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**BUNN, OLENA SWAIN
AN EXCEPTIONAL PERSPECTIVE: THE RHETORIC OF
RETARDED CHILDREN IN NEWBERY AWARD-WINNING
FICTION.**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT
GREENSBORO, ED.D., 1978**

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AN EXCEPTIONAL PERSPECTIVE:
THE RHETORIC OF RETARDED CHILDREN IN
NEWBERY AWARD-WINNING FICTION

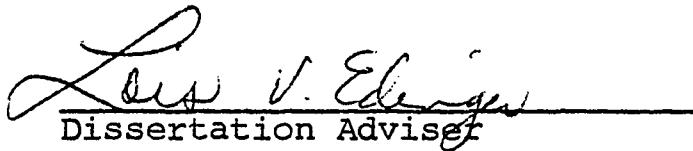
by

Olena S. Bunn

A Dissertation Submitted to
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Doctor of Education

Greensboro
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Approved by



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APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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BUNN, OLENA S. An Exceptional Perspective: The Rhetoric of Retarded Children in Newbery Award-Winning Fiction. (1978) Directed by: Dr. Lois V. Edinger. Pp. 207.

A rhetoric of children's fiction follows a writer's means of influencing his reader. The popular phenomenon of the 1960's and '70's known as the new realism provides the writer and critic of children's books with opportunities to observe an exceptional perspective in fiction. Drawing from social problems that have been traditionally avoided as subjects in children's books, the new realism sets out to satisfy factual, social, or commercial concerns; frequently it is didactic; sometimes it shows an ugly side of life. By definition the treatment of mental retardation in 42 children's stories published since 1960 is both new and real. Because many living children with mental deficiencies are placed by law in classrooms instead of institutions, they have become highly visible; it is now a fact of contemporary life that the problem of mental retardation has been made evident to children all over America. A writer, therefore, who delineates a retardate can no longer presuppose his character to be a clown who gives readers something to laugh at and thus protects them from the need to think. A retarded child, set forth as a fictional character, is a writer's gift; he exists in fiction for the sake of the reader. To examine a writer's means of persuading the reader to accept mental retardation in his story is to define a process for examining the rhetoric of children's fiction.

Of the 42 books that treat this social problem, three have won a Newbery Medal. Irene Hunt's Up a Road Slowly (1967), Betsy Byars' The Summer of the Swans (1970), and Jean Craighead George's Julie of the Wolves (1973) have been cited as the most distinguished American literature for children. Because the status accorded them as Newbery winners allows them to serve as models of good, ostensibly nondidactic and entertaining fiction, and because they are appropriate to the perspective of this study, they offer a ground for examining what the best of realistic writers do with the rhetoric of mental retardation.

Through a close reading of episodes relevant to the subject, this study does three things: (1) it discovers and demonstrates a process of rhetorical criticism by discussing each narrative in terms of product (plot, character, style, and the like) and of the writer's potential effect on the reader, illustrating by analysis and example some of the ways in which the writer seeks to manipulate the audience. (2) It defines the fictional character of a retarded child as a deliberate agent of persuasion which embodies the writer's meaning and shapes the reader's response. (3) It discovers ways in which a writer handles a social concern (or fails to) without jeopardizing the fiction as good and entertaining literature for children. This study accepts the obligations of nonprescriptive rhetorical criticism to describe, interpret, and judge.

To this end certain points are fundamental to a writer's rhetoric whether he writes for children or adults. A writer controls his reader by persuasion. The force of his character, personality, and literary skill are his available means to persuade. The choices that he makes of subject matter, of audience, of what to say and not to say, his attitudes toward his reader's potential intelligence and response, all work together in concord to create his image. To determine a writer's image is to discover the rhetoric of his fiction.

It follows, then, that a new realist defines more than the character of his retarded child: he defines himself. In the conscious or unconscious choices that he makes he constructs the image of a teller in the tale. Insofar as he is the right sort of writer for children, as C. S. Lewis puts it, the storyteller is a rhetorician of good sense, good character, and good will. When he writes a truth-discovery novel that tries to lead young people to the hard truths of mental retardation in contemporary society, the good person skilled in speaking is able through the moral and literary choices that he makes to realize an authentic experience for children and at the same time to call up the resources of mature readers, as well. The true rhetorician speaks with a validity that is not altered by his appeals to the young.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
APPROVAL PAGE	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
An Exceptional Perspective	1
Purpose of the Study	7
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	11
Introduction	11
Children's Literature	12
Children's Literature and the New Realism	23
Retarded Children as Characters in Con-	
temporary Fiction	48
Mental Retardation: Facts and Attitudes	
in Children's Fiction	51
Rhetoric and the Rhetorical Analysis of	
Literary Works	58
III. PROCEDURE	77
Limitations	77
Method	77
IV. PRACTICAL ANALYSIS: THE RHETORIC OF	
RETARDED CHILDREN IN NEWBERY AWARD-	
WINNING FICTION	86
Introduction	86
Up a Road Slowly	89
The Summer of the Swans	118
Julie of the Wolves	136
Conclusion	166
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS . . .	171
Summary	171
Conclusions	180
Implications	188
BIBLIOGRAPHY	193
APPENDIX	203

Alan Linwood Bunn

1952 - 1972

. . . a fellow of infinite jest,
of most excellent fancy

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

An Exceptional Perspective

In spite of the increasing number of articles and studies examining aspects of the "new realism," as it is called, and the number of frank and even naturalistic appraisals of contemporary social issues in children's books, almost no critical attention has been paid to mental retardation, one of the most serious of social problems, as it appears in juvenile fiction. Two surveys, Children's Literature in the Elementary School¹ and Now Upon a Time: A Contemporary View of Children's Literature,² offer exceptions to a sustained lack of attention to this subject. Although the author of the first recognizes the presence of retarded characters in some of the newer children's books and gives plot summaries of them, and the second includes an annotated but uneven bibliography of books depicting handicapped children (including stories about mentally retarded children)--becoming therefore virtually the first to bear with any weight on the subject of retarded children as characters in juvenile books--

¹Charlotte Huck, Children's Literature in the Elementary School (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977).

²Myra P. Sadker and David M. Sadker, Now Upon a Time: A Contemporary View of Children's Literature (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).

their intentions are not so much to present an overview of this perspective in fiction, nor to recognize the ways in which a writer shapes his readers' attitudes toward mental retardation, nor yet to discover whether the social concerns of those who write within the context of the new realism are compatible with good storytelling, as they are to teach. One offers practical suggestions to parents, teachers, and librarians for selecting children's books and integrating them more fully into the school curriculum and the other emphasizes children's books "because they are contemporary in mood and topic, rather than because they exemplify lasting literature."³

Now a recent publication, Notes from a Different Drummer,⁴ taking its title from Thoreau, brings to the attention of the public a broader review of stories dealing with the handicapped. Primarily an expanded annotated list of children's fiction (1940-1975) which offers detailed plot summaries and evaluation, this book stresses specific disabilities and focuses on a number of criteria relating to matters

³ Sadker and Sadker, "Preface," Now Upon a Time, p. x. May Hill Arbuthnot and Zena Sutherland, Children and Books, 4th ed. (Chicago: Scott, Foresman, 1972) occasionally gives plot summaries, as do other references, such as Mashak Rudman, Children's Literature: An Issues Approach (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1976), but to a lesser degree and in the context of other realistic issues than that of mental retardation.

⁴ Barbara H. Baskin and Karen H. Harris Baskin, Notes from a Different Drummer: A Guide to Juvenile Fiction Portraying the Handicapped (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1977).

of psychological, rehabilitative, and social import. Since only a small percentage of all books published about handicapped children deal with mental retardation, however, the subject of retarded children is accorded no special emphasis above and beyond that of the other, more prevalent handicaps. Of the three Newbery Award-winning books that touch mental retardation, it lists two. Yet Notes from a Different Drummer, is a comprehensive tool that groups together for the first time a great many stories about disabilities, including nearly all the fiction on mental retardation. As such, it may receive the use and recognition it deserves. But its intention is not the same as ours.

This study is about persuasion. When a writer chooses to tell a story, he has designs on his reader. He knows he must gain his reader's interest and consent, so he sets about deliberately to please and to persuade--to promote a feeling, to arouse a reaction, or to create a state of mind. "A book," says John Rowe Townsend, "is a communication; if it does not communicate, does it not fail?"⁵ Unless a writer speaks his reader's language, he had just as well not speak at all. He knows, as Arbuthnot reminds us, that his "young reader is not looking for uplift or guidance or for solutions to social problems, but for entertainment."⁶ Thus his reader, curled

⁵ John Rowe Townsend, "Standards of Criticism for Children's Literature," Top of the News (June, 1971), pp. 385-387.

⁶ May Hill Arbuthnot, Children's Reading in the Home (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1969), p. 227.

up in an armchair somewhere or face down on a hearth-rug with a book, is secure in the knowledge that he can read or not read as he chooses--since he is the final arbiter of what he likes and what he does not like, and he will mark his discovery of a good story with "a catch of the breath, and a beat and lifting of the heart,"⁷ unaware that what Tolkien calls "that sudden miraculous grace of recognition" comes to him not because of what he brings to his reading, and not because of the subject of his book, but because of what the writer puts into the story to win his assent. It is the action, the experience, the character--the free, elusive spirit of his unreluctant years, the sum of all the good things a writer shapes deliberately to "stretch the mind and give direction to the imagination"⁸ that holds him thrall and makes him see. The strategy and architecture of this art is persuasion. It is rhetoric, and rhetoric seeks all available means to persuade.⁹ Rhetoric is

the method, the strategy, the organon of the principles for deciding best the undecidable questions, for

⁷ J. R. R. Tolkien, "On Reading Fairy Stories," Tree and Leaf (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), pp. 68-69.

⁸ Lillian Smith, The Unreluctant Years: A Critical Approach to Children's Literature (New York: Viking, 1953), a Viking Compass Book, p. 38.

⁹ Aristotle, Rhetoric, Book I, trans. Lane Cooper (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1960), p. 7.

arriving at solutions of the unsolvable problems, for instituting method in those vital phases of human activity where no method is inherent in the total subject-matter of decisions.¹⁰

And to reconcile these elements is the office of a "good person skilled in speaking."¹¹ It has been so from ancient times, and so it is today. The comprehensive rationale of the performance of that good person, insofar as he is skilled in speaking, insofar as he influences opinions and attitudes, is rhetoric.¹² Thus the primacy of rhetoric in Newbery Award-winning fiction is, in part, the subject of our concern.

Another subject of this study is mental retardation, a matter that may be handled in fiction in any one of a number of widely different ways. Though persistent in all levels and degrees of society, it has been virtually ignored as a subject for children's fiction through the years. Perhaps this is because social concern for the retarded is marked by a long history of mistreatment and neglect, in which the

¹⁰ Donald C. Bryant, "Rhetoric: Its Function and Scope," in The Province of Rhetoric, ed. Joseph Schwartz and John A. Rycenga (New York: Ronald Press, 1965), p. 11.

¹¹ The ancient rhetorician Quintilian picked up Marcus Cato's definition of the perfect orator as the "vir bonus dicendi peritus," the good person skilled in speaking; he added a restatement of an old view of Cicero, and made it his own. To him the word "good" applies first to the good and effective work, and secondly and equally to the good and moral person. Prentice A. Meador makes much of the "vir bonus" theory, even outlining the attributes and actions of the good person. See A Synoptic History of Classical Rhetoric, ed. J. J. Murphy (New York, Random House, 1972), 153-155.

¹² Bryant, "Rhetoric," p. 11.

afflicted person is said to have been incarcerated with criminals and the insane, tolerated as the village idiot, or even murdered with the town's sanction.¹³ A notable exception to the lack of retarded persons in fiction, however, is to be found in folklore, where the retardate is assigned a special role to play. As a "natural fool" he is a clown, a bumpkin, or an object of dehumanized buffoonery; as an "artificial fool" he uses his apparent foolishness to prophesy, to conceal wisdom, or to protect himself from censure and distress.¹⁴ Whether he is individualized as "Poor Tom" or "Simple Simon," or anonymously called the "numbskull" or the "droll"; whether in wisdom he serves the king, or neglected, fends for himself in a hovel, his relationship to society in folklore is defined by the cap-and-bells, and he is compelled by tradition to play the fool. Outside this context he does not exist, so his disability as a human handicap is in effect denied.

But the handicapping aspect of mental retardation has come increasingly before the public eye during the last twenty years. The 1960's marked a dramatic growth of national interest in the problems of mentally disabled children and their families. Some of the country's leaders, notably the late President John F. Kennedy and the former Vice-President,

¹³ Yearbook of Special Education, 1977-78 (Chicago: Marquis Academic Media, 1977), p. 136.

¹⁴ Francelia Butler, Sharing Literature with Children: A Thematic Anthology (New York: David McKay, 1977), p. 92.

the late Senator Hubert Humphrey, helped initially to establish a favorable public climate for this interest by openly acknowledging, in each case, the existence of a retarded person in their own families; and then President Lyndon Johnson began his "War on Poverty," which has been called by those who deal professionally with Down's Syndrome, as "the most relevant war against mental retardation which could ever have been mounted."¹⁵ Political pressure toward recognizing the humanity of the retarded and lobbying for their rights as citizens has continued to grow until it reached fruition in the passage of Public Law 94-142, "The Education for All Handicapped Children Act," enacted by Congress in November, 1976.¹⁶ The full implementation of this law, which is scheduled immediately, places children with all kinds of handicaps in the mainstream of public classrooms across America. As a compelling subject for interest, recognition, and social concern in contemporary life, and hence as a subject for children's books, a retarded child provides possibilities for an exceptional perspective in fiction.

Purpose of the Study

The interest in mental retardation as a subject for a novel does not lie in its inherent qualities, nor in its

¹⁵ Nancy M. Robinson and Halbert B. Robinson, The Mentally Retarded Child, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), p. 46.

¹⁶ Leroy V. Goodman, "A Bill of Rights for the Handicapped," American Education, July 1976, pp. 6-8.

sociology, but in its handling. When a writer confronts this handicap in his core of story, allowing it to modify the action and demanding that it be reckoned with uncompromisingly on his own terms, he is creating his readers. He is shaping them deliberately, affecting their sensibilities, and forcing them to take sides. A writer shapes his readers, even as he does his narrative and his characters, by the literary choices that he makes.¹⁷ His narrative choices of what to put into his story and what to leave out, or what to show and what to tell force his readers to respond and to make judgments. He affects his readers in the experience of the story, both by his matter, by the "hard facts of character and action" in the tale he tells, and by his manner, by the deliberate picture of himself that he creates inside the story as the teller in the tale. A writer is the power behind the book, its causal and its generating force, who chooses what his reader is to see. "A writer chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read," says Booth,¹⁸ and in his story he stands revealed, an "ideal, literary, created version" of a real person. "He is the sum of all his choices."¹⁹ And his stature as a writer of good and entertaining literature for children will rise or fall depending on the quality of the choices that he makes.²⁰

¹⁷ Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 74.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 74-75. ¹⁹ Ibid., p. 396. ²⁰ Ibid.

The intention of this study is to determine some of the ways in which a good writer shapes the attitudes of his reader; and within the limits of a genre that has traditionally placed literary pleasure and skill after more utilitarian ends, to determine whether rhetorical analysis of children's books can yield fruitful answers to questions of method, form, or rationale in fiction concerning mental retardation--an aspect of the popular new realism that is relatively unexamined in criticism--and thus to turn new ground. To this end we find that three writers, Betsy Byars, Irene Hunt, and Jean Craighead George, have each received a Newbery Medal, the highest award in children's fiction, for a story which delineates a retarded child. If each one can successfully persuade her readers to accept her norms and enter into a world where mental retardation is a fictional reality, it may be because she finds children "the most attentive, curious, eager, observant, sensitive, quick, and generally congenial readers on earth,"²¹ as E. B. White puts it, or it may be that she is gifted enough to know how to make them so. A writer who finds a common and universally human ground to share with readers is "the right sort of writer for children."²² Such a writer, artist, and rhetorician is the subject of our

²¹ E. B. White, "On Writing for Children," from "The Art of the Essay," Paris Review 48, Fall 1969, pp. 65-88.

²² C. S. Lewis, "On Juvenile Tastes," in Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1966), p. 41.

concern. Through a close reading of these Newbery Medal winners this study aims to do three things: (1) to discover and demonstrate a process of rhetorical criticism appropriate for analyzing the new realism in children's fiction, (2) to define the character of a retarded child as an agent of persuasion which embodies the writer's meaning and shapes the reader's response, and (3) to discover ways in which a writer handles his social concern (or fails to) without jeopardizing his fiction as good and entertaining literature for children.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

A study of that aspect of the new realism in children's books that aims to delineate retarded children as fictional characters gives rise to questions which, broadly put, may be seen as these: What is children's literature? Where does it seem to be going? What does it have to do with mental retardation? How can we determine its value? This chapter seeks preliminary answers through a review of literature. The first part of the chapter defines children's literature as an art form and the writer as an artist, primarily according to the authoritative view of C. S. Lewis, whose essay, "On Three Ways of Writing for Children," is paraphrased and related to the overall question of children's literature as art. The next defines the popular and influential trend in children's fiction, the new realism, reviewing its scope, its background, and its impact on contemporary fiction. It also reviews some of the varied and conflicting responses that the new realism has provoked, and relates the whole to the question of literature. It considers early stories and stories from abroad, and offers a list of American and foreign fiction delineating retarded children. It generalizes some pertinent facts of mental retardation that are appropriate for a layman to know, recognizing that these facts do not speak for

themselves in fiction but are chosen with an eye to influencing attitudes.

Finally, this chapter reviews the method of literary analysis that M. H. Abrams calls "practical analysis," and that E. P. J. Corbett calls "rhetorical analysis," first defining "rhetoric" according to the classical tradition of Aristotle and contrasting it with "poetic"; and next relating the union of "rhetoric" and "poetic" in the "Ars Poetica" of Horace and in the "Defense of Poesy" of Sir Philip Sydney. It then paraphrases Corbett's method of rhetorical analysis of literary works and gives attention to Booth's position on the rhetoric of fiction. Because of the three-fold emphasis on writer and audience and work in this study, and because of the persuasive and literary aspects of its content, rhetorical analysis is seen as the best way to discover value in children's literature.

Children's Literature

The term "children's literature" is sometimes considered an arbitrary term, used for convenience by a world of governing adults, who in the interest of bringing children and books together, impose their selections, as it were, on an audience that neither writes, nor publishes, nor reviews--nor even makes initial selections on its own. As such it is a fallible term. Although it may refer to a wide range of materials, from handbooks, hornbooks, and textbooks designed

for instruction, or occasional pieces designed to turn a quick profit in the marketplace (those "little racks of ready-cut hay,"¹ which are trash or at best transient)--it ought, with more validity, to mean the "real" books, both old and new, that are universally admired as good and entertaining literature for children. Instead, it is a term often used condescendingly to suggest only a qualitative difference between fiction written for children and that intended for adults, polarizing the alleged weakness of one world against the contrasting strength of the other.² But books that fall under this rubric often vary in literary value neither more nor less than do other kinds of fiction. "Fluff, be it trivial or memorable," says Natalie Babbitt, "predominates in both worlds. And a critic would be wrong if he tried to define the separate natures of the two on the basis of fluff."³ Each world, of course, has a few classics. These are both serious and entertaining, as good stories are, and it is only here, within this worthy Horatian summary, that any real definition can be found, if in fact it exists at all. Critics tend to agree, for the most part, that the differences between what is

¹"Children's Books," Quarterly Review 74 (June-October 1844): 1-3, 16-26.

²See Eleanor Cameron, "The Sense of Audience," The Green and Burning Tree: On the Writing and Enjoyment of Children's Books (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969), pp. 203-228, for a spirited discussion of children's books as literature.

³Natalie Babbitt, "Happy Endings? Of Course, and Also Joy," The New York Times Book Review, 8 November 1970, pp. 1, 50.

considered good writing and what is considered good writing for children dissolve under examination. Literature must speak to the essential nature in all of us, which we hold in common as human beings regardless of age. So the term "children's literature" should not be used as a judgment but as a description. If it refers to a body of fiction that presents characters, action, and plot in the form of creative and enjoyable narrative, and consciously directs its appeal to children in the upper elementary grades or to adolescents in general--which it obviously does--it brings to mind some critical observations by C. S. Lewis, who says there are three ways of writing for children. There are two good ways and one that is generally bad.⁴

Lewis learned about the bad way from two unconscious witnesses. One was a writer who asked him to read a story in which a magic machine was given to a child. It was not a traditional magic-maker, a ring or a cloak, but a gadget, a thing of knobs and handles and buttons you could manipulate. You could pull one and get ice cream, push another and get a puppy, and so forth, and Lewis says he had to tell the author honestly that he did not much care for that sort of thing, to which the writer replied that neither did he; in fact it bored him to distraction. But he had included it because it is

⁴C. S. Lewis, "On Three Ways of Writing for Children," in Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966), p. 27.

"what the modern child wants" (p. 22). The other witness to a bad way, referred to a gala high tea in one of Lewis's books, commenting, at the same time, that he could understand a writer's fine use of food in this context: If you want to please grown-up readers you give them sex, he said, but since Lewis must have thought to himself that sex might not do for young children, he had to decide to appeal to another appetite and give them something to eat instead.

In these two examples of bad ways of writing for children, Lewis is talking about rhetorical appeals. He is not saying that tea parties and magic are bad subjects for children--they are not. Nobody questions the fact that the subject of any story is less important than how it is handled. What is bad is that both of these people see writing for children as a special department of giving the public what it wants. Children are a "special public" (p. 22), and as a writer who wants to sell his books, you have to find out what they want and give it to them, whether or not you like it yourself. Lewis does not go so far as to tag this writer a hack, though by definition he "makes cheap appeals" to his audience and "asks for responses that he cannot himself respect,"⁵ but he clearly defines this kind of rhetoric as bad.

⁵ Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, pp. 90, 392, 397. "Do we not see in every bit of hack writing on the best seller list evidence of what happens to art when the audience's demands are allowed to control what the artist does?" For Minedert De Jong's views of hack-work in children's books, see Virginia Haviland, ed., Children and Literature: Views and Reviews (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1973), p. 162, defining the hack as "a performing clown," who "gives the public what the public wants."

Good ways of writing for children may seem to be concerned with giving them what they want, but any resemblance to the hack-way is only superficial. His second example is the good way of Lewis Carroll, Kenneth Grahame, J. R. R. Tolkien, and perhaps others, whose printed fiction grows out of a tale told face-to-face with a living child. This way of writing for children resembles the first one, because the storyteller is trying to give a child what it wants, but then he is dealing with a concrete person, who is different from all other children. There is no question here of a composite being conceived as "the child" or "the public," whose habits you have made up and lumped together.⁶ It would not be possible in a personal relationship to tell a story designed to please the reader if the teller regarded him with indifference or contempt. Any listener would see through that. In a living relationship the two participants modify each other. A voice becomes slightly different when it is directed to a child and a child becomes slightly different because he is being talked to by an adult. Thus a community, a composite personality is created, and out of that good mutual relationship, a story grows.

The third way of writing for children, the one Lewis professes to use, consists of writing a children's story because "a children's story is the best art form for something you

⁶Lewis, "On Three Ways of Writing for Children," in Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories, p. 23.

have to say" (p. 23). The story he likes, of course, is the fantasy or the fairy tale, but there is the "children's story" too, the realistic story where children are treated successfully from their own point of view, in the only literary form that could successfully portray the direct qualities of childhood. Sentimentality is apt to creep into stories about children as seen by their elders. In writing "about" children instead of "for" them, the reality of childhood creeps out, he says (p. 24). Everybody remembers that his childhood, as he lived it, was immeasurably different from what the grown-ups saw. For this reason, stories like the Bastable trilogy provide even adults, in one sense, with a more realistic reading about children than they could find in most books addressed to adults. But also, conversely, it enables children to read something more mature than they realize. This is true because the whole book, a character study of the protagonist, is an unconsciously satiric self-portrait, which every intelligent child can fully appreciate; but which no child would sit down to read as a character study, if it were written in any form other than narrative.

In commenting on the realistic appeal of the Bastable trilogy, Lewis says he has stumbled on a principle. Where a children's story is simply the right form for what the author has to say, then readers who want to hear that kind of thing will read the story--or reread it--at any age. In fact, he is "almost inclined to set it up as a canon that a children's

story which is enjoyed only by children is a bad children's story. The good ones last" (p. 24).

Now the modern critical world uses "adult" as a term of approval. It is hostile to what it calls "nostalgia" and contemptuous of what it calls "Peter Pantheism." Therefore a person who admits that giants and witches and talking beasts are still dear to him when he is old is less likely to be praised for his youthfulness than chided for his arrested development. If Lewis therefore feels compelled to defend himself in this essay against these charges, it is not so much because it matters whether he is scorned and pitied, he says, as because the defense is pertinent to his whole view of fantasy, which he writes, and of children's literature--or even literature in general. His defense consists of three propositions:

First, of course, critics who make a big thing out of being adult are not very adult, themselves. To admire being grown-up because it is grown-up is a mark of adolescence. In the young person this feeling, in moderation, is a healthy symptom, since children ought to want to grow up. When he was ten, Lewis says, he read fairy tales in secret and would have been ashamed if he had been found doing so. But now that he is fifty he reads them openly. When he became a man he put away childish things, including the fear of childishness (p. 25).

Secondly, the modern view seems to involve a false conception of growth. It is not arrested development to continue

to like what you once liked in childhood. Arrested development consists rather in failing to add new things than in refusing to lose old things. An adult may enjoy Tolstoy and Jane Austen and Trollope, as well as children's stories, and Lewis calls that growth because the reader has been enriched. Where he formerly had only the pleasure of fairy tales, the one pleasure, he now has several. But if he had had to lose the children's stories in order to acquire a taste for the novelists, he would say that he had not grown; he had only changed. To make the case a little stronger than this, the growth is just as evident when he reads the children's books as when he reads the novelists, for he enjoys them better than he did when he was a child. Being able to put more into them, he is now able to get more out (pp. 25-26).

Finally, the association of fantasy with childhood is only accidental. In most times and places fairy tales were not made especially for children, nor exclusively enjoyed by them. In fact, many children do not prefer fairy tales, and many adults do like them, and those who do probably cannot say with any certainty what their reason is. According to Carl Jung, fairy tales free those archetypes which dwell in our collective unconscious, so when we read a good fairy tale we are obeying the precept "know thyself" (p. 27).

As for writing fantasy, the medium which he prefers, Lewis finds that it requires of him three specific things: It permits or compels a writer to direct the force of his book

into what is done and said, it limits his tendencies toward exposition, and it imposes "certain fruitful necessities" about length (p. 28). Returning to his initial point, then, Lewis rejects any approach to writing for children which begins with the question, "What do modern children like?" So too he rejects the didactic approach which begins with the question, "What do modern children need?" This is not because he dislikes stories that have a moral; it is rather that to ask this question is to assume too superior an attitude. One can be sure that what does not concern a writer deeply will not deeply interest his readers, whatever their age, but it is better not to ask a question of morals at all, allowing the story itself to tell its own moral. Inevitably the moral that is inherent in a story will rise from whatever spiritual roots the writer may strike during the whole course of his life. If the story he writes fails to show a moral, the writer must not put one in, for the moral that is deliberately planted is likely to be a platitude, or even a falsehood skimmed from the surface of his consciousness. It is impertinent to offer the children that. If a writer can write a children's story without a moral, he had better do so, for the meaning that is any good--the only one that has any value--is implicit, and must come inevitably from the whole cast of the author's mind (p. 33).

In fact, everything in a children's story must rise out of the "whole cast" of the author's mind. A writer must write

for children out of those elements in his imagination which he shares with them, for he differs from his readers not by any less serious interest in the things he handles, but by the fact that adults have other interests which children do not share. The matter of his story should be part of the habit of his life and the furniture of his mind. This, he thinks, has been the way with all the best writers for children, but it is not generally understood. Nothing is worse in children's literature than an idea that whatever the writer shares with children is, in the negative sense, "childish," and that whatever is childish is somehow comic. "Writers must meet children as equals in that area of their nature where we are their equals" (p. 33). The superiority of adults consists partly in commanding other areas, and partly in the fact that they are better at telling stories than children are, but children as readers should neither be patronized nor idealized. Even worse is that attitude which regards them professionally in the lump as a sort of raw clay to be handled. Writers should, of course, try not to do them harm, and should even sometimes dare to do them good, but only such good as involves treating them with respect, for a writer is not Providence or Fate. The best meeting between adult and child is the meeting of independent persons. Of the higher and more difficult relations between parent or child and teacher, Lewis refuses to speak. An author, as storyteller, is outside all that. He is not even an uncle or a cousin or an aunt. He

is an equal, a free agent "like the postman, the butcher, and dog next door" (p. 34).

It is thus only within the boundaries of an intelligent and living personal relationship, which neither patronizes nor idealizes its reader, that a writer can translate the cast of his mature character into meaning. Indeed, it is only through the reciprocal relationships of writer, to reader, to story, that Lewis is able to shape his rhetoric into art, within the boundaries of those "fruitful necessities" of form (p. 28). His comparative evaluation of three ways of writing for children limits the geographical boundaries of his "one good way," and formulates a model for the definition of "the best art form for what he has to say" (p. 24). Meindert De Jong, in his National Book Award acceptance speech, extends that definition.

Certainly in terms of adult experience, the child's world and the world of children's literature are limited worlds. But it is in that very limitation that the writer for children finds his joy and his challenge and his untrammeled creativity. Braque said it right for painting; I say it after him for children's literature: "Limitation of means determines style, engenders form and new form, and gives impulse to creativity."⁷

It is finally in his perception of juvenile story as art and of reader as peer, that Lewis, as writer and critic, is able to establish a pattern for evaluating the rhetoric of children's fiction. Speaking primarily of fantasy, he applies his rationale

⁷ Virginia Haviland, "The New National Book Award for Children's Literature," Horn Book Magazine, June 1969, pp. 283-286.

with equal validity to the whole of children's fiction--or to fiction in general--as "much of the most astute commentary on realism for children comes from writers talking about fantasy,"⁸ for if what he says is true, the term "children's literature" is not to be taken as dogmatic. One does not have to be a child to enjoy the best of it.

Children's Literature and the New Realism

In the late 1960's teachers, librarians, and parents, who kept abreast of their children's reading, became aware of a popular trend toward social realism in juvenile fiction. A new kind of "implied storyteller" appeared, who continuously experimented with ways to mingle facts with his fiction and to blend his imagination inventively with the real. Characteristically he sought to extend his vision through a commitment to some aspect of the human condition that had been generally hidden away, ignored, or never previously treated as an issue in children's books. One had only to examine the newest award winners (and, of course, the best sellers) for proof that the implied author of the new books had set no human or social problem beyond the pale for children. The traditional limits of realism in juvenile fiction existed no more. A young reader, in however far-off a land he might find himself in his reading, whether it was a true and geographical place or a

⁸Patrick Merla, "'What is Real?' Asked the Rabbit One Day," Saturday Review: The Arts, November 1972, pp. 43-50.

land of make-believe, was confronted page by page with social problems, rendered explicitly and in minute detail. The world was so much with him, late and soon, showing and telling, that his childhood was no longer a time apart.

The reader has grown sophisticated, implied the new writers. He is more mature than he was ten years ago, and he does not need to be protected. What he does need is freedom. He needs to see through the eyes of characters unlike himself, whose lives are different from his. He needs to see it all, the desperation and the dirt, the skeleton in the closet, and the thing under the stone, with nothing held back. "Tilting with taboos frequently helps to make interesting stories," says one.⁹ He lives "in a world where change is the only constant," says another.¹⁰ If a book is controversial, he "should have a chance to make up his own mind,"¹¹ says a third. "To choose only 'clean' books is to ignore much that is current, timely, relevant, and artistically important."¹² So children, reading in the 1960's, were plunged in medias res into the grimdest and grimest action of society. And parents, teachers, and librarians, who knew what their

⁹ Isabelle Holland, "Tilting with Taboos," Horn Book Magazine, June 1973, pp. 299-304.

¹⁰ Richard H. Escott, "Everybody's Talking at Me," Top of the News, April 1975, pp. 299-300.

¹¹ Sheila Egoff, G. T. Stubbs, and L. F. Ashley, eds., Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 9.

¹² Escott, "Everybody's Talking at Me," Top of the News, pp. 299-300.

children were reading, recognized that the old concept of a sheltered childhood had collapsed, giving way in literature--as in the life around them--to an impulse that came to be called the "new realism."

Newsweek formulated its definition of this trend in a mock fairy tale style:

Once upon a time, most books written for young people--aside from out-and-out adventure stories--were populated by cheerful white teen-agers whose biggest worries were how to get a date for the senior prom or whether the home team would win the Saturday night game. Not any more. A pandemic of realism has invaded young people's fiction, and adults who haven't taken a look at this genre since pre-Kennedy years are in for a shock. In books with titles like "Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack!," "Diary of a Frantic Kid Sister," "My Dad Lives in a Downtown Hotel," and "Mom, the Wolf-Man and Me," today's youthful heroes and heroines are smoking dope, swallowing diet pills, suffering mental breakdowns, worrying about homosexuality and masturbation, watching their parents squabble and split up, being battered by racial discrimination, confronting serious illness and even death. In short, they are doing things that real kids do.¹³

But the question, "Is Realism Overwhelming Children's Literature?" is the one that Helen W. Painter, in the National Council of Teachers of English Newsletter, asked.

Where, even in the midst of stress . . . are the gentleness of character and of spirit, and the beauty, goodness, and wonder of the world? Is life totally ugly, sordid, cruel and false? Are parents ineffectual and generally at cross purposes with their children? Do children scorn, despise or lack respect for their fathers and mothers? Are even small youngsters physically and sexually oriented, with no spiritual values? Is what-I-can-get-by-with the current philosophy of children and youth? Must a book include violence, obscenity, or

¹³ Jean A. Seligmann, "New Novels for Juniors," Newsweek, March 4, 1974, p. 83.

swearing to be contemporary? . . . Is there no security for children? Is relevancy assured by recent copyright date, or are authors of other centuries like Shakespeare relevant now?¹⁴

Her answer, evident everywhere, in nearly all the new books for children--even very young children--was yes, emphatically yes. Life is sordid; there is no security, and relevance is only a part of the matter. Not everybody agreed that this was bad. Since the new books were selling, some writers and publishers gladly affirmed the trend.

An article by Charlotte Zolotow, senior editor of the Junior Books Department of a large publishing firm, supports the changes in children's books as reflecting new understanding, new insights, extended boundaries of mind and imagination, and new artistry.¹⁵ Too many contemporary children's books are filled with children who "'eat everything on their plates, go dutifully to bed at the proper time, and learn all sorts of useful facts or moral lessons by the time the books come to an end,'" she says, citing Nat Hentoff, from a 1966 issue of The New Yorker. In the minds of many "uninformed adults, this is the kind of pap children's books stand for." Fortunately, a new generation of people have become aware of children's books as a genuine literary form, which must have

¹⁴ Helen W. Painter, "Is Realism Overwhelming Children's Literature?" The J M Newsletter, National Council of Teachers of English, Fall 1974, p. 4.

¹⁵ Charlotte Zolotow, "The Revolution in Children's Books," Prism: The Socioeconomic Magazine of the American Medical Association, December 1974, pp. 42-46.

"characterization, vitality, beauty of language, genuine humor, an honest point of view, and an internal integrity" that makes the difference between a good book and a bad. The kind of books Hentoff was describing have been foisted on children by "insensitive or misguided adult writers," and "have lost us many readers," for they are dishonest, and "dishonesty toward a child is the greatest harm we can do" (p. 39).

Remembering from her own childhood the ways in which she confused appearances and reality, Zolotow wishes, she says, that books about "the real world" had been available to her. It was not that what her parents taught was wrong, but no one prepared her for a world where not everyone lived by the same values; no one told her that "morality, love, affection, and respect" were different in each family, according to the "personalities and mentalities of the adults in charge" (p. 44).

The world today cannot protect children. "We cannot protect them from war and violent death which they see on TV each night, from dishonesty and theft in high places, from cruelty and injustice, from tragedy of man's making. . . ." (p. 45). What we can do is to help the children see, so they can form their own judgments and defenses and be "honest" in the books we give them "about alcohol or drugs or immorality." There never was a happy world. To tell children that a happy world exists is to send them unprepared into the world, rigid and inflexible, and lacking the "understanding, compassion, and awareness" that are the "weapons and the armor of life, and perhaps the hope of life as well" (p. 45).

It is a fallacy, she continues, to think that we can shelter our children long enough for them to find their own wings before they are pushed out of the nest. That is the attitude of the last generation, who were not less educated, or less sensitive, or less caring about their children, but who were satisfied to meet their children's questions about the terrible loneliness and pain and mystery around them with the same phrase over and over "You'll understand some day." It was "then" that she needed answers, she says; it was "then" that she needed understanding. Today books for children no longer deny the questions or avoid the fact that life can be as violent as it is beautiful. Zolotow says she does not pretend that there are answers. But even well-provided-for children, lovingly surrounded by well-meaning parents, must now question loudly what her own generation only questioned in the silence of their hearts. Today books for children no longer deny the questions or avoid the fact that life can be as violent as it is beautiful. Not much of middle-class America is sheltered by love and understanding. Many children are growing up with friction. Many parents are trying to escape personal unhappiness by quarreling and drinking, often leaving their children in despair, unable to share their pain with anyone (p. 45).

'Books for children have changed. From books for the very youngest child to books for the young adult, the "quality is better," and the content "more honest and discerning."

The subject matter and language in these new books have never appeared in children's literature before (why pretend on the printed page that children don't speak the way the reader hears his peers speak at school or members of his family speak at home?). Books have come a long way in dealing with ethnic problems, from Little Black Sambo to new books that catch the flavor of life on the streets of Harlem and the lilt of authentic language, and "especially in the sadness and terror of what they have to say" (p. 25). These books are "honest," with no "dishonest solutions," and no dishonest endings that are untrue artistically, as well as in human terms. There are books about "fractured families," where parents are divorced or alcoholic, hypocritical or cruel, where uncaring parents fail to see the pity and sorrow of their own children. There are books about physical awakenings, of awkward young love and unmarried sex, unplanned pregnancy and abortion in children who do not let their parents know. There are books about death and dying, many of them written for the very young. The point to remember is that these books, the "good ones," are really good. They are written by "fine writers" and published by "courageous publishers" in spite of the controversial nature of the problems they contain (p. 46).

There is still a large body of adults who feel that "the material of life itself" is not suitable for children. A large group of parents bring pressure on librarians to get rid of books that use language that their children "hear now or will

hear someday from other kids," books in which the experiences of the young characters involve sex, nervous breakdowns, class struggles, hunger, war, and questions about obedience that "many of us who lived through the Nazi regime in Germany wish had been asked and examined before that hideous period of history" (p. 46).

There is no doubt that "books for kids" are different from the way they were a generation ago. To many this is a movement toward "a better, more honest, more reasoning, more compassionate world." The good writers today write not because of "the sensationalism of their topics," but because they are about "real children" in "real life situations." They are handling their material so that it meets the best criteria of writing for any age group--"beautiful, effective use of language and humor and dialogue, moving portrayals of real emotions and situations." The books are different; the books are good.

It is a wonderful thing that has happened in books for children, and if uninformed, rigid adults do not stand in the way of their publication, some hope for a better world may rest in the hands of people who are attempting to reach future adults with honesty, earnestness, and compassion.¹⁶

Charlotte Zolotow is very much aware of the threat of censorship. This may be a questioning, indirectly voiced, of the appropriateness of some of these books for children.¹⁷

¹⁶ Zolotow, "Revolution in Children's Books, Prism, p. 46.

¹⁷ See Huck, Children's Literature, pp. 395-398, who says that the issue of appropriateness is basic to the controversy aroused by the new realism.

Writers, as well as publishers, have had their say about the new trend. Lloyd Alexander calls it "hard core realism."¹⁸ Mary Q. Steele, winner of a Newbery Honor Book Award, like many other writers for children, had been pressed to slant her stories toward social reforms in ways that were demanded by some of the pressure groups who see in children's books an excellent ground for propaganda. Satirizing this dogmatism, she sums up the prescribed subject matter of new novels, saying

. . . that mothers should be neurotic, that fathers should be lushes, brothers potheads, sisters five months illegitimately pregnant, and everybody's acquaintances liberally sprinkled with pimps, dealers, abortionists, and members of the Mafia. Sex, death, and taxes are considered the proper subjects for today's young people's novels, and woe betide the writer who is irrelevant.¹⁹

To Jean Stafford, though, relevance is not the issue. She begins her annual report in The New Yorker on the children's books of 1974 with "the bad news."²⁰ It is not that she can tell all the bad news, she says, since there is so much of it, but if a prospective Christmas-present buyer wants an idea of what is going on in the juvenile market, "pandering to low tastes is what's going on" (p. 178). In book after book she finds "odious revisions of nursery rhymes" (p. 170); "up-to-date no-nonsense treatments of divorce and the low-down

¹⁸ Lloyd Alexander, "On Responsibility and Authority," Horn Book Magazine, August 1974, pp. 363-364.

¹⁹ Mary Q. Steele, "Realism, Truth, and Honesty," Horn Book Magazine, February 1971, pp. 17-21.

²⁰ Jean Stafford, "Children's Books for Christmas," The New Yorker, 2 December 1974, pp. 170-204.

ordinariness of housework"; "inflexible piety"; "the freedom of incorrect speech" and "unacceptable prosody"; characters "as stereotypical as those in morality plays;" language that is "turgid or rude, and in either case, banal, and so timely that it has no chance of being timeless." She objects to the grotesque extremes of the dope-crime-abortion books, many of which "smell so strongly of the clinic" that they cannot be seen as fiction. She questions whether such books could instruct in "any worthwhile way" by their unrelieved misery, and declares that if they brought pleasure, "the pleasure would be morbid" (p. 182). She does not recommend a children's version of the Rubáiyát that reads, "a lid of grass, a book of verse, and thou. . . ." Or a book of cartoons about God for "New Children," appended by the "vulgar jollifications" of a priest (no less) who declares that God is "responsible for a hell of a lot. . ." (p. 173). To her "boundless dejection" Jean Stafford sees these and other bad examples of the new trend in children's books as symptomatic of one of America's most serious cultural diseases:

. . . there is no longer a generation gap, hence there is no childhood, hence no magic, no eccentricity, no personality, no idiosyncratic style. It is not possible to grow to man's estate without magic; it is not possible to live out one's allotted span of years without the solaces of magic. The mind lacking humor, impassioned affinities and impassioned dislikes, and hankerings that gnaw is a stupid mind. Ignorance is pardonable but acquired stupidity is not. Poor children! They are being brainwashed in the nursery, in kindergarten. Their enemies are their parents, their teachers and librarians, and the authors and publishers of condescending and misleading trash. (p. 175)

In an article from Horn Book, Astrid Lindgren pinpoints the problem further in the form of some ironic advice to a would-be writer. If you are to embark further on a career in "this year of grace 1970," and you want a recipe for a children's book, here are your ingredients:

Take one divorced mother--plumber if possible, otherwise an atomic physicist will do quite nicely--the main thing being that she does not fall into the slough of domesticity and maternal devotion; add two parts effluent and two parts air pollution, a few pinches of global starvation, parental repression and teacher terror; carefully insert two dumplings of racial problems, two more of sexual discrimination; and a soupçon of Vietnam; sprinkle generously with copulation and drugs; and you have a good and durable concoction which serves any purpose.²¹

Finally, John Rowe Townsend, addressing a meeting of the New England Library Association, raises questions about all those, whoever they are, who see children's books as important instruments of social engineering.²² It can be very difficult to argue with pressure groups, he says, since your disagreement with any means of forwarding a cause may brand you as an enemy of the cause itself. When the latest educationalist, psychologist, or sociologist comes along with a prescription for what children's books ought to be doing, or when a pressure group says that certain books foster undesirable attitudes, we are prone to bandwagon-jumping to show that we are practical, concerned, down-to-earth. Are we to suppose

²¹ Astrid Lindgren, "A Short Talk with a Prospective Children's Writer," Horn Book Magazine, June 1973, pp. 248-252.

²² John Rowe Townsend, "The Now Child," Horn Book Magazine, June 1973, pp. 241-247.

then, that children are very different creatures today from those of yesterday, or tomorrow? This is nonsense. Manners and morals change all the time, but the basic creature, the underlying *Homo Sapiens*, remains unchanged. And "the basic truth of literature is truth to human nature." One of the traps for writers--and not just those who write for children--is that the harder they concentrate on the "surface detail of today" (p. 243), the fashionable attitudes, the fads and slangs of today, the more surely and rapidly the books will date. Tom Sawyer does not date; Jo March does not date, even though the worlds in which they lived have vanished away. Tom and Jo are recognizable as living moving, real, three-dimensional boy and three-dimensional girl. They are Tom and Jo; they are clear, individual unique, and real. Not many writers can hope to create characters as enduring as Jo March and Tom Sawyer, but this is what writing children's books is all about. A writer must be forever trying to go beneath the immediate surface, to draw people who will be believable to anybody at any time, not just here and now. Books have to be judged not on any sociological grounds but literary grounds, because the authors have to create living, believable people. Dangers arise when authors attempt, however well-meaningly, to do something outside their range. "The job of an author, as I've said before and most firmly believe, is not to meet needs, but to write the best book he can" (p. 245).

Handicapped children are very much in evidence in the new realistic books. Perhaps the disabilities that have been

invisible in the past are now the most openly portrayed. For instance, Ivan Southall's Let the Balloon Go is about a child with cerebral palsy; Virginia Haviland's The Planet of Junior Brown examines a psychotic child; Richard Parker's He Is Your Brother presents the problem of an autistic child; Colby Rodowsky's What About Me? has the protagonist face her complex feelings about a mongoloid brother, and James Garfield's Follow My Leader tells how a boy is blinded by a firecracker, and how he adjusts to his disability with Leader, his seeing-eye dog. The volume of stories about handicapped children is increasing rapidly, for the subject matter of handicaps seems to have a sudden, strange fascination for writers and their readers. If a writer chooses to deal with a subject, selecting it deliberately from a world of other possible choices, he is obligated to do something with that subject. But his moral or emotional commitment is not enough to realize a book about a matter that can be treated in any one of a number of very different ways.

It is not irrelevant that a book contribute to moral perception or social adjustment or to the advancement of a minority group or to the Great Society in general; but in writing there can be no substitute for the creative imagination, and in criticism there is no criterion but literary merit.²³

"I do not know what is so new about the New Realism," says Robert Burch. "It would seem to me that realism dates back as far as mankind itself. And sometimes we get ourselves

²³ John Rowe Townsend, "Didacticism in Modern Dress," in Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature, ed. Sheila Egoff, G. T. Stubbs, and L. F. Ashley, p. 40.

in trouble if we fail to take the past into consideration."²⁴ Burch notwithstanding, the past seems at first glance to have little obvious connection with realism for children. Upon brief examination, though, it can be seen to divide into streams that lead directly and recognizably to the new realism in America.

Until modern times, that is until the middle of the nineteenth century, realism had little relationship to children's books. For one thing, books as a separate body of publication for children had known only about a hundred years of "fitful and unspectacular progress"²⁵ before the time of Queen Victoria. It was during her reign that the English-speaking people of the world multiplied in number, industry, and energy, and became literate enough to support an economic base for a flourishing children's literature. Until 1850 children's books, consisting largely of textbooks and tracts, were judged for their extra-literary qualities and valued almost exclusively for their power to "preach, teach, exhort, and reprimand."²⁶ Anyone who was inspired to write for an audience of young readers before 1850 turned his pen in the direction of admonition or etiquette or moral instruction, and was generally undisturbed by any wish to entertain. Harvey F. J. Darton

²⁴ Robert Burch, "The New Realism," Horn Book Magazine, June 1971, pp. 257-264.

²⁵ John Rowe Townsend, Written for Children: An Outline of English-language Children's Literature (Boston: Horn Book, 1974), p. 55.

²⁶ Egoff et al., eds., Only Connect, p. 426.

sees a five-hundred-year growth of children's literature up to 1850 as a "developmental struggle between repression and happiness, that culminated in a new freedom," which changed attitudes toward all writing for children and "removed the time-encrusted barriers of oppressive morality."²⁷ By the end of the Victorian period, he says, young people had gained access to an enjoyable literature of their own that did not underestimate their intelligence.²⁸ Though the didactic tradition was as strong as ever in children's books, the Victorian era introduced new departures and new elements, and saw the beginning of books that were written especially with children in mind, and written not only to edify but to entertain.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, published in 1865, is considered the first English masterpiece for children. An entertaining fantasy without "the faintest trace of a moral or a scrap of useful information or one improving lesson," as Arbuthnot puts it, it is a book that stands on its own as literature.²⁹ It can be said, moreover, to mark the beginning of an era--a triumphant time when writers of major stature characteristically wrote for children. To call the roll of

²⁷ Harvey F. J. Darton, Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), p. vi.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Arbuthnot and Sutherland, Children and Books, p. 97.

British writers from that time into the twentieth century is to name as writer for children the most highly regarded authors in the larger world of literature. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, mathematical scholar at Christ Church College, Oxford, under the pseudonym of Lewis Carroll, wrote Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass; John Ruskin, Slade Professor of Fine Arts at the same college, wrote King of the Golden River and Dame Wiggins of Lee and Her Seven Wonderful Cats; Charles Dickens wrote The Magic Fishbone and A Child's History of England; Rudyard Kipling, in the year before he received the Nobel Prize for Literature, wrote Puck of Pook's Hill, and later The Jungle Books; John Masefield, while he was Poet Laureate of England, wrote The Midnight Folk and The Box of Delights; Robert Louis Stevenson wrote Kidnapped and Treasure Island; J. R. R. Tolkien took time from teaching Anglo-Saxon at Oxford to write The Hobbit; Sir James Matthew Barrie wrote Peter Pan; Rumer Godden, The Doll's House; Kenneth Grahame, The Wind in the Willows; A. A. Milne, Winnie the Pooh; C. S. Lewis, The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe. At least forty-five statesmen, writers, and public-spirited people of repute from Oxford alone, town, gown and shire, have written books for children.³⁰ But it was C. S. Lewis, holding professorships first at Oxford and then at Cambridge, and receiving honors for his scholarship in Medieval

³⁰ Olena S. Bunn, "The Oxford Connection in Children's Books," unpublished study, Oxford University, 1971.

and Renaissance Literature, and for his popular books and essays on Christianity--yet still finding time to write the seven volumes of Narnia that won him a Carnegie Gold Medal for children's fiction--who summed it all up. "A children's story," he declared, "is the best art form for something you have to say."³¹ What Lewis and the other artists had to say to children took the form of fantasy, engrossing, multifaceted, and symbolic. If these stories represent the best of Britain's writers--as the passage of time seems continuously to confirm--then it is clear that England during the first three-quarters of the twentieth century must count fantasy as its principal, rich, and lasting contribution to the world of children's books.

Not so in America; American writers from the start preferred realism. By the late nineteenth century the place of a nondidactic literature for children was established in America, as it was in England. But not with fantasy. The man who became the model of realism for children's books in America, Mark Twain, warned his readers against attempting to find a moral, even as he created a new concept of morality, himself, in his "boy's book," the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. This book, sometimes called the great American novel, has a continuing appeal, for it succeeds first as a child's book. "One can read it at ten and then annually ever after," says Lionel

³¹Lewis, "On Three Ways of Writing for Children," in Of Other Worlds, p. 23.

Trilling, and each year find it as "fresh as the year before, that it has changed only in becoming somewhat larger."³² To read Huckleberry Finn young, he continues, is like planting a tree young--"each year adds a new growth-ring of meaning, and the book is as little likely as the tree to become dull." Mark Twain's boys in Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer are real, rather than idealized children, who have exerted a tremendous influence on subsequent fiction. Ernest Hemingway, for example, is reported to have said that modern American literature comes from Huckleberry Finn, and he consistently lists it among the books that he "would rather read again for the first time . . . than have an assured income of a million dollars a year."³³ J. D. Salinger's Catcher in the Rye is a direct descendant of Huckleberry Finn, John Rowe Townsend observes, and "the number of lesser Holden Caulfields narrating in the first person and in the same tone of voice defies computation."³⁴

But long before Salinger, since the time when Mark Twain reacted against the sentimental, romantic, and overtly didactic, and entertained an interest in the life and language of ordinary people, American writers for children followed his

³² Lionel Trilling, "Introduction," The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, by Mark Twain (New York: Holt, 1948), pp. v-vi.

³³ Robert O. Stephens, Hemingway's Nonfiction: The Public Voice (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), p. 222.

³⁴ Townsend, Written for Children, p. 292.

lead. Will James's protagonist, for instance, speaks the rough vernacular of the cowboy on the range in his Newbery Award winner, Smoky, the Cowhorse. Lois Lenski explores the flavor of regional dialects in her stories--the dialect of the Florida "cracker" in Strawberry Girl, the North Carolina mountaineer in Blue Ridge Billy, and the Amish in Shoo Fly Girl creating a realistic sense of place and tone in each story, accurately, objectively, compassionately, and without condescension or sentimentality. In Blue Willow, Doris Gates's Janey Larkin forms a metaphor for endurance and hardship, as she and her family of migrant workers search for a home during the great depression. Other writers depict the concerns of racial and religious minorities in their stories: Leo Politi chooses Chicanos in Song of the Swallow; Marguerite de Angeli, Quakers in Thee, Hannah! and the Amish in Henner's Lydia; Sydney Taylor, Jews of Lower East Side New York in the 1930's in All-of-a-Kind Family; Mary and Conrad Buff, Navaho Indians, in Dancing Cloud; and Jesse Jackson, Negroes, in Call Me Charley. A great many children's books can be cited early on as examples of the free, open, and realistic trends of the first half of the twentieth century, where we see a democratic focus upon a wide variety of Americans, a growing social awareness of their lives, and an increasingly humanitarian interest in their welfare.

An American historian, Henry Steele Commager, reasons then that the history of children's literature to the 1950's

gives us not only a continuous record of childhood in England and America, but a record of society as a whole, and more importantly, a reflection of the ideals and standards that society wishes to instill into each new generation.³⁵

English literature exhibits a sense of adventure, Commager says, a feeling for Empire, a code of fair play, a fierce sense of justice, and individualism moving into eccentricity, class consciousness, the importance of the "nanny" and the governess, the kind of morality usually associated with religion; humor that takes the form of nonsense or fantasy, a feeling for nature--cultivated and orderly--and for animals, and a tone of kindness, gentleness, tenderness, and also the courage and loyalty, which we recognize as traits that make up the composite English character. From American literature there emerges a similar but different picture: the key is democratic equality rather than class consciousness, a strong feeling for family; adventure at home, within the boundaries of the United States, especially in the "wild west" rather than in foreign lands; no sense of imperialism, but proud American provincialism instead; courage, and dislike for the bully; self-reliance; work and the ethic of work; nature untamed and uncultivated; a sense of fair play that favors the underdog; respect for mechanical skill; humor that runs to

³⁵ Henry Steele Commager, "Introduction," in A Critical History of Children's Literature: A Survey of Children's Books from Earliest Times to the Present, eds., Cornelia Meigs, Elizabeth Nesbitt, Anne Eaton, and Ruth Hill Viguers (New York: Macmillan, 1953), pp. vii ff.

boisterousness and tall story instead of to fantasy and nonsense; simplicity and morality.³⁶ In short, Americans preferred realism.

So it follows that realism as an appropriate and descriptive term for American children's books is not new; it has been used categorically for years to distinguish the contemporary from the historical, to separate myths, fairy tales, and other fantasy from books about a child's everyday experiences, and about parallel events that could actually happen. "The realistic story," says May Hill Arbuthnot, "may be defined as a tale that is convincingly true to life."³⁷ This simple definition was predicated upon the acceptance of childhood as a "slow accrual of understanding," a time for growing up, and gathering strength with which to face the harsher realities of the future.³⁸ Childhood was thought of as a time of being sheltered and loved and taught and protected. Until the middle of the twentieth century writers and publishers for children accepted and preserved in their books the idea of a sheltered childhood. They narrated, for the most part, the fortunes and misfortunes of well-adjusted, well-fed, intelligent children, tacitly assuming a stable middle-class norm, since the novel, itself, is a middle-class form. And since

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. xiii-xiv.

³⁷ Arbuthnot and Sutherland, Children and Books, p. 420.

³⁸ Frances Clarke Sayers, "A Time to Begin," Horn Book Magazine, December 1974, pp. 674-679.

there was and still is such a thing as middle-class morality, realistic fiction for children did not exceed the limits of strict propriety in language and subject matter.

Even so, said Anne Eaton in 1953, "children of certain ages are hungry for realism."³⁹ This demand can be misinterpreted as a "longing for the here and now," but it is unjust to children to make such an assumption. What children want is reality that is stark and powerful because it projects an abundant and vigorous life that is independent of time and place.⁴⁰ Long before the midpoint of the twentieth century this kind of realism--the kind that projects "abundant and vigorous life"--was available in books for children. And it still is. Whether the best kind of new realism is found in stories that turn to mental retardation as subject matter is the question.

The new subject matter of children's books, having recently aroused much interest because of its expanded parameters, may be of vital public and private interest--as the subject of mental retardation and its effect on human life undoubtedly is--while its presentation can be vital, or pernicious, or preeminently dull. Ever since there have been books written for children there have been fashions in the conception of what children's books should be. Looking back at the history of books now forgotten, one can see the

³⁹ Meigs et al., Critical History, p. 398.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

emphasis on making children pious, or polite, or well-informed on subjects of social matters with which grown-ups of the time were concerned.⁴¹ This was well-intentioned, says Lillian Smith, but its philosophy was based on uncritical standards of the nature of literature and on a misconception of the nature of children. When a new children's book is praised because its subject matter verifies some current interest or confirms a popular attitude toward problems, it is time to ask whether it is being praised for right reasons, or "because of mistaken ideas of what constitutes a suitable theme for a good children's book."⁴² Where subject matter is treated imaginatively, as in good fiction, it should "stretch the mind and give direction to the imagination."⁴³ In this Smith is supported by Alice Bach, who says:

Many writers (and publishers) are tempted to shout a message to the child so he will "get" it, and this stridency kills genuine fiction. There are reviewers and librarians who expect the children's novel to perform a socializing function, to be a blueprint of adolescence, a guide on how to get through this uncertain time. And most important--and so it seems from the flurry of praise certain glib books receive from the media--is a book that provides the child with a tidy packet of reassuring answers for survival in our fast changing world.

. . . It's all right to have an unmarried mother; it's not to worry that you had a homosexual dalliance; study hard and you can leave the ghetto behind you. . . . A book about a biophysicist mom who swears at her kids

⁴¹Lillian Smith, The Unreluctant Years, pp. 33-43.

⁴²Ibid., p. 39.

⁴³Ibid., p. 38.

can be just as flat and unreal as the much-maligned genre that described a dishwashing mom earnestly hemming her cheerleader daughter's tulle prom frock the night before the dance. It's the writer's vision that makes a book memorable, not the family situation. In children's novels, as in any fiction, it's what the writer does with his material that is of lasting importance.⁴⁴

In the best of children's books the writer is "objective" in his approach to his subject, Smith says, because the subject is there for the sake of his story--the plot, the characters who are affected by the events or those who precipitate them, and the time and place and setting in which it all happens.⁴⁵ A book's place in literature is determined not by the subject of a story but by other things--a writer's ability to create memorable and living characters, his sense of climate within which the reader feels the illusion of reality, and the power of his language to persuade. To this end Paul Hazard asks that children's books contain "a profound morality"; that they set in action "certain truths worthy of lasting."⁴⁶ Or as Booth puts it, the writer should operate "on some kind of eternal ground," where he can "plumb to universal values about which his readers can really care."⁴⁷

It follows, therefore, that there are two very different kinds of writers for children. The "wrong sort" believe

⁴⁴ Alice Bach, "Writing for Children--With Respect," Publisher's Weekly, 24 February 1975, pp. 66-67.

⁴⁵ Smith, The Unreluctant Years, p. 40.

⁴⁶ Paul Hazard, Books, Children and Men, trans. Marguerite Mitchell, 4th ed. (Boston: Horn Book, 1966), pp. 42-44. --

⁴⁷ Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 395.

that children are a separate race.⁴⁸ The "wrong sort" of writers are the sophists who carefully invent the tastes of these strange beings--like an anthropologist observing the culture of a primitive tribe--or even invent the tastes of a clearly defined age group. They give children not what they themselves like, but what children are supposed to like. Unfortunately, educational and moral and commercial motives are altogether influential here. But the "right sort" work from the "common, universally human ground they share with children, and indeed with countless adults" (p. 41). Everything a good writer does is done in an effort to make his story communicate, to make it all "accessible to someone else--his peers, himself as imagined reader, his audience."⁴⁹ The "right sort" of writer for children is in the truest Aristotelian sense a rhetorician, a good person skilled in speaking. He creates his readers as he does his story, in the sense that he "makes them see what they have never seen before"; he "moves them to a new order of perception and experience altogether," where he is rewarded in "the peers he has created."⁵⁰ When human actions are shaped to make a work of art, Booth says, the form can "never be divorced from the human meanings,

⁴⁸ Lewis, "On Juvenile Tastes," Of Other Worlds, p. 41.

⁴⁹ Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 397.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 398.

including the moral judgments, that are implicit whenever human beings act."⁵¹

Retarded Children as Characters in Contemporary Fiction

Even the most realistic of children's stories published before the 1960's fail to hint that mental retardation is a serious human handicap. A retarded character who appears in juvenile fiction before this date is traditionally stereotyped as a clown. He is a "sop to Silenus," notes Lewis, who preserves readers from the temptation to question by giving them something to laugh at.⁵² Buffoonery has been the retardate's only literary role. In the wake of social changes in the 1960's which shaped new attitudes toward the handicapped, writers of children's books began to question rather than ridicule the plight of the retarded and to see the burden of mental retardation for the first time as a seriously handicapping human condition. Yet it was not until after the appearance of Don't Take Teddy⁵³ that public concern was sufficiently accepted for the term "mental retardation" to appear in the reference guides to children's book selection. Don't Take Teddy was named the best juvenile

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 397.

⁵² C. S. Lewis, Allegory of Love: A Study in the Medieval Tradition (Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 54.

⁵³ Babbis Friis-Baastad, Don't Take Teddy, trans. Lise Somme McKinnon (New York: Scribner, 1967).

book written in a language other than English, having received the Norwegian Minister of Education Prize (1965), and was selected by the International Board of Books for Young People to receive the second annual Mildred L. Batchelder Award in America, becoming the first recognized children's book to delineate a retarded child as a major character. Only after its publication did the standard reference guides to children's book selection, the Children's Catalog⁵⁴ and the Elementary School Library Collection⁵⁵ begin to pay attention to this handicap.

A search for juvenile fiction delineating retarded children included an examination of these and other specialized publications which offer a variety of helpful lists, reviews, and articles. Among the most useful sources of information on contemporary juvenile fiction are the Horn Book Magazine, which has been published continuously for more than fifty years; the Top of the News and Booklist, of the American Library Association; the English Journal and Language Arts, of the National Council of Teachers of English; the Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, from the

⁵⁴ Barbara E. Dill, ed., Children's Catalog, 13th ed. (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1976). This basic bibliography of recommended materials for children in grades K-8 is published every five years with four annual supplements.

⁵⁵ Phyllis J. Van Orden, The Elementary School Library Collection: A Guide to Books and Other Media. 11th ed. (Newark, N. J.: Bro-Dart, 1977). A standard reference guide listing only recommended materials, it is issued every one or two years, printing supplements for the years it is not published.

University of Chicago Graduate School of Library Science; Children's Literature in Education, with literary analyses from Britain as well as America; and occasionally The Great Excluded: Critical Essays on Children's Literature, from the English Department of the University of Connecticut, an outgrowth of the Modern Language Association Seminar on Children's Literature. These are all currently available and in general circulation. Major newspapers and magazines, notably the New York Times, the Saturday Review, and the New Yorker periodically review children's books. The Children's Guide to Books in Print, published for the first time in 1967, and the subsequent Subject Guide to Children's Books in Print, both of which are nonevaluative trade lists, are useful because they index a very large volume of materials.

Research in children's literature is impeded by special obstacles, such as a scarcity of criticism as opposed to book reviews, and a general absence of inter-library loan policies in juvenile fiction. Nevertheless, there is appended to this study an annotated list of 42 stories for children that delineate retardates as fictional characters. While we do not claim that the compilation is definitive, this study does claim that the appended bibliography provides to date a more complete listing than any other American reference or bibliography in print.

Mental Retardation:
Facts and Attitudes in Children's Fiction

Young people are more directly and powerfully influenced by their reading than the old, and inexperienced readers, they say, take fiction more naively as transcript than as interpretations of life.⁵⁶ Though novels go far beyond the function of disseminating information, a writer may legitimately, with caution, serve that function too. So treating fiction as a source of knowledge--though not "strictly literary"--is "pardonable at a certain age and usually transient."⁵⁷ Between the ages of twelve and twenty, practically everybody acquires from fiction (along with plenty of misinformation) a great many incidental facts about foods, clothing, customs and climates, and the ways in which people work and behave. A reader is not getting a "philosophy of life" this way, but general knowledge. He is gaining information about the world.⁵⁸ Therefore, when a writer commands his reader's belief in a handicap and makes him accept it as a part of his fictional world, he is obligated first to gain his attention, and then to tell him what he needs to know. This is because a good writer for children is careful not only to interest his reader, but also to keep him honestly informed. He is, of course, not bound to strict standards of scientific accuracy when he

⁵⁶ René Wellek and Austen Warren, Theory of Literature (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956), p. 90.

⁵⁷ C. S. Lewis, An Experiment in Criticism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 75.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

represents facts, for every writer makes a "secondary world," Tolkien calls it, which the "mind can freely enter."⁵⁹ Inside it what he tells is "true" because it "accords with the law of that particular world," and the facts that he employs to fit his norms become the background for the experience against which the action of his story works itself out. So in keeping his reader honestly informed, a writer is less likely to concern himself with "psychological, rehabilitative, and social matters,"⁶⁰ per se--since the more factual a story, the more nearly it is out of the storyteller's control--than with interpreting his reader's understanding of the facts, as they are transformed in this particular narrative, through this particular character's delineation. Facts, after all, are a writer's "reinforcing rhetoric,"⁶¹ and the writer should be unwilling to distort them for the sake of effect. As Booth says, it is not altogether impossible for a writer to be "brief, clean, effective, and entirely appropriate in his dramatized facts,"⁶² or, as Lewis might add, to be "as honest as he pretends to be."⁶³

Without accepting a necessity to explore the relationship of fact to fiction or to ask scientific accuracy of a writer

⁵⁹ Tolkien, Tree and Leaf, p. 37.

⁶⁰ Baskin and Baskin, Notes from a Different Drummer, p. 75. These writers consider it worth remarking that ". . . works purporting to be realistic are not necessarily the most forthright, accurate, or honest about disability" (p. xii).

⁶¹ Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, pp. 177-179. ⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Lewis, Experiment in Criticism, p. 67.

who chooses to depict a retarded child as character in his story, it is useful and appropriate here in simple outline to list a dozen widely held generalizations that are appropriate to an understanding of mental retardation in this study. Lacking these there may be no common background on which to base interpretation or make comparisons.

Thus to generalize:

1. A retarded person is incapable of adapting to a normal environment in such a way as to remain independent of supervision, control, or support. The National Association for Retarded Children describes the retarded person as "marginally dependent," "semi-dependent," or "dependent," while teachers refer to him as "educable," "trainable," or "custodial." Whatever else these terms may do, they serve to underscore his deficiencies in adaptive behavior and his continuing need for help.⁶⁴

2. A retarded person is not sick. He is afflicted with a handicap, not a disease. He does not have an illness like polio or cancer that can be treated by a medical doctor, but instead a mental deficiency that cancels any notion of potential intelligence. One of the theories behind mainstreaming is that, given proper care, he may be taught to use his limited abilities, and to develop his capabilities rather than succumb

⁶⁴ Samuel A. Kirk, Educating Exceptional Children, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), pp. 165, 166. See also Robinson and Robinson, The Mentally Retarded Child, pp. 31, 420.

to his deficiencies, but there is no hopeful prognosis that he can ever be cured. A writer who allows his retarded character to get well falsifies a basic reality of the nature of this handicap which cannot be changed by point of view; the truth is not in him.

3. Mental retardation is a disability that manifests itself during the developmental years of childhood before the eighteenth year. Stories covered in this study, including those listed in the appendix, are confined to a concern with retarded children. They are not written for mentally disabled children, but about them. The American Library Association, Children's Services Division, has standing committees for services to exceptional children, and under their auspices selected bibliographies of special media are available.

4. A retarded character in fiction is seldom described according to any system that classifies the severity of his disability. For many years such words as "idiot," "imbecile," "moron," "lunatic," and "feeble-minded" were used to designate the retarded person's symptoms.⁶⁷ They are clinically out of vogue now because of their derogatory connotations, so if they are used in fiction it is likely to be with opprobrium, and thus rhetorically carry a strongly negative weight.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Robinson and Robinson, The Mentally Retarded Child, p. 39.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 33.

5. A retarded child in this study has a single handicap, and is seen primarily as mentally deficient. The American Association of Mental Deficiency (AAMD), in a 1973 statement, seeks to avoid differentiating mental retardation from other mental and emotional disorders of children. Under its definition a child who suffers any mental disability, from brain damage to schizophrenia, may be classified as mentally retarded "whether this symptom is thought to be primary or secondary to emotional or organic disorders."⁶⁸

6. A demographic estimate places from five to seven million mentally retarded persons in the United States, roughly about 2.5-3% of the national population.⁶⁹ Most of these are said to be twenty years old or older. About 250,000 are reported to be institutionalized, 80% of whom in turn are in publicly provided institutions; the rest live with their families or live independently.

7. In 1970 the United States Office of Education conducted a national survey of 2,000 public elementary and secondary schools. These schools reported 936,000 retarded pupils, a rate of twenty-one per 1,000 pupils. Of these 84% received some kind of special education, though 27% of the schools made no such provision.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Herbert Grossman, ed., Manual on Terminology and Classification in Mental Retardation, rev. ed. (Washington, D. C.: American Association on Mental Deficiency, 1973), p. 11.

⁶⁹ Yearbook of Special Education, 1977-78, p. 137.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 142.

8. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act, Public Law 94-142, fully implemented in September, 1978, guarantees the right to every handicapped person to be educated in the least restrictive environment commensurate with his needs. This is the law known as "mainstreaming."⁷¹

9. The concept of mainstreaming places handicapped children, including the mentally retarded, with normal children in public classrooms across America. "Until there is contact between special-needs children and other children," says the Children's Defense Fund report, "no one can sufficiently allay the fears, stop the stereotypes, or limit the labels."⁷²

10. Any society that places a high value on intelligence and achievement may be predisposed to brutalize and dehumanize an inadequate or deviant person. When deviance is seen not only as inadequate but also threatening, the "latent dehumanization becomes overt."⁷³ It should come as no surprise, then, that the retarded have been dehumanized in both word and deed. They have been perceived (a) as defective and deviant--that is, unpleasant, offensive, frightening; (b) as the "Lord's punishment"--that is, a manifestation of the parents' sin, the work of the devil, something to be hidden or "put away"; (c) as

⁷¹ National Advisory Committee on the Handicapped, "Education of the Handicapped Today," American Education 12 no. 5 (June 1976): 6-8.

⁷² Bernadette Dorna, "Into the Mainstream," Nation's Schools and Colleges 2 (March 1975): 36-40.

⁷³ Yearbook of Special Education, 1977-78, p. 203.

a menace--that is, a genetic threat, not allowed to reproduce, or as having criminal tendencies; (d) as pitiful--that is, childlike, helpless, not taken seriously as human beings; (e) as worthless--that is, routinely subjected to "the final solution," at the hands of the ancient Greeks and Romans, the Eskimos and Bushmen and the Nazis in Germany; (f) as surplus--⁷⁴ that is, a population with no place in society; (g) as a holy innocent--that is, special child of God, harmless, incapable of voluntary evil; (h) as a clown--that is, a natural or professional fool, possessed of shrewd, inverted wisdom; (i) as a burden of charity--that is, a financial drain on families and taxpayers; (j) as sick--that is, "suffering" from mental deficiency; (k) and increasingly as a handicapped but developing individual.⁷⁵

11. Mental retardation can occur in any family, at any socioeconomic level, from any one of a number of causes, many of them unidentified or little understood. Some forms of this disability happen more often under specific social and environmental conditions. Some forms have genetic origins and recur in particular families. Some are the result of birth injuries or disease. Mental disability may vary from a borderline condition to a profound degree of impairment.⁷⁶

12. The way in which a retarded child will grow up and get along in the world depends on his potential for development,

⁷⁴ Bernard Farber, Mental Retardation: Its Social Context and Social Consequences (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968), pp. 9f.

⁷⁵ Yearbook of Special Education, 1977-78, p. 205.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 59.

and on how that potential is fostered. Early in this century people felt that retardation was hopeless; today people realize that whatever a child's potential may be, the way he is treated can make him better or worse. It is also true that most retarded children are neither deformed nor socially unacceptable. With good education and warm, accepting relationships, many can be trained to support themselves and lead useful lives.⁷⁷

A retarded child in fiction is a powerful agent of a writer's persuasion. This is because of what the writer chooses to tell and to show about him--that is, because of the facts the writer employs to make his character "work." However clearly and logically he delineates him "in character" as retarded, the facts he uses are not objective. They are "highly charged by the meanings of the author."⁷⁸ Facts are rhetoric; they convey attitudes. Whether or not they are scientifically real is immaterial. The impression of mental retardation gained by the reader depends on whether the judgment of the author "seems defensible in the light of his dramatized facts."⁷⁹

Rhetoric and the Rhetorical Analysis of Literary Works

The resources of language that are open to a writer and used by him in any way, as he addresses any audience, or as he

⁷⁷ Yearbook of Special Education, 1977-78. p. 23.

⁷⁸ Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 112. ⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 79.

is himself seen by any critic, are properly considered the province of rhetoric. To define the word in the classical sense, as Aristotle does--that is, as the "faculty or power of discovering all the available means of persuasion in any given case,"⁸⁰--is to define a discipline which had its origins in ancient Greece and held a place of prominence in the civilized world for two thousand years. Aristotle did not invent the term "rhetoric," but it was he who gave structure to the ideas about its meaning and purpose, and it was he who organized it into a theory that has been basic to literary criticism from his day to the present time.

Broadly speaking, rhetoric as Aristotle conceived it is divided into five parts: (1) "invention," which is concerned with the discovery of arguments or proofs; (2) "arrangement," concerned with the organization of the invented parts; (3) "style," with the forms of expression; (4) "memory," with techniques for committing a speech to memory; and (5) "delivery," with oral presentation.⁸¹ According to the ancient definition the types of rhetoric are threefold. The first, the deliberative or political, has to do with the future and seeks to persuade an audience about a public matter or to move an audience to an action. Second, the forensic or judicial, has to do with the past, and seeks to defend someone or to prosecute him for past actions. And third, the epideictic or

⁸⁰ Aristotle, Rhetoric, Book I, p. 7.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, *passim*.

ceremonial, has to do with the present and seeks to censure or to praise. Aristotle says that rhetoric seeks all available means to persuade. To this end he singles out a speaker's three modes of appeal: (1) First is the appeal of the "ethos" or character of the speaker, through his virtue and good will. This inspires the hearers' trust. (2) Second is the appeal to reason, through arguments and demonstrations offered in the work or speech. This compels the hearers' belief. (3) Third is the appeal to emotion, through an appreciation of the temper and intelligence of the audience. This engages the hearers' favor. These three modes of appeal tie in with the elements that figure in any rhetorical situation--the speaker, the work, and the audience, or to put it "in pronomial terms,"⁸² the "I," the "it," and the "you." Showing as they do the interacting relationships between the speaker, the speech, and the audience--or the writer, the book, and the reader--these three modes of appeal help to distinguish Aristotle's treatment of persuasion in the Rhetoric from his treatment of imitation in the Poetics.⁸³

Poetic is concerned with the nature, principle, and forms of poetry, or by extension with any art, and especially with literature. In contrast to rhetoric, which is a practical art,

⁸² Edward P. J. Corbett, Rhetorical Analyses of Literary Works (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. xiii.

⁸³ Aristotle, Poetics, trans. S. H. Butcher, in Criticism: The Major Texts, ed. Walter Clinton Bate (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1952), p. 19.

it is a fine art, created for contemplation, for the larger pleasure of itself, through imitation, which is the common principle of all art. Aristotle deals with literature in the Poetics according to its structure and the nature of its parts; he is concerned with determining the essence, the species, and the functions of poetry, with ways to create plots and with the various parts of poetic works. His primary concerns are tragedy and epic, viewed as "mimetic," and thus imitative. There is no discussion in the Poetics of the writer as the creator who causes the work to be. This is reserved for the Rhetoric. As for the audience as receiver of the work, the spectator is considered briefly but significantly when Aristotle speaks of the effect of tragedy as "catharsis," the purgation of pity and fear. The emotion of the spectator in catharsis is identified with the imitation of the action before him and the working out of tragedy. By his intellectual realization of what has happened in the catharsis, the spectator of a drama is purged not only of pity and fear, but also of the subjective and self-centered. His feelings are enlarged and extended through sympathy. He has had his feeling joined with insight, and his habitual emotions conditioned to an awareness of the essential importance of human action. This is what poetic imitation can offer.⁸⁴ The classical premise of the poetic in presenting imitation is

⁸⁴ Ibid.

that art is formative. It enlarges, exercises, and refines a spectator's feelings. In leading them outward, it possesses a unique power to reconcile emotion and intelligence, and harmoniously to integrate the two.⁸⁵

According to classical tradition, the useful arts minister to practical needs and the fine arts develop awareness and insight. The difference thus between Aristotle's treatment of rhetoric and his treatment of poetic can lead to a definition of rhetorical analysis. For such a definition we rely on the structure and pattern set up by E. P. J. Corbett.⁸⁶ At the start, Corbett says it is clear that Aristotle sees rhetoric and poetic as distinctly different and separate. Yet in time, because of the rigorous emphasis on rhetoric as a discipline taught in the schools, the idea of imitation as the distinguishing trait of the poetic began to wane, and the conceptions of any distinction between rhetoric and poetic began to merge. By the time the Roman poet Horace published his Ars Poetica⁸⁷ shortly before his death in 8 B.C., critics had begun to accept the notion of discourse as communication, and they were ready to consent to the Horatian view that communication was thus also a function of literature. Horace says, in effect, that it is not enough for poetry to be

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Corbett, Rhetorical Analyses, p. xiv.

⁸⁷ Horace, The Art of Poetry, in Criticism: The Major Texts, ed. Walter Clinton Bate (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1952), p. 51.

beautiful; it must also please and lead the mind. His summary is contained in the conjoining of the words dulce and utile, which may be translated as "pleasure" and "profit," or as Wellek and Warren put it, as "entertainment" and "edification."⁸⁸ Under Horace the conceptions of rhetoric and poetic blend completely into one. Poetry still has its aesthetic function, and this function is still recognized, but Horace's view now imposes on literature a didactic function, as well.

The "utile," the practical aspect of poetry, is accepted by critics for the next fifteen hundred years or more, on into the Renaissance, when Sir Philip Sidney's famous definition of poetry, Corbett says, becomes "the final cause" of Horace's utile and dulce.⁸⁹ In his "Apology for Poetry" (1595), Sidney puts it like this:

Poesie therefore is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle terms it in the word mimesis, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or a figuring forth--to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture: with this end, to teach and delight.⁹⁰

Thus Sidney, for all his acknowledgement of Aristotle in this selection, takes a stand that is unquestionably Horatian, and it is this view that continues to be dominant for another two hundred years. Even as late as the eighteenth century,

⁸⁸ Wellek and Warren, Theory of Literature, p. 228.

⁸⁹ Corbett, Rhetorical Analyses, p. xv.

⁹⁰ Sir Philip Sidney, An Apology for Poetry, in Criticism: The Major Texts, p. 86.

Samuel Johnson asserts that "the end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing."⁹¹ But the last few years of the eighteenth century, after Johnson, saw the first stirrings of a romantic temper that was to bring about a decline in the classical tradition, and hence a decline in the prestige of rhetoric. The old three-fold emphasis of rhetoric, on the speaker, the audience, and the work, began to shift and be replaced by a new emphasis on the poet alone, on his personal subjectivity and his creative spontaneity. As the nineteenth century wore on, the influence of the audience became less and less important, while the poet himself became the end and all, indeed, the final cause of art.

Yet M. H. Abrams calls the rhetorical method the principal aesthetic attitude of the Western world. Because rhetorical criticism is not the only viable method of analyzing a literary work, it is appropriate at this point to look briefly at the four major varieties of literary criticism, as Abrams describes them in the first chapter of The Mirror and The Lamp.⁹² Set in order of their historical appearance--as mimetic, pragmatic, expressive, and objective--these four approaches match the areas of external experience to which

⁹¹ Samuel Johnson, "Preface to Shakespeare," in Criticism: The Major Texts, ed. Walter Clinton Bate, p. 210.

⁹² M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), Chapter One.

literature is related: the world, the audience, the author, and the work. Therefore, if the literary critic limits his concern to the work itself and is concerned primarily with its structure and form, Abrams says, he is engaged in an objective approach. This is the method of the so-called New Critics, as well as those who call themselves the neo-Aristotelians. These critics direct their concern to the work, its form, and all the elements which make it whole, paying no attention to the writer who wrote it or to the reader who reads it. If a critic, on the other hand, directs his concern to the "universe" or the outer world that the work tries to represent, he is engaged in mimetic criticism. He is interested in imitation, in permanent truth, and the archetypal reality in a work. If he focuses on the author as artist and creator, as the Romantics did, and derives his criteria from the artist, the critic is engaged in expressive criticism.

The word Abrams uses to describe the fourth method is "pragmatic," by which he means the same as the approach that we have called "rhetorical." This mode emphasizes the relationship between the author and the audience, and judges its value as a method of criticism according to the writer's success in reaching his audience. Rhetorical criticism of literary works, Corbett notes,⁹³ stems today not so much from Aristotle, who saw rhetoric and poetic as separate modes of

⁹³Corbett, Rhetorical Analyses, p. xvii.

discourse, but from Horace, and from the Renaissance interpretation of Horace that blurred the distinctions between rhetoric and poetic, and unified them into a single mode of discourse. But the modern approach to rhetorical criticism has chosen to make emphases of its own.

First of all, rhetorical criticism is a way of analysis that emphasizes the work itself. But unlike the neo-Aristotelians, who also focus on the work, rhetorical criticism does not confine itself to the inside of a literary piece, but ranges outward to consider the author and the audience inclusively, as well. This is because its interest lies, as it always has, in that threefold relationship of author to audience to work that is the traditional interest of rhetoric. Rhetoric emphasizes the work itself, to be sure, but it considers the author and the audience, as well. And what it learns of the author and the audience are essential, for this information is found not in external matters pertaining to them, but in evidence that comes from inside the work. A critic gains an impression of the writer from looking at his attitudes, his ideas, his tone, and his style as he stands revealed in the work, not as he is seen biographically or through any other external means. Rhetorical criticism seeks to determine an author's "image" as he establishes it in a particular work in order to create a particular effect on a particular audience.

Rhetorical criticism determines from its examination of the work some ideas about the composition of the audience,

and also some speculations about how the audience is likely to react. Any reliable information about the author or audience may be used by the critic to help him understand a particular work. But the work itself provides the main source of information to help him understand the disposition of the author and the audience, and to help him unravel a particular work. A rhetorical critic knows this, but he is willing to facilitate the validity of his work by the use of history, biography, and other external information, as well. When a critic like Wayne C. Booth examines a work of fiction, he believes that the story represents a tacit agreement between the writer and the reader. As such it is a public act. It is public because the reader knows he is reading fiction which somebody has written; he is not reading facts, such as may be recounted in the daily news. Back of the fiction there is somebody who makes it happen. There is an author, who is probably not the narrator of the story, but who is nonetheless recognized as a manipulator of all the reader's responses to all the actions and characters in the book. Booth's position is that the writer's manipulation of the reader--that is his rhetoric--is an essential part of the experience of the book, for the writer uses rhetoric in everything he "shows," as well as what he "tells," regardless of his professed efforts toward objectivity.

. . . all of the clichés about the natural object being self-sufficient are at best half-truths. Though some characters and events may speak by themselves their artistic message to the reader, and thus carry

in a weak form their own rhetoric, none will do so with proper clarity and force until the author brings all his powers to bear on the problem of making the reader see what they really are. The author cannot choose whether to use rhetorical heightening. His only choice is of the kind of rhetoric he will use.⁹⁴

Every novelist, therefore, uses rhetoric in a conscious or unconscious effort to carry his artistic message; it is this, in fact, employed with proper clarity, that makes his reader see.

The study of the audience's response to a literary work is probably the main concern of rhetorical criticism.⁹⁵ But the critic who sets out to examine this response must be aware of the pitfalls that lie in wait. The question, "How does literature affect its audience?" is an empirical one,⁹⁶ which must be answered, if at all, by an appeal to experience. Because there are no tools that will measure an audience's response with any degree of objectivity or accuracy, a rhetorical critic is liable to lay himself open to the trap of his own subjectivity. If he is wise he will protect himself against impressionism by confining his analysis to those elements in a work that are capable of creating a certain effect in an audience.⁹⁷ If a critic assumes that the response of an audience is "potentially contained in the work," Corbett

⁹⁴ Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 116.

⁹⁵ Corbett, Rhetorical Analyses, p. xxii.

⁹⁶ Wellek and Warren, Theory of Literature, p. 90.

⁹⁷ Corbett, Rhetorical Analyses, p. xxii.

says, then his analysis of the "potential effect" will be as objective as his analysis can be, because he knows that what happens to the reader happens not because of the composition or disposition of the audience, or by its age, but because of the experience of the book--because of what the writer has put in the work to affect its response.⁹⁸ The critic will thus direct his attention to those elements which seem deliberately calculated to elicit a specific effect.

Whenever a traditional knowledge of rhetoric has consciously influenced the writing of a work, Corbett says, it is easy to use rhetorical terms to unravel that work. The critic can show that the work has the structure of a classical speech, or he might analyze the work according to its topics. He can show that a writer does or does not argue his case well, that he chooses the right or the wrong subject, or even that he selects the right or the wrong audience for his work. But whatever approach a critic may take, he is bound to base his judgments on an examination of the text or on some external evidence that shows how an author has imposed a structure on his work.

Whenever rhetorical criticism is based on classical rhetoric it may analyze the "kinds of argument." Such an approach is suitable when the work, or part of the work, is viewed as an effort to persuade the audience. In the case of fiction the audience can be considered either as the

⁹⁸Ibid.

characters inside the story, who are the hearers, or the readers outside the story, or both. The critic who takes the "kinds of argument" as his concern will be using an appeal to reason and will thus be interested in "the kinds, the cogency, the sources, and the validity" of the arguments.⁹⁹ If he concerns himself only with the kinds and sources of the argument, he will seek the "topics" or the "places of argument" that the classical frame lists as parts of "invention." Thus he can see the arguments as having derived from such topics as "'definition,' 'similarities,' 'differences,' 'cause and effect,' and 'antecedent and consequence.'"¹⁰⁰ If he examines the "cogency and validity" of the argument, his criteria will come from the truth of the argument, certainly, but it will also consider the reader, the subject, and the purpose, as well.

The critic may go beyond the appeal to reason to employ other methods of rhetorical appeal, the emotional appeal and the ethical appeal. Whichever approach he takes, he will be dealing with Thought, "that constituent of an imitative work which, as Aristotle admitted in the Poetics, belongs more properly to rhetoric."¹⁰¹

A study of "style" is the kind of criticism that is considered to be the most obviously rhetorical. In fact, the

⁹⁹ Corbett, Rhetorical Analyses, p. xxv.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. ¹⁰¹ Ibid.

negative connotations of the word "rhetoric" grow out of views on the exaggerated style of those who use deceit to make the worse appear the better way. The association of style with rhetoric has a historical basis, in that some of the Greek and Roman orators, who were called "sophists," were primarily concerned with style. The most extreme sophists sometimes claimed, for a fee, to be able to turn their pupils into golden orators, as did the followers of the seventeenth century rhetorician, Peter Ramus. Classical rhetoricians, we recall, divided the study of rhetoric into five parts, one of which was the study of style. Today the proponents of the "new rhetoric," that branch of the New Criticism, which got its start at Vanderbilt University under the direction of Professor Donald Davidson and included such practitioners as Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, and John Crowe Ransom, has made its most impressive advancement in the area of style, or "stylistics," as it is now called. Rhetorical criticism, whenever based on style, gives attention to "diction, imagery, sentence structure, sentence rhythm, tropes and schemes, and the topology of styles."¹⁰²

But not everybody who writes about style in literary works is involved in rhetorical criticism. What makes an analysis of style "rhetorical" is not the commentary on style itself, but something else. When a critic relates style to the work and to other elements in the work, and also relates

¹⁰²Corbett, Rhetorical Analyses, p. xxvi.

it to the writer himself, and to the ways in which the writer uses his style to influence the reader, then he is rhetorical. As Corbett puts it, "For the rhetorical critic, style represents the choices that an author has made from the available lexical and syntactical resources of a language."¹⁰³ To Booth, however,

"Style" is sometimes broadly used to cover whatever it is that gives us a sense, from word to word and line to line, that the author sees more deeply and judges more profoundly than his presented characters
 [It is] one of our main sources of insight into the author's norms. . . .¹⁰⁴

Not only his style but his tone, as well, Booth continues, are matters of choice.

The implied author chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him as an ideal, literary, created version of the real man; he is the sum of all his choices.¹⁰⁵

This reference to choices gets to the very center of rhetorical criticism, for choice is what rhetorical criticism is all about. When Booth and Corbett define rhetoric, as Aristotle did, as the "faculty or power of discovering all the available means of persuasion in any given case," they, like him and all the rhetoricians to follow, are concerned with making judicious choices from the available resources that language provides. In regard to the points of reference

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 74.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 74-75.

that we have already named--subject, genre, occasion, purpose, writer, and reader--as Corbett says,

. . . when a critic asks why an author did this in this order, and in these words, and answers his question in relation to one or more of these reference points, he is probably operating as a rhetorical critic.¹⁰⁶

If the critic centers on the most important of the reference points we have listed above, his choice will have to be the audience. "The one thing the poet does," notes Booth, citing Aristotle, "is to produce effects on audiences,"¹⁰⁷ and this notion of the primary importance of audience is implicit in the following definition of rhetorical criticism:

When I speak of a rhetorical critical method, I mean the investigation of the use of traditional devices to produce an effect on an audience, of the presence of materials in a poem, novel, or short story which can best be accounted for by a pragmatic rationale--in other words, the presence in a work of elements that are there for one chief specific purpose: to manipulate an audience.¹⁰⁸

It should be clear by now that rhetorical analysis is a form of internal criticism that is interested in the interlocking relationships between a work, an author, and an audience.¹⁰⁹ As such, it is interested in the "product," the "process," and the "effect" of language. When rhetorical

¹⁰⁶ Corbett, Rhetorical Analyses, p. xxvii.

¹⁰⁷ Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 92.

¹⁰⁸ Gene Montague, "Rhetoric in Literary Criticism," College Composition and Communication 14 (October 1963): 168, reprinted in Corbett, Rhetorical Analyses, p. xxvii.

¹⁰⁹ Corbett, Rhetorical Analyses, p. xxii.

criticism is applied to fiction or to any other imaginative literature, it sees a work not only as an aesthetic object for pleasurable contemplation, but also as an artfully constructed tool for communication. When rhetorical criticism deals with fiction, it is more interested in what it "does" than what it "is."

Rhetorical criticism is most often applied to works that have an ulterior purpose--works like satire, didactic pieces and poems, or propaganda novels--where the writer prefers to teach rather than to delight, or at least to teach while he delights,¹¹⁰ as writers for children have traditionally done. It is also applied to those pieces that have been occasioned by contemporary events or concerns of social importance, as children's handicaps are. But rhetorical analysis can be applied with equal effectiveness to works of writers who have no intention of being didactic, and for whom the term "didactic," in the modern pejorative connotations of the word, if applied to them, would be unpleasant.

We have only to examine literary history, especially the period of time from Sidney to Blake, to find that the discipline of rhetoric controlled the making of literature fully as much as did any system of poetics. Chaucer was trained from the days of his youth in the art of rhetoric, and so was almost every British writer after him. Those who were not--if such existed--felt the pull toward rhetoric

¹¹⁰Ibid.

that was in the very air of the age in which they lived. For most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the influence of rhetoric has weakened and nearly disappeared. Most modern critics and writers have had little formal rhetorical training, so most of them do not consciously make use of rhetorical principles in composing their written works; most of them do not conduct their rhetorical analyses according to the rationale and terminology of the classical discipline. But an exercise in "practical criticism," Corbett says,¹¹¹ does not have to be done in terms of the classical tradition in order to define it as distinctly and acceptably rhetorical. Some modern critics have written analyses in which they have not used a single term from the rhetoric books; some even show no evidence that they have any awareness of all of the rhetorical tradition. The point is that one does not have to be a rhetorical scholar to act as a rhetorical critic. Corbett says that many who write about fiction today might even be surprised to learn that they have been engaged all along in rhetorical writing about literature. For those who prefer to concentrate on the work itself, as we do, this is a good and useful method of internal criticism, allowing us in this study to discover a variety of causes and conditions for a children's book--especially one that focuses on the character of a retarded child--to be what it is, and to do what it does, and to mean what it means through the manipulations of the

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. xxvii.

teller of the tale. This study is about a seriously handicapping condition, mental retardation, as it is presented in the best of children's fiction, but the process of criticism, and the definition of a rhetorical process insofar as it relates to analyzing juvenile fiction, is a primary concern of this study.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Limitations

This study focuses on mental retardation in children, one of the most serious social problems of the new realism, as it is portrayed in Newbery Award-winning fiction. Using the available resources of rhetorical and literary criticism, it seeks to determine whether a writer is able to handle his social concern without jeopardizing his fiction as good and entertaining literature for children.

Method

Rhetorical criticism is the best, most generous and practical method for determining value in children's books. Because rhetoric, as Aristotle says, seeks all the available means to persuade in any given case, it is useful in the process of looking at a story to see what makes it work.¹ The rhetorical method of criticism is multi-dimensional in its concern with the writer, the reader, and the story, for as Bryant says, rhetoric can be examined in an almost unlimited number of widely varying ways, and any related or interrelated aspect of these three dimensions is important to a

¹ Aristotle, Rhetoric, trans. Lane Cooper, p. 7.

rhetorical criticism of literary work.² Insofar as rhetoric concerns children's fiction, it may be seen as a writer's attempt to communicate an experience. Because the writer promises a story in exchange for the reader's attention, he makes a tacit agreement to reward the reading. Rhetorical criticism asks how this promise is fulfilled. It sees a children's book in relation to the author who makes it and the reader who receives it, rather than as a separate object for contemplation. It makes no arbitrary distinction between the terms rhetoric and poetic, for they go hand in hand, as they must in good children's stories. If the devices that shape attitudes in juvenile fiction are to be tonic instead of flaccid, they have got to be fitted with artistic skill into that frame of necessity which common sense demands of one who directs his appeals to an inexperienced reader.

The function of rhetorical criticism is to describe, interpret, and judge. It asks, as Lewis does, that a critic begin by reading each book as if it might be very good, for flaws, he says, can always be found, and no work can succeed "without a preliminary act of good will on the part of the reader."³ So rhetorical criticism takes the trouble to see what a writer does. It is not dogmatic; it does not prescribe. Through a close reading of Newbery Award-winning fiction,

²Bryant, "Rhetoric," in The Province of Rhetoric, pp. 3-36.

³Lewis, Experiment, p. 116.

rhetorical criticism in this case seeks to do three things: (1) to determine and illustrate ways in which a writer manipulates his reader; (2) to define mental retardation as a persuasive agent in fiction, and (3) to discover ways in which a writer succeeds or fails to handle a social concern without jeopardizing his fiction as good and entertaining literature for children. It looks at incidents and episodes that are shaped around a retarded character, for it is "in these small areas . . . that individual achievement may be properly assessed."⁴ It tends to concentrate on close reading and the way words work. Whatever there is in form, or style, or invention that compels a child's imagination, that evokes an attitude, that invites understanding; whatever enables; whatever manipulates values by color, or flavor, or texture, or the sound of words, these are the province of rhetorical criticism. They are seen as rhetoric. They are a deliberate means of controlling a reader's response. When a writer attempts to lead a child to discover the hard truths of a social problem within the experience of his book,⁵ the functions of rhetorical criticism are aroused by the sense that children's books and their authors are worth examining.

According to Aristotle there are three kinds of persuasion which a writer can use: the first is based on the

⁴ Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, "Plot in Narrative," in Perspectives on Fiction, ed. James L. Calderwood and Harold E. Toliver (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 277-302.

⁵ Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 182.

moral character of the writer, the second on creating a frame of mind in the audience, and the third on the work itself, insofar as it seems to be true and convincing. The third kind has to do with logical argument or a frame of expectation; the second has to do with appeals to an audience, its emotions and prejudices; and the first deals with the personality and character of the writer himself. It is only in recent times that the first kind of proof, depending on the character of the writer, has come to be fully appreciated. The greatest single argument to favor any allegation is generally seen to be the character of the writer as the reader understands it.⁶ This view has come to be called an image, and contemporary society sees that the image, more than any other single factor, controls an audience's reaction. In modern-day advertising the image is important because it influences potential buying habits. The man who buys a car too big for his garage, too expensive for his budget, and altogether inappropriate for his commuting patterns, for example, is not buying a car but an image. By and large, a writer who wants to persuade his audience can begin where the ad-man does, by deciding on the image he wants to create. What Aristotle thought of as an appeal to "ethos" was based on the impression an audience had of the speaker's moral

⁶Richard E. Hughes and P. Albert Duhamel, "The Modern Uses of Persuasion," The Province of Rhetoric, ed. J. Schwarz and J. A. Rycenga (New York: Ronald, 1965), pp. 431-455.

integrity. He mentions knowledge, belief, honesty, and self-respect as qualities admired in ancient times. They are still admired. No writer dares to be without them today, whatever his subject, if he hopes to succeed in his primary function as a storyteller, which is to persuade.

It has become customary in rhetorical criticism to speak of a writer's dramatic voice. As Jessamyn West puts it, writing is a way of playing parts, of assuming roles, of trying on masks for the story's sake. "'To make a work of art,'" she says, citing Elizabeth Sewell, "'is to make, or rather unmake and remake one's self.'"⁷ The writer thus creates another self to tell his story, an ideal version of himself, different from the implied versions of other writers in other stories. To this end he may appear as a first person narrator or an omniscient observer, he may speak in a variety of voices or exist only in the way his story develops, but the teller of the tale becomes a perceived presence in his story, with a personality as distinctive as that of any fictional character he creates. He is known by the language he uses, by his tone, by what he chooses to leave out of his story, as well as what goes in, and by the quality and kinds of insights his story allows. A large part of his reader's response comes from learning to know him, to recognize that he is there, and to accept for the life of the book

⁷ Jessamyn West, "The Slave Cast Out," in The Living Novel, ed. Granville Hicks (New York: MacMillan, 1957), p. 202.

whatever he says as true. Whether he is thought of as a voice, or an image, or an implied author, a writer's literary personality should be both wise and good, and also more engaging than that of the one whose name is listed on the book's title page. However similar the two may appear, they are not the same, for the one, the living writer, is biographical and historical, limited as all mortals are by his human failures in wisdom and compassion, his physical needs, and the finite boundaries of taxes and death. The other, the implied author, is literary and syntactical, a well-disposed version of the real person, who stays in the story, individual and unchanged, for as long as the story lasts. A writer of sensibility cannot afford to show himself indifferent to his literary image nor careless of the quality of his voice by failing to make choices all through his story that are intelligent, appealing, and appropriate to his reader.

All writers are thus rhetorical. The most influential word on the rhetoric of fiction comes from Wayne C. Booth,⁸ who demonstrates convincingly that rhetoric is communication, and that every successful writer is rhetorical, whether he is consciously so or not. Whether the novelist is a master of objectivity like Joyce or James, or overtly rhetorical like Dickens or Fielding, he always explores the rhetorical resources that allow him to control his reader. Booth's main

⁸Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, *passim*.

points, from The Rhetoric of Fiction, may be listed as follows: (1) A writer reveals himself as an implied author in his work. Though he may choose to disguise himself, he cannot choose to disappear. It is in his choices that he gives himself away. (2) A writer makes his readers in much the same way that he makes his characters. He makes them interested, or indifferent, or receptive to what he has to say. (3) A writer creates attitudes by his rhetoric. His very choices of what to tell, of what to show, what to leave out, and what to put in are expressions of value. He cannot choose whether or not to use rhetoric; he can only choose what kind of rhetoric he will use. (4) The more heightened and dramatic an event is in his narrative, the more it requires a rhetoric to place it for the reader. Literature from the least to the greatest depends for its success on the concurrence of belief between the reader and the writer. (5) The ultimate problem of the rhetoric of fiction is that of deciding for whom the writer should write. If he writes for himself, it has to be a public self, who is subject to the limitations that others are subject to when they read his book. If he writes for his peers, he is choosing his audience well, because the hack is by definition the one who asks for responses he cannot himself respect. But there is no such thing as a peer who is above the need for help in viewing the author's fictional world. A writer cannot be excused if he fails to provide his reader with the means to

judge. A writer creates guidelines for his reader; he is committed to move him toward a certain interpretation of events. To do otherwise, according to Booth, is immoral.⁹

Booth is not talking about morals per se, but about the obligation of a writer to make his intentions clear. In social situations there are norms, and these norms are values. Values come into play in reading fiction, for this is a part of what goes on. Values in the world of fiction evoke responses in different ways, because a writer sees to it that the social and aesthetic norms are either upheld, or overturned, or even sometimes enlarged. Responsible narration shows the reader where to stand in the world of values.

Value is not an external standard. If it is discovered at all it is built out of experience, because it grows out of the flux of events. This is why fiction can serve children as authentic experience. When it is well-conceived, well-executed, and convincing, fiction does not criticize life so much in terms of values as it discovers values in terms of experience.

Booth's scholarly insights are not diminished by their applicability to children's books. When he says the ultimate problem in the rhetoric of fiction is that of deciding for whom the author should write,¹⁰ he gives no quarter to the writer of children's fiction, who may think he already knows

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 396.

for whom he writes. If he writes for children, he needs to make the discovery of values a convincing outgrowth of the experience. If he writes for himself, it will be a public self, who is not contemptuous of the efforts necessary to limit his work in order to make it accessible to children. If he writes for his peers, he will bend his efforts toward making the children his peers; he will make them share a mutual sense of human commonality. In this he sets the measure of his art. The quality of the common ground he finds within these limitations is the quality of the implied author. Within so small a space as a Grecian urn, say, or a sonnet, or a children's book, it takes an artist to do a well made thing.

Rhetorical criticism, in this case, asks whether a writer is able to handle his social concern without jeopardizing his fiction as good and entertaining literature for children. Insofar as he can, he shows himself a person of good sense, good character, and good will--a good person skilled in speaking, who knows how to shape his story with a validity that is not altered by his appeals to the young.

CHAPTER IV

PRACTICAL ANALYSIS:
THE RHETORIC OF RETARDED CHILDREN
IN NEWBERY AWARD-WINNING FICTIONIntroduction

Three books delineating retarded children as fictional characters have received a John Newbery Medal for the most distinguished children's book of the year in which they were published. The award, which was named for an eighteenth-century British publisher and bookseller, was donated in 1921 by Frederick G. Melcher, himself a publisher, and has been awarded annually since 1922 by the Children's Services Division of the American Library Association as his gift. In order to win a Newbery Medal a book must be original and not a reprint or translation; it must have been published within the preceding year and written by an American citizen or by a permanent resident of the United States. The medal, itself, was designed by René Paul Chambellan, and bears a motto, "The John Newbery Medal for the most distinguished contribution to American Literature for Children."

The delineation of three retarded children in Newbery Award-winning books, Aggie in Irene Hunt's Up a Road Slowly,¹ Charlie in Betsy Byars's The Summer of the Swans,² and

¹Irene Hunt, Up a Road Slowly (Chicago: Follett, 1966).

²Betsy Byars, The Summer of the Swans (New York: Viking, 1970).

Daniel in Jean Craighead George's Julie of the Wolves,³ provides the best starting point for a practical analysis of contemporary children's fiction on this subject.

Children's stories have always been a means of teaching and delighting, and have traditionally reflected the values of society. Now under the new realism, children's books are less frequently assumed to mirror the public's interest in social concerns than they are "expected" to contain and annotate social "issues,"⁴ often to the end of furthering some worthy cause. It is not necessary to join the storm of protest against propaganda to recognize that its presence in children's books poses a literary problem.⁵ The more intent a writer is on creating a brief for a cause, the more limited must be his artistic direction. He thus writes a story for a purpose rather than a story with a purpose. By its very intention propaganda is placed at one extreme of persuasion, and is thus subject to the ancient charge of "making the worse appear the better way."⁶

³ Jean Craighead George, Julie of the Wolves (New York: Harper, 1972).

⁴ Masha Rudman, Children's Literature: An Issues Approach (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1976), p. 3.

⁵ See Dorothy M. Broderick, "Pressure for Pluralism: The Blacks, the Chicanos, the Native Americans, and Women," in Arbuthnot and Sutherland, Children and Books, p. 734. See also references listed in Rudman, Issues, *passim*; and articles, e.g., John Rowe Townsend, "Didacticism in Modern Dress," in Only Connect, ed. Egoff, p. 40; J. M. Bingham and Grayce Scholt, "Didacticism in New Dress: A Look at 'Free' Stories," Top of the News, April 1976, pp. 253-260.

⁶ Aristotle, Rhetoric, p. 177.

Still, fiction that elicits a willing suspension of disbelief is obligated to persuade. A writer's success depends not only on the richness of his material, or on the richness of his interest in it, but also on the richness of language by which he manipulates his material into experience. The organization of experience is an art. In any truth-discovery novel that tries to lead children to the "hard truths of adulthood," Booth says, "the problem is to make the discovery a convincing outcome of the experience."⁷ In popular parlance, the term "propaganda" applies to pernicious ideas, which are spread dishonestly by those who are not to be trusted.⁸ Yet if

. . . we stretch the term to mean "effort" whether conscious or not, to influence readers to share one's attitude toward life, then there is plausibility in the contention that all artists are propagandists, or should be, or . . . that all sincere, responsible artists are morally obligated to be propagandists.⁹

To this end Wellek and Warren describe the writer as a "responsible propagandist."¹⁰ While this seems at first to be an unnatural joining of contrary terms, it may, in fact, be interpreted as an expression of the tension under which a writer works to correlate his practical and artistic intentions. Perhaps "ethical persuasion" is a better term, for rhetoric is an honest and useful art when rightly practiced. The values that come into play in fiction grow out of a

⁷ Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 182.

⁸ Wellek and Warren, Theory of Literature, p. 24.

⁹ Ibid. ¹⁰ Ibid.

practical and artistic view in terms of final cause. A writer's final artistic cause is pleasure, including all the kinds of pleasure literature can give, and his final practical cause is to persuade, and this can be summarized in the traditional principle of Horace, "dulce et utile," which is also a final cause. Whatever these three writers do to reconcile the artistic and the practical in their stories, they have assumed an exceptional perspective by choosing to delineate retarded children as characters in their fiction. Their Newbery Medals notwithstanding, the question here is whether each one can handle a social concern that lends itself to an expression of any number of very different attitudes and aims without jeopardizing his fiction as good and entertaining literature for children.

Up a Road Slowly

One of the earliest examples of juvenile fiction to depict a retarded child in a contemporary context is Irene Hunt's Up a Road Slowly, a story that antedates the publication of any similar children's book but one, which it supplants.¹¹ In 1967, when it was awarded a Newbery Medal as the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children, Irene Hunt had already gained public recognition

¹¹ Nancy W. Faber, Cathy at the Crossroads (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1962). A retarded child (in an institution) is an unconvincing character in this book. In a sequel, Cathy's Secret Kingdom (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1963), the retarded child gets well, which is even more unconvincing.

through other awards: an American Library Association Notable Book Award, a Charles W. Follett Award, and a Newbery Honor Book Award.

The Honor Book Award for Across Five Aprils carries with it an unusual distinction, even for so distinguished a prize, in that most committees selecting the Newbery winners see fit to follow a tradition that was initiated in 1922 when the first Newbery Medal carried with it a total of five runners-up. But in 1965 those who named Irene Hunt's Across Five Aprils as an Honor Book enhanced the value of this choice by selecting hers as the only one. In fifty years of Newbery Medals no more than three Honor Awards have been so strengthened by this kind of choice as a single selection. The story thus honored centers on a midwestern family whose sons have left off farming to fight in the Civil War, one brother with the South and another with the North, leaving the third and youngest, Jethro, who is not yet grown, to till the farm and explore in his mind the opposing views of those he loves, while he struggles to work out his own conception of what is right. This book has been considered a balanced, sane, and convincing statement of conflicting views about the Civil War, for it was selected five years after its publication by the International Board of Books for Young People to be translated into other languages and published abroad "to encourage world understanding through children's literature."¹²

¹² Virginia Haviland, "A New Internationalism," from De Openbare Bibliotheek, v. 14, no. 9, 1971, reprinted in Children and Literature, pp. 328-334.

Hunt continues today to receive favorable attention for her stories. One of her later books, A Trail of Apple Blossoms, is about Jonathan Chapman; it tells how "Johnny Appleseed" helps the members of a pioneer family travelling West in a Conestoga wagon to discover a new and lyric humanitarianism in their rough lives. This book is included in the University of Chicago's Best of Children's Books.¹³ If awards count for anything, Irene Hunt's name on a book jacket may be taken as something of a promise, and a reader who chooses her book has a right to expect a good and entertaining story.

In Up a Road Slowly Irene Hunt delineates a retarded child as deficient; not as a comic figure to be mocked, nor as weak to be nurtured, but as physically offensive to be shunned. Yet a "new realist," looking for unflinching treatments of popular issues, and finding them here in the questions of death and disease and drug abuse that she raises in her fiction--along with her realistic treatment of mental retardation, will be unwise to categorize Irene Hunt as a social problem writer. She is not so readily pigeonholed, for the problems in her books are less important than the story. The problems are not disproportionate. They grow realistically and naturally out of the action, or seem to,

¹³ Zena Sutherland, ed., The Best of Children's Books: The University of Chicago Guide to Children's Literature, 1966-1972 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), p. 202.

for Hunt understands that problems are an essential corollary of effective fiction, and she handles hers, no matter how closely they relate to popular trends--nor indeed, how widely they diverge from them, with a sense of appropriateness and an instinct for the inevitable and tragic that are characteristically her own.

Characteristic, too, is her sense of time and place. Like Eudora Welty, whom she sometimes resembles, she does not use place to provide "theme" in her fiction, since "only feeling about life can do that."¹⁴ Feeling, Welty says, carries the crown among those good spirits that watch over a writer at work, but "place stands in its shade."

The union of feeling and place which enables Irene Hunt to shape her book into an imaginative work for children resides in her youth and informs Up a Road Slowly with a special geography of the mind that relates to her own childhood. At a very early age, when she was most impressionable, she suffered the loss of her father. The enormity of this early encounter with death at the beginning of her conscious perception, she says, has remained undiminished through the years.¹⁵ Its intensity may explain why she writes this particular story; it may define a reason for her introducing

¹⁴ Eudora Welty, "Place in Fiction," South Atlantic Quarterly 4 (January 1956): 57-72.

¹⁵ Ann Commire, Something about the Author, 12 vols. (Detroit: Gale Research Book Tower, 1971-77), 2:419.

death as she does in two shaping episodes, one of which concerns a retarded child. And it may also explain why she brings the power of death to bear less trenchantly on endings for her protagonist than on new and unremittingly painful beginnings.

For whatever reasons she chooses to write out of her childhood of death and mental retardation, however, she must recognize the dangers of subjectivity that are implicit in any personal reminiscing. The technical difficulties of writing fiction--large enough, at best--are multiplied for one who turns to a remembrance of things past. As Dorothy Broderick points out in the New York Times, a writer who draws directly from her own youth in this way faces two main obstacles: she confronts the problems of sentimentalizing the past, and she faces the problem of holding her reader's interest to the end.¹⁶ Irene Hunt is successful in this book, and she seems to recognize these dangers, but even so, she does not always avoid their pitfalls.

Up a Road Slowly begins with the haunting of Julie Trelling, who frail and shaken from the same disease that caused her mother's death, is brought at age seven to live with her aunt, where she is caught at once in an unreasoning and unreasonable fear of the house. She is too young to know or understand that half of her Aunt Cordelia Bishop's life

¹⁶ Dorothy Broderick, review of Up a Road Slowly, by Irene Hunt, in New York Times Book Review, 6 November 1966, p. 8.

had been spent in caring for an aged mother and two spinster aunts. But it was one of these old ones that Julie had unexpectedly encountered years before, when she was not above three, while visiting her aunt. She had opened an upstairs door tentatively, on a tour of childish exploration, in order to peek inside, when a woman turned in her chair and smiled toothlessly at her, asking in a voice that quavered, "Whose little girl are you?" For a few seconds Julie had stood numb with fear, saying nothing. Then she had fled down the hall, hearing as she went, a dreadful little cackle of laughter following her. It was a long time before she exorcised that small gray presence from those upstairs rooms. In the years that followed, even before her mother's death, the memory of that incident slipped beneath the surface of her conscious mind, but the fear remained, persistent, inexplicable, appearing now anew, as she climbs the stairs to bed, bereft of her mother, a small and haunted stranger in this mysterious house.

The house is a metaphor, a means by which Irene Hunt allows herself to comment by slight indirection on Cordelia Bishop and her values. It is above all and at first spotlessly clean and orderly, an old white-pillared house, set far back from the big gate at the road in a grove of evergreens and hardwood shade trees. It wears the imprint of time, which its occupants have shared down the years through necessity and choice. Signs of penury and prosperity coexist

now more or less functionally and with little perceptible disharmony. The house has no central heat, and the coal-burning stoves, set up each winter, demand some spartan discipline, which by implication builds character, while they temporarily mar the beauty of rooms to give them warmth. But in summer the twelve high-ceilinged rooms are airy and pleasant. The curving staircase in the hall, the marble mantelpieces, and the concert grand piano in the library lend their proportion to a harmonious whole, with an air of gracious, upper-middle-class dignity and stability, and just the least mystery and restraint, that are altogether in keeping with the character of Cordelia Bishop herself.

When she demonstrates that it is not necessary to articulate a metaphor's meaning in order for him to sense relationships, Irene Hunt makes certain assumptions about her young reader. It is interesting to observe the techniques by which she implies that she addresses an audience for whom it is neither necessary to labor a point nor to forego suggestive imagery. She understands that immature readers, whether grown-up or not, quickly lose interest in long passages of explanatory prose, but her metaphors of place form an overt means of communication, which she constantly enlarges and illustrates, as her reader likes it, in anecdote and incident. Perhaps the easiest and surely one of the most successful kinds of oblique appeal to manage is that which begins in an anecdote, introduced as in this case by a

flashback. The means of making flashbacks and anecdotes both vary according to the skill of the writer, from the awkward and trite, to the clean, sure objectification of events, but Hunt heightens her reader's attention when she relates these devices to place and uses them consciously as a delineating technique to introduce the personality of Haskell Bishop.

In a renovated carriage house back of the big house, away from the family, Cordelia's brother Haskell lives alone. His separation from the others in earlier years saved him the distress of watching his sister carry a load of responsibility for their aging relatives that he never offered to share. But one of the reasons why he prefers to live alone is that it is easier for him to maintain the myth that he is a writer who needs privacy to work on his "magnum opus," as he calls it, rather than--as is actually the case--that the privacy he covets safeguards his need to drink in solitude. Since he does not relish an unflattering view of himself as a drunkard, he consciously seeks to create the image of a scholar, a connoisseur, and a man of wordly sensibilities instead. Just so, when the children were small he had once impressed Julie and her brother Christopher with a story that the bottles they saw on the shelves of his kitchen held rare wines from the sunny vineyards of France. Chris, who had just learned to read, translated the labels into the blunt English words "Old Crow," but their uncle responded helpfully that the French, being very obliging people, had

placed the English translation of "Le Vieux Corbeau" on all the bottles exported to America.

Bishop is quick-witted and disarming, pretentious though his actions show him to be, and yet entirely fallible throughout. Hunt imposes the realities of his character in ways that compel a young reader's apprehension of irony. Through a combination of implicitly negative judgments and directly explicit statements, she makes her reader understand that the authorial presence does not condone this man's excesses; it censures. Hunt follows a tradition venerated by novelists since before the time of Fielding in that she does not hesitate to tell her reader outright what to think whenever she considers it advisable to do so. She tells, and she tells directly, but she does not tell crudely, nor does she figuratively pull her reader by the ears, as it were, to make him attentive--nor yet find it necessary to set him awash in a flood of emotionally charged rhetoric in order to simulate reality. Her point is taken. With a good deal of telling, a little implicit moralizing, and a lot of showing for reinforcement, she clearly, rightly, and for the most part convincingly indicates which side her reader is to take, and what in the world of his reactions she demands. Hunt's use of anecdote and flashback, like the one to follow, is a legitimate appeal, sufficient to the task of making her young reader see exactly what she wants him to see.

Julie absentmindedly watches her Uncle Haskell stride into the woods with his typically buoyant step, golf bag over

his shoulder. It strikes her one day that there is no golf course within five miles, and if there were, it would be too dark now for him to play. She realizes almost simultaneously that there are no golf clubs in the brown bag over his shoulder, and she knows for the first time that she has seen him step into the shadowy woods on several fine evenings, a beret set jauntily on his head, a golf bag without visible clubs flung over his shoulder. Suddenly curious, she conspires with her brother Chris, and with their closet friend and neighbor Danny Trevort, to trail him through the woods and learn the secret of Haskell Bishop's nocturnal golfing.

Down by the creek he crosses the bridge, where the growth of underbrush is heavy, and removes a spade from his golf bag. A grave! she thinks. Uncle Haskell is a monster who digs graves in the damp soil under the bushes and buries Heaven-knows-what in the concealing dirt. Chris takes her hand, and she can see the same horror on his face that must show on hers. Whether or not their gasps betray their presence, Bishop leans on his shovel, chuckles, and speaks out pleasantly enough to nobody in particular, saying, "Scat, you little devils," and they flee. Not until the next day when he drives into town, do the three children venture back down to the creek unobserved to find that Uncle Haskell has been up to. The "graves" are quite shallow, for (as Hunt says) he would not be one to expend a great deal of energy in the digging, and so they easily uncover what

has been buried there--empty bottles, of course, of "Le Vieux Corbeau."

Julie's uncle is a physically handsome man. His face at fifty-five is unlined; his skin, instead of showing the ravages of alcohol, is youthfully clear; and his eyes seem to be full of innocent good humor and a bland assurance that the world loves him and believes in him. His self-centered life is almost but not quite hidden behind the door of the little carriage house and by his cultivated charm, for Hunt, implying the inner poverty of his life, grants him poise and wit rather than self-respect. At the same time, she delights her audience with the skill by which she forces her young reader to see the ironic gap between Bishop's view of himself as a handsome sophisticate and the comic and sad reality of what the world perceives him actually to be.

As the days slip by and the memories of her mother grow fainter, Julie's grief starts to wane. The old house that was frightening slowly becomes familiar and pleasant, and school offers its compensations, including the beginning of lifelong friendships. Haskell Bishop, who does not yet seem sad to Julie, is a huge joke, but Cordelia Bishop is a challenge.

Her aunt is Julie's teacher as well as her guardian. At the one-room schoolhouse, where she has taught since she was a young girl, she is, in fact, the only teacher, and she gives no sign in the schoolroom that she knows her niece

better than the others, having Julie call her "Miss Cordelia," as all the rest of the children do. She easily commands respect, for she can be stern in the classroom, since she demands obedience, but once a misdemeanor is settled she becomes a pleasant, forgiving friend, never stooping to hold a grudge. Cordelia Bishop is the prototype of an old-fashioned dedicated teacher, who is rightly convinced that she fills an important need in the community. She continues to teach year after year, even though her farm affords her an independent and comfortable livelihood, walking the mile and a half to school every morning unless the weather is bad, arriving an hour early on Monday mornings during the coldest winter months in order to get the fire started and have the room warm before the children come, teaching from nine to four o'clock every day, then dusting and sweeping up in the afternoons before she returns home. Twice a year in the fall and the spring, the children have half a holiday, at which time Julie, Chris, and Danny Trevort help her wash and polish the windows, scrub the floor, and wax the desks. She never fails to thank them for their help and give them a special treat in payment for their work.

In the first twenty pages, before the narrative gets very far along, the reader is set at ease with the implied author's values, shown clearly as they are within this characterizing place, and is persuaded to recognize them as the norm. In her world, Irene Hunt makes it patently clear,

through the controlling personality of Cordelia Bishop, who seems to be her surrogate, that the good life is a very disciplined, but nonetheless giving life. The excellencies of mind, body, and spirit that strengthen the human bond and thus promote happiness are valued here, where Julie, suffering the trauma of her bereavement, comes to live in the country. It is a clean, well-lighted place. It nourishes the waking powers of this child, as she seeks under the strict guidance of her aunt, to bring broadly varying agencies together in concord, and make a harmony within the deliberately set limits of this place.

During the school year most of the children carry their lunches in tin pails and eat out under the trees whenever the weather permits. Julie likes to eat outdoors because it lessens the impact of one matter which has been a sharp annoyance to her almost from her first day at school. By the end of the school year, she has found an answer, if not a solution, to the problem of having to eat lunch with Aggie Kilpin.

Aggie is mentally retarded. The daughter of a vicious father and of a mother who has been beaten down by the cruelties of life, she is seen in this story in all her deficiencies, not as comic, to be taunted, nor as weak, to be nurtured, but as poor, dirty, and physically offensive, to be despised. She is slightly older than Julie, but she can hardly recognize a dozen words in the primer that even the

youngest child in school can read with ease. She grimaces and mouches a half-intelligible garble when she reads; then she looks around the classroom, grinning, Julie thinks, as if her failures are evidence of some bit of cleverness. Julie always looks away, for she cannot stand to watch.

She feels sorry for Aggie in some ways. Primarily, though, she finds this retarded child repulsive. For galloping over to sit close to her, for eating loudly at lunch, for calling her "kid," and throwing her arm around her neck until Julie learns to dodge, she loathes her, but most of all for being dirty, for not changing her clothes, or washing her hair, nor apparently ever having had a bath. Distasteful as her mental problems are, Aggie's dirtiness, especially her bad smell, are the gravest and most repellent issues to Julie, who contrives ways to keep her distance.

But keeping distance is a difficult feat in this place, as the compassionate teacher, Aunt Cordelia, sees to it that Aggie is included in all the young children's games and invited to join the activities of all the older children, as well. Because Julie is under special pressure as the teacher's niece to be a decently behaving classmate, she knows that her avoidance of Aggie must be subtle if not deliberately devious. Thus the seating arrangement which she organizes during lunchtime is an achievement of sorts. Everybody is to sit in a big circle, she explains, and the Queen will sit in the middle. Aggie as the oldest gets to be the Queen, and

the rest of the children are peasants who must not look at the Queen while she eats, so they will sit with their backs to her. A rule of the game grants Queen Aggie the power to order her subjects beheaded if they dare to look at her while she is eating. Consequently the circle of peasants at lunch-time grows larger every day, while the unlovely monarch, despite her protests, sits in splendid isolation where she cannot offend her subjects. Of course, when Cordelia Bishop discovers this plot, as she must, Julie is supported by her friends as she explains their game with the same wide-eyed innocence that she pretended first to Aggie. She thinks she senses retribution as the teacher stands silently looking at them. But even as young as she is, she is able to detect a reaction from her aunt that she cannot understand, an ambivalence, Hunt says, of sadness, amusement, and a kind of baffled uncertainty--which one, she cannot tell--before she turns and walks away without comment.

As springtime approaches, Julie's twelfth birthday draws near. Cordelia agrees that she might have a party with unlimited guests, inviting everyone she wants to invite. The talk at school is centered for several weeks upon the great event to come. Word of the party gets to Aggie, of course, who still sits in the center of a wide circle of peasants during the lunch hour, and she tells Julie naively and quite happily that she will be coming to the party, too. Julie does not think she will. Sometime later, when Cordelia counts

the tiny pink envelopes containing invitations that Julie has addresssd for mailing and asks why no invitation bears Agnes's name, Julie knows what her aunt's question implies. She protests that Aggie will ruin her party; the girls who come from town will think Aggie is her friend, not just a classmate. Moreover, Aggie smells like no little girl ought to smell and she simply cannot be invited. But Cordelia is not swayed. This child has been in her classroom for ten years, she says, learning nothing, and seeming dirtier every year, but if you hurt her she will feel the pain: Julie will not be encouraged to be cruel to her. If "everybody" is invited to this party, Aggie must be invited too. Faced thus with the prospect of having to include the unwanted guest with the others, Julie, strong-willed as she is, drops her pink invitations into the wastebasket. To the anger and shocked disappointment of her friends, she cancels her twelfth birthday party.

In the face of the uproar that follows, Cordelia maintains her usual calm; her only nod to everybody's disappointment is a casual remark that, although the party is cancelled, there will be birthday cake for everyone. At noon Julie cuts two huge cakes that her aunt has baked and iced the night before, and gives a slice to every pupil. It is a poor substitute for a party, she thinks, and most of her friends are as disappointed as she is. But not Aggie, who clammers out of her seat, declaring that she will not be queen today,

kid; she is going to sit by Julie. Today is Julie's birthday, and she is going to be her best friend.

It is at this point that Irene Hunt employs her most explicit rhetoric. Taking no chance of her reader's feeling sorry for Julie because she has lost her birthday party, and thus misinterpreting her self-centeredness and cruel lack of compassion, the author goes beneath the action, and allows Julie to speak forcefully for herself, to insure her reader the direct and reliable view she wants him to have. She does something, Julie says, that she cannot later forget, for she turns on an innocent human being in fury and throws Aggie's love for her back into her simple, uncomprehending face. Aggie is not to dare to follow her, she shouts, and not to dare to come near her. Flashing a hostile look toward her aunt, she strides past her desk then, not caring what measures of discipline Cordelia Bishop might think up for her later. But the teacher says nothing to Julie. She holds out her hand to Aggie, inviting her to go along as she takes the smaller children into the woods to gather wild flowers for Julie's birthday. After this incident Aggie seems to be afraid of her. Though she will grin timidly and nod her head as if encouraging Julie to be kind, and though Julie sometimes in shame returns the smile, it is always a weak thing, and Aggie, never reassured, keeps her distance.

Having contrasted the two girls at school, forcing the reader thus to compare Aggie's deprivation with Julie's

privilege, and heightening the selfish introspection of her protagonist before the other's need and ugly helplessness, Hunt is almost ready to conclude the Aggie Kilpin incident in Julie's life. She must therefore intensify the rhetoric of mental retardation in the service of her story. To this end she can choose to make her narrative take any one of a number of different directions. Relying, for instance, on the historical tradition of buffoonery that portrays retarded persons as clowns to be ridiculed, she might allow Julie to slip deeper into her defensive rejection of Aggie and make fun of her, leading the other children at school to taunt her openly. On the other hand she might sentimentalize her by stressing her pitiful qualities. And in a new light of wish-fulfillment have her receive unexpected and positive attention from an anonymous source, so that she can be renewed if not cured by special education. Or she could take a third approach. Going back to the ground she has already laid in describing Aggie's father as "shiftless and vicious," she could have daughter, like father, turn explicitly violent through a growing resentment of Julie, who has wronged her. This method would support the kind of melodrama currently employed by some of the new realists; it would "tell it like it is." Whatever action she takes, the writer's course will be chosen deliberately; it will be directed to the conscious end of fulfilling the needs of the story she wants to tell and of forcing her reader to become a party to Julie's growth.

Up a Road Slowly is a truth-discovery novel, as its title and the first third of its unfolding action imply. Hunt will see to it that further contact between the retarded, neglected Aggie and the privileged, self-satisfied Julie leads her protagonist into an increasingly broader vision of herself. It is clear from the outset that Aggie is invented to reveal the character of Julie, and not the other way around, so for the sake of unity and coherence this is what Aggie will continue to do. Hunt will choose some technical means by which she can accomplish this aim to her satisfaction, and her every stroke of writing will lead her protagonist, and thus her reader, step by step, to this end. Julie will confront herself. The reader expects this of her, but confrontation alone is not enough. Aware as she is that she has a transaction with her reader, the writer will maintain command of the experience she chooses and translate the situation as she sees it in her mind's eye into terms that a young reader can appreciate and accept. Her rhetoric will suit her audience if it is to engage the attention she demands. It will hold the precarious balance between distance and subjectivity which she has established and sustain its tension well enough for her best reader to be persuaded to attend sympathetically to what she has to say. The direction Irene Hunt chooses to take in this story is not one of the possibilities suggested above, for Julie is not allowed to slip out of character enough to taunt Aggie openly. Neither

is Aggie helped by someone who reaches out in compassion on her behalf. But the narrative is moved on a predetermined route, according to the writer's choice, and must traverse its own special potholes of technical difficulty, as we shall see.

The summer is unusually hot and dry. In August, when the heat simmers unbearably and tempers are short, word comes that Aggie Kilpin has fallen ill of what appears to be a septicemia, growing from an untreated cut on her foot. In accord with the prevailing neighborly custom in this place, Cordelia drives to the Kilpin house to help. Her skills are not inconsiderable, for she had years of practical experience in nursing the old ones in her home, but they are almost forcibly rejected when she offers to bathe the child. She returns home defeated by the immovable forces of ignorance and stupidity. In the stifling heat Cordelia is pushed to the rare point of admitting her exasperation.

A few days after this incident, on a Sunday afternoon, Julie goes driving with Carlotta Berry in an elegant wicker and patent leather pony cart, drawn by a high-stepping white pony, her birthday gift. She is not unaware of the picture the two girls present that Sunday, Lottie with her blonde hair and blue organdy dress, and Julie with her shiny black hair and her embroidered white linen-eyelet. Uncle Haskell takes off his hat and makes a sweeping bow in acknowledgement of the charming vignette they make. Aunt Cordelia,

however, cuts an armful of the bright gladioli that have just begun to bloom, and suggests that it would be good to take a bouquet to Agnes. Cordelia is too much of an authority figure to both of them to be denied. Coupling this with a reluctant though somewhat guilty sense of decency, they accept responsibility for the errand.

Once out of hearing, however, Carlotta explodes. This is just like Miss Cordelia! First she spoils Julie's birthday party because of Aggie, and now she ruins their afternoon by making them stop at the dirty Kilpins'. But Lottie, for one, does not have to obey her she says, and she will not go in; Julie, who is her niece and does have to obey her, will have to deliver the flowers. So this is how it happens that Julie, dressed in her Sunday best and carrying long-stemmed flowers in her arms, climbs down from the pony cart with some trepidation and makes her way across the road alone into another world, the likes of which she has never known.

Place is this writer's characterizing metaphor. The carriage house represents Haskell Bishop's weaknesses; the little school, his sister's kindly, high-principled discipline and strength, and the Bishop place, the old verities by which the young protagonist may be shaped. Now what of the Kilpin house? The character of the Kilpins has been projected, incident by incident, with a rhetoric that the writer is now obligated to confirm. But is it "realism"

that she must confirm? Is a realistic treatment of Aggie and her surroundings her present obligation? Irene Hunt meets her obligations in her own wise way. In this episode, where Julie finds herself at the bedside of Aggie, uncertain of what to say or do, the writer knows how to draw back, and she sets about to make her reader do most of the work.

Aggie's mother opens the door, a sad and sullen replica of her unfortunate child. Dropping the flowers indifferently on a chair to wilt, she leads her unwelcome visitor to the sheetless bed where Aggie tosses feverishly. Hesitantly Julie speaks, but she receives no answer, for today Aggie is not the foolish queen that all the children mock. She is a different person, a part of the dignity of a great and universal drama, as heedless of Julie's presence as of the houseflies crawling on the edge of the medicine spoon on the table by her bed.

And yet for Aggie the reader is allowed to feel nothing. Hunt's emphasis is controlled and directed entirely to Julie because it is necessary for the reader to feel exactly what Julie feels. Awed and unsure of herself, Julie after a long time asks the shadowy figure at her side if Aggie will get well. The question had never crossed her mind before she stood beside this bed. Mrs. Kilpin's answer is a toneless, negative, bitter accusation that Julie's polite regrets represent the world's indifference to her child. No, she will not get well, and nobody cares, not her pa, nor Julie, nor

anybody. Nobody cares that Aggie Kilpin is going to die. How can Julie say she cares? All she can say is that she wishes she had never been mean to Aggie, but Mrs. Kilpin tells her to go, and points her to the door.

When she steps out of the house Julie is a different person. She has lost the power of reentry, for she cannot at once climb back into the pony cart and shrug off the world that she has seen. Lottie, of course, not understanding, is annoyed that the pleasure of her outing has been dulled, and refuses to turn back home as Julie asks her to, so they quarrel. In her anger and frustration Julie demands to walk, so Lottie tosses her blond curls beautifully in the sun and drives off in the pony cart. It would have been a long two miles of walking through the yellow dust if Danny Trevort had not come by and taken her home on the handlebars of his bicycle.

Mrs. Kilpin had been right. Word comes of Aggie's death the next morning, and Cordelia joins the women of the neighborhood to help get Aggie ready for a decent burial. Julie has never attended a funeral, but four of her classmates are pressed into attending Aggie's. They carry big armfuls of flowers and follow Aggie's casket to the altar of the little country church. When Julie looks at Aggie lying in her coffin that afternoon she is filled with wonder at what she sees. Aggie is clean, beautifully clean in the soft ivory-colored dress that her aunt and other neighbors

have bought for her. It is a dress that would have sent Aggie into ecstasies if she could have had it while she lived. Her hair is bright with copper lights in it, and it shines when the afternoon sunlight channeled in through the church windows touches her head and face. It seems such a terrible waste--ugliness all her life, and something clean and pretty discovered only after she is dead. It is difficult to see how Irene Hunt could avoid sentimentalizing this scene.

At twilight that evening, Julie wanders over to the carriage house, where Haskell sits enjoying the evening breeze. He teases her for her somber face, but she will not be cheered.

"Do you know what it means to feel guilty?" she asks. But of course, he does not. Nor should Julie feel guilty, he insists, for if this girl were alive again, as moronic and distasteful as she was a month ago, she would feel the same revulsion for her; she could not help it. Julie knows that he is right, of course, because she cannot deny the terrible fact that Aggie is nicer dead than she was alive. This is what bothers her. Her uncle continues. It is a blessing that society has escaped a multiplication of her kind. Death may be a great equalizer, but Julie will do well not to give in to the hypocrisy that it is also a great glorifier (pp. 65-66).

Julie knows her uncle's words express something of the truth, but as the two of them sit quietly, listening to the

sounds of night around them, she is not satisfied; she feels that he is somehow missing something. Surely there is more in this than a distasteful little girl's few dreadful years and fever-driven death, but she cannot put it into words. It crosses her mind that it is strange that she should seek out a cynic like her uncle from whom to find an answer. Suddenly sorry for him, she bends over him on impulse where he sits and kisses him on the forehead. It is the first time in her life she has ever done anything of the kind.

The next morning when she opens her eyes, she sees the folded paper that has been slipped underneath her door. It is a short, neatly typed note protesting that her Uncle Haskell is not the good gray uncle full of wisdom that she seeks, and he hates to step out of character even for a little niece who kisses him goodnight, but for a moment he will say the wisest thing he knows: Guilt feelings are no good. They will not help either Julie or the Kilpin child. But compassion, as Julie grows to womanhood, may well become a kind of immortality for the girl that she calls Aggie.

When she sees him after breakfast, she half expects her uncle to be changed. But he is not. He gives no sign of ever having written her a note. Haskell Bishop's cynicism is a successful device for the avoidance of mawkishness. It works, and thus helps to balance the funeral scene, which is as nearly insurmountable, given these conditions, as a technical problem can be.

It is a measure of Irene Hunt's virtue as a writer that she provides her protagonist and hence her reader with little comfort in terms of unproductive pity. In her depiction of a dark, remote, and unfamiliar place, a place of guilt and death, she realizes in Julie's response the impossible, insolvable problem of a retarded child. She is in this an innovator. As one of the first to choose mental retardation as a subject for fiction, she extends her reader's range of literary experience and compliments him by showing herself willing to share an important, grave matter, seriously viewed. She is a very serious-minded writer. And she gives her audience what it wants in the sense that she fulfils her reader's expectations in an orderly and satisfying way. She gives her reader what he wants in terms of action, but it is action organized as a kind of mirror in which every intelligent schoolchild can see himself. A reader's own instinctive aversion to Aggie and the dirty Kilpins and their ilk is set out in provocative detail, the most concrete of all being Aggie's bad smell. This is a universally accepted metaphor, the repulsive meaning of which cannot be misunderstood. Only suggested at first, only a hint; it is repeated and enlarged by constant reinforcement of meaning within the action--the birthday cake, the lunch-time episodes, the offensive hugs. Aggie's bad smell envelops everything she stands for and is more powerfully suggestive than the term as a descriptive tag might literally imply. It produces an

undercurrent of identification that intensifies in the reader's own personal sense of repulsion a sense of how pernicious is this child's neglect. It is not so much her "retardedness," Julie says, as her smell that is offensive, and cause enough for all the children's scorn.

So Aggie Kilpin is made to represent a great and terrible barenness of good will. She is deprived of the material necessities of life, abused, repulsed. She is set apart through no fault of her own, not only from the wonders and pleasures of human interchange, but from illumination--from the light and tenderness and insight through which an intelligent and intelligible world could and should somehow balance out her desperate need. Hunt is by definition a special pleader. She forces her protagonist and hence her reader to know, to believe, to see. She obviously cares that her story somehow serve to expand rather than contract his sensibilities. She wants her reader to recognize, as William James once said, "how soaked and shot-through life is with values and meanings that we fail to realize because of our external and insensible point of view."¹⁷ To this end she generates the essentially moral process of Julie's growth. If her story is a bit slow, as young readers sometimes think it is,¹⁸ perhaps, as her title says, growth is a

¹⁷ William James, "What Makes Life Significant," in Persuasive Prose: A Reader, ed. Richard E. Hughes and P. Albert Duhamel (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 575.

¹⁸ A sixth grader's impression of this and other stories

slow process. Hunt is earnest, of that there is little doubt, and she employs one highly effective means to connect her artistic aims and her reader's betterment: she makes an event. The Aggie Kilpin episode in Julie's life is an experience that forces her reader to explore his own feelings. It is an episode in the flux of simple events by which she compels her reader to interpret values, to take sides. It is a common experience that she builds with him, made powerful by her illuminating and harmonizing function as the wise, strict, and graciously dignified teller in the tale. In the exercise of what Friedman calls her "stream of conscience,"¹⁹ she compels some sense of community and leads her reader indirectly to a perception of the truth, of mental retardation and the needs of the retarded, as she sees it. Like Julie her reader does not "like" Aggie Kilpin. But through Julie she strengthens the bond that she has made, and brings about a mutual recognition, protagonist, reader, and writer together, in a bond they share--though only sensed, perhaps--that human beings need to learn to love each other.

In any "truth-discovery" novel, Booth says, and particularly those stories that try to lead young readers to the cold truths of life, such as this one does, "the problem is

for children comes from interviews with Mary Weiss, age 12, Irving Park School, Greensboro, N. C., 1977-78.

¹⁹ Alan Friedman, "The Stream of Conscience," in Perspectives on Fiction, ed. James L. Calderwood and Harold E. Toliver (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 374-384.

to make the discovery a convincing outcome of the experience."²⁰ To this end Irene Hunt clearly defines the values on which her reader's judgment should depend, and she sets about to reinforce her norms in every use of rhetoric at her command. Understanding that no reader comes with his beliefs already made, she takes nothing for granted but reinforces and emphasizes the values that she wants, directly intervening as an omniscient narrator whenever it suits her purpose. When the attitude toward which she wants Julie to grow is such that she thinks her protagonist and the reader need some reinforcement, she preaches a little, generally through the appropriate character of Cordelia Bishop, the teacher, but sometimes quite effectively through the cynical observations of Haskell, the unwise uncle. There is little dis-harmony between her idea and her dramatized object, for she knows how to employ direct commentary to heighten events rather than to substitute for them. She seems to know that having Julie wrestle explicitly with her values in regard to Aggie Kilpin makes this episode assume a very grave importance. The episode, in fact, results in a breadth of experience unlike that provided by any children's book before this time.

Hunt is as clear about her moral position as a writer can be, and she assumes that she has a moral obligation to write well. "But when we say that the morality in art rests in 'writing well,'" says Booth, "we silently import into

²⁰ Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 182.

our claim the concept of the realization of a worthwhile purpose."²¹ To this end Aggie Kilpin becomes an effective means of rhetorical persuasion to make her reader see what he perhaps has never seen before.

The Summer of the Swans

Betsy Byars won the John Newbery Medal in 1971 for The Summer of the Swans, the story of Sara, an unhappy and self-centered adolescent, who matures significantly when the entire community, including her enemy, Joe Melby, join together to search for her retarded younger brother, who is mute, and who is lost in an area of open strip mines and abandoned mine shafts. From the first page of her book the author sets about to put a spell on her readers, to hold their doubts in abeyance while she entices them into the state which Coleridge calls illusion. She begins her story simply, presupposing a norm and renewing and at the same time reinforcing her boundaries for that norm. Fourteen-year-old Sara Godfrey is frankly miserable. Watching her sister get ready to go out, she complains about the way things are for her in this the summer of her discontent. Her sister, Wanda, protests that she had rather not hear Sara start again listing the millions of things that are wrong with her. But she does listen nevertheless, and sympathetically until she leaves. Sara, having no further audience, teases the dog for a while,

²¹Ibid., p. 388.

goes out on the porch eventually, and sits beside her brother Charlie, continuing her lament. Charlie doesn't answer her. For a moment she sits without speaking, and then she sums it all up. "I'll tell you the truth, Charlie, this has been the worst summer of my life" (p. 19).

In her first few pages, Betsy Byars performs at least one very important function. She selects her readers. She knows that her opening scene must be interesting and convincing to her protracted reader if she is to hold her audience. So she endeavors to give it an air of truth by choosing a familiar context, one which most young people, especially girls, can identify and accept. She begins to make plausible the region of her choice, setting her story in the coal fields of West Virginia and building a fictional world through the use of physical details common to ordinary life. Details of current teen-age speech and casual dress are commonplace, as are the names of preferred television programs, and she mentions the food, especially the snacks they eat. All these, handled with restraint and naturalness, serve to place Sara and her surroundings in a familiar climate, which she invites her readers to share by their recognition of its rightness, and to accept for themselves as her physical world. This is what her readers understand her to do.

She sees the value of conversation as a working method and uses it freely, almost exclusively at first, having the girls express their feelings in easy, idiomatic language

that not only moves the narrative along, but also includes the readers in her game of world-building, involving them in the action as it unfolds, and showing not merely telling them about the world to which they must assent. Like Alice in Wonderland, who questions the good of books with little conversation in them, Betsy Byars accepts the use of dialogue as a staple of the writer's craft, and therefore presents much of her narrative in the form of direct discourse. Her pace is leisurely, her syntax clear and linear, and her episodes generally occur in sequence, so it is only after she introduces Sara as the main character, uncertain and unhappy in her self-centered adolescence, and Wanda as a loving and helpful older sister, that she allows the reader at the end of the first chapter to see Charlie.

He is now ten years old, but Charlie Godfrey has not spoken since he was three, when a fever wracked his body with two attacks, one following immediately after the other, and left him barely alive, brain damaged and mute. Since then he has been an intense and unifying reality in the lives of these three people, conscientiously and heartily cared for by Aunt Willie, who has lived with the children for six years now, ever since their mother died; tenderly and realistically cherished by Wanda, who buys him gifts and who is even now seeking a space for him in a summer camp for retarded boys; and watched over by Sara too, whose love is defensive and protective, a flame of passion against which

every human relationship in her life casts its shadow. In her lexicon Charlie must be spoken to, helped with, looked after, sat beside, walked with, and succored by all those who are to be called friend. Anyone who teases or mistreats him, on the other hand, is the enemy, a "fink" against whom she feels justified in taking swift revenge. In fact, she turned the hose on Gretchen Wyant and drenched the green silk dress her brother had sent from Taiwan, because in thinking no one was around to hear, and unaware that Sara was hooking up the garden hose back of the shrubbery, the girl had called to Charlie across the fence, maliciously, mockingly, "How's the REEEETARD today?" The best sight in her whole life, she said later, was nice little Gretchen Wyant standing there in her wet Taiwan silk dress with her mouth hanging open (p. 80).

Namecalling to Sara's mind is a petty evil neither to be tolerated nor excused, and to be avenged quickly by whatever homely means are at hand, but stealing is something else again. And Joe Melby, the bitterest enemy of all, is a thief. It was Joe, with a group of other boys, when Sara's attention was diverted, who slipped off the watch that Wanda had bought for Charlie and "lost" it. Not until several days later did he return it, pretending to have found it in the school bus. Convinced that he returned it out of cowardice, Sara's desire for revenge on Joe Melby is balanced only by the intensity of her general unhappiness and discontent.

Sara has said aloud the word retarded only recently, her cheeks burning when she said it, for she was admitting that Charlie is retarded for the first time in her life. Even then she said it privately and with embarrassment to Wanda. Friends should accept him, she believes, but the family should not talk about him to strangers. "He's our problem," she says. But Wanda answers her, "He's everybody's--" (pp. 22-23). In this Betsy Byars states both a theme and a foreshadowing.

The implied author of Summer of the Swans assents to Wanda's point of view that mental retardation is or should be a generally accepted human concern. And she could reasonably assume that her readers' sane judgment from the beginning would agree with those who succor the weak and speak kindly and not tauntingly to the handicapped. In fact, she suggests throughout that her audience is intelligent and humane, and as such, will assent to her implicit values in this case. One might then question her judgment in emphasizing so strongly her moral slant toward this exceptional child. Is she not forcing her fiction to dwell on the obvious? Evidently the author believes that this issue is not obvious at all, for she misses no chance to press for full acceptance of her ethical attitudes toward mental retardation. The reader may come to this story with his beliefs ready made and of like fabric to her own, and he probably does, but she takes no chances. She clarifies and compels her position

just the same. It is normal for good people in her created world to be kind to a retarded child, and throughout the story she reinforces and cumulatively reiterates that norm.

Yet she does not preach. She sees to it that the reader perceives her judgment in the book's action, for he must, as these values arise generally and quite naturally out of the form and drama of the narrative she has conceived. Nor does she condescend to the reader because he is a child, telling him overtly what he ought to think. In a sense Sara is the author's "reliable narrator"²² when she says, "Charlie is our responsibility," but Wanda is even more so, and speaks for the implied author in a larger sense when she says, "He's everybody's." As the story unfolds, Betsy Byars sees to it that Charlie becomes more than ever Sara's responsibility, and before it ends he is everybody else's concern, as well.

At Aunt Willie's insistence, Sara reluctantly takes Charlie to see the swans, a spectacle that suddenly appeared three days ago on the nearby lake. Nobody knows where they came from or why they chose this particular lake for their favor, but they are there, beautiful and serene, as though they will stay forever. Sara holds Charlie's hand as they walk along slowly, and talks to him as to herself, pouring out her loneliness to him and her sense of alienation. The

²²Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, pp. 106-209.

author does not emphasize the irony of this scene. Although there is no rhetorical suggestion here that the reader's perception of Charlie's greater alienation is in any way fundamental to his experiencing the story's intent, yet within the layers of meaning that match and contrast, she comments about human alienation implicitly, enriching her story with irony on more than one level, as the children leave the sidewalk and cut across the field that leads them to the lake.

Sara can tell the exact moment when Charlie sees the swans. He stops; his hand tightens; he "really holds on," for they are "painfully beautiful" in their white, elegant contrast to the dark lake; their ease of movement makes Sara catch her breath (p. 41). Charlie's reaction to this scene is stated three times. Presumably the writer signals here through her emphasis that the swans have meaning beyond the ornamental in this story, and Sara's reaction to them as an ugly duckling underscores this point. Together the children scatter the bread Aunt Willie has given them, Sara showing Charlie how to break off each piece, how to feed the swans. He sits on the grass awkwardly with his legs angled out in front of him, concentrating. When the bread is gone he wants more, but she tells him they must go home. He refuses. He shakes his head back and forth slowly without looking at her. She argues with him, but he continues to shake his head and clutches a handful of grass on either side of him stubbornly, as if to hold on. So Sara irritably and ungraciously gives

in. She points to his watch, telling him they can stay until the "long hand gets to there," and Charlie nods, but when the time is up, his negative head shaking begins again, mechanically, emphatically. She looks away from him. Unexpected tears blur her vision of the swans, turning their outlines into white circles. What touches Sara--even her self-pity--is worth talking about, the author seems to feel, so she is allowed to become her own narrator, revealing her thoughts in an interior monologue. The reader, who is thus inside so to speak, privy to her emotions, is urged by this narrowing of distance to sympathize with Sara's self-centered views. She will be glad when this summer is over. Until now she has

. . . loved her sister without envy, her aunt without finding her coarse, her brother without pity. Now all that has changed. She is filled with a discontent, an anger about herself, her life, her family that make her think she will never be content again.
(p. 46)

In her frustration she almost drags Charlie home after it has become too dark to see the swans.

The inside view of Sara that Betsy Byars imposes on her readers will make it difficult in a sense to look without prejudice at the self-conscious weaknesses of this adolescent girl who balances so precariously between being a child and becoming a woman. Yet the petty, thoughtless, discourteous, and irritable incidents that mark her behavior toward her family and her peers are clearly defined in her action. While she loves Charlie beyond any doubt, she is nevertheless annoyed by the responsibility that his care imposes on her. Though

she protects him vigorously from the outside world, inside her own family circle she sometimes only tolerates him. Thus Betsy Byars shows Sara to the reader as a mixture of complaints and conflicts as she must if she is to allow room for Sara to grow, and the reader must be aware of these faults if he is to enjoy her growth at the end. So Betsy Byars allows Sara to suffer over her nose, her hair, her ugly orange tennis shoes, and to reproach herself for being what she is. But at the same time she compels the reader from his intimate, inside view to see and understand.

During the night while everyone else in the house is sleeping, the restless, wakeful Charlie wanders out into the dark, trying to make his way toward the lake and the swans, and becomes lost. His movements alert a watch dog, whose barking frightens him. He runs wildly, clumsily, for a long way, stumbling over roots and bumping into fences and bushes with briars, until finally a long time later he falls to the ground in a ravine in the forest, and silently cries himself to sleep. It is not until the next morning, after Wanda has gone to work, slipping out quietly, as is her custom, so as not to wake the family, that they discover him to be gone. Sara rushes to the lake, hoping to find him watching the swans, but returns frightened to Aunt Willie, confirming their fears that Charlie is lost.

For a time at this point Aunt Willie becomes the author's disguised narrator. It is her purpose to summarize

the facts the audience needs to know. In her fear for Charlie's safety, she remembers the terrible days when two separate mine disasters took her brothers' lives. That time with all its horror is, to her remembrance, too close to the mood of this day, and she blames herself bitterly for not watching over Charlie more lovingly and more closely. She restates the circumstances that brought her into this family, recalling her promise to Charlie's mother before she died to look after the boy. She calls the police and reports his disappearance. Then she decides to telephone the children's father, who has not been mentioned before. "He won't come," says Sara. "Yes he will," her aunt answers her. "You don't know your father." And Sara in her mind's eye sees a gray, sober man who works in Ohio, coming home to West Virginia on occasional week-ends, only to sit in the living room watching sports events on TV, never starting a conversation on his own. "That's the truth," she answers (p. 81).

And once again the ironic author underscores her important theme of alienation and raises some pertinent questions. Sara remembers a picture of her father taken when they were very young, of two little girls and a laughing man with black curly hair and a broken tooth. Once they were happy, the author seems to say. Once there was laughter and a time without illness or fear. But Betsy Byars will not allow her reader a perfect world, not even in retrospect. Is this then why she chooses to paint Sam Godfrey in his youthful happiness

with a strange, small defect, a broken tooth? The reader can be sure the detail is included consciously not accidentally, for if the author had not specifically wanted it to be there, she would have left it out. By including it, does she say that perfection does not exist in this world, not even in the illusions we preserve with our old photographs? Does she mean to show the children's father in his youth as slightly though somehow suggestively flawed? Could there be some connection between an early physical flaw that is visible, and a later character flaw that is hidden, or visible only in connection with his prolonged absences from home? "You wait until you lose your father, then you'll appreciate him," says Aunt Willie. Sara knows she is thinking of her own father's death, but she nevertheless answers, "I've already lost him" (p. 86).

Does Sara speak here for the author, is she a reliable narrator with vision unimpaired? Or does she again speak only for herself? Aunt Willie, whose loving heart supports Sam Godfrey as she supports the other Godfreys, shows that Sara again is thinking mainly of herself, as she adds this:

Your father's had to raise two families all by himself. When Poppa died, Sammy had to go to work and support us all before he was even out of high school, and now he's got this family to support. . . ." (p. 86)

So Willie, suggesting that Sam Godfrey is deprived, not flawed, is still the author's disguised narrator, and Sara is still presenting only her limited inside view.

Sara tells Aunt Willie after this brief exchange, that she must go and search for Charlie herself. The community forces are organizing to scour the dark hills and the abandoned mine shafts for him, but she is already out before they are, with her friend Mary, walking, looking, calling for Charlie. Joe Melby sees them from the baseball field and comes to join them, saying he wants to help, but Sara insults him and makes bitter accusations, which he denies convincingly, without rancor. Moreover he stays with the search. It is Joe who discovers Charlie's bedroom shoe near the wire fence. This happens at just about the same time that Sara learns, indirectly through Mary's mother, that she has misjudged Joe all along. He had had nothing to do with the disappearance of Charlie's watch and everything to do with its return. So Sara faces up to her mistake and apologizes to him in humiliation and embarrassment. Joe's forgiveness is straightforward, easy, unselfconscious. United in friendship and mutual purpose now, they climb together to an abandoned strip mine on the top of a hill, where they can scan the whole valley for Charlie, because nobody knows this terrain any better than Joe.

Fortunately for her readers, Betsy Byars is committed to the happy ending. As it should be, Sara and Joe find Charlie, briar scratched and badly frightened, but otherwise well. Sara comforts him tenderly in her arms, reassuring him, making him feel once again secure. Joe spreads the

word that Charlie is safe. Whereupon the searchers converge in the late afternoon sunshine of the open field (p. 131), touching Charlie, congratulating the family, the police, and each other, and repeating the story of his discovery. It is a scene in which the author confirms the community of man and his humane capacity to be moved by a mutual and reciprocating need. It is a verification of that which was foreshadowed, for Charlie has become everybody's responsibility.

Suddenly distracted by a sound like rushing wind, everyone looks up to see overhead the swans flying away from the lake back to their own, unknown home. Heavy and awkward in flight, their necks outstretched, their wings beating the air, they bear no resemblance to the graceful swans on the water. At that moment someone says, "Charlie, here comes your aunt. Here's Aunt Willie." And Charlie starts running toward her. "There was a joyous yell that was so shrill that Sara thought it had come from the swans, but then she knew it had come from Charlie, for the swans were mute" (p. 132).

Obviously the author draws a distinction in her narrative between the way the world is perceived before the swans arrive and the way it is perceived after they leave. It was the "worst summer of her life" for Sara before, but afterwards it is as though "she had just taken an enormous step up out of the shadows" (p. 140). This device of the swans and the author's manipulation of it suggest further relationships in the story, many of them contraries that are

echoed and paralleled internally, in images of beauty and pain, grace and awkwardness, light and dark, life and death, sound and silence, and others throughout the book, affirming some contradistinctions and intimating others. Why did Betsy Byars entitle her book The Summer of the Swans? On the most elementary level, of course, the dramatic events of the story take place during a summer which was unique, the summer when the swans came. As for other meanings in the title, the author relies on the ugly duckling theme, which every young reader knows, and allows it to suggest layers of meaning that coalesce into an intriguing conundrum. Obviously Sara is the ugly duckling who grows into a swan at the end. But there is Charlie, and the suggestion that he, too, may fit this interpretative pattern as a divergent element, mute like the swans and mysteriously remote.

In this book the author's attention to setting is slight but significant. She pays virtually no attention at all to interior or exterior description of the Godfrey house, except to mention the fact that, on his way outdoors the night he was lost, Charlie walks down the "linoleum" floor of the front hall. The author might have chosen to give an extensive description of the house in which the Godfreys live. This would serve as one way to delineate character, since his house is generally supposed to represent an extension of the person. But the author chooses other ways, the more active ways that children prefer to portray character, and

she includes this small rhetorical detail as one way to undergird her narrative intention. The hall is covered in linoleum, not carpet or tile. If this detail hints at the family's economic situation, then perhaps it substantiates what the reader has already surmised of Sam Godfrey's search in Ohio for a better, safer, and more substantial way than the West Virginia coal fields can provide to support his family.

Any discussion of setting in this story must include the mines. Their threat of tragic cave-ins and accompanying disasters underground and the open wounds of the strip mines lacerating the ground above broods over the author's world. She permits herself little narrative description, knowing this to be a passive technique of telling with less appeal to children than more active techniques of showing. In one or two brief references, however, she clearly defines the natural environment as she sees it, in terms of devouring menace.

The valley was a tiny finger of civilization set in a sweeping expanse of black forest. The black treetops seemed to crowd against the yards, the houses, the roads, giving the impression that at any moment the trees would close over the houses like waves and leave nothing but an unbroken line of black-green leaves waving in the sunlight. (p. 117)

In her view man is fragile and vulnerable, standing under the necessity of a hostile deterministic nature that brings death and disease and mental retardation. It is only by banding together in love and compassion that humankind can

hope to garner a little "late afternoon sunlight in the open field" (p. 140). As she says, this happens when one man's problem becomes the loving concern of everybody.

It is only when Sara is back home, finding herself unexpectedly on the phone with her father, long-distance, that she recognizes the depth of his concern for Charlie. Since her aunt is still outside talking with the neighbors who are cutting a watermelon for Charlie in celebration of his return, it is up to her to tell him the events. At the same time she finds her father. Betsy Byars avoids any shade of sentimentality and manages in plain and understated dialogue to emphasize again her theme of separation and loneliness. But this time Sara forgets herself in discovering her father, and realizes that "it was as though she had just taken an enormous step out of the shadows" (p. 140).

The Summer of the Swans is a successful book. With all her readers the author shares the pleasure of a well constructed and interesting plot. Sara's mentally retarded brother, who was lost, is found. In finding him with the help of one who was her enemy but is now her friend she has also found herself. She has thus gained in compassion for others, including even her father, and most importantly, she has grown in self-knowledge, which is wisdom. As she says to Wanda, "A person can be wrong, you know." She has therefore moved a step away from childish introspection and preoccupation with self. She has taken a step forward toward maturity.

The ABC "After School Special" series adapted this story for television and presented it under the title of Sara's Summer of the Swans in December, 1975.²³ Many people have raised objections to televised productions of children's books, because they fare so poorly in the hands of commercial producers that they may, in fact, turn children away from the book, itself.²⁴ Given the strict time limitation of a television production, it is unlikely, or more probably impossible to make a film that is faithful to its source. The bowdlerization of this book, however, has little to do with the element of timing, because Bob Rogers, who is listed as the screen writer, doctors up a new story of his own. He gives no indication that Charlie is retarded, but makes him "shy" instead. Moreover, Charlie is five years old on TV instead of ten, and he is perfectly happy in the woods, though lost, until he sees a snake, at which time he runs away, falls, and knocks himself unconscious. Specifically, John Donovan, Executive Director of the Children's Book Council, calls the televised version of Robert Lawson's Rabbit Hill "sappy," and that of E. B. White's Stuart Little "condescending." If he happened to see the ABC "After School Special" adaptation of Betsy Byars' The Summer of the Swans, he has added another title to his list.

²³ Sara's Summer of the Swans (New York: ABC-TV, December 16, 1975), the "After School Special" arranged for TV by Bob Rogers.

²⁴ Arbuthnot and Sutherland, Children and Books, p. 760.

But in the book itself Betsy Byars has realized some specific aesthetic purposes. She has created a believable world with believable characters, who share their lives realistically with a mentally retarded child. This child is instrumental to the protagonist's growth, and is an integral part of the narrative whole. Children who read The Summer of the Swans are convinced that the author understands retarded children, and they wonder if she may even have had experiences with them.²⁵ Her language is pleasing and clear, simple but not simplistic, and is limited, as it should be, by what C. S. Lewis calls "certain fruitful necessities" of rhetorical complexity and length.²⁶ She does not fall victim to the ugliness of didactic preaching or condescension or cheap, sensational appeals. Central to her concern is her reader, for she has chosen him consciously, and has shaped her work for his collaboration. She offers him the probability of personal rewards in pleasure and entertainment, and she gives him more than he expects in the way of ideas and wholesome attitudes. In fact, she provides more than enough to fill one reading, for should he reread her book, it is likely that he will find new levels of meaning there.

If in a phrase she offers an easy, unworthy solution by suggesting that Charlie, screaming in his trauma, may have

²⁵A sixth-grader's interpretation of this and other stories for children comes from interviews with Mary Weiss, 12, Irving Park School, Greensboro, N. C., 1977-78.

²⁶Lewis, Of Other Worlds, p. 28.

recovered his voice and be no longer mute, this is regrettable in a book that is otherwise so fine. It is too neat. An overdriving clumsiness that allows no imaginative conjecturing, leaves no strand unknotted at the end, everything linked together whether or not it fits, is one of the problems with children's fiction. Truth, they say, is stranger than fiction. When a reader comes upon this kind of heavy manipulation, he knows instantly that the fiction is not credible. An over-explicitness reveals some want.

Not to press the point, what Betsy Byars does do in this book is important. She centers her pattern of expectation in the reader rather than the book. She involves him in an active collaboration with her, urging him to share in her experiences and to make some (if not all) of the imaginative decisions on his own. After all, it is a successful exercise of literary and rhetorical skill to find with readers a common and universally human ground.

Julie of the Wolves

Jean Craighead George, whose Julie of the Wolves won the Newbery Medal in 1973, says that a children's book was the farthest thing from her mind when she went to Barrow, Alaska.²⁷ She went to the Arctic Research Laboratory on an assignment by a national magazine to observe scientists who were studying the language of wolves. She had learned from early

²⁷ Jean Craighead George, "Newbery Award Acceptance," Horn Book Magazine, August 1973, pp. 337-347.

ecological studies that wolves keep the number of big-game animals in balance when they harvest the sick and infirm; and that they are advanced enough to have a ritual behavior within the pack for population control and the care of their cubs by "sitters." But a newer study, she learned, had observed their facial expressions and movements--the positions of their tails, ears, and heads--and had defined this behavior as language. Soon after the publication of the later study, scientists had begun to speak freely about animals and their language. Now they know that when a wolf bites another gently on the top of his nose, he is declaring his leadership. When a wolf rolls over on his back, showing his belly, he is announcing his surrender.²⁸ They know that the alpha wolf is a fearless leader who initiates activities, makes decisions, and communicates his decisions to the rest of the pack. Jean George in Alaska began to study the language herself, so she could "talk" to the wolves. In time she learned to grunt and whine so as to gain friendly attention; she learned to communicate by voice, and gesture, and pose.²⁹ But the most significant communication she saw took place between a scientist and a wild male alpha wolf, when the man opened the door to the wolf's pen one morning and stepped inside. Gently he bit the wolf on the top of his nose; the wolf then sat down before his "leader" and the

²⁸Ibid., p. 399. ²⁹Ibid., p. 341.

two talked in soft whimpers. That, says Jean George, was the genesis of Julie for her.³⁰

That is how she came to think of Julie, who was born Miyax, daughter of Kapugen, adopted child of Martha, citizen of the United States, pupil at the Bureau of Indian Affairs School in Barrow, Alaska, and thirteen-year-old wife of Daniel, who is "dull." It is Daniel, the boy-husband by way of an arranged marriage, who drives her to the tundra.

Jean George does not choose to discuss mental retardation in this story, for although she makes Daniel's disability very clear, she never labels him as retarded. This is not to say that he is without meaning. A character is its creator's semaphore. Every novelist, says Joseph Conrad, must begin by creating for himself a world in which he can honestly believe.³¹ This world is fated to remain individual and a little mysterious, for it "cannot be made otherwise than in his own image."³² The meaning of a novel lies in the writer's image, and it cannot be perceived apart from what he is. Whatever "moral" a story or a character has, or whatever truth, C. S. Lewis says, grows out of the roots a writer has succeeded in striking throughout his lifetime.³³

³⁰ Ibid., p. 342.

³¹ Joseph Conrad, "Books," in The Theory of the Novel, ed. Philip Stevick (New York: Free Press, 1967), p. 29.

³² Ibid.

³³ Lewis, Of Other Worlds, p. 33.

So what Jean George has to say about mental retardation, or at least what she says about its embodiment in the personality of Daniel, who is retarded, is clearly discernible, and is a part of the story's moral and artistic whole, whether as a writer she says it consciously or not. The meaning of Daniel, hence of mental retardation, is in the story, though it is not necessarily explicit.

The story begins when Miyax, lying on her stomach on a little frost heave, looks across the vast lawn of grass and moss toward a wolf pack she has come upon two sleeps ago. Her hands tremble, for she is frightened, not so much of the wolves, who are shy and many harpoon-shots away, but because she is lost. She remembers that her father, Kapugen, who was a great Eskimo hunter, had told her of camping near a wolf den once while he was on a hunt. When a month passed and he had seen no game, he had told the wolf leader that he needed food; the wolf had then led him far away to a freshly killed caribou. The trouble was that Kapugen had never explained how he was able to tell the wolf his needs, for soon after he told her this story, he had paddled his kayak into the sea to hunt for seals and had not come back. If Miyax is to communicate with the wolves, she must learn how on her own. She must find a way to ask their help or she will starve, for she is lost and she is hungry, and she is not at all sure that the wolves will help her. On this great arctic tundra where no tree grows, where no roads run, where nothing

exists to tell her where she is, she is in real danger of starving. She has been circling around and around on an ocean of grass, and she has not eaten for many sleeps. Her hands tremble, and she presses them together to make them stop. Kapugen had taught her when she was young that fear can so inhibit a person that he cannot think or act. "You must change your ways when fear seizes," he had told her, "because it usually means that you are doing something wrong" (p. 42).

Beginning her action on a level of pure and simple narrative by fixing on an emotion that is basic to human nature, Jean George uses an appeal to fear and a human interest in fear as her reader's common ground. Fear is a motivating force in Julie of the Wolves; it touches all the characters as it touches the lives of people in all the places of the earth, and raises the question, fundamental to constructive action on any level, of how human beings deal with fear. What to do within its crippling grip is one of this book's several persistent themes.

To this end the writer has found inspiration in the classics. Survival, in one form or another, has always been an immediate problem of mankind. A Robinson Crusoe story has an irresistible appeal, for its theme touches the deepest human instincts and fears. Fear is of the essence here, and Daniel is the embodiment of its constricting power. Fear is one of the several threads that lead to meaning, as George

weaves this strand into Julie of the Wolves. Here is a story of fear overcome and of practical survival attained through intelligence and the power of love. Though she owes something to Kipling's Jungle Books, the story of Mowgli, the human child who is adopted by the wolves and nurtured even as Romulus and Remus were, her story is her own.³⁴ Each concrete, credible and absorbing detail of Julie's survival is told with the authority of one who understands the ways of nature and who knows how to make a story appealing by fresh and vigorous invention. The story parallels that of another Newbery Award-winner, the survival story of Scott O'Dell's legendary Indian girl, Karana, who lives in a desolation of loneliness on the Island of the Blue Dolphins.³⁵ With the desperation that courage gives to fear, the protagonists in both stories initiate deliberate relationships with wild, flesh-eating animals. Karana befriends her arch-enemy, Rontu, the wounded leader of a pack of wild dogs that had killed her small brother, and Julie, in the posture of a cub, ingratiates herself with Amaroq, a great alpha wolf, who accepts her into the pack, and thus becomes her adopted father. In an appeal to a presumed ignorance of wolves, and of Julie's observations and practical experiments in forcing them to

³⁴ Rudyard Kipling, The Jungle Books (New York: Doubleday, 1894).

³⁵ Scott O'Dell, Island of the Blue Dolphins (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960).

feed her, George fastens on the reader's imagination a picture of intelligence and ingenuity, and demonstrates the vitality of a protagonist--as the new realists like it--who, with Karana, is neither white, nor middle class, nor male.

The search for a father is implicit in Julie's actions from the time when her father, the great Eskimo hunter, went out into the sea to hunt for seals and did not come back, and when Naka, who should now be her father's surrogate, fails her, too. But Amaroq, like her father, is a wealthy leader, as Julie understands the meaning of wealth from her childhood on Nunivak Island. The Eskimo hunters of old believed the riches of life were intelligence, fearlessness, and love. They admired these riches and desired them as gussacks (foreigners) admire money and goods. These are the riches of Amaroq, the leader of the wolves. Therefore, she is not afraid of the wolves, for they are affectionate to each other, they communicate in a language of their own, and as she masters that language by imitating the pups, they become her gentle brothers. She praises the spirit of the great wolf, Amaroq, her father, in a feast of song and dance upon the tundra in the old way, singing in Upik,

Amaroq, wolf, my friend,
You are my adopted father.
My feet shall run because of you.
My heart shall beat because of you.
And I shall love because of you. (p. 60)

She is a wolf now, she thinks, and wolves are a race who love leaders. They are gentle brothers.

Against the gentle brotherhood of wolves, Jean George ironically balances man's inhumanity to man. She relies on the complex of conventional meanings associated with the word "wolf" that any dictionary gives, meanings that children know, at least in part and connotatively: the adjectives "cruel" and "rapacious"; the infinitive "to wolf," or to devour ravenously; the slang expression "wolf" for an aggressive womanizer; the phrase "to cry wolf," from Aesop's fables, meaning a false alarm; and the other phrase, "to keep the wolf from the door," associating the wolf not with nurture, as Julie does, but with starvation. Weaving these and other constellations of meaning together ironically, suggestively, and almost never explicitly into a simple and even naive story-form, Jean George expresses some sophisticated reflections on the nature of man and his society. The goodness of primitive man, whose life has direction and purpose in its unity with the sea, the sky and the earth, and his respect for all the creatures of the earth, she defines in the Eskimo, who recognizes the riches of life as intelligence, fearlessness, and love, which he finds in understanding the earth and returning to it for his sustenance. The goods of modern man, whose life has direction and purpose apparently in its scientific and technological conquests, she defines in the gussak, the white man, who admires money and goods, which he gains by using the riches of the earth to do him ease. She enables children in their reading thus

to become much more mature than they realize, for the book is an ironic commentary, in a sense, which no child would read in any other form than in the story of a world which Jean George invites her reader thus to enter by way of entertainment.

Miyax remembers the day her mother died. The wind screamed wild high notes and hurled ice-filled waves against the beach. Kapugen, grieving, left his possessions with Aunt Martha, left his important job as manager of a reindeer herd, and taking Miyax, who was scarcely four, on his shoulders, walked all the way to the seal camp.

The days at the seal camp are infinitely good, and Jean George builds Miyax's memories of utopia into a poetry of color. Kapugen's little house of driftwood close to the sea is rose-gray on the outside; inside it is golden brown. Walrus tusks gleam; drums, harpoons, and man's knives decorate the walls, and the sealskin kyak beside the door glows as if the moon is stretched across it. Dark gold and soft brown are the old men who sit around Kapugen's camp stove and talk by day and night (p. 78).

The ocean is green and white, rimmed with fur, for Miyax sees it through Kapugen's hood as she rides to sea with him on his back inside the parka. She sees the soft eyes of the seals and feels the tightness of his back as he raises his arms and fires his gun; she sees the ice turn red. The celebration of the Bladder Feast later is many colors--

black, blue, purple, fire-red, but Kapugen's hand on hers is rose-colored, and that is the way she remembers the dancing men in masks and the singing at the feast. Kapugen blows up seal bladders at the last and the old men carry them out on the ice and drop them into the sea, singing. Bladders carry the spirits of the animals, she is told. The spirits can enter bodies of the newborn seals and keep them safe until the next harvest. On the night of the Bladder Feast she is given a piece of seal fur and blubber to tie to her belt. It is an "i'noGo tied," she learns; it is a house of the spirit for her.

Her flickering yellow memory is of the drums the old men play when Kapugen and his serious partner and friend Naka dance together and sing the song of the wolves. The two of them are wolves; they are real wolves, they cry, patting each other under the chin in the touch of brotherhood. And Kapugen tells her of how he and his friend used to hunt in the wilderness, calling the wolves, speaking their language to ask where the game was, and then returning when they were successful with sledloads of caribou. Wolves are brotherly, he had told her. They love each other. If you learn to speak to them they will love you, too (p. 76). He had said that all the birds and animals have their languages, and if you listen and watch, you can learn about their enemies, and where their food is, and when the big storms are coming.

Her silver memory is the beautiful white whale, big as a mountain, brought in by the nets, a gift from the sea.

Miyax remembers watching them put the spirit of the whale into the "i'noGo tied" so it can be returned to the sea. Then blue like the sky is her memory of the tundra, and of walking on it with Kapugen in laughter, as he hailed the sky and shouted his praises for the grasses and bushes. And the fishing memory in summer is murky-tan, for they would wade out into the river mouth and drive the fish into nets. In Miyax's eyes the beauty and harmony of man and nature is a color wheel at the seal camp, a cluster of values that the reader must accept as crucial to the story's meaning.

Summers at seal camp were less beautiful, she remembers. When the Eskimos from Mekoryuk came in the summer they spoke English and called her father Charlie Edwards and called her Julie. Her mother had called her Julie, so she did not mind the name until Kapugen called her that. Then she stormed at him that she was an Eskimo, not a gussak. He had tossed her into the air and hugged her and agreed that she was Eskimo, and she must not forget it. Eskimos live as no other people can, he told her, for they truly understand the earth. If Jean George is to show the "push and pull of two cultures,"³⁶ as she says in her Newbery Award acceptance speech, she must make her reader identify with Miyax, not only as a child, but as a sensitive part of the natural beauty of her surroundings and her traditional heritage.

³⁶George, "Newbery Award Acceptance," Horn Book Magazine, pp. 337-3 .

One day Martha arrives unexpectedly in a noisy launch that shatters the quiet utopia, bringing a paper saying that Miyax must by law go to school. You are nine years old now, Kapugen tells her, so you will live with your aunt. Martha is thin and her face is pinched, and she does her duty with scant time or inclination to be kind. It is easy to see why she is named Martha in the Biblical sense, for she is a materialist, a self-appointed martyr, distracted with much serving, and Miyax dislikes her immediately. She does not object, however; it never occurs to her to protest against anything that Kapugen says or does. But she must listen closely, he tells her, for if anything happens to him, or if she is unhappy, she can leave Aunt Martha when she is thirteen and marry Daniel, Naka's son. Kapugen will make arrangements with Naka, who is going to Barrow on the Arctic Ocean, for Naka is an old-time Eskimo who likes the traditions. Miyax listens carefully. Then she goes with Martha and becomes Julie. Soon she is walking to school in the darkness every morning, finding that she enjoys learning the printed English in the books, so the time passes quickly.

One day an old man from the seal camp comes and tells them that Kapugen had gone seal hunting in his kyak. He had been gone a month and bits of the kyak have washed to shore. He is gone, Martha tells her; he will not be back. Julie runs out the door to the sea shore and stands among the oil cans. He is truly gone and the earth is barren and the sea is bleak.

Gradually, in time, she pushes Kapugen out of her mind and accepts the people of Mekoryuk. She realizes that she had lived a strange life in the seal camp, a dear and wonderful life. Now she has new things to learn. One day she visits a schoolmate with some other girls. In that house she sees for the first time a gas cooking stove, a couch, framed pictures on the wall, and curtains of cotton print. The girl who lives there has a bed of her own with a headboard, a table, and a reading lamp. On the table lies a little chain from which hang a dog, a hat, and a boat. She is glad to see something she recognizes. It is a lovely "i'noGo tied," she says politely. She has to repeat the word for the house of spirits before the girl snickers and tells her it is a charm bracelet, and then everyone laughs. It is not the last time Miyax is to meet the new attitudes of Americanized Eskimos. The writer thus sets up a pattern of expectation for her reader. Miyax has much to learn besides English. And that night she throws away her "i'noGo tied."

English and math come easily to Julie at school. She learns to read and write. She works at the mission, greeting the tourists who come to see the real Eskimos. She works at the hospital on week-ends; she cuts her hair and learns to put it up on rollers; and she sews on the electric machine in her domestic science class. Later she gains a pen pal when Mr. Pollock, who owns stock in the Reindeer Corporation,

gives her a letter from his daughter Amy in San Francisco. In the weekly letters that come from Amy Julie learns about television, blue jeans, bikinis, wall-to-wall carpeting, and high school. There is no high school in Mekoryuk. She thinks if she marries Daniel maybe Naka will send her to school, and she wonders when Naka will call her to come.

The call comes suddenly. The head of Indian Affairs in Mekoryuk appears at the door one morning in June explaining that Naka has written requesting Julie to come to Barrow to marry his son. There is an agreement in his files signed by Naka and Kepugan saying that she is to go when she is thirteen. Martha tells her she can refuse if she wants to, but Miyax, glad to leave Martha, declines, saying that the old ways are best. The next day the Bureau of Indian Affairs arranges transportation, and she finds herself sitting in the sky, on her way to Barrow, the home of the Arctic Research Laboratory--and Daniel.

As the wheels strike the runway and roll to a stop by the small terminal on the tundra, Julie for a moment has misgivings about her fate. Then a stewardess brings her coat and escorts her to the door, where she looks down at two people she knows must be Naka and his wife, Nusan. Daniel is hiding behind them. Slowly she walks down the steps and across the pavement and takes Naka's hand. She remembers his eyes from her color wheel of memory and she feels better; Nusan is smiling. Then she sees Daniel. She knows from his grin

and his dull eyes that something is wrong with him. Nusan sees the disappointment that flashes over her face, for she puts her arm around Julie, and she says quickly, "Daniel has a few problems. But he's a very good boy and he's a good worker. He cleans the animal cages at the research lab. He will be like a brother to you" (p. 92). So Julie relaxes and pushes him out of her mind; Daniel will be only a brother, and that suits her.

But the very next day, to her surprise, there is a wedding. The minister comes to Naka's house with two strangers, and Nusan gives Julie a beautiful sealskin suit and helps her dress. Daniel wears a shirt and gussak pants. They are told to stand in the doorway between the living room and kitchen while the minister reads. Daniel holds her hand; it is as clammy with anxiety as hers. She stares at the floor wondering if Kapugen knew Daniel was dull. She will not believe that he did. After the service she goes outside and sits on an oil drum in the still night. She does not know how long she sits there in quiet terror, or how long she would have sat with her head dropped on her knees, if she had not felt a tap on her arm. Her friend Pearl, who was also married, tells her not to worry about it, because nobody does. If you leave the house or run away everything's forgotten. These early marriages, she says, are for convenience; you are here to help Nusan make parkas and mittens for the tourists. Even in the old days they did not make kids stick

with these marriages if they disliked each other; they just drifted apart.

When Julie gets back to the house Daniel is gone. Nusan puts her to work sewing for tourists, commending her for her quickness and her beauty. Julie sees little of him that summer, and so by October she is beginning to enjoy her new home. She goes to school; she cooks and sews for Nusan and studies at night; and she has some time for herself each day to be with Pearl at the quonset hut. As the time passes her letters from Amy become the most important things in her life. The house in San Francisco grows to be more real for her than the house in Barrow. She knows everything about that house, all the steps that lead to the door, every blowing tree in the garden. She knows all the curls on the wrought-iron gate; the black and white tiles in the foyer. She can almost see the arched doorway to the living room and the wide window overlooking the bay. But the second floor is what she likes most to dream about. At the top of the winding stairs are four rooms, and one is the pink bedroom, the one that will be hers, Amy tells her in every letter, just as soon as she comes to live in San Francisco.

During the winter Julie comes to understand Naka. She has thought at first that he must have an important job, for he would be gone for days, often weeks, before he came home tired and angry, and he would sleep, sometimes for as long as two days. But when the subzero weather comes, Naka stays home. This is how Julie learns that he does not work at all;

he drinks. The more he drinks, the angrier he becomes. Sometimes he strikes Nusan or picks fights with the neighbors. Finally he will fall into bed and sleep for days. When he awakes he will be pleasant again. He will sit on the floor making moose-hide masks for the tourists, and sing the old songs and tell Julie tales of the animals he and Kapugen had known. At these times Julie recognizes Naka and knows why Kapugen had once loved him. One night he strikes Nusan over and over. When she hits back Julie runs to the quonset hut to find Pearl, who is not there. But in the corner sits a young man, Russell, who is campaigning for the Eskimos to vote against allowing liquor licenses in the local cafes. Naka is evil again, she tells him (p. 99). His spirit has fled. Russell nods, agreeing that Naka, like many others, cannot tolerate alcohol. He tells her there is a man from San Francisco who has been able to help people like Naka; he helped Russell's father, and helped him. Now they all join together and help each other not to drink. Julie's guess is confirmed that the man is Mr. Pollock. She is pleased that now the dream house in San Francisco has a new dimension.

While Jean George was in Alaska observing the scientific investigations into the habits of wolves, she was able toward the end of her stay in Barrow to visit a woman, a mother of three sons, the wife of a hunter, who had adapted her family somehow to the conflict of two cultures.³⁷ Her name was

³⁷ Ibid., p. 342.

Julia Sevegan. In spite of the sewing machine, the stove, and other modern conveniences she now owned, this woman retained a part of the past, for she held a position of reverence as a shaman, or wise woman, who was described in the poetry of the Eskimo tradition as one who had sighted a ten-legged bear. Perceiving something of the beauty of the old culture during her visit with Julia Sevagan, and of the sadness of its passing, George recalls her visit:

While she sat on the floor sewing warm mittens, I learned of bears and moons and family love. . . . As I sat among the plastics and machines, I lamented the passing of the Eskimo culture that had sustained these remarkable people under the most adverse conditions in the world. Yet, Julia was more comfortable because of her warm gas stove and her radio that filled the room with music. She could not, nor would anyone want her to, go back to severity. But something beautiful has been lost.

As I left Julia's house, I realized we have given the Eskimo everything but meaningful values; because of this some are violent, some are drunk-- they are deprived.³⁸

Under the influence of this wise woman, Jean George names her protagonist Julie, but the name would have fit her Julie in this particular story if the writer had never met the Eskimo shaman, Julia Sevegan. The name comes from the Greek, a diminutive of Julia, and "exceeds Rome in its antiquity."³⁹ It was used as a feminine name therefore even before the founding of Rome, when Romulus and Remus, those descendants of Aeneas, were nurtured by the wolves. Women

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 343.

³⁹ Charlotte M. Yonge, A History of Christian Names (London: Macmillan, 1884), p. 149.

who were the descendants of emperors and some who became saints bore this name, for its two intrinsic meanings are "an impassioned girl," and "one who is resolute."⁴⁰ Julie of the wolves is both of these. Perhaps this is the impression Jean George gained from Julia Sevegan, who enriched her material for the story, and who may have helped her define its parable in relation to Naka's anger and the violence that is to come.

The winter passed, summer came, and the tourists began to arrive every day. The research lab buzzed with activity. The little house where she had lived for a year became home for Julie. Late one night Nusan came in angrily, saying that Naka was in jail; she had to go and get him. Asking Julie to finish some sewing that must be completed for sale the next day, she hurried out the door. When the door opened again and Daniel came in, Julie did not look up, for she knew his routine. He would fix himself a TV dinner, open a Coke, and sit on his cot in the kitchen, listening to his radio. But this time he did not.

"You!" he shouted. She looked up in surprise.
"You. You're my wife."

"Daniel, what's wrong?"

"They're laughing at me. That's what's wrong. They say, 'Ha, ha. Dumb Daniel. He's got a wife and he can't mate her. Ha.'"

He pulled her to her feet and pressed his lips against her mouth. She pulled away.

"We don't have to," she cried.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 151.

"They're laughin'," he repeated, and tore her dress from her shoulder. She clutched it and pulled away. Daniel grew angry. He tripped her and followed her to the floor. His lips curled back and his tongue touched her mouth. Crushing her with his body, he twisted her down onto the floor. He was as frightened as she.

The room spun and grew blurry. Daniel cursed, kicked violently, and lay still. Suddenly, he got to his feet and ran out of the house. "Tomorrow, tomorrow I can, I can, can, ha ha," he bleated pitifully.

Julie rolled to her stomach and vomited. Slowly she got to her feet. "When fear seizes," she whispered, "change what you are doing. You are doing something wrong." (pp. 101-102).

Quickly she put on her warmest clothes, her wedding parka and pants, and her heaviest boots. She got Daniel's old pack and fitted it with her man's knife and ulo, and matches in a waterproof tin. She opened the door and walked calmly through the midnight to Pearl's house. Creeping softly past the sleeping family, she slipped into Pearl's room and whispered that she was leaving. From Pearl she got food, a sleeping skin and ground cloth, a cooking pot and some needles. She walked to the beach, climbed onto the ice, and made her way along it on her hands and feet, crouching low until she was out of the sight of the village. Then she stood up and looked at the ocean. "Julie is gone," she said to herself. "I am Miyax now" (p. 104). She leaped up the bank and out onto the tundra. Her stride opened wider and wider, for she was on her way to San Francisco.

So there it is. This final scene with Daniel accomplishes effectively what it sets out to do. Its structure and place in the story may be immediately evident to an

attentive reader, or it may be seen only in hindsight, but the writer has prepared the way for it quite clearly, leading the action step by step, inevitably to this terrible encounter between Daniel and Julie that drives Julie onto the tundra. The character of Daniel is abstracted for this purpose rather than individualized; he is not allowed to utter a word until now, but he is there waiting, always waiting in the background to be reckoned with. As the old Eskimo understands the good life, he is the negation of good, for he is dull instead of bright, frightened instead of fearless, and he perverts the meaning of love through aggression instead of affirming it through gentleness, or reciprocity, or joy. He "has a few problems," his mother says, and these problems are compounded by external circumstances before which he is helpless. They effectively negate in him any potential for inheriting the riches of men. Indeed, what does Daniel know of the Bladder Feast, the "i'noGo tied?" A house of the spirits is nonsense to him, for his life is alien in all respects to the realities of the spirit, since he perceives only the opposite in the refuse he cleans from the cages in the animal lab. Daniel has dull eyes; he does not see. Because he goes blindly about, doing what he is told to do, he is "a hard worker" and thus "a good boy." He is good by standards that deny him his birthright.

Children see Daniel as the "bad thing" that has to happen in any story to make it work. Like a spell of wickedness

in the fairy tales, he is "what happens" to insure Julie's presence on the tundra, and to bring about the "best part of the story," which is her meeting with the wolves.⁴¹ He represents that airless inner-darkness that is necessary to precipitate the action through which Julie must discharge her terror if she is to survive. Children, like the sensitive readers they are, intelligently endure the scene with pity and fear commingled, and read right on to see what happens next. "Children," as C. S. Lewis says, "read only to enjoy."⁴²

But some people wonder if a scene like this is justified. Nancy Schimmel, concerned with the problem of censorship as good librarians are, asks whether grown-ups may be overlooking the need to help children learn to deal with the "biased, inaccurate, unsavory material" they find in books. To this purpose she writes,

I believe that . . . stereotypes restrict children's freedom of choice in their activities, associations, and aspirations, and I do not want to promote these stereotypes. Some librarians believe that books such as . . . Julie of the Wolves foster harmful attitudes toward the mentally retarded.⁴³

She is right, of course, in that parents, teachers, and librarians want to encourage reading and help children to

⁴¹ A sixth-grader's impression and interpretation of this and other stories for children comes from interviews with Mary Weiss, Irving Park School, Greensboro, N. C., 1977-1978.

⁴² Lewis, Of Other Worlds, pp. 40-41.

⁴³ Nancy Schimmel, "Reading Guidance and Intellectual Freedom," Top of the News, April 1975, pp. 317-320.

learn to read, as she puts it, with a "constructive skepticism."⁴⁴ "How can we get children to test what they read?" she asks. For one thing, C. S. Lewis says, a bad book cannot elicit good reading,⁴⁵ and the joy of "good" reading is what parents, teachers, and librarians earnestly desire for children. It is not a critic's function to press his evaluation upon others, as Lewis puts it, for critics are "to show others the work they claim to admire or despise as it really is; to describe, almost to define, its character, and then leave them to their own (now better informed) reactions."⁴⁶

Should one see Jean George then as "biased, inaccurate, and unsavory"? Does she really stereotype? Must she be blamed for the character of Daniel and accused point-blank of being unfair? Perhaps Daniel's story is actually just as interesting as Julie's. Though it seems unlikely that Daniel could be as interesting as Julie is, even if he were, this story is not his but hers. For the sake of emphasis George cannot be equally fair to both. No matter how willing the reader may be to see Daniel's side, the story belongs to Julie of the wolves, and in choosing to tell that story, Jean George must inevitably overlook another, and seek her reader's sympathy for her protagonist first, even if she has to

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

⁴⁵ Lewis, An Experiment in Criticism, pp. 117-121 *passim*.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

exclude Daniel in his supporting role, and be unfair to him along the way. This is what Betsy Byars does when she focuses on Sara, and it is also Irene Hunt's pattern in the making of Aggie Kilpin; it is what novelists have to do. The issue at stake is whether the writer can win her reader to Julie's side in the story without creating the impression that she has played false with Daniel, or as Booth puts it, that she has weighed Daniel's character "on dishonest scales."⁴⁷ The point is not whether Jean George judges Daniel, but whether she judges him truly in the light of her narrated facts.

Her offense in this case lies not in stereotyping Daniel, for "stereotype" implies a character that lacks the power to evoke attention because it has no real significance. This writer is too original and creative for that. Daniel is abstracted but not stereotyped, for he does have meaning and significance. The writer's offense, if such it is, is to play on deep traditional fears in Daniel's attack, fears so real that readers must draw back in protest. To put it mildly, the episode is "unsavory"; Nancy Schimmel is right about that. Yet it is neither inaccurate nor unduly biased. It is agreed that Daniel is deeply flawed, but again he is abstracted because the special intensity of his effect depends on his being a static character.⁴⁸ The changes that go to make up

⁴⁷ Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 79.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

his story are matters of fact and circumstance and knowledge, not his essential worth as a retarded child. His flaw is not peculiar to mental retardation, though it is a very dangerous thing. Daniel's flaw is something human beings have in common, for he has a little learning that he has gleaned painstakingly from his mother's unmotherliness and his father's pattern of drunken hence mindless frustration and rage. He learns from Naka how a man must act, and from his peers, who call him "dumb Daniel" and are not brotherly, what he is supposed to do. If he is seen as personal and particular, he sets about with the courage of quiet desperation to do what he has learned to do. He is the epitome of fear, embodying it in all he does, terrorizing Julie, who has been forced on him and is not his choice any more than he is hers, because he knows no other way. Is Daniel "dull" when he denies his hope of manhood by being brother to his legal wife? Is he "dull" when he rejects this state? Does Daniel's dullness relate either to a cure or to a cause?

When the writer describes their marriage, having Julie wear the beautiful sealskin suit and Daniel the shirt and gussak pants, she shows Julie as the traditionalist, who tells Aunt Martha that the old ways are best, and Daniel, with his radio, his TV dinner and Coke, and his animal job in the Research Lab, as the unthoughtful new. They are extremes of opposite, unequally yoked. Jean George, when she was in Alaska, would walk after supper in the sunny night,

she says, trying to understand the tundra, with its eternally frozen ground called permafrost.⁴⁹ She saw the kinds of plants that grow in that inhospitable place, and the clouds of birds that fly over it. And she came to a deeper understanding of the relationship between the owl, weasel, lemming, grass, caribou, bear, bird, fox, and Eskimo. "The ecology of the Arctic is like a Chinese wooden puzzle," she says, "each piece locks into the others, and if one is not right, the whole thing falls apart."⁵⁰ An Eskimo leader of the Arctic Slope Natives Association talked to her about the way things have to work.

"To survive in the Arctic you have to be innocent and respect nature. The white man rushes the North and hence destroys it." He pointed to the beach in front of the Arctic Research Lab. A truck was dumping black stone upon it. "The gussaks are putting back the beach," he said. "They used it for fill; the ocean adjusted and began to snatch the whole shore. It threatened to demolish the laboratory." The gussaks are paying for their lack of respect for nature.⁵¹

The marriage of the two children in Julie of the Wolves forces nature; it is not right. Like the conflict between the two orders in the North, it lacks the innocence and respect necessary for a successful marriage. A good union needs thought, and courage, and love. These things can be successfully translated into a story by an artist, sometimes on more than one plane, and sometimes simultaneously. Without

⁴⁹ George, "Newbery Acceptance," Horn Book, p. 342.

⁵⁰ Ibid. ⁵¹ Ibid.

any straining of imagination, Jean George is able to evoke her dual interest here.

Like her idea for a children's book when she went to Alaska, mental retardation was probably the farthest thing from her mind in this story. She may never have intended to regard a disability like this at all, but she makes a statement about it, nonetheless, when she makes Daniel "dull." Literally, he is incapable of adapting to his environment without support. Whatever he does, his action is not independent; he simply mirrors the quality of his supervision and control. He needs the brotherly concern of those who have the riches of life which are denied to him, the intelligence, the courage, and the love of those who see him as deprived, for he is guileless and unequipped with the self-preserving cunning that he needs to survive the civilized jungle of the animal lab. To oversimplify what she suggests but does not say simplistically: Daniel is fear, yes; fear him and his kind if you must, but in brotherhood do not neglect to fear for him, as well. He too is being violated.

A critic is rash, of course, to make dogmatic pronouncements of a writer's intention, for it is not always easy to know what an author really thinks. But there are numerous techniques by which any writer controls his reader, and a good one like Jean George does not allow her presence to be forgotten in a story, nor does she forget the presence of the audience for whom she writes. A reader may not perceive

the constellations of all her different meanings--nor does he have to--but he will have the clues he needs to see. She is the good writer skilled in speaking who includes what her intelligent reader needs, because a writer "makes" the reader.⁵² However deprived, unattractive, frightening, or misguided Daniel may be, if she makes her reader well, Jean George is able without the least trace of mawkishness to force him to perceive the very pity of it all. When she names him Daniel her meaning must communicate. Even the youngest literate child will know he is no prophet. Through no fault of his own he has been weighed in the balance and found wanting, and for all his striving, unless he has the reach of human brotherhood, he cannot be lifted up from out the lion's den.

Finally, on the level of pure and simple narrative Julie of the Wolves proceeds from the girl's realization that she is lost on the great Northern Slope of Alaska, from her successful contact with the wolves, and from the long flashback of her memory that defines the struggles of two cultures and her quest for a father. It describes how her perception of Naka and her encounter with Daniel sends her out to the wilderness looking for escape; and begins the process by which she must find reconciliation and return. "Back to nature" is a theme that Jean Craighead George, naturalist, explores

⁵²Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 397.

in all her books.⁵³ Though the term covers many kinds of primitivism, disenchantment with civilization, and the many complexities that modern life is prey to, as a basis for imaginative telling the theme offers possibilities for high adventure, or parable, or even myth. Like Robinson Crusoe, Julie is alone on the tundra as he was on a desert island, denied the assistance of men but separated from the inhumanity of men, and like him she is able to survive by the exercise of courage, knowledge, and love. This is a story-line that has engaged the interest of readers of all ages. It is a formula, George knows, that cannot fail to entertain. But it is also a story, like Robinson Crusoe and The Jungle Books and the Island of the Blue Dolphins, that brings Julie back to civilization at the end to face the causes and consequences that initially sent her forth. Julie of the Wolves is a story of "a girl who lives with a pack of wolves and learns about mankind,"⁵⁴ George says. It is a serious book with some complex things to say about wealth and the uses of wealth, about motherhood and fatherhood as well as brotherhood, and about marriage, and responsibility, and man's inhumanity to man. Its structure is beautifully simple; everything in the story is there for the story; everything is plain. Sentences are short; style is lively; action is

⁵³ She explores this theme with particular vividness in her Newbery Honor Book, 1968, My Side of the Mountain, also filmed by Paramount Pictures.

⁵⁴ George, "Newbery Acceptance," Horn Book.

preeminent. All in all it is a very simple story. It makes one wonder how so naive a form could support such a complex of images and ideas that are not simple at all.

Julie ends her quest finally and loses her freedom; she finds and loses and rediscovers a father to whom she must be reconciled, and she gains in wisdom in ways that go beyond the limits of this study. All told, Jean George's message is not a comforting one, for the loss of innocence seldom is. Yet children often miss the sadness in this book the first time around, because the story that they read proclaims triumphantly and enticingly the joy of survival and the goodness of the wolves.

Still a book like this could help mature readers, who are attentive to it, to be less complacent, to support in a positive way a Daniel's efforts to learn from those around him; to respect the questioning intelligence of the Julies of the world; to preserve the natural beauty and goodness of the earth; to encourage the manifestation of brotherly love in all unlikely places, and hence to lessen the erosion of permanent values in the land. This seems to be Jean George's "moral," since it squares with what she says in person, and in all her other books, as well. One could be wrong, of course, for Jean Craighead George is not the most explicit writer in the land, nor does she need to be. She meets the demands of responsible authorship for her attentive reader in more creative ways.

Conclusion

Mental retardation in Up a Road Slowly, The Summer of the Swans, and Julie of the Wolves is meaningful only insofar as the writer makes it so. Knowing that pleasure is the first, most obvious function of literature, each author who is a perceived and separate teller in the tale, establishes a rapport with her reader. She gives him an event, a narrative in which something exciting happens. She sets up patterns of expectation; she builds suspense, anxiety, fear. Will Charlie, for example, fall into an open mine shaft in the dark, and because he is retarded and mute, lie there helpless, unable to call out? What will become of fastidious Julie Trelling in her white eyelet dress, when she walks across the threshold and finds mental retardation and death in the dirty Kilpins' house? Can an Eskimo girl, who is driven out onto the wild Arctic tundra by a retarded boy and lost there, survive a confrontation with a pack of wolves? Each writer arouses curiosity, prolongs it, exasperates it, and finally satisfies it.⁵⁵ Each gives her reader a vicarious delight--all the better if her story has a happy ending, and enables him to participate in the interesting and exciting life of her fictional world. Freely, honestly, and with good will, being neither dogmatic nor condescending, nor pandering to popular demands (which is itself a form of

⁵⁵ Lewis, An Experiment in Criticism, pp. 36-37.

condescension),⁵⁶ this is what she does, and what she ought to do. When a child is reading, he is "standing on one leg, or squatting, or lying on his stomach, holding his breath, absolutely generating force."⁵⁷ This is the kind of enjoyment that children want, and it ought not to be neglected nor denied them in their books. A reader ought to wonder and worry and hold his breath, for to some extent it is the kind of pleasurable involvement all readers find in even the most elevated forms of fiction.

Still the desire for excitement is not enough. Knowing that this pleasure put first is transient, each of the writers accepts the obligation to give her reader something more, to lead him to a pleasure of a higher kind. Fiction is made of language; language is charged with meaning; and meaning, in turn, cannot exist outside the context of human values. This being true, the value of fiction is based on a belief in the existence of a common human experience that can be evoked in words. The honest endeavor of this creative task is assumed by these writers, each of whom shows it to be a valid justification for writing children's stories. A definition of this obligation, perhaps its best expression in literature, comes from Joseph Conrad, who puts it like this:

⁵⁶ Rebecca J. Lukens, A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1976).

⁵⁷ Joan Aiken, "Purely for Love," in Children and Literature, ed. Virginia Haviland, p. 153.

My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel--it is, before all, to make you see. That--and no more, and it is everything. If I succeed, you shall find there according to your deserts: encouragement, consolation, fear, charm--all you demand--and perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask.⁵⁸

The highest obligation of the rhetoric of fiction, within this good Horatian summary, is to make the discovery of meaning a convincing outcome of the experience of the book.⁵⁹

To this end, Irene Hunt, Betsy Byars, and Jean Craighead George command an exceptional perspective. For each of them a retarded child set forth as a storybook character is a gift of language, an implied promise to the reader, through the medium of a living plot, to show him how to feel, and what to see, and what he needs to know. The promise that he carries is a heavy emotional load, for a retarded child is static, by Forster's definition, a "flat character,"⁶⁰ who is unchanging, while causing others to change. He is unresponsive, or at most inadequate to circumstances, though he orders, unaware, the climate that controls the inner weather of his fictional world. As Henry James puts it, he is "the reader's friend . . . from the beginning to the end of the

⁵⁸ Joseph Conrad, Preface, The Nigger of the Narcissus (New York: Sundial, 1938), p. xiv.

⁵⁹ Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 182.

⁶⁰ E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1927), p. 173.

book, an enrolled, a direct aid to lucidity."⁶¹ However he is shown, abstractly, realistically, unfavorably--in whatever form he takes, he is the reader's friend "because he so eminently needs one,"⁶² and is created to fulfill an implied promise, as Conrad says, for a glimpse of truth, or as James, for a touch of light. He is a cause, a center, an enrolled, direct aid to the truth and the light--a mark, in fact, for the truth and the light, but he is not the way. The way is the writer, the implied author back of it all, consciously and skillfully in control. She is the good person skilled in speaking, who through the character of a retarded child, meets her young reader on a common ground.

In novels that try to lead children to the hard truths of mental retardation, the problem is to make the discovery a convincing outcome of the experience. This is necessary because attitudes and values are built out of experience. They are discovered in terms of experience. And a retarded child as character at the hands of a good writer serves the function of authentic experience. Because there is such a thing as fiction, there are values that come into play in reading it. The values in a story grow out of a practical and artistic view, as Aristotle puts it, in terms of final cause. A writer's final artistic cause is to please, and his

⁶¹ Henry James, Preface, The Ambassadors (New York: Heritage, 1963), p. xvi.

⁶² Ibid.

final practical cause is to persuade, and both are summarized in the traditional principle of Horace, dulce et utile, which is also a final cause. This good Horatian summary is generous enough to encompass a wide creative practice.⁶³ The utile, the practical function, goes far beyond the need to teach a moral lesson and may be thought of as something worthwhile, something that deserves serious attention; whereas the dulce, the pleasure that is sweet because it is not a duty or a bore, can include all the kinds of pleasure that literature can give. When a work of literature is successful, even when its scale is limited, the two aspects of pleasure and practicality join together in the experience and merge. The pleasure becomes a higher aesthetic pleasure, and the practical, the higher seriousness of perception. It simply comes to this. The better the writer, the better the language; the better the language, the better the experience. Three novels, Up a Road Slowly, The Summer of the Swans, and Julie of the Wolves, through their depictions of a retarded child, move their readers to a new plane of perception and experience together. Their Newbery Medals confirmed, they are distinguished books for children. Each writer has her register, which is individual, perceptible, and unique. Within her range she demonstrates that she can handle her social concern without jeopardizing her fiction as good and entertaining literature for children, insofar as she speaks with a validity that is not altered by her appeals to the young.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

The "new realism" in children's books, as it is called, stresses the treatment of contemporary social problems. It places no subject beyond the pale of juvenile fiction. Even subject matter that is outside the norm of children's interests and experiences, and thus inappropriate for them, is exploited and vindicated on the grounds of being real. To many of the so-called new realists a subject is not real unless it does justice to the outside reality of the contemporary world. It is not real unless it responds to the claims of a burgeoning cult of ugliness and shows the seamy side of life. For some the new realism must satisfy the demands of factual, social, and commercial reality. For others the realism must serve didactic ends. A fact which is not widely understood, however, is that every realism in a given children's book is an expression of value. It reflects a writer's conscious or unconscious attitude. It is personal and integral to the image he creates. A writer is thus the causal and generating agent in his fiction and his deliberate choices, whether he makes them consciously or unconsciously, determine the content, meaning, and quality of what his audience reads. Critics who write about the new realism in

children's books tend, on the whole, to miss this altogether. They seem less interested in the directive power of a writer's prose than in the uses to which his narrative can be put. For the most part the new realists seem less consciously concerned with a writer's manner and meaning than with their own prescriptions for his subject matter.

Any writer who delineates a retarded character, therefore, may be recognized primarily because of the subject he selects. The indisputable gravity of this subject, its relevance to the climate of social realism in children's books and to the legal mandates on "mainstreaming," as it is called, now serve to make retarded children highly visible. This has afforded an opportunity for writers of juvenile fiction to see an old and persistent social problem in an exceptional new perspective.

When a writer chooses to deal realistically with mental retardation, he is no longer limited to the canons of the past, nor compelled by literary and social tradition to make his retarded character play the clown or wear the cap-and-bells. He is no longer forced to shape his character into a device for comedy. A contemporary writer is free to raise questions and impose meanings, the quality of which clearly define the image he projects. He knows that unless a retardate is deliberately ridiculed, as he has been in the folklore tradition, this disability as a human handicap is not easily denied.

His subject matter, then, is an expression of a writer's conscious choice. It grows out of his interests, his experiences, and his attitudes, and it reflects them, for the subject that he chooses is basic to his view of reality. Because it is the fertile ground for something that he wants to say, because it can be handled as he likes it, in any number of different ways, the subject--as grave, timely, and relevant as mental retardation may be--is meaningful to the reader only insofar as the writer makes it so. It becomes what he does with it and is inseparable from his handling of it. In point of fact, fiction has no meaning or value that is independent of its writer's personality and skill. It has no meaning independent of his rhetoric.

A successful writer, therefore, has designs on his reader. He knows that he needs first to gain his reader's interest and consent, so he starts out intentionally to please and to persuade. He knows that the reader is not likely to attend his story unless it is entertaining. He endeavors, then, with all the skill at his command, to arouse interest, promote feeling, and create a state of mind. The structure of his skill is rhetoric, and rhetoric, Aristotle says, seeks all the available means to persuade. To reconcile the means of this persuasion is the office of a good person skilled in speaking. The comprehensive rationale of the performance of the good person, insofar as he is skilled, insofar as he influences opinions and attitudes, is rhetoric. It is in his rhetoric that a writer is revealed.

Central to the concern of this study, therefore, is the process of rhetorical criticism and the conviction that the process can be put to good use in analyzing children's fiction. Unlike other methods of literary criticism, which focus primarily on the internal elements of plot, character, setting, and the like, rhetorical criticism is multi-dimensional in its concern with the writer, the reader, and the story, and it can be applied to fiction in an almost unlimited number of widely varying ways. Any related or interrelated aspect of the three dimensions is important to the rhetoric of fiction. This is true because the most effective means of persuasion and proof that a writer can use are three in number: (1) A writer creates an image of himself as a person of good will, good character, and good sense; (2) he creates a frame of mind in his audience by his appeal to their emotions, revealing the ways in which he sees his readers; and (3) he tells a story with a measure of skill that reflects his personal definition of good and entertaining literature for children. The ancient Horatian formula from the Ars Poetica provides a helpful start in criticism by defining the function of literature as dulce et utile. These words have been variously translated as "teach and delight," or "intelligence and emotion," or "useful and pleasant," or "good and entertaining," among other things, for the meaning of the phrase is seen to be elastic and adaptive rather than precise. The utile, therefore, may be taken to mean worthwhile, serious,

well-written, or convincing, and to embrace the good and effective qualities that are equated with rhetoric, while the dulce implies entertainment and delight, or the peculiar forms of pleasure that literature can give. A writer aims to please and to persuade, and his ideal in literature is the reconciliation of the two.

A rhetoric of children's fiction pursues an author's means of controlling his reader, seeing them as sources of artistic success in communication. The rhetoric follows these artistic means of persuading the reader by accommodating a process to the analysis of juvenile fiction that has been adopted by the best writers of ancient times and by a great many competent writers since. The most influential discussions of the rhetoric of fiction come from two contemporary sources. The first is Wayne C. Booth, who convincingly demonstrates that every successful writer is rhetorical, whether he is consciously so or not.¹ The second is C. S. Lewis, whose rhetorical approach to criticism is evident in all his work, and especially in his critical comments on writing for children.² A summary of the rhetorical process employed by substantial and competent writers faces two peculiar difficulties, the first being the almost unlimited parameters of rhetoric, and the second, somewhat like the

¹Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, *passim*.

²Lewis, Of Other Worlds, *passim*.

first, being the nondogmatic quality of effective criticism, which describes, interprets, and judges--at least by implication--but refuses to prescribe. A process for analyzing the rhetoric of juvenile fiction, based on centuries of rhetorical tradition and relying heavily on the contemporary interpretations of Booth and Lewis, will see the following as essential points:

1. A writer reveals his image in his work. Though he may choose to disguise himself, he cannot choose to disappear. It is in his very choices of what and how to tell that he reveals himself as the implied author back of his story. No writer of sensibility can afford to be indifferent to his image nor careless of the quality of his choices insofar as they are intelligent, appealing, and appropriate to his reader.

2. A writer makes his readers in much the same way that he makes his characters. He makes them responsive to his skill, knowing that they must respond if they are to enjoy his story and read it through to the end. He directs the force of his children's story into what is said and done; he avoids the temptation to describe and explain; he limits his story's length. He is not superior to the limitations imposed by an inexperienced audience. He recognizes them as fruitful necessities, not barriers, and discovers ways to transcend them in order to communicate with readers of all ages. If he is successful he writes with a validity that is not altered by his appeals to the young.

3. A writer creates values and attitudes with his rhetoric. His choices of what to tell and how to tell it, what to leave out and what to include are expressions of value. He cannot avoid revealing values in his rhetoric, but he can choose the kinds of values he wishes to reveal. The best writers seek to stand on some eternal ground, but they do not place deliberate morals in their books for children. This is not to say that a book should have no moral. A true moral is implicit; it grows out of the whole cast of a writer's mind and out of the spiritual roots that nourish his life. His moral values are present and obvious in every story, whether or not the writer plans it so. A writer who tries to arouse emotions by asking children for a response that he cannot himself respect as an artist and adult is impertinent: a hack by definition does just this.

4. Literature depends for its success on the concurrence of belief between the reader and the writer. Every reader needs the writer's help and guidance to place an action and tell him what he needs to know. It is a writer's business to discover with his reader a common and universally human ground and to see that his reader's reactions are at the end identical to his own.

5. The ultimate problem of the rhetoric of fiction is that of deciding for whom a writer should write. If he writes for himself it has to be a public self, subject to

the same limitations that others face when they read his book. If he writes for his peers he chooses his audience well. If he writes for children he will bend his efforts toward making the children his peers, for the quality of the common human ground he finds for the reader in the fiction he makes is the quality of the implied author. Within a literary genre which has so small a range, it takes an artist to do a well-made thing. A children's book that only children like is a bad children's book.

These five essential points outline a process by which to analyze the rhetoric of children's fiction. They relate a writer's general means of controlling his reader by persuasion, by his force of character, personality, and literary skill. They show how his image is defined in the choices that he makes of subject matter, treatment, and attitude toward his reader's potential intelligence and response. To determine the kind of image a writer manages to project is to discover the rhetoric of his fiction.

This study has examined juvenile fiction published since 1960 and has compiled 42 titles that deal in some dramatic way with mental retardation. The books appended to this study, the most complete listing of its kind to date, encompasses in its range the extremes of fashionable realism. Hey, Dummy (Platt), for example, strains mightily to show the seamy side of life; Me Too (Cleaver), according to the publisher's blurb, breaks all the rules and makes cheap appeals

to popular demands; Listen, Lissa! (Luis and Millar) is full of real, verifiable, and sometimes very dull facts; and Don't Take Teddy (Friis-Baastad), like many of the books on this list, is explicitly didactic. But three of the number have each won a John Newbery Medal. Irene Hunt's Up a Road Slowly (1967), Betsy Byars' The Summer of the Swans (1970), and Jean Craighead George's Julie of the Wolves (1973) were cited by the Children's Services Division of the American Library Association as the most distinguished American literature for children. Because the stature accorded to them as Newbery Medal winners allows them to serve as models of good, ostensibly nondidactic, and entertaining fiction, and because the three books are appropriate in content to the perspective of this study, they provide a ground for examining the rhetoric of mental retardation in juvenile books. Through a close reading of the relevant episodes in these stories, this study has done three things: (1) It has discovered and demonstrated a process of rhetorical criticism by discussing each narrative in terms of product (plot, character, style, and the like) and of the potential effect on the reader, illustrating by analysis and example some of the ways in which the writer manipulates the audience. (2) It has defined the fictional character of a retarded child as a deliberate agent of persuasion which embodies the writer's meaning and shapes the reader's response. (3) It has discovered some specific ways in which a writer has handled a social concern (or failed to) without

jeopardizing the fiction as good and entertaining literature for children. In so doing it has accepted the obligations of nonprescriptive rhetorical criticism to describe, interpret, and judge.

Conclusions

Through an examination of children's literature and an analysis of three winners of the Newbery Medal that depict retarded children as fictional characters, this study has reached the following conclusions:

1. A good, useful, and nondogmatic process of literary criticism by which to examine the many dimensions of fiction does exist.
2. A process for analyzing discourse which has dominated literary theory in the western world for more than two thousand years has led to a renewed interest in rhetoric and to the development in recent times of a mode of rhetorical criticism.
3. Rhetorical criticism does not claim to be the only way to analyze fiction, but it is a viable, respectable, and active mode of examining literature. Because there is a growing need to employ practical ways of looking at children's books, the rhetorical method provides a valuable tool for the juvenile book critic's diagnostic kit.
4. Rhetorical criticism, while focusing on the work itself, seeks to discover elements that exist in literature to arouse the reader's response. A retarded child exists in fiction for the sake of the reader.

5. Rhetorical criticism reveals the ways in which a writer sees his reader; this is a distinguishing mark of the writer's fictional image. Because the image reveals the quality of personal relationship established between reader and writer (a vital dimension in associating with children), the rhetorical process offers a fruitful means of analyzing children's literature.

6. By assuming what his young audience is able to understand and agree with, a writer "makes" his readers, and his version of the children for whom he writes is made up of hopes and realities in proportion to the nature of his personal expectations of childhood. A writer reveals himself in the picture of the reader that he makes.

7. In any truth-discovery novel, where the young reader is led to the hard truths of social life in the contemporary world, the discovery of value ought to be an outgrowth of the experience. Because a story can serve the function of authentic experience for children, a responsible author creates a common ground with his reader from which to interpret the norms of his fictional world. A retarded child as character can provide the human ground for authentic experience.

8. A writer's business is with the lasting perceptions of what is real and his reader must be made attentive and informed if he is to respond to it. A successful writer is willing and able to employ the means necessary to shape his reader in his own image and to make his reader his peer.

By delineating a retarded child as character he can make the reader attentive, interested, and informed.

9. However objectively drawn, a writer's view of reality in fiction is a statement of value. A portrait of a retarded child is intentionally or unintentionally colored by the writer's attitudes.

10. A retarded child, set forth as a storybook character, is a writer's gift, an implied promise to the reader to tell him what he needs to know.

11. A retarded character is the reader's friend, whose helpless, loving, or unlovely heart shows the reader where his own heart is supposed to be.

12. A writer can handle his social concern, that is his attitude toward a retarded child, without jeopardizing his fiction as good and entertaining literature for children only insofar as he is able to speak with a validity that is not altered by his appeals to the young.

Of the three novelists considered in this study, Betsy Byars' story, The Summer of the Swans, about a mute retarded boy lost in an area of open and abandoned mine shafts, is likely to appeal to a younger, less experienced reader. This narrative, the shortest, most compact of the three, emphasizing the events of a single day, is limited to the impact of these events on the character of the protagonist, the boy's older sister. Byars damages the value of her story as fiction in the incident where Charlie is found and restored to his

family by hinting that he has miraculously recovered his voice. Yet she gives her reader some memorable moments as well. She persuades him to see a retarded child as part of a middle-class American family, a picture that he might not have seen before, and she gracefully spares her reader, at the same time, the suffocating pity that blots so many stories about handicapped children. The analysis of her book demonstrates in this study that Betsy Byars is an appealing, intelligent writer, who makes her story accessible to the reader in specific ways, employing a simple, direct style that rings true.

Irene Hunt, with a gift of recall, finds the existent child in herself, going back to the place of her childhood for her material in Up a Road Slowly. With its strong sense of place, the story contains a series of relatively short episodes in which a young girl learns compassion painfully through her involuntary and grudging association with a retarded child. It defines an ordering of values that compels the reader to interpret these events. A detailed analysis of her story demonstrates ways in which the writer makes and reinforces her reader's attitudes. It shows how she contrasts Julie's wealth of love and opportunity with the other child's deprivation, how she invents a school-teaching aunt who speaks wisdom and a profligate uncle who reinforces this wisdom with irony, and how she leads the reader finally to perceive Julie's changing attitude toward a retarded child. Hunt makes

her reader her peer. A sense of common human responsibility for the unattractive, retarded Aggie is communicated to the protagonist in this story, as Julie comes slowly to see her classmate in a new light, while Hunt, as a reliable narrator, is also able, as we have seen, to define the essential human bond skillfully, by implication, as the reader's own.

The third writer, Jean Craighead George, plumbs to greater depths than either of the other two. In Julie of the Wolves she raises questions, demands attentive reading, and rewards that attention. In light of the general sophistry and tastelessness that is evident in much of the new realism today, her dramatization of Daniel's attack on Julie raises legitimate questions concerning the appropriateness of this scene in a children's book. It is not necessary to join the clamor of protest against the use of violence in juvenile fiction nor to equate violence with "the way things are" and call it "truth" in order to see the question of a scene's artistic and moral value as appropriate. Without taking sides one may reiterate the point that Wayne Booth makes in a similar controversy. "Art," he says, "is not invariably best when it makes the conventional most uncomfortable."³ If there ever was an "uncomfortable" scene in a children's book, the incident when Daniel forces Julie to the floor to consummate their legal but unfortunate marriage is certainly one. Yet the theme

³Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 397 (n. 2).

stresses and extends the idea of conservation that is implicit in all of Jean George's stories. The attack on Julie is both integral and inevitable to the dramatic plot and, as such, becomes a technical expression of multiple meanings. The topic of modern man's thoughtless destruction of his surroundings is a staple of this writer's fiction. Jean George enriches her topic of conservation and caring with layers of new meaning in this startling scene, and its net effect is not illegitimate. As painful as it is, there is nothing gratuitous about it; it is not likely to excite unnatural impulses or encourage imitation. Instead it evokes a sense of wonder. It arouses cathartic emotions of pity and fear.

Far from being a faceless, irresponsible writer who offers sensation in the place of substance, Jean Craighead George is dominant in the experience of this book. Relating her retarded character to a frightened animal caught in an environment of death, she manipulates the animal imagery to suggest moral value, implying that Daniel, piteously bleating, is baited. Deliberately misguided, unable to reason his way through the mechanical maze that traps him, he is caught as a sheep for the slaughter in the animal lab. With studied precision George defines Daniel as a sacrificial lamb preyed upon by human wolves and shows her attentive reader in every characterizing detail that he who, until this scene, is kept effectively silent by rapacious leaders and by his own insurmountable shortcomings, is doubly victimized. Those

who ought to care for him and love him are made most culpable in his neglect. His mother and father, failing to support him, are made to personify irresponsible authority, heightening the evil effects of their son's helpless condition and of his destructive and terrifying efforts to learn. His brothers are not brotherly. Even Julie's own father, who lightly arranges his daughter's ill-fated marriage, neither knowing nor caring that her future husband is dull, is seen in the gradual unfolding of his charming character as wickedly irresponsible.

In structuring this scene as she chooses to do, the author gives herself away. She manipulates her young reader to meet higher standards of reading and response than he expects to give, for she is a skilled molder of judgments, raising serious questions of moral responsibility that jolt her reader into mature and compassionate answers in spite of himself. The story of Julie, the child-bride who flees her retarded husband to the tundra, where she learns that wolves are kinder and more brotherly than men, is Jean George's most mature accomplishment in fiction. It is a story that she makes accessible to children, exciting their interest by action and adventure on one level, while probing other levels that must give all her readers pause. Julie of the Wolves is a book for reading and rereading. Exciting, perceptive, moral, and mature, it never fails to entertain.

And it persuades the reader at the same time to view a serious, value-laden world from a moral promontory, where he is not likely to have stood before. To accomplish this through the delineation of a retarded boy, as Jean Craighead George has done in a children's book, is the office of a skilled rhetorician.

A rhetoric of children's fiction, focusing on a social problem that until recently was considered inappropriate for the serious attention of children, has examined three Newbery Medal winners which not only fall by definition within the boundaries of the so-called new realism, but which counteract by example some of the new realism's most pronounced fallacies. Betsy Byars' Summer of the Swans, Irene Hunt's Up a Road Slowly, and Jean Craighead George's Julie of the Wolves do not set out, as the new realists frequently claim to do, to satisfy factual, social, rehabilitative, or commercial demands, nor primarily to instruct, nor to depict the seamy side of life, but they do set out in the tradition of Horace to please and to persuade. To that end each story employs a mentally retarded child as a persuasive agent to tell the reader what he needs to know. This study has shown that successful writers of children's books communicate with their readers through rhetoric, and the use of mental retardation in these stories is clearly and definably rhetorical. This study has shown that the writer of children's books must work within the limits of certain fruitful necessities of

form imposed by the nature of his audience, and that he affects his reader through the elements he puts into his story deliberately for his reader's sake. It follows that an implied author of a children's book defines more than the character of his retarded child: he defines himself. In the conscious or unconscious choices that he makes, he constructs his own image. The quality of this image is measured by the quality of the literary and moral choices that he makes. Insofar as he is "the right sort of writer" for children, as C. S. Lewis puts it,⁴ he is a true rhetorician, a person of good sense, good character, and good will. When he writes a truth-discovery novel that tries to lead young people to the hard truths of mental retardation in contemporary society, the good person skilled in speaking is able through his delineation of a retarded child to realize an authentic experience for children and at the same time call up the resources of mature readers, as well.

Implications

Because a writer's attitudes are implicit in his work, because they are a part of the habitual furniture of his mind, and because he reveals them intentionally or unintentionally in the choices that he makes, it is possible, regardless of the subject he chooses, to examine selected items in his fiction that seem to animate his attitudes. It is possible to charter and weigh a writer's attitudes toward

⁴C. S. Lewis, Of Other Worlds, p., 41.

mental retardation, for instance, by collecting and cataloging his use of properties. Because properties are images figuratively presented, they provide the reader with many revealing details. Since the process of rhetorical analysis can show how a writer manipulates the impressionable minds of children while seeming only to entertain, and because this method is a useful way to examine fiction, it is recommended that the groundwork laid in this study be put to practical use and that its findings be expanded. It is recommended that a rhetorical process of literary analysis be applied to the examination of imagery in children's fiction. This is one way to define a writer's implicit attitude toward mental retardation. It is further recommended that specific images for analysis be drawn from the full bibliography of 42 books listed in the appendix to this study. The following suggestions offer three possible ways to start:

1. A critic might consider the rhetoric of inanimate objects.

(a) Charlie, for instance, is preoccupied with the ticking of his watch in The Summer of the Swans. The ticking watch animates the inanimate because it becomes a metaphor for speech; thus it lends the writer's attitude to Charlie's condition as a retarded mute.

(b) Patricia Wrightson describes her retarded child in A Race Course for Andy as one who sees the world

through a closed window. Andy is figuratively walled in by glass, distorted by the imperfections in glass, unable to communicate through the density of glass; furthermore, outsiders perceive him only through the glass darkly. The window becomes a metaphor for Andy's mental retardation and an image of his separation from the world. The choice of image thus reveals an attitude.

(c) The Cleavers in Me Too describe the retarded Lorna as "dead baggage" (p. 10). Lorna's retarded friend is said to have "mop hair the color of old dust" (p. 157). The images in both cases are static, inanimate, and strongly negative.

(d) Theodora Koob, in Deep Search, shapes her retarded child's building blocks into a metaphor, the meaning of which she implies in the book's title.

2. A critic may consider the rhetoric of titles.

(a) Children's book titles are frequently rhetorical. Don't Take Teddy, Escape the River, Dark Dreams, and Hey, Dummy, among others, are explicit statements, open to interpretation.

(b) The Summer of the Swans, for example, implies an association between Charlie, retarded and mute, and the swans that are also mute. The critic may decide whether Betsy Byars sees Charlie as an ugly

duckling in his handicap, or as a swan who possesses like the bird a certain remote beauty of his own.

3. A critic may consider the rhetoric of names.

A quick survey reveals that most of the retarded children in this bibliography are called by diminutives--Charlie, Aggie, Teddy, Kenny, Andy, Lornie, and the like--all of which are reductive and thus expressive of attitudes. One child is called Nink, a word which has onomatopoetic associations. Daniel's name, as we have seen, has an ironic connection with its Biblical source.

Because the use of images may be seen publicly by most readers as nothing more than illustrative or decorative and not as overt statements of value, it might be expected to betray a writer's real centers of interest and attitudes. Even in ancient times a rhetorician was judged by the effect of his images upon a reader. So it is today. Written literature cannot exist without the clarifying force of imagery, for imagery is a most persuasive form of rhetoric, and there is nothing in its way that is not a consideration of meaning. For a study of the real meaning of mental retardation and other social problems in children's fiction, the implications of imagery are obviously fertile.

If rhetorical criticism, as described in this study, seems then to be a good, practical, and multi-dimensional method of

examining values in children's fiction, it is suggested that this process be applied to the serious analysis of children's books. It is in analyzing and discovering the quality of a writer's image that one may find meaning. It is through the discovery of meaning that critics may hope to effect an improvement in the quality of the stories that teachers, parents, and librarians are willing to give to children, for it is finally in the rhetoric, whatever the subject matter, that the real meaning and value of children's fiction may be made clear.

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Tolkien, J. R. R. The Hobbit or There and Back Again. Illustrated by the author. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1938.

Twain, Mark. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Illustrated by E. W. Kemble. New York: Harper, 1884.

Twain, Mark. The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. Illustrated by Worth Brehon. New York: Harper and Row, 1938.

White, E. B. Stuart Little, Illustrated by Garth Williams. New York: Harper and Row, 1945.

Wrightson, Patricia. A Race Course for Andy. Illustrated by Margaret Horder. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968.

APPENDIX

Bibliography: Retarded Children as Characters
in Juvenile Fiction

Allred, Harry. The Stupids Step Out. Illustrated by James Marshall. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974.

A read-aloud nonsense story for young children. Stanley Q. Stupid and his family are comic fools.

Bowden, Nina. Carrie's War. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1973.

Carrie, evacuated from London during the war, meets Mr. Johnny Gotobed, who is retarded, and Hepzibah, the woman who looks after him.

Bradbury, Bianca. Nancy and her Johnny-O. New York: Washburn, 1970.

Family tensions for fifteen-year-old Nancy are compounded by the mother's insistence that Johnny, who is retarded, be sent to kindergarten, where he is unable to cope.

Brown, Roy. Escape the River. New York: Seabury, 1972.

"Escape" is a word with many connotations in this story of smuggling on the River Thames and of Paul's relationship with his older brother Kenny, who is retarded.

Burch, Robert. Renfroe's Christmas. Illustrated by Rocco Negri. New York: Viking, 1968.

"Crazy Nathan" gets a Christmas present from Renfroe, who makes a sensitive and unsentimental choice for his retarded friend.

Byars, Betsy. The Summer of the Swans. Illustrated by Ted CoConis. New York: Viking, 1970.

Sara's younger brother, Charlie, retarded and mute, is lost in the West Virginia coal fields, in an area of open and abandoned mine shafts and strip mines. John Newbery Medal, 1971.

Carpelan, Bo. Bow Island. Translated by Sheila La Farge. New York: Delacorte, 1971.

Johan spends the summer on an island in the Baltic Sea, where he meets Marvin, who is "appealing," despite his mental retardation, and competent in many practical ways. A poetic story.

Carpelan, Bo. Dolphins in the City. Translated by Sheila La Farge. New York: Delacorte, 1975.

Marvin's mother gets a job in the city, an alien environment, and Marvin gets into trouble.

Christopher, Matt. Long Shot for Paul. Illustrated by Foster Caddell. Boston: Little Brown, 1966.

Paul, though retarded, is taught by his brother to play basketball. When his two free shots tie the game, he begins to be accepted by the players who have scorned him.

Cleaver, Vera and Bill. Ellen Grae. Illustrated by Ellen Raskin. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1967.

A simple-minded man, Ira, is Ellen Grae's friend.

Cleaver, Vera and Bill. Where the Lilies Bloom. Illustrated by Jim Spanfeller. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1969.

Though Mary Call Luther's older sister, Devola, is "cloudy headed," the landlord wants to marry her. The story was a runner-up for the National Book Award, 1970.

Cleaver, Vera and Bill. Me Too. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1973.

Lydia tries to teach her retarded twin, Lorna, to be "normal."

Cone, Molly. Simon. Illustrated by Marvin Friedman. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970.

Julia, a ten-year-old child, is retarded, neglected and abused. When Simon finds her tied up like an animal to keep her from running away, he becomes involved.

Crane, Caroline. A Girl Like Tracy. New York: McKay, 1966.

Tracy is nineteen, beautiful, and retarded. Her younger sister, overwhelmed by the responsibility of caring for her, leads the way to discovering help at a sheltered workshop, where Tracy receives training in vocational and social skills.

Duncan, Jane. Camerons at the Castle. Illustrated by Victor Ambrus. New York: St. Martin, 1964.

The youngest Cameron, Nink, is severely retarded, but he is the one who discovers the secret room of the castle and finds the missing treasure.

Faber, Nancy W. Cathy at the Crossroads. Illustrated by Howard Simon. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1962.

Cathy learns that her new stepmother has a retarded daughter, Anne, who is in an institution.

Faber, Nancy W. Cathy's Secret Kingdom. Illustrated by Howard Simon. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1963.

Cathy works with Anne and helps her overcome a severe emotional problem. It turns out that Anne is not retarded, after all.

Fassler, Joan. One Little Girl. Illustrated by M. Jane Smyth. New York: Human Sciences, 1969.

The emphasis is on the things that Laurie is able to do. A read-aloud book for young children.

Friis-Baastad, Babbis. Don't Take Teddy. Translated by Lise Smme McKinnon. New York: Scribner, 1967.

The taking of Teddy has multiple meanings. Because Mikkel fears that the authorities will take Teddy away, he takes his severely retarded brother to a mountain cabin to hide; the journey is a harrowing one. An instructive book, winner of the Mildred L. Batchelder Award.

George, Jean Craighead. Julie of the Wolves. Illustrated by John Schoenherr. New York: Harper and Row, 1972.

"Dumb Daniel" is a dull, thirteen-year-old husband of Julie by an arranged marriage. John Newbery Medal, 1973.

Holman, Felice. A Year to Grow. New York: Norton, 1968.

Julia becomes friends with Jimmy, the mute and retarded son of the director of her school.

Hunt, Irene. Up a Road Slowly. Chicago: Follett, 1966.

Aggie Kilpin is the protagonist's schoolmate, retarded, neglected, and dirty. John Newbery Medal, 1967.

Johnston, Norma. Of Time and Of Seasons. New York: Atheneum, 1975.

Eighteen-year-old Bedelia is "an innocent" in this literate historical romance set during the Civil War.

Jordan, Hope Dahle. The Fortune Cake. New York: Lothrop, Lee, and Shepard, 1972.

Jenny and her retarded ward, Dawn, are alone in a summer cottage when they are taken hostage by a young man who claims to be an escaped murderer. Dawn and the fortune cake add excitement to the rescue.

Klein, Gerda. The Blue Rose. Photographs by Norma Holt. New York: Lawrence Hall, 1974.

A book of photographs. Jenny is an exceptional girl, as rare as a blue rose.

Koob, Theodora. The Deep Search. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1969.

Paul is ten and badly brain-damaged, but he is the only one who knows what has happened to Petey, who has disappeared. An exciting story.

Little, Jean. Take Wing. Illustrated by Jerry Lazare. Boston: Little, Brown, 1968.

His parents refuse to accept the fact that James is retarded, but his older sister Laurel knows and sets about getting help.

Lively, Penelope. Astercote. Illustrated by Antony Maitland. London: Heinemann, 1970.

Goacher Tranter has appointed himself and his dogs guardian of Astercote and of the mysterious Thing.

Luis, Earlene W., and Millar, Barbara F. Listen, Lissa! New York: Dodd, Mead, 1968.

When Lissa becomes a Candy Stripper she learns about her retarded neighbor, Artie's condition. She helps her younger brother understand when Artie has to be institutionalized. An instructional book.

Magee, Catherine Fowler. One of the Family. New York: McKay, 1964.

A baby with Down's syndrome is born into the family the year that the protagonist is ready to graduate from high school.

O'Daniel, Janet. A Part for Addie. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974.

Nathan, who is retarded, goes for help in a dramatic emergency.

Platt, Kin. Hey, Dummy. Philadelphia: Chilton, 1971.

A world of unrelieved darkness and violence, with Alan as the "dummy," in a book that sets out deliberately to shock.

Reynolds, Pamela. A Different Kind of Sister. New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1968.

Eighteen-year-old Debbie comes home from a school for the retarded in time to complicate the life of her sister, Sally, who wants to be friends with the social set at the stables where she boards her horse. Sally is forced to make some serious personal decisions.

Rinaldo, C. L. Dark Dreams. New York: Harper and Row, 1974.

Carlo, twelve, becomes friends with a retarded man in this story of violence, innuendo, and darkness.

Rodowsky, Colby F. What About Me? New York: Watts, 1976.

Dorrie has a mongoloid younger brother. A story of learning to cope.

Smith, Gene. The Hayburners. Illustrated by Ted Lewin. New York: Delacorte, 1974.

Will's family takes a retarded man, who is by implication a hayburner (a useless horse), as a temporary farm hand for the summer. A worthwhile book.

Southall, Ivan. Finn's Folly. New York: St. Martin, 1969.

A harrowing story of trauma, with a retarded boy "at large."

Southall, Ivan. Hill's End. New York: St. Martin, 1963.

Butch is mildly retarded and a nuisance. But he proves himself worthy in an emergency.

Stucley, Elizabeth. The Contrary Orphans. Illustrated by Charles Mozley. New York: Watts, 1961.

Carlotta, in an institution for homeless children, is befriended by Maggie, the retarded cook, who is loving and kindhearted.

Walker, Pamela. Twyla. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973.

Twyla Krotz, fifteen and retarded, types out her own story in the form of phonetically spelled letters to a young man she admires. A pathetic story.

Williams, Jay. Stupid Marco. Illustrated by Frinso Henstra. New York: Parents, 1970.

Stupid Marco is "cheerful, good-hearted and handsome," so he is fun to be with. A picture book for young children.

Wrightson, Patricia. A Race Course for Andy. Illustrated by Margaret Horder. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968.

When Andy buys the race track from a tramp for three dollars, the action begins. An American Library Association Notable Book.

Mary Alford Hunter

an indomitable spirit in illness and adversity

died July 13, 1978

The hand that hath made you fair hath made you good.
The goodness that is cheap in beauty makes beauty brief
in goodness; but grace, being the soul of your complexion,
shall keep the body of it ever fair.

--Measure for Measure