

Celebrate Reading National Conference, 28-29 October 2016

Archimede Fusillo Notes - Exploring The Darker Side...

Here is what I know-and I guess most of you know too...

Teenagers DO NOT have access to TV news reports about War...Riots...Famine...Natural Disasters...Terrorism

Teenager's lives are NOT touched by Divorce...Family Violence...Abuse...

Teenagers DO NOT have access to pornography, violence, death, abuse and human suffering on the Net...on their devices.

Teenagers DO NOT engage in Sexting...Bullying...Violence...Intolerance

Teenagers DO NOT engage in Sexual Experimentation....Are Confident of their Sexuality...and DO NOT question Authority.

Teenagers DO NOT see older people in their world so they DO NOT ever encounter people with memory lapses-memory loss-incontinence-fear-anxiety-the loss of a desire to continue living....a wealth of Life Experiences that go largely ignored and brushed aside.

This is what else we know-

Many parents shield their Teens from Failure...Everyone's a Winner...There is no second place because there is no Competition...No-not in the world beyond school either!

Everything BAD happens to OTHER people...People unlike us...People who do not live in the real world....

Old People are 'others' in the same way that Refugees are....Teenagers will never be old themselves...Their parents will never age...

Teenagehood is a time of Blissful Ignorance about the world beyond the end of our own fingertips-Teenagehood is when we are completely EGO and no ID....We have no awareness of anything other than ourselves.

Somehow the teenage years are Cocoon years--- spent apart from the world as it really is-A bit like a segregated Year 9 class that is kept at a separate campus to the rest of the school body.

Interesting thought-that we all live in the same world- by we I mean Adults and Teenagers.

It would seem to me that we become the adults we do because of our experiences as Teenagers...and those experiences actually do involve the so-called darker aspects of life-such as Death, Violence, Loss, Grief, Confusion, Bullying...the sight of a beloved family member becoming less aware of the world around them-becoming erratic, incontinent...

cont/...

Perhaps the reason YA writers seem to tackle these same issues that appear to be taboo to many is that this is where the HEART of the TEENAGE world lies...Amongst the confusion and questioning that comes when Childhood is part history-part safety blanket.

Perhaps what we are really looking at is **When is an individual READY for YA Fiction?**...When are they no longer the child-but the Human Being who will move from Child to Adult through Teenager?

To ask why YA tackles these ideas profoundly and intimately is really to look at the core of what being a Teenager Involves-and that for me at least is about the struggles to understand the issues of Death, Violence and so forth-RATHER than an awakening to them.

YA Fiction reflects the teenagers world back at them-obliging them to look at what is around them in a manner that is relatively safe and non-threatening-the characters and the events-created by the writer, but forged by an awareness that in the real world there is more often than not a balance between good and bad, life and death, loss and gain.

I think YA writers have a freedom that perhaps writers for Adults and Children don't-That Freedom to put the often underlying concerns of their Audience in the spotlight at a time in their lives when they themselves are starting to become aware of their own mortality, their own prejudices and biases, their own strengths and weaknesses.

In Fiction we can take the Teenager to the precipice, have them peak over the edge and then bring them back-because it is **NOT REALITY**....It is an expression of the real world-and one in which they are free to question their responses and feelings without due consequence on their own lives.

In **The Dons for instance**, Paul is faced with the death of his father and the vacuum it leaves in his and his mother's lives-but also with the prospect of change being eminent as his mother starts to date again. On top of this there is the issue of his Nonno's dementia-of Paul's growing awareness of his own separatedness to both his mother and his Nonno-and the uncomfortable sense of responsibility for his relationship with both....At a time when he is Seeking to find where he fits in amongst his peers-his growing sexuality, his desire to be both a good son and a good mate..and the struggle to be both a grandson and a carer to his Nonno.

Paul is in that space between a Childhood unencumbered with responsibility-and the Adult he sees in his mother, his Zia, and other significant 'older' people in his life-including his dead father. He has adult issues to deal with but a teenagers EXPERIENCE to use in trying to NAVIGATE them-The novel hopefully provides a schematic for my readers to Address the very same challenges Paul is facing-by identifying with Paul-his situation...and analysing his way of dealing with same.