

Dr Antoinette Curtin, *Trinity College Dublin, Ireland*

Alan Moore's Sexual Ladies

ancurtin@tcd.ie

Described by its creator as self-consciously pornographic, Alan Moore's graphic novel *Lost Girls* (1991-2) depicts the sexual adventures of three canonical female figures from late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century children's literature, Alice of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), Dorothy of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) and Wendy of *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906). In its representation of the sexual exploits of the heroines as teenagers and old women, the text negotiates a number of taboos, most specifically childhood sexuality and sexual activity in advanced age, explored also in Roger Mitchell's film *Venus* (2006). Although condemned by its detractors as endorsing cultural representation of the sexualised child, the text failed to attract the scale of controversy anticipated by Moore and his collaborator Melinda Gebbie, while in its representation of the heroines as teenagers rather than children itself acknowledged the inviolability of the taboo. In this paper, I propose to analyse two issues: the text's flirtation with contemporary taboos, and its engagement with opposing constructions of pornography as exploitative, or as celebratory, of female sexuality. With reference to the reception of the text, I argue that *Lost Girls* illuminates contemporary uncertainty about the rightful boundaries of artistic freedom.

Antoinette Curtin is a teaching assistant at Trinity College Dublin, where she recently submitted a doctoral thesis entitled "Beauty as a matter of course: the Representation of the Heroine in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot." The doctorate was funded by Trinity College Dublin and the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences. She has presented papers on Jane Eyre and Jane Austen and now intends to turn her attention to the writings of Sara Coleridge and the role of physical appearance in the Victorian legal system.