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A STUDY OF THE CRITICISM OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE 1969-1979

The Ohio State University

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A STUDY OF THE CRITICISM OF
CHILDREN'S LITERATURE 1969-1979

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

by

Betty Marion Brett, B.A.(Ed.), B.L.S., M.Ed.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University

1981

Reading Committee:
Charlotte S. Huck
Martha L. King
Frank Zidonis

Approved by

Charlotte S. Huck
Adviser
College of Education
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to a number of individuals who directly or indirectly have helped to make this study possible.

Long before the study actually began Professor Sheila Egoff of the University of British Columbia sowed the seeds of what became for me a compelling interest in children's literature. I was privileged to have been her student.

William and Phoebe Brett were no longer present when the study was undertaken but their memory inspired both the decision to begin and the will to finish it. I owe to them a debt beyond words. Other members of my family were always understanding and supportive.

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To the members of my Committee, Professor Martha King and Professor Frank Zidonis, I owe sincere thanks for their guidance, particularly in the initial stages of the project when ideas were being crystallized. To Professor Charlotte Huck, the Committee Chair, I am deeply grateful. Teacher and mentor, she initiated the idea behind the study and directed its development. Her wisdom, warmth, and professionalism are a source of inspiration and encouragement for her students.
VITA

October 19, 1930 ... Born - Barr'd Island, Newfoundland, Canada.

June, 1945 ... Graduated from High School.

Jan.-April, 1946 ... Emergency Supply Teacher, One room school, K-VI.

July-August, 1946 ... Newfoundland Department of Education Summer Training program. Probationer's license to teach.

1946-1947 ... Teacher. K-VIII. One room school.

1947-1948 ... University student. The Memorial University of Newfoundland.

1948-1950 ... Principal and teacher. Two room school. K-XI. Teaching all subjects, VII-XI.

1950-1952 ... University student. The Memorial University of Newfoundland.

1952-1953 ... Principal and teacher. Three room school. K-XI. Teaching all subjects, IX-XI.

1953-1954 ... University student. The Memorial University of Newfoundland.

1954 ... B.A.(Ed.). The Memorial University of Newfoundland.

1954-1963 ... High school principal and teacher. Newfoundland Department of Education.

1963-1964 ... Graduate Studies, University of Alberta.

1964 ... M.Ed. University of Alberta, Canada. (Secondary English.)

1964-1970 ... English teacher and Curriculum Coordinator. Newfoundland Department of Education.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970-1971</td>
<td>Graduate Studies</td>
<td>University of British Columbia, Canada.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>B.L.S.</td>
<td>University of British Columbia, Canada.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971-1973</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Department of Curriculum and Instruction,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Memorial University of Newfoundland.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1973-1978</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>Department of Curriculum and Instruction,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Memorial University of Newfoundland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-1980</td>
<td>Graduate Studies</td>
<td>The Ohio State University, Columbus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>Department of Curriculum and Instruction,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Memorial University of Newfoundland.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIELDS OF STUDY

MAJOR FIELD

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Studies in Children's Literature
   Professor Charlotte S. Huck

Studies in Adolescent Literature
   Professor Frank Zidonis

Studies in Language Arts
   Professor Martha L. King
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. THE STUDY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background to the Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticism of Children's Books—Historical Perspective</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticism of Children's Books—A Contemporary Perspective</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories of Criticism</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Problem</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of the Period</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Sources of Information</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of Specific Sources</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sample</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of Items for Study and Analysis</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of the Report</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. AN OVERVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE: ESTABLISHING A BASIS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOR CRITICISM</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Page

II. AN OVERVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE: ESTABLISHING A BASIS FOR CRITICISM (Cont'd)

The Nature of Literature ......................... 26

The Pragmatic Approach .......................... 26
The Expressive Approach .......................... 27
The Objective Approach ......................... 29
The Archetypal Approach ......................... 30
Synthesis ...................................... 30

The Nature of Children's Literature .............. 32

Children's Literature as a Part of all
Literature .................................... 32
Distinctive Features of Children's Literature .. 38
Synthesis ...................................... 49

The Function of Criticism ........................ 50

Criticism of the Arts ............................ 50
Criticism and Children's Literature ............. 51
The Focus of Criticism .......................... 52
Synthesis ...................................... 54

III. WORK-CENTERED CRITICISM ................... 56

Introduction ...................................... 56
Landmark Works .................................. 60

Literary Elements in Children's Literature ....... 67

Plot ............................................. 67
Characterization ................................ 71
Theme .......................................... 74
Style .......................................... 77
Synthesis and Emerging Principles .............. 81

The Literature of Oral Tradition .................. 84

The Nature of Traditional Literature ............. 84
Versions for Children ........................... 86
Brutality and Horror in Traditional
Literature .................................... 92
Synthesis and Emerging Principles .............. 94

vii
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>III. WORK-CENTERED CRITICISM (Cont'd)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Fiction</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Nature of Historical Fiction</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Authenticity and Art in Historical Fiction</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Point of View in Historical Fiction</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Language of Historical Fiction</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Problems in Writing Historical Fiction for Children</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Synthesis and Emerging Principles</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Nature of Biography</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Choice of Subject in Biography</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Point of View in Biography</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Synthesis and Emerging Principles</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantasy</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Nature of Fantasy</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Reality of Fantasy</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Secondary Worlds of Fantasy</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Fantasy of Escapism</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Synthesis and Emerging Principles</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science Fiction</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Synthesis and Emerging Principles</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Nature of Poetry</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Subject Matter and Technique in Children's Poetry</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Synthesis and Emerging Principles</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture Books</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Nature of the Picture Book</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Paucity of Artistic Criticism</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Problems in Picture Books</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Criteria for Excellence in Picture Books</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Synthesis and Emerging Principles</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>WORK-CENTERED CRITICISM (Cont'd)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informational Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informational Books as Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Criteria for Excellence in Informational Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Synthesis and Emerging Principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CHILD-CENTERED CRITICISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Question of Audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Synthesis and Emerging Principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Sense of Audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing for Oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing for Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Synthesis and Emerging Principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children and Literary Merit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Synthesis and Emerging Principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Developmental Approach to Criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Synthesis and Emerging Principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children's Response to Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Synthesis and Emerging Principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children's Sense of Story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Synthesis and Emerging Principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ISSUES-CENTERED CRITICISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Issues in the Content of Children's Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Synthesis and Emerging Principles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## V. ISSUES-CENTERED CRITICISM (Cont'd)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Presentation of Minority Races in</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's Books</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language in Racism</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypes in the Presentation of Minority Races</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics, Racism, and Criticism</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectivity and criticism</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The right to authorship</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflicting criticism</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria for Evaluation of Books on Racial Themes</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis and Emerging Principles</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexism</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexism in Children's Books</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language in Sexism</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypes in Presentation of Sexes</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics, Sexism and Criticism</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria for the Identification of Non-sexist Books</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis and Emerging Principles</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handicapism</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Handicapped in Society</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Portrayal of the Handicapped in Children's Books</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis and Emerging Principles</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ageism</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Portrayal of the Elderly in Children's Books</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis and Emerging Principles</td>
<td>362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Realism</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Realism in Children's Books</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty of Realism</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriateness of Theme and Approach</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis and Emerging Principles</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter

V. ISSUES-CENTERED CRITICISM (Cont'd)

Violence ........................................ 382
The Nature of Violence ........................ 382
Violence in Children's Books ........ ..... 383
The Effect of Violence in Children's Books ... 385
The Appropriate Depiction of Violence in
Children's Books ............................ 386
Criteria for Evaluation of Violence in
Children's Books ............................ 392
Synthesis and Emerging Principles ............ 393

Environmental Control .......................... 394

Synthesis and Emerging Principles ............ 401

Conclusion ..................................... 402

VI. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS ............. 404

The Nature of the Problem ...................... 404

Methodology ................................... 404

Questions, Answers, and Implications ............ 407

Principles of Work-Centered Criticism .......... 427
Principles of Child-Centered Criticism .......... 431
Principles of Issues-Centered Criticism .... 431

Recommendations .............................. 439

BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................... 443

APPENDIX A: CHILDREN'S BOOKS MENTIONED IN TEXT . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 472
APPENDIX B: CRITICISM OF THE WORKS OF INDIVIDUAL
AUTHORS ............................................ 479
APPENDIX C: PERIODICALS SAMPLED ............. 488
CHAPTER I

THE STUDY

Background to the Study

Introduction

Literature of excellence is always likely to be associated with a strong and comprehensive criticism, for, as Miller (1946) affirms, "the arts flourish where there is a sound, critical judgment to examine and appraise" (in Haviland, 1973, p. 403). In the absence of such a criticism the author will degenerate, Cranby (1967) believes, since one of the chief requirements for good literature is missing. Southall (in Haviland, 1973), a distinguished author of children's books, contends that the contribution of the conscientious critic is as valuable to the literature of a country as is that of the conscientious writer. In his creative efforts to produce a work of some significance the author "bears his soul at some personal risk," Southall explains, and any critic who is desirous of fulfilling a constructive function can do no less. The author and the critic have mutual need of each other; for both, integrity is the ultimate truth (p. 414).

Criticism of Children's Books—Historical Perspective

Concern for a valid criticism of children's literature is not a new phenomenon. Writing in the United States more than a century ago,
Horace Scudder (in Haviland, 1973), himself a fervent believer in the importance of a serious assessment of books for children, expressed his concerns thus:

A literature is forming which is destined to act powerfully upon general letters; hitherto it has been little disturbed by critics, but the time must soon come, if it has not already come, when students of literature must consider the character and tendency of Children's Letters; when all who have at heart the best interests of the Kingdom of Letters must look sharply to this Principality. (pp. 21-22)

Fifty years earlier Sarah Trimmer (in Haviland, 1973) used the pages of her Guardian of Education to alert her English readers to the "much mischief" lying inherent in the books for children which at that time had "multiplied to an astonishing and alarming degree" (p. 4). Books even then were not all of equal merit and Trimmer was adamant in her insistence that critical judgment be exercised by all who selected books for children. Although the "leaven of false philosophy" had infiltrated even the school texts, she admitted that there were "in the mixed multitude" some books that were of good quality and some "that might be rendered so with a little trouble in revising them" (p. 6). Books for children, in Trimmer's judgment, should be "correct in principle and cautious in expression." In her critical reviews she warned against putting into the hands of children books which were improper in either subject matter or language (p. 7).

Most historical and critical surveys of children's literature identify the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth as the first Golden Age in children's books in both England and the United States. It was not merely a coincidence, as Nesbit (1967) explains, that in this period there was a
proliferation of articles and essays about children's literature, as well as reviews and selected lists of children's books.

What has been described as a milestone in early literary criticism appeared anonymously in the Quarterly Review in 1844 (in Haviland, p. 8). In what must have been among the first survey articles to deal exclusively with writings for children, the author, later identified as Elizabeth Rigby, speaks out boldly against the spate of unimaginative and didactic literature being written for children. Challenging the rigid adherence to a predetermined classification of books for children, Rigby maintains:

In truth it is good for them both that the young and the old should frequently exchange libraries. We give them a world of new ideas, but they do more, for they purify and freshen our old ones. (p. 12)

Her list of recommended books includes folklore and classic fiction as well as the more traditional type of school books. Comments about the books reflect critical discrimination. With reference to German Popular Tales translated from Grimm, for example, the author recommends that care be taken in getting the original edition of 1823, which one was illustrated by George Cruikshank, for "a baser edition" was also in circulation (p. 14). The avowed purpose of this article is in the best tradition of literary criticism in any period, whether 1844 or 1979:

We should be happy if, by calling attention to the real excellence and beauty of a genuine child's book, we could assist in raising the standard of the art itself - the only efficient way it seems to us, of checking the torrent of dressed up trumpery which is now poured upon the public. (p. 18)
In his comprehensive study of the reviewing of children's books in the United States during the period 1865-1881, Darling (1968) discovered that in that country serious criticism of children's books had indeed begun before the end of the nineteenth century. The criticism was almost entirely the work of reviewers who, according to Darling, had respect for children's books as a part of literature and were sensitive to the new trends of the period. This notwithstanding, Moore (1931) declared that "standards of appraisal consistently applied to the consideration of children's books as holding a place in contemporary fiction was unknown in 1918" (p. 2). It was in that year that she was invited to contribute to *The Bookman* an article on the children's book of the year. Her critical review of Hudson's *Little Boy Lost* was, according to Meigs et al. (1969),

> a fine example of a technique of comparison which is highly effective when the critic has a knowledge of literature and literary effects sufficient to enable him to make an exact and telling comparison of one book with another. (p. 389)

Noting that Moore's critical essays served to establish books for children "on an equal footing with the literature of the adult world" (p. ix), Sayers (in Moore, 1961) identified in her the characteristics of a genuine critic: long and close association with writers, illustrators and publishers; a knowledge and love of both children and books; an intellectual discipline and discernment; and a clear concept of the function of the critic (p. ix).

*Criticism of Children's Books—A Contemporary Perspective*

Since children's literature on both sides of the Atlantic had, by the end of the first quarter of this century, become well established
as a commodity deserving of critical study, the questionable status now attributed to it appears particularly astounding. Describing children's literature as being "barely discussible at a respectable, intellectual level," Townsend (1971b) believes that in order for children's books to be disassociated from "kiddy lit" and all the connotations implied by that "squirmy term," and taken seriously as literature, they must be considered "with critical strictness" (p. 382). His assessment of the present situation is clear and condemnatory:

When we look for individual assessments of actual books (as distinct from general articles on children's literature and reading) we find that most of what is written comes under the headings of a. overwhelmingly reviews, b. aids to book selection, c. general surveys. . . . There is little writing that I think could be dignified with the name of criticism. (p. 378)

Gerhardt (1973) attributes the dearth of critical writing about books for children in the United States to the continuous oversupply, which she considers to be "the greatest deterrent to effective criticism in any art form" (p. viii), and to the low status accorded to teachers of children's literature. Generally practicing librarians and not full-time faculty members, teachers of children's literature, according to Gerhardt, lack the time and motivation to produce scholarly critical writing.

Any assessment of either the quantity or the quality of the current criticism of children's books must be determined in part by one's definition of criticism. Townsend (1971b) distinguishes between criticism and reviews, book selection aids and general surveys. Gerhardt (1973) refers to critical essays and maintains that "children's librarians have, perforce become reviewers, without the time to become
critics" (p. vii). Criticism may manifest itself in many forms, however, and in some sense we are all critics, for as Heins (1970) suggests, "Every time we pass judgment on a book or express enthusiasm for it we are engaging in a critical act" (p. 265). Agreeing that "different forms of assessment are valid for different purposes," Townsend (1971b) nevertheless points out that the viewpoints of psychologists, sociologists and educationalists have little in common with each other or with those whose approach to criticism is mainly literary (p. 376). What is of primary importance is not so much the form that the criticism takes but its purpose and its nature. Whoever the critics are, the form, the style, and the quality of the critical statement will be largely shaped by the purpose it is designed to serve and the audience for which it is intended.

Categories of Criticism

Although criticism in one form or another has for a long time been applied to books for children, Meek, Warlow and Barton (1978) believe that the critics fall generally into two main categories:

There are those who undertake ... 'stern critical appraisal according to high literary standards on behalf of the discerning adult'. ... And there are those who look at children's literature on behalf of the child, trying to understand his needs and advising parents and teachers accordingly. (p. 263)

Gerhardt (1973) identifies another category—one focusing on the analysis of racism, sexism, or ethnic images (p. ix). Concern with fiction as a medium of propaganda has, she believes, recently taken priority over concern for those qualities of excellence so central to the consideration of any art form (p. ix). Granstrom and Silvey (in MacCann & Woodard, 1977) refer to the 'isms' currently assailing
children's books:

feminism, sexism, racism, and even middle-class white Americanism; and most of the voices of protest are those of America's minority groups. It seems to be a time for change, but also a time to pause, to reflect, to exercise considered judgment. (p. 97)

Much of the present criticism of children's books falls into these three categories which may be identified as work-centered, child-centered, and issues-centered. Egoff, Stubbs and Ashley (1969) followed a work-centered approach to criticism when they included in their collection of readings only those articles which dealt with children's literature "as an essential part of the whole realm of literary activity, to be discussed in the same terms and judged by the same standards that would apply to any other branch of writing" (p. xv). This work-centered approach was also the one adopted by Haviland (1973). In Meek et al. (1978) there has, however, been a marked shift in emphasis from the work to the reader. This change in emphasis provides the justification for the collection:

It would be difficult to justify another collection of essays such as this, unless it opened up a way forward from the minority cult which children's literature can so easily become if the authors and the critics, mutually sustaining as they are, lose sight of the readers. (p. 4)

But whether the focus is on the work as a representation of art, the writer as artist, the reader as audience, or the subject matter as issues—or on any other aspect—there is no mistaking the importance of a valid literary criticism. The case for such a criticism is forcefully presented by Meigs et al. (1969):

There is still need for more penetrating and knowledgeable criticism, which estimates the quality of a book in relation to what it is rather than to what it is not; which dwells upon significances, not upon trivialities; which
consider a book in its totality, rather than allows a minor aspect to distract the whole; which is authoritative in its perspective of the past and its knowledge of the present. (p. 389)

Statement of the Problem

The existence of any body of criticism related to literature for children has in the past decade been sharply called into question. As a consequence, questioned also has been the status of children's literature, either as an integral part of all literature or as a separate and independent form of art. Indispensable to the development of the arts in any society is the simultaneous growth of a valid criticism and, until there exists for children's literature a sound and respected critical assessment in some unified and visible form, its status will remain uncertain. Townsend (1971b) maintains that before books for children are ever taken seriously as literature they must be subjected to critical examination. His observation that there is little writing about children's literature that can be seriously considered as criticism, provides the focus for this study. The primary purpose of the study, then, is to survey the present state of the art of criticism as it relates to children's literature. More specifically, it will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What evidence is there of the existence of a body of critical and evaluative writing associated with children's literature?

2. To what extent is it possible to categorize such critical and evaluative writings as do exist as work-centered, child-centered, and issues-centered?
3. Who are the critics?

4. How comprehensive is the criticism which does exist, and what is the present state of the art?

5. What are the prevailing principles emerging from an examination of the critical writings?

6. What evidence is there of shifting emphases in the criticism of children's literature within the past decade?

Significance of the Problem

Critical reaction to children's literature exists in many forms in a variety of sources, and the critic may appear in many guises. Parents, teachers, librarians, authors, illustrators and publishers all pass judgment on books for children. Such judgment may be direct and overt; it may be indirect and subtle; it may be scholarly and esoteric; it may be personal and popular; it may be altruistic or egocentric in purpose. Its motivation may be aesthetic, political or mercenary. It may have as its focus the work, the audience, or the subject matter. Its diversity and diffusion often result in complexity and chaos, with its function and very existence being questioned. This study attempts to consolidate, synthesize, evaluate and make accessible what presently exists by way of "critical reaction" to children's literature. By so doing it is hoped to confirm the existence of a body of criticism related to children's literature and to bring some shape and form to that criticism. The study is important in that no similar study appears to have been undertaken. Inasmuch as the study is introductory and exploratory it may establish some broad guidelines, thus laying the groundwork for additional studies which may deal more
precisely with particular aspects of the whole. Since the number of books presently being published for children is so great as to make personal perusal of all of them impossible, this study may have particular significance for teachers of children's literature, classroom teachers, librarians and others who should be aware of the scope and quality of the criticism of children's literature.

**Limitations of the Study**

1. The survey was limited to a ten-year period—the previous decade.

2. The volume of the material in which children's books are written about limits the feasibility of any single, exhaustive study. The present survey is based on a sampling of the writings of the period under study.

3. The sample is purposive and hence is reflective of the judgment of the researcher. The fallibility of that judgment must be perceived as a limitation.

4. No attempt was made to include in the survey either popular magazines and newspapers or specialized occasional papers.

5. Books designed as texts in the study of children's literature were generally excluded from the survey, as were works of historical and critical survey.

6. Because of the overwhelming volume of reviews of children's books in the decade 1969-1979, no attempt was made to include them in the major sources of the survey.

7. Writings about children's books are scattered, often embedded in articles, essays and columns not ostensibly concerned with criticism. The most diligent search may miss items of import.
8. The volume of the critical writings dealing with particular works and/or the collected works of individual authors made any comprehensive examination of the same unmanageable in the context of this study, which has been restricted to the general principles of criticism.

9. Interpretation and analysis of the individual items included in the survey reflect the judgment and personal philosophy of the researcher. While objectivity was aimed for, a study which depends entirely on human assessment is bound to reflect the bias of the researcher.

**Definition of Terms**

In this study particular meanings have been assigned to a number of terms which in other contexts may have different connotations. These terms are defined below.

**Children's Books**

Children's books are considered to be those published through the children's departments of publishing houses, appearing on the publishers' children's lists and reviewed and advertised as books for children. They may be fiction or nonfiction, may deal with a wide variety of subject matter, and may appear in a number of formats.

**Children's Literature**

An integral part of all literature, children's literature includes those books of past and present which, though not written specifically for children, have been taken over by them; and books written for children which remain true to those qualities of excellence that
characterize all good literature. More particularly, children's literature may be defined as that body of children's books which, in the combined judgment of teachers and librarians, have been included in the recommended lists compiled by professional organizations or other respected and reputable bodies. The books may be fiction or nonfiction, may deal with a wide variety of topics and may appear in a number of formats.

Selection Aids

Selection aids, as distinct from publishers' catalogues or other forms of "awareness lists" and buying guides, are specialized reviewing media and recommended book lists. Usually sponsored by professional rather than commercial interests, they exist to assist teachers and parents in selecting books of excellence for children. Ideally, the recommended lists will include a brief annotation as well as a statement of recommendation.

Criticism

In this study criticism refers to evaluative writings that either in whole or in part are concerned with some aspect of the nature, function or quality of literature. The focus of the critical attention may be on the work itself, the needs of the child reader, or the issues raised within the work. Whatever the focus, criticism implies a concern with the ultimate integrity of literature, and may appear in a variety of forms.
Critic

The critic is the individual who focuses evaluative attention on some aspect of the nature, function or quality of literature. While any individual may adopt such a role, there are those who by virtue of background, training and experience are better able to interpret, analyze, and compare, and thus bring more enlightened insight and judgment to the consideration of individual or collected works. The best-informed critical opinion is likely to appear in the professional literature, and it is such professional literature which provides the sources for this study.

Judgmental or Purposive Sample

A judgmental or purposive sample is one selected by the researcher not by statistical methods and procedures but on the basis of personal knowledge of the population, its elements, and the nature of the research aims (Babbie, 1973).

Methodology

The primary purpose of this study was to survey the state of the art of critical and evaluative writing related to children's books. More specifically, the study attempted to answer a number of related questions:

1. What evidence is there of the existence of a body of critical and evaluative writing associated with children's literature?

2. To what extent is it possible to categorize such critical and evaluative writings as do exist as work-centered, child-centered, and issues-centered?
3. Who are the critics?

4. How comprehensive is the criticism which does exist, and what is the present state of the art?

5. What are the prevailing principles emerging from an examination of the critical writings?

6. What evidence is there of shifting emphases in the criticism of children's literature within the past decade?

Selection of the Period

While recognizing the value of a comprehensive study of all critical and evaluative writing related to children's books, the researcher decided to limit the present survey to one decade only. This limitation was imposed because of the bulk of the material to be examined and the time required to make the necessary analysis of the same.

The choice of the particular period 1969-1979 was not arbitrary. Since the study was concerned with the present state of the art, it was imperative to make the survey as current as possible. As well, there was some indication that the decade 1969-1979 might be an eventful one to study. The beginning of this decade was marked by the publication of a collection of essays and articles on children's literature edited by three Canadian educators. Egoff et al. (1969) claimed that no previous collection of writings on children's literature had been characterized by such diversity, nor had there been heretofore such a broad representation of writers from both sides of the Atlantic. In selecting items for inclusion the editors were unequivocal in their assertion that children's literature is a part of all literature and must be judged by the same standards as are applied to all literature.
They rejected any idea of a special scale of values for children's books. Their emphasis is on the work itself and their avowed purpose is to make accessible a body of critical writing related to children's literature. Toward the end of the decade another collection of works appeared, again with representation from Great Britain and North America. Meek et al. (1978) were still concerned with children and their reading but the main focus of attention has changed from the work to the reader. The proposed study attempts to discover whether such a shift in emphasis is generally apparent in the critical and evaluative writings of the period.

Also, in the period proposed for study the existence of any body of critical writing related to children's books had been seriously questioned. Townsend (1971b) and Gerhardt (1973) both identified the lack of a serious criticism as a contributory factor to the intellectual confusion surrounding children's literature.

For these reasons the period 1969-1979 appeared to be an appropriate one for study.

General Sources of Information

Articles, essays, and general information germane to the study were obtained from three major sources: books, the general periodical literature, and a judgmental sampling of periodicals from the United States, Great Britain and Canada, 1969-1979.

Because of the overwhelming volume of the reviews of children's books in the decade 1969-1979, no attempt was made to include reviews in the major sources of information. This decision was primarily pragmatic rather than philosophical, although the status of the review
as a form of criticism is the subject of some debate. The review, regarded by many as journalism rather than criticism, may be and often is informative, narrative and descriptive, rather than critical and evaluative. Admittedly reviews may vary in style, purpose, and critical perceptiveness, and they do make accessible a body of information which, for many, may constitute the only form of criticism available. Also, they provide a useful source of information for those involved in the selection of books for children. For these reasons their exclusion has been noted as a limitation of the study. A survey of the reviewing of children's books in the period under study may well be the subject of another study.

Identification of Specific Sources

1. Books. Books pertaining to the study were identified through the use of all appropriate standard bibliographic tools. While the major search was restricted to material published within the period under study, this restriction was relaxed to permit the inclusion of such landmarks in criticism as *Books Children and Men* (Hazard, trans. by Mitchell, 1944), *The Unreluctant Years* (Smith, 1953), *The Green and Burning Tree* (Cameron, 1969), and *From Two to Five* (Chukovsky, 1925, trans. and edited by Morton, 1963). Books designed specifically as texts and those primarily concerned with historical survey were generally omitted from this study. Reference has been made in some instances, however, to a particular work which offered a new or different perspective, or provided additional elaboration of a principle explored elsewhere.
2. Periodical Literature. Articles and essays from the periodical literature were searched with the aid of all standard bibliographic tools. The search was restricted to those published in the period under study. Exception was made in the case of articles which, originally published prior to 1969, have reappeared in recent collections.

3. Judgmental Sample of Periodicals, 1969-1979. Generally because of the international nature of children's literature, but more particularly because of the relationship that exists among the three countries in the publication and distribution of books, periodicals from the United States, Great Britain and Canada were included in the survey. The volume of the periodicals carrying some form of assessment of children's books prohibited a comprehensive survey. Those included comprise a judgmental sample. No item has been included at random. Represented in the sample are the publishing trade and the library and teaching professions.

The Sample

The initial plans for the study called for a wider sample of periodicals than was finally adopted. The rationale governing the selection of items for the preliminary sample was that such items should represent the book trade as well as the library and teaching professions, and should be those most likely to reflect the state of the art of the criticism of children's literature during the last decade in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and internationally. The particular periodicals selected for the preliminary sample are identified and described below.
The United States

1. Publishers Weekly. 1872–

The official organ of the book-publishing trade, this periodical provides weekly listings of new books as well as ideas, editorials, articles, and such other services as are designed to provide information for those involved in the book business.

2. Wilson Library Bulletin. 1914–

The expressed purpose of this periodical is to keep librarians informed about library matters. Published monthly (except July and August), it is comprehensive in scope and each issue is devoted to the exploration of a particular theme. One issue yearly is devoted to the general subject of children's literature.

3. Top of the News. 1946–

A quarterly publication of the American Library Association, Top of the News is the official journal of the divisions of that Association which serve those who work with children and young adults in all types of libraries. It is edited to be of particular use to teachers and librarians and, in the literature, it is generally considered indispensable as a selection aid. It includes articles on children's literature and each spring publishes the May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture.

4. The Horn Book Magazine. 1924–

This magazine, published six times yearly, reviews and evaluates children's books, and features critical articles on all subjects pertaining to the field of children's literature. A particular strength is the caliber of its articles, which are generally written by 'experts'. Library literature describes it as an essential source of information,
indispensable to both teachers and librarians.

5. **School Library Journal. 1954-**

      Designed primarily for children, young adults, and school librarians, and published nine times yearly (September-May), this journal is the most extensive, single book-reviewing publication available. Its editorial emphasis is generally critical, and it features articles on controversial subjects. Reputable selection aids rate it as an invaluable source of information.

6. **Elementary English/Language Arts. 1924-**

      A publication of the National Council of Teachers of English, Elementary English is designed primarily for the elementary teacher. It contains a wide variety of articles on subjects pertaining to the language arts, and these are written by professionals. Articles on children's literature are among its regular features. Its contribution to professional literature is labeled 'unique'. Since 1975 this periodical has appeared under the title Language Arts.

**Canada**

1. **Quill and Quire. 1935-**

      The magazine of the book-publishing trade, Quill and Quire attempts to provide all pertinent information for those in the book business.

2. **Canadian Library Journal. 1944-**

      A bi-monthly publication, this periodical is the official organ of the Canadian Library Association.

3. **In Review: Canadian Books for Children. 1967-**

      Published quarterly as a service for school libraries, In Review includes profiles of authors, brief articles on a variety of subjects,
and critical reviews of children's books.

4. **Canadian Children's Literature. 1975-**

    Designed for those who guide children's reading in schools and in libraries, as well as at home, this periodical, published quarterly, contains authoritative articles and in-depth reviews of children's books. Its avowed purpose is to provide a valid criticism.

**Great Britain**

1. **Bookseller. 1858-**

    The British counterpart of the American *Publishers' Weekly* and the Canadian *Quill and Quire*, this periodical is the official organ of the book-publishing trade.

2. **The School Librarian. 1937-**

    Published three times yearly, this journal of the School Library Association aims to promote the use of the school library as an instrument of education.

3. **Signal. 1970-**

    Dedicated to the evaluation of children's literature, *Signal* is published three times yearly. Its strength is its critical articles which are usually written by recognized 'experts' in the field.

**International**

1. **Children's Literature in Education. 1970-**

    *Children's Literature in Education*, which began as a British publication, has, since 1973, included American representation on its editorial committee in order to provide an American perspective on children's literature. Published four times yearly, this periodical
has a commitment to evaluation, its editorial policy being to provide for teachers and librarians a 'serious and sustained criticism' of literature for children. Its emphasis is both literary and educational and its critical articles reflect their authors' concern for appropriate standards of judgment in dealing with juvenile books.

2. **Bookbird. 1963-**

A quarterly publication concerned with literature for children and young people, **Bookbird** provides news from all over the world, with critical reviews and recommendations for translation.

Once these periodicals had been identified, all issues for the decade 1969-1979 were sampled and their contents searched for evidence of the inclusion of critical articles pertaining to this study. The search revealed that not all of the periodicals included in the preliminary sample were useful, and, consequently, six were dropped. **Publishers' Weekly** was dropped from the United States listings; **Quill and Quire**, **Canadian Library Journal** and **In Review** from the Canadian; **Bookseller** from the British; and **Bookbird** from the International. The official organs of the book-publishing trade (**Publishers' Weekly**, **Quill and Quire** and **Bookseller**) were primarily concerned with news of the book-publishing industry rather than criticism; **Canadian Library Journal** did not concern itself with criticism of children's books; **In Review**'s emphasis proved to be critical reviews rather than articles of criticism; and **Bookbird** provided book news from around the world, with recommendations for translation, but very little by way of critical articles.
The revised sample included the nine periodicals listed below.

**The United States**
- Elementary English/Language Arts
- The Horn Book Magazine
- The School Library Journal
- Top of the News
- Wilson Library Bulletin

**Canada**
- Canadian Children's Literature

**Great Britain**
- Signal
- The School Librarian

**International**
- Children's Literature in Education

**Selection of Items for Study and Analysis**

Judicious selection of items for study and analysis is central to this survey. In deciding upon items for inclusion, the researcher has been bound by the definition of criticism adopted for this study. Because the work is introductory and exploratory, the interpretation of the term criticism was kept deliberately broad. Critical or evaluative writings were considered to be those that addressed some aspect of the nature, function and quality of the literature under discussion. The focus of the criticism might be on the work itself, including such things as the literary elements, the authors' point of view or the
authors' style and technique; it might be on the developmental needs of the child-reader; it might be on the social issues raised by the work, and the accurate presentation of the same. Whatever the focus, in order for the writing to be included there had to be evidence of some concern with the ultimate integrity of literature. Excluded from the analysis were writings of an historical or survey nature, as well as those that were purely descriptive or narrative.

The task of selection was complicated by the fact that some pieces of writing which were described by the authors, editors or publishers as being critical, upon closer observation appeared to be mainly descriptive. Conversely, there are works such as Cameron's *The Green and Burning Tree* which deny any claims to criticism but are, nonetheless, critical in stance. There are also writings of a very general nature which have seeds of criticism embedded within them. The researcher's personal judgment must be the last recourse.

Items identified for inclusion were studied carefully for interpretation and analysis of content, and identification of critical viewpoint. From an examination of the body of critical opinion identified, there emerges some picture of the present state of the art of criticism as it relates to children's literature, as well as information which provides answers to the specific questions posed by the study.

**Organization of the Report**

The study is reported in six chapters. Chapter I provides the background for the study, states the problem and its significance, identifies the limitations of the study, defines particular terms, and details the methodology.
Chapter II presents an overview of the related literature for the purpose of establishing a basis for criticism. More specifically, it examines the nature of literature as it has been perceived by scholar and critic; the dual nature of children's literature—as a part of all literature, and with distinctive features which characterize it as literature for children; and the nature of criticism, in function and focus.

Chapter III reports that body of criticism which has been labeled as work-centered or literary criticism. It is largely concerned with the criticism of particular literary genres. It includes also that criticism which deals in general terms with the literary elements of plot, characterization, style, and theme.

Chapter IV is a report of child-centered criticism. It includes a consideration of the question of audience, a sense of audience, the child and literary merit, a developmental approach to the criticism of children's literature, children's response to literature, and children's developing sense of story.

Chapter V focuses on criticism which is issues-centered. In particular, it examines criticism which relates to the presentation in children's books of racism, sexism, handicapism, ageism, the new realism, violence, and environmental control.

The emerging picture of the state of the art of criticism as it relates to children's literature is outlined in Chapter VI. On the basis of the body of critical opinion examined, answers are provided for the six questions which were identified in the purpose of the study (p. 8) and some recommendations for further study are suggested.
CHAPTER II
AN OVERVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE: ESTABLISHING A BASIS FOR CRITICISM

Introduction

The basis for criticism is the interdependence of creator and critic. Criticism presupposes creation, but the critic no less than the creator is concerned with artistic excellence, however it may be defined. While the genuine critic's reaction to any work of art will be in response to the individual work itself, it must be rooted in a genuine perception of the nature and function of the larger body of which the work is a particular example. The demands made upon the work, the standards by which its integrity is assessed, the strengths and weaknesses identified are all determined by what the critic believes about excellence in the form of art represented. This is to say that an objective and enlightened assessment of the "part" results from knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the larger "whole."

The confusion which at present appears to characterize the critical assessment of children's books may thus be seen as a part of the confusion surrounding the nature and function of children's literature. Literature for childhood in any society will reflect the values of that society and the beliefs of that society regarding the nature of both children and books. The criticism of adult literature, although characterized by different approaches and different emphases, has been
unified by a general agreement of what literature is. Unfortunately no such unifying principle exists for children's literature. There exists the pragmatic view that since children's books are chiefly intended for reading practice they are not susceptible to serious critical treatment; there is the "custodial" point of view that only a "certain type of literature" is appropriate for children, since in their impressionable years they must be protected from the harm which may result from indiscriminate exposure to books; there is the view that children's literature is but one branch of literature and hence must be subject to the same critical standards as are all literary works. The thesis underlying this study is that children's literature while possessed of its own distinctive features is an integral part of all literature. For this reason it is now proposed to place literature itself in some critical perspective, to explore the relationship between children's literature and the main body of literature and examine the function of criticism as it relates to both.

The Nature of Literature

The Pragmatic Approach

While Plato expelled from his realm the "honeyed muse" of poetry he was nevertheless receptive to appeals in her defence, challenging her supporters to show "not only that she is pleasant but useful to States and to human life" (in Bate, 1952, p. 48). Aristotle, whose Poetics has been described as "perhaps the most influential work in the entire history of criticism" (Bate, 1952, p. 13) was one of her defenders. He justifies poetry on the grounds of its truth and
validity as an imitation of nature and also its morally desirable
effect on the human mind (Bate, 1952, p. 14). Aristotle's philosophy
was shared by both Horace (in Bate, 1952) and Sidney (in Bate, 1952).
Horace perceived the aim of the poet as "to inform or delight or to
combine together, in what he says both pleasure and applicability to
life" (p. 56), and to Sidney poesy or the art of imitation is:

> a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth . . .
a speaking picture; with this end to teach and delight.  
(p. 86)

This idea of poetry or imaginative writing as a medium of instruc-
tion and delight prevailed into the eighteenth century and this prag-
matic approach to literature with its concern for influencing the
reader in some way is reflected in the critical writing of the time.
Johnson (in Bate, 1952) emphasized the instructive nature of the
writing:

> The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to
instruct by pleasing.  (p. 210)

The pleasure for Sidney (in Bate, 1952) results largely from the
writer's form and style. He not only shows the way "but giveth so
sweet a prospect into the way, as will entice any man to enter into it"
(p. 92). Sidney refers to the writer's words "set in delightful
proportions" and his tale "which holdeth children from play and old
men from the chimney corner" (p. 92).

The Expressive Approach

In the nineteenth century the focus of criticism appeared to shift
from the reader or the audience to the writer and the writing process.
No longer was the primary function of poetry perceived as "the
communication of propositional truth - morals, or information dressed
in fine language" as Brown (1971, p. 78) expressed it; rather, poetry
was the verbalization of human emotion. Wordsworth's (in Bate, 1952)
definition of poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feel­­ings" (p. 337) and Shelley's (in Bate, 1952) description of the poet as
"a nightingale who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude
with sweet sounds" (p. 431) both appear to indicate a total indiffer­­ence to the reader. That vestiges of the earlier philosophy still
remained, however, is evidenced by Wordsworth's reference to the
"worthy" purpose of his own writing and his description of the writer's
task:

We shall describe objects, and utter sentiments, of such a
nature, and in such connexion with each other, that the
understanding of the Reader must necessarily be in some
degree enlightened, and his affections be strengthened
and purified. (p. 337)

Shelley (in Bate, 1952) in his defense of poetry makes a bold claim for
this writing which he defines as "the expression of the imagination":

It [poetry] awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering
it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of
thought. Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of
the world and makes familiar objects be as if they were not
familiar. . . . Poetry strengthens the faculty which is the
organ of the moral nature of man, in the same way as exercise
strengthens a limb. (p. 432)

Such claims for literature by Wordsworth and Shelley attest to their
belief in the moral power of poetry as well as its efficacy in the
development of human compassion and the sharpening of sensitivity.
Their philosophy was shared by other critics, notably Hazlett (in Bate,
1952) who defined poetry as "that fine particle within us, that expands,
rarefies, refines, raises our whole being" (p. 304). Brown (1971)
described this expressive theory as an attempt to identify "the unique nature and function of literature" (p. 81). He says:

First, it helped us move away from the naive notion that literature was philosophical principles, morals, or information dressed in pleasing language. In doing this it also eliminated the duality of form and content. It stressed the view that the literary work was an organic whole, and that language was a creative power. It also made room for feelings in literature, and thereby distinguished between literature and other forms of writing. (p. 81)

The Objective Approach

The New Criticism developed at least in part as a reaction to what appeared to some critics to be the overemphasis on emotion which characterized the "expressive orientation" to literature. Once again the focus of attention shifted to the work itself which was perceived as having an existence of its own quite apart from its creator. The proponents of this approach to literature emphasized the structure and unity of the work of art; they were primarily concerned with objectivity which meant the "submerging of the artists' own personality in the technical process of poetic expression" (Bate, 1952, p. 520). Poetry to Eliot (in Bate, 1952) is no longer "a turning loose of emotion," as Wordsworth might have described it, but "an escape from emotion" and "an escape from personality" (p. 339). To Eliot and those who shared his philosophy the world of literature is an autonomous world constrained by its own forms and structures and governed by the laws inherent therein.

The New Criticism with its emphasis on the organic wholeness of the work of art repudiated the dichotomy of form and content, focusing attention on the work itself rather than on things external to it.
This Brown (1971) considers to be a valuable contribution of the objective approach to literature (p. 83). He noted in this strength the seeds of weakness, however, for in their insistence on the independence of the individual work the critics failed to identify any unifying principle governing the works themselves, their relationship to each other and their relationship to the larger whole of which the works are a part (p. 84).

The Archetypal Approach

The archetypal approach, however, is based on such a unifying principle. Frye (in Bate, 1970) sees the archetype "not only as a unifying category of criticism but itself a part of a total form, and it leads us at once to the question of what sort of total form criticism can see in literature" (p. 604). Sloan (1975) in her interpretation of Frye's theory refers to the images, themes, story-shapes, events and symbols which are the archetypes or fundamental patterns appearing in all literature (p. 17). Central to the archetypal approach is the belief that all stories are a part of one story—man's quest for identity; that all literary conventions come from literature; that romance, comedy, tragedy and irony constitute "the mythoi or generic plots" of all literature; that an examination of literary works will reveal recurring patterns, motifs, and symbols; that in all of the literature there is a universal design or organizing pattern.

Synthesis

The approaches to literature to which brief reference has been made in this section all throw some light on the nature of literature as it
has been perceived by scholar and critic. Based on his detailed analysis of these theories Brown's (1971) statement of what literature is is both lucid and insightful:

Literature, then, is not mere imitation; it creates and transforms. It is to some extent independent, yet related to life. It is not just sermons in fine language, yet it is moral. Its end is not primarily pleasure yet ... any healthy use of it should be pleasurable. It is a power to be possessed, yet some analysis, not as a game, but as an aid to knowledge and understanding, is necessary for full possession. It is made up of independent, unique works, yet together they form a whole, a verbal universe, the understanding of which gives added significance to the individual work. (p. 95)

It must not be construed, however, that these theories provide either a comprehensive or conclusive answer to the question: What is literature? Nor should the omission of other approaches from the discussion be interpreted as a judgment on their validity. Every theory, while in itself incomplete, may contribute to a conceptual structure of literature which must remain open to change as the individual's understanding and experience grow. It may be that no single satisfactory definition of literature is ever possible for, like truth itself, its nature may be more clearly comprehensible in how it behaves than in what it is. Product of the educated imagination and characterized by particular qualities of form and style, literature is a communication between the reader and the work—a communication which may say more than the writer ever conceived. Its capacity to instruct and delight has been conceded since the Aristotelian period. Noted also should be its power to evoke emotion, to stimulate thought, to increase awareness, to deepen perception, to sharpen sensitivity and to foster compassion and humaneness. That literature for children is an integral
part of this larger body of literature has long been a subject of
discussion and debate.

The Nature of Children's Literature

Children's Literature as a Part of All Literature

Although children's literature in the best moral and humanistic
tradition may be said to have been born in the mid-nineteenth century
(Egoff et al., 1969), the acceptance of that literature as a valid
branch of all literature did not follow immediately or automatically.
Cameron (1969) refers to the "contempt" or "tolerant amusement" with
which children's literature was being treated, charging that this was
evident in many subtle ways. She points out, as an example, that
reputable reference publications such as Webster's Biographical
Dictionary (1963) made no mention of C.S. Lewis' books for children,
nor was the name of Beatrix Potter included either in that publication
or in the first and second editions of The Columbia Encyclopedia (p.
206). Cameron is particularly incensed by the ignorance expressed in
an advertisement appearing regularly in the magazines of writers them­
selves:

The Juvenile Field is the Training Ground for the
Beginning Writer - Earn While You Learn. (p. 207)

Rejecting this approach to children's literature, Cameron insists that
the serious writer, believing that his books will be read and enjoyed
by children, writes with involvement and devotion coupled with a
strong sense of responsibility:

And this is not alone because his books will go into the hands
of children, but because he knows that children's literature
does not exist in a narrow world of its own, but is enmeshed
in a larger world of literature of which all its qualities, its initial inspirations, its abilities to reveal and illumine, are an interrelated part. He knows that children's and adult literature are facets of a single art, and that the highest standards of one hold good for the other. (pp. 227-228)

Rosenheim (in Egoff, 1969), shares this philosophy. "If we don't fatuously accept children's literature as a safe, sane, antiseptic device for the preservation of childishness," he maintains, "its most fundamental appeals are the appeals of all effective literature" (p. 29). Cameron and Rosenheim are but two of the many proponents of this belief. Hazard (trans. by Mitchell, 1944) describes good books for children as those "that remain faithful to the very essence of art . . . that awaken in them not maudlin sentimentality, but sensibility; that enable them to share in great human emotions" (p. 42); Lewis (in Egoff, 1969) believes that any book which is worth reading at ten is abundantly worth reading at fifty (p. 207); Smith (in Haviland) speaks of "the fine children's books in which literature is attained" (p. 395); Heins (1970a) describes children's literature as "a branch of the tree of literature" (p. 370); and Townsend (1971b) believes that there is no such thing as children's literature, there is just literature (p. 378). Any line drawing to distinguish between children's literature and adult literature is both arbitrary and artificial, Townsend (1971a) believes, and "wherever the line is drawn children and adults and books will all wander across it" (p. 9).

Authors of children's books themselves refuse to acknowledge such a dividing line, for they generally disclaim any intention of writing deliberately for a child audience. They write because they are writers, they have something they want to say and they say it in what seems to
be the most effective format. They write for anyone who is interested; they write for themselves; they write for the children they once were. Their observations upon their own philosophy of writing are interesting indeed:

I begin the story with self-indulgence ... the place is somewhere that is known to me and the story will attempt to please me by its pattern. (Gordon, in Blishen, 1975, p. 35)

After all, children live in the world with the rest of us; they aren't a separate race. (Aiken, in Blishen, 1975, p. 42)

I am writing in every sense for myself. I suspect we are all writing for ourselves. For if in every child there is an adult trying to get out, equally in every adult there is a child trying to get back. (Hodges, in Blishen, 1975, p. 56)

I wanted to write, not as a grown up looking back, but as a former child, remembering the emotional landscape I had once moved in. (Bawden, in Blishen, 1975, p. 62)

For me, all books are for children. There is no such thing as a children's book. There are books of many kinds and some of them children read. (Travers, cited in Heins, 1977, p. 26)

Townsend (1974) reports that of nineteen leading children's authors whom he contacted while gathering data for his Sense of Story more than half confessed that they wrote for themselves and not for children (p. 36). O'Dell (in Townsend, 1971a) and Fox (in Townsend, 1971a), distinguished authors of award-winning children's books and authors of adult books as well, both maintain that in their own writing they make no distinction between the two. Books of his which are classified as children's books he did not write for children, O'Dell explains, rather "they were written consistently in the emotional area which children share with adults," an area which he claims is wider and deeper than is usually recognized (p. 160). Fox refers to what she calls the absolutes of good writing, "whether for children or grown ups, or the
blind or the deaf or the thin or the fat" (p. 95).

Lewis (in Egoff et al., 1969) expounds his personal philosophy of what literature for children is. There are, he believes, three ways of writing for children. His first method is that of "giving the public what it wants," which consists of finding out what children want, and giving them exactly that, regardless of what the author's personal inclination may be. His second method is through the told tale—an original tale told to a particular child. The first and second methods are obviously related, since in both cases the author seeks to give children what they want, the difference being that, in the second case, the tale begins with a particular child. Lewis' third method, and the only one which he himself would consider, consists in

writing a children's story because a children's story is the best art form for something you have to say: just as a composer might write a Dead March not because there was a public funeral in view but because certain musical ideas that had occurred to him went best in that form. (p. 208)

Lewis, as did L'Engle (1964) and Southall (1975), distinguishes between the childlike and the childish, insisting that children should neither be patronized nor idolized, and affirming that those who write for children must write out of an imaginative sharing, using a subject matter which "should be a part of the habitual furniture of the authors' minds" (p. 219). He insists that authors "must meet children as equals in that area of nature where [they] are their equals" (p. 219) and that at all times the child reader must be treated with respect. His philosophy is akin to that of Treece (cited in Egoff, 1969), who saw writing for children as "the expression of something important to the reader himself in 'that common territory' shared by human beings of
all ages" (p. 264). Paradoxically, Lewis and Treece both reject a fixed border between children's literature and mainstream literature, but neither rejects the child, either in statements of critical position or in his own writing of children's books. Their critical stance is that of the literary purists generally, a position presented by Townsend (1974), who says:

> It can be argued that in literary terms there never has been any real distinction between imaginative literature for children and for adults; there is just imaginative literature. (p. 34)

The purist belief in the 'oneness of all literature' finds a strong proponent in Epstein (in Egoff et al., 1969). Epstein opposes any idea of a separate literature for children with perhaps more zeal than logic. He complains vociferously that

> children's books have increasingly become part of a bureaucratically administered subculture, largely cut off by a dense fog of conventional and irrelevant theory from the best literary and scientific culture of the community at large. (p. 71)

He repudiates totally the philosophy of such 'experts' in reading and children's literature as Josette Frank, May Hill Arbuthnot, and Nancy Larrick, in that they recommend increasing recognition of a particular world of childhood, and the idea that books "should be adjusted to the tempers and interests of children," or should "meet the reading needs of the young child." Such an idea, Epstein declares, would, if implemented, "reduce the children to idiocy and turn the library into madhouses" (p. 88).

What Epstein is apparently objecting to is any attempt to lower literary standards, and for some reason, which he does not reveal, he appears to associate writing for children with writing 'down'. His
position in this regard is one which E.B. White unequivocally denies both in philosophy and performance. White (in Haviland, 1973) asserts that writing for children is a matter of writing up, not down, for children are demanding and they are "the most attentive, curious, eager, observant, sensitive, quick, and generally congenial readers on earth" (p. 140). Epstein's argument bears, in itself, the seeds of its own fallacy, since there is limited reference only to an impressive body of works for children outstanding when judged by any standards. It is noteworthy that his article, which was originally published in 1963, predates such books as Byars' Pinball (Harper & Row, 1977), Patterson's The Bridge to Terabithia (Crowell, 1977), Babbit's Tuck Everlast- ing (Farrar, Straus, 1975), MacCaulay's Cathedral (Houghton Mifflin, 1973), Cooper's The Dark is Rising (Atheneum, 1973), Nichols' Marrow of the World (Macmillan, 1972), and Le Guin's A Wizard of Earthsea (Parnassus, 1968). What he apparently fails to realize is that the question of children's literature as a part of all literature, or as a particular branch of literature characterized by distinctive features, is not, necessarily, an either-or one. Literature for children is literature, with all the concerns that are implied thereby; but it is literature for children and, as such, it is an 'artistic communication' for a particular audience. It is the recognition by the author of the characteristics of the audience which gives children's literature its distinctive features. This notwithstanding, it appears that the border between children's literature and adult literature may indeed be "elusive" and ill-defined. The creators of the works may make no conscious distinction between the two but the book will be published
either as an adult book or a children's book. How it is published will largely determine how and where it is advertised, and how and where it is reviewed, which, in turn, will directly influence its sale and readership. Decision-making regarding the distinguishing features of adult literature and children's literature may thus be a function of publishing houses and children's editors, and may be administrative rather than literary. Ideally, such decisions are rooted in concern for both children and literature; there may be other considerations. "In children's books, even more than in adult books," one editor admits, "the commitments and prejudices of the editors may determine what is published" (Jordan, 1975, p. 63).

Distinctive Features of Children's Literature

To accept the fact that children's literature is a part of literature, differing in degree rather than in kind (Rosenheim, in Egoff et al., 1969, p. 30), is not to deny that it is characterized by identifiable and distinguishing features. There is indeed a strong body of critical opinion to support this position.

Tucker (1976), for example, disagrees with those who argue that literature is literature—that there are no intrinsic differences between literature for children and literature for adults. He doubts that any work in children's literature could ever be a work of art in the sense that a work by Tolstoy or George Eliot is, but this is not a valid reason for eliminating it from literary consideration. That books for children may never be 'in the same league' with the masterpieces of adult fiction he attributes to the fact that authors who write for children automatically work within a set of restrictions related
essentially to the child's limited development and experience with living. These restrictions must be reflected in the choice of subject matter and style, and the level of complexity of vocabulary. An exploration of the mysteries of human behavior, for example, may be beyond the child's range of experience and insight, he explains, and the tendency of the child to view the universe as "an essentially moral construction" will dictate the nature of both characters and situations in books for children, as well as the positive nature of the ending. Tucker quotes Chesterton who described his own usual 'Day of Judgment' type of denouement as being essential in all good stories for children:

For children are innocent and love justice; while most of us are wicked and naturally prefer mercy. (cited in Tucker, 1976, p. 20)

It is this philosophy of Tucker which prompted him to edit, in 1976, a collection of critical articles under the title Suitable for Children?, a collection which deals with Fairy Stories, Comics, Children's Books and Fear, Children's Classics, and The Value of Children's Literature. Included are critical opinions as varied as those of Mrs. Trimmer, Mrs. Sherwood, Charles Dickens, Charles Lamb, Catherine Storr, Janet Hill, and James Britton.

Fadiman (1976), in "The Case For a Children's Literature," adopts a reasoned approach to the debate. He challenges the arguments usually presented against children's literature, and convincingly builds a case for it. For Fadiman, the case rests on the grounds that children's literature has a tradition which, strictly defined, is nearly three hundred years old, and more loosely defined reaches back for half a millenium; it has its own masterpieces--meritorious works
of art which qualify by any critical standards (among such works he includes those of Lucy Boston, Rosemary Sutcliff, David McCord, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Kornei Chukovsky, Ivan Southall); it has a greater capacity, in some instances, than does mainstream literature to make effective statements about life; and it is possessed of scope and the power to expand that scope. It is in this area of scope that Fadiman may appear to disagree with Tucker, although they are really very close philosophically. Fadiman admits the limited "range, amplitude and inclusiveness" of children's literature and acknowledges that books for children are limited by child powers of comprehension; he is not as willing to admit, however, that children's books can never be as "deep" as adult literature. He explains:

The child's world is smaller than the grown-up's; but are we so sure it is shallower? Measured by whose plumbline? Is it not safer to say that, until the child begins to merge into the adolescent, his mental world, though in many respects akin to that of his elders, in many other obeys its own private laws of motion? And if this is so, it might be juster to use one plumbline to measure the depth of his literature, and a somewhat different one for that of his elders. No one will deny the depth of Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisition episode. But who is to say that to a sensitive child reader William Mayne's A Game of Dark does not convey an equally profound intimation of the forces of evil? (p. 16)

The "scale" may differ, Fadiman suggests, but the "thickness" need not.

With reference to the scope of children's literature, Fadiman argues that, while traditionally there have been many aspects of human experience which have been closed to children's literature, this is no longer the case, and the distinctive children's literature which now exists embraces a broad spectrum of genres and subgenres, and develops a multiplicity of themes. Particularly in the decade under
study children's literature has, according to Fadiman, become much more flexible, expanding both its forms and themes, so that it now handles with varying degrees of success "everything from drug addiction to homosexuality" (p. 18).

Completing his case for the defence, Fadiman claims that children's literature "is being presently worked upon by theorists and historian, and is the subject of scholarly commentary and criticism." Of the criticism, Fadiman maintains:

The body of criticism and history is not only formidable; it is valuable. It points up the importance of what at first might seem a minor field of investigation. Though some of it, inevitably, is but dusty poking into the deservedly dead, and much of it is duplicate, yet as a whole it reflects a solid tradition, of acute importance in shaping the minds and hearts of children. (p. 20)

Children's editor, author, and critic Jean Karl, in her book From Childhood to Childhood (John Day, 1970a), confirms the existence of the children's literature which Fadiman so strongly defends, and she discusses the nature of this literature as well as the need for it. According to Karl, its distinguishing features are not easily established, since the basic standards of literature must remain immutable whether the book is for children or adults. The difference, she believes, lies not in style or beauty of language or the author's seriousness of intent; nor does it lie in the choice of subject matter, since children are interested in as many subjects as are adults. It lies rather "in the author's approach to his material and in some cases in the depth and breadth of what he covers" (p. 6). In her decisions concerning what makes for excellence in children's literature, Karl is bound by the demands of plot and style, characterization and
theme; she considers other constraints to be equally important. Real children's books are what they are because children are what they are, she insists, and she discusses the distinctive characteristics of children's books which parallel the attributes of children. Children's books, for example, according to Karl, demonstrate a pervading optimism, because optimism is a characteristic of childhood; children's books have associated with them a sense of beauty, a 'freshness', a 'newness', a sense of wonder and expectation, a vision of something better which awaits. This is so because children themselves believe in life and, even though they may not be able to verbalize it, they are convinced that there is beauty both in life and in the human spirit, no matter how circumstances may degrade or destroy it (p. 8). Children's books evince also, in Karl's opinion, a sense of adventure, a feeling of affinity for the world—for animals, plants and all living things, a sense of the 'rightness' and goodness of the universe, and the place of children in the universal plan of things (p. 8).

Although almost any book possessed of these characteristics may qualify as a children's book, the best children's book, Karl states, will also have child characters with whom children can identify, and will depict experiences children have had. It will not be restricted by known experiences, however, but will successfully blend the known and the unknown, the new and the old. It may confirm the present state, but it will also push back horizons and open up new vistas. There is little doubt that the good book for children, in Karl's judgment, is different from but not inferior to a good book for adults; has the child directly at the center; and exists solely because of and
for children. Of such a good book, she says:

[it] respects a child's intelligence, his pride, his dignity, and most of all his individuality and his capacity to become. A child is a becoming person; he is not yet all that he will be. Because his growing edge is so strong, so much the most compelling part of him, a good book will have a growing edge to match his. (p. 9)

Higgins (1970) defines literature, whether for adults or for children, as "writing that has claim to consideration for beauty of form and emotional impact" (p. 1), and for literature for children, no less than for literature for adults, there must be standards by which a good book can be distinguished from a poorly written one. Higgins believes that books which deserve to be called children's literature are books which "educe" or "lead forth" the inner uniqueness of the individual child, and it is his contention that such books have a significant role in fostering the developmental education of the child. Higgins attaches great importance to this "inner child," believing, as he does, that each individual is possessed of "an innate essence" which is unique to himself and which is often lost in the course of his journey into maturity. The cost of successful entry into society may often be for the child the subjugation of this inner self. It is never completely lost, however, but becomes for the individual the "taproot awareness" that commits man to life, just as his intellect convinces him of life (p. 3). When this inner self is 'educed', it is, Higgins believes, "the wellspring from which all art flows" (p. 3). Books which are truly children's books, which have the capacity to reach that inner child, are the work of an author who has the ability to reach into his own inner self and communicate with "the essence of
childhood." It may be that this facility on the part of the author relates to what many of them describe as 'writing for myself' or 'writing to please myself', or 'writing for the child I remember'.

Higgins restricts his criticism of particular books to 'Mystical Fancy', but he discusses those works always with particular emphasis on the world within the child, the world around him, and the world beyond him. His insightful analysis of Hudson's **Little Boy Lost** (Knopf, 1920), Lewis' **Chronicles of Narnia**, de Saint-Exupery's **The Little Prince** (Harcourt, Brace, 1943), and Tolkien's **The Hobbit** (Houghton Mifflin, 1937) conveys his own personal belief in the integrity of the child and, allied to that, his conviction that through literature of this caliber the child may hold or recapture the quality of childhood—that quality which lends a glow to the good and the beautiful wherever, whenever, and however it exists; the quality which all of us once possessed, but many of us lost in the struggle for survival. It may be posited that it is this very quality that makes some books, though appropriate and acceptable to children, of no lesser importance to those who have left childhood far behind.

The common characteristics of the writers who are the subject of Higgins' discussion is the "sincere childlikeness" of their own outlook—a characteristic which some critics consider essential for the authors of children's books. Each of them, Higgins claims, writes for children, drawing on the wellsprings of his own experiences, his own accumulated store of knowledge, his own hopes and fears; but each of them draws his own insight "from the child himself, the little boy on Mulberry Street" (p. 105). It is for this reason they are able to
recreate a world in which children may feel at home; a world to which adults joy to return.

Significant in Higgins' analysis of the books he chooses is his observation that in spite of their deference to the world of childhood—or is it because of that?—these books are literature in very truth. He rejects, as does C.S. Lewis, any need of writing down for children. The story that has to be constantly explained in process is doomed to failure, either because the author is underestimating the emotional or intellectual nature of his audience, is attempting to ensure that his audience interprets the story as the author does, or has chosen a story which is beyond the capacity of the child reader (p. 32). The success of the author of children's literature lies in the recognition of rather than the neglect of "the special needs and limitations" of children, and Higgins states convincingly that "when a writer is over the emotional and intellectual capacities of his child readers, then no matter what he thinks, he is no longer writing for children" (p. 37). In this regard, however, he makes a clear distinction between literature and those books which one might normally designate as readers:

In their case the story is the instrument of the words. Whereas, in children's books which one might call literature, the words are the instruments of the story—they may be little words or big words—difficult words or easy words—monosyllabic words or polysyllabic words—they may be words with silent e's or hard e's—just as long as they make a contribution to the artistic telling of a story appropriate for children. (p. 38)

Jago (1972) is concerned, among other things, with the nature of children's literature and its relationship to experience and insight. Her belief that literature "may help illuminate our condition by its shaping of insights" (p. 21) is related to Higgins' (1970) claim that
the best books are those that "communicate with the essence of childhood . . . from the depths of the author's own uniqueness" (p. 3).

Denying that children's literature is mere escapism, Jago attempts to discover the type of world children meet in their books. Like Higgins, Jago sees the best children's books speaking not only to children but to adults as well—to that 'inner world' of the adult where reminiscences of the 'essences of childhood' are still retained. For Jago, as for Higgins, never is literature for children lesser than literature for adults. Its difference—and there is a difference—lies in the interests and conceptual sophistication of the two audiences. The significance of what Higgins calls the 'innate essence of childhood' appears to be caught in Jago's idea of the picture of the world which should be presented in children's books. She says:

Perhaps the best we can offer children are the discoveries we have made for ourselves, the patterns and meanings we have discovered, and which make sense of the world for us; but in a sense what we discover about childhood is perhaps the most significant, not necessarily for children; the directness and 'nakedness' of a child's developing awareness of the world may be essential for our survival and well-being as adults whole in self and with a readiness for encounter with others. (p. 24)

Of the appeal of children's books for adults Jago suggests:

Perhaps one reason—and a legitimate one, if I'm arguing rightly—why we enjoy some children's books is that their pared-down-ness may allow us back into a world which is sharp and significant even while it may not be enriched, as are the moments of intensity in adult life, by the complexities of self-awareness and developed intellect. (p. 24)

Jago lends credence to her argument by her perceptive analysis of Le Guin's A Wizard of Earthsea (Parnassus Press, 1968), a book written for children, but adhering to the strictest standards of literary
excellence. The book goes beyond an exciting narrative to speak of the human condition—the human inclination to error and pride, the incontrovertible fact that, as intelligent humans, we bear responsibility for our own behavior, and that our own actions bear in them the seeds of our salvation or destruction. This type of literature can hardly be labeled as 'escapism'; nor should anyone suggest that such a book is the province of children only. Children's books such as *A Wizard of Earthsea*, in that they push back horizons and enlarge experience, and explore what it is like to be human, illuminate reality for both the child and adult rather than provide escape from it. As Jago says: "To feel enjoyment in reading children's books is to renew and respect the child in ourselves" (p. 29).

The outer simplicity and inner significance which characterize *A Wizard of Earthsea*—and many children's books—is surely related to the simplicity-significance factor which author Jill Paton Walsh (in Tucker, 1976) identifies as being a problem in technique presented by children's books. The problem, as she defines it, is "that of making a fully serious adult statement as a good novel of any kind does, and making it utterly simple and transparent" (p. 212). Whether the adult statement "runs alongside, rather than within the book," as in *The Mouse and His Child* (Harper & Row, 1967), or whether it operates through the use of fantasy or surrealism, Walsh is convinced that it is present in the best books. She uses the analogy of the soap bubble to illustrate her idea of the perfectly achieved children's book. She says:

> All you can see is a surface—a lovely rainbow thing to attract the youngest onlooker—but the whole is shaped and sustained by the pressures of adult emotion, present but invisible, like the air within the bubble. Many
themes can be treated indirectly in this way which crudely and directly broached would not be suitable for children. (pp. 212-213)

Concern for the preservation of the distinctive features of children's literature is forcefully voiced by Heins (1970b), Moss (1974), and Egoff (1979a). All three agree that children's literature is a part of all literature, all covet for children's books those qualities of excellence which characterize good literature in any form, yet all express concern lest the zealous emphasis on children's literature as literature somehow succeed in divorcing it from the children themselves. Children's literature, although a part of the main body of literature, is nonetheless children's literature, Heins (1970b) believes; the unfortunate thing is that it is difficult to determine "the proper relationship between the term children's and the term literature" (p. 269). Reacting to what she calls the increasing sophistication or the "adulteration" of children's books, Moss (1974) claims that there is little recognition of the child and his world in many first class contemporary "children's books." Charging that an elitist attitude prevails in the publication and criticism of children's books, she suggests that the time has come for a shift in emphasis (p. 65). Like Karl (1970a) she will accept no lowered standards, but those who write for children must take a different approach:

When novelists who have sharpened their pens in the children's field assume the present day novelists' techniques and obscurities, his psychoanalytical approaches, his obsession with the person rather than the story, I suggest there the children's editor should draw the line and let the book sink or swim as adult fiction. (p. 68)
Egoff (1979a), always numbered among those who insist that children's literature is a part of all literature, is equally insistent that its distinctive features be preserved. She notes with misgiving that contemporary children's literature in tone and theme and language appears to be "moving perilously close to the adult world" (p. 270). She is fearful that having gained "the whole world of adult freedom and power and expansion of subject matter" it has lost something still more valuable:

In our children's literature and in contemporary society itself, we have taken down the walls that surrounded children. In the process of this extending of horizons, we have also run the risk of removing the circumstances that sheltered and nourished and developed those special characteristics of children's literature: warmth, wonder, gaiety, sentiment, simplicity - in a word, the childlike. (p. 271)

Children's literature may thus be seen as a part of all literature, characterized by these qualities of excellence inherent in all good literature. It is, however, literature for children and as such it cannot ignore the special nature of its audience.

Synthesis

The conflicting ideas of the oneness of all literature, regardless of audience, and the existence of a distinctive literature for children have been the focus of this section. The opinions examined attest to the existence of a growing body of writing for children, the best of which measures up favorably when judged by strict literary standards, and may be unapologetically classified as literature. But it is literature for children in that it takes into consideration the characteristics of its intended audience. It is not a 'lesser' or an inferior
literature; it is different. In subject matter, theme, language and
tone it reflects the authors' perceptions of children, and the best
writings recognize what childhood is like. Books that are genuinely
children's literature recapture childhood with its honesty, its joy,
its excitement, its optimism, and its anticipation, and may have much
to say not only to children but to adults as well. That many writers
fail or succeed only superficially may be explained in part by de Saint-
Exupery in his dedication of The Little Prince (Harcourt Brace World,
1943). "All grownups were once children," he says, "although few of
them remember it." It is the remembering and the artistic power to
recreate that are the keys to a successful children's literature. A
valid criticism must take account of both.

The Function of Criticism

Criticism and the Arts

A sound and healthy criticism is indispensable to the life and
well-being of the arts in any society. Wordsworth (in Bate, 1952)
spoke of the potential injury which may result from a false or mali-
cious criticism, even suggesting that the time spent in critiquing the
works of others might be better spent in original composition. But
genuine criticism is neither false nor malicious, nor is it lacking in
originality or creativity. Arnold (in Bate, 1952) perceived criticism
as an exercise of man's curiosity, an instinctive response to his
natural compulsion "to try to know the best that is known and thought
in the world, irrespectively of practice, politics, and every thing of
the kind" (p. 457). But knowledge of the best is to Arnold only a
partial function of criticism; the critic's responsibility is to propagate the "best," and "by in turn making this known to create a current of true and fresh ideas" (p. 458).

Eliot (in Bate, 1952) also perceived the function of criticism to be positive, creative and constructive, with the critic's primary concern being the interpretation of art and the improvement of the public taste. Both Arnold and Eliot saw the critic drawing upon the rich resources of the past to bring judgment and perspective to works of the present. Arnold's "touchstone theory" is universally known; Eliot speaks of the "existing monuments" and the critic's instruments of comparison and analysis (p. 526). Both see as essential to the exercise of criticism a comprehensive knowledge of what has gone before, the ability, sensitivity and perception to interpret the new both for its own sake and as a part of the whole, the independence and courage to express opinions fearlessly, and the skill with language to do so with precision and persuasion.

**Criticism and Children's Literature**

What applies to criticism of the arts generally applies equally to the particular of literature, and to literature for children no less than to literature for adults. Nesbit (in Fenwick, 1967) remarks that creative literature has always called forth creative critics, and she believes, with Heins (1970b) that there is available an abundance of "worthwhile children's books inviting critical assessment" (p. 266). The function of such critical assessments, Nesbit claims, is to "know and propagate" the best and at the same time to "know and discourage the worst." Serious criticism, she believes, will be effective in
establishing and maintaining the prestige of children's literature as literature (p. 122). This is what Heins (1970a) refers to as the "Apologetics" or defense of children's literature, which he too considers a major function of criticism (p. 372).

If children's literature is accepted as a part of all literature, then its criticism becomes a part of the criticism of all literature. Serious literary criticism is concerned with matters of form and style and language; it is concerned with literary technique; it involves interpretation, analysis and comparison; it places the individual work in the perspective of the larger context; it is concerned with "literary integrity." Whatever else it does, it must according to Nesbit (in Fenwick, 1967), "establish with clarity, preciseness, and enlightenment, the quality or lack of quality of the writing in question" (p. 121).

The Focus of Criticism

The literary purist may insist that the sole function of criticism is to establish the presence or absence of such literary merit or to determine what is literature and what is not, according to some absolute standards. Decisions regarding child appeal may be difficult ones for the critic but Elleman (in Kamerman, 1978) believes that children have much in common and any story which has "a feeling of excitement, a naturalness about it, a quick plunge into the plot, sparkling dialogue, and a swift pace" is likely to be popular with a wide audience of children (p. 152). Alderson (cited in Haviland, 1973) in "The Irrelevance of Children to the Children's Book Reviewer" states this position:
It may be objected that to assess children's books without reference to children is to erect some critical standard relating neither to the authors' purpose or the readers' enjoyment. To do much less, however, is to follow a road that leads to a morass of contradictions, and subjective response. (p. 405)

In such an approach the child is irrelevant; the focus is on the work alone.

To adopt this critical stance in assessing children's books is to deny the nature of children and the distinctive characteristics of their literature. Literature as communication will fail unless it takes into account the interests, needs and personal development of children. Townsend (1971b) views as a matter of critical concern the lack of child appeal in literature:

if a children's book is not popular with children here and now, its lack of appeal may tell us something. It is at least a limitation, and it may be a sign of some vital deficiency which is very much the critic's concern. (p. 387)

This is not to suggest that a book's popularity is a measure of its literary excellence; it does suggest that while considerations of literary quality must be paramount, a function of criticism is to see the child at the center. Although the serious critic may, according to Heins (in Kamerman, 1978) have reason "to worry about the implications of judging children's books by childish standards," she maintains that those who appraise children's books must remain aware that they are indeed dealing with children's books (p. 115). Townsend (1971b) addresses the same problem:

Just as the author must, I believe, write for himself yet with an awareness of an audience of children, so the critic must write for himself with an awareness that the books he discusses are books written for children. (p. 386)
Criticism of children's literature cannot be totally divorced from the subject matter and the issues raised by it. The increasing realism in children's books with the resultant expanded subject matter and extended vocabulary may demand a form of criticism heretofore unthought of. Heins (1970a) sees the trends of the period "closely interlinked with critical problems":

In recent years the subject matter of children's books has expanded considerably to include social problems, questions of prejudice, urban and academic situations, and psychological dilemmas; in addition, there has been a greater stress than ever before on realism of presentation; and the vocabulary of children's books is beginning to reflect the spirit of the times. . . . After we have absorbed new kinds of subject matter and new points of view, we still have to ask not only what a book tries to do, but how well it does it. (p. 373)

Gerhardt (1973) acknowledges the validity of questions regarding "negative and positive persuasions or propaganda" in children's books; her concern is that such questions may dominate questions of excellence (p. ix). While opinions may vary about the relative responsibility of the critic to address other than literary concerns (Nesbit, in Fenwick, 1967), failure to address the issues now appearing in children's books and failure to consider the relationship between literary technique and the sensitivity and integrity with which the issues are presented would appear to be a failure in genuine criticism.

Synthesis

A valid literary criticism must be concerned with literary merit. Criticism of children's literature must be concerned with both the nature of literature and the nature of children. And in a society where the subject matter of children's books is as broad as reality
itself, any valid comprehensive criticism must include some consideration of the appropriateness, the honesty, and the artistry of the presentation of social issues. Whether the focus of the criticism is work-centered, child-centered, or issues-centered, there can be no equivocation regarding its function:

Criticism of the right kind, in whatever form it may take, may and should serve several purposes, informational, evaluative and stimulative. It should be drawn into being by the existence of literature worthy of serious, intelligent even inspired criticism. In turn, such criticism encourages, stimulates, and rewards literature worthy of criticism's best efforts. (Nesbit, in Fenwick, 1967, p. 126)
CHAPTER III

WORK-CENTERED CRITICISM

Introduction

Literary criticism, or criticism centered in the work itself, is a recognized and respected approach to criticism, needing neither defence nor rationale in this present context. Rooted soundly in classical scholarship, it has both history and tradition. Unlike child-centered or issues-centered criticism, work-centered criticism has been the subject of study and research; it has a form, a structure, and a body. While its recorded history may be traced to Plato's Republic and Aristotle's Poetics, the Hebrew writer of the Book of Genesis suggests that in the beginning of time the first Creator looked at His own completed work of 'Art' and pronounced it good.

Work-centered criticism involves identification, comprehension, interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and comparison. It cannot be divorced from emotion but it draws on broad reading experience, general knowledge and experience, as well as reason and enlightened judgment. Its corpus includes the 'old' criticism and the 'new'; it embraces a diversity of critical approaches, and a variety of critical theories. It is prescriptive in that it identifies and mirrors the highest standards of excellence of the past; it is descriptive in its record of society's changing values and changing emphases. Characterized by growth and change, a work-centered criticism takes cognizance of
standards that were once considered immutable; at the same time it responds appropriately to the innovative and the creative. At its best it is positive and constructive in tone; its total purpose is fulfilled neither in the identification and castigation of inferior literary works nor in the indiscriminate praise of works possessed of some literary merit. Its function includes a reasoned distinction between literature and nonliterature and the identification in literature of what is 'good', 'better' and 'best', with some understanding of why each is so. Its goal is a heightened awareness of literary integrity, a greater appreciation of a literary work as a work of art, and the increased enjoyment which results from deeper perceptions and broader insights.

The truism that children's literature is literature for children implies that the criticism of such literature becomes a part of the criticism of all literature, and those literary considerations which are important to the study of adult literature are no less significant in the study and evaluation of children's literature. This was the contention of such early proponents of children's literature as Anne Carroll Moore, Frances Clark Sayers, Frances Lamberton Becker, Anne Thaxter Eaton, and Lillian Smith; it has more recently been the expressed philosophy of a host of authors and publishers, as well as critics. Anne Carroll Moore (1931), in her demands for "informed criticism of good work and poor work" rather than "indiscriminate praise," allows no special dispensation for the authors of children's books; nor does Geoffrey Trease in Tales Out of School (1964) when he asserts that "the function of [critics] is not to warm me or any other writer. It is to tell us, through competent judges of style and
content, whether we are writing well or badly" (p. 9). Leon Garfield (1970), as does John Rowe Townsend (1971b), defends the idea of the continuum of literature. Garfield refers to literature as a "continuous matter from childhood onward," and maintains that "no good comes from thinking of literature as divided into a negligible junior field, and a senior field that is alone worth considering seriously" (cited by Heins, 1971, p. 15); and Townsend refers to the artificiality of any line-drawing to separate children's literature and literature. For Townsend the distinction is an arbitrary one and more administrative than literary (p. 348).

The critical stance of Garfield and Townsend is clearly that of the literary purist—a position held by many others who think seriously about children's books. Moss (1974) distinguishes sharply between this critical position and that of the pragmatist who views children's books as a means to an end. The purist approach, she believes, sets standards, enforces a regard, and challenges the adult, intellectual reader to take cognizance of literature for children. The pragmatist is concerned with the relationship between literature, children, and reading. Moss dismisses the apparent 'rift' between the two critical schools by declaring that both approaches are indispensable in the development of any comprehensive criticism. Hand's (1973) "Criticism and the Children's Fiction Industry" identifies a concern which cannot be dismissed as easily, however. In a scathing article he denounces two "postures," adopted by authors, he believes, to diffuse criticism of their work. He refers to the 'I write for myself—so it's no business of yours to presume to judge' and 'the children like it—what business is it of yours?' positions. Hand's allegations are serious
ones. He charges that "the command posts in children's literature—the award-giving panels, the review columns of the 'quality' newspapers and weeklies—are in the hands of an alliance composed of the critically incompetent and the authors themselves" (p. 4); that what passes for critical perception as far as children's literature is concerned is nothing more than 'uplift'—"the diffuse sense that children's literature is a Good Thing and the more of it the better"; and that the critical vacuum is being filled by the authors themselves who have become "judges in their own cause . . . promoting their own images" (p. 4). Although most of these allegations are effectively refuted by Alderson (cited by Haviland, 1973), himself a literary purist, Hand's article is significant in that it focuses attention on the need for objectivity and strict, critical standards in the assessment of children's books—a work-centered criticism.

The focus of this present chapter is work-centered criticism. It attempts to examine those writings which are consciously or even indirectly concerned with the establishment and preservation of the critical standards which Hand and countless others believe to be essential in any literature deserving of that title. Margery Fisher, in Intent Upon Reading: A Critical Appraisal of Modern Fiction for Children (Brockhampton Press, 1964), suggests that "the miller's daughter in the fairy tale, counting the grains of sand, had no more difficult task than that of a critic discussing the whole body of children's literature" (p. 7). The writer of this report has discovered that the task of presenting any organized overview of such criticism is no less demanding. The volume of critical writing dealing with literary standards, literary elements, literary genres, and the
works of individual authors and illustrators, makes an exhaustive analysis of it impractical in the present context. Within the present study the approach is mainly by genres, with an overview of the literary elements which pertain to all genres. No attempt is made to deal specifically and separately with the works of individual authors or illustrators. A selected listing of the critical articles related to the works of particular authors and illustrators is provided in Appendix B. The work-centered criticism which has been reviewed is reported under the following headings: Landmark Works, Literary Elements in Children's Literature, The Literature of the Oral Tradition, Historical Fiction, Biography, Science Fiction, Picture Books, Fantasy, Poetry, and Informational Books.

**Landmark Works**

The work-centered approach to children's literature was convincingly espoused by Lillian Smith almost three decades ago. Her *The Unreluctant Years: A Critical Approach to Children's Literature* (Viking, 1953) must be considered a landmark work. In her foreword Smith sets forth her basic principle:

> Children's books do not exist in a vacuum, unrelated to literature as a whole. They are a portion of universal literature and must be subjected to the same standards of criticism as any other form of literature. (p. i)

The qualities which are essential to good writing are, Smith believes, literary ones, and she insists that any valid criticism will be rooted in a thorough understanding of what she calls "the fundamental principles of good writing" (p. 35). The literary quality for Smith is determined largely by "the quality of the writer's idea, the soundness of the structure he builds, and the expressive power of his language"
Included in these three constituents are obviously the subject matter and theme, the development of the plot, and the style of writing. Originality, imagination, and style are key ingredients in literary quality as far as Smith is concerned. Using Arnold's 'Touchstone Theory', she attempts to develop criteria by which books of excellence may be judged, whether they be folk tales, myths and legends, poetry, fantasy, historical fiction, or information books. Smith is unrelenting in her demands for excellence, refusing to tolerate the mediocre or the commonplace. Her sensitive and perceptive analysis of 'touchstone' classics provides a sound base and a valuable guide for other critics.

It is significant that in 1966 a conference focusing on "the ingredients of knowledge, understanding, and sensitivity fundamental to serious criticism and interpretation of children's literature" (Fenwick, 1967, p. 1) had as its title the subtitle of Smith's book, A Critical Approach to Children's Literature. The major papers presented at this conference were concerned with children's literature as "a segment of all serious literature, a commentary upon life in dimensions that are meaningful to children" (p. 1). Fenwick, in her introduction to the Conference Papers, acknowledges the relationship that must exist between children's literature and the child's developmental and environmental needs, but identifies the focus of the conference as the literature itself. Significantly, the last paper is concerned with the responsibility of the critic in the shaping of children's literature, and its author, Elizabeth Nesbit, herself an author of children's books, makes a plea for "more articles of literary criticism" (p. 126).
In an attempt to find articles of serious literary criticism, Egoff et al. examined hundreds of articles in periodicals from all parts of the English-speaking world. Their primary aim, as they expressed in the preface of *Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature* (Oxford, 1969), was to find selections that deal with children's literature as an essential part of the whole realm of literary activity, to be discussed in the same terms and judged by the same standards that would apply to any other branch of writing. (p. xv)

Rejecting any need for a "special scale of values" for children's literature, these editors sought articles which reflected "insight" and "informed contemporary thinking," offering ideas which were "fresh, original, and illuminating, and not necessarily unorthodox or provocative" (p. xv). This work makes accessible 'some interesting fragments' in six major categories: Books and Children, Fairy Tales, Fantasy, Animals, Historical Fiction, Some Writers and Their Books, Illustrations, and The Modern Scene. It is an important contribution to the literary criticism of children's books and a significant landmark in the development of a work-centered approach. Its second edition (Oxford, 1980) follows the same guidelines and uses the same criteria in reaching decisions about what was to be included.

Haviland's (1973) collection of "essays, criticism, and statement of trends in the world of children's books" includes an historical as well as an international perspective; it also directs attention to the importance to the development of children's literature of a valid criticism and the establishment of awards for literary excellence. Articles selected for inclusion are those which, in the judgment of the editor, contribute to an understanding of the historical background of
children's literature, as well as contemporary theories and judgments regarding the same. Its philosophical base, like that of *Only Connect*, is that children's literature, as a part of literature, is subject to adult standards. This philosophy has its origin in the nineteenth century and is reflected in the writings of Sarah Trimmer, Horace Scudder, Charlotte Yonge, and Elizabeth Rigby. It was this last-named critic who wrote in 1844:

A child's book especially requires that which every possessor of talent knows to be its most difficult and most necessary adjunct, viz., the judgment evinced in the selection of your ideas, the discretion exercised in the control of your powers. In short, the 'beau-ideal' of this class of composition lies in the union of the highest art with the simplest form. (p. 8)

A collection of another kind, but one which must be noted as a valuable contribution to the criticism of children's literature, is Cameron's *The Green and Burning Tree* (Little, Brown, 1969), a collection of personal essays which the author claims are concerned more with appreciation than criticism. These essays offer perceptive analyses of particular books and elucidate critical principles which should govern writing for children. Particularly valuable is this author's discussion of style, sense of audience, and sense of place.

Two other collections, *Writers, Critics and Children* (Agathon Press, 1976) and *Crosscurrents of Criticism* (The Horn Book, 1977), bring together in permanent form some of the most significant writing on children's literature in the decade under study. Both collections focus on a developing criticism of writing for children and offer some perspective on the present state of the art of literary criticism as it relates to children's books.
More than a century after Elizabeth Rigby (1844) had claimed for children's literature the need for "the union of the highest art with the simplest form," John Rowe Townsend (1971b) made another claim that, just as children are a part of mankind, so children's literature is a part of all literature (p. 378). His May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture "Standards of Criticism for Children's Literature," in its attempt to make a statement about what may be described as the literary-purist approach to criticism, must be considered a landmark work. Townsend identifies a standard of literary merit as "the leading edge or backbone in book assessment," and suggests that, without such a standard, criticism becomes little more than a collection of unrelated criteria or idiosyncratic response to a work. Criticism, Townsend believes—the strict criticism which is necessary to raise children's literature beyond 'kiddy lit' to a respectable intellectual level—is more than 'vague approval', 'sentimental gush', or 'praise for the work of established writers because they are established'. Arguing that the critic counts for more than the criteria, Townsend stops short of formulating a list of guidelines for would-be critics. He insists, however, that good critics will be aware of such considerations as theme, plot, style, and characterization. But beyond such awareness, the critic must bring to his work a sensitivity sharpened and refined by broad experience with literature generally as well as with children's literature, a sense of balance and rightness, and the capacity to respond to the strengths and weaknesses of a work. Townsend believes also that children's books which succeed when evaluated by strict standards of literary merit will be those which operate on more than one level, and offer to the reader increasing pleasure and
perception at different levels of development. "The writer for children need feel no lack of scope for high endeavour," he says, "for attempting the almost but not quite impossible" (p. 387).

In an article which he describes as complementary to Townsend's and "possibly a first step on the critical road Townsend suggests," Hunt (1974) suggests that in children's books critics have a last chance of "approaching and evaluating the virgin area of literature." He cautions, however, that unless critics have a clear sense both of what their subject is and what the purpose of their criticism is, they are in danger of generating "more sound than sense" (p. 117).

Agreeing with Townsend that the study of children's books has suffered both in status and in quality as a result of the lack of serious criticism, Hunt believes that an academic approach would have two valuable results: it would provide reference in the corpus of children's books for other disciplines, and it would bring deserved recognition to those many deserving books that have been 'lost' along the way (p. 118). Hunt's approach to children's literature is totally work-centered. The fact that literature is for children is significant only if the audience or the author's conception in any way affects the way the author writes, he believes. His central argument is that whatever critical theory we produce for children's literature, it will have little or nothing to do with children. Thus we may say that Book X is literature, or Book Y is good literature, regardless of whether children actually read it, or like it, or buy it. (p. 119)

Hunt suggests a three-layered, critical theory to decide whether a book written for children is literature or not, and which parts of it are worthy of analysis and explication. He refers to the **factual stage**
which is concerned with the establishment of a text; the contextual approach, which involves consideration of symbolism and allusion; and the generic approach, with its concern for the particular characteristics of children's literature.

The factual stage Hunt associates with the 'new criticism' of Brooks, Tate, Warren, and others, with emphasis on the mechanics of the book as a work of art; the contextual or the exponential approach, concerned largely with expression and meaning, deals with themes, symbols, imagery, and motifs; the generic or mythological and archetypal approach draws on anthropological and historical sources to link elements of children's books with elements of world cultures. He makes reference also to a moral criticism, concerned with the detection of a book's message, and a judgment of a book based on the quality of its message—an approach which he considers particularly relevant to children's literature, where a strong didactic element exists; a psychological or psychoanalytical approach—an approach which he considers likely to provoke strong, adverse reaction; and a sociological approach, which he considers responsible for much that is prescriptive in the writing on children's books. The importance of Hunt's article, in the opinion of the writer of this report, is its insistence that children's books can bear serious critical analysis; that critical method is not only applicable to children's books, it is imperative; and that criticism will make a contribution to the establishment of a firm foundation of academic discipline for the study of children's books. His article must be considered a significant statement in literary criticism.
Literary Elements in Children's Literature

In children's literature, no less than in literature for adults, all the literary elements pertain, and no less significance should be attached to any single element because a book happens to be one of interest to children. In this, as in other aspects of literature, the difference between literature for children and literature for adults is more a matter of degree than of essence. The major elements of plot, characterization, theme, and style function in literature for children as they do in all literature, and no valid comprehensive assessment of children's books can ignore the relationship between the literary excellence of a work and the author's ability to develop individual elements, manipulate them effectively, and integrate them into a unified whole. Although an examination of critical reaction to the techniques and practices of individual authors in their handling of the literary elements is beyond the scope of this present study, critical opinion regarding the elements of effective writing cannot be ignored in the context of this chapter. In this section attention is focused upon the general opinions of the critics regarding the literary elements of children's literature, regardless of genre. Successful writing in any genre will, of course, be directly related to the author's success in using all such elements purposefully in effecting his artistic intention.

Plot

It is difficult to find a more concise or more accurate statement regarding the nature of the narrative plot than that of Aristotle in *The Poetics*:
A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A beginning is that which does not itself follow anything by causal necessity, but after which something naturally is or comes to be. An end, on the contrary, is that which itself naturally follows some other thing, either by necessity, or as a rule, but has nothing following it. A middle is that which follows something as some other thing follows it. A well constructed plot, therefore, must neither begin nor end at haphazard, but conform to these principles. (in Bate, 1952, p. 24)

This well constructed, unified plot of which Aristotle writes is central to successful fiction in any genre, since the writing must succeed as fiction first, and only secondarily as historical fiction, realistic fiction, science fiction, or fantasy. If the writing succeeds at the narrative level, the reader may, in retrospect, if not immediately, come to appreciate the universal truths or the symbolism embodied therein; if the plot fails, the book will not hold the reader's interest for long, regardless of the art or the skill with which it is presented. This is the consensus of those who make statements about the importance of plot in children's books. Smith (1953) repeats Aristotle's demand for a beginning, a middle, and an end, and she speaks of a series of events—sequential and interrelated—arousing curiosity, creating suspense, and leading the reader on to discover something. She cautions, however, that if all a plot has to offer is suspense, its interest appeal will be short-lived, as there will be no reason to reread it (p. 40). Horowitz (1969) believes plot to be "the basis for the whole fictional creation," and she sees its significance to be the "sense of direction" that it provides for the sequence of events, and the "control" that it exercises over the actions of the characters (p. 400). It is her contention that in many recent stories for children, particularly those told from a
first-person point of view, the element of plot has been ignored and this has resulted in "a type of aimlessness." When the author's purpose is not achieved through the plot, Horowitz points out, the burden of his intent must be borne by the characters, who then must become the author's mouthpiece. This, she believes, destroys the integrity of the characterization and is doomed to failure, because child characters are not normally possessed of either the vocabulary or the psychological insight to convincingly communicate the author's intent. Horowitz believes that it is the business of critics to constantly remind authors of the "poetic unity" of all the literary elements. Sadker and Sadker (1977) also refer to the primary importance of plot in children's books. They comment as well on the need for action-filled plots; the importance of outer rather than inner action in books for younger children; the need for resolved plots, and uncomplicated techniques of plot structure; and the importance of having the plot develop naturally from a given situation, or a given set of characters, rather than rely on contrivance or coincidence (p. 5).

From the point of view of a children's book editor, Karl (1970a) identifies the importance of pace and dimension in plot—"the speed with which the elements of the plot are revealed and the details which give it shape" (p. 72). She describes as equally effective the plot which is loosely structured and the one which is tightly structured and swiftly paced. It is a matter of appropriateness rather than correctness, and in both approaches there is the same need for the development and resolution of complications through the interplay of all other literary elements.
Something of the importance which the critics attach to an author's handling of plot is evidenced by their comments on the strengths of individual works. Stott (1973), for example, says of Gates' *Blue Willow* (Viking, 1940) that the artistry is complex, and that through her treatment of plot, setting, and symbols, the author has "transformed a story of the late 1930's into a universal study of a young girl's search for security" (p. 761). Stott compares Gates' technique with that used by Eliot, Hemingway, and Fitzgerald, and he demonstrates that she has placed her characters within a modern wasteland, but has so structured her plot that they are permitted to escape from that wasteland to a promised land. Sherlikes (1977) attributes the survival of John R. Tunis' novels to their master plots, characterized by excitement and suspense. Nettleford (in Kirpatrick, 1978) says of Mollie Hunter that in her work "she is unfailing in her technique and historical research, and the success of her plots owes a great deal to design and little to accident" (p. 639). And Egoff et al. (1980) attribute the "extraordinary strength of their literary qualities" in such writings as Hunter's *A Sound of Chariots* (G.K. Hall, 1973), Southall's *What About Tomorrow* (Macmillan, 1976), and Hamilton's *The Planet of Junior Brown* (Macmillan, 1971) to the "logical flow of the narratives," combined with the "delicate complexity" of their characterization, themes, and style (p. 316). This is the unity which Karl and others demanded.

Anderson and Groff's (1972) assessment of plot in children's books focuses attention on the points which have been made in this section. They say:
When the limits of the plot are properly set and all of its inner parts add to the total effect, a world is created that has meaning and organization seldom possible in the real world. . . . A good plot with boundaries of beginning and end, which contains a harmonious unity, builds a world not found in ordinary experience. Literature thus makes sense out of chaos by its arrangement of reality. (pp. 15-16)

**Characterization**

Credible and clearly delineated characterization is a hallmark of good writing and it must be construed as something other than coincidence that those authors who receive critical acclaim are almost invariably those who have created memorable characters. These characters, not always human, succeed through the force of their own individuality in engaging the reader's interest and empathy, often involving him in a relationship which outlasts the reading experience itself. Not that there is any single character prototype which the successful author must follow. Munro Leaf's Ferdinand, H.A. Rey's Curious George, William Armstrong's Sounder, Wangerin's Chaunticleer, Leon Garfield's Smith, Rosemary Sutcliff's Drem, Erik Haugaard's Guido, Armstrong Sperry's Mafatu, Edith Sharpe's Nkwala, Kenneth Grahame's Toad, E.B. White's Charlotte A. Cativica, Patricia Wrightson's Andy, Ivan Southall's Josh, Scott O'Dell's Karana, Louise Fitzhugh's Harriet, L.M. Montgomery's Anne, Antoine de Saint Exupery's Little Prince, Tolkien's Bilbo Baggins, and Ursula Le Guin's Ged all testify to the rich and varied array of characters in children's books, and to the versatility and originality of the authors who create them and bring them to life. Valid criticism involves both the recognition and identification of such ability on the part of individual authors, and remarking on the lack of it. The literature examined provides
evidence of both; it also makes statements about effective approaches to characterization.

Crouch (1972) speaks of Nina Bawden's skill in drawing recognizable children, and her exercise of restraint in "requiring no more of them than they can reasonably perform" (p. 46). Southall (Macmillan, 1975) writes of his own searching for characters that children can identify as human, characters with whom they themselves can sympathize and identify (pp. 35-36). Sutcliff (in Jones & Way, 1976) relates how her characters are mere acquaintances before she begins to write, and as the book unfolds the acquaintanceship ripens (p. 148). Describing Toad as "the children's Falstaff," Tucker (1976) identifies characterization as the strength of The Wind in the Willows, and the strength of the characters, he believes, arises from their credibility—never are they "miserable creations who are merely the mouthpieces for an adult's stereotyped vision of what is considered to be especially suitable for children" (p. 164). Townsend (1971a) refers to Lucy Boston's weakness in characterization (p. 30), Meindert de Jong's failure to individualize (p. 98), and Joan Aiken's ability as a caricaturist and a mimic, but inability to create strong characters and tell a story about them (p. 30).

Both Sadker and Sadker (1977) and Anderson and Groff (1972) say something of the techniques involved in characterization. Sadker and Sadker observe that the author may develop characters through description, through the use of speech patterns and dialogue, through behavior in response to both ordinary and extraordinary situations, and through the recorded observations and reactions of confreres (p. 6).
They emphasize the need for characterization consistent with age, culture, and background, and which develops rather than 'happens'.

Commenting on the endless variety of characters appearing in children's books, Anderson and Groff point out that "anything from an angel to a stone can become a character, if it is endowed with life and made accessible to the imagination" (p. 17). Herein lies the secret of characterization, the ability of the author to endow even inanimate objects with life, energy, vitality, and individuality. Anderson and Groff distinguish between what they call the "externals" of characterization, conveyed through illustration, description, and the social status afforded the individual; and the "essence" of characterization which is revealed through action and the choices characters make—choices based upon motivation and sense of purpose. They point out also that many characters, particularly those in books of fantasy, while individualized and convincing at the narrative level, may have symbolic dimensions much larger than life. When this is the author's intention, the character must be believable at both the narrative and symbolic levels.

Karl (1970a) perceives character as being inextricably interwoven with plot in successful writing, and she refers to a "well-bound-up plot-and-character book." The characters she describes as those of a good book may be seen to embody those 'strengths' which the critics have identified. Karl says:

The characters in a good book seem to live not only in the book but beyond the pages as well. The book tells what happens to them over a given span of time. But the reader knows they were not all born on the first page and do not all die on the last page. They have vigor and a sense of direction that impel them through the book and beyond.
Such characters are people with flaws, with human emotions that are not always pleasant, with desires, wisdoms, stupidities, sensitivities, with all the virtues and vices that make up real people. They are strong enough not to be forced into actions unnatural to them, and they are never merely place-holders, moving through pre-patterned events. (p. 73)

Theme

The themes which are explored in children's books are a rich and varied assortment. Indeed, there is scarcely any theme which of itself may be considered inappropriate. The manner in which a theme is developed inevitably determines its acceptability, interest appeal, and effectiveness. Books which are remembered beyond a single reading are most likely those which make perceptive comments about the human condition, and do so through the total interplay of all the literary elements rather than as a corollary to a tale.

A book's theme or themes should be, according to Smith (1953), woven naturally into the story, developing not through isolated incidents, but through the action of the plot and through the characterization (p. 40). Smith cautions against the frequent practice of second-rate writers to choose overly didactic themes. These writers are they of whom Smith says:

[they] are most anxious to write a story that will support a cause in which they as adults are interested, rather than to tell a story for the sake of the pleasure it will give a child. (p. 38)

Her critical assessment of such writing is particularly pertinent at present in view of the proliferation of books on 'relevant' themes. She says:
When a new children's book is acclaimed by adults, not because of its creative conception, its imaginative treatments, its values in the art of writing for children, but merely because the subject matter confirms an adult interest in some ephemeral phase of adult problems or experience, it is time to ask oneself whether a book is being praised for the right reasons, or because of mistaken ideas of what constitutes a suitable theme for a good children's book. (p. 39)

It must remain a matter of critical concern that the themes employed in children's books and the manner in which they are developed be related to the interests of children and, at the same time, be within their emotional and intellectual capacity for involvement. This concern is expressed by Smith and supported by other critics as well.

The critics identify as strengths of individual authors their ability to develop within a smoothly integrated narrative, themes which are both interesting to children and evocative of response from the child's perspective of human experience. Some authors work with a recurring theme, developing it by a variety of approaches. Townsend (1971), as does Holland (1978), for example, refers to the recurring theme of the nature of good and evil in the writings of Leon Garfield. Garfield's themes are few, Townsend points out, and all of them in some way involve "the confusion between the real and the apparent—mysteries of origin and identity, the precarious survival of compassion and charity in a tempestuous world" (p. 99). Kingsbury (1977) refers to the theme of love in all of Maude Kerr's novels and she identifies as a strength of these novels that they introduce themes which continue to be a source of universal interest. Kerr's thesis is that "the why of people can be explained in terms of who or what they love and whether they receive the love they need from others" (p. 288).
Madeleine L'Engle's themes, according to Townsend (1971), reflect her own strong, religious beliefs. Though very different in subject matter and approach from those of Kerr, L'Engle's books also are concerned with love, and express her conviction that our very survival as a race may depend upon our capacity for mutual love and understanding (p. 121). Stott (1973) sees the artistry of Doris Gates' *Blue Willow* directly related to the author's success in communicating what he calls "a universal story of a child's need for security and of the courage a child so often exercises to achieve it" (p. 839), and Jago (1972) refers to a major theme of *A Wizard of Earthsea* as "the use and abuse of the nature of things and people" (p. 26). These may all be seen as serious themes, making profound philosophical statements about life and the human condition. Their presentation, however, is neither dull nor ponderous, nor is the approach always serious. The books in question differ sharply in subject matter and style; they are all distinguished by literary merit.

Related to the subject of theme in children's literature are archetypes and motifs. Anderson and Groff (1972) describe this awareness of the recurring patterns in all literature of imagery, structure, character and plot, as "perhaps the greatest discovery of modern literary criticism" (p. 34). Frye (1963) draws parallels between the natural seasons and human experience, and he identifies four phases of archetypal structure as: the dawn, spring, and birth phase; the zenith, summer, and marriage or triumph phase; the sunset, autumn and death phase; and the darkness, winter, and dissolution phase (p. 16). In their discussion of Sendak's *Where The Wild Things Are* and Grahame's
The Wind In The Willows, Anderson and Groff (1972) identify the presence of these universal archetypes, and they suggest that in both tales "the forest serves as motif and archetype of the unknown and the dangerous" (pp. 34-38). They suggest, moreover, that the critic of children's literature must be sensitive to such archetypes, motifs, and universal themes. They explain:

First, because of the ancient nature of the archetype as a way of looking at the world, these patterns of imagery are of vital force in the human tradition. Also, because of their deep psychological nature they stir emotional responses. Further, because they are so important a tool to the literary artist, so widely and richly used, their recognition is necessary to the interpretation of literature. They are a real part of the symbolism of literary art—learning to see them is an additional way of reading the whole experience of literature. (p. 36)

Style

Style is that powerful literary element which acts to harmonize all other elements, integrating them into a unity which constitutes the book's structure. Difficult to define, style is a matter of art. It is individualized and particularized and, in essence, results from the author's choice of words and arrangement of the same. The critics agree that style is that element which distinguishes a work which otherwise might remain very ordinary.

Cameron (1969) describes style as neither embellishment, nor anything artificial which is superimposed upon a writer's natural expression; but rather, the sound of the self arising from the whole concept of the work (pp. 138-139). She refers to four qualities of memorable prose as control of language, distinctive rhythm, involvement of the writer, and poetic vision; and she suggests that those who wish to
write distinguished prose for children would do well to consider the
texts of outstanding picture books. She mentions, in particular, the
writings of Marcia Brown, Barbara Cooney, Wanda Gag, Robert McCloskey,
Rebecca Caudill, Beverly Cleary, Eleanor Estes, and Clyde Bulla.

Cameron is critical of the style of much of the writing in realistic
fiction, particularly that being turned out in response to the demand
for material on issues. She does, however, exclude from her castigation
the 'realistic narrative' that results from an author's striving for
authenticity in the portrayal of place, people, and situation.

The critical position underlying Cameron's statements is clearly
enunciated by Sadker and Sadker (1977) who maintain that the style an
author adopts for a particular book must be consistent with plot,
theme, and character, both reflecting and enhancing these other elements
and contributing to the total unity of the work (p. 6). And while it
is true, as they suggest, that an audience of children will impose some
restrictions on an author's manner of expression, it is certainly not
the opinion of the critics that children's books should be devoid of
richness of phrase or literary image. Mrs. Molesworth in 1893 (in
Salway, 1976) rejected any such idea, and the majority of critics since
that time have done likewise. Mrs. Molesworth believed that all the
general rules of style hold true for children's books. She, herself,
was a strong proponent of clear and simple language, insisting that
the words used must be the very best possible, and rejecting any
necessity of being constrained by the children's own vocabulary (p.
343). The same idea, almost a century later, is expressed by Hunter
(1975) who states that "rhythm, simplicity and the word exactly right
in context" are the hallmarks of good writing (p. 113). She compares the aim of the writer to that of the magician, and in both cases the tools of the craft are words. Hunter says:

The aim the writer sets himself is the same as that of the magician—to penetrate to the secret, beating heart of life; and by touching it, marvellously to transmute one set of circumstances to another. His method is the same. Instinctively he senses that words are inherently magical, and that by setting one with another he may formulate the language which is his spell. Yet intellectually he is aware that words may be defined only to the extent of ensuring their correct use in context, and all creative writing is an attempt to solve the contradictions this imposes. (p. 109)

A number of the critics in the literature reviewed expressed concern about the author's choice of words, and what Hunter calls "their correct use in context." Higgins (1970), for example, believes that the author must be allowed the freedom of choosing the words which best serve his purpose, that he must be "unshackled by word lists or controlled vocabulary," and that, when appropriateness dictates, the author may indeed require the young reader to "extend himself" (p. 74). Fox (1975) warns of the need for authors to be on guard against what she calls "a kind of potato language" which she claims has been gaining in popularity over the years, encouraging authors to substitute for plain, direct, and simple speech what is little more than "doughy, flaccid, tedious babble" (p. 440). Fox refers to the use in current books of such 'in' words as meaningful, related, creative, viable, and love (which she describes as "the biggest fix of all"). Of these and other such words Fox says:

These words are meaningful. . . . But they have broken from their moorings in real thought. And we seem to use them, like the others we borrow from the ash heaps of professional jargon, to constrict and hurry past consciousness, not to enlarge it. (p. 440)
Fisher (1970), too, warns that critics must not seek to "impede" writers in their choice of vocabulary. She suggests, indeed, that any attempt on the part of the critic to restrict the author's choice and use of words is an impertinence, just as any attempt to dictate the "individuality" of the writer's style may result in books which are written to formula rather than being a reflection of the integrity and strength of the author's vision (p. 16). Steele (1975) is concerned that her own characters speak naturally and in words that come naturally to them (p. 252). To ensure the credibility of her own characters Steele will, she says, use the best words and the best order, nor will she tamper with their natural expression, regardless of what grammarians may say (p. 253). Related to this is Aiken's (1972) discussion of the use of dialect versus prescribed speech patterns. She espouses the belief that the author's goal ought to be one of being "cheek-to-cheek with one's reader, mouth-to-ear," and that in order to communicate to the reader an honest view of a character, the author has an obligation to communicate the total picture, including speech patterns. Aiken admits that she does not know how to reproduce the exact pronunciation, cadences, inflexions, vocabulary, of some characters without running the risk of offending some readers (p. 17). Her own attitude toward language and dialect, from the point of view of a writer, is clearly and forcefully stated:

Language ought to be for us to use, instead of our being subservient to it; after all, we invented it. We ought to prevent it becoming a kind of Cinderella's shoe into which we have to shove our bleeding feet. . . . Language ought to be a tool, not a yolk on our backs. (p. 20)
Emerging from all of these comments is the principle that language in particular and style in general must serve the purpose and harmony of the whole. The very fact that an author's style calls attention to itself, for any reason, may be an indication of its inappropriateness. With reference to this it is interesting to note Crouch's (1972) assessment of the style of Rosemary Sutcliff—that at its best it is characterized by flexibility, eloquence, and the power to evoke response, but at times it has what he describes as a "self-intoxicating quality" and threatens to take over the narrative (p. 65).

Fisher (1970) suggests that the words the author chooses—and, presumably, the manner in which he employs them—are part of the writer's revelation of self. In this, of course, she reinforces Cameron's idea of style as the sound of self, and Porter's belief regarding the inextricable relationship between author and style that "you do not create a style, you work and develop yourself; your style is an emanation from your own being" (cited by Cameron, 1969, p. 153). Cameron's observation on this point is pithy and pertinent:

if one does not have a self, or only a weak or uncertain self, then one has nothing to refer to but grammar and usage. And both content and style (so closely related), the thought and the delivery of thought, are most memorable, most illuminating, when the writer is wholly at ease with himself and has neither the need nor the desire to cover up or avoid the uniqueness of that self. (p. 153)

**Synthesis and Emerging Principles**

The literature reviewed in this section provides the basis for the formulation of a critical perspective on the significance of the literary elements in writing for children. Never is there doubt expressed that all the literary elements pertain in literature for children as
in literature generally. Regardless of the genre, the literary elements of plot, characterization, theme, and style are seen as functioning separately and in combination with each other to provide a work of literary excellence. Each element or component of literature, skillfully and imaginatively effected, must contribute to the work, but it is in the unity of all elements that the merit of the work is assured, and the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

A well structured plot with a clearly defined beginning, middle, and ending, is important, and the rather loosely constructed personal narratives of many contemporary writers suffer from lack of such structure. Plot development should be sequential, consequential, and consistent, leaving nothing to accident or contrivance, but developing naturally around action—which, in books for younger children, should be "outer" rather than "inner" action.

In the best books characters are recognizable individuals. They are credibly and convincingly portrayed; they belong naturally in the plot, and are directly involved in its development, as they themselves develop through its action. Their total personality, which must be consistent with age, culture, and background, unfolds as the plot unfolds, and becomes apparent through description, through their own speech and behavior patterns, and through the attitudes of others toward them. Essential to effective characterization is accuracy in communicating both the 'externals' and the 'essence' of individuals; and those individuals, endowed with the strengths and weaknesses, vices and virtues which are a part of the human condition, act and react naturally and consistently in the circumstances which beset them.
So convincingly delineated are they as individuals that they 'live', not only in the narrative, but beyond it.

The rich and varied assortment of themes in children's books, often making perceptive comments on human experience, must be woven into the pattern of the story, never appended at the end, but emerging as threads which permeate plot and character and are, as well, expressed by the author's style. These themes need not be simplistic or superficial--nor should they be--nor is there any cause for a dull and tedious treatment of a serious theme. Matters of consequence, or life's universal truths, may often be communicated to children more convincingly through humor, whimsy, and a simple, direct narrative, than through complexities of style, structure, and subject matter. What is of most importance is that the theme, whatever its nature, be developed in a manner which is accessible to a child, and what is true of theme may be applied as well to archetypes and motifs.

Central to the successful integration of all other literary elements is the author's style, which will reflect his attitude to his audience, the richness of his vision, and his competence in using the tools of his craft. In writing for children all the rules of style apply, with the qualification that consideration be given to the child's ability to respond. There is no suggestion, however, that an author's style be condescending or trite. Rather, the challenge to the author is to purposefully exploit the rich potential of vocabulary, idiom, and image in a manner which will engage the interest of children at the same time that it encourages them to extend themselves. An author's style is best assessed by reference to his creation and
manipulation of all the literary components. Distinguished writing in every genre results when a fresh, imaginative, and original style functions effectively to combine all other literary elements into a harmonious whole—a work of art which, while reflecting the excellence of its individual parts, is greater than the sum of them.

The Literature of Oral Tradition

The Nature of Traditional Literature

The literature of the oral tradition includes myths, legends, fables, folk tales, fairy tales, epics, romances, and any other form which derives from the oral traditions of the people. Its origins, like the origins of the races whose voice it is, are hidden by the mists of time. In recorded form it exists in translations, retellings and adaptations of the original tales; versions for children may preserve the richness, the beauty and the authenticity of these tales, or they may dilute, distort, and merely tell, without recreating or representing. In this section the various forms of this body of literature are dealt with collectively rather than individually. While forms have their distinctive characteristics, their differences may be measured in degree rather than in kind, and they share common elements.

The literature of the oral tradition, whatever its form, is the literature of the 'folk', rooted in their life and nature, and preserved and transmitted across the generations by the art of storytelling. A people's representation of reality, it emanates from universal experience; and in one form or another it seeks to bring meaning, shape, order, and purpose out of the apparent vagaries of human existence.
Frequently sharing common archetypes and motifs, it uses symbols or images to interpret and explain. Farmer (in Fox et al., 1976) says of it that it all relates to general experience and derives from the human mass subconscious (p. 55), and Anderson and Groff's (1972) description of myth as operating on "the fundamental assumption that behind the impenetrable face of reality there is pattern, order, causality, will, meaning, and design" (p. 43) may be seen to have implications as well for the larger body of folklore. Anderson and Groff themselves refer to the mythic archetypes which are present in the folk tales, and the similar motifs and themes which recur in all folklore (p. 54).

Generally, regardless of form, this literature uses the common literary elements of narrative. It differs from most other forms of narrative, however, in that it was not originally intended for children; indeed, the books by which it becomes accessible to them are often retellings of editions for children adapted from translations or transcriptions of the original oral material. Such versions for children, clearly three or four removes from the original lore of the people, may easily lose sight of their origins altogether and become merely a recounting of fabulous tales. Critical assessment of "retellings," "adaptations," "versions," and "variants" must be rooted in some awareness of and sensitivity to the folk whose tales these are—their land, their culture, their codes of behavior. Genuine folklore, as Egoff (1975) insists, is more than the product of a people; it is a representation of them, communicating the spirit and flavor of a country, a race, and a way of life. Versions for children should preserve and communicate that spirit and flavor.
Because any criticism or evaluation of the literature of the oral tradition can only be criticism or evaluation of an individual author's interpretation, retelling or adaptation of particular myths, legends, fables, folktales, fairy tales, epics or romances; and because such criticism or evaluation must naturally be based on some standard, it is not surprising that there appears to be little criticism readily available. Few critics have access to original transcripts, few are able to read the tales in their original language, and many critics are neither classical scholars nor folklorists. The normal modes of narrative may be assessed but, beyond this, the critical evaluation of the literature of the oral tradition presents unique problems. The critical literature reviewed for this study reveals what appears to be a reluctance on the part of critics to deal with this literature. Naturally enough, the small amount of criticism which does exist focuses mainly upon versions for children. In this regard, what is said about one branch or form of this literature may usually be applied as well to other branches. Specifically related to the folk tale, for example, is some concern for its potential to frighten children. Such concern may also legitimately relate to the myths, legends, and epics.

Versions for Children

The critics agree that the literature of the oral tradition must be somehow made accessible to children. There is general agreement on the freshness, the beauty, the wonder, and the excitement of this literature, as well as its interest appeal and its potential for imaginative stimulation. There is a consensus, too, that folklore
constitutes a natural fare for children; that children deprived of exposure to the imaginative literature of folklore may indeed, as Chukovsky (trans. by Morton, 1963) suggests, create their own, through the power of their own imaginings; there is agreement that versions of traditional literature should preserve and communicate the spirit and flavor of both a period and a people; and that both writers and critics of such versions must be possessed of an empathy for the folk whose tales provide their subject matter. What remains a matter of critical focus is the success with which the individual retellers handle their subject matter and preserve for children of today the authenticity of yesterday's tales.

Smith's (1953) discussion of the distinguishing characteristics of the Greek and Norse myths and her insightful analysis of different versions of a single tale in both the Greek and Norse collections remains a landmark treatment of this subject. She covets for all 'retellings' of the Greek myths for children the "pure choice of words," and the "music and rhythm of language," which, in her opinion, characterize Kingsley's The Heroes. Similarly, she commends the "stark directness of telling," the "sense of remoteness," the dignity, the strength and clarity, and cohesion which are the hallmarks of Hosford's retelling of the Norse myths in Thunder of the Gods (Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1952). Hosford's dramatic simplicity, her understatement, terseness, forceful conversation and directness of narrative are all in keeping with the Norse Eddas, Smith believes; just as Kingsley's version of the Greek myths recaptures the classic age of Greece and has about it a "rightness" (p. 75). Smith explains that
versions of the Greek myths must convey the wonder, poetry, and freshness of the original story and must, at the same time, communicate a sense of setting—of a land of natural beauty in the sunny Mediterranean. In striking contrast, retellings of the Norse myths must convey a setting where nature is an enemy, where life is a continual struggle, where there is always present an undertone of tragedy, of impending doom, the inevitability of 'the twilight of the Gods'. Smith warns against any retellings of the Norse myths which attempt to embellish and expand the details, or to add explanations. Such liberties, she cautions, may well destroy the feeling, the significance and the veracity of these myths. In effect, their Norseness may be lost.

Any effective versions of the traditional literature for children, Smith declares, will communicate a sympathy and an empathy between the writer and the material with which he works. In order to communicate the whole environment of the tales the writer must first absorb it. Her assessment of retellings of epics and sagas is equally valid for folklore generally. She says:

If we are to apply a standard of judgment in evaluating versions for children of the epics of any country, our understanding of the significance, as well as the content and style of the original epics, must inform our judgment before we can know whether a translator has handled the material with respect, integrity, and imaginative insight. (p. 81)

With specific reference to the folk tale, Smith questions the practice of substituting contemporary expressions for the folk language, calls for preservation in versions of the conventions and motifs of the traditional tales, and insists that, as an art form, such versions should transmit in style and technique that quality of "artless art"
which characterized the originals (p. 56).

Emerging from Smith's discussion is a clear, critical principle—that as more and more of the literature of the oral tradition is being made available in the form of retellings and adaptations, there must be some standard of evaluation which is soundly based on knowledge of and comparison with original sources.

Such critical concern regarding 'versions' or 'retellings' in folk literature is not new. Charles Dickens, in 1853, in his "Frauds on the Fairies" (in Tucker, 1976) leaves little doubt of his opinion. He says:

To preserve them in their usefulness, they must be as much preserved in their simplicity, and purity, and innocent extravagance, as if they were actual fact. Whoever alters them to suit his own opinions, whatever they are, is guilty, to our thinking, of an act of presumption, and appropriates to himself what does not belong to him. (pp. 47-48)

In 1854 William Roscoe (in Salway, 1976) is biting in his criticism of George Cruikshank's illustrated retellings of the folk tale, denouncing his "sacrilegious alterations," and recommending to "all the instructors of youth" that they "buy the books, burn the text, and preserve the pictures" (p. 126). And in 1868 John Ruskin (in Salway, 1976) refers to the "natural changes from the sincere action of the fear or fancy of successive generations," changes which are "inevitable," and leave the story "essentially true"; but he refers also to "a deeper collateral mischief in this indulgence of licentious change and retouching of stories to suit particular tastes and inculcate favourite doctrines" (pp. 129-130).

Ironically, more than a century later Jane Yolen (1977), distinguished author of versions of traditional literature for children,
repeats this concern of Ruskin—that of using the tales to propagate one's own particular doctrine. She refers specifically to the Cinderella which the American mass market is giving to children and which, she argues, is false. Beginning with the Disney film of 1949, America's Cinderella has become little more than a caricature of the Perrault character, Yolen maintains, an "insipid beauty" waiting for the dramatic arrival of Prince Charming. As a result, the magic of the old tales has been falsified, and the true meaning destroyed. The story of Cinderella is not, Yolen insists, a story of rags to riches, but a story of riches recovered; and to present this character as less than she is, is heretical. Yolen explains:

It cheapens our most cherished dreams, and makes a mockery of the true magic inside us all—the ability to change our own lives, the ability to control our own destinies. (p. 23)

And what has happened to Cinderella, Yolen contends, has happened and is happening to the folk literature generally.

Hunter (1975), too, is concerned with the 'trivializing' of folk stories, and she refers to the "debased forms" in which they appear. Her comment, directed specifically toward fairy tales, may be seen as embracing all folk literature. She says:

To present children with this poor, thin food for their imagination is to starve them both of the strong, homely fare provided in the folklore of small, domestic transactions between 'fairies' and humans, and also of the rich romanticism of ancient legend. (p. 94)

Hunter defines the dual task of the writer as that of working at the narrative level and providing a simple story which may be enjoyed by young readers, but at the same time working at another level which employs image and symbol to communicate what she calls "the deeper
implications of the story" (p. 94). It is largely a matter of use of language, she believes, and to the writer unable to function at both levels Hunter would deny all right to work in folk literature at all.

The reteller, according to Egoff (1975) has two basic choices:

to keep as close as possible to the original, whether it was recorded by anthropologists or taken down orally, trusting the reader to make his own link with an alien culture; or to retell the story with substantial modifications, keeping the basic spirit but adding an original and compelling creative quality. (p. 44)

This second approach, Egoff believes, was followed very successfully by Garfield and Blishen in their retelling of the Greek myths in The God Beneath the Sea (Pantheon, 1971). With reference to the retelling of the Indian and Eskimo tales, as well as to folklore generally, Egoff emphasizes the importance of respecting and preserving the authenticity of native materials. In her assessment of Canadian writings she commends highly the retellings of Christie Harris, Ronald Melzack, and James Houston, all of whom, in her opinion, produce versions which, while differing markedly in subject matter and style, preserve the authenticity of the folk literature. They also communicate the dignity and the integrity of a way of life.

With reference to Egoff's point of the need for respect for native materials, Kathleen Hill (in Egoff, 1979b), a reteller of the legends of the Micmac Indians, admits her reservations about the propriety of an outsider's dabbling in the literature of another people. In spite of her respect for the material--or, perhaps, because of it--she is plagued by uncertainties throughout the course of her attempts to adapt for children a number of Micmac tales. Her efforts have been ostensibly successful, but she announces her decision: "From here
on I shall leave Glooscap to his own people" (p. 188).

Storr (in Tucker, 1976), in her discussion of why folk literature lives forever, refers to the "essence" of the "true" tales, a quality which is difficult to define, but which she equates in some way with Tolkien's joy. While the appeal of such genuine folk literature is difficult to identify, it does, she declares, make 'forgeries' easy to detect. Of such forgeries she says:

They simply ring no bells. They are invented on a purely conscious level. They may amuse, but they are apt to have only the trappings, the stock figures of the conventional story, very little else. (p. 71)

What Storr, Egoff, Yolen, Smith, and numbers of other critics repudiate are these versions of traditional literature which recount but do not recreate—pale retellings which have lost all resemblance to their original sources, neither capturing nor communicating the spirit of the culture which gave them birth. Whether they are sterile tales, devoid of poetry, wonder and imagination; or dramatic but dishonest presentations of a people's perceptions of their world, and reality itself, such retellings reinforce Tolkien's belief (1964) that the practice of adapting traditional literature for children is "a dangerous process, even when it is necessary" (p. 35).

Brutality and Horror in Traditional Literature

The critical literature reveals little concern for the potential of folklore to frighten children. Such concern, indeed, is dismissed by those who consider it at all. Smith (1953) counters any such arguments with her contention that under the best circumstances "both the child's attitude and the characteristic narrative methods of the folk
tale have an impersonal quality important to remember" (p. 59). She
refers to the 'emphasis' and the 'intention' of the teller, and the
recognition by the child that the tale belongs solely to the realm of
the imagination. This 'tacit understanding' between author and reader
or narrator and listener sets the "appropriate climate" for such
literature, she believes (p. 59). The critics, generally, agree with
Smith's assessment.

Lewis (in Egoff, 1969) is skeptical that tales really have much
potential for inciting fear in children. His position is clear:

Let there be wicked kings and beheadings, battles and
dungeons, giants and dragons, and let villains be soundly
killed at the end of the book. Nothing will persuade me
that this causes an ordinary child any kind or degree of
fear beyond what it wants, and needs, to feel. (p. 216)

Children recognize, as Tolkien (1964) so aptly puts it, that "There is
certainly no dragon in England today" (p. 40), and the best versions
of the folk literature will create what Tolkien calls a Secondary
World, creating it so effectively, indeed, that the reader, while
remaining in it, is captivated by the 'truth' of the tale. When the
reader leaves that Secondary World to return to the Primary one, he
leaves behind the things that pertain to it (pp. 36-37).

This is not to suggest that there are not some tales which may
frighten particular children--but this is not a phenomenon peculiar to
traditional literature; it applies no less in other genres. This is,
of course, as Chukovsky (trans. by Morton, 1963) suggests, "a legiti-
mate concern, and we can only respect it" (p. 130). Nor must it be
construed as a basic weakness in the tale. It does, however, emphasize
the need for judicious selection in sharing folk tales with individual
children. Hetherington's (in Salway, 1976) comment on this matter almost a century and a half ago is as applicable now as it was in 1847. He said then:

Of course, with fairy tales, as with all forms of literature for the young, it is well to make a selection; all those that deal with horror or are likely to haunt a child's memory with ghastly details should be rigidly excluded. It will, however, be found that comparatively few of the best and oldest stories are at all likely to cause such fears as these. (p. 150)

Synthesis and Emerging Principles

The literature of the oral tradition, in whatever form it appears, is the literature of the folk, or the people, representing their attempts to interpret their own experience to bring order, meaning, and purpose to the world around them, and to make some statements about the universals of human existence. This genre includes the myths, legends, fables, folk tales, fairy tales, epics, romances, and any other forms which may derive from the collective tales of a community. Its origins often obscure, this literature has been transmitted across the generations by the "artless art" of the storyteller, and has only relatively recently been 'fixed' by written records. Originally the literature of the folk, it was for children only in the sense that children were a part of the folk audience, but it made no concessions to their immaturity or lack of experience. Versions designed particularly for children are, therefore, several removes from the original tales, since they are retellings or adaptations of the transcriptions or translations of these tales. And there are versions or variants of adaptations or retellings, even variants of variants, and the process continues until, in the numbers of versions for children that abound
today, it is sometimes difficult to sense any trace of the original sources, or of the 'folk' themselves. Thus, the multiplicity of versions and variants, some of which are very far removed from the 'truth' or 'rightness' of the tale, threaten to destroy for children the wonder, richness, and beauty of this traditional literature.

Versions of traditional literature for children must be rooted firmly in folklore and in classical literature; they must preserve and transmit the spirit, the flavor, and the very atmosphere of the total environment in which the tales evolved; conventions, techniques, and styles must be those which are natural to folk literature; the language, whether it is rich and embellished, or stark and direct, must be appropriate and must communicate an authenticity; individually as well as collectively, these versions must convey the "essence" of place, period, and people. This means that the retellings of Greek myths will differ sharply from retellings of the Norse myths; that the retellings of the Indian myths will be different in form, style and subject matter from both those of the Greeks and the Norse, and also from those of the Eskimo. It means also that the folk literature of different races and different countries, while sharing common characteristics, will be independently recognizable by distinguishing features of plot, characterization, language, style, theme, and motif. While the critical literature makes no reference to illustrated versions for children, there can be no doubt that in picture-book versions the illustrations, as well as the text, must capture and reflect the identity, the authenticity, and the dignity of the tales.
Any valid criticism of versions for children of traditional literature must stem from an awareness of original sources, and an understanding of the characteristics which distinguish the various branches of this literature, as well as those which distinguish the folk literature of one country from that of another. It must also take cognizance of the fact that versions which 'prettify' the folk tales in an attempt to make them palatable for younger and younger children may serve only to emasculate these tales, so that they are little more than a travesty of folk literature; and that to falsify folk literature in form, theme, language, style, or in any other manner, is to deny its origins, distort its nature and intent, and effectively destroy it as a genre of literature.

**Historical Fiction**

**The Nature of Historical Fiction**

Historical fiction is fiction with an historical perspective. That it is fiction first and only secondarily concerned with the events and personages of history, is the consensus of all of the writers and critics whose works are here examined. However the critics may define this genre, however they may classify it, or however they may identify and describe the varying approaches to it, all agree that the good historical novel is the successful fusion of fiction, historical fact, and writing skill; it is a total blending of narrative and documentary; a product of both intellect and emotion, it is an imaginative recreation of a segment of history. It recaptures the atmosphere, the spirit and flavor of a time and place at the same time that it engages
the reader in a compelling narrative. It is rooted in careful and exhaustive research, but it goes beyond the historical data to reveal the way things were, why and how particular events occurred, and how people—the high and the humble—lived and died. It provides a stage for the eminent characters of history to faithfully reenact their roles; it provides the same stage for the less dramatic lives of the countless men, women, and children of whom history has no record. It depicts with equal accuracy the glorious and shameful deeds of the political and military leaders of the nations; it portrays ordinary people going about the routine business of living, but sometimes caught in extraordinary circumstances. It depicts their successes and their failures. It shows them meeting overwhelming odds with courage and superhuman effort; it shows them also defeated by circumstances they are powerless to dictate or control. It presents a picture of a period complete with sights and sounds and smells; it clothes the bare bones of history with blood and marrow—and life. Its raw material is the product of sound study and research heightened by perception and interpretation; the product itself is a creation of imagination and artistry. Smith (1953) says of it that the story is woven into the facts of history as warp into web, and the texture of the 'fabric' will be "fine, coarse, even or patched, according to the skill of the writer in weaving the two into one" (p. 164). At its best it offers the reader an extension of his own experience and, through imaginative response, a vicarious visitation to other places and periods; at its worst it is little more than an historical handbook. It recaptures what Trilling (cited by Fox, 1974, p. 349) calls "the hum of the past,"
confirming as it does so that history itself is a kind of fiction. The closer the story sticks to the recorded facts of history, the more valid will be the experience of the reader (Smith, 1953, p. 165); yet the facts must be borne lightly, lest the result become classroom text rather than captivating tale (Burton, in Haviland, 1973, p. 300). While accuracy is an asset, plausibility is essential (Egoff, 1975, p. 96), and how completely the reader is transported "to live in the past," how powerfully the emotions as well as the mind are engaged, depends entirely on the evocative skill of the author. This total involvement on the part of the reader will never be commanded, however, by "the parcelling out of so much history and so much fiction" (Egoff, 1975, p. 95), for, as Fox (1974) so aptly remarks:

We know that such a man was born and died, that such a battle was fought and lost, that such a charter was signed. Through personal records, drawings, artifacts of one sort or another, we can say to ourselves, the past existed, was; that is how people dressed, this is what they ate, how they were buried. But that "hum" [of the past] is another matter. We must invent. (p. 349)

Fox is here acknowledging the importance of what Egoff describes as the observance of "the appropriate balance between the contending pulls of authenticity and imagination" (p. 96).

The concept of historical fiction outlined above, a composite of ideas propounded by Smith (1953), Trease (1964, 1972, 1977), Walsh (1972), Horowitz (in Field, 1969), Burton (in Haviland, 1973), Fox (1974), Hunter (1975), Sutcliff (in Jones & Way, 1976), Picard (in Jones & Way, 1976), Townsend (1971b), and many others whose ideas the writer of this study has absorbed but cannot identify, is succinctly and suitably caught in a comment by Hales (1957), almost a quarter of
a century ago, when he says:

Whatever the meaning of history may be, there was once a time when it was not history. It was experience, shared by living people. . . . Upon these happenings the historians write their gloss, but the first thing is that they happened, and for us the first thing is that they happen again in our imagination. Before we interpret we experience, before we judge, we feel. (cited by Edwards, 1972, p. 32)

Authenticity and Art in Historical Fiction

The "contending pulls of authenticity and imagination" to which Egoff makes reference is a general matter of critical concern. The conflict is one between accuracy and authenticity on the one hand, and imaginative narrative on the other. It is not that the two are antithetical; but rather, "the more fact [the author] has to deal with, the more imagination he will need to carry it off" (Fisher, 1964, p. 225). Egoff (1975) identifies the extremes of the dilemma as those of "dedicated but narrow historical research divorced from a creative and imaginative vision of history," and "no research at all" (p. 119). Both positions spell failure for the historical novelist. The successful author is one who discovers the sensitive balance between knowledge and creativity, between fact and fiction, for, as Fisher (1964) insists, "without imagination and enthusiasm, the most learned and well documented story will leave the young reader cold, where it should set him on fire" (p. 225).

There is no suggestion in the literature that research is unimportant. The writers and critics demand the accuracy that results from an author's meticulous knowledge of detail. Trease (1977) refers to the strict standards of scholarship demanded by the historical novelist,
declaring that serious authors "shrink from faking even to make a better story" (p. 27), and he recounts that he, himself, has rewritten whole chapters to correct "a slight inaccuracy belatedly discovered." Crouch (1972) considers it a source of author Cynthia Harnett's greatest strength that she adds a brief postscript to each book, giving the reader a glimpse of the depth of her research (p. 62), and Smith (1953), Walsh (1972), Burton (in Haviland, 1973), Sutcliff (in Jones & Way, 1976) and Hunter (1975) all insist upon the same careful research.

An historical narrative of quality is possible, Smith believes, only when the author "has become sufficiently saturated with a period to move freely in it with a full awareness of the conditions and issues inherent in it, and sees his characters with sympathy and understanding as the products of these conditions" (p. 165). Hester Burton explains that, as a preparation for her own writing, she becomes so knowledgeable about the period under study that she has no need of a reference book once she begins to write. The demands she places on herself as writer (and critic) are stringent ones:

I should be able to see clearly in my mind's eye the house in which my characters live, the clothes they wear, and the carts and carriages and ships in which they travel. I should know what food they eat, what songs they sing when they are happy, and what sights and smells they are likely to meet when they walk down the street. I must understand their religion, their political hopes, their trades, and--what is most important--the relationship between different members of a family common to their particular generation. (p. 300)

Sutcliff likewise engages in research until she is literally 'living' in the period about which she proposes to write (p. 147), and she describes herself as consuming charred toast and marmalade with her
mind totally engrossed in fifth-century Britain (in Egoff et al., 1969, p. 246). Hunter (1975) considers research to the 'n'th degree' the novelist's responsibility. It is only when evidence one way or another is lacking, she says, that the writer is free to use the full play of the imagination (p. 46). Like Burton and Sutcliff, Hunter meticulously researches the period before presuming to set her historical narrative in it. The purpose of such research for the historical novelist, she believes, is to be able to both think and feel the essence of the period. With reference to her own preparation for writing, she says:

I had discovered what it was to think, talk, eat, sleep, wake in times other than my own; to work, worry, celebrate, mourn, as the people of those times had done, living among them, feeling with them, even dying as one of them.

Having thus 'lived' a period, Hunter feels free to recreate it imaginatively in any way she chooses. This is the strength of her novels and it is this same ability to 'recreate imaginatively' which has determined the reputation of Hester Burton, Rosemary Sutcliff, Geoffrey Trease, Cynthia Harnett, Jill Paton Walsh, Ronald Welch, Esther Forbes, and other 'greats' of historical fiction. Historical detail alone will never make a successful novel. Indeed, the very minutiae which are the product of the most meticulous research may result in tedium for the reader. It may, as Edwards (1972) suggests, result in the overpowering of the imagination as the reader becomes tired of being told what is what, or it may, as Trease (1972) warns, all add up to psychological falsehood. A true sense of period results from the author's adoption of what Edwards calls "the horizontal perspective," the perspective by which the author recreates the past from inside it
The findings of careful research must thus be considered the writer's raw material, by means of which he can effectively duplicate the past, having wedded his imagination and technique in so doing. The technique the author develops will always be of first importance, for, as Hunter (1975) explains, without skillful technique to mould, restrain, and govern it, the writer's imagination will remain little more than a purposeless strength. She claims an essential relationship between the writer's knowledge, imagination, and technique. "As technique governs, so also must truth restrain," she says (p. 46).

Walsh (1972) explores this relationship in her article "History is Fiction." The historical setting, regardless of its accuracy, can never make a novel historical, she maintains; it is the story which is 'the heart of the matter'. As a writer of historical fiction herself, she says that she is trying "to enshrine in the heart of the novel, in the very centre of its being, a truly historical insight" (p. 19). She makes an interesting distinction between 'not true', meaning 'not known to be true', and 'not true', meaning 'known to be not true'. The 'known false' should not appear in literature, she maintains—nor can it ever be legitimized by calling it fiction; but the 'not known to be true' is the whole point of writing historical fiction. Walsh's central thesis is that those writers who are concerned only with the 'known to be true' should restrict their attention to history; that it is the province of historical fiction to "go beyond the sound footing of the known-to-be-true on to the thrilling quagmire of the 'might have been'" (p. 20).
It must never be construed, however, that such freedom is license, or that in historical fiction anything goes. Herein, again, must be perceived that delicate balance which Egoff demanded—the balance between authenticity and imagination. The writing of historical fiction can never be "an orgy of self-indulgent, wish-fulfillment writing" (Walsh, 1972, p. 20). It must always be subject to the restraints of time and place, and the moment an author decides to place his tale in a particular historical setting he must accept these restraints. Smith (1953) perceives the major difference between a good historical story and a poor one to be the difference between becoming steeped in the life of a period and finding there a story to tell, and having some preconceived notion of a story and looking around for an appropriate period in which to place it (p. 168).

Trease (1972) cautions against the danger of 'psychological falsehood' which may result even after exhaustive research has ensured the accuracy of every detail. The true historical novel, for Trease, seeks not only authenticity of fact but also, "as far as is humanly discoverable, a faithful recreation of minds and motives" (p. 6). While he insists on the need for research, Trease believes that literature is more than research and it is his contention that "many books with unsound history are far better literature than some in which details are impeccably researched" (p. 9). Psychological authenticity involves the internal as well as the external reality of historical characters, Trease believes, and he refers to a common pitfall of the historical novel—the creation of modern characters masquerading in historical costumes. The 'external reality' is a product of careful
research; the 'internal reality' results when an author imaginatively
embues historical fact with an "authentic, inner life of thought and
feelings" (p. 13). It is this psychological authenticity which has
earned for Forbes' *Johnny Tremain* the appellation of "the prototype of
all that historical fiction should be" (Horowitz, in Field, 1964, p.
142). It is its absence which, at least in Egoff's (1975) opinion,
results in a dearth of successful Canadian historical fiction. Authen­
ticity, Egoff declares, is within the reach of any writer who diligently
researches his material; imagination, however, cannot be thus achieved
(p. 96). Acknowledging such writers as Sutcliff and Forbes as the
models against which achievement in historical fiction must be judged,
Egoff concludes that historical fiction for children, in Canada, is a
"succession of failures" (p. 98). Its virtue is the accurate reporting
of historical facts; its failure is literary. The Canadian authors
have not, it appears, been able to achieve the balance between authen­
ticity and art which is the hallmark of excellence. In this failure
they are members of a large company of writers who display more skill
in reporting history than in recreating it. It should be noted, however,
that Egoff's assessment was made prior to the publication of Barbara
Smucker's *Underground to Canada* (Clarke Irwin, 1977), and *Days of Terror*
(Clarke Irwin, 1979), both of which have received some critical acclaim.
Truss' *A Very Small Rebellion* (J.M. Legel, 1977), and Hughes' *Beyond
the Dark River* (Nelson, 1979), and *Keeper of the Isis Light* (Nelson,
1980) have also been published since that statement was made.

Although little mention was made in the literature of the authen­
ticity that may be communicated through the carefully conceived and
well executed illustrations, this, nevertheless, deserves to be noted. As in the literature itself, so in the illustrations, the results of research must be recorded accurately and artistically, and the balance between the two remains of first importance. Townsend (1974) observes that picture books and picture story books have period settings which must be accurate. Fisher (1964) refers to the "insipid faces" which may look out from carefully detailed costumes; she refers also to illustrations in which every exact detail has a place in the story (p. 241). Nowhere was there reference to the possible contribution of either photographs or art reproductions. Nor was there any critical reference to the significance to historical fiction of the works of such illustrators as Victor Ambrus, Ingrid and Edgar Parin D'Aulaire, Richard Cuffari, Charles Keeping, Arthur Maitland, Kate Seredy or Symeon Shimin. The contribution of these and other illustrators still awaits assessment.

**Point of View in Historical Fiction**

While there is agreement in the literature about the general nature of historical fiction, opinions regarding its characteristics vary, and these variations are reflected in the points of view of both authors and critics. For Trease (1972), for example, a good historical novel is simply a good novel, whose story happens to be laid outside the time limits of living memory (p. 9). For Walsh (1972), however, a novel is historical fiction when it is wholly or partly about public events and social conditions which are the materials of history, regardless of the time at which it is written (p. 19). By Walsh's definition it is possible for a contemporary novel to be historical
fiction, while a novel set in the past may not necessarily be so (p. 19). She distinguishes also between the true historical novel and the costume novel—the costume novel being the nonhistorical novel set in the past. Both Trease (1972) and Egoff (1975) make similar distinctions. Barbara Leonie Picard (in Jones & Way, 1976) identifies three kinds of historical novels: the novel entirely about historical characters, the one in which the characters are partly fictional and partly historical, and the one in which totally fictional characters are set against the background of a particular historical period (p. 140). Similar distinctions are made by Smith (1953), Walsh (1972), Trease (1972), Sutherland (1977), and Huck (1979).

There is a general consensus also that, except in the case of picture books and picture story books, the distinction between historical fiction for children, and adult historical fiction, is difficult to catalogue. As a literary genre, historical fiction is suitable for children, "not in any condescending sense," and "neither more nor less than for adults," Walsh maintains; and she recalls that it was an historical tale of which the critic Philip Sidney said that it drew the children from play, and the old men from the chimney corner (p. 23). Apart from differences in length, and the possible use of illustrations, the differences between juvenile and adult historical fiction are becoming fewer with the extension of the scope and depth of children's books, Trease (1972) points out. He claims that those who, like himself, write historical fiction for both adults and children, realize how little there is of what Sutcliff describes as 'gear change' in moving from one to the other. The distinction which does exist
results from the author's attitude to the past, he believes. It is his contention that, in the selection of theme and the researching of material, the author may make no distinction; it is when he begins to write that the "inner child" will dictate the form (p. 14). Trease does not, in this context, identify as a distinguishing feature of literature for children, the presence of a child with whom the reader may identify.

A point of critical concern appears to be the impartial presentation of history. While all agree that accuracy and authenticity are hallmarks of this genre, there is not the same agreement that historical fiction must be impartial. "There is no literary law to suggest that the historical novel must be fair to all sides," Townsend (1974) observes, but he himself concedes that the best ones usually demonstrate that fairness (p. 183). Fairness to all sides does not, however, demand neutrality on the part of the author. Fisher (1964) believes that there is no need to fear a partisan approach to history; children are possessed of intelligence which they will bring to bear on the subject matter. She believes that the author must adopt his own point of view and write honestly from that stance (p. 236). The author's historical point of view may at times appear prejudicial, but no author of historical fiction may legitimately distort fact. He may present the Battle of Hastings from the point of view of one of King Harold's soldiers who may curse the accuracy of the Norman arrows; he must never even imply that in the Battle of Hastings the Normans were defeated. He may adopt the point of view of a bullying Fishing Admiral governing a particular Newfoundland fishing settlement in 1749
because his ship was the first to arrive in that harbor that season. He must not suggest that the colony thrived under that system of government, or that the beleaguered fishermen acclaimed it.

Another matter of critical concern involves the ability of children to deal with the raw facts of history. How much of historical fact is enough? Jean Fritz (1974), for example, takes issue with the Nebraska Curriculum which suggests that children lack the maturity to judge a person's motives; likewise, that children should not be concerned with the personal virtues and vices of historical figures but rather, should be restricted in their awareness to "the large field of the character's action and the scope of his contribution" (p. 178). Fritz rejects this philosophy completely, insisting that "society as well as an individual has to come to terms with its past before it can either profit from it or be released from it" (p. 179). She believes that children of school age are not too young to learn that historical heroes may have feet of clay, and that public performance may sometimes bear little relationship to private motivation. She suggests, for example, that children deserve to know that John Hancock Otis' signature on the Declaration of Independence was written in such a bold hand, not because he was so courageous, but because he was naturally a show-off (p. 179). This philosophy of Fritz is shared by Monjo (1975a), who considers it an indication of our political maturity that we are able to recognize and laugh at our own foibles and those of our heroes. With reference to the changing attitude and liberalized approach toward historical fiction for children, Monjo says:
When gravity ceases to be the all-contrasting censor and when a freer climate of opinion allows wit and scholarship freedom to bring us and young readers everything that can be authenticated and skillfully unearthed from the fumbled treasureheaps of the past, is it any wonder that biography and history can be more enjoyable. (p. 77)

While not denying the value of the freedom Monjo covets for writers of historical fiction and biography, the writer of this study believes that the author's sensitivity and discretion will always effectively determine which details fulfill or extend the purpose of the writing, and which are little more than sensational sops to maudlin curiosity.

The successful writer of historical fiction must be governed, Sutherland and Arbuthnot (1977) believe, by the social attitudes and conventions of the period in which the tale is set. Since attitudes and conventions change, authors may sometimes find themselves in conflict with contemporary society because of their faithful recreation of period. There is agreement among the critics that no writer may presume to rewrite history in terms of today's manners and mores.

Trease (1977), for example, speaks of 'ransacking' the social history of the Roman Empire to find how much independence he could justifiably allow a high-spirited teenage girl in the second century A.D. (p. 26); and Huck (1979) refers to the need for a more balanced perspective and the importance of having books reflecting different points of view. She affirms, however, that characters must behave "in accordance with the values and beliefs of the time," and she indicates the incongruity of having them do otherwise. She says:

You can't save George Washington with a shot of penicillin any more than you can have Brink's Caddie Woodlawn join the Women's Liberation Movement or the black mother in *Sounder* become a militant. (p. 468)
Burton (in Haviland, 1973) and Hunter (1975) are both concerned with what may be described as an emotional problem— that of dealing honestly with the facts of history and, at the same time, showing sympathy and understanding toward the reader. They are concerned that horror and brutality which appear normally in the context of the past may be revolting in a contemporary setting. Burton believes that the primary objective of writing historical fiction is "an exercise of the heart rather than the head" (p. 303), and she would have the author, by the treatment of the subject matter, communicate to the reader an extension of his own human sympathy. Hunter suggests that at least a partial solution lies in the author's involvement of reader with characters so that "either his sympathy is engaged or his hostility is satisfied when one or the other of them is the victim of violence" (p. 49). She refers to moral responsibility of the author, in some instances, to project an opposing point of view, and this may be done, she suggests, by allowing at least one opposing voice.

Whatever the author's point of view or technique, there can be no doubt about his responsibility— to communicate an accurate picture of a slice of the past, and to communicate it so convincingly that the characters become, for the duration of the book, the readers' travelling companions, and a sense of our common humanity pervades. Leeson (1976) points out that much that we value today may be traced to some point in the past and "to search conscientiously for those roots is not to impose today's values on those of other times but simply to recognize an organic continuity" (p. 179). Wibberley (in Field, 1969) describes the work of the historical novelist as that of "[enriching] that which
is already known" and "[listening] to the insistent whisper of for­
gotten voices penetrating the centuries" (p. 113). He identifies his
own point of view and purpose with reference to his characterization
in the Treegate Series, in which he attempts to trace "the fortunes and
feelings" of an American family during the time of the American Revolu-
tion:

They are the humble builders of the world whose names are
unknown, whose graves are lost, and whose lives make no
stir beyond the circle of their friends. They are you and
I and everyman, and I have tried to give them back their
voices so they can speak across the centuries of their
time on earth. (p. 113)

This purpose must somehow be embodied in the intentions of all who write
novels from a perspective of history.

The Language of Historical Fiction

A special problem for the historical novelist is the handling of
language and dialogue. In this matter the critics are divided. There
are those who hold the author responsible for a faithful reproduction
of the language of the period; there are those who believe that in any
tale—historic or otherwise—the use of standard English is not only
appropriate, it is preferable. Those who adopt the second position
hold, moreover, that the adoption of period English or dialect is
likely to result in a work that is unintelligible to the reader. The
sampling of opinion which follows indicates the dilemma of authors and
critics who seek a balance between authenticity and intelligibility.

All agree that language is often the rock upon which the historical
novel is wrecked.
Sutherland and Arbuthnot (1977) state the dilemma succinctly:

If the words and sentence patterns are so archaic as to break the reader's concentration, the author is in difficulty. If the conversations are too contemporary in tone, the mood of the story may be destroyed. (p. 268)

Fisher (1964), Crouch (1972), Trease (1972), Sutcliff (in Haviland, 1973), Hunter (1975), and Huck (1979) all make reference to the same problem. Sayers (in Haviland, 1973) thinks it is possible to overdo the updating; children, she believes, are fascinated by things of the past—including the language. John and Patricia Beatty (1965) discuss their own attempts to use period dialogue, showing the problems presented, for example, by a seemingly simple word such as door knob (p. 121). Huck (1979) asks for authenticity of language and dialect but agrees that too many "prithees" and "thous" will be more contrived than credible. She recommends the use of dialectal words and expressions that are made explicit by their context, and such figurative language as is appropriate for the time and characters. Huck reinforces this last point by her observation that, whereas Hakon's comment in Haugaard's Hakon of Rogen's Saga (Houghton Mifflin, 1963, p. 96) that "a plan should be whole and tight like a cooking pot, and ours seemed to me to resemble a fishing net," is effective, the metaphor in the comment of prehistoric Dom in Christopher's Dom and Va (Macmillan, 1973, p. 95), that "It was no good. The die had been cast" is singularly inappropriate (p. 469).

Hunter (1975) believes the historical novelist must somehow manage to convey the impression of speech forms common to past times, but she has no illusions that this can be done either by seeding the text with archaisms or by reproducing dialects. She refers to
archaisms "scattered through a text like sprigs of parsley decorating a dish that otherwise tastes of anything but parsley," and she believes the "academically accurate reproduction of dated speech forms" do not serve the modern writer's use of dialogue (p. 50). Hunter's own position is clear:

The dialogue the historical novelist must always settle for is a clear, plain English which in itself is timeless, and which should be touched by the fashions of an age only when these can extend its main function. (p. 51)

In this regard she is close to both Sutcliff (in Haviland, 1973) and Trease (1972), both of whom believe the solution is a form of artistic compromise. For Trease, the ear is the final judge, and if a line sounds wrong it must be changed, even if it is historically accurate (p. 16). Sutcliff seeks for a 'middle course', "avoiding both Gadzookery and modern colloquialism" (p. 307). Like Trease, she believes that the sound is of critical significance and she adopts in her own writing a "made-up" form that captures the rhythm of the language of the period (p. 307). Both Trease (1964) and Fisher (1964) laud the revolution in the diction of historical fiction to allow for the use of modern English. Trease says:

Today it seems self-evident that if the reader accepts the convention of Arabs, Eskimos, and even Martians conversing in modern English, Robin Hood and Friar Tuck should be permitted to do the same. (p. 96)

In historical fiction everything must combine to communicate the spirit and the flavor of an age. To use language that is intelligible and sounds 'right' is one of the author's greatest challenges.
If questions of appropriate language constitute a major problem in the writing of historical fiction, the construction of the introductory chapter is no less challenging. Many novels fail because of the anachronisms of language; many others fail because the reader does not continue past the first chapter. The author must find a way of setting the historical stage for readers who have little sense of the past and less awareness of time perspective. His challenge is, as Hunter (1975) expresses it:

> to cast his opinion in a form that will convey the story's period and setting clearly, simply and without contrivance at the same time as it sweeps them into action. (p. 45)

Burton (in Haviland, 1973) adds to this the responsibility of setting the stage without appearing to teach or preach (p. 303), and she shares the dilemma of Sutherland and Arbuthnot (1977) who suggest that, while interest will lag if the author spends too much time developing the setting, the child may be totally bewildered if background is too sparse to provide the information necessary to an understanding of the plot (p. 369). Burton identifies also the difficulty of conveying honestly the less pretty side of history to children who are susceptible to fear and horror (p. 303). (Reference to this concern has been made in the section on authenticity and art; it is also discussed under the heading of Violence in Chapter V.) Egoff (1975) points out the need for clear character delineation, the importance of depicting characters who have 'immediacy' for children, the significance of moving the child reader very quickly into the consciousness of another time, and the weight of the author's responsibility in confronting
children with an awareness of the continuum of history. She recom-
mends a convention adopted by the best authors—that of "introducing
an invented boy or girl to represent the reader in the past." Whatever
the plot device the author follows, the best historical novels, Egoff
believes, are those in which "child calls to child across the years"
(p. 97).

Since children are naturally lovers of story, the best juvenile
historical fiction is that in which a captivating tale brings children
the vicarious experience of living in a time other than their own. The
most common failure of those who write in this genre for children,
Smith (1953) believes, is "the sacrifice of plot to period" (p. 175).
She would doubtless subscribe to Trease's (1977) philosophy that the
main thing is the story—"the joy in action, and suspense and mystery;
the interest in human relationships, in colourful settings, and, above
all, in language" (p. 24). The increasing respect for accuracy, Trease
(1964) sees as a potential difficulty in that "too many historical
writers have been even more in love with history than with writing
. . . and so fascinated by their discoveries that they are tempted to
put them all in" (p. 100). The difficulty the author must face is one
of winnowing and sifting the historical details so that children with
little knowledge of history will neither be bewildered with facts nor
deprived of information necessary to comprehension and interpretation
of the story.

Reference has already been made to difficulties associated with
the language of historical fiction and the dilemma of authors regarding
the revelation of the human frailties and idiosyncrasies to which
historical personages, no less than the rest of us, are prone.

**Synthesis and Emerging Principles**

Historical fiction for children, as for adults, recreates the past. It does so through a good story in which action and adventure result from a successful blending of fact and fiction, and in which historical background is used in the service of narrative. The subject matter is the past, vastly rich in potential; the tale lives, largely through the credibility of its characters who represent with disarming accuracy both the historically eminent, and those for whom there are no entries in historical references. Accuracy and authenticity are preserved, but never at the expense of artistic presentation. The primary criterion for language is that it give the impression of a period, and sound right in its context. The point of view of the novel must reflect the social manners and mores of the time period, but the author will bring to his story his own interpretation of facts. While falsification and distortion of facts are reprehensible, impartiality is not a requirement. For young children, the historical background must be supplied sensitively, and in proportion to the demands of the tale. (In this regard, appropriate illustrations may be invaluable.) The author has a responsibility to preserve the moral order by engaging the reader's sympathy for the victims of social injustice and by recording in some convincing way—through plot and character—a disapproval of social practices which, in the perspective of the present, are unacceptable to a majority of civilized people. Such historical fiction needs no justification other than the quality of its narrative. Any other justification required of it may
be found in Butterfield's (1924) claim, which itself is dignified by half a century of recognition:

The real justification of the novel as a way of dealing with the past is that it brings home to readers the fact that there is such a thing as a world of the past to tell tales about—an arena of vivid and momentous life, in which men and women were flesh and blood, their sorrows and hopes and adventures as real as ours, and their moment as precious as our moment. (cited by Smith, 1953, p. 163)

**Biography**

**The Nature of Biography**

The history of the world, Carlyle (1840) suggests, is nothing more nor less than the biography of great men (p. 12), and Garraty (1957) claims for biographers the role of God, in that they bring the dead back from the grave and grant to them a measure of immortality. These are powerful claims for biography, a genre which appears to be increasing in its appeal to young readers.

Individuals who are the subjects of biography play their roles on the stage of history; they are products of their place and time, shaped by events in which they themselves are involved. They are flesh and blood creatures, bearing the marks of identity and reality; they are characters both of history and contemporary society.

There can be no question of the overlap between historical fiction and biography. The relationship between authenticity and art; the divergent points of view regarding the appropriateness of subjects, themes and technique; the problem of language and dialogue; the particular challenges associated with writing for children, are as much a part of a critical study of biography as they are of historical
fiction, and, in most cases, the conclusions and critical principles which apply to one genre apply equally to the other. In the opinion of the writer, it is unnecessary to repeat what has been already said in the previous section; the purpose of this section is to examine what the critics are saying about these matters which pertain particularly to biography.

The raw material of biography, as has been already suggested, is the stuff of history—diaries and documents, letters and memoirs, records and reminiscences; the mart and the museum provide equally valuable sources. Biographers take the welter of research material and bring to bear upon it the weight of their own personality, giving it a focus and a theme. While they strive for objectivity, their selection of details for inclusion may be considered a form of bias, and the line between bias and art is often difficult to define.

The critics agree that the appeal of juvenile biography rests in its reality—it deals with people who were once alive or are alive at the present time. They agree, as well, that the success of the genre resides in the nature of the narrative, which at its best will be swift-moving, action-filled, and adventurous. There is agreement also that first-rate biography will be carefully researched, will include authentic details and dialogue, will inform, will entertain and, in short, will present a convincing picture of a genuine person. There is not the same agreement about choice of subject, the appropriateness of particular points of view, or particular approaches to writing, or even the purpose and appeal of juvenile biography. There is little doubt, however, that in the past decade there has been a noticeable
change in the approach to juvenile biography, a change which is reflected in the works themselves and in the expectations of the critics.

Writing of the nature and needs of juvenile biography, Jurich (1969) refers to the difficulty of achieving authenticity, and claims that "resurrection may be more difficult than creation." The biographer, she suggests, "must not only revive persons--and particularly one person--but he must breathe back past times--not so much a panorama of ceremonies and battles, but the trivia that are significant to most people" (p. 143). The writing of biography for children is particularly difficult, she suggests, because the author must not only recreate a past time; he must also provide a role-model for children. Jurich sees two major needs in juvenile biography: an expanded subject list, and fuller treatment of the lives of those chosen as subjects. She labels as "a delicate form of suppression" the omission of parts of the lives of the subjects; she demands more biographies of ordinary people. Her article "What's Left out of Biography for Children?" is an interesting position paper at the beginning of the decade under study. Coolidge (1974), Monjo (1975b), Fritz (1976), Sutherland and Arbuthnot (1977), and Huck (1979) all speak of a different state of affairs at the end of the decade, when the subject matter of juvenile biography had been expanded to include not only the historical "Greats," but neglected women, members of minority and ethnic groups, controversial individuals, and the socially unacceptable. At the same time, a much more liberal attitude exists toward the inclusion of details of the private lives of individuals.
A change has also occurred in the manner of the presentation of eminent historical personages. The more recent tendency is to show individuals, regardless of their prestige or social status, as humans with idiosyncrasies and personal frailties. Monjo (1975b) describes "joyless hero worship" as a bad way to offer greatness to children (p. 435), and in his own work he decided to present "some flawed, partial impressions and irreverent portraits of great Americans today" (p. 435). His purpose and his approach he explained:

I wanted these shirtsleeve miniatures to contain only those details that a young child might be likely to admire and understand. . . . I wanted to be sure to include any jokes and mistakes the great themselves might have made. I wanted to show their foibles and to present the hero not as a huge, remote icon—but instead, as an intimate, palpable, fallible surprise. (p. 436)

Fritz (1976), too, combines the elements of surprise and humor to give children a fresh image of historical personages. She believes that children, if they could find suitable material, would read biography for the same reasons adults do—to seek insight into the human condition. As she says:

It is helpful to find familiar threads running through the lives of others. We need to know more people in all circumstances and times so we can pursue our private, never-to-be fulfilled quest to find out what life is all about. (p. 193)

Fritz applauds the fact that biographies for children are becoming more realistic, more original, more scholarly, more lively" (p. 125); that a great deal of original research is now going into the writing of juvenile biography; and that, in all periods, ordinary folk as well as the 'famous', female as well as male, are now appearing as subjects.

Both Fritz and Monjo, by their scholarly research, their fresh, imaginative approach, and their successful blending of wit and
readability, have, in their own writings, contributed to the changing image of juvenile biography. Their scholarship, though impressive, is unobtrusive, and, as Sutherland (1976) says of them, they write for children from the point of view of a child, thus allowing the egocentric young to identify with their characters (p. 120).

Rooted as it is in narrative, biography has a natural appeal for children, whose developing sense of story feeds on action and adventure. This point is generally accepted by the critics. Some critics, however, go beyond the narrative appeal to suggest possible values other than the information and enjoyment. This idea is well expressed by Huck (1979), who believes that biography may extend children's opportunities to identify with Greatness in past and present, and may fulfill children's need for identification with someone "bigger" than they are, thus giving them "new models of greatness to emulate" (p. 550). That Monjo (1975a), in his own biographical and historical novels, consciously subscribed to the same idea is evidenced by this comment:

I would like my books to arouse young people—to make them understand that all great human beings were once uncertain children, unaware of their power. I want my books to invite children to dare to do something marvellous. For, if they dare, perhaps they will succeed. (p. 440)

And Herman (1978) sees both biography and autobiography as literary forms concerned with "personal integration," possessed of emotive as well as intellectual force. "If not a summons to a life sublime, then what is biography?" she asks, rhetorically, and she identifies a major problem in this genre as one of "[portraying] admiration, respect, even love, without icon making" (p. 86).
Groff (1973) challenges all such claims made in the name of biography. Citing Huck, Arbuthnot, Georgiou, and others, he insists that claims that children identify with models, that such 'models' give them examples of greatness to emulate, or provide a 'succor from disappointment or temporary failure', are based on an assumption that children can understand the depictions of the lives of adults given in biographies (p. 211). It is this assumption that Groff disputes. "The time is ripe," he says, "to challenge the veracity and, consequently, the wisdom of these presently unexamined contentions" (p. 211). His contention is that "biography has little chance of exerting the extraordinary moral or psychological influence on children credited to it," and he doubts that true biography is even possible for children. He bases his position on four arguments: that there is a relatively small number of good biographies written; that there is no research evidence to indicate that children can take the role of adults—on the contrary, according to Piagetian theory, the young child is incapable of so doing; that biographical characters, because of distortion and omissions, are not true to life and do not present the whole individual, so that if children could identify with such characters it would be with surrealistic figures rather than normal individuals; and that the writing of juvenile biography is so poorly done that the finished work is often little more than "a cut-and-paste" rendition of biographies done for adults. While Groff's points are clearly cause for concern, his charge that there is no biography for juveniles may well be challenged by the carefully researched, imaginative works of such writers as Edgar and Ingrid Parin D'Aulaire,
Hartwell Bowsfield, Clyde Bulla, Marchette Chute, Luella Creighton, Jean Fritz, Clara Judson, Jean Latham, Ferdinand Monjo, Catherine Peare, and Ronald Syme.

Sutherland (1976), in her survey of "Biography in the United States," refers to the many 'arid cut-and-paste' biographies of the past, "lauded with adulatory remarks, so that the subjects emerged as haloed puppets" (p. 116). She goes on to say, however, that outstanding books have appeared. She notes the increasing emphasis on documentation; observes that the most impressive development is the increasing candor with which biographies for older children are written; and concludes that "while there are still biographies that resemble laudatory chronologies . . . most of those are found in written-to-formula series" (p. 119).

With reference to the Canadian scene, Egoff (1975) is equally harsh in her judgment of most biographical series, referring to the "window dressing" which passes for biography. In her discussion of the "Canadian Lives Series," she identifies the strength of good biography regardless of source or subject. It is, she says, based upon evidence, clearly and simply written without condescension, and making effective use of appropriate anecdotes and other details of the social history of the time (p. 217). She speaks of the "plain, straightforward writing that yields fact," and the "valid interpretation of the facts which gives strength and character to the writing" (p. 221).

Fisher (1976) points out that "considerations of age affect every aspect of a junior biography," and she acknowledges that such considerations are reflected not only in the selection of subject, but also
in the prominence of the narrative, and nonanalytical treatment of character, and the generalizations and reconstructions made without 'scrupulous, qualifying parentheses'. It is these very considerations which lead inevitably to some of the 'pitfalls' identified by Herman (1978): prescience, or knowledge of things before they exist; conversations which never took place; avoidance of controversy—sexual, political, or religious; the avoidance of pain. Fisher, however, believes that there is not as great a difference as is normally supposed in style and approach between books for older readers and those by authors such as Geoffrey Trease of Elfreda Vipont. The author's power of narrative, she maintains, solves many of the differential problems, including length. In this regard, Fisher observes that biography is a hybrid, and so has all the advantages of related forms. She considers it unfortunate that "few authors for the young make use of the stylistic and technical richness available from the craft of fiction" (p. 114).

First-rate biography, then, is the historical fact successfully blended with an interesting narrative, through the power of imaginative and artistic writing skill.

Choice of Subject in Biography

The critics fail to agree regarding the appropriateness of certain subjects for juvenile biography. It has already been noted that there has been in the decade under study an obvious change of approach in this regard, a change reflected in the subjects featured. A decade ago the subjects were generally male; they rarely represented the ordinary folk, or minority or ethnic groups; nor did they include those whose
reason for recognition lay outside the accepted conventions of the Establishment. The famous were prime candidates; the infamous were ignored. The biographers generally sought those individuals whose lives were considered to be deserving of emulation by children, and the resulting works were usually didactic in tone. Trease (1964) made an interesting distinction between subjects for adult biography and juvenile biography when he said:

The most odious creature who lives is a fit and necessary subject for adult biography, provided he achieves eminence in some field—as such people most invariably do. He cannot be the subject of a story book which children will enjoy. . . . We have not only to rule out the odious, but the mean and the dull—which again will exclude a large percentage of the world's notables. (p. 58)

Trease, it will be noted, restricts the subjects to the notables—and those who live commendable and exciting lives. Fisher (1976) shares Trease's view that the subjects are necessarily eminent, and, for her, this genre is basically didactic.

Fritz (1976) restricts the subjects who are appropriate for juvenile biography but for a different reason. The lives of some people can never make a compelling narrative, she believes, and, as has been already emphasized, narrative is central to successful biography. She also dismisses Fisher's idea of didacticism, declaring that biography has lagged behind other types of children's literature expressly because it has been "bogged down" because of didacticism (p. 125). The nature of children's biography has, she declares, been determined largely by the desire to write about real people whom children may emulate. Fritz raises a number of troublesome questions in this regard:
What about the traits in even the worthiest characters that may not be worthy of emulation? Should they be left out? Who actually sets out to emulate a famous character? How is it done? How does a fourth-grade boy emulate George Washington? Or a fourth-grade girl emulate Joan of Arc? (p. 194)

Groff's (1973) answer to these questions is that children, because of their natural patterns of development, do not and cannot adopt either the point of view or the role of adults in biography; hence will in no way be encouraged to emulate them. If Groff is correct, then undue concern regarding the choice of subject in juvenile biography is unwarranted—and the only restriction may be good taste, however defined. Both Huck (1979) and Sutherland and Arbuthnot (1977) refer to the expansion of the subject list to include almost any character the author wishes to write about, including the controversial and the socially unsavory. Huck, for example, points out that Surge's Western Outlaws (Lerner, 1969) and Appel's Hitler, from Power to Ruin (Grosset & Dunlop, 1964), deal with social aberrants. She remarks also that such controversial figures as Fidel Castro, Ho Chi Minh, and Lenin have been featured recently in biography for children (p. 551). To that list she may well have added Richard Nixon, Malcolm X, and Jerry Rubin. Huck's comment that children have come to know of those characters through the news media, is a significant one. Through the marvels of modern technology, the world is indeed 'a global village', and it is no longer necessary to restrict children to the famous lives of their own country. The 'Republic of Childhood' has become vaster than even Hazard had envisaged.

The emphasis on narrative, action, and adventure has, for some time, led both writers and critics to assume that the thoughtful
contemplative life has little appeal for children, and that those whose contributions to society have been in the less dramatic or less visible realms of thought and aesthetics can never have the appeal of the heroes of the battlefield, the sea, the air, or the playing field. Smith (1953), for example, suggests that "children have not enough experience in living to be able to view with sympathy and understanding the abstract ideas and theories which find achievements in the arts by men of genius" (p. 187). She believes that attempts to bring such lives within the reach of children will, of necessity, "result in oversimplification which leaves their greatness unexplained, because inexplicable, to a child" (p. 187). Fisher (1976) likewise suggests that the lives of writers and musicians and all those "whose work is visibly the expression of their whole selves" are best portrayed in a work other than biography (p. 110). With reference to this point, Huck (1979) records the increased popularity in recent years in biography of "poets, authors, artists, musicians, and humanitarians," and she remarks, perceptively, that "perhaps children are beginning to appreciate the challenges of the mind and spirit, as well as those of physical accomplishment" (p. 551).

In the midst of this trend toward liberalizing the 'qualifications of candidates for inclusion in biography for children', and when biographers appear to be bound only by their own knowledge, sensitivity, and aesthetic judgment, a note of critical caution appears timely, and such a note is sounded clearly. Objectivity and accuracy are, of course, demanded by all the critics; it may be more a matter of oversight than design that so few refer to good taste and a concern for a
child audience at a time when permissiveness and candor appear to be keys to the market, and when the walls that have surrounded children's fiction generally are crumbling. Monjo (1977) and Herman (1978) reflect the concern of a minority of critics.

While admitting that biographies for children have a responsibility "to right the wrongs of neglect which have been done in the past," Monjo expresses his own practice in this regard in stating unequivocally that he will write only about those men and women who, in his opinion, "have a right to be in that Pantheon in the first place" (p. 124). Herman (1978), too, in her article "Footprints in the Sands of Time," takes a similar position. With reference to the now much-maligned idea of using biography for role-models, she concludes: "Maybe we do want to set models, not for lives sublime, but at least for lives worth living" (p. 93). This would appear to be a valid principle underlying the selection of subjects for juvenile biography.

**Point of View in Biography**

The critics identify a number of types of juvenile biography, determined by the author's point of view and the approach he takes to his material. Careful research figures largely in all types and it is a truism that any valid biography cannot be written without such research. There is general agreement that the reader should be aware of the nature of the research undertaken, the sources consulted, the details unearthed, and wherein facts end and conjecture and interpretation begin. The way in which the author does this, and the way in which he uses research in the service of art, will define the biography he creates.
Trease (1964) distinguishes between biography and story biography, but his distinction is not between fact and fiction. Fisher (1976) notes a similar distinction. The story biography, Trease maintains, should be no less concerned with truth than biography for adults should be; but the author of story biography, having "established the truth in his own mind," now endeavors to communicate it "in a digestible form" (p. 58). Trease describes the writer of story biography as engaged in some practices which, while reprehensible for the historian, are acceptable for the biographer. He refers, for example, to the invention of dialogue, after all the facts are known, and he speaks of the biographer's need at times "to presume to enter, and beckon the reader after him, into the very mind of his subject" (p. 59). Herman (1968) refers to chronological biography, in which the approach is linear--beginning with the subject's birth or childhood, and tracing segments of his life, through adulthood, to death; and interpretative biography, in which the events discussed are selected and ordered to present a particular picture. Coolidge (1974) insists that the distinction between facts and judgment must be clear, as must also the distinction between judgment and absolute truth. A biographer herself, she describes the facts as the bricks with which a biographer builds; the more facts there are, the more freedom the writer has to design a creative work. She cautions, however, that successful biography is more than a mass of facts, and "the perfect biographer is not a tape recorder" (p. 146). Sutherland (1977) and Huck (1979) categorize genuine or authentic biography, and its two hybrids, fictionalized biography and biographical fiction. Genuine or authentic biography is
well researched and documented, corresponding to the best biography for adults. Fictionalized biography and biographical fiction are both grounded in research, but the author uses the facts as the basis for the imaginative invention of dialogue or reconstruction of events in the interest of narrative. In all three there must be a blend of history, the individual, and literary art.

A matter receiving considerable critical attention, one which relates indirectly to subject choice, and has parallels in historical fiction, concerns the responsibility of the author to shield children from the harsh realities of life. Specifically, as it relates to biography, it is concerned with the amount of truth which should be communicated. The divergent viewpoints are represented by the extremes of discrete omission of unsavory detail and the tell-it-all-in-the-name-of-honesty approaches. The middle-of-the-road approach—the one adopted by most biographers—is to include any details, pleasant or otherwise, which have direct bearing on the story, and to present them objectively and forthrightly, but the gratuitous inclusion of sensational and titilating detail unnecessary to an understanding of character is to be deplored. The illegitimate circumstances of the heroine's birth, for example, are unlikely to affect her worth as an individual, and these should be recorded only if they have some bearing on her subsequent behavior. Likewise, the fact that the hero has a paid mistress is a detail of questionable concern for children, who normally have more interest in their hero's battlefield exploits than in his bedroom activities. Nor is this to suggest that the subject of the biography is always a 'human saint'. The critics
are divided; the subject is a moot one.

Esther Forbes (cited by Fritz, 1976) believes that uncomplimentary details have no place in biography, that it is more important to show the individual's contributions to society—and that suffices. She explains her position:

It is easy to remember Sam Adams' political trickery, King Hancock's vanities, James Otis' craziness. . . . But should they not be judged (even as the artist is judged), not by personal shortcomings, but 'by their works ye shall know them'. (p. 196)

Fritz (1976) records that everything that she includes in her biography actually happened—none of the details are made up. She rejects this position of Forbes, and to the comment reported above she retorts:

Why judge at all? Why not accept the whole man along with his deeds? How can you separate Sam Adams' trickery from his works or John Hancock's vanity from his?

And she adds:

It seems strange to me that Esther Forbes, a masterful historical writer, should imply that by remembering a person's shortcomings, one is condemning him and minimizing his achievements. No one, particularly in public life, can go through life without betraying his weaknesses. Do we want to make history a record of something other than life? (p. 197)

Trease (1964), Jurich (1969), Fisher (1976), and Stott (1978) obviously share Fritz' viewpoint. Authors should not be afraid of human frailties, Trease suggests, nor is there any literary principle to justify the 'uncritical adulation' with which the dead are often presented (p. 58). Authors are storytellers, not salesmen, he observes, and the approaches of the two differ. Jurich challenges the practice of excluding parts of lives, dubbing the practice a form of suppression (p. 144); and Fisher maintains that, while it is important that young readers be able to identify with a hero, it is equally
important that they realize that heroes are people, and that they be able to identify with some of their problems and difficulties (p. 113). Her judgment on the state of biography is that "the authors, and behind them a host of self-appointed guardians of children, do not intend to give the readers a full, candid portrait to contemplate, but prefer to direct them to a certain point of view" (p. 3). Stott affirms Fisher's assessment, adding that this "invisible influence" has determined both the subject and the point of view. He, however, identifies another factor which must influence the author's point of view. He points out that

the lives of great men are often inner, and, as such, beyond the understanding of most children; moreover, the outer lives are generally involved with historical, political, and economic forces which are not understood by children. (p. 69)

It is surely an awareness of this very problem which leads Monjo (1975b) to decide in his writing of *The One Bad Thing About Father* (Harper & Row, 1970): "When I came upon facts and situations which I felt an eight-year-old would not have understood, I left them out" (p. 439). Monjo describes his objective, and his point of view:

- to give a child his first authentic taste of a great figure from the past... But if the first taste is not bitter, and if it leaves the reader perhaps eager to read more on the subject, so much the better. (p. 439)

The dichotomous approach under discussion is well captured in Herman's (1978) article, and her judgment on the matter is noteworthy. Referring to the use of biography to present models to children, she observes that, under the pens of many biographers, if a life fails to proceed in an acceptable way, it is easy to ignore the "unpalatable or unsuitable" parts. Soon the line between 'should have happened'
and 'did happen' becomes very hazy, and it is difficult to decide where authenticity ends and wishful thinking and imagination begin.

Herman says:

An author of biography for children should have a genuine interest in his subject, honor his audience without condescension, his point of view either be stated specifically or be implicit in his work, that there be evidence of commitment to scholarship and intellectual integrity. (p. 91)

**Synthesis and Emerging Principles**

In biography the author tells a story which reaches back through time to touch a real person and present that person as a normal human being embued with the strengths and frailties which characterize humanity. Courageous lives of action and adventure are natural candidates for inclusion; there is no less a place for the quiet, contemplative lives, often omitted from earlier biography; and the ordinary folk, including the neglected and the rejected of society. The stage on which these characters play is as wide as the world. While the demand for lives worthy of emulation has been challenged, there is still some insistence upon judicious selection, discretion, and good taste in the choice of subject and the details included. The strength of biography is its tale; the raw materials are historical sources. Details carefully researched are filtered through the author's mind, interpreted, clothed in imaginative narrative, and reported as authentic biography, fictionalized biography, or biographical fiction. There should be no doubt of the point of view the author is adopting. Actual details, anecdotes and dialogue are all valuable components; the author may, however, within the constraints of a sound, historical perspective, invent and reconstruct in the service of art. The difficulties and
pitfalls of biography are those of historical fiction—largely related to the restrictions placed on the author by the child's capacity to respond. There is the difficulty of recreating for children another segment of history, the difficulty of finding a suitable fusion of authenticity and imagination, and the baffling problem concerning the degree to which children need shielding from the realities of life. Questions concerning the suitability of subjects, and the inclusion or omission of particular details, are characterized by critical ambivalence. Although the tendency is toward a more liberalized approach than heretofore, human decency, human dignity, and human worth are still significant considerations. Honest and careful reporting of facts is imperative. Only superficial reference is made to the illustrations which are no less important to biography than to historical fiction.

**Fantasy**

**The Nature of Fantasy**

The genre of modern fantasy, having its roots in ancient folklore and sharing many of the characteristics of the same, has developed beyond its origins to have now its own laws, structure, and tradition. In its present form it differs from the folk tale "in intent, complexity, and sophistication" (Egoff, 1975, p. 66), and Lewis (in Kirpatrick, 1978) records that "many of the greatest written works belong to the genre of fantasy" (p. viii). The genre is paradoxical in nature, dealing with dreams, illusions, and figments of the imagination at the same time that it is engaged in a quest for the
essential truths of life and the illumination of reality itself. It is fantasy, but not escapism; it deals in illusions but its focus is reality. The climate in which it lives, different from that of other fiction, is "an atmosphere of reality in unreality, of credibility in incredibility" (Smith, 1953, p. 152). Child of the creative imagination, and akin to poetry, it uses a metaphorical approach to an exploration of life's imponderables. Like poetry also, it evokes emotional and intellectual response. It may claim kinship as well with myth, allegory, parody, and satire. It is perhaps the most challenging genre for any author; certainly it contains some of the most profound ideas in books for children. It outlasts most other types of fiction because it "stands outside time" and its concerns are those "universal problems and eternal values" that remain unaffected by the passing years (Crouch, 1972, p. 120).

Cameron (1969) identifies three major paradoxes of fantasy: it contains assumptions that defy reason, it breaks all the natural laws, yet it is possessed of convincing reality within itself; it takes its readers outside the real world, wanders about in time, and endows its characters with supernatural powers, yet it is not escape literature; it is set in a world divorced from reality, yet it embodies essential truths of the human condition (pp. 43-44). These particular characteristics are, indeed, among the most significant features of this genre.

Fantasy may operate in many forms; its functions are no less varied. Wood (in Tucker, 1976) suggests that fantasy has "radical aspects"—metaphysical, moral, and visionary. It may function, he
believes, to question the prevailing world order, to question the true nature of reality, or to offer 'credible alternatives' to existing reality (p. 166). Lewis (in Kirpatrick, 1978) refers to the multiplicity of forms that fantasy takes in twentieth-century juvenile fiction. It converges on the ordinary world of the supernatural; it plays with time, calling the past into the present; it creates totally new worlds; it reinterprets tales of myth and legend; it gives life to toys; it is both serious and nonsensical. She speaks of the 'increasingly powerful' place of fantasy in fiction for older children, and identifies that development as an English feature. American authors, she says, are able to write realistic fiction of a high level, but appear reluctant to deal with dreams, time shifts, or the supernatural. She relates the English propensity for fantasy to the fact that "English life tends to become inexplicable when looked at closely; perhaps because it lacks extremes of poverty, as well as extremes of climate and landscape" (p. viii). Interestingly, and in sharp contrast, Egoff (1975) decries the absence of any impressive body of Canadian fantasy, also relating this dearth to the characteristics of the Canadian landscape (p. 75).

Something of the variety and versatility of modern fantasy for children is evident in Huck's (1979) treatment of the genre. She categorizes her discussion under a number of headings: strange and curious worlds, imaginary kingdoms, animal fantasy, the world of toys and dolls, Lilliputian worlds, fabulous flights, eccentric characters and preposterous situations, magical powers, tricks with time, overcoming evil, and suspense and the supernatural. While she does not
specifically define a sub-category of fantasy, Huck uses the term 'high fantasy' with reference to such books as Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* (Atheneum, 1973) and LeGuin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* (Parnassus, 1968), *The Tombs of Atuan* (Atheneum, 1971), and *The Farthest Shore* (Atheneum, 1972). These are books with strong moral overtones, drawing on symbol, allegory, myth and legend to develop the theme of the conflict which is at the center of human existence—the conflict between light and darkness, goodness and evil, life and death.

Langton (1973) suggests that every work of fantasy poses and answers three primary questions: What if? Then, what? So what? (p. 443). The 'what if' question is the book's theme, and the manner in which the author poses it will determine his approach to "the dividing line between truth (the real world) and fantasy (the unreal world) (p. 443). Using an analogy of a piece of cloth which serves as the dividing line, Langton, in her article "The Weak Place in the Cloth: A Study of Fantasy for Children," discusses eight approaches to fantasy: the fabric remains whole, but is stretched somewhat—the entire story happens on the real-world side; the cloth is punctured—the characters pass through to another world; the cloth is invisible and permeable—the two worlds co-exist; the fabric is whole and unbroken—the events take place on the other side; animals from the other side push their way through to the real world—animals behave like humans; there are overlays in time—the present becomes the past, or characters from the past burst through to the present; the cloth is a shroud—the dead pull it aside and enter; the cloth separates a 'finite present and a kind of infinite future'—the events may be labeled science fiction (pp. 433-441).
Once the question What if? has been posed, the other two follow from it, but the writer must "cleave to logic," Langton says. The most important key to the Then, what? question, she believes, is the credibility of the characterization. "Sharply drawn characters—whether children, miniature people, elves or animals—make the cleanest rip in the cloth of reality," she says (p. 571). Two things that characterize fantasy of distinction are, Langton believes, "a strongly realized, personalized vision" and "a second level of meaning—significance, symbolism, allegory, a stab at a moral, a message, a lesson." She concludes:

Meaning is not easy. Sometimes the attempt at it is too vaguely vast, too preachy-teachy, too thin and scant. But when it works, the book gains a value that may outlast the short time-span during which a young reader is available to us. It may last him all his life. (p. 575)

Whatever form the fantasy may take, all critics agree that its first requirement is a good story. Unless it adheres to and meets all the standards of good narrative writing, no fantasy can be successful; but within the context of a well told tale the imaginative author can convince the reader that Aslan and the White Witch are just beyond the closet door, and that from the smallest star in the heavens a little prince looks down and laughs.

The Reality of Fantasy

Across the decade under study, and before, the critics speak with one voice of the reality of fantasy; and through its reality, its efficacy in confronting the reader with the power of his own imaginings, and its capacity for self-revelation. The collective picture which emerges from the opinions reported below provides a critical
perspective on this genre and portrays fantasy on a firm foundation of reality.

At a time when the cause of fantasy needed championing, Chukovsky's (trans. by Morton, 1963) claims for it were bold:

Without imaginative fantasy there would be complete stagnation in both physics and chemistry, because the formulation of new hypotheses, the invention of new implements, the discovery of new methods of experimental research, the conjecturing of new chemical fusions—all these are products of imagination and fantasy. (p. 124)

Smith (1953) speaks of books of fantasy which reach out beyond their actual characters to speak about "fundamental questions of human life: good and bad; right and wrong; the recognition of true as opposed to ephemeral values" (p. 151). In her "News from Narnia" (in Egoff et al., 1969), for example, Smith identifies as an outstanding quality, that "above and beneath and beyond the events of the story there is something to which children can lay hold: belief in the essential truth of their own imaginings" (p. 175). Alexander (1970) refers to the relevance of fantasy—in that it is constantly illuminating some aspect of the truth, it is relevant, "always new; always now" (p. 148). Hoban (1971) sees fantasy as not separate from reality, but as an approach to it—"the scaffolding from which to work on actualities" (p. 13).

For L'Engle (1972) the reality of fantasy is irrefutable. "It may never have existed in concrete fact; it has always existed as truth" (cited by Richardson, 1966, p. 549). For LeGuin (1973) the fantasist, regardless of the mode in which he works, may be talking as seriously as any sociologist—and a great deal more directly—about human life as it is lived, and as it might be lived, and as it ought to be lived. (p. 239)
Babbie (1974) considers fantasy "one of the best ways of interpreting and ordering fact" (p. 184); Kimmel (1975) perceives of 'truly great fantasy' as a large balloon "high above the plane of the contemporary world, yet solidly anchored to emotions and ideals felt by all" (p. 147); Egoff (1975) speaks of the power of fantasy to demonstrate "immutable truths" and to illumine, heighten, and intensify reality (p. 67); and Richardson (1976) in "The Reality of Fantasy" argues that fantasy, more so than any other literary form, deals with the reality of life. Just as children of the 70's need realistic fiction, so they need 'fiction that is real', she says. Her claims for fantasy at its best are significant ones:

Fantasy assures the reader that the human spirit has survived and will always survive; that the human spirit emerges fuller for having undergone trials and hardships; it allows them to observe and experience natural emotional responses; it encourages them to consider inevitable human quests and conflicts objectively and fearlessly. (p. 549)

This reality, which the critics claim to be a characteristic of fantasy, is only possible if the fantasy really works. The fantasy will work only if it is credible. It will be credible only if everything fits logically. The logic and the order which are inherent in true fantasy derive from consistency within the framework established by the author. Once a basic premise is accepted, and the conditions of the fantasy set up, events must follow laws of sequence and causality. Fantasy is "not simply absurdity piled upon absurdity until some climactic point is reached" (Hunter, 1975, p. 59). Rather, once the author has established the rules he, himself, then becomes "subject" in his own kingdom. Alexander (in Haviland, 1973) explains:
Once committed to his imaginary kingdom, the writer is not 
a monarch but a subject. Characters must appear plausible 
in their own setting and the writer must go along with the 
inner logic. Happenings should have logical implications. 
Details should be tested for consistency. Shall animals 
speak? If so, do all animals speak? If not, then what—
and how? Above all, why? (p. 243)

A deadly enemy of fantasy is inconsistency, says Alexander. Where there 
is inconsistency, he points out, "the machinery moving the tale grinds 
and screeches, the characters cease to be imaginary and become simply 
unreal. Truth drains out of them" (p. 243). When this happens the 
fantasy is flawed; the "compelling inner ring—the inner consistency 
of reality" is gone (de la Mare, cited in Smith, 1953, p. 155); 
reality is destroyed.

In any evaluation of modern fantasy, a primary concern, Huck 
(1979) believes, must be the way the author makes the fantasy credible. 
She discusses a number of techniques authors may use "to create belief 
in the unbelievable" (p. 255). This may be done, she suggests, by 
grounding the story firmly in reality before moving into fantasy; by 
carefully detailed setting; by the characters' acceptance of the 
happenings of the book; by the proof of real objects; by consistency 
of story; by ingenious and creative plot; and by the use of language 
appropriate to the story (pp. 255-256).

The use of appropriate language may help establish the reality 
of the fantasy; or, it may also cause problems for the author. Tolkien, 
for example, has been criticized for his use of archaic language. 
Nichols (1976) insists, however, that no other language would have been 
appropriate for his purpose. She justifies his use of the English of 
the King James Bible in that "it was the natural idiom of a world
that still shared the values Tolkien seeks to restore," and Nichols suggests that "in condemning his language, one runs the risk of becoming entangled in a condemnation of his values" (p. 22). Archaic language, she points out, may serve a useful function for contemporary writers of fantasy, but it is not essential. The danger is that some writers may consider such language to be in itself the true substance of fantasy. In this regard, the problems associated with appropriate language for fantasy are no different from those associated with language for historical fiction or biography. It may be useful to repeat here what Hunter (1975) said of the dialogue of historical fiction. She recommends "a clear, plain English which, in itself, is timeless, and should be touched by the fashions of an age only when these can extend its main function" (p. 51). Nichols believes, however, that fantasy should in time develop its own idiom, and she hopes, in her own work, to make a contribution to that development.

The Secondary Worlds of Fantasy

Alexander (in Haviland, 1973) suggests that though the author has the freedom to decree as many laws as he chooses, the fewer departures from the real world, the better the fantasy. "The writer can painfully bark his shins on too many pieces of magical furniture," he says (p. 244).

Cameron (1969) disagrees with Alexander on this point. She agrees that by its nature fantasy "assaults and breaks the scientific laws of our world," that it is imperative that the author achieve the reality without which the fantasy becomes embarrassing; that in order to establish reality the author must set up premises and invoke an
inner logic; that good fantasy is not merely a matter of calling on magic to make things work out. Cameron, however, would place no restrictions on the "enchantments," the "inventions," or the "departures," as long as the author is able to sustain the truth of the fantasy (p. 22).

The common practice of writers of this genre to locate the main action of the story in some 'other world' certainly places additional strains on credulity, and presents a challenge to the author's ability to sustain reality. Tolkien (in Egoff et al., 1969) defines the task as that of the creation of a Secondary World in which the reader's mind can enter. It is not merely a question of "suspension of disbelief" on the part of the reader; it is also one of creation of belief in this Secondary World on the part of the writer. Tolkien says:

The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken, the magic or art has failed. You are then out in the Primary World again, looking at the little abortive Secondary World from outside. (p. 114)

MacCann (in Egoff et al., 1969) insists that the boundaries of the created world must be clear, and within the boundaries, corroborating detail must support undeviating belief in its existence (p. 144); and Higgins (1970) believes that the test of the author's 'inventiveness' is not "how far out the imagination of the writer may take his reader, but rather, the degree to which he can make the reader believe in the world he has created" (p. 21).

In order to preserve the reality of his fantasy, Garner (1970) places all his own tales in a real setting. It is his contention that the sense of reality is stronger when children can identify the
setting in the here and now. "If you are going off into airy planes of existence and you do not stitch it down to the modern world here and now," he says, "for me it is an arbitrary thing and anything goes" (p. 18). For the same reason, he uses real people—modern children, ordinary human characters.

Nichols (1976), a successful writer of fantasy, agrees that good fantasy need not involve other worlds. She cautions against the casual creation of fantasy worlds which "cheapens the device and obscures its usefulness" (p. 26). "If Romanticism is true," Nichols observes, "the world we live in is a sufficient wonder in itself." Her position about placing fantasy in the real world is thought-provoking. She explains:

[If] the writer of fantasy believes the Romantic world-view to be true, then it seems to me more interesting and provocative, as well as involving greater skill, to relate his ideas to the world in which we all must operate. . . . But if it cannot be done—if the Romantic position is false—then I agree with the critics that one should not write about a fool's Paradise of parallel worlds in which Romanticism is true. So to write about the everyday world is, for the fantasist, to put his beliefs on the line. To do this requires courage and conviction. (p. 26)

The fantasy world may, however, serve two legitimate human needs, Nichols believes. The author may create a world of breathtaking beauty and, hence, satisfy the human hunger for beauty; it may at the same time provoke a Miltonic 'divine discontent' with what man has done to destroy the beauty of the universe, and in so doing may invoke the need to act in the preservation or restoration of the natural order (p. 26).

According to Egoff (1975), Nichols herself comes closer than has any other Canadian writer of fantasy to the creation of a believable sub-world. Radu (1975) agrees that the basic failure of the writers
of Canadian fantasy is their failure to create a secondary world that the reader can believe in. He describes them as "reporters with a moral tale." He concludes:

When a writer attaches a moral or spiritual view on to the fantasy like a piece of bunting, he is, in effect, depending upon the idiom of the real world for thematic support. This leads to uninspired writing and essentially unconvincing fantasy. (p. 75)

Fantasy as Escapism

It is at least in part because the action of fantasy is so often set in Middle Earth, or Narnia, or Earthsea, or in strange and curious worlds, that the charge of escapism, or escape literature, is sometimes laid against this genre. Those who, through fantasy, sojourn for awhile outside the boundaries of time and space must return to earth, and fantasy offers them little more than visions or mirages. So reason those who decry fantasy. Watkins (1972) identifies this potential of inferior fantasy, and he cautions against the reader's being "seduced into a whimsical daydream world that bears little relationship to reality." We must be careful that what we are offered in the name of fantasy has "an imaginative hardness" and is not "self-centred escape," he says (p. 56). He analyzes Garner's Elidor (Walck, 1967) to show how the author uses fantasy not as a means of escape but as a means of explaining the difficult problems children must face. It does not offer escape from them.

Nor does true fantasy ever offer escape, Nichols (1976) insists. She effectively refutes any such charge in her paper "Fantasy and Escapism." Admitting that fantasy, like any human creation, is open to abuse, she believes the fault lies not with the fantasy but with
the individual who so abuses it. For Nichols, fantasy has a strengthening and enabling potential. She says:

the fear of fantasy, far more than the love of it, sabotages one's relationship to the world; for who can act with full power if he fears, and so refuses to know himself? And self-knowledge is finally the whole point of fantasy. (p. 26)

Far from encouraging escapism or providing a haven for those who would shirk responsibility, Nichols views true fantasy as a positive, reaffirming force. It is, she believes, "one aspect of Romantic religiousness," and, for Nichols,

True Romanticism leads not to amoral egotism or irrationalism . . . but rather it returns the Romantic to the world, having revitalized his ability to act in love and hope. (p. 27)

Fantasy is not escape literature. Although it takes the reader into other universes where the restraints of time, and place, and human mortality no longer apply, it is law-governed, credible, and highly moral. It has implications for the ordinary world to which the reader must return. Fantasy, according to Alexander (in Haviland, 1973), presents the world as it should be. He elaborates:

Sometimes heartbreaking, but never hopeless, the fantasy world as it "should be" is one in which good is ultimately stronger than evil; where courage, justice, love and mercy actually function. Thus, it may often appear quite different from our own. In the long run, perhaps not. Fantasy does not promise Utopia. But if we listen carefully, it may tell us what we someday may be capable of achieving. (p. 245)

This is the reality of fantasy. It invites the reader to become involved.
Fantasy is difficult to define; it is equally difficult to establish its parameters. Child of the creative imagination, closely allied to poetry, it draws heavily on the literary heritage of the past—folk tale, fable, myth and legend. It employs a multiplicity of devices, including satire, allegory, and parody, to explore the nature of reality and the basic conflicts which are at the heart of human existence. Paradoxically, it deals in the "stuff" of fantasy, yet its larger purpose is the illumination of reality. Primarily a good story, and characterized by all the literary elements of the same, it functions successfully on the narrative level. For readers who see more than the obvious, it goes beyond the narrative to wrestle with essential and immutable truths, to show what life at its best may be like, and to involve the reader in a quest. The quest, which is central to much of fantasy, is man's universal quest for something more, for something better; it is indicative of the human longing 'to become' or 'to belong'; it is the 'Divine Discontent' of which Milton writes.

Fantasy may take many forms, ranging from the light and the whimsical anecdotes of A.A. Milne to the complex and sophisticated writing of Susan Cooper or Ursula LeGuin. And the profundity of its 'message' bears no correlation to the seriousness of its tone. Sendak's *Higglety Pigglety Pop!* (Harper, 1967), no less than LeGuin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* (Parnassus, 1968), says something about the quest for human happiness and those things that are of lasting worth. Although its subjects may be the inexplicable, the fantasy need not be ponderous. Like poetry, it may use metaphor and allusion to make
observations about reality; the implications may be serious, the fantasy need not be. And the whole will work only if the imagery is comprehensible, the fantasy credible.

Much of fantasy is associated with some secondary world, but this is not imperative. The ordinary world has potential for fantasy; the author may have to work a little harder to develop it. Any secondary world must be completely credible, logical, orderly, consistent, law-governed. While the author has the liberty to establish his own basic premise and 'invent' at will, he has the responsibility of making the unbelievable believable. Once the basic laws of the fantasy are established, the author himself becomes a 'subject' in his own kingdom.

The key to the success of the fantasy is the author's techniques in sustaining the fantasy. The nature of the fantasy may determine which technique will be most effective. Language appropriate to the setting must be used with discretion. Clear, plain English may be always acceptable; archaic language may present barriers.

Fantasy is not escape literature. The reader who through fantasy travels to other worlds or explores new dimensions of his own, having been entertained and stimulated imaginatively and intellectually, should willingly return to reality, with vision renewed and perspective enlightened. If the reader finds himself plummeted abruptly into reality in the course of the fantasy, the fantasy is flawed. If he finds himself reluctant to return when the fantasy ends, it may be the fault of the fantasy; it is more likely to be the fault of the reader.
Science Fiction

The dividing line between science fiction and fantasy—if there is one—is very difficult to define. It appears to elude both the critics and the authors themselves. The clearest distinction which emerges in the literature examined is that of Engdahl (1971) who says:

Science fiction differs from fantasy, not in subject matter but in aim, and its real aim is to suggest real hypotheses about mankind's future or about the nature of the universe. (p. 450)

Science fiction as a literary genre in children's literature has only recently received recognition, a fact which is reflected in the paucity of the criticism that exists. Smith (1953) does not mention the term. Egoff et al. (1969), in their collection of critical essays, include one article only on this subject, one written by Egoff herself in 1969—one in which she says:

Science fiction for children is not literature; there is as yet no novel in the field that welds scientific fact and/or sociological speculation with strong, literary qualities to give it universal appeal. Nothing yet matches the best in other genres, such as fantasy and the realistic or historic novel for children. (p. 390)

Haviland (1973) also includes but one article, Engdahl's "The Changing Role of Science Fiction in Children's Literature," to which reference has been made above. In her introductory paragraph Engdahl observes that "those unfamiliar with the field of children's literature envision 'teenage' science fiction in particular as melodrama of the comic book and television variety" (p. 449); she herself confesses to some difficulty in explaining what it is. Nor do any of the other 'landmark' works attempt an explanation; no reference at all is made to this 'stepchild' of children's literature. All indications are that, at
the beginning of the decade under study, this genre—if indeed it can be classed as such—was of little reputation, suffering from its early emergence as 'space opera', and considered undeserving of literary or critical attention.

Egoff (1969) is devastating in her criticism of science fiction in its infancy. "What chiefly developed," she says, "was the 'space opera'—plots that were lifted from cheap westerns and detective stories and transferred to outer space" (p. 386). Moreover, in the early stages the emphasis was on the science rather than the fiction. Emphasis on fiction and the narrative elements, with concern for the consequences of scientific and technological advances on the lives of people on earth or in 'other worlds', came later. That the perception of science fiction as a literary genre has been evolving in this past decade is evidenced in Engdahl's critical essay, as well as in those of Bereit (1969), Bova (1970), Greenlaw (1971), and Tate (1973).

As the boundaries of science fiction are elusive, so also is its definition. Although it has been labeled escape literature, Asimov refers to it as offering 'escape into reality' (cited by Bereit, 1969). Author of seventy-five books of science fiction, Asimov (in Bereit, 1969) defines the genre as "that branch of literature which deals with a fictitious society, differing from our own chiefly in the nature and extent of its technological development" (p. 897). For Heinlein (1969) it is "speculative fiction in which the author takes as his first postulate the real world as we know it, including all established facts and natural law" (p. 369). For Heard (in Bereit, 1969), it is the "prophetic" or "apocalyptic" literature of our time; for Bova
It is a literature of ideas and a literature of change; and for Green (1971) it is the genre of literature that imaginatively depicts plausible events that are logical extrapolations of known facts and are descriptive of the social impacts of science and technology. Though the plots may seem impossible to man in his present condition, they do reflect the possibilities of the future. (p. 196)

From these definitions, differing as they are, there emerges the idea of a society or world other than that of reality, made possible through the accomplishments of science. This is the world of science fiction; the literature may be truly referred to as 'the literature of tomorrow'.

Engdahl (1971) denies that science fiction is prophetic. "It does not and cannot attempt to predict the precise form new developments will take," she says. Admitting that science fiction of the past did make some forecasts which proved accurate, she nevertheless insists that this is not its function. Its true function, she believes, is "to shape attitudes toward the future, and toward some of the possibilities the future may hold, as well as toward the universe that waits to be explored" (p. 452).

Failing to find a satisfactory definition of the genre, Egoff (1969) attempts to characterize it, paralleling it with the folk tale, and describing it thus:

It is a transferred fairy tale with Mars as a never-never land; with the formidable scientist replacing the powerful 'old men' of the woods, and scientific ingenuity replacing the supernatural. . . . It allows the reader to find the large concepts of the fairy tale (good versus evil, life versus death, love versus hate) applied more directly to the world he sees around him. (p. 397)

Egoff points out later, though in the past it has been criticized for its simplistic approach and lack of literary elements, particularly
style and characterization, science fiction may be construed as allegory or myth, embodying profound themes or morals. Shelley's Frankenstein, for example, "unveils the terror of man's failure to understand with his heart what he has created with his mind," Egoff points out (p. 397), and this theme is the focus of much of the newer science fiction. In any case, the themes are always significant ones, and the writer's ability to use all literary elements in the service of thematic development without destroying the balance and the unity of the narrative, may well be the key to successful science fiction. Egoff believes that in all science fiction there is one underlying theme—man himself. The place of the individual in a technological society; the conflict between free-will and societal control, and between order and destruction; wars between worlds; the destructive power of jealousy, selfishness and hate; the power of love to combat and defeat evil; the responsibility of man to control his own impulses, change his own nature, and accept responsibility for the consequences of his own behavior—these are the themes which concern the writers of contemporary science fiction. The focus is the preservation of a moral order—which may not be in the form which we perceive it at present; the genre is in a way a vehicle for social commentary; a portrayal of the eternal struggle for 'right' and 'justice' and the 'salvation' of human kind—and life itself. It depicts a possible future for society and thus permits society to prepare and provide for it, or protect itself from that future. The perpetual message, as Bova (1970) perceives it, is that tomorrow will not be like today; but as Egoff (1969) suggests, science fiction does not provide answers to mankind's baffling
problems; nor does it offer a philosophy. It offers a weapon (p. 397).

This preoccupation with serious themes relating to the social order is evidence that there is more to good science fiction than speculation about scientific inventions and the latest technological accomplishments; nor can the introduction of scientific 'gadgetry' or jargon compensate for slight plot or trifling theme. Its scope, as Engdahl (1971) defines it, "encompasses far more than mere technological progress" (p. 451), and she believes that anyone who writes science fiction for children has a responsibility "to consider carefully whether the outlook of the story is truly one he wants to foster" (p. 453). Huck (1979), too, insists that the writers must get behind the 'gadgets' and do more than tinker with technology; they must show how the products of science affect the minds and lives of people. Writers who presume to present a possible future to children must be prepared, she believes, to say what they believe about the future they create. (This demand on the writer is very little different from that of Hunter (1975) who demands that the writer of historical fiction preserve the moral order by including among the characters one whose comments bring a rational perspective to bear on the events.) It is Huck's judgment that only a few writers of science fiction for children have been able to rise above the scientific 'novelty' to understand and use "the human dimensions of the new knowledge" (p. 291). Herein may lie the significance of science fiction—not as a literature of escapism, but as a literary genre of universal proportions. Replying to the charge of escapism, Engdahl says:
Critics sometimes claim that science fiction seeks to provide escape from reality; personally, I feel that the reverse is true. I feel that it can offer a wider perspective on reality, leading young people to view the future not with our own era's gloom and despair, but with the broader realism of renewed hope. (p. 455)

This does not imply, however, that works in this genre are always heavy or serious to the point of dullness. The implications may be serious; the narrative, like all good narrative, should be characterized by action, excitement, romance, and adventure. It should be humorous, when humor is appropriate within the context of the plot. Huck (1979) refers to the blending of humor with scientific facts as a strength of MacGregor's Miss Pickerel series for young children. The significant consideration is that science fiction, however its function may be perceived and whatever its theme may be, is fiction first and it must be construed as a literary flaw if the philosophy or the message is too heavy for the narrative. This criticism is frequently laid against science fiction for children.

Although it is primarily fiction, the scientific components of science fiction must be accurate, or at least, plausible. Credibility is critical to the successful development of theme, and, as Egoff (1975) observes, the moment a writer puts vegetation on the moon the credibility of his tale crumbles somewhat (p. 96). Science is to science fiction what history is to historical fiction. The facts must be verifiable, and the imagined developments of the future must be in keeping with what is known of science and scientific principles. Yet, the literary elements of the narrative—plot, characterization, style, and theme—must not be sacrificed to the development of a scientific treatise; nor should plot, characterization, and style be sacrificed
to thematic considerations. Just as it may be perceived as a flaw if the philosophy is too heavy for the plot, the work will likewise be flawed if theme or setting usurps the role of character. The unified work will use all of these elements in the service of artistic creation with a particular focus. Character development in good science fiction must receive the same attention as character development in any good story for children, Bereit (1969) observes, and the primary focus must be the story. For Bereit the uniqueness of the narrative centers around the author's imaginative relation of time, setting, and scientific principles, and the overall structure or form she describes as "the balance of reality with the fanciful, or the balance between the known and the unknown" (p. 900). This balance, which is imperative in successful science fiction, is accomplished, she says, by

using enough aspects of reality through character, event, time, or setting, to secure equilibrium and creating fanciful character, event, time, or setting to cause tension. (p. 900)

It is the author's sensitive and artistic handling of this 'equilibrium' and 'tension' which gives science fiction its unique structure, and is a key to its success.

Bereit (1969) notes as one distinctive feature of the narrative of science fiction for children, that there is sometimes need for detail explaining a particular scientific concept or a scientific technique. It must be observed, however, that such detail must never be permitted to hinder the advancement of plot, and when it is essential to the development of the narrative or theme, it must be used artistically. The gratuitous insertion of facts is no more successful in
scientific fiction than it is in historical fiction. The need for such facts may lead the critic to question the appropriateness of the theme itself. Townsend (1974) observes of the science fiction of John Christopher, who writes both for adults and children, that the distinguishing characteristic of his children's books is that they do not require an adult body of experience (p. 216).

Greenlaw (1971), Bova (1970), and Tate (1973) analyzed a number of science fiction books for children. Their findings and conclusions embody useful implications for criticism. On the basis of her analysis of 133 children's books, Greenlaw concludes that the belief that science fiction is escape literature, associated with 'bug-eyed' monsters and space opera plots, is erroneous; that the genre includes significant themes and values which are social commentaries, focusing on the impact of technology on human values; and that such books can be used to broaden understanding of social problems and increase awareness of the importance of personal decisions.

Bova (1970) traces the history of science fiction from the seventeenth century and examines a number of books. He refers to a 'new wave of science fiction' which reflects "the field's growing maturity." This new wave, according to Bova, "has left behind the well ploughed fields of the moon and Mars in search of fresher pastures" (p. 803). It emphasizes characterization and style, but adopts a "careless," "disenchanted" attitude toward science, no longer assuming that the marvels of science and technology provide a panacea for human ills. On the basis of his survey, Bova claims that "in terms of subject matter, style, or any other criterion . . . science fiction
offers a rewarding body of literature"—one which he considers to be "the most consistently exciting field of literature" (p. 799). The reported practice of authors exerting little effort to make the science in the story plausible, appears, in the opinion of the writer of this study, to be a weakness of this body of work, however.

Tate (1973) analyzed forty-nine volumes of science fiction appearing on recommended lists, and concluded that science fiction is no longer written exclusively for boys; that a growing number of books have females as well as males in significant roles; that, while simple adventure stories continue to be published, science fiction increasingly deals with more complex themes; and that writers evince an awareness that complex and philosophical questions are of interest to girls as well as boys when there are significant characters with whom they can identify.

While the body of first-rate science fiction for children remains small, Egoff's (1969) assessment that it is not literature, and that there is no novel in the field to match the best in other genres, may now be challenged. Such works as L'Engle's Wrinkle in Time trilogy (Farrar, Straus, 1962, 1973, 1978) and those of Sylvia Engdahl provide the evidence.

Synthesis and Emerging Principles

Little criticism of science fiction for children exists, unquestionably a reflection of the low esteem in which this genre has been held. Such as there is emphasizes the changing nature of the genre from a preoccupation with science and scientific accoutrements to a
greater concern for the fiction, and the consequences to society of scientific progress. At present, science fiction may be perceived as fiction with a scientific perspective. Its raw materials include scientific facts and scientific hypotheses; no less important are the literary elements of fiction—plot, character, style and theme. Theme looms large; and plot, character, style, and scientific details are often used in the service of thematic development. The central concern is the story, and all elements should contribute to the unity of plot and theme. Accuracy and plausibility must be established; narrative skill must so clothe facts, principles, and concepts with imaginative fiction, that in the emerging story the reader is led to consider the impact of science on society. Authors of science fiction create new worlds for children and offer them a vision of a future different from the present. The authors should not remain detached from their creations, but should accept responsibility for them so that the future, in fiction and in fact, may hold for children a promise of better things.

Poetry

The criticism of poetry in children's literature is a relatively recent phenomenon. While many articles have been written about it, these have tended to be directed more toward its use than its quality, and are often more effusive in their general claims for poetry than critical of its nature, subject matter, technique, or form. Reference has been made earlier in this chapter to Only Connect: Readings in Children's Literature (Oxford, 1969), a landmark collection of essays focusing on literary criticism of children's literature. It is
significant that this work included no article on poetry. With refer­
ence to the omission, the editors explained: "A careful search was
made for critical treatment of children's poetry, but nothing we read
seemed significant enough to merit a place in the collection" (p. xvi).
Serraillier (in Blishen, 1971) observes that poetry is an area in which
the critics are somewhat reluctant to commit themselves; Benton (1978)
notes the absence of critical writing in most publications associated
with literature; and in The Cool Web (Atheneum, 1978) the emphasis is
still focused on the prose narrative; nor is there included any essay
on poetry. Townsend, in his Written for Children (Lippincott, 1974),
does include a chapter entitled "Writers in Rhyme," in which he
observes that the poet and the child share a common gift—"the gift of
seeing and feeling things afresh, as if they had never been seen or
felt before" (p. 131). He acknowledges that "a sizeable amount of
poetry, and a vastly greater quantity of verse" has been especially
written for children; he believes children's poetry is "worth discus­
sion"; and he records with surprise that much of the poetry written
especially for children has been written by "good poets." Moreover,
much of it "is still alive and enjoyable" (p. 131).

The paucity of the criticism of poetry as a part of children's
literature may be explained, in part, by a statement from the Bullock

It has to be acknowledged that poetry starts at a dis­
advantage. In the public view it is something rather odd,
certainly outside the current of normal life; it is either
numinous, and therefore rarely to be invoked, or an object
Ironically, the Report does little to help the situation. In 600 pages, less than four are devoted to poetry (Benton, 1978, p. 112). If poetry "lies outside the current of normal life," then many critics who normally appraise the prose works of children's literature share with adults generally an ambivalent or negative attitude toward poetry. Often those who readily confess to reading poetry themselves are reluctant to discuss it in critical terms. For some reason poetry appears to be surrounded by an aura separating it from other genres of literature, and placing it outside the province of criticism. A poem, more so than any other work of art, appears to be sacrosanct, the property of its creator, a child of imagination and emotion, too personal to be violated by criticism. Consequently, we now have under the guise of poetry a body of verse and doggerel, deriving its effect from rhyme and rhythm. Fortunately, there are those who dare to identify it as such. Lying somewhere between the traditional nursery rhyme and nonsense verse, and the rich, poetic heritage which is normally thought of as the province of adult poetry, there is what Chambers (1979) calls "a puddingly morass of specially composed verse for children." The "messages" of such verse, he claims, are "couched in rhyme and rumpety-rump rhythm from which has been drained all the challenge of poetic artifice" (p. 352). Those who hail such 'poetry' usually do so on the grounds that children understand and enjoy it. And there can be little doubt that this is so. Nor does Chambers attempt to dispute it. His counter-argument, however, is noteworthy:

Children like such stuff for the same reasons that they like candy floss, and if they are never faced with anything else, the real meat of poetry, they grow up with rotten teeth and no stomach for anything that needs chewing. (p. 352)
One of the values of genuine poetry claimed by Chambers and others, is that it helps the reader to see even the familiar and commonplace with fresh vision. In Chambers' words, "it forces us to fill our minds, to think differently and flexibly; it subverts the narrow conditioning that asks us to think in routine fashion" (p. 354). To deny children this type of poetry because of any misguided notion of either the nature of the child or the nature of poetry is unfortunate—if not tragic. The theme of Chambers' article is that poetry is not difficult, if we consider it worthwhile. One of the reasons poetry is not generally considered worthwhile may be related to its neglect by the critics. Chambers' own article, along with a small number of others identified in this section, provides evidence that this situation is changing.

The Nature of Poetry

In spite of the apparent neglect of poetry for children, there have been isolated voices speaking of its form and function. Usually they have spoken clearly and forcefully, and their comments remain as guideposts in criticism. Replier (1892), for example, made claims for poetry which are paralleled in those of Chambers (1979), and she echoes his concern that poetry for children may degenerate to "infantine or juvenile verse." The situation she describes has a contemporary ring:

Too often . . . the poet strives to adjust to what he thinks is the childish standard. He lowers his sublime head from the stars, and pipes with painstaking flatness on a little reed, while the children wander away, and listen breathlessly to older and dreamier strains. (in Haviland, 1973, p. 264)
Chukovsky (trans. by Morton, 1963) insists that poetry for young children should be written in a special way and appraised by special criteria. He is adamant, however, that poets cannot ignore the standards by which poetry is judged. Indeed, so convinced is he of the importance of this consideration, that he embodies it in his twelfth 'commandment':

Children's poetry, in addition to satisfying the special requirements . . . must have the skill, the virtuosity, the technical soundness of poetry for adults. A bad poem could not be good for children. (p. 154)

His thirteenth 'commandment' develops and expands this idea, making clear that in Chukovsky's philosophy, the poetry of childhood is more than the cute and the rhythmic, and such poetry as makes no demands on mind or emotion. He explains:

We, children's poets, must not only adapt our writing to the needs of the young—we must also, through our creations, bring the children within reach of our adult perceptions and thoughts. . . . It follows, therefore, that we deliberately, if gradually, abandon all the 'commandments' necessary for the best writing for the very young so as to develop in the growing child an ever-maturing and strongly instilled understanding, appreciation, and love of the great poets. (p. 154)

It is significant that Chukovsky, while suggesting that his special 'commandments' for children's poetry are gradually set aside, insists that his twelfth 'commandment' which has to do with "excellent poetic quality in poetry for beginners" must never be violated (p. 154).

It is such violation of poetic quality by would-be children's poets that invokes the critical displeasure of Robert Bridges when, in his introduction to The Chilwell Book of English Poetry (Books for Libraries Press, 1922, 1971), he refers to those writers who, without any other poetic pretense, "have good-naturedly composed poems for the
young, and in a technique often as inept as their sentiment" (p. ix). This is the philosophy and practice, too, to which Clark (in Field, 1969) is responding when he says:

For too long the youngest have been allowed to wander aimlessly in the candy-floss kingdom of Tinery Tottery. They need stronger meat. The poems chosen for them should always have something to say that is worth saying. (p. 158)

Smith (1953) believes that children can understand far more than they can verbalize, and that by intuition and imagination they can understand what is far outside the realm of their experience. She would certainly not confine children to Clark's "kingdom of Tinery Tottery"; indeed, she believes it is impossible to draw a dividing line between poetry for children and poetry for adults. One thing she is emphatic about--that children, with their innate affinity for poetry, have the capacity to respond to the best and hence deserve the best. It is her philosophy that poetry for children, like every other genre, should be tested against the "touchstones" of great poetry. In her appraisal of poetry suitable for children she uses as her touchstone the work of Walter de la Mare, who himself said, "I know well that only the rarest kind of best in anything can be good enough for children" (in introduction to Bells and Grass, Viking, 1963, 1942, p. ix).

Repplier, Chambers, Smith, and others who write of the poetry of childhood, making claims regarding its nature and function, rarely if ever succeed in defining the genre about which they write. This elusiveness of its definition, or, more particularly, the vague emotion-based, romanticized definitions sometimes offered, may contribute to the reluctance of the critics to become involved. It is
very difficult, for example, to deal critically with Farjeon's often-quoted "not the rose, but the scent of the rose" type of definition, or Livingston's claim that

poetry is, after all, a personal thing; its meaning to each human being is private. It invades the innermost thoughts; it clings to and bolsters the inner life. It is not something to be rationalized and explained.

(cited by Groff, p. 181)

Nor is Frost's cryptic comment that "a poem is a momentary stay against confusion . . . an arrest of disorder" (cited in Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1977, p. 244) any easier to analyze. Groff (in Field, 1969) suggests that what is needed is a more precise working definition of poetry, one which will clear away the emotionalism, and remove it from the "never-never land of mysticism set up by Eleanor Farjeon and others" (p. 184). Such a working definition, he believes, would provide critics with a basis for judgment, and would encourage decisions as to what is and is not deserving of the label of poetry. If there is such a genre as poetry, Groff insists, it must be definable, and he presents his own definition:

Poetry for children is writing that (in addition to using, in most cases, the mechanics of poetry) transcends the literal meaning of expository writing. It is not the kind of writing that appears in newspapers and popular media or the kind of writing that is found in classroom textbooks. It is writing that goes beyond the immediately obvious. [It] consists of those aspects of writing that cannot be readily explained, unless one has some knowledge of what is going on. In contrast to that which is readily and completely understandable to all, poetry is often ambiguous.

(p. 184)

This definition, while admitting that there is much about poetry difficult to define except in 'poetical terms', makes reference to the mechanics or the special components of poetry; it acknowledges its
figurative and symbolic nature; suggests that profound meanings may be
clothed in outer simplicity; that it may have different meanings for
different readers; and that, like a painting, it may grow in depth and
meaning the more one ponders it. In developing his definition, Groff
refers to the connotative as well as the denotative nature of language,
and suggests that in poetry it is the language and not the subject
which is of utmost importance. "Its subject is not presented by mean­
ing of the language," he says. "Rather, language is presented with
the aid of a subject" (p. 185).

Clark (1978) distinguishes between young and old poetry. Young
poetry he defined as those poems that have young children in mind,
according to their stage of experience, and poems that have been
especially written for children. This is the poetry which, in the
context of Chapter IV might well be called child-centered. In this
style of writing the successful poets have, in Clark's opinion, been
the poets of the past. He particularly identifies Christina Rossetti,
Robert Louis Stevenson, Rudyard Kipling, Walter de la Mare, and James
Reeves, all of whom were poets first, and poets for children, second­
ardly. In Clark's judgment, there is nothing in contemporary poetry
for children to match the work of such poets, and few living poets
have written much of value for children. His judgment on 'modern'
poetry is harsh. He says:

Much 'modern' poetry falls into the same monotonous pattern
of arid intellectualism, as if it sprang from a frozen
fountain. . . . How far removed from the essence of true
poetry is the work of those poets of our own day who have
lost, if they ever possessed it, a sense of wonder. (p. 128)
Old poetry Clark defines as poems from the past which young children are likely to enjoy. Such poems would necessarily be short, in some way associated with the child's actual experience, simple in form, and direct in statement (p. 129).

Poetry for Chambers (1979) is far more than a "medium for telling the reader about reality," although it may do that. A poem, he believes, draws its 'reference points' from the external world, but these reference points merely contribute to the larger purpose of poetry, which is to help the reader go inward—"into the poem as an object in itself." He explains:

Not as an object just in the sense of paper and ink we can look at, but the object which has existence only in our imagination: the object which is the virtuality of the text—the being made in our minds by the writer's way with language. (p. 354)

Although poetry comes into existence through the use of language, a poem is much more than an arrangement of words, as a religious building is more than a composite of various building materials. Chambers' analogy is effective. He elaborates:

[Poetry is] a complex architecture of semantic and non-semantic effects, which convert everyday externally recognizable material into something greater, rather as stone and metal and wood are converted by architecture into Durham Cathedral, the Great Mosque at Mecca, or the Daibutsu at Kamakura—all different, yet all religious statements expressive of multiple and profound meanings. There is a philosophy, a way of thinking, behind the architecture which gives the buildings a meaning extending beyond anything contained within the material they are built of. The buildings mean more in themselves than they represent or are made of. And we can know this, not only by hearing someone tell us what they mean, but by walking inside and round them and experiencing them. Which means using head, heart and senses. We can do just the same with poetry. (p. 351)
Tucker (1973) believes the great moments of poetry are not the disasters, tragedies or violence which often create the excitement of the novel—they are, rather, insights. The insights of which he speaks result from "the accumulation of details of understanding, and are as personal as the moment of satisfaction when the last piece of the jigsaw falls into place" (p. 144). Tucker distinguishes in an interesting way between poetry for adults and poetry for children. The poet writing for an adult reader, he believes, may take whatever liberties he chooses; he may use whatever form or technique his fancy directs. In writing for children, however, Tucker sees the need for some restraints, not to the point of prescription, but in the interest of understanding. It is necessary to meet the child's limited experience and build upon it. "We should be sure that the doors of the mind are opened widely enough to admit a solid proportion of traditional furniture before we introduce the agent provocateur," he says. He adds, "You can't throw the furniture around, if you haven't first moved in" (p. 153).

Tucker disapproves of politics and sociology in the guise of poetry; he has misgivings about 'obscurity' which children may not have the capacity to interpret; and he believes that children cannot respond to irony. He devises a number of rules for those who would write for children: the subject should be about living things, real people, and actual events, and these subjects should be treated with "connected thought" and "clarity of meaning." Rhyme and rhythm are important, as are also "the bag of tricks" kept under control as a reinforcement of meaning and memorability. Abstractions should be avoided, as should sophisticated complexity, and 'beautiful thoughts'. Rhyme and rhythm
should never be resorted to as an end in themselves, and 'verbal juggling' is inappropriate (pp. 153-154).

Whatever rules the poet follows, Tucker believes that genuine poetry is a "civilized and rather gentle art" and of it he says:

[It] is the only kind of writing that can convince children that the ordinary is more interesting than the fabulous, that a field is a more interesting place than Narnia. Children lose themselves in the novel. The idea is that they find themselves in poetry. (p. 154)

Hill (1979) identifies as flaws of children's poetry the overly-strong sense of rhyme which results in rhyme at any cost; strained and idiomatic language, inappropriate images; and attempts by the poet to think and talk like a child. Poems for children must be good enough for adults, she insists. In her article "How To Tell the Sheep from the Goats--and Why it Matters," she uses examples of 'poor' poems to illustrate her points. She is critical of poets or editors of anthologies for children who act as if they believe that, if the audience is a child, all that is needed is a subject with some appeal, for children lack the maturity to bring any other judgment to bear. Such writers (and editors), she claims, seem to assume that to the naive child inadequacies in language will not matter, nor will he be bothered by forced rhymes, padded lines, 'cute' images, and the poem that "runs down at the end like an old Victrola record." She is particularly critical of poets who do not give sufficient care to the appropriate and effective use of language.

The language should be poetical, and the poem's content should have appeal for children, Huck (1979) believes. She sees little difference between poetry for children and poetry for adults, but she
points out that children who have not reached formal stages of mental development will have difficulty understanding complex symbolism and literary allusions, and figurative language will be effective only if in some way it relates to the child's background of experience. She believes that the nature of poetry must change as society changes.

"The child's hero of today works in space," not "under the spreading chestnut tree," she says (p. 307). This changing nature of poetry is alluded to also by Seraillier (in Blishen, 1971), who says that the survival of art forms is dependent upon their ability to adapt to new conditions. For poetry, this may mean "some means of escape from the printed page—and this may bring poetry closer to its origins—in song and dance and the spoken word" (p. 102).

It is apparent, then, that poetry defies any simple definition; it likewise resists any attempt to cast it in a single mold, or to prescribe either its style or subject matter. Child of intellect and emotion, clothed in imagination, and manifested in images, symbols, rhythm and rhyme; and taking the universe as its business; poetry is not the sole possession of a select audience; but rather, its enjoyment is part of the general, human inheritance, demonstrated convincingly in the young child's love of repetition and rhythms.

Subject Matter and Technique in Children's Poetry

It has already been suggested that the subject matter of poetry is as inclusive as the universe. That there are few restrictions on appropriate subject matter for children, appears to be the general consensus of the critics. It is "vast and inclusive," says Smith
(1953), "and its influence is incalculable" (p. 113). She believes, moreover, that there is no dividing line between poetry children like and that liked by adults. Morse (in Field, 1969) maintains that poetry for children really means poetry that children like "with all the variety of form and substance so easy-going a definition suggests" (p. 168). Muir (in Haviland, 1973) believes children "can be enchanted by any poem which opens their minds to the world of imagination," regardless of the subject matter, and regardless of whether it is terrifying or delightful. Livingston (in Field, 1969) and Townsend (1974) both agree that themes of love and death are appropriate ones for children's poetry, but Livingston would first ask, What kind of love? What kind of death? Both subjects, she believes, are equally appropriate for adults or children, but with different treatment. Poetry for Clark (1978) is perceived as truth, and he believes that the best poetry mirrors the world and the life in it. Clark would exclude from children's poetry the "flabby and oversentimental"; he would also exclude "the horrific, the sadistic, the brutal, and the violent," on the grounds that these are not normal experiences in childhood. He elucidates:

It is no concern of poetry to prepare the heart and mind of young children for the shades of the prison house. Yet it is possible for them to come to grips with genuine sensations and experiences and to find themselves involved in a range of feelings by contact with poetry that is as vigorous as it is tender, as uplifting as it is honest. (p. 131)

Clark believes that poetry for children should include both traditional and contemporary poetry, and, for the younger child, should include nursery rhymes, carols, folk songs, extracts from larger poems, narrative poems, and action poems. For older children poetry should be
characterized by relevance, and feeling and should deal with "birth, death, love, sex, people, places, and happenings." It should depict strong images, and should employ a variety of techniques. Sentimentality, coyness, and nostalgia should be avoided (p. 131).

The subject matter of children's poetry, then, in the opinion of the critics throughout the decade under study, is neither narrow nor restricted. It appears that, with few exceptions, it is not the subject itself but the poet's treatment of it that determines suitability. The 'ring' of almost any words may be 'bright', when the right man rings them, and there is some conviction that children can respond to the language and music of poetry when the subject matter is only dimly understood. This claim was made for poetry generally, of course, by Coleridge in his oft-quoted statement that "poetry gives much pleasure when only generally and not perfectly understood." The same claim is made on behalf of children's poetry by a number of critics, including Reppplier (1892).

Whether or not children's poetry must be a special class of poetry, has long been a subject of debate. In the discussion of the nature of poetry in the previous section, statements by Clark (1978), Chambers (1979), and Huck (1979) support one side of this debate; while Tucker's position lends some support to the other. The earliest and perhaps the most forceful spokesman in the case for the negative is Reppplier (1892), who says:

It has been often demonstrated, and as often forgotten, that children do not need to have poetry written down to their intellectual level, and do not like to see the stately Muse ostentatiously bending her ear. In the matter of prose it seems necessary for them to have a literature of their own,
over which they will linger for a little while, as though in the sunny antechambers of a king. But in the golden palace of the poets there is no period of probation, there is no enforced attention upon petty things. The clear-eyed children go straight to the heart of the mystery, and recognize in the music of words, in the enduring charm of metrical quality, an element of never-ending delight. When this sensuous pleasure is added, the enchantment of poetic images, lovely and veiled and dimly understood, then the delight grows sweeter and keener. (p. 264)

It is never through 'juvenile' or 'infantine' verses, however, that such a love of poetry is engendered, Repplier maintains.

Townsend (1974) points out that poetry "wanders around the vague and shifting border between children's books and just plain books" (p. 131); that much of the lyric poetry is accessible to children; and that anthologies for children usually contain a considerable amount of poetry not written for children. Reeves (1958) makes the interesting point that the qualities to be sought in children's poetry are best demonstrated in the things that last. He uses nursery rhymes and the poems of Walter de la Mare as examples, and of these he says:

These have almost the opposite qualities to those that one often associates with children's literature, which are provided by the numerous purveyors of children's verse, who sentimentalize children by making the verse cosy and sloppy. (p. 13)

Reeves concludes:

We must always provide poetry in such a way that it creates, and nourishes a continuing craving for poetry and does not kill it by making poetry seem something childish. (p. 13)

Livingston (in Field, 1969) ostensibly takes a middle-of-the-road position in the debate, claiming that there is something to be said for both positions, but her qualifications tend to reveal her leanings toward a special child-centered poetry. In Livingston's position there is the conscious union of child-centered and work-centered
criticism. She is fearful lest those who challenge poetry written only for children become too far removed from the child to be sensitive to his ability to respond intellectually or imaginatively. At the same time she would reject the "cute," and she recommends the establishment of criteria by which poetry may be assessed. She points out that some criteria which apply to fantasy, realistic fiction, and other forms of literature, apply equally to poetry. In her own special criteria, she emphasizes the delight of poetry; the "degree to which the reader is provoked to find the part, the fraction that is missing, or not understood; and the degree to which the poet allows room for the imagination of the reader" (p. 177).

Groff (in Field, 1969) refers to the "battle" between those who recommend a special poetry for children and those who decry the same. Like Livingston, Groff equivocates somewhat. "The battle seems to be worth fighting, regardless of the side one is on," he says, "for if we begin with children's poetry, we begin with something less than the best" (p. 187). Groff believes that children must be introduced to the 'best' poetry, whatever that is, and he would himself exclude from that category the overly obstruse, the ancient, and the cute. He establishes two criteria for assessing poetry for children: through its subject matter it must delight children, and it must be couched in poetic language. For younger children, subject is of primary importance, Groff believes; for older children, language becomes the primary criteria. He makes mention of the potential appeal of the 'new poetry', and he refers specifically to "the social realism of Gwendolyn Brooks, the unpretentious warmth of Eve Merriam, the exhaustive imagery
of Mary O'Neill, the gentle persuasion of Harry Behn, and the urbane versatility of James Reeves" (p. 189). His list might be extended to include such names as John Ciardi, Aileen Fisher, David McCord and Dennis Lee.

Livingston's (1979) perceptive analysis of the works of David McCord, in which she discusses his subject matter and technique, and highlights the strength of his work, is an example of the type of critical writing which poetry needs if it is to survive the pitfalls threatening to be its undoing. McCord, she says, draws on strong foundations of literary tradition, including Watts, Blake, Carroll, Lear, Stevenson, de la Mare, and Roberts. To the best of their traditions he has brought his "carefully crafted rhythms," of which he is a master, his unaffected and wise use of figurative language, and his unique ability to play with the shape and sound of words. Of the body of his work she says:

> He has cherished, related to, and recalled his own childhood. He has absorbed the sights, sounds, wonders, tastes and rhythms that have marked his life. The result has been poetry for children, uniquely American, punctuated and crafted with speech patterns, the rhythms, and the "abiding faith in the laughter of today's children." (p. 25)

It is not without significance that this is the judgment of the work of a poet who once said that

> no one worth his salt has ever been able to write the kinds of poems he wants to write without a basic knowledge of metre, rhythm, rhyme, and the existing verse forms. (p. 37)

McCord combines such knowledge and expertise with a love and understanding of children, and an intention to communicate to them something of the wonder and excitement that his own experience of living brings to him.
Tucker (1973) refers to these dual features of expertise and intention as keys to successful poetry for children. He believes there is a particular danger in giving to children poetry which has been written for adults in a different age and a different language. The poetry of childhood is, for Tucker, the poetry of the familiar—of everyday objects, sights and emotions. His own basic rules, to which reference has been made earlier, demand that the poet choose subjects carefully, develop them clearly and meaningfully, and use every poetic device in the service of communication and art.

**Synthesis and Emerging Principles**

The vagueness and elusiveness which have characterized the definition of the genre of poetry, and the emotional and personal nature of many individual works, have served to put poetry outside the range of objective criticism. Poetry, nevertheless, is more than sentimentality or emotionalism. Although it is difficult to restrict it to any single definition, no less than prose it draws its subject matter from the whole life, and its appeal is to intellect, emotion, and imagination. Laughter, as well as tears, lie within its province; thoughts and feelings are equally evoked; imaginative stimulation is its natural concomitant. Characterized more so than is prose by its use of figurative language, images, and literary allusions, its distinctive feature is its use of rhythm and rhyme. Its outer simplicity may cloak an inner kernel of truth; its conciseness is often its strength. It may illumine with fresh vision the known, the ordinary, and the routine; it may plumb new depths of intellectual and emotional insights, to add new dimensions to life.
The appeal of poetry resides in both its subject matter and its language. For younger children the principal appeal may be through language alone; for older children the subject matter assumes increasing importance. Because of the dual nature of its appeal, poetry may be appreciated aurally when it is only incompletely understood, and a criticism of much of the poetry specially written for children is that it offers little more than a catchy rhythm. Genuine poetry has aural appeal; it also evokes intellectual, emotional, and imaginative involvement, and, at its best, it conveys a sense of excitement and wonder, an experience of discovery.

The debate concerning the need for a specially written poetry for children is more academic than pragmatic. It is not an either/or consideration. Children are individuals, and their responses may be evoked, but neither prescribed nor predicted. The 'architecture' of poetry must be intelligible to the reader before total appreciation is possible; and the reader's appreciation of the work may be determined as much by how the poem means, as by what it means. Nor must it be assumed that the 'best' in poetry must, of necessity, be in poetry written for adults; that all else is preparatory in nature. Child-centered poetry, no less than adult poetry, is only deserving of the name if it uses the mechanics of poetry in the service of poetry and of art. Trifling subjects, superficial emotions, forced rhymes and rhythms, contrived and pointless images, unnatural language, and condescending attempts to think and speak like children, are no more appropriate for children's poetry than for adults', nor should they be more readily tolerated. The subject matter of children's poetry
need be neither slight nor narrow in scope. With few exceptions, it draws on the same sources as does poetry generally; only the treatment is different. The emotions evoked by children's poetry should be those which are the normal emotions of childhood; there is no place for the cheaply sensational, the sadistic, or the aberrant. Figurative language and literary allusions will contribute to the poem's total effect, as they relate to the child's knowledge and background of experience. In the guise of innovation, and in the name of poetry, some contemporary 'poets' are serving to children the products of their own intellectual experiments and egoistical extravaganzas. It is time that the critics called attention to the nature of true poetry. Fortunately for children, there are those who are beginning to do so.

**Picture Books**

The Nature of the Picture Book

In the picture book, words and pictures combine to tell a story, and the most successful picture books are those in which a happy blending of text and illustrations results in a fresh, original, and imaginative approach to the development of an interesting theme. This is the collective opinion of those who offered definitions of this genre in the literature examined for this report. More so than for any other genre, definitions abound. The critics may not always agree upon the nature of fantasy, poetry, or historical fiction; but in the case of the picture book there is no such ambivalence. This becomes clear in the sampling of opinions which follows. Smith (1953) describes the picture book as "a book in two media—words and paint, or whatever
medium the artist uses" (p. 116). She sees the text and pictures of equal importance, and it is "fusion" of the two that gives unity and character to the whole. The picture book must appeal to the intellect and the emotion, as well as to the senses, she says, and the pictures must be integrated with the action of the story. Smith also insists that both the ideas and feelings expressed must be those of childhood (p. 116). MacCann and Richard (1973) speak of the picture book in terms of a brief narrative and a story-line presented largely through the illustrations. "Nearly every scene, object, or idea is imparted to the reader visually as well as verbally," they say (p. 2). For Egoff (1975) the genius of the picture book lies in its balance of word and picture, which together form a perfect whole, although each is incomplete in itself. Many picture books are "visually beautiful," Egoff says, but they are lacking "a honed and disciplined text" (p. 271). Cleaver (1976) speaks of picture books combining words and pictures to create a variety of worlds for children—"worlds in which art, music, literature, language and ideas can be discovered" (p. 71). She insists that pictures are a language; and it is through visual language that we understand much of what we know. Lent (1977) refers to the "marriage of words and art" which gives the picture book its uniqueness (p. 161), and he believes that the artist, no less than the writer of the text, must be a storyteller. Sutherland and Hearne (1977) describe the words and pictures of the picture book as "equal but not separate" (p. 158); and Sendak (interviewed by Lorraine, 1977b) describes the integration of the two as "seamless." The finished work, he says, is like a poem—"you shouldn't be aware of the pastings together. You should
only be aware of the work as a complete and total entity" (p. 152). For Sendak's personal satisfaction, the work has to be ambiguous--allowing for the possibility of individual interpretation (p. 153). Marantz (1977) refers to the picture book as an "art object," and claims that "its expressive potential goes well beyond the mere narrative" (p. 148). He does say, however, that its strength derives from "the totality of its making . . . more than some ancillary decoration of visual reinforcement for a literary effort" (p. 149). Marantz claims for the good picture book the potential "to pique curiosity, to extend viewpoints, to refresh wonder" (p. 151). Bader (1976), whose American Picture Books from Noah's Ark to the Beast Within (Macmillan, 1976), has been called "the definitive work on the evaluation of the picture book in this country" (Donovan, 1977), defines the picture book as "text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historical document; and foremost, an experience for a child" (p. 1). As an art form, she says, "it hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the turning of the page (p. 1).

It is apparent, then, that the dual nature of the picture book is generally accepted; that the complementary components of text and illustration are recognized; that the successful integration of these components is perceived as the key to a successful production. Interesting, in the light of this demand for integration, is Groff's (1974) rejection of the wordless picture books as literary material. In his article "Children's Literature Versus Wordless Picture Books" he refutes arguments that have been advanced in favor of the wordless picture books and deplores the fact that, increasingly, picture books
for children are being purchased on the merit of their pictures rather than on the quality of their written text. He specifically challenges a position espoused by Cianciolo (1973), that wordless picture books are excellent literary material, and hence may be used in the study of literature as well as in the teaching of reading and visual literacy. His judgment on the wordless picture book is harsh—and thought-provoking:

It appears inevitable that the wordless book, as it dilutes the opportunities available to exploit the child's abilities, or to develop his will, to respond in imaginative ways toward stories, will become a potential threat to the major objective of children's literature. (p. 300)

Groff believes that the proliferation and popularity of wordless picture books will mitigate against the development of children's verbal imagination, thus delaying their appreciation of linguistic art. It is the strength of the picture book, he believes, that pictures do not "overwhelm" the text, and it is his contention that the text of a good picture book remains a literary art even without pictures (p. 300).

An assessment of critical opinion regarding the nature of the picture book may legitimately include some reference to the nature of children's response to this literary form. Keeping (1970) maintains that in the matter of illustrations children have as much right to be heard as do adults, and that their response has greater validity than does the judgment of adults. He says:

children are far more in touch with what is happening and what it's all about when it comes to the art side of it, because these children have been brought up on art that isn't just stuck in a certain type of nineteenth-century rut. They are quite willing to accept any change at all in the structure and they understand it. (p. 43)

Smerdon (1976) believes that if Keeping's assessment is correct, more attention should be attached to what children are saying about
picture books. On the basis of his experiment, designed to determine the nature of the responses evoked from children by particular kinds of pictures, and the degree to which these responses vary with age, ability and experience, Smerdon concludes that children in all the age groups included (from the infant school to the school leavers) prefer representational art forms to abstract forms; that such preferences vary at certain ages, particularly at the Infant stage; and that there is no significant difference in the preferences expressed by boys and girls (p. 30).

Gilpatrick (1969) attempts to apply to picture books the tenets of the New Criticism, as espoused by Ransome, Tate, and Warren. She advocates the close reading of the text of the picture book and an analysis of its particular language, with reference to both its literary strategies and the successful intermeshing of meaning with symbol and image. She believes that children's books are frequently assessed purely on the basis of whether a child "liked it," and in terms of what the child can "get at" through his own language competency. Gilpatrick rejects this position as a basis of judgment, insisting that the child can appreciate and understand far more than he can read or verbalize—certainly far more than his limited vocabulary would suggest. In a child's association with a book, she believes, there is at work a 'tacit dimension' which permits him to take in much that is beyond his own vocabulary. Her attempt to apply Polanyi's (1967) idea of tacit knowledge to a child's interaction with a picture book leads Gilpatrick to conclude that a child may experience the richness of literature not merely through the symbols he meets, but also through the "implications"
that these symbols recall for him. This experience, she believes, may go beyond either the author's intention or the child's like or dislike for a particular book. Her thesis is that the best picture books have the power to change a child's self-image, and she explains:

[for] symbols in a book to affect a child's self-image, it is not necessary that he be able to identify them or even advert to their presence. . . . All the unnamed, often unguessed, hidden symbols and literary devices act below the threshold of overt knowing. The child benefits through tacit knowing—his ability at all times to know more than he can ever say or ever know he knows. (p. 574)

If, as Gilpatrick suggests, the richness of the literary experience and the best that literature has to offer come to the reader through his 'tacit knowing', in combination with his actual experience with the book, then the quality of the picture book in both text and illustration would appear to be of critical significance.

Paucity of Artistic Criticism

In truth, there is little 'artistic' criticism of picture books. Most of the reviewers and many of those who write articles of criticism ignore this dual nature of the picture book which has been the emphasis of the preceding section. Indeed, most of those who lament the absence of artistic criticism do little themselves to add to it. It can only be construed that the critics of the picture book feel some insecurity in dealing with the art component; and for this reason they either ignore it or make rather meaningless remarks about it. In any case, the result is unfortunate. MacCann and Richard (1973) maintain that the 'silence' of the critics about the visual content of the picture book has always been a serious problem; the absence of any critical
direction has allowed inferior and stereotyped illustrations to flourish and go unchallenged. Her viewpoint is shared by Trease (1964), Keeping (1970), Egoff (1975), Salway (1976), Marantz (1977), and Sendak (in Lorraine, 1977b). The general complaint is twofold—that the illustrations in the picture books are usually ignored; and that when they are dealt with, their treatment is superficial or incompetent. Salway, for example, speaks of a frequent practice of the critics as that of dismissing the art work of the picture book in a few sentences, with little serious consideration of work, either as art or serious interpretation of text; Sendak (in Lorraine, 1977) complains that the art of the picture book is not taken seriously or reviewed intelligently, and he calls for criticism which will assess the work as art, and Keeping (1970) observes that such criticism as is given is valueless because the critics are not qualified to judge. He wonders how many writers would be happy to have their work reviewed by musicians. Keeping has perhaps identified and diagnosed the problem accurately—that most critics are indeed poorly qualified to offer any reliable assessment of art. And there are some critics who are as reluctant to assess art as they are to assess poetry—because they are not sure of the nature of either.

Problems in Picture Books

There are those, however, who hold strong opinions about what is not acceptable or appropriate in the artwork of children's books, and many of the common pitfalls of the picture book have been marked out by the critics. For Egoff (1975), for example, excellent artwork is
not most of what has been produced in Canada in the name of picture books. Referring to the work of Charles Keeping and Ezra Jack Keats, work in which the artists have been so successful in interpreting the slums of London and New York, Egoff maintains that the Canadian environment—rural and urban—has provided little inspiration for artists. The picture book genre has not attracted artists with "exceptional, imaginative and graphic talents," she says (p. 272). She singles out Elizabeth Cleaver's work as the best examples of picture book art in Canada, but she says little of the techniques which have made her so. She does mention Cleaver's use of detail and her success in integrating her illustrations with the text, but there is little other justification for this claim.

For MacCann and Richard (1973), artwork of excellence is not produced by those who attempt to "paint and draw like the child." Labeling this approach as 'sham,' these authors observe that when this approach is added to traditional arrangement and use of color the aesthetic result is "vulgarly inappropriate" (p. 10). Betchel (in Haviland, 1973) also notes that children have little interest in each other's artwork, or in an artist's attempt to be naive in a child's way (p. 175).

Hoare (1977) contends, contrary to the opinions of many reviewers, that Macaulay's artwork is not particularly appropriate for children's books. He refers specifically to Cathedral (Houghton Mifflin, 1973), City (Houghton Mifflin, 1974), and Pyramid (Houghton Mifflin, 1975). Hoare complains that this artist's drawings of figures lack all individuality (he reports that one child described them as 'dummies in
a museum'), and he speaks of the "vagueness" of his work. He suggests that Macaulay's training in architecture has left him uneasy about animate things; he points out (and documents) instances where more care with detail is needed for accuracy; and his final analysis is that these books make "a good attempt to preserve aspects of 'the elder art'." He believes, however, that it is now time for the new, and publishers should be turning their attention to where children are (p. 20).

Hoare's comment that many illustrators of children's books seem to be aiming at other adults rather than children, receives much support in the literature, and there appears to be a growing concern that much of the modern picture book art is not for children. There is general agreement that much of contemporary picture book art appears to be produced for the delight of adults, and that it is in danger of becoming a 'victim' of the success of technology and sophisticated techniques. Lanes (1971), Haviland (1973), Townsend (1973), Groff (1974), Egoff (1975), Salway (1976), Vliet (1976), Lewis (1976), Lorraine (1977) all express concern in this regard. Key words from the observations of these critics are: art experimentation, graphic virtuosity, innovation, novelty, cleverness, sophistication, complexity, dazzling color, self-indulgence, superficiality, surface gloss, bewildering techniques, fads, gimmicks, and artistic inferiority. These words collectively tell a story of a possible movement away from imaginative art for children toward elaborate, sophisticated, self-indulgent extravaganza. Haviland refers to the sophistication of techniques, the virtuosity of graphic art, and the experimentation of new effects by commercial and other artists, and questions whether all of these changes have been
beneficial for children. She is also concerned that a preoccupation with art has pushed text into the background. Lanes, too, believes that the picture book is becoming "a vehicle for the illustrator's uninhibited self-expression" (p. 57), and, like Haviland, she is concerned that text is being increasingly subordinated to art, to such an extent, indeed, that a growing number of picture books have no words at all (p. 63). Townsend refers to the 'dangers' that have been the concomitants of the 'blossoming' of the picture book, and he refers specifically to the danger of overproduction. He believes that in a time when this genre has been in high demand it has been possible for publishers to get away with inferior productions. He refers also to the danger that technology may dictate form and that sophisticated techniques may be used just because they are there, rather than because they are essential to the creation of a work of art (p. 308). Reference has already been made to Groff's concern regarding wordless picture-book phenomena. His concern, more specifically, is that "picture books are becoming the tool of the graphic artist to such an extent that significant numbers of them no longer represent a potential literary experience for the young child" (p. 299). Salway (1976) complains that there is an overemphasis on color, and he refers to "lush, self-indulgent picture books," and illustrations that are "bland" and "lifeless," offering "little entertainment and not much grace" (p. 235).

Vliet (1976) considers one of the dangers in the picture book field to be that of overillustration, with emphasis on form rather than content. She believes the aim of such books is "not to gently
stimulate a child's imagination but rather to dazzle him and exhibit
the artist's own cleverness" (p. 58). Lewis (1976) is concerned that
the 'novelty' and 'cleverness' presently in vogue have resulted in the
presentation of the 'unusual' merely for its own sake; she deprecates,
as others do also, the relegation of text to "a few tired words"; she
criticizes the "masterful artists" who, having found an easy market,
keep on repeating their past successes. (In this group she includes
Lionni, Wildsmith and Chorao.) She laments also the "sly sophistica-
tion" which ignores a child's level of experience in an attempt to
"lure" adult buyers of children's books. Lewis is particularly criti-
cal of what she calls the books written-to-order--those books which
reflect the current causes and concerns of the adult society. Her
objection is not to such subject matter as death and divorce, but
rather that quality is sacrificed to 'timely topics' (p. 83). Like
Salway, Vliet believes there is an overemphasis on color, and she
aptly remarks that the artistry of such illustrators as Lear, Tenniel,
Brookes, and Lawson does not depend on color for its perfection (p. 83).

Lorraine (1977a) charges that the present emphasis in the picture
book appears to be on "polishing the technique" rather than in
exploring ways of communicating ideas, which he believes is the "heart
and soul" of the picture book. His assessment of the present state of
the art of the picture book is that the drawing is better, the render-
ing, the color, the reproduction are more professional than ever
before, the books are more refined, and more elegant, but he believes
they have lost some content. "There are those in the field," Lorraine
charges, "who play to the advantage of [the] bandwagon and exploit it
to their own ends" (p. 144). He believes the responsibility of the critic is to identify, label, and discourage such behavior.

Criteria for Excellence in Picture Books

The difficulty in any comprehensive evaluation of the picture book stems from the fact that the picture book is a work in two media, and both the text and the illustrations must be assessed. Criteria for the evaluation of text must be drawn from the literary arts; criteria for the evaluation of the illustrations must be drawn from the graphic arts. The two are not the same. Author and illustrator both tell a story, and both deal in images and symbols, but while the writer uses language, the illustrator deals in colors, shapes, lines, and textures. A principle which emerges clearly from the critical literature examined is that any valid criticism of the picture book must include the graphic as well as the literary elements. A second and related principle concerns the equality and the interdependence of those elements in any work of excellence. The excellence of the picture book resides in neither its graphic nor its literary components, but in the excellence of each, and in the balance and harmony of their fusion in a new work of art. Even the briefest of texts should be well written, and every text, whether short or long, should be assessed by those criteria applied to any literary text. Likewise, the illustrations, whatever their media or style, should be assessed by the criteria governing excellence in the graphic arts. Any consideration of the illustrations as less than art suggests, according to MacCann and Richard (1973), "that illustration lacks meaning in the very area it utilizes for
communication—the visual" (p. 23). Lively and interesting storylines; plots carefully and compactly structured; credible characterization that includes at least one central figure, animal or human, with whom the child can identify; a text that is couched in language that is finely honed, rhythmic and cadenced; may combine with effective illustrations in any appropriate media to produce a single creation—a work which, while characterized by the excellence of its components, reflects as a totality an excellence which is greater than the sum of its parts. The illustrations may include a wide range of style and media; no particular form is best. The use of photography in books for young children may, however, deserve more critical attention than it has been receiving. Trease (1964) cautions that, while color photography is acceptable for "matter-of-fact stories," it has no place in imaginary literature. "When the illustrator approaches the frontiers of Fairyland," he says, "all cameras should be confiscated" (p. 37). The critics generally agree that color is important, but not essential; that clarity is more important than dazzling colors which may serve to distract from the book's essence. Any sophistication in technique or design which serves to satisfy the ego of the artist rather than the needs of art is as distasteful in illustration as it is in text. The critics generally agree also that outstanding artists tend to use precise and lively detail, and that their work is characterized by humor, simplicity, honesty, and integrity. Appropriateness should be the determining factor in the selection of both the media and the style of illustration, and in the best picture books there is always a successful blending of text and illustration.
The best picture books have also what Townsend (1973) calls "substance"—that indefinable quality that causes the child to return to the book again and again to make new and interesting discoveries. Any picture book which is exhausted in one reading is a poor one, he contends (p. 320). This "substance" is akin to Lorraine's (1977a) "communication." He demands that the picture book communicate both ideas and feelings, that it speak in language understandable to the child, and that the illustrations both support and extend the text (p. 145).

The most comprehensive statement of criteria is that of MacCann and Richard (1973). They believe that in any satisfactory evaluation of the picture book the critic must recognize the function of the illustrator—to convey meaning by the way in which he arranges and synthesizes colors, lines, shapes, and textures; and to extend and enhance the text rather than merely describe it. Critical comments about picture books, they believe, should emanate from aesthetic judgment rather than personal taste, and aesthetic judgment involves consideration of those "elements" which contribute to or detract from the excellence of the work. It must also reflect some awareness of the artist's intention and the uniqueness of his personal interpretation and approach (p. 26). In their study of the criteria by which excellence in picture books may be assessed, MacCann and Richard affirm that illustrations belong to the realm of visual art and must be assessed by criteria governing the fine arts; that in illustrations, as in text, the work must be analyzed to determine the elements which carry the burden of the author's statement; that the artistic elements
of color, line, shape, texture, and composition must be studied to determine how and with what success they have been employed; that careful study of illustrations may pay rich dividends in interpretation and appreciation; and that, while mediocre artists tend to use the same stereotypes and repeat the same styles regardless of content or context, skilled artists demonstrate versatility and originality in their use of the various artistic elements both singly and in combination (pp. 79-94). Consequently, they emphasize that the "expressive quality" of the illustration, no less than that of text, must be analyzed and assessed; that the "pictorial statement" must work along with the text, and go beyond it; and that the primary determiner of the artist's success is his ability to purposefully manipulate artistic elements.

Cognizant of these considerations, the picture-book critic must apply informed aesthetic judgment, recognizing artistic excellence and describing it; and, at the same time, identifying artistic inferiority and labeling it as such. To do less is to ignore the dual nature of the picture book and to evaluate it on the basis of text alone or on the subjective basis of personal preference.

Synthesis and Emerging Principles

The successful picture book results from the happy blending of text and illustration, and is characterized by excellence, both literary and graphic. A fresh, original and imaginative text, possessed of the potential to stand on its own merit, is described, enhanced and extended by pictures which reflect the discriminating and disciplined employment of all the elements of graphic art. The product is a work of excellence in two media—an integrated 'totality' in which the two
contributing components are equal and separate, but interdependent and integrated; it is a child born of the union of literature and art, and bearing the features of both, but a new and independent creation. The picture book is, hence, an artistic as well as a literary experience, and an acknowledgment of the duality of its nature is central to any valid criticism of its form.

The literature examined for this study speaks strongly of the lack of any body of valid and comprehensive criticism of picture books. Such criticism must recognize that the criteria by which excellence in text and illustration is assessed are different, and must be drawn from both the literary and the graphic arts. And even beyond these considerations, some assessment of the harmony and balance of the integrated whole is imperative. The practice by critics of either ignoring or assessing only superficially the illustrations of the picture book has permitted to go unchallenged many works which, while posing as picture books for the young, take little account of their interests or their emotional and intellectual capacities, and do little more than exploit the potential of sophisticated, modern technology for the satisfaction of the artist. In the critical literature on the picture book, work-centered and child-centered criticism coalesce at some points to state unequivocally that picture books which are truly for children must reflect an awareness of the nature of childhood. Related to this are expressions of concern that wordless picture books, which contain no literary experience, appear increasingly to be considered as literature; that the marvels of modern graphic techniques threaten to subordinate the text of the picture book to its art; that photography may replace
imaginative illustration in children's books; that a preoccupation with color may so dazzle illustrators and critics that they become insensitive to genuine artistic attributes; and that artistic excellence, both literary and graphic, may be sacrificed to the pragmatic and transitory concerns of contemporary society.

The total statement of the picture book of excellence is both textual and pictorial. Critics must examine, in the illustrations no less than in the text, the honesty of the artistic intention, the freshness or uniqueness of approach, and the effectiveness of those "expressive qualities" which communicate the "substance" of the work—its feelings and ideas. Shahn (1957) observed that "the popular eye is not untrained; it is only wrongly trained—trained by inferior and insincere visual representations" (p. 124). In this statement there are significant implications for the criticism of children's picture books.

**Informational Books**

**Informational Books as Literature**

That there is so little by way of criticism of informational books is attributable, at least in part, to the fact that works of non-fiction are not universally considered as literature. Such books are variously labeled as 'textbooks', 'subject books', 'informational books', 'reference books', and only infrequently as literature or as a subject appropriate for inclusion in literary discussions. No reference is made to informational books in Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature (Oxford) in either the first edition (1969) or the second (1980); The Cool Web: The Pattern of Children's Reading
(Atheneum, 1978) is also silent on the subject. This notwithstanding, there is an increasing number of children's books which, while primarily concerned with the presentation of accurate and authentic information on a multiplicity of subjects, are so well conceived, so imaginatively and artistically executed, that they deserve to be classed as literature for children, and hence, to be subject to criticism which includes literary as well as 'informational' considerations. There are, as well, a small number of critics who insist that such is the case. They make statements about the nature of such works and the criteria by which they should be assessed. For these reasons a section on informational books is included in this chapter on work-centered criticism.

All nonfiction books are not literature any more than all fictional works are. It appears, however, that the very fact that a book is concerned with information rather than 'story' has served to set it outside the mainstream of literature, regardless of its merit as a work of art. Fisher (1972) observes that there is an "unexpressed feeling" that informational books are not "creative," and, as a result, they are assessed in terms of their content rather than their literary value (p. 9). She suggests, moreover, that writers of nonfiction are not generally thought of as writers, in the sense as are authors of novels. The names of Farjeon, Coatsworth, Pearce, and Ransome, for example, are readily recognized by anyone even remotely associated with children's literature, she points out. The same is not true of nonfiction writers such as Wymer, Adler, Taylor, or Unstead (p. 9). It may be true, as Heeks (1970) explains, that there is a "magic"
associated with the creation of even mediocre or inferior works of fiction that seems to be missing from what she describes as "the assembling and ordering of facts." She explains:

Sneakingly, a number of us believe that with a fortnight of peace and a couple of encyclopedias we could put together an outline for children on some subjects that interests us. To hold the detailed threads of plot, conjure up characters and find voices for them needs an effort of a different kind. (p. 721)

The distinction between fiction and nonfiction blurs, however, on close examination, as does any distinction between informational books and stories. The truth is that, in both fiction and nonfiction, fact and fancy may blend, for, as Fisher (1972) remarks, "a great many fact books make use of incidental fiction, and who could argue that fiction has no element of fact" (p. 10). Fisher's own distinction between fiction and nonfiction relates to the intent of the author, and that may be the only valid distinction. The writer of fiction, she says, is primarily concerned with story, and any facts which are used are used in order to develop and support the story. The purpose of the writer of an informational book, on the other hand, is to communicate information on some subject, and all of the techniques which he uses—and these may include storytelling—are used to effect that purpose (p. 11).

Like Fisher, Smith (1953) identifies the author's intention as the key to the difference between the two types of writing, but she concludes that it is unlikely that informational books will be literature. Their very function mitigates against it. While the story-writer is preoccupied with "the art of literature," the writer of
nonfiction must be preoccupied with the "special field of knowledge" he is seeking to present, she believes, and the literary art can thus be only a secondary consideration (p. 180). Smith identifies three types of informational books for children: those in which simple information is the only purpose and, hence, the only consideration; those in which information is presented and interpreted; and those in which information is presented and interpreted within a literary framework (p. 181).

Meltzer (1976) rejects Smith's "types" of writing in informational books, insisting that literary quality is inherent in the entire work; it is not applied as a coat of paint to a finished product (p. 19). He also takes strong exception to Smith's suggestion that the writer of nonfiction is only secondarily concerned with literary art. Meltzer contends that the best writers of nonfiction put their "hearts and minds" into their work; that their concern is not only for the subject matter to be communicated, but also for the manner in which it is to be communicated. Smith, he charges, is guilty, as many writers are, of considering only the best writers of fiction when she talks of children's literature, and only of the "run of the mill" writers when she discusses informational books. He adds:

there are as many stories as there are works of nonfiction which deserve to be promptly forgotten. In both cases no art is exercised, nor does the writer put his whole heart and mind into the book. Or if he does, it is a second-rate mind and an unfeeling heart. (p. 19)

Serious writers of nonfiction who care about their art, Meltzer believes, demonstrate "a presence of feeling which emerges in the rhythm of the sentence, in the choice of detail, in the colour of the
language." And in this sense, there is style, he insists—style which is not merely "a touch of rhetoric or a decorative daub" but rather "a quality of vision" (p. 21). The author's style is a revelation of his 'self', an indication of how he thinks and feels, Meltzer believes; and, consequently, it is interwoven with the form and content, and cannot be separated from them.

Meltzer's claim that nonfiction at its best is characterized by literary style, as well as by accuracy and authenticity of information, finds support in Hazard's (trans. by Mitchell, 1944) discussion of books of knowledge. It may be, as Heins (1976) observes, that much of the dull, colorless, "over-simplified" and "inconsequential" nonfiction has resulted from a well intentioned but misplaced attempt to ensure that learning is fun (p. 15). Hazard dismisses as undeserving of attention any such books—[books] that want to encroach upon recreation, upon leisure, pretending to be able to teach anything without drudgery (p. 43). Hazard outlines his own philosophy of informational books:

I like books of knowledge, when they are not just grammar or geometry poorly disguised; when they have tact and moderation; when, instead of pouring out so much material on a child's soul that it is crushed, they plant in it a seed which will develop from the inside. . . . I like them especially when they distill from all different kinds of knowledge the most difficult and the most necessary—that of the human heart. (p. 43)

The books which Hazard describes assuredly belong within the field of literature. Indeed, Sutherland (1974) and Chambers (in Meltzer, 1976) both argue against any attempts to draw dividing lines between informational books and literature. Sutherland maintains that
informational books are a part of children's literature; that never is there a question of pleasure versus purpose; nor is there any need to lower literary standards for books of nonfiction (p. 164). Chambers repudiates any attempts on the part of the proponents of children's literature to narrow the field to what he calls "the holy three" of stories, poems, and plays. He believes that "every book, no matter what its content and purpose, deserves and demands the respect and treatment--the skill and care of art" (p. 19).

Meek (1977) adds another dimension to the discussion of informational books as literature. Pointing out that in the total number of books published for children the category of imaginative fiction is comparatively small, and that in the assessment of nonfictional books critical acclaim has been reserved for accuracy and lucidity when judged by adult standards, Meek insists that authors, editors, and critics must have a 'vision' of the child for whom the book is intended. Any attempt to determine the merit of informational books must, she believes, take into account the suitability of the material, its organization, and the language used to present it (p. 8). Meek's philosophy in this regard unites the child-centered and the work-centered approaches to criticism. Her contention is that the criterion of literary merit is not transferable from works of fiction to works of nonfiction; that the information presented, the writer's style, the illustrations, and any additional features included must all be judged in relation to the use a child may make of them. Critics of nonfiction, she believes, must be knowledgeable about the subject matter; they must also be keenly aware of "the embedding of facts in
language," particularly as this relates to the conceptual development of the reader (p. 12).

Criteria for Excellence in Informational Books

The critics who write about informational books are in agreement that a fresh, colorful and original approach combined with interesting and imaginative writing and careful attention to form, style, and structure are just as important to a work of nonfiction as they are to fictional writing. The information communicated should be marked by accuracy, authenticity, clarity, currency, and objectivity, with fact and theory clearly distinguishable. The author's personal bias should be made explicit, and children should be made aware that no author is omniscient; that the search for knowledge is continuous; that today's 'truth' may be incomplete; that children themselves may be part of the search for understanding. First-class informational books engage children in just such a search. Devoid of didactic arrogance, they will reflect an author's enthusiasm for the subject and will foster ideals of scholarship and a scholarly approach. Never will they give the impression that the last word on the subject has been spoken; the author's stance, as Meek (1977) describes it, is "alongside the child" (p. 11).

The first-class informational book will make its subject matter accessible through organization and arrangement, through supporting illustrations with clear and adequate captions; through additional features such as tables of contents, bibliographies of related materials, and glossaries of terms; and through vocabulary, which neither
totally ignores nor is completely prescribed by the constraints of a youthful audience. Books for the very young will be restricted in scope to the exploration of a single concept, will move from the familiar to the unknown, and will reflect the fine but significant distinction between a simplified and a condescending treatment of the subject matter. The challenge to the author is to know the subject, to know children, and to be able to write in a manner which will communicate the experience of participation, the joy of discovery. Selsam (in Fenwick, 1967), who brings to her own scientific writings for children a sense of wonder and an appreciation of the excitement of science, explains that it is not enough to say "Here is an exciting thing. See the way a caterpillar spins a cocoon." The role of the writer, as she perceives it, is to write the book so that a child can feel that he is an actual participant in a discovery (p. 96).

Sutherland and Arbuthnot (1977) see the best nonfiction books as effective in stretching the mind, enlarging the vocabulary, fulfilling children's need for information, and developing a 'scientific approach' to the pursuit of information. They identify as flaws verbosity, condescension in tone or approach, unjustified generalizations, the use of pointless photographs or illustrations, and the use of anthropomorphism. Both Selsam (in Fenwick, 1967) and Elleman (1977) also caution against excessive use of anthropomorphism. Selsam maintains that "the study of animal behaviour is fascinating enough when it is based on the results of observation and experiment in the field, and is not beclouded with an approach that ascribes human characteristics to animals" (p. 98); and Elleman insists that whatever form an animal
book may take, the animal's distinctive behavior must prevail. As well, Selsam cautions against teleology, an approach which explains everything in nature according to purpose, leaving no room for further inquiry. In her own definition of the accuracy which she demands of informational books, Selsam includes not only correct factual detail presented with clarity and directness, and an avoidance of sweeping generalizations, but, as well, the avoidance of vagueness, careful discrimination between proven truth and hypothesis, and a willingness to say, "I don't know" (p. 98).

**Synthesis and Emerging Principles**

Although the status of informational books as literature is a subject of some debate, the critical opinion reviewed in this section supports the position that no sharp dividing lines may be drawn between fiction and nonfiction. While the most valid, single, distinguishing feature may be the author's intention, it is clear that a writer whose primary purpose is to tell a story may employ facts in the narrative, just as the writer who intends primarily to present information may use a narrative to support the same. It is likewise obvious that the flow and cadence of language, a fresh and original style, and a carefully structured and unified whole are all as important in nonfiction as in fiction. There is no suggestion that all informational books are literature, any more than all fictional books are. The fact is that included in the proliferation of nonfiction books for children in recent years are many works of literary excellence—works which present accurate and authentic information with an interesting, stimulating, and imaginative approach, using all
appropriate literary elements with originality and vision. Not that the standards of excellence are immediately transferable from fiction, since the effective communication of information involves some considerations which do not pertain to straightforward narrative. The accuracy and currency of information, the inclusion of all important details, the use of facts to support generalizations, the clear distinction between fact and opinion, and the inappropriate use of such literary devices as anthropomorphism or teleology are considerations which scarcely arise in fictional works but are of critical significance in works of nonfiction. Of critical importance also are the logical organization and arrangement of the information; the use of illustrations that are clearly and directly captioned; the use of additional features such as a table of contents, an index, a bibliography of sources consulted or a bibliography of related sources, and a glossary of terms; and a pervading manner of approach which employs the scientific method and encourages a scientific approach to the continuing search for truth, and engages the child as a participant in discovery. There is, in addition, a strong suggestion that a valid criticism of informational books, even more so than of books of fiction, must consider the child along with the work in relating the use of language and the embedding of facts in language to the cognitive level of the audience.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the criticism of children's literature from the perspective of the work itself. Unlike either an issues-centered or a child-centered approach to criticism, a work-centered
or literary criticism is rooted firmly in scholarship and tradition, having a history, as well as a form, a structure, and a body. Literature for children, as a part of the wider field of literature, lies within the province of this literary criticism, and must be assessed by those critical standards which pertain to literature generally. In literature for children, as in all literature, the common literary elements function, both individually and in combination with each other, to yield a work of literary excellence, regardless of genre. The different genres, though characterized by features which distinguish and categorize them, have in common such components as plot, character, theme, and style; and it is from the excellence of these and other literary elements, and from their successful fusion into a harmonious and unified whole, that the success of the genre derives. Narrative works are fiction first, and only secondarily are they representatives of a particular genre, characterized by that genre's distinctive features.

The body of critical writings with a work-centered focus is extensive. It includes such early landmark works as *The Unreluctant Years: A Critical Approach to Children's Literature* (Smith, 1953), and *Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature* (Egoff et al., 1969), as well as more recent collections of critical writings such as *Crosscurrents of Criticism: Horn Book Essays 1968-1977* (Heins, 1977) and *Writers, Critics and Children: Articles from Children's Literature in Education* (Fox, 1976); it includes also an increasing number of articles elucidating general principles of criticism as they relate to children's literature, and a large and growing body of
critical writings concerned with an analysis of both individual and collected works of a particular author or illustrator. The sheer bulk of the writing has made any comprehensive examination of the criticism of the works of particular authors and illustrators impractical if not impossible in the context of this survey. This chapter has attempted simply to bring into focus those general principles which appear to represent the prevailing critical viewpoint as it relates to the literary components of children's literature and to the distinguishing characteristics of the genres. Informational books have been included as a literary genre, since critics claim that status for them. The principles which emerge from the writings examined are synthesized at the end of each section; it is obviously impractical to repeat them here.

The body of work examined has been reported under the headings of Landmark Works, Literary Elements in Children's Literature, The Literature of the Oral Tradition, Historical Fiction, Biography, Science Fiction, Picture Books, Fantasy, Poetry, and Informational Books. While the focus of the chapter is the work itself, there is an expression of awareness that in children's literature a relationship must exist between the literature and a child's developmental nature. At times the work-centered and child-centered approaches merge. The general critical stance is positive and constructive. Nesbit's statement (in Fenwick, 1967) regarding the relationship between a valid criticism and literary works (cited at the end of Chapter II) serves well to illustrate the general nature of the work-centered criticism: "Such criticism encourages, stimulates, and rewards literature worthy of criticism's best efforts" (p. 126)
CHAPTER IV

CHILD-CENTERED CRITICISM

Introduction

It may be argued—and often is—that literature, a unique creation of an artist, is its own raison d'être, independent of both universe and audience; it may also be postulated that if literature is in any way a communication, the audience for whom it is intended must be at the center of its creation and its criticism. To adopt the first position is, of course, to reject any idea that a children's literature exists; there is only literature. The present study emanates from the philosophy espoused in the second position—that literature is a communication between author and reader. It holds, moreover, that there is a distinctive children's literature, characterized by these qualities of excellence inherent in all literature, but communicating with a child audience. Any such literature must relate to the distinctive characteristics of the child audience whom it addresses; hence, any criticism of that literature must take into account the nature of the child. A premise of this study is, therefore, that a child-centered literature demands a child-centered criticism. That so little of such criticism exists may be construed as an indication of the confused status of children's literature itself. An
examination of the critical writings of the decade under study reveals a small but growing body of child-centered criticism, reflecting an increasing awareness of the importance of the nature of the child and the nature of children's literature. It may also indicate a greater willingness on the part of literary purists to acknowledge the relationship that there is between the artist, the audience, and the social environment which the work depicts.

This chapter examines critical writings which are essentially child-centered. Included also are brief discussions of children's responses to literature, and children's developing sense of story, with some reference to the research related to these topics, as well as a small but impressive body of research dealing with the corresponding characteristics of child and tale. These subjects, while not directly related to criticism, have significant implications for it. The subject matter forming the body of this chapter is reported under the following headings: The Question of Audience, A Sense of Audience, The Child and Literary Merit, A Developmental Approach to Criticism, Children's Response to Literature, and Children's Sense of Story.

The Question of Audience

Abrams (1953) identifies four elements of a work of art which are a part of all critical theories aiming to be comprehensive: the work, the artistic product itself; the artist; the universe or the social environment in which the work develops; and the audience. He defines the audience as the listeners, spectators, or readers to whom
the work is addressed; and he suggests that audience, universe, artist, and work are all connected by a web of interrelationships (p. 6). Any reasonably adequate theory of criticism must, Abrams believes, take some account of all four elements; most theories "exhibit a discernible orientation toward one only" (p. 6). Although the criticism of children's literature has not, in the past, exhibited any such 'discernible orientation' toward audience, an emphasis in that direction is developing.

The two pillars upon which any theory of criticism must rest, according to Richards (1924) in his Principles of Literary Criticism, are an account of value, and an account of communication (p. 25). Agreeing that an experience must be formed before it can be communicated, Richards maintains that a particular work takes the form it does because it is a communication with a 'message' for a designated audience. This would suggest that, regardless of the sincerity and honesty with which authors may disclaim any sense of audience, they effectively establish their audience from the moment they begin to write. The choice of subject matter and theme, and the treatment of the same, as well as their choice of vocabulary, will all serve to characterize the work as a 'communication' with children, or with adults, or with a mixed audience. In contemporary society, when the boundary between children's literature and adult literature is often an elusive one, and when the publisher is often the final arbiter of whether a work is for adults or for children, an observation from a critic of more than a hundred years ago appears of significance:
The truth is that the task of producing the literature of childhood is not one which can be safely left to the manufacturer of books. . . . A rare faculty of moral insight, and much observation, are needed in order rightly to discern what is going on in the mind of a child, to realize all its little experiences, to see with its eyes, to understand its manifold bewilderments, joys, troubles, and fears; and so to sympathize with it as to know precisely what it is that books can do, and what it is they cannot do for childhood; and what is the kind of intellectual food for which the infantile appetite is adapted. (in Salway, 1976, p. 300)

It was the contention of this anonymous critic, writing in the Quarterly Review in 1860, that "children's books will be well written and wisely purchased in just the proportion in which the nature of childhood is studied and understood" (p. 301). While it is perplexing that such a dictum has been so little heeded in the course of a century, at least some contemporary critics share that philosophy.

In their introduction to The Cool Web: The Pattern of Children's Reading (Atheneum, 1978), Meek et al. refer to the 'minority cult' which children's literature can so easily become "if the authors and critics, mutually sustaining as they are, lose sight of the readers" (p. 4). Their collection of critical articles, the first with this particular emphasis, seeks to focus attention on the developing child as a potential reader. Claims for the artistic validity of writing for children are no longer necessary, they affirm; such claims have been generally conceded, and children's authors have been recognized as artists in their own right. The concern of the editors of this collection is for the child who, presumably, is the center of all such artistic endeavors. They explain thus the emphasis of the critical articles included:
Our chief concern is to focus on the reader and to ask about the nature of his experience in the development of his thinking and feeling. We have emphasized the point that, although it is possible to judge books for children by what is called 'adult standards' and regard them as part of literature, the young reader carries a different world in his head, no less complex than an adult's, but differently organized. . . . When discussing stories for children, to lose sight of the reader is too dangerous to contemplate. (p. 11)

In her recent biography The Open Book, author Monica Dickens observes that a book is a book only when it is read. "There must be a reader as well as a writer to complete the mysterious process of creation," she believes (cited in Elleman, 1979, p. 40). To accept this as truth is naturally to argue that in the creation of books for children there must be a child upon whom attention is focused. Elleman (1979), a reviewer of children's books, insists that all who are in any way involved with the creation of such books—writers, editors, publishers, critics—must ensure that children are central in their considerations. And these children, she believes, must be real children, not some 'idealistic creatures' who exist only in the minds of authors and critics (p. 40). Children deserve the best, Elleman believes, but she issues a sober reminder to all those who in their thrust for excellence exclude the child from the center of their deliberations when she says:

Children's minds must be treated with respect. They are not receptacles into which adults can unload their own opinions and beliefs without recognizing the potential and the limitations of those for whom they write. . . . No matter how well designed, superbly illustrated, or competently written the book may be, it may not be acceptable to the real child pursuing his/her work. (pp. 40-41)
A zeal for the nature and concerns of childhood must not, however, blind authors, publishers, and critics to the nature and concerns of literature. It is the coalescence of those equally important considerations and the maintenance of a balanced perspective regarding the same which will the more likely result in a literature of excellence which has the child as focus, for as Margery Fisher, noted critic, observes:

In all our queries we put the children first, because they are our first responsibility. But the book was there before the child and it will be there after him. (cited in Robbins, 1970, p. 5)

Synthesis and Emerging Principles

In the criticism of children's literature the question of audience has, during the past decade, received increasing attention. Many critics now adopt the viewpoint that any comprehensive, critical theory will reckon with the audience as well as artist, the social setting, and the work itself; that any valid criticism of children's books must focus attention on the developing child as a potential reader; that the very form a work will take is largely determined by the nature of its intended audience; that the best authors effectively establish their audience from the moment they begin to write; and that by choice of subject matter and theme and the treatment of the same, they characterize their work from the outset as being a communication either with a child or an adult. Since any effective communication postulates a receiver as well as a sender of messages, authors of books for children must take into account the nature of children's intellectual and emotional maturity at varying stages of their development. Never must
it be construed, however, that concern for the nature of a child audience is justification for second-rate writing. The best writers, cognizant of both the nature of the child and the nature of literature, will maintain a balanced perspective, treating both with due respect, neither compromising nor exploiting the one or the other.

A Sense of Audience

Writing for Oneself

Because comprehension and interpretation are critical to effective communication, and the 'message' must be intelligible to the intended audience, in any act of communication a sense of audience will influence, if not actually determine, the form the message takes. It has been suggested earlier that, for the author, the creative process is complete only when the work is read. For the authors of children's books, then, the creative process is complete when their books are read not merely by editors, publishers, and reviewers, but by children. Reference has already been made to Abrams' (1953) theory of criticism in which the audience is perceived as the listeners, spectators, or readers to whom a work is addressed, and a sense of audience is considered to be one of the four constituents of any comprehensive critical study. The insistence on the part of many authors of children's books that they do not write for children is thus a perplexing matter. Whether such authors self-consciously believe that children's literature is a second-rate form of writing and that their reputation is diminished by association with it; whether they are intimidated by colleagues and critics who sometimes treat this writing with amused
tolerance; or whether they actually believe that, as writers, they say what they have to say in the most effective manner available to them; the truth is that many authors are reluctant to admit that they deliberately write for children. In a previous chapter comments have been reported from a number of authors who maintain that they write for themselves, for the children they once were, or for anyone who will read (p. 34). The most frequently quoted of such authors is Pamela Travers, who rather vociferously denies that she, herself, writes for children, and she doubts that any other author does. Travers even questions that there is a valid field of children's literature, suggesting that so-called children's literature owes its existence to publishers and booksellers rather than to writers. Insisting that she writes not for children but for herself—and she has been a child—Travers (1975) says:

You do not chop off a section of your imaginative substance and make a book especially for children; for if you are honest you have, in fact, no idea where childhood ends and maturity begins. It is all endless and all one. (p. 21)

Assertions by authors that they write for themselves need not imply an indifference to an audience, Cameron (1969) believes. In her critical examination of this stance on the part of authors of children's books she attempts to get at 'the heart of the matter', and she draws a fine distinction between writing for oneself alone and writing to please oneself. The first approach she considers to be incompatible with writing for children; the second is not. Cameron's treatment of this subject comes in direct response to statements such as Travers'. Indeed, she makes reference to Travers' comments that there are no
such things as children's books, and that children do not like to be written down to; she also refers specifically to objections by Sterling North to what he calls the "patronizing phrase 'writing for children'." North maintains there is no such category as "children"—there are, he says, "only human beings of varying degrees of intelligence and sensibility" (cited by Cameron, p. 208). Challenging the logic of the premise from which these suppositions derive, Cameron demands to know why 'writing for' is equated with 'writing down' when one is thinking child. "What is the matter with the child?" she asks, and she adds:

Surely if a writer respects himself and his craft, if he respects the idea of "child"—that creature of swift perceptions, eager imaginings, the devastating stare, the continually searching intelligence—how can there possibly be any question of writing down? (p. 209)

Cameron rejects any idea that the act of writing from a child-centered perspective need result in what she describes as "superficiality, niceness, softness of fiber, dishonesty, sentimentality, or any other lack of quality" (p. 211). The best authors, she believes, will always write to please themselves; to do otherwise would be to deny artistic and personal responsibility. But the act of writing to please oneself, to fulfill oneself in the writing process, and to produce a work which embodies one's best creative effort, in no sense precludes a clearly defined sense of audience. Those who write best for children, Cameron believes, are those who have "retained into adulthood many of the mental qualities of children" (p. 226), and they engage their artistry in developing themes of interest to children. To L'Engle's (1964) observation that the genuine author has "to write whatever book it is
that wants to be written," Cameron would add, "in the way it demands to be written" (p. 216), and of the nature and quality of writing she concludes:

For there are certain tales that demand to be written out of the depths of childhood, from the point of view of childhood; and there are others that demand from inception the point of view of adulthood, worked from adult levels of knowledge and experience. This does not mean, however, that adult knowledge and experience will not be necessary in the creation of a children's book, or will not enter into the tale written out of childhood. (p. 216)

Chambers (1977) considers it a mistake to use as evidence in criticism anything that an author says about himself, either publicly or privately, and he cautions against a practice which appears to be gaining in popularity—"a fashion for calling the authors on stage to explicate themselves and their work in public and to defend it against the worst ravages of pedagogy and off-the-cuff criticism (p. 71). This practice, he believes, is beneficial neither for the authors nor for audiences. Literature, for Chambers, is a form of communication and as such it must have a reader to complete the work. (In this regard he reaffirms the statement by Dickens (see p.209)). He argues that any author, regardless of what he may say to the contrary, addresses someone as he writes. That someone is, for Chambers, the "implied reader" (p. 71).

The idea of the "implied reader" is developed at length by Langman, whose work provides the base for Chambers' insightful article "The Reader in the Book." Any valid criticism of a work, Langman maintains, must derive in part from an awareness of the implied reader, regardless of any avowed intent of the author. He explains:
I do not say we need to know what readers the author had in mind. An author may write for a single person or a large public, for himself or for nobody. But the work itself implies the kind of reader to whom it is addressed and this may not coincide with the author's point of view of his audience. What matters for the literary critic is to recognize the idea of the reader implied by the work. Not only correct understanding but also evaluation often depends principally upon correct recognition of the implied reader. (cited in Chambers, 1977, p. 65)

It is the failure on the part of critics to take into account the implied reader which has in the past "bedevilled criticism of children's books," Chambers believes, and he insists that if critics of children's books are ever to be taken seriously as critics they must "show how the concept of the implied reader relates to the children as readers and to the books they read" (p. 66). It will be apparent that this concept of the implied reader suggests an approach to criticism which is more concerned with the means by which communication between author and reader is established than with the actual subject matter. Such an approach, Chambers believes, would be efficacious in determining whether indeed a book is really for children at all, what kind of book it is, and what kind of a readership it demands (p. 66).

Author and critic John Rowe Townsend (1971a) contends that however much authors believe they are writing for themselves, they must, consciously or unconsciously, have a special sense of audience (p. 13). No author who expects to be read by children can, Townsend believes, ignore the limits of the child's experience. Gordon (in Blishen, 1975) believes that authors who say that they write only for themselves are deluding themselves. A writer himself, Gordon maintains that any writer assumes an audience, for "the instant pen touches paper there are other eyes looking over his shoulder" (p. 34). For Gordon, the
writing for a youthful audience demands neither more discipline nor
less than writing for anybody else; it is the technique that is used
that indicates the audience.

Just as a distinction may be made between writing for oneself and
writing to please oneself, so there is a distinction to be made between
the childish and the childlike in writing. Madeleine L'Engle makes
this distinction, as does Ivan Southall—both distinguished writers.
L'Engle (1964) describes the difference thus:

A childish book, like a childish person, is limited,
unspontaneous, closed in. . . . But the childlike book,
like the childlike person, breaks out of all boundaries.
And joy is the key: (p. 266)

Putting away childish things has nothing whatever to do with putting
away the child, Southall (1975) declares. He believes that in himself
the child is "relatively intact." He describes it as "an inner quality,
not worn externally, not always visible externally, a very personal
matter" (p. 52). Southall himself is unable to determine whether he
writes for children because of his personal characteristic, or whether
he has developed the characteristic because he writes for children. He
sees the two as interrelated; nor does he apologize for writing for
children. He explains:

Good writing for children is a discipline of specific
subtleties arising out of awareness most laboriously
sought, but joyously found, and the best of it stands
unblushingly as literature beside the best of anything.
The worst of it should be sunk with a millstone in the
sea. (pp. 52-53)

While agreeing that a writer must be conscious of his audience and
responsive to it, Trease (1964) cautions that deliberate catering to
children may well diminish the quality of the writing. He uses the
analogy of the school dietitian meticulously adding up calories and checking off vitamins, and concludes that the author who writes in such a fashion runs the risk of writing down to children (p. 24).

Higgins (1970) also deplores the 'too-conscious' overemphasis on audience selection, where authors, lacking confidence in their own insight and intuition, draw solely on psychological and pedagogical sources for information about their child audience. The concern of such authors is to ensure that they give children books which will both interest them and be good for them. In subject matter and presentation these books "are guaranteed to be in the best interests of the readers' mental, physical, and spiritual well-being," Higgins declares, but he describes them as "antiseptic as mouthwash, and just about as exciting as gargling" (p. 19). Higgins' point is not that the interests and needs of children are unimportant—these must be of concern to the author—but rather, that if such questions become the sole focus of the authors' attention and effort, in the absence of intuitive knowledge and imaginative creation, it is doubtful that the resulting work will be deserving of any audience. The authors whom Higgins considers to be "truly great authors for children" have a sense of audience not gained from texts or formula. Of them he says:

[they] have a childlike quality about themselves which sets them apart from their fellow writers. They enter the stream of childhood, not through the door of memory, but by immersing themselves presently in the current of child experiences. (p. 7)

In such company he includes Robert Louis Stevenson, Meindert De Jong, George A. MacDonald, and C.S. Lewis. His emphasis on the childlike quality of the children's author places Higgins himself in league
with Cameron (1969), L'Engle (1964), and Southall (1975), and all
those others who consciously and proudly write for children.

Mary Steele (1975), Jay Williams (1978), and Ellen Raskin (1979)
are among those authors who write to please themselves by giving of
their best to their work; who are concerned about literary quality;
but who, nevertheless, consciously and deliberately write for children.
Nor do they see any conflict in their intentions. Steele explains that
when she sits down to work on a book, she intends to write as good a
book as possible. "I have something I want to say and a particular
way to say it," she explains (p. 255). She invests her writing with
great care because she believes that if her book does not please her
it cannot possibly bring pleasure to others. Of her sense of audience
she says:

I try to bear in mind that the children I am writing about
are different from me, that they do not always know what I
know, feel what I feel, or think what I think. . . . And
yet my characters must somehow convey to the reader what I
am trying to say, my own view of the world, in the language,
thoughts and feelings of a ten-year-old. (p. 255)

Nor does Jay Williams (1978) apologize for being a children's
author. Convinced of the worth of his endeavors, Williams brings
commitment and indignation to his defence of all who consciously and
conscientiously write for children. He writes for children himself,
he declares, not because he expects to become rich or famous but
because he cares deeply about the audience for whom he writes—as do
most writers of children's books, he believes. Speaking generally
for children's authors, he says:

We are thought of as being bunny-rabbit writers, whereas
the truth is that most of us are grappling with far more
serious matters than most adult writers pay any attention to in their struggles to find new symptoms for fornication. (p. 46)

Raskin (1979) insists that the book is far more important than the author, and she is concerned, lest in an age of "inflated personalities," public interest in who the writer is may replace concern for what the writer writes. She explains her own proud awareness of her chosen audience:

To me writing for a reading child does not mean preaching or teaching. (I leave that to the more qualified.) It does not mean prescriptive formula. (If I had the need for formulas I would write for adults.) It does not mean catering to arbitrary reading levels or age groups. (p. 385)

Raskin says the one concession she does make is in the look of the book, of which she says:

I write and design my book to look accessible to the young reader; it will have less than a hundred pages, and there will be no endless seas of gray type. I plan for margins wide enough for hands to hold, typographic variations for the eyes to rest, decorative breaks for the mind to breathe. I want my children's book to look like a wonderful place to be. (p. 385)

Richards (1924) in Principles of Literary Criticism provides an interesting perspective on the related subjects of writing for oneself, writing to communicate, and the merit of the work itself. He believes that the authors' preoccupation with getting his work 'right' to the neglect of its communicative features is understandable. At the same time Richards rejects the idea that such conscious neglect of communication on the part of the author will diminish the importance of the same in his finished work. He explains:

The very process of getting the work 'right' has itself, so far as the artist is normal, immense communicative consequences . . . it will, when 'right', have much greater communicative power than it would have if wrong. (p. 27)
The business of criticism is not the "avowed or unavowed motives of the artist," Richard believes, but rather the "procedure" by which the artist makes the "communicative efficacy of his work correspond with his own satisfaction and sense of its rightness." Richard maintains that successful communication will result only when there is "close correspondence between the poet's impulses and possible impulses in his reader" (p. 28).

**Writing for Children**

In her book *Talent Is Not Enough* (Harper & Row, 1975) Hunter reveals her personal philosophy of writing for children, and she delineates the factors which characterize such writing. There are, she maintains, "enduring factors," among which she identifies two requirements complementary to each other; namely, "the specification needed to create literature, and an awareness of what will best feed the imagination of growing minds" (p. 2). The first of these requirements emanates from the philosophy that literature is literature irrespective of the audience; implicit in the second is the fact that children are different from adults and, hence, books which are for children must take into account the nature of the child. Drawing on Edward Blishen, noted author and critic, Hunter defines a good book for children as one which has "the child's eye at the centre" (p. 2). Such a book, she explains, is one in which "the experience of the children's writer melds harmoniously with the perception of the child reader" (p. 2). This, for Hunter, requires that authors of children's books have the courage and the honesty to employ all their
talent in the service of children, in developing a technique and a total approach which will allow them to acknowledge with sensitivity and artistry the nature and viewpoint of childhood. Hunter's thesis is that an author will never achieve this by talent alone—that behind every successful book there must be a person who has drawn from the well-springs of personal experience. "No book can say anything worth saying," Hunter believes, "unless life has first said it to the person who conceived that book" (p. 30). But when such an author consciously and willingly adopts the point of view of childhood, the book which results will be a children's book—and a good one—regardless of the prevailing standards of criticism by which the book may be assessed.

This philosophy of Hunter, so ably demonstrated in her own writing for children, differs very little from that of Higgins (1970) or from Southall's (1975) position—a position which he also admirably adheres to in his own writing. Central to all of his books are the children whose worlds he seeks to share, and of his efforts he says:

'Within the limit of my capacity I endeavour to make each journey with a boy and a girl beside me. I see them there. I feel them there. If occasionally my stride is too long and they have to stretch, it will not be the last time they will be required to run to keep up with a man who is intent upon taking them somewhere.' (p. 36)

What to Blishen and Hunter is "the child's eye at the centre," to Higgins is "the essence of childhood," and to Southall is "a boy and a girl beside me," is to Chambers (1977) "the reader in the book." The idea of the 'implied reader' is central to Chambers' very significant article on child-centered criticism, to which reference has been made earlier in this section. He maintains that what is necessary
is a critical method which will take account of the child as reader—a method that will tell us about the reader in the book. He quotes Iser (1974) who describes such a critical method as "concerned primarily with the form of a work in as far as one defines form basically as a means of communication or a negotiation of insight" (p. 57).

Chambers discusses some of the principal techniques by which an author can maintain 'the child's eye at the centre', or, as Chambers himself describes it, how the author can establish his tone—his relationship with his desired reader—and, by which he can draw the reader into the text in such a way that the reader accepts the role offered to him and enters into the demands of the book. (p. 67)

The establishment of this 'tone' or relationship with the implied reader is, Chambers believes, largely a matter of style, and a sharply focused point of view. It may involve 'taking sides' or forming an alliance with children, but this is not imperative to the book's success. The device of 'taking sides' may indeed become reprehensible if it is used in Enid Blyton fashion to form "a collusion in a game of us kids against the adults" (p. 73). With reference to this practice of Blyton, Chambers charges:

Ultimately Blyton so allies herself with her desired readers that she fails them, because she never takes them further than they are. She is a female Peter Pan, the kind of suffocating adult who prefers children never to grow up, because she can enjoy their pretty foibles and dominate them by her adult superiority. (p. 73)

Such behavior on the part of an author Chambers considers a betrayal of children. It is possible, however, he believes, for an author to establish an alliance and a point of view that 'engage' the child, and, as a consequence, the child may be guided "toward the meanings
In his discussion of other techniques by which an author may achieve the desired tone, Chambers makes reference to the author's use of information—what he discloses to the reader and what he conceals; the way in which intentions are signaled; the evocation of suspense; the introduction of the unexpected; the manner in which the author chooses to play about with the reader's expected response to the narrative (p. 87). It is Chambers' contention that these techniques will be recognizably different in child-centered books than in books for adults.

It is apparent that writers and critics of children's books are becoming increasingly aware of something which Walter de la Mare stated emphatically half a century ago and which has more recently been confirmed both by writers of the reputation of Joseph Krumgold and Nina Bawden; and by critics, publishers and editors such as Richardson, Collinson, and Karl. They all speak in individual styles and couch their message in different images but there is no mistaking their message—the best writing for children must be child-centered. De la Mare (1937) says it this way:

> every good story, worthy of as good children, is concerned with a country, complete with climate, scenes, denizens, fauna and flora all its own, of which we ourselves were once native. . . . It keeps well within the radiant ring of its little candle the comprehension of an intelligent child. And this need by no means imply a narrow range. (pp. xii-xiii)

Joseph Krumgold (1967), in discussing his own prize-winning And Now Miguel, explains his switch of focus when faced with a child-audience. Having begun to convert the book from the film purely as a
money-making venture, he became so totally involved in it that the aesthetic demands of the work became everything. He explains:

The unforeseen discipline of writing the story simply and sharply from the child's point of view imposed an altered structure. It developed a different and a deeper theme. I found I was engaged with confrontation, that curious event through which a child grows up and is accepted as an adult. (p. 2)

Nina Bawden (1974), in a very personal essay, explains convincingly that children don't always feel as adults expect them to feel, nor do they always see what adults would have them see. Adults and children, living in the same world, view it through different eyes, Bawden believes. She relates a personal anecdote of her father's homecoming after a long absence. She and her mother stood on the pier awaiting his arrival. Her mother wanted and expected her to behave in a particular manner but she did not share her mother's perceptions of the impending event. Unable to respond to the emotion-packed moment of reunion, and with apparent indifference, she allowed herself to become preoccupied with the bloated body of a dead pig floating on the surface of the water. She describes the situation and relates it to writing for children:

We were bellowing to each other across an unbridgeable gulf. . . . We were both there together, caught up in the same highly charged, emotional situation, but we saw it quite differently. And the important difference between writing for adults and writing for children is not style or subject matter, though these come into it, but the point of view you're looking from. (p. 3)

Richardson (1978), in her perceptive article "Rediscovering the Centre in Children's Literature," makes the point effectively thus:

Contemporary writers have portrayed the externals of subculture groups in our society more vividly and accurately
than ever before; however, externals make up only half of the milieu in which the child lives. If a book fails to make contact with the child's inner reality also, it can hold no meaning for that child. (p. 139)

Editors and publishers may be considered the initial critics as well as the final arbiters since they decide what will be published as children's books. Collinson (1973), in "The Children's Author and His Readers," leaves no doubt about the responsibility of both authors and publishers. He says:

To treat children as adults is to reveal that one has no understanding of or concern for how children develop, emotionally, conceptually, or linguistically . . . if the writer is not concerned about what children read books for and does not subordinate his talents to the needs of his readers, he may produce a book, which could prove a damaging experience, or, more probably, one which the child will find unreadable. (p. 43)

Collinson believes that the publisher must have a thorough understanding of children, their cognitive, emotional, and linguistic development, in order to select judiciously the manuscripts which deserve to be published as children's books.

Karl (1970a), writer and editor, believes that there must be children's books because children are children, with less experience in living than adults and with physical, mental, and emotional needs that are different (p. 4). She asserts that "it is because of what children are, not what adults think they are, that real children's books exist" (p. 5). Karl devotes her book From Childhood to Childhood (John Day, 1970) to an exploration of the nature of childhood and the nature of books.

The editorial approach of Karl is reflected also in comments by other editors of leading publishers for children. A survey of such
editors in the middle of the decade under study, reported by Jordan (1975) in Publishers' Weekly, reveals that at least the editors whose opinions were polled are in agreement in predicting for the future books that are more visibly child-sensitive and child-oriented, and reflecting "a greater sensitivity in general to the needs of the young" (p. 64).

**Synthesis and Emerging Principles**

What, then, may be concluded about the importance of a sense of audience in writing for children? The body of writing examined supports the critical position that, regardless of the author's avowed intentions, there will always be, in every piece of writing, an implied audience; and that the most successful books for children are those which acknowledge the unique characteristics of childhood, including their limited experiential background. While the critics express some perplexity that so many authors of children's books insist that they write not for children but for themselves, there is general agreement that a distinction may be drawn between writing to please oneself and writing for oneself, just as there is a clear distinction between the childlike and the childish in writing. In both cases, the first approach is compatible with good writing for children; the second is not. Those who would write for children, while writing to please themselves, must also write to please their audience; and writing for a child audience must not be equated with writing down; nor is such writing dishonest, soft, superficial, or sentimental. There is in the literature a prevailing, critical awareness that a distinguishing
characteristic of children's literature is its child-centeredness; that those who write for children must have 'the child's eye' at the center; and that a work which is consciously addressed to a child will not, for that reason alone, be either lesser or greater than one which is directed toward an adult—both works should reflect the integrity and sense of responsibility of the authors. The work which is addressed to a child will, however, be different. A growing body of evidence indicates that, in the creation and criticism of children's books there is a movement away from the literary purist stance toward an increased emphasis on the "implied reader" or the child at the center. Comments by authors, editors, and publishers bear witness to this fact. In this climate of opinion, the critic must effectively relate the nature of the literature to the nature of the reader. Collinson (1973) focuses attention on this changing role:

The task of the critic of children's books is not to give them the status of being able to stand up to the same critical standards we apply to adult novels, but to get down to the business of criticizing children's books for what they are, and to give more recognition to those writers who know what writing for children is about. (p. 47)

Children and Literary Merit

Townsend (1971b) in his "Standards of Criticism" adopts primarily a book-centered rather than a child-centered approach to criticism, and he sees the alternative to standards based on literary merit as "a jumble of criteria, a haphazard mixture of personal responses" (p. 382). He maintains that reform is necessary because children's literature which has been "barely discussible at a respectable intellectual level" is not "taken seriously as literature" (p. 383). This
contention of Townsend, differing sharply from that of Fadiman (1976)
forms, of course, the focus of this present study with its thesis that
there exists a large and growing body of valid criticism of children's
literature, and only part of it is book-centered. Leeson (1975)
refers to Townsend's stated position as "the most comprehensive—and
best—statement of what might be called the 'purist' position in chil-
dren's book criticism" (p. 18), and he challenges it. Townsend, he
says, argues for "an independent [critical] standard of quality other
than what children like or is good for them, or what brings them face-
to-face with contemporary issues" (p. 18). Leeson's challenge to this
position is that literary standards alone will not suffice, that "the
virtue in children's books is that they speak directly to children,
affording them free passage in and out of their children's world,
enriching them, preparing them for the future" (p. 23). He believes
that the winds of change are blowing, and children's literature is in
a transitional period, moving from a matter of 'minority interest' to
something like a 'mass movement'. This mass movement is characterized,
Leeson believes, by the demand for suitability and relevance, regard-
less of what the literary purist may think of this direction, and some
particular interest groups, if denied a hearing through the regular
publishing channels, will publish their own versions of children's
books, following their own criteria. The Feminist Press is, of course,
one example of this. This developing trend, along with the continuing
search for excellence, has resulted in a multi-faceted approach to
children's literature, and no comprehensive or unified critical theory
exists. This rather chaotic state of affairs places grave
responsibility on the critic and emphasizes the need for a broader viewpoint than can be provided by the literary purist alone.

The very existence or survival of children's literature, as a distinctive literature, depends on the solution to the present dilemma of the relative importance of literature and child. An overemphasis on literature, to the exclusion of any consideration of the characteristics of the child, may result in literature of excellence—but for whom? The converse is equally true. An overemphasis on children to the exclusion of consideration of the literary merits of the book may result in nonliterary, childish reader-type writings, which serve neither child nor literature. It would appear that the path to success for author—and child—must lie in finding that delicate balance between the two positions, and it behooves the critic to sound a warning when authors adopt extreme positions in either direction. There is little danger, perhaps, that the second position will ever pose a serious threat—too many concerned publishers, authors, librarians and teachers are on the alert. A danger more insidious is what Moss (1974) calls "the adult-eration" of children's books, and in this decade some critics are beginning to call attention to this development. The 'adult-eration' of children's books will result when the child at the center is out-of-focus and when, as Leeson (1975) defines it, "the pursuit of individualized perfection by author and critic has taken them further and further away from the reader" (p. 25). In this regard the writer of the feature "Notebook" in Signal (1973) makes reference to "the fashionable expectations held out to writers for the young" as a contributing factor to this 'adult-eration'. Responding
to a comment by Russell Hoban that Leon Garfield is an example of an author's talent leading him out of children's literature, the writer suggests that it is not his talent but rather society's demands on him that is leading Garfield away from children's writing. The writer's comment in this context of a child-centered criticism is thought provoking:

Every time we allow people to talk about "writing for myself alone" when instead they ought to be talking of writing for children; every time we sit down, as some do at conferences, and hold under-graduate-like discussions for hours on end about subterranean meanings hidden beneath the artfully child-book surface of certain novels, uttering not a word about children and their responses; and every time we press children's writers to pretend they are anything other than what they know they are and wish deeply to be—people who speak to the young—then we help to create the results Mr. Hoban points out. (p. 110)

It is something of this critic's concern that is echoed by writer Nina Bawden (in Blishen, 1975) when she refers to the "enormous army of librarians, teachers, reviewers, and booksellers" between the writer and the audience, so that writing for children is not merely a simple relationship between the writer and the reader. And there is poignancy in Bawden's comment that

recently I have begun to feel a growing bewilderment bordering on a kind of despair. Speaking to people who care, often deeply, for children, I have begun to feel that the child I write for is mysteriously absent. (p. 64)

Moss (1974) suggests the need for a change in emphasis on the part of all who are involved in the book-production industry. She refers to a group of specialists--publishers, editors, reviewers--talking to each other, and the child is lost in their midst. Writing midway in the decade under study, Moss describes the present situation
with regards to children's literature as one in which we are "standing on the edge of a precipice, the precipice of over-sophistication in an area where appropriateness is, for the majority of children, the most important aspect of the product we have to sell" (p. 65). She refers to "the veil of quite unnecessary sophistication which needs to be discarded" and "the elitist attitude which prevails" (p. 65). Moss particularly deplores "trendy picture books" in which the emphasis is on the art work and not on the child; and the reviews of such books which made no mention of the books' potential audience. She emphasizes that children do respond to good writing, and she defends the current practice of exploring sensitively and realistically topics which are a part of young teenagers' lives. Her main thesis is that children's literature, which has made so much progress toward establishing its own identity and its own importance in the lives of children, has now reached a point where some stocktaking is necessary. If such evaluation is not undertaken, Moss believes, charges of 'exclusiveness' or 'elitism' may be justified.

Spencer (in Hunter-Grundin & Grundin, 1978), too, asks some searching questions about apparent trends in children's books. Commenting upon the distinction made in a Schools Council Report between "books written for children which are of quality" and those of "non-quality," Spencer claims that "there is a developmental dimension in reading which is all too little explored" (p. 176). She declares that the avowed position of such critics of children's literature as Margery Fisher, Brian Alderson, Naomi Lewis, Edward Blishen, and John Rowe Townsend, that children's literature must be judged by adult
standards, is no longer valid because it is based on a view of childhood that no longer applies. Their position, Spencer maintains, fails to take into account that many of today's children are not addicted to reading, nor indeed do all of them possess the reading skills to deal with the increasing sophistication in form and style which marks many children's books. Spencer links children's literature with the child's developing ability to read, and her questions—provocative and challenging—must be reckoned with by all who are concerned about books and children. She asks:

If the 'best' books for children are defined exclusively so that only a few children can read them, what do the others read? Can critics of children's books ignore the developmental aspects of reading? What, for example, is a simple text? Is it the same as a simple message? What makes language readable? How does a reader 'take on' a rhetoric and what view of the world does a reader derive from a particular author? Is the 'adult standard' argument infallibly a good one? (p. 178)

Challenged by Spencer's queries, when one considers such writings as Sutcliff's The Lantern Bearers (Walck, 1959), Mayne's Earthfasts (Dutton, 1967), Garner's The Owl Service (Walck, 1968), Adams' Watership Down (Macmillan, 1974), Garner's The Stone Book (Collins, 1976) and Wangerin's Book of the Dun Cow (Harper, 1979), one may conclude indeed that such books rank among the best of literary works. It is certainly unlikely, however, that any of them will have wide appeal to more than a select audience. Spencer's point that books that win awards are usually inaccessible for many children, is also pertinent. The problem is not that children lack the imagination to enter the authors' created worlds, but rather that they lack the ability to handle literary language and literary forms and what Spencer calls
"embedded references, and subtleties of intonation or register" (p. 178).

This same concern regarding the inaccessibility of many award-winning books led The Children's Rights Workshop to set up an alternative book award—an award which they claim takes into account social as well as literary factors. Mann (1975) in his article "The Other Award" presents something of the dichotomy of opinion which is the focus of this section. The division, as he describes it, is between

[those] who claim that all that is needed are more "good books" and who fight a rear-guard battle on behalf of "literary merit" and "aesthetic quality." They bask in the calm waters of a children's book world fed by a book-loving "magic circle" of less than 10% of potential readers,

and [those] who are concerned with the lack of "suitable" literature for the majority of children. They demand on behalf of the disadvantaged and ignored a more committed attempt to write books that reflect their needs and experiences. (p. 142)

Mann deplores the disparaging labels of "bibliotherapist" and "social engineer" often assigned by the "literati" to those who adopt any but the literary-purist stance. In setting up its criteria for an alternative award the Workshop insists on literary standards but gives prominence to its purpose:

To encourage the development of a critical approach to children's literature that can encompass all the elements of a book, including its success among children itself . . . that takes social as well as literary factors into account. (p. 143)

In defence of the Workshop's position Mann suggests that the whole concept of 'literary merit' needs to be reexamined, and it is no longer possible, he believes, to regard the assertion of the
"permanence of traditional (or eternal or universal) values" in books as a serious contribution to that reexamination. He says:

Private notions of beauty and style are all very well but hardly enough when we are writing, producing, and distributing literature for the children of this society. (p. 144)

The majority of the children of this society—the ninety percent whose needs are ignored by awards committees—come to books, if at all, through basal readers and comics. The transition to books of high literary caliber is neither smooth nor sure. Spencer (in Hunter-Grundin & Grundin, 1978) believes that critics have the responsibility to identify good books that will meet the developmental needs of children and facilitate the transition. A growing body of research on the child's sense of story, to which reference is made elsewhere in this chapter (p. 271), appears to indicate that the children develop a sense of story and acquire story conventions and story grammar through constant exposure to stories—but the stories must be ones to which the child can respond.

Spencer's point about the relationship of text to message is also significant. Profound messages may be carried in simple texts; difficult and complicated texts may deal in superficial ideas. If, as Rosenblatt (1976) suggests, the reader 'burns through' the text to find his own message, and the message he takes from the text is in large measure determined by what he brings to it, then the child's developmental and experiential background may be more important to the 'reading' than are the black marks on the page. Spencer's comment that there is still a great deal to discover about which books are really 'easy' to read (p. 182) warrants attention. A web of
relationships appears to exist between children's physical, emotional, cognitive, and linguistic development on the one hand, and their reading interests and reading ability on the other. It appears also that the books we give to children must in some way bear relationship to that 'web'. Spencer's own experience with children with reading difficulty has convinced her that literary text is no more difficult to predict than is the nonliterary (p. 183). It is the difficulty of the text, the appropriateness of the message that it carries, and the relationship of the one to the other that should be the object of our critical concern, she believes. It is her opinion that the way to bridging the gap between books for children who read well and books for children who are struggling to read at all may lie in the 'fit' between text and message (p. 184).

Theories of literature and theories of literacy are, Spencer believes, inextricably interwoven, and both are concerned with the child. The critic of children's literature must, therefore, operate from this base. She explains her thesis thus:

Literature asks the reader to read in a wide range of modes and to recognize them. At present the critics of children's books are too restricted in their recognition of the modes by which an author seeks to make a bond with the young reader whose vision of the world he thinks is important. . . . Literature depends on being read (or heard) as such; therefore a theory of children's literature is linked to a theory of reading, and because it is children's literature, to a theory of learning to read. In the same way, literature has to be there for things to happen. Children derive literary competence from their literature because the authors teach them the kind of reading their work requires. The importance of story is the belief that they share. (p. 185)

Children's literature has in the past decade moved, to use Egoff's (1979) analogy, 'beyond the garden wall'. She conceives of
the garden wall as symbolizing the classic literature, and the 'beyond-ness' she associates with the passion for the new and the shocking. In reflecting on recent trends in children's literature she observes that the 'wall' has come crashing down, and those who are concerned with children and books are left wondering what next? And for whom? Observing that literature for children is moving perilously close to the adult world (p. 270), Egoff fears that its present status may have been reached by the sacrifice of those characteristics that give it its identity—"warmth, wonder, gaiety, sentiment, simplicity—in a word, the childlike" (p. 271). This concern of Egoff for a child-centered literature is one which is not expressed in the editorial policy of Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature (Oxford, 1969), nor is it reflected in her own The Republic of Childhood: A Critical Guide to Canadian Children's Literature in English (Oxford, 1975). Her avowed position, heretofore, may be interpreted as a strictly literary one, and her critical writings demonstrate an almost compulsive preoccupation with literary excellence. Her apparent stance in "Beyond the Garden Wall," the May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture for 1979, with an expressed concern for the child and the 'childlike', is significant in that it comes at the end of the decade under study and appears to indicate a conscious or unconscious change of emphasis on the part of at least one eminent critic. In this regard, it is interesting also to note that the first Pacific Rim Conference on Children's Literature (1976), of which Egoff was Co-ordinator, had as its main theme The Child and the Book and in the introduction to the report of that Conference Egoff (1979b) says:
"If it is its special audience that gives children's literature its distinctive character, then it is no surprise that childhood itself is a continuing motif throughout these papers" (p. vii). In the light of this, it is ironical and certainly difficult to explain that the revised edition of *Only Connect* (Oxford, 1980) still includes no article of criticism which may be described as child-centered.

As children's literature becomes increasingly the subject of serious study and research there is the danger, as the editors of *The Cool Web* point out, that "the child curled up in an armchair with his Jennings book will be forgotten" (p. 331). Yet children's literature is for this child—and for other addicted readers—but also for all of those other potential readers whose experiential background has not led them to pleasurable encounter with books. It must be construed as a painful paradox that at a time when so much of children's literature has reached a level of excellence which, in Egoff's judgment at least, is better than anything that has gone before, the 'marketplace' resounds with statements that charge that many of today's children do not and cannot read. One is forced to ponder whether, in the ceaseless quest for literary excellence, many writers of children's books have outstripped the child's capacity to comprehend or respond. It may well be, as Moss (1974) suggests, that the time has come to return to the center and take our bearings anew. She identifies what she believes to be one desirable direction:

> to concentrate on using our experience to provide more approachable-looking books and better written stories for the broader mass of young readers. (p. 69)
The challenge of maintaining literary standards while at the same time "adapting them to wider horizons," which Moss identifies, is Spencer's problem of finding the 'fit' between demands of text and appropriateness of theme. Both agree that this is important, and both believe that the critics of children's books must assist in the task. This will naturally mean that critics in their assessment of a work must broaden their terms of reference to include more than literary considerations. It must never mean, however, that in zealous efforts to reach the masses, literary considerations are disregarded. This is the very situation Wojciechowska (1977) cautions against when she says:

all the good books ever written were written not for the masses of kids but for the pleasure they must give a few. In our homogenized, pasteurized, egalitarian society, must we dump books as if they were so many apples? If we must, let the few good ones that still seem to survive the assaults on individuality be placed apart so that they may be found by those special kids—the ones who believe a book to be a power tool of the mind. (p. 4)

There are 'special children' who thrive on a challenging reading experience, and there must be books which stimulate and stretch both their intellect and their imagination. Spencer does not question that. Her point is that there should also be books of excellence to interest and stimulate the many 'reluctant' readers, who may be still at an initial stage of book exploration. In The Reluctant Reader (Pergamon, 1969), Chambers attributes the fact that such a small percentage of the literate population ever read for pleasure to the fact that they have never in their lives become 'tuned in' to reading, and this, he believes, is largely because authors and publishers do not cater to children's real needs. Literary taste and discrimination result from
wide, "voracious," indiscriminate reading, Chambers (1973) believes, and he, like Dickinson (in Fox et al., 1976) would not deny children the opportunity to sample 'rubbish'. It is in the sampling of 'rubbish', Dickinson believes, that children learn "the art of comparison and subconsciously acquire critical standards" (p. 75). Spencer, too, believes that literary taste is developmental but she assigns to critics of children's books the responsibility of identifying the 'best' books for the various stages of such development.

Leeson (1975) also foresees a change in the approach to criticism and he envisages the critics of the future "with a new range of criteria borrowed from people with whom they are not on speaking terms" (p. 25). He emphasizes, however, that the critical decision is not really between the extremes of "a narrow and didactic 'end justifies the means' stance," and an entrenched purist position, which in the service of literary excellence, discards relevance, appropriateness, and recognition of the child reader (p. 25). To insist on the latter elitist approach, Leeson believes, will diminish the role of the critics, eventually forcing them "to take a voluntary retirement from all useful employment" (p. 25). It may well be, as Bios (1978) asserts, that children's literature and child psychology are 'sibling disciplines', and that the many mutual interests shared by those disciplines need to be explored and developed.

The unenviable and dangerous position which appears to have been reached in the field of children's literature at the end of the decade under study, a position described earlier of Moss (1974) as one of "standing on the edge of a precipice" (p. 65), is cogently brought into
focus by a disturbing statement by Leeson (1974)—disturbing because, if it is true, it denies the hopes, the intent, and the very philosophy of all of those genuinely concerned with bringing children and books together. Leeson is referring to a school of thought which he believes is prevalent in the children's book world. He says:

Children's literature is too good to be wasted on children. There are talented people straining nerve and sinew to win recognition for children's books as literature. I'm concerned that the end product of this approach (on its own) in writing, editing, reviewing, will end up by making books which will be admired by everyone except the children. The books will be praised, written about, bought, presented, and finally left on the shelves while the children go out to play with Enid. (p. 9)

Synthesis and Emerging Principles

In the second half of the decade under study, there is evidence of a growing concern that the persistent struggle for literary excellence on the part of all those associated with the children's book world is resulting in books which, while ostensibly for children, are inaccessible to all but a select group of readers. This school of thought emanates from a philosophy that children's books are meant to be read by children, links literature to literacy, and holds that a valid criticism of children's books must broaden its terms of reference. Criticism which is comprehensive, it is believed, must be concerned with books of quality for the many as well as the few, and the responsibility of the critic includes finding the 'fit' between reader and text. Both writers and critics of children's literature may benefit greatly from the work of child psychologists who also see the child at the center.
A Developmental Approach to Criticism

The increasing tendency on the part of critics of children's books to focus attention on the child as well as on the literature, or to find the 'fit' between reader and text, has led to what may be described as a developmental approach to criticism. Literature which is child-centered, and, hence, criticism of the same, cannot fail to take into account what is known of child growth and development. Children's interests cannot be divorced from their physical, emotional, and intellectual development, and a book which a child finds boring at one stage of his development may later become a favorite. The problem may lie, initially, not with the book but with the timing. A book, for example, which requires a young egocentric child still in Piaget's preoperational stage of development to stand aside from the action of the story and view incidents objectively, or to take another character's point of view, may fail completely. Its failure may relate not to any inherent flaw in the book but because the reader is unable to adopt the stance that is necessary to an appreciation of the work. Later, as the same child has become less egocentric and has developed facility in assimilating and accommodating, the same book may be a source of delight. Books which are too complex in idea and image for children in the preoperational stage may provide endless pleasure when the same children have advanced to the concrete-operational level of maturity. This will be particularly evident in books where a story exists within a story, for example, or where there are subplots, flashbacks, time shifts, or other complexities in idea or form. Images, symbols, and figurative language which may be totally beyond the intellectual
capacity of young children, may become the very source of their appreciation of a work as they move into concrete-operational or formal-operational levels of thought. Yashima's *Seashore Story* (Viking, 1967), for example, Pearce's *Tom's Midnight Garden* (Lippincott, 1959), L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* (Strauss, 1962), Garner's *The Owl Service* (Walck, 1968), or *The Red Shift* (Macmillan, 1973), Cunningham's *Dorp Dead* (Pantheon, 1965), Steele's *Journey Outside* (Viking, 1969), and Mollie Hunter's *The Third Eye* (Harper & Row, 1979) all demand from the reader flexibility of thought, the ability to adopt different points of view, and to theorize and to develop hypotheses which may form the bases for logical conclusions. Such characteristics are not natural to young children. In this sense it may be observed that a child-centered approach to the criticism of children's books is concerned with bringing the right book to the right child—at the right time.

Although a conscious developmental approach to the criticism of children's literature may be considered a relatively recent phenomenon, the roots of such an approach are fixed firmly in the past. In every decade there have been individuals who have dared to say that literature for children must be assessed in full knowledge of the nature of childhood. As early as 1860 an anonymous critic, writing in *The Quarterly Review* a lengthy essay entitled simply "Children's Literature," reveals an amazing sensitivity in this regard. Considering a "reverent and thoughtful study of childhood as indispensable to the creation of a sound juvenile literature," the writer says:

Children are not merely undeveloped men and women with all the mental and moral faculties in a like condition of inferiority. If they were it might not be unreasonable to
give them in a diluted and simplified form exactly the intellectual sustenance which would suit adults. But, on the contrary, they are beings in whom certain intellectual powers are far more active, and certain moral attributes are in a condition of greater purity and more healthy action, than in later life. They therefore require provision of a special kind, adapted to stimulate the growth of what is good as well as to check the growth of that which is too luxuriant. (in Salway, 1976, pp. 302-303)

In this early statement of child-centered criticism are foreshadowings of Piaget and Kohlberg and of other critics whose works are cited in this chapter.

Hazard, in his landmark work Books, Children and Men (trans. by Mitchell, 1944), examines books from the point of view of the child, and he demonstrates how children are possessed of a capacity to choose those books which are real to them, and to discard all others. He begins his work by observing that "children and grownups belong to different worlds," and he describes as "a long misunderstanding" the well-intentioned attempts of writers to provide children with pleasurable reading material. He identifies the problem thus:

Entirely pleased with themselves, they offered the child books that represented themselves, with all their attributes thrown in, their practical sense, their science, their hypocrisy, and their ankylosis. . . . The sooner they imposed limits, rules and constraints, the more men were pleased with themselves for having raised childhood without delay to their own state of supreme perfection. (p. 3)

In his discussion of books which have a lasting appeal to children, Hazard makes numerous references to works which appeal because, by their nature, they strike a respondent chord in the child reader. The tales of Andersen, for example, Hazard believes are pleasurable for children, because children recognize in them "the law of their being and the feeling of the great role they have to fill" (p. 105).
Andersen, Hazard claims, through his treatment of his subject matter, "communes with the soul of children, harmonizes himself with their deep nature, allies himself with their mission" (p. 105). *Pinocchio*, Hazard identifies as "that first book in Italy to be written wholly from a child's point of view" (p. 111). "Children's books," he says, "repudiate instinctively antagonism and hatred, mixing indissolubly with a sense of patriotism a sense of humanity" (p. 144), and children, he insists, "lead us back to the fountainhead," inviting us to see the world through the eyes of childhood.

The world of childhood, as perceived by Hazard, is one in which abstractions have little place; in which new ideas may be baffling; where feelings are elementary and transitory, neither 'wallowed in' nor analyzed; where good and evil are clearly defined, where reality is of the external world, and where there is no room for cynicism or pessimism. This world of the child, confined neither by political nor geographical boundaries, may, through the influence of books, become a 'universal republic', where a sense of our common humanity supersedes any narrow parochial identity.

Chukovsky, in his work *From Two to Five* (trans. by Morton, 1963), presents a psychologically based examination of the young child's linguistic development as well as his developing interest in books. Describing the child as "a tireless explorer," Chukovsky refers to the "miracle-performing mental activity during the early period of the child's existence," when beginning about the age of two every child becomes for a short period a linguistic genius (p. 7). It is at this time that the child develops linguistic control over his environment,
and words become a source of fascination. Chukovsky portrays the child, not as a miniature adult, but as an individual, possessed of distinctive characteristics, whose intellectual and moral development keep pace with his physical development. Chukovsky identifies characteristics of developing children which separate them from the adults in their world. Adults, for example, think in terms of allegories and metaphors; children think in terms of objects which they can perceive. Children persist in discovering the information necessary to their world and they "protect" themselves from unnecessary information proffered to them prematurely. Such information, Chukovsky believes, they transform into the raw material for boundless fantasy. According to Chukovsky, all children between the ages of two and five believe that life is meant only for joy and happiness, and their normal psychological growth is conditioned by such optimism. They reject unmitigated sadness in their literature, zealously guarding their own "illusions of happiness," and replacing unpleasant situations "with their own myths" (p. 46).

Significant in Chukovsky's analysis of the children in their relationship to literature is his discussion of poetry and fairy tales. Children are naturally lovers of poetry, and are poets themselves, he maintains. Their affinity for repetition, rhyme, rhythm, nonsense words and "topsy-turvies" is a natural outgrowth of the quest for language, and a characteristic of normal child development. In his thirteen 'commandments' for children's poetry Chukovsky includes graphic illustrations, rapid-changing images, moving and changing rhythm, frequent rhyme, rhyming words which are 'message carriers',
and rhythm, which, predominantly trochee, is suitable for playing games (pp. 140-155). It may be that children's alleged antipathy for or ambivalence toward poetry derives from the fact that the poetry they are given is often poetry to which they are unable to respond either intellectually or emotionally. How else can one explain that young children become so disillusioned with poetry? Both Chukovsky's philosophy and Terry's (1974) formal study lend credence to this idea.

The fairy tale, Chukovsky believes, is the "most wholesome food" for every normal child up to the age of seven or eight, and children who are deprived of the fantastic in their literature will create it for themselves. Of the importance of this type of literature for the developing child, he says:

Until recently those in charge of setting standards for children's literature have given insufficient thought to children's demonstrated preferences for fairy tales, and the value of such tales in developing, strengthening, enriching, and directing children's capacity for creative thinking and imaginative responses. (p. 123)

The fascination of the fairy tale, as Chukovsky perceives it, is much more than entertainment—which in itself is justification for their use with children. The fairy tale, at a certain stage in their cognitive development, is effectual in assisting children to orient themselves to the surrounding world, in enriching their spiritual life, in encouraging them to regard themselves as "fearless participant[s] in imaginary struggles for justice, goodness, and freedom" (p. 125). As they mature, children's need for such tales diminishes and they finally abandon them altogether.
Throughout his book Chukovsky reiterates his theme of child growth and development, with the resultant changes in interest. He constantly deplores the behavior of adults—parents and educators—who, in his opinion, are "incapable of seeing the life of a child as a process, that is, as being in constant flux, changing and developing," or who "do not take into account the dialectic development of the human being" (p. 136). His work, an exploration of the characteristics of developing children and their reading interests, is a significant landmark in a child-centered approach to criticism.

More recently Bettelheim, in his *Uses of Enchantment* (Vintage, 1977), has explored in much greater depth than did Chukovsky the relationship between the fairy tale and the developing child. Bettelheim's thesis is that the child at every stage of his cognitive development is engaged in a search for self-knowledge, knowledge which, in turn, contributes to an increased understanding of others and, thus, a greater capacity for successful interpersonal relationships. Literature, Bettelheim believes, can assist children to arrive at a better understanding of themselves and others and to discover meaning in life. He rejects as unsuitable for this purpose, however, much of children's literature, claiming that "the overwhelming bulk of so-called 'children's literature' attempts to entertain or to inform, or both," but that "most of these books are so shallow in depth that little of significance can be gained from them" (p. 4). In all of children's literature, with few exceptions, "nothing can be as enriching and satisfying to child and adult alike as the folk fairy tale" (p. 5), he believes. Bettelheim bases his claim for the efficacy of the folk
fairy tale on the association which is possible because of the nature of the tale and the nature of the developing child. He says:

these tales, in a much deeper sense than any other reading material, start where the child really is in his psychological and emotional being. They speak about his severe inner pressures in a way that the child unconsciously understands—and without belittling the most serious inner struggles which growing up entails—offer examples of both temporary and permanent solutions to pressing difficulties.

It is Bettleheim's thesis that the tale which will be important to an individual child at a particular time is determined completely by that child's psychological stage of development (p. 18). Children will respond positively, he believes, to those themes or motifs that speak to them personally, rejecting those that are of no perceived relevance. Tales that are rejected at one stage of development because they are extraneous to experience may become very important later.

Bettelheim uses a number of well known tales to illustrate his thesis. 'Hansel and Gretel', for example, in which "the child's striving to hold on to his parents even though the time has come for meeting the world on his own is stressed" (p. 15), may be particularly appealing for that young child who is just beginning to assert some measure of independence and move outside the safe, known family environment. "Little Red Riding Hood," according to Bettelheim, addresses the normal child's ambivalence about "whether to live by the pleasure principle or the reality principle"; it deals with conflicts arising from pubertal problems, and concludes with behavior modification which results from conscious choice based on personal experience. "Cinderella" deals, among other things, with sibling rivalry and jealousy, and will,
Bettelheim believes, have particular appeal for the child placed in similar circumstances. In "Goldilocks and The Three Bears" he sees the greatest appeal of the tale as being also its greatest weakness—Goldilocks, the curious explorer, runs away when confronted with the challenge posed by the return of the bears. There is, thus, in this tale, no indication that Goldilocks' search for happiness and a place in life leads to any "higher selfhood" for her (p. 222).

Bettleheim's examination of these and other tales serves to support his primary thesis of the strong correspondences between child and tale. Consistently, tales are shown to depict the various stages of development by which an individual becomes a mature, independent adult. Parallels are drawn between the nature of child and the nature of tale, and the particular appeals of the tales are elucidated. Whether one accepts or rejects Bettleheim's assessment of the body of children's literature as being shallow in substance and of little significance, or whatever one's personal feelings about a psychoanalytical approach to children's literature may be, the significance of Bettleheim's work to this present study must be recognized—both in its study of the genre of the folk tales and its child-centered approach to an analysis of the same. While the writer of this study questions Bettleheim's knowledge and assessment of children's literature, admits to a grave personal discomfort in wandering around in the child's subconscious, and has serious misgivings about this approach to literature, Bettleheim's work cannot be ignored in child-centered criticism. The work of Favat (1977), which is discussed elsewhere (p. 268), emanates from a similar philosophy.
The significance and validity of the developmental approach to an examination of children's books is dramatically documented in White's *Books Before Five* (Oxford, 1954), and Butler's *Cushla and Her Books* (The Horn Book Inc., 1980). Both works are longitudinal studies documenting the experiences related to the use of particular books with individual children and make significant comments about the relationship between child and literature. Both works offer convincing evidence, not only that children take delight in particular books and that this delight increases and intensifies as experience with books is expanded, but also that children as they mature are willing and eager to deal with books of increasing complexity. Both books bear irrefutable witness to the fact that the books which appeal to children bear some relationship to their cognitive and emotional development.

White (1954) keeps a daily record of the books she reads to her child between the ages of two and five years. She documents the child's developing interests, choices and responses. The child's reactions to particular books at particular times serve to cast some glimmer of light on the relationship between the child's personal development and reading interests. Two-year-old Carol, for example, does not respond to Brooke's *Johnny Crow's Party*, but Flack's *Ask Mr. Bear* is very popular. At four she loved the *Johnny Crow* books; and *The Golden Island*, which was a miss the first time it was offered, was joyfully received a year and a half later. At two, the child's enjoyment of a book is increased when she has seen in real life the animals she has been reading about; at five, the same child obviously enjoys being read
The Hobbit. The young child can only understand I as myself, and cannot grasp the concept of I in reference to a book character; the child at five is able to make distinctions between the real and the pretend, and is able to identify the I of the character; the young child has difficulty bridging the gulf between the possible and the impossible, the real and the fantastic; the older child has a sufficiently strong grasp on reality to depart from it willingly. The young child has an apparent interest in books that confirm rather than extend experience; the four-year-old is obviously excited by the strange and the unusual. A book which a young child rejects may become a favorite some years later. White presents interesting evidence of a developing child between the ages of two and five becoming a 'spectator' of her own behavior and, with a growing sense of story, displaying an ability to transmit her own experiences into artistic revelations.

Butler (1980) documents the influence of books in the first years of a severely handicapped child. Cushla, the child in this study, was first introduced to books when she was four months old, at which time she would look at the book, apparently captivated by it (p. 18). The fact that at thirty-two weeks Cushla's language was not significantly below normal, even though she had severe physical retardation, was attributed largely to the amount of verbal attention she received, including the continual reading of books. At eleven months this child, whose earlier condition, in the opinion of experts, was hopeless, was able to recognize that a picture was inverted, a feat which, according to research, comes much later in most normal children. At this time also she had her favorite books of which she never tired. She never
pushed a book away in rejection, and at seventeen months the attending psychologist reported with disbelief that "book behaviour, trained by adults in her family, was very advanced" (p. 38).

After the age of eighteen months the number of books to which Cushla was introduced was steadily increased until, at the age of three years, eight months, she was making use of an extensive personal library, was borrowing books on a weekly basis from the community library, and was dividing her use of books almost equally between 'reading' aloud herself and being read to by adults (p. 76). In the time reported in this study Sendak's *Where The Wild Things Are* (Harper & Row, 1963), was the one book which Cushla refused to return to the library until she had her own personal copy.

The books which became Cushla's favorites in this period reveal fascinating evidence of relationships between her developing interest in books and her own slow struggle for personal growth. At eight months, for example, when she was having obvious difficulty in focusing on objects, she formed a strong attachment to Bruna's *B is For Bear*, a picture book in which a large letter appeared on one page, and one simple object on the other. This book, and others of this type--textless books with clear, unlettered illustrations--fascinated Cushla. The researcher reports her response:

Cushla learned to follow the adult finger with her eyes, but refused often to move to the next object if she wished to continue staring at something that interested her. She never smiled at what she saw; her expression was invariably one of intense concentration. (p. 28)

At this age, Cushla responded to the rhythm of rhyme and jingles, but music did not hold her attention as books did. Restricted very sharply
in her physical movements, young Cushla appeared to take joy in identifying in her books with familiar objects and familiar activities—it was as if she participated vicariously in child-like activities which were otherwise denied to her. This continued throughout the period under study.

Butler draws interesting comparisons between Cushla's developing interests in the period from two to five years and those of Carol in the White (1954) study. At eighteen months, for example, Carol showed little interest in things she had not seen, but at two her interests had extended to include things not previously experienced. Cushla, however, denied by her physical impairments the normal activities of childhood, had fewer experiences to draw on and, hence, made fewer demands on her books. White reports the child's increasing preference for colored illustrations; Butler believes that, for Cushla, with her visual problems, it was clarity of outline that mattered more than color, and it was this feature which remained constant in her favorite books (p. 47). Unlike Carol, who appeared perturbed when the whole of characters and objects was not visible in illustrations, Cushla solves such problems for herself, telling her mother emphatically that the rest of Peter's body (The Tale of Peter Rabbit) was in the watering can, when he appears in an illustration, hidden in the can, with only his ears visible (p. 50). Butler raises the intriguing question of whether Cushla, who had such intense experiences with pictures from babyhood, is wiser in this regard than the physically normal child whose energies have been less concentrated. Butler poses interesting questions also regarding the difference in the two children's
willingness to accept what was at hand. Carol constantly demanded explaining of things which were to her incomprehensible; Cushla's enjoyment appeared to be sensory. She appeared to be willing to listen endlessly, obviously without understanding all that was intended. This difference in reaction is nowhere more evident than in the response of the two children to Lear's poetry. Carol White, at three, rejected nonsense songs; Cushla was fascinated by Lear's nonsense poetry and by Milne's verse. Butler wonders if Cushla's willingness to listen, even though she might not understand, was related to her need to compensate, and her need to "look." Her continuing fascination and intoxication with words were effectively demonstrated by the fact that at the age of three she could recite by heart a number of books, songs, and rhymes, including most of Milne's collection When We Were Very Young. Throughout the study Cushla shows her conversance with book language, as phrases and sentences from her favorite books become interwoven in her own everyday speech.

Butler's study of Cushla and her association with books is a fascinating and moving one, its implications, of course, going far beyond the scope of this present study. In the context of the present study, however, it seems pertinent to note the relationship in Cushla's case between a child's exposure to carefully selected books—books considered appropriate in theme, subject matter and language—and her development cognitively and linguistically. But beyond this, in a realm which cannot be easily documented, books which met a young child's particular needs and lent credence to a young child's dauntless struggle to climb impossible mountains were books which struck a
responsive chord in the child. As Butler points out:

Cushla's books have surrounded her with friends; with people and warmth and colour during the days when her life was lived in almost constant pain and frustration. (p. 102)

Butler suggests that it was the book characters whom she had grown to love who went with Cushla "into the dark and lonely places that only she knew" (p. 102). Paradoxically, for Cushla the world of reality is often little more than a figment of her creative imagination; her real world is the world which unfolds through her encounters with books—books which, for her, open doors which might otherwise remain firmly closed. Although Cushla is a 'special' child, she is a child, and the significance of her story for a child-centered literature and a child-centered criticism cannot be lightly dismissed.

Huck (1979) examines a number of books in the light of knowledge which the Piagetian stages of development reveal about the characteristics of childhood. Under the heading 'Ages and Stages' she develops a number of charts (pp. 31-36) which "describe some characteristic growth patterns, suggest implications for selection and use of books, and provide examples of suitable books for a particular stage of development" (p. 30).

Huck characterizes the pre-school and kindergarten child, for example, as being egocentric in interest, behavior and thought, and from this she infers that at this stage of development the child, who can see only one point of view, will appreciate characters with whom he can identify. She suggests for this child such books as Buckley's Grandfather and I (Lothrop, 1959), Hoban's Bedtime for Frances (Harper
& Row, 1960), Keats' The Snowy Day (Viking, 1962), and Massie's Walter Was a Frog (Schriber, 1970). For the ten-, eleven-, and twelve-year-old, who by now has a highly developed sense of justice and concern for others, and an innate sympathy for the weak and downtrodden, Huck suggests such books as Byars' The Summer of the Swans (Viking, 1970), Picard's One Is One (Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1969), Robinson's David in Silence (Lippincott, 1966), and Smith's A Taste of Blackberries (Crowell, 1974). Such suggestions by Huck represent a conscious effort to make decisions about books in full knowledge of the characteristics of children, to choose books with the child's eye at the center.

Huck draws on Maslow (1970), Erikson (1964), and Havighurst (1955) in the exploration of children's needs and personality development. She rejects any suggestion that books alone can satisfy basic needs but she believes that "literature may provide opportunities for identification and for understanding of self and others" (p. 27). The inference is that such literature will be child-centered and will permit the reader to see himself at his particular stage of development.

Tucker (1972), an educational psychologist, is also concerned about the relationship between books and the readers' 'ages and stages'. In an illuminating article "How Children Respond to Fiction" he studies children's preferences for books according to their developmental levels. He believes that children's liking for particular books is not a result of either parents' or teachers' enthusiasm but, rather, is a natural consequence of certain correspondences between the characteristics of child and book. Tucker believes that "intellectual limitations" or "conceptual boundaries" effectively determine children's
responses to books, just as they influence their ability to understand mathematics, science, or any other subject.

For Tucker, a children's book is therefore one "that observes certain limitations of structure and experience" (p. 56). He identifies as limitations or boundaries, bearing direct relationship to the books children choose to read: length, the distinction between the concrete and abstract, causality, affinity for the fantastic, self-identification, task-orientation, independence-seeking, challenge to fear, desirable rather than realistic experience, moral development and cognitive dissonance. Tucker reasons that a child must have both time and experience in his favor to respond to books which present complexities in either plot or characterization; that children—certainly children below the age of seven—are likely to prefer what he describes as "tangible results, clear-cut rewards and punishments, plots that work out, clues that all come together in the end and present some overall picture that can be easily understood" (p. 50); that in the young child's world cause and effect follow naturally and there is no room for coincidence; that if the author chooses too soon to work outside a framework of fantasy the child reader may be left behind; that the journey theme in children's books is related to children's natural curiosity, their desire to grow up, and their growing desire for independence; that it is probably asking the impossible of children to ask them to see things as they are, since children choose to see things "in a light that is more acceptable than perhaps realistic"; that what is reasonable justice in the eyes of a child is largely a matter of that child's stage of moral development.
Tucker raises interesting and significant questions related to the nature of the author's responsibility in meeting the needs of the child reader. Does an author, for example, meet the child reader at that child's level of thought and leave him there, simply entertaining him momentarily; or, having met the child where he is, and having gained his attention, does the author then take him along new pathways, explaining new ideas and new attitudes and making the child reach beyond the safely known and the easily recognized? Tucker's own answer is clear. He says:

It is futile for the author to ignore all aspects of children's thinking and put adult values all the way through, because he will simply not communicate with the child. But if he is good enough to recognize the child's condition and yet try to make the book concerned with growth in some way, then this is a measure of literary value. (p. 55)

This is what Karl (1970b) refers to as "going beyond" and is, she declares, a measure of a book's excellence, regardless of its subject matter. Tucker's article, which the writer of this study considers to be a significant one in child-centered criticism, reaffirms what C.S. Lewis had said much earlier about writing for children. Tucker quotes Lewis in support of his own thesis:

You must write for children out of those elements in our own imagination which we share with children, differing from our child readers not by any less serious interest in the things we handle, but by the fact that we have other interests which children would not share with us. We must meet children as equals in that area of our nature where we are their equals. (in Egoff, 1969, p. 219)

Tucker's linking of the child's stages of development with literary interests bears direct relationship to Huck's more extensive treatment of the same subject. His theories on this subject are supported also
by the longitudinal studies by White (1954) and Butler (1980), and by Schlager's (1978) research into the interest of children in a number of award-winning books. His reference to fantasy finds support in Chukovsky's (1963) landmark work *From Two To Five*. All of these works are discussed elsewhere.

Tucker distinguishes clearly between a psychological approach to literature as outlined in his article "How Children Respond to Fiction" and a Freudian or psychoanalytic approach. In his critical assessment (1974) of the works of British author Nina Bawden he applies the former approach. He attributes the success of the body of her work to her understanding of children, her recognition of their unique characteristics, and her ability to touch the very heart of childhood with her tales. He notes, for example, that Bawden capitalizes upon the child's innate affinity for fantasy, never "stripping children of all the fantasies that help make life comprehensible and manageable at that age" (p. 39); he justifies the 'happy endings' in all of Bawden's books; comments that "children are not quite ready for the implications of a truly moral universe, where natural justice can seem to be very scant" (p. 37); claims that Bawden accepts children's 'causality' level of thought, but moves them beyond that stage by giving them characters who learn that things don't always work out easily; and that she also takes account of psychological concepts such as projection, displacement, and repression. Through her books, Tucker believes, Bawden helps children combat isolation and develop empathy—a difficult concept for an audience still naturally egocentric. Her acute perception of children and their behavior is based, not on theory or on any particular
McDowell (1973) would, it appears, agree with Tucker's main theses. In his article "Fiction For Children and Adults: Some Essential Differences" he describes a good children's book as "making complex experience available to its reader," while the good adult book focuses on the "complexity of experience." He discusses such major differences as length; an active rather than passive approach; and emphasis on dialogue and incident rather than description and introspection; the use of child protagonists; the use of commonly recognized conventions; a simple, direct plot with no subplots; the adherence to a moral schema which adult fiction often ignores; the tendency toward optimism; the extensive use of fantasy and child-oriented language (p. 51).

McDowell's contention is that these differences are 'inherent' rather than 'accidental' or 'conventional' and he explains them in terms of Piagetian and Kohlbergian theories. In short, he says:

There are, it seems, whole areas of moral, emotional, psychological understanding which are beyond the child's cognitive range, exactly as there are physical skills like walking which are dependent on motivational factors. (p. 53)

Ricou (1977-78) expresses surprise that given the impact of Freud, the mass of psychological literature on child development, and a society many would call child-centred—so few writers have tried to express the point of view of the child. (p. 3)
In his psychologically based examination of Mitchell's *Who Has Seen the Wind* (Macmillan, 1947), he is specifically concerned with child-language development and learning. Drawing upon Piaget's observation about the egocentric nature of child language, Ricou speaks of the "special sensitivity" demanded of the creator of child characters, a sensitivity which, in his judgment, is particularly evident in the language of Lee's *Alligator Pie* (Macmillan, 1974), the Dr. Seuss Books, and White's *Charlotte's Web* (Harper & Row, 1952). Dennis Lee, Theodore Geisel, and E.B. White are less concerned with communication with the child than they are with exploring the child's language for "its sheer pleasure of rhythm and sound," and by such exploration they seek to "liberate" the child's imagination (p. 5).

Ricou is concerned with the difficulty faced by the would-be author of a children's novel in what he calls "the apparent contradiction of trying to convey the child's simple, sensory, spontaneous encounter with the world through a deliberate and carefully worked language" (p. 3). The contradiction, he says, is the universal one of trying to match language and experience, and of it he says:

> It is especially intriguing and challenging when the writer, the most skillful of men in his use of language, must use words to express the perspective of those who have a very primitive language (or, at the extreme of infants, no intelligible language at all). (p. 3)

Ricou submits that it takes a particularly talented author to write a novel that "begins with and remains with, the life of a child," and of those who attempt this approach few are successful. Quoting extensively from Mitchell's novel *Who Has Seen the Wind* to document his theory, he argues that this author is possessed of a rare ability to
sense and convey the child's unique perceptions. Ricou demonstrates, for example, that child language is adeptly portrayed, as is child diction; there are examples of the child in Chukovsky's role of 'the tireless explorer', seeking to answer his own questions; the child verbalizes his own 'inner speech', not for the sake of communication, but rather to accompany, clarify, and reinforce his own mental activity; the child engages in monologue by means of which he obviously seeks to define and explore both his internal and external worlds and to answer such profound questions as What is God? and What is Good? The central thesis of Ricou's article is that in the development of his main character author W.O. Mitchell successfully incorporates what is known about child growth and development. He calls upon Piaget and Kohlberg for theory which he documents very convincingly by reference to the book under study.

Broderick (in Gerhardt, 1973) also draws upon the work of Lawrence Kohlberg. In a brief but incisive article entitled "Moral Values and Children's Literature," Broderick examines possible relationships between children's literature and Kohlberg's theory of moral development. From what is a complex theory consisting of 'levels', 'stages', and 'aspects', she draws implications both for reader guidance and for the evaluation of children's books. She restricts her discussion to a study of two 'aspects' dealing with "behavioural motivation" and "the value of a life" (p. 36) as they relate to "preconventional morality," "conventional morality," and "postconventional morality." Drawing on the generalities of Kohlberg's theory, with particular reference to the two 'aspects' identified above, and to the specific
features that deal with an individual's developing ability "to grasp the reasoning of stages other than his own," and the natural inclination of a child to select as the 'best' reason for an action "the one immediately above where he is actually functioning," Broderick formulates three hypotheses. She hypothesizes:

(a) that the books a child likes best are either at his own level of moral development or the one immediately above

(b) that books rejected by children . . . are operating at a stage more than one above where the reader is at, or are below his level

(c) that once we have determined the child’s level and the book’s level, we can offer him material above his own level and thus aid him in his upward movement. (p. 37)

With reference to the evaluation of books for children, Broderick reports the results of an initial attempt to apply these hypotheses in the analysis of fifty Newbery award-winning books. Primarily the study sought to determine the level of moral development at which the characters made their decisions, and on the basis of this assessment some interesting observations were made. The greatness of Forbes' *Johnny Tremain*, for example, Broderick attributes to Johnny's progression in moral development from an elementary stage with which young readers can identify to a much higher stage, to which the reader can also move either in reality or vicariously. The limited audience appeal of Coatsworth's *The Cat Who Went To Heaven*—a great book when judged by literary standards alone—she attributes to the fact that the main character, at the beginning of the book, is operating at a level of moral development beyond the comprehension of the potential audience. Thus, Broderick demonstrates the importance of a natural correspondence
between the moral level of a book and the moral level of that book's potential audience. She reinforces this point by indicating that a far more popular book for the same age group than *The Cat Who Went To Heaven* is Lawson's *Rabbit Hill*. Her contention is that this is so because the highest level of moral development reached by young rabbit Georgie is one that is easily accessible to a normal ten-year-old. It appears to the writer of this study that Broderick's concern that there be some correspondence between the moral level of a book and the stage of moral development of the reader may be paralleled with the concern which Chambers (1977) believes is always the responsibility of the author for his implied audience (see pp. 221-223).

Broderick identifies two problems associated with the possible implication of the Kohlbergian theory for children's literature, the second of which may have particular reference for criticism of that literature. One problem is related to the small number of books which actually reach above elementary stages of moral development—a situation which may, in part, account for the fact that young adolescents tend to seek reading satisfaction in adult novels. The second problem—a significant one, in the opinion of this writer—relates to the ability of adults, who may themselves be "fixated at lower levels of moral development," to be of help to children wishing to move upward. Broderick suggests that this situation may contribute to the "gap" between adults and the youth of the counter culture (p. 38).

**Synthesis and Emerging Principles**

From the literature reported in this section a strong critical statement emerges; namely, that books which are truly for children
are child-centered, and take into account what is known about the nature of the child, including language development as well as intellectual, emotional, and moral development. This stance, convincingly adopted by a small number of critics, and impressively documented by formal research, draws primarily on the psychological concepts of Piaget and Kohlberg and operates by exploring, in particular, the features of children's books which correspond to those psychological concepts. The consensus of critical opinion here presented is that children's books will reflect in appearance, in language, and in style, as well as in subject matter, the author's sensitivity to the internal and external worlds of children. The ability to see with the eyes of a child is critical to successful writing for children.

Children's Response to Literature

The ability to see with the eyes of a child, which has been identified in the preceding section as being critical to the successful writing for children, is a rare attribute, requiring more than talent alone. The intimate knowledge of childhood which is implied may emanate from reminiscences; it will the more likely emerge from an understanding of child growth and development, and an awareness of how children of differing ages respond to works of literature. The importance of children's responses to works of literature as a component to be considered in the criticism of the same, justifies their exploration within the context of this chapter.

Purves and Beach (1972) describe the process of literary response as very complex, including a number of unrelated constituents:
understanding, knowledge, the ability to be objective, the ability to enter into the world of the work, the ability to apply evaluative criteria, and the ability to articulate critical statements. Based on their review of the related literature they concluded that understanding and liking are related; that, to the reader, content is more important than form; and that individuals are affected by what they read—attitudinally, intellectually, and emotionally (p. 28).

Half a century ago, Downey (1929) identified three types of respondents: the ecstatic, whose consciousness becomes totally engrossed with the work; the participant, who himself adopts the roles of all the characters met in the work; and the spectator, who remains detached and objective, and assumes the stance of evaluator. A decade later, Rosenblatt (1938), in her Literature as Exploration, identified the literary response as a 'transaction' or an 'interaction' between the reader and the work. The true and genuine response, for Rosenblatt, is a "live circuit" between the two. Significant in the present context is her insistence that the individual response is unique, since each reader brings to the work a personal background of experience and he 'burns through' the actual content to take away his own personal and idiosyncratic reactions. In Rosenblatt's theory, this individual and initial response may be partial and tentative; it changes, it is corrected, it is modified, it grows and is completed as the reader returns to the text from his consultation with others, to reformulate or reconfirm his original response.

Nearly forty years after formulating her theory, Rosenblatt (1976) confirmed her earlier concept of the transactional nature of
literary response. Text for Rosenblatt is not all-important; it is the reader in his interaction with the text who brings life and meaning to what would otherwise continue to exist only as black marks on the page. This theory of Rosenblatt implies that a book which for any reason fails to involve the child in a personal interaction is not truly a child's book; conversely, the book which is child-centered is likely to encourage maximum interaction on the part of the child; and hence, involvement and response. The reader, in interaction with the work itself and with others who have shared it, "plays" the text upon the instrument of his mind, and the "music" of meaning is personal. The nature of the response is developmental, since in the "music making" there is room for the individual to grow.

Rosenblatt (1978) makes an interesting distinction between efferent reading, which is primarily concerned with reading for information, and aesthetic reading, which goes beyond the mere comprehension of text to involve connotative and denotative associations, emotions, and feelings. The relationship between the individual's aesthetic reading and his level of cognitive and emotional development must be significant.

Britton (1975), in his model for written language, distinguishes between spectator and participant response. In this model a literary response would be in the role of spectator, a role which permits the respondent the luxury of standing back from an event and taking a studied look at occurrences—a form of personal interaction, in Rosenblatt's terms. Both Britton and Applebee (1978) draw on the thinking of psychologist George Kelly and philosopher Susanne Langer. In
Kelly's (1963) theory of constructs the individual throws his own templates over new experiences and interprets the new in terms of the known; and Langer (1953) believes that the individual's initial response to a work of art is a direct response to the primary world of illusion; it is when the individual later returns to the work that the initial appreciation is heightened by an increased awareness of form. Britton (in Squire, 1968), indeed, defined the literary response as "an increasing awareness of form" (p. 5) and he emphasized the value of the individual's quest for meaning—a quest which is personal, active, and continuing.

Of particular significance to this study are two relatively recent pieces of research which have direct bearing on child interest and literary response, and hence, this writer submits, on child-centered criticism. Favat (1977) and Schlager (1978) both believe that the traditional emphasis upon child interest based on content may be misplaced and deceptive. Both argue that children choose to read materials which correspond to their perception of the world at a particular stage of development. Favat drew parallels between the characteristics of tale and child, specifically the parallels of magic, animism, morality as expressed in constraint and retributive justice, lack of causality, and egocentrism. The similarity of Favat's work to that of Bettelheim is apparent (see p. 253).

On the basis of his study Favat concluded that "precise correspondences between child and tale do indeed exist," that "the tale embodies an accurate representation of the child's conception of the world" (p. 38). He claims that the intense interest which the tale
holds for the child results naturally from the strong correspondences between the two. He explains:

Seeking a respite from the disruption caused by the crisis of experience, children turn to the tale for the world order they once knew and for the satisfaction of experiencing a world in which their magical, animist, moral, and egocentric expectations are fulfilled. . . . The phenomenon of interest produced by this conjunction of the child's mind and the tale's construction is short-lived, but for its duration it reflects children's struggle to establish a relationship between themselves and a world that is as unfamiliar as it is real. (p. 57)

One of the implications which Favat draws from his study is that children have a 'need' for the fairy tale, a need which cannot be filled by tales of realism. Realistic stories, Favat maintains, do not provide children with the "rest" they need from preoccupation with the real world (p. 64). He covets more analytic studies in which knowledge of literature and knowledge of child combine. Such studies, he believes, will shed light on such questions as:

What is it about this particular book that would cause children of what age and psychological disposition to respond to it in what ways?

Or conversely:

What is it about children of this particular age and psychological disposition that would cause them to respond to what books in what ways? (p. 68)

Sound answers to such questions surely have implications for criticism of children's literature.

Schlager (1978) is concerned that the "what" of children's reading has taken "almost exclusive precedence" over the "why" of the same. She emphasizes the need for "cross polination" between the disciplines of psychology and children's literature in an attempt to
relate knowledge of child development to children's literary inclinations. In her research Schlager studied the five most popular Newbery award-winning books and the five least popular ones in an attempt to determine the source of their child appeal. She reports that the five most popular books were those which reflect the child's perception of reality, and she bases this finding on the discovery that "developmentally valid and complex characteristics appear in the most circulated books and [are] conspicuously absent in the least circulated ones" (p. 138).

Schlager concludes that literary quality alone will not ensure child-interest in books. Books which are to appeal to childhood must have the developmental perceptions of childhood. It follows that the key to children's reading interests and, hence, to their literary response, is their particular stage of intellectual and emotional development, and this has implications for both writers and critics of children's books.

**Synthesis and Emerging Principles**

The small but impressive body of writing reported in this section attests to the developmental nature of children's responses to works of literature. On the basis of the critical opinion and formal research examined, a number of conclusions may be drawn. Children's response to a work of art is a rather complex thing, difficult to define or to analyze, and impossible to predict or explain. The genuine individual response results from 'interaction' with the work, and it involves both the emotion and the intellect. The genuine response is personal.
It emanates from comprehension and interpretation, and reflects the idiosyncrasies which are a part of particular personalities and backgrounds. An initial response is likely to be partial and tentative; it is refined, modified, changed or completed in the course of subsequent encounters. Response is developmental inasmuch as the reader's attitudes, experiences, intellect and emotion all enter into its formulation, and these are all the products of development. A successful book for children will involve children in a 'personal interaction' and will allow the reader to play the text on his own 'instrument' and make whatever 'music' he can. The boundaries of today's interpretation may expand with tomorrow's insights and wisdom. The response, which is initially concerned primarily with content, may later reflect increasing awareness of the form that gives the work its meaning. The literary quality alone will not, however, ensure child appeal. Books which are to appeal to children must have the developmental perceptions of childhood. The degree of coalescence between the nature of child and the nature of tale will determine the level of interest. The work of both Favat and Schlager bear convincing witness to this fact, and neither authors nor critics of children's literature can ignore such evidence.

**Children's Sense of Story**

Just as the child's perception of the world is developmental, so also is a sense of story. A growing body of research, most of it done within the last decade, attests to the belief that this sense of story is a uniquely human predisposition; that it begins naturally in early
childhood, and is developmental. That narrative, a primary act of mind, is central to all our lives is Hardy's thesis (in Meek et al., 1978). She maintains:

we dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticise, construct, gossip, learn, hate, and love by narrative. (p. 13)

Hardy contends that our very ability to live and cope with the contingencies of life, to construct a social past and future, is related to our ability to hear and heed the stories of others, and to create our own tales. With the tales we tell ourselves we represent our own worlds to ourselves and, in Kelly's terms, we throw our constructs over experience. If our "hypotheses" or our "anticipations" do not fit we revise either our constructs or our expectations. Experience stored through "representation" in the consciousness can be returned to again and again, a continuing base for reinterpretation and modification—for editing of the narratives. Our ability to build for ourselves a "retrospect" and "prospect" is related to a developing sense of narrative. Based upon this theory, it seems logical to hypothesize that the appeal of a book for a particular child may depend, at least in part, on that child's sense of story as well as on the nature of the book itself.

Applebee (1978) found that the child of 2½ or 3 years has begun to develop some sense of story, and this sense continues to develop. The conventions of story are adopted by very young children, and by the age of five most children are using a title or formal beginning, a narrative past tense, and a formal ending. In their own narratives,
Applebee found, children move from 'heaps', through 'uncentred chains', to narratives where centering and chaining occur together. The child's ability to distinguish between fiction and reality is also developmental, Applebee discovered. To the young child all tales are reality, and even at the age of six, some children, in Applebee's study, believed in the reality of their tales although, for them, the tales "happened" long ago and far away. By the age of nine, however, most children are able to distinguish clearly between the world of tale and the world of reality, just as they are now able to write their own tales in true narrative style. Young children tend to distance unpleasant situations both by removing themselves from the tale, by distancing the setting, and by using the narrative past tense.

The findings of Applebee, as they relate to the developmental nature of the child's sense of story, are repeated in work by Sutton-Smith (1978) and Rubin and Gardner (1977). Sutton-Smith discovered that in the years from two to six children move from the first-person chronicle to a third-person narrative, including characters, and adopt the past tense as well as conventional beginnings and endings. Interestingly, evidence of these characteristics are also obvious in Chukovsky's (trans. by Morton, 1963) much earlier discussion of children's exploration of their world. Rubin and Gardner (1977) report that young children identify particular "story frames," and having met and mastered such frames, they build expectations which they apply in subsequent encounters. The monster frame, for example, is one of the earliest frames which children adopt, and there is frequent evidence of this in the narratives of three-year-olds.
In their examination of story completion by children in the first, third, and sixth grades, Rubin and Gardner (1977) also found evidence that as children develop intellectually their sense of story also develops, and they show an increasing facility in relating appropriate endings to contexts and in dealing with content and form. A significant extension of this idea of the relationship between children's intellectual development and their sense of story is explored by Brown (1977). He studied the relationship between children's sense of story and their reading and writing ability, and found a close correspondence.

**Synthesis and Emerging Principles**

A growing body of research convincingly concludes that a sense of narrative is a distinctly human predisposition, that it begins in early childhood, and it is developmental. This developing sense of story, which is related to intellectual and emotional development, enables the child to increasingly adopt the conventions of story, to distinguish between reality and fiction, and to build expectations and predict outcomes. There is evidence also that a close correspondence exists between the children's developing sense of story and their reading and writing competence. The research reported in this section provides additional evidence for authors and critics of children's literature that the books which will have the strongest appeal to children are those which offer perceptions which are within their developmental capacities for response. The best books are those in which accomplished and appropriate literary forms provide the 'medium' for 'messages' which the child reader is capable of hearing and understanding, and to which he can respond normally and naturally.
Conclusion

This chapter has examined the criticism of children's literature from a child perspective. The primary thesis emerging is that, in a distinctive children's literature, attention must be focused on the nature of children who are the potential readers; that a valid and comprehensive criticism of children's literature must take into account the characteristics of the child audience; and that the responsibility of the critic includes the identification of appropriate correspondences between literature and child, and the discovery of the 'fit' between reader and text. There is no suggestion that criticism must be child-centered to the exclusion of all literary considerations, but rather, that critics of children's literature must bring to their task a dual focus.

The writings examined in this chapter have been reported under the headings of The Question of Audience, A Sense of Audience, Children and Literary Merit, A Developmental Approach to Criticism, Children's Response to Literature, and Children's Sense of Story. The main points and the critical principles which emerge have been synthesized at the end of each section and are not repeated here. The consensus of critical opinion, however, supports the theory that there is a distinctive children's literature; that this literature is child-centered; that both authors and critics of this literature need to draw on knowledge of child growth and development; and that the search for literary excellence must never preclude attention to the child. The emphasis on child-centered literature and criticism is of recent origin, but the idea of the children as the focus of their literature occurs in
critical writings of the past as well as present. A small but convincing body of research draws parallels between child and tale, and emphasizes the developmental nature of the child's sense of story and ability to respond to literature.
CHAPTER V

ISSUES-CENTERED CRITICISM

Introduction

The literary purist may argue that any valid criticism of literature will concern itself solely with literary or artistic matters, and that the topics addressed in this chapter lie outside of its province. Literature, however, does not exist in a vacuum but is in some way a reflection of a society which gives it birth. The reader lives not only in a private kingdom of the mind but in a social setting where the individual good must be juxtaposed with the greater communal welfare. Social issues are a part of life and hence, a part of literature, since literature, as any work of art, draws its subject matter from the well-springs of the culture— from life itself.

This philosophy is not new, nor has it been lacking in proponents. Goethe, a century and a half ago, maintained that the poetry and the literature generally of his country "was inseparably connected with the life and passions of the whole nation," and he reminds his readers that "a nation's literature cannot be known or appreciated unless we bear in mind along with it the whole complex condition of that nation" (cited in Strelka, 1973, p. 19). A people's culture, Eliot (1948) believed, is revealed through their arts, as well as through their social system, their habits, their customs and their religion. An
understanding of one is possible only when all are understood (p. 120). Hartmann (1953) and Bruford (1964) both made reference to the arts as an integral part of the total culture of a people. "What the arts are in essence," Hartmann maintains, "they can only be in the framework of the historical reality which gave them birth" (cited in Bruford, 1973, p. 10), and Bruford (1964) describes the relationship thus:

All works of art, being created by living men for living men, depend for their effect on the existence around them of a continuous culture, that links up author and reader, those who create, and those who enjoy works of art. (cited in Bruford, 1973, p. 9)

Many of the questions raised by literary study are directly or indirectly social questions, Wellek (1956) believes, and in Abrams' (1953) theory, artist, work, audience, and universe are all interrelated. Abrams' 'universe' is the society which is common to both artist and audience and from which the subject of the work derives (p. 5).

If indeed the subject matter of literature is inextricably interwoven with the fabric of society, it follows that any attempt to critically evaluate that literature must examine not only its literary form but the accuracy of its subject matter as a reflection of a social order. Richards (1924) in his Principles of Literary Criticism confronts the common argument that true criticism does not concern itself with the social and moral aspects of the work of art; that the critics' business lies solely with the work itself. He says:

The common avoidance of all discussion of the wider social and moral aspects of the arts by people of steady judgment and strong heads is a misfortune, for it leaves the field free for folly and cramps the scope of good critics unduly. (p. 35)
Richards maintains, moreover, that any attempt to separate the experience of literature from life is not only "lopsidedness," "narrowness" and "incompleteness," but it is doomed to failure. Richards is concerned with what he calls a "wholeness" of critical judgment, and of it he says:

It is impossible to divide a reader into so many men - an aesthetic man, a practical man, a political man, an intellectual man, and so on. It cannot be done. But if it could be done, as many critics pretend, the result would be fatal to the wholeness and sanction of the critical judgment. (p. 79)

It must not be construed, however, that any piece of writing which addresses a social issue automatically qualifies as literature. To so believe would be to accept what Strelka (1973) describes as "the perversion of the literary work from a subject having its own ontological value to mere material for sociological investigation" (p. vii). The belief is rather that the critics' dual concern includes both what an author is attempting to do and the manner in which the intentions are effected. Ramsey (1973) sees the critics' role as involving both the presentation of the social issues in a work, and the literary artistry with which those issues are portrayed. While he considers it "an offense verging on the criminal" for a teacher of literature to reduce literature to social issues, he nevertheless maintains that it is impossible to teach literature well without placing it within a social context:

Literature offers to the student of society a vast field of study, inevitably misunderstood unless the student of society is also a good literary critic who can see structure, qualifications, reserves, distancing, qualities, contextual and rhetorical surprises. (p. 22)
It is the maintenance of balance and perspective in the evaluation of both the matter and the form of a literary work which is essential to a valid criticism.

If one accepts the view that a valid and comprehensive criticism of a work of literature must take into account the manner in which social issues are portrayed, then the truth or the authenticity of the presentation of such issues becomes an important critical principle. This authenticity, Sadker and Sadker (1977) believe, does not exist apart from such literary elements as style, characterization and plot, but it goes beyond them to include another aspect—"a social, psychological and moral trueness to life" (p. 6).

The body of critical writings relating to the portrayal of social issues in children's books which have been surveyed for this study falls readily into eight categories. The critical precepts and principles emanating from these writings will be explored in the sections which follow under the category headings of Social Issues in the Content of Children's Literature, Racism, Sexism, Handicapism, Ageism, The New Realism, Violence, and Environmental Control.

Social Issues in the Content of Children's Literature

Heins (1970b) includes as one of the ten topics worthy of consideration in coming to terms with criticism of children's literature, the expansion of the subject matter of children's books to include "social problems, questions of prejudice, urban and academic situations, and psychological dilemmas" (p. 373). That the presentation of social issues is even recognized as a matter of critical concern, is a reflection of society's changing attitude to both children and literature.
Literature is no longer directed toward middle-class children with middle-class values. Increasingly, authors and publishers of children's books believe that books for children should deal honestly and openly with the real world in which the readers live, and in their books they confront children with the issues and concerns that characterize that world. The result is a spate of books dealing with all of the 'isms' and related ills of contemporary society. Racism, feminism, handicapism, and ageism are all explored in children's books; as are birth and death, conception and abortion, marriage and divorce, and heterosexual and homosexual activity.

This liberal approach to writing for children has been the focus of considerable critical controversy. Smith (1953) expresses reservations about both the approach and the products. Referring to society's willingness to burden children's books with what Anne Carroll Moore calls "lifeless stories about too many problems," Smith says:

Such books are often applauded by adults because they reflect a grown-up's sincere concern for social problems, rather than because the theme is a natural interest of childhood. Nor is the permanent value of these books given careful scrutiny. (p. 34)

Smith insists that contemporary writing, no less than the classics of children's literature, must be judged by clearly defined standards, and she is convinced that the qualities which are basic to good writing are literary.

Sadker and Sadker (1977) believe that authors have a responsibility to portray society with honesty and authenticity, and they consider it within the role of the critic to examine the integrity with which both individuals and social issues are presented. They
insist that any depiction of the events that most affect our lives—sexual experience, family upheaval, death—should be without either condescension or sensation (p. 6). Rudman (1976) shares this viewpoint and recommends that an issues-approach be taken in the study of contemporary children's books. A critical examination of the books in the light of how they treat contemporary social problems and conditions is a valid part of criticism, she maintains, as are the historical and literary perspectives (p. 3).

A preoccupation with social issues and the attempt to provide books on all subjects must never, however, blind either the author or the critic to the fact that in literature content is never an end in itself. As Crouch (1972) explains, it is with the people in society, not with social problems, that the author is primarily concerned, and although within the context of a well developed plot a variety of social problems may be identified, explored or even solved, any realistic solution emerges naturally from the interaction of credible human beings (p. 216). It is what a book has to say about life, Richardson (1978) maintains, that determines its status as literature. It is her concern that attempts to provide books on every conceivable topic has resulted in many second-rate productions which deal only superficially with the issues in question and fail to make contact with the inner reality of the child. In her insightful article "Rediscovering the Centre in Children's Literature" Richardson takes a sound critical stance and proposes a different approach to evaluating issues-oriented books. With reference to the relationship between content and meaning, this critic's position is clear:
If our immediate concern about content leads us to perceive the new characters and topics as ends in themselves, that concern could lead us to overlook the very core, or center of literature, with its power to transcend the specific environment and conflicts of a given character in order to describe and interpret human nature, to touch the inner and outer environments that form the personal milieu of every individual, and to help readers understand and interpret their experiences in both these worlds. If our emphasis on content should cause us to forget the meaning of a book, we are in serious danger of losing sight of the center of children's literature. (p. 138)

In her proposal for the evaluation of issues-oriented books Richardson suggests that each book be examined carefully to determine whether or not the author "actively engages the reader in an experience with life" (p. 140). Such critical examination may mean, she suggests, that on some issues no books may be available. This, she believes, "is preferable to encountering an important issue of life through a shallow and ineffectual treatment" (p. 140).

Central to Richardson's critical theory is the manner in which subject matter is handled by the author. Such subjects as death, violence, and grief, in that they are a part of the human condition, belong rightfully in books for children. It is the treatment rather than the nature of these and other social issues which makes them inappropriate subjects for children. Richardson's position is unequivocal:

We must demand that literature for children provide genuine experiences for them and that these experiences increase the child's understanding of the world and his own place in it. We cannot allow ourselves to overlook those qualities that make a book a piece of literature rather than an information or documentary book. (p. 145)

That a concern for racism, sexism, or relevance in any form need not and should not supplant the insistence upon literary quality in
children's books, is a strong contention of Ladevich (1974). Commenting upon the apparent "lack of concern about the literary quality by educators," as evidenced in the results of a study undertaken to determine the criteria by which educators chose books for their school programs, she concludes:

Just as it is important to avoid those elements which have an adverse effect on the social or affective development of the child, so also is it important to encourage literary taste, discrimination, and language awareness. (p. 983)

Quality, as MacCann and Woodard (1977) suggest, may indeed spring from "the depth and breadth of the writer's vision" (p. 5). Assuredly, it will result from a conscious and successful intermeshing of matter and form. Nor is it an either-or consideration, for that book which is well written will convey more effectively and more memorably a picture of a time and place. This point is well made by Baronberg (1971) in her reference to the aesthetic and sociological controversy:

The either-or choice tends to be misleading because what is really high-quality literature must deal in an age-appropriate way with all the stimuli it presents to the reader. The book that presents the very important stimuli of skin colour differences and then ignores them as a critical issue is simply not attuned to the perceptiveness or needs of the young reader. (p. 5)

Synthesis and Emerging Principles

In the decade under study, society's changing attitudes toward literature and children have resulted in the expansion of the traditional 'safe' subject matter of children's books to include a wide range of issues and 'isms' and a melange of topics of 'relevance'. The critical study of the books of this period has consequently become increasingly concerned with the legitimacy of the subject matter as well as the
honesty, integrity, and literary quality of the presentation. Just as the books themselves have dealt with social issues with varying degrees of success, so the critical writings have been unevenly successful in identifying the essentials, and in separating the matter from the form, the content from meaning, the shadow from the substance, the literary from the political. From the welter of writing which addresses the subject, however, a number of principles emerge clearly. The critics agree that authors of children's books cannot morally ignore the social milieu in which children live any more than they can ignore the issues which are an important part of the social settings in which their tales are placed. There is agreement also that, although social issues must be explored in children's books, such issues must never be introduced merely as token gestures; nor should they be treated either sensationally or superficially. Social issues, when they appear, must develop naturally as an integral part of a unified literary expression; and once they are introduced, the author must deal with them with due respect to both the subject matter and literary art. There is expressed in the critical writings a strong concern that a preoccupation with the presentation of a preponderance of problems may blind authors to their primary responsibility—the creation of a literary work. Never is there any suggestion, however, that the presentation of social issues and literary excellence are mutually incompatible. The challenge of authors is to recognize the 'isms' and the issues that shape the lives of their characters and to use the same honestly and fearlessly in the service of literary art. The challenge of the critics is to distinguish between concerns which are genuinely
literary and those which are predominantly political; to identify and praise the first, while boldly decrying the second.

**Racism**

The Presentation of Minority Races in Children's Books

Racism, as defined by the Council on Interracial Books for Children (1976), is "the systematic oppression and exploitation of human beings on the basis of their belonging to a particular racial group or people" (p. 4). The Council maintains that in the United States racism is "institutionalized," and it is "white." In their discussion of racism, members of the Council reject the term Non-white because of its racist implications "that white is the norm by which all else is defined" (p. 5). They choose instead to use the term third-world, in which they include Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans. The Council maintains that racism appears in children's books both overtly and covertly; that it runs from complete omission of third-world peoples to white paternalism. It includes insensitivity to or abuse of their language and the depersonalization of individual characters. When the problem is acknowledged, it is seen from a purely white perspective. The Council's position on such books is clearly propounded:

By ignoring the reality of racism and its economic origins, such books are deceitful and do nothing to prepare children of any colour for the society around them. They encourage confusion and self-hatred in the third-world child. And they encourage white chauvinism and distortion of reality in the white child. (p. 7)

The existence and the scope of racism in children's books were dramatically documented by Larrick (in MacCann & Woodard, 1972) in her
landmark article "The All-White World of Children's Books" (1965). Her survey of more than 5,000 trade books published in the United States from 1962-1964 revealed that American children were being brought up "on a gentle dose of racism in their books." She declared:

across the country 6,340,000 non-white children are learning to read and to understand the American way of life in books which omit them entirely or scarcely mention them. There is no need to elaborate upon the damage—much of it irreparable—to the Negro personality. (p. 156)

The world portrayed to children through the majority of their books today is a predominantly white world, the Children's Literature Review Board maintains (in MacCann & Woodard, 1977, pp. 107-133). All the significant characters are white; most biographies of famous individuals are written about men and women with white faces; in career books it is white people who excel as ballet dancers, doctors, journalists or astronauts; popular serial characters are white; clowns and fairies, elves and angels, Peter Pan and Little Red Riding Hood, Mother Goose and her entourage are usually white. Even among the multi-colored characters of Dr. Seuss there are few who are black. The Board believes that whether black characters have been omitted entirely, allowed to appear in inferior or inconsequential roles, or even granted an occasional acknowledgment of excellence, the idea that Black people do not really matter is reinforced over and over in the minds of young people through the books they read (p. 109).

According to Thompson and Woodard (1969), the major criterion for full acceptance and full participation in American society is whiteness, and they identify as one facet of the white perspective the social significance that appears to be attached to skin pigmentation.
The hierarchy is from white at the top to extreme darkness at the lower end of the social ladder (p. 419). Their viewpoint is reinforced by Dubois' (1968) characterization of the society in which the black American is born:

a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. (cited in Thompson & Woodard, p. 416)

The 'contempt' and 'pity' of which Dubois speaks are akin to the tolerance which Broderick (1973) identifies as the main theme in too many books about blacks written for children. This tolerance, which she documents in her study of the image of the black in children's books, has an air of condescension about it; it "reeks of a superior/inferior relationship," and in no way should be confused with love, understanding or genuine acceptance (p. 5). Indeed, this very tolerance in its magnanimity may bear the seeds of racism for, as the Children's Literature Review Board (in MacCann & Woodard, 1977) maintains, it is not the mere introduction of the nonwhite into children's books which will guarantee their fair portrayal. The Board believes that while books continue to be written from a narrow and distorted white perspective, are lacking in authenticity, and include nonwhites only as token gestures, they are likely to reinforce the very racist attitudes they attempt to dispel (p. 110).

What has been identified by the Children's Literature Review Board as 'token gestures' have often been well-intentioned, though misguided, attempts to include multi-ethnic characters and settings in books for
children. These gestures have resulted from an increasing awareness on the part of authors, illustrators and publishers that our society is a composite of people of different colors and cultures. That their efforts have so often been less than successful may well be a result of a too-conscious attempt to achieve racial balance. The inspiration has been social rather than artistic; the consequence has been contrived rather than convincing. Gast (in MacCann & Woodard, 1972) examines some of the past, present, and possible future approaches to the treatment of minorities in literature. His labeling, though sometimes facetious, is generally self-explanatory. He refers to the Invisible Man Approach, the Noble Savage Approach, the White Man's Burden Approach, the Minstrel Approach, the Queer Customs Approach, the Multi-ethnic Dick and Jane Approach, the Reversed Stereotype Approach, the Tell-it-like-it-is Approach, and the Remanufactured Past Approach (pp. 170-172). These approaches include the extreme negative position where children's books feature an all-white cast, and the equally extreme positive position where history is rewritten to glamorize and idealize nonwhite characters. Both approaches are equally deplorable.

The philosophy and attitudes which characterize Gast's 'approaches' appear under different labels in the 'syndromes' described by the Children's Literature Review Board (in MacCann & Woodard, 1977). These 'syndromes' or 'traps' are identified as the most serious flaws occurring in the handling of minority groups in children's books. The Board identifies the Romantic Syndrome, the Avoidance Syndrome, the Bootstrap Syndrome, the Oasis Syndrome, and the Ostrich-in-the-Sand Syndrome (pp. 120-128). By whatever labels the various approaches are
identified, and whatever the motives may be that prompt them, collectively and individually they represent a false and stereotyped portrayal of minority races in a multi-ethnic society.

Although the direct caricature of the nonwhite is no longer present in most children’s fiction, a 'less obvious misrepresentation' still prevails, Thompson and Woodard (1969) claim, and they refer to the narrow ethnic attitudes which dominate even books written specifically to foster interracial understanding (p. 416). Broderick (1973) states that the books analyzed for her study were neither outright racist nor "incisive, insightful books that lay bare the essence of humanity." They were, however, either condescendingly racist or traditionally do-gooder (p. 177). In Broderick's critical judgment the literary merit of those books was diminished because of the authors' preconceived notion of what their black characters should be like. Black characters were usually assigned roles which reflected societal attitudes, and the characters themselves remained stock figures rather than multi-dimensional individuals. She identified as a major problem of both the books in her study and those published since, that they "personalize the race issue instead of recognizing it as the social-economic-political problem it is" (p. 179).

Although the criticism of the treatment of the nonwhite in children's books has generally been in reference to the black race, the principles involved apply equally to other minority groups. Daniels (in Gerhardt, 1973), for example, reports that a search for children's books authentically portraying the Jewish culture was difficult and disappointing. She found little representation of Jewish books in
standard bibliographies, and most of those which were available were
published by Jewish organizations for a limited market, and were
categorized by religious and ceremonial allusions. Themes were
generally repetitious, focusing primarily on holidays and anti-
Semitism. Kimmel's (1973) article "Jewish Identity in Juvenile Fic-
tion" supports Daniels' findings. Kimmel also points out that any
author choosing to deal with the Jewish perspective must recognize
that "Jewish identity is religious as well as ethnic, mystical as well
as rational." Many children's books at present consider only the ethnic
level, Kimmel maintains (p. 179). After a two-year comprehensive
critical survey of children's books on Chicano themes the Council on
Interracial Books for Children (1975) concluded that the books avail-
able do not present an accurate view of Chicano culture or tradition.
The message conveyed through these books, sometimes overtly, sometimes
subtly, is, the Council claims, that goodness, rightness and happiness
consist of speaking English, behaving as Anglos, and adopting Anglo
values (p. 9). Nor is their criticism of books about Puerto Ricans
less negative. A study of all available books about Puerto Ricans
published in the United States in the forty-year period 1932-1972
(totaling 100) led the Council (1972) to report:

Pervading the books is a strong undercurrent of race and
class which results in the portrayal of Puerto Ricans as
inferior beings. Not one of the 100 books represents any
kind of significant step toward the creation of Puerto
Rican self-identification.

That the situation as it applies to the treatment of Native Americans
is little different is confirmed by Herbst (in MacCann & Woodard, 1977),
Byler (in MacCann & Woodard, 1977), and Mallam (in MacCann & Woodard,
1977). All three testify to the fact that the Indian is denigrated, his history distorted, his culture vandalized, and his humanity debased in a large number of books for children.

The Black, the Chicano, The Puerto Rican, the Native American—and all other ethnic groups—have individual and diverse cultures. In this diversity there is strength and richness that the white Caucasian culture alone can not exemplify. To ignore the diversity by ignoring the existence in literature of nonwhites, or to adopt a 'melting-pot' approach and emphasize only those universal characteristics which we have in common may both be considered equally racist. Racism cannot be obliterated by a denial of its existence; no more can it be mitigated by any claim that we are all alike. Schwartz (cited in Granstrom & Silvey, 1977) observes that "the struggle is really to recognize and accept differences," and any story which is honest, he claims, will reveal these differences. He describes such a story:

it won't consist only of the universals—the so-called brotherhood and sisterhood books, in which there is a glob of colour here and there; then all get together and mix—that's not life. (p. 101)

Broderick (1973) denies that it would be possible to write a book about a Black without identifying him as such. Nor does she agree with the literary approach which accentuates the universals. Of this approach she says:

Teaching children to be colour-blind may seem a good idea but as long as being black is the single most important fact of a man's life, then the real harm that comes from pretending we are all alike far outweighs whatever good can be attributed to this romantic wishful-thinking. (p. 4)
Language in Racism

Language, a uniquely human attribute, may be an effective means of communication or an instrument of misunderstanding and confusion. It may indicate the social status or prestige of a speaker; it may signal strong individuality and cultural pride; it may contribute to social and racial stereotyping. How an author has his characters speak will not only determine their credibility, it will also determine the authenticity of the writing as a work of art. In the past, acceptance by authors of a 'standard' or 'correct' English often resulted in characterizations which have been at best unrealistic. Variations from this 'correct' English have been sometimes used to demean or stereotype speakers of lower classes, minority groups, or nonwhite ethnic backgrounds. Such practices derived from a philosophy of language which has been proven obsolete in the light of modern, scientifically based linguistic theory. With reference to this theory, Goodman (in Gerhardt, 1973) discusses key insights into the nature and use of language which have implications for both the creation and the criticism of books for children. The English language is 'a family of related dialects', varying in grammar, phonology and vocabulary, but generally intelligible to all speakers of the language; difference in language is not a deficiency, and there are no right and wrong forms of language; all dialects are "fully formed," "systematic" and "rule-governed," and "capable of expressing any experience common in the culture from which they stem"; dialects are living and growing and they have varying social status only because they are spoken by members of particular social groups; children and young people are very
effective agents of linguistic change; thought, learning and literature are not the monopoly of those who speak high-status language (pp. 81-82). Language, Goodman points out, is not a "straight-jacket" for human expression, but a "tool," possessed of all the flexibility the author claims for it in his attempts to bring life and integrity to his characters.

Jordon (in Gerhardt, 1973) declares her personal dedication to the preservation of Black English in children's lives and in their literature, and she makes an impassioned defence of the use of Black English in children's books. Jordan's own His Own Where (Crowell, 1971) and Dry Victories (Holt Rinehart, 1972) are examples of the type of book she recommends for black children. Her use of Black English is a statement of her philosophy as a writer. There are no feelings of inferiority, only pride in her culture and all that pertains to it:

As a Black poet and writer, I hate words that cancel my name and my history and the freedom of my future. . . . I hate the arrogant, prevailing rejection of this our Afro-American language. And so I work, as poet and writer, against the eradication of this system, this language, this carrier of Black-survivor consciousness. (p. 86)

Jordan's statement is strong but it is sound. It is rooted in the theory espoused by linguists and elucidated by Goodman. Impassioned it may be, but no fanatical, bigoted outburst. It reflects the philosophical and critical stance of an accomplished artist who recognizes that to reject the language of a culture is to reject the culture as well. Her position, ably made explicit in her own writings, emanates from her philosophy:
Too many people in this country deliberately seek to enforce a homogenized, complacent, barbarous society where standard means right, where right means white. Therefore, non-standard means sub-standard, and means wrong, and means dangerous, and will be punished, even unto the death of the spirit. (p. 85)

The articles by Goodman and Jordan studied in juxtaposition present a critical principle related to the appropriate use of language variations in writing for children. And these writings should not be reserved for the Black child or the Chicano, or the Appalachian, or the Indian, or any other special group who happen to speak one of the 'variations'. Both Goodman and Jordan would agree that the lives of all children are enriched by exposure, through books, to the linguistic and cultural diversity which is their heritage.

The manner in which the language variations are handled by authors is quite another matter. Dialect in itself is in no way demeaning. Indeed, when it is presented accurately it adds that authenticity which is essential to art. When, however, it is contrived or exaggerated it results in stereotyping. Sadker and Sadker (1977) believe that dialect exaggerated can be used as "a tool to portray ignorance." They have strong criticism for those authors who "combine negative character traits, menial roles and tortured dialects into powerfully unflattering stereotypes" (p. 132).

Goodman (in Gerhardt, 1973) refers to the stereotyping that results when dialect is overdrawn, as "linguistic caricature" (p. 84). Linguistic caricature results when all Blacks or all Chicanos or all Indians are given a uniform speech pattern. Just as white Caucasians speak in many diverse dialects, so also do nonwhites and members of
minority groups. Sadker and Sadker (1977) recommend a more authentic approach "where characters speak with a variety of speech patterns, including Black English" (p. 153).

The critical viewpoint which emerges regarding the use of language may be aptly summarized in the words of Goodman:

Purifying, standardizing or homogenizing language not only misrepresents it and the people who use it, but is likely to result in a loss of some of the beauty and strength the more suitable language could express. (p. 84)

It would be difficult to criticize the beauty, strength and authenticity of the language of June Jordan's characters, or Graham Lorenz's, or Stephen Steptoe's; just as it would be difficult to find fault with the speech of Rosemary Sutcliff's characters or those of Laura Ingalls Wilder.

**Stereotypes in the Presentation of Minority Races**

Much of the criticism of racism in children's books centers around the stereotypic portrayal of characters. Regarding this Lickteig (1975) states succinctly a sound principle, one which no critic questions:

No one should be content to see people of any race, nationality, or religion depicted as stereotypes. The individuality of all people should be depicted, as well as the pride that comes with their differences. Children of any race or nation should be able to identify with central characters who are like themselves. . . . The books must be an honest portrayal of the people to be considered quality literature. (p. 7)

Evidence abounds that nonwhites do not always receive this honest portrayal.
Brown (1933), in his report of "Negro Characters as Seen by White Authors," identified seven major stereotypes: the contented slave, the wretched free man, the comic negro, the brute negro, the tragic mulatto, the local color negro, and the exotic primitive (cited in Broderick, p. 3). Again in 1937, this time with specific reference to children's books, Brown pointed out that "Negro children have generally been written of in the same terms as their mothers and fathers, as quaint living jokes, designed to make white children laugh." He did, however, indicate that in a small number of books black children were being depicted with "sincere and informed sympathy" (cited in Broderick, p. 3). Broderick's major study, almost half a century after the work of Brown, found that the situation had not changed dramatically. She reports that the informed and sympathetic depiction of Blacks, to which Brown made reference, was replaced after 1945 with an approach apparently designed to teach white readers that 'we are all alike' (p. 3). Convinced that positive and negative stereotypes are equally demoralizing, Broderick does not share the apparent satisfaction with which Gast (1965) reports that:

Recent children's literature generally contains complimentary stereotypes of present-day American Indians, Chinese, Japanese, Negroes and Spanish Americans. Middle-class Anglo-American virtues make up the new stereotypes imputed to these minorities by the authors of literature. The traditional non-complimentary stereotypes have largely disappeared from the literature. (cited in Broderick, p. 4)

Through an insightful and critical analysis of a great number of children's books, Broderick shows that literature still abounds with stereotypes and caricatures of the happy slave, the unhappy freedman, the local-color negro, the freeborn Black, the Black as performing
artist, the primitive Black, the ugly Black, and the musical Black. Children's authors, Broderick maintains, avoid confronting the issue of unhappy slaves by ignoring them as subjects. Her study provides documentation that the unhappiness of the freedman is portrayed both by actual description and by assigning to them lower social positions than those held by whites; the local color of the negro—"the quaint, the odd, the picturesque, the different"--is communicated in both text and illustration; the freeborn Black must know his 'place' in society and not aspire to move beyond it; there is a definite correlation between social success and skin pigmentation; the primitive black is savage and violent; all things white may be beautiful but blackness and ugliness are related; the musical Black is rarely talented and is usually an object of white condescension. Negroes, in Broderick's study, are religious and superstitious; passive and insecure. They are ugly in appearance and retiring of disposition; they excel in activities requiring manual rather than mental dexterity; they are socially helpless without the aid of the white 'saviour'. Roosevelt Grady (Collins, 1963) is singled out by Broderick as a special book in the study—a book that "stood up under constant re-reading" (p. 91).

In the light of the evidence presented by Broderick it becomes difficult to dispute Alexander's (in MacCann & Woodard, 1972) thesis that:

Despite the growing number of books depicting the Black experience, the image they give of the Black American is still one of the more insidious influences that hinder the Black child from finding true awareness. (p. 57)
As long as the size of the lips, the structure of the nose and the texture of the hair are considered in any way a measure of human worth, the charge of racism is justified.

The treatment of the Black enunciated by Broderick's study is paralleled by the stereotypic portrayal of other minority groups. Such stereotyping is chronicled and documented by Sadker and Sadker (1977), Rudman (1976), Herbst (in MacCann & Woodard, 1977), Davis (in Gerhardt, 1973), The Children's Literature Review Board (in MacCann & Woodard, 1977), and in almost every issue of the Bulletin of the Council on Interracial Books for Children. As has already been shown in the portrayal of the Blacks, other nonwhites are depersonalized, denied individuality and presented either as larger than life or as helpless, purposeless, poverty-stricken masses, living on the periphery of a white world, dependent for salvation upon their white benefactors. Rarely is there in the literature any indication of cultural pride or the contribution made by various ethnic groups to the American Society. The switch-blades of the Puerto Ricans, the bare feet and sombreros of the Chicanos, the knishes, pastrami and bagels of the Jews, the feathers, war paint and tomahawks of the Native Americans, all constitute common stereotypic symbols, just as do passivity, resignation, apathy, violence, avarice, stoicism and stealth. Denied of any clearly defined identity, personal, linguistic, or social, third-world characters move through the plots, usually occupying menial or subservient roles. Illustrations, characterizations, themes and story lines all combine to create stereotypes which detract from the humanity of the characters and the credibility of the books as works of art.
So frequently and consistently are cultural stereotypes presented, indeed, that a problem arises for the reader in determining what is real. This must be perceived as a very serious problem by the critics, in whatever capacity they operate. Something of its magnitude is indicated by Poussaint (1976):

The fine line between stereotyping and authenticity is often hard to see. In most cases the former draws upon the latter as a base, exploiting and vulgarizing it, and frequently a stereotype escapes notice altogether because it is so subtle. Certain stereotypes become even more acceptable to White America than reality, forming the basis of distorted generalizations about a people, their culture, their traditions, attitudes and history. (p. 5)

Related to this is the responsibility of the author as a social critic. Are authors merely observers, making artistic statements about what they see, or do they have a moral responsibility to employ their art in social commentary? Do authors merely mirror the stereotyped images that society already holds, or do they indicate that injustice is intolerable whenever and wherever it occurs? Both Broderick (1973) and the Children's Literature Review Board (in MacCann & Woodard, 1977) take the position that authors are more than reporters, that they determine the faces their characters will wear and the roles they will play; they have the freedom to expand or explain a real-life situation; and they may, if they choose, use their art to comment upon obvious injustices that are perpetrated in their own works. The Board maintains, for example, that in spite of that book's many merits, de Angeli's treatment of prejudice in Bright April is unsatisfactory. Their criticism is that the author permits white children to behave with impunity in the mistreatment of their black stereotyped peer.
Nor is any explanation given for their behavior (p. 127). Broderick, likewise, questions the author's treatment of subject matter in *Sounder*. Of it she says:

> We do not need any more books like William Armstrong's *Sounder*, where a black child who watches his father destroyed by racism overcomes the horrors of childhood to attain the lofty position of being allowed to sit in the white man's kitchen and help the white man's children become intellectually strong. (p. 180)

There is involved here a dilemma for both author and critic. While authors have the power to 'color' the social situation according to their own philosophy, they have also a responsibility to represent accurately the social history of the period they choose to portray. Just as de Angeli in *Bright April* and Armstrong in *Sounder* have been accused of stereotyping Blacks, so Brink in *Caddie Woodlawn* has been accused of stereotyping women, and Edmonds in *The Matchlock Gun* has been accused of stereotyping Indians. The question arises as to whether the authentic portrayal of social history is ever stereotyping. Interestingly, no critic has accused de Angeli or Armstrong or Edmonds of presenting a stereotyped image of their white characters.

Hollingdale (1974) elucidates a valuable critical position which has bearing on this dilemma. He identifies two types of books, thus:

> the one which contains certain assumptions because they are part of the intellectual climate in which it was written, and those which deliberately set out to propagate absolute or repugnant doctrines. (p. 2)

It is his contention that the author must report accurately the "intellectual climate"; to do otherwise would be to attempt to rewrite history. The book which sets out to propagate doctrines rather than incorporate them, Hollingdale would reject.
It follows that the hero or heroine of a hundred years ago may be today's stereotype. In assessing credibility of characterization the critic must view a work in the context of its setting. It is an accurate but sobering observation that Townsend (1974) makes in his defence of Lofting, who posthumously has been accused of racial stereotyping:

Lofting's lapses illustrate the extreme difficulty of escaping accepted attitudes, for he was far from being a crude imperialist. . . . It is a rare individual who can rise above the general insensitivities of his own day, and none of us can tell of what sins we may be found guilty in fifty years' time. (p. 159)

Politics, Racism, and Criticism

Objectivity and criticism. In literature, as in life, it is often difficult to separate social issues from the politics which enmesh them. This is as true in the criticism of literature as it is in its creation. This is not to accuse the critic of conscious and deliberate political partisanship; it is merely to recognize that attitudes and opinions are born and nurtured in a social and political milieu, and that absolute objectivity, particularly on matters which touch them personally, may be beyond the easy reach of most humans. Freedman (1977) doubts that such objectivity is ever possible. She says:

Whenever a book is recommended for publication, selected or discarded in a library, adopted for class use, or included in a bibliography, someone's predilections or prejudices are involved. To assume that any media or collection of data is "value free" is naive in the extreme. (p. 3)

There may be much truth in the statement of the Council on Interracial Books for Children (in MacCann & Woodard, 1977) that "all of us have been educated with a monocultural, assimilationist perspective . . . ,
and unless we deliberately confront this perspective, we will perpetuate grievous mistakes in the books we write or select" (p. 24). Such is human nature, however, that often those viewpoints which are labeled as subjective, political and racist when they are held by others, are conceived as being objective, nonpartisan and critical when we hold them ourselves. The problem is to distinguish between valid criticism and personal bias, between the critics and the propagandists. Both critics and propagandists speak clearly and convincingly on topics which are often fraught with emotion and controversy. Racism is one such topic.

The right to authorship. Nowhere is this dichotomy of critical opinion more visible than in the continuing debate over the right to authorship. At the center of this debate is the question of experience. Can one write about what one has not actually experienced, or must writers be restricted in subject matter to their own personal experiences, or the experiences of their own ethnic group? Lester (in MacCann & Woodard, 1972) denies the likelihood that a book by a white author can either accurately present the black perspective or be relevant to black children. He elaborates:

We no longer (and never did) need whites to interpret our lives or our culture. Whites can only give a white interpretation of blacks, which tells us a lot about whites but nothing about blacks. . . . Whites can never understand the black view of the world until they get it straight from blacks, respect it and accept. (p. 29)

Lester insists, moreover, that black writers should write for black people, to articulate for them their own black condition. Too much black writing has been blacks writing to whites, he believes (p. 29).
Feelings (1970) also questions the validity of the portrayal of the "Black experience" in books for children, when the authors of such books are nonblacks. Truly meaningful and authentic writing about the Black experience can come only from Blacks themselves, he believes, and anything else, regardless of its merit, is "synthetic." No book like *Sounder*, Feelings maintains, should ever win an award for excellence (p. 2).

This "synthetic" portrayal of experience concerns MacCann and Woodard (1977), who also question the ability of white authors to authentically portray a nonwhite experience. White authors in their depiction of third world characters, they maintain, often "reach for an image to express a quality or idea and find nothing but stereotypes in their storehouse of third world mental impressions" (p. 4). Children who are constantly exposed to such stereotypic presentations will, they fear, develop negative attitudes toward the third world.

The criticisms cited thus far have been largely of white authors who write of the black experience. Criticism has been voiced also against whites who write about Native Americans, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans. Byler (in MacCann & Woodard, 1977), Herbst (in MacCann & Woodard, 1977), and Mallam (in MacCann & Woodard, 1977) all decry the image of Native American Indians portrayed by nonwhite authors. "American Indians in literature, today as in the past," Byler declares, "are merely images projected by non-Indian writers" (p. 22). The books, she claims, are characterized by depersonalization and dehumanization, patronizing attitudes, distortions of truth, and vandalism of culture. Her conclusion is simple—and stark:
Only American Indians can tell non-Indians what it is to be an Indian. There is no longer any need for non-Indian writers to 'interpret' American Indians for the American public. (p. 38)

Herbst accuses the white writers of the past of presenting in children's books a stereotyped image of the Indian individual, presenting him as either savage, noble, or inferior (p. 40). The authors have, she says, "mirrored their belief in the superiority of the Western European civilization and in the 'white man's burden' of remaking the world in their own image" (p. 40). Mallam, harsh in his indictment of the treatment of the Indian, both in public school texts and in literature, records that only one Indian writer is represented in the entire collection. His appraisal of the situation is devastating. "Spawned by literary and instructional ignorance, these writers, in turn, perpetuate this travesty by producing other works of ignorance," he charges (p. 53).

The Council on Interracial Books for Children (in MacCann & Woodard, 1977) make similar criticisms of books portraying the Puerto Rican and Chicano cultures. They base their criticism on surveys of the books available. Of the one hundred books about Puerto Ricans surveyed by the Council, ninety-four were written by white authors. The Council reports that the books are plagued by gross inaccuracies about Puerto Rican traditions and customs, and the Council believes that:

because almost all the authors are white and middle-class and live in the suburbs, the books are also flawed by misconceptions of what it is to live in Ghetto, U.S.A. (p. 71)
Based on a survey of two hundred books on the Chicanos the Council (in MacCann & Woodard, 1977) reports that practically all of these books written by Anglo-Americans revealed attitudes of paternalism and superiority. "Even those authors whose efforts were marked by good intentions," they declare, "could not in the final analysis transcend the boundaries of perspective defined by their white, American cultural biases" (p. 56). In her evaluation of the Chicano in children's literature Taylor (in MacCann & Woodard, 1977) concludes that authenticity is usually nonexistent. Commercial interest, she believes, often brings to a field authors who have no real experience or sympathy for it (p. 66).

In the light of this body of criticism one must question whether good intentions on the part of an author are enough, or if it is indeed inappropriate that white authors write about nonwhite subjects and themes. Whitney (1966), MacCann (1976, 1978), and Rudman (1976) all agree that intentions alone do not qualify the writer. Whitney, herself an author, confesses that when she puts a negro in a story she does not—and cannot—write from the character's point of view. Admitting that many white writers have made valuable contributions to black literature, Whitney still believes that, regardless of good intentions, such authors cannot be "at the real heart of things." It is not perspective as much as experience that they lack, Whitney believes (cited by MacCann, 1978, p. 36). MacCann (1976) argues that even when the portrayal is sympathetically motivated and the white author claims a genuine imaginative experience, there is always the danger that the 'portrait' is incomplete, and the 'missing qualities'
may be the very ones required to convey self-respect or mutual respect (p. 156). While not denying the ability of authors to empathize with experiences other than those of their own sex or race, Rudman (1976) questions their ability to write about such experiences with honesty and authenticity (pp. 172-251). Broderick (1973), however, strongly condemns as racist the view that only Blacks should write about Blacks. All blacks are not alike anymore than all whites are, she declares, nor do all black people hold a single point of view. A corollary of the statement that only blacks should write for blacks would appear to be that blacks should write only for blacks. Broderick believes that many black authors and illustrators will not wish to be thus restricted in their choice of subject matter (p. 181).

Heins (1972) brings critical perspective and focus to a controversy which has often been confused and emotion-ridden. Experience alone can not make a competent writer or illustrator, he points out, for "authenticity needs the support of skill." All artists, regardless of their color and culture, must, Heins points out, "rely upon the power of the image, the work and the story to engage the attention— not to say the interest and the pleasure— of their audience" (p. 335). Heins questions whether one must be black to appreciate the artistic creations of a Tom Feelings or a Virginia Hamilton. Surely excellence in writing, as in any form of art, is where it can be found, regardless of the color of the skin or the texture of the hair of the author.

It is this philosophy which leads Monjo (1974) to reject completely Byler's (in MacCann & Woodard, 1977) argument that only American Indians should write about American Indians, declaring that
such a position is not only undemocratic and unhealthy, but also philistine and anti-art. For authors and critics to adopt such a stance, Monjo insists, is to set up walls in the very areas where thoroughfares and bridges for communication need so badly to be built.

He states his own position boldly:

Whites and Blacks and Indians—people of all races—must be free to put one another in one another's fiction or non-fiction. Anytime they want. Any way they can. So long as they're truthful, and they try to write well. Everyone must continue to feel free, and to be free, to write about anything they want to write. And no one must ever dream of trying to limit this freedom. (p. 37)

It is this same philosophy also which leads Bach (1977) to defend Paula Fox's right to write The Slave Dancer. Dismissing as trifling the rather harsh criticism of Fox by the Council on Interracial Books, Bach says:

Members of the CIRBC (Council on Interracial Books for Children) would keep Paula Fox in chains, permit her to write novels stemming only from her own experience. So much for imagination. The members of this organization will have to relinquish their copyright on suffering if they are to preserve a vestige of credibility. (p. 520)

Thompson and Woodard (1969) believe that only writers who have "a black perspective based on an appreciation of a black experience" (p. 418) should undertake to write about blacks. The writers should, they say, "wear the shoe," and they suggest that 'the wearing of the shoe' may be an actual or a vicarious experience. But having 'worn the shoe', not all are qualified to write about the experience, for not all are possessed of the creative ability to do so. Good Books about black children will result, they believe, only when 'black consciousness' is combined with creative ability (p. 418).
Meltzer (1974), a white author concerned with racism, believes that the black experience and the white experience have shaped each other, and it is impossible to deal with one without an awareness of the other. Meltzer explains how, in order to give his own work a black perspective, and to assist white readers to see themselves from that black perspective, he examines letters, speeches, memoirs, diaries, newspapers, court records, public hearings, interviews, affidavits, and eye-witness accounts. The authenticity rooted in such careful research, coupled with Meltzer's skill in writing, results in a work credible to both blacks and whites.

Hamilton (1975), an award-winning black author, gives an insightful, sensitive analysis of black literature, in the course of which she provides a thoughtful rejoinder to those who insist that the race of an author is a matter of critical concern. Referring to nonwhite literature as a "vanguard," and "a continuing revelation of a people's essence and individuality," she is critical of those—white or black—who would restrict the author's choice of subject matter, form and style. The primary concern should be good writing, Hamilton insists, regardless of "the source, the idiom, argot or social dialect" (p. 119). Of her own writing she says:

I attempt to recognize the unquenchable spirit which I know exists in my race and in other races in order to rediscover a universality within myself. . . . I am free to write about the time of the world as I wish; I must be; and I am confined only by the measure of my knowledge. For all writers this must be so, and never should they be intimidated into believing otherwise. (p. 120)

The Council on Interracial Books for Children, to which reference has been made earlier, has for some time been consciously engaged in
establishing critical criteria for assessing children's books. Their efforts culminated in 1976 in the publication of Human and Anti-Human Values in Children's Books: A Content Rating Instrument for Educators and Concerned Parents. The instrument derives from a philosophy that the author's intentions are irrelevant to the value of his work, that it is only the final product that counts; and that, regardless of intent, "white authors and artists have rarely done a satisfactory job of depicting Third World people" (p. 9). The justification for the emphasis of content over form is that "good form has always been in demand but good content has not" (p. 22). This attempt at establishing an evaluative base for children's literature has brought on the Council a storm of criticism and charges of politicking.

Referring to the Council as "The Would-be Censors of the left," Gerhardt (1976) issues a stinging indictment of its critical stance. She says:

There is the same old call for the control of writing, publishing and evaluating children's reading matter. . . . There is the same refusal to grant authors their interests. (Good intentions, says CIBC, are not enough) If writers fail to promote anti-materialism, anti-elitism, anti-escapism, and anti-ageism, their books can only be rated as "harmless" or worse—sexist, racist, etc. by omission. If the books are in any way anti to the antis listed above, they are harmful and to be shunned. No books or library collections can survive a CIBC-guided scrutiny. (p. 7)

Gordon (1977) criticizes the Council's instrument for "the narrow range of acceptables which the reviewers allow" and "the level of book reviewing which is so issue-centred as to forget any knowledge of history, author's purpose and artistic or literary value in a book" (p. 3). Donovan (1976) considers the publication significant in that it acknowledges the social usefulness of books as a valid criteria.
in their assessment. With reference to the Guidelines, however, both those presented in the Council's publication, and those prepared by the Task Force on Gay Liberation of the American Library Association's Social Responsibilities Round Table, Donovan raises a valid question: "When is it appropriate for a special-interest group to impress itself on creators?" (p. 147). The time to evaluate books is after they have been published, not before, Donovan maintains. He expresses concern over the 'dictums' being laid down by the Council on Interracial Books for Children, and any other groups. Such dictums, he fears, "suggest an adversary relationship between originator and evaluator that is certainly unhealthy and could prove fatal" (p. 147). Hentoff (1976) in his article entitled "Any Writer Who Follows Anyone Else's Guidelines Ought to be in Advertising," charges that the Council "obviously trusts neither individualism nor children and hence has no business messing with children's literature" (p. 29). While he agrees with the political goals of the Council, he states emphatically that politics and literature are separate and quite different matters. Disagreeing with the Council's avowed motive of "having children's literature become a tool for the conscious promotion of human values that will lead to a greater human liberation" (CIBC, 1976, p. 4), Hentoff charges that the Council "fundamentally misunderstands the act of imagination," and declares that "literature cannot breathe if it is forced to be utilitarian in this or any other sense" (p. 28). His concern for children is totally incompatible with that of the Council, as he perceives it. Of the Council's concern for children, Hentoff says:
The Council's concern is expressed through guarding them against any thoughts, characters, plot lines, words and art work that might 'harm' them. The Council, of course, considers itself the arbiter of all that, having discovered by innate virtue the sole and correct party line. (p. 29)

Hentoff expresses his own concern for children thus:

that they (children) find in a book what they have never quite expected to see in print - elements of themselves, dreams they're not sure but what they too have dreamed. And a chance, as many chances as I can give them to play with their imagination. (p. 29)

Conflicting criticism. Criticism must never be confused with dogma. Ostensibly objective, criticism will usually reflect as much of the value system of the critics as of their knowledge and powers of literary discernment. Critics, no less than students of literature, have the freedom to interpret a work at will, to study it, interact with it, and place their own pictures 'in the frame'. Where one person sees meat another may, in truth, see poison. Every sincere, critical viewpoint adds some new dimension to a work of art, and a piece of literature may grow or diminish in stature as it is exposed to the light of varied and divergent critical opinions. The situation becomes untenable only when literary criticism becomes enmeshed in political ideology, and an individual critic believes himself to be the sole arbiter of truth. No subject matter in children's books has been more prone to extremes of critical opinion than has racism.

Donovan (1978) describes the contemporary situation thus:

We appear to have worked ourselves into an Alice-like world where to espouse "intellectual freedom" is to be "racist. . . . People who espouse the cause of making America a better place as a result of positive actions designed to eliminate past and present injustices, find themselves branded "censors". . . .
Labellers speak both authoritatively and with strong, perhaps strident voices and are heard; and, depending on who is listening, to be heard is to be believed. (p. 87)

Donovan refers to a difference in critical judgment between the Council on Interracial Books for Children and Selma Lanes, children's book editor, critic, and reviewer. Lanes (1977), responding to an utterly devastating criticism of "The Five Chinese Brothers," published in the Council's Bulletin (1977), defends Weise's artistic approach as being "a style particularly well suited to the folk tale." Commenting that she had always considered the five brothers' yellow faces as being not "bilious" but "the colour of sunshine or butter, cheerful and appealing," Lanes suggests that the Chinese setting is only incidental, that the characters could just as well have been Kurdish, Peruvian, or Bulgarian when the book was written. She concluded:

By all means, let's avoid using any picture book where it might give offence, but let's also avoid blanket condemnation. It's just possible that one man's stereotype may be another's broadening experience. (cited in Donovan, p. 87)

To this honest assessment of Lanes, the CIBC replied:

Ms. Lanes may have felt that it was a 'broadening experience' because it just reinforced her own stereotyped image of the Chinese. (cited in Donovan, p. 87)

Conflicting opinion of a single work is nowhere more visibly portrayed than in the critics' response to award-winning books. Prime targets in the past decade have been Armstrong's Sounder (Harper, 1970), Taylor's The Cay (Doubleday, 1969), and Fox's The Slave Dancer (Bradbury, 1973). These three books, like Bannerman's Little Black Sambo, Loftings' Dr. Dolittle, and Travers' Mary Poppins, have been both praised and castigated.
Sounder, winner of the American Library Association's Newbery Award, was heralded by the New York Times Book Review as the best novel of the year, and it was included in the School Library Journal's best books for 1970. Myra Livingston (1971) calls it "a book of powerful realism, sparsely and beautifully written with much to say to every child of any age who reads it" (p. 83). Shelton Root (1970) says of it that "as an important literary social commentary Sounder cannot be faulted" (p. 726). Ethel Heins (1969) refers to its "epic quality" and the "power of the writing," which she believes derives from its "combination of subtlety and strength" (p. 673), and Sutherland (1969b) refers to its "elegaic quality that is reminiscent of the stark inevitability of a Greek tragedy" (p. 54). Stavn (1969) describes the book as rarely beautiful and sensitive; Petts (1971) refers to its philosophical center which is so powerfully evocative of response that "those words which spring most readily to mind - 'human dignity', 'love', 'hope', and 'faith' - seem inadequate." These qualities are all in the novel, Petts maintains, "but to mention them is something like describing Beethoven's Ninth as tuneful" (p. 24). This is high praise indeed. Schwartz (in MacCann & Woodard, 1972), on the other hand, questions its authenticity, describes its style as "white fundamentalist" and the book itself as "an emasculation of the blacks." Alexander (in MacCann & Woodard, 1972) also rejects the book as racist, and reference has already been made to Broderick's (1973) judgment that we do not need any more books like Sounder (see p. 180). The characters whom Heins (1969) considers "unforgettable," Schwartz labels "impotent"; while she speaks of the "inscrutable fortitude and
dignity" of the mother, Schwartz labels the mother as "the Black stereotype of the Southern tradition." Armstrong's technique of leaving his protagonists nameless is viewed by a number of critics as effective symbolism, which has its origin in slave art. Both Stavn (1969) and Townsend (1974) make reference to the namelessness which, in this novel, bespeaks the universality of oppressed people. To Schwartz, however, this technique is blatant racism. Declaring that "within the white world, deep-seated prejudice has long denied human individualization to the Black person" (p. 90), Schwartz maintains that what would have been an acceptable literary device in the hands of a black author, in the hands of a white author raises the issue of white supremacy (p. 90). Without casting any aspersion on Schwartz's sincerity, this writer feels compelled to challenge the inconsistency of this particular statement.

The Cay, winner of five awards, is equally controversial. It has been lauded for its message of racial understanding; it has been denounced for its propagation of racial inferiority and paternalism. So severe, indeed, were the charges of racism that the Jane Addams Book Award, given for a book of literary excellence which stresses themes of dignity, equality, peace, and social justice, was withdrawn. Foremost in the attack on The Cay has been the Council on Interracial Books for Children. The Council (1975) takes serious issue with the portrayal of the main character Timothy as "ugly, self-effacing, sycophantic, ignorant, and self-sacrificing" (p. 283). Timothy's eventual death, the Council declares, "has the ring of a metaphorical statement to the effect that it is for blacks to serve and die and
whites (white civilization) to be served and prevail" (p. 283).

Schwartz (in MacCann & Woodard, 1972) maintains that the book is colonialist, sexist, and racist. The book is racist, he declares, "because the white boy is master and the Black man is subservient throughout the story" (p. 108). Sadker and Sadker (1977) say of this book that:

To some young readers at a certain level of understanding The Cay will provide an emotional experience and help establish positive attitudes toward blacks. At a deeper level, for children of more penetrating insight, the racial portrayal of Timothy and the superficial nature of the tolerance that Philip has gained, will serve to cripple the book's message. (p. 151)

In responding to the charge of racism the author, Theodore Taylor (1975) attempts to explain his intention in having Philip lose his eyesight:

Insofar as prejudice is concerned I honestly feel that Philip was already blind, as was his mother, long before he suffered the injury. I believed that Philip should dramatically know that much of prejudice is a matter of eyesight (as with ugliness)—my own opinion. Finally, I wanted him to reach the point where "color" made no difference, leading to the line, "Are you still black, Timothy?" (p. 287)

This last line, which Taylor so carefully planned, has been central to the controversy which has raged around this book. So much for the author's intentions!

Nor did good intentions save Paula Fox from harsh criticism of The Slave Dancer. Chosen as a distinguished book, and awarded the Newbery Medal by the American Library Association, this book has been the center of a storm of protest from black and white critics, more vitriolic than that aroused by either Sounder or The Cay. The criticism
centers around the author's portrayal of the slaves and her apparent failure to lay blame against the inhuman behavior of the white slave traders. Mathis (in MacCann & Woodard, 1977) describes *The Slave Dancer* as a book that insults her children and all Black people, and perpetuates stereotypes about Africa and Blacks in general (p. 146). Tate (in MacCann & Woodard, 1977) charges that the slaves are completely dehumanized, that the book has racist implications, and it is lacking in authenticity (pp. 152-153). Lester (1974) believes that in spite of the quality of Fox' writing the book is not a success.

"In *The Slave Dancer,*" Lester says, "we are only spectators and we should have been fellow-sufferers—as slave traders and slaves" (p. 8).

That Fox herself intended to convey the suffering of the slaves there is little doubt. Her graphic depiction of events in the novel emanates from her own attitude toward slavery:

> Slavery engulfed whole peoples, swallowed up their lives, committed such offences that in considering them the heart falters, the mind recoils. . . . Slavery debases the enslavers. . . . But it is not the victim who is shamed. It is the persecutor, who has refused the shame of what he has done. (Fox, 1974, p. 341)

Schwartz (1974) identifies as a weakness of the book that the Black people do not in any way rebel or strike back. They are "characterless" and merely "pathetic sufferers." Nor does Jesse make any protest against the inhumanity which he sees perpetrated around him. Aware of oppression and injustice, he does nothing about it and hence provides no model for young readers. Of the book Schwartz says:

> White readers who empathize with the misery of the black experience can feel virtuous. . . . But in thus feeling compassion, whites are relieved of the need to change society. Like Jesse they end up feeling no real
obligation to take a positive role. They merely take the passive role of not playing the fife—of not reacting to injustice in any meaningful way. (p. 8)

Heins (1975), however, contends that Schwartz's position ignores or rejects what has been for thousands of years a basic critical tenet "that real tragedy cleanses through the arousal of pity and horror" (p. 111). The compassion which Schwartz depicts as a passive and impotent response, Heins describes as "affirmative, creative, and participatory," going "hand-in-hand with sensitivity, understanding and responsiveness" (p. 111). There are other critics who agree. The Slave Dancer, Bach (1977) declares, "is written with words that make one weep" and its conclusion is "as cathartic and devastating as that in any classic tragedy" (p. 520). Dixon (1975) describes it as a novel of great horror and great humanity, a novel which approaches perfection as a work of art (p. 125), and The Booklist (1974) describes it as:

a story that movingly and realistically presents one of the most gruesome chapters of humanity, with all its violence, inhuman conditions, and bestial aspects of human nature—explored but never exploited in Fox' graphic, documentary prose. (p. 484)

Townsend (1979) calls it Fox' finest achievement and of the violence and horror he says:

dreadful things done by decent men, to people whom they manage to look on as not really human, are a reminder of our own self-deceit and lack of imagination, of the capacity we all have for evil. There, but for the grace of God, go all of us. (p. 64)

The negative criticism of The Slave Dancer is concerned entirely with social issues. Even the harshest critics admit the literary quality of the work. Rudman (1976) crystallizes this position with
her comment:

At its best the book remains a masterful, descriptive piece. At worst, it is an apologia for white participation in the slave trade. (p. 208)

She concludes that, particularly at a time when the right of minority groups is such a sensitive issue, the author has a responsibility to create a world in which minorities are "a part of the movement toward a better society" (p. 208). By implication The Slave Dancer does not qualify. Yet no one has suggested that this book does not incite compassion, and genuine compassion and indifference make unlikely companions. Young people will never defy injustice, Heins (1975) exclaims, until "head and heart have suffered it--however vicariously" (p. 111).

What then is the final critical assessment of Sounder, The Cay, and The Slave Dancer? The divergent viewpoints sampled provide incontrovertible evidence that critics themselves are often in conflict; that at its best criticism may be partial and tentative; that at its worst it may be idiosyncratic and prejudicial. What appears certain is that works which invite and can survive such winds of conflicting criticism have some common qualities, and in the free exchange of critical opinion these qualities will emerge. When the storms of criticism have subsided, one may conclude, for example, that one of the strengths of Sounder is the symbolism of the nameless characters. One may see worlds of meaning in Taylor's single line "Are you still black, Timothy?" or in Paula Fox's "Never again could I listen to music." One may conclude that these lines in the respective novels fully convey the authors' intention; one may conclude, however, that Taylor, in
The Cay, does not successfully convey his commitment to universal brotherhood, and that The Slave Dancer would have been a stronger novel if even one character had had the courage to condemn what was happening. In either case the response is a considered and reasoned one and the books grow in stature commensurately.

Criteria for Evaluation of Books on Racial Themes

If the task of the critic is as Arnold (in Bate, 1952) describes it, "to try to know the best that is known and thought in the world, irrespectively of practice, politics, and everything of the kind" (p. 457), then any valid constructive criticism should culminate in the development of some set of criteria by which excellence may be recognized and assessed. Always, such criteria must be as much concerned with the quality of the writing as with the integrity of the subject matter. Books of excellence will result only when authenticity and accuracy are clothed in imagination, and communicated with consummate artistry. The power of the writing to engage, to convince, to evoke emotional response, to stimulate the imagination, and to create experiences which the reader may share vicariously, is a measure of its success. The authenticity of these experiences is no less a mark of quality. Aesthetic and social considerations are wedded in the sound critical judgment of books in which racism is either overtly or covertly present.

It is a simple matter to catalogue criteria for the evaluation of racist books. The literature surveyed for this study abounds in such lists. Baker's (in Haviland, 1973) "Guidelines for Black Books: An
Open Letter of Juvenile Editors" is a key statement in the development of a critical position. Other critics build upon it, elaborate issues within it, and in rare cases, add to it. Useful ideas are provided by Thompson and Woodard (1969), Birtha (in MacCann & Woodard, 1972), Baxter (in MacCann & Woodard, 1977), Byler (in MacCann & Woodard, 1977), and in the Evaluation checklists of the Council on Interracial Books for Children, included in their Bulletins, 1969-1979. It is not considered necessary to report those various statements of criteria either singly or totally, nor is it considered useful to categorize criteria for the literature of different ethnic groups. The lists have been examined and analyzed to yield a composite statement of criteria which may be applied to all books on nonwhites and minority groups.

The sets of criteria examined show very similar considerations being treated with varying degrees of emphasis. Whatever the specifics, the general concerns always include some reference to the authors' ability to adopt an unbiased and authentic cultural perspective, the honesty and integrity with which that perspective is communicated, the appropriate use of language; stereotypic portrayal of themes, social attitudes, or characters in either text or illustration; and the strength of the storyline, with emphasis on plot rather than on the story as vehicle for a social message. An underlying principle is that all books, regardless of the racial group being portrayed, must be judged by standards of literary excellence. Key words are accuracy, authenticity, honesty, humanity, individuality, equality, sensitivity, and relevancy; and all of these are to be combined with artistry. Patronizing and paternalistic approaches are deplored, as are
romanticized or idealized depictions, historical distortion or omission, and false and superficial integration. Cultural values must be respected, and the contribution of minority races must be honored. 'Imports' and 'reprints' must be carefully examined in the light of contemporary philosophy, but the realities of history must not be tampered with. The author has a responsibility to pass judgment on history, but he cannot change it. Realism must be based on truth, and the happy ending is not always credible. The presentation must be from the inside looking out; neither good writing ability nor good intentions alone will qualify the author. The only point of controversy which arises is the right to authorship (see p. 303), and this should not be considered here, since criteria are concerned with the 'creation' rather than the 'creator', and are in no way color-bound.

The demands on the writer are neither few nor simple. Birtha (1970) helps to bring many of these stringent requirements into focus by her comment:

> Children neither need books to foster antagonism, hatred and militancy in the blacks, nor to promote guilt feelings or distrust in the whites. . . . Children need books through which both blacks and whites can be educated to real-life situations through accurate portrayal of life. (p. 405)

What is needed, she insists, are books which engender in both black and white children a recognition and appreciation of each other's identity, individuality, and potential.

Referring to the difficulty of selecting such books from the proliferation of titles available Condon (1969) makes a wise observation:
The librarian will stumble into controversial issues and beliefs, but she must attempt to focus her concern on the merit and value of the individual, as a writer or as a subject and her selection will be a difficult one, no matter whom she places her faith in as judge—her Divine Maker, her Jehovah, or Old Father Time! (p. 657)

Synthesis and Emerging Principles

The body of critical opinion examined in this section supports the conclusion that racism appears in children's books in different guises; and that ethnic minorities are poorly served by their depiction in children's literature. By complete omission, by token inclusion, by a color-blind approach to cultural identity, and by stereotypic portrayal of race and individuals, many authors have dealt unrealistically and dishonestly with ethnic minorities in a multi-cultural society. While the critics are not always in agreement regarding the circumstances that depict racism through the literature; and while there are indications that some critics themselves find it difficult to apply a completely objective perspective to the separation of form from content, and the politics of criticism from its true function, there are, nevertheless, certain principles which emerge clearly and serve as valuable guidelines for an issues-centered criticism.

The deliberate or unconscious use of his art by an author of children's literature for the communication of racist attitudes or ideas is intolerable, and must be so identified and labeled. Authenticity in characterization, regardless of the ethnic background or social status of the individual(s) involved, may include the use of appropriate language 'variants' or dialectal patterns. Whereas exaggerated dialect or speech patterns may be used to demean or
stereotype, the sensitive use of speech patterns which are 'variations' from 'correct' or 'standard' English may be effective in depicting credible characters. Incongruity rather than credibility may be the result if authors attempt to 'purify' or 'homogenize' the dialogue of children's books; and the linguistic diversity which is their heritage should be convincingly presented to children through their literature.

The individuality of all characters should be portrayed with honesty and sincerity. Stereotyping by race, nationality, religion, or in any other fashion, either positively or negatively, is reprehensible. A character's strengths or weaknesses must be developed; never may they be merely imposed as natural concomitants of race, religion, or social status. Characters must be individualized and personalized; they must be perceived as representing themselves, while at the same time reflecting a cultural 'belonging'. The critics agree that in many books, characters who are members of minority groups move rather purposelessly through the plots as passive recipients of white paternalism, occupying subservient roles and possessed of no self-confidence or self-worth. Such stereotypic presentations are dishonest and must be so identified and castigated.

The right of an author to write about any social issue which interests him, and to people his plots with characters of any ethnic background, though denied by some critics, is strongly upheld by others. The critical principle emerging from the debate on the rights of authorship appears to be clear: that good writing on any subject need bear no relationship to the color or the ethnic background of the author. To argue that only Blacks can write about Blacks, or only
Indians can write about Indians, appears to be no more logical than to argue that only women can write about women, only the handicapped can write about the handicapped, or only that person who has experienced a particular historical occurrence can write about it. To accept this as a critical position would be to eliminate from consideration as literature such works as Miles' *Annie and the Old One* (Atlantic-Little, 1971), Wrightson's *I Own the Race Course* (Harcourt Brace, Jovanovich, 1968), the body of Sutcliff's writing—as well as Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. There is in the literature a strong critical front which completely rejects such a stance.

The critics are somewhat ambivalent on the responsibility of authors to use their own artistic efforts to comment upon or to attempt to correct social injustice. The responsibility of the author to present an accurate picture of a social situation is accepted; yet this very accuracy may incur the critical displeasure of those critics who appear to forget that the stereotype of today was yesterday's heroine, and that social practices which are rejected in some cultures are quite acceptable in others. The critical question which remains unresolved is whether an author's authentic portrayal of social history, either of situation or character, should ever be considered racist—in short, whether the writer is more than an accurate reporter of history or social circumstance. The principle which appears immutable is that authors must accurately report the "intellectual climate" related to the tale; the author may, however, by a judiciously placed comment, either indicate some disapproval or disassociate himself from the philosophical situation involved.
The fact that criticism of a particular work may often be conflicting, that critics cannot always among themselves agree upon literary merit, indicates how important it is that authors have the freedom to exercise the power of their own creative imagination. Nor should any Institution, Council or individual critic attempt to prescribe in advance a formula for artistic creation. To do so may serve to stifle, stultify, and destroy the creative spirit. Neither critical viewpoint nor artistic accomplishment may be effectively dictated, and emerging from this particular critical discussion are principles regarding the mutual independence of literature and politics; the significance of the author's intention in any piece of writing; the right of the author to freedom in choice of subject matter, form, and style; and the power of the creative imagination to transform social statement into a work of literature. The prevailing critical opinion overriding all of these ideas is that the quality of a book must never be evaluated solely in terms of the social attitudes presented. Nowhere is this more strikingly elucidated than by Thompson and Woodard (1969). They say:

When the principal concern of literature becomes polemics and manifestos, ideas replace characterization and the reader leaves the book with a slogan rather than an experience. (p. 422)

Sexism in Children's Books

Many of the critical principles which have been applied to racism in children's books are equally applicable to sexism. Problems
relating to language, stereotypic presentations, political propaganda, and the relative emphasis on authenticity and aesthetics are as apparent in a study of sexism as of racism. Just as racism may be defined as the systematic exploitation of human beings on the basis of their membership in a particular race or ethnic group, so sexism may be defined as the exploitation of human beings on the basis of sex. It must be noted that, while traditionally the female has been considered the natural victim of sexist attitudes and cultural practices, the male is no less victimized. This is recognized by the Council on Interracial Books for Children (1976) when they define sexism as primarily "the systematic oppression and exploitation of human beings on the basis of their belonging to the female sex," and secondarily, "the repression of people based on cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity which prevents both sexes from realizing their full human potential" (p. 11). The Council believes that sexism, no less than racism, is fundamental to American society, and is as prevalent in books for children. That its existence is equally deplorable is axiomatic.

In the last decade the women's liberation movement, through various Feminist Groups, have been active in focusing public attention on the inequities and indignities suffered by women, in life and in literature. Although criticized for aggressive tactics, propagandist approaches, and attempts to reduce literature to mere vehicles for personal ideologies, such groups have been successful in sensitizing the public to the imbalance existing in children's books. Their efforts, whatever their motivation, have resulted in raising the
critical awareness of both the producers and the consumers. Feminists on Children's Media, one such group, was formed in 1970 expressly to combat the stereotyped portrayals of girls and women in children's books. Members of this particular group—editors, writers, teachers, librarians—were all directly associated with children's literature. Believing that "the rigid sex roles depicted in most children's books—active and independent male characters, passive and dependent female characters—were detrimental to the healthy development of young readers of both sexes" (p. 5), they undertook as a major project the publication of Little Miss Muffet Fights Back (1971), a bibliography of "good books about girls and women" (p. 7). On the basis of their study in the preparation of this bibliography, and its revised edition 1974, they concluded that the number of books of excellence—"of unequivocally high standard as judged by feminist, literary and child-development standards"—is small (p. 8). Replying to the charge of 'feminist propaganda', the Feminists cite evidence to support their contention that the majority of children's books do not mirror reality in their presentation of sex-roles. Of the state of children's books they say:

although females slightly outnumber males in the population, males in children's books (fiction and non-fiction) far outnumber females; although over 40 percent of women in this country work outside the home, very few of the women in children's books have careers—and those who stay at home in books do not reflect—the reality of active school and community work in which real women are involved. (p. 9)

The literature examined for this study yields much support for this viewpoint. Experimental studies and empirical observations all attest to the prevalence of sexism in children's books. Based on his
synthesis of eighteen research studies, Dixon (1975) concluded that male characters appear much more frequently both in text and illustration than do females, and in more leading roles (pp. 1-41). Arguing that the only activities biologically restricted to one sex alone are 'giving birth' and 'suckling', Dixon states that there is no foundation at present for any of the fierce sex-role indoctrination that exists in children's fiction (p. 35).

In separate studies Czaplinski (1972) and Weitzman, Eifler, Hakada and Ross (1976) found blatant sexism in award-winning books. Czaplinski, in her systematic analysis of award-winning picture books and the best sellers of the forty-year period 1931-1971, reported increased evidence of sexism during the 60's and 70's (p. 31), an interesting phenomenon when one considers that this was a period of strong anti-sexist activity. Based on their own examination of the treatment of sex roles in all books which had been awarded the Caldecott Medal, Weitzman, Eifler, Hakada and Ross (1976) concluded:

Children scanning the list of titles of what have been designated as the very best in children's books are bound to receive the impression that girls are not very important because no one has bothered to write out about them. The content of the books rarely dispels this impression. (p. 9)

Among their findings they reported that in more than thirty percent of the sample of recent Caldecott books there are no women at all, and when female characters are included, they are usually assigned roles which are insignificant or inconspicuous (p. 9). They reported, moreover, that in a sample of eighteen Caldecott winners and runners-up in the past five years, they found 261 pictures of males compared with
twenty-three pictures of females. Nor did their analysis of the forty-nine Newbery award-winning books (1922-1971) yield any more positive results. These books, the researchers reported, depicted more than three males to every one female (p. 9).

Gersoni-Stavn (1974), in a perceptive evaluative overview of feminist criticism, makes reference to the many studies that have been done by private groups, feminist organizations and official task forces. These studies have all documented specific examples of sexism in children's books. Collectively, they present convincing evidence that many more stories have been written about boys than girls, that boys engage in more interesting and more fun-filled activities than do girls, that boys have frequently to come to the rescue of passive and helpless girls, that mothers are more likely to scold and reprimand than fathers are, and that mothers rarely work outside the home (p. 22).

Gersoni-Stavn's article is perhaps the most valuable single article on this subject. Not only does she bring into focus the valid concerns of feminist critics, but she also adopts a firm, sane, uncompromising position on the nature of such criticism and the responsibilities of the critics. Observing that sex-role stereotyping has resulted largely from the unthinking and unconscious action of both authors and publishers, she suggests that feminist critics must make their goal "the enlightenment, not the castigation" of all concerned (p. 25). Some evidence that publishers have indeed been enlightened is the fact that, since 1975, a number of major publishing houses have released guidelines for their writers in a deliberate attempt to ensure the nonsexist nature of their publications. McGraw-Hill's (1975)
Guidelines for Equal Treatment of the Sexes is a landmark in this regard. This company stated its motivation thus:

We are endeavouring through these Guidelines to eliminate sexist assumptions from McGraw-Hill Book Company publications and to encourage a greater freedom for all individuals to pursue their interests and realize their potentials. (in Sexism in Children's Books, p. 45)

Language in Sexism

The critics have been consistent in their attempts to increase public awareness of the sexism inherent in certain linguistic practices. A recurring concern in the discussion of sexism is the use of sexist language by authors of children's books. The critical issue in sexist language is quite different from that of racist language, where a major concern is the recognition of ethnic dialects. No one seriously maintains that there is a dialect that is specifically male or female. The critical issue in sexist language is the more basic one of the recognition of a feminine gender. The Council on Interracial Books for Children (1976) declares that the language problem as it relates to sexism is even greater than is the case with racism. Whereas 'Blackness' may be equated with badness in racist writing, womanhood disappears completely in sexist writing, they maintain (p. 13). The Council objects to the frequent use of such words as he, man, mankind, or the average man to refer to both male and female. They speak of the 'built-in sexism' which appears in words such as salesman, repairman, mailman, manpower and brotherhood. They charge that women are constantly made to appear as human baggage in such expressions as 'man and wife', or 'Daddy took the family to . . . ' and they reject the inferences in such statements as 'Each citizen must pay his taxes',
or 'a good nurse cares about her patient's feelings' (p. 13). This position of the Council is echoed by most of those who address the subject, though it is generally stated less dramatically.

Graham (cited in Maryles, 1975), executive editor of the American Heritage Dictionary, and one of the authors of the Guidelines for Equal Treatment of the Sexes in McGraw-Hill Book Company Publications, states emphatically that language is used effectively not only to exclude women but to trivialize and stereotype them as well (p. 59). The word man, which was in Old English a truly generic term, has now become so strongly associated with the male of the species, Graham insists, that "it no longer seems broad enough to embrace the average person or the human race" (p. 59). Graham objects also to the use of female-gender word forms such as poetess, aviatrix, and usherette. Such usage effectively distinguishes men and women in the field of performance and consequently, Graham believes, "it is possible to segregate women from the mainstream of work and achievement and to treat them less seriously than men" (p. 59). It is no accident, she believes, that the -ette form used to mean female in majorette means imitation in leatherette and, in kitchenette, it means little, small, or diminutive. Graham also considers trivializing and dehumanizing the practice of conferring the feminine gender in inanimate objects (p. 59).

McGraw-Hill (1975), in its Guidelines for Equal Treatment of the Sexes, addresses the problem of sexist language very forthrightly and pragmatically. Lists of words or expressions which are overtly sexist are identified and suitable synonyms or appropriate alternate constructions are recommended. These recommendations, however, are intended
primarily for use "in teaching materials, reference work, and non-fiction works in general," thus acknowledging an important critical principle, "that the language of literature cannot be prescribed." While sensitive authors must share the awareness and the valid concerns of the feminist critics, they alone must choose the language which will best serve their artistic intentions. The author, neither insensitive to the worth and the dignity of every individual whether female or male, nor intimidated by extremist views which would place literature in the service of personal persuasion, must exercise aesthetic as well as social judgment. It will serve neither the cause of art nor society if, in defence of nonsexist language, authors adopt a he/she approach or stultify their style with nonsexist vocabulary. Graham's point that the same term cannot represent both the genus and the species may be generally valid; for the writer of this report, however, the 'brotherhood of man' embraces the 'sisterhood of woman', and the 'personhood' of all.

Stereotypes in Presentation of Sexes

A major criticism of sexist books is the sex-role stereotyping which they portray. Those who write on the subject are in agreement that the stereotyped portrayal of children and adults, in both text and illustrations, violates the reality of the world the children know, and denies many of the healthy and legitimate expectations they may have for themselves. While most of the criticism centers around the stereotyping of females, male stereotyping is also a concern—more harmful perhaps because it is less frequently recognized. Just as
all girls are not helpless, passive, timid, or thoughtful; neither are all boys resourceful, active, bold or uncaring. Just as all women do not remain at home as housewives and mothers, nor dissolve into tears when faced with a crisis; neither do all men hold exciting jobs or make difficult decisions with aplomb. Many girls are active in sports; some boys like to play the piano. Some women are lawyers, doctors and busdrivers. Some men are teachers, nurses and cooks. Both boys and girls may be gentle, considerate, imaginative, and intelligent; both may be callous, thoughtless, unimaginative and dull. Both men and women may be successful writers, artists, athletes or soldiers; both may be secretaries, scientists, musicians or homemakers. Personality traits, natural predispositions and creative and intellectual ability are more likely the product of heredity and environment than gender. Occupations and professions are sex-differentiated largely because of social attitudes and cultural practices, rather than because of sex-related skills and abilities. Such is the stance of the feminist critics, and this philosophy provides the basis for the frequent charge of stereotyping against a large number of children's books—even some which have been cited for literary merit. The critics charge that girls are presented as placid, passive, docile, dependent, unimaginative, inward-looking, concerned with trivialities, rarely enjoying each other's company, playing traditional female roles, dressed in traditional feminine garb, and restricted geographically. Boys, on the other hand, are portrayed as active, aggressive, adventurous, domineering, independent, imaginative, cast in more exciting and challenging roles, traveling far and wide, involved in joyous
camaraderie with other boys, and usually emerging as heroes. Adult females are generally portrayed as wives, mothers and housekeepers, or in subservient occupational roles requiring neither wit nor resourcefulness. Women and girls perform almost exclusively service functions; the rich variety of professional roles and challenging vocations is reserved for men and boys. While men and boys lead, women and girls follow, or, as Dixon (1975) describes the situation, the males do; the females are. It is noteworthy that Weitzman, Eifler, Hakada and Ross (1976) in their study of the Caldecott award-winning books, found that not one woman had a job or profession; they also reported that "loving, watching, and helping are among the few activities allowed to women in picture books" (p. 11). Observing that the picture books give the impression that women are helpless without men and that they present girls in roles which are "defined primarily in relation to that of the boys and men in their lives," the researchers conclude:

The rigidity of sex role stereotypes is not harmful only to little girls. Little boys may feel equally constrained by the necessity to be fearless, brave and clever at all times. While girls are allowed a great deal of emotional expression, a boy who cries or expresses fear is unacceptable. (p. 18)

The authentic presentation of the male role, they maintain would encourage boys to use their emotions as well as their intellect (p. 26).

Stewig and Higgs (1973), who had earlier undertaken a picture-book survey to clarify the actual facts in relation to women's roles, reported findings similar to those of Weitzman et al. Their analysis of 154 picture books, chosen randomly from a collection judged representative of those typically available to children, led them to report
that "women are not depicted in the rich variety of professional roles in which they are engaged today" (p. 49). They recommend a wider presentation of women's roles so that young children, particularly girls, may have "a more realistic picture of career opportunities now open to women" (p. 49).

One problem in coping with sex-role stereotyping is, as Huck (1979) explains, that today's stereotypes were yesterday's norms (p. 395). By reference to selected folk tales Donlon (1972) shows that the female characters in this literature appear "either as ineffective creatures who need to be dominated by men, or as aggressive monsters who must be destroyed by men" (p. 611). One would, however, question any critical judgment which recommends a rewriting of the literature of the oral tradition. To change the folk tales, Huck believes, would be to destroy our traditional heritage. She cautions also against any attempt to rewrite history. A book which is historically authentic and true to its genre should not be criticized, Huck maintains, because it mirrors social practices or reflects images which are not in accord with the contemporary point of view. Such liberal criticism may not be extended to contemporary books, however. They, in Huck's opinion, must allow for "a wide range of occupation, education, speech patterns and futures for all persons, regardless of race, sex, creed or age" (p. 395).

Gersoni-Stavn (1974) also warns the feminist critics to "tread carefully in the area of historical fiction" (p. 24). To tell it as it was is not necessarily to condone the way things were, she points out. She considers it a responsibility of the critic to remind the
writers of historical novels that there have been, in every period of history, men and women who have defied the conventions of their time, just as there have been men and women whose life styles, though socially acceptable in their own lifetime, appear unconventional to later generations. Both groups, Gersoni-Stavn claims, are fit subjects for historical fiction (p. 24). Surely any attempt to recast Caddie Woodlawn according to contemporary feminist guidelines would be misguided as well as incongruous. It is even conceivable that overzealous attempts to avoid the stereotypes of the past may result in another stereotype— one no less deplorable— the ideal feminist stereotype.

Some critics view the nonsexist book as an answer to sex-role stereotyping. If the sexist book is, as Huck (1979) describes it, a book in which "women and girls are exclusively assigned traditional roles, or [in which] men and boys are expected to behave in certain prescribed ways" (p. 395), then the nonsexist book must be one in which the opposite situation pertains. It has been more specifically defined as a book "that conveys the concept of personhood" (cited in Sadker & Sadker, 1977, p. 243), and the Feminists in Children's Media (1974) state their position clearly and succinctly:

we do not ask that children's books simply trade over their current stereotypes for some "ideal" feminist stereotype; we simply ask that children's books begin to reflect the diversity of real life, and to show the changes that are taking place in the ways men and women and children live and work together. (p. 9)

In establishing their criteria for such books they ask "that literary merit and valid themes combine to delight and inspire readers" (p. 20).

**Politics, Sexism and Criticism**

If literature is deliberately used as a vehicle of social-activist ideology, the aesthetic considerations are likely to become subordinate to the message. In feminist criticism, therefore, as in racist, there
is the danger of confusing propaganda and art. Propaganda in and of itself may be harmless; when it comes in the guise of literature, it may be subtle and dangerous. It may appear as an example of the 'didacticism in a new dress' of which Townsend (in Egoff et al., 1969) speaks. Townsend rejects any critical approach which seeks to prescribe the social values which the author should espouse. To use books as "ammunition" to rectify all kinds of social ills is, according to Townsend's philosophy, a move toward literature as propaganda and, thus, "a move toward conditions in which, hitherto, art has signally failed to thrive" (p. 39). Claiming that books are judged by the wrong standards, Townsend says:

It is not irrelevant that a book may contribute to moral perception or social adjustment or the advancement of a minority group or the Great Society in general; but in writing there is no substitute for the creative imagination, and in criticism there is no criterion except literary merit. (p. 40)

In their article entitled "Didacticism in New Dress: A Look at Free Stories" Bingham and Scholt (1976) examine books that are written deliberately to champion the cause of women, and they question the integrity of these books as literature. They describe them thus:

These books (whose purpose is social activism rather than aesthetic experience) are just as surely tracts in their own way—offering codes that tell the children how to act, what to know and what to value—as were the manners-and-morals sermons of the past. They are just as non-creative, stultifying, limiting and pat. (p. 256)

Such books, they declare, written to formula to propagate the philosophy of some interest group, whether women's liberation or anything else, are not literature but propaganda, and as such will be harmful both to the cause and to children (p. 256). Similarly, Rosen (1974), in
discussing the conscious writing of role-model books, claims that such purposeful writing has resulted in "tract writing sweetened with fictional effects" (p. 50). It is surely the responsibility of the critic to recognize and call attention to such tract writing whenever and wherever it appears. This is not to deny that books for children should mirror today's culture; it is rather to affirm that reflection will be honest and authentic only as its first considerations are literary and aesthetic.

Lanes (1974) and Gersoni-Stavn (1974) both provide thoughtful discussions of this point of view. Lanes believes that considerations such as feminism or male chauvinism, or any other deliberate attempt to raise the reader's social consciousness have little if anything to do with literature. Allowing that such considerations may be minor or major aspects of a literary work for either adult or child, she believes that "once they become the reason for the work's being, we leave the realm of art or near art, and enter the province of propaganda" (p. 23). Lanes discusses publications of the Feminist Press designed specifically to combat the stereotypes of sex-roles. While commending the messages of these books, and acknowledging that they may effectively broaden the outlook of children, Lanes denies that they are literature. To pretend that they are is perhaps to be more concerned with politics than literary excellence.

Gersoni Stavn (1974) is equally unequivocal in her judgment. Feminist criticism, to be valid, must be humanistic, she declares, and she makes a plea for criticism of children's books based on aesthetic standards. Rejecting as censorship any attempt by zealous
feminists to effect corrective social action by removing from circulation certain books of the past, Gersoni-Stavn cautions that feminist critics must avoid paranoia if they are to be taken seriously. (p. 24). Their valid concerns, she maintains, are the concerns of all critics; their valid demands provide a strong common cause for both book-people and child-people, and their ultimate goal is that expressed by Townsend:

We would wish every child to experience to his or her full capacity the enjoyment, and the broadening of horizons, which can be derived from literature. (cited in Gersoni-Stavn, p. 24)

The National Council of Teachers of English (1973) in their "Guidelines for Publications" affirm their belief that sexist bias must be confronted in the same way as racist and religious bias must. They acknowledge, however, that change will come not as a result of 'fiat or legislation', but only through the total commitment of all who are involved. They ask not that publications become propaganda for women's rights, but that they be neither "consciously or unconsciously, advocates for current negative conditions and attitudes."

This enlightened approach will be effectual in fostering unbiased writing, however, only if critics, as well as authors and publishers, are able to consciously and consistently distinguish between art and propaganda or between the aesthetics of writing and its politics. Nor is there any justification for the action of feminists in writing their own books especially for girls. Such written-to-formula books are usually theme- or message-oriented and lacking in that imaginative quality which is a hallmark of literature. Books of literary excellence that are at the same time nonsexist exist, as has been suggested
earlier. It is often politics and not criticism that dictates that books which appear on one group's nonsexist lists are labeled as sexist by other groups. Perhaps it is the nature of literature rather than the nature of sex roles that needs to be more clearly defined.

Feminist critics, like all critics, must also acknowledge literary merit where it occurs, whether the protagonists are male or female, or negatively or positively depicted. The decision of an author to develop his tale around male characters only, is that author's artistic right. The work is not diminished by the exclusion of female characters, nor must it be criticized on these grounds. Conversely, a book which features as protagonist a female bus driver or tractor operator is still a poor book if it is poorly written. Nor must it be lauded as literature because it is nonsexist. Women, in an appropriate context, may be portrayed as contented housewives and mothers, neither seeking nor needing the work-world for self-fulfillment. Such a book must not be castigated if the presentation is honest, the characters credible and the theme developed in a well constructed plot. It is a matter of sound literary judgment on the one hand, and superficial political views on the other. Although she does not label it as such, Steele (1975) has been the object of such political criticism. She has, she says, been criticized because many of her books are not feminist in tone. Her reply is noteworthy:

The problems of women concern me very deeply and always have. But I am writing books not propaganda. If in the course of looking about for a book to write, my soul lights upon a girl who faces some troubling issue of discrimination, then I would not hesitate to write about her. Until that happens I shall continue to write about girls and women as they appear in my head. . . . I cannot purposely make my characters
what they are not, for that is surely the very opposite of excellence. (p. 251)

Herein lies the difference between literary craftsmanship and political persuasion as perceived by an author. The critics' viewpoint is cogently stated by Lanes (1974):

The expansion of women's horizons, the principle of the equality of all men regardless of their religion, color or national origins—these are noble goals. Yet, I have serious reservations about the literary value of an endless stream of books promoting feminism or any other cause. The deeper reaches of the human soul are neither touched nor illuminated by the great majority of such works. In fact, books of this sort are in exactly the same category as books given to school children in the New China or the Soviet Union in order to promote approved social and political attitudes. (p. 27)

Criteria for the Identification of Nonsexist Books

Literary merit is a primary consideration in the evaluation of books for children, and nonsexist books, no less than any other type, must be judged by this standard. That this is the prevailing critical opinion becomes apparent in the examination of the statements of criteria which abound in the literature. Specific sets of criteria prepared by feminist groups, professional organizations, publishers, writers, and critics all identify common concerns. Their conclusions differ in their manner of expression rather than in substance. Individually they focus critical attention on particular problems which must be recognized in the honest and realistic portrayal of sex roles in children's books. Individually and collectively they express the dual concern that characters, both male and female, be presented as individuals and not as sex-stereotypes—either negative or positive—and that such characterization be an integral part of works of literary
merit. The integrity of the work and the authenticity of the character portrayal are seen as interrelated. The critical principle which appears to underlie all of the statements of criteria is made explicit in one of the McGraw-Hill (1975) Guidelines:

Men and women should be treated primarily as people, and not primarily as opposite sexes. Their shared humanity and common attributes should be stressed, not their gender differences. Neither sex should be stereotyped or arbitrarily assigned to a leading or secondary role.

When this criteria is met, related criteria will also apply. Occupations should be gender-free; parents should be shown in dual roles of parents and people; in both text and illustration clothing should be functional and contextually appropriate; the relative interdependence of male and female should be situation-based and not prescribed; females should be free to develop confidence and strength and to engage in physical activities without any fear of loss of femininity; intellectual and emotional expression should be the equal right of both sexes; males and females should equally experience success and failure without being made to feel "unsexed" by either; both males and females should be depicted as possessing mental as well as physical attributes, with neither holding a monopoly on professional or vocational talents. While alternate life styles are espoused and portrayed, the traditional sex roles should be neither demeaned nor ignored. Both males and females may be portrayed negatively as well as positively, but such portrayal should be as individuals, not stereotypes.

Books which meet the demands of such combined criteria will portray individuals, not as representatives of a particular sex, but as credible human beings engaged in realistic endeavors. Such books will
not be mere statements of the social conscience but books of literary excellence, which may leave children with something to remember.

Lanes (1974) contends that for children and adults alike the truly memorable books are most likely those which deal with triumphs of human beings over some sort of "spiritual bondage." She explains her own philosophy of excellence:

While it is certainly true that members of minority groups and women in contemporary society do face special problems, it is also true that long after women have attained their equal rights and today's minorities have achieved full acceptance, the great human problems—failure to communicate with one another, love unrequited or lost, an individual's grasp forever exceeding his possibility for achievement—will still confront us all. And we will continue to look to works of true literary quality and depth to shed light on them. (p. 27)

Synthesis and Emerging Principles

Both experimental studies and empirical observation attest that sexism does exist in books for children, that boys are written about more often than are girls, that there is an imbalance in the frequency with which males and females occupy leading roles, that males and females, both as children and adults, are depicted in traditional sex roles, and that even the award-winning books are not free of sex bias. The problem related to language, stereotypic presentation of characters, the confusion between genuine criticism and political propaganda, and the relative emphasis on authenticity and aestheticism, all apply to the study of sexism in children's literature as they do to racism. Sexist language serves to exclude as well as to trivialize and stereotype females, but the general problem of stereotyping as it applies to males is as serious as it is to females—it may be even more serious
because it is less often recognized. The critics agree that the stereotypic depiction of either male or female characters—either positively or negatively—is unacceptable. They caution, however, against the distortion of historical authenticity. Authors of children's books may not rewrite the circumstances of the past; contemporary books, nevertheless, must not be restricted to the traditional sex-roles, but must reflect the philosophy of present-day society. The critics caution also against a zealous feminism that seeks to place literature in the service of personal persuasion rather than in the service of art, or seeks to make literature primarily a vehicle of a social consciousness. Any such approach will effectively move children's books from the realm of literature to the province of propaganda. Characters, both male and female, must be portrayed as individuals, not as representatives of their sex; members of both sexes must be treated as people, with the focus on a shared humanity rather than on gender differences. Individual characters, regardless of gender, must be depicted as developing their emotional, physical, and intellectual capacities and engaging in such behavior and occupations as are appropriate to their personalities and their abilities. The interdependence of male and female characters must never be superimposed on the basis of sex, but must be convincingly revealed as a natural consequence of circumstances and setting. While alternative life-styles belong in the literature, traditional sex-roles are no less legitimate. Authors must have the freedom to develop their narratives around male protagonists or female ones as the occasion dictates, and a book which is poorly written is a poor book regardless of the gender of the main
character. Authors must also have the right to portray members of both sexes negatively or positively without being subjected to charges of sexism, as long as the portrayal is honest and develops naturally. Literary excellence must never be assessed in terms of the relative number of male and female characters included in a work; nor must sound literary judgment ever be confused with political expediency. Books designed primarily to promote feminism—or any other cause—must be subject to the rigid critical assessment that all books deserve. The cause of sexism—and the cause of all other valid social issues—will be best served in books for children when well conceived and carefully executed plots, credible characterization, and appropriate settings and themes all combine with a captivating style to produce a work of literary merit, the memory of which may linger long after the title or the characters' names and genders have been forgotten.

Handicapism

The Handicapped in Society

That there is little criticism of books about the handicapped is, perhaps, not surprising. Society has been slow to accept disabled people into its mainstream, and books are mirrors of cultural practices. Negative perceptions of the disabled have in the past pervaded almost every aspect of society. Objects of curiosity, fear and superstition, disabled individuals have been ignored, ostracized and ridiculed. Physical and mental handicaps have been considered as identical or concomitant ills, and associated with them have been poverty, ugliness, guilt, loneliness, alienation, rejection, and helplessness. Emphasized
have been the characteristics which segregate the handicapped, rather than the common humanity of all people. More recently, increased knowledge and understanding of the nature of physical and mental disabilities have resulted in the quickening of the social conscience regarding the rights and needs of disabled people. Baskin and Harris (1977) report, however, that still "daily experience provides ample evidence that the disabled are not considered part of the mainstream of the common citizenry" (p. 11).

Although the terms handicap and disability are used synonymously, it is generally social attitudes which determine when a disability will become a handicap. The term handicapism has been used to refer to the prejudice, discrimination, and stereotyping practiced by society against disabled peoples, and, like racism and sexism, it has connotations of the host of negative attitudes with which society often regards minority groups. One manifestation of handicapism, Bikler and Bagdan (1977) believe, is the reflection by the media of just such negative images and attitudes (p. 5). Baskin and Harris (1977) believe, however, that books of excellence for children may effectively counter such portrayals. Maintaining that better and more complete acceptance of the handicapped will result from increased contact with them, either through actual experience or through honest portrayals in literature, they say:

Books that children read provide continuous stimuli through their formative years, and latent and overt messages in stories of exceptional individuals accumulate to form subsequent perceptions. Literary presentations that avoid distortion and that accurately reflect the reality of impairment help readers separate the disability from the false superstructure imposed by society. (p. xv)
In this claim there is obvious support for the principle espoused by the critics of racist and sexist books—that social issues may be effectively wedded to literary excellence.

**The Portrayal of the Handicapped in Children's Books**

Although the amount of criticism on the subject of handicapism is minimal, authors, publishers, and consumers of such books may find a useful critical base in what does exist. What emerges is a clear and perceptive analysis—albeit incomplete—of the positive and negative features of books depicting the handicapped. Primary concerns in the criticism examined are the techniques of the author in the presentation of the handicapped, and the image of the handicapped that emerges. The problems of language and propaganda do not, in the criticism, assume the proportions that they do in the criticism of racist and sexist books, though it is obvious that the potential for both may be present. Criticism of language is of an indirect and general nature, relating to the demeaning of the handicapped through the figurative and idiomatic use of language in such expressions as 'a lame duck', 'a blind alley', 'deaf as a post', or 'blind drunk'; and the use of euphemisms such as 'slow learner' or the 'emotionally ill' to refer to unpleasant or objectionable situations. The observation is that idioms derived from disabilities are always negative, and that they, as do the euphemisms, reveal unconscious values and beliefs about disabilities (Baskin & Harris, 1977, pp. 7-8). Some reference is made also to the frequent use by authors of slurred and stumbling speech as a characteristic of almost any physical or mental impairment, and
often portrayed as the object of ridicule (p. 7).

The one reference to the danger of confusing art and propaganda was made by Baskin and Harris (1977) who refer to "literary manipulation" which may be "counter productive" (p. 48). That their observation is valid and as pertinent to books of racism and sexism as to those of handicapism will be recognized by reference to the following comment:

Many advocates of outgroups assert that the public must be saturated with models that reflect prodigious accomplishments or quintessential goodness—models that are antidotes to the ubiquitous stereotypes found in many cultural forms. This posture frequently surfaces in children's literature where the focal character is so idealized that resemblance to an actual person vanishes. The result is a packaged item, like a gas-ripened tomato, superficially attractive in its untroubled perfection, but without taste, substance, or relation to its real counterpart. (p. 49)

They add, further, that any practices which attempt to obliterate unfavorable portrayals from the literature will be self-defeating (p. 49). It has been noted elsewhere in this chapter (p. 347) that a negative image of an individual, regardless of race or sex, is perfectly acceptable when such a portrayal is justified by context and is not merely a stereotype. The same observation regarding the handicapped person may now be made.

Reference has been made earlier to the work of Baskin and Harris (1977). Their Notes from a Different Drummer: A Guide to Juvenile Fiction Portraying the Handicapped, the most significant contribution to the evaluation of the literature depicting the handicapped, provides both descriptive and critical analysis of more than three hundred juvenile books published in the period 1940-1975. The philosophy on
which this valuable collection is based is that "impairment should neither be exaggerated nor ignored, neither dramatized nor minimized, neither romanticized nor the cause of devaluation" (p. xv). The authors believe that people with impairments are human beings with human idiosyncrasies. They have human needs and desires; human hopes and fears. Neither saints nor sinners, neither super heroes nor social parasites, the handicapped are possessed of strengths and weaknesses, wisdom and folly, industry and slothfulness. In short, within the constraints of their particular disability, they are like the rest of society, and it is as such that they should be portrayed in books for children. This is equally true whether they play major or minor roles. Schwartz (1977) charges that some authors portray the disabled as handicapped, and by always using examples of people like Helen Keller and other disabled superachievers, both authors and society minimize the no less valiant struggle of ordinary people (p. 15). Baskin and Harris share that viewpoint.

In assessing items for inclusion in their guide the authors are especially critical of books which portray the handicapped in any "patronizing, pitying or romanticized" manner, and it is their judgment that a book will succeed or fail on the basis of its literary excellence, regardless of the integrity of its intention (p. xiii). The ideal book, they believe, would combine excellent writing, wide appeal, and honest and sympathetic portrayal of people (p. 54). Because such books on any subject are rare, they have made some compromises in their selection. In their interpretative and literary comments, however, they consistently draw attention to both messages and merit and
the successful integration of the two. Since, in books for young children, the illustrations carry much of a book's impact, they note with concern the usual omission from illustrations of all representations of aberrations, even when characters have obvious impairments. Such omissions, they declare, are expressions of a negative attitude toward the disabled.

Not all books which focus on the handicapped communicate attitudes which are equally positive or healthy. Describing much of the literature about the handicapped as "infused with emotions that call for tears and lamentations," Frank (1969) concludes that well written books should evoke compassion that is informed rather than sentimental, and strengthening rather than resigned" (p. 136). Baskin and Harris (1974), however, believe that the best writing will evoke empathy; and empathy, which focuses on "acceptability based on knowledge and closeness," is a more positive response than is compassion, which concentrates solely on suffering (p. 56). Haynes (1974) in his perceptive analysis of *Let the Balloon Go* (Methuen, 1978), *I Can Jump Puddles* (Chesire, 1973) and *I Own the Racecourse* (Hutchinson, 1968), states that each of the books is successful in developing this empathy in the reader "by enabling him to see the world through the eyes of the handicapped child" (p. 17). Haynes examines the authors' treatment of spasticity, infantile paralysis and mental retardation. The handicaps are different, the authors' techniques are different, but collectively these books exemplify some of the best aspects of literature about the handicapped. In discussing these Haynes draws valid conclusions which have generalizations beyond the three books under discussion. He
points out, for example, that superstition often surrounds the handicapped, that the physically handicapped are not necessarily mentally handicapped, that parents are often over-protective of handicapped children, that society tends to emphasize the difference between the handicapped child and the normal child, that even parents and peers, as well as society at large, subject the handicapped individual to cruelty. He shows how the authors of the books under discussion handle these problems positively and effectively. Haynes defends Wrightson's graphic depiction of a spastic attack (I Own the Racecourse), claiming that nonhandicapped—adults as well as children—need to confront the realities of the handicapped in order to understand their point of view, for it is of such understanding that empathy is born.

In an attempt to determine how fictional characters manage deafness, how novels of the deaf may be improved, and future directions for such novels, Groff (1976) analyzed six novels in which deafness is portrayed. He discovered that in all six novels the author is successful in developing an empathy between the deaf child and the other characters and that all books end on a happy note. The inevitable happy ending Groff questions, believing that the problem of the deaf child may be more realistically presented if some note of tragedy were permitted. As alternatives to the happy-ending approach, Groff suggests three options for authors. Authors may, he suggests, continue to write as before, evoking sympathy for the psychological status of the deaf child, but minimizing the assurances that circumstances will improve; they may have more characters who engage in exploits of
daring and adventure with little or no reference to their deafness; or they may use a fantasy approach in which all problems related to deafness are solved "either by futuristic scientific events or devices, or by magical bodies, forces, charms, or implements" (p. 201). Groff also suggests that, to be more psychologically attractive, novels for the deaf need to be more humorous, mysterious and adventuresome. His theory regarding the most effective approach to writing for the deaf may be generally applied to writing depicting any disabled people. He says:

the prevailing supposition in children's literature, that the best way to change present-day apathy toward the deaf to an interest in and acceptance of them is to continue recounting the miseries of their emotional ghetto, is wrong. What is needed is the creation of aggressive and productive characters who prevail because of their handicap, rather than being its mean-spirited or pitiable victims. (p. 201)

Groff's insistence that the handicapped be portrayed as "aggressive" and "productive" human beings finds unqualified support in the critical literature. Baskin and Harris (1977) demand that characters with exceptionalities be treated as people, rather than devices (p. 34), and they identify as literary flaws the "vague and insubstantial treatment of the disabled," and characters who are "so sweet and good as to be offensive" (p. 54). Huck (1979) believes that well written stories of disability should evoke respect for what the child can do rather than pity for what he cannot, and that characters should be "multidimensional persons with real feelings and frustrations" (p. 422); and Haynes cites as one of the strengths of I Can Jump Puddles the attitude of the parents toward their son's handicap.
In the most comprehensive statement of criteria in the literature examined, Bikler and Bagden (1977) warn against depicting disabled people only in a receiving role. Rather, they demand that they be presented as multi-dimensional individuals, in a wide variety of situations, capable of a full range of human emotions, neither the perpetrators nor the victims of violence, interacting as equals, and giving as well as receiving (p. 9).

What is of primary importance in books about the handicapped, as it is in books about race or sex or any other subject, is the honest and sensitive portrayal of both situations and character by an author who recognizes that any message he communicates is subordinate to his artistic creation. With reference to the criteria by which any book for children should be evaluated, Tucker (1972) suggests:

One might ask of a children's book whether it offers a child simply one viewpoint which is perhaps rather like the child's own, or whether it offers two viewpoints, which is the beginning of wisdom. (p. 56)

The best books about the handicapped will offer the child that wisdom of which Tucker speaks.

**Synthesis and Emerging Principles**

The amount of criticism related to books about the handicapped is small, reflecting perhaps the lack of recognition which, until recently, society generally has afforded this segment of the population. Such criticism as does exist presents an effective analysis of the books, focusing on the techniques of the author in the presentation of handicapped characters, and on the images those characters portray. Problems related to language and political propaganda do not assume,
in the criticism of writing about the handicapped, the importance which has been attached to them in the criticism of sexism and racism. The question of political propaganda does not arise in the criticism reviewed. Criticism of language relates exclusively to the use of negative, figurative, and idiomatic expressions derived from disabilities. The prevailing criticism is that of stereotypic presentation of characters, and in this regard the critics denounce the perspective of many authors. The critics agree that disabled characters should be featured in children's books in both major and minor roles, but they insist that a clear distinction must be made between a disability and a handicap, and that no disabled individual should automatically be depicted as handicapped. The critical consensus is that physical and mental impairment, in both text and illustration, should be neither ignored nor exaggerated, neither minimized nor dramatized, neither romanticized nor patronized. Individuals with disabilities should be treated as full human beings, possessed of all the strengths and weaknesses, vices and virtues, to which human nature is prone. They should be portrayed neither as suffering saints nor deserving sinners who have been punished, but as ordinary individuals who, within the constraints of their particular disability, function as 'normal' citizens. Such characters should be portrayed in multidimensional roles, neither totally helpless nor dependent, but contributing to society as well as receiving from it.

Writing which features the handicapped must succumb to neither sensationalism nor sentimentality, but must portray both character and situation with honesty and sensitivity. The best writing will evoke
respect for what disabled individuals can do rather than sympathy for any limitations their disabilities may impose. It will evoke empathy rather than compassion; it will convey a picture of a community in which members possessed of varying degrees of well-being live together in a climate of mutual respect and support. It is better to omit the disabled entirely from children's books than to present them as objects of suspicion, fear, derision, repulsion, charity, or pity. Any acceptable presentation of them will be justified by the development of an 'artistic whole' in which they play natural and contributing parts.

**Ageism**

**The Portrayal of the Elderly in Children's Books**

The Council on Interracial Books for Children, which has been active in the exposing of racism, sexism, and handicapism in children's books, has been in the forefront of criticism of ageism, which they define as "the systematic subordination of human beings on the basis of their age, primarily old age" (Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1976, p. 16). The Council claims that both in text and illustrations children's books stereotype the elderly. More specifically their charge is:

The old hobble through children's books, loaded down with all sorts of infirmities: deafness, poor sight, forgetfulness. Their speech is "high pitched" or "halting." Their manners and attitudes are rigid, stubborn, old-fashioned, annoying, interfering—and are often ridiculed. The elders are allowed a minimum of ideas, which they constantly repeat. Sometimes they are allowed to be wise but this supposed wisdom is usually given in the form of a few truisms or clichés. (p. 16)
If this serious criticism is reasonable and just, then most of those who write about children's books are remiss in failing to focus attention on the circumstances which surround it. The fact is that the depiction of the elderly has been almost ignored. That the material examined for this study revealed so little substantive criticism relative to this social issue appears to suggest, either that the position of the Council is grossly exaggerated, or that the critics generally are particularly insensitive to this subject. Is it possible that the critics' ignoring of the subject is a mirror of contemporary society's denial of aging?

Ansello (1976), Associate Director of the Center on Aging at the University of Maryland, believes that the problem is not so much one of negative stereotyping as it is of ignoring the elderly entirely. His own content analysis of more than five hundred books led Ansello to comment on the pervasive invisibility of the elderly in books for young children. He found older characters present in only sixteen percent of the books examined, and less than four percent of the books focused on an older person as the principal character. In his analysis of 18,000 illustrations he found that less than five percent of the illustrations contained any older characters, and in less than one-half of one percent of all the pictures did older characters appear alone (p. 4).

When the elderly did appear, however, they were usually stock characters, cast in sex-stereotyped roles, and performing unimaginative rather than creative tasks. According to Ansello, the elderly, more to be pitied than admired, are frequently portrayed as having lost
their health, their initiative, and their independence. The adjectives old, little, and ancient comprised more than eighty percent of all physical descriptors applied to them in the books examined, and the two equally most frequent adjectives used were sad and poor (p. 6).

Based on his findings Ansello concluded:

When older characters are always portrayed as sweet, little, or slow and are seldom depicted as capable of self-care or as active or productive, then we must acknowledge that children's literature with its present focus is a dis-service to society. (p. 6)

With reference to the responsibility of those who write such books, Ansello comments that while authors must not present the elderly as "superpeople" they must portray them as human beings and that any honest portrayal will show them exhibiting "the whole continuum of behaviours and roles—good to bad, strong to weak, active to passive—that all characters (and people) are entitled to" (p. 10).

Contrary to the conclusions reached by Ansello, Sadker and Sadker (1977) maintain that when the elderly do appear in books for children the portrayal is overwhelmingly positive—even idealized. They do agree, however, that the depiction is often restricted and one-dimensional (p. 82). In their appraisal "Growing Old in the Literature of the Young" (pp. 71-93) they identify and discuss books which portray warm and loving relations between grandparents and grandchildren, books which "depict the elderly as a source of special wisdom and as participants in a unique and intimate bond with the young," and books which "attempt to describe realistically the problems that old people in our society must confront, the pain this confrontation causes them, and the pain it causes the children who love them" (p. 82). Their
discussion includes such titles as *William's Doll* (Harper & Row, 1972), *The Story Grandmother Told* (Dial, 1969), *Grandfather and I* (Lothrop, Lee & Shepherd, 1959), *My Grandson Lew* (Harper & Row, 1974), *Akavak* (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1967), *Journey from Peppermint Street* (Harper & Row, 1968), *After the Goat Man* (Viking, 1974), *The Hundred Penny Box* (Viking, 1975), *Grandma Didn't Wave Back* (Watts, 1972) and *A Figure of Speech* (Delacorte, 1973). The authors conclude that picture books, as well as books for older children, should present not only the positive aspects of aging but should also help children recognize and understand some of the problems the aging confront in a society that is not always sympathetic. The understanding the Sadkers covet for young readers may well have as a by-product that empathy which Baskin and Harris (1977) suggest is a more positive response than compassion (p. 56).

The portrayal in literature for the young of the serious problems associated with aging is a relatively recent phenomenon, an offshoot of the new realism. Illness, disability, senility, loneliness, and rejection—all unpleasant but very real aspects of growing old in a society dedicated to youth—are now being explored honestly and sensitively by authors of contemporary juvenile fiction. Katz (1978) defends the exploration of such social issues as legitimate literary pursuits. She sees the authors as artists making literary statements. It is, she contends, a time-honored, although painfully neglected role of the artists in any society, to act as observers and make artistic statements about what they see (p. 317). Of the effectiveness of their presentations she says:
As an observer of a society in which aging has become a serious problem and in which old people are often victimized by forces beyond their control, the current writer of children's books has revealed a sense of despair, outrage and injustice that seeks to confront our consciences and often challenges us to act. (p. 317)

Katz denies both the invisibility and the stereotyped portrayal of the elderly. Studies on which such conclusions are based, she claims, approach fiction from the standpoint of social science not literature, and what is reported as denigratory treatment of the elderly is often artistic truth. She refers specifically to the Newbery Honor book *Annie and the Old One* (Atlantic-Little, 1971) which has been accused of ageism by the Council on Interracial Books for Children because the grandmother is unnamed. What is not considered, Katz charges, is that in many cultures different from ours the term Old One is a term of honor and respect and in no way dehumanizing. Katz charges also that gerontologists:

have been busy counting and drawing up charts, but their research has been directed at literature which is not concerned with aging instead of that which is. (p. 316)

In her own critical survey, Katz examines a number of books in which the elderly are indeed portrayed as coping with the problems referred to earlier. She chooses classic as well as contemporary examples. Included are *Then Again Maybe I Won't* (Bradbury, 1971), *A Figure of Speech* (Delacorte, 1973), *The Hundred Penny Box* (Viking, 1975), *After the Goat Man* (Viking, 1974), *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* (Atheneum, 1967), as well as *Pinocchio* and *Heidi*. Her conclusion, unequivocally and forcefully presented, is a stark contrast to that of the Council on Interracial Books for
children, quoted at the beginning of the section and with that of Ansello, quoted on page 359. She says:

If gerontologists, humanists, librarians, and teachers are concerned about bringing children into touch with the problems of old people, they need look no further than at children's books. . . . Gray hair, wrinkles, and the crises that arise towards the end of life are observed through the eyes of those who are just beginning their own journeys. And all of this is woven into story lines and characterizations and sometimes expressed in language that borders on the poetic, so that the ultimate statements can be haunting and memorable. (p. 321)

Synthesis and Emerging Principles

In the critical literature under review there is little substantive criticism of books on the elderly, and what does exist is strongly dichotomous. On the one hand, there is the critical viewpoint, supported by formal research and empirical observation, that in books for children the elderly are either ignored completely or portrayed in a totally unacceptable and unrealistic manner—cast as stock characters in sex-stereotyped roles, either relegated to denigratory positions and described as old, little, ancient, sad, and poor; or idealized and portrayed as super-people. On the other hand, there is the critical position that denies the invisibility and the stereotypic portrayal of the old, insisting that such claims emanate from social science rather than literature and are a denial of artistic truth; and insists that in many books of literary excellence the elderly are sensitively portrayed as coping effectively with the problems of growing old in a youth-oriented culture.

The polarization of critical opinion may well reflect the same confusion between genuine literary criticism and pure political
persuasion which surfaced in the criticism of racism and sexism. It is unlikely that the truth lies at either extreme, and there is an obvious need for more critical study and comment in this regard. In spite of this critical ambivalence, certain principles emerge clearly. The elderly belong in books for children and any stereotypic portrayal of them is reprehensible. Elderly characters, no less than younger ones, should emerge as human beings, individualized and particularized. They should be neither eulogized nor debunked; nor should they be depicted as necessarily ill, helpless, or dependent on their children or charity. The elderly represent the sum total of human personality; they have lived longer than the young but they are not, by virtue of their longevity, either better or wiser than others. Obstinacy, no less than wisdom, may be a product of their years; they are not automatically, because of their advanced years, either human saints or cantankerous dolts. Picture books for the young, as well as books for older children, should sensitively and sympathetically portray the physical and social problems of aging; they should equally depict middle-aged grandparents, still actively involved in productive labor, neither senile nor disabled physically or mentally.

It may be that ageism, as well as racism, feminism, and handicaps, are, like beauty, in the eye of the beholder. In any case, books on the aging, like books on race, sex, or handicaps, must be evaluated not as social propaganda but as literature. A book's merit as a work of literature is not determined by the relative number of black or white, male or female, whole or impaired, young or old, who appear either in text or illustration. If the work meets standards
of literary excellence, the likelihood is minimal that it will be
discriminatory or derogatory in its portrayal of any individual. Katz' remark about books on the aging is equally relevant to all other groups discussed in this chapter:

A work of fiction must be judged in its entirety before it can be accused of being discriminatory against a particular group. Its theme, as well as its setting, must be considered, and the characters must be judged in relation to one another. To quote out of context in order to prove a point is unfair to the writer and the book. (p. 317)

The New Realism

The New Realism in Children's Books

Overlapping with racism, sexism, handicapism, and ageism, but going beyond these 'isms' to discuss with disarming frankness a wide variety of subject matter, is a composite category which may be labeled the new realism. This new realism, in its liberal approach to books for the young, dramatically reflects society's changing attitude toward both children and literature. It also mirrors the popular culture and the values of a society in ferment. As was suggested earlier in this chapter (p. 281), birth and death, conception and abortion, marriage and divorce, and homosexual and heterosexual activity, are all among the subject matter. The new realism looks at life in all of its diversity; it exposes the seamy, the sordid, and the sadistic; it admits that birth is a natural physical process; it allows people to die by unnatural as well as natural causes; it acknowledges the existence of human sexuality and treats it as a subject of interest and importance to young people. Rinsky and Schweikert (1977), in reference to the new realism, identify themes which were heretofore
considered inappropriate for children's books and topics which were formerly taboo. In their discussion of themes they include emerging family patterns, death, ethnic groups, and male/female changing roles. Under the heading of taboo topics they list pregnancy, adolescent physical change, birth, and drugs (p. 473). Considering the scope and nature of this category it is not surprising that it has been the focus of considerable critical commentary and not a little controversy. The criticism centers mainly around the honesty of the realism, the appropriateness of the themes and subject matter, and the manner of the presentation.

Honesty of Realism

That the critics should so frequently raise the question of the honesty of the new realism appears rather ironical, since the proponents of this writing justify its approach to and treatment of its subject matter on the grounds of honesty, and on behalf of the child who has a right, they believe, to read it like-it-is. Honesty in realism, however, demands that attention be given to the positive as well as the negative factors at work in society. When this balance is missing, the result is a form of neo-realism, no more honest than 'good' books which it purports to replace. In the new realism of the past decade the emphasis on the negative and the sensational has tended to reflect a disillusioned and pessimistic view of society, where there is little worth preserving and where neither adults nor young people are deserving of respect or emulation. Messages have often dominated and key words have been topicality and sensationalism. A
concern for relevance has frequently replaced the more legitimate concern for literary excellence. Many of the books appear to be following a formula—a formula which is easily derived from an examination of a sample of the so-called junior novels. Any serious criticism must challenge the honesty of the portrayal of society in many such books; the criticism examined in this study does so forcefully. All adults are not drunken, domineering, dull, corrupt, uncaring, cruel or incompetent; nor are all teenagers thoughtless, self-centered, mal-adjusted radicals. Some women still find the role of housewife and mother a challenging and fulfilling one; not all marriages end in divorce. In many homes there still exists a loving relationship between husband and wife, and between parents and children. Youth are not always preoccupied with alcohol, drugs, and sex; nor are the elderly always helpless, ailing and senile. Birth and death may both be treated with naturalness and dignity; human sexuality need neither be exploited nor ignored. Ordinary lives well lived are not necessarily devoid of either glamor or contentment; the superficially topical is not necessarily literary. Whatever the form of their expression, these have been the opinions of a number of those who write about children's books.

In her perceptive appraisal of the American realistic fiction of the 60's, Egoff (1970) suggests that much of the realism of that period is designed for the market place and is "aggressively un-literary." Primarily concerned with themes that are currently topical, these books, she declares, are more concerned with news value than story, and are "instant, slick, superficial, and as prone to style
change as your automobile" (p. 148). While not questioning the validity of the themes, Egoff deplores the shallowness and the oversimplification which often characterize their presentation. These books offer one-dimensional answers to multi-dimensional problems, she charges, and she questions whether bibliotherapy can really be an excuse for poor literature. Her judgment on the bulk of these books is incisive:

Books about "real life" are on the increase. But these "outer-directed" works of fiction that offer thinly disguised instruction on psychological and sociological themes—hastily written, speedily published, whose only interest derives from the topicality of their subject—are no more realistic than soap operas. (p. 149)

Writing again a decade later of a brand of books which she charges has "remodelled and narrowed" realistic fiction to what may be more correctly referred to as the problem novel, Egoff (1980) characterizes this genre as being primarily concerned with externals—"how things look rather than how they are." The books, she says, are concerned with problems rather than plot or character; the protagonists are usually hostile to and alienated from the adult world, with their only satisfactory relationships with adults being with some unconventional individual; the narrative is first-person, confessional, and self-centered; the vocabulary is limited; both sentences and paragraphs are short; the language is flat, with a profusion of expletives; sex is discussed openly; and the setting is urbane (pp. 357-358). Most of these books, according to Egoff, "could be destroyed on literary grounds, or challenged as amateurish forays into the disciplines of psychology and sociology" (p. 356).
Steele (1971), Bach (1975) and Fox (1975) also challenge the honesty of many of the books of the new realism. On the basis of her personal examination of "the crop of books that purported to tell it like it is," Steele (1971) concluded:

It was not just the feeling that many of these books were written to be fashionable; it was, worst of all, I think, that they were written out of expediency, that we rushed in to convince our children that we too were concerned and interested, not because we were concerned but because we suddenly thought we ought to be. As though, indeed, we were telling them not what we honestly believed but too often what we thought it was easiest and safest and most convenient to have them believe. (p. 20)

Bach (1975) refers to the falseness of the many books which in the guise of contemporary realism gives 'meretricious assurances' about many matters. The author who tackles contemporary subjects may be courageous but not necessarily realistic or honest, she points out. Bach is critical of the 'with-it' books which exploit sensational topics and reader interest without due respect for reader or child. Of such books she says:

A book about a biophysicist mom who swears at her kids can be just as flat and unreal as the much maligned genre that describes a dishwashing mom earnestly hemming her cheerleader daughter's tulle prom frock the night before the dance. It is the writer's vision that makes a book memorable, not the family situation. (p. 66)

While accepting the credibility of the new themes, Fox (1975) insists that "the mere evocation of subjects once tabooed" must never be confused with "the artistic power, the imaginative comprehension of emotion needed to bring such themes ... closer to life" (p. 440). Comparing the new realism to the moral tales of an earlier time, Fox suggests that contemporary authors may have devised 'a new kind of
bullying' by giving the impression of omniscience, and "by treating
the pains of growing up as a mechanic treats the parts of a motor"
(p. 440). This comment of Fox is reminiscent of Egoff's (1970) observa-
tion that genuine problems are often treated too simplistically. The
problems being addressed in a book can only be perceived by the reader
as "absorbing" and "significant," she says, if the author is successful
in involving the reader in a pain, sorrow and joy that is universal.
When this happens, Egoff believes, the work becomes so personalized
that "every reader can say of the protagonist 'That's me!' and of the
theme 'I know it's true'" (p. 149).

Burch (1971) is excited about the trend toward stronger realism
but points out that subject matter alone, no matter how topical, cannot
make a good book. A story, Burch holds, should "never be merely a
platform from which to discuss a topic," and he quotes Townsend who
maintains that you can't turn a bad novel into a good one by filling
it with "pregnancy, pot, and the pill" (p. 263). Burch deplores any
brand of realism that rules out happy endings, claiming that in life
there are surely as many happy endings as sad ones, so that to be
truly realistic, books should average out accordingly (p. 264).

Particularly harsh in her criticism of the new realism is Jordan
(1973), herself an author. Sharing something of Burch's philosophy,
Jordan rejects as dishonest much of this body of writing, of which she
says:

In the name of realism reviewers applaud books crammed with
relentless, so-called documentation of pathology, flowering
from a pivotal, perverted faith in a pathogenic, miserable
and hopeless condition of being which is, allegedly, our
realistic condition. In the name of realism, the writer
finds himself or herself encouraged or forcibly spurred to invent problems, to build conflicts, to design characters of infallibility and self-centered inconsequence. (p. 143)

Jordan believes that what passes for realism is, for the most part, "pointless, self-indulgent, status-quo-protecting, and irresponsible garbage" (p. 143). This serious charge is based on Jordan's analysis of the negative perspective of much of contemporary realism with its heavy emphasis on problems, conflicts and human ineptitude. Honest realism, Jordan believes, should help the reader "get past the problem and in to something else" (p. 144), and this, she claims, much of contemporary realism fails to do. Jordan calls on publishers to "cease and desist their perpetuation of the status-quo under the misleading mantle of realism," and she states clearly her own commitment, as an author, to realism:

I will not write anything unless I can learn how to craft it into usable, good news, or usable information to interdict and humanely supersede the reality of some particular bad news. (p. 145)

One aspect of the new realism which has been frequently criticized is the dishonest portrayal of adults and parents. Early in the decade Bacon (1970) had serious misgivings about 'the adult cop-out' in the burgeoning realistic books. Referring to "a stream of books with drunken mothers and no-good fathers," in which "children are left defenceless and alone in a world which they do not understand and with which they cannot cope unaided" (p. 157), Bacon insists that such is not honest realism. At the end of the decade, and in reflection on the books of the 70's, Calabro (1980) notes that the time has come for authors to acknowledge that "lots of kids do have loving, supportive
families and would like to read about similar ones in fiction" (p. 26). Supporting her position, Calabro cites a recent study by Broderick in which 500 children overwhelmingly included their parents in their list of the three adults most important to them. The third adult was also, usually, a family member. If this is a social truth, then writers of realistic fiction cannot ignore it and, as Calabro suggests, authors who wish to create honest realism will feel compelled to develop their adult characters more fully. Such books may become correspondingly longer and more complex, and the 'formula' may have to be abandoned (p. 26).

Central to the controversy which has surrounded the new realism has been the frank and open discussion of matters pertaining to human sexuality. In this also the honesty of the presentation has been challenged by the critics. Articles by Stanek (in Gerhardt, 1973) and Wersba (in Gerhardt, 1973) provide a focus for this criticism. Stanek refers to books of the new realism which simply exploit a time of change rather than deal with reality. She believes that books which are being written in the heat of a sexual revolution cannot, if they are honest, ignore such subjects as sexual desire, contraception, and abortion. What is of primary importance, however, is the manner in which the subject matter is treated. "A book dealing with premarital pregnancy can be as old-fashioned," Stanek maintains, "as the cliché how-to-get-a-date-for-the-prom story" (p. 180). She believes that an honest, realistic treatment of the subject demands that the writer deal in depth with all facets of the issue, presenting the conflicts, examining the alternatives, and portraying emotions (p. 180).
Wersba speaks of the books which do indeed address the subjects Stanek feels are omitted from discussion, but addresses them falsely, so that pain and suffering, condemnation and punishment are the natural consequences of any deviation from the accepted social values. She declares that the so-called New Liberalism in children's books is not really there at all, but rather, what is there is merely the old morality thinly disguised as the New Sex (p. 172). She states her perception of the situation:

In the old books, the boy and girl would go for a soda after a movie; in the new books, they smoke a little pot and go to bed. It's all very contemporary and a few four-letter words are tossed in. But when you examine these books closely, you find that the morality is still the same; that a judgmental quality pervades. Those who might have been homosexual, of course, go straight; those who were promiscuous are guilty; and if an adult has been attracted to a child heaven help him. (p. 172)

The implication of Wersba's comment is, of course, that if the 'realism' of fiction is to be an honest portrayal of the realities of life, then dire consequences will not necessarily follow any sexual behavior that contravenes the accepted social norms. Avowing that she is not asking for graphic depiction of sexual behavior in children's books, Wersba makes a plea for "depth and truth." "Sexual happiness—human happiness—these are areas yet to be explored," she believes (p. 173).

Appropriateness of Theme and Approach

To accept Wersba's philosophy regarding the honest, uninhibited portrayal of human sexuality is to accept also her prior supposition that such topics are appropriate subject matter for children's books.
Among the authors and critics of children's literature there are indeed many strong proponents of this position. The argument is that all topics sensitively explored provide suitable fare, since children's books must keep pace with the realities of life itself. Steele (1971) believes that though she writes for children she is free to write about any subject matter she chooses, and she feels in no way bound to flood the realities of the world with a rosy light. The real world has not spared children hunger, cold, sorrow, pain, loneliness, disease, death, war, famine, or madness, she reasons, so why should authors who write for children fail to make use of this knowledge (p. 20).

Lester (1970), Lanes (1971), Kalkhoff (1973), Seligmann (1974) and Rinsky and Schwei kert (1977) all share Steele's belief that children's books should confront the realities of their world. Lester (1970) charges that as long as we fail to give children books which honestly depict the unpleasant aspects of society, we train them to be "victims" of that society, and we make them "emotional and spiritual amputees." He declares:

In a world in which a child can be dead from an overdose of heroin at age twelve, Snow White is not only inadequate, it is in danger of being vulgar. (p. 202)

Lanes (1971) suggests that most adults are "reluctant to ruffle that blanket of primal innocence with which all children enter the world," and the result is often books "so sunshine-saturated and corruption-free as to be antiseptic, devoid of any living substance" (p. 5). Kalkhoff believes that those who select books for children must descend from their ivory tower, abandon what Lanes (1971) calls the Peter Pan Principle, look around at the real world in which the children live,
witness the diversity of experiences which meet them there, and provide
them with books which mirror these experiences. Seligmann (1974)
describes the heroes and heroines of the new realism as "doing things
that real kids do." Included in these activities, according to Selig­
mann, are:

smoking dope, swallowing diet pills, suffering mental break­
downs, worrying about homosexuality and masturbation,
watching their parents squabble and split up, being battered
by racial discrimination, confronting serious illness and
even death. (p. 83)

And to those who might challenge this motley fare Rinsky and Schweikert
(1977) offer this reminder:

We need to remember that, in terms of sophistication and
candor, the youth of today are no more like the youth of
25 years ago than the realities of the 1970's are like the
realities of the 1950's. If one wishes to object to the
realities of today's literature, whether written for adults
or for children, one must first object to the realities of
life that are, for so much of the world, harsher and less
comforting than they were 20 years ago. For if literature
is to escape the charge of offering only escape to its
readers . . . it must be aware of the world and its
problems. (p. 472)

Responding to the hypothetical question: Since you're writing
books for children, can you subject them to the harsh realities of
life, like sex, Neufeld (1971) maintains that because one is writing
about the world and ideas of the young one dare not "excise an entire
portion of their consciousness and learning" (p. 150). Neufeld explains
what he, himself, demands in a juvenile novel:

I want a whole kid. I want a girl who's curious about sex,
perhaps afraid of pain. I want a boy who's afraid he might
not be able to perform as he thinks he should. I want dirty
jokes, since they exist, and slanderous asides about that
girl just ahead of us in the hall . . . I want, simply, kids
in books allowed the same freedom of their imaginings they
are allowed in real life. Anything less is, to me, dis­
honest. (p. 150)
Wersba (in Gerhardt, 1973) too, claims all of life for her child readers. She would like to see more sex in children's books—starting with picture books and going right up to the young-adult novel—but she would like to see it treated differently. Wersba complains that in our children's books, as in adult books, we have moved from Puritanism to Pornography, and pornography she defines as "the meshing and interworking of parts rather than people" (p. 171). What Wersba covets in the treatment of any subject that touches on human sexuality is "the meshing and intermeshing of minds." Sex is psychological, not genital, she believes, and "people respond to one author because of what is in their heads—and hearts" (p. 171). Wersba would obviously reject any superficial treatment of the subject in the interest of topicality or relevance.

Klein (1977), a successful author of sixty short stories and eighteen novels, believes that many books in their approach to sexuality are "setting up a false and even dangerous premise—that sexual activity of any kind is only something children 'turn to' as a result of a negative experience. Like Wersba, Klein wishes more, not less, treatment of sexuality, and she wants it presented as a 'natural' and 'normal' part of human growth and development. Her main thesis is that "the whole of life is the province of children's literature," and that there is a need for honest realism which reassures children that their own sexual feelings are natural and healthy, a cause for joy rather than embarrassment or chagrin (p. 84). Klein (1975) would remove not only the taboos of subject matter but those of language as well. She hopes that in her lifetime the language of children's books
will be so liberalized that "four-letter words may be used as frequently in books as they are in the everyday lives of respectable middle- and upper-class folk" (p. 309).

In his discussion of the responsibility of authors and critics Wildick (1970) points out that the author cannot present "the truest possible picture" if countless taboos must be respected. He maintains that there are some occasions in children's books where both honesty and art demand that reference be made to "body functions or even to coarseness in behaviour or language" (p. 127). Hildick explains his position:

People do copulate. Many of them enjoy copulating. They do urinate and defecate. They do talk about such functions—clinically or coarsely. People do swear. People do use colloquialisms. People are often ungrammatical in their utterances. . . . The author who bows indiscriminately and completely to all the more serious taboos is bound to falsify his picture of life and even trivialize it. (p. 130)

The viewpoint of those who have misgivings about the appropriateness of matters pertaining to human sexuality as subject matter for children's books is most effectively presented by Frank (in Gerhardt, 1973). Frank is particularly concerned that books dealing candidly with sexual activities reach down in readability to ten-year-olds. She suggests that it may well be time to pause and assess what is happening. Admitting that adults have to come to grips with their own inhibitions and hang-ups when they make decisions about the books they make available to children, Frank believes, nevertheless, that adults must insist on some positive values in these books. The question, she believes, is one of benefit rather than harm, and "benefit can come in the form of information, emotional satisfaction, escape, expanded
horizons, or just plain fun" (p. 169). In determining the acceptability of books of high sexual content Frank would apply the criteria of integrity of purpose, authority, moral and social validity, and the resolutions they offer. She freely admits that her concern is that children be protected from "unnecessary, premature, unhealthy sexual stimulation, beyond their present maturity and capacity to manage" (p. 170). Frank's dilemma of 'how much' and 'when' is shared by many of those who must make decisions about the new realism. Related to that dilemma, for this writer, is the still-unanswered question why? This appears to be Bach's (1975) question also when she says, "Why, then, do reviewers chortle: 'Finally, a book about drugs, sex, masturbation. So needed for kids!' Needed for what?" (p. 67).

Hunter (1975) addresses this dilemma very effectively in Talent Is Not Enough. With reference to the multiplicity of themes presently being explored in children's books, themes which on the surface appear totally unsuitable for children, she agrees that children must learn to relate to real-life situations. She maintains, however, that writers who claim the freedom to explore such themes must exercise the responsibility of raising the level of understanding of the reader by creating emotional and intellectual frameworks to which the child can relate. The distinction between the suitable and the unsuitable in subject matter for children's writing lies, for Hunter, in the distinction between the normal and the aberrant, "with all that lies on the side of the normal classed as suitable, and all on the other side as unsuitable" (p. 21). The problems arising from the new freedom which contemporary society allows the writer of children's books will
not be solved by talent and technique alone, Hunter believes, but by
talent and technique compounded with what she calls the "convention of
care." This convention of care, which involves the author's sensi-
tivity to subject and audience, must operate strongly in the prepubertal
years, Hunter believes. Unless such care is excercised, she says,
the law of diminishing returns is immediately activated, and
the writer will only succeed in rubbing his young reader's
nose in the dirt of the world before the same child has had
a chance to realize that the world itself is a shining
star. (p. 22)

Hunter repeatedly emphasizes the author's responsibility to take into
account the nature of the audience to whom the work is addressed. Her
note of subdued warning is timely:

children's writing is rapidly rising from its position as
the Cinderella of the arts; and it could be salutary to
wonder whether some talented newcomers to the ball might
be more concerned with dancing in glass slippers than with
keeping an ear open for the midnight chime that warns,
Children . . .! Children . . .! (p. 22)

Worthy of serious note also are Hunter's misgivings about the
consequences of what appears to be the 'cult' of realism for children.
She is concerned not only about the restriction of language associated
with such realistic stories, but even more so about the 'danger' to
children which may result from constant exposure to 'realistic'
writing. She identifies such danger thus:

the danger that children over-burdened by serious themes may
be made old before their time; or even, simply that they may
be denied the due need of their natural fascination for the
fantastic, the hilarious, the exotic, the adventurous, in
storytelling. (p. 23)

The "warts and all" realism of the 60's and 70's appears to be
nearing a stage of transition, with a change in emphasis, if not in
subject matter, imminent. Publishers, who may be considered chief among the critics in the sense that they make the final decision about what will reach the audience, now purport to be looking for books which not only point out problems but show how ordinary people live with them.

"Realism has been accepted, so publishers can relax a little now," the Editor-in-Chief of one juvenile publishing company explains. He elaborates:

> If a book features a spunky, independent female character, we don't have to tag it as 'feminist' anymore just as a book about divorce can be read on its own terms and not as the newest problem novel. *(in Calabro, 1980, p. 24)*

The Editor-in-Chief of Bradbury Press, the individual responsible for giving Judy Blume to the book world at the beginning of the decade with *Are You There God, It's Me Margaret*, enunciates his company's present philosophy:

> A lot of the YA novels of the 1970's tended to rub the nose of the reader in reality. We're finally getting away from that; nobody has just one problem, and nobody's problem affects just one person. The best books all along have been those which artfully illuminate just what it is to be human, not just how it is to suffer along through this or that. Those are the kinds of books we're looking for. *(in Calabro, 1980, p. 24)*

Now that we have survived the shock of the "warts and all" subject matter and the "tell-it-as-it-is" approach, it may be timely, as Frank (in Gerhardt, 1973) has suggested, to pause and assess the direction in which realism in literature should go. The barriers have come down and writers of the new realism, no longer restricted by the taboos of the past, work in a much more favorable artistic environment. But this new freedom must not be perceived as license, nor is it a guarantee of excellence. Book authors and publishers must, as Alexander
(1970) points out, "differentiate between the superficially topical and the deeply relevant; between what stimulates the nerves of the epidermis and what reaches the bone" (p. 146). Much of contemporary realism, in that it has failed to make this differentiation, will be short-lived, dated by the very 'causes' it espouses, and the shallowness of its approach. The realism which will endure will offer more than topicality of subject matter. Alexander makes this point effectively:

The deepest and most durable works of art go beyond a specific social unit, beyond a specific area, and become explorations of the world, not only of the neighbourhood; journeys not only to another country, but into the cosmos of the human personality. (p. 146)

**Synthesis and Emerging Principles**

The criticism reviewed in this section provides no easy answers to the complex questions associated with the new realism, but there emerges quite clearly a strong critical position which holds that in the exploration of contemporary social issues a concern for realism, relevance, and topicality must never replace that concern for literary excellence which must remain an author's primary goal. The critics demand honest presentation of the realities of life and death; they approve of the expansion of subject matter to include all topics which are related to children's development and experience; they insist upon a sensitive, dignified, and honest depiction of the same. They identify as pitfalls for authors of realism the mistaking of the stereotype for the real, the superficial for the substance, the message for the art. They reject the dishonest portrayal of both
people and situations, and they deny that serious social problems may be solved as simplistically as some authors suggest. It is the treatment of the subject matter rather than the subject matter itself which determines the merits of a work. All matters concerning human existence may be fit subjects for exploration but it is the author's vision which may transform into literature what might otherwise be mere social gossip. Authors should have neither their subject matter nor their language prescribed, but the freedom to explore and create should not be confused with license to falsify, distort or exploit; nor should a writer's attempt to evoke themes once considered taboo be construed as artistic achievement. Exploitation of the sensational, the shocking, or the titillating cheapens both life and literature. The best books, whatever their subject matter, will illuminate what it is like to be truly human, and will, as Karl (1970) maintains, recognize the common humanity of all men and women. Steele (1971) may be right when she says that realism "is never going to be a unicorn, a wild and graceful beast of the forest. But it can be a serviceable and sturdy beast of burden, provided you can drench it with enough honesty to save its life." The honesty which Steele covets, coupled with sensitive and artistic development of subject matter and theme, may well result in books which do not fail when judged by Hazard's standards:

books that remain faithful to the very essence of art; namely, those that offer children an intuitive and direct way of knowledge, a simple beauty capable of being perceived immediately, arousing in their souls a vibration which will endure all their lives. (p. 42)
The Nature of Violence

The violence in contemporary society is a serious social issue. In one way or another it infiltrates our entire lives. It appears both in recognizable and more insidious forms. It may be physical or psychological; it may be external or internal; it may be controlled or unrestrained. It may be swift and ruthless; it may be soft and subtle. It may destroy both body and spirit; it may inspire positive and creative endeavor. Its companions are misunderstanding and unresolved fear; its deadly enemy is moral order. It involves all living things and embraces man's desecration of the natural environment. It may be experienced through first-hand encounter or vicarious exposure. Literature, which is a reflection of the social system, cannot ignore it.

Giblin (1972), in a landmark article on violence in books for children, recognizes its constructive as well as its destructive force; he also distinguishes between its internal and external nature. For Giblin, external violence exists in the real world in which the child lives. It may be as personal as a quarrel in his home or a fight with a friend; it may be as remote as a news report of political hostility abroad. Internal violence is that potential for violence which is a natural attribute of every human. Normally controlled by the constraints of good manners and social convention, this savage side of the human nature may be unleashed in the service of good or ill. Giblin believes that the difficulty of coping with external violence
pales by comparison with the difficulty of restraining one's personal violent feelings. Well written books, he believes, can explore both internal and external violence and can assist readers to see the relationship between the two. Giblin believes, moreover, that good books are effective in prompting readers to channel constructively their own intense emotions (p. 65).

**Violence in Children's Books**

To deny children through their literature any vicarious exposure to fear, violence, and other concomitant ills may be labeled as a form of escapism or a dishonest and even paradoxical portrayal of life. Assuredly, such an approach is contrary to the philosophy and practice of both writers and critics. Sayers (in Haviland, 1973) levies as one of her strongest accusations against Disney that he 'misplaces the violence' and hence falsifies life. To present children with a world in which all is 'so sweet' is to present a 'soap opera' world, Sayers maintains. She covets for children the depiction of a world in which the truths of life are honestly explored, and she identifies as an element of all great literature "the realization that in life there is a tragic tension between good and evil, between disaster and triumph" (p. 124). She believes that even in their nursery rhymes children find evidence of the conflict that is at the core of life.

The conflict and the violence of the nursery rhymes is considered by Tucker (in Haviland, 1973) to be their major asset. They present violence in a manner which is "permissible," "recognized" and "controlled," he believes, thus presenting the child with a picture which
"makes sense both of himself and some of his feelings, and also of aspects of the violent world around him" (p. 262).

In her discussion of fear and evil in children's books, author Catherine Storr (1970) presents her own philosophy. Authors, she believes, have a responsibility to express in their books the evil which they believe children should know, and the result may be frightening. Conflict and evil are intrinsic to children's books and no author can know in advance what will frighten children. The author's commitment, she believes, is not to avoid the discussion of fearful topics but rather to discover how to tell the children truths without horrifying or misleading, and to find some positive resolution for any fears that are aroused.

Other authors who reject any idea that writing for children should be devoid of 'alarming events' or 'frightening encounters' are Walter de la Mare and C.S. Lewis. De la Mare (cited in Storr, 1976, p. 146) believed that no child who was unacquainted with fear could ever become a poet. He considered frightening experiences to be apt nourishment for the imagination, and he described as impoverished, children who are protected from all that frightens (p. 146). Lewis (in Egoff et al., 1969) believes that normal children both want and need to feel fear and that attempts to protect them are doomed to failure and may even have negative consequences. Of such attempts he says:

To deprive the child of alarming events in his books will not succeed in banishing terrors but will rather succeed in banishing all that can enable or make them endurable. (p. 217)

It may be observed that the success of all three authors in their own writing for children derives in large measure from their own adherence
The Effect of Violence in Children's Books

Lewis' observation, that fear encountered in an appropriate literary context may enable and strengthen, effectively counters the argument that exposure to violence may beget violence. Tucker (in Haviland, 1973), Storr (in Egoff et al., 1969), and Hildick (1970) also challenge that viewpoint. Children will always have their own violent fantasies, Tucker claims, and "it is better to exorcise such feelings in print than to brood over them in private" (p. 262). He is here referring to the violence expressed in many nursery rhymes, but the principle may be validly extended to other contexts. Anthony Storr (in Egoff et al., 1969) believes that children find reassurance in reading tales of violence which they enjoy. It is comforting, he believes, for children to know that the seething emotions and conflicts that rack them are shared by others. Nor is there any fear, Storr maintains, that such literature will contribute to delinquency. Normal children, he believes, have the capacity both to distinguish and see the relationship between the world of reality and the world of the imagination. Storr is convinced that "no book ever pulled the trigger of any gun but that upon which a finger was already quivering" (p. 95). Hildick (1970) takes issue with those "self-styled cleaners-up of the popular arts"—those who would seek to suppress the sight of blood, "a messy exit wound in a shooting scene," or "the puckered bloody criss-cross of flesh in a knifing incident," because they believe such depiction will invite violence on the part of the reader. His argument
is strong:
they are assuming an ubiquitous, almost universal, barely latent sadism—that realistic details will be responded to by a pathological gloating if not actual emulation. So they will no doubt, in a small number of clinical cases, but the more general reaction is likely one of repugnance. (p. 142)

The Appropriate Depiction of Violence in Children's Books

The conviction that violence is a natural and necessary part of children's literature, as it is of life itself, is based upon intuitive knowledge rather than scientific evidence. Indeed, as Storr (in Tucker, 1976) observes:

It seems curious that in a society like ours, obsessed by the omniscence of scientists and pathetically reliant on the information provided by statistical surveys, we have reached no conclusions about what scenes or ideas in books or film might damage our children. (p. 143)

Such conclusions as have been reached are based upon the study of television rather than books, and are both inconsistent and inconclusive. The cathartic value of violence vicariously experienced has received some support but Salter (1972), in reviewing the existing research, concludes that the critical principle that vicarious hostility, violence and aggression result in a cathartic experience is not based on experimental study. This principle, however, is fundamental to Hunter's (1975) argument for the inclusion in her historical fiction of the violence and brutality she so vividly portrays. She maintains that "the reader . . . experiences the purging of the emotions which is the useful function of violence in life; and as in life, so it should be in literature" (pp. 49-50).
One finding of the Himmelweit Commission (cited in Storr, 1970) in its study of the effect of television on the child may have valuable implications for the depiction of violence in children's literature. The Commission found that the context in which the violence, cruelty or horror was portrayed was a more significant factor than the degree to which it was shown (p. 143). Distancing the events, either in space or time, had a salutary effect. Children were not disturbed by even the most horrendous occurrences when they were placed in settings remote from their own. Such was not the case, however, when psychological distancing was impossible. The implications of this finding for writers of both historical fiction and contemporary realistic fiction appear obvious. Storr (in Tucker, 1976) refers to the historical fiction of Sutcliff. Of her techniques of distancing, she says:

She never minimizes danger, but in her stories the passage of time serves the same function as the proscenium arch or the spotlight in the theatre; it enables the audience to believe in what is happening on stage while retaining the consciousness of immunity from danger. (p. 150)

Even in the absence of conclusive scientific evidence that the child's vicarious encounter with violence is both desirable and ameliorative, literature constantly reflects the violence of society, and the author's approach must be a matter of critical concern. Violence which is used in the service of art is justifiable; violence which is used to exploit either the subject or the reader is not. Violence which is used honestly and realistically in the portrayal of an authentic experience is valid; violence which is included gratuitously for shock effect or for sensuous advantage is not. Violence
which is a part of an exercise in elementary justice is acceptable; violence which exploits its own commercial potential is not. Baskin and Harris (1977) confirm that no book may be condemned solely on the basis that it contains some elements of violence. The critical issue is the acceptability of the depiction (p. 58). Their judgment on what is acceptable is clear:

an acceptable depiction pivots precisely on whether violence is used as an exploitive, sensual, titillating manner or as a means to illuminate the iniquitous aspects of individual and collective behaviour. (p. 58)

Haig-Brown, eminent Canadian writer, defends vehemently the number of killings in his book *A Story of Panthers* (Collins, 1934). He maintains that violence in his writings is always incidental to the story itself and to conceal it or play it down would be not only disappointing but dishonest (Stow, 1975, p. 15). To deny death or to conceal injury and pain is an offense, Haig-Brown asserts, but the worst offence of all is the exploitation of either (p. 15). For Haig-Brown the key word is *honesty*. He explains:

If you are using violence as a showpiece to attract readers, it has to be wrong. If you are using it in the attempt to show something as it really is, then your problem is to handle it realistically, without making it too offensive. (p. 15)

In the preface of *Panther* (Houghton Mifflin, 1946) the author justifies his realistic presentation of cruelty and violence in the wild:

When Ki-Yu killed, he did so, as do all animals for one or other of three reasons—because he was hungry, because he was in fear of his life, or because his right to a female was challenged. The question of cruelty did not enter into the question at all.
Nor does Haig-Brown fear that such vivid portrayal of nature in the raw will harm the reader:

Nothing in nature, so long as it is honestly observed and honestly described, can harm the mind of a child. . . . Conceal from children, if you will, the baseness of men. But let them read and understand the ways of animals and birds, of water and wind and earth, for these things are pure and true and unspoiled. (Panther, Houghton Mifflin, 1946, Preface)

The depiction of violence that Haig-Brown defends and exemplifies superbly in his own writings is not that of Allen’s Skinhead (New English Library, 1970) or Cave’s Chopper (New English Library, 1971). In both these books violence has no apparent purpose but to shock and titillate. Bizarre pleasure is its only justification; the inflicting of pain on another is both willful and sadistic. In Skinhead the sound of breaking bones and the sight of spurting blood are satisfying to the ego of the protagonist, just as in Chopper the protagonist takes personal pride in his participation in an incident which can only be described as repulsive and obscene:

Chopper moved into position. . . . Bringing up his knee, Chopper felt with satisfaction the scrunch of broken bone as the kid’s nose made contact. The kid went down, while blows from boots rained upon his body. He lay groaning, spitting out gouts of deep red blood and pieces of broken teeth. (p. 9)

Not at any time do the authors attempt to restore the moral order by indicating some degree of disapproval of anti-social behavior.

Trease (1964), Hildick (1970), and Hunter (1975) all make reference to the responsibility of the author in preserving the moral order. Trease accepts the validity of violence in the 'literary diet' of children but insists that it is necessary to distinguish "between the
purposes for which violence is used, and the degree of approval which is implied by the author" (p. 89). Hunter believes that even in the most unsavory context the moral order may be reinforced by the natural introduction in the story of one contravening opinion, one dissenter to the status-quo. In the incident she is describing Hunter would not permit all of those present at a cockfight to accept unquestioningly its cruelty. The lone upholder of civilized behavior must, however, be a credible member of the group (pp. 53-54). In this context it should be recalled that the harshest criticisms of Fox' The Slave Dancer (Bradbury, 1973) have centered around the author's failure to support the moral order by allowing even one character to speak out against the inhuman treatment of the slaves (see p. 317 of this chapter).

The recognition and reinforcement of the common good and the basic moral order of society is always the writer's responsibility, even in books where the depiction of violence is a legitimate concern. In such books the preservation of the moral order is best effected when the author successfully establishes that such violence is natural to the setting rather than an end in itself. Kelty's (1975) contention "that books which condition boys to the cult of violence and killing as their initiation into the adult world are untrue to the very deepest meaning of the nature of life itself" (p. 60), may be valid when applied to contemporary social conventions. To describe any primitive hunting society without reference to such initiation rites, however, would be a distortion of truth.
Hildick (1970) believes that the author has a responsibility to make it quite clear that the behavior displayed by a character is culpable. He also considers it "quite reprehensible" for a writer to portray acts of violence in great detail without showing in equally great detail their likely effects (p. 142). It is, for Hildick, a matter of using the violence in the service of art and in the service of essential truth and, hence, in the service of morality. It is when the consequences of violence—often disgusting and always painful—are descriptively presented in all their horror that there is likely to be a "diminution" of such violence (p. 142). Human sensibility enraged and human sympathy aroused by such a depiction, cries out for action. There are those critics who will argue that it is this use of violence that is the strength of both Armstrong's *Sounder* (Harper & Row, 1969), and Fox' *The Slave Dancer* (Bradbury, 1973).

It is not the introduction of violence that is harmful in children's books, Hildick (1970) believes, but "unevenness, lack of balance, the failure of the author to follow through artistically and logically" (p. 147). In this he shares the viewpoint of Hunter (1975) who comments that "scenes of blood and violence are often a necessary part of externalizing children's fears," but what is important is that such scenes be projected in context. This, Hunter maintains, is "totally different from gratuitously inserting them for effect" (p. 49). Townsend (1979) questions the Cleavers' use of violence in *Grover* (Lippincott, 1970). He refers specifically to the incident where Grover revenges himself on the woman who had tormented him over his mother's death by chopping off the head of her turkey. The incident is
so graphically detailed as to be shocking (pp. 94-95). Townsend is not convinced of the "artistic necessity or psychological accuracy" of this incident and he declares that unless it is essential to the story it is "pointless and repellent violence" (p. 36). Baskin and Harris (1977) deplore what they call "the exploitive use" of violence in books about the disabled, where the handicapped person is portrayed as victim (p. 58). Such portrayals, they believe, will serve some valid purpose only if they shed light "either on aspects of the reader's own nature or on corrosive elements in society" (p. 58).

Criteria for Evaluation of Violence in Children's Books

Storr (in Tucker, 1976) recommends ways in which the conflicts, evil and violence of the child's world may be effectively projected, and discusses the relative merits of each. She refers to the totally unrealistic Ian Fleming style, where everything is "so stark a black and white that nothing is the colour of reality" (p. 148); the dehumanized approach, where the author pits his hero against fate "in the shape of either the forces of nature, or the evils of society" (p. 148); the humorous approach, where the author, while using the villain as "a necessary impetus to the plot," makes him the butt of his humor and thereby reduces his horror (p. 149); the distancing approach (p. 149); and the approach of fantasy, in which the evil can be depicted "without the danger of overwhelming the child participant" (p. 150). As an author, Storr finds the fantasy approach the "most sympathetic" and the easiest to use for children (p. 151).
Giblin (1972), in his capacity as book editor, evaluates the violence in manuscripts according to criteria of appropriateness, realism, honesty, portrayal of genuine emotion, and thoughtfulness (pp. 65-67). He believes that few subjects are inappropriate in and of themselves, but it is the author's treatment that determines their acceptability; he seeks no superficial reality but rather the emotional reality of the characters and of their actions in the story; he considers the portrayal of genuine feeling to be the most important single criterion; he covets a universality of theme and an approach which may give the subject "spirit and breadth" extending beyond the particular subject (pp. 65-67). While Giblin admits that even after stringent application of the above criteria he has no assurance that the published book will have a positive effect, he strongly believes that such will be the case.

Synthesis and Emerging Principles

Violence, both physical and psychological, is so much a part of the society in which children live that to ignore it in their literature is as unnatural as it is unrealistic. The prevailing critical position emerging from the body of opinion examined is that violence, which may be a constructive as well as a destructive force, is a natural and an appropriate subject for children's books; that, indeed, a sensitive exploration of this subject may assist children in understanding something of the nature of violence as a force which works within the individual as well as in society at large. Any suggestion that books which deal with violence are likely to incite readers to
acts of violence is denied by the critics, the counter argument being that the abhorrence which results from seeing raw violence in action is likely to have a positive rather than a negative effect on social behavior. There is also a strong consensus that the depiction of violence through literature may have a cathartic effect through the 'purging' of the readers' emotions. The critics all agree that it is the treatment of the violence rather than the violence itself which is harmful, and there is agreement that violence which is used realistically to portray an authentic experience or as part of an exercise in justice, is appropriate. Violence used honestly in the service of art is acceptable; violence used gratuitously for the exploitation of either subject or reader is repellent. The critical principles governing the treatment of violence in children's books, once it has been introduced, dictate that the setting permit children the option of psychological distancing; that the violence be resolved in some satisfactory manner; and that the author, by some indication of disagreement or disapproval of anti-social behavior, ensure the preservation of the moral order of the universe.

Environmental Control

For more than a decade now society has been increasingly concerned about the importance of maintaining the balance of nature and preserving the natural environment. Conservation, pollution, environmental control and ecology have become household words. Government agencies, special-interest groups, and private citizens have worked to arouse public sensibilities to the dire consequences of continued ruthless
exploitation of the environment. Millions of tax dollars have been spent in clean-up operations after oil spills and industrial wastes have polluted the air, the lakes and streams, the countryside, and the sea. Programs have been developed to educate adults as well as children to the social ills which accompany any serious imbalance in nature, and to the responsibility of citizens in helping to keep the planet a fit place for human habitation. This preoccupation with clean air, blue skies, green grass, and clean water has resulted in a growing disenchantment with the city with its factories, its industrial pollution, and overcrowding; and a romanticized vision of the country, where a sort of idyllic peace is thought to pervade.

Any issue which has been the focus of such social concern and public outcry is bound to be explored in books for children. It is not surprising, then, that during the decade there has been a spate of juvenile books on ecological concerns. The merit of those books has not, however, remained unchallenged. At the beginning of the decade Heylman (1970) commented:

The truism that children's literature is a sensitive mirror reflecting contemporary concerns and values is certainly borne out by the number of juvenile books that have appeared recently about our environmental crises. (p. 44)

Eight years later Thomas (1978) reflected:

The ecology bandwagon is full of materialists who know when a spiritual theme has inspired mass loyalty, and publishers have rushed to fill a marketing vacuum. . . . No one would criticise the high purpose of those who want to teach children to take care of the world; but there are stridency and sanctimony in some of the books that sound like religious fervour and intolerance of deviation from the true faith. The result is a simplistic view which distorts the truth and serves neither ideology nor children. (p. 24)
The primary concern in books on ecology, as with books on other social issues discussed in this chapter, is that they qualify as literature when assessed by standards of literary excellence. The critical question is whether the author's intention is to create a work of art and thereby to entertain and delight, or to preach anti-litter or conservation sermonettes and thereby to instruct and precipitate action. When the author is successful in using the social issue in the service of art, and the ecology theme arises naturally from a well-told story, then the medium may indeed become an effective message.

Although the amount of criticism of this bulk of writing is disproportionately small, two significant articles effectively focus evaluative attention upon it and serve to bring this 'movement' into sharp critical perspective. Heylman's (1970) "The Little House Syndrome vs. Mike Mulligan and Mary Anne" and Thomas' (1978) "The Infernal City: The Arcadian Lament in Children's Picture Books" roughly span the period under discussion and bring thoughtful judgment to bear on children's books which focus on the ecology and on matters of environmental control.

Heylman (1970) defines the area of environmental control, establishes criteria by which books on this subject should be assessed, and, using her own criteria as base, recommends a selection for young children, for the middle grades, and for older readers. Her selections include picture books, general fiction and informational books.

Restricting her definition to books dealing with "ecology, conservation, and air and water pollution" (p. 44), Heylman maintains that such books should meet all normal standards of literary excellence,
and should contain concepts which are within the emotional and intellectual grasp of the intended reader. For younger children, she believes, the most appropriate books are those which foster in children an understanding and appreciation of nature and of nature's own controls. Juvenile books, on the theme of environmental control should, Heylman believes, help readers understand the distinction between the 'ecologic approach' to the environment, which dictates that for everything taken something must be eventually returned; and the 'frontier approach', which features man as the ultimate consumer, always taking but never restoring. The best books, she believes, alert the reader to some sense of responsibility of being a co-participant in the effecting of a plan of universal proportions. The approach to the subject is positive and the required action is within the reader's control. "For a writer to cry doom to an audience still politically helpless is not only sadistic but pointless," she believes. It is for this reason that she considers Stone's The Last Free Bird (Prentice Hall, 1967) to be unsuitable for younger children, in spite of its literary excellence.

Included in Heylman's own recommended list are books which purport to deal specifically with matters of ecology, but also books with the potential of sensitizing the reader to the beauty and wonders of the natural world of field and forest, swamp and meadow, lake and river, sea and shore, as well as the animals, vegetation and minerals that abound therein. Something of the variety is represented in a sampling of the titles which includes Swamp Spring (Macmillan, 1969), Tucker's Countryside (Farrar, 1969), My Side of the Mountain (Dutton, 1959),

In such a compilation the author wisely recognizes that the best books on ecology may be those which are not really about ecology at all but, rather, are books of excellence on a variety of subjects, all testifying to the interdependence of the human and the animal world and the fragile relationship that exists between man and his environment.


An author's keen insight, clarity of vision and power of imaginative creation may transform what would otherwise have been a mere recounting of incidents into a work which may cause children and adults, who read it as children, to be conscientious seekers after an ideal society which is always within one's vision but never quite within the grasp. Karl (1970b), herself an editor of children's books, defines a great book as one which has 'gone beyond' in some way. It is, she
says, a book "which has seen a new vision and has made that vision real for those who have not ventured as far as the author" (p. 144). It is, thus, the author's treatment of the subject and not the subject itself which often makes the difference between mediocrity and greatness. In a great book, Karl believes, ecology cannot be just another social issue, it must step over into reality. Of such books Karl says:

We have had the books that show us devastation in our forests, on our beaches, among our birdlife, and in the threatened marshes and swamps of our lowlands. But we also need realistic non-fiction books about what we can do on a small scale, what children can do to feel themselves a part of the natural world. And we need fiction about people who are trying, people who are working in good ways to make men a part of nature and not an enemy of it. The need is to make people feel at home in the world and responsive to it. (p. 152)

Thomas (1978) deals more specifically with one facet of the ecology movement—one which she calls the 'back to earth movement'. Sharing Heylman's concern that "strong feeling, whether it be about religion or race relations or pollution, often engenders an uncontrollable urge to proselytize the young" (Heylman, p. 44), Thomas is devastating in her criticism of the 'evangelistic' approach to many of the books on ecological themes. She indicts authors and publishers who provide children with books which distort reality, at the same time that they provide enough kernels of recognizable truth to make them seductively dangerous. "That so many books reach publication without benefit of the critical judgment needed to temper their smugness, indicates the strength of the assumptions on which they founder," she asserts (p. 29). She reserves her strongest criticism for books which convey to children a false vision of the city in today's
technological and industrial society. Making no attempt to minimize
the ills of city living, Thomas claims, nevertheless, that its
'vitality' and 'variety' may provide food on which the human imagina-
tion thrives. Observing that birds may nest and flowers may grow even
in the litter of the vacant lot, she believes that "a vision of the
beauty possible in such events may foster the desire to clean up the
mess and plant the seeds" (p. 30). Thomas' words indeed prompt recol-
lection of Keeping's *Joseph's Yard* (Oxford University Press, 1969),
where a young boy lovingly nurtures his rose in a backyard in a ghetto,
and of Hunt's *Lottery Rose* (Scribner, 1976), where a rose bush becomes,
for a battered child, a symbol of beauty and new life and freedom.
Thomas' concern is for a more positive treatment in children's books
of the ecological problems which plague the city dweller, for there
may be no solutions except those effected by concerned citizens them-
selves. Her comment is a cogent one:

> Cities may escape human control, but no city where people
now live is beyond improvement by a caring population.
The world will not survive the defeatists who want to escape
to green pastures, which they, untaught in the arts of
community, will soon destroy. (p. 31)

She covets books which present both sides of both urban and rural
living. She praises such books as MacCaulay's *City: A Story of Roman
Planning and Construction* (Houghton, 1974), in that it may arouse the
reader's awareness of the beauty deriving from architectural planning
and design; Ventura's *Book of Cities* (Random, 1975), in its honest and
detailed portrayal of the pleasures and problems of city life; and
Freschet's *Web in the Grass* (Scribner, 1972), so beautifully illus-
trated by Duvoisin, for its realistic vision of nature that includes
violence and death as well as beauty. Her conclusion is one that librarians, teachers and parents, as well as writers and publishers should heed:

Too many writers act as if they didn't know what all of us do know: people need both sky and roof, boulder and brick, undisturbed woodlands and well ordered streets. Horror stories and sermons and grim sentiment perpetrated in the name of ecology are meretricious doctrine and meretricious art. (p. 31)

Synthesis and Emerging Principles

The critical viewpoints presented by Heylman and Thomas provide a sound base for the assessment of books on ecological themes. Their prevailing concern is that of literary excellence; associated with that are the more specific considerations related to honesty and authenticity in the presentation of the social issue. Generally, the primary and secondary concerns are part and parcel of each other. There is recognition of the fact that while ecological themes may be, and often are, overtly explored, subtle truths related to the same are communicated in many books of excellence where the relationship between the human and the environment is sensitively and sympathetically affirmed. The critical question is whether the author's primary intention is to create a work of literary merit which will both entertain and delight, or whether his intention is purely didactic. In this, as in other social issues, if the author succeeds in using the issue in the service of art, the theme will develop naturally in the context of a well told tale, and the medium may become an effective message. Recognized also is the importance of picture books, fiction, and nonfiction, in the exploration of such themes; that in picture books as well as in
general fiction the 'message' should evolve naturally from the story; that books on ecological themes should contain concepts which are within the emotional and intellectual grasp of the intended reader, and that the required action be within the reader's control; that in nonfiction the information should be both current and accurate; that in all books whatever the format, there should be room for both sides of a problem; and that the author's approach should be positive--an affirmation of the affinity between man and nature and of the individual's responsibility for involvement in the protection and preservation of the universe.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the criticism of children's literature from the perspective of social issues. A rationale for such an approach has been presented, and the body of writing examined has been reported under the headings of Social Issues in the Content of Children's Literature, Racism, Sexism, Handicapism, Ageism, The New Realism, Violence, and Environmental Control. These headings serve well to identify social concerns which have been the focus of much of the issues-centered writing about children's literature, and within each category critical viewpoints pertaining specifically to that category have been identified. Since these viewpoints or critical principles have all been included in the syntheses which follow each section, it is unnecessary, as well as impractical, to repeat them here. What may, however, be noted is that critical viewpoints which emerge from the discussion of a particular issue often move beyond that issue to speak
of literature itself. Stereotyping, for example, is seen as equally reprehensible whether it is by race, language, or sex; or whether its subjects are the old, the young, the physically vigorous, or the disabled. Whatever the social issues, it is the author's perspective, vision and sensitivity in the treatment of the subject matter which will effectually change social commentary into a work of literature. Social issues may provide a legitimate subject matter for literature. But literature is not social documentary. Literature will use social issues in the service of art and will go beyond the 'issue' to artfully illuminate life, to reveal our common humanity, and to lay bare a sliver of truth. After all the categories have been separated and examined, it is useful, this writer believes, to recall Bacon's assessment of the true worth of a book regardless of its subject matter:

What does it matter of what he writes so that his heart be true to the finer possibilities in human nature? The book which degrades our intellect, vulgarizes our emotions, kills our faith in our kind, is an immoral book; the book which stimulates thought, quickens our sense of humour, gives us a deeper insight into men and women and a finer sympathy for them, is a moral book; let its subject-matter have as wide a range as life itself.
(cited in Broderick, 1971), p. 31)
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Nature of the Problem

Although for more than a hundred years voices have been raised in defence of children's literature and in defining and describing the same, this literature, in the course of the past decade, has been sharply challenged. The questionable status afforded it has been associated with the absence of any valid criticism which examines and appraises and, hence, provides the nurturing climate in which the arts may flourish. The present study is a response to this point of view. It was undertaken to explore the state of the art of the criticism of children's literature and to seek answers to questions related to the existence of such criticism and the nature, scope, and categorization of the same.

Methodology

The particular period under review was the decade 1969-1979, and the sources examined for evidence of critical viewpoint were books and general periodicals as identified through standard bibliographic research procedures, as well as a purposive sampling of particular periodicals. Because of the universal nature of children's literature, and, more particularly, because of the relationship that exists among the three countries in the publication and distribution of children's
books, the sample was chosen to include American, British, and Canadian representation. Periodicals of both the library and teaching professions were included. Attempts to include the official organs of the book-publishing trade proved unproductive since, in all cases, the emphasis in these publications was book news and sales promotion rather than actual criticism. The sample consisted of nine periodicals, namely:

**The United States**

- Elementary English/Language Arts
- The Horn Book Magazine
- The School Library Journal
- Top of the News
- The Wilson Library Bulletin

**Canada**

- Canadian Children's Literature

**Great Britain**

- The School Librarian
- Signal

**International**

- Children's Literature in Education

The particular period (1969-1979) was chosen for a number of reasons.

1. It was impossible to do an exhaustive study of all sources; some time frame was imperative.
2. It was considered important to make the study as current as possible.

3. At the beginning of this decade serious questions had been raised concerning the existence of any valid criticism of children's literature.

4. During the decade the subject matter of children's books had expanded to include all the issues and 'isms' of contemporary society. A serious, comprehensive criticism could scarcely ignore this.

5. The parameters of this particular decade were marked by significant publications in the field of children's literature. *Only Connect: Critical Readings in Children's Literature* (Oxford, 1969), at the beginning of the decade, concerned itself primarily with a literary approach to criticism. This emphasis was retained in the revised edition (Oxford, 1980). *The Cool Web: The Pattern of Children's Reading* (Atheneum, 1978), at the end of the decade, however, was concerned with a child-centered approach to the criticism of children's books, claiming that this very change in emphasis provided the justification for a new collection of criticism.

In the context of this study, *criticism* is deemed to be writings which either in whole or in part are concerned with some aspect of the nature, function, or quality of literature. The *critic* is that individual whose writing, of a critical or evaluative nature, has been published either in books or in the periodical literature examined. While it is recognized that a diversity of reasons may prompt an
individual writer to make statements of a critical nature, it has been assumed, for purposes of this study, that the best-informed critical opinion is likely to appear in the professional literature. Such professional literature provides a large part of the sources for this study.

The books identified and included in the study were examined for evidence of critical approaches; the general periodical literature and the periodicals of the purposive sample were searched for critical articles on some aspect of children's literature, and all articles located were studied and analyzed for individual critical viewpoints, evidence of developing trends, and categories of critical opinion. Details of the findings, with the emerging critical principles in each category, are reported in Chapters III, IV, and V, in the categories of work-centered criticism, child-centered criticism, and issues-centered criticism. In this chapter the most significant findings are consolidated in an attempt to answer the particular questions posed by the study (see pp. 8-9), and, in so doing, to fulfill the primary purpose of the study, which was to survey the state of the art of critical and evaluative writing relating to children's books.

Questions, Answers, and Implications

The six questions discussed in this section are stated in the purpose of the study (pp. 13-14). The answers, based directly on the information which forms the main body of the study and which is reported in detail in previous chapters, reflect the author's attempt to synthesize the prevailing critical opinion pertaining to children's
books, to identify the critical principles which emerge therefrom, and to provide an accurate picture of the present state of the art of this criticism.

1. **What evidence is there of the existence of a body of critical and evaluative writing associated with children's literature?**

This study presents convincing evidence of the existence of an extensive and rather impressive body of criticism of children's literature. The evidence, examined, synthesized, and categorized, provides the body of this report. Although it exists often in fragments, and in a variety of sources, the criticism is unified by a prevailing concern for the preservation of high literary standards in a distinctive children's literature. Collectively, it addresses the nature of literature itself, the nature of the child, and the nature of society. It adopts and defends a balanced approach to children's literature, an approach in which the primary concern for literary excellence is sufficiently broad to embrace also a concern for the child reader and the social setting. Firmly rooted in such landmarks of the past as Hazard's *Books, Children and Men* and Smith's *The Unreluctant Years*, it moves beyond these to reflect increased emphasis on the developmental nature of childhood and to address the impact upon literature of contemporary social issues.

The evidence does not, however, reside entirely in the volume of the critical writings, impressive as that is. The nature, the scope, and the authority of the writings are likewise convincing. The writings cover a variety of subjects, adopt a number of critical stances, include both popular and scholarly approaches, are accessible
in style and format to layman as well as expert, and contain much that may be described as high-caliber criticism. They appear in popular and professional journals, and in general as well as specialized sources. The criticism is included in reference sources, in omnibus surveys, in full-length books, and in edited collections of public lectures and conference papers, as well as in collections of previously published items from a variety of sources. A significant development in the decade under study, indeed, has been a number of such collections. Egoff et al's. Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature (Oxford, 1969, 1980), Haviland's Children's Literature: Views and Reviews (Scott, Foresman, 1973), Gerhardt's Issues in Children's Book Selection (Bowker, 1973), Fox' Writers, Critics and Children (Agathon Press, 1976), Heins' Cross-Currents of Criticism (The Horn Book, 1977), Meek's The Cool Web: The Pattern of Children's Reading (Atheneum, 1978), and Egoff's One Ocean Touching (Scarecrow Press, 1979) will serve to illustrate this development. Another significant development in the decade under study is the appearance of a number of specialized periodicals devoted exclusively to the study and criticism of children's literature. These periodicals attest to an increasing recognition on the part of the university and the wider community of scholars of the existence of a body of literature which is deserving of study, research, and comment. Examples of this development may be seen in such periodicals as Signal: Approaches to Children's Books (1970- ), Children's Literature in Education (1970- ), Children's Literature: The Great Excluded (1972- ), Canadian Children's Literature: A Journal of Criticism and Review (1975- ), The Lion and the Unicorn:

The criticism reported in full-length books includes general criticism such as Fisher's Intent Upon Reading: A Critical Appraisal of Modern Fiction for Children (Brockhampton Press, 1964) and Matters of Fact: Aspects of Non-Fiction for Children (Crowell, 1972), Karl's From Childhood to Childhood: Children's Books and their Creators (J. Day, 1970), Hildick's Children and Fiction (Evans, 1970), and Anderson and Groff's A New Look at Children's Literature (Wadsworth, 1972). It includes, also, numerous works in which writers themselves discuss the role and the responsibilities of children's authors. Cameron's The Green and Burning Tree (Little, Brown, 1969), Wintle and Fisher's The Pied Piper (Paddington Press, 1975), Southall's A Journey of Discovery (Macmillan, 1975), Hunter's Talent is Not Enough (Harper & Row, 1975), Blishen's The Thorny Paradise (Penguin Books, 1975), and Townsend's A Sense of Story (The Horn Book Inc., 1971), and A Sounding of Storytellers (Lippincott, 1979), are excellent examples. There are also books dealing with particular themes and genres, as is evidenced by Kingston's The Tragic Mode in Children's Literature (Teachers' College, Columbia University, 1968), Higgins' Beyond Words: Mystical Fancy in Children's Literature (Teachers' College, Columbia University, 1970), Ellis' The Family Story in the 1960's (Archon Books, 1970), Broderick's Image of the Black in Children's Fiction (R.R. Bowker, 1973), MacCann and Richard's The Child's First Books: A Critical Study of Pictures and Texts (Wilson, 1973), Blount's Animal Land (Hutchinson, 1974), and Rudman's Children's Literature: An Issues
Apart from collections and full-length book presentations, the criticism, as has been indicated earlier, includes many articles of varying length and sophistication, and deals with a multiplicity of subjects. The apologetics of children's literature, an important part of any criticism, is well served by such essays as Smith's "The Case for Children's Literature" (in Smith, 1953), Lewis' "On Three Ways of Writing for Children" (in Egoff et al., 1969), McDowell's "Fiction for Children and Adults: Some Essential Differences" (1973), Fadiman's "The Case for a Children's Literature" (1976), and Butler's editorials in *Children's Literature* (1972, 1973, 1974), an annual publication of the Modern Language Association. The role of criticism in the identification and castigation of inappropriate and inferior literary productions is effectively demonstrated in articles such as Viguers' "Not Recommended" (1963), Sayers' "Walt Disney Accused" (in Haviland, 1973), and Cameron's "McLuhan, Youth and Literature" (in Heins, 1977). The articles deal also with literary elements, literary genres, literary standards, the nature of literature, the sense of audience, and the appropriate presentation of social issues. They seek to interpret, analyze and compare. Collectively, they provide the nucleus of a sound critical approach to children's literature.

The incontrovertible evidence of this study is that the criticism of children's literature is coming of age. No longer can the term "kiddy lit," referred to by Townsend (p. 5) be applied with any justification to a distinctive branch of literature which is accepted as a discipline worthy of study and research in university departments.
of English, Education, and Library Science—a discipline which has associated with it its own scholarly associations, its own reference sources, its own reviewing periodicals, its own critical journals, and a growing body of criticism which this study indicates may be both formalized and structured.

2. To what extent is it possible to categorize such critical and evaluative writings as do exist as work-centered, child-centered, and issues-centered?

The body of critical writings examined for this study has been categorized as work-centered, child-centered, and issues-centered. These categories are not mutually exclusive, for there are critical concerns which transcend any single category to address the wholeness of the literary creation. Nevertheless, because of the particular critical stance adopted by their authors, the items which form the basis of this study fall quite naturally into one of the three categories identified above. All three approaches are unified, however, by their common emphasis on the need for literary merit in children's books, regardless of the subject matter or style of presentation. This emphasis pervades all three categories.

An extensive body of writing dealing with literary elements and literary genres has been reported in the category of work-centered criticism. This criticism includes commentary concerning the relative importance in children's books of the literary conventions of plot, characterization, theme, and style, and their individual and collective contribution to the development of successful narrative; it includes, also, discussion of the distinctive features of particular genres of
literature. This work-centered criticism is reported under the headings of Literary Elements, The Literature of the Oral Tradition, Historical Fiction, Biography, Fantasy, Science Fiction, Poetry, Picture Books, and Informational Books. Unlike either a child-centered or an issues-centered approach to criticism, a work-centered or literary criticism is rooted firmly in scholarship. Drawing on the traditionally accepted conventions of literary art, the critical writings reported in this category explore the nature of each literary genre; outline the qualities which characterize excellence in each; refer to 'touchstones' by which new works may be assessed; and identify major pitfalls which plague authors working in particular genres. The critical observations assume added credence because many of the 'critics' are themselves distinguished authors, recognized leaders in the genres which they discuss.

The body of criticism classified as child-centered draws from the disciplines of both literature and psychology, and establishes a relationship between the two, a relationship which is reinforced by the findings of both formal research and empirical observation. Collectively, the items which have been identified as child-centered make statements about the relationship between author and audience, and the relationship between text and reader. This criticism concludes that, consciously or unconsciously, the author writes for a 'real' or an 'implied' audience, and both subject matter and approach will be indicative of this. It calls attention to an ironical development in children's literature, one in which the continuing thrust for excellence is seemingly resulting in books of literary merit accessible to few
children only. While acknowledging the need for books of excellence for the few, child-centered criticism insists that a knowledge of the nature and limitations of the developing child is essential if authors are to communicate with the masses. It charges authors to write well for the many as well as for the few, and to bring good literature within the reach of all children.

The thesis of child-centered criticism is that good literature should be within the reach of all children at each stage of their developing life— it is not something which is associated with either intellectual snobbery or social elitism. A corollary to this thesis would appear to be that the critics, no less than the authors of children's books, must work from a consciousness of the developmental nature of childhood— intellectually, emotionally, and morally— and the developmental nature of the child's capacity to respond. Child-centered criticism implies that for author or critic to fail to take some account of the nature of child growth and development is to deny both the nature of children and the existence of a distinctive children's literature.

The body of criticism classified as issues-centered deals with the appropriate presentation in books for children of the issues and 'isms' of contemporary society. It addresses the general question of the legitimacy of the subject matter and the honesty, integrity, and artistry of the presentation. More specifically, it focuses attention on racism, sexism, ageism, handicapism, violence, the new realism, and matters of ecological concern, as these topics are and should be dealt with in children's literature. The criticism, for example, has
observations to make about the stereotypic portrayal of character whether by race, sex, language, age, physical condition, or in any other form. It offers guidelines by which nonsexist books may be identified and appraised; it identifies those qualities which should characterize the presentation in children's books of members of minority races, the handicapped, and the elderly; it establishes the conditions under which violence may be effectively and appropriately included; it draws a sharp distinction between what is literary, and what is little more than didactic discussion of environmental issues. In these and other matters it insists that literature is not social commentary, nor should children's literature be used to 'burden' children with problems for which they bear no responsibility and with which they have no capacity to cope.

The three categories—work-centered criticism, child-centered criticism, and issues-centered criticism—serve well to identify and classify the bulk of the critical writing which has provided the focus for this report. There are doubtless other equally valid approaches to the criticism of children's literature. White (1976), for example, presents a case for psychological criticism, sociological criticism, archetypal criticism, and structural criticism. Interestingly, a number of the articles she uses as examples appear in the present study in different categories. "Science Fiction: Impossible! or Prophetic?" (Greenlaw, 1971), for example, which White classifies as sociological criticism, has, in this report, been included in the study of the genre of science fiction (p. 149). Similarly, Gilpatrick's "Power of the Picture Book to Change Child's Self-Image"
(1969), which White identifies as structural criticism, in this study is included in the child-centered criticism. The argument may be advanced, also, that the work of Bettelheim (1975), Favat (1977), and Schlager (1978) represent a psychoanalytical approach. Even so, these items have a child-centered emphasis and are in this study legitimately included in that category. They do, moreover, constitute the only subject matter in the present study which may be labeled as psychoanalytical criticism. It is quite possible that another study, using a different sample, may uncover a body of criticism with a different orientation.

3. Who are the critics?

The individuals whose judgments have formed the bases of this study are informed, professional people, together forming an impressive core of critics whose collective viewpoint effectively describes the present state of the art of children's literature, and offers guidelines for the direction of that literature in the next decade.

Of the approximately 350 'critics' for whom some identification of 'credentials' was possible, slightly more than forty percent were themselves published authors of children's books. Just over thirty percent were involved with the teaching of children's literature in departments of education, library science, or English. Approximately fifteen percent were associated in some capacity with the publishing trade; and roughly fifteen percent were school teachers or school librarians.
The percentages cited above may be misleading, however. Certainly they do not tell the whole story. The truth is that the credentials of the critics represented in this study are difficult, if not impossible, to categorize accurately, because most of the individuals are involved in many activities. How, for example, does one categorize the occupational role of Margery Fisher, Augusta Baker, or John Rowe Townsend? Fisher, the first recipient of the Children's Book Centre's Award for distinguished service in the area of children's literature, is notable as a professional critic through her reviews, her lectures, her critical essays, and her books of criticism. Baker, long-time coordinator of children's services for the New York Public Library, is a distinguished lecturer, storyteller, teacher of storytelling, compiler of children's collections, author, and editor. Townsend is known and respected as a reviewer, a lecturer in children's literature, author of Written for Children (Lippincott, 1974), a study of English children's literature, as well as A Sense of Story (The Horn Book Inc., 1971), and A Sounding of Storytellers (Lippincott, 1979), both critical studies of children's books. It was he who delivered the Arbuthnot Honor Lecture for 1971, entitled "Standards of Criticism for Children's Literature." As well, he is author of numerous books for children. Other less well known individuals bring to their discussion of children's books rich backgrounds of training and experience in a variety of activities. All are sufficiently interested in children's literature to want to say something about it.

It has been already indicated that the 'professions' represented by the critics included authors; university professors in departments
of education, library science, and English; editors and publishers; professional critics; teachers; and librarians. Included also were representatives of university departments of art, history, and psychology; there was at least one psychiatrist, one computer-systems analyst, one museum-project officer, one tutor in learning disabilities, one children's book-selection specialist, three translators of children's books, and one physician.

The list of critics includes many who will be immediately recognized as individuals who themselves, in one capacity or another, have made outstanding contributions to children's literature. Reference has already been made to Fisher, Baker, and Townsend. Brian Alderson, Eleanor Cameron, Aidan Chambers, Sheila Egoff, Clifton Fadiman, Virginia Haviland, Paul Heins, Charlotte Huck, Mollie Hunter, C.S. Lewis, Margaret Meek, Elaine Moss, and Zena Sutherland are others. Included also are such distinguished authors as William Armstrong, Hester Burton, Nina Bawden, Edward Blishen, Roderick Haig-Brown, Leonard Clark, Esther Forbes, Ursula LeGuin, Elizabeth Nesbit, Ruth Nichols, Mary Steele, and Rosemary Sutcliff. Any argument that authors as critics are less than effective because of biased judgments, is difficult to defend when one considers that many of these author-critics are not only acclaimed authors, but also editors involved in determining standards of excellence in published works. Jean Fritz, Jean Karl, and Ferdinand Monjo, for example. Many of them are parents, with an intimate knowledge of children. All of them were once children, and most of them appear to remember that experience.
Although reviews were not included in the major sources for this study, a number of the critics have distinguished reputations as reviewers. Zena Sutherland, for example, has long been associated with The Bulletin of the Centre for Children’s Books. Margery Fisher single-handedly produces Growing Point, the name of Marcus Crouch is readily connected with reviews in The Times Literary Supplement, Junior Bookshelf, and The School Librarian, as is that of Jill Paton Walsh with The Times and The Times Literary Supplement; Betsy Hearne is book-review editor for Booklist. Likewise, the names of Edward Blishen, Joan Blos, Aidan Chambers, Nancy Chambers, Ethel Heins, Elaine Moss, and Margaret Spencer will be immediately associated with insightful reviewing in a number of sources.

4. How comprehensive is the criticism which does exist, and what is the present state of the art?

Something of the general scope of the existing criticism has been already indicated in the answers to questions 2 and 3. The answer to question 4 focuses more specifically on the subject coverage of the criticism, identifying a number of areas which have been dealt with only superficially, and indicating something of the state of the art.

The genres of historical fiction, biography, science fiction, fantasy, and informational books are well served by the existing criticism. This is not to say that the quantity of the criticism in each genre is extensive, or that all genres are explored in equal depth. It means, rather, that the existing criticism, whether substantial or slight in quantity, effectively establishes the nature of the genre, explores standards of excellence, and develops criteria by
which such standards may be assessed, notes the problems which are associated with each genre, and highlights examples of excellence. The critics are often those whose own works represent literary touchstones in their respective genres, so that the critical theory expounded in the writing is ably demonstrated by example. Hence, the criticism is more than a mere admonition to "do as I say." There is convincing evidence that the goals which are established are capable of realization; the critics themselves show the way. Critics such as Hester Burton, Cynthia Harnett, Mollie Hunter, Ferdinand Monjo, Rosemary Sutcliff, and Jill Paton Walsh, for example, do this for historical fiction; as do Olivia Coolidge, Esther Forbes, Jean Fritz, and Geoffrey Trease for biography; Lloyd Alexander, Natalie Babbit, Eleanor Cameron, Alan Garner, Madeleine L'Engle, Ursula LeGuin, and Ruth Nichol for fantasy; Isaac Asimov, Sylvia Engdahl, and Robert Heinlein, for science fiction; and Ronald Meltzer and Millicent Selsam for informational books.

The situation in the criticism of poetry, the picture book, the literature of the oral tradition, and the new realism is less satisfying, however. Of all the genres, poetry is perhaps least well served by its criticism, largely because many of the critics themselves are reluctant to say what poetry is. In the absence of any clearly defined guidelines, much that is not genuine poetry passes in that guise. The intellectual and imaginative aspects of poetry have been frequently ignored or subordinated to the purely personal, the emotional, and the rhythmic. While recognizing and lauding the imaginative and the innovative, the criticism of poetry needs to adopt a new
assertiveness in identifying and labeling the cute, the condescending, the childish, and the gimmicky. Articles such as those by Tucker (1973), Clark (1978), Chambers (1979), Hill (1979), and Livingston (1979), constitute a significant move in that direction. The move seems to be away from the vague, sentimental, noncommittal, undemanding treatment of poetry, toward a more enlightened and constructive criticism.

In their appraisal of the picture book, the critics have been unevenly successful. They have been adamant and convincing in calling attention to the dual nature of the picture book and in insisting that a valid criticism of this genre draws on both the literary and graphic arts. They have, however, provided little by way of example in the implementation of this critical theory. The problem appears to be that few critics are equally competent in both literature and art. It may be that the best criticism of the genre requires a team approach, drawing on the expertise of both fields. Certainly, there is need for more critics of the caliber of Bader, MacCann, and Richard to describe and identify genuine artistic creation, so that the potential of the new technology may be used in the service of art and for the enrichment of both literature and children.

The literature of the oral tradition presents particular challenges to the critic. Because of the nature of this genre, it is the particular version or variant which is of critical concern. At a time when an increasing number of variants are being produced, critics need to aggressively declaim the trite and the trivial. Particularly when mythology, and folk-literature generally, are being rewritten for younger and younger children, critics must demand authenticity in both
text and illustration. A strong and confident criticism is needed to preserve the literature of the oral tradition from the onslaught of mass production and mediocrity. This study has not provided convincing evidence of such criticism.

In their treatment of the new realism, the critics have tended to be proponents of a liberal viewpoint. The inclusion of controversial subject matter in children's books has rarely been disputed; the honesty of the presentation has. In their treatment of the expanded subject matter which characterizes the new realism, the critics, no less than the authors, do not always appear to recognize a trend toward the exploitation of the superficially relevant, the topical, and the sensational. The honest realism of ordinary lives well lived, and the satisfaction and personal fulfillment which may result from routine activities, or from responsibilities accepted and discharged, need to be reaffirmed by the critics. Also, realism is much wider than 'the new realism' which appears to be absorbing most of the critical attention. The sports stories of Barbara Cohen, Marion Renick, Alfred Slote, or John Tunis; the mystery stories of Scott Corbett, Peter Dickinson, Virginia Hamilton, Donald Sobal, Mary Steele, or Phyllis Whitney; the war stories of James Forman, Jaap ter Haar, Janet Hickman, Johanna Reiss, or Hans Richter; the Eskimo tales of James Houston or Ronald Melzack; the animal stories of Roderick Haig-Brown, Alan Eckert, Marguerite Henry, James Kjelgaard, or Sterling North; the family stories of Nina Bawden, Betsy Byars, Paula Fox, or Madeleine L'Engle; and the refreshing humor of Beverly Cleary, Carolyn Haywood, Robert McCloskey, Peggy Parish, or Barbara
Robinson, are all as much of life and realism as are the more controversial themes of Judy Blume, Norma Klein, Barbara Wersba, or Paul Zindel.

Other 'isms' of contemporary society have been dealt with by the critics, as have the important social issues of violence, and environmental control. The issue of racism has received the largest amount of critical attention, with sexism a close second. In both cases it is not always easy to distinguish between cold, reflective criticism, and impassioned outbursts with political undertones. Refusal to accept the truths of history, or reluctance on the part of critics to acknowledge the rights of authors to deal with subjects of their choice by whatever approach they deem artistically appropriate, may be construed as examples of such critical confusion. In the criticism of books which may dishonestly depict or stereotype sex roles there is need for caution as well as strong statement, lest insistence upon the need for equal rights and equal coverage cloud the real issue and become mistaken for sound criticism. Neither emotionalism nor political motivation, in whatever guise it appears, can be permitted to substitute for informed literary judgment. The criticism of books dealing with the elderly is somewhat contradictory and requires clarification. The need is for additional examination of this subject generally, and, more particularly, for recognition by authors and critics of the multi-faceted process of aging.

The body of critical writing with a work-centered focus is substantial and impressive. It includes all the literary genres, and treats children's books seriously, positively, and constructively.
In its demand that children's literature adhere to high literary standards, and in emphatically refusing to compromise literary quality because books are for children, it adds significantly to the status of children's literature and, at the same time, provides valuable guidelines for both authors and critics.

Once the general guidelines have been established, what is urgently needed in the criticism of children's literature is serious in-depth criticism of individual works. There is at present an abundance of survey-type criticism and it has served a useful purpose, but at its best it can do little more than give cursory attention to individual works. The need now is for evidence of the critic at work in the roles of analyst of technique and judge of quality in the study of individual works. A body of such criticism, uncovered in this study, awaits further analysis. It may well supply additional proof that there is a distinctive children's literature which can survive the most demanding and most meticulous, critical scrutiny.

The criticism which emphasizes the importance of the relationship between literature and child is small in quantity, rather general in nature, but thought-provoking in content. Reasoning that the good book must be good for someone, it argues that it is impossible to state what a good children's book is without reference to children. The approach to criticism, vehemently rejected in some circles, bears within itself the seeds of a dilemma, involving the nature of artistic excellence and the mutual independence of art and audience. The question of whether literary excellence resides in the work itself without reference to audience, does not arise in relation to adult
literature. The real question, it seems to this writer, is whether or not there is associated with children's literature a uniqueness which makes such an approach to its criticism not only appropriate but imperative. The answer to that question must be found in the answer to a related question: Is there a distinctive children's literature? To argue for a distinctive children's literature is to argue for recognition of the unique characteristics of childhood. To argue for a distinctive children's literature, while denying the validity of a child-centered criticism, appears to be the very antithesis of reason.

The child-centered criticism reported in this study does not imply a child-centered emphasis exclusive of any literary consideration. Its thrust is toward a comprehensive criticism which includes reference to the nature of the developing child, the potential audience of the work. Its strength is the supporting evidence from psychology and research; its weakness is that it deals largely in generalities, with few specific examples of principles applied. The need is for more clearly elucidated guidelines and more direct application of these guidelines for the criticism of specific works. In this exercise, the psychologists and the experts in children's literature may mutually support each other.

The items classified and reported as child-centered criticism together provide a valuable perspective, one which in the past has received little serious attention. The recognition and adoption of this perspective by critics of children's literature may be effectual in halting a trend which, almost imperceptibly, may have been insidiously developing in the decade under study—the trend toward a
literature of excellence accessible only to an elitist minority, while
the masses are relegated to mediocrity as reflected in unliterary
books with controlled vocabulary, stultified style, and unimaginative
narrative.

The rather substantial body of criticism categorized as issues-
centered focuses on the presentation in children's books of many of
the social issues of the decade under study. Often characterized by
the strong, personal feelings of a writer whose sense of right or
justice has been betrayed, it, nevertheless, recognizes some of its
own inconsistencies, and it cautions against over-zealous criticism of
literature in defence of social causes. On matters of substance, there
is general agreement; divergent critical opinion usually involves the
implementation of critical principles rather than the principles them-
selves. The critics are unanimous in denouncing all forms of stereo-
typing, and they strongly caution against sensationalism, and the
exploitation of subject or audience. The degree to which they are
successful in balancing personal feelings and sane literary judgment
is the degree to which their comments contribute to constructive
criticism. Collectively, they have provided valuable guidelines and
a sound critical perspective for the assessment of children's books.

5. What are the prevailing principles emerging from an examina-
tion of the critical writings?

From the body of critical writings examined for this study, a
number of critical principles emerge. These general principles,
categorized as work-centered, child-centered, and issues-centered,
are identified below. All elaborative details, supportive evidence,
and subsidiary points of view are recorded in the appropriate chapters from which the broader principles have been abstracted.

**Principles of Work-Centered Criticism**

1. All the **literary elements** pertain in literature for children as in literature generally.

2. The **literature of the oral tradition** exists for children in recorded 'variants' of the original sources. Valid critical evaluation of this literature must be rooted in an awareness of original sources, and an understanding of the characteristics which distinguish the folk literature of one country from that of another.

3. Versions of **traditional literature** for children must preserve and transmit the spirit, the flavor, the atmosphere of the total environment in which the tales evolved.

4. **Historical fiction** for children successfully blends fact and fiction, recreating a slice of the past and providing children, through a tale, the opportunity of living in a time other than their own.

5. The subject matter of **historical fiction** is the past; the tale comes alive largely through the credibility of the characters who may be either the 'greats' of history or the ordinary folk of whom history has no record.

6. The language of **historical fiction** must give the impression of period, and sound right in its context.
7. In **historical fiction** for young children, historical background must be supplied sensitively and in proportion to the demands of the tale.

8. Subjects for **biography** in children's books should be presented as real people, possessed of both strengths and weaknesses, and including not only courageous lives of action but also the quiet, contemplative lives, and those neglected and rejected by society.

9. In the choice of subjects for **biography**, and in decisions about details of lives to be included, there must be judicious selection, and the exercise of discretion and good taste. (Critics do not all agree that the subjects of biography should be those whose lives are worthy of emulation.)

10. In both **historical fiction** and **biography**, the sources are historical; the presentation must be artistic. Accuracy and authenticity must be preserved but details, carefully researched, may be clothed in imaginative narrative.

11. In both **historical fiction** and **biography**, the author is under no obligation to remain impartial. Within the constraints of sound historical perspective, authors may interpret, reconstruct, and invent in the service of art.

12. In both **historical fiction** and **biography**, illustrations, no less than text, are important in the establishing of authenticity.

13. **Fantasy** must be primarily a successful narrative; it goes beyond the narrative, however, to explore the nature of reality.

14. The implications of **fantasy** may be serious; the fantasy itself need not be so.
15. Although much of fantasy is associated with some secondary world, the ordinary world of here-and-now has potential for settings for this genre.

16. Once the basic laws of the fantasy are established, the authors themselves become subjects in their own created kingdoms.

17. Critical to successful fantasy are the author's techniques in maintaining the readers' "willing suspension of disbelief." When credibility lapses, the fantasy is flawed.

18. The language of fantasy, like the language of historical fiction, must sound right in context. Clear, straightforward English is always acceptable.

19. Science fiction is fiction with a scientific perspective. Its sources are scientific; its form and purpose are literary.

20. Authors who, through science fiction, offer children a vision of a future different from the present, must accept responsibility for such visions.

21. Genuine poetry is more than mere sentimentality and catchy rhythm. Drawing its subject matter from all of life, it appeals to the intellect and the imagination, as well as the emotion.

22. Child-centered poetry, no less than poetry for adults, is only deserving of the name if it employs the mechanics of poetry in the service of poetry itself.

23. Trifling subjects, superficial emotions, forced rhymes and rhythms, contrived and pointless images, unnatural language, and condescending attempts to think and speak like children, are no more appropriate for children's poetry than for adults'.
24. Emotions evoked by children's poetry should be the normal emotions of childhood. There is no place for the cheaply sensational, the sadistic or the aberrant.

25. Figurative language and literary allusion will contribute to the effectiveness of children's poetry only as they relate to children's emotional and intellectual capacity to respond.

26. The picture book is an artistic as well as a literary experience, and an acknowledgment of the duality of its nature is central to any valid criticism of its form or content.

27. The criteria by which excellence in text and illustration in the picture book is assessed are different. Such criteria must be drawn from both the literary and graphic arts.

28. The marvels of modern graphic technology must not be permitted to subordinate the text of the picture book to the illustrations. Text and illustrations must fuse to create a harmonious whole.

29. Photography, while effective in some instances, notably in informational books, should not be readily used to replace imaginative illustrations in children's books.

30. Books which are primarily concerned with information may be so imaginatively and artistically executed as to be considered literature.

31. Effective communication of information involves some considerations which do not pertain to narrative. These include the accuracy, authority, scope, and arrangement of the material; clear distinction between fact and opinion; and the involvement of the reader as a participant in the search for truth.
Principles of Child-Centered Criticism

1. A distinguishing feature of children's literature is its child-centeredness. Those who write for children must do so out of an awareness of their limited experiential background and their intellectual and emotional maturity at various stages of their development.

2. A literary work which is addressed to a child will not, for that reason alone, be either lesser or greater than one addressed to an adult. It will be different.

3. Concern on the part of an author for the nature of a child audience is never justification for second-rate writing; but literary quality alone will not ensure that a work will have child-appeal.

4. Books that are truly for children will reflect in appearance, in language, in style, as well as in subject matter and approach, the author's sensitivity to the internal and external worlds of childhood.

5. Authors and critics of children's books should draw on the work of child psychologists, who study the developmental nature and needs of childhood.

Principles of Issues-Centered Criticism

1. Authors of children's books cannot morally ignore the social milieu in which children live; nor can they ignore the social issues which are an important part of the setting in which their narratives are placed.

2. Although social issues belong in children's literature, such issues must develop naturally as an integral part of a unified
literary expression.

3. When effectively presented in children's books social issues and literary excellence are not mutually incompatible.

4. Works of literature, regardless of subject matter, must be evaluated not as social commentary or social propaganda but as literature.

5. The use of art, either literary or graphic, in the communication of racist or sexist ideas or attitudes is intolerable. This is so, regardless of the author's intention, and regardless of whether the practice is deliberate or unconscious.

6. Stereotypic portrayal of characters, whether by race, nationality, sex, religion, language, or in any other form—either positively or negatively—is unacceptable.

7. Appropriate language variants or dialectal patterns may be used to authenticate characterization. Attempts to standardize or homogenize the language may misrepresent it, and deny children exposure to rich linguistic diversity.

8. The authentic portrayal of social history should not be perceived as stereotyping.

9. Meritorious writing on any subject is not necessarily related to the color or ethnic background of the author.

10. It is the author's responsibility to accurately report the social situation. (On the matter of whether the author is more than a reporter of social circumstances, the critics are divided.)

11. While accurately reporting the social situation, authors may, by a judiciously placed comment, indicate some disapproval of
unacceptable philosophy or practice, and thus **restore the moral order of society.**

12. **Literature, criticism, and politics must be mutually independent.**

The choice of subject matter, form, and style must be the author's prerogative.

13. **Characters, both male and female, must be portrayed as individuals,** not as representatives of their sex. The focus must be on a shared humanity rather than gender differences.

14. While historical accuracy must not be distorted to observe the social conventions of the present, **contemporary books must not be restricted to traditional sex roles,** but must reflect the philosophy of present-day society.

15. **Authors must have the freedom to develop their narratives** around male protagonists or female ones, and to portray members of both sexes negatively or positively as situation and honest portrayal dictate.

16. **A book which is poorly written is a poor book** regardless of the race or gender of the main character.

17. **Disabled characters should be featured in children's books in both leading and supporting roles,** contributing to society as well as receiving from it.

18. The presentation of **physical and mental impairment,** in either text or illustration, should be natural and unsensational, neither minimized nor exaggerated; neither romanticized nor patronized.

19. Writing which features the **disabled** should evoke respect for what the individual can do rather than sympathy for the limitations the
disabilities impose. The emphasis should be on empathy rather than compassion.

20. The elderly in children's books should emerge as full human beings, neither eulogized nor debunked because of their years; nor should they be depicted as necessarily ill, helpless, or dependent on their children or charity.

21. Picture books for the young, as well as books for older children, should sensitively portray the physical and social problems of aging. They should equally depict middle-aged grandparents still involved in productive labor, neither senile nor sedentary.

22. In the presentation of realism of contemporary society, the distinction between the suitable and the unsuitable in subject matter may be the distinction between the normal and the aberrant. Generally, it is the treatment of the subject rather than the actual subject itself which determines the appropriateness.

23. Honest realism will present the positive forces at work in society as well as the negative ones. The superficially topical or sensational is not necessarily literary.

24. Writers who explore controversial themes must exercise the responsibility of raising the level of understanding of the reader by creating emotional and intellectual frameworks which serve as reference points.

25. The new realism, as all other types of literature, must be assessed in terms of the integrity of purpose of the writing, its moral and social validity, and its literary merit.
26. **Violence** used honestly in the service of art is acceptable; violence used gratuitously for the exploitation of subject or reader is not.

27. **Violence** introduced naturally as part of effective plot development should occur in a setting which permits children the security of psychological distancing; it should be resolved in some satisfactory manner, and the moral order of the universe should be preserved.

28. Books on ecology must qualify as literature when assessed by standards of literary excellence. Didacticism and proselytizing are no substitutes for literary merit.

6. **What evidence is there of shifting emphases in the critical evaluation of children's literature within the past decade?**

   This study failed to provide conclusive evidence of changing critical emphases in the decade under study. The study, rather, has confirmed the need for, and the beginning of, a more comprehensive criticism—a criticism which, while in no way denigrating that criticism which is primarily work-centered, is itself concerned with the developmental characteristics of children, and the importance of finding the fit between reader and tale, as well as with the honest and artistic presentation of social issues. A work-centered or literary criticism has always been associated with the study and appraisal of the literary arts. The evidence of this study does not in any way diminish the significance of that type of criticism. The criticism which is herein reported, however, reflects a trend away from a total preoccupation with the work itself to emphasize the importance of some understanding
of the child reader and the real world in which the reader lives. The thesis is that the success of any work of art cannot be completely divorced from its communicative power, and the communicative power of children's literature is inextricably related to the nature of children and their capacity to respond.

Criticism which takes into account the developmental nature of the "implied" reader, did not originate in the decade under study, but has doubtless been nurtured by the increasing emphasis, during the decade, on the nature of childhood, and the developmental aspects of child growth, mentally as well as physically and emotionally. Restricted almost entirely to critics writing in Great Britain, this approach to the criticism of children's books holds it to be important that all writing for children, and all criticism of the same, be undertaken in full knowledge of the nature of the child who must remain at the center of both endeavors. Critics who adopt this stance see a close relationship between the 'sibling disciplines' of children's literature and child psychology, and they see the critics' role as one which includes the task of finding the fit between literary text and child reader.

Also in the 60's and throughout the 70's, when literature for children embraced all of the concerns of contemporary society as its legitimate subject matter, there developed a fairly substantial and growing body of social or issues-centered criticism. This criticism, emanating largely from the United States of America, but not restricted to the American critics, has, at its best, concerned itself with both the legitimacy and the accuracy of the presentation of social issues in books for children, as well as the artistry of that presentation.
Never has it been suggested by the critics that literature for children become merely a vehicle for social propaganda, or a mouthpiece for an author with a particular cause to espouse. The unifying principle emerging from such criticism is that any acceptable presentation of social issues through the medium of literature must have all such issues used in the service of art, and developing naturally within the context of a well structured narrative. The question of social issues or literary merit never arises in the criticism of the decade. The prevailing critical position is that when emphasis in either writing or criticism moves from concern with the unity of the whole as a work of art to concern for issues alone, both the work and the criticism have moved out of the realm of literature and into the realm of social commentary.

But issues-centered criticism, no less than child-centered criticism, is concerned with literature. Concern for the nature of the child and concern for the presentation of social issues are both ancillary to what must remain the critics' primary concern—the search for and promotion of literary excellence. It is when the pursuit of literary excellence is wedded to a sense of child and a sense of community that the resulting work is most likely to be a work of art for children. When the child is left out of the deliberation, the work may be a work of artistic merit; it may even be listed among the award-winners for excellence; but it may, at the same time, be inaccessible to the majority of children. In this regard it must be noted that genuine criticism must acknowledge and promote literary merit wherever it is to be found, and it is to be found in the writings of new and
unknown authors no less than in the writings of those who have already received acclaim.

The criticism of the decade under study appears to be moving in the direction of a comprehensive criticism, involving the nature of literature, the nature of the child, and the nature of society. While the nature of literature, and the nature of society, are constantly subjects of critical commentary, increasingly the nature of the child is receiving attention as a focus of criticism. The change, however, is in the scope and range of the criticism, rather than in emphasis. It appears to the writer of this report that this developing trend does not constitute an abrogation of the true critic's responsibility. It is, rather, a recognition of a form of criticism which both Richards (1924) and Abrams (1953) supported. Richards was concerned with the "wholeness" of critical judgment (see p. 279); Abrams identified as the valid components of any comprehensive criticism, the artistic product; the artist; the universe, or the social environment; and the audience (see p. 206).

It is the conviction of the writer that the tripartite nature of the criticism of children's literature, which appears to have assumed some significance in the decade under study, may be perceived as a strength rather than a weakness, and that these three concerns may coalesce to form a sane and valid approach—one that is strongly literary. In a distinctive children's literature there is a uniqueness which relates to the nature of children. The individual works are literature, however, and it must remain the responsibility of the critics, whatever form or emphasis their response to children's books
may take, to preserve both those qualities which are literary and those which are childlike. It is their responsibility, also, to insist that there is no place in children's literature for the condescending, the childish, or the unliterary.

It is important, also, that the critical positions espoused by those who bring wisdom and discernment to the assessment of children's literature continue to be couched in such style and format as will allow them to be readily accessible not only to experts but also to parents, librarians, teachers, and all of those who are most directly involved with bringing children and books together. An elitist class of critics who talk only to each other are no more impressive, or effective in the opinion of the writer, than are authors who write only for themselves, with no sense of communication with an audience.

Recommendations

The following recommendations for further study are based on the foregoing questions, answers, and implications.

1. The criticism of children's literature examined in this report has been categorized as work-centered, child-centered, and issues-centered. In the decade under study the trend in the evaluation of children's books appears to be away from a narrow literary approach toward a more comprehensive form of criticism. This new approach, while literary in emphasis, includes critical consideration of the presentation of social issues, and draws on psychology and research to focus attention on the relationship between literature and child. The evidence of this study is that the expanding of the critical base implies no lessening of the demand
for literary excellence, although it is conceivable that this may result as a consequence. It is recommended that at the end of the decade of the 80's a similar study be undertaken to determine the state of the art of criticism of children's literature at that time, and to assess the effect of this comprehensive approach to criticism, both on children's books and on the criticism itself.

2. Although the criticism discovered in the sources searched for this study fell naturally and completely into the categories of work-centered, child-centered, and issues-centered criticism, it is probable that these categories were determined largely by the nature of the purposive sample. A different sample may have included criticism with a different orientation. Considering, for example, the emphasis on child development and the growing interest in the relationship between the disciplines of child, psychology, and children's literature, it is possible that a sample of psychological literature may yield a body of criticism with a psychological or psychoanalytical emphasis. It is therefore recommended that a follow-up study be undertaken, using a sample of psychological literature, in an attempt to discover additional evidence of a critical link between child psychology and children's literature.

3. Reference has been made in this study to the work of Schlager (1978), who concluded on the basis of formal research, that a book's literary appeal will not alone ensure its popularity with children; that books which are to appeal to children must have the developmental perceptions of childhood. It is recommended
that the validity of Schlager's conclusions be tested by a replication of her study, using other samples of books. A sample of Caldecott award-winning books, for example, or the Canadian Children's Book-of-the-Year award-winners, or the British Carnegie or Kate Greenaway award-winners, may be used.

4. In 1979 the Citizens' Committee on Children, Ottawa, published a report entitled *Children's Choices of Canadian Books* (Citizens' Committee on Children, 1979) containing information on how children of different ages responded to 198 books recommended to them by adults. This publication may provide valuable data for a study similar in intent to the Schlager study. It is therefore recommended that the data collected by the Citizens' Committee on Children and reported in *Children's Choices of Canadian Books* be analyzed for evidence of a relationship between a book's appeal and its representation of the developmental perceptions of childhood.

5. It may be considered an acid test of a sound and viable criticism that it include not only writings of a general nature, but also in-depth examination and analysis of individual works. In the present study, the approach to the literary criticism of the decade has been by genre and, as a purely pragmatic consideration, critical writings of the decade dealing with individual works or the collected works of individual authors, were not included for in-depth study. It is therefore recommended that all such criticism be examined and assessed.
It may be argued that a large and impressive body of criticism of children's literature resides in reviews which appear regularly in both popular and specialized sources. It was noted as a limitation of the present study that, for pragmatic reasons, reviews—descriptive and critical—were not included in the sources consulted. It is therefore recommended that a study of those reviews be undertaken with the intent of assessing this source of criticism, determining the degree to which the trends of the general criticism are reflected, and identifying evidence of other critical developments.
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APPENDIX A

CHILDREN'S BOOKS MENTIONED IN TEXT


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APPENDIX B

CRITICISM OF THE WORKS OF INDIVIDUAL AUTHORS


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12 Dyoth St., London, WC1A 1DF

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150 Fifth Ave., New York

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1111 Kenyon Road,
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585 Boylston Street,
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American Library Association, Children's Services Division, Young Adult Services Division, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, Illinois. 60611.

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The H.W. Wilson Co., 950 University Avenue, Bronx, N.Y. 10452.