

In the last essay in this collection, Kate Harvey explores different methods used by adapters of Tolkien's work to address specific audiences through a range of visual media. The Alan Lee illustrated edition is the best known and has influenced and is referenced in all the other works mentioned in this essay. Other adaptations of Tolkien's work into visual media i.e. comic books, graphic novels, animation and films, face a problem in transforming the text from a verbal to a graphic medium since efforts are generally made to fit as much of the original text as possible into the new pages, illustrations, animations and film.

This interesting and compelling collection of essays deals with various issues in J.R.R. Tolkien's work and offers a new critical approach through the lens of children's literature studies and looks at some problems through adult and fantasy literature. This collection will be attractive to students of children's literature, fantasy, illustration, film and anyone who has an interest in Tolkien's work.

Maja Loborec

Desire: Right or Wrong?

Lydia Kokkola. 2013. *Fictions of Adolescent Carnality: Sexy sinners and delinquent deviants*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company. 236 pp. ISBN 978-90-272-0155-3

In this study, Lydia Kokkola explores one of the most controversial topics in young adult literature: carnal desire. Reviewing about 200 Anglophone novels and short stories published in more than one English speaking country and featuring sexually active teenage characters, Kokkola has arrived at interesting generalisations about Anglophone society's attitudes to adolescence, adolescent sexuality, and the messages adult writers convey to their young readers on the topic. The author points out that though this is a literary enquiry, the root phenomenon is of a social character because teen fiction does not reflect real teens but rather what adults think about them and what they should be, proving that despite the liberal democratic stance Anglophone society takes, it remains conservative regarding adolescent sexuality.

In the introductory chapter, the author starts off by examining the social beliefs embedded in the concepts of childhood, adolescence and adulthood. She states that "adolescence is a social construction" (2) just like the myth of innocent childhood, both existing because of adults' urge to "privilege adulthood as a period of balanced maturity" (6). In Anglophone cultures, Kokkola argues, adolescent *sturm und drang* is actually invented by adults for this very reason. Focusing on inner turmoil, the angst-ridden teen is celebrated through the media and literature, actually perpetuating stereotypes in order to serve broader social purposes, as this enables the younger child to remain innocent for longer.

Kokkola claims that the "aetonormative" order of society, as Maria Nikolajeva terms adults' power over children, allows adults to decide what constitutes age-appropriate behaviour and to convey it to their offspring via literature for youth which offers an "ideal site for indoctrination" (14). Thus, instead of reflecting reality, literature has been used as a

didactic tool, “a means by which adults attempt to educate and guide young people” (12). To prove her point, the author points out the *problem* with problem novels which place sex as the problem that requires resolution, especially in novels featuring gay and lesbian characters, thus conveying society’s view that there is something wrong with this.

In the chapter “Adolescence, innocence and power”, Kokkola explores child-adult boundaries and how they were constructed. She focuses on the concept of innocence and argues that it is a socially assigned property of childhood. Placing it in a socio-historical context, the author attempts to demonstrate how the Victorian era turned the Romantic myth of childhood innocence into a concept specifically implying sexual innocence.

Kokkola quotes the words of Marah Gubar: “innocence is all about what you lack” (35) and goes on to say that knowledge about sexuality can transmute a child into an adult through a single act, a situation that constantly repeats itself in almost all literature for youth. A “knowing child”, in Anne Higonnet’s terms, is no longer a child but is instantly reclassified as a teenager, a person whose identity is synonymous with trauma and stress. Biologically, the transition is also marked by the onset of sexual desire, and time and time again adolescent literature portrays adolescent sexuality with pain and punishment. “By observing trends which occur across numerous titles, we can investigate the social ideology underlying the text” (39) and in the author’s opinion the ideology is that “adolescent sexuality is deviant” (39).

The following chapter, “The calamitous consequences of carnality” deals with the consequences that befall teen characters when they act upon their sexual drives. These consequences usually involve unplanned pregnancies, damaged relationships and emotional pain, sexually transmitted diseases and death. The author is highly concerned with the emphasis which literary texts place on these calamitous consequences, although she admits there is the possibility of an underlying real-world trend being reflected. However, she also states that the obviously didactic nature of the novels is impossible to ignore and that “this didacticism may even be contributing to the problem it purports to address” (52). Thus, instead of reflecting the reality and providing useful information and valuable life insights, the author deems this literature to be judgemental, with the main goal of repressing teens’ carnal desire through exaggerated emphasis on punishment. For instance, a shocking revelation, especially bearing in mind the liberal commitment of the Anglo-Saxon world, concerns the intimate link between teen homosexuality and death, again conveying the message that “sex can kill you” (93).

The chapter “Teen carnalities” juxtaposes teen with queer carnalities and demonstrates how society treats teens as deviant in much the same way. By extension, the author finds queer where it is not obvious, by reading through a queer lens, and suggests that “the reading teen can be empowered by learning to read against the grain, seeking out queer expressions desire” (100). She also points out the double marginalisation that queer adolescents face for being not only desiring teens, but also for experiencing queer desires.

In what follows, the author points out the common queer stereotypes in adolescent fiction, such as the stereotype of the typical gay/lesbian physical appearance or the insatiability of gay sexual desire. Another stereotype reflected concerns cross-generational relationships and the notion of informed consent. In the depictions of these relationships,

teenage characters are always represented as the victims, regardless of their, at times, manipulative behaviour to seduce the older partner. The author also finds that lesbian characters are “ghosted” in adolescent literature in order to avoid their direct representation.

In the chapter “The beastly bestiality of adolescent desire”, Kokkola comes to an interesting conclusion that the Romantic child is often set in a pastoral surrounding to emphasise “natural” child innocence, whilst the typical settings for teenagers are quite different. Either the setting is an urban area, implying that sexuality belongs to the civilised world, as opposed to the natural, or the teen story is set in the wild and violent natural world, suggesting that adolescent sexuality is bestial, less mature and shorter lasting than that of adults, and cannot be tamed once it is released.

Indeed, there are many examples of depictions of adolescent sexuality that draw parallels with the animal world in the corpus, such as the metamorphosis of teenage characters into animals. In the author’s opinion, this trope can be used to promote cross-generational communication on the topic of adolescent sexuality while staying in the readers’ comfort zone, as sexuality is often only evident to those readers who have already recognised their own sexual desires. However, at the same time, the trope also sends ambiguous messages, blurring the line between the adolescent and the beast, once again sending a message of the bestiality of adolescent sexuality. In addition, the metamorphosis is also employed to depict the abuse of the teenage character, which, unfortunately, often contributes to the blaming of the victim due to the vileness of the image of the abused character.

“The abjection of abused adolescents” discusses the depictions of the taboo theme of sexual abuse in teenage literature. The number of novels tackling this topic has increased significantly in recent years, which may suggest that social change is taking place, signalled by the willingness of adults to speak to teenagers as their equals on such difficult topics. However, Kokkola does not consider that this author-reader relationship is as candid and benevolent as it seems. On the contrary, she feels that it only confirms the aetnonormative order as these representations “do not offer an apology for the fictional adults’ behaviour” (204). Moreover, she states that “there is still a strong tendency to blame the teenage characters for failing to protect themselves” (205). In this sense, it may be suggested that trauma novels conflate abjection with adolescence, as the abuse renders the character unstable, and recovery with adulthood, which all aligns with Kokkola’s theory of childhood innocence as a product of the aetnonormative social order. Therefore, the author lauds the existence of novels which acknowledge that recovery is not always possible, thus also fostering the process of forming skilful and ruminative young readers. That being said, Kokkola also points out that young adult literature fosters stereotypes by connecting victimhood with racial and/or ethnic minorities, usually the Black and, almost always, the poor.

In the final chapter “The end of innocence and the on-set of knowledge?” Lydia Kokkola summarises her points about adult views of adolescence in today’s society expressed in teenage literature and discusses the so-far proposed solutions. In her opinion, promoting abstinence and keeping sexual secrets is not the way to go, since such moves instead place children in danger, as teenage pregnancy, abortion, rape, incest, child abuse and other related problems are spiralling and society is facing a crisis revolving around adolescent sexuality.

Thus the author offers a different solution: “radical teenage literature”. Adopting the term from Kimberly Reynolds, Kokkola explains that radical literature is “a literature that tries to get to the root phenomenon of desire and would situate that desire within the entirety of the society they [the readers] inhabit. It would be literature that endeavours to speak honestly and openly to its readers, which invites dialogues and refuses to either condescend or to pander to the youngster’s lack of experience and/or knowledge” (211). In the corpus, Kokkola has found three works that match these requirements, all of which are shockingly among the oldest novels included in this study: *Forever* by Judy Blume (1973), *It’s OK If You Don’t Love Me* by Norma Klein (1977) and *Breaktime* by Aidan Chambers (1978).

Although newer novels do show some tendency towards radical literature, there is no smooth movement towards this comprehensive new view of adolescence. On the contrary, in Kokkola’s opinion the majority of authors view adolescents as “sexy sinners and delinquent deviants” (214).

As has been said, this study scrutinises the depictions of teenage sexuality in literature intended for this audience and has come to some intriguing conclusions about our society in general, which makes this a social study as well as a literary one. In the author’s opinion, a crisis is taking place in the way adolescence is perceived and treated in Anglo-Saxon society, especially in terms of sexuality. However, some may argue that this crisis is not only taking place in the realm of childhood/adolescence, but throughout society in general. Some believe we are facing a moral crisis in which sexuality, among other aspects of the human being, is taken out of context and mistreated to serve political or financial ends, which is then consequently passed on to the next generation.

As society has not yet come up with the means to deal with the large-scale crisis, the easiest solution is to try and stop it from spreading, cautioning the young via literature not to go in that direction. Hypocritical or not, society’s intention, as Kokkola also admits, is not ill-intended, although we can easily agree it is obviously not the most effective one.

However, I am doubtful that the crisis in the way society perceives and treats adolescent sexuality can be solved without addressing the root issue of the way society perceives and treats a human being in all his or her integrity and complexity. This change will follow when large-scale social change takes place: a radical change that will bring people back to their roots and stimulate them to embrace the entirety of the human being. In this sense, the radical literature Kokkola proposes could be a welcome stepping stone towards a more pleasant society.

Tea Babić

Happy Thinking!

Thomas E. Wartenberg. 2013. *A Sneetch Is a Sneetch and Other Philosophical Discoveries: Finding Wisdom in Children’s Literature*. Illustrations by Joy Kinigstein. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Inc. 176 pp. ISBN 978-0-470-65678-5

Does the end always justify the means? Is temptation a prerequisite for will power? Is it important to be an individual, and if so why? These are just some of the numerous thought-