

2003/ March ROS ASQUITH - Publishing News

It's not so unusual for authors of children's books to use their younger selves as a models for a character. Ros Asquith is one who has done it, and to great acclaim, with Letty Chubb - and not content with that, she's doing it all over again with Trixie Tempest. "The stories were going to be about Letty Chubb's younger years," says Asquith, "but a new personality emerged as I developed the idea, and she wasn't a worrier and was much more audacious." Thus was born the Tweenage Tearaway, star of Asquith's new series from HarperCollins.

Trixie is probably best described as feisty; she has attitude, she takes issue. She is very, how can I put it...visible. "Trixie is lots of girls I know," says Asquith, "friends' daughters, nieces and myself, of course. I remember being Trixie's age so well...8 to 12 is a golden age, if you have a happy home; you've no responsibilities and it's the age of hobbies, the real joy of play and life is full of schemes. My whole childhood was spent trying to forge £5 notes and sell milk bottle tops; I used to make saddles and bridles for friends' toy horses, that's where Trixie comes from."

Her new character is, says Asquith, a direct result of her *Teenage Worrier* books. "They were my big break," she tells me. "I mean, what had I done? Four cartoon books for Pandora, the small feminist press. I really owe it to Brenda [Gardner], she gave me the chance to do it and I'm very grateful for that." The first *Teenage Worrier* sold 20,000 copies very quickly and got onto the *Sunday Times* bestseller list, which meant, says Asquith, that she got into the business very easily.

Starting life as a photographer for *The Observer*, Asquith got her writing break when a journalist failed to turn up for one of the jobs she was doing and she was asked to do the piece. "And I thought 'Ooh, I can double my money!' and I began writing a lot," she says. "I did theatre reviews, first for *TimeOut*, then *City Limits*, and I wrote about the theatre for *The Observer*; but I got bored, constantly going on about the fact that there weren't enough plays by women, always seeming to say the same thing, so I thought I'd *draw* what I wanted to say instead, and that started the cartooning."

It looks like this is going to be Asquith's year, with a total of twelve books coming out. "This has never happened to me before," she says, "I'm aiming to do an Enid and have 50 books out in one year." 2003 will see two new *Fab Four* titles from Orchard, plus a re-issue/repackage of the first four books; there are three picture books, which she's written but not illustrated, and, of course, the three *Trixie Tempest* novels. And to top things off, there are also hopes that Trixie might make it onto TV as an animation.