

Identities in YA Narratives One Day Symposium, University of Northampton 16/12/12

Abstract

“‘You’ve just got to find a way to live there anyway’”: The dystopian chronotopes of trauma in Patrick Ness’s *More Than This*.’

Dr Sonya Andermahr, University of Northampton

YA dystopian fiction has proven fertile ground for the exploration of traumatic events experienced by young people undergoing rites of passage. This paper employs Bakhtin’s concept of the chronotope (literally, “time space”) to examine the representation of trauma in Patrick Ness’s YA novel *More Than This* (2014), which follows the protagonist Seth’s journey back into an estranged and depopulated version of his childhood home. As in classic trauma theory, the novel contains two traumatic episodes: a primary trauma (the ‘wounding’ of the protagonist’s brother), which took place in England in the past; and a secondary trauma (his own apparent death), which takes place in the United States in the present. Ness portrays this dual trauma in parallel narrative strands, which intersect and fuse into one deeply alienating, puzzling, and complex whole. In the process he explores a range of traumas affecting young adults including suicide, child abuse, homophobia, and murder. Like Seth himself, the reader has to decode the temporal-spatial indicators to discover the source of Seth’s trauma and trace his journey from acting out to working through his traumatic experience.

Author Biography: Dr Sonya Andermahr

Sonya Andermahr is Reader in English at the University of Northampton, U.K. She has written widely on contemporary fiction and women’s writing in Britain and the United States and has a special interest in trauma narratives. Her publications include *Decolonizing Trauma Studies: Trauma and Postcolonialism* (Basel: MDPI, 2016), *Trauma Narratives and Herstory* (with Silvia Pellicer-Ortín; Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), *Angela Carter: New Critical Readings* (with Lawrence Phillips; Continuum, 2012), and *Jeanette Winterson* (Palgrave 2009). She is currently working on a book on traumatic spaces in YA fiction and guest-editing a special issue on Brigid Brophy for *Contemporary Women’s Writing*.