

Docility, Desire and Disruption: Representations of the Body in Australian Children's Literature

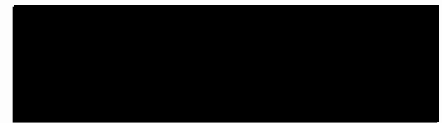
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I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.



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Abstract

This thesis explores the representation of gendered, untamed, abject, carnivalesque and docile bodies in a selection of Australian children's books. Utilising a range of theoretical perspectives I interrogate some of the ideological imperatives that emerge from these texts and problematise the normalising discourses which they employ. Beginning with an introductory exposition on theorising the child's body, I then proceed to deploy Feminist theory in a discussion of the conservative gender roles offered in John Marsden's *Secret Men's Business: Manhood: The Big Gig* and Margaret Clark's *Secret Girls' Stuff*. Chapter Three combines postcolonial theory and historical analysis of the discourses that have surrounded wild children to consider Gary Crew's novel *Angel's Gate*. Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject is used in Chapter Four to study Sonya Hartnett's *Sleeping Dogs* and Margo Lanagan's *Touching Earth Lightly*. Chapter Five employs Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque in an interpretation of Victor Kelleher's *The Red King* and John Marsden's *The Journey*. Finally, Chapter Six applies Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, in conjunction with an exposition of docility and childhood, to a critical reading of three novels by John Marsden: *So Much To Tell You*, *Letters From the Inside* and *Checkers*. The result is a discourse on body-politics which identifies some of the conservative ideals that render bodies docile, desirable and disruptive within Australian children's literature.

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