

Not Just Another Poo Poem

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With reference to, 'The Meaning of Life' published in *So Grotty!* (2004).

I know that I will never be
all warm and tinkly
like a wee.

I have a bigger job to do.
Grunt! Groan! Plop!
I am poo.

This poem was dismissed by a reviewer as 'just another poo poem' and this is my response. To understand the significance of this poem it is necessary to explain a few terms:

Humanism looks at the nature of human beings and their relationships to societies. It says that although men and women may not have complete freedom in their lives they nevertheless have the opportunities to make choices and to forge their own agency. They do this by engaging with both the personal and inward aspects of 'being and experiencing' and the social and political dimensions of living in a society. Humanistic thought is that ordinary people can use their intellect, emotions and imagination to understand other people's worlds and ideas, to strive for social and political freedom and for justice.

Solipsism refers to an inability to distinguish between one's own self and the otherness of the world and of other people. 'It's all about me.'

Subjectivity is when an individual has a sense of self in relation to other individuals and society.

Intersubjectivity is the state when we can perceive the otherness of the world and of other people.

Bildungsroman genre is one where there is growth and development of the adolescent into adulthood.

Adolescents are obsessively preoccupied with the formation of subjectivity and the development of their own selfhood. It is essential in their transition from childhood to adulthood. The same can be seen in *The Meaning of Life*. The title *The Meaning of Life* flags for the reader that this will be a poem about developing a sense of self. Part of the humour is that this search of self in relation to others is undertaken by a taboo 'character' - Poo. To have a Poo

that talks is absurd, extraordinarily silly, but kids find this leap of logic highly amusing.

This poem is situated at the end of the adolescent's quest to find one's place and purpose in the physical and social world. It flags for the young reader what the next stage in their development will be when they make the transition from child to adult. The use of first person brings intimacy and aligns the reader with the main character. Poo has grown to the point where it recognises the selfhood of another, ie wee, and has moved out of solipsism to a more intersubjective position. Poo now has a sense of knowing where it is going as well as a sense of its own individual uniqueness. It has established its own identity, quite separate to wee.

By comparing itself to wee we see that a quest for knowledge and a struggle has taken place - 'I know that I can never be ...' - prior to achieving enlightenment. There has been a struggle between Poo's concept of self and the concept of self it perceives for wee. Whilst originally trying to align itself to wee and the group traits of being 'warm and tinkly' it has come to appreciate that it is independent from wee and has a valuable role in itself.

The 'warm and tinkly' traits of wee are linked to a feminine adult schema whereas the strong and tough traits of Poo are linked to the male adult schema. The declarative/authoritative statement 'I am Poo' confirms this gender role and highlights that Poo has achieved independence from others.

Who would have thought ...