

Debbie Pullinger

Constructions of adolescence in adolescent poetry

ABSTRACT

Young adult (YA) fiction materializes when adult constructions of adolescence are subjected to the pressure of narrative form. But what if those constructions of adolescence are subject to the pressures of poetic form? Although a relatively scarce commodity, published poetry for older children or young adults does exist.¹ Amongst the field in the UK, however, Philip Gross stands out as an established poet² who has consistently produced poetry for older children to critical acclaim. I examine *The All-Nite Café* (1993), his second volume and winner of the Signal Poetry Award, and will attempt to demonstrate, through a very small sample of the poetry, that there are at least two distinctive attributes produced by the conditions of writing for adolescents against the resistance of poetic form.

Debbie Pullinger: Bio

Following a varied career in primary teaching, educational publishing, and writing, Debbie returned to academic study in 2008, taking the MPhil in Children's Literature at the University of Cambridge. Selected work from her thesis on the poetry of Charles Causley is due to be published later this year as a chapter in *Poetry and Childhood* (Eds. M. Styles, L. Joy, D. Whitley). She is now researching for a PhD in which she is investigating the aesthetics of poetry for children.

¹ For several reasons, adolescent poetry is also harder to corral than adolescent fiction. For example, there are some anthologies marketed for teenage readers, but these typically include many poems not first written or published for children. Equally, some poetry written for children, such as that of Carol Ann Duffy, is somewhat ageless in that the implied reader might equally be six or sixteen.

² Philip Gross has published several volumes of poetry and a book of collected poems. He won the T.S. Eliot prize for poetry with *Water Table* (2009).