Troy reveals her literal power in the resolution of The Haunting. However, for Harry, revealing her secret knowledge is a hollow exercise of power. There is power over Christobel in knowing something of such importance that Christobel has no inkling of. However, in the moment of revealing her power, she simultaneously relinquishes it. Hence, it is important that Harry utters a second incantation in the novel's closing, thereby symbolising her independence and new personal force. In The Catalogue of the Universe, Angela's search for her father indicates that she has come to a stage of wanting to effect power over the course and nature of her family life rather than merely being subject to its power over her. Also, in Angela and Tycho's sexual union, there is a severance of a psychological umbilical chord. In Memory, Jonny's need to deal with his childhood and to enter into adulthood translates into an adolescent quest.

In those novels where adolescence is not driving the plot, it is certainly implied within it. Consequently, the content of Mahy's *oeuvre* is eminently appropriate for the publishers' target audiences.

If Mahy's content is eminently appropriate for the publishers' target audience, what of her style? Just as intertextual networks forge unmistakable links between her *oeuvre's* structure and content, so it is with Mahy's stylistics. For the purpose of this essay, stylistics will be defined as the level of determination of narrative codes, diction, allusions, and the extended metaphors within her texts.

Narrative Codes

How much assistance to solving enigmas in the hermeneutic and symbolic codes of her novels does Mahy give her adolescent readers? In S/Z, Roland Barthes defines the hermeneutic code as:

> all the units whose function it is to articulate in various ways a question, its response, and the variety of chance events which can either formulate the question or delay its answer; or even, *constitute an enigma and lead to its solution.* (17, my italics)

If it were true that such a code varied in its determination according to the age and stage of its readership, one could expect that Mahy's Adolescent Novels would be more overdetermined [2] than adult literature. To test this theory, I record the determination of the hermeneutic codes of the principal (and some minor) questions and enigmas raised in one of her Early Adolescent Novels, Aliens in the Family.

Until the fifteenth chapter of Aliens in the Family, the actual reader, like the implied reader and the characters, assumes that Bond is being pursued by Wirdegen, who are dangerous knowledge pirates from the future. The revelation that they are merely of Bond's own Galgonquan race comes as an unexpected surprise. (Its potential for bathos is deftly avoided by transferring attention to thematic concerns whilst maintaining pace through the family's time-travel.) The resolution is inherent within the text as an underdetermined [3] entity of the hermeneutic code:

1) After Bond's initial escape from the Wirdegen, he is mystified by their unusual actions: *"They could have kept their presence secret from me but they've given Solita a chance to warn me - they're frightening me and letting me run!* 'There's no sense in it!' he said aloud, shaking his head as he hurried on" (48).

2) Similarly, their following actions are enigmatic:

a) "The car [driven by the Wirdegen] was right on his heels. It could have run him down if it had wanted to" (49). The actual reader is likely to explain their failure to run him down by their desire to capture Bond rather than exterminate him. But if the car is so close, surely its driver would attempt a capture?

b) When they seem to have passed him, there is a hint of doubt in Dora's comment: "I don't think they saw you" (51). Doubt about the actual motives of the Wirdegen is therefore encoded in the text, but no hint of their real identity has been similarly encoded up to this point.

3) After a Wirdegen secretes itself in part of Lewis's mind, Lewis tells the others that the Wirdegen are nearby, but he does not know how he knows. "They must have meant me to know" (75). This sustains the suspense created by the enemy's choice to make itself known when advantages seemed to lie in being secretive.

4) The only direct clue to the Galgonquans' duplicity is provided in a snippet of conversation between the computerised teacher and a Galgonquan doctor-cum-technician:

> "'Was it necessary to involve the young child?'
> 'The boy will not be harmed,' said the voice of the teacher." (87)

Just which young child/boy is being discussed is ambiguous on a first reading. They could be meaning Bond rather than Lewis, and the conversation goes on to discuss Bond's use of the children without returning to confirm the hint that it is the Galgonquan themselves who have forced the participation of Lewis. Any actual readers who accurately interpret this passage would thenceforward find themselves alienated from the implied reader, but such an interpretation is unlikely given the brevity of the passage, its ambiguity, and the absence of confirmation of its tenor.

5) The potential benevolence of the spirit within Lewis is suggested by its habit of consuming Lewis's fear of it; the narrative voice describes it as a "fear-eater" (75, 97). However, the actual reader is more than likely to respond with the assumption that eradicating Lewis's fear is motivated by a desire to keep Lewis's possession secret, rather than from benevolence.

6) Immediately before Bond realises the truth, there are two strong hints that the Wirdegen are not all they seem:

a) they refer to Bond's desire to choose the form of a hero, something Bond had shared only with his teacher (153).

b) when Bond threatens to order Solita to destroy him, the "Wirdegen" look afraid (154).

This example shows that Mahy does not patronise her younger adolescents by belabouring the point. When the enigma is resolved, there is no condescending repetition which might imply a lack of faith in the readers' abilities to comprehend the resolution in the first place. In the Mahy *oeuvre*, I have only found one example of overdetermination. Coincidentally, it is in Aliens in the Family and concerns the repetition of what should already be obvious to the reader: "It was Sebastian Webster [...] *we* were the mannikins!" (157). This is not to say that Mahy otherwise practises the art of obfuscation. On the contrary, when it comes to clarifying things for her younger audiences, she gives all the necessary clues. Unlike other time

travellers such as Philippa Pearce's Tom in Tom's Midnight Garden, or Sherryl Jordan's Rocco in the novel of that name, the three sets of characters dominating Aliens in the Family are not only sited in different time frames, but also in different places, making for potentially confusing transitions. However, each transition from one time-space to another is clearly marked by the use of actual gaps on the page, or by the beginning of a new chapter, or by sets of asterisks across the page to divide one section off from the next. If the significance of such typographical foregrounding is missed by readers, the text clearly marks them with phrases such as "in a different space and time from her own" (3), and "On the planet below, but even further back in time" (9), or by describing the setting in concrete terms that leave no room for ambiguity about time and space. Mahy obviously felt that her readers were vulnerable to confusion about such changes and avoided potential ambiguity by being explicit. By contrast, readers of Rocco follow the implied reader's assumption that Rocco has travelled into the past, rather than the present. When the misconception is overturned, the effect is one of surprise. No confusion is engendered as a result of this, but events in the final chapter are underdetermined to the extent that many teenage readers fail to understand that the dissolving of a stone brought back from the future implies that Rocco has successfully altered the course of history. By comparison, this shows that Mahy's explicit approach is a canny response to her understandings of the limitations of adolescent readers. That she achieves this, and subtly establishes an underdetermined hermeneutic code without being either patronising or confusing, is admirable.

The subtlety of the encoding in the example above is representative of the hermeneutical sequences relating to the resolution of enigmas in all of the Mahy Adolescent Novels. While the text offers adolescent readers adequate assistance to follow Mahy's hermeneutic codes, what of her symbolic codes? Mahy develops an unobtrusive balance between underdetermined symbolic codes and their eventual overt treatment. Hence, she is able to encode messages, allowing the alert formal-operational thinker [5] to interpret the novel's symbols without stooping to didactic methods to convey them. The overt treatment of themes follows a network of underdetermination that makes explicit thematic references in the dénouement seem to be inevitabilities rather than authorial impositions, thereby avoiding alienation of the readers by appearing to patronise them. To illustrate, consider the following discussion of free will in The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance.

When the presence of Carmody Braque is foreshadowed, Mahy is not just using a clever technique to tease the reader or titivate the text. Instead, it is crucial to Mahy's purpose that we are aware of Laura's ability to identify Carmody Braque: "Laura was alone with the day. It panted at her with a stale sweetness on its breath, with a faint, used-peppermint smell that made her want to be sick in the gutter, but she shut her mouth tightly and walked on" (13). So, why doesn't Laura leave Carmody Braque's shop once she recognises the same odour within it?: "Yet once in

this enchanting shop, all Laura wanted was to get out again for it was full of the stale, sweet smell, laced with peppermint, that had assailed her in the morning - the smell of something very wrong and unable to conceal its wrongness" (19). She asks herself the same question:

> 'Why am I telling him all this? I don't have to tell him everything he asks.' [...] 'We've got to go,' Laura said, wondering why it was so hard to walk away from someone who was talking to you, even when you didn't want to hear what they were saying." (21)

The symbolic code concerning the ability to control one's own destiny began with the involuntary warning which her mother forbids her to act upon. It continues with Carmody Braque's insistence that Jacko must "Hold it [his hand] out properly! Offer it to me or I won't be able to stamp it clearly" (22). Mahy is using the Christian idea that to become demon-possessed requires some complicity[4]. When readers return to the Primary World, it is easy to discount the existence of lemures and the plethora of supernatural beings found in fiction generally, but Mahy strengthens this episode of the stamping of Jacko's hand in the Secondary World of the novel by foreshadowing Carmody Braque's sinister act in the apparently innocent one of the librarian's stamping of Jacko's hand. Mahy seems to be suggesting that danger lurks in innocent things, and that everyday trivia can have meaning far beyond their ostensible insignificance. To what extent is the giving of a stamp a mark of possession by the giver? To what extent does any form of benevolence, however trifling, carry conditional subjugation of the recipient?

There are three 'demons' at work in this symbolic code: the supernatural (Braque), the commonplace (the librarian), and the internal (the conditioned self). The latter is reiterated when Laura again acts against her own will when she defends Kate from Chris's insinuations of duplicity. Then, despite meaning to be rude and to show her anger, she becomes gentle with him, apologetic in tone, unwillingly treating him like one of the family (47-49). These three 'control demons' meld shortly afterward in the home of the Carlisles where Laura is again participating in something that has a significance she does not understand as she eats (because she is conditioned to accept hospitality) the proffered tomato sandwich (an apparently innocent object) which turns out to be some sort of initiation rite that reassures the Carlisle women (who turn out to have supernatural powers). Next, she finds herself becoming involved in the relationship between the Carlisle women and Sorenson: "Already, out of nothing, she had moved into a vague alignment with these women, become a conspirator without knowing the nature of the conspiracy" (71). Like Barney and Jacko (and Harry, Jake, Jonny, Angela, Tris, Anthea, and Hero), Laura is thrust into a situation that is not of her making, manipulated by forces she does not comprehend, and exacerbates her problems by turning traitor upon herself. But unlike Barney and Jacko, these characters have a power that becomes a weapon. The weapon is adolescence and Mahy turns it to their advantage as a problem-

solver. Optimistically, it offers power and self-determination in a context that overcomes egotism: "We might have to make a few adjustments," says Jonny (Memory 234); overcomes revenge: "Given the chance to be cruel did you get cruelty out of your system by acting on the chance, or did you invite it in?" says Sorenson (The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance 186, sic); and overcomes anarchy: "Awful to overbalance now, having got this far," says Troy (The Haunting 133). Mahy's victors may be unconventional, but the symbolic coding that describes their actions indicates that in their transitions from adolescence to early adulthood they will find an equilibrium between independent solutions to problems and conformity. As a result of her underdetermination of symbolic codes, Mahy communicates ideas without alienating her adolescent audience with simplistic overstatement.

Diction

Whilst Mahy's hermeneutic and symbolic codes avoid patronising her audience with overdetermination, she risks alienating less able readers with sophisticated vocabulary. This is not, however, a departure from the typical Mahy style. It is not something she does when switching from children's writing to adolescent writing. One of the stylistic features typical of her children's writing is her tendency to create polysyllabic words by adding multiple suffixes, such as her use of "accommodatingly" in the picture book, The Dragon of an Ordinary Family (31). Many of the publisher's target audience would struggle to sound the word out, let alone comprehend it. But more startling is her creation of neologisms by use of multiple suffixes, as in the creation of "rumbustification" [6] from "rumbustious", and "fantastamological" [7] from "fantasy". Furthermore, she conflates and hyphenates words and simultaneously adds suffixes, such as in "scrumble-diddly-dumptious" [8], "goloptious" [9], "knibbly-knobbly-knubbly" [10], and "Horrakapotchkin" [11]. In these cases Mahy is participating in a tradition that stretches back to at least Lewis Caroll's portmanteau words. In Raging Robots and Unruly Uncles, she creates some very Carollian diction: "I tell you a laser is a bindlespang device for directing common light in completely parallel lines without any grimtucketing diffusion or snufwinkling dispersion" (91-92). The reader can almost hear the jabberwocky come whiffling through the tulgey wood! In such cases, the words are there for fun as much as for meaning. However, even in these middle-childhood books there are sophisticated words, for example, Raging Robots and Unruly Uncles uses the following: veritable (18), nebulous (73), iniquity (87), latitude (92), and serendipity (93).

The following words are found in Aliens in the Family:

- hypothetical (5)
- interfaced (5)
- Inventory (5)
- anomaly (8)
- metamorphic (8, 35)

- affect probability (8)
- accentuated (17)
- inaudibility (30)
- cynical (41)
- inert (44)
- languidly (47)
- involuntary metamorphosis (82, 142)
- comatose (88)
- covertly (92)
- obstinately (101)
- trepidation (118)
- reciprocate (120)
- quietude (137)
- divulged (141)
- convulsion (144)
- brandishing (144)
- cowered (145)
- entitled (145)
- nauseous (147)
- incredulously (154)
- simultaneous (156)
- paradox (156)
- gravity (i.e. grave-ness) (163)
- incandescent (165)

Undoubtedly, many of these words exceed the limitations of the 11-12 year-old group the novel is marketed for. When I put it to Ms Mahy that the presence of such sophisticated vocabulary in writing for young age groups is curious, she had this to say:

> The publisher[s] on the one hand, sometimes say, "Yes, we love this book and we would like to publish it, but can't we make it a little more achievable?" [...] Sometimes I do try to simplify things, and I do sometimes at personal cost, and I think, "This story is not quite how I intended it in the first place." (Mahy Interview MM48)

As is evident from the above vocabulary list, even after the process of editorial simplification, some words will exceed the limited reading vocabulary of many adolescents. However, at the same time that some adolescents are suffering lapses in micro-comprehension as a result of such vocabulary, other adolescents will be experiencing precise comprehension and, often, delight from the same words.

Allusions

Mahy's novels make use of a range of different types of allusions to texts which fall into two broad networks: allusions to texts teenage readers are likely to know, and those they will not know. There are readily accessible allusions to a wide range of texts such as allusions to widely-known children's literature, networks of allusions to single children's texts, allusions to whole genres, and collocations of allusions. Most curiously, there are allusions to texts that teenagers will probably be ignorant of, including allusions to contemporary adult fiction, and allusions to pre-twentieth century classics. Not surprisingly, there are no allusions to other Adolescent Novels [12].

Understandably, Mahy makes periodic allusions to texts that young readers have a good chance of knowing, such as nursery rhymes, fairy tales and children's stories. For example, the first paragraph of Aliens in the Family ends with the familiar "Thursday's children have far to go..." In this case, the distance to be travelled is both literal, because the children have far to go through space and time; and metaphoric, because they have far to go developmentally and emotionally. It is an effective allusion because it points to similarities between children who initially seem very dissimilar. Such allusions enrich the reading process for those who recognise the text being alluded to. More subtly, The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance, contains a secret garden by the name of "Janua Caeli", the door to heaven. The secret garden draws attention to Mahy's feminist revision of Frances Hodgson Burnett's The Secret Garden. Lissa Paul argues that whilst Burnett's central female protagonist learns that "winning selfhood means losing self" (Paul 197), Mahy's female protagonist "completes her quest without losing her story or herself to the male lead" (197).

Particularly effective networks of allusions to a single text enhance two of Mahy's novels. In The Other Side of Silence, she weaves a clever set of allusions to The Jungle Book. Mowgli is an example of the difference between pre-adolescent literature and adolescent literature. Whilst Mowgli is presented as a happy child, Mahy's portrayal of Miss Credence's feral child is far from happy. Underrunners juxtaposes the extended underrunner metaphor, discussed below, with references to Wind in the Willows. The network begins by drawing comparisons between Tris and Ratty (12). Later, in a clear attempt to link the Wind in the Willows allusion to the extended underrunners metaphor, Tris imagines that he can turn one of the openings to an underrunner into a forecourt, such as existed in Mole's underground home. "Though Tris knew it could never really be done, the idea played on the edge of his mind, tossed between possibility and impossibility" (36). When Tris and Winola are in the underrunner, he compares their presence there with Rat and Mole's presence in Mole's tunnel (84). Another reference that establishes the pleasant connotations of Wind in the Willows is when Tris decides against calling his imaginary cave dwellers on the planet of Kruj "The Moleymen" because Mole had

been a gentle character. He calls them "Mewlymen" instead: "They make a mewing sound as they move," says Selsey (37). All of this is part of a network designed to link Tris to his captor, Orson. When Orson seems on the verge of suicide, aiming the barrel between his eyes, he quotes from Wind in the Willows :

> "At the end of the tunnel something bright and small twinkled like a tiny star... What can it be?... It's too glittering and small for a glow-worm!"
>
> "It was the water rat," said Selsey Firebone. This was to be the last time Selsey Firebone spoke through Tris. (166)

The shared story effects phatic communion. This unexpected human contact weakens Orson's resolve to commit suicide. It also impacts upon Tris, who suddenly sees Orson as Ratty would have seen a victim: as "something hurt and ruined" (166). Winola thought that Tris's tears for Orson in the final stages of their ordeal were contrived to arouse Orson's sympathy, but Tris said that he was suddenly genuinely sorry for Orson, because he looked lonely, and because his mother had read Wind in the Willows to him (181).

Mahy makes frequent inclusive allusions to entire genres that all readers will recognise. That is not to say that the use of the allusion will not contain its own subtleties. In Aliens in the Family, horror books and ballet books describe the antithetical personalities of Jake and Dora respectively. The presence of the book of horror stories in Jake's pack also confirms that Jake's mother has failed to contribute to the packing process - a sign of her ineptitude (21). Similarly, Mahy gives the reader cause for a second thought when Jonny alludes to horror films in Memory. Jonny explains how he changed from the child Bonny knew to the young adult she saw before her: "That dear little boy didn't make it [...]. Poor little chap - he split open one day, and *I* came out. I'd been growing inside him all the time - like in a horror film" (141, sic). Bonny enjoys the joke, as the implied reader does, until the narrative voice adds: "Jonny grinned sheepishly, though he had told nothing but the truth", a phrase made all the more poignant by its own allusion to the language of the law court. The conflation of horror and law turns initial humour into pathos, which in turn conflates with the reader's association of horror films with fear and mystery. Association is a key element in allusions, which is why the following allusion made in The Tricksters is enigmatic. It follows the chilling description of Harry pulling a cold, live hand through sub-aquatic rock: "Her cry could not be heard, but rose in silver bubbles before her eyes, just as if she were a screaming girl in a comic book. 'Eeeeeek!' would be written in the heart of each bubble, but it would stay unheard until the bubbles burst on the surface of the sea" (26). Because of the two-dimensional aspect of the comic genre, this allusion has the potential to weaken the impact of an otherwise eerie description. However, I think its role is to stimulate networks of comic-book memories in the reader, just as Harry's experience

momentarily "magicked" her with an ability to see images from the past:

> Pictures of a rambling garden, in which a spade and garden fork stood up like witnesses, formed in her mind, and Carnival Hide could be seen beyond them, recognizable but indefinably altered. Her mind was flooded with memories not her own; she saw, not through her eyes, which were full of salt and greenness, but through her lost hand. (25-26)

Just as Harry inadvertently stumbled upon a supernatural network of mental images, so allusions to whole genres cast driftnets through the mind of the reader that may "catch" a memory which invigorates the description.

Less haphazard is Mahy's usage of collocations of allusions. Such collocations appear in some of her children's stories, such as The Wind Between The Stars in which the wind of death carries with it a collocation of fictional figures, animals and objects:

> Kings crowned with ears of corn and crimson poppies, peacocks, mermaids, comets, the twelve dancing princesses, dragonflies, Helen of Troy, lyre birds, minstrels with lutes, gypsies to tell your fortune, little silver fish, frogs and roses, Rapunzel, wound around in her own shining hair, the crippled lizard-beggarman from Alpha Centauri. (13)

Similarly, Mahy evokes the Secondary World of literature in an expansive way at the end of The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance, except that she conflates it with the real world of suburban New Zealand:

> Outside in the city, traffic lights changed colours, casting quick spells of prohibition and release. Cars hesitated, then set off again, roaring with urgency through the maze of the Gardendale subdivision, a labyrinth in which one could, after all, find a firebird's feather, or a glass slipper or the footprints of the minotaur quite as readily as in fairy tales, or in the infinitely dividing paths of Looking-Glass land. (214)

At no time is there an inappropriate allusion in the Mahy *oeuvre*. In context, the allusions deepen understanding and advance the symbolic codes. However, there are allusions that might baffle many adolescent readers. In The Other Side of Silence there is direct mention of New Historicism, but then the Rappers are a university family (70). In both The Catalogue of the Universe and The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance, there are multiple allusions to adult romantic fiction. In The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance, Sorry Carlisle reads romantic novels in an attempt to regain the humanity he lost in his childhood through rejection by his mother and the cruelty he was subjected to by his foster father. Hence, there are allusions to For the Love of Philippa (87), Stolen Moments (87), Wendy's Wayward Heart (96), *Women's Weekly* (106), and "the last five lines of a Barbara Cartland" (107).

More enigmatic is the quotation, in Memory, of six lines of "The Ancient Mariner" (176,sic), which only a few adolescents will have encountered in their education. The allusion is explained, some lines are quoted, so adolescent readers with no prior knowledge of the poem are likely to believe that they have understood its purpose. There is no alienation when readers feel involved. However, when the narrative voice relates that "Jonny thought Sophie was rather like an albatross", immediately after explaining that the old sailor "had shot an albatross and had been punished by having to wear it around his neck", those readers who do not know the poem may erroneously infer that Jonny has a sub-conscious desire to harm Sophie. However, most are likely to see that it means that Jonny is feeling as though he has betrayed Sophie and that he will suffer as a result. By taking Sophie's case to the authorities, Jonny knows that Sophie's freedom will inevitably be curtailed; that at least she currently had her independence, whereas institutionalisation will take her truncated and variable memory away from Tap House with its physical links with Sophie's past. If the reader who is ignorant of the poem can interpret that much, only those readers with a knowledge of the poem will be empowered to interpret the sentences that follow the allusion:

> He [Jonny] wondered why he had told Max that he should have been the one to go over the cliffs at Seacliff Reserve. Kept to himself it was a frightening thought, spoken aloud it sounded rather ridiculous and self-pitying. You could begin to make fun of yourself for thinking it. *Jonny felt he'd tossed an important part of himself away as if it didn't matter.* (176, my italics)

Mahy is subtly drawing a line of comparison between Jonny and the mariner. Knowledge of the poem tells the reader that the mariner loved the albatross, yet tossed its life away with no apparent thought. Perhaps Jonny, who tossed his self-pity to Max without a thought, has also loved his self-pity. This is a clue to Mahy's intent for Jonny's characterisation. What makes him interesting is that he has a tendency for "childish anxiety", "self dramatisation" and for the "glamour of playing the idea that you have been the starting-off point of something so ultimate and dramatic [as death]" (Mahy Interview 4). This allusion conveys some of this to the reader who knows the poem.

Extended Metaphors

In all of her novels there are extended metaphors of one sort or another. The following example from Underrunners indicates that she is not afraid to use this technique in her Early Adolescent Novels, despite the likely limitations of most early adolescents.

In her typically crisp fashion, Mahy foreshadows her major themes early in Underrunners. The term "underrunner" refers literally to tunnel erosion, but even when Mahy introduces literal underrunners, she conflates them with the

metaphorical:

> Tris imagined a whole network of secret passages running under his feet [...,] shafts from other dimensions, tracks that the Veng could use. Winter swelled the earth with rain, summer dried and shrank it. The treacherous tunnels formed under the grass and tussock, occasionally eating their way to the surface. (13)

The language of this initial fantasizing by Tristram indicates the symbolic role underrunners will play in the novel: there are plenty of them, "a whole network"; like the imagery in the parable of the man who built his house upon the rock, they are related to what is fundamental about people, they are "running under his feet"; and their treachery lies in the inability to detect them, they are "secret passages". Whilst these may be missed in an initial reading, and by an adolescent reading *per se*, the conflation of the physical underrunners with Tristram's fantasizing gives a definite, if subtle, indication of the symbolic role they will play as manifestations of mind games. The physical description adds that they are nature's response to physical alterations, foreshadowing the idea that underrunners of the mind are a natural response to familial changes.

These themes are given more definition when the narrative, sounding much like Tristram, says, "It was funny to think that something as menacing as an underrunner could be a safe hiding-place as well" (36). Of course, Tristram later discovers that the underrunners are not a safe hiding place, as Orson finds Winola there within 24 hours of her use of the underrunner, but at this stage Tristram imagined taking his father there in a time of military crisis. The suggestion that ostensible security is actually a threat is a juvenile antithesis perhaps as challenging to its adolescent readers as Keats' antithetical "numbness pains" is to adult readers. Both Tristram and Winola are placed in mortal danger when Winola seeks the literal security and obscurity of Tristram's secret underrunner. Similarly, ostensible menace comforts: Tristram imagines that Victoria is a threat to his relationship to his father and therefore to his vain hope that his mother will return and restore the family unit. In fact, Victoria gives him security and comfort once he has given up the underrunners of his mind. An idea emerging from this aspect of the novel is that children are safest in institutions; and conversely, they are most at danger when taking their safety upon themselves. Winola was safest in the hands of the Featherstonehaugh Children's Home; she was least safe in her own, and Tristram's, hands. Mahy could be criticised for her conservative and didactic treatment of the issues of child empowerment and institutional safety, but I would prefer to praise her for her honest treatment of the limitations of children and to compare this favourably with writing such as Enid Blyton's which often portrays children as capable beyond their years.

The unfolding of the underrunners as a metaphor for tricks the mind plays on itself continues on page 41: "Tris imagined Selsey moving through invisible tunnels

in his brain." Later, as Tristram and Winola fantasise about how to protect themselves from invaders, Tristram suggests using the underrunners as a hiding place (53). Again, the physical underrunners are introduced on the heels of the fantastic, suggesting the link between fantasy and self-deceit. Selsey Firebone, Tristram's heroic alter ego, is integral to Tristram's adventurous fantasising, and hence he is inextricably linked to self-deceit, the chief underrunner of the mind. Tristram's other fantasy is that his mother will come back, but he is sometimes ambivalent about it: "'Suppose my mother came back and...' Tris stopped again. 'I mean I know she won't, but suppose she did. Sylvia's mother came back'" (64). The novel suggests a universal danger in such self-deceit by another application of the underrunner metaphor: after discovering the apple he is grating is infested with a worm, Tris says, "Every single thing's got underrunners" and Randall replies, "So has life! [...] Great on the surface and spooky underneath." Mahy plays with puns again as Tris replies: "Grate on the surface... but watch out what's in the core" (71). It would describe Orson rather well, but the link is never made explicit. It also describes their home which looks romantic, but is primitive by today's standards. It also describes Tristram's alter ego: "for Selsey, so strong in other dimensions, was powerless in the everyday life that held school and the Morley twins" (74). The omnipresence of underrunners is made clear when Tristram says: "Wherever you look there are tunnels running through everything [...]. Underrunners everywhere: crabs in sand and codlin caterpillars in apples." Their treacherous nature is made explicit when he immediately follows this up with: "Everything half eaten and full of holes" (86).

However, Mahy concludes with some hope that fantasies and unlikely hopes are not altogether "full of holes". Firstly, just when the narrative seems to have written Selsey out of the script, he returns. When Randall and Orson emerge from the house where Orson had been holding Tris and Winola at gunpoint, "Selsey Firebone was there, alive in the outside world, not in Orson, the man with the gun and the car, but partly in Cissy Tyrone who had rechristened herself Winola, partly in Randall, and perhaps even in Tris himself, dissolved into his blood for ever" (175). Throughout most of the story, Tristram fails to integrate Selsey into his own personality. He sees him as separate, and, at the times when Selsey fails to help, treacherous. By recognising Selsey as a psychological underrunner, a self-deceit, Tristram is able to reevaluate true heroism. He begins to fully appreciate the skill and heroism it must take for his father to counsel armed offenders and, ultimately, to take more responsibility for his own actions. Secondly, Tristram's hope that he will hear word from his mother is realised at the very end of the story. Subtly, Mahy shows rather than tells her readers that Tristram has overcome the old underrunner hope in a miraculous reunification of his family: Tris does not read the contents of his letter from his mother, it was

> too important to read while so much else was going on. In a way, at that moment, it was more important, more urgent, to gallop in the

> sun, to look up into the sky where the hawks and larks flew, or at trees growing out of the body of the diving man, or down on to the tide-lines where the geese lived their private, foraging lives, crying out warnings when the shadows moved over them. (184)

This chapter has identified networks of interconnecting textual elements in the Mahy *oeuvre* which indicate that in content and determination of narrative codes the novels are eminently appropriate for the adolescent audience. Mahy makes her themes and narrative sequences clear without being patronising. However, I have also shown that sophisticated diction, allusions and extended metaphors may alienate those adolescent readers whose knowledge is not equal to that of the implied reader. So, where a study of the generic structure, content and hermeneutic codes reveals Mahy's acute sensitivity to the needs of adolescent readers in general, a study of the *oeuvre's* generic diction, allusions and extended metaphors reveals Mahy's similar sensitivity towards the exceptional adolescent.

Notes

1. "Determination" is used in this sense to mean the clarity of a string of clues working through a single text. (See "overdetermine" and "underdetermine" in the Glossary.)

2. By "overdetermine" I mean that ample clues have been placed to help the reader to resolve an enigma.

3. By "underdetermine" I mean that subtle clues have been placed that may lead only a few readers to solve the resolution of an enigma before the implied reader.

4. However, it is hard not to object that in this case the child's action is too innocent to permit evil. If the world had divine rules designed to protect the innocent from insidious demons like Carmody Braque, it must only be a divinely virtuous being who could adjudicate their enactment. By virtue of its lack of justice, this pivotal episode suggests the presence of supernatural malevolence and the absence of a corresponding benevolence. It presents the world as a very frightening place indeed.

5. The adolescent is a formal-operational reasoner who is not tied to the concrete reality of the pre-adolescent and is able to envisage the world as it could be. Rather than asking "why?", the formal reasoner will ask "why not?". Michael Berzonsky makes an arguable application of this:

> An appreciation of fictional literature is predicated on reversing the relationship between reality and possibility. The concrete thinker asks, "Why read fiction? It's not true (real)?" The formal reasoner replies, "But it could be" (or perhaps, "It should be"). (Berzonsky 227)

Where concrete thinkers (pre-adolescents) are limited to solving tangible problems of the present, the child who functions with formal operations is liberated. He or she can deal with all classes of problems, "the present, past, future, the hypothetical, and the verbal." (Wadsworth 102)

6. Used 11 times in "The Great Piratical Rumbustification" and once in "The Librarian and the Robbers".

7. Used in the nonsense poem "The Tarragon Vinegar Song" (Nonstop Nonsense 61).

8. Used 6 times in The Dragon's Telephone.

9. Used on page 17 of The Dragon's Telephone.

10. Used twice in The Dragon's Telephone.

11. Used on page 21 of The Dragon's Telephone.

12. The only adolescent text I have found that alludes to another adolescent text is John Marsden's Tomorrow, When the War Began which foreshadows impending disaster by having one of its teenage characters refer directly to Robert C. O'Brien's post-apocalyptic Z For Zachariah (40). (Perhaps authors allude to children's literature rather than to adolescent fiction because the former is more likely to be known to the majority of readers.)

CHAPTER FOUR:
GENERIC CONTENT AND STYLISTICS
IN THE HAUNTING AND THE CATALOGUE OF THE UNIVERSE

How do these novels become "curiouser" once the reader is aware of Mahy's networks? Firstly, awareness of the networks guides readers towards certain interpretative possibilities, especially thematic possibilities. Secondly, the novels become "curiouser" because, whilst the networks infuse the *oeuvre* with eminently appropriate material for the publishers' target audiences, other textual elements exceed the same audiences' limitations. By analysing an Early Adolescent Novel and a Late Adolescent Novel in the Mahy *oeuvre* in the knowledge of the networks, three things emerge: their generic links with the other novels, their suitability for their respective target audiences, and their stories[1].

The Haunting

As with the other novels, The Haunting is about family harmony. It portrays domestic life complete with its sorrows, its arguments, its divisions, and its resolutions. Its departure from the nuclear unit illustrates the potential for dysfunction and division in the family on the one hand, and implies belief that family is defined by interpersonal links rather than blood ties, on the other. In The Haunting, the Palmer children lost their mother, Dove, when she died giving birth to Barney. John Palmer remarried happily and Claire, his new wife, has proved to be just as loving as if she were the children's real mother. In this way, the novel shows that maternal instincts do not depend upon physical maternity for their manifestation. Despite the general happiness of this nuclear unit, a number of complicating factors create underlying anxieties. Barney is deeply concerned about the danger of Claire's pregnancy (25 & 38), imagining that because his mother died in childbirth, fragility is a natural consequence of pregnancy. For this reason, he resists telling her about his haunting, believing that her resultant anxiety would threaten her and the new child. Barney also worried that he was in some way responsible for Dove's death: "if your mother died when you were born, did that make you in some way a murderer, even though it was not a thing you could remember or do anything about?" (25). Even more frightening for Barney, is the fear that once the new baby arrives, he - Barney - might be surplus to requirements and consequently passed on to Cole, who is haunting him and coming to get him

(92). Barney is very sensitive to others and prefers to suffer in silence than to worry them. For example, Barney chose to suffer Mrs Gaines, who had looked after the children after school before Claire and John were married, rather than trouble his father with the problem that he had been misunderstood by her and treated without affection and interest (85). John had been too involved in his own grief over Dove and too preoccupied with the responsibilities of raising three children for any of the children to be fully honest with him about their troubles. They knew he was in no state to help. John becomes very sympathetic and listens to Barney's problems when it becomes impossible to ignore Barney's unhappiness any longer, but he still applies adult scepticism to Barney's story: "no great-uncle, *real or not*, can take you away from us" (91, my italics). Barney had previously been unsure about his father, thinking of him as "a jolly man who might turn out to be not very interested in his children in the long run" (38). John had "seemed more of a distant relative than Claire did" (53). However, when the haunting climaxes in a telephone call from Cole, the magician, it becomes a catalyst for a family conference in which Claire is affirmed by the children, Barney's anxieties are aired, and John affirms Barney's place in the family.

The techniques Mahy uses to reinforce this familial plot are interesting. Not only do relationships in the extended Scholar family point to the familial plot, but the central plot from which the novel derives its tension and its power to chill the reader points to it also. Thematically, the central plot plays the role of supporting actor to the familial plot. The central plot concerns Cole's haunting of Barney. Great-Uncle Cole Scholar was previously thought to be dead. He had run away from home and his mother had fraudulently identified a drowned body as his because she was so desperate to be rid of him. She had battled his magic powers from the moment he had been born, but try as she might, she could not crush the magic out of him. In her effort to normalise him, she created a climate for deep psychological problems. As an adult he

> looked like a grown-up child. [... He] was not much more than the fierce baby who had battled with his mother from the hour he was born, the child who had lived like a wild animal, refusing to speak in a house that was armoured to defeat him and to make him deny his special nature. (98-99)

In all his years in exile he had communicated regularly and secretly with his brother Barnaby, so when Barnaby died, Cole was lonely. In Barney, Cole thought he had found a magical kindred spirit. Perhaps it is self-delusion rather than genuine benevolence, but Cole also claims to be motivated by a desire to prevent the unintentional stifling of Barney by the Palmer family (100). Hence, the central plot points towards the familial plot.

The other important player in the central plot is Great-Granny Scholar whose role also points to the importance of familial relations in this story. Early in the

novel, Tabitha compares Great-Granny Scholar to "a wall with furious swear words scribbled all over it" (11). She kissed her great-grandchildren "as if it were something disagreeable that *had* to be done" (20). The narrative voice describes her as "a terrible old lady, a small, thin witch, frail but furious." (11) "Witch" seems figurative here, but the dénouement reveals that Great-Granny Scholar is a closet Scholar magician. As a child she set fire to her sister's hair in a fit of jealousy and stifled her magic out of self-fear thenceforward (117). Perceptive Troy has this to say about her:

> she set about to crush the magic right out of her life, to wipe out her own specialness [...]. Her magic died, but other good things died with it because it was her own specialness she killed. [...] All those years you [Cole] thought she was fighting you she was fighting herself just as much. (117-118)

Perhaps it was her failure to subdue Cole's magic, or perhaps it was a subconscious jealousy of Cole's sense of freedom to use his power without harming anyone (in fact, he used his magic to delight his siblings), but Great-Grandmother Scholar's suppression of Cole's powers transformed into oppressive punishment. She had begun to hate Cole remorselessly, still wishing him dead a generation after his departure. Their relationship is a dramatic illustration of what families risk when they treat difference as a curse, when they attempt to stifle individuality, and when they fail to resolve differences between members by conferencing and compromising.

Great-Grandmother Scholar's rejection of Cole is a thematic pointer towards John's insensitivity to Barney. Moreover, it provides an intense mirror image of John's relationship with Troy. There is an interesting reluctance for Mr Palmer to accept Troy's giftedness. Troy says, "Dad will never feel easy with me again [...]. I can feel him looking at me and - I don't know - shrinking away from me" (130). Troy anticipated John's reluctance to accept her magic powers; it was her main reason for concealing her magic. Even Claire is reluctant to accept Troy's otherness and, before Troy performs her first magic to the family, Claire says: "It will change everything. If she *can* show us - if she does - she'll never be the same Troy again" (121). However, Claire adapts more quickly than John. Mr Palmer's inability to adapt is a softer version of the vehement denial of Great-Granny Scholar's attempted repression of Great-Uncle Cole's powers. Predominantly, this is a story about the effects of repressing a child's natural individuality - however bizarre. The symbolism is linked to the theme of conditional acceptance of children by their parents. It implicitly pervades each of Mahy's Adolescent Novels, manifesting itself as plot and setting, and coalescing into thematic concern.

Despite its portrayal of family difficulties, this novel also asserts the family's potential to exercise a humanising influence upon its members. It does this through the Palmers' acceptance of Cole into the family. A week after he had been

terrorising Barney with his ghostly appearances, Cole is learning how to be a family member: "Troy says I have to learn a lot and that being part of a family will help me learn it" (129). The methodology for such humanisation is addressed directly by Claire: "we're more of a family, too [...]. We've all told one another things and come closer together" (134). It is Claire, too, through whom Mahy defines the modern family in a comment that would be appropriate in any of the Mahy novels: "Everyone in this family belongs to everyone else - belongs with everyone else, rather. [... What] matters most is that he wants to be ours and he doesn't want to be yours. That's what counts" (106).

In addition to discussing family harmony, The Haunting also provides a compelling example of Mahy's interest in adolescent empowerment. Troy is 13 years old. Keeping the secret of her magical powers for so long has made her a silent type of person: "Seven words were a lot for Troy to say all at once like that" (8). The self-control required to hide her true nature from the rest of the family shows itself in her excessive tidiness (78), and in her frowns and general sobriety: "Barney could never remember hearing her laugh, but she gave one of her rare smiles" (86). Maintaining the pretence of normality had been very painful for her, so much so that Barney thinks of her in these terms: "frowning Troy who seemed to move around in the heart of her own private storm, struggling against tempests no one else could see" (10).

Despite the austerity of her temperament, she is not without sympathy and care. It was Troy who had created Barney's "imaginary friends", Mantis, Bigbuzz, and Ghost. The reason they seemed so real was because Troy had magicked them into existence for him in response to her knowledge that he had been feeling "a bit lost and unhappy" (121). Her potential for sensitivity is introduced early when she shuts Tabitha up when Tabitha's natural curiosity threatens to upset Barney (18). This is followed with an introduction to her own style of communicating general sociability when she "waggled a toast crust at him [Barney] as a sign of fellowship" (19). So, despite the oddity of her magicianship and the effect of keeping it to herself, she is capable of expressing human love, compassion, and companionship.

However, there is a sense of the inevitability of Troy's revelation. In her preamble to the family, she says, "*I'm* not afraid to be what I am" (118). If Cole had not triggered it, then perhaps something else would have. She is variously described as "struggling with some ghost of her own" (79); "tearing herself to bits inside" (83); and "sweeping the room with a glance so stormy that it was a wonder the flowery curtains did not billow out wildly and the pictures fall from the hooks under the black magic of her eye" (24-25). I propose that the attitudes towards Troy's magic are symbolic of the attitudes towards giftedness and the attitudes towards adolescence. Magicians are an "other" in this novel. The ambivalence of attitudes towards people who are gifted is evident in Cole's complaint: "If it's pretty, if it's

gentle, people think it's a trick. And if it's a strong proof, then they're frightened" (107).

Mostly, though, her magic is a symbol of adolescent empowerment. Dove had told Troy to keep her magic part secret until she was "grown up" (119). In this way the text associates the revelation of her power with the emergent adolescent. Her father's difficulty with accepting her giftedness is a metaphor for parental difficulties in accepting the autonomy and empowerment that accompanies adolescence. Adolescents want to challenge the ideas of their parents; they develop new capabilities, including the ability to procreate, to work, to be independent. When Troy perceives that John will never see her as she was, that is because she will never be as she was. Troy's use of her power is treated cautiously in the closing pages: she hopes to make the world better, but does not know how (131); she engages in the "dangerous game" of spinning the world (133); her physiognomy is archetypally witchy - with long nose and Gypsy gaze (132). There is the potential in her magic for disaster and destruction. Mahy portrays adolescence as a gain, a magic, an empowerment - not a recipe for instant happiness, nor a recipe for instant disaster. However, there is the potential for both. Troy's new self is welcomed by those old enough to see the wisdom of it. Grandmother Scholar says: "It can only be good for all of us for you to be free of that old silence and struggle. Be a magician with my blessing, my dear" (122).

Hence, knowledge of Mahy's thematic networks guides readers to interpret the semic code[2] - composed of connotative words and phrases - without obscuring the story.

Narrative Codes:

Was the determination of the hermeneutic code in Aliens in the Family an isolated example of Mahy's appropriately subtle network of clues to solve enigmas in the plot? Again, it is useful to test an Early Adolescent Novel, because it is there that overdetermination will occur if anywhere. Hence, I traced several hermeneutic codes in The Haunting; one of which appears below.

Until the surprise revelation in the eleventh chapter (a Mahyism for the "eleventh hour"?), the implied reader is led to believe that the magical "electricity" felt by the Scholar family has something to do with latent magical abilities inherited by Barney from the Scholar side of the family. Troy reveals that she has been concealing these powers from everyone all her life. The surprise this engenders in actual readers is deepened when they realise the extent of the underdetermined code

leading to this:

1) The question is raised implicitly: "Perhaps that was why Troy was so silent, too[?]" (12). In other words, there must be a cause for her habit of silence, so what is it?

2) The suggestion that Troy is magical is made using the ambiguous semic code:

"Troy leaned against the wall as close to the door as she could get, sweeping the room with a glance so stormy that it was a wonder the flowery curtains did not billow out wildly and the pictures fall from hooks under the *black magic* of her eye" (25, my italics).

3) The suggestion that she is not what she seems to be is made too "obviously" to be taken literally: "Better to be like me and tell only lies" (29).

4) In the next clue, the suggestion is made to seem too figurative to have the literal connotation of witchiness: "Barney was startled to see in Troy's eyes, under her frowning black brows, a sudden sharpness, like that on Great-Granny Scholar's face" (30). Great-Grandmother Scholar is also referred to in witchy imagery, yet at this stage it is not suggested that she is a witch. So, the implied reader is not given an overt indication that such descriptions are anything other than a convenient form of comparison.

5) Again, the frequent use of metaphors deters readers from taking descriptions to their literal conclusion:

a) "Yet today there was something about Troy's tidiness, even when it was expected, that was shocking - something eerie and astonishing" (78).

b) "Neatness was well known for being a good thing, so why did Troy's neat room look somehow so mad - so demented?" (78).

c) "[The] slant of the eyebrows, the tightness of her long mouth, suggested that Troy was struggling with some ghost of her own" (79).

6) When Troy claims not to hear the ghostly footsteps, the implied reader is led to assume this is because of her lack of sensitivity to the supernatural. Tabitha says: "Gosh - perhaps I'm being haunted too" (80). What is implied is that Tabitha and Barney are being affected by a haunting that Troy is immune to, yet no prior experience has indicated any such sensitivity in Tabitha. Troy's deafness could therefore be thought of as suspicious.

7) When Barney tells Great-Uncle Cole, "You've got the wrong one" (82), the actual reader is invited to ask who the right one may be. But such a question is likely to be stifled by Cole's insistence that Barney is magical: "But you don't know it yourself yet. We don't always know what we are in the beginning" (82).

8) Troy's effort to conceal her powers is alluded to indirectly when Claire makes the following perceptive observation: "There's Troy looking as if she's - I don't know - she looks as if she's tearing herself to bits inside" (83).

9) Again, the semic code defers resolution of the enigma after Troy proves

to be a surprisingly acute judge of the causes of her family's problems:

a) "Barney stared, too, at Troy as if she had performed a magic trick before his very eyes" (85).

b) "It was her father's turn to stare at Troy in the alarmed fashion of someone whose secret has been revealed" (86).

c) Tabitha likens life with Troy to "living in the same house [as] a secret agent" (87).

Armed with the knowledge of the plot's dénouement, the actual reader realises that Troy's perception is the result of her mind-reading powers. But in an initial reading, the actual reader falls in with the implied reader's assumption that her perception is the result of her silent observations of family life.

10) When Cole finally enters their lives as a physical being, Barney compares his face to Troy's (93). Still the actual reader is unlikely to take the comparison as anything other than a reference to Troy's "dark watchfulness" (93).

Looked at in this isolated way, it may seem impossible to believe that readers could miss the clues and experience genuine surprise at Troy's revelation. However, that is not the case. The resolution to this enigma is not overdetermined. In a Mahy Adolescent Novel, covert clues to the revelations of the closing chapters take the form of conventional foreshadowing of the sort that may occasionally lead only an exceptional reader to an early resolution of enigmas. The result of such encoding is twofold: firstly, it performs the necessary function of creating a resolution that is surprising without being dissonant with the rest of the text. Secondly, it gives an acute reader the opportunity to predict accurately the resolution of enigmas by using clues that do not insult the intelligence. Hence, Mahy's determination of the hermeneutic codes within this text, as in the others, serves two audiences: a "typical" adolescent reader, and an exceptional adolescent or adult reader. There is no condescending overdetermination of the hermeneutic code; the actual reader solves enigmas at the same time as the implied reader, so there is no alienation of the actual reader from the implied reader, and no alienation of the actual reader from those characters whom the implied reader is tacitly expected to identify with. Consequently, these texts do not "talk down" to their readers, but treat them with the respect adult readers expect of their novelists. The risk such determination runs, however, is that, as in the conclusion to Sherryl Jordan's Rocco, some readers may fail to comprehend the resolution of enigmas. Such failure would alienate them from the implied reader, and hence, from the text, therefore it is not surprising to discover that the Early-Adolescent Novels in the Mahy *oeuvre* involve a limited amount of overdetermination of potentially-confusing developments in the dénouement.

Symbolic Codes

Not surprisingly, the symbolic codes in The Haunting focus on family and adolescence. The key characters involved in this symbolic code are Troy, the covert magician, and John, her father. From his introduction, John is presented as one who

struggles to be open. "Fancy our Barney fainting!" he says. "You must have been thinking too hard at school, Barney" (8). He fails to follow this flippancy with any serious endeavour to get to the bottom of Barney's unusual behaviour. As has been said above, Barney had been unsure about his father: "a jolly man who might turn out to be not very interested in his children in the long run" (38). He had "seemed more of a distant relative than Claire did" (53). Claire was the children's lovable step-mother. In a brief admission of the difficulties of being a working parent, John says that he finds it hard to tell if something is wrong with the family when he is away at work all day (84). Despite his failings, he is very concerned for Barney and he acknowledges the humanising impact of the family when he says to them: "It's something I've had to learn myself - to become a fuller person, I mean. And I'm lucky. I've had good helpers" (90). These aspects of characterisation are peripheral to the central enigma relating to the nature of Barney's haunting. Indeed, their presence in the novel seems to serve the sole purpose of adding to the sense of authenticity, the "Secondary World" of the novel, when taken in context. Yet, when the novel is viewed teleologically from the final conversation between Barney and his step-mother Claire, through to the exposition, the statements about John's relationships with his children coalesce into a network of underdetermined clues that culminates in the reader's realisation that essentially this book is about relationships within families. Troy, who held the key to the hermeneutic enigma in the plot, also holds the key to the symbolic code. Her magic is a metaphor for adolescent development: physical, sexual, and hierarchical. It is this new creature that John finds so very difficult to accept. Even before her magical nature is revealed, Troy alarms John when she turns the full force of her oral and intellectual power upon him:

> "[...] be your age, Dad! What would you have done? Would you really have looked around for someone else? Mrs Gaines was so convenient, just down the road and very reliable and she didn't charge much. Besides a lot of the time you were so miserable yourself... There's just no point in telling everything you know unless its going to *change* something. You've just got to put up with what can't be helped. We all do. You did. I do. So does Barney. The way things are is the way things are." (86-87)

His alarmed stare was much more than the response of one surprised to hear a normally-retiring Troy say more than one sentence; it was also the response of one who suddenly recognises in his daughter a knowledge and power that he has never before detected. Like every parent of an adolescent, he was having to assimilate the phenomenon of adolescence into his perception of his child, and into his understanding of their relationship. As has been said above, the suggestion that the tenor of the magical power metaphor is adolescent empowerment is revealed in Troy's statement that Dove, her birth mother, had told her to keep her magic part secret until she was "grown up" (119). Indeed, this interest in parent-adolescent

relations, shifts from the status of an idea in the text to that of a central theme within it when it is revealed that Troy has literal power.

> "Dad will never feel easy with me again," Troy went on, almost absentmindedly. "Do you realize that? He tries to think of me just as he used to, but he can't. Too much to expect, I suppose. I can feel him looking at me and - I don't know - shrinking away from me." (130)

So, the central issue in the novel's symbolic code is that of parental acceptance of the adolescent transition from one who does not have the power to be independent to one who has. That the author intends this issue to be of central significance is most obvious in the final conversation between Claire and Barney. The topic of conversation is, not surprisingly, families. "'Troy's said too much for Dad,' Barney pointed out. 'She says he'll never get over it... he'll always feel a bit spooky about her'" (134). Hence, the last thread in the symbolic code highlights the underdetermined threads, so that the overt thematic references seem to be inevitabilities rather than authorial impositions. Once again, Mahy's style allows her to communicate ideas without alienating her adolescent audience with simplistic overstatement.

Diction

The level of semantic sophistication in The Haunting denies accessibility to micro-comprehension for some readers. As with all of her texts, this one has words that will take the average readers in the publishers' target audience to the limits of their knowledge and beyond as the following list demonstrates:

- reprovingly (10)
- exorcized (52)
- pediatrician (57)
- profusely (58)
- affronted (60)
- derisive (71)
- dubiously (72)
- ruefully (133)
- revelation (75)
- resigned (i.e. reconciled to) (77)
- immaculately (78)
- precision (78)
- demented (78)
- anxious (80)
- reluctance (81)
- patronizing (100)
- incredulously (101)
- obstinately (103)
- speculatively (107)
- meticulous (113)
- gimlet (116)
- pompously (126)

It is curious that where narrative codes and symbolic codes are appropriate for early adolescents, some of the diction is not. Of course, the words listed are a tiny proportion of the 39,000 to 40,000 words in the novel. Most of the novel's diction is accessible to the publishers' target audience.

Allusions

Similarly, the majority of the allusions in The Haunting are accessible to the publishers' target audience, but some exceed their limitations. Allusions to widely-known children's literature in The Haunting include a reference to Barney "half

expecting to be crushed into a sort of rolled-out gingerbread boy" (2); a prophetic linkage of Great-Uncle Cole to Old King Cole (23); and a Punch and Judy show (36). There are allusions to whole genres such as horror comics (4), ghost stories (51) and science fiction (57).

Of those texts that adolescents may be ignorant of, there includes a reference to a "looking glass". There is no such thing as a "typical adolescent reader", so it is hard to generalise, but I would suggest that few teenagers would know Lewis Caroll's texts in anything other than animated versions, so when Mahy uses the phrase "looking glass" rather than "mirror" on pages 92 and 93, it is fair to assume that many readers may miss the allusion to the Alice stories. In this instance, the context should facilitate their recognition of what is happening, but the possibility for opening the reader to a network of literary experiences depends entirely on the reading experience of the actual reader. Of those texts that the adolescent reader would almost definitely be ignorant of in The Haunting is included an allusion to "An eagle [which] dropped a tortoise on some dramatist and killed him" (125). In context, sense could be made of that, whereas Tabitha's allusion to Keats' "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" is cryptic by comparison. "'We've just got to go on staring at each other with a wild surmise,' Tabitha said, quoting with satisfaction a line from a poem in a school collection" (69). The line gives a great deal of satisfaction to the reader who recognises the link between the conjecture of Cortez's men as they gazed upon the physical unknown, and Tabitha's sense of puzzlement as she gazes upon the spiritual unknown. It gives greater satisfaction to the reader who knows the poem well enough to recognise that just as Keats' response to "the realms of gold" was sincere, yet vicarious, so is Tabitha responding to an experience happening to someone other than herself. By quoting the line, Tabitha believes she is engaging in something terribly mature; by "quoting with satisfaction" we are reminded of her naïve wish that she was being haunted because she wants life to be so interesting (34). Hence, the allusion extends to tone. There is a sense of melodrama in Keats' poem, which is about his response to literature rather than lived experiences, just as there is a sense of Tabitha's enjoyment of Barney's haunting and its possibilities for thrilling terror.

So, how does The Haunting become 'curiouser' once the reader is aware of Mahy's networks? Firstly, knowledge of Mahy's generic themes has assisted the search for meaning in the novel, resulting in some discoveries about what the novel is saying about families and about adolescent empowerment. Secondly, it has assisted the process towards concluding that Mahy balances the need to give

adolescents sufficient signposts to follow the novel's plot, with the need to offer exceptional readers the opportunity to solve the novel's enigmas before the implied reader solves them. Thirdly, it has assisted the process towards concluding that Mahy's symbolic codes convey ideas in harmony with plot, and that Mahy offers opinion without preaching. Fourthly, knowledge of her networks has contributed to the curious conclusion that, in diction and allusions, Mahy exceeds the limitations of the publishers' target audience. The most curious aspect of these conclusions is the contrast between aspects of the novel which are eminently appropriate for the publishers' target audience, and those which are equally inappropriate for the same audience.

The Catalogue of the Universe

If knowledge of Mahy's generic content and stylistics leads the reader to discover that aspects of an Early Adolescent Novel may exceed the limitations of many of the publisher's target audience, can the same be said of a Late Adolescent Novel?

Like the other Mahy novels, The Catalogue of the Universe foregrounds both family harmony and adolescent empowerment. It has a complex plot structure consisting of Angela's attempt to meet and forge links with her father; relational problems in the Potter household; and sexual tension between Tycho and Angela. In contrast to Mahy's other Adolescent Novels, it is facile to say that the family harmony plot is a sub-plot and that it is pointed to thematically by the main plot. Instead, Mahy's interest in family harmony wells to the surface of The Catalogue of the Universe and pervades all three plots. Nevertheless, the same applies to this novel as to the others in the *oeuvre*: despite the primacy of family relations in this novel, the central interest for teenage readers is deflected onto an age-appropriate appeal. In this case, it is the sexual tension between Angela and Tycho.

In The Catalogue of the Universe, there are two families: one functional single-parent family; one dysfunctional nuclear family. The single-parent family consists of the comparatively harmonious Dido May and her daughter, Angela. In many ways they are a normal family. Dido's concerns for Angela are typical of any parent's concern for her daughter:

> Either I let you go and worry about you, which I do, or I can keep you home and have you raging around complaining about me [...] and probably in the end telling me a few lies about where you're going and who you're going out with and so on. (75)

However, the May relationship is subsumed by Angela's desire to form a relationship with her father. Chapter Six, entitled "On Being a Child of Love", shows

tremendous sympathy for the child who does not know her father. Angela moves between curiosity - "But it is natural to want to know [the identity of one's father], isn't it?" (57) - bitterness - "Neither of them [parents] made any arrangement with me, did they?" (p.60) - and self-pity - "It [illegitimacy] marks you off [...]. They [people] label you, and the label's like a weight" (63). When Angela discovers that Dido has deceived her about the personality of her father, she hits Dido where it hurts most: "I don't want any parents. I don't want ever to have been born" (97). However, a short time before, Angela had boasted to Roland, her father: "Dido says if we'd been with you [Roland] we'd have been masked from being our true selves [...]. You would have stood between us and the storm, but we've faced the storm and won as ourselves" (91-92). By the novel's end, Angela and Dido have reconciled their differences.

The dysfunctional nuclear family, on the other hand, has been permanently affected by circumstances beyond its control. Mr Potter developed epilepsy after being the innocent victim of a car accident (23-24). For some time after the accident, Africa, the Potter's only daughter, had been ashamed of her father on account of his fits. Her shame affected him permanently (24), so that when Africa's marriage encounters problems, he feels some triumph: "Africa was his favourite child, [...] and although he did not exactly want them to be unhappy, he was not averse to rescuing her from a few troubles from time to time. [...] 'I knew it couldn't last,' Mr Potter said, not without deep satisfaction" (14). Somehow, Mr Potter's problems have been projected onto Tycho, who has a vivid childhood memory of unkind questions being raised in a supermarket by a gossip who asks of someone within earshot of Tycho, "Has he got the same trouble as his father? He doesn't look quite normal!" (29 & 43). Despite Richard's tendency to indulge in humour rather than facing problems squarely, he reveals his genuine core when he says, "It's not right! [...] Mum should be getting out and doing something else, enjoying herself a bit more. Dad too! They've brought up their family and they should be allowed to get on to the next bit. Goodness knows they haven't had much fun what with Dad's trouble" (23). Richard, who is the eldest son, finally comes to a mature, albeit cynical, realisation about his parents' relationship: he describes the Potters' 25 year marriage as evidence of loyalty rather than love. "Love doesn't last," he says. "It's not meant to" (168). Richard and Tycho realise that their parents' marriage is built on conceptual rather than emotional premises, and that they are never likely to rekindle the romance of old. Despite this, Mrs Potter says, "My family - you've all I've got apart from china painting" (105). The Potter plot follows a roller-coaster series of ups and downs in Africa's marriage which serves as a catalyst for discussions about the relationship between Mr and Mrs Potter. Africa's adversarial relationship with Hudson also highlights the difficulties of enacting Mrs Potter's ambition for "great family happiness" (109), which she comes close to despair over (114). Through Richard's humour, Mahy expresses some of the myth behind the idealistic image of the nuclear family: "Tyke and I may be selfish and

parasitic, but that only means we're nice, healthy, normal boys. What more could any home-loving mum want?" (114).

Whilst the May household has reconciled its differences by the novel's end, the Potter household is in utter confusion and Africa's marriage has disintegrated. Mahy is certainly casting doubts on the integrity of the nuclear family as an ideal model, but she does not portray the Potter family as an entirely unhappy one. Tycho and Richard have a considerable amount of fun together. Africa cares enough to insist that Tycho enjoy the "three-minute fame" of newspaper heroism despite her troubles, and both Mr and Mrs Potter are sometimes entertained by their sons' esoteric sense of humour, despite the generation gap. In Mahy's own words:

> the more you read about family life, the more you think that there are a lot of very bizarre families, particularly when you look at accounts of family life in the past. [...] There are bizarre elements about [Janet Frame's] family, and yet they were probably as happy as many. (Mahy Interview 21)

Again, Mahy is able to present the best and worst without imposing either cynicism or naïvety.

The Catalogue of the Universe has a fascinating symbol for adolescence in its depiction of the May's home. The house is a mid-point between the structure and logic of the city streets and the wilderness of unkempt land and the dare-devil Cherry's. Angela is described as living "above the city, in a wild place close under the sky" (4). It is "planted high up on a hilltop, a house linked to the rest of the world by a snaky road" (11). It is a metaphor for Dido and Angela, and for Angela's stage of adolescence and the discovery of who she is. She perceives herself to be attached to society, but divorced from it. She wants to be thought of as normal by her boyfriend, Robin, who has never been to her house, yet superior to him. The road is a vehicle that captures the untamed spirit of adolescence and the untamed Mays, who may or may not conform, be wild, be magical. The Mays live a liminal existence, as do adolescents. Nonconformity is glorified in the novel, made to be a mystical thing, a valuable thing rather than a sinister deviance. But it must finally be balanced as in the eventual acceptance by Angela that she cannot force her father's hand.

Adolescent empowerment emerges through the chiastic structure of Angela's fortunes in this novel. When it begins, Angela believes herself to be in control of her emotions and able to manipulate the emotions of others. She is made to fall from this height but Mahy catches her and empowers her to work through it, thereby illustrating that the mistakes of adolescence are not necessarily debilitating. First comes the arrogance: "She was like a magician's lady shut in a box pierced through with golden swords. But she herself was impenetrable, able, once the swords were withdrawn, to rise up, triumphant and whole" (68). Such an idealistic view of life

sets her up for a fall. She had believed herself capable of controlling 'Mr Dead' who had "never got the better of her, not even in dreams, and a girl who could command Mr Dead would command a father with no trouble at all" (69). Despite this fantasy being shattered, her feeling of having access to an inner ocean, evident in her tears, which makes her "bigger inside than out" (69) proves true. Nicholas Tucker claims that there needs to be a certain balance between "sustaining myths" and "glimpses of a sterner reality" in fiction for adolescents (Tucker 149). Mahy's weighting, as illustrated in this example, empowers the adolescent reader with a view which favours the former without obliterating the latter.

With adolescence comes fresh understandings about life as is illustrated through Tycho and Angela. Tycho grows out of adolescent and pre-adolescent egoism: "not being a child any more, he could no longer believe he was naturally good or wise, or had any of the qualities that should ensure love" (159). At the same time, Angela is realistically hopeful rather than idealistically naïve about the permanence of her feelings for Tycho: "The square root of two was an irrational number. Well, it still is, isn't it, and people are still trying to pretend differently" (181). In other words, there is no logical formula to explain the source of their love. Then: "even if it is irrational, you've got to have a go, haven't you? You've got to believe that you're the one who's going to get it right, or where's the sense of it?" (181). Whilst Mahy's writing employs the cliché of the adolescent fighting against the odds where others have failed, her construction of adolescence has a tough edge which empowers adolescents by acknowledging the possibility of unwelcome developments, without implying subjugation to those developments.

Narrative Codes

As regards the hermeneutic code, there is an absence of the need to resolve enigmas in this novel as is demonstrated on the back cover of the Mammoth edition:

> Angela May has never met her father. He was forced to leave her mother before she was born, but their true love was joined for ever in Angela herself. At least, that's what Angela has always believed...
>
> When she finally seeks him out, she doesn't get the reaction she'd expected. Suddenly everything alters as lifelong certainties are shattered.
>
> But Angela isn't the only one with problems. Her friend, Tycho Potter has difficulties of his own. To the surprise of both, Angela and Tycho begin to find consolation in a new relationship that emerges from their old friendship.

Blurb is not generally renowned for its subtlety, but if this novel's interest lay in the resolution of enigmas, this blurb would be particularly inappropriate because it resolves two of the central enigmas.

The code that is interesting in the novel is the symbolic code. One of the key symbols is a present given to Tycho by Angela, a book with the title, *The Catalogue of the Universe*. Its status as a gift from Angela is important enough to be mentioned twice in the exposition (21 & 33). It is not the content of the book that is as important as the acknowledgement that, despite their intellectual differences, Angela respects Tycho's esoteric interest in astronomy and philosophy. In fact, it is Tycho's intellect that enables him to see himself as masculine in the absence of the macho qualities possessed and paraded by Angela's boyfriend, Robin. For example, when approaching a group of "bikies", Tycho becomes at once nervous and philosophical:

> Feeling furtive and cowardly, he became convinced he was approaching a tribe of *true* men, all illustrated with the signs of violence and violation, while he was a creature protected by nothing but an Ionian view of the world - the belief that things might be understood, and that he might attain wonderful power at last through struggling to understand them. (49)

It is also Tycho's intellectual qualities that make him appealing to Angela, and the gift foreshadows Angela's gift of carnal knowledge. In fact, the book is involved in both their sexual encounters. The first was an embrace which began after Angela sees him clutching the book "as if it were a lover, or a shield" (33). The second follows Angela's dramatic entrance at the end of Chapter Eleven with the book under her arm (122) which leads to Tycho standing on *The Catalogue of the Universe* to bring him up to Angela's height to embrace prior to consummating their relationship. It is with this in mind that the narrative voice reveals:

> Yesterday he could have watched Angela walk off with Robin and felt mainly resignation, but the view for a man standing on *The Catalogue of the Universe* was different and, once standing there, you couldn't just step off again. The book was only an inch or two thick, but the fall was infinite. (159)

However, the apple of sexual union is shown to be blemished. It opens the way for jealousy and emotional damage. Nevertheless, the novel's final description of Tycho involves the same symbol in a positive way: "Half-transfixed, wearing what Angela thought of as his magician's look, Tycho felt himself actually become the catalogue of the universe, never finished, always being added to" (185). So, despite its dangers, the gift transforms and enhances identity. In a country that manifests its pioneering past in the continuing glorification of machismo, Mahy's conflation of intellect with sexual power must be an empowering symbol for the bookish boys who break the mould by reading romantic fiction. Like The Haunting, The Catalogue of the Universe develops an unobtrusive balance between underdetermined symbolic codes and their overt treatment.

Additionally, there is a symbolic code that links Angela and Tycho in archetypal terms. The Catalogue of the Universe is one of four of the Mahy *oeuvre*

to exclude supernatural events. (The others are Underrunners, The Other Side of Silence, and Memory.) Yet the metaphoric language of magic pervades the descriptions of Angela. The narrative voice alludes to her witchiness from the first as she "watched a *wand* of moonlight move through the bedroom air, touch her breast and turn it from fabulous gold to cool silver" (11, my italics). Richard, too, describes her as a witch: "that sexy school-girl witch," he calls her (18). Angela's witchy descriptions of Tycho indicate that she is conscious of being mysterious in some witchy way. Angela is attracted to the "enchanter" she sees in Tycho: she watches him "as a small child might watch its first magician" (32); and she thought of him as a "moonlit goblin" on their first day of school (90).

In the poetic description of the morning after their sexual encounter, the lyrical narrative voice describes them as: "The phantoms of romance [who] had twisted in their slow, acrobatic tumble, beginning to perform new tricks" (137). There are also strong Edenic overtones in the language. Angela is playfully cast as the temptress: "Come on! Be a devil" (34), she taunts. Indeed, that is exactly what he wants: "Tycho wanted to be as beautiful as Lucifer" (108). His desire is again an expression of his frustration with himself. His inability to match the image of an archetypal New Zealand male results in his desire to be powerful and attractive. In "the odd Eden of the Potter kitchen" the aftertaste of forbidden fruit is still sweet but the potential for its denigration into bitterness is alluded to. Nevertheless, for the moment, Tycho has broken out of his "baffling chrysalis [...] and become - nothing as sunny as a butterfly - but a velvet moth of darkness with feathery antennae and moons on his deep wings" (32).

Again, the content is eminently appropriate for the publisher's target audience. Again, the content conforms to the generics identifiable in the other novels. As with The Haunting, knowledge of those generics guides the reader to interpret the novel's narrative and symbolic codes. Again, some of the above subtleties may elude some adolescent readers, but what of the suitability of other aspects of the stylistics?

Allusions

The Catalogue of the Universe contains networks of allusions that most teenagers are likely to know, and others that they are unlikely to know. However, there is a difference between recognising a text, and knowing it well enough to bathe in the light of the subtleties inherent in its evocation, as the following example illustrates:

> Angela felt so full of emotion that she was, for once, hardly able to speak or move. She just looked at Roland Chase as if, like the *Little Mermaid*, she had no voice and must make him love her with her beautiful body, her graceful walk and lovely eyes. (91, my italics)

The setting is Chase's office. Angela has realised that he is her father. Believing the stories of her mother, she assumes that he will welcome her after some initial

resistance, but the reader who knows "The Little Mermaid" will instantly recognise the foreshadowing of impending failure. Just as the Little Mermaid's prince failed to give her the love she wanted, so Chase will fail to deliver. Just as the Little Mermaid had sacrificed more than the prince ever knew, so Angela and Dido had suffered more than Chase ever knew (and ever wanted to know). More optimistically, just as the Little Mermaid was rewarded by "daughters of the air" for her devotion and sacrifice with the hope of an immortal soul, so Angela will be rewarded for her devotion in unexpected ways. Moreover, the reader who knows "The Little Mermaid" will have the enhanced sense of Angela's romantic infatuation with her father and the readers who know Hans Andersen's story will be better equipped to interpret the sarcasm in Angela's thought, "Dido had never been loved, and *never made any noble sacrifice for love*" (93, my italics), because they will detect the implicit contrast between Dido's lack of sacrifice and the Little Mermaid's superhuman ones (which include willingly having her tongue sliced off, never being able to return to her native environment, intense pain whenever she walks, and risking death if her plan to marry the prince fails). However, in the steady transition from one sentence to the next, it is unlikely that even those readers who know "The Little Mermaid" well would pause long enough to draw these conclusions; they are more likely to sense intuitively the possibilities rather than to itemise them logically as I have done. Either way, the reading is enriched according to how well the reader knows the story.

The Catalogue of the Universe makes plenty of pre-twentieth century allusions, especially to ancient astronomers, mathematicians and philosophers. There are sometimes collocations of them, such as when Tycho considers the accuracy of the Ionian idea that "existence might be made understandable, even predictable, because it had an inner order that could be discovered and understood" (115). He goes on to summarise the people whose predictions vindicate the Ionian view: Thales, Anaximander, Anaxagoras, and Pythagoras "(the triangle man)" (115-116). These allusions assist characterisation of Tycho and contribute to the thematic network of the text, so adolescent readers will be quite comfortable with them, despite their obscurity. However, other allusions may not be understood for what they are, such as Tycho's homophonic and consonant adjustment of Tennyson's "Nature, red in tooth and claw" (*In Memoriam* lvi): "We're nature red in tooth and claw, *and* nature read in truth and law, both at the same time" (65). Shortly after, Angela returns to this image: "Nature read in truth and law - it's an opposite, isn't it? What we're supposed to end up being like - civilized and all that" (65-66). For the reader who knows Tennyson's work there is an added dimension to reading Mahy's homophonic and antithetical twist to it, but there is no lack of comprehension for the reader who is unfamiliar with the work and is willing to read Mahy's text closely. There are multiple allusions to classical myths and legends in The Catalogue of the Universe that the teenager is unlikely to recognise. For example, when Angela and Tycho turn off Dry Creek Road and into Centaurus Road, "the road of the Centaur"

(80), it is possible that Mahy is relating the illusion of Angela's plan of meeting her father to the illusion that gave rise to the Greek myth of the Centaur, thereby foreshadowing its failure.

Similarly, there are multiple allusions to adult romantic literature that the teenage reader may know by title only, such as Gone with the Wind and Casablanca. The allusions are made in dialogue between Tycho and Angela, allowing them to explore romantic notions vicariously, without the necessity of making it personal - a sort of fictional foreplay. In context, it is not essential that the reader has read or seen these romances for them to understand that Mahy is tapping into a network of romantic literature that links Tycho and Angela's subjective experience with the universal experience of romantic love. However, Mahy risks alienating her teenage reader with allusions such as those to Noel Coward. Consider the following example:

> [Mr Potter] was wearing his best camel-hair dressing- gown, specially bought for a hospital visit some years ago, had knotted a white silk scarf at his throat and brushed his grey hair. "Look at that! The Noel Coward of Ferry Road," said Richard. [...] " I'm surprised you didn't put on full evening-dress, and carry a cigarette-holder." (17)

How many adolescent readers are going to have a general knowledge that would enable them to interpret such allusions meaningfully? I suggest there would be very few. This raises two questions: how does failure to recognise allusions affect reader response? What positive function does an allusion serve when its meaning is not recognisable to the novel's target audience? The answer to the first question is that it would be a rare thing for a reader's macro-comprehension of the text to be affected by failure to understand an isolated allusion, although the use of "Kubla Khan" in Barry Faville's Stanley's Aquarium is such a rarity[3]. However, micro-comprehension will inevitably be impaired.

Ignorance of the identity of Noel Coward should not deter a reader from recognising the mocking tone in Richard's voice, nor something of the style of dress Richard is envisaging for his father. The description becomes more vivid, however, when it is attached to a strong mental image of Coward's attire, his characters and his particular representation of their era. However, in answer to the second of the questions above, there is no advantage to comprehension if the reader fails to understand an allusion. There may be positive extra-textual educational advantages, such as the reader's engagement in research into Noel Coward, but the allusion is not designed to take the reader away from the text. It assumes immediate recall. It is not of sufficient import to justify putting the text aside in order to search out the fullness of its meaning. Seen in this light, it is an odd allusion to make in a novel designed for adolescents. It assumes a broader general knowledge than most teenagers possess; therefore, either it is written with an exceptional reader in mind, or an older reader in mind. When I asked Ms Mahy about the appropriateness of the

allusion, she admitted to the tension between the appropriateness of the allusion in its context and its inappropriateness to the adolescent audience. Nevertheless, she felt its place is justifiable because "someone's going to pick it up and be thrilled by it" (Mahy Interview MM49).

An aspect of intertextuality not previously discussed in this essay is each novel's intertextual links with fairy tales. The following description has the potential to be linked to "The Ugly Duckling": "[Tycho's] particular myth, that of the cloak of ugliness, had been turned inside out and had proved to have a magical lining" (137). The connection to "The Ugly Duckling" is strengthened when it is matched with Africa's off-hand description of Tycho as a "changeling" (29). However, the link is never made explicit. There is a subtle anti-Sleeping Beauty allusion when Angela emerges from the fractious encounter with her father:

> While she had talked to her father in another kingdom, a hundred earthly years had gone by, and someone had stolen the world and put a hasty imitation in its place, clever enough in its own way, but still quite easily seen through. (95)

Even though Angela's experience is *dyscatastrophic*, Mahy rescues her and Tycho's relationship from disaster, despite the overtones of Romeo and Juliet in the description of their awakening from post-coital slumber: "Darkness dissolved; through a net of birdsong, limitless light began to flow" (137)[4]. In Tycho's patience and winning over of Angela, there is also something of "The Frog Prince"; but the connection is never made, perhaps because it is the intuitive sense of fairy tale *eucatastrophe* that Mahy intends as the following statement implies: "If you looked closely [at the tee shirt Angela had given Tycho] the Ionians still ruled on it, but less confidently than they had first thing in the morning, when it seemed he had achieved a predictable ending to his fairy tale" (157-158). Perhaps too, there needs to be more realistic ambiguity in a novel for older adolescents than for younger ones. A direct fairy tale allusion may seem ironic in a novel that uses the structure of *liberating eucatastrophe*, so once again, Mahy's style adapts to the stage of adolescence her novels are published for.

Extended Metaphor

If some allusions will mystify many adolescent readers, and other allusions will be only partially understood by other adolescents, while some allusions will even alienate others, how will adolescent readers get on with the extended metaphor used in the dénouement? Whilst The Catalogue of the Universe foregrounds a family problem as the central enigma, the dénouement to that plot occurs well before the novel finishes. Initially, Mahy overcomes the potential bathos by turning attention on the relationship between Tycho and Angela, but after that plot reaches its climax, there is the potential for a rather dull finish as Angela and Dido reconcile their relationship. Hence, Mahy injects excitement into the novel's ending by introducing a car accident in which Tycho and Angela make the mistake of thinking that Dido

has crashed over the edge of Dry Creek Road. However, this deflection from the familial plot is more than excitement for its own sake: it is actually an extended metaphor for romantic relationships. David Rees claims that "the episode in which Tycho pulls a neighbour from a wrecked car is unnecessary and unconvincing" (Rees 155). If he was incapable of seeing its link to the new status of the relationship between Angela and Tycho, many adolescents may not either.

Prior to this extended metaphor, Mahy introduces three issues which are universal to romance. Initially, these issues may seem to contradict what I have hitherto asserted about the positive attitudes towards growing up in Mahy's novels: the validity of making selfish requests of one's partner; the way that change in one relationship inevitably alters the balance and dynamics of other relationships; the problem of love being confused with ownership. Mahy not only handles these deftly, but she turns potential cynicism into hope.

Initially, Mahy raises the three issues in a light-hearted conversation between Angela and Tycho who are standing naked in the kitchen the 'morning after'. One would expect this to be a significant conversation that sets some of the contractual foundations for the relationship to come. If that is so, the foundations are built on sand. First comes the request for change: "Well if I give up my vinyl jacket will you stop wearing shirts people can see through?" he asked her (140). Second comes the shifting of power between interlinked relationships: "'Where do you get your hair done? I've never liked to ask but...'. 'My mother cuts it,' Tycho replied. Angela burst out laughing. 'That figures!' she said" (139). Thirdly, there is the issue of ownership of a partner: "I'm just trying to improve you, but you're just being possessive" (140).

That Mahy raises these ideas during a light-hearted dialogue makes it easy for the teenage reader to overlook them, which is why the following events (the car crash, the latest bust-up between Africa and Hudson, the new truth from Dido about her relationship with Roland) reiterate them with increasing intensity. These three incidents merge into an extended metaphor for relationships. The crash is a symbol of the fear of a relationship coming to grief. When Angela loses the fear that the occupant was Dido, she: "lost something of the power that enabled her to plunge down one hillside and a third of the way up another like a demented genie" (148). The car is likened to a dragon. So on the one hand, it is romantically wild and primeval, like their love-making, but on the other hand, it is ugly and dangerous as well. The metaphor reminds the reader that love-making can have ill effects. Such ill effects are illustrated by Dido's financial and emotional deprivation as a result of Roland's indifference to her predicament. They are also seen in the disaster of Africa's falling out of love with Hudson. We are told that "[The Cherrys] regarded the roadside as part of their proper grazing ground" (154). This mistake was part of what led to their accident - an illustration of the danger of the attitude that one

"owns" his or her partner. The link between the crash and the relationship between Tycho and Angela is made more explicit in the following passage:

> Jerry groaned strangely, eyes still closed, sounding to Tycho not so much like a man whose legs were shattered and torn as someone whose heart was broken. Soon after, when Angela leaves the scene, her farewell sounded [to Tycho] like the sort of thing employers were supposed to say if they didn't want to employ you. (157)

That this scene symbolises their relationship is further suggested by one of the last comments upon it when Tycho perceives the hill as being "simultaneously beautiful and horrible" (158). Tycho's lack of his earlier confidence is symbolised in the blood on the shirt Angela had given to him. The blood obscured some of the writing so that, "the Ionians still ruled on it, but less confidently than they had first thing in the morning" (158).

The result of failed relationships is symbolised by the wreckage: "Tycho couldn't imagine the car would ever be of any use to anyone in any form ever again" (158). The danger of love could again be perceived as the tenor of this elaborate metaphor when one of the ambulance men says, in a typical New Zealand understatement, "You took a bit of a chance, didn't you?" (160). The danger of falling out of love and its consequences are both illustrated with the disarmingly flippant comments made by Africa: "Look - I loved Hudson. I dreamed of Hudson. It used to be wonderful to do the dishes with bloody Hudson. And he hasn't changed. I've changed" (166). She goes on to say: "At the time it felt as real as anything could. Anyhow, who says it's got to last for ever to be real?" (166). Richard replies: "Love doesn't last. It's not meant to" (168). He describes the Potter's 25 year marriage as evidence of loyalty rather than love (168). Africa continues: "Love changes and wears out [...]. But if you do a brave thing it lasts as long as you do" (170). By applying this statement to Tycho and Angela, it says that whilst their love may not be permanent, their attempt to wrest some passion out of life is, because it shows their courage to attempt it despite all the precedents for failure scattered around them.

For Angela, the danger is of a different sort. She is in danger of losing her self-reliance and of becoming emotionally dependent upon Tycho. When the phone rings she is eager for it to be him (171). When she sees the night sky, it is Jupiter, the very masculine king of the gods who is <u>above</u> Venus, the seductress. It is a clever symbol of her new enfranchisement to things masculine. "I'm longing for old Tyke, she thought. I've done it. I've fallen in love with him. I've always wanted to in a way, but now I've managed it. She was not sure how or why" (174). This uncertainty vindicates what I have been saying concerning the doubts about the longevity of such feelings. If they are acquired so mysteriously, could they not leave with similar rapidity? That is the danger of love. Angela is not troubled by her subjugation to these new feelings; oddly she triumphs in them: "mixed in with this

was a curious feeling of triumph, as if in the end she had won a victory, and had forced the indifferent universe to render up a sort of justice" (174). Like Africa's comments about the permanence of bravery, Angela praises their courage but is realistic about their chances: "The square root of two was an irrational number. Well, it still is, isn't it, and people are still trying to pretend differently" (181). In other words, there is no logical formula to explain the source of their love. Similarly, she admits that there are no guarantees that the alchemy that has created their romantic attachment will not evaporate as mysteriously as it came, but, she says, you have got to be brave enough to believe that it will last: "even if it is irrational, you've got to have a go, haven't you? You've got to believe that you're the one who's going to get it right, or where's the sense of it?" (181).

In the closing, Mahy makes it clear that Dry Creek Road is a symbol of the danger of love: "'Be careful on the hill, won't you?' Dido said to him [...]. 'I was thinking of the bit before he even gets to the car,' Dido said. Angela replies, "It's as dangerous for me as it is for him" (185). As is appropriate for her audience, Mahy is definite about the dangerous side of love, but never to the point of cynicism.

How then, does knowledge of Mahy's networks, make The Catalogue of the Universe "curiouser"? Firstly, it assists in arriving at some conclusions about the novel's themes and ideas: in this case, the novel conveys that both families and adolescents have the potential for *dyscatastrophe*, but it conveys this in a way that does not obliterate the possibility of *eucatastrophe*. Secondly, knowledge of the generic content leads to the conclusion that Mahy develops an unobtrusive balance between underdetermined symbolic codes and their overt treatment. Thirdly, it contributes to the confirmation that, in content, the novel is eminently appropriate for the publishers' target audience. Fourthly, knowledge of the networks of allusions leads to the conclusion that Mahy's allusions are pregnant with interpretative possibilities. Fifthly, it reveals that the novel's allusions will elicit a variable response depending on how well the reader knows the work being alluded to. Sixthly, exploration of the generic stylistics reveals sophistications beyond the abilities of many adolescents. These answers apply equally to The Haunting when the same question is asked of it.

Notes

1. Of literary analysis, Mahy has this to say:

> it takes one particular aspect of stories, and looks at that aspect in a way detached from anything else that is going on in the story. I think that's a fair thing to do, and I think that it can be quite fruitful, but I think in the end you have to return to look at the story as a whole. (Mahy Interview MM11)

This chapter attempts to allow each of two stories to speak "as a whole".

2. A seme is a signifier that carries a connotation beyond the usual meaning of the signifier (for example, when "wealth" can mean more than one type of wealth). The semic code, then, is a network of connotative words and phrases.

3. Faville makes extended use of "Kubla Khan" in Stanley's Aquarium, just as Mahy does of The Wind in the Willows in Underrunners and of The Jungle Book in The Other Side of Silence. In order to resolve some enigmas in Faville's novel, the reader would need to know Coleridge's poem, as the following quotation illustrates:

> I told him, too, about "Kubla Khan" and the other reason why its words had burned into my mind when I first read it - something you will have noticed yourself if you know the poem and have read the last couple of pages with care and attention. (38)

4. This is similar to the bird and light imagery at the beginning of Act III scene V of Romeo and Juliet.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE READERS IN ALIENS IN THE FAMILY, THE CHANGEOVER: A SUPERNATURAL ROMANCE, THE TRICKSTERS AND MEMORY

Thus far, I have argued that there is a tension in the Mahy *oeuvre* between elements that are eminently appropriate for adolescents, and elements that are too sophisticated for many adolescents. Whilst content is consistent in its appropriateness, aspects of stylistics are not. I have also demonstrated that knowledge of Mahy's textual networks contributes to interpretation and that the texts are mostly accessible to adolescent readers despite occasional alienation from the implied reader. Clearly, though, response is enriched when the actual reader has the knowledge and skills to recognise subtleties in the texts. What is equally clear is that many of the readers targetted by the publishers will not have the skills or knowledge to recognise or interpret some of the subtleties in the Mahy *oeuvre*. However, those subtleties are less obscure when the reader is aware of the networks existing in the text.

If some textual elements exceed the limitations of the very people the novels are published for, who is Mahy's audience? It is not surprising that Mahy professes to have a number of target audiences in mind when she writes: there are the children in the age group she is writing for, of course, but also she writes for "those readers who approximate to the sort of reader I was as a child", and for adults "though in order to appeal to the 7-year-old one has to be careful about the amount and level of attention you give the ghostly 47-year-old somewhere out there in the future" [1]. She also says, "I suppose I'm writing for a reader who's approximately the same sort of reader as I am, [particularly the re-reader]" [2]. She acknowledges the need to make her books accessible to the publishers' target audience, and accordingly simplifies her writing at the request of her publishers but, she says, "I do [simplify] sometimes at [a] personal cost, and I think, 'This story is not quite what I intended it to be in the first place'" [3]. The result of refusing to simplify, of being true to a range of implied readers, is to produce "rather esoteric sorts of novels" [4]. Their esoteric quality arises out of the number of implied readers inherent in the text. These are:

* the formal-operational reasoner [5],
* the publishers' target audience,
* the "child who approximates to the sort of reader I [Mahy] was",
* the "ghostly 47 year old out there somewhere" (that is, the educated adult reader),

* the re-reader (who may be a literary analyst or one who has read all of Mahy's works).

Is understanding of each novel expanded by identifying textual elements which imply one reader at the expense of others?

Aliens in the Family

The Formal-Operational Reasoner

The adolescent is a formal-operational reasoner who is not tied to the concrete reality of the pre-adolescent. Where formal-operational thinkers are capable of abstract thought, concrete-operational thinkers are limited to solving tangible problems of the present. Hence, writing for the formal-operational child excludes its concrete-operational predecessor. Aliens in the Family is a clever cojoining of plot, setting and theme in which the central protagonist, Jake, copes with the feeling of alienation from her father and his new family by helping a literal alien, Bond, to be reunited in time and space with his intergalactic school. Concrete-operational thinkers are automatically excluded from realising the interconnectedness of the textual elements and are therefore excluded from participation in the novel's symbolic code. For example, the concrete-operational thinker is unlikely to recognise any symbolic significance in Bond's choice of name, beyond characterisation. However, the formal-operational thinker has the ability to see Mahy's Dickensian use of "bond" for its metaphoric qualities. The character, Bond, creates the environment for bonding to occur: Jake calls Dora by name for the first time whilst discussing how to help Bond (60); she begins to feel at home for the first time whilst helping Bond (68); she and Dora speak intimately for the first time whilst pursuing Bond down the narrow causeway forged by the stream (119). Dora makes the realisation that she is linked through her humanity to Jake, after listening to Bond's fantastic story (137). Furthermore, the metaphoric use of the word "alien" will be overlooked by concrete-operational thinkers, such as in the narratorial statement, "They were all aliens together now" (129); and later, in a thematic climax, "In spite of their differences, they were inhabitants of the same planet after all" (155). However, there is nothing stopping the concrete-operational thinker from a systematic comprehension of the sequence of events or from a realisation of the resolution of enigmas in the plot, but such an understanding falls considerably short of the author's intention.

The Publisher's Target Audience

The early adolescent age group is implied in a number of ways within the text. One way is the age of the central protagonists. Jake is twelve, Dora seems to be a similar age, as is Bond, in Galgonquan terms. Also, they are experiencing feelings about themselves that early adolescents might identify with. Bond represents an arrogant adolescent: "*It's not a difficult test after all*, he thought, *or perhaps it is - for others*" (26). Just as the central protagonists in the Later Adolescent Novels go

through chiastic experiences, so Bond's over-confidence sets him up to fall before being brought up to a place where he can anticipate the future without conceit. Jake and Dora are also introduced in terms of self-image. Whilst Jake fosters an image designed to conceal her unhappiness, Dora seems to be Mahy's answer to the archetypal early adolescent of fiction: she loves horses, reads magazines, makes an effort to create a girlish, Barbie-doll image; she wants to dye her "blonde, bubbly curls" (51); and she fantasises about being "discovered": "*Will this boy look at me and love me forever? Will this woman see me and stop in her tracks, crying 'That's the very face for my new movie!*'" (16). However, Dora's obsession with appearance is linked to fear of her father's rejection (170), so the novel treats it as a manifestation of a personal problem rather than merely a character trait and takes adolescents who are similarly image-conscious through a journey of self-discovery. The journey begins with a penurious assessment of Jake: "You could share a bedroom with someone who would enjoy learning to do their hair in a new way. But the Lone Ranger - even without a horse - was another matter altogether" (19). However, the journey ends with generosity that results from seeing beyond the surface image to the underrunners beneath (173). So, the characters match the publishers' target audience in age and stage. If early adolescents do not recognise themselves in these characters, they will recognise some of their peers.

An Approximation to the Adolescent Mahy and The Educated Adult

It is conjecture to discuss the sort of reader Mahy may have been as an adolescent. Nevertheless, it is possible to guess in broad terms what a sophisticated adolescent reader, such as the adolescent Mahy, may respond to as opposed to what an unsophisticated reader may respond to. Before doing so, though, I will continue the previous discussion of characterisation because in addition to implying the early adolescent reader, it implies the adult reader. Philippa, the mother of Dora and Lewis, is another one of Mahy's amazing mothers, whose understanding of life is as much a pragmatic response to the daily grind of motherhood as a philosophy: "Who wants to be secure anyway?" she says. "Life ought to be a little bit dangerous. That's what makes it exciting!" (37). However, it is not so much in characterisation as in open-endedness that the educated adult is implied. For example, the educated adult reader may recognise the feminine reference to the circular nature of life that follows: when David cannot decide whether the re-creational events following Lewis's breathtaking departure are an ending or a beginning, Philippa replies, "Maybe it's both [...] A circle" (172). Where some knowledge of the theory of feminine symbols might be needed to see the connection between feminism and Philippa's perception, no such prior knowledge is required in the following example in which the narrative voice colludes quite clearly with the reader. When Philippa jokes that the moon's texture is the result of blistering caused by the sun, eight-year old Lewis roars with laughter "at his mother's ignorance" (65). The irony gives the narrative voice the opportunity to share a joke with the reader at Lewis's expense. Other subtleties seem even more designed for a reader who is also a parent. Lewis,

who has a fascination for eagles, "Once started to write a book called 'A Pair of Eagles' and he had written three and a half pages before he lost his pencil box for a week. By the time he found the box again the inspiration had gone" (52). There is an authorial collusion with parents in this explanation, because parents may recognise, in their own children, similar excuses for failure to complete projects begun with great gusto. Where adolescent readers may read the second sentence literally, parents are likely to see in it the implication that the loss of motivation coincided with the loss of the pencil box, not its recovery.

As in all of Mahy's Adolescent Novels, there exists in Aliens in the Family suggestions of post-modernism in which Mahy seems to foreground the relationships between author and text, text and reader. Of Lewis, the narrative voice says, "Sometimes he thought he might actually draw himself right into one of his eagles and fly off into a sky on the other side of the paper" (13). Even without re-reading, it is possible that many readers will link the impossibility of Lewis's thought to the author's ability to create reality. The description is more than characterisation in which the strength of Lewis's imagination is established; it is an expression of the fiction of fiction, a reminder to the reader that the text is fictitious, that fiction is art, that the Secondary World of the novel requires different forms of assimilation to the Primary World of life. Less subtly, the narrative voice subsequently says, "He [Lewis] sometimes felt as if he and his family were not real, that they were living a television commercial instead of true life" (13). In context, the image can be read as an expression of the discrepancy between Lewis's expectations for family life and the outcome. Again, though, the image reminds the reader that the family is not real. Because they are no more real than a television commercial family, the reader is reminded that it is as valid to scrutinize the feelings and ideas evoked in response to a novel as it is to scrutinize the desires and thoughts aroused by a television advertisement.

However, even when post-modern references to writing seem to imply cynicism, the Mahy philosophical framework surprises the reader with suggestions of hope. In Aliens in the Family, Jake created a false image of herself in her letters to her father; "she had told David many lies in her letters, and she did not want her courageous, adventurous image destroyed" (41). Taken to extremes, such an interpretation may seem to indicate a cynical disbelief in writing. On the other hand, whilst it suggests that the truth of writing requires testing, it also implies the power of writing to anticipate life because the image Jake portrays in her letters becomes closer to the truth as the novel progresses in that Jake begins the process of learning to ride a horse and she realises that she is happy at home most of the time (107). Furthermore, the truth of writing is not only implicit in the novel's realism, but in its images, such as when Lewis remembers the re-creational events of the dénouement as "crowded with images of trees growing, volcanoes spouting fire, and years flickering by *like pages swiftly turning*" (174, my italics). The simile is well-chosen.

Not only does it describe the speed of the re-creational events within the novel's Secondary World, but it also reminds the reader of the novel's Primary World nature, thereby encouraging the reader to test its truth, while simultaneously being true to the Secondary World of the novel.

Whilst adolescents are unlikely to have the knowledge to interpret these images as post-modernist, they may, if they approximate to the sort of reader Mahy was at their age, interpret them as implications of the relationship between the participants in the reading process. However, the educated adult reader may make distinctly post-modern inferences from the same images.

The Re-Reader

The re-reader is not as strongly implied in Aliens in the Family as it is in the following novels. Perhaps this is evidence of Mahy's ability to defer to the needs of the principal audience: in deferring to the needs of the early adolescent, Mahy seems to have composed a novel that is less subtle and less stratal than those written for older age groups.

The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance

The Formal-Operational Reasoner

If a concrete-operational thinker could achieve some satisfaction from following the hermeneutic code of Aliens in the Family, despite failing to comprehend the symbolic code, the same reader would be comparatively lost in The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance because so much of its language is connected to the symbolic code or is semic in quality. Right from the start, the language of adolescent change drives descriptions that would seem inane to anyone reading at a superficial level. It opens with Laura's reverie on shampoo, moves to her consideration of herself in the mirror, then to the loss of little Jacko's shoe. From such apparent inanity, the exposition moves to the receipt of an enigmatic supernatural warning. Under the surface, however, is a semic code that constitutes nothing less than the imaginative matrix of the novel as a whole. Looking at her ghostly reflection in the steamed bathroom mirror, Laura considers the physical changes that can be wrought artificially, through hair dye and the like, and those that are happening involuntarily through adolescence. Following this comes the premonition of something going wrong in the day ahead in which she hears an "inside" voice say, "It's going to happen" (3). Then her mirror image alters indefinably and "looks back at her from some mysterious place alive with fears and pleasures she could not entirely recognize. There was no doubt about it. The future was not only warning her, but enticing her as it did so" (4). Mahy's use of supernatural phenomenon to symbolise the natural phenomenon of adolescent development can only be realised, even intuitively, by one who can exercise sufficient dexterity of mind to go beyond the concrete description to its metaphorical possibilities. This opening requires that the

reader see the reverie on shampoo as a consideration of the physical self, and to see the loss of Jacko's shoe as a very domestic contrast to the supernatural premonition that follows it.

The Publishers' Target Audience

The publishers' mid-adolescent target audience is implied by the stages of the central protagonists (Laura is a fourth former, Sorry is a seventh former) and the interest in romance. Laura's ambiguous feelings for Sorry and for romance are expressed symbolically when Laura is expecting to be kissed: "She remained as still as the heroine of a jungle movie who, waking to find a serpent coiled on her breast and unable to move in case it bites her, lies breathing slowly watching light rippling over its wonderfully coloured scales" (97). Like the ambiguous premonition in the mirror that warned as well as enticed, the prospect of a kiss suggested danger as well as beauty. Moreover,

> On one side of a kiss was childhood, sunshine, innocence, toys and, on the other, people embracing, darkness, passion and the admittance of a person who, no matter how loved, must always have the quality of otherness, not only to her confidence, but somehow inside her sealing skin. (97)

Laura, a character in her own right, but a representative construct as well, voices her sense that sex and romance are a loss of the magic of childhood as well as an uncertain gain. As with Tycho and Angela in The Catalogue of the Universe, romance brings with it the promise of pleasure, and the dangerous probability of intrusion and pain. (Indeed, intrusion and pain may be consequences of a romance, even if the love maintains its integrity.) Whether it is a manifestation of Sorry's dysfunctional family background, or of his diet of cheap romance novels, or just because his nerve is multiplied by his hormonal verve, I do not know, but instead of kissing Laura he insensitively places his hand on her breast, confirming Laura's misgivings more forcibly than she feared. Sorry's violation of Laura was foreshadowed by Carmody Braque's spiritual possession of Jacko and by the brief mention of Jacynth Close, a girl who was raped in Gardendale. In some ways it overshadows Braque's violation of Jacko as the most shocking experience of the novel. Laura's response is disarmingly simple: "Don't! [...] Remember, you've got to be invited" (98). Teenage readers can discount the Secondary World of lemures when they drop the book, but Sorry's intrusion bears a sharper correlation between life and art. Perhaps this is one episode in which the female adolescent reader is not only implied most strongly but responds most closely and acutely.

By the end of the novel, the relationship between Laura and Sorry is an equitable one. In fact, it is possible to argue that Laura is the most powerful one in the relationship, as Sorry's supporting role of Gatekeeper in Laura's changeover indicates. Plenty has been written about Laura's changeover, and two writers at least have referred to it as a feminist development of "Sleeping Beauty" [6]. What

nobody has commented on in is the possibility that Sorry is the Sleeping Beauty (with the "wonderfully coloured scales") and Laura the handsome prince. Whilst the coloured scales imply his beauty, Sorry's lack of some human qualities indicate that part of him is asleep. When Laura wakes up, Sorry says, "The Sleeping Beauty always loves the prince who wakes her. You've had it now, Chant... no hope for you, I'm afraid." She replies, "I woke myself" (151). Not only has she acted as her own prince, but she wakes Sorry:

> He looked like no one she could ever imagine, commonplace and supernatural, the divided face he had turned to her earlier, modified, beginning, perhaps, to come together under the pressure of something new and nameless in him, as if her adventure had been his as well, and was continuing to affect him. (151-152)

When he looks down at her breasts "absentmindedly", he is ashamed of himself "for the first time that she could remember" (152), indicating that Laura's changeover from human to witch has mysteriously transmogrified Sorry from full witch to half human. Laura can see the two halves of his nature in his face. His androgynous potential is also indicated in the symbols of the sword - a phallic symbol - and the wand - a symbol of female magic in this novel. He gives both to Laura, but takes back the sword. Laura keeps the wand and makes her magical rebirth with it, hence her changeover is undeniably female, but active female rather than the passive version in "Sleeping Beauty". Meanwhile, Sorry is undeniably masculine in sexuality, but archetypally feminine in his new-found humility, self-consciousness and passivity. Further evidence of Sorry's androgynous nature is that his family's hereditary magic has hitherto been feminine, passed on through the female line rather than the male. Sorry is as new to the Carlisle family as the "Sensitive New Age Guy" is to the human family. Mahy has melded a new "Sleeping Beauty" that is feminist in its revisionism, and androgynous in effect. Later on, after Laura "uninvites " Carmody Braque by sending him to his overdue death, Sorry playfully tells her to "Be a man!", to which she replies: "I can be just as good not being one" (194). If Mahy's adolescent readers do not see feminist revisionism because it is subtle and interpretative, no one can deny the appropriateness of the content for them.

An Approximation to the Adolescent Mahy

In The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance, it is likely that a sophisticated adolescent reader such as the adolescent Mahy may respond to the text's puns, sophisticated vocabulary, allusions, symbolism, and the richness of the figurative language. How do these elements contribute to a full understanding of the final four chapters of the text?

There are two puns to describe Braque. One is Laura's use of the word "dummy" in the colloquialism, "What a dummy!" (156). For the unsophisticated reader, the phrase will express no more than Laura's disdain for Braque, who, in

attempting to disguise himself as an ordinary mortal by engaging in the very ordinary activity of pruning roses, reveals himself as an oddity by pruning them several months late. On the other hand, the sophisticated reader will realise that the phrase implies that Braque's physical self is no more than a mannequin, animated by a diabolical spirit. Most of the remaining puns are *double entendres* that refer to the developing physical relationship between Laura and Sorry. Two of these are underdetermined. When Kate remarks that Sorry has been "seeing more of Laura these days than I am" (207), the narrative adds, "Sorry looked sideways at Laura, and she could feel, almost as if she were thinking them herself, various answers cross his mind." The look "sideways", implies some private collusion, prodding the reader to infer the literal, "seeing more of", rather than the colloquial. The answer that Sorry gives, moves in a different direction:

> "Yes, well, don't look on it as losing a fourth former, Mrs Chant," he said at last. "Look on it as gaining a prefect!"
>
> "Or a Wild Life officer," suggested Laura, opening the door to let him out. (207)

Sorry's reply uses the register of wedding speeches, but the previous *double entendre* is not reinforced by it; rather it is overshadowed by the cleverness of Sorry's reply in one so young. Laura's reference to Sorry's training in the "Wildlife Division" could also be taken as an implication of his instinctual sensuality. If unsophisticated readers miss the sexual overtones in these puns, so the final *double entendre* may be missed: as Sorry works in his darkroom, he says, telepathically, "You're a wonderfully developed girl, Chant," (213).

Whilst puns may be overlooked by unsophisticated readers without their cognizance, sophisticated diction has the potential to alienate unsophisticated readers who may respond to such diction with a sense of bewilderment or, at worst, inadequacy. In the final four chapters the following words may have such an effect for many of the fourth form readers implied by the age and stage of the central protagonist: "arcadian" (156), "vociferously" (174), and "plaintively" (204). Similarly, the allusions to Mr Pickwick (158) and Shelley (167) will automatically alienate many actual readers from the implied reader, whereas the "NO EXIT" (156) symbolism of the road sign on the street Carmody Braque lives on will be naïvely accepted for its literal meaning by many without any sense that something has been missed. Those who see in the road sign an implication of the danger inherent in Laura's attempt to subjugate Braque will also have a heightened sense of the irony of the setting's physical description: "The home address led them to a fashionable hill suburb, every home designed by some architect, every garden the result of professional landscape design. PRIVATE ROAD said the sign. NO EXIT" (156). Not only is the danger implicit, but its implication draws attention to the irony of Braque's hideous presence amongst dwellings designed to beautify and to the ironic link between the inhabitants' careful planning of their sections and Braque's careful planning to ensnare Jacko.

Mahy's figurative language is often what distinguishes her from other writers for adolescents. Its richness implies adolescents who approximate to the adolescent Mahy, because the comparisons are often pregnant with multiple possibilities, networking any one reader to a range of possible interpretations, yet similarly implying a single core of meaning. In the final four chapters of The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance, Carmody Braque is described in animal imagery. The core meaning of this imagery is Braque's lack of the qualities that constitute what it means to be human. Additionally, each image conjures multiple possibilities. Hence, when Laura could see that Braque's "round dome was covered with a fine fluff of new hair, like the down on a rabbit only a few days old" (158), the reference to a young rabbit implies not only Jacko, as the source of Braque's rejuvenation, but it also brings to mind the fact that Braque was once a juvenile. By inferring the child-Braque, a reader has the potential to explore the possibility that Braque was not always evil, that he had once been innocent, even that his malevolence may be as much the result of familial dysfunction as Sorry's lack of human qualities was. Soon after, Braque's nature is compared to an eagle (161-162). Again, the reference to the animal kingdom revolves around Braque's lack of human qualities, but the reader who dwells upon the image can also come to understand that Braque is acting upon his basic instincts, just as the hawk does when it "tear[s] a live mouse in two" (162). The understanding may not move the reader to forgive Braque, but it may deepen response to the text by overcoming simplistic notions of innate malice. Later still, Braque is compared to a "frantic, stunted goblin" (167). Some may infer Rumplestiltskin from this image: he, too, underestimated the perspicacity and resourcefulness of his enemy. The goblin image is followed by a comparison between Braque and a crab: "He looked more like a desperate crab than any sort of man"(167); and, finally, to a parrot: "His protruding tongue was now quite black and round, a parrot's tongue in a man's mouth" (192). In both cases, the reader who approximates to the adolescent Mahy has the potential to temper a view of the animal-Braque, who is the oppressor, with a sense of sympathy for the once-human-Braque, who is the oppressed. He is reduced to a scuttling, devolving victim, only capable of pleading and of parroting his centuries-old motivation of needing "To feel... to feeeel..." (192, sic).

Inventively, Mahy links Braque and Laura through imagery. Laura's temptation to be cruel by exacting revenge upon Braque is also expressed in animal imagery, suggesting that more links her and Braque than supernatural power alone: "her voice slid ahead of her along the immaculate white walls, slipping like a serpent across the glossy floor. 'Your turn now! Your turn Mr Carmody Bloody Braque'" (178). Because the text is in sympathy with Laura, this link through animal imagery gives added weight to the possibility that the text implies some sympathy for Braque, and subsequently invites the reader to speculate about what brought him to malevolence. Moreover, the link implies some criticism of Laura, indicating the dangers of being motivated by the desire for revenge. The second such link occurs

when Sorry says to Laura: "Are you playing with your mouse a bit?" (184). Primarily, the image links cruelty with the animal kingdom, implying that humanity is defined by interpersonal love rather than flesh and blood; but secondarily, the image again casts Braque as a victim. Only once does the text overtly refer to the origins of Braque's malicious method of self-preservation: when Sorry tries to talk Laura out of torturing Braque by saying, "I suppose he [Braque] was a real man once but he got stuck, and maybe what caught him was the sort of choice that you've got" (187). So, whilst unsophisticated readers have just the one bite at the apple, sophisticated readers have two: one is overt, the other is implied in the imagery. Additionally, sophisticated readers have the potential to perceive a multiplicity of apples when the unsophisticated reader may see just the one.

The Educated Adult Reader

So, the text's puns, sophisticated vocabulary, allusions, symbolism, and the richness of the figurative language contribute to a full understanding of the final four chapters, and, hence, to the novel as a whole. They also imply a sophisticated adolescent reader of the sort who might approximate to the adolescent Mahy, sometimes to the exclusion of the unsophisticated reader. There are times, however, when somebody beyond the adolescent reader is being implied, such as when Sorry quotes Shakespeare's Sonnet 116 in response to Laura's claim that Sorry is too much in love with her to be truly free: "An ever-fixed mark," Sorry said uncertainly, "looking on t-tempests and never b-being shaken, and all that?" (214, sic). Response is deepened in the reader who recognises the quotation as an allusion to one of the greatest love poems in English literature.

Much more obscure is Mahy's evocation of Tolkien's essay Tree and Leaf. To say that Sonnet 116 is by far the better known of the two may be a substantial understatement. The allusion to Tree and Leaf initially concerns the novel's other love story, that between Laura's mother, Kate, and Chris Holly. Chris is a Canadian who is in charge of the library's New Zealand room (a nice irony there) and who gives Kate a new zeal for life. When Laura surprises her mother by turning up first thing in the morning, there is, in turn, a surprise for Laura in that Chris Holly's car is still outside. Where the hermeneutic code clearly determines the extra-marital sex of Harry's father in The Tricksters, it underdetermines the sexual relationship between Chris Holly and Laura's mother, Kate, in The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance by never overtly linking Chris's car, (and, later, the morning sound of his electric shaver) to sleeping with Kate. The underdetermination allows a variety of responses depending upon sexual awareness. Whilst the implied reader is a sexually aware person, those who are not sexually aware are not alienated. The episode containing the allusion to Tree and Leaf is preceded by Laura's angry offer of sex to Sorry: "perversely enough, Laura now found she was really longing for Kate once more, as if by offering herself so insultingly to Sorry she had in some way caught up with her mother or got her own back on her" (120). Again, the underdetermination allows

for a variety of responses depending upon the sexual awareness of the reader. When Kate says "in a careful voice" that "I wasn't expecting you to turn up quite so early in the morning", Laura replies, "Anyone could have told that" (121). The underdetermination could again be missed by many adolescent readers.

However, three developments certainly imply an educated adult reader, even to the exclusion and alienation of the sophisticated adolescent reader. Firstly, Kate explains to Laura that "I needed some sort of *consolation* and *escape*" (122, my italics). Secondly, when Laura contrasts Kate's new love for Chris with Kate's stale love for Laura's father, her thoughts are described in the following terms: "yet true love had brought Kate unhappiness, and she herself had turned to a man she had known for only two days for *consolation* and *escape*" (189, my italics). Thirdly, the thematically central description of Laura's misgivings about a relationship with Sorry, who has hitherto been estranged from his humanity, ends with the statement, "Maybe he had chosen estrangement wisely and should stay estranged, even though he could see in her [Laura] the possibility of *consolation* and *escape*" (208, my italics). *Consolation* and *escape* are two of the functions of fairy tale according to Tolkien (Tree and Leaf 58-59). Tolkien's beliefs about "Faerie", and *eucatastrophe* in particular, are, in part, an extension of Tolkien's Christian framework of thought. He took these ideas seriously and saw them having a significance beyond the mere distraction of stories, so Kate and Laura's comments are loaded with overtones that rise above the apparent escapism of their diction. Read without knowledge of the allusion, Kate's tone is easily misinterpreted as implying a superficiality in her relationship with Chris. Similarly, a reader who did not realise the full impact of Tolkien's use of *consolation* and *escape*, could misinterpret Laura's tone as belittling the new relationships formed by her mother and herself. Hence, in allusion, an educated reader is implied to the exclusion of the adolescent reader. Of plot, Aristotle claimed, "in the plot, a certain length is necessary, and a certain length *which can be easily embraced by the memory*" (Aristotle 59, my italics). Applied to this particular aspect of the symbolic code, one could add that not only is Mahy writing for the educated adult reader, but also for the educated adult reader who is capable of recalling subtle aspects of the semic code.

Perhaps adolescent readers respond to Mahy's genre-crossing as much as adult readers. Of course, they will recognise the romantic conventions such as the obvious magnetism that has existed between Sorry and Laura for two years, but had yet to manifest itself in anything other than looks, pregnant with promise, across the playground. There is romance's convention in Laura's belief that she can see something in Sorry that nobody else can. There is romance's convention of initial conflict in eventual lovers: when Laura comes to Sorry at night to ask him to use his powers as a witch, Sorry gets angry because he had assumed a more intimate purpose for the visit. Throughout the growth of the relationship there is a tension that continues despite the development of intimacy and trust: Sorry continues to call

her by her surname, Chant; Laura continues to assert her independence; Sorry continues to lend his sexual desires verbal strength. However, there is a feminist bent to the romance that connects it with a network of fiction stretching at least as far back as Jane Eyre. Jane's relationship with Rochester was never going to be an equitable one while he held the rod of financial and physical power. For their relationship to be truly equal, it was as necessary for their relationship that Rochester be physically humbled as it was for Jane to be financially independent. Similarly, Laura's changeover is not only connected to the supernatural, adolescent and familial plots, but also to the romantic one. It makes her Sorry's equal; and as has been said above, it tempers Sorry's use of his power. Mahy's Rochester does not need to be physically emasculated; he gains hormonal self-control from a spiritual alteration in nature rather than a physical one, indicating a subtle revision of Bronte's answer to sexual politics. As with The Catalogue of the Universe, The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance has a failed old relationship operating in counterpoint to the successful incipient one. Kate and Stephen's failed marriage of 15 years, and the wounds that still exist just under the surface for all involved, justify the tensions between Laura and Sorry and breathe intensity into Laura's ability to assert herself and her need to become Sorry's equal in magic.

The other two genres clearly discernible in The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance are fantasy and the problem novel - normally thought of as being opposites. Fantasies are considered escapist; problem novels are considered realist. Yet Mahy interconnects the two with romance. Like the best of jugglers, she performs the integration with apparent ease, mostly attributable to the use of sub-plots for familial issues (as is detailed in Chapter Two). Just as the romantic genre is multi-levelled in that it contains several relationships at different stages, so it is with the other genres. The problem novel genre is implied in the web of adulterated adult relationships in Laura's family and rejection and child-abuse in Sorry's family. The fantasy genre is manifest in a lemure (a spirit that sucks the life out of humans in order to live in the physical world), three witches, whose powers are hereditary, and a "sensitive" who can sense magic but cannot effect it, much like Barney in The Haunting. Furthermore, there is a rich interweaving of the symbols of power from many different sources. In the process of Laura's changeover, there are collocations of allusions. Some are clichés of the fantasy genre: the full moon, a sword and a wand, and the traditional black cat. Mahy gets away with this because the clichés are spread between other allusions, such as to fairy tales: Sleeping Beauty, "the forest at the heart of fairy tales" (144),

> dwarfs, lost princes, beautiful girls who had committed themselves to silence in order to save brothers turned into swans or ravens, young men who thrived on sunshine and dwindled with darkness, mutilated maidens who wept over their own silver arms, and then simpler people, three bears, the girl in the red hood, the lost children who

> found their way home, the lost children who didn't and were covered with leaves by the robins. (145)

The changeover passage also alludes to classic children's stories such as Alice in Wonderland and The Wizard of Oz. It alludes to Christianity in its references to a demon and an evil spirit, the association of blood with wine, the baptismal associations of water and the phrase "born again" (151). There are mixtures of mythological symbols and archaeological ones in the mention of the unicorn and "the hearts of Aztec sacrifices" (146), and even an allusion to Poetry Today, "a well-known school textbook" (150). Even the similes have potential to establish a network of allusionary response such as "If she had been an Egyptian mummy" (140) and "like pregnant, primitive goddesses" (145). So, the clichés sit quite comfortably with the other allusions and together the effect is a *tour de force* of magic symbols. Of emblems, Mahy says: "the emblem gives access to memory, to emotions, to a certain sort of interpretive energy held in the matrix of the imagination" ("Emblems and Journeys" 32, sic). However, when it comes to memory, allusions are given power in direct proportion to the reader's recall and response to the literature being alluded to, therefore they imply the educated adult reader more than the adolescent reader.

The Re-Reader

When describing sophisticated responses to aspects of The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance, whether it be from an adolescent or an adult, is it possible that similar responses could be made by a re-reader, even a relatively unsophisticated one? It is possible, for example, that re-readers may realise the networks that link Braque to the wolves in "Little Red Riding Hood" (or "Little Red-Cap" in the Grimms' version) and "The Three Little Pigs". The connections are underdetermined. Usually, the allusion is made through references to Braque's teeth (163, 164, and 190). Once, it is made through the diction describing his demonic hunger: "all this talk is making me *hungry, my dear*" (163, my underlining). Only once is it made explicit. That is when Laura telepathically calls Jacko out of his coma: "The wicked wolf is gone and the little pig can come out of his brick house and play," she says (175). It is more likely that a re-reader will see such networks, but it is unlikely that any reader other than a close reader will ever see them.

By contrast, allusions the reader is ignorant of will never be accurately understood regardless of the number of times it is re-read. "By the pricking of my thumbs...," says Sorry when seeing Braque emerge from his house (157). The phrase is sufficiently unusual to cause the re-reader in particular, to stop to consider its function. Those re-readers who do not recognise its source could be forgiven for assuming that it connects Sorry to Sleeping Beauty. Such an assumption is not in conflict with the novel's symbolic codes. However, when the reader recognises it as an allusion to the Second Witch in Macbeth (IV:1, 61), two things become clear. Firstly, the supernatural similarities between Sorry and the Second Witch. Subtly,

Mahy is reminding the reader of Sorry's potential for evil. Secondly, as is suggested by the ellipsis, Mahy offers the reader the satisfaction of completing the quotation, thereby making accurate sense of the allusion: "By the pricking of my thumbs, / Something wicked this way comes."

Whilst re-readers are not necessarily advantaged, By virtue of familiarity with the text and the likelihood of dwelling on its significance beyond a string of events, re-readers are the most likely readers to knit thematic threads. Hence, it is the re-reader who is implied in a metaphor for bad luck which has Braque as its vehicle. This thematically-central metaphor is composed of three clear threads: Braque is described as an embodiment of "a dreadful machinery at work" in the world (161); then he claims to be one of life's chances (162); and later Laura is said to understand that this is a "dangerous world where both wickedness and blind chance might make you lose what you loved most for no reason at all" (174). The multiplicity of similar networks vindicates Betsy Herne's reference to Mahy's "artful structuring of this book" (Herne 412). Artful structuring calls for a sophisticated response, the sort that a re-reader is best qualified to make.

It is my view that the result of the multiplicity of readers is laudable, worthy of close reading and analysis, but results in taking aspects of the novel beyond the comprehension of many adolescents, whether re-readers or not [7]. However, by exploring those aspects, Mahy's novels become "curiouser" because it is there that sophisticated readers will find deeper meaning.

The Tricksters

The Tricksters is Mahy's most complex book in the *oeuvre*. In stylistics, it is classic Mahy, but in development, each element of style is generally more complex than the other novels. Its melodrama derives intensity and complexity from dealing with the ambivalent attractions of being mastered and being self-determined. The novel's evocation of adolescent empowerment is double-edged, depicting its potential to raise demons as well as to raze them. Some of its ubiquitous linguistic surprises and allusions require elaborate explications. Its hermeneutic code contains at least four central enigmas of equal complexity; all resolutions, bar one, result in reader-surprise despite thorough underdetermination; each interweaves to discuss similar themes. Its intra-textuality (that is, its links between one Mahy novel and another) explores two generic Mahy themes more assiduously than in previous Mahy novels. Do each of these textual elements imply one reader at the expense of others?

The Formal-Operational Reasoner and the Publishers' Target Audience

The transition from concrete thinking to formal-operational reasoning is the last of Piaget's major transitions in cognitive development. Therefore, as with The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance, the formal-operational thinker is implied throughout. On the other hand, the publishers' target audience - mid to late teenagers - is implied at most times, but not at all times. They are implied most strongly in this novel by Harry's involvement in melodramatic events and in her melodramatic romantic fantasies. By far the most terrifying thrill of the novel is when Harry inadvertently pulls the ghost of long-dead Teddy Carnival out of the subaquatic rock. Her earlier incantation had been based on her desire to be as special as her exciting elder sister Christobel, and to have the family status held by Christobel and her elder brother, Charlie. She uttered the incantation in fun, wishing its fulfilment, but never imagining its success. When her hand reaches through rock and meets another hand, the melodramatic thrill comes from shock and fear of the supernatural; it is compounded with the knowledge that Teddy Carnival's drowned body was never found. The other motivating force behind her incantation was her desire for romance, "to be overwhelmed by something so whirling and powerful she could never be expected to resist it" (22), and, indeed, it is to her writing that she attributes the ghostly touch rather than to the ghost of Teddy Carnival.

In a typical Mahy network, the key melodramatic event is connected to the key melodramatic desire. Harry is in the process of writing a novel which is an avenue for expressing her strong teenage desires for a masterful romance. She identifies with her fictional character, Jessica, who is mastered by Belen, a winged stallion: "*They fell together onto the quilt of fallen blossoms as if on to a bed of silver and ivory. 'Now you will be mine,' said Belen. 'You can't escape. In the end you will beg me to possess you.'* " (51). Harry thinks of Belen as a "secret lover" of whom she was "ashamed" (14), yet when she goes to bed she writes "boldly of Jessica, safe in the arms of her hero Conrad, but unable to forget the *thrilling violations* of Belen, her enemy-lover" (95, my italics). However, when melodrama turns to drama and she is actually sexually threatened by Hadfield, she hates it. Having fought him off, she then crosses out the part of her story (quoted above) in which Belen rapes Jessica. Hence, Harry seems to have matured beyond "the idea that it might be exciting to have choice taken away from her" (106). If Mahy had left this issue there, it would have been complex enough, but from apparent resolution grows ambivalence as the text follows this with an enigmatic allusion to Yeats' "Leda and the Swan". Harry remembers Yeats' version of Zeus' seduction of Leda with sorrow, wondering if by crossing out her story, she had ruined the possibility of being Leda (106-107). Mahy sustains this ambivalence right to the end when Harry repeats her initial betrothal to the sea: "I've married the sea. I'm Mrs Oceanus. Everything comes out of me" (24 & 263). Where the first betrothal was connected to masterful loving and resulted in chaos, the second is less a betrothal

than an exercise of adolescent power. Indeed, it has an extraordinary effect, part magic, part orgasmic, in which "she was indeed possessed *by the brute blood of the air* so powerfully but so delicately it was like no possession she had ever imagined" (263, my italics). With Carnival's Hide exorcised of its spirit and Carnival's Beach exorcised of Teddy's ghost, and with Belen crossed out and burnt up, there is nothing supernatural left to interfere with her own magical power. Whilst the actual teenage readers may lose some of the connections in the complexities of this process, they will nevertheless be left with no choice but to believe that Harry's last act of magic wells up from an internal source of power. While many would want to argue that Harry's femaleness is the source of that power, I would argue that its source is her adolescent self-definition which has found individuality when her family seemed to threaten it. (I also suspect that it is adolescent readers who would best define where her power emanates from.)

However, Mahy's generic depiction of adolescent empowerment is made unique in The Tricksters by its double-edge. Much of the familial tension in the novel arises from Harry's sense of being in Christobel's shadow. Christobel has frequently put Harry down, sometimes intentionally, other times inadvertently. Mostly, Harry suffers from a "middle child" syndrome: a sense of inadequacy in self-comparison to older siblings which is sharpened by bitterness that the needs of younger siblings have taken parental priority over her own. So, when Harry discovers that Christobel has been mocking her story and refuses to apologise for doing so, Harry is moved to reveal the terrible secret that Jack, her father, is also Tibby's father. This is also the novel's *dyscatastrophe*. Harry's disclosure wrenches sibling rivalry and paternal lechery from the safety of secrecy. It is exactly what Ovid has been hoping to achieve since Harry drew him out of the rock. It is not anger alone that motivated Harry. It is too simple to suggest that it was the straw that broke the camel's back and Mahy does not allow such simplicity of interpretation. Firstly, Harry's new-found sexual power has given her a new confidence to speak in ways she has not spoken before. Secondly, Mahy links Harry's anger to the schizophrenia represented by the triplicate Carnival brothers when she describes Harry's heart splitting from her head in the face of Christobel's obstinacy (229). Despite Christobel's obstinacy, and Harry's schizophrenic split, Harry still resists exploding. Thirdly, however, Christobel actually tries to force Harry to publicly admit that the story deserved ridicule. Fourthly, Harry felt that in Christobel's criticism of the story-book love there was mockery of Harry and Felix (239). Fifthly, the narrative reveals that Harry "had always wanted to be the one to tell Christobel this secret" (230). So, whilst there were external catalysts, Harry's exertion of power has its source in a new self that is defined by knowledge - carnal and otherwise - and desire. According to Plato, desire is defined by lack; but in Harry, the desire to tell the secret is much more an overflow of new-found strength than its absence.

So, Harry's power is adolescent in source, but destructive in effect. It creates rifts between Christobel and her father, Christobel and her best friend Emma, Christobel and Harry herself. It terrifies Serena and mystifies Benny. Retrospectively, it was also her power, in part, that raised Teddy's ghost from the bay in the form of Ovid, Hadfield and Felix. Together, Ovid and Hadfield have caused a pub brawl, fisticuffs on the beach, menaced Harry and her parents, plotted Harry's humiliation and orchestrated the family bust-up. Ovid has been the catalyst for cancelling what had seemed an imminent engagement between Christobel and Robert, and Harry has lost her virginity to somebody who does not seem to exist. All in all, Harry's power might seem to be in league with the forces of chaos. However, from the carnage grows hope. This novel's *liberating eucatastrophe* is total for the mortal characters as well as for the supernatural ones. Family tensions are not only relieved, but there is the hope for closer relations to come than would otherwise have been possible; for example, Christobel has now come to a perception of her father that goes beyond child-like simplicity. She accepts Jack's human frailties, defining him by broader terms than his role in the family (259). "I'm going to force happy endings out of all this," she says (260). Robert's lengthy and troubled romance with Christobel has been replaced by a more compatible one with Emma. In losing her virginity, Harry has gained in knowledge and power. The reverse side of empowerment is abuse of power. Mahy rescues her teenage protagonist from the effects of power gone mad, and implies to her teenage readers that their power may bring turbulence, but good can come of it.

An Approximation to the Adolescent Mahy (and the Educated Adult Reader)
The adolescent Mahy is, perhaps, most discernible in the *oeuvre's* ubiquitous linguistic surprises and allusions. In some cases, these require more elaborate explications in The Tricksters than in the other novels and actual readers who approximate most to the implied adolescent Mahy have a considerable advantage over those who do not.

Mahy's ubiquitous linguistic surprises enliven The Tricksters, as they do her other novels. Her customary supernatural figurative language is also customarily ambiguous so that readers are often unsure whether the description implies some literal magic. Carnival's Hide is described variously as "a Magician's sign" (1), and a place of "*extra* summer" (5): "Its dormer window looked out to sea across curved *wands* of bougainvillea" (12, my italics). The path between Carnival's Hide and Carnival's Beach is similarly personified: "the path that had carried the little ones off to the beach simultaneously delivered two sandy men" (17). Mahy's supernatural figurative language suspends the reader's certainty in the actual supernatural events. If one is metaphoric, then why not the other? If one is literal, then why not the other? Indeed, it is just this sort of suspense that delays readers from concluding, with Harry, that the Carnival brothers are physical embodiments of Harry's imagination. However, it is in a particular pun and an allusion that the reader who

approximates to the adolescent Mahy is enlightened at the expense of less sophisticated readers.

Mahy employs a highly sophisticated pun in The Tricksters. When first faced with the Carnival brothers, Harry "knew at once that they had crawled out of a wrong gap in the world, that they had struggled through holding on to a silken *clew* of her own story" (53, my italics). In mythology, the clew is a ball of thread used to guide someone through a labyrinth, so its use is a wonderfully appropriate metaphor for the manner in which Harry drew Teddy out of the labyrinth of time and imagination through the subaquatic rock. As a homophone of clue, *clew* also emphasises the detective genre that pervades the Teddy Carnival plot of this novel and that concludes with an unravelling of the cause of Teddy's death and its motives. Edward Carnival killed his son Teddy, and Teddy planned it that way as his final victory over a demagogue. In fact, the pun implies that somewhere in Harry's own story, there is a thread of information that will link her story to the true identity of the Carnival brothers. Actually, there are two such threads Firstly, Harry's desire to have a masterful lover, as has been discussed above, links her story to the masterful father, Edward Carnival. Secondly, just as Harry's story is the result of a desire for raw passion, so Teddy's death was the result of passionate hatred. Whilst the teenage reader is implied in the theme of adolescent empowerment, the same reader may lose the thread of Harry's power, without the knowledge of what the word "clew" means. Once again, it is at the point where one reader is implied at the expense of other readers that interpretation expands and clarifies meaning.

Much later in the novel, Mahy makes a subtle echo of the clew pun. When preparations are being made for a Christmas Eve beach party, the tide-line is described as an assortment of flotsam and jetsam that must be cleaned up. The debris brought in by the tide indicates that "other people were sharing the harbour with them. Out beyond this line, other people were enjoying other Christmases, perhaps as mixed as their own" (180). The novel makes a number of references to the beach's tide-line, and on this occasion it describes it as a "long, untidy clue" which Harry would like to follow, "knowing that it would lead her safely through a strange maze" (180). The text is doing several very sophisticated things at once. In recalling the earlier clew, it reminds the reader of the detective genre moving through the novel; it differentiates between the clear reality of the physical evidence of the tide-line, and the shadowy reality of the silken clew; and it links the universality of the tide-line and the people it represents to the universality of the novel's themes, such as the difficulties of being a middle child, the effect of guilt, the effects of infidelity, and so on.

The clew is also a clue to a significant allusion. Harry's given name is Ariadne. The adolescent well-read in Greek mythology would see the potential in that name for foreshadowing the dénouement and will link it to the earlier use of

"clew". Despite telling Felix that it is too grand for her, Harry, like the mythological Ariadne, will fall in love, will assist in the destruction of a supernatural monster, and her Theseus will desert her. However, Mahy's revisionist tendencies result in a more self-determined Ariadne than the Greek one, so the reader who recognises the significance of her name will have a heightened sense of the victory of Harry's final magic. The practice of foreshadowing by using sophisticated allusions is common in The Tricksters.

Another example of when the sophisticated reader is implied at the expense of others is when Felix says, "You see, we were sent to account with all our imperfections on our head" (129). Harry's reply shows that he is alluding to Shakespeare, but no more is made of it. It is part of the speech uttered by the ghost of King Hamlet (Hamlet, Prince of Denmark I.v.78-79). In content it adds little to the novel until it is understood in context. By associating Felix with a ghost, it suggests his own ghostly nature, although this will already be obvious to most readers. By associating Felix with the injustice of King Hamlet's fratricide, it suggests family foul play in Felix/Teddy's death, thereby foreshadowing a resolution to that enigma. In context, King Hamlet is saying that his sudden death precluded a chance to put his soul right with God. One of Prince Hamlet's chief dilemmas is deciding whether avenging his father's death is effecting justice or participating in villainy. Similarly, the reader who recognises the quotation is led to ask what purpose Teddy's return serves - creative, or destructive? The question is not posed in any overt way anywhere in the novel, so sophisticated readers have a particular edge over others in this allusion.

Another approximation to the adolescent Mahy is found in the typically large number of central enigmas in the hermeneutic code, their characteristic underdetermination, and their individual sophistication. The Tricksters contains four central enigmas of equal complexity; all their resolutions, bar one, result in reader-surprise despite thorough underdetermination; each interweaves to discuss similar themes. The four central enigmas are the identity and nature of the Carnival triplets; the balance of power between Felix and the other two triplets; Anthony Hesketh's place in the scheme of things; and the source of tensions between parents Jack and Naomi.

The Re-Reader

The re-reader is implied in the last three of these enigmas because the re-reader's knowledge of their resolutions enables them to follow their determination and consider their place in the novel's thematic network. Take the relationship between the Carnival triplets, for example. It symbolises the psychological phenomenon of conflicting natures within an individual, which, in turn, symbolises the theme of family power struggles. The most enigmatic part of it is that as Felix grows in the

power to love, his brothers seem to grow in animosity and ambition for chaos. The determination is developed through twenty references:

1. Ovid says, "In our family I'm the head, and Felix is the heart, and Hadfield's a simple predator" (67).

2. When Hadfield refers to their brotherly struggle for power, Ovid says, "I'm the best at it, and Felix is the worst" (68-69).

3. Ovid says of their inter-relations, "I'm its head [...] Hadfield occasionally gets the better of me, and Felix is always giving himself airs, not that it does him any good" (70).

4. Hadfield comments to Ovid that Felix might take them over without their father "to beat him out of us" (107).

5. Despite the flippant way that Felix seems to treat Hadfield's assault upon Harry, Harry can tell that Felix is upset (110). This indicates Felix's ability to operate independently of his brothers.

6. In a form of self-defence against his affective side, Ovid tells Harry that Felix is the dangerous one (110).

7. "Felix broke the symmetry" formed by the brothers (111).

8. Felix claims that Harry could help him to become the powerful brother (124).

9. Harry sees the beginning of a different smile in Felix to that of Hadfield's (130).

10. Felix suggests that his intimacy with Harry will give him power over Hadfield and Ovid (130-131).

11. Felix's smile "was being increasingly altered by doubt", whereas Hadfield's "was taking on a malicious edge" (165).

12. Where Hadfield had nothing good at heart, "Felix had become a different sort of man" (170).

13. Ovid calls Felix "silly", believing that he would have revealed their secrets to Harry (173). He goes on to say that "what touches him [Felix] touches us all" (174), and that Felix is "too susceptible" (175).

14. When Ovid kisses Christobel, Hadfield breaks into derisive applause. Yet Harry perceives dismay on his face and, when he turns to Felix there is challenge, threat, but respect too (191).

15. Felix claims that his brothers are disowning him (194) at the same time that he is "becoming more eloquent in their lives" (195). The eloquence is evident in Ovid's unexpected feelings for Christobel.

16. Ovid says that Felix is invading him, "I'm losing my light-heartedness" (198). In fact, his light-heartedness is being consumed by love-heartedness.

17. Hadfield claims angrily that it was Felix's influence on him that stopped him from raping Harry: "I can work with Ovid. But you'd alter me too much. [...] You're shifting me already" (199). Hadfield then physically attacks Felix.

18. As Felix gains in strength, Ovid and Hadfield become physically weaker: "their skins had become a little more grainy, their eyes shadowed, Hadfield's face paler, Ovid's ringlets less buoyant" (205).

19. Felix tells Harry that "We were caught up in your story-book people, but it didn't matter. It suited us all to argue as separate men, rather than struggle as one. And in a way it set me free, to make my bid for power, to grow strong" (224).

20. Felix exerts his power by dissolving his brothers: " 'Behold how mind and instinct become the servants of the heart,' he announced like a showman. '*I* am the true Carnival magician. Hey presto!' " (234). With that, he dissolved, and his brothers followed him.

Because there is so much else to focus on in this complex novel, it is the re-reader who is most likely to puzzle over the enigmas represented in this particular development. Despite the growing power of Felix, the heart, his brothers continue to cause fights, to menace the Hamilton parents, to plot family disintegration. Yet, Felix has his influence: Hadfield, the predator, resists raping Harry, and Ovid, the head, finds himself falling in love with Christobel rather than merely playing her along in his usual light-hearted manner. Yet, if there is strength in the heart's dominance, why is it Felix who effects exorcism? Felix's triumph is to rectify the "imperfections on our head". Teddy Carnival's murder was a triumph for the head, but such an unbalanced ghost cannot forever enter a state of "Carne vale" - the putting aside of flesh - until balance is achieved. Whilst Teddy's return leads to *dyscatastrophe*, his restored balance through Felix is part of the novel's *eucatastrophe*. The readers who were led to ask if Teddy's return was destructive or creative have their answer. Moreover, as a symbol of family unity and psychological coherence, they illustrate the importance of balance. Again, focus upon one implied reader at the expense of others results in additional meaning.

Memory

So, understanding of each novel is clearly expanded by identifying textual elements which imply one reader at the expense of others. Is it possible that one of the implied readers is one who has read the whole *oeuvre* and is familiar with Mahy's children's works as well? If so, is there anything to be gained by knowing a raft of Mahy's works when reading Memory?

There is certainly an advantage for the reader who knows The Other Side of Silence. Even though it was published well after Memory, the semic code in The Other Side of Silence seems to precede the earlier novel. The first sentence of Memory describes Jonny Dart, "Groping his way through darkness, certain he was no longer on the *true* path" (1, my italics). Not only does "true" imply the intended path, it also implies a true/false dichotomy and interconnects with The Other Side of

Silence, where each chapter is headed alternately "True" and "Real". So in Memory, "true" and truth may imply something different from "real" and reality. Jonny is in a drunken haze. He is literally and mentally in the dark, off the intended path, groping. Metaphorically, he is off the path of truth groping for some light. But all is not lost, because when he is not experiencing *true* life, he may be experiencing *real* life. There is no illusion in this opening sentence except for those who fail to see its potential for conveying the state of Jonny's mind beyond its mere drunkenness. It is not necessary to know The Other Side of Silence to see the potential for ambiguity in "true", but it is necessary to know it to simultaneously link it to a desire to fuse a true life to a real one as Hero does in The Other Side of Silence. Knowing that is the key to understanding Memory in which Jonny needs to discover which of his schizophrenic memories about the death of his sister, Janine, is *real*. Did he push her, or did she fall? And he also needs to sort out his *true* identity: Jonny yearns for a life that is different from his real one, "to have another secret self, something fierce and wild and full of uncontrollable power, as different as possible from the way he was in real life" (25).

Seldom is there such a strong advantage to the reader in knowing one particular novel. Mostly, it is knowledge of the generic aspects which will be advantageous to the reader. For example, there is an almost universal concern in Mahy's work with perceptions of reality and illusion. "'But there wasn't a real dragon,' said the mother. 'It was just a story I made up.'" [8] This revelation is made in The Lion in the Meadow, the first of Mahy's children's stories to be published as an independent book rather than as part of a Department of Education Journal. It reveals that the mother inadvertently magicked a dragon into existence, a revelation that is startling for its implications for the power of fiction. Simply by entertaining, in the womb of her imagination, the unlikely possibility that there may be a dragon in a matchbox - made all the more startling by her use of it as a solution to the improbable problem of what to do with the lion in the meadow - the mother gives birth to a monster of such proportions that it frightens the lion into co-operation with the boy. The mother, in turn, is so frightened by her power that she "never ever made up a story again." [9] The point that interests me in this peculiar story is Mahy's evocation of the issue of how the perception of reality alters events. The text does not resolve the enigma of whether or not the lion and the dragon are actually part of the Secondary World of the story, or whether they are no more than extensions of the boy's imagination. Mahy has said that she imagined the lion and the dragon to be real to both the boy and the mother, but that is not how the illustrators have presented it.

The same preoccupation pervades Mahy's The Pirate Uncle, written for children in the middle childhood years: "Uncle Ludovic was strange flickering between being a real uncle and a story-book pirate. Where did the real leave off and the story book begin?" (47). Many of her Adolescent Novels also involve elements

of the supernatural. Even in them, the line between personal experience and magical experience is sometimes blurred, such as Harry's odd experience in the sea at the end of The Tricksters (described above). However, even in those Adolescent Novels whose settings exclude conventional magic, supernatural figurative language lends ambiguity to the nature of reality as does the following personification from Underrunners: "Once again the land seemed to have a heart, beating through invisible underrunners, through the poles of the house and the soles of his feet and up into his head" (68). On this occasion the rhythm is caused by the water pump, but the imagery is carried to impossible lengths. At other times, it is in events themselves, even very ordinary events, when the threshold between reality and illusion is explored. In The Tricksters, there is more to Anthony Hesketh than he initially admits to. For personal reasons, and then out of embarrassment, he does not inform the Hamiltons that he is a descendant of the Carnivals, and that Minerva, Teddy's sister, had confided knowledge of Edward's crime in him. Because of his inside knowledge, Anthony knows that the Carnival brothers are not "what they say they are" (72); he follows this statement by adding, "Though God help me, almost nobody is, I suppose" (73). Whilst his own deception is of no great import in the hermeneutic code, it illustrates a more everyday form of illusion than that practised by the Carnival brothers.

The issue of distinguishing between reality and illusion runs through the network of Mahy's Adolescent Novels like a silken clew. From the first sentence of Memory, the reader who knows of Mahy's interest in reality and illusion will find the clew and will subsequently read the text with an additional dimension. The first three chapters of Memory convey a subtextual typology of the threshold between reality and illusion. Within these chapters there are introductions to the novel's treatment of linguistic ambiguity, intentional deception, and accidental misunderstanding; alcohol-impaired memory, schizophrenic memory, and senile dementia; coincidence, surrealism, and fantastic imagination. Each twists new threads of understanding into Mahy's vision of reality.

Linguistic ambiguity is evident in a number of ways. The potential for inferring multiple meanings from a single word has already been discussed. The same potential exists in a name. Mahy's names often relate to characterisation and so it is with Bonny Benedicta. Jonny believes that Bonny has the ability to free him from his schizophrenic memory because she advised him to lie about the circumstances surrounding Janine's death, telling the authorities that Janine had been on the ledge by herself when she fell from the cliff. Whilst the lie had made things easier for Jonny at the time, his memory had been confused by it and at times he had come to think that perhaps the lie was necessary in order to conceal his own culpability: perhaps he had pushed Janine off the cliff at the Seacliff Heights Reserve. As the only other witness, Bonny is the only one who can confirm which of his memories is accurate. The guilty half of his memory is multiplied by the

effects of childhood persecution, resulting in unemployment, pub fights, and conflict with his father. So he seeks Bonny Benedicta. Her Christian name implies verve, and it links her phonetically to Jonny, foreshadowing their romantic compatibility. Her surname recalls Saint Benedict, the father of centuries of monastic order. So together, Bonny and Benedicta suggest both human energy and divine wisdom. Moreover, her name echoes *bonum et benedictum*: goodness and blessedness. Benedicta also suggests benediction, a final blessing. Not surprisingly, then, he learns the truth from her at the end of the novel, so the blessing comes as something of a redemption, symbolically taking place in the midst of a baptismal downpour. By redeeming him from his schizophrenic memory, Bonny proves that she is the one able to keep Jonny from falling, and to present him faultless. When linguistic ambiguity is distilled in this way, it conveys more than the reality of a label by which to identify one character from another; it also conveys a contrived reality that reveals the deft hand of the illusionist-author.

Mahy actually throws her punning into sharp relief when Jonny recalls Bonny's puns: running away to sea/*see*; and from the world into silence/ *whirled* into silence (23). The narrative voice then explains that "Though she had vanished immediately after Janine died, her [Bonny's] echo had gone on working for Jonny, twisting words and sometimes the things they stood for" (23). In this way, the text offers intimations of the reality/illusion theme to the reader, but it is the reader who is aware of this interest in Mahy's work who will most keenly perceive that in twisting words, one also alters perceptions of reality. Similarly, word choice can convey a reality contrapuntal to action. When Jonny is about to bed down in Sophie's spare room, he detects a domestic argument in progress next door. The diction used to describe the scene accentuates the fact that events are experienced differently for protagonists as for audience:

> [Jonny] found himself looking across some sort of a wall at another wall beyond, and there he saw an indistinct shadow-show, two people facing one another, and began to hear the sound of voices. Though he could not hear words, he could recognize that staccato beat of an argument. He watched for a second as the shadow puppets gesticulated in time to their words, each conducting a different tune. (48)

Jonny finds it "fascinating".

Another way the text conveys verbal shifts in reality is in intentional deception. Both in Bonny's "calm lie" (3) about Jonny's distance from Janine when she fell and in the media's reference to a firecracker at a protest march being an "explosive device" (15), the text echoes the mother's lie in The Lion in the Meadow. She did not believe that there was a dragon in the matchbox, but when the lie is believed it alters perception so much that it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Bonny's lie has grown in Jonny's imagination to the point where he believes he

remembers pushing Janine. Similarly, media exaggeration, although the text never explores it further, has the potential to become a virtual reality, affecting public perceptions of the protest march and accordingly public perception of the protesters' cause.

A difference in motivation exists between intentional deception and accidental misunderstanding, but reality is affected equally by each. When Jonny is invited into the Benedicta's house, the protesters assume that his injuries are the result of a clash with the police when they were actually the result of a drunken fight in a pub (6-9). Their misunderstanding results in initial camaraderie which rapidly turns to hostility when Jonny finally impresses the truth upon them. They treat accidental misunderstanding as intentional deception. A more pervasive form of misunderstanding in the novel is that caused by Sophie's senile dementia. In just about every conversation with Sophie there is dysfunctional communication in which Jonny sees beyond her words to the pathos of her twisted intellect. Even her phatic communion is based on inaccuracies as she talks mistakenly about the weather (45) and talks of an article she read seven years ago as if it were "yesterday" (45-46). In this grotesque way, Mahy highlights the ubiquitous difference between the intended reality and received reality of every conversation. Real communication, one could infer, is a rare thing.

Another way that Mahy evokes the threshold between reality and illusion is through Jonny's drunkenness. Firstly, his alcohol-perceived reality is esoteric:

> He drank a little more, although by now he felt as if he were watching them down a seething tunnel which was beginning to fall in on itself. Something was devouring the edges of the room. [...] His feet seemed miles away from the rest of him, a shifty disobedient frontier where he had once been complete master. (9)

Later, "his head felt detached" (13), an illusion he would be unhappy to real-ise. His drunkenness also affects the way people perceive him: hostility from his father, resignation from the Benedictas, some degree of humour from Max Dainton, wariness from other protesters. Secondly, alcohol impairs his memory. When Jonny awakes on the traffic island, he cannot recall how he got there (18). When Sophie takes him to Marribel Road, he cannot recall that a short while before he had discovered that Bonny lived there (31). Later again, he cannot recall if he had anything to drink at the Benedictas (46). The frustration of his impaired memory indicates something of life inside Sophie's head. Where hers is an accident of the machinery of life, his is engineered to deal with the strife in his life. Both indicate the frailty of memory, and the phenomenon of memory loss, illustrating its potential for humour as well as danger. There is real danger for Sophie in forgetting that her house is freehold. She has been conned into paying rent and is gradually whittling her savings away to satisfy the demands of her extortioners.

In addition to focussing on memory-loss, Mahy explores the effect of having a schizophrenic memory. As has been explained above, Jonny has two memories of Janine's death and he does not know which is the right one (15). In one of Mahy's characteristic linguistic surprises, she describes his schizophrenic memory as seeing through a "flawed glass of memory" (16) which economically suggests dual images and their distortion. Some well-publicised New Zealand court cases since the publication of Memory have dwelt on the unreliability of memory, the potential to misremember and to respond to the power of suggestion by conjuring mistaken "memories" at the expense of genuine ones, so once again, there is a profundity of thought behind Mahy's use of the reality/illusion theme. Additionally, Jonny suffers from a sort of schizophrenic or multiple personality:

> Several people were at war somewhere inside his head - a good-hearted boy who had once been a Scout and wanted to see an old lady safely home; the mad, searching Wolfman, expecting the city to guide him with magical clues even though he was not sure what he had been searching for; and a third man, overlapping the other two, but on the whole more real than either of them, who might suddenly take over and say, "For God's sake, what am I doing here? How did I get into this? How do I get out?" (38)

In my interview with Ms Mahy, she spoke of Jonny's schizophrenic memory as being in part the result of "a certain amount of childish anxiety, and also perhaps self-dramatisation," (Mahy Interview MM9). The same applies, I believe, to Jonny's sense of being several people. What he is in fact experiencing is the rather more common phenomenon of being multi-faceted and this novel is very much about the quest for a congruous personal integrity. The quest is partially successful as is evident in the responsible steps he takes to find long-term care for Sophie, his gainful employment, and the certainty of his answer to Sophie's opening gambit: "Are *you* the one?" (28) His initial reply was "I don't know," but his final one is, "I think I *am* the one. I truly think I am" (234). Readers of The Other Side of Silence would want to know why he was not "*really* and truly the one". They would also recognise the Rapper family in Jonny's penchant for dramatics when he takes Sophie out to hear a band. Nevertheless, with the healing of his schizophrenic memory, there is considerable resolution of identity.

Understanding, however, continues to elude Sophie West. Her senile dementia results in some humorous domestic displacement such as when Jonny discovers that the pigeon holes of her desk contain an incongruous assortment of items including a banana skin and a roll of toilet paper (43) and when Sophie mistakes Jonny for a relation who, in former times, had designs on her (44). Undoubtedly, a clear perception of reality eludes her to the point of illusion.

Mahy also conveys the fine line between reality and illusion in the mystery of coincidence. The plot relies on two equally unlikely coincidences. Firstly, and least

plausibly, Bonny is Sophie's neighbour. Secondly, Sophie is being extorted by a small gang whose leader was Jonny's boyhood tormentor, Nev Fowler. Nev had particularly disliked Jonny. Jonny's appearance on the Chicken-bits television advertisements, his bleached hair and his tap-dancing combined to produce acrimony in Nev. Nev had made Jonny tap-dance in the boys' toilet at school, had pushed his head into a toilet bowl and flushed water over it, and had threatened to kill him (32-33). Sophie's house is perhaps a little too coincidentally placed for Jonny to exorcise the phantom of Janine's death and to overcome his fear and sense of inadequacy resulting from Nev's childhood torments. However, it is a mistake to interpret this as authorial laziness. Far from it, the text addresses it directly: "All this time he had believed he was offering himself blindly to chance. His feet, independent and treacherous, had been purposefully dancing him back to scenes of torment" (32). Coincidence is a fact of life that has led many to believe in the fatedness of life whether in terms of social-determinism or divine intervention, so in representing an incredible coincidence, Mahy is doing no more than recreating what is, for many, one of the mysteries of real life as they see it.

However, Memory explores incidence as much as coincidence. Mere incidence can seem illusory enough, as Jonny discovers when he finds himself wondering why he is checking Sophie's house as if he is going to stay (43), and later he acknowledges an awareness of a liminal reality existing in counterpoint to his own sense of reality: "Jonny had always been aware of this limping machine, even under the clean, smooth surface of his own home" (44). In other words, Jonny had always been aware of a Sophie-style senility under the surface sanity of real life.

One of the most overt representations of the interconnectedness of reality with illusion in this novel is its initial surrealism. When Jonny walks through parts of inner city Christchurch he finds an unworldly eeriness there which makes him feel "like a man from outer space revisiting the world after the neutron bomb had killed every living thing but left all property intact" (27). It is here that he meets Sophie whose dishevelled appearance clashes with her cultured voice. Instead of avoiding him as most strangers would, she approaches him and asks him that enigmatic question, "Are *you* the one?" (28). Whilst the description of Jonny's night-time encounter with Sophie is dream-like in quality, it is also recognisably real in its detail: "Traffic lights, just a little ahead, changed colour. To his surprise in this early morning silence he heard the clockwork of their change" (27). Surrealism and realism are not just side by side in Mahy's vision, but intertwined. The surrealism is further developed when Jonny finds that Sophie's residence is Tap House. True to its name, "From between its top windows there protruded a huge old-fashioned tap, painted purple" (35). The narrative exploits not only its surreal qualities, but also its symbolic ones: "A tap like that, turned on and *forgotten*, could flood the whole city" (35, my italics), thereby symbolising the long-term impact of faulty memory and implying its connectedness to the sur/real in life.

However, sometimes apparent surrealism in Memory is no more than the machinations of a powerful imagination that projects its fantastic ideas upon real life: "for Jonny, imaginary things, once properly imagined, could grow as powerful and lucid as if they were real" (4). When Jonny sets his mind to speaking to Bonny on the fifth anniversary of Janine's death, he believes that "In the morning everything will change back" (11). More fantastic is his illusory hope in Bonny that caused him to momentarily expect her to "uninvent" Janine's tragedy immediately after she fell (20). He was fourteen years old at the time. These childhood dreams are still with him in his twentieth year: he follows Sophie "filled with a credulous enchantment" (29); when dancing he sometimes believes he is "set free from gravity", moving beyond himself and becoming "rhythm itself" (34); when entering Sophie's house he fleetingly believes that he may never escape alive (37). Jonny's problem is that he is too ready to believe and enjoys his belief too much. Again, Mahy is suggesting the role of the imagination in the interpretation of everyday reality. That Jonny's perceptions are more imagination-fired misconceptions than objective truths is an illustration of the fact that it is human to be imprisoned by subjectivity, even when one quests for objectivity.

So, is there anything to be gained by knowing a raft of Mahy's works when reading Memory? There is no doubt that lines of thematic continuity stretch between The Other Side of Silence and Memory, and between Memory and The Lion in the Meadow. I doubt that conclusions about Memory would be very different without identifying such continuity, but the search for meaning is focussed more sharply as a result of the thematic concerns in other works. The reader who knows Mahy's works has some of the advantages of the re-reader, hence, this inductive study suggests that the more of Mahy's texts readers know, the quicker they will identify the presence of thematic networks when reading new Mahy texts.

Is understanding of each novel expanded by identifying textual elements which imply one reader at the expense of others? Firstly, the symbolic and semic codes imply the formal-operational reasoner at the expense of the concrete-operational thinker. Clearly, understanding is unlikely to go beyond the comprehension of a narrative sequence in a concrete-operational reading, so understanding certainly expands when identifying elements excluded from such a limited reading. Secondly, there are times when the publishers' target audience is better placed to interpret these texts than the adult reader, especially when the novels deal with experiences mostly confined to the adolescent years, such as the first romantic kiss. Also, understanding the source of adolescent power is enhanced by scrutinising events that seem peculiarly adolescent. Thirdly, when one identifies

the elements that imply the sort of reader the adolescent Mahy may have been, meaning multiplies. The threshold between sophisticated adolescent readers and average adolescent readers occurs in the stylistics: puns, allusions, symbolism, figurative language. These linguistic surprises often defer interpretative closure, offering a multiplicity of compatible meanings. Fourthly, when these novels imply the educated adult at the expense of the adolescent, response deepens in a number of ways: there is an enhancement of awareness of relationships between the author and text, text and author; the way is opened for networks of responses to other texts; and, for those educated adults who also have excellent recall, meaning is clarified. (By contrast, ignorance can, on rare occasions, lead to misunderstandings in these novels.) Fifthly, identifying threads that the re-reader is best qualified to knit results in thematic realisations. Finally, whilst readers of any Mahy Adolescent Novel are advantaged by possessing a knowledge of both Mahy's other Adolescent Novels and her children's works; such readers are not implied at the expense of other readers, however, they are advantaged over them in their speed of comprehension. Nevertheless, understanding of each novel is certainly expanded by identifying textual elements which imply one reader at the expense of others and, conversely, understanding is sometimes denied those who are not implied.

Notes

1. Page 12 of Mahy's "Part of the Democratic Pantomime".

2. Mahy says:

> I go back and I read books a second and third time, and I find that quite a rewarding thing to do in some books, notoriously you pick up on things that you missed the first time, and all that sort of thing, and I enjoy the process. So, again, I suppose, you tend to try and establish things that you enjoy yourself, and establish them for a reader who is approximately a similar reader to the reader that you are. (Mahy Interview MM51)

3. Mahy Interview 48

4. Ibid

5. As was explained in footnote 4 of Chapter Two, the adolescent is a formal-operational reasoner who is not tied to the concrete reality of the pre-adolescent and is able to envisage the world as it could be. Rather than asking "why?", the formal reasoner will ask "why not?". Michael Berzonsky makes an arguable application of this:

> An appreciation of fictional literature is predicated on reversing the relationship between reality and possibility. The concrete thinker asks, "Why read fiction? It's not true (real)?" The formal reasoner replies, "But it could be" (or perhaps, "It should be"). (Berzonsky 227)

Where concrete thinkers (pre-adolescents) are limited to solving tangible problems of the present, the child who functions with formal operations is liberated. He or she can deal with all classes of problems, "the present, past, future, the hypothetical, and the verbal." (Wadsworth 102)

6 See Elliot Gose's "Fairy Tale and Myth in Mahy's The Changeover and The Tricksters", and Adam Berkin's " 'I Woke Myself': The Changeover as a Modern Adaptation of 'Sleeping Beauty' "

7. Gwen Gawith would disagree. In reference to The Haunting and The Changeover: a Supernatural Romance, she writes:

> I have yet to meet an adolescent who is immune to the compelling tension of these psychological dramas if the books are allowed space, time and context to work. In contrast, it is adults who have commented that the books are too complex, obscure, sophisticated for all but the most able readers, a complaint that says more about the way adults predetermine the responses of adolescent readers than it does about the adolescent reader's real and potential response. (Gawith 41.)

8. Page 17.

9. This line does not appear in the 1989 Puffin edition, but it is on page 10 of the following edition: "A Lion In The Meadow". 1969. A Lion in the Meadow and 5 Other Stories. Melbourne: J.M. Dent, 1976.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

According to literary theorists such as Umberto Eco and Charles Sarland, there must be a number of commonalities shared by the reader and the writer (Sarland 137-139). The reader must be able to understand the meaning of the words on the page; the reader and writer must have overlapping "encyclopaedias of meaning". They must share allusions as well as basic assumptions about how texts work. Eco and Sarland claim that if there is a sufficient mismatch between the knowledges and assumptions of reader and writer "then reading simply will not occur" (Sarland 138). It would be possible to misunderstand this thesis as an attack upon the sophistication of Mahy's Adolescent Novels. Without doubt, there are times when adolescents will suffer from lapses in micro-comprehension. Undoubtedly, these books are written for people whose cognitive development is post-concrete-operational. Yet the strength of the stories themselves ensures that reading will occur despite any lack of sophistication in the reader and despite any mis-match between the texts' sophistications and the readers'.

When interviewing Ms Mahy in November, 1995, I concluded that her narrative style of answers to questions was an answer in itself. Ms Mahy seemed to be saying that meaning lies in story, not in precision of language or doctrine. In "A Dissolving Ghost" she writes: "Without the ability to tell or live prescribed stories we lose the ability to make sense of our lives" (7). What this thesis has revealed, first and foremost, is that her Adolescent Novels are largely composed of networks of interconnecting textual elements within and between Ms Mahy's Adolescent Novels; my description of generic structure, content and stylistics reveals a unique Mahy prescription. Her structural networks include her use of *eucatastrophe*, chiasmus and the resolution of a pre-narrative problem. All three structural networks offer realistic optimism to the adolescent rather than naïve hope or cynical despair. In content, I have shown how Mahy gives universal primacy both to familial issues and adolescent empowerment, despite crafting them as sub-plots, and I have shown that she adapts the main-interest plot to suit the stage of adolescence of the publishers' target audience. In stylistics, I have shown how these novels are similar in their level of determination of narrative codes, diction, allusions, extended metaphors, and linguistic surprises. It is Mahy's linguistic surprises that make her work outstanding in the genre of Adolescent Novels, but in all the stylistics listed above, except the determination of narrative codes, Mahy's sophistication frequently exceeds the limits of the publishers' target audience. Chapter Five moved towards

unravelling this curiosity by itemising a network of five implied readers within the Mahy texts. Most curious of all, however, is that, at times, the implication of one reader at the exclusion of another either clarifies meaning or multiplies it. Hence, knowledge of the networks that inhere in the matrix of Mahy's novels enriches meaning and response to them.

This subsequent enrichment of meaning and response occurs in the following ways. Firstly, awareness of thematic networks guides the reader towards interpretative possibilities. Secondly, sophisticated readers will experience the frequent thrill of recognition when confronted with elements such as a Shakespearian allusion here, an intra-textual connection there, a sophisticated word elsewhere. Thirdly, the sophisticated aspects offer intensity to those in search of meaning. Fourthly, the sophisticated aspects offer readers the opportunity to consider the validity of Ms Mahy's revisionism and her tentative excursions into post-modernism.

Meaning and response multiply in Mahy's texts according to the number of implied readers inhering in the actual reader. Undoubtedly, these sophisticated elements are in tension with the abilities of a large number of her adolescent readership, yet her novels are the richer for it as are the best of her adolescent readers who are unlikely to experience the same thrill of recognition in many other Adolescent Novels.

GLOSSARY

actual reader: the person reading the text.

Adolescent Novel: novels written and/or published for the adolescent stage of life, normally for 12-18 year olds.

cynical eucatastrophe: *eucatastrophe* which denies the existence of the light side of life (the binary opposite of *naïve eucatastrophe*).

determination: the clarity of a string a clues working through a single text.

dyscatastrophe: narrative structure that results in final defeat (the opposite of *eucatastrophe*).

dysfunctional eucatastrophe: uses the classic fairy tale formula unsuccessfully (the binary opposite of *functional eucatastrophe*).

Early Adolescent Novel: a novel marketed for 11-13 year olds

eucatastrophe: narrative structure that results in what Tolkien called "the Consolation of the Happy Ending." It results in a joy that arises out of the knowledge that the story could have ended in *dyscatastrophe* and the sense that it "denies... universal final defeat". (See chapter one.)

functional eucatastrophe: the classic fairy tale formula (the binary opposite of *dysfunctional eucatastrophe*).

hermeneutic code: according to Roland Barthes, "All the units whose function it is to articulate in various ways a question, its response, and the variety of chance events which can either formulate the question or delay its answer; or even, *constitute an enigma and lead to its solution*" (S/Z 17, my italics).

ideal reader: one who reads and interprets texts in ways which the writer intended. Ideal readers may arrive at variable interpretations, but they will agree on the validity of each other's processes. (See Jonathan Culler's "Literary Competence" in Jane T Tompkins (ed.) Reader Response Criticism, John Hopkins U P.)

implied reader: a reader whose abilities, limitations, and responses are implied in the text's content and stylistics.

intratextuality: links between one novel in Mahy's *oeuvre* and another.

Late Adolescent Novel: a novel marketed approximately for post-15 year olds.

liberating eucatastrophe: which liberates the text from earlier *dyscatastrophe* (the binary opposite of non-liberating *eucatastrophe*)

Mid-Adolescent Novel: a novel marketed approximately for 14-15 year olds.

naïve eucatastrophe: *eucatastrophe* which denies the existence of the dark side of life (the binary opposite of *cynical eucatastrophe*).

non-liberating eucatastrophe: *eucatastrophe* which does not liberate the central characters from the prospect of impending *dyscatastrophe* (the binary opposite of *liberating eucatastrophe*).

overdetermine: to make something, especially the resolution of an enigma, too obvious by repeating it.

Primary World: the world as it exists outside the novel; the "real world". Tolkien says that fiction fails when the reader leaves the "Secondary World" of the novel and returns to the Primary World while continuing to read.

Secondary World: the world of the story. Tolkien says that if the story's art is successful, your mind enters the Secondary World of the novel, which you believe "while you are, as it were, inside" (Tolkien 36).

semic code: a seme is a signifier that carries a connotation beyond the usual meaning of the signifier (for example, when "wealth" can mean more than one type of wealth). The semic code, then, is a network of connotative words and phrases.

symbolic code: according to Christine Brooke-Rose, the symbolic code implies allegory and theme.

underdetermine: to insert subtle clues that may lead only a few readers to solve the resolution of an enigma before the implied reader.

APPENDIX ONE:
SNYNOPSES OF MAHY'S ADOLESCENT NOVELS

The novels are listed in alphabetical order.

Aliens in the Family (1986)

Target Audience: early adolescents

Setting: interplanetary school, Christchurch, Webster's Valley; mostly present-day, briefly colonial New Zealand, futuristic for short intervals.

Central Characters:

The Raven family:
- Jake (Jacqueline, Jackie)
- David (Jake's father, recently remarried to Philippa)
- Dora (David's step-daughter)
- Lewis (David's step-son)
- Philippa (mother of Dora and Lewis)
- Pet (Jake's mother; an incompetent parent)

Galgonquans (aliens from the future):
- Bond
- Solita (Bond's sister)
- Bond's teacher (a machine)
- Wirdegen (Galgonquans in disguised as their enemy)

Sebastian Webster (Wehipa; colonist who adopted Maoritanga)

Hakiaha and Koro (Webster's Maori companions)

Central Situation:

Jake, who resents her father's new family, comes from Australia for the school holidays and quickly falls out with Dora. The two are opposites in many ways. However, through protecting Bond, whose test on Earth seems to have gone badly wrong, the children learn to relate positively to each other.

Dangerous Spaces (1991)

Target Audience: early adolescents

Setting: Veridian (a space between life and death); the Wakefield's large, run-down house in late summer.

Central Characters:

Anthea (recently orphaned, she lives with her cousin, Dora's, family)
The Wakefield family:
- Dora (jealous of Anthea)
- Molly (mother)
- Lionel (father)
- Teddy (little brother)

The Wakefield ghosts:
- Henry (Griff; died in childhood)
- Old Lionel (Leo)

Central Situation:
When Henry died, his spirit waited for Lionel before crossing the sea to the spiritual after-life. Likewise, when old Lionel died, he waited for Henry. Each waited in separate places. In her dreams, Anthea involuntarily passes into Veridian with Henry and it takes Flora to solve the mystery, save Anthea, resolve their differences, and exorcise the Wakefield home of its debilitating ghost.

Memory (1987)

Target Audience: late adolescents

Setting: Seacliff Heights Reserve (where Janine died); Tap House in Marribel Road, inner-city Christchurch.

Central Characters:

The Dart family:
- Jonny Dart (Jonathan, alias Wolfman)
- Janine Dart (fell to her death)
- parents

The Benedicta family:
- Bonny Benedicta (pythoness, Jonny's childhood friend)
- Carl (Bonny's father, a doctor of philosophy)
- Ruth (Bonny's mother, a pathologist)

Sophie West (suffers from senile dementia)

Nev Fowler (Jonny's childhood tormentor)
Spike and Don (Nev's criminal friends)
Max Dainton (social worker)

Central Situation:
Unemployed, haunted by a shizophrenic memory, and drunk, Jonny tries to find Bonny on the anniversary of Janine's death. Instead, he finds, and eventually helps, Sophie. The relationship is the catalytic agent to resolving Jonny's personal problems and reuniting Jonny and Bonny.

The Catalogue of the Universe (1985)

Target Audience: late adolescents

Setting: Dry Creek Road (where the Mays and the Cherrys live) and the Potter home; at the end of Angela and Tycho's Seventh Form year

Central Characters:
The May family:
Angela (Seventh Former)
Dido (Angela's unconventional mother)
The Potter family:
Tycho (intelligent, unattractive, youngest child)
Richard (Tycho's witty, unindustrious brother)
Africa (Tycho's sister, marriage disintegrates)
Hudson (Africa's unpopular husband)
Hamish (Africa and Hudson's son)
Mr Potter (epileptic)
Mrs Potter (mostly conventional with a "raffish" side)
The Chase family:
Roland (Angela's cold father)
Angela (Roland's mother)
The Cherry family (who live up Dry Creek Road):
Phil and Jerry Cherry (brothers)
Charlie Cherry (the morose father)
Robin (Angela's boyfriend)

Central Situation:
As Angela prepares to enamour herself to the father she has never met, and as the Potter family faces yet another crisis, Angela and Tycho unsteadily experiment with romance.

The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance (1984)

Target Audience: mid-adolescents

Setting: Gardendale suburb; the Chant household; Janua Caeli, the Sorenson home.

Central Characters:

The Chant family:
- Laura (fourth former; changes to a witch)
- Kate (Laura's mother; married 15 years, separated 3)
- Jacko (Jonathan, Braque's victim)
- Stephen (Laura's estranged father)
- Julia (Stephen's new partner)

The Carlisle family:
- Sorry (Sorenson; Seventh Form Prefect; witch)
- Miryam Carlisle (Sorenson's mother)
- Winter Carlisle (Sorenson's grandmother)

Carmody Braque (a lemure)
Chris Holly (Kate's newly-found boyfriend)
Mrs Fangboner (Jacko's babysitter)
Jacynth Close (a girl who was raped in Gardendale)

Central Situation:
Carmody Braque is a spirit who perpetuates his physicality by sucking the life out of innocent victims - in this case the victim is Jacko. Laura saves Jacko by undergoing a changeover from mortal to witch. In the process there is a growing romantic attachment between Laura and Sorry.

The Haunting (1982)

Target Audience: early adolescents

Setting: almost exclusively the Palmer and Scholar households following Great-Uncle Barnaby's death.

Central Characters:

The Palmer family:
- Barney (the subject of a haunting by Cole)
- Tabitha ("the family novelist")
- Troy (13, a covert magician)
- Claire (sensitive step-mother)

John (father)
Dove (nee Scholar; deceased wife of John and mother of children)
The Scholar family (the maternal side of the Palmer family)
Great-Granny Scholar (the matriarch, and closet Scholar magician)
Great-Uncle Guy Scholar (a paediatrician)
Great-Uncle Cole Scholar (the Scholar magician, previously thought to be dead)
Great-Uncle Barnaby (recently deceased; had kept contact with Cole)
Grandpa (Benjamin) Scholar and Grandma (Janet) Scholar
Great-Uncle Alberic Scholar
Mantis, Bigbuzz, Ghost (Barney's friendly childhood ghosts)

Central Situation:
Tabitha tries to solve the problem of Barney's haunting, but its explanation lies in the Scholar family's magic powers. Cole wants to take Barney away, believing that Barney has inherited the Scholar magic, when in fact it is silent Troy who has magic powers.

The Other Side of Silence (1995)

Target Audience: early adolescents

Setting: Rapper home in Benallan Drive; the large, overgrown Credence home - Squintum's House - in Credence Crescent.

Central Characters:
The Rapper family:
Hero (alias Jorinda; *aphasic voluntaria*)
Ginevra (the prodigal elder sister)
Athol (supposedly writing a PhD thesis; actually writing soap operas)
Sapphira (youngest)
Annie (mother; university lecturer)
Mike (father, house husband)
The Credence family:
Miss Credence (post-mistress in public, imitates her dead father in private; conceals her illegitimate child)
Rinda (Miss Credence's feral child)
Sammy (Ginevra's foster-son)
Colin and Kevin Brett (builders)

Central Situation:
In order to be special in the eccentric and gifted Rapper family, Hero chooses not to speak. However, when she is incarcerated with Miss Credence's feral child, she makes some self-discoveries which lead her out of silence.

The Tricksters (1986)

Target Audience: late adolescents

Setting: Christmas at Carnival's Hide

Central Characters:

The Hamilton family:
- Harry (or Ariadne, 17 years old)
- Christobel (Harry's older sister)
- Naomi and Jack (the parents)
- Charlie, Serena and Benny

The Hamiltons' guests:
- Emma Forbes (who had a brief affair with Jack)
- Tibby Forbes (Emma and Jack's child)
- Anthony Hesketh (who turns out to related to the Carnivals)
- Robert Huxley (Charlie's friend, Christobel's boyfriend)

The Carnivals:
- Teddy Carnival (killed by his father, returns as the Carnival brothers)
- The Carnival brothers: Ovid, the head; Hadfield, the instinct; Felix, the heart
- Edward and Ann (Teddy's parents)
- Minerva (Teddy's sister)

Central Situation:
Harry inadvertently brings Teddy back to life two generations after his death. Teddy returns in the form of the Carnival brothers who are the catalysts for a number of conflicts and disclosures.

Underrunners (1992)

Target Audience: early adolescents

Setting: a part of Banks' Peninsula with underrunners - tunnels formed through erosion; the Catt family home in the vicinity of Featherstonehaugh Children's Home

Central Characters:

- The Catt family:
  - Tristram
  - Selsey Firebone (Tristram's alter ego)
  - Randall (father, police negotiator; his alternative tendencies embarass Tristram)
- Victoria (Randall's girlfriend)
- The Tyrone family:
  - Cecily (alias Winola; early childhood friend of Tristram's)
  - Orson (the deranged kidnapper, father of Cecily)
  - Dearie (mother of Cecily, one time babysitter of Tristram)
  - Tod and Damon (Cecily's brothers)

Central Situation:

Tristram attempts to protect Cecily from Orson by concealing her in an underrunner. Orson subsequently kidnaps both children.

APPENDIX TWO:
MAHY INTERVIEW: 18.11.95

What follows is an edited transcript of the interview I conducted at Ms Mahy's home in Governor's Bay. Edits are indicated with square brackets. Unfortunately, the first one-and-a-half hours of the interview were inaudible owing to a technical problem, so the transcript begins well into the interview.

SH1: What I detect is that for you the writing process is quite an evolutionary one, and it's the process that I've noticed is commented a lot in interviews that people have conducted with you, and articles that have been written as a consequence of that. The things that you have said yourself in talks and so on, seem to be about the writing process, and I suppose where I come from as an academic looking at a text is not at the process, but the outcome.

MM1: Yes, that's right.

SH2: When you, it seems, sit down and write a piece of fiction, you haven't got the outcome set, and it's not something you can analyse.

MM2: Well, I think it's a bit like reading a story but in a much more halting and uncertain way. I mean, you know there's a story there when you sit down and look at a book that somebody has written. Somebody has defined the story and done all this stuff for you. When you're writing it, you have to do it on your own. It's a lot of trial and error, but there does come a point in the process where, what seemed like a large number of possibilities in the beginning, become reduced, the story does take form, and you are stuck with certain decisions the characters make, or you make about the characters which then you can't go back on, because you like them or they feel right. I think that with my stories, although there's lots of things I can intellectually speculate about them, I think in the beginning it's hit and miss. It's quite a primitive process. At its simplest, say with a story like A Lion In The Meadow - it's one story I remember writing quite clearly, and I have written about that somewhere in a talk - I was actually reciting another story at the time, and I suppose I had a lot of hopes...

[Visitors temporarily interrupt the interview.]

SH3: You talked about the characters taking over at times. That's an idea that seems to be reflected in the characters sometimes. I've got a question there [referring to the sheet of questions] about free will or the absence of it at times. Characters seem to do things against their will. There's a simile in The Other Side Of Silence which I read today, it's as if Hero is being mastered.

MM3: I think that is true at one point there, that Miss Credence puts her in the position where she has to come back at a point where she really would rather not.

SH4: Yes, with the money - that sense of obligation.

MM4: Yes, I think that she loses her free will there, you might say, is that what you are talking about?

SH5: No, it's not quite, because this is a situation where one part of the psyche seems to be instructing another. Now, have I got the formal question about this? [...] Oh yes, it was in Tricksters immediately prior to Harry's release of the family secret, the simile likens her movement to that of being mastered, and in The Other Side Of Silence, Hero seems to be the author of her own plot to some extent, and written by part of herself beyond her control to another. A lot of characters seem, at some points in your novels, to do something against their will. [...] In The Changeover, Laura forces herself to be polite to Kate's boyfriend. [It's] not that she forces herself to, no, that's not the way that it's described. It's that she "finds herself" being polite to him, when really she wants to show her disapproval.

MM5: I think that does happen with those characters. I think that happens in real life quite a lot, at least it certainly seems to happen to me. I don't always act upon intuition... [Another interruption] I think I have probably quoted somewhere the piece that I read which once said we have a crocodile or horse in our brain as well as a human being, that we have the brain stem which governs a lot of our appetite and things like that. And then we have a rather more rational area over and above that, I think it's a hippocampus. And then there's the cerebral cortex which is the great area where human beings are very strong. So, there are times when you might say that the crocodile in us instructs us to do something which is then overridden by the cerebral cortex. You know, you have all those things going on. I assume that it happens like that with a lot of people. Don't you sometimes find yourself doing things that are against your impulse or intuition because of reason or social conditioning or those sorts of things, or because you're actually divided about what you want to do? [...] And I think that that certainly does happen with several of the characters in books and stories that I have written, particularly in the novels. It doesn't happen in the simpler stories.

SH6: Does it challenge our uniqueness in the animal kingdom? Because at times we do seem to act unconsciously or subconsciously or not according to our usual set of principles or decisions. Something seems to override that socialisation.

MM6: Yes, I think that does happen, well I know it does happen at times. It happens in extremities like war, when civilised people do awful and uncivilised things, and there are times when the primitive brain does seem to override.

SH7: So it works both ways, sometimes we find our conscious civilised brain taking over our impulses, and sometimes the opposite. Yes, it makes an awful lot of sense to me, and I'm interested that that occurs in the novels, because I'm sure that sometimes adolescents are baffled by what they do.

MM7: I'm sure that they are, and I'm sure that, because as human beings with the interaction of a lot of different biological systems, adolescence is a time when we have a large number of capacities: you're often physically strong, you've often got almost as [...] much language at your disposal as you are ever going to have, your command of it may increase, you feel the importance of being justified as an individual, which obviously you do from the time you're Alice's age on [Alice is Ms Mahy's granddaughter], but you feel better able to reinforce it , and you've got the rhetoric to reinforce it by the time you're an adolescent. All those things start to work to produce behaviour which can be very troublesome in a family group, for example. [...] It's a great cliché to say adolescence is a great time of rebellion - I mean it's true, and the rebellion takes different forms, and some people don't rebel, and some people glide through adolescence relatively smoothly, but I certainly think it's true of quite a number of the characters in my books that there is some sort of inner debate going on, but that's probably a description process I felt and feel myself.

SH8: In Memory, with Jonny's split memory, where does that come from because that's something I can't identify with - having a memory that is so inaccurate about such an important event?

MM8: Actually, since I wrote that, there has been a tremendous amount of information or speculation about memory denial, lost memory, all those syndromes. There wasn't that going on at the time. I do think it's possible to misremember things. I've never misremembered anything quite as confusing or [...] anything like Jonny's misremembered. I have sometimes misremembered things, or when I've talked them over with people afterwards, I've found that they view it very differently from the way that I remember it, and I, of course, have no idea whether it is my memory that is accurate or theirs.

SH9: Yes, that's quite a common family debate about a particular incident. Somebody says, "Well you said this." "Oh, no I didn't"...

MM9: Or, "This happened to me," and somebody says, "No, that happened to me." You know, that sort of thing? So, I suppose it's an extension of that. But I must say, that looking back now, I do think that on the whole, it is true to say that it would be a very rare thing for anyone to misremember anything quite so important, and I think it might be due, in this story, to a certain amount of childish anxiety, and also perhaps some self-dramatisation, causing [Jonny] to speculate, that perhaps he did it. He may even, I suppose - not that he wanted to kill his sister or anything like that - but there's a sort of glamour of playing with the idea that you have been the starting-off point of something so ultimate and dramatic and everything like that. And of course people do seem to take on guilt or deny guilt according to the circumstances, reasonably readily, at least from what I understand. I think it would be rare to misremember anything like that in quite that way. Perhaps it's a fault in the story, I don't know.

SH10: Well, it's made credible by Bonny having created this secret and telling this lie, and that reinforces the conditions for misremembering. Is there a link between that dancing on a cliff edge [in Memory]and Dido in The Catalogue of the Universe who also seems to be on the edge of a cliff?

MM10: I think that it's an image that comes out in The Other Side of Silence. There's not a cliff edge so much as a climbing of the trees and it's a sort of a figurative cliff edge if you like, and walking along the wall, and things like that. I suppose it seemed to me a seductive image for some of the confrontations that most people find in their lives.

SH11: Is it a psychological image too? Diane Hebley makes quite a lot in her thesis [see Bibliography] of the importance, or the connection between place and psyche in your work. Is that something that is there consciously? I mean, I almost got the feeling reading Diane's thesis that I should have read some Freud and Jung in preparation for considering your works.

MM11: Diane's thesis takes one particular aspect of stories and looks at that aspect in a way detached from anything else that is going on in the story. I think that's a fair thing to do, and I think that it can be quite fruitful, but I think in the end you have to return to look at the story as a whole. There are occasions in Underrunners... The peninsular in that [...] is quite badly eroded. It's got these tunnels that run, you know. Apparently in the dry weather the ground cracks under the surface of the ground, and when it rains water gets in and it hollows out tunnels that don't show. I don't know how long they are. They used to be called "Maori drains" in more racist times. So that if you brought in earthmoving machinery you might suddenly find that you're on fairly unstable land that looked OK on the surface. So it's quite a tempting metaphor. A very charming metaphor. At the time I was half thinking of writing that story, we were buying the land [across the

harbour]. No we had bought it. My accountant said to me, "What do you want it for?" and I said, "I sort of want to get it out of romanticism." He said that that wasn't a very good reason from an accountant's point of view. But anyway I started to write this story. I had mentioned the same piece of land in Dangerous Spaces, although I didn't own it then. It's just that it's always been out there, and I've written a short story about it. From some angles it looks a bit like a person half submerged. But anyway, we were walking over it with someone from the Department of Forestry. He said, "Oh, you've got very big underrunners on this land," and it struck me as a good title and a good phrase, and a fascinating sort of metaphor for life itself, which looks one way on the surface and another way when you come to look at it more closely.

SH12: I think you use it so nicely in the novel. [...] I was really taken with the links between that idea of underrunners and the theme.

MM12: Oh, it probably works well because [...] we are sort of living with it in a very day-to-day way. So that's one case where the actual landscape has affected and given a lot of form to the story. Other times of course, I suppose you manipulate the landscape relative to what you want to happen. When I was a child in Whakatane, we used to climb steep and rather crumbly slopes. My father used to call it rotten rock. It was rock which broke up into a lot of geometric little segments as you climbed, and it was slippery, almost like shingle. It broke into shingle very very quickly, and these little stones would go rattling on down, and I think that we had the feeling of being very adventurous and doing something daring as we climbed over it, and sometimes we got a bit scared since it was the sort of rock where you could reach up and take a piece as a handhold, and the whole thing would come away in your hand. So I think that it's out of childhood memories like those that I constructed Jonny's particular dilemma. It's quite interesting as we talk, and as I've had occasion to talk about some of the stories before, to realise just how much of them has got some sort of basis in remembered events, or in actual events which somehow or other you put into a collage and with luck and hard work it actually then becomes the seamless part of the story. That's what you hope for anyway.

SH13: [...] Underrunners seems to be working on a number of psychological levels. There's Orson, who seems so normal on the outside, and Winola says that she's afraid that if the nurse meets Orson that she will believe that what's written about him is not true.

MM13: I think that there's quite a lot of occasions where you meet somebody who confronts you with a sort of surface of reason, ordinary language, apparent humour, everything like that. Oh, it's not even that they are trying to trick you. [...] Recently I went to the prison to be part of a writing group for women prisoners which I was

asked to do by a friend and there were women in the group that I was talking to and one in particular that I was talking with and during the time that I was there she had to go out and she had to - her little boy had come to visit her - and she had murdered the child's father, certainly the partner. She was in prison for a long time. I'd read about the case, it made a big difference meeting her. When I'd met her and talked to her she'd been nice and pleasant and normal and everything like that. It's not that I thought she was necessarily innocent, it just mattered a bit less that she was guilty, for example, which is rather sneaky. [...] While I was reading about her in the paper, on the page she was one way; when I met her and talked to her and she talked about what she was writing and everything like that then of course it was a different thing like she was a different person. [...] I think there's two forces that bring about your statement of attitude. One is what people have to say, and if they can present themselves as being pleasant and rational and everything like that most of us are very ready to accept them on face value. And indeed, we have to because we have to assess people partly through what they have to say.

SH14: This is similar to the dichotomy that goes through The Other Side of Silence so nicely. There is a real exterior and a true interior that is not matching the exterior necessarily. Miss Credence is a post-mistress on the one hand and is a gaoler on the other. [...] Are you actually exploring consciously any of these Freudian, Lacanian and Jungian ideas as you go or do commentators identify those because of their own...

MM14: I don't know that I set out to explore them exactly. I suppose at any time the way in which you estimate yourself and the society that you are growing up in depends upon what information has been made available to you and Freudian and Jungian information has been made available to me. It doesn't matter too much to me in many ways, doing the sort of thing that I'm doing, whether Freud was wrong in saying that young women had fantasies of sexual life with their fathers - nowadays a lot of feminists say that quite a lot of their fathers did sexually interfere with them and Freud refused to face up to that. It's not the truth or otherwise of that so much that interests me, I suppose, but the idea that we do have these different levels of consciousness, such as the subconscious and the unconscious and the conscious mind and there are things that we choose not to think about, that we repress. Of course, sometimes I think that we are right to do it. I know that sometimes people speak as if it's a bad thing to do, but I don't automatically think that it is, but it is an area of speculation that I have which I wouldn't have if it hadn't been for people like Freud and some of these people in the ambient community of ideas in which I have grown up. I don't know that I'm exploring them but - well I suppose I am in a way. I think it's fair to invoke them at times, which is rather a different thing, and I think it's fair, well I certainly think it's interesting, to suggest that at certain times in their lives, the characters [...] are aware of these possibilities in their own lives too. Only, sometimes in odd ways, not in very well defined ways, you the author, or the reader

perhaps, are a bit more defined on their part than they are on behalf of themselves. I suppose there are times when the author directs the reader to be a bit more defined about what's going on in the life of this character, than the character is able to be for him or herself. To say that one explores something, somehow seems to suggest [...] a series of connected intentions, and I don't know that I always have those, though I do think that they are important ideas in our world. They seem to make a great deal of difference to the way we assess things. I think that people see the world differently at times, because of the way artists have prepared them to see it. I think that it's easier for us to see the world as the impressionists apparently saw it, because of having lived with impressionists, and imitations of the great impressionists. So that if you look out at the tree and see it dappled with light, you see it perhaps as Renoir saw it, because you have already seen his paintings of it, whereas if you lived in the Middle Ages, I don't know that you would have seen it in quite that way. [...] I don't suppose it can make too much difference to the image that falls on the retina but, somehow or another, the way in which the information then goes from the eye to the brain, and the way the brain processes it, is subject to some sort of alteration, because of the examples that have been placed before us.

SH15: Is art to our vision what language is to our ideas?

MM15: I think it is to some extent. Take the word subconscious, for example. They couldn't talk about the subconscious quite like we do early in the 19th or 18th century, because they didn't have the word for it, and yet sometimes you might find [18th or 19th century] writers who have various poetic ways of trying to indicate some secret part of self. I think Blake does at times, for example, but because he hasn't got that language he invents terms of his own to try to describe it. So having the words, having somebody make up the words and describe the ideas the words are attached to, actually does give power over... It's a funny sort of process, we do have power over an idea, but it also gives the idea of power over us too, because I think what tends to happen is that [...] you have the word and the idea perhaps given to you through reading psychology, let's say, but the [...] idea is more of an approximation than many people make it sound. Then people start to speak as if it were a definite clinical state, which you could very easily define, and I think it's much smudgier than some people make it sound.

SH16: More "wobbles" in it than that.

MM16: A lot more wobbles. I certainly think this happens in theology, for example. And I certainly think it happens in areas of psychology that you get people who become very devoted to theories about how human beings operate, and are reluctant to allow the amount of variety that there really is. And one of the things that makes them self-confident about this is possessing the language, and the set of

ideas that the language invokes. I don't know if that makes any sense, I know it's a bit scrambly.

SH17: Well, no it's all right, because I'm interested in closure in your novels and to the extent to which it does and doesn't exist. Well, it's truer to say that deconstructionists are interested in closure, and I'm interested in deciding what I think of their ideas. They would claim that the traditional novel would give the appearance of closure but they would be able to identify points where there isn't closure, it's just the appearance of it, or perhaps we're finding it there because we expect to find it, rather than because it actually exists.

MM17: Well, I think it's very fair to consider those things and to speculate about them. [...] I often think that ideas like that, for me anyway, they work better held in some sort of suspension relative to other ideas. And it's not so silly really, since we live in such relative times with the whole wave-particle duality - which, I'm told, if I knew the mathematics, wouldn't seem nearly so mysterious to me as it does, but it still sounds pretty mysterious to me. But it seems to me that we are being called upon, if we were as being as honest as we can be, to hold things in suspension, in some static suspension and that what emerges as they move relative to one another is valuable.

SH18: I can identify that at the end of a lot of your novels you create the suspension that you're talking about, by indicating future events. So that at the end of Tricksters it indicates future resolutions and problems and so on, and at the end of Haunting there is that suggestion of ongoing problems coping with the power.

MM18: I think [..] I have already said [that] in Catalogue of the Universe. I certainly think that there is this idea of ongoing events in The Other Side of Silence too, in that at the end of that the heroine is emerging into a, I suppose into a different sort of life. Obviously her father is worried about some sort of sexual connection, she's perhaps moving into that area. She's abandoning the fantasies that led her to be silent. The fantasies are all to do with her specialness - her mother saying "This is the silent one of the family."

SH19: The desire to be famous and to make a mark on the family.

MM19: Yes, well that's part of [what] she says at the end about it, and I think she says the story turned out to be about fame and the deep distortions it puts into people's lives. So it's quite an interesting thing to be speculating about. When I go around to schools [...] little children ask questions about where I get ideas from and things like that. One they ask me regularly is, "What's it like to be famous?" Immediately I feel a great feeling of dismay, and tell them I'm not famous, I'm well known. [...] Then I think, is this just some sort of puritan anxiety not to seem

bigheaded? Because after all being well known is another way of being famous. In some ways [...] over the years I have struggled to be well known. I don't think I've promoted my books unduly hard, but I've never turned down the chance to talk about them.

SH20: It's a business isn't it? You've got to make a living.

MM20: Yes, it's a business because increasingly it comes to be. Yes, that's exactly right. I was talking to an actress about this just a short time ago. [...] She was enormously popular in Britain. She did very little in the way of giving interviews or anything like that, so it's not necessary, but it's harder and harder I think to be a writer without being expected to say something, or to be seen as saying something, you know what I mean. It doesn't really seem to have much to do with the book. I once heard the writer William Maine speak, and he said something that I thought was very true, which was that all the things he has to say that were worthwhile he's said in his books. [...] I heard him saying this at a plenary session at a Conference, and I talked about this with one of the conference conveners afterwards, and I said that I had enjoyed this session very much, and he said that a lot of people were very annoyed because William Maine came on and looked around the people and said, "Well what do you want to know?" I said I thought it was quite enlightening because you thought, "Well, what am I doing sitting here listening to this person talk rather than reading his books?" [...] But a lot of people did get annoyed, and in the beginning the questions that people asked were every bit as banal as "Where do you get your ideas from?" and "What's it like being famous?" They were just that sort of question. Then they got a bit more interesting. Anyway, the convener of the conference said, "Well he didn't have to come, nobody forced him to come and accept the invitation to speak, and he's being paid," and immediately that changed my attitude again, not against him, but I did think there's two systems working there. Both of them are fair in their way. I did find that a very useful session myself, even if he didn't say anything very much, even if he refused in many ways to talk about his books. You stood there watching him refusing to talk about his books [...] - it sort of put the responsibility back on you as the person who had turned up to listen to him.

SH21: E.D. Hirsch defines the meaning of a novel or any work of fiction as what the author intended by it, which always seems to me to be a little problematic, because authors may alter what they mean by something, or may not have set out with a conscious meaning in the first place, and [so it] seems to take too much responsibility away from the reader. Nevertheless, it does make some sense, that if one is trying to be definitive about meaning then authorial intent has got to be of some consideration.

MM21: Yes, I think so too. I'm not sufficiently post-modern to think that the time that the author lived in, or the author's intention, are irrelevant. I do think that you gain from a book from knowing something of those things. I think that what the author intended is part of the book's meaning. What the reader reads, of course, [...] concludes something that the writer presumably began to a certain point, and then there is this space left in which the reader can then conclude. The story that is not read is incomplete. Although there are occasions when I think you write a story, and then when you read it you read it with the readerly part of your mind rather than the writer. I suppose the story could be fulfilled in the subconsciousness at times, and I mean it's a little bit like [...] The Other Side Of Silence. At the end of that, Hero says she told herself the story. She's taken a damaging experience transposed it into literature of a kind, and she's explained it to herself. She now has power over the incident. [...] She wants to keep that power to herself, I think. She does not want it to become attenuated by being spread around a lot of people, so she wipes it away, because she now, I suppose, feels it contained within her anyway.

SH22: I suppose to some extent I'm guilty of doing just the very thing that you've talked about. You've written your books, and here I am coming and asking you about them.

MM22: Well, the thing is, it's just one of those oddities. The only thing is that sometimes when I read bits of biographies [about authors in the Bloomsbury Group] I find it really interesting in a lot of different ways. First of all there is the interest of the sort of gossip and the story itself. The Bloomsbury Group were innovative and lively and had a lot of interesting things to say. [...] They were enormously privileged people, and consciously and unconsciously patronising about people who didn't have their advantages. If I was to re-read Virginia Wolf I would certainly re-read it a bit differently and I think in a richer way, as it's always somehow interesting to read about things and try to define them, try to define what's going on. It's a different sort of process.

SH23: What frustrates me is that I find a definition or a leaning or a focus, and then I tend to find something else that disturbs that. It doesn't necessarily slide away, but it alters its importance, or its place in the hierarchy of the meaning, and that's why it's nice to talk to you and to get a sense of your priorities.

MM23a: I think the story, probably story rather than lesson, as I have already said, is a priority with me. But having said that, of course, because we are such cause and effect people, it's a bit tricky to suggest that you can tell a story without having some sort of lesson, because things happen. I mean even Alice in Wonderland, [implies that] it's perfectly permissible for children to be entertained by nonsense. It's something that doesn't seek to influence their behaviour, [yet] it is still a comment on behaviour in a way, on permissible behaviour. You know, when Alice

in Wonderland was written there were so many stories that were very very significantly structured to produce desirable behaviour in children. There is this very heavy idea that that is what the story is there for, and oh well of course it's still there, particularly children's stories. [...]

MM23b: I mean, say with something like this question 3 [referring to the following printed question: "Some of your references to writing suggest the limitations of fiction, others seem to suggest the civilizing influence of it. The middle line seems to be represented by Tycho's action of standing on The Catalogue of the Universe: he is rejecting the vicarious in favour of the genuine at the same time as he is acknowledging that genuine experience began with the vicarious. In using it to raise his stature, he is both vindicating its function as a foundation, and putting it in its place beneath experience. Do you feel some ambiguity about the role of fiction?" I do think fiction has its limitations; I do think that it has a civilising influence in that it makes certain sorts of truths accessible to us, but you can't think that they would be accessible in any other way except through the story. Where you read those books that are a mixture of fact and fiction, say like Schindler's List, now that's not a very good example but, suppose, it's happened once or twice recently, that somebody has written a book which you think is non-fiction and then you find it's fiction. I mean, it's possible to think that fiction has its limitations, and at the same time feel that it is a civilising influence, not only in the way it alters your attitude to literature, but also the way it alters your attitude to life. In life a lot of people are looking for a story to live by, as it were, and a good story. [...] First of all, part of fiction is form, and we need form to reach understanding. Confronted with the simultaneous nature of everything - even if you're just looking out of the window and seeing hills and the ships and the flowers which are made up of so many other things which are in turn made into so many other things - the multiplicity of what we are seeing, if you chose to see it that way, would be confounding. But we do see it in terms of certain sorts of basic forms: hills, sea, and the trees. So those are the forms that present themselves to us and [we] accept those. And in a way one of the things that is powerful about fiction is form, it makes things understandable.

SH24: Presumably that is one decision you must make before you start writing, [...] your genre. The romance in The Changeover, for example, or parody in Raging Robots.

MM24: Yes, obviously the two things are not absolutely totally disconnected, but they are written for different sorts of reasons. I mean on the one hand Raging Robots you find at the end of the discussion how important the mixture is, and the horror of the robot and the doll, is that they represent extreme wickedness and extreme good. Isolated. And it's the mixture that is interesting, which is a sort of philosophical speculation I suppose, but it's obviously meant to be read very very differently to the way something like Underrunners is meant to be read.

SH25: [...] Was it in your mind to express a suspicion of language's ability to communicate meaning when you wrote Underrunners?

MM25: I think what I was thinking about there was that at that particular moment [when Tris receives the long-awaited letter from his mother, yet chooses to play and open it later] Tris is in a moment of contentment of a kind. He has undergone the adventure [so] the frustration he has felt at not having his mother is in temporary abeyance, and although he is going to read the letter and read it very closely, just at that moment, that's not what he wants to do. And Winola, for her part, doesn't want to speculate about the future or the past or anything like that, she just wants to be that horse, plunging away, and grab the advantage of the ecstasy of the moment. Tris is a bit like that too at that time. So it's almost as if, just simultaneously and partly because of one another, they have come to a point, well they have stepped out of the flow of their normal anxieties and everything like that. They have been able to do that because of what they had been through in the story in effect, and they are just able to be exultant and happy. And that does happen sometimes.

SH26: It was also the word the Featherstonehaugh - Fanshaw is how it's pronounced; is there anything more going on there than just a play on words?

MM26: I think that it's fair to say that the paradox of - not only me, but of other writers too - is that on the one hand you want to say "Listen, this what I want to tell you and I'm using language to tell you but beware of language."

SH27: And you seem to give away your power. I used to do a lot of clowning, and the difference I felt between clowning and acting was that in clowning you gave away your power, you came down off the stage and you passed that power over to the audience and they did whatever they would with it, and to some extent you seem to do that with your writing.

MM27: I think that is probably true at times.

SH28: And there seems to be something quite grand about doing that as a writer, you potentially interrupt the magic of fiction and the power you might have over your readers in order the share it with them or to make them aware that they can be manipulated.

MM28: I think that I do that a bit, and in fact, I've written a story which may never be published. It starts off with a boy at school, and the teacher says there is this new Government policy of meanness at the school, so we either have to choose a copy machine for the staffroom, or [...] we can get some more library books, but you children wouldn't want your teachers to go without their copy machine, so you're going to have to write books to go into the school library. And this boy is opposed

to doing this, but as he goes home he's assailed by somebody who says, "You look like a boy whose thinking of writing a book," and this is the first character of the book, who says, "You have to write this story because people have to see how wicked I am." This is the villain. And he gets home and starts to talk a bit about having to write this story and his little sister says that she will help him do it, and he says, "No, I can do it myself." And he goes away and starts writing this story. Anyway, the following day before he gets home he is assailed by the villain who says, "Things have gone wrong in our story, you said that I had to be wicked, and now my little sister is in there, I said that I wanted to be wicked, and how can I be wicked when my little sister's in there ruining things for me?" And the boy goes home, and his sister has added a piece onto the end of the story, and so the next night he hides the book, but then she's written something with his pen. So the story goes through a whole lot of vicissitudes. [...] The boy and the sister are both writing the story. They are at odds about what is going on in the story. The characters come out and complain about what is happening to them. In the end he gets permission to use his father's computer, and his little sister goes to the library and gets into internet, and so they're connecting up through the story and at the same time a character from a video game [...] starts to intrude into the story too, so it gets quite complicated, but it all ends up happily, and the book wins a prize. [...] If I ever have this book produced, and I think that most editors will think it's too intricate, what I would like would be to have it printed in different colours or different type-faces, so that there will be this story that I'm telling, then there's the story that the boy's writing, and then his little sister is adding on to it, and then at the end of the book I would like to have a pocket where there would be a little book, which is just the book that the children wrote between the two of them, with their names on the cover. And in that particular story, there's lots of jokes about the nature of story, a lot of jokes about the use of language. At one stage the hero is writing on the computer and he says they started to run down stairs, and the villain says, "You're picking the wrong way about it. How about saying, 'Suddenly a gap in the floor opened and they fell straight through.'" And he says, "You can't do that. You have to have structure, and everything like that." Obviously they argue about the nature of the story. And I think that at the level at which it's written it's probably for the Raging Robot age, but because it's such a complicated story I suspect that it won't ever get published, except that at the end the boy says, "We have been saved by art." And when I wrote that, I suddenly felt really marvellous, that they thought they had been saved by art. I mean, it's not that it's such an original thing, but just being entertained by the idea reminded me of old melodramas, where someone would claim, "Virtue triumphant: saved by art." I think it had "Saved by art" as the subtitle.

SH29: Well it certainly sounds interesting. I would really like to see the book if it ever emerges.

MM29: Well I showed it to publishers when I was away, and they said, "Oh well, it's very complicated," and I knew that they would say that.

SH30: We've talked a lot about ideology and so on... [Referring to the following printed question: The Catalogue of the Universe shows the flaws in Angela's attempts to be assertive, to 'write her own plot'. It concludes with suggestions of growing dependence on Tycho. So whilst it eschews the clichés of much young women's literature about womanliness and popularity, it nevertheless suggests inescapable subjugation of women to men. Do you agree?

MM30: [...] I don't know that it does suggest [...] a growing dependence on Tycho. Well she does in a way, and yet at the same time, it seems to me that he is in a more dangerous situation than she is, because of what I was saying earlier about having moved from a position of resignation to one of hope, and I think that hope is necessary in human life, but it's got its dangers.

SH31: There were just one or two comments, she found herself waiting for the phone to call, just one or two of those sort of things, which are not necessarily growing dependence, perhaps just a growing attachment.

MM31: Yes, I think it is probably a growing attachment, and of course an increasingly specific one. [Reading form the printed questions:] "When your female characters achieve their goals, they do so by employing varying degrees of deceit." Do you think they do that more than Tris in Underrunners?

SH32: OK. Fair point. Actually, that was a question I wrote a long time ago, prior to reading Underrunners.

MM32: In so far as there is deceit, I wouldn't think of it as specifically female myself, although I'm conscious it may have turned out that way, but I think that it's just people trying to get their way in a world where particularly children are prevented from having their own way, so they try to find ways of getting around that.

SH33: Yes, I think that's right. I think that question grew out of a comment I had seen along those lines, that a lot of women historically in fiction achieve their goals through deceit because they had no other means of power, of control.

MM34: I'm certainly not aware of doing that exclusively, and of course one of the things I think about Christobel, for example, is that Christobel isn't a person who indulges in deceit, whereas Harry does. But that's because of a difference in character, place in the family. The fact of having Christobel above her with her particular way of being honest, somehow restricts Harry's capacity to be likewise.

And I think that does happen, not that she was that sort of person anyway, but in any given family there is probably only room for a limited amount of truth, and I haven't thought about it, but I suppose you could say in the Other Side of Silence that that's why Hero becomes silent and Athol is fairly silent too. He's deceitful in a way, because he pretends to be doing one thing but does another.

SH35: Was his rejection of the thesis, by the way, and dealing with new historicism, were you just playing there with ...

MM35: I was playing a little bit with words and the academic life that his parents had in mind for him which he was capable of going along with in some ways, but actually was more interested in the primitive stories of television, and possibly making money and things like that.

SH36: If Shakespeare were alive, he'd be writing Soap Operas wouldn't he, rather than writing for theatre?

MM36: Well, that's what people say, but you know it's very difficult to estimate. Shakespeare would have the producers and directors looking over him. They probably did correct him a bit, I don't know if there's argument about that, but "How about making Hamlet Canadian, because we can get Canadian money?" Television people are a bit inclined to do that. The story is intruded upon very very early on. I don't mind it, because you know before-hand that that is what it is going to be like, but it is intruded on by things that seem to have nothing to do with what the story should be.

SH37: Presumably though, he would have had some certain restrictions, the number of actors they might have had at their disposal.

MM37: Shakespeare. Oh, I'm sure he would have.

[...]

MM38: [Ms Mahy responds to the following written question: "It has been said that there is a literary tradition of presenting women and adolescents as either angels or demons. To what extent have you made a conscious attempt to revise such presentations into a Manichaean whole, perhaps best illustrated in the children's story Raging Robots & Unruly Uncles?"] I don't know, there may be a literary tradition of presenting women and adolescents as angels and demons. I think some writers do this very well. [...] I'm not totally out of sympathy with the Manichaean heresy, and I do think that Raging Robots and Unruly Uncles does illustrate it to some extent, but I'm certainly not very conscious of making women and adolescents either angels or demons. Though I think that there are times, and perhaps

particularly in adolescence, when the idea of being a demon is a very imaginatively attractive one, more so than being an angel. The majority of people have a pretty sentimental image of an angel, but then there has been quite a proliferation of books with devilish children and adolescents, *The Omen* and things like that. [...]

SH39: Is there a stronger sense of self that emerges from the demonic side of life than from the angelic one, which is by definition self-less?

MM39: Yes, I think that's certainly one of the things you get from Milton on. I mean [...] Satan in Paradise Lost has got a lot of power and glamour about him, and I think that is quite a traditional way of seeing the devil. Although there are other ways.

[Responding to the following written question: "If feminism is not an important issue to you, how do you account for the fact that others recognise feminist themes and motifs in your work?"]

MM40: We've talked a bit about the feminist thing. [...] It's interesting looking back at, you know, picture books, to see how many of them have got heroes rather than heroines, and with the novels I think, although by now I suppose, there's one or two heroes who are not highly active, I mean you wouldn't say that about Barney in The Haunting, and in a way the same thing happens, the same is true of the hero of Underrunners - Tris is active in a way. They tend to be sensitive. They're often coupled with girls, and in a way Tabitha is much tougher than Barnaby; and of course Winola certainly is than Tris, [...] - she is physically tougher, she is physically prepared to hurt somebody. And I don't think I do it much with a conscious idea of expressing positive women, but I must say that when I was a child I used to love the idea of violent women. [...] There used to be a lot of B grade Westerns, and I became very thrilled with the idea of Belle Star. I didn't see the picture that [was] about Belle Star, but there was a poster which showed her riding a horse, and with a gun, dressed as a man, and I did write a book when I was eleven called Dell Gray which was about an eleven year old girl who led a gang in the West, and ended up shooting the villains, and was a very good shot, and everything like that. And then there's certain female pirates, Mary Reed and Anne Bonny [...], but I really like the androgenous characters. They seem to me to be very glamorous and exciting, and I suppose it's a little bit the idea of women [and] girl characters having the power of life and death over other people because of weapons, or strength or something. So I suppose some of those characters certainly go a long way back with me, back before feminism was talked about. [...] Obviously, I have pretty mixed feelings about it now, in that nowadays there are a lot of people opposed to violence in children's books, and I used to love it, it used to seem very exciting to me, and I am tempted to say it didn't do me any harm. Aidan Chambers would say, "Well, prove it", but

on the other hand, you've also got to prove that not having any violence did you any good, and that's also hard to prove.

[Ms Mahy responds to the following written question: "Your adolescent characters are often deeply influenced by family secrets and by the power of ancestors. Why do these themes recur?"]

MM41: [...] I suppose the preference of this secret is once again something that happens in folk tales to a certain extent, and it makes a good dramatic point. The thing I think about Harry is that really she wants to tell that secret, she wants to tell somebody, and she suddenly finds herself in circumstances where she feels that she can do it, partly out of white-hot temper, and partly she feels that now the time has come, she can do it in the best possible way. As regards families being problematic, [Reading] "Do you use problem families more as the setting than the theme?" I suppose I think that most families have problems of one sort or another. It's part of what makes them interesting. I know that there are serene families, but most of the ones I know have problems of one sort or another.

SH42: That's right, they have, and even families that appear serene are probably harbouring some problem or another, and I like that image of the cage in The Other Side Of Silence, where you make her [Hero's] own home to appear like a cage at times - the scaffolding around it - and I think that's true to some extent in any family. It requires some suppression, some clipping of the wings, because we can't just do what we want to do, or be the people we want to be all the time, because at some times it's at other people's expense.

MM42: That's right. The families that I've written about mostly pick themselves up. They struggle on, they survive in one form or another. I suppose the exception might be Jonny. You don't know very much about his family, except that he's had an argument with them. I think that he stays amiable with them, but didn't go home again. But on the whole, the families pick themselves up, they brush themselves down, and stagger on bleeding a bit. But they laugh a lot too, and I think that that's one of the valuable things about laughter, that although somebody says, I think Nietzsche, that laughter is used to replace deep thought, and it certainly can work that way, the question is, are there times when that is not a bad thing? I mean, if deep thought is causing you to stagger on uselessly inflicting agony in one way or another, then it's quite good to laugh and take a break, but one of its functions is to carry you into another area of intuition I suppose, abandoning some of the struggles. It's like a sort of forgiveness at times, or a sort of, perhaps not so much forgiveness but acceptance, where you just say, "Well, that's the way the world is," and laugh. It's also true that you can say that's the way the world is and then weep, but I suppose that part of the judgement of the writer is for the character to do one or the

other. It's not that you want people to laugh the whole time, but it's a great way of sometimes moving your way past what would be otherwise impassable.

MM43: [Reading] "Arthea Reed says that good literature written for young adults should help readers understand the feelings of helplessness that accompanies the turbulent years between childhood and adulthood, and such literature should help readers overcome it." I don't know what I think about that just off hand. I think that good literature for young adults can help readers understand their feelings of helplessness which accompanies the turbulent years etcetera, etcetera. Whether it always should do that, I'm not too sure about, because, it's certainly often not what children choose to read. I mean, we talk a lot about young adult books and adolescent literature and everything, but [...] the books that are very widely read at secondary school, tend to be books like, Stephen King's books, or Virginia Andrews' [...]. Somebody told me that Virginia Andrews was very popular with some of her girl readers. Those are books that really have nothing to do with helplessness, and I think that there is a tendency with girls in particular when they write stories, they often go through a stage where they choose very tragic and terrible themes, you know of suicide and murder and all sorts of things, differently from the way that boys do. Boys, when they write, often write quite violent stories; but girls, if they write about "I", the I is sacrificed or a sacrificial character, and they go through often very emotional, dramatic stories filled with all sorts of cruelty and awful things happening. I think that in a way though, it's just that some people like to explore emotional extremes, and they can do it like that without actually suffering what those characters are suffering. I can remember once when I don't know how old I was, but I started a poem that began "We trudge along the weary road, the weary road of life." I probably rhymed it with strife. My mother said "What are your writing this for, you life's not like that", and I can remember standing looking at the poem thinking, "No, my life isn't like that." I think I was reaching for an adult theme, and that an adult theme was filled with misery. I can remember that quite specifically, and I can remember the puzzlement of my mother's scorning this particular poem, that I had started to read to her quite proudly, feeling that I was getting on to something that was really mature, and she absolutely cut the ground away from under my feet. And I do think that perhaps that is partly what it is, that [adolescents] are reaching on for some great emotional extreme. I mean obviously, if you ever hear Robert Cormier talk [...] - I've only read talks that he's given - I think that he is very good and very different, less agonised than one would have thought, and very cheerful and entertaining and all those sorts of things after writing this series of agonised books. And one of the things he said was that he got a lot of letters from children [...] saying "This was a great story," and I think that there is something there again [...] that is working there for some readers.

SH44: So that a story about helplessness, doesn't necessarily make its reader feel helpless.

MM44: [...] I was a bit like the child that was supposed to have said "Cruel. I love cruel. But sad. I hate sad." I never liked the story of the Little Match Girl as a child and I hated the story of "The Babes in the Wood", but quite a lot of stories with terrible things happening in them, I would enjoy because [...] when you were reading folk tales as a child they're very clear about right and wrong, and although characters do suffer, they're usually vindicated, and they're usually lifted up.

MM45: [Referring to part of a printed question that says, "...where adolescents do attempt something dramatic it often fails."] Of course even in adult life if you attempt anything dramatic it often fails; it doesn't work the way you think it would work. It was quite a real success for Tris, though because what he did sort of semi-accidentally do, was to find out something that struck a chord with Orson's own childhood by talking about The Wind in the Willows. He enabled Orson to set up a little connection with his own childhood, and then Orson, in effect, says that Tris had recognised him as a human being, whereas his own daughter, actually for very sound reasons, could only see him as a figure of menace. [...] There are one or two very ruthless lines in The Other Side of Silence particularly at the end when Miss Credence is talking about the way she's treated her daughter over the years, and how she could have killed her but she couldn't quite bring herself to do that. And there was a point, I think it's in Underrunners, where, in effect, Tris says to Winola he's going to kill himself and she said something like, "I wish you had." I think she really did wish that. [...] I think that she's quite a damaged person, but she's somebody who is going to go on and do the best that she can, and people make astonishing degrees of recovery, which is something that needs to be acknowledged too, and she does manage to express at the end by running like the horse, to express some sort of desperate energy, and some sort of poetic feeling about life too. I think Jonny Dart is an outsider. I actually have got another story which I've never written, in which he appears as not the main character but on the side. He's somebody who has got a bit of manic violence in him. He's somebody who...

[During the brief interruption as the tape is turned, we talk about the fact that publishers are less interested in Adolescent Novels than they were.]

MM46: [Publishers are] finding it harder to sell young adult books now. Well, I think that one of the reasons is that if you've got a reasonably good young adult reader, is that they enjoy reading adult books. But if you go into the library you often find the young adult area rather an underprivileged area. I can't think about Hastings at the moment, but it's quite a hard one to maintain. I haven't really particularly looked at the Christchurch one for a long time, I must confess, but it tends to be a rather uneasy area.

SH47: I'm interested that publishers are finding that it's not very successful, because I find that what my girls at school read, and what the boys when I was teaching at

Boys' High read, was very much the popular stuff, the Babysitters Club for girls, and for the boys the Stephen King-type stuff, and lots and lots of fantasy for boys. It was a very rare reader who got into something that I would consider really worth stopping and thinking about.

MM47: [...] When I was at secondary school, I loved reading Rider Haggard. I've got a whole long collection of Rider Haggard books up there. I think I've got about 21. I used to go into second-hand book shops and seek them out, and adventure stories, and some of them have got supernatural pieces in them [...]. I like various supernatural ones, and there's some very good Zulu ones.

[Ms Mahy reads the following written question: "Your allusions go over the heads of most adolescents, your vocabulary is frequently sophisticated, you do not overstate resolutions to enigmas. In short, your novels are beyond the comprehension of many adolescents (despite giving tremendous satisfaction to others). Who are you writing for?"]

MM48: [...] Well, I suppose I'm writing for a reader who's approximately the same sort of reader as I am, and for the ones who do enjoy it. But there's the problem because in the externalisation of a book, you know it starts off being this story that you want to tell, and it gets to a certain point where you've finished the story, then it starts to turn into a book, the book is a product which has to be sold, and you do these sometimes very esoteric - but I'm not the only person who does them - but they're rather esoteric sorts of novels. The publishers on the one hand, are sometimes going to say, "Yes, we love this book and we would like to publish it." But then they're going to say, "Can't you make it a little more achievable?" [...] Sometimes I do try. I do simplify things, and I do sometimes at personal cost, and I think, "This story is not quite what I intended it to be in the first place," and I feel that perhaps, because I'm always hearing about some other author who stuck out against editorial interference and everything like that... But I don't think that it's unreasonable to want to produce a book that's going to sell reasonably well, and you do have to bear in mind [...] the readers that you are writing for. You know, as you say, the [Mahy Adolescent Novels] have these things [...] - sophisticated vocabulary and their resolutions aren't neat always, so...

SH48: I think that they work at the plot level. I think that macro-comprehension isn't affected, but at times adolescents must be confused, you know when you come across the allusions to Noel Coward, for example. There would be very few of my seventh formers who would know who Noel Coward is, I think that's an allusion that is made in <u>The Catalogue of the Universe</u>, now they would just gloss over it.

MM49: Well, I hope that they would. And then of course you've always got the idea that someone's going to pick it up and be thrilled by it. The problem is that the

people who do that, you know the people who have this sort of response to it, are probably going to be very keen committed readers, with good literary background, and there's a bit of a tendency in publishing to think that you've got to aim at something a bit more average. So there is a problem.

SH50: It's a tension that you feel as a writer. On the one hand you want to be free to express things the way you want them to be expressed; on the other hand you have to consider your audience?

MM50: It's a bit of a dilemma. The Haunting is a very simple story. It's not nearly as dense or complicated as some of these others. Every now and then I think it would be fun to go back and do something just as simple and straight forward as that.

SH51: It's chilling, I remember feeling very chilled once or twice reading it through for the first time. It really works, very nicely. I'm not saying that the others don't work, I'm just saying that one really has the power to move the reader very much.

MM51: [Reading the following question: "Cognitive theory would suggest that early adolescents are not yet ready for subtle symbolic devices. You would not agree with that?"] I didn't know that cognitive theory suggests that early adolescents are not yet ready for subtle symbolic devices, but I imagine that would be true. But [...] I didn't think it was to do with cognitive development, just simply that they hadn't been introduced to it. Well I suppose if you're writing [...] this book which, goodness knows why one should think that anyone would go back and read it a second time when you think of the number of books there are to read, but nevertheless I do go back and I read books a second and third time, and I find that quite a rewarding thing to do in some books. Notoriously you pick up on things that you missed the first time, and all that sort of thing, and I enjoy the process. Once again, I suppose, you tend to try and establish things that you enjoy yourself in other books, and establish them for a reader who is approximately a similar reader to the reader that you are, but that's a bit of a dangerous thing to do. And of course there are a lot of books to read. [...] It's got to be really important for somebody to go back and read a book a second time, when there's a new book waiting to be read. I'm very keen to go back and re-read one or two books, but because of the stage that I'm at, I've got a pile of books in there that I haven't read, and I think I need to catch up on some of those, and some of them are quite long and complicated too.

[...]

SH52: About Memory, I just felt that there was a potential tension there between the fact that Jonny resolves his problems at the end through violence, or resolves his fear of Nev in that way, and yet on the other hand there had been the authorial

criticism of his father's advice that you will never be a man until you fight your own battles. Do you feel that there is a tension there, or have I misunderstood?

MM52: No, there is a tension there and there is a clash, and he's resolved stored-up resentments and things like that and faced up to whatever it was. Interestingly enough I haven't thought about it until right this moment, but he'd been bullied at school, and he comes back and takes a sort of revenge in a way, and that's really partly what The Fat Man's about, the Maurice Gee book. A boy who was bullied at school comes back as a man to this town, and at that stage the father of the child who's telling the story - used to be one of the bulliers - but he's a bit down in the world now. He's out of a job, and it's during the Depression, and this man comes back with money, and humiliates him in a variety of ways, some of them which you can't see, but the child watching from the side can see. So it's got a lot of very snide things about it. So once again it's a story of a bullied child getting revenge. It's quite a different sort of book, but I was just interested to think...

SH53: Is it reflecting what you just sense is a reality really? It probably was bad advice for the father to say that you will never be a man until you fight your own battles, because all that does for a child who's timid and scared is just intensify his sense of inadequacy.

MM54: It sort of builds a lot of tension in him which he discharges as violence. [...] He also was a bit of an actor; he had the power in certain circumstances to become very terrifying. He might not have been any better a fighter than anyone else, but because of being an actor, and because of having an imagination and things like that, he could make himself scary.

SH55: Yes, his scare tactics at the end are quite delightful.

MM55: Which is what I used to do when I was at school. Kids used to tease me, and I would tell them that I had a poison bite, and I'd bite them. Have we talked about No.7? ["Harry in The Tricksters, addresses the relationship between fiction and reality, and asks which copies the other?"] Well, I think fiction, as I've already said, is a different thing from reality, but I do know that in some ways reality copies fiction, that there are certain sorts of story which so catch the public imagination that people try to remodel reality to make it match up to that particular story a bit. And I read somewhere there was a painter Claude of Lorain who used to paint landscapes, and he had a shift of colour vision I think. At any rate he had used certain colours, and there was a little fashion for people at the French court to have glasses made that would change landscapes to match up with Claude of Loraine's colours. [...] I think in all sorts of things, I think in certain sorts of political propaganda, reality is being asked to take on fictional forms. I think when politicians get up and say "Let's get back to basics, let's get back to true family life,

you know the way family life used to be," I think that's a fictional thing, that somewhere in the back of their mind that they do have this picture of this marvellous happy family where children were happy and on the whole fairly obedient and law-abiding and everything like that, and I don't think that there's no families like that. I just mean that there's not as many of them. They speak as if that's the way it is and the more you read about family life, the more you think that there is a lot of very bizarre families, particularly when you look at accounts of family life in the past. People come and tell stories of their family life, whether it's Janet Frame, or someone like that, I mean there are bizarre elements about her family, and yet they were probably as happy as many.

SH56: Yes, I'd rather wondered in 7b there, to what extent you create characters who readers can emulate? Do you do that at all?

MM56: No, I don't think I do very much want anyone to copy any of the characters. [...] I do try to create characters who have got sufficient mystery to be intriguing, and who get into a variety of adventurous situations. I don't particularly want anyone to copy the characters that I've done.

SH57: No, I expected you'd say that, the question was designed really just to confirm what I felt you'd probably say, because there is so much talk about, the responsibility of writers...

MM57: Well, some people feel very strongly about that, and as I say there is a very big tradition of it in writing for children. The first books specifically written for children were text-books written for boys. [...] Maori literature doesn't have any specific stories for children, I don't think. There's probably stories that people chose to tell [children] more than they would others, but they don't have children's literature in the way that Europeans do, and a lot of societies don't have a children's literature as such. The adults and the children share the same stories much more, and of course that still happens here with things like Steven King and in the past the Penny Dreadfuls. [...] I suppose from the time of Newbury onwards, you get an increasing suggestion that children should read stories not only because of the pleasure of the story itself apart from what they are going to learn from it, and of course if you look at anything like Cole's Funny Picture Book, I don't know if you remember that, it was an Australian picture book, some of the things in that are alarming because, well they wouldn't be printed nowadays of course, but also it's [...] strange to think that somebody at the time would have thought that they were suitable for inclusion in something called Cole's Funny Picture Book. There's quite a lot about cruelty to animals, which is often punished, but not always. There's one poem which begins "What, go and see the kittens drowned on purpose in the yard, I didn't think there could be found a heart so hard." [...] It's a horrid poem. It's the sort of thing that you would think would keep a child awake at night, weeping with

anguish. [...] You don't expect to find some of the really sad things that there are in here. I used to quite enjoy it. My mother had it when she was a child, this is of course a more recent one.

[A short while later, while driving back to Christchurch...]

MM58: On the one hand, I think that children's writers have got a bit of a tendency now to feel marginally in some ways by the academic community. How annoyed they feel about this varies quite a lot. In some ways I don't think it matters too much, on the other hand of course, when someone in effect says, that this is a part of the writing of the community, that there's some interesting writerly things that can be said about it with the way the reader receives the story, and things like that. I think that from a children's writer's point of view there are some encouraging things happening in the academic world. Massey has got quite a generous attitude towards children's writers, so has Waikato.

SH59: Yes Waikato has in particular, and Victoria has just taught this year, for the first time, a course on children's literature, but I'm not sure just what they are covering in it, but that's breaking new ground again.

MM59: I can remember some years ago when I was a library assistant, and I said to the librarian in charge of the children's library, "Why don't you have picture books in the library?" And she said, "Well, you know, they're not really very good literature. The characters aren't developed." Now when you think about this, this is a very odd criticism to make of a children's book because some of them actually take their power from the fact that the character doesn't develop. And of course there's some very good, although not academic, writing by adults. P.G. Wodehouse's Jeeves never changes, and Berty Wooster never changes. The fun is seeing them behave in a calculable way over and over again. I mean, just seeing how Jeeves is going to get Berty out of a particular lot of trouble [...] is genuinely funny. Now I don't want to rubbish literary seriousness, but it's got its restrictions, and I just wonder if you find people think that just because you're writing about children's books in your thesis, you're doing something that's less serious.

SH60: Yes I'm sure that you're right. Of course, they wouldn't want to admit that to me, but I'm certain that that is the case.

[The conversation digresses for a time.]

MM60: [...] I think that some people suggest that one reading is as legitimate as another, and I don't agree with that, not always because of authorial intent but also because of the nature of the story. [...] I think stories play a very powerful part in the life of nearly every human being. Even if you are not a particularly literary child

you are still affected by stories which you can gain access to in a number of ways through film, television, comics, all that sort of stuff or because the story's come to be alive in the world in some way. You might be affected by events that then get turned into stories. So with the Rainbow Warrior for example, I'm sure that the story we tell about it will be quite different from the stories that will be told about it in France. There will be a different structure given to it, a different sort of emphasis in certain ways and in the end - I was thinking about this relative to our discussion to the friend - in the end the pursuit of truth is just so complicated, so intricate, and so self-contradictory at times that most people opt for some story or other which works terribly well. [...] There's a book by Kurt Vonnegut, Cat's Cradle, that talks about the lies that make you happy. He's doing something very provocative there, by saying lies rather than stories because of course they are not necessarily lies. What he is suggesting though is the short-comings in any schemes of how we should live. All this seems a long way away from stories except to say that I think human beings are structured somewhere inside their heads to receive stories and to draw dramatic or synthetic conclusions. Patriotism is a very suspect emotion that causes people to construct very specific stories about what makes a hero. [...]

SH61: I am interested in linking your novels to The Lion in the Meadow. I think there are some very distinct links there. I think it is possible to write a thesis on that itself. [...]

MM61: The child [in the Lion in the Meadow] says she [the mother] should have looked in the matchbox first. He exposes the fact that the mother has been using stories without the proper seriousness of the heart, using them to try to trick him into better behaviour, but he acted with conviction in his own story. [...]

SH62: Well, to some extent the way that you could talk about what is and isn't real in the Lion in the Meadow exists in all of your novels. There's an ambiguity about what reality is and who defines it.

MM63: Well, I'm not very solopsistic and I'm really quite prepared to take a sort of roughly consensus view of reality, but there are some very odd things about, for example, people arriving say in New Zealand in the colonial days. It always strikes me as odd that there was quite a number of expensive houses built in Dunedin in the 1880's facing south. There was quite a lot of examples of that sort of thing, where people come along and don't look at the world and say, "Look, that is where the sun is." But they say, "This is the way you build a house." I did read somewhere an account of a woman who came and was told to put her larder on the south side of the house which is the cool side in New Zealand which was important in the days before refrigeration. They told her that the sun has considerable warmth here, to which she is supposed to have replied "Oh, we are not going to let that influence us in the slightest." [Margaret also recounts an example of how, in the early colonial

days of Australia, Aborigines were painted to look like Africans.] Whatever happened, the Aborigine people looked like Aborigine people. I'm not saying that reality was different, and yet perception of reality was affected - the way in which certain things were perceived to be real and other things are ignored.

SH64: A lot of reader-response critics talk about the way an identity pattern somehow has an influence on what a person reads, and other factors such as your expectations of what a novel will be affects your response to it.

MM65: [Talks about a book her mother read as a child which had references to homosexuality in it. Her mother had not noticed it at the time of reading.]

SH66: And what does it mean to you to be a New Zealand author, if it means anything?

MM67: It didn't mean anything in the beginning really because I was quite displaced by my own reading as quite a lot of people were and I didn't think of stories as necessarily having to be in any particular place. I'm not the only one. Patricia Grace said that she felt her life wasn't a proper subject for stories rather in the way that I did, and when I did start writing New Zealand stories I actually wasn't very satisfied with what I wrote. I didn't believe them in some way and certainly the local references seemed to me to sit on the page in a very uneasy self-conscious way and I think that's true of many writers and the mention of pohutukawa trees somehow seemed uneasy. I don't think it does any more. I think we've got over that sort of self-consciousness. When I heard myself first talking on the radio I sounded as if I should be reading recipes because when I grew up that's often what women were doing on the radio. [...] I do think that by now, because of the variety of children's fiction that has been written in New Zealand, that New Zealand children can think of themselves as being appropriate imaginative subjects. Their lives and the things around them are as likely to be marvellous as anything else. [...] But I feel very pleased to be a New Zealand writer now. I think that in a partial way any of us who are New Zealand writers who get our books published overseas certainly make a point about ourselves and about our society and about everything like that to other readers.

SH68: They are not imposingly New Zealand stories, but they are, as Diane Hebley so nicely points out, unmistakably New Zealand stories.

MM68: I don't think they are very powerfully New Zealand stories. [...] I feel very easy about putting the pohutukawa tree into it, not because it's a particularly New Zealand story, I just like the sound of the word. I didn't feel that it sat on the page too self-consciously at all, just a nice sounding word, but that might be partly because I've got over my self-consciousness.

SH69: I love the words that you have created in a lot of your children's stories. You're obviously just playing with sounds as well.

MM69: Yes, I think that they're just actually very fundamental things in language acquisition. I was once just driving along when Poppy started going "Oi, yoi yoi yoi yoi yoi" and I just sort of picked it up and she repeated it and she was just so amused. I think that a lot of the great things of our life are reinforced with such strong pleasure principles. Language is reinforced with a lot of them by playing those games and just having fun out with language [...] Initially at a very primitive level and then on with increasing degrees of sophistication and everything, children work their way into language and I am entertained by giving some sort of acknowledgement to this trivial game-playing on the side by inventing words and songs.

ABBREVIATIONS

Ed(s)	Editor(s)
OUP	Oxford University Press
P	Press
U	University
U P	University Press

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