THE POSSIBILITIES OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE:

A RHETORIC-ORIENTED APPROACH

TO JUVENILE TEXTS

By

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Abstract

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This rhetoric-oriented dissertation examines the academic discussion of children's literature, especially the influence of Jacqueline Rose and her landmark book *The Case of Peter Pan, or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1984). The implications of Rose's claim is that an entire school of interpretation within children's literature scholarship arose that began to (1) question (tacitly or overtly) whether it was possible for adult writers to really compose texts for children and (2) even suggest that the literature is something similar to a subversion and even exploitation of a child reader.

This dissertation seeks to reopen the issue that Rose first drew attention to, which is that in addition to the intended child-reader, stories for children must also consciously address an adult reader. In effect, each author for children has a 'two-headed reader' for her story, two heads with different expectations and desires. In this dissertation, I hope to show how such seeming tension between these two readers is frequently resolved by authors such as C.S. Lewis, who offers his own theory of children's literature that coincides and rivals Rose's own framework.

Finally, this dissertation makes the case for the possibility of children's literature that is supported by the earlier theory of children's fiction suggested by Lewis and by returning to the widening canon of rhetorical criticism as it pertains to literature. Lewis and rhetorical criticism provides a fresh insight into children's fiction.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1:

The Impossibility of Children's Fiction?

Is children's literature possible? In matters of reading, is the relationship between an adult and a child always a matter of power and dominance by default? Is the power relationship between the adult and child inhibiting the pleasure we get from reading these stories, or does it somehow add to our enjoyment? Can a writer, who is an adult, ever write a story that can truly be enjoyed by a child?

Much is said of the author's authority over the child reader, but can the reverse also be true? Is the cause of the author's power within the narrative come from her positioning herself in a subordinate position to the child reader? Much like *The Giving Tree* of Shel Silverstein's story, the author seems to give much and only ask for a modicum of attention in return. But how does the author create this special relationship? Like the tree, the author must give the child reader a part of himself. But how?

While none of these questions can be answered definitely, they can nonetheless be explored. Furthermore, these are questions that are relevant in this dissertation because they pose certain problems in our current study of children's literature. Perhaps in the past, the answers to these questions could be taken for granted. 'Of course children's literature is possible because writing a story for children is easy, right?'

Even today, I am amazed at the number of people who believe that composing a book for a child must be a straightforward and simple process. However, beyond the printed story itself, our culture often assumes that a relationship exists between the adult storyteller and the child who listens, that this relationship can bridge the adult and child

boundaries, and that this relationship is an uncomplicated phenomenon that does not merit much discussion: this final assumption continues to be frequently challenged by critics today.

Modern scholars who began taking a serious look at children's stories (beginning in the late 1960s) did much to confront this perception of an 'easy story' to write and tell, and they also challenged many other traditional notions that had always surrounded juvenile literature. Many assumptions or 'trades of the craft' which had before escaped scrutiny were now being explored; with the arrival of Freudian criticism, none of the truisms concerning texts for children seemed untouchable anymore: the sacerdotal bulwarks were compromised, and all that was unconscious or submerged within these texts was illuminated for cultural analysis. Through the modern transubstantiation of psychoanalysis, everything was now driven to the light for exposure and discussion. Or was it?

However, when British scholar Jacqueline Rose published her book *The Case of Peter Pan or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction: Language, Discourses, Society* (1984), the assumptions of a literature for children, written by adults and read by children, began to be questioned much more intensely and with more scrutiny.

Using a Freudian psychoanalytical framework, Rose asserts that children's fiction "is impossible" not because an author cannot write a book intended for a child (which Rose herself contends would be nonsense), but because somehow the concept of children's literature itself "hangs on an impossibility, one which it rarely ventures to speak. This is the impossible relation between adult and child." Rose argues that the

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reason for this is because the central preoccupation of most children's fiction is ironically "not…what the child wants, but of what the adult desires," and she implies that the author somehow necessarily seeks to fulfill this desire by 'construing the child' as the object for these adult-driven narratives (Rose 1, 136).

While Rose's claim might seem radical to some, her argument hardly came from the hinterlands of scholarly discussion concerning children's fiction. As we will see, the preoccupation with the roles that the 'adult' and 'child' both play within the narrative, rhetorical, and critical discourse has been an ineluctable dilemma for authors and publishers of children's literature long before the time it became a large-scaled book industry. What themes or techniques are *adult* and which ones are *juvenile*, and what adult topics can be brought into the literature to innovate it, and which ones must remain beyond the boundaries as unsuitable?

Finally, Rose gives us an added problem: a doubt that makes us wonder if the "relation between adult and child" is "impossible" for any adult author to achieve. Of course, part of Rose's intent is to discuss the relation between an "adult and child" within an individual author or reader—an adult who wishes to fulfill desires by returning to a state of childhood, which of course is impossible. Nevertheless, Rose neither focus solely on this notion of 'the child' within a single person, nor 'any generalised concept of the child' that she claims to refute, but Rose on several occasions drifts into discussing children as reading audience. In the Introduction, for example, where Rose is laying out much of the theoretical framework that will structure her work, she writes that "*Peter Pan* is a classic for children, despite the fact that they could not read it" (Rose 6). When

talking about the 'political disavowal' latent in much of classical children's literature, Rose returns to individual readers:

> For, as *Peter Pan* very clearly demonstrates, if we are talking to one group of children, then the chances are that we will not be speaking to another. More likely, the very idea of speaking to all children serves to close off a set of cultural divisions, divisions in which not only children, but we ourselves, are necessarily caught (7).

More importantly, Rose's discussion of 'impossibility' goes beyond the unfeasibility for a person to return to a romanticized and ahistorical state of childhood. For instance, Rose's references to 'child' and 'the child' (e.g., within a few pages when she is discussing real children or the conception of childhood innocence, etc) become so shifty at times that she is hard to follow, and sometimes she has to backtrack: in one example, Rose clarifies that she is not "talking here of the child's own experience of the book which, despite all attempts which have been made, I consider more or less *impossible to gauge*" (9, emphasis added).

This is what I wish to explore in this chapter. However, before we go much further, I would like to begin with an obscure essay that scholars have not really discussed since children's literature became an object of serious study. Nevertheless, here we find many of these concerns were already anticipated a generation earlier, before many of these modern questions were asked.

<p align="center">Children as Readers or a Species?</p>

In his paper "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to be Said" (1956), British author C.S. Lewis tells the readers of *The New York Times Book Review* how he first came to create his Narnia stories 'for children.' One of the claims Lewis makes is that "I never wrote down to anyone; and whether the opinion condemns or acquits my own work, it certainly is my opinion that a book worth reading only in childhood is not worth reading even then." In arguing this, however, Lewis is also arguing a larger point, which is that he was writing 'for children' not in the sense that he "collected information about child-psychology and decided what age group I'd write for…This is all pure moonshine. I couldn't write in that way at all" (Lewis 38 [OOW]).

As a professor of literature and philosophy at Oxford and later Cambridge University, Lewis's argument is one variation of the same claim he made throughout much of his scholarly work since 1930. Before writing to the *New York Times*, Lewis had earlier argued to his friend and fellow writer Charles Williams that

> It is usual to speak in a playfully apologetic tone about one's adult
> enjoyment of what are called 'children's books.' I think the convention a
> silly one. No book is really worth reading at the age of ten which is not
> equally…worth reading at the age of fifty…The only imaginative works
> we ought to grow out of are those which it would have been better not to
> have read at all (15).

In his own stories, Lewis claims that he wrote for children "only in the sense that I excluded what I thought they would not like or understand; not in the sense of writing what I intended to be below adult attention" (36-38). Lewis is chiefly discussing the

fantasy story or 'fairy tale,' which, in his own time, was still being categorized as a form

of nursery genre, and he frequently references the analogy of his friend and Oxford

colleague, J.R.R. Tolkien, who in his own criticism argued that the modernist tendencies

of contemporary culture had moved "fairy-stories" out of the popular mainstream and

"regulated [them] to the 'nursery', as shabby or old-fashioned furniture is regulated to the

playroom, primarily because the adults do not want it, and do not mind if it is misused"

(Christopher Tolkien 130). Lewis further asserts

> that the connection between fairy tales and children is not nearly so close
>
> as publishers and educationalists think. Many children don't like them and
>
> many adults do. (Lewis 37 [OOW])

Lewis and Tolkien here are mainly concerned with rehabilitating the literary status

of the fantasy genre, which was the sort of fiction they wrote, and so their goal was to

protect the form of the story. However, the criticism written by Lewis and Tolkien has

further implications for the 'adult' and 'child' boundary when it comes to literature.

The psychoanalytic revolution that Freud and Jung had brought about in the early

1900s had brought with it a new vocabulary (e.g., 'primary' and 'secondary processes')

and a new way of mapping out the newly 'discovered' unconscious mind (e.g.,

'archetypes,' 'libido,' etc). Soon it became fashionable in other fields such as sociology

and the humanities to divide and classify persons, cultures, and mythological studies

according to these new analytical frameworks.

Lewis was frequently an outspoken critic of Freud's more sociological writings,

and Lewis was critical of the modernist tendency to classify groups of persons, especially

when it came to their literary attitudes. While Lewis does not directly blame Freud himself for the notion that children are distinct from adults (and he points to other culprits such as mass educators, industry publishers, etc.), Lewis does imply that the popularity of Freudianism—with its emphasis on stages of physical and unconscious development— has contributed to how contemporary culture sees the relationship between our childhood and adult personality. However it came about, Lewis and Tolkien were weary of the concept of an author who wrote 'for children' as a demographic rather than as individual readers or (at the very least) as a distinct audience. Lewis quotes an unnamed periodical which echoes the mainstream assumption of that time, that 'Children are a distinct race,' which was (and in some circles often still is) the conventional wisdom. Tolkien and Lewis firmly objected to this dichotomy.

For instance, Tolkien in "On Fairy-Stories" (1947) expresses his concerns with those who "tend to think of children as a special kind of creature, almost a different race, rather than as normal, if immature, members of a particular family, and of the human family at large" (Christopher Tolkien 130). In his essay "On Juvenile Tastes" (1958), Lewis agreed with Tolkien and went on to poke at the preoccupation of the book market where

> Children are regarded as beingʏa distinct *literary* species, and the
>
> production of books that cater for their supposedly odd and alien taste has
>
> become an industry; almost a heavy one (Lewis 39-40 [OOW]).

Lewis felt that the distinction between 'adult' and 'child' was shiftier than most of the psychologists and educational professionals of his time were willing to admit, and

Lewis went on to say that apart from some issues of vocabulary and topic, "juvenile taste is simply human taste," and that children simply "select…that minority of books which happens to suit them, as a foreigner in England may select those English dishes which come the nearest to suiting his alien palate," which is hardly different from how adults choose their own books and stories (39-40).

Lewis goes on to argue that the reading tastes for adults, particularly those with literary tastes, might be much more distinct and peculiar than those of children:

> Fashions in literary tastes come and go among adults, and every period has
> its own shibboleths. These, when good, do not improve the tastes of
> children, and, when bad, do not corrupt it; for children read only to enjoy
> (40-41).

After the passage of sixty years of modern and psychoanalytical criticism concerning texts for children, it is difficult not to read into Lewis' last statement some sort of romanticism concerning 'the child,' as depicted by Enlightenment writers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau: a child who is left unmediated by the culture surrounding her, and thus more pure in her actions, observations, and judgments about the world. However, Lewis is getting at something different. What Lewis means is that "it would be less arrogant, and truer to the evidence, to say that the peculiarity of the child readers is that they are not peculiar. It is we who are peculiar." Lewis clarifies this difference further by saying that writing a story for children is more similar to writing a story for adults who are not acquainted with the "jejune and narrow" modernist "approved canon of tastes" for

fiction, and therefore, the author who has "a story to tell must appeal to the audience that still cares for story-telling" rather than *avant-garde* tricks of the trade (40-41).

Lewis was often contemptuous of what he dubbed 'the historical point of view', or the notion that the events of a given moment in time marked that generation as different from both the one the preceded and succeeded it. Lewis' distaste is subtly present in many of his scholarly and philosophical writings, but is most direct in his fiction. Take this instance from *The Screwtape Letters* when Screwtape advises his nephew Wormwood:

> …since we cannot deceive the whole human race all the time, it is most important thus to cut every generation off from all others; for where learning makes a free commerce between the ages there is always the danger that the characteristic errors of one may be corrected by the characteristic truths of another. (Lewis 151 [SL])

This is not to say that Lewis is a universalist, or not as we understand the concept today. Lewis never denied that time and historical forces have a role in shaping how all individuals, including children, respond to the world around them. However, Lewis is interested in how humans respond when presented with situations through language and storytelling, and he believed we could respond in reliable ways if certain conditions were met between the writer and her audience. In this sense, Lewis is no more a 'universalist' in the philosophical sense than a rhetor who assumes that her audience might respond best if she plans the timing of her message or invokes a sense of exigence.

Returning to Lewis' concern with the "jejune and narrow", the background for his unease was that he was a scholar of medieval literature and 16th century English poetry where the difference between literary and popular stories was much more porous: the distinctions were more likely to be based either on the verses being composed in Latin rather than the English vernacular, or the distinction might have been a topical one (a treatise on astrolabes, etc.) rather than distinctions of literary technique. While some exceptions remain, such as *Paradise Lost*, I do believe the gulf between Shakespeare to the average Elizabethan dweller was vastly narrower than that of Faulkner to today's average graduate from an American high school.

Lewis was concerned about the growing chasm between literary and popular fiction, and the cultural fragmentation that this might cause. As Lewis argued to Charles Williams, he saw books for children and genre texts as having a potential far beyond writing an educational tale for a child or an entertaining narrative for a fantasy reader: Lewis= vision was for a "story that can mediate imaginative life to the masses while not being contemptible to the few" (Lewis 18). Lewis had high goals (almost impossible ones as he confessed to Williams) for the children's story, but we have seen the embodiment of his ambitions when we look at Richard Adams' animal stories, Tolkien's Middle-earth histories, or J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series.

After Lewis and Tolkien took great pains to diminish the perceived difference between adult and child readers, their supposed types of stories, and how these distinctions do not hold, Lewis then went on to raise the bar for the sort of story that should be written for children, which was concerned with more than just children

themselves. How did Lewis solve the problem of writing a story *for* children, when he himself argued that there was nothing 'peculiar' about the tastes *of* children?

Obviously, the difficulty Lewis faces is less severe once we have abandoned this notion of 'children' in a general sense, and move to a view that is more particular, which considers children as persons with differences of taste and likes. While I might not be able to write a convincing story for all first grade children in the United States, Lewis might believe that I can write a satisfactory tale for the 20 children in my daughter's class. And if I can write a story that delights these 20 children in the class, then perhaps there is a possibility that some of the first graders in other classrooms might also enjoy my story. Once an author changes this perception of his reading audience, then the problem of audience is gradually ameliorated.

For example, in his important essay "On Three Ways of Writing for Children" (1952), Lewis discusses a couple of ways in which a story for children might come into existence. The first method was the one Lewis Carroll, Kenneth Grahame, and Tolkien used to compose their own books: "The printed story grows out of a story told to a particular child with the living voice and perhaps *ex tempore*" (Lewis 23).

Lewis distinguishes this method of creating a story to please a child from more consumer-driven motives to "give the child what it wants"—the latter, Lewis implies, is more wish-fulfilling pleasures or bombastic flattery, whereas the former is relationship-driven and comes with a sense of shared pleasures. In contrast to marketing a story to a broad demographic, the story that pleases a particular child is "dealing with a concrete person, this child who, of course, differs from all other children" which steers the author

clear of imagining her readers as an alien species. Lewis argues that the advantages for

creating a story in such a way is that in

> any personal relationship the two participants modify each other. You
>
> would become slightly different because you were talking to a child and
>
> the child would become slightly different because it was being talked to by
>
> an adult. A community, a composite personality, is created and out of that
>
> the story grows (23).

Lewis here illustrates that the process of creating a story is relationship-driven,

that it can be a discourse community, and through this the author creates a new persona,

what Wayne C. Booth calls 'the implied author' of the text. This 'author' is essentially

another character in the story that often "stands behinds the scenes, whether as stage

manager, as puppeteer, or as an indifferent God, silently paring his fingernails. This

implied author is always distinct from the "real man"—whatever we may take him to

be—who creates a superior version of himself, a "second self," as he creates his work"

(Booth 151).

Despite the attempts of modernism to 'dehumanize' literature in order to create

some notion of artistic perfection—or the movement's more practical goals to at least

make the author a less intrusive presence within the narrative—Booth insists that 'beliefs

and characteristics' of the implied author cannot be avoided, no matter how invisible the

real author might try to render him:

> In short, the author's judgment is always present, always evident to anyone
>
> who knows how to look for it. Whether its particular forms are harmful or

serviceable is always a complex question, a question that cannot be settled

by any easy reference to abstract rules. As we begin now to deal with this

question, we must never forget that though the author can to some extent

choose his disguises, he can never choose to disappear (Booth 20).

Booth argues that all novels are *rhetorical*, meaning not necessarily that they try to

persuade us to take a position on various political implications that are embedded in the

text (though that could be the case sometimes). Rather, what Booth is saying is that

rhetoric in fiction is the instrument where each author tries to convey her vision to the

reader and to persuade him of its realness. This vision, and the need to convince others to

share it, is at the heart of Lewis's concern: creating a relationship with the reader helps

him as a writer to instinctively anticipate the dreams and wishes of his readers, which is

very important if an author wishes to influence those dreams and make us into the readers

he wants us to be.

   This communion with the child helps to create the author's second self. As Lewis

argues, when a printed story for children begins with a narrative that is intended for a

particular child, the author is more cautioned against (1) conceiving of a reading audience

of children as "a strange species whose habits you have 'made up' like an anthropologist

or a commercial traveler" and (2) it would not be as "possible, face to face, to regale the

child with things calculated to please it but regarded by yourself with indifference and

contempt. The child, I am certain, would probably see through that" (Lewis 23 [OOW]).

Lewis, it seems to me, is clearly implying that, through the process of sharing a story with

a real child, an author can come to create a believable 'implied author' that can persuade

more child readers (even if she cannot persuade all children) to accept the story as

something *for* (or even *about*) themselves. This works along the same lines as Plato in

Phaedrus who was wary of the written word—which he likens to painted images that are

limited in their ability to engage with their interlocutor—and who instead preferred

dialogue which engaged the soul of the learner. In this sense, persuasion is aided when

the rhetor is faced pointblank with his audience because she can alter and accommodate

her text based on any immediate response. Such a process can also prevent an author

from writing (consciously or not) for adult experts on the likes and tastes of children

rather than for children themselves.

As sound as Lewis makes this method seem for creating a reliable and authentic

story for children, when it came to his own Narnia novels, Lewis admits that he himself

could not use it for his fiction. Rather than allowing a narrative to take shape from telling

a story to an actual child, Lewis claimed that he instead belonged to a different group of

writers who wrote

> 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 into that form (Lewis 23).

One of the problems with Lewis's criticism on juvenile literature is that his

essays—unlike his scholarship on John Milton, medieval literature, or 16th century

English verse—were intended for more popular readership than for academic circles (few

of which, in the 1950s, would have been interested in the topic anyway), and so

sometimes Lewis's attention to detail or his theoretical consistency is less assiduous than it could have been. For this reason, Lewis might confusingly seem to be falling back on his earlier claims that there is not a distinct literary 'taste' for children and even implying that there is a common 'form' of story for them, but Lewis does not intend to do so. A few sentences later, for example, Lewis makes it clear that

> Sentimentality is so apt to creep in if we write at length about children as seen by their elders. And the reality of childhood, as we all experienced it, creeps out. For we all remember that our childhood, as lived, was immeasurably different from what our elders saw (24).

Nevertheless, while earlier Lewis reveals how the viable 'implied author' of a juvenile book could be created in the case of an author who shares a story with a 'particular child,' it seems that by assuming children to be the proper audience for his story, that Lewis is guilty of being the 'anthropologist' or 'commercial traveler' type of writer that he himself was criticizing, and that he must, at some point in the composing process, be making some assumptions about his readership. However, another theory here is possible, one that Lewis did not himself lay out, but one that can be pulled and coherently arranged from his own writings.

The writer Hugh Walpole argued that writing a story for children is more difficult than writing any other type of story because "it can only be done by somebody having a great deal of the child to his outlook and sensibilities" (Griswold 3). Walpole's claim is interesting when contrasted with a story Lewis sometimes told:

Once in a hotel dining-room I said, rather too loudly, 'I loathe prunes.' 'So

do I,' came an unexpected six-year-old voice from another table.

Sympathy was instantaneous. Neither of us thought it funny. We both

know that prunes are far too nasty to be funny (Lewis 34 [OOW]).

Of course, our adult wisdom breaks in here to remind us how healthy prunes are,

how they assist our digestive system, and how redeemable this makes them, even if they

lack the taste of bacon, the texture of a porterhouse steak, or the ampleness of a rich and

warm dessert *a la mode*. Prunes give us health, and therefore these reasons of salubrious

prudence must sometimes trump such other concerns as taste, craving, or pure delight.

To all of this, we should hear the frustrated child at the dinner table instantaneously

exclaim, 'moonshine!' Lewis is suggesting that the realm where a person enjoys

anything—a food, a toy, a game, good weather, a cup of tea, etc.—*for what it is in itself*,

and partakes of it *because he or she enjoys it*—rather than taking it for some other motive

that has been attached to it—is the country that is familiar for many children. Lewis

would not deny that individual children differ depending on experiences. Nevertheless, he

assumes that most children unmarked by extraordinary circumstances, and who were also

developing their training in what Lewis called "the doctrine of objective value", would

respond in this general way (Lewis 19 [AOM]).

Lewis seems to take for granted that the author who lives in this between country

(or at least lives a portion of her life there in summer residence) already has an advantage

over other authors when it comes to creating a story for children.

Navigating Consciousnesses

Rather than a different region, perhaps it can be more useful to think of Lewis's suggestion of coexistence between the consciousnesses of the child and adult as a sort of balance (or even dalliance) between the two ways of looking at the world within the same person. A compelling metaphor for this balance can be found in the Disney film *Flight of the Navigator* (1986) where an air voyage is navigated by a twelve-year-old child. *Navigator* has a lot to do with the child personality within our adult consciousness, and how these two very different perceptions can not only learn to tolerate each other, but that they can often comfort, console, and inform each other, and that the two insights can even thrive together far better together than they could have alone.

Navigator is the story of David Freeman who after dark on July 4, 1978 takes a walk in the woods near his Fort Lauderdale home to tell Jeff, his eight-year-old brother, to come home from a neighboring house. After Jeff leaps out of a tree and scares David, David is about to turn and chase him to punish him, but David turns instead to follow Bruiser his dog who has run off barking at something. The dog leads David to a small gorge near a railroad where he suddenly slips and falls to the bottom. David is unconscious for what appears to be a couple of hours, but when he gets up and walks home he finds that his parents and brother no longer live there, and that it is now July 4, 1986: 8 years have gone by, everyone David knows is older but he is still 12—all of his favorite television shows have been cancelled, he has never seen a music video or heard of Twisted Sister, or drank New Coke, etc. Life has completely passed David by—all of his friends have dated and are off to college, Jeff (who was his little brother) is now a teenager and 4 years older than him, and the world and culture around David has changed.

Perhaps worst of all for the insecure and self-conscious David, his lack of aging and his unusual brain activity (caused by alien star charts that have been downloaded inside his head) have made him something of a human anomaly—an object of curiosity and inquiry for medical professionals and government scientists.

While *Flight of the Navigator* is a compelling science fiction and time travel film for children, the story is also about adolescence: often this universal 'phase' in our lives is mistaken for another level of childhood, or a simple 'step' in our biological or emotional development, when it is truly a transitional period where the two cultural and biological perceptions of childhood and adulthood collide without much warning and (for some of us) perhaps even uninvited: this begins the process of conscious and unconscious mediation and negotiation that perhaps continues to be ongoing well into our college or middle-age years.

This mediation is the subtext for *Navigator*. Before his strange adventure begins, David is being bombarded by the emotional and physical changes he is experiencing. Early in the movie, David takes Bruiser to a dog competition where he fails to measure up to the more experienced dogs; as Jeff chaffs him on the defeat, David becomes outwardly angry at his younger brother and lots of harsh name calling and physical fighting ensues; inwardly, however, Jeff's teasing hurts David who is developing an adult need for accomplishment and a growing competitive nature. Also, as his sexual development begins to mature, David is beginning to desire opposite-sex companionship, but he is also afraid to speak to girls because—as with the dog competition—he is afraid of rejection and ridicule, which would be for David another form of humiliating defeat.

What underlies all of these specific conflicts within David is his confusion with what his existence is supposed to mean. Right before he encounters Jeff and then falls into the gorge, David tells Bruiser, "I don't know what I want out of life anymore." What David's words convey is a feeling of a larger uncertainty that seems to be new for him: the things he used to value—toys, games, imaginative play, activities he once enjoyed where so much *ego* was not at stake, etc.—now seem inappropriate to him, but in their absence is a void and David is at odds as too how to fill it. This point of conflict is where David's adventure begins.

At the hospital when the doctors are trying to find out why David disappeared for 8 years and why he has not aged, David tells his mother that everything is 'like a bad Dream.' From an adolescent point of view, what happens to David is very much like a bad dream in that it is a projection of the fears he was already experiencing before his strange encounter. Rachel, the NASA intern who brings David his meals, is about the same age David would be were it not for his time travel experience. From a standpoint of popular culture, for instance, David cannot relate to Rachel because he wants to hear songs and watch television shows from 1978, and he does not understand the sudden craze over hair highlights or synthesizer music. This mismeeting between David and Rachel underlies perhaps the biggest anxiety for many of us during adolescence: the fear of being different from those whose respect we desire, the dread of being dismissed as irrelevant by our friends and peers. This fear of David's is also personified in Jeff's scorn and ridicule over the failure of the dog competition and his notice of David's newfound interest in girl companionship.

If David's 'bad dream' experience is a particularized depiction of his internal conflict of adolescence, then the effects of the fearful dream begins to be lessened as David takes over the role of navigator of the alien ship. For instance, when 'Max' (Trimaxian Drone Ship) absorbs some of David's humanness in the 'mind transfer', Max begins to ridicule David in the same way Jeff did earlier in the film. However, rather than responding in kind, David channels his anger as a challenge, and so he begins to learn how to pilot the spacecraft around the planet with considerable skill. When Max (using the knowledge he has absorbed from David) takes the spaceship to Tokyo instead of Miami, we learn that in school David is poor at geography. However, once David is motivated to return home, he stops at a convenience store to buy a roadmap and navigates the spaceship to Fort Lauderdale by following an interstate. Furthermore, unlike the dog show, as David is learning the functions of the spacecraft his attitude is often playful and he seems to enjoy himself: David pilots the ship to The Beach Boys' "I Get Around" and later teaches Max to sing "Old Macdonald Had a Farm", all without being insecure or self-conscious about being out of style or too 'childish' for his age. David also finds he has no trouble talking to Rachel and making friends—and even charm her, make a joke, persuade her to help him, etc.—once he is focused on something else aside from the desire of companionship alone.

Finally, David's experience teaches him that life has an elasticity that should be embraced rather than avoided: he learns this from his spaceship flight, but he also discovers it by seeing his family 8 years after he disappears—he sees Jeff become a protective and helpful older brother to him (better than David had probably been to Jeff),

but most of all, David sees how his absence has affected his family, especially his parents—for the first time in his life, David realizes how important his family is to him and how important he is to them. In the story, David disappears, reappears, and then returns on Independence Day, which is symbolically important for the conflict David faces throughout the film because what this 'independence' really is for David is how he will mediate between his past childhood and growing adult consciousness. Ironically, David's independence is leading him to be less dependent on his parents and family, but at the same time, in his new freedom he has made a conscious choice to dedicate himself to his family. While David has learned to retain what was best about his childhood, David is growing in the way he should: he was born his parent's son and Jeff's older brother, but now that he is free to choose, he chooses dedication, loyalty, and love to those who are devoted to him.

If David is learning to be less selfish, more dexterous, and more playful all while 'growing up' in a better way than he might otherwise have had, the 'mind transfer' that Max and David undergo makes Max less grim and more playful, amusing, and personable. Before Max absorbs all of David's adolescent consciousness (along with the star charts he needs to return to planet Phaelon), he is a lot like Dr. Faraday, the NASA scientist who seems mostly interested in David as a means to some end. Unlike Dr. Faraday, though, Max is incapable of even pretending that he is interested in David for David's own sake: Max is focused on his galactic mission, is uninterested in relationships, views David merely as an 'inferior species' compared to him, and often seems annoyed with David for distracting him. Max also thinks that all human activities

(such as laughter) should be quantifiable and have some sort of productive purpose. While the mind transfer makes Max more interesting for the audience, the key attribute that Max gets from David is an interest in another person for his own sake. The 'transfer' is actually a remediation for Max—before it, Max's only choices are about his mission for Phaelon, but afterwards Max chooses to care for David and to even have compassion for him.

What David's story seems to suggest that if our adult consciousness can conserve and continue to tap into the awareness that we had as children, then we can be happier as adults and need not sacrifice those things which gave us pleasure to the altar of adulthood. However, what is this childhood awareness? How might children see the world differently from us?

If children are in some way different than their adult counterparts, perhaps one of their differences lies in that children tend to be more unaware of the underlying motives (political, social, religious, cultural, sexual, hierarchical, provincial, etc.) of their elders, and how these motives often cause conflict for adults and make them (for good or evil) go against their other desires. Sometimes adults share some degree of this innocence. While there is a temptation to envision the adult of children's literary theory as something from a Peanuts comic strip—more monolithic and perhaps imperceptive—we see other personalities and character traits: the thirty-year-old 'altar boy' or the fifty-year-old 'girl scout' who stays far above the office fray or the 'pay for play' politics of some working environments: those grownups that remain naïve, aloof, or principled (or some combination of the three) against fashionable notions of convenience or pragmatism.

Such an adult, Lewis seems to suggests, would relate very easily to a child

because this grownup already shares some of their views of the world. Of course, this

innocence that I have described is a positive characteristic that children and adults can

share, but the same could be said for negative ones such as selfishness, dishonesty, or

disorder. Such examples of this behavior in adults is not hard to find. Such a grownup can

also relate to a child on different grounds, and could feasibly write a story that celebrates

these sorts of deleterious human characteristics (which is precisely what some social

critics and critical scholars argue about some texts for children). Nevertheless, most

authors for children seem to avoid such appeals as selfishness, and often embrace a more

innocent, critical, and inquisitive understanding of the world. Lewis concludes that this

understanding "is the proper meeting between a man and child as independent

personalities," which is how Lewis and authors like him seem to create the 'implied

authors' that they need for their stories.

In his book *Feeling Like a Kid: Childhood and Children's Literature* (2006), Jerry

Griswold contends that "the best writers for children can speak to the young" because

"they are still connected to their childhoods and sympathetic" (Griswold 4). Lewis would

agree with Griswold. In his autobiography *Surprised By Joy* (1955) Lewis writes about

the most traumatic moment of his childhood, the death of his mother from cancer when

he was nine years old. Unlike today where many children in the industrialized world are

shielded from human fatality, her long illness and eventual death happened not in a

hospital, but at the Lewis home in the eyes of all her family. Lewis writes:

There came a night when I was ill and crying both with headache and

toothache and distressed because my mother did not come to me. That was

because she was ill too; and what was odd was that there were several

doctors in her room, and voices and comings and goings all over the house

and doors shutting and opening. It seemed to last for hours…Children

suffer not (I think) less than their elders, but differently. For us boys

[Lewis and his older brother Warren] the real bereavement had happened

before our mother died. We lost her gradually as she was gradually

withdrawn from our life into the hands of nurses and delirium and

morphia, and as our whole existence changed into something alien and

menacing, as the house became full of strange smells and midnight noises

and sinister conversations. (Lewis 18-19 [SBJ])

Lewis's attention to detail here is rich and vivid, but he goes further as he turns to

his recollections of his father's anguish during this time of bereavement. Rather than

reading a somber (yet distanced) account of this tragedy within the memoirs of a popular

professor, Lewis instead gives us something completely unexpected:

the sight of adult misery and adult terror has an effect on children which is

merely paralyzing and alienating. Perhaps it was our fault. Perhaps if we

had been better children we might have lightened our father's sufferings at

this time. We certainly did not. (19)

The picture of the nine year old Lewis, who has lost his mother, is hard to read for

any empathetic reader. However, Lewis's adult admission here of a long-held guilt, which

has outlived his childhood, for me is almost as moving. I find it difficult to believe that

Lewis came to this conclusion about his own father later in adulthood; more plausibly,

this conclusion *followed* Lewis *into* adulthood as did other feelings of loss, regret, self-

blame, and insecurity in his life. As he later observed, "With my mother's death all

settled happiness…disappeared from my life." And while there "was to be much fun,

many pleasures, many stabs of Joy" to be had during the remainder of Lewis's childhood,

there was "no more of the old security. It was sea and islands now; the great continent had

sunk like Atlantis" (21). To return to Griswold's thesis, Lewis shows that this event that

happened when he was a child forever 'connected' him to his childhood. However, this

'connection' is more than mere memory.

As Griswold's choice of words in his title 'feeling like a kid' implies, this

continuous association is not just a remembering of what it was like to be a child, but it is

a sort of mood, a consciousness, or a 'way of seeing' that continues to be a part of the

author. In a letter to Joy Davidman, the American writer who later became his wife,

Lewis recounted something of his mother's death and confessed to Davidman that "I've

not quite succeeded in growing up…there is still too much of 'Mammy's lost little boy'

about me" (*Letters* vol 3, 398). Perhaps it is safe to conclude that Lewis rarely had to

create an 'implied author' (at least not one from scratch) each time he created a new

Narnia story: because he was so connected to his childhood and had retained somewhere

the same worldview he had had when he was ten years old, Lewis seems at times to carry

his 'implied author' with him throughout his adulthood (Lewis 34 [OOW]).

This brings up a point that I will wish to explore later on in this dissertation. While it seems that Lewis used a part of himself, the 'lost little boy' who loved to make toy gardens, to create the different implied authors of his fictional books, does the door ever swing the other way? As readers, we coexist in the 'primary world' where we live but come into contact with the 'secondary world,' as Tolkien put it, of the story. In a sense, through the act of reading a story and trusting the storyteller, the story renews our minds and hearts, and becomes a living part of us.

However, we might begin to ask ourselves, since it is the mind of the reader where the secondary world and the primary world come to exist together, does this mean that within the reader that these two realities become one world? Does the secondary world become as real as the primary because it lives in the mind and often renews us as readers, even making us a new sort of reader?

We will slowly work our way towards exploring this question further in this dissertation. However, we can conclude that contemporary scholarship on juvenile literature might be different had it begun with the critical work of Lewis and Tolkien. Some of their ideas were firmly grounded in the classical tradition Lewis and Tolkien were taught, but some of it was ahead of its own time. For example, there is no evidence that Lewis was familiar with the texts of Mikhail Bakhtin or that he was familiar with such terms as "heteroglossia," but Lewis shows an awareness for some Bakhtinian ideas, especially when it comes to seeing that each good text is somehow a dialogue, a conversation that is a bridge between personalities, and the roles of author and reader are not so rigid or structured, but dynamic for both of the participants who are involved in the

creation of the story. While this analysis has not yet even scratched the surface of the potentialities, the study of children's literature becomes more open to discourse studies if we start with Lewis.

Again, none of this is to say that Lewis and Tolkien left behind a workable scheme for interpreting texts, or even a thorough literary framework. Of course, neither Tolkien nor Lewis was interested in deconstructionist theory or critical-cultural studies, and while Lewis questions some of the assumptions about children's literature, when it comes to some of Lewis's other work—such as his *Preface to Paradise Lost*, which was perhaps for the sake of professional compliance—he sometimes takes texts at rhetorical 'face value.' However, what Tolkien and Lewis did leave behind (especially Lewis) was a vision of this literature that was creative, highly imaginative, interactive, full of fluidity, yet grounded within certain discursive and rhetorical practices. I believe that their perspective on worlds as well as their exploration of the boundaries between adult authors and child readers adds something important to our contemporary conversation on children's literature: most of all, it provides the missing component that helps us see that writing fiction for children is possible.

Chapter 2:

Rose and Her Shadow

In hindsight, perhaps all criticism of children's fiction should have begun with C.S. Lewis, but this was not so. As Leonard S. Marcus tells us in his book *Minders of Make-Believe: Idealists, Entrepreneurs, and the Shaping of American Children's Literature* (2008), most of the criticism on children's texts—until the 1970s—was done by librarians rather than by scholars of literature (though Marcus seems unaware of Lewis' work). As the literary specialists began to move in, Marcus shows us that there was often "an irritating tendency" for them "to sound like someone who had stumbled upon virgin territory" as they passed over the work of earlier critics to discuss these texts as if they were worlds "where no thoughtful grownup had trod before" (Marcus 278).

Indeed, aside from Lewis and Tolkien, there were earlier critical voices engaged in a discussion of children's fiction, such as Anne Carroll Moore's "The Three Owls" column in the Sunday *Books* section of the *New York Herald-Tribune*. Moore served for years as the director of the New York Public Library's Children's Services department, and her influence among librarians across the United States was unmatched when it came not only to their book selections for the library stacks, but for their votes for the annual Newbery Medal for the year's best children's book. There was also *The Horn Book*, which began as a store newsletter that was published by Boston's Bookshop for Boys and Girls, but became one of the first magazines that "questioned the wisdom of isolating the literature from the literary mainstream."

However, when Temple University Press published the first volume of *Children's Literature* in 1972, the editor Francelia Butler claimed that the study of children's texts should be done by "humanists" rather than "children's experts," and Butler not surprisingly "wrote as if *The Horn Book* either did not exist or else was beneath her mention" (Marcus 98-99, 253). Butler's preference for 'humanists' over librarians indicates that, while it is understandable that literary specialists would be less familiar with library publications, we cannot rule out professional condescension as a motive when contemplating the question of why earlier scholars did not take more advantage of this earlier body of work.

While this neglect of previous critical work is in some cases unfortunate, nevertheless, much of the skepticism that scholars held towards the earlier critical treatment of children's literature did have much basis in fact. In 1952, for example, Harper Brothers' children's publisher Ursula Nordstrom had received E.B. White's manuscript for *Charlotte's Web*, and she hoped that this book would finally win for Harpers the coveted Newbery Medal (rather than the runner-up distinction) which had persistently eluded Nordstrom for years. However, Marcus suggests that Anne Carol Moore, in her review for *The Horn Book*, might have somewhat stultified Nordstrom's chances at winning the coveted award for Harpers.

In her criticism, Moore seemed to hold too rigidly to some personal tenet of genre classification because she complained that White's book had elements of realism and fantasy (though *Charlotte's Web* was no more of a genre amalgamation than George Orwell=s *Animal Farm* which had been widely published and read years earlier in the

29

United States and Great Britain). Furthermore, one of Moore's more questionable criticisms was that White had not developed the character of Fern enough, and that this shortcoming, along with the mixing of genre elements, would confuse the children reading the book. Moore either thought that children readers were supposed to identify with Fern because she is the most important child character in the book, or Moore might have somehow thought that the book was supposed to be (or should have been) about Fern herself. Both conclusions are incorrect: when we take the book as a whole, the text is chiefly about Wilbur and Charlotte, their friendship, about life and mortality, and the meaning of existence. While other reviewers such as Eudora Welty were enthusiastic, Marcus suggests that the librarians nationwide were more apt to heed the critique of a colleague such as Moore than a writer such as Welty, and this cost White and Nordstrom the 1954 Newbery Medal.

While the claim of whether or not Anne Carol Moore cost *Charlotte's Web* the Newbery is far from settled and is not something we will explore further in this dissertation, Moore's critique of the novel does illustrate something of the stagnant selectiveness of the criteria that was sometimes used to evaluate the new texts for children that were being written in the beginning of the postwar period. The attitude of the conventional children's literary groups and professionals towards the emergence of comic books, serialized fiction, and fantasy literature further illustrates this inclination as they were forced to deal with the literary innovations that were to appear in the 1950s and 1960s. Furthermore, it illustrates the inconsistency of these attitudes as well. For instance, as Marcus writes, "editors and librarians still looked askance at fantasy fiction as a form

of fringy, escapist readings, litter better than the comics," which, for this group of critics, was indeed an indictment, but sometimes the American librarians made an exception "when fantasy came with a British pedigree" (Marcus 227).

In his book *Freud in Oz: At the Intersections of Psychoanalysis and Children's Literature*, Kenneth B. Kidd contends in that "psychoanalysis developed in part through its engagement with children's literature" and that the pioneers of psychoanalysis reciprocally "helped advance as well as reshape that literature." Kidd argues that there has been a "historical and contemporary relationship between children's literature and psychoanalysis…sometimes collaborative and sometimes antagonistic…best understood as two-way, or mutually constitutive" (Kidd vii-ix).

As Kidd concludes, many of the newer scholars did often turn to psychoanalysts, such as Bruno Bettelheim, as they began their reinvention of the study of children's literature in the 1970s. Bettelheim's ideas on fairy tales and earlier stories were very important because they helped put the study of narrative at the center of the emerging critical discussion. In his book *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (1976), Bettelheim discussed the larger implications of storytelling within a culture, its salubrious effect on a troubled child or on a more universal society that was afflicted by restlessness and uncertainty. As Marcus tells us, though "Bettelheim made only a fleeting reference to modern-day children's literature, his book in one stroke elevated the subject of children's literature to the level of earnest cocktail party conversation" in wider academic, editing, and intellectual circles.

Though Bettelheim was critical (scalding at times) about what he thought was a lack of inner conflict in modern stories for children, Bettelheim "impressed many readers," including many of the emerging literary scholars, "with his assertion that far from being childish and trivial stories, fairy tales were incomparably powerful distillations of humankind's most basic interior dilemmas" (Marcus 274). Bettelheim clearly saw, as had C.S. Lewis earlier, that traditional story forms for children (such as the fairy story) had broader implications beyond the nursery, and that these stories contained wider potential for our culture and the study of society.

Bettelheim's psychoanalytical theorizing of cultural storytelling, and his popular reception among many scholars, also marks another significant development within the scholarship of children's literature. Furthermore, it is a clear indication that Kidd's argument is correct and is further supported by the growth in popularity of sociological terms to describe biography, history, and literary phenomena: "The new 1960s-bred university critics were less diffident about sexuality and about the underlying issue of children's books as a literature defined in good part by cultural taboos." According to Marcus, "they exhibited a lightly held awareness of the potential usefulness of their purposes…of Freud and other psychologists" (Marcus 254).

One of the consequences of this was that the criticism of children's literature was expanded beyond the text and its author, but into the realm of self-perception (individual and cultural), interpersonal relationships, and entire theories of human behavior that were connected to the text. Perhaps in the beginning, the results of this interpretative approach were rather unforeseeable, but the concern with repression (or 'secondary processes' as

Freud called them) and how it relates to sex, culture, religion, and other social concerns was at the center of this literary theoretical scheme.

Through a roundabout way, scholars returned to the dynamics between child and adult readers. While it took some time to explore the depths of the complexities of adult negotiation between consciousnesses in the same way as Lewis did, much work as been done on the role of adults in forming and composing of children's literature. Perry Nodelman's summation in *The Hidden Adult* is probably the closest argument we have to a consensus view on the role of the adult in books for children:

> Children's books encourage readers to consider what it means to see or think in ways usually considered to be childlike—ways defined by their relative lack of knowledge or complexity. They open a discourse about what children are, about how they are different from adults, and about the relative merits of the different qualities. And in doing so, they invite their readers, not just adults but also children, to think about what it means to be a child and what it means, therefore, to know less than older people do. In a sense they replicate the foundational situation of their writing—an adult knowing more writing for children because children know less and need to understand the implications of knowing less. (Nodelman 22)

As Kidd notes, Nodelman's argument is an inversion of Jacqueline Rose's line of reasoning that puts psychoanalysis against children's literature. In some ways, our modern study of the literature comes from Rose and this gives her work some indelibility in our criticism. Nevertheless, the way we have come to acknowledge the 'hidden adult'

33

has had other consequences such as providing, as Kidd phrases, a "more suspicious perspective on childhood associated with Rose" that continues to remain in our discussions of the literature (73).

Nodelman does not agree with Rose's characterization of the villainous adult behind the veil, but what has been the influence of Rose beyond her mere assertion of the presence of the adult? While psychoanalysis' long-held relationship to children's literature has been beneficial in some ways, have there also been drawbacks? Finally, using a Lewis-centered epistemology alongside with Nodelman and other current scholarship, is it possible to rework the study of the adult-child role away from some of the more negative aspects of Rose and her particular brand of psychoanalysis? As to the final question, some possibilities where raised in the previous chapter, all of these questions will be discussed in this chapter and throughout the dissertation.

<div align="center">1984</div>

As David Rudd and Anthony Pavlik explain, Jacqueline Rose's book *The Case of Peter Pan, or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1984) entered the discussion at a time when "the study of children's literature was trying to find its theoretical feet within an area that, while often celebrating the aesthetic and literary qualities of texts, had tended toward the utilitarian" (Rudd and Pavlik 223). Rudd and Pavlik recount, as Marcus does, how texts for children had long been the concern of librarians and early childhood educators, but this began to change in small ways in the 1970s and in larger ones later:

> The 1980s…saw a number of cultural shifts: literary studies was
> expanding in higher education institutions, and the literatures of previously

neglected groups…began to be given attention, together with the extensive

hinterlands that operated alongside the capital—and capitalized—

"Literature": series books, comics, films, TV, merchandizing, and

children's texts, too, came within its purview. The 1980s was also the time

of "high theory" and the "theory wars," when many disciplines found

themselves redefined within the seemingly ubiquitous and omniscient

ambit of "Cultural Studies." (223)

This time of 'high theory' exploration and contentious theoretical expansion

within children's literary studies was a natural environment for Rose to come, who

brought her Freudian and Lacanian 'psychoanalytic way of thinking' into the discussion

of juvenile fiction. As Rudd and Pavlik point out, after twenty-five years Rose's book "is

probably one of the most quoted works in children=s literature criticism" (224).

Furthermore, *The Case of Peter Pan* was a logical book to come out of this

psychoanalytical movement within modern children's literary scholarship, which was

becoming more preoccupied with the power dynamics between adults, adult culture, and

children. Rose states that Peter Pan, "is the text for children which has made that claim

most boldly" that it is the story that "speaks to and for children, addresses them as a group

which is knowable and exists for the book, much as the book exists for them." However,

Rose argues that "*Peter Pan is*" paradoxically the "text which most clearly reveals [this

argument] as a fraud" because she claims that "*Peter Pan has never…*been a book for

children at all," but rather fulfills the ideal of innocence as well as what Rose calls a

'fantasy of origins' for adult readers (Rose 1, 138).

One problem in reading and discussing Rose (and her statements) is that psychoanalytic scholars are not generally concerned as much with issues of reader response since their overall aim is to trace and diagnose the social or individual consciousness that helped to frame (or even create) a literary work. Therefore, when Rose claims that the story of Peter Pan "has never…been a book for children at all," it is sometimes unclear how much Rose discussing the experiences of Peter Pan readers rather than the sociological implications that could have helped produce the text itself. Though the line might seem shifty at times, I do believe Rose at times does intend to comment (at least in part) on readers as part of her overall case of impossibility (hence her emphasis that Peter Pan is not 'for' rather than 'about' children). Furthermore, I do not believe that Rose and other psychoanalytic theorists can avoid (assuming that they ever intended to do so in the first place) reader-response implications since the criticism they do cannot exist in a compartmentalized space that touches no aspect of the intended reader of a created text.

The suggestion within Rose's statement about Peter Pan never being about children, of course, that we begin to view all books for children (not just *Peter Pan*) as texts that are not only written by adults, but *for* adults as well; the concerns for the child reader are either secondary or non-existent. From this point on, Rose suggests what she calls 'the impossibility' of all children's fiction. This claim of Rose's is loaded with all sorts of implications that scholars have debated, enlarged on, and criticized since the 1984 publication of *The Case of Peter Pan*.

In a sense, Rose=s premise has its origins in the conundrum that has always lived

within the genre of children's fiction, a conundrum that Rose partially recognizes and that many consumers (and even critics) of children's texts have historically failed to notice or address: children's stories must consciously address an adult reader along side of the child reader for whom the text is intended. This prospect is even trickier than it sounds because, as I point out in the previous chapter, the 'adult reader' of children's literature is not a coherent individual, but a flux of conflicting points of view. Rose's claim at times is persuasive because her argument is rooted in the ongoing difficulty that authors, publishers, editors, and readers have long faced: texts for children are not easy to write because those who create or publish them show an obvious preoccupation with two very different readers. While this difficulty is not obvious to most people (hence the widely-held assertion that writing a 'children's book' must be 'easy'), authors must strive to make their narratives seem effortless or (to quote W.B. Yeats) worth 'a moment's thought' because the rhetorical situation that surrounds a text for children is a daunting one.

For example, the author of a detective novel can take some minimal factors about her implied audience for granted and can reasonably assume that she is writing for *one* reader—the person who bought the book. On the other hand, each author who attempts to write a book for juveniles cannot conclude that she is writing a narrative for one intended reader, the child who reads or listens to the book; instead, she has to consider a secondary reader, the adult who buys the book and will probably read it to the child each evening. In effect, each author for children has a 'two-headed reader' for her story, two heads with different expectations and desires. I hope to eventually show in this dissertation how such

seeming tension between these two readers is frequently resolved by authors such as

Kenneth Grahame, J.R.R. Tolkien, E.B. White, and others, but for now I will suffice to

say that this dilemma is the backdrop of Rose's argument.

However, Rose goes far further. Using a Freudian psychoanalytical framework,

Rose asserts that children's fiction "is impossible" not because an author cannot write a

book intended for a child (which Rose herself contends would be nonsense), but because

somehow the concept of children's literature "hangs on an impossibility, one which it

rarely ventures to speak. This is the impossible relation between adult and child" (Rose

1).

Rose argues that the reason for this is because the central preoccupation of most

children's fiction is ironically "not…what the child wants, but of what the adult desires,"

and she implies that the author somehow necessarily seeks to fulfill this desire by

'construing the child' inside the text as the object for these adult-driven narratives.

<center>Reactions to Rose</center>

While Rose=s work has been influential for children's literary criticism, she has

also been one of the most criticized voices in the field, probably beginning with Perry

Nodelman's review of her book (1985) where he was the first to point out that "Rose is

herself guilty of the unquestioning innocence that she says, quite rightly, is not in fact a

quality of children" (Nodelman 100). Nodelman also observes that Rose seems to be

'horrified' at any adult attempt to rear or educate actual children:

> I don't particularly share Rose's horror. According to her logic, any
>
> attempt by adults to teach anything at all to children must be understood as

<center>38</center>

an act of repression…if teaching it is repression, I am happy to be

repressive (98).

Nodelman also takes exception with Rose's claim that *Peter Pan* can represent all

other children's books:

> And there are few children's books as egregiously sadistic as Peter Pan;
>
> Barrie's clearly sexual delight in exquisite tortures makes the tone of this
>
> perverse work different from that of just about all other children's
>
> literature…Rose ignores the ambiguity that underlies the apparent
>
> simplicity of most good children's books in terms of the quite limited and
>
> often wrongheaded assertions that critics and authors make (99).

Nodelman was the first to put forth this criticism of Rose's unifying argument,

which is that the Peter Pan adventures by J.M. Barrie speak (for good and ill) for the

history of children's fiction. Nodelman has not been the last to push back against Rose's

assertion. Furthermore, he also points out that Rose seems "upset about the way

children's books imply a character for their audience," but that Rose seems to "forget the

fact that *all* books do that—that indeed, much of the pleasure we have in reading fiction

comes from our perceptions of differences between who we actually are and who the

books we read imply we are" (98).

It is unclear whether Rose assumes, as Nodelman claims, that a reading audience

of children has a sort of "unquestioning innocence" that frees it from the conventional

world of the adult writer, or if she instead believes that child readers are naturally so

hyper-individualist as to be opposed to any form of cultural mediation. Either way, for

many readers, it seems difficult not to be aware of some sense of the 'cult of independence' when reading Rose's book.

Rose is often more concerned with power relations between adult and child (which, unlike Nodelman, Rose generally assumes to be negative and oppressive) than she does with children's fiction and its potentials, and what underlies her claim in *The Case of Peter Pan* is the assumption that the desires of the adult and the child are of a necessity irreconcilable. I say that Rose *seems* more concerned because, at times, it is difficult to surely discern her intentions. While she is so bold in making many of her claims about the possibilities of children's literature, Rose sometimes seems elusive in pointing out what she wants us to understand about the relationship between the adult consciousness concerning authors for children. What is it that Rose wants us to understand?

Kidd claims that "Rose's case writing [on Peter Pan] does indeed resemble the kind of suspicious psychobiography we see around Barrie and especially Carroll," and he points out the long line of critical speculation concerning Barrie's sexuality and his interest in the Llewellyn Davies boys that seems to stem from Rose's work. Perhaps Rose seems cryptic at times because she wishes to remain subtle as she deals with the delicate matter of creating a profile of a classic author who might have, in her view, been a sexual deviant in the mental and creative (if not physical) sense. Kidd seems to suggest that such an unmasking of Barrie might have been Rose's primary (if nuanced) goal in writing *The Case of Peter Pan* (Kidd 85). Kidd's suggestion is reasonable, though it is just one of many possible interpretations.

Deciphering Rose's intentions is a necessity for scholars who want to discuss her

theories on children's literature. Writing in the same 2010 volume of *Children's*

Literature Association Quarterly that featured Rose's legacy, Alison Waller tries to

explain one of Rose's more dubious and murky claims, that the 'shifting identity' of the

Peter Pan narrator, from the prospective of an observing and evaluating adult to a

vicarious and empathetic child, is a form of narrative 'molestation.' Waller explains that

what Rose is really discussing is the narrative 'loss of control' in Barrie=s novel, which

could be seen as a paradox to the safe, idyllic, and salubrious myth of tranquility that

children's fiction is supposed to provide for its two-headed reader:

> I shall return to the idea of molestation later, but for now it is important to
>
> note Rose's description of an adult subjectivity that aspires to be close to
>
> the child by assuming a bond with those fictional children (by speaking for
>
> them) and reading children (by being complicit with them). To avoid
>
> acknowledging this aspiration, readers ignore the implications of the
>
> adult/child blurring in classic works, while demanding less deceitful and
>
> more transparent narrative structures in fiction aimed more obviously at a
>
> child audience (Waller 277).

While I am not sure if Waller is completely correct (in her final claim or in her

explanation of what Rose meant), Waller's explanation of this 'molestation' is clearer and

more useful than the analogy that Rose herself provides. The problem of clarification here

that Nodelman and Waller face seems to be a universal concern for nearly all critics who

turn to discuss Rose. Some of the problems with reading Rose might come from Rose's

possible unfamiliarity with the scholarly discussion surrounding children's fiction: Rose

had never contributed academically to children's literary scholarship prior to *The Case of*

Peter Pan, and, other than a letter to editor for the *2010 Children's Literature Association*

Quarterly, she has not written one word about children's fiction since 1984 is perhaps an

indication of her lack of engagement (or interest) in the field. Perhaps Rose would have

reached some different conclusions about the possibility of children's literature had she

engaged with fiction beyond *Peter Pan*.

While this unfamiliarity might explain some of the reading problems, Rose often

lacks clarity even as she attempts to be bold and provocative. Sometimes Rose's

arguments can become so detached from any textual reference and with her constant

references to 'the child' in different contexts it is hard to be sure if Rose is discussing

either (1) the fictional child character of the text, (2) the occasional child (or shifting child

and adult) narrator, or (3) some notion of a universal child that is supposed to be reading

the text. While Rose is rightly considered as the primer for so much for our current

critical work that has benefited from reconsidering the roles of adults and children in

children's literature, the ambiguity in Rose's work causes interpretive deficits for

scholars, and this makes using Rose difficult.

The Impossibility of Children's Fiction, or the Problem of Rose?

The ambiguity of Rose aside, the question remains: has Rose's theoretical work

has helped us gain a new understanding of children's fiction? I agree with Nodelman,

Waller, Rudd, and Pavlik that Rose has helped our comprehension of this body of

literature, but at a cost. In contrast to C.S. Lewis's theory of children's fiction that is

flexible, interactive, and multifaceted, Rose's theory of literature is overly full of motivism and often grimly deterministic in its creative and rhetorical outlook. One problem is that Rose and others who adhere (in some way) to her methods are frequently guilty of discussing child readers as a 'species' that is completely distinct from adults, which creates a problem for Rose very early in her book.

In the 2010 special issue of *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* that featured the legacy of Rose, it is interesting how some of the featured scholars seem tacitly sanguine (or at least resigned) to Rose's impact on the scholarship of children's literature. Even Perry Nodelman, who published the very hard-hitting review of *The Case of Peter Pan* in 1985, seems a little more pliant towards *The Case of Peter Pan* after 25 years. However, if we are honest, most of us, for a variety of reasons, probably react negatively when we first come to Rose. One of my colleagues (a retired English professor now working on her own fiction book for children) who has been so kind to read these pages several times, said to me one evening: "The problem with Rose is that she doesn't recognize the child that is still in her." After some thought and further discussion, I think she was more right than she knew.

First of all, it would be best to avoid speaking of a child 'in' us, lest we tread too close to the popularized notion of the 'inner child' that comes from Carl Jung and suggests (as so many commercials and Saturday morning cartoons emphasize) an independent personality within our adult human consciousness. However, if we use C.S. Lewis' description of how the child lives in him, *not* as an independent personality *but* as an inseparable (if at times distinct) and continuous part of himself, then this conclusion

43

could be correct because Rose seems to 'other-ize' childhood. Although she never explicitly says this, Rose seems to assume that our existence as a child, for all of us, is something in the distant rearview mirror. But as Lewis illustrates for us, our human consciousness—especially as it becomes more compartmentalized and multifaceted as we sublimate ourselves more towards our professional lives and adult responsibilities—is far more complex and harder to describe than what Rose gives us in *The Case of Peter Pan*. Interestingly, Barrie himself in his preface to the stage play described consciousness as a series of rooms inhabited by our earlier selves.

If Rose had instead made the concession that there is very little difference between either the minds or reading habits of children and adults, her present argument would be weakened, or Rose would have to overly qualify her claim so much so that it would cease to be provocative as it is in its present form. However, if Rose had made the concession, it might have led her to make a very different contribution to the study of children's literature.

Another problem for Rose, related to the earlier issue we just discussed, is that her analysis conveys some of the flaws of some forms of psychoanalysis that become too rigid, mainly in their inclination to favor *observing* the phenomena within the text and *speculating* upon it to the exclusion of *experiencing* it. Since a literary work is first and foremost designed to be experienced, I believe that any analysis that does not consider how the text interacts with its readers (child *and* adult) is already impaired.

A problem that arose from earlier forms of psychoanalysis, which has sublimated itself in all the other fields of inquiry that have made use of it, is its difficulty of

recognizing the difference between a patient's psychological problem on one hand, and

his moral problem on the other when he tries to choose between which impulse to follow.

According to Lewis, these two problems are very different: "what psychoanalysis

undertakes to do is to remove the abnormal feelings, that is, to give the man better raw

material for his acts of choice; morality is concerned with the acts of choice themselves"

(Lewis 89-90). The difference between these two problems can be seen in this example. If

one of our students cannot remain seated in his chair, cannot pay attention to the

discussions, and cannot complete his assignments either because of a chemical imbalance

or an irrational fear of classrooms in his unconscious, then psychiatry, counseling, and

medication can offer the student treatment so that he can complete his work. Lewis and

other critics of the early psychoanalytical worldview never denied this. However, what if,

after the student receives his treatments, he then continues to disrupt the class and not do

his work?

Perhaps the student should be further tested and continue his counseling sessions,

but what seems to chafe Lewis and those who share his concerns is that some people who

subscribe too uncritically to the early psychoanalysis worldview continue to look for a

medical or unconscious causation rather than consider, for a moment, the possibility of

the moral or spiritual choice of the student himself. In other words, after all the clinical

treatment and talks with a counseling professional, what if the student chooses instead not

to do his work and to continue to distract others from doing theirs? For Lewis, the

distinction between the student who cannot do his work and disrupts class and then later

on, after treatment and counseling, continues to disrupt class without a physical cause,

"this difference is a purely moral one and psychoanalysis cannot do anything about it" (Lewis 90).

Almost without saying, the idea of a 'moral choice' is something that has been unpopular in social scientific, educational, political, and pop cultural circles now for awhile; furthermore, many contemporary scholars would disagree with any notion that we are somehow 'free' to make choices for ourselves, which is a separate if related conversation to what Lewis is discussing. Either way, our freedom to choose (or its lack thereof) is an interminable dilemma because I can walk into a classroom and asking the first student I see, "Do you have free will or not?" is the same as asking him, "How do you feel today?" First, knowing his answer to the latter question increases the probability of my guessing his answer to the former. Second, no answer that he could give to either question would be verifiable, but would be an interpretation of experiences regardless of how popular his interpretation might be for current academic circles. In general, I believe there to be a connection between the choices (real or not) open to us and the freedom we believe we have.

Nevertheless, Lewis' main point here is that psychology and psychiatry can help a human being make choices that are more rational and less antisocial, but the a human being had to make the final ultimate decision about whether to pursue a good, bad, or ill-considered course. While accepted that environment and history influences human actions, surely no one can dispute the role of human choice in everyday life and the forming of society.

When it comes to choices, Rose and others who follow her theories are often so concerned with culture, social constructions, and vague notions of a universalized 'adult' and 'child' that they rarely seem to address the concerns that surround all of the issues, which are the products of choice at the authorial level. For example, Rose discusses how the narrator in *Peter Pan* novel intrudes (shifting from third person into first person) into the scene where Mrs. Darling wishes that Wendy could remain 2 years old forever. Rose argues that this is a problem for this reason:

> The demand for better and more cohesive writing in children's literature…carries with it a plea that certain psychic barriers should go undisturbed, the most important of which is the barrier between adult and child. When children's fiction touches on that barrier, it becomes not experiment (the formal play of a modern adult novel which runs the gamut of its characters= points of view), but *molestation* (Rose 70).

Returning to Waller, "it is important to note Rose's description of an adult subjectivity that aspires to be close to the child by assuming a bond with those fictional children…and reading children." Waller seems to agree with Rose that this is a 'loss of control' within the narration of *Peter Pan* and stories similar to it.

While I tend to agree with some of the criticisms of Nodelman and others about *Peter Pan* and Rose's decision to use this text to represent all of children's fiction, I sometimes wonder, what if we are wrong in our assumption of J.M. Barrie 'losing control' of his narrative? Might Barrie have made all of his narrative and plot choices for

a reason, which might have been that he did not believe in such a barrier, as Rose does, in the first place?

While I am unsure if this reading of Barrie is the best possible one, a case could be made for interpreting *Peter Pan*, as Lewis might, as a text that illustrates for us that the lines of demarcation between childhood and adulthood (if it exists at all) are porous and shifty. Furthermore, when it comes to the readers that Waller mentions, what if they are not 'avoiding' the implications of Barrie's narrative, but are choosing to delve into (and even delight in) it? Perhaps most readers understand and desire to experience what Lewis describes as the creation of a "community, a composite personality" that forms and "out of that the story grows" before their eyes on the page and in their minds (Lewis 23). Perhaps Barrie's seemingly shifting and evolving narrative, which is often confusing to many readers who look at it from a scholarly viewpoint, gave to its more devoted readers a sense that they were growing with the story, and this story became a living part of them. All of these possibilities could be explored in Barrie's text, but not unless we consider the text as something formed by choices and experienced through choices. Rose's theory is too deterministic and prejudiced for such potentials.

According to Rudd and Pavlik, scholars have had "four main responses" to Rose's contribution to the development of children's literary theory. "The first", they claim, "has been to ignore it entirely" and to not engage with *The Case of Peter Pan.* The second method "has been to engage with" Rose, but to remain unengaged with the 'theoretical roots' of her arguments or observations, which, Rudd and Pavlik imply, leads these scholars to either abandon Rose eventually or view her as something of a lesson in toxic

waste to be avoided in the future. The third reaction that scholars have "is to acknowledge" Rose's contention of "the constructedness of the child both inside and outside the book but to carry on regardless" and even "sidestepping" the implications of what this might mean. Finally, the fourth response is one of "open engagement and a recognition that [Rose's] longevity and bibliometric potency" which leads to a 'body of work' that is more conducive to Rose's theoretical orientation" (225-6).

In order to better illustrate the 'fourth response' to Rose, Rudd and Pavlik point to the work of Karín Lesnik-Oberstein who has "sought to show not only the folly of believing that such a thing as children's fiction can exist (as anything but a construction by adults) but that children's literature criticism is, therefore, itself fatally compromised." They quote Lesnik-Oberstein as saying "how and why adults claim a knowledge of this 'child'" is "the fundamental problem all children's literature criticism has struggled with—or rather, also avoided struggling with—since Jacqueline Rose introduced it" (226).

However, using Lesnik-Oberstein's reasoning, children's literary theory is only 'compromised' if indeed it is impossible to write a story for a child unless that child is little more than an artificial construct of our adult consciousness or unconsciousness. However, if we return to C.S. Lewis, I think we are right to question the static notions of 'child' and 'adult' that Rose and Lesnik-Oberstein seem to be using. Remember, Lewis points out that when an adult author begins a story by telling it to a particular child, and whether either one realizes it, a "personal relationship" starts where the "two participants" begin to "modify each other" to create a very different author and audience:

You [the story teller] would become slightly different because you were

talking to a child and the child would become slightly different because it

was being talked to by an adult. A community, a composite personality, is

created and out of that the story grows (Lewis 23).

When we instead begin to consider a child reader as a member of a shared

discourse community, as Lewis does, rather than a constituent of some sort of

sociological class, as Rose and Lesnik-Oberstein sometimes seem to do, then the act of

composing a story for a child seems less of a repressive fantasy contrived by nefarious

adults. A literature for children also seems possible when we turn to Lewis' theoretical

and autobiographical examination of the 'implied author' who is an ever present part of

himself. Because Lewis' experience as a child of ten years continues to be a luminous

part of his adult life, this is what helps him write to children. Of course, Lewis is writing

as an adult and accessing his past experiences through the filter of adult consciousness,

but as we saw in the previous chapter, Lewis' experiences come directly from childhood

and have had an equal (if not greater) impact on his adulthood than the reverse.

Therefore, if the aprioristic argument on which Lesnik-Oberstein's claim rests is

fallacious, then perhaps criticism of children's literature is also possible, and none of us

are laboring in vain.

For all of their differences, however, Jacqueline Rose and C.S. Lewis bring to our

attention (1) the relationship that a story for children has to the adult world and (2) the

distortions that some adult perspectives can create regarding childhood. However,

Lewis's theory of children's literature is creative, imaginative, interactive, and fluid,

though it remains grounded within a certain discursive and rhetorical framework. Rose's theory is also grounded, but its deterministic approach to literature is, frankly—for those of us who are tempted, from time to time, to be enthusiastic about the texts we enjoy—a sort of 'buzz kill.'

In contrast to Rose, Lewis often seems inspirational, perhaps because of a difference of two generations: many of Rose's generation were far more suspicious of authority than previous ones. Indeed, the writer Frederick Buechner, who served as the Presbyterian chaplain at Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire from 1959 to 1967, offered this description of his student congregation:

> In keeping with the spirit of their time and generation, the majority of them were against almost everything—the Vietnam war, the government, anybody over thirty including their parents, the school, and especially religion because all the people they were against were always telling them it was good for them (Buechner xiiv).

From this general feeling of the times came a more developed 'hermeneutics of suspicion' that is present in Rose as it is in much of the critical theory and scholarship since the 1970s, which has useful in some ways. However, the suspicion and cynicism within Rose's work goes far beyond any social or ideological movement. The fact that this attitude, along with Rose's theories, has been imported and has become something of a shadowy *ethos* that is not necessarily ubiquitous within the scholarship of children's literature, but it nevertheless does continue to loom like a specter over critical scholarship such as the work of Lesnik-Oberstein. As Lewis and others show, Rose's claim that we as

adults can never understand how children read is demonstrably false, and so Rose should

be challenged and her inhibiting shadow can be lifted.

Interestingly, Rose's argument has been recently challenged by scholars of

children=s literature such as David Rudd (2010) who share some of Rose's theoretical

roots. Rudd calls Rose's claim "that children's fiction is thereby impossible" a "*non*

sequitur" for a number of reasons such as (1) her use of the Peter Pan novels to somehow

represent all children's texts; (2) Rose's lack of clarity because Rudd maintains that at

different times throughout her book Rose seems shifty as to which 'Peter Pan' text she is

discussing and therefore Rose at times "seems to refer to a whole body of [Peter Pan]

texts, some of them not even by Barrie"; (3) Rose's supporting argument that "*Peter*

Pan is [a] peculiar, and yet not peculiar" representation of children's fiction is awkward

and difficult to support; (4) finally, Rudd argues that Rose's vision of a literature that is

universally impossible for children depends, ironically and despite her attempt at creating

a more critical perspective, on the "problematic figure of the Romantic child" who has

somehow been left unmediated by the world around him or her. As Rudd explains:

> Rose's opening claim, that "[c]hildren's fiction sets up the child as an
>
> outsider to its own process, and then aims, unashamedly, to take the
>
> child *in*" (2), is explicit in stating her case. But in what sense…can the
>
> child have "its own process"? Where, in other words, is the "outside" of its
>
> textual representation? Where, precisely, is this child before it is taken in?
>
> This is where Rose seems to grant the child special status… (Rudd 293)

As I have stated elsewhere, while Rose is attempting to bring light to what she

sees as a problem that is both endemic and natural within all fiction that is written by adults for children, she ironically creates a much larger problem for scholars of children's literature, especially for those such as Rudd and myself who do not concur with her ultimate claim. While Rose never directly argues that it is impossible for children to enjoy fiction written for them, her assertion that children's literature is the construction of a seductive (or even predatory) adult consciousness underlies much of her analysis and deeply conveys a sense of exploitation that a child reader must inevitably resent once aware of it. Therefore, any pleasure a child reader has with such a text comes at her expense and is temporary prior to a maturing realization that an adult author has been taking advantage of her.

Because of Rose, the burden is *ipso facto* on us to prove that children's literature *is possible* at all. In other words, scholars of children's fiction must endeavor to demonstrate that a literature for children—experienced by children and enjoyed by them—is possible. Indeed, the problem Rose creates goes beyond just technical and inventional aspects of these texts, but to some of the very philosophies that lie behind not just fiction for children, but behind much of fiction itself.

I believe, however, that the case for the possibility of children's literature can be made and qualitatively supported by examining the recent body of criticism that has come about because of Rose's claims, and providing an alternate theory that can be used, at times, in *accordance* with Rose's theory and, perhaps eventually, *in place* of her theory. This I have done.

Now I want to move on to discussing some characteristics of children's fiction that Rose and scholars who follow her often overlook such as the difficult (though often skillful) dalliance between the looming notion of defeat and ultimate loss (or what we might call the 'problem of pain' in the genre) on the one hand, and the 'happy ending' on the other. After doing this, I will review the canon of rhetorical criticism as it pertains to literature and illustrating how this body of work can provide new ways of understanding children's fiction. Then I shall develop a theory of a 'rhetoric of possibility' that can be expanded to create a criticism of children's literature.

Chapter 3:

Other Worlds—Escape, Defeat, and Happy Endings

"I just couldn't get into it." As teachers of English and literature, I wager that we hear these six words quite often from our students. The story is a familiar one: we assign different readings for classroom discussion and writing assignments, and while we spend hours of 'preplanning' trying to choose selections to please everyone, they usually never do. Sometimes this expression can be annoying, especially considering all the work we do. And yet, if we are honest, we sometimes find ourselves putting aside books or stories, or turning off movie rentals, because something about them does not grab us. In each story written for children, an attempt is made to bring the reader into the story. What does it mean to 'get into' a story, and how do authors try to accomplish this? We will look at how writers do this in this chapter.

Returning for a moment to the theories of C.S. Lewis and Jacqueline Rose, if there is one conclusion we can come to after reviewing their work it is that there is no such thing as a good story that is *only* for children. If we accept this claim, then what are some of the elements of a story that appeal to both adults and children? Lewis simply claims that such "a story…must appeal to the audience that still cares for story-telling" rather than for whatever the literary fashions of the times might be. But what is it that these readers look for in these narratives? Furthermore, is Lewis' vision of a "story that can mediate imaginative life to the masses while not being contemptible to the few" merely a romantic conjecture, or is it a real possibility? Above all, can children's fiction truly serve as this universal story?

Lewis's own novels for children, the seven-book *The Chronicles of Narnia* series, offer some commentary on this topic. For example, in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, as Lucy is going through the Magician's Book, she finds a spell "for the refreshment of the spirit." She begins to read the spell so she can speak it, but then finds herself reading something that is more like a story than a magical incantation:

> It went on for three pages and before she had read to the bottom of the page she had forgotten that she was reading at all. When she had got to the third page and come to the end, she said, "That is the loveliest story I've ever read or ever shall read in my whole life. Oh, I wish I could have gone on reading it for ten years." (Lewis 167)

Lucy tries to reread the spell "for the refreshment of the spirit", but the magic of the Magician's Book is that the reader cannot turn the pages backward, and once Lucy realizes she cannot reread the spell, she tries to remember it. However, Lucy finds she has forgotten the story mere minutes after reading it. She can remember something about "a cup and a sword and a tree and a green hill," but nothing else. Nevertheless, "ever since that day", though she has forgotten all of the distinctiveness of the narrative that she read, "what Lucy means by a good story is a story which reminds her of the forgotten story in the Magician's Book" (Lewis 168).

Similar to Lucy enjoying this spell, the stories that we as readers enjoy are often the ones we have difficulty explaining *why*. Even those of us who should be well-equipped with the literary vernacular for describing and assessing the importance of such a text, can find ourselves not only tongue-tied when asked to explain the qualities of the

stories we enjoy, but also (and rather embarrassingly) unable to recall what were the passages or scenes that most delighted us. What happens to Lucy might be what happens to most of us when drawn into a fictional world. However, how does an author cast such a 'spell' upon the reader?

Tolkien argues that a literary text must (to paraphrase both him and Aristotle in *Rhetoric*) *persuade* the reader to accept its fictional secondary world as (at least momentarily) true. The creator can only succeed, imply Tolkien and Aristotle, if the author can anticipate the expectations of the audience. In this way, a balance is maintained by a fusion of (1) elements that appeal to our senses and (2) a detailed portrayal of human devotion and courage that appeals to our emotions and our sense of character. As we shall see, all of these essentials make it easy—and even desirable—for us to forget that we are even reading a story or watching a film, and to instead accept the invitation of the author to share this world with the characters. While Tolkien was discussing 'fairy stores' (or fantasy), I believe this argument holds true for all stories that take place in a created world.

Aside from journeying into another world, what other elements of fiction do both children and adults enjoy? What makes these stories, for them, worth reading again and again?

Another book that offers much commentary on storytelling is Richard Adams' novel about rabbits, *Watership Down*, which is a book enjoyed by both adults and children. Adams uses the notion of 'escape' as both a plot device and as a constant theme for his stories. For example, when El-ahrairah (who sometimes seems to be an

amalgamation of King Arthur, Odin, and Adam for the rabbits) defies the god Frith and tries to takeover the world by having more children, Frith stops him by giving other creatures a "desire to hunt and slay and eat the children of El-ahrairah." However, Frith does not want to exterminate all rabbits, and so he decides to give El-ahrairah a gift, and blesses his bottom while he is digging a hole to escape the fox and weasel. The gift makes El-ahrairah very fast, and then Frith declares to him:

> El-ahrairah, your people cannot rule the world, for I will not have it so. All
> the world will be your enemy, Prince with a Thousand Enemies, and
> whenever they catch you, they will kill you. But first they must catch you,
> digger, listener, runner, prince with the swift warming. Be cunning and full
> of tricks and your people shall never be destroyed (Adams 37).

Dandelion tells this Genesis story early in the novel when the rabbits are resting in a wood full of dangers after leaving their old warren, all in the hopes of finding a new home. Earlier in the novel would seem to be the natural place for a tale of Creation, but the placement of this particular El-ahrairah legend serves two other purposes: the first is to encourage the reader (as it does Dandelion's companions) not to despair over the current circumstances, but gives us hope and persuades us to trust the author to work things through; second, the legend tells us something about the character of the universe that Dandelion, Hazel, Fiver, Bigwig, and the other rabbits live in; in other words, the placement of this legend of El-ahrairah establishes an *ethos* for the world Adams' creates, and is an indicator of what to expect in the main story.

Therefore, in a novel full of escapes, perhaps the amazing one is at the battle with General Woundwart at the end where Hazel, Blackberry, and Dandelion release the farmer=s dog and get him to chase them all the way back to Watership Down where he kills Woundwart and chases off the other Efrafan rabbits. As incredible as this ending seems, however, the reader can accept it and perhaps even anticipate it for this reason: escape, resourcefulness, and compassion have been skillfully placed at the center of the secondary world from its very beginning. Once the author has persuaded us to enter his creation, and if that creation is well-crafted, then we begin to react and contemplate as someone who belongs to that world.

Finally, the element of escape in stories implies the presence of danger in children's fiction. In C.S. Lewis's time as in our own, there was much concern about how much peril or fright should children be exposed to in their fiction. Should parents work to shield their children from anything that could frighten or depress them and therefore stunt their mental or psychological development into adulthood? To all of this, Lewis replied that

> There is something ludicrous in this idea of so educating a generation
>
> which is born to the Ogpu [Soviet forerunner of the KGB] and the atomic
>
> bomb. Since it is so likely that [children] will meet cruel enemies, let them
>
> at least have heard of brave knights and heroic courage. Otherwise you are
>
> making their destiny not brighter but darker. Nor do most of us find that
>
> violence and bloodshed, in a story, produce any haunting dread in the
>
> minds of children. As far as that goes, I side…against the modern

reformer. 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. For, of course, it

wants to be a little frightened (Lewis 31).

Lewis points out that a degree of danger in fiction healthy for child readers and

that its presence is necessary in order to produce the needed effect for a story. Turning to

our current and most popular forms of children's storytelling, from Disney's Peter Pan to

Harry Potter, or towards the modern CGI movies such as *Toy Story* or *Wall-E*, the

presence of danger, pain, and loss in most children's fiction is indication of a shared

concern for both adult and child readers. While some books (for the sake of hyper-

protective adults) hide the conflicts that a child must face alongside their adult

counterparts, most authors refuse to avoid shaping their narratives so that no terrors of the

night or conflicts from the home can come into their stories.

Instead, they continue to follow the authors they admire such as Lewis Carroll,

J.M. Barrie, and Rudyard Kipling in integrating Henri Bergson's (1900) complementary

elements of *tension* and *escape* into their stories for children. In this way, authors do not

have to artificially shield children from the problems of pain that do exist for them in

their own worlds; but at the same time, authors offer their young readers release and hope

sometimes in the forms of the 'happy ending' or in the promise of better times to come.

One advantage of 'escape' is that rather than shield children from the pain of their current

lives or the sufferings they might endure later as adults, authors can pull back the curtain and give their young readers a real look at the root of pain, despair, and evil.

This chapter will examine some classic texts of children's fiction, but I want to begin not with the canonical books, but with two fairly recent Disney-Pixar films, *Up* and *Toy Story 3*. Beginning with contemporary film can illustrate the importance of the rhetorical and literary elements of escape, defeat, happy endings, and secondary worlds in a universal sense.

<center>Between Two Worlds</center>

Up (Disney-Pixar 2009) is an animated film centered around the character Carl Fredrickson, a widower and retired balloon salesman, who escapes his fate of losing his house and being forced to live in a retirement home by turning his house into an airship: the image of the house at the moment of escape (juxtaposed with one of the best musical scores) floating on thousands of bright-colored balloons might be one of the most aesthetically-pleasing images ever created for a film.

In the movie, Carl decides to take his house to Paradise Falls, a remote and exotic location in the South American mountains, and he is joined by Russell, a boy scout from a broken family, Dug, a Golden Retriever who can talk with the aid of an interpretive collar, and Kevin, a giant flightless bird who is actually female and searching for food for her offspring while protecting Carl and Russell. Carl's inspiration for his adventure to Paradise Falls comes from a dream his wife, Ellie, had for them when they were children and avid fans of the adventurer Charles Muntz. Ironically, the adventurers come across

<center>61</center>

Muntz himself, who becomes the villain for the story, and Carl must defeat his childhood hero in order to save Kevin from being abducted from her habitat.

Throughout the film, Carl struggles to choose how to honor Ellie's memory: to keep their past sterile, or to draw strength from it to begin new friendships with Russell, Dug, and Kevin. Carl's airship house is a metaphor for his personal past, which poses a question for viewers: how should we deal with periods of our lives that we cannot return to, yet remain inseparable from who we are? Should we preserve these moments (as we would a museum or shrine) so they remain static and unchanged? Or should our pasts be the materials and tools for constructing our current relationships and confronting our present situations?

Both choices have risks, such as the alienation Carl feels when he lives alone in the shadow of the life he and Ellie lived in a neighborhood that no longer wants him, or later when Carl chooses to use his floating house to retrieve Russell and Kevin and must sacrifice it in order to rescue his new friends. However, the difference between the two paths is that when Carl chooses to risk his house to save Russell and Kevin, he gains new companions and a life worth living: Carl's previous mausoleum life was not worth living and had long deviated from the *spirit* of the life he had lived with Ellie.

What makes Carl's story so cathartic for the audience is not the plot, the imagery or symbolism, music, or even the character development, though all of these are important in the film. However, what holds all of these elements together and enhances them is a coherent and well-unified world that is autonomous from our own world, though it shares many of its values and concerns. The producers at Pixar might have had a

storyboard for the film, but to make that narrative work as something more for the moviegoers, they created a world that is self-governed by its own natural regulations and related moral laws. From inside this created world, the audience is better able to experience Carl's life and the dilemma of his choices as he experiences them, which explains why watching the movie is so much more fulfilling than reading my summary of the story. But how did the producers accomplish this?

This is a complex question, but I believe that much of what the filmmakers did was done in the first 10 minutes of the film. For example, recently on a friend's Facebook account I saw a movie still of Carl and Ellie: it was one of their relaxing picnics when they were a young couple. What was more interesting, however, was the message that someone had added onto the image that said this: "Fact: Pixar created a better love story in 8 minutes than *Twilight* did in 4 books." I will not deliberate further on this argument, but I do believe that much more is happening in this 'love story in 8 minutes' than is immediately apparent.

In the Bible, the story of creation and the fall of Adam and Eve foreshadow the events of the New Testament, but Christian theologians agree that these opening events also illustrate to us the character of God and the natural world, as well as the character and values of the creation where we dwell. In a similar sense, the Genesis beginning for all of *Up* is Carl and Ellie's relationship, which has the same effect for us as the Creation and the Fall when we watch the film. The audience only sees one prolonged flashback from their early life, when Carl meets Ellie for the first time in the abandoned neighborhood house which later becomes their home. The audience only hears Ellie's

voice here, when she is a child. After this one episode, we see the entire life of Carl and Ellie in a little over 4 minutes through images (accompanied by a musical score that the producers call the 'Ellie theme') and no words. While this romantic waltz conveys to us a sense of love and devotion between Carl and Ellie, most of all it personifies the 'spirit of adventure' (the name of Charles Muntz's airship) and the idea that to be human means to aspire to be better than what we are.

All of these are values that become the *ethos* of the movie, and they serve as two important elements for the film: (1) as the subtle vortex that draws us (perhaps unaware) from our own world and into another, and (2) as the governing components that shape the world of the film. Once established, the filmmakers added other elements to give their world more depth and dimension. For example, Dug and all of Muntz's dogs have interpretive collars so that they can verbally communicate with Carl and Russell. Aside from the obvious comic relief that this provides for a film with a serious dilemma, the things the dogs say and their manner of speaking ("I have just met you, and I love you— squirrel!") do seem to mirror our human conception of the sort of conversation that dogs might have with us were they able. Nevertheless, the other elements of this world are all ancillary to the more foundational rudiments that we see in the Carl and Ellie relationship, and they all work to enhance those earlier values.

Without further evidence, I assume the world of *Up* was created (as most movies are) around a basic storyboard. However, the reverse is also possible: the world can come first and a story can be created into it. There are some instances of this happening when it comes to fiction writing.

For example, in his short-short essay "It All Began with a Picture…" (1960), C.S.

Lewis describes how he came to write his novel *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

Lewis warns that "you must not believe all that authors tell you about how they wrote

their books" because once finished, many of them "have forgotten a good deal of what

writing it was like," and, also, a person who writes a story "is too excited about the story

itself to sit back and notice how he is doing it"; this would "stop the works" in the same

way "thinking about how you tie your tie" might make you discover that "you can't tie

it." Furthermore, "Making up", as Lewis calls it, "is a mysterious thing. When you 'have

an idea' could you tell anyone exactly *how* you thought of it?"

Nevertheless, Lewis is fairly certain where the idea of his first novel for children

began:

> All my seven Narnian books, and my three science fiction books, began
>
> with seeing pictures in my head. At first they were not a story, just
>
> pictures. The *Lion* all began with a picture of a Faun carrying an umbrella
>
> and parcels in a snowy wood. This picture had been in my mind since I
>
> was about sixteen. Then one day, when I was about forty, I said to myself:
>
> 'Let's try to make a story about it.' At first I had very little idea how the
>
> story would go. But then suddenly Aslan came bounding into it. I think I
>
> had been having a good many dreams of lions about that time…I don't
>
> know where the Lion came from or why He came. But once He was there
>
> He pulled the whole story together, and soon He pulled the six other
>
> Narnian stories in after Him. (Lewis 42)

Lewis is not the only author to begin with 'pictures.' Peter Beagle began his novel *The Last Unicorn* with a picture of a unicorn traveling with a vague 'companion' who eventually became Schmendrick the Magician. However, Beagle first tried to put these images into a modern world, abandoned this story after 85 pages, and then wrote a different story in a fairytale world. Lewis's image of the faun with his parcels and umbrella, however, indicates that some of the particulars of his world came with his pictures, and the *ethos* for Narnia seems to grow from them.

Obviously, the creation of the first Narnia novel was more detailed than this, as Lewis's own notes and his authorized biographers Walter Hooper and Roger Lancelyn Green (the latter actually read many of the early drafts of *Lion* over tea and beer in Lewis's university rooms) point out. In his diary entry for March 10, 1949, Green remarked that he had a "wonderful talk" with Lewis "until midnight: he read me two chapters of a story for children he is writing—very good indeed, though a trifle self-conscious" (Hooper 402). In later years, Green came to doubt his own reserved praise for the *Lion* draft because in his biography of Lewis that he coauthored with Hooper, Green added a short note to his diary entry: "Nevertheless it was a memorable occasion which the listener remembered vividly, and remembered his awed conviction that he was listening to a book that could rank among the great ones of its kind" (Green and Hooper 240-1). As later Lewis biographer Alan Jacobs argues, "It is hard not to see this as a case of revisionist memory—like the tale of some old baseball scout who claims that he knew from the first time he laid eyes on a seventeen-year-old shortstop that one day the boy would be in the Hall of Fame" (Jacobs xv).

Indeed, for a number of years Lewis had struggled to fit his 'pictures' into a story, and went through many drafts. However, what is most significant here is that what Lewis calls his 'pictures' seem to really be actual glimpses into his fictional world. What is remarkable is that Lewis's world—or at last parts of it—were in existence long before he had a story for it: a world where the perfunctory (packages, parcels, and umbrellas) and the fantastic (a mythical faun, a lamppost in the middle of a wintered forest) existed together; then came the lion, the symbol for justice and absolute truth for the Narnian world. Though he was a teenager when he received his first glimpses of his own fabled world, Lewis was in his early fifties before he could create a story for it: but this world must have had a powerful hold on Lewis's imaginative consciousness to survive so many stumbling attempts at creating a story.

As I have said previously, the producers of *Up* create within the film a small world with its own rules and *ethos*: the purpose of this is that it enables the audience to enter and vicariously experience everything to the same degree as Carl. This point might seem at times redundant, but this is the greatest quality of a film such as *Up*, and I would argue this is something which often separates a long-enduring film from the movies that fail to last after the glow of the box office has waned. However, Lewis's discussion of 'pictures' indicates that the creation of other worlds, where fictional characters and actual readers share vicariously in the adventure of the story, is more important than box office sales, but is an central part of the creative process.

How important is the creation of a separate world, where creator, audience, and fictional characters share a common experience to the story itself? J.R.R. Tolkien felt that

authorial creation of another world was not a miniscule detail, and he profusely wrote about this creation in his important essay "On Fairy Stories":

> What really happens is that the story-maker proves a successful "subcreator." He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is "true": it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken: the magic, or rather art, has failed. You are then out in the Primary World again, looking at the little abortive Secondary World from outside (Christopher Tolkien 132).

To put Tolkien's argument in another way, a literary text must *persuade* the reader to *decide* to accept this Secondary World as (at least momentarily) true. Tolkien never specifically says if this persuasion happens on the conscious or unconscious level, and he seems to take for granted that readers require some sort of appeal regardless of their current state of critical awareness if World the author offers is going to be viable. The author can only succeed if she can anticipate the expectations of the audience. This is how the author comes to create her fictional world. Perhaps the safest way to anticipate these expectations would be to keep the story as 'realistic' as possible, or, in other words, do not write anything that the reader cannot believe, and do not create things that do not demonstrably exist in his world.

Without knowing what scientific research is available to tell us how many birthday balloons are needed to make a house float to South America, it is reasonably safe to conclude that the amount of balloons that move Carl's house violates the laws of

physics, and is thus not 'realistic.' However, since all fiction is just a creation of some

form of reality in words, then most of our ideas of 'realistic' literature are more

convention rather than demonstrable fact. Furthermore, perhaps what makes a story or

film more 'real' and believable is that it manages to fulfill a sort of wish for the audience:

it speaks to a deeper, more transcendent 'longing'; it somehow externalize our deepest

anxieties, hopes, and joys in the form of narration, images, and characters.

An example of this anticipation can be seen in the conversation between Heidi

and Clara during her visit to the Alps, after long-invalided Clara has learned to walk

again.

> As Clara and Heidi lay in bed that night, looking at the stars, Heidi said
> suddenly, 'I've been thinking. Isn't it a good thing God doesn't always
> give us just what we're asking for, even though we pray so hard? Of
> course, it's because He knows something else will be better for us.'
>
> 'What makes you say that now?' asked Clara.
>
> 'When I was in Frankfurt I prayed so hard to be allowed to go home at
> once, but God didn't let me, and I thought He had forgotten me. But if I
> had gone home then, you would never have come here and got well.'
>
> Clara considered this, then she said, 'But in that case, perhaps we ought
> not to pray for anything, because God knows—as we don't—what is best
> for us.'
>
> 'I don't think that's quite right either,' Heidi replied quickly. 'We ought
> to pray to Him every day to show our trust, and that we know that

everything comes from God. If we forget Him, them sometimes He lets us

go our own way, and then things go very wrong with us. Your

grandmamma told me that, and everything turned out as she said it would.

(Spyri 272)

On the one hand, this is a sample of the basic Christian commentary that Johanna

Spyri often provides for her readers. However, this conversation in the mountain cabin,

with a clear view of the stars from Uncle Alp's perch, is indicative of some of the deepest

aspirations that we face. For all of its seeming Hallmark movie appearance, something

here in Heidi is quintessential for many classic stories for children. The troubles we

confront in our world—as Heidi faces when she is forced to leave her idyllic home with

her grandfather to live in Frankfurt—or the emotional pain we encounter when

circumstances force us into unfamiliar or hostile frontiers—as it does Heidi at the

Sesemann home—are things we not only experience, but deeply contemplate. But more

than this, a part of our human consciousness seems to long for reconciliation for our past

sufferings, and we even dare to ponder such possibilities as, can our past or present

sorrows be transformed to joys with enough knowledge?

Often in stories, the promise of future joy and peace of mind can operate in an *ex

post facto* way, retroactively transforming past pains into present joys and future delights,

which is what we see in this scene from in *Heidi*. Spyri deals with our transcendent

instincts and *Up* as a film uses fantastic elements, but both of them somehow draw on

what is most familiar and real. Think of Lewis's faun in the snowy wood, holding his

70

parcels and an umbrella over his head: the fantastic and the real emerge together to create one image that has a special appeal for readers.

If we look at the worlds created for children in this way, we see that a balance is maintained by a fusion of (1) fantastic elements that appeal to our senses (e.g. a house floating from a plethora of colorful balloons) and (2) a detailed portrayal of human devotion and courage that appeals to our emotions and our sense of character (e.g. the restoration of Heidi's confidence in the eternal rightness of God). All of these essentials make it easy—even desirable—for us forget that we are even watching a film and accept our invitation to share this world with Carl, Russell, Dug, and Kevin in Paradise Falls, or to bask in the reassurance that comes to all who experience the raw but delectable pleasures of Uncle Alp's cabin which abides the world if it wishes to come. Yet the elements for these created worlds are made up from components of our own. Each fictional world seems to be created in this way, drawn from the minds, desires, experiences, and expectations of its intended audience.

But how is all of this related to the lives of child readers? In each chapter of his book *Feeling Like a Kid* (2006), Jerry Griswold discusses five 'themes' of children's literature, which are snugness, scariness, smallness, lightness, and aliveness. Griswold shows how each of these themes, which are sensations that are present in the everyday life of children, are integrated into the fictional world that the author creates. Griswold's argument is strongest when he discusses 'snugness.' He writes that "the snug place [for children's literature] is a refuge and haven associated with sensations of comfort and security, with ease and well-being" and "a safe anchorage where the soul's calmness can

71

be restored and well-being enclosed…from this safe center the feelings of basic trust and well-being can be extended to the world at large" (Griswold 6, 30).

But why should we assume that this is what children want in their stories? As Griswold earlier notes, we know that 'children seek this feeling' because we can observe them creating their own snug places:

> Kids get a special pleasure from playing underneath tables, and setting up housekeeping in tents made of blankets and chairs, and creating forts in large cardboard boxes, and passing time behind the furniture. Adults are not immune to this delight; the daydream of retreating to a mountain cabin or the special satisfaction grown-ups take in outfitting a recreational vehicle with clever fittings, for example, comes close. Still, snugness seems a pleasurable feeling especially sought in childhood. (Griswold 5)

For children the "snug place is a refuge" Griswold reminds us, and to emphasize this he reminds us of *The Wind in the Willows* when Rat and Mole are relieved to find an orderly yet convivial shelter from their wandering in the snowy Wild Wood. The passage is so illustrative of Griswold's claim that it is worth quoting at length:

> The kindly Badger thrust them down on a settle to toast themselves at the fire, and bade them remove their wet coats and boots. Then he fetched them dressing-gowns and slippers, and himself bathed the Mole's shin with warm water and mended the cut with sticking-plaster till the whole thing was just as good as new, if not better. In the embracing light and warmth, warm and dry at last, with weary legs propped up in front of

them, and a suggestive clink of plates being arranged on the table behind,

it seemed to the storm-driven animals, now in safe anchorage, that the cold

and trackless Wild Wood just left outside was miles and miles away, and

all that they had suffered in it a half-forgotten dream. (Grahame 58)

Kenneth Grahame's description of Badger's home demonstrates some of

Griswold's points about the significance of 'snugness' to children and the literature

written for them. First, the snug space is usually 'tight,' 'small,' 'simple,' and 'well

designed,' and, perhaps above all else, 'enclosed' and thus 'safe' from the chaos or

trouble from the outside. Another quality Griswold mentions is that the snug place is

usually 'hidden':

The pleasure of ownership is also an explanation of the association of

snugness with hidden and secret places. The child who retreats to his or

her private place is engaged in a geographic or architectural assertion of

individuality; keeping secrets, from which parents and others are excluded,

is likewise as assertion of individuality. (Griswold 14)

The Wind in the Willows seems for Griswold to be the quintessence of snugness,

and he points us to the passage where Mole praises Badger's home which is safe from the

weather and outsiders:

The Mole found himself placed next to Mr. Badger, and…he took the

opportunity to tell Badger how comfortable and home-like it all felt to

him. 'Once well underground,' he said, 'you know exactly where you are.

Nothing can happen to you, and nothing can get to you. You're entirely

your own master, and you don't have to consult anybody or mind what

they say. Things go on all the same overhead, and you let 'em, and don't

bother about 'em. When you want to, up you go, and there the things are,

waiting for you.' (Grahame 67)

Like any other readers, the creation of a world with its dangers and comforts, with

its realness and otherworldliness, is what helps to *persuade* child readers to *decide* to

accept the fictional world of the author as true. Therefore, as Griswold and Tolkien argue,

the creator succeeds or fails according to how she anticipates the expectations of the

audience. Into most of these worlds enter two complementary elements, those of *tension*

and *escape*, which create added problems and solutions for children's fiction.

The Good Catastrophe

Toy Story 3 (2010) is the third installment of Pixar Animation Studio=s computer-

animated trilogy about the toys in Andy's room: Woody, Buzz Lightyear, Rex, Slink,

Hamm, the Potato Heads, and the Pizza Planet aliens. In the movie, the toys feel

neglected and forsaken since Andy is now a teenager and has not played with them in

years. Woody tries to encourage them to keep their sense of purpose by reminding them

that their true nature as toys 'isn't about being played with' but 'being there for Andy,'

but after years of disuse the toys are wary of Woody's advice. Andy is cleaning out his

room before going to college, and he decides to take Woody, his longtime favorite, with

him. Andy then places the other toys in a plastic garbage bag, meaning to put them in the

attic, but because of a mix-up, Andy's mother thinks the toys are trash and puts them on

the curbside on garbage day.

The toys escape and get to the carport, but are convinced that Andy doesn't want them, so they get into another box of toys in the trunk of mom's car that is being donated to Sunnyside Daycare. While Woody tries unsuccessfully to convince the others to disregard the mistake because Andy still wants them, all of the toys become trapped because Andy's mom closes the trunk and takes them to Sunnyside. Once at Sunnyside, with the exception of Woody, the toys began to fall in love with their new home which Lotso (a pink, strawberry-scented bear) and Ken (from the Barbie collection) display for them like a Boca Raton resort, after which all of Andy's toys decide to stay. Woody, however, leaves and attempts to find his way to Andy, is instead taken home by Bonnie, a little girl whose mother works at Sunnyside. Once at Bonnie's home, the imaginative little girl plays with Woody for the first time in years, and Woody is momentarily happy.

After Bonnie is asleep, however, Woody learns from her own toys that his friends are in great trouble because Lotso, Ken, and some of the other Sunnyside toys run the Daycare like a prison, confining the newly donated toys to the Caterpillar Room where all the toddlers abuse and mistreat them. This way, Lotso, Ken, and the other gangster toys can stay in the Butterfly Room where the children are older and gentler. Woody sneaks back into Sunnyside, determined to save Buzz and his other friends.

All of the *Toy Story* films operate within a solid secondary world with consistent rules, motifs, narrative symmetry, and a sense of internal *ethos*. This quality, as with *Up*, is a trademark of many Disney-Pixar films. *Toy Story 3* picks up with an element from the previous films, which is how despair (similar to what Michael D.C. Drout calls the 'sin of pale hope' of medieval theology) can transform a decent character into a villain. In each

of the three films, the role of despair evolves—from Buzz's deep depression that momentarily incapacitates him in the first film, to Stinky Pete's extreme hatred for his own natural purpose (which is to be a child's toy) after years go by and no one purchases him in the second film. However, with Lotso in the third film, the Pixar producers travel further than Buzz's depression or Stinky Pete's despair, but in a modern sense touch the roots evil.

Throughout the trilogy, one of the philosophical questions we are asked is this: while there are pragmatic reasons (for toys and humans) to isolate ourselves from the pain and anguish that comes with existence, what happens if people divorce themselves from all that is familiarly human? Wayne C. Booth, writing about Albert Camus's narrator of *The Stranger*, describes Meursault as someone who "goes through the motions of life…a stranger to all normal human emotions and experiences" until he is condemned to death for the murder of an Arab when he

> Discovers…that he has not been a lost man after all, that in his indifferent isolation he has figured a truth about the indifference of the whole universe, and that he has been happy all along, "and that I was happy still" (Booth 296).

The *Toy Story* trilogy takes such a character—not under prison watch and awaiting his execution—and follows him further than the nihilistic Meursault is allowed to go, and lets him influence and affect the relationships of other characters. In the case of Lotso in *Toy Story 3*, the result can be terrifying. Unlike Meursault, we hear that Lotso once was not a 'stranger' to the desires or feelings of a normal toy. However, after his

original owner loses him and then replaces him with another Lots-O'-Huggin' Bear, Lotso rejects any value there is in being a toy, for himself and others, declaring to the other toys at the dumpster scene that no child really loves their toys, and worse yet, asking Woody, "You think you're special, cowboy? You're a piece of plastic! You were made to be thrown away," and saying to all the toys that they are "all just trash waiting to be thrown away! That's all a toy is!"

His self-devaluation enables Lotso to mistreat, abuse, and subjugate the toys at Sunnyside, and this philosophy is what permits him to abandon Woody and the others in the dump scene to certain destruction after Woody and Buzz had saved him from the shredder. Far from incapacitating him (as it did temporarily with Buzz in the first film), Lotso turns his despair into a safeguard that shields him from the shared values of others, and it enables him to project his vision of personal hopelessness onto all who surround him, and this serves as a self-enforced justification for his cruelty to them.

In the film, all of the toys reject Lotso's self-serving nihilism by embracing the value they place in their individual relationships. For example, when Ken intervenes against Lotso and begs him to not throw Barbie into the dumpster, Lotso predictably replies, "She's a Barbie doll. There's a hundred million just like her," to which Ken proclaims, "Not to me there's not." Indeed, the values that each of the toys place in their friendships is a powerful, seemingly transcendent force throughout the film. And yet, it is not enough for this story.

We as viewers are hard on Lotso and might rejoice that Ken comes to the same truth as Woody and Buzz, but the problem of despair remains because, in the end, Lotso

is right. John Lassiter confirms this in one of his statements about his film: "When you're broken, you can be fixed; when you're lost, you can be found; when you're stolen you can be recovered. But there's no way to fix being outgrown by the child." All of the Toy Story films spend some amount of time on the probable fate of toys: once children no longer play with their toys, they are lost, donated away, broken, and eventually, all of them are tossed out and destroyed. And though Andy's toys are rescued and able to return to their owner, after all their struggle and resilience, *Toy Story 3* ends with Andy giving all of his once cherished toys away.

Defeat for toys seems to be an ineluctable fate. Therefore, the question remains at the end of the final film: despite his inconvenient actions in the plot of the movie, isn't Lotso's analysis essentially correct? Either way, the directors John Lassiter and Lee Unkrich have left us a problem to consider. Our world and recorded tales of times past are far fuller of defeats than happy endings, and history proves cruel to the optimism of previous ages. Is happiness or security something we should even expect, in our lives or in our fiction, given so much evidence to the contrary?

This is a problem Tolkien also dealt with in his scholarly essay "Beowulf: The Monsters in the Critics." Tolkien tries to relate both a little of the rhetorical situation and the collective imagination that the Beowulf poet might have faced as he set himself to the task of compiling this long, narrative saga:

> When we have read [the Beowulf poet's] poem, as a poem…we perceive
> that he who wrote *hæleð under heofenum may have meant in* dictionary
> terms 'heroes under heaven', or 'mighty men upon earth', but he and his

hearers were thinking of the *eormengrund*, the great earth, ringed with

garsecg, the shoreless sea, beneath the sky's inaccessible roof; whereon, as

in a little circle of light about their halls, men with courage as their stay

went forward to that battle with the hostile world and the offspring of the

dark which ends for all, even the kings and champions, in defeat

(Christopher Tolkien 18).

This ultimate scheme where men and all their accomplishments shall perish, or, as

Drout puts it, this 'idea of a long defeat,' is an idea Tolkien ferrets out of old

mythologies, and it contrasts sharply with much of our modern fashions of thought, such

as the seductive 'success narratives' found in some conservative commentaries that

usually maintain that if all of us study hard, pay our 'dues,' and make the most of our

opportunities, we will see good times evermore; or the dogma of some socialist

ideologies that claim a completely equal and egalitarian society, fundamentally different

than our own, can be achieved though an increase of social programs. Instead, Tolkien

indicates that no matter how prosperous we might become as individuals, or how perfect

the socialist state we construct on Earth, in the long term, they will fail and chaos and

misery will inevitably ensue.

This idea is at the center of much of Tolkien's scholarly and literary work, and in

"The Monsters and the Critics," Tolkien does not want us to forget that however inspiring

Beowulf might be, however comforting the fire, food, and fellowship inside King

Hrothgar's hall might seem, no matter how joyous we might be at the deaths of Grendel

or his mother, in the end the monsters win and civilization is doomed. The fate of Andy's

toys, it is suggested, is exactly the same. However, despite my gloomy descriptions, Tolkien was not a fatalist, but in his critical and literary work he developed a concept of 'consolation' that works for *Toy Story 3*.

After the dumpster scene and Lotso's final betrayal, the toys are taken to the dump, placed on a conveyor belt, and tossed into a gigantic furnace with no hope of rescue. Facing certain destruction, the toys join hands as they inch closer to the incinerator and their doom. Suddenly from above a crane comes (lowered by the Pizza Planet alien toys) and lifts them to safety. Woody, Buzz, and all the other toys are saved from certain destruction. On the DVD commentary, the Pixar directors (rather humbly) refer to their rescue of the toys as *deus ex machina*, which is sometimes translated as "God from the machine," which implies that though they dearly wanted to save their beloved toy characters, the directors feel as though they have weakened the story's value by interrupting (entering their story like God from behind the sunset) the natural course of events. However, in *Toy Story 3* Lassiter and Unkrich have not disrupted their narrative by saving their characters because they have done something different.

Tolkien's term *eucatastrophe* might be better suited for what actually happens at the end of *Toy Story 3*. In his essay "On Fairy Stories," Tolkien claims that the "eucatastrophic tale is the true form of fairy-tale, and its highest function," and therefore elements that set up the eucatastrophe, "however wild its events, however fantastic or terrible the adventures," are naturally woven into every fantastic tale:

> The consolation of fairy-stories, the joy of the happy ending: or more
>
> correctly of the good catastrophe, the sudden joyous "turn"…this joy,

which is one of the things which fairy-stories can produce supremely well, is not essentially "escapist," nor "fugitive." In its fairy-tale…setting, it is a sudden and miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur. It does not deny the existence of dyscatastrophe, of sorrow and failure: the possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance; it denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat and in so far is *evangelium*, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy…beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief (Christopher Tolkien 153).

Indeed, the 'joy' we vicariously experience through Woody, Buzz, and the other toys does indeed seem to come "beyond the walls of the world." However, because from the beginning the Pixar producers are not only drawing on elements that were presented earlier in the film and the two earlier movies ('the claw,' Potatohead's rescue of the toy aliens in *Toy Story 2*, etc.), but have also infused their story with an *ethos* that also "denies…universal final defeat" because their characters, in one way or another, refused to accept despair (as Lotso did), this makes the escape at the end seem cathartic, or enlarging, rather than a cheap trick by the producers to 'save the day.'

Instead, this different conclusion becomes the ending we anticipate, and when we as moviegoers get it, we realize that there could have been no other. This is why the false ending of Lotso saving the toys by pressing the button to stop the conveyor belt would have seemed 'tacked on' and would not have worked.

Another film that uses a similar scheme to *Toy Story 3* is the Hughes brothers= *The Book of Eli* (2010), a postapocalyptic film that also lends itself to a eucatastrophic

interpretation. At the end of the movie, the main character Eli (Denzel Washington) offers his dying prayer to God, the transcendent force that has helped him make an impossible journey to Alcatraz Island where civilization is going to be reborn:

> Dear Lord, thank you for giving me the strength and the conviction to complete the task you entrusted to me. Thank you for guiding me straight and true through the many obstacles in my path, and for keeping me resolute when all around seemed lost. Thank you for your protection and your many signs along the way. Thank you for any good that I may have done, I'm so sorry about the bad. Thank you for the friend I made. Please watch over her as you watched over me. Thank you for finally allowing me to rest. I'm so very tired, but I go now to my rest at peace knowing that I have done right with my time on this earth. I fought the good fight; I finished the race; I kept the faith.

In a sense, Eli's final prayer echoes a similar, though more nuanced, dialogue between the *Toy Story 3* characters and the directors. Woody, Buzz, and the others have 'fought the good fight' even though the odds were impossible, they have 'finished the race' though there was never hope of winning, and they have 'kept the faith' in the ideas that the filmmakers planted into their Secondary World—the *logos* that structures the imaginative universe that the Pixar filmmakers created governs our interpretations as viewers and presses its weight onto all the characters who live within this World and their decisions. Even a happy ending can be the right ending when the narrative requires it. Andy's toys have done all that was asked: they struggled to the end, and therefore, the

only natural conclusion to the narrative, or any narrative such as this, is a eucatastrophe. However, when we turn to children's fiction, what does this notion of a 'good catastrophe' mean beyond a recent film?

As mentioned earlier, authors for children seem unwilling, in spite of the cultural or political pressure of the times, to superficially shield children from the issues of pain that exist in their worlds. Many authors would probably view this as dishonesty. Nevertheless, child readers are probably also similar to adults in desiring something to balance the pain and tragedy in their fictional worlds, and one benefit of 'escape' is to give their young readers a real look at the root of pain, despair, and evil, and the reader will accept this as long as there is the hope of conciliation.

In his fiction, Tolkien in *The Hobbit* and later to a greater extent in *The Lord of the Rings* fully uses 'escape' to expose some of the depths of real pain and depravity. Many authors such as Roger Lancelyn Green (who adapted the tales of Robin Hood, King Arthur, and the Norse myths for children in the 1950s and 1960s) never belabor the point that the world of the book is full of darkness so much so that they overwhelm the reader. However, Green often drops reminders that are brief, yet linger with us as we move through all of his narratives.

For example, in the later chapters of *Robin Hood* when the pardoned Robert of Locksley goes into Nottingham to attend mass at the cathedral, not suspecting that King Richard is dead and that the vengeful John is setting a trap, Green places Lady Marian "looking around the comfortable room and out at the trim garden of Locksley Hall," and as she reviews the surroundings where she and Robin Hood have lived for a short time in

peace, love, and comfort, she says, "I fear that the good days are ending" (Green 266).

The moment of foreshadowed doom is brief, but effective, and such moments are often found in modern fiction for children, but the reader's faith (waning though it might be at times) in the possibility of 'escape' makes the darkness more bearable.

In effect, the pain and suffering is necessary for the catharsis of escape. Jerry Griswold argues that "Being frightened is stimulating and thrilling because it wakes up a more vivid self in response" and that this form of fear can even be 'pleasurable' (Griswold 48-9). However, when the anguish is greater, then the characteristics of endurance and faith become more central to the stories. Indeed, the defeat of heroes and the disappearance of any modicum of security is important in most children's literature, and this is a theme that is as old as the medieval stories Green is retelling for children. This convention found its way into the earliest of children's fiction.

Tolkien (who like Lewis was Green's friend but also his thesis advisor at Oxford University) discusses this idea of an inevitable 'long defeat' in the aforementioned essay, "Beowulf: The Monsters in the Critics." Even though he is arguing a point of scholarly interest, and not intending to create a work of literature, Tolkien becomes visionary, describing a "great scene, hung with tapestries woven of ancient tales of ruin." And inside a small hall that shielded them from the hostile elements and their looming fate—this "little circle of light" that functions much like the eye of a hurricane is a small golden time before all ends for "even the kings and champions, in defeat." Again, this idea that happiness is only temporary and doom the inevitable state of things goes against our contemporary notions of success or progress. Therefore, no matter how brave Sir

Lancelot is or how holy Sir Galahad can be, or how Robin Hood acts with cunning, or how glorious the Norse gods might be, given enough time all of them will be defeated and the vainglorious 'offspring of the dark' will be unquestioned conquerors of the earth. As the leaves fall before the snows, this is the determined order of the universe.

This problem that Tolkien so powerfully describes is a constant conflict in many children's stories, and not only when the narrative is dealing (as Green does) with 'olden times,' but in the various genres within the field. Indeed, books such as *The Secret Garden* and *Heidi* begin with pain, suffering, and loss: Mary loses her parents and is practically abandoned in India before being sent to England to live with relatives she has never met; Heidi has lost her parents before being abandoned by her aunt (who deems the 5 year old girl as an economic inconvenience to her career opportunities) and sent to live with her grandfather whom she has never known. The pain here is light when compared to the violence and maltreatment in *Black Beauty* or with the parental problems that Huck Finn faces or the institutional heartlessness in *Oliver Twist*. However, pain to some degree is a constant factor in most classic stories for children, and while many moralizing critics have interpreted these narratives (often rightly) as the constructs of an author who wants to act as the social reformer and protective champion for the powerless child, this does not always hold true.

For example, we also see another view of pain in Beatrix Potter or in many of the fairy tales where the mood seems to be (to some degree) much more resigned. For example, while Betty MacDonald's *Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle* series books argues for more inventive forms of punishment for children rather than any variation of corporal

punishment, the necessity of punishing children is never questioned in MacDonald's narrative, and while the punishments that Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle invents are creative, they are often very physical and much more humiliating than some milder (and more private) forms of spanking.

Most pains and injustices in children's literature seem to have no advocate for social justice, no judicial commission of inquiry, and no hope of punishment for the perpetrators. Indeed, rather than justice, it seems disconcerting that the narrative tone concerning pain in much of classic children's literature seems at times to echo what C.M Woodhouse says in his partial assessment of George Orwell's narrator concerning the violence and ultimate unfairness at the end of *Animal Farm*: "Life is like that—take it or leave it." While Woodhouse makes it clear that Orwell does have a political purpose for his animal story, *Animal Farm* seems to be harsh on Western assumptions such as our beliefs in democratic utopia, mass education, or even the notion that political activism (in other words, the idea that "We are the change we seek," etc.) will always lead to a better existence for individuals or society. Indeed, for Orwell's animals and for other characters in much of children's fiction, despite our visions and hopes, there is an ultimate and inevitable pain of loss that will come.

This holds true for the personal as well. In *Bridge to Terabithia*, where Katherine Paterson shows that while Jess Aarons can temporarily flee the painful aloofness of his home life and go with Leslie Burke to a kingdom of their own making, there is no haven to protect Jess from the thought of Leslie's lack of existence in this world. Perhaps here is where the distinction between 'adult' and 'child' is completely dissolved away. As times

of war, economic uncertainty, and death teach us, loss and defeat are the country of children and well as grownups.

However, if texts for children are unique from those of literary adults, perhaps it is because the pain and anguish in children's literature can often serve to strengthen our anticipation of other possibilities, which is why most fiction for children often has an element of escape: a 'happy ending' as we often call it or, if such a phrase sounds too florid or sentimental for our modern sensibilities, we can return to Tolkien's term 'eucatastrophe.' Regardless of the term, the idea serves as a narrative device that saves the heroes from their defeat. Tolkien claims that the "eucatastrophic tale is the true form of fairy-tale, and its highest function." The eucatastrophe does not negate the loss or 'long defeat,' but it atones for the struggle against in incredible odds, redeems any failings for those who continued with 'the good fight' in the face of inevitable defeat, and is the natural salvation for those characters (and the readers) who have kept faith. With these tenets of the eucatastrophic tale in mind, Tolkien argues that the elements that set up the eucatastrophe, "however wild its events, however fantastic or terrible the adventures" should be woven into every fantastic tale (Christopher Tolkien 153).

Tolkien emphasized that escape comes within the narrative, not outside of it. Therefore, we should not mistake the 'happy ending' or the 'eucatastrophe' for *deus ex machina* where the rescue comes from outside the machine, but the escape Tolkien discusses is built into the clockwork itself and helps the mechanics of the narrative. Therefore, the possibility of escape is almost always understood and assumed by the reader, and so Tolkien and other writers who used escape often argued that the longing

for 'joy beyond the walls of the world' was something that went beyond the creation of stories but touched something important to human nature itself, and here is a connection to the rhetorical studies of Booth, Burke, and Bakhtin.

Therefore, the 'happy ending' is something more than one literary convention among thousands that storytellers (for reasons of genre, market, or ideology, etc.) could use or not use to create an acceptable story: *eucatastrophe* is a rhetorical appeal that reaches back to the quintessence of our human existence that captures the heart of what John Poulakos and George Poulet mean when they discuss the nature of people to exist simultaneously between to spheres of reality, between the ground where we stand and the horizon to which we gaze.

Finally, most books for children can be studied as reflections of rhetorical, philosophical, and literary possibilities, and I plan to examine most of the classical texts from the period as well as a few contemporary texts from this theoretical perspective.

Chapter 4:

Rhetoric and Children's Literature

Some time ago I was invited to an informal talk hosted by fellow Episcopal churchgoers to discuss a couple of issues facing the local parishes. I had arrived expecting to listen, take notes, and say little, but eventually was drawn into some of the discussions. After our talk was over, a few people thanked me and basically told me, "You said today exactly what I really felt and what I would have wanted to say, but I just wasn't sure how to do it."

As someone who teaches rhetoric for a living, I think of my objective as actually helping others to 'say' what they want to say. However, as a literary critic, I am also interested in this notion of a reading audience desiring a writer to express for them a vision of what they would themselves have expressed were it possible for them to do so. I believe that part of this notion parallels what Wayne Booth asserts in *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent*, that the primary act of human nature is to give 'assent' rather than to cling to 'systematic doubt' (Booth xvi). In other words, we as human beings desire consensus, and we desire someone who can make it possible through such expressions as verbalization, successful argument, or the creation of other worlds. But as we discussed with Tolkien and his writing on 'secondary worlds,' and as we will later discuss once we cross the threshold into the 'rhetoric of possibility,' there is something far deeper that lies beyond our natural need for 'assent.' Are there elements that draw a reader to select a story or a text because it somehow 'says what' they 'would have wanted to say'? What is

this need that we seek to fulfill, and how do rhetors of fiction anticipate it as they create new worlds for their audiences?

While these questions will be explored partially in this chapter and more fully in the next, the desire that the reader brings is itself an unavoidable part of the reading experience, and each author must somehow anticipate it. This should not be confused with some sort of cheap marketing ploy for readers like the one C.S. Lewis warned against in Chapter 1, but as something that is inherit in human understanding and is visible in our own individual experiences if we take a moment to consider it.

For instance, as someone who is an economic patron of art but has little skill, I perhaps am drawn to those images that appeal to the mind and senses that I would have created myself if I had time and ability. Most artists tend to create things they would like to experience. In "I would not paint—a picture" (#505), Emily Dickenson went further than this claiming "Nor would I be a Poet—/It's finer own the Ear," suggesting that aesthetic perception was the inward driver for her to create. While advertisers and marketing experts are aware of this instinct and can appeal to it, it is a basic part of human experience. While some work remains to further mend the rhetorical and literary fences, I believe the work already done shows that successful storytelling draws its power from anticipating the sort of narratives a reader would have created for themselves for their own delight. In this chapter, I wish to continue the dialogue between the studies of rhetoric and literature, with special consideration to how language seeks to connect to readers in books for children.

In contrast to residual views that literature and rhetoric must remain divorced and studied separately, most postmodern literary scholarship has benefited from a revival of rhetorical study and schemes such the use of scenic elements found in Kenneth Burke's pentad or Mikhail Bakhtin's emphasis of 'the border zone' of language discourse between speaker and receiver. I will work primarily from an Aristotelian definition of rhetoric, but I will also apply Wayne Booth's use of the term 'rhetoric' for the way that fiction writers make known their vision to readers and persuade them of its validity. In his landmark book *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), Booth shows that literature can be better understood when we recognize that the "novel comes into existence as something communicable" rather than an aesthetic work that is "divorced from…human meanings." Indeed, Booth continually demonstrates that the conventional tendencies of the literary scholarship of his time to (1) exclude the author or (2) construct the 'intentional fallacy' have obscured rather than enlightened our understandings of literature. Booth's work also draws from some of his contemporaries such as Burke and Bakhtin, both of whom will also be included in this rhetorical analysis of children's literature.

Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction* has become widely accepted within the mainstream of literary studies for many reasons, one being that he helps us see that the relationships existing between what Booth terms the 'implied author,' the narrator, the characters and the plot, and our relationship as readers to all of these textual elements. Booth makes these connections for fiction clearer than any literary critic had before (even more than perhaps Kenneth Burke who influenced him), and using Booth can help illustrate a whole range of possibilities for children's fiction and juvenile texts. J.L

Austin's *How to Do Things With Words* opens the door to a whole new range of

rhetorical possibilities for children=s books. Austin argues that "if a person makes an

utterance [that performs an act or creates a response] we should say that he is *doing*

something rather than merely *saying* something," which provides a whole range of

possibilities for texts that rely on wordplay, and novels such as *Heidi*, *The Secret Garden*,

and *Charlotte's Web* can help to illustrate different parts of Austen's argument such as

how language can create a change, not only within the fictional characters, but within

ourselves as reader (116).

But why is the study of rhetoric—usually assumed to be about either technical

processes or esoteric issues of language and discourse—important for children's books,

or literature in general? Booth argues that all novels are *rhetorical*, meaning not

necessarily that they try to persuade us to take a position on various political implications

that are embedded within the text, but rather that *rhetoric* in fiction is the instrument

where each author tries to convey her vision to the reader and to persuade him of its

realness. This vision, and the need to convince others to share it, is at the heart of what I

will examine later in this dissertation.

This chapter will offer more illustrations of how a rhetorical critique can

illuminate certain aspects of texts intended for children that were before either obscure to

literary criticism or difficult to discern with our current critical lexicon. Beginning with

Classical concepts of rhetoric, I will take parts of J.R.R. Tolkien's novel *The Hobbit* and

show how parts of the story (where Gandalf, Bilbo, and other characters use language to

challenge, argue, trick, cajole, and persuade others) clearly apply to Platonic and

Aristotelian notions of rhetoric. Furthermore, these applications of rhetoric in *The Hobbit* illustrate not only the character=s beliefs in oratory and language in the novel, but the *logos* of Tolkien's entire Middle-earth, or the philosophy that governs his secondary world.

Moving from classical to more modern and postmodern rhetoric, I will reexamine Peggy Parish's Amelia Bedelia stories using Donald Davidson=s philosophy of language and the analytic literary philosophy of Reed Way Dasenbrock to show how generations of critics, by assuming that Parish's character is merely 'literal-minded' and nothing more, have missed the Bakhtinian and Davidsonian interplay within the Amelia Bedelia texts. From this rhetorical perspective, the Amelia Bedelia character is quite complex.

Donald Davidson's philosophy of language uses a 'principle of charity' that is pertinent to any discussion of children's texts. Davidson's principle requires that when we interpret an utterance from someone else and an incongruity arises that interferes with our understanding of the meaning of that utterance (probably tempting us to question the wisdom of the utterance itself or the person who constructed it), we should not immediately conclude that the person's statement (or the mind that formed it) is irrational or illogical *if* a rational, coherent interpretation of the statement remains possible.

Davidson claims in his essay "Three Varieties of Thought" (1991) that 'charity' incorporates two other established principles: the Principle of Coherence, which "prompts the interpreter to discover a degree of logical consistency in the thought of the speaker," and the Principle of Correspondence, which "prompts the interpreter to take the speaker to be responding to the same features of the world that he (the interpreter) would be

responding to under similar circumstances" (Davidson, 211 [TVT]). Davidson's ideas can help us reevaluate some stories for children such as the Amelia Bedelia books, which are easy to dismiss as 'funny' but not very significant for scholarship in the study of children's literature. Davidson, however, helps to illustrate some important concepts of language communication and interpretation that are in action in the Amelia Bedelia stories and offer us a new interpretation on popular stories for children.

Finally, we will put many of these rhetorical philosophies together to examine the use of internal discourses—and how they add to character development, scenic qualities, and the underlying philosophy of the text—in C. S. Lewis's fifth Narnia novel, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Lewis illustrates that there are private, inner-discourses that play a part in how we see reality and how we decide what course of action to take when faced with a choice. In his stories, Lewis focuses most of all on the deliberative moral choice of his characters, and he demonstrates how persuasion plays a role not merely in our relationships with others, but within ourselves.

What this entire section will illustrate is that the art of creating any story is relationship-driven, that it often begins as a discourse community with an assumed shared set of values and views on the world, and through all of this the author creates a new persona, another version of herself to direct and instruct the reader on the ways of this world: this second self is what Booth calls 'the implied author' of the text. This 'author' is essentially another character in the story that often "stands behinds the scenes, whether as stage manager, as puppeteer, or as an indifferent God, silently paring his fingernails. This implied author is always distinct from the "real man"—whatever we may take him to

be—who creates a superior version of himself, a "second self," as he creates his work" (Booth 151). Yet this 'author' is an inseparable part of the text and is even one of its indelible qualities that can either attract or put off the reading audience.

Tolkien and Classical Rhetoric

Oratory and rhetoric in J.R.R. Tolkien's fiction play a critical part in the world he creates: they advance the narratives within his novels *The Hobbit* or *The Lord of the Rings* as well as distinguish the characters according to their individual cleverness, leadership abilities, and their historical sense of myth and transcendent goodness of their world. However, rhetoric also reveals crucial details about the philosophies, ethics, and passions of many of the inhabitants of Middle-earth that perhaps were not apparent before. The wizards Gandalf and Saruman, both of whom seem the most skilled and studied rhetors in Tolkien's fiction, not only represent elements of the Sophist and Classical views of rhetoric, but also embody the philosophies and values (as well as the flaws) of those systems.

As Jay Ruud (2010) points out in his own recent work on wizardly rhetoric, Tolkien "was familiar with classical rhetoric and dialectic through both formal and informal study" as he read classic texts as part of his 'Honor Moderations' study at Exeter College that included the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Demosthenes, and Cicero. Ruud also reminds us that Tolkien would have been exposed to forms of classical rhetoric and dialectic before entering the university because of his membership in the Debating Society at the King Edward School in Birmingham. Therefore, Tolkien would have been

95

familiar with the classical system of rhetoric developed by Aristotle and its Roman amplification by Cicero and Quintilian.

Once Tolkien completed his first Oxford University exam, he changed his academic study to medieval literature where Tolkien focused his energies and interests for the remainder of his life (Ruud 141). There is also scant evidence that Tolkien showed much preoccupation with classical rhetoric studies, particularly at the time he was writing his Middle-earth stories for children. Nevertheless, Tolkien the medievalist had to deal with classical rhetoric in his professional studies since medieval texts draw on a simplified view of Aristotle's system of rhetoric. Furthermore, the study of rhetoric is highly relevant here because throughout much of Tolkien's fiction, the lines of a constant battlefield are fought not only with weapons and magic arts, but more often with opposing rhetorics and their philosophical implications. These are the forces in play within Tolkien's world and to understand them better, we should turn to *The Silmarillion* where the values of Middle-earth are infused within it.

While Tolkien's prequel was not intended for children, and only his most avid fans have ventured to read it, *The Silmarillion* helps us understand Tolkien's stories for children and young adults since it illustrates that from the beginning of Middle-earth the narrative contains a *logos* (law, divine nature) that has an aprioristic existence from this beginning. This means that Tolkien made a conscious choice to firmly establish the truths of his world before creating its characteristics or values, and the creation of *The Silmarillion* (which Tolkien worked on at intervals for 57 years and never published in his lifetime) is his rhetorical argument for all of his Middle-earth stories. What is

interesting is that the *logos* Tolkien builds seems to come to life and seems to act as what Wayne C. Booth calls the 'implied author' of the novel, since it not only serves as a guide and a companion for the readers, but it comes to personify the very values necessary for readers to understand and interpret the story as it should be (Booth 70-76).

With this *logos* firmly in place, Tolkien establishes an *ethos* (character) within Middle-earth, starting in the opening pages with Melkor who ends the harmonious fellowship of the Music of the Ainur with his wandering "alone into the void places seeking the Imperishable Flame": we see the character of Middle-earth clearly when its values are violated once we see that "desire grew hot" within Melkor "to bring into Being things of his own, and it seemed to him that Iluvatar took no thought for the Void, and he was impatient of its emptiness." However, this is dangerous because "being alone, [Melkor] had begun to conceive thought of his own unlike those of his brethren" (S, i, 3-4), and as such he begins to violate the natural laws of Middle-earth because Tolkien is creating a rhetorical argument that holds through all of his fiction, using his words and his textual characters as tropes for his worldview, and the logos of that worldview is this: that both a love and life of adherence to *truth* is more important than the pursuit of self-interest, empowerment, or even expediency.

While Tolkien's *Silmarillion* might not be as commercially popular as the *Lord of the Rings*, and while it is certainly not a story for children, it is important in helping us understand his works for children and young adults. In the world that Tolkien constructs, it is the unabated pursuit of these aforementioned desires that eventually leads to the most ravenous evils. Both the means that Tolkien uses to do this and his argument bear

scrutiny when they are applied to the conventions of Sophistic and (mainly) Classical

Rhetoric.

<center>The Hobbit and the Rhetor Wizard</center>

Earlier in *The Hobbit* when the wizard Gandalf arrives at the clearing in the

woods, he finds that Thorin Oakenshield and his twelve dwarf companions have been

captured by the trolls Bert, Tom, and William. Shortly before their captivity, Thorin had

fought valiantly, using a torch to burn Bert in the eye and to knock out one of Tom=s

front teeth, before William finally takes Thorin from behind and places him in a sack.

Now the trolls, more incensed than before, are quarrelling about the most expedient way

to cook these unlucky thirteen. In the middle of this cookout ruckus, the gang of robbers

and eaters of dwarf flesh have been comically morphed into the form of an assembly

gathered to debate the policy of preparing dwarf meat: roast them slowly, mince and then

boil them, or "sit on them one by one and squash them into jelly" (H, ii, 49).

After much heated debate, the trolls decide to follow Bert's idea to roast the

dwarves immediately and save them for a later snack. However, once they come to their

tenuous consensus, the trolls hear a voice (which Bert takes to be William's) say "No

good roasting 'em now, it'd take all night" (H, ii, 50). William and Bert immediately

begin to quarrel again and finally decide to boil the dwarves, when the voice (which Bert

and William take to be Tom's) begins to quibble about fetching the water for the pot.

This convenes the deliberations afresh, and the three trolls start fighting again, which

goes on awhile until the sun peeks into the clearing in the woods and the voice says,

"Dawn take you all, and be stone" (H, ii, 51). The trolls turn to statues and Gandalf, who had been disguising his voice, steps triumphantly into the clearing.

Readers might be unclear whether Gandalf used magic (which, as Ruud argues, is not likely) or acting to dissemble his own voice for the trolls, but Gandalf's strategy for keeping the trolls from eating the dwarves and arguing until morning is shrewdly rhetorical and begins long before he contributes a single utterance to the trolls' culinary conversation. For instance, before he speaks, Gandalf listens to Bert, Tom, and William argue and fight over roasting or boiling, and deduces the character and emotional state of his audience: that the churlish companionship of the three trolls is hardly filial, but held in place mostly by their gluttonous urges and desire for plunder, which leads to a mutual suspicion that makes their alliance shaky. Gandalf then infers that the trolls could be credulous enough that if he were to exploit these tensions, he might persuade them to focus their anger more on themselves rather than the dwarves.

Of course, by 'persuasion', I do not mean to imply that Gandalf's mimicry here is the same as offering a form of argument in the traditional sense. After all, Gandalf impersonating each of the trolls in turn, who are unaware of the wizard's presence or that they are Gandalf's audience. Instead, Gandalf here is more like an opposition leader to a majority coalition who analyzes the clefts in the different factions and who works to clandestinely exploit these so that the shaky alliance will weaken itself without any obvious effort on his part. Gandalf's impersonation is therefore not an argument but it accomplishes a rhetorical goal by convincing the trolls to continually reopen their deliberations on the issue of dwarfish succulence, which in turn accomplishes Gandalf's

99

own end of keeping the trolls arguing until sunrise.

Aristotle's analysis of rhetoric provides some insight into what Gandalf here is doing. In Book II of *Rhetoric*, Aristotle uses chapters 1 through 17 to enumerate the emotions or passions so that the rhetor can use them in order to effectively persuade his audience. For example, in chapter 2, Aristotle discusses anger as an impulse that is always directed towards another person, often because of an insult, and that "people who are afflicted by sickness or poverty or love or thirst or any other unsatisfied desires are prone to anger and easily roused: especially against those who slight their present distress" (Garver 251). Aside from describing the characteristics of anger, Aristotle further claims that "the orator will have to speak so as to bring his hearers into a frame of mind that will dispose them to anger, and to represent his adversaries as open to such charges and possessed of such qualities as do make people angry" (Garver 257).

Then in chapter 10, Aristotle discusses the passion of envy, which he claims is the only emotion that is distinctively bad or evil. "Envy," says Aristotle, "is pain at the sight of such good fortune as consists of the good things already mentioned; we feel it towards our equals; not with the idea of getting something for ourselves, but because the other people have it" or "We feel envy also if we fall but a little short of having everything" and that in general "those who aim at a reputation for anything are envious" (Garver 303). No matter the station or degree in life, Aristotle suggests that among those whom we consider 'equals,' any perception of increase in fortune will raise the emotion of envy in the envious man. Envy is always competitive, and Aristotle cautions the rhetor that if "we

100

ourselves with whom the decision rests are put into an envious state of mind…it is obvious that they will win no pity from us" (Garver 307).

Later in Book II, Aristotle moves on from emotions to the differences in individual character that the rhetor should consider when trying to persuade members of the audience—examining the probable characteristics of young persons, old persons, and those who are middle-aged, etc.—because Aristotle wants to show the rhetor how persons in each age group might (in all probability, of course) respond to different sorts of arguments and proofs. The rhetor must appeal to these values if he wants to persuade the audience. The rhetor in this case, Gandalf, uses scenic elements that are already in his favor. Henri Bergson, in his theory of laughter, claims that many comedic situations are caused by the complementary forces of *tension* and *elasticity*:

> If these two forces are lacking in the body to any considerable extent, we
> have sickness and infirmity and accidents of every kind. If they are lacking
> in the mind, we find every degree of mental deficiency, every variety of
> insanity. Finally, if they are lacking in the character, we have cases of the
> gravest inadaptability to social life, which are the sources of misery and at
> times the causes of crime (Bergson, ii, par 8).

The relational tension between Tom, Bert, and William, coupled with their dearth of intellectual agility, does much of Gandalf's work for him as does Death's gold in *The Pardoner's Tale* or the apple of Discord with the Greek goddesses: Gandalf's trick is successful because he makes use of the situation he finds.

Gandalf's use of speech is effective with the trolls, but the wizard puts his

rhetorical abilities to full use when he, Bilbo Baggins, and the thirteen dwarves come to

the house of Beorn—the half-man, half-bear creature who lives in a great wooden

dwelling in the middle of the woods outside Mirkwood Forest. Thorin, Bilbo, and

company have just escaped from the goblins of the Misty Mountains with the aid of

Gandalf, but they are without food or transportation, and Beorn is the only person in the

area who can aid them. Unfortunately, Beorn is not amenable towards needy company,

but without some aid Thorin's expedition to the Lonely Mountain will surely fail, and the

adventurers will likely perish either by starvation or at the mercy of their enemies.

While the rhetorical situation Gandalf faces with Beorn is not as dire as with Bert,

Tom, and William since no one is about to be roasted or boiled, everything hangs on

Gandalf's ability to persuade Beorn to help them. This is even more difficult because

Beorn is far more shrewd and decent than a cabal of feckless trolls. A fair question here is

why doesn't Gandalf use his magical powers instead of relying on his rhetorical abilities

so that Beorn has no choice but to help Thorin's company? Unlike Saruman, Gandalf

seems reluctant to act as a wizardly puppeteer to control people against their will;

Gandalf's magic is usually meant for escape, protection, or uncovering a mystery. Tolkien

creates a world where moral wizards treat magic as a powerful weapon to be used with

restraint, mainly where no other recourse is available, but never to make a person act

against his will.

For good or evil, Tolkien's characters often make use of rhetoric since the choice

of each character is paramount, and if Gandalf wants to get Beorn to aid Thorin, Bilbo,

and the dwarves, he has to rely on his ability to persuade. Before they reach Beorn's lands, Gandalf has several advantages, one of which is his familiarity with Beorn's origins and history. As Gandalf explains to Bilbo,

> Some say that he is a bear descended from the great and ancient bears of the mountains that lived there before the giants came. Others say that he is a man descended from the first men who lived before Smaug or the other dragons came into the hills out of the North…As a bear he ranges far and wide. I once saw him sitting all alone on the top of the Carrock at night watching the moon sinking towards the Misty Mountains, and I heard him growl in the tongue of bears: 'The day will come when they will perish and I shall go back!' That is why I believe he once came from the mountains itself (H, vii, 126).

As they reach Beorn's lands, Gandalf cautions the dwarves "not to annoy him" and that Beorn "can be appalling when he is angry, though he is kind enough if humored" (125). Then the wizard instructs the company to come to the house two at a time, so Beorn will not be startled, and tells them to come in pairs after he whistles, and to continue to do this at five minute intervals. Gandalf then takes Bilbo with him and the two proceed alone while the other thirteen wait in the woods. Gandalf and Bilbo find Beorn in a courtyard who asks, rather tersely, "Who are you and what do you want?" (128). After Beorn says he has never heard of Gandalf, the wizard asks Beorn if he knows the wizard Radagast, who is Gandalf's cousin and lives nearer to Beorn on the southern border of Mirkwood. Beorn does know Radagast, "not a bad fellow as wizards go," and

he begins to somewhat soften his tone (129). Then Gandalf begins to tell Beorn the story of their adventure in the Misty Mountains, the trouble with the goblins, their victory and escape, which greatly amuses Beorn because he despises goblins as invaders and enemies of nature.

Once again, Gandalf is Aristotelian—he uses his knowledge of Beorn's character, his history, and his location to place the cranky bear-man into a favorable mindset that is more open to persuasion. Gandalf's plan is so clever and persuasive, that Beorn, rather than being annoyed at finding that Gandalf has been fiddling with the number of dwarves (at one time the wizard says he was with 'a friend or two,' then 'several of our companions,' and then its 'more than six of us,' etc.) is almost jocular, and in his amusement helps correct Gandalf's equivocal arithmetic as if it were a game. Beorn is so pleased, he offers the company food, lodging, and he also does some scouting for them, learning that the goblins have an attack party that is out searching for the dwarves and wizard that killed the Great Goblin, who was their king. Beorn gives them advice on how to evade this group by taking the northern pass through Mirkwood that will take them near the Lonely Mountain.

What is also noticeable is that Gandalf, in dealing both with Beorn and the trolls, does not tell the truth, or at least not the whole truth. Indeed, he deceives the trolls so that they fight each other, and he purposely misleads Beorn about the numbers of Thorin's company. Such dissembling tactics, on the other hand, seem to be a violation of many tenets of Classical Rhetoric, mainly that the rhetor should always be honest. However, Gandalf here seems to be following Quintilian, the Roman rhetorician, who maintains

that the rhetor must be honest and just, of course, although Quintilian manufactures a

special backdoor that is a unique innovation for Classical Rhetoric:

> …a good man may sometimes think it proper to tell a lie, and occasionally
>
> even in matters of small moment, as, when children are sick, we make
>
> them believe many things with a view to promote their health, and promise
>
> them many which we do not intend to perform…and much less, is it
>
> forbidden to tell a falsehood when an assassin is to be prevented from
>
> killing a man, or an enemy to be deceived for the benefit of our country so
>
> that what is at one time reprehensible in a slave is at another laudable even
>
> in the wisest of men. If this be admitted, I see that many causes may occur
>
> for which an orator may justly undertake a case of such a nature, as, in the
>
> absence of any honorable motive, he would not undertake (Bizzell and
>
> Herzberg 417).

In other words, the rhetor must be honest with himself, and therefore manipulation or

even lying can be acceptable if done for justifiable reasons, such as when Gandalf wants

to save his companions from being roasted, or likewise when they are cold, wet, and

hungry, to get them food to eat and a bed for the night. Therefore, while Gandalf here

might not be truthful, he is adhering to what many Classical Rhetors often refer to simply

as 'the good,' which is what is best for the greater number of people.

However, in another sense, Gandalf by misrepresenting the truth is adhering to the

logos of Middle-earth, which makes the argument that for Gandalf to remain honest and

true to his own convictions (which Quintilian implies must be overriding), he has no

choice but to deceive his audience for the sake of his companions. Otherwise, the wizard will fail to uphold his values and adhere to the most 'honorable motive' within him. In the end, Gandalf the Grey abides by the rules of the Classical Rhetor who acknowledges, what Plato argues in the *Phaedrus*, that "there never is nor ever will be a real art of speaking which is divorced from the truth" (De Blas 235). Therefore, Gandalf is only a rhetor secondly after he is a philosopher. As Plato makes a distinction between teaching the truth to others and being persuasive, he argues that those who seek the truth must learn philosophy before rhetoric, and that rhetoric must be employed in the service of philosophy so that souls of persons might be led to truth. In contrast to Saruman the White (who becomes Saruman of Many Colors), rhetoric for Gandalf is only a tool so that he might be the philosophic hero of Tolkien's world, while Saruman becomes the archetypical Platonic representation of the Sophist Rhetor that places persuasion above all else, even truth.

<div align="center">Saruman the 'Sophist' Foil</div>

Many of Tolkien's child readers followed him as young adults when he published *The Lord of the Rings*, and while his 3-part Middle-earth story was not necessarily intended for children, child readers who enjoy *The Hobbit* (as I did) often go right into *The Lord of the Rings*. In both stories, rhetoric continues to reveal details about the philosophies, ethics, and passions of many characters, and the *logos* of the story that Tolkien creates continues as the rhetorical argument that shapes Middle-earth: that faithfulness to *truth* means more than more fashionable values such as self-fulfillment or ease of life. Furthermore, while readers have previously experienced an *ethos* of

possibility that rhetoric provides for characters, in his later works Tolkien shows us the use of rhetoric to create a mindset (or mood) of impossibility.

For instance, Saruman's seemingly 'long rehearsed' speech to Gandalf, retold at the Council of Elrond, makes an appeal to the situational impossibility that Gandalf faces in opposing Sauron's rising in the east:

> The Elder Days are gone. The Middle Days are passing. The Younger Days are beginning. The time of the Elves is over…A new Power is rising. Against it the old allies and policies will not avail us at all. There is no hope left in Elves or dying Númenor. This then is one choice before you…We may join with that Power. It would be wise…There is hope that way. Its victory is at hand… (FOR, II, xi, 261)

As Saruman concedes to Gandalf, acceptance of such inevitability means many scruples such as 'deploring maybe evils done by the way' and they will have to 'keep our thoughts in our hearts' for the sake of alliance. However, Saruman confidently argues that he and Gandalf can 'come to at last to direct' Sauron's 'courses' and even control him by 'approving the high and ultimate purpose' that they share with the dark power, which is a desire for "Knowledge, Rule, Order; all the things that we have striven in vain to accomplish, hindered…by our weak or idle friends." What makes Saruman's appeal here to a 'high and ultimate purpose' most alluring is his previous attempt to make Gandalf despair over the futility of fighting for what is eternally right. Using his rhetoric of impossibility, Saruman hopes to move Gandalf into a state of hopelessness so that

Saruman can again elevate Gandalf to a state of hope with a new vision (and thus enslave him to this alternate vision).

Gandalf, however, rejects Saruman because he embodies the truth that governs Tolkien's world. When faced with the rhetoric of impossibility, each character in Middle-earth must make a similar choice: those who adhere to the values of Tolkien's world must confront and overcome this despair that comes from similar acts of persuasion.

Again, Gandalf and Saruman engage in rhetoric more than the other characters of Middle-earth, and they both enact and embody the values and flaws of the Sophist and Classical views of rhetoric. Gandalf often uses a more dialectic form of rhetoric where the orator must have more elasticity in order to persuade since the audience can respond in some sort of 'give and take' structure. Saruman uses a more oratorical rhetoric where the audience cannot (and does not expect to) respond to the rhetor.

While Saruman's shadow looms throughout *Lord of the Rings* from the time of the Council of Elrond, the first unfiltered view of the white wizard is much later at the Tower of Orthanc after he is defeated by Treebeard and the Ents. King Théoden, Éomer, Gimli, Legolas, Merry, and Pippin ride to the tower to see if Gandalf can convince Saruman to repent for his misdeeds and reconcile himself to those he has misled with lies and equivocations. However, once he appears in the Tower, Saruman neither acts nor speaks as a vanquished enemy who is cornered. Saruman, who began a war of aggression against Théoden and his kingdom of Rohan, seems incredulous of his situation because he immediately endeavors to use Gandalf's gesture to try and turn the different members of the envoy against each other.

First Saruman attempts to reach out to Théoden, asking "first to speak with the King of Rohan, my neighbor, and once my friend." Saruman reminds the old lord how beneficial an alliance between them would be. He praises Théoden as "worthy son of Thengel the Thrice-renowned" and the "mightiest king of western lands" and laments "the unwise and evil counsels that beset" him, but Saruman maintains that "Despite the injuries that have been done to me, in which the men of Rohan, alas! have had some part, still I would save you, and deliver you from the ruin that draws nigh inevitably, if you ride upon this road you have taken" (TT, III, x, 583). Twice Saruman is interrupted, once by Gimli the dwarf and a second time by Éomer, Théoden's nephew, both of whom remind the taciturn Théoden of the contrast between Saruman's current words and his recent deeds. Saruman responds sharply at first with scathing insults, but then softens his tone and reminds both Gimli and Éomer that for reasons of distant citizenry and inexperience, they should "Meddle not in policies which [they] do not understand."

Finally, Saruman also answers the charges against him and offers Théoden a rational for the recent war between Isengard and Rohan:

> …am I to be called a murderer, because valiant men have fallen in battle? If you go to war, needlessly, for I did not desire it, then men will be slain. But if I am a murderer on that account, then all the House of Eorl is stained with murder; for they have fought many wars, and assailed many who defied them. Yet with some they have afterwards made peace, none the worse for being politic. I say, Théoden King: shall we have peace and friendship, you and I? It is ours to command (583-4).

Here Saruman uses the rhetoric of impossibility not to create a picture of an impossible

battle or inevitability, but of a different impossibility: that no act can have value, no deed

can be heroic, knowledge of the past (even if personally experienced) is questionable, and

there is an ineluctable equivalence between the just and the unjust. Saruman's goal is to

increase his own stature in Théoden's eyes by diminishing Théoden's own sense of moral

rightness, and Saruman does this by blurring the line between justice and injustice,

appealing to pragmatism, and distorting Théoden's own knowledge of the past and of

virtue. Once accomplished, Saruman can persuade Théoden as he once did.

In the end, Saruman is unsuccessful with Théoden, though for a moment he seems

to be able to sway some in the assembly, including Théoden perhaps, though it is unclear

whether his reticence during Saruman's speech is due to 'anger or doubt.' Incredibly,

Saruman is most successful with some of the Riders of Rohan who have just fought a

costly battle with the wizard's forces at Helm's Deep: they "were silent, as men spell

bound" and that the image of Saruman in their minds was beginning to morph from a

nefarious enemy to a savior who "stood beside a door of escape, holding it open so that a

ray of light came through" (583). Gandalf warns the others that "Saruman has powers you

do not guess," Ruud maintains that "it is Saruman's rhetoric, rather than any magical

powers, that makes him so dangerous," and Ruud uses Tolkien's 1958 letter to Forrest J.

Ackerman to amplify his claim:

> Saruman's voice was not hypnotic but persuasive. Those who listened to
>
> him were not in danger of falling into a trance, but of agreeing with his

arguments, while fully awake…Saruman corrupted the reasoning powers

(Ruud 143).

Indeed, Saruman's main strength seems to be his ability to use words and language not simply to *communicate* knowledge and ideas, but rather Saruman is what his name means, a "man of skill," who uses language to construct and reconstruct his audience's knowledge of reality. Unlike Gandalf, who remains an objective observer of his audience and acts very much like a diagnostician, Saruman sees his audience as vastly malleable and particularly vulnerable to emotional appeals, and perhaps he is right. Hence Gandalf=s warning to "Beware of his voice" (581).

Saruman rejects the Aristotelian rhetoric that Gandalf uses for the powers of the Sophists, particularly that of Gorgias who was a persona of fierce criticism in the dialogues of Plato, Aristotle's teacher. In Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen*, the Spartan queen is a defendant in a lawsuit and Gorgias positions himself as her defense attorney. Gorgias begins his defense by claiming that Helen of Troy cannot be culpable for starting the Trojan War for three reasons. First, Gorgias asserts that Helen absconded with Paris because it was the will of the Olympian gods, and therefore Helen is innocent since mortals cannot elude fate (i.e. Oedipus). Second, Gorgias suggests that Paris might have forced Helen to go to Troy against her will (which an Egyptian version of the tale, told by Stesichorus around 600 BC, claims), in which case Helen could not be held responsible for the War.

However, in his third argument, Gorgias claims that "if it was speech" rather than divine fate or human coercion "which persuaded [Helen] and deceived her heart" then we

should also consider this in our judgment (Bizzell and Herzberg 45). In other words, Gorgias claims that Paris might have been able to use rhetoric in his courtship of Helen so seductive that it was capable of vetoing her own will to stay in Sparta and be the goodwife of Menelaus. Indeed, Helen would have seen the impossibility, the sheer futility, of doing otherwise. Gorgias further asserts that "The effect of speech upon the condition of the soul is comparable to the power of drugs over the nature of bodies" (Bizzell and Herzberg 46). In the hands of such a skilled rhetor, Helen would have been helpless.

Essentially, all of Gorgias' defenses of Helen hinge on an impossibility created by rhetoric: language and rhetoric, as Gorgias describes them, are more of a magic art rather than the rational system for persuasion preferred by Aristotle. To make his point, Gorgias draws a parallel between rhetoric and its persuasive influence over an audience with the sway of dramatic poetry on its listeners:

> Sacred incantations sung with words are bearers of pleasure and banishers
> of pain, for, merging with opinion in the soul, the power of incantation is
> wont to beguile it and persuade it and alter it by witchcraft (Bizzell and
> Herzberg 45).

The power of rhetoric and oratory, as Gorgias describes it, seems to be sublunary to no other art and no one seems safe from its manipulative strength.

While Saruman is a wizard who can sometimes use magic, it is important to remember that magic for Tolkien is not always a superseding force because it often cannot surmount other things such as the personal *ethos* of the character, moral choice,

elasticity of mind and action, and finally, the constantly reoccurring theme of grace that permeates Tolkien's world. This is what Tolkien intended with his *Istari* wizards when he created them for his fiction, as he indicated in a 1954 letter draft to his former guardian, Father Robert Murray:

> …the purpose was precisely to limit and hinder their exhibition of "power" on the physical plane, and so that they should do what they were primarily sent for: train, advise, instruct, arouse the hearts and minds of those threatened by Sauron to a resistance with their own strengths; and not just to do the job for them (Letters 202).

Nevertheless, Saruman would not need to be the mightiest magician because the power of rhetoric, as Gorgias asserts, springs not from preternatural powers but from a natural human concupiscence or, as Gorgias puts it, the 'opinion in the soul' that is inclined to merge with the influence of oratory:

> All who have and do persuade people of things do so by molding a false argument. For if all men on all subjects had [both] memory of things past and [awareness] of things present and foreknowledge of the future, speech would not be similarly similar, since as things are now it is not easy for them to recall the past nor to consider the present nor to predict the future. So that on most subjects most men take opinion as counselor to their soul, but since opinion is slippery and insecure it casts those employing it into slippery and insecure successes (Bizzell and Herzberg 45).

Since such is the state of all people, this bewitching knowledge that leads (or manipulates) them can be instructed to others: hence, the need to employ a Sophist to teach the aspiring men of Athens rhetoric and oratory because, after all, Gorgias seems to be using the *Encomium* as an opportunity for advertising his skills.

As Ruud points out, Saruman's speeches and his grounds for supporting his claims are astounding when viewed within the system of Classical Rhetoric. For example, Saruman tries to use his credentials ('all the aid that my knowledge…can bring') to sway Théoden to join him, but, as Ruud claims, it "is difficult for Saruman to claim any moral authority when he has used those long years of knowledge to forge new tools of warfare, and when he has himself inflicted the injuries that need repairing" (Ruud 145). However, Saruman here is not merely committing a fallacy of traditional systems of rhetoric, nor does Saruman merely disagree with his audience's interpretations of events, but, like Gorgias, he challenges their very notion of reality. For instance, when he finally addresses Gandalf, Saruman disputes his former colleague's version of what happened the last time Gandalf visited Orthanc: that Saruman had held him prisoner for the One Ring and, before his escape, was planning to send Gandalf to Mordor. Instead, Saruman admits that "in my eagerness to persuade you, I lost patience. And indeed I regret it. For I bore you no ill-will" but that all the time Saruman contends that he was really attempting "to advise you for your own good," and that since he and Gandalf are "both members of a high and ancient order" that they should "redress the past" for the good of Middle-earth (TT, III, x, 585).

However, both Gandalf and Théoden reject Saruman's offers of help and his interpretations of the past. True to both Aristotle and Plato, both characters point out in their refutations that they reject any notion that all knowledge can ever be is probable, which is one of the original tenets of the Sophists, and instead Gandalf and Théoden refer to truths of motive and intent, which, in their Aristotelian view, can be distinguished from and transcend Saruman's attempts to persuade them to reconstruct a fake past with his words and propositions. Théoden declares Saruman to be "a liar…and a corrupter of men=s hearts" and that even if his war on Rohan was justifiable (which Théoden still denies) the actions of Saruman's henchmen and orcs in Westfold where children were murdered or at Helm's Deep where "they hewed Háma's body before the gates of the Hornburg, after he was dead" could never be considered justifiable actions. Therefore, Saruman cannot claim that his past acts where honorable or justifiable. Gandalf in turn replies that he possesses "a clearer memory of [Saruman's] arguments, and deeds" and then proceeds to remind the beleaguered wizard of his true situation: "Your servants are destroyed and scattered; your neighbors you have made your enemies; and you have cheated your new master, or tried to do so. When his eye turns hither, it will be the red eye of wrath" (587).

Aside from his probable view of truth, many of Saruman's rhetorical errors can be measured not only from the conventions of Aristotelian and Classical rhetoric, but from the Sophist standpoint as well. Ruud often calls Saruman's rhetorical tactics 'sophistry,' the origins of this term obviously linked to the perception of Sophist philosophy that comes mainly from Plato. However, in recent years rhetorical scholars have attempted to

reconstruct the beliefs of the Sophists, which has not been easy since most Sophistic

writings have disappeared and many surviving accounts (i.e. Plato's dialogues) are hostile

to them. However, scholars such as Jacqueline de Romilly, Everett Lee Hunt, and Robert

Wardy have tried to restructure the original Sophist epistemology, and have rehabilitated

some of Sophist's reputation on issues such as social tolerance, and if this new critical

narrative on Sophist rhetoric and philosophy is viable, then Saruman has failed to learn

his lessons.

First of all, Saruman has made the mistake that, if Plato's accounts can be trusted

in the *Gorgias* and *Protagoras*, the students of the Sophist might have made when

practicing the arts of their teachers, which is learning oratory for the purpose of using

rhetorical appeals to control an audience unilaterally. In other words, Saruman takes it for

granted that if he exerts his powers for oratory and persuasion, then he only needs a

minimal amount of willingness from his audience. Indeed, though Saruman seems to

misplace the credit for his rhetorical successes (temporary or not), he is mostly persuasive

because—as with the war-weary Riders of Rohan who, for a fleeting moment, dream of

peace at any price—he can anticipate some of their innermost wants and desires.

However, as obvious as Saruman's oratorical skills are, his reliance on his own

persuasive powers and not on the audience's mood or disposition blinds him to both the

exigencies and constraints he faces when setting out to persuade Gandalf and Théoden.

Whereas Protagoras developed a technique for using 'dissoi logoi' (opposing

arguments) so that a rhetor might strengthen his own position, or Gorgias illustrated the

role that language had in generating an audience's beliefs as opposed to merely informing

them dispassionately, Saruman pushes some of the ideas of the Sophists to their logical extreme, and thus becomes not another Gorgias but a Callicles—Gorgias' volatile student in Plato's *Gorgias*— who at one moment tells Socrates that "natural fairness…is this—that he who would live rightly should let his desires be as strong as possible and not chasten them, and should be able to minister to them when they are at their height" (Bizzell and Herzberg 115). While this is not what Gorgias has been teaching, Plato has his Gorgias persona admit to Socrates that "by virtue of this power [rhetoric] you will have the doctor as your slave, and the trainer as your slave; your money-getter will turn out to be making money not for himself, but for another—in fact you" (Bizzell and Herzberg 91).

Saruman seems to fit the exact role of a Platonic Sophist, someone who sees rhetoric as the means to power and is willing to deny or forsake truth in order to acquire it. Indeed, Saruman diminishes so much so that he no longer resembles a historical Sophist, but a Platonic Sophist: similar to those archetypes that Plato ridicules in his dialogues, the former white wizard has devolved so much so that, as Gandalf's repartee implies, Saruman truly missed his calling in life, which was to be a coxcombed fool.

While it is impossible to know for certain if Gorgias' performance in *Encomium* is meant as entertainment or promotion (or perhaps both), clearly those persons who desired to hold power over others through language—like a Saruman who desires more than white but 'many colors'—would have found Gorgias' underlying assertion useful, which is that absolute knowledge is impossible to attain and so rhetors must concern themselves only with probable knowledge, and this can only be done through language. However,

Wardy argues in his *The Birth of Rhetoric: Gorgias, Plato and Their Successors* (1996),

that the performative nature of what Gorgias does in his *Encomium* presupposes a

cooperation between the entertaining speaker and his listeners: the audience is lured into

Gorgias' equivocations and florid declamations only because they wished to be lured for

some purpose such as amusement or wish fulfillment (Wardy 33). Indeed, as with the

Riders of Rohan, Saruman is able to offer them some sort of satisfaction for their desires

for peace and security, or at the very least Saruman seems to offer them a strong,

momentary release from their emotional anxieties. However, in this case the affect of his

appeals are fleeting because Saruman has an audience in no mood to be humored,

especially by him, which therefore renders Gorgias' strategies in the *Encomium* useless

for him.

Furthermore, when Saruman's rhetorical strategies fail, the diminished wizard

seems not only frustrated with his audience, but oratorically jammed and unable to adapt

his language or conventions to address their beliefs. In his influential theories on the

philosophy of language, Donald Davidson describes two concepts that help to govern the

interpretations of both speaker and listener, which he calls 'prior' and 'passing' theory.

Prior theory "expresses how [the listener] is prepared in advance to interpret an utterance

of the speaker, while passing theory is how he [actually] *does* interpret the utterance," and

for the speaker, the prior theory "is what he believes" his audience's "prior theory to be,

while his passing theory" is the convention "he intends [for] the interpreter to use"

(Davidson 442). Davidson believes that at some point the 'passing theories' of both the

speaker and the listener must become more alike while communication is taking place, or

otherwise understanding and agreement is impossible. What is required at Orthanc is for

Saruman to modify his 'passing' theory since there is a chasm between his 'prior' theory

and the one held by Gandalf, Théoden, and the others. However, this Saruman cannot do,

calling his listeners 'fools' and 'cut-throats' to 'go away' and 'come back when [they] are

sober' (TT, III, x, 587). Saruman fails to use a passing theory in his communication with

the others, and his inability to evolve his prior theory is one of the factors that results in

his failure to persuade.

Finally, Saruman cannot do as Isocrates insists and fall back on his reputation as a

speaker, which Isocrates felt was most important for a rhetor to be persuasive: that is, for

the speaker to live a good, moral life and draw on this 'ethos' to win support from the

audience. The character of the speaker (or if not his *ethos*, his ability to use his

personality to move the audience) is, for the Sophists, crucial for persuasion, and

Saruman's reputation is ruined before both his friends and enemies, which is why his

offer to use his wisdom to aid Théoden falls flat and even reminds Saruman's audience

how he has recently put his knowledge to use at Helm's Deep. Indeed, Gandalf laughs at

Saruman=s appeals, saying, "you missed your path in life. You should have been the

king's jester and earned your bread, and stripes too, by mimicking his counselors" (TT,

III, x, 586). Indeed, Saruman's ability to unwittingly amuse Gandalf is probably the

closest the fallen wizard comes to embodying the true, historical Gorgias.

Saruman's use of rhetoric to alter perceptions of reality underlies the crucial part

that all decisions play in Tolkien's world. In the end, while the *ethos* is illustrated in

actions such as Frodo's mercy towards Gollum, or his refusal to murder him after he has

been captured, what is most paramount is the choice that each of these characters must make: to embrace and follow the *logos* of Middle-earth, or labor against it for some other perceived 'good.' In an earlier article "Demons, Choice, and Grace in *The Lord of the Rings*" (2007), I spent much time discussing the role choice plays in Tolkien's fiction:

> The diabolical and grace transcend Frodo, Gollum, and all peoples of Middle-earth and the *choices* they make. The characters of Middle-earth cannot evade choice. When Éomer asks the trio of Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli, "What doom do you bring out of the North," Aragorn answers with, "The doom of choice." The enemies of Middle-earth thrive on this ineluctability. Saruman tries to persuade Gandalf to join him with, "I said *we*, for *we* it may be, if you will join with me" and "This then is one choice before you, before us" (*Mallorn* 45: 21).

Gandalf and Saruman are so similar, and one possible reason for this is Frank P. Riga's claim that the two wizards are based on the different sides of Merlin that are depicted from a long, sprawling, and often conflicting tradition of Arthurian literature: Saruman is the 'darker' side of the Merlin narrative, while Gandalf is visionary, courageous, and moral. Therefore, when it comes to oratory, Gandalf and Saruman throughout *The Lord of the Rings* perform opposing rhetorical roles, each trying to persuade the others characters who face such a choice to choose a different path, which is for Saruman the path of expediency, pragmatism, and power.

In a Platonic sense, Gandalf is the rhetorical hero of Middle-earth because he knows what is true, and he cannot bear its corruption by Saruman, and he uses his

rhetoric, dialectical or oratorical, to lead others to that truth, which matters most whether or not it is profitable, whether it leads to defeat or victory. In the rhetoric that Gandalf uses throughout Tolkien's fiction, he urges the other characters not necessarily to learn the values of Middle-earth, but to discover and remember the absolute truths and forms of their shared world, and thus find peace and certainty at the center of their souls, and this, from a Platonic point of view, is what all persons yearn for beyond the material comforts that the Sophists (and Saruman) were incapable of comprehending. While most readers (and certainly the Peter Jackson film fans) might mostly remember the battles or external conflicts which are the stage for Tolkien's fiction, the 'doom of choice' that these characters face is paramount, more so perhaps than any victory or escape, and the weight of these choices often seems stronger than any other burden.

This is why a small number of wizards walk among the vast population of Middle-earth. This is why their words are more important than their magic. This is why rhetors are of the essence in Tolkien's fantasy world, and the wizards are constructed for this purpose: so that each character will have the opportunity to make—and will be incapable of evading or postponing—their choice.

Amelia Bedelia and Language Philosophy

When we listen to a statement from someone else and an incongruity arises that gets in the way of our understanding, how should we react? Perhaps we are charitable people who might say, "What he really meant to say was this…." However, depending on the situation and its frequency in occurrence, we are probably tempted to question the wisdom of the statement and the person who made it. If such a person's actions seem un-

interpretable, should we conclude that the person (and her statement) is illogical? However, what happens if someone's seeming irrationality (or statements or actions otherwise) lends itself to a sort of rationality? Is a coherent interpretation of the statement still possible?

Furthermore, in fiction when a character seems act beyond any discernable degree of logical consistency, in thought or action, how do we reconcile these acts with our understanding of rationality? The answer is that in our world our concepts of logic and truth are not peculiar to us as individuals but are 'shared' with those we communicate and interact with on a daily basis. The same is true for most created worlds in literature. As Tolkien reminded us, inside a created secondary world "what [the author] relates" to the reader is "true" because, if the author has done what she set out to do, then what we learn should be in accord "with the laws of that world." When it comes to the Amelia Bedelia stories, what holds them together and enhances them is a coherent and well-unified world which is independent from our own world, but it shares many of its values, concerns, and rules. From inside Peggy Parish's created world, we as readers are better able to experience Amelia's perplexity and choices as she experiences them when she comes into conflict with different possibilities of language.

Parish published her first *Amelia Bedelia* book in 1963, and since then the *Amelia Bedelia* series has become such a familiar addition to our nurseries, schools, children's libraries, and at the bedside table, that we think we understand everything about Parish's silly, seemingly uncomplicated character. However, by applying Donald Davidson's 'principle of charity' to Amelia Bedelia's responses to oral and written commands, we

can gain a new insight into some of the inconsistencies and more elusive elements of language and conceptual thinking that underlie our understanding of Amelia Bedelia's character and our understanding of human discourse.

While Winston Churchill claimed that courage was "the first of human qualities" because he felt it guaranteed the other qualities, Davidson's philosophy of language would begin always with *charity*. Davidson's 'principle of charity' is part of his larger philosophies on language and human agency, which has to do with our individual knowledge and the knowledge we share with others. Davidson seeks to explore theories of meaning and language, and his 'principle of charity' requires that when we interpret an utterance and an incongruity arises from our interpretation of meaning (maybe tempting us to question the wisdom of the utterance itself or the person who constructed it), we should not immediately conclude that the person's statement (or the mind that formed it) is irrational or illogical *if* a rational, coherent interpretation of the statement remains possible. The principle of charity has not been considered or applied in previous interpretations of Peggy Parish's books or in most critical reviews of her Amelia Bedelia books. However, the scenic issue of charity is a present within the secondary world that Parish creates.

Drawing on the earlier work of W.V. Quine and other analytic philosophers, Davidson claims in his essay "Three Varieties of Thought" (1991) that 'charity' incorporates two other established principles: the Principle of Coherence, which "prompts the interpreter to discover a degree of logical consistency in the thought of the speaker," and the Principle of Correspondence, which "prompts the interpreter to take the speaker

123

to be responding to the same features of the world that he (the interpreter) would be responding to under similar circumstances" (Davidson 211 [TVT]).

Most of our conventional wisdom would seem to place the onus for clear understanding on the 'speaker,' hence the popular cultural phenomena of what are often referred to—whether with endearing amusement or partisan scorn—as 'Bushisms,' or the YouTube parodies of President Obama claiming to have campaigned in '54 states.' However, in his discussion of Coherence and Correspondence, Davidson stresses that a successful act of interpretation depends as much on the interpreter as the speaker:

> One principle endows the speaker with a modicum of logic, the
> other endows him with a degree of what the interpreter takes to be
> true belief about the world. Successful interpretation necessarily
> invests the person interpreted with basic rationality. It follows from
> the nature of correct interpretation that an interpersonal standard of
> consistency and correspondence to the facts applies to both the
> speaker and the speaker=s interpreter, to their utterances and to
> their beliefs (211).

In other words, if communication between rational beings within a shared world is to be possible at all, then a minimal commitment to charity is required.

Davidson's philosophy makes it clear that our concepts of logic and truth are not peculiar to us as mere individuals, but are 'shared' with those whom we communicate and interact with every day: they are 'shared concepts.' This commitment to shared theories is required because otherwise, without an assumption of charity, how could

anyone hope to communicate with others? If we assumed the speaker was extremely

illogical to the point that there seemed to be nothing coherent in anything she said, did, or

believed with what we did, said, and believed, then communication would likely be

impossible. Furthermore, in his essay "True to the Facts," Davidson argues that "truth"

itself "can be explained by appeal to a relation between language and the world, and that

analysis of that relation yields insight into how, by uttering a sentence, we sometimes

manage to say what is true" (Davidson 37-38).

However, to be clear, applying the 'principle of charity' in our interpretations of

Amelia Bedelia's choices and actions does not mean we must accept them as contextually

'true' as if charity were a form of conceptual relativism that concludes Amelia Bedelia's

actions seem unintelligible only because the differences between the intelligibility

between one system of thought and another are beyond determinability. In his work,

Davidson rejects this notion, and as Reed Way Dasenbrock points outs out, while these

conceptual arguments are often impossible to refute within their own schools of

theoretical thought, some of the same theorists seem unable to avoid undermining their

own theories because they often violate them in their acts or writings. Instead, as Kevin J.

Porter points out in his 'pedagogy of charity' for first-year college English classrooms,

using Davidson's principle in our interpretations does not necessarily mean we must

accept Amelia Bedelia's actions as either sound or sensible:

> Charity does not require that a listener accept as true every single
>
> belief of a speaker, but it does presume that false beliefs can be
>
> reconciled only against a background of widespread agreement. For

example, if I disagree with a student's claim that Abraham Lincoln

was the twentieth president of the United States, I need not dismiss

the student as an irrational being, for the claim itself assumes much

that I would accept as true: that Lincoln was a president, that there

is an office of the presidency, that there is a United States

government, etc. The disagreement does not reflect a disjunction

between incommensurable world views (Porter 33).

Charity will be applied in more detail as we delve further into the problems of

interpreting Amelia Bedelia's responses to requests and commands. However, we might

first ask why a reevaluation of the *Amelia Bedelia* series (with or without Davidson) is

needed? After all, Amelia Bedelia, the maid for Mrs. Rogers, seems to be uncomplicated:

whether because of her ineptitude with language (malapropisms, distinguishing between

homonyms, etc.) or from a lack of mental agility, Amelia Bedelia misinterprets what Mrs.

Rogers wants her to do, and does absurd things such as putting dust on furniture and

drawing a picture of the drapes in the window when she is asked to "Draw the drapes

when the sun comes in" (Parish, 25-6 [AB])

Indeed, the issue of Amelia Bedelia's mind might go deeper than her ability on the

surface to understand basic language commands: as she makes mistakes, such as serving

the Rogers family dried corn feed for dinner because they asked her for a "chicken dinner

[and] That's what chickens have for dinner" or serving Mr. Rogers a raw egg at breakfast

because he "didn't say to cook it" in *Good Work, Amelia Bedelia* (1976), or making a tea

cake from tea leaves in *Amelia Bedelia Helps Out* (1979), it often can seem as if Amelia's

126

mind is completely incoherent with the world and culture surrounding her. While readers can enjoy recognizing how Amelia Bedelia's mistakes make some sense at some level, it has been easy for critics to dismiss Amelia Bedelia as an irrational, nonsensical character, or as one reviewer referred to her, "the zenith of foolishness" (*Saturday Review*, 42).

What else is there to understand about Amelia Bedelia? There is plenty of bad fiction that we fail to understand because it is poorly conceived, and there are stories that exist long after they are fully interpretable because we have forgotten their historical contexts. However, remembering that logic and truth are 'shared' concepts with others, what can Davidson's theory teach us about Amelia's world and her understanding of language? After so many years, what can we learn that is new about Peggy Parish's stories?

<div align="center">Amelia Bedelia and the Surprised Critics</div>

Parish's critics have rarely differed widely in their perceptions of the Amelia books. The reviews for *Amelia Bedelia* (1963) are mostly negative: the book is dubbed as "just another story with entertaining illustrations" and also as a "purely 'silly' book, with no lesson to impart." Furthermore, within these earliest reviews we find the first diagnosis of Amelia Bedelia as a character with "a very literal mind" (Quimby 106; *Saturday Review* 42). After the 1963 reviews, the characterization of Amelia as 'literal' or 'literal-minded' increases in frequency: out of 35 press reviews between 1963 and 1988, 19 of them use some variation of the term 'literal' to describe Amelia's understanding of language and commands. The regular application of 'literal' to Amelia Bedelia is of concern, especially since many of her mistakes do not necessarily result from literal

<div align="center">127</div>

interpretations of commands. As I mentioned in an earlier, Mrs. Rogers asks Amelia to 'draw the drapes' when the sun comes into the living room, and Amelia responds by drawing a picture of the drapes. Amelia obviously fails to carry out Mrs. Rogers' command as her employer intended, but does Amelia really interpret Mrs. Rogers' command *literally*?

Perhaps this depends on our perspective. When we use the verb 'draw' in a command to someone else, the word itself could mean 'to move something in a particular direction as if by pulling' or 'to sketch,' depending on both the contextual situation and the prior understanding that has been established between speaker and recipient. Paul de Man touches on this in his *Allegories of Reading* when he takes Derrida and Nietzsche to task for rhetorical 'relevance'. To support his argument, de Man uses an episode of *All in the Family* where Archie and Edith Bunker are arguing over the meaning of the phrase, 'What's the difference?' Edith asks Archie if he wants his bowling shoes laced over or under, and when Archie asks what the 'difference' is, Edith believes that he wants to know the difference between the lacing and patiently explains the difference to him. This greatly flummoxes Archie who meant instead that he didn't care either way. In support of a formalist view of language, de Man argues that Archie's irritation and perplexity here illustrates the shakiness of all such rhetorical questions and ultimately with all of language (de Man 8).

In this sense, Amelia does what she is asked, and her interpretive action could easily be more correct than Mrs. Rogers' assessment had both of them been in an art studio rather than in the Rogers house. Ironically, Amelia Bedelia's interpretation of the

words within the command could be more semantically accurate because Mrs. Rogers left

out crucial information, which was the direction for Amelia to draw the drapes towards:

had Mrs. Rogers said 'draw the drapes *closed*,' her intention would have been more

precise and much harder (we can hope) to muddle. Either way, however, one meaning is

not more *literal* than the other because they both are literal.

In his paper "What Metaphors Mean" (1978), Davidson argues repeatedly that

"metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing

more" (Davidson 209 [WMM]). What Davidson means is that metaphor "is something

brought off by the imaginative employment of words and sentences and [it] depends

entirely on the ordinary meanings of those words and hence on the ordinary meanings of

the sentences they comprise" (210). Therefore, to discover the meaning of a metaphor

within a poem or a children's story hardly calls for substituting a figurative word for a

literal one as with the simple substitution codes learned in Boy Scouts or elementary

school (i.e., A=1, B=2, etc.), but as something that works together, as Davidson says, with

"two different kinds of meaning at once":

> Imagine the literal meaning as latent, something that we are aware
>
> of, that can work on us without working in the context, while the
>
> figurative meaning carries the direct load. And finally, there must
>
> be a rule which connects the two meanings, for otherwise the
>
> explanation lapses into a form of the ambiguity theory. The rule, at
>
> least for many typical cases of metaphor, says that in its
>
> metaphorical role the word applies to everything that it applies to

in its literal role, and then some (213).

Returning to Mrs. Rogers' request for Amelia Bedelia to "Draw the drapes," if we approach this problem from an angle of meaning and interpretation, we could say Mrs. Rogers and conclude that Amelia Bedelia perhaps lacks the imagination to completely comprehend that 'to draw' something could be used differently, such as to 'draw out' something in the same way people in other cultures still 'draw' water out from a well. Perhaps Amelia Bedelia has also failed, as Davidson might point out, to go beyond the 'latent' meaning when she was called to. However, if we are concerned with the words themselves, then both Amelia Bedelia and Mrs. Rogers are correct because the words 'draw the drapes' serve as the basis for both the literal and figurative meanings.

Another misunderstanding that happens is when Mrs. Rogers' asks Amelia to help her put on a 'shower' for a friend, which, as Mr. Rogers explains, is when a group of people "shower" a "person with gifts" before their wedding (Parish 13 [AMSS]). The use of the word 'shower', and Amelia's confusion over the meaning, relates to what Davidson addresses about the notion of metaphors having an encoded meaning. One question is, might Amelia in some way need to 'decode' such an archaic phrase that references to dated images—or 'dying metaphors' as George Orwell characterized them—because of their obsoleteness?

Davidson does not think so. Historical and cultural knowledge might still be needed to appreciate the entirety of a phrase or metaphor, but Davidson argues that both the literal and figurative meanings of metaphors depend on the "ordinary meanings of words" (211). Therefore, Amelia Bedelia's problem might be more one of understanding

than interpretation, indicates Davidson:

> …if words in metaphor bear a coded meaning, how can this meaning differ from the meaning those same words bear in the case where the metaphor dies—that is, when [the metaphor] comes to be part of the language? Why doesn't 'He was once burned up' as now used and meant mean *exactly* what the fresh metaphor once meant? Yet all that the dead metaphor means is that he was very angry—a notion not very difficult to make explicit" (221-2).

The reasons for Amelia's misinterpretations of Mrs. Rogers' intentions are many, but the critics mostly tend to focus on one possibility. Obvious as this tendency is to over-characterize Amelia as 'literal-minded,' Parish's reviewers display other reductive inclinations in their criticism that seem to sever Amelia more and more from the world she shares with the reader. Between 1963 and 1988, the critiques for Parish's series improve only moderately, as when a reviewer calls her later book *Come Back, Amelia Bedelia* (1971) "a child-pleasing boost to the lowest form of humor" (*Kirkus* 1118). However, as the 1960s gave way to the 1970s, more reviewers began to recognize the pedagogical possibilities for Parish's books. For example, one reviewer's praise for *Play Ball, Amelia Bedelia* (1972) recommends the book for teachers: "Brief and humorous, the book is also a good choice for reading aloud to preschool and kindergarten children" (Sutherland 13). However, although some of Parish's critics were beginning to see the usefulness of her books (even if their critical praise was poured forth like alms), the wider consensus on Amelia's literalness remained unquestioned. Furthermore, the reviews are

often replete with such characterizations of Amelia as the 'scatterbrained maid,' a 'well-loved noodlehead,' and 'everybody's favorite nut,' and this critical consensus on Amelia Bedelia's mind remained strong in the later reviews (*Children's Literature Review* 152; Ammon 41; *Publisher's Weekly* 159-60).

What seems to underlie the characterizations of the critics (such as 'noodlehead' and 'favorite nut', etc.) is an assumption that Amelia Bedelia is an irrational and even nonsensical character; furthermore, some of the critics deal little with the logic to Amelia's actions that made the books enjoyable, as if this only mattered insomuch as a pattern of behavior in a lunatic matters in the defining of an abnormality. However, in another 1963 review that was moderately favorable to Parish's new book, one critic stumbles upon something interesting that other reviewers either failed to notice or chose not to mention:

> Miss Parish provides several giggles for primary children over the way…Amelia Bedelia…misinterprets the note of instruction [Mrs. Rogers] leaves for her when she is called away…"*These folks do want me to do funny things*," she said, as she took a tape measure to 'measure' two cups of rice…(Emphasis added; Libby 22).

The reviewer here does not further explore the implications of what Amelia Bedelia says, but this is not the only instance in *Amelia Bedelia* where Amelia comments on the paradox of what she is doing for Mrs. Rogers and what seems more logical to herself. Earlier in the book, when Amelia is pondering Mrs. Roger's instructions to 'Dust the

furniture,' she turns and says, "Did you ever hear tell of such a silly thing. At my house we undust the furniture. But to each his own way" (Parish, 20 [AB]).

In these two instances, what is intriguing is in contrast to the 'noodlehead' perception that is so commonplace for Amelia's readers and critics; here we see Amelia Bedelia undeniably taking a step back for a moment and questioning the reasoning behind what she perceives as the meaning of Mrs. Rogers' command, demonstrating (a) that she is aware of the conventions of Mrs. Rogers' world and (b) that she shares some of the beliefs of those conventions even if she misunderstands them when they are used by other speakers.

Of course, Amelia Bedelia does not always seem to share the same world as the Rogers family, nor does she always seem so critical as to question these perceived commands, as when she brings Mr. Rogers a raw egg for breakfast or serves the Rogers family raw corn for supper. However, there are other instances in the series such as in *Amelia Bedelia and the Surprise Shower* (1966) when she and her cousin Alcolu (who shares some of Amelia's interpretive inclinations) question Mrs. Rogers' perceived intentions to give her guest, Miss Alma, who is engaged to be married, a bathing 'shower': "[Miss Alma] is about to get married. They should do something nice for her. She can give herself a shower," to which Alcolu replies in the fashion of the Bedelia clan, "Your folks do have funny ways" (Parish 9 [AMSS]).

In these instances, something else seems to be happening that clashes with the popular (and critical) notion of Amelia Bedelia as a 'literal noodlehead.' Most of Parish=s reviewers could hardly be accused of generosity, and in some cases their

distance might be justifiable. However, with their wide insistence on Amelia Bedelia as 'literal' or 'literal-minded' (and with the word appearing at least once in 19 out of 35 reviews, we might called it a 'boilerplate' expression) as well as the general dismissal that anything reasonable might be happening inside of Amelia's mind indicates that reviewers and critics have not been charitable towards Parish's work or her titled character. Unsure of how to make meaning from these stories, the reviewers seemed prone to dismiss the incongruities as nonsensical, and the two aforementioned instances in *Amelia Bedelia* (1963) were most likely overlooked since they did not fit this conceptual scheme.

Parish's critics did not adhere to some of the basic qualities of 'charity.' For instance, they never consider that even Amelia Bedelia's mistakes could be somehow rooted in a shared rational world (*their* world), such as when she draws a picture of the drapes. In fact, some of Amelia's other actions must have a shared degree of rationality, or otherwise the reader might not find her actions so comical:

> An action one has reasons to perform may be an action one has
>
> better reasons to avoid. A belief may be reasonable in the light of
>
> some but not the totality of one's other beliefs; and so on. The
>
> point is that the possibility of irrationality depends on a large
>
> degree of rationality (Davidson, 99 [RA]).

In other words, Davidson illustrates for us that because the critics were uncharitable, they missed an important point, that even Amelia's irrationality must find its footing in the

rationality of this world. Otherwise, the humor would be uninterpretable as humor, and would seem *non sequitur* to us.

In essence, Parish=s critics have missed an opportunity to understand what makes the Amelia Bedelia books distinctive as books for children, which is a coherent and well-unified world that shares many of the values and rules of our own world as well as multiple illustrations of the possibility of language. However, Davidson's 'principle of charity' can show us new things about Amelia Bedelia that the earlier critics have missed in their earlier reviews of the stories. I believe this can offer us a unique perspective on Parish's character.

<div style="text-align:center">Will the Real Amelia Please Stand Up?</div>

To interpret Amelia Bedelia's actions, we may first need to decide which Amelia Bedelia we are examining because Parish's character is not developed consistently throughout the series. Sometimes there seem to be three different variations of Amelia. The first Amelia Bedelia might indeed be a 'noodlehead' or a 'nut' if by this we mean she does not act coherently within the conceptual framework that she shares with those who employ her. However, when we apply such terms as 'illogical' or 'irrational,' it is important to distinguish as Davidson does that "Irrationality is not mere lack of reason but a disease or perturbation of reason" (Davidson 99 [RA]). Davidson argues this further in his paper "Incoherence and Irrationality" (1985), and his comments are worth quoting at some length:

> [N]o factual belief *by itself*, no matter how egregious it seems to
> others, can be held to be irrational. It is only when beliefs are

inconsistent with other beliefs according to principles held by the

agent himself—in other words, only when there is an inner

inconsistency—that there is a clear case of irrationality. Strictly

speaking…the irrationality consists not in any particular belief but

in inconsistency within a set of beliefs…I think we must say much

the same about intentions, intentional actions, and other

propositional attitudes…They are never irrational in themselves,

but only as part of a larger pattern. We often do say of a single

belief or action or emotion that it is irrational, but I think that on

reflection it will be found that this is because we assume in these

cases that there must be an inner inconsistency…The point

remains: we call a single attitude, belief, or action irrational only

when we assume it conflicts with other beliefs or attitudes of the

agent (Davidson 192-3 [II]).

Any terms of irrationality we apply to Amelia Bedelia, therefore, are in error if we

mean she has no degree of reason; instead, these references should mean that she seems

unable to measure her assumptions of what other people want her to do with her

knowledge of the world she shares with the same people who are making those requests.

Some examples of this is when she serves Mr. Rogers the raw egg for breakfast and corn

feed for dinner, or in *Teach Us, Amelia Bedelia* (1977) when she instructs students to

plant light bulbs in the school garden. If we assume that Amelia is not a recent transplant

from another 'galaxy far, far away…where no man has gone before' (an assumption I will

briefly abandon later on), then perhaps we can presume she should know that we plant

vegetable bulbs, not electric ones, in the garden or that people do not usually enjoy eating

raw fish topped with chocolate icing.

Davidson's philosophy is concerned with interpretation, charity, rationality, truth,

and what he calls 'a shared world,' and often in his philosophical writings, these elements

are codependent. Davidson claims that "Communication depends on each communicator

having, and correctly thinking that the other has, the concept of a shared world, and

intersubjective world" (Davidson 105 [RA]). The concept of a shared world is what

distinguishes the second Amelia Bedelia from the first because at times she does not seem

to share the same world as those who give her commands and interpret her actions. (Her

interpreters should include not only her employers in the stories, but Parish's readers and

critics as well.)

Some of Amelia's actions can be likened to a person for whom English is a

second language, such as mistaking an idiom as "Draw the drapes" for drawing a picture

of the drapes. However, more often Amelia II seems less of an ESL interpreter and more

like someone who is outside the culture of her employer altogether. One example already

mentioned is when Amelia serves the Rogers family raw corn for their 'chicken dinner.'

Amelia also shows her unawareness of common household maintenance and conventions

when she heats a can of soup for Mr. Rogers in the can, or when she tells Alcolu to 'prune

the hedge' by sticking actual prunes on the hedges. Although Amelia Bedelia is excellent

at baking (which is why the Rogers never fire her), she is often ignorant of simple

culinary customs, such as when she pours coffee over Mrs. Rogers' cereal when Mrs.

Rogers asks to "have cereal with her coffee," or when she reads a book to schoolchildren that begins with "run, run, run," which makes Amelia react by running out of the classroom (Parish 8-9 [CBAB]; 20-2[TUAB]).

While some of these speech acts could be attributed to Amelia II belonging to a culture with different customs and practices, some of the scenarios in the *Amelia Bedelia* series ought to make us wonder if the culture Amelia II springs from is outside of the United States, or—speculatively—outside of this terrestrial sphere?

Some acts that Amelia performs, such as putting chocolate icing on raw fish when Mr. Rogers asks her to "ice them" or when Amelia has trouble understanding what a baby bottle is or how to use it until someone explains it to her, might suggest that she has indeed 'boldly' been 'where no man has gone before.' There are other situations in the stories, such as Amelia Bedelia's brief tenure as a doctor's receptionist where she literally brings the patients into the doctor=s office by carrying them, or later when the doctor tells her "Dickie," a small boy, "has a bad cut. He needs a few stitches" and Amelia opens her purse, takes out a sewing needle, and asks "What color thread does Dickie like?"

Some of these scenarios might suggest that Amelia Bedelia has more in common with the Solomon family (extraterrestrials who have been morphed into human form) in the 1990s television sitcom *Third Rock from the Sun*. But is there another Amelia whose perplexity we share in because of all the possible ways we can use and interpret language? Is there an Amelia who represents us as readers and critics, who acts like we do and shares the concerns of our world?

Amelia the Critic

The third Amelia Bedelia is the one we began with: in contrast to Amelia I and II who are more inclined to carry out commands with less (if any) deliberation, Amelia III carries out her perceived orders to the letter, but sometimes she sits back and wonders why Mrs. Rogers and Mr. Rogers want her to do such 'funny things,' even if she nonetheless does them anyway.

Amelia III shows us she is critical, rational, and fully aware of the paradox between what she is doing and how it conflicts with the 'shared world' both she and Mrs. Rogers inhabit. I am primarily interested in Amelia III, because she offers us the opportunity to explore a new question: since Amelia Bedelia at times shows that she understands what Mrs. Rogers and others should ask her to do in different given contexts (to undust the furniture, etc.)—and this act demonstrates that she understands the shared conceptual scheme that Mrs. Rogers wants to convey using language—then we wonder if Amelia has fallen into the same traps as the critics and reviewers? Is Amelia Bedelia an uncharitable interpreter of the other speakers' words and actions?

Obviously, the reasons Amelia Bedelia fails to understand Mrs. Rogers are numerous, especially since the Amelia of Peggy Parish's series does not seem to be one, consistent character. However, Amelia III is interesting because her central failing is not mere irrationality, but her failure as a rational being to interpret Mrs. Roger's intent within the expectations and associations of the 'shared world' that she inhabits with her employer. To return to a passage I earlier quoted from Davidson, "irrationality lies in the inconsistency of the intention with other attitudes and principles rather than in the inconsistency of the action of which it is an intention with those attitudes and principles."

Undeniably, Amelia Bedelia shows she is conscious of a 'shared world' when, after she thinks she has interpreted Mrs. Rogers correctly, she steps back and says, "Did you ever hear of such a silly thing" and "These folks do want me to do funny things" (Parish 20, 37 [AB]).

Often the other characters in the books throw up their arms, concluding as Mrs. Rogers momentarily does in *Come Back, Amelia Bedelia* (1971), that Amelia is "impossible," dubbing her as something akin to a useless dunce; but in the end (as sort of a last laugh) could it be Amelia Bedelia who above all fails to practice Davidson's *principle of charity?* Does Amelia credit Mrs. Rogers with, as Davidson suggests we should, at least the presumption that her employer is, to some degree, a rational being?

I believe if Amelia did presume Mrs. Rogers to be rational, then we would see a much different Amelia Bedelia. But since Amelia is capable of assuming that some people outside her house like to have their furniture covered in dust (hence, that they do not share the same world as her), she is willing to destroy the Rogers' house with great enthusiasm and glee (as Franz Siebel's images help to illustrate). However, instead of throwing up her arms and saying to herself that Mrs. Rogers wants her to do '*funny things*' and then carrying out what she knows is nonsense, if Amelia had practiced the 'principle of charity,' which would have allowed her to sit back for a moment and ask, 'Now I know what that sounds like, but surely Mrs. Rogers' wouldn't mean for me to do that,' then perhaps we would have found a charitable Amelia Bedelia, and she would

have been more sympathetic to the generations of readers and critics (even if the story would not have been as entertaining).

Indeed, the only character in the Amelia Bedelia series that seems to practice Davidson's 'principle of charity' is Mrs. Rogers. One of the trademarks of the Amelia Bedelia stories is that Parish usually rescues Amelia from unemployment, fierce tempers, social ostracizing, lawsuits, and maybe even criminal charges with her ability to bake excellent desserts, such as the chocolate cupcakes she makes for the surprise shower: "the ladies said they were the best cakes they had ever eaten," which must have been very good indeed if they were able to erase the memories of being served raw fish covered with chocolate icing (Parish 63 [ABSS]).

Among many contemporary readers, there is a temptation to read these conclusions as misogynist or hegemonic, but Amelia Bedelia's abilities as a baker serve a different purpose: they illustrate for Mrs. Rogers that her sometimes feckless housekeeper, nevertheless, does hold some rational beliefs (following instructions in a cookbook, conceptions of heat, ingredients, measurements, etc) and that Amelia can apply to the conventions and rules of the same world she shares with Mrs. Rogers. However, in order for Mrs. Rogers to do this, she (unlike Amelia or the reviewers) must recognize that no matter how flummoxing Amelia Bedelia's actions can be, she does hold rational beliefs and is capable of understanding concepts about the world they share:

> Strictly speaking, then, we might want to say the irrationality lies
> in the inconsistency of the intention with other attitudes and
> principles rather than in the inconsistency of the action of which it

is an intention with those attitudes and principles (Davidson 194

[II]).

While readers might focus more on Mrs. Rogers' prickly (if often justified)

responses to Amelia's mistakes, once she understands that her new housekeeper can bake

excellent lemon-meringue pies and other things, then she has "discover[ed]," as Davidson

earlier said, "a degree of logical consistency in the thought of" Amelia Bedelia, and from

then on Mrs. Rogers can move from there with a better idea of how to explain her

household duties to her. This is what we can take from the ending of the original *Amelia*

Bedelia:

> So right then and there Mr. and Mrs. Rogers decided that Amelia
>
> Bedelia must stay. And so she did. Mrs. Rogers learned to say
>
> undust the furniture, unlight the lights, close the drapes, and things
>
> like that (Parish, 62 [AB]).

Returning again to Davidson's theories of 'prior' and 'passing' interpretation (discussed

in his essay "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs"), Davidson seeks to distinguish what is

literal in a language from what is established convention. Understanding is only possible

if these two modes of interpretation work together, modifying each other as discourse

continues. Where Amelia Bedelia fails to use a passing theory when she communicates

with the others and interprets their speech acts, Mrs. Rogers does evolve her prior theory

to accommodate how Amelia tends to interpret various commands. Mrs. Rogers has

therefore done what Amelia Bedelia could not: she has practiced the 'principle of

charity.' And indeed, such a practice is not unique, nor does it only exist in fiction, but it is also recreated constantly in our daily interactions with others.

Whether I want to understand something my seven-year-old is asking for, explain to first-year college students why their claim is debatable, or understand my car mechanic's instructions about how the antilock breaks on my 2001 Saturn SC1 operate differently from the breaks on the 1989 Ford Mustang that I owned for 10 years, communication and understanding meaning are only possible if my daughter and I, my students and I, my mechanic and I (in spite of the gap in years or specialized knowledge) share a world in which we can understand each other. Otherwise, if 'truth' is something idiosyncratic for each of us, then communication itself cannot really have a shared meaning, and the irony as well as the delight of the Amelia Bedelia stories is impossible, which is the possibility of rhetoric and language.

The Rhetoric of the Dawn Treader

Incongruities in language use or action are one matter, but how do we interpret the insertion of mystery into a created world? When the author provides powers and forces that govern her world that seem unrelated to our world, how is a coherent interpretation possible? Most of all, how might such a fictional text draw upon the shared world of the reader to convey the truth of her own creation?

Returning again to the realm of children's fantasy, while *The Chronicles of Narnia* books are often thought of as genre fiction or works of Christian allegory, one theme that is profusely present in C.S. Lewis' stories for children is the ineluctable role that rhetoric, language, and knowledge play in who we choose to become in our lives.

While oratory and rhetoric in Tolkien's fiction helps to advance the plot of his stories and

reveals something of the philosophy that governs his created world, rhetoric for Lewis

also does this and much more: it reveals crucial details about the ethics and passions that

motivate many of the inhabitants of his world, some of which are perhaps not apparent

without the scope of rhetorical criticism. To one extent or another, all of Lewis'

characters in Narnia are dynamic characters who are still evolving into one sort of person

or another, and each of them are approaching a moral choice that much of the novel is

preparing them for.

Similar to Tolkien's fiction, from the creation of Narnia in Book 1, *The*

Magician's Nephew, Lewis establishes an *ethos* within it, beginning with the lion Aslan,

who is the most powerful person in all the stories. The character of this secondary world

is powerful, deliberate, moral, but it is also beautiful, highly creative, and at times, even

playful. The creation begins with darkness, then a solitary song in the abyss, and then the

travelers see Aslan "pacing to and fro about" the "empty land…singing his new song":

> It was softer and more lilting than the song by which he had called up the
>
> stars and the sun; *a gentle, rippling music*…Polly was finding the song
>
> more and more interesting because she thought she was beginning to see
>
> the *connection between the music and the things that were happening.*
>
> When a line of dark firs sprang up on a ridge about a hundred yards away
>
> she felt that they were *connected with a series of deep, prolonged notes*
>
> *which the Lion had sung a second before.* And when he burst into a rapid
>
> series of lighter notes she was not surprised to see primroses suddenly

appearing in every direction. Thus, with an unspeakable thrill, she felt

quite certain that *all the things were coming (as she said) "out of the*

Lion's head." When you listened to his song *you heard the things he was*

making up: when you looked round you, you saw them. This was so

exciting that she had no time to be afraid. (Lewis 123-4, 126-7, [MN]

emphasis added)

Similar to Tolkien's world, Lewis' creation begins with song. Aslan here sings the

new world and all its creatures into existence with his various melodies, which is similar

to the 'performative utterances' J.L. Austin describes because the world responds by

coming forth out of the nothingness since Aslan's act of speech commands it to do so.

From this moment on, Lewis is creating a rhetorical argument and upholds it throughout

his Narnia children's fiction, using his words and his textual characters as symbols for his

worldview: that love and *truth* (represented by Aslan) is more important than the pursuit

of *egocentricity* or *convenience*. In the world that Lewis assembles, the unabated pursuit

of self-interest leads the characters away from Aslan and into depravity, alienation, and

moral degenerateness.

For Narnian characters that adhere to the 'natural laws' of Narnia, their utmost

desire is to be vassals of the lion Aslan, who (more so than Gandalf) both *embodies* and *is*

this supreme truth for this secondary world. Surprisingly, both the means that Lewis uses

to do this and his argument itself bear scrutiny when examined in the context of Classical,

Modern, and Postmodern Rhetoric. Throughout most of his academic, philosophical, and

literary writings, Lewis' preference for Classical learning cannot easily be missed, and

this is often doubly so in the Narnia books, especially in Book 5, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, particularly when Edmund, Lucy, Eustace, King Caspian, and the talking mouse Reepicheep set foot on the enchanted Island of the Star where Ramandu—himself a fallen star—and his daughter live.

At this point in the story, the voyagers have sailed far from any charted lands and seem to have sailed into some sort of virtual Platonic universe where truth lives and rhetoric exists to lure the seafarers into direct contact with all that is sublime. After disembarking on the island and finding the strange outside table spread lots of food—as well as a mysterious stone knife—and three sleeping lords seated, the travelers sit next to the sleepers all night waiting to see what happens. Then Ramandu and his daughter come out, take their places on the opposite sides of the table, hold their arms up and face eastward, and then begin to sing as the sun rises. Here we see the confluence of the material and the transcendent:

> In that position they began to sing. *I wish I could write down the song*, *but no one who was present could remember it*. Lucy said afterward that it was high, almost shrill, but very beautiful. "A cold kind of song, an early morning kind of song." And as they sang, the gray clouds lifted from the eastern sky and the white patches grew bigger and bigger till it was all white, and the sea began to shine like silver…the Narnians had wondered whether the sun at its rising did not look bigger in these seas than it had looked at home. This time they were certain…And the brightness of its ray on the dew and on the table was far beyond any morning brightness they

had ever seen. And as Edmund said afterward, "Though lots of things happened on that trip which *sound* more exciting*, that moment was really the most exciting*." For now they knew *that they had truly come to the beginning of the End of the World*. (Lewis 222-3 [VDT], emphasis added except 'sound')

The song and the beauty of the sunrise at the End of the World emphasize the created nature of the fictional world, which rather than being superficial, Lewis implies that this makes created worlds all the more wondrous. Such marvels are not limited to Narnia. Lewis choice of 'song' with elusive verses is similar to Rat's moment of catharsis as he listens to Pan's song and tries to discern the words (though he has no hope of understanding their meaning) in *The Wind in the Willows*:

'So beautiful and strange and new! Since it was to end so soon, I almost wish I had never heard it. For it has roused a longing in me that is pain, and nothing seems worth while but just to hear that sound once more and go on listening to it for ever. No! There it is again!'…Entranced, he was silent for a long space, spell-bound…'Let me try and give you [the words],' said the Rat softly, his eyes still closed. 'Now it is turning into words again—faint but clear—*Lest the awe should dwell—And turn your frolic to fret—You shall look on my power at the helping hour—But then you shall forget*! Now the reeds take it up—*forget, forget*, they sigh, and it dies away in a rustle and a whisper… (Grahame 120-1, 129)

In both *Dawn Treader* and *Wind in the Willows*, the use of song as the medium for truth is interesting because since Plato felt that true knowledge is discovered once we looked to the heavenly forms that lie beyond linguistic reality—actually, this is where Plato believed we rediscovered truth. So music, for many modern authors in the 20th century, often does represent a higher, more pure expression of truth. As with the creation of the world in the first Narnia story in the series, the song Ramandu and his daughter sing has an effect on their world because of the *ethos* and *logos* that Aslan has put into Narnia when it was created.

Once the song and the marvelous visions at the End of the World are over, there is much dialogue that further illustrates the Platonic ethos that comes with Lewis as he creates his novel. For example, Ramandu responds to Eustace's claim—that in the world he, Lucy, and Edmund come from (our own world) that "a star is a huge ball of flaming gas"—with this counterclaim: "Even in your world, my son, that is not what a star is but only what it is made of" (Lewis 226). Here Lewis emphasizes his Platonic philosophy, that the material components of the star Ramandu are not themselves what is 'real,' but are merely representations (or 'shadows' as he writes in Book 7, *The Last Battle*) of that reality which exists transcendently from the physical world.

Aside from this Classical worldview that underlies *Dawn Treader*, Lewis often relies on a Classical Rhetoric epistemology to shape and advance the plot of the novel. For example, earlier in the novel when Caspian and Lord Bern bluff the credulous Governor Gumpas, who had been misruling the Lone Islands, into abandoning the castle even though Bern and Caspian's men are far outnumbered by his own guards, Bern and

Caspian use a prescriptive rhetoric that is similar to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. After Edmund, Lucy, Eustace, and Reepicheep are captured by the slave merchant Pug (whom Gumpas has allowed to profit in the illegal slave trade) Caspian wants to attack Pug's ship, but Bern insists that Caspian instead go to Gumpas and use "the terror of the King's name" rather than an honest, more diplomatic appeal to the governor because, while Gumpas is dishonest and self-serving, he "is a chicken-hearted man and can be over-awed" (51).

So Bern helps Caspian send out signals to his fictitious fleet of ships (which is duly reported to Gumpas), and Caspian's small number of 30 men then put together a performance in order to awe Gumpas, complete with a royal procession with men in armor, full of cheers and music, pomp and spectacle, and Bern has his own people ring bells and stir up excitement in the crowds that fill up the streets to watch and cheer the return of the King of Narnia. When the Dawn Treader anchors at the provincial capital of Narrowhaven, there is a sizable crowd there to meet Caspian and Bern: these people are friends of Bern who support Caspian and are there to help in the spectacle. As soon as Caspian sets food on shore, the crowd breaks out in shouts of "Narnia! Narnia! Long live the King." At the same time, bells begin to ring out, the trumpet blows, and Caspian's royal banner is brought out. But the real show is a mixture of power and chance: "every man drew his sword and set his face into a joyful sternness, and they marched up the street so that the street shook, and their armor shone (for it was a sunny morning) so that one could hardly look at it steadily."

However, the true magic of the royal spectacle is that it anticipates the interests and desires of the Lone Islanders, and thus they are persuaded to take Caspian's side

unawares. At first, the only people who cheer for the return of their king are those who are allied with Bern:

> But then all the children joined in because they liked a procession and had
> seen very few. And then all the schoolboys joined in because they also
> liked processions and felt that the more noise and disturbance there was
> the less likely would be to have any school that morning. And then all the
> old women put their heads out of doors and windows and began chattering
> and cheering because it was a king, and what is a governor compared with
> that? And all the young women joined in for the same reason and also
> because Caspian and Drinian and the rest were so handsome. And then all
> the young men came to see what the young women were looking at, so that
> by the time Caspian reached the castle gates, nearly the whole town was
> shouting; and where Gumpas sat in the castle, muddling and messing
> about with accounts and forms and rules and regulations, he heard the
> noise. (53-56)

By the end, many of the Lone Islanders have been lured into the excitement and have joined Caspian's procession to Gumpas' castle. All of this to the reader might seem deceptively spontaneous and improvised, but Lewis shows that Bern and Caspian understand the old maxim that 'statecraft is stagecraft,' that the populous longs for a little excitement and spectacle, and that official demonstrations of enthusiasm can lead to an outpouring of loyalty. From the beginning, before they set foot into the streets of Narrowhaven, Bern and Caspian have been shrewdly rhetorical, figuring out how to get

the response from the Lone Islanders that they want so that they can overawe Gumpas

into surrendering his authority, closing down Pug's slave auction, and freeing Edmund,

Lucy, Eustace, and Reepicheep.

Furthermore, like Gandalf and his assessment of the trolls, Bern and Caspian use

Aristotelian rhetoric to calculate the response of the different demographics of the Lone

Islands so that they get the response they need to rouse Gumpas. However, first their

rhetorical strategy revolves around the evaluation that Caspian and Bern have made on

the character and emotional state of their audience (Gumpas), and then proceed to create a

strategy that will persuade Gumpas that he truly has been overpowered by the might of

the king's forces. In order to terrify Gumpas into abandoning his supreme advantage,

Caspian and Bern take great pains to create an authentic royal and authoritative character

within the procession and in Caspian's actions: as Aristotle discusses in Book II of

Rhetoric, "the orator must not only try to make the argument of his speech demonstrative

and worthy of belief; he must also make his own character look right and put his hearers,

who are to decide, into the right frame of mind" (Garver 243). The procession is a

complete fiction, but it is 'worthy of belief' because Gumpas' reaction is real.

Finally, Aristotle says that "when it is advisable that the audience should be

frightened, the orator must make them feel that they really are in danger of something,"

and this feeling of danger paralyzes Gumpas and his will to act (Garver 275). Obviously,

if their improbable scheme is to have any chance at success, Caspian and Bern must put

Gumpas in such a fearful frame of mind, one where the governor is so concerned with

what might happen now that the king has returned and caught him in the abuse of his

powers, that Gumpas is unable to contemplate the possibility that he is being completely bluffed. This is because Caspian and Bern, when they confront Gumpas, play their roles so convincingly, threatening at one moment to seize the seemingly-beleaguered governor's personal fortune to pay for the tribute he has neglected for years, and at another moment threatening to flog him if Gumpas does not leave the castle immediately.

As with Gandalf and the trolls, Caspian and Bern in dealing both with Gumpas and his guards do not tell the truth as they use the ethos of the 'king's name' to mislead everyone as to their actual strength. Such dissembling tactics seem to be a violation of Plato's and Aristotle's views of rhetoric, and create an ethical problem for Lewis who wants virtue and honesty at the center of his secondary world. Once again, Caspian and Bern only need to follow Quintilian who maintains that the rhetor must be honest and just (Bizzell and Herzberg 417).

Again, the rhetor must be honest with himself, and therefore Quintilian gives the speaker a backdoor so that she can use manipulation or even lying for justifiable reasons, such as when Caspian and Bern want to save Edmund, Lucy, and Eustace from being sold into slavery by Pug, or to restore the Lone Islands to their proper place in Caspian's kingdom. Therefore, while Caspian and Bern here might not be truthful, they are adhering to what many Classical Rhetors often refer to simply as 'the good,' which is what is best for the greater number of people. By misrepresenting the truth, Caspian and Bern adhere to the *ethos* of Narnia, which means that for Caspian and Bern to remain true to their convictions, they have no choice but to deceive their audience for the sake of their friends.

'I' and 'me'

Though Lewis often evokes Classical Rhetoric and a moral *ethos* in his secondary

world, the *Dawn Treader* also contains several tropes and scenes that contain an

underlying shift away from Classical modes of rhetoric, especially when he explores how

we use language to construct our own individual realities. In this realm, postmodern

rhetoric can help us better understand what is happening in the Narnia stories.

To begin with, there are several links between Lewis' larger body of work and the

Modern and Postmodern rhetoricians that are often missed. For example, Chaim

Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca in *The New Rhetoric* criticize the Logical

Positivists, which was the school of analytic philosophers who sought to create a

metalanguage that would be so utterly logical that it would be devoid of the messy

subjectivism that permeates everyday speech. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca argue that

the epistemology created by the Positivists failed because of its "lack of success in

developing a logic of value judgments" and its "difficulty of satisfactorily defining value

judgments and judgments of reality." Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca argue that any

epistemology that views "language either as a reflection of reality or as an arbitrary

creation of an individual" is forgetting what is most important, which is "the social aspect

of language…an instrument of communication and influence on others" (Bizzell and

Herzberg 1377-8).

Lewis develops some of his ideas on rhetoric and language in his books of

scholarship and philosophy. One of his most important such books is *The Abolition of

Man* (1943), where Lewis argues in his first chapter "Men Without Chests" that students

who are unfortunate enough to be forced to use the contemporary English textbook—*The Control of Language* (1940) by Alex King and Martin Ketley—will be led to accept that (1) "all sentences containing a predicate of value are [only] statements about the emotional state of the speaker" and also (2) that "all such statements are unimportant" because they cannot be verified using empirical methods. Lewis criticizes King and Ketley's textbook for departing from the realm of language and drifting into philosophy, for proscribing a certain worldview under the guise of teaching English, and Lewis worries about the subversiveness of their rhetoric:

> The very power of [King and Ketley] depends on the fact that they are dealing with a boy…who thinks he is 'doing' his 'English prep' and has no notion that ethics, theology, and politics are all at stake. It is not a theory they have put into his mind, *but an assumption,* which ten years hence, its origin forgotten and its presence unconscious, *will condition him to take one side in a controversy which he has never recognized as a controversy at all* (Lewis 4-5 [AOM], emphasis added).

Predictably, Lewis here is squarely on the side of Plato, who taught that reality was transcendent and knowable through an act of memory, and that too often empiricism can mislead an audience. Appearances or shadows, such as empiricism, can lead us away from the truth. However, Lewis also sides with Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca—for related, but different, reasons—in attacking the same Logical Positivism, especially in how this branch of analytic philosophy seems to be completely helpless in dealing with claims of virtue or value.

What Lewis touches on in his philosophy, and *does* explore further in his *fiction*, is that individual moral choices are also an act of persuasion, which is why King and Ketley (and their disdain for expression of value) concern him. While Lewis obviously is resisting any attempt to see English and philosophical studies as interdependent upon each other, his recognition that King and Ketley's schoolboy is forced to deal with notions of 'ethics, theology, and politics' shows Lewis's full awareness of the contingencies that go into the rhetoric that shapes the heart of pedagogies, and the greater danger that in improving a student's ability in one area, we create in him a sense of 'false consciousness' that will stultify him in other areas of study and life for years to come. In these opening pages from *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis' underlying fear is that the false consciousness that King and Ketley inevitably create within the schoolboy will in some measure truncate his ability to internally perceive and debate different sides of various issues as they arise throughout his life, because his conditioning will render him 'without a chest'—in other words, he will be a man unable to understand that he is in the process of making a moral choice because he has been molded to assume that the conventions of thought that precondition his choice are reality.

Similar to his theoretical work on children's stories, Lewis did not develop a comprehensive theory as to the forces behind these internal debates within a person when an issue of moral choice is involved, but he leaves an intriguing thread to follow throughout his works. For example, in his own autobiography, Lewis argues that one of the first challenges to his previous Positivist views began when a World War I shell (that was fired from his own side) hit him in the back. When Lewis recalled the experience

some years later, he seemed certain that this was the point where he began to doubt his own "hostility to the emotions" (which is how he viewed judgments of value at the time) as well as his use of extreme verifiable logic.

Something else that might complicate any notion of a 'pure logic' for any person, Lewis also seems on the point of questioning any notion of a single consciousness or unconsciousness when it comes to how we perceive the world. Returning to his battlefield injury on the Western Front, Lewis recalls this new awareness:

> [J]ust after I had been hit…I found (or thought I found) that I was not breathing and concluded that this was death. I felt no fear and certainly no courage. It did not seem to be an occasion for either. The proposition "Here is a man dying" stood before my mind as dry, as factual, as unemotional as something in a textbook. It was not even interesting. The fruit of this experience was that when, some years later, I met Kant's distinction between Noumenal and the Phenomenal self, it was more to me than an abstraction. I had tasted it; I had proved that there was a fully conscious "I" whose connections with the "me" of introspection were loose and transitory (Lewis 197-8 [SBJ])

Similar to his earlier discussed implications of child-adult parts of his awareness that worked together in how he understood the world and wrote to children, Lewis here explores the possibilities of our multifaceted personalities. While Lewis' distinction between his conscious 'I' and his introspective 'me' may seem unclear to us at this point, some probable explanation of it can be found by returning to the *Dawn Treader*. Curious

instances of a double-consciousness in self-discourse (when it comes to making a moral choice) are found throughout the novel. One example is found in the sailor Pittencream, a minor character who is the only crewmember not allowed to sail to the World's End but left behind on the Island of the Star:

> Caspian accepted all the men [for the final voyage] but that one who had changed his mind at the last moment. His name was Pittencream and he stayed on the Island of the Star all the time the others were away looking for the World's End, and he very much wished he had gone with them. He wasn't the sort of man who could enjoy talking to Ramandu and Ramandu's daughter (nor they to him), and it rained a good deal, and though there was a wonderful feast on the Table every night, he didn't very much enjoy it…And when the others returned he felt so out of things that he deserted on the voyage home at the Lone Islands, and went to live in Calormen, where he told wonderful stories about his adventures at the End of the World, *until at last he came to believe them himself. So you may say, in a sense, that he lived happily ever after.* But he could never bear mice. (Lewis 234 [VDT], emphasis added)

In this passage, Lewis seems to move from Classical and into Modern/Postmodern awareness regarding to how individuals come to persuade themselves of the truths they hold later as self-evident. The current concept of 'discourse communities' helps us to more fully understand what Lewis is telling us about the moral choices and responsibilities that the *ethos* of his Narnian world presses on its characters as well as its

157

readers. The communities influence what is most important: our own private, internal discourse communities where we engage in the most important rhetoric of our lives—where we set out to persuade ourselves.

Lewis has several representations of this process of self-persuasion throughout *Dawn Treader* and elsewhere in the Narnia series. The main focus of rhetoric for Lewis's fiction is not on characters who wish persuade others, as Caspian and Bern do, or the characters who must decide on one course of action or another depending on the arguments. Instead, Lewis gives us a close look at characters who seek to persuade themselves, as Pittencream does, to accept the same arguments and propositions that they themselves wish to advocate.

Earlier in *Dawn Treader*, Lewis gives us a potent illustration of this self-persuasion process as Lucy searches through the Magician's Book for the spell to make the invisible Duffers visible again. Midway through her searching she comes to the spell "*to make beautiful her that uttereth it beyond the lot of mortals*." In the illustrative pages of the magic book, Lucy sees the terrible consequences—wars, deaths, etc.—this spell would have, transforming her into a new Helen of Troy that moves all miseries in her wake. Nevertheless, Lucy decides she will say the spell because she is envious of her sister Susan, whom the adults of her own world praise as the beauty of the family. However, what is most interesting is that before she tries to speak the words of the spell, Lucy says "I *will* say the spell…I don't care. I will," to which the 3rd person omniscient narrator adds, "[Lucy] said *I don't care* because she had a strong feeling that she mustn't" (163, 165).

The scene with Lucy and the Magician's Book is the closest parallel to what

Lewis meant in his autobiography by the 'me,' in this case the Lucy who sees herself

already glorying in insidious beauty, and the 'I' part of Lucy that seems to fully

comprehend that in order to take the beauty she desires, she must harden herself against

any misgivings she might have for any evils that might consequently occur. Perhaps using

the rhetorical scheme of Lloyd F. Bitzer (audience, author, text, exigence, and

constraints) we can see Lucy acting as both rhetor (author) and audience in this abortive

attempt to persuade herself to say the spell to make herself beautiful 'beyond the lot of

mortals.' Lewis illustrates that in this situation, Lucy cannot merely perform this speech

act because her desire to have this destructive power of beauty conflicts with her very

conscious sense of moral *ethos*; therefore, Lucy's speech is an attempt to persuade herself

that her sense of *ethos* either does not exist or it must yield to her desire to have power

over Susan.

Lucy's attempt fails when she is confronted with an image of Aslan the lion-

wizard, who for Lewis' world represents truth; but throughout *Dawn Treader* and the

Narnia stories, Lewis is preoccupied with self-persuasion, particularly when a question of

value or virtue is at stake. Miguel de Cervantes said that "Every man is the son of his own

works," which could also be rephrased as 'the author is the son of his work.' Cervantes'

statement points to an unusual dialogical exchange that happens within the creator of a

text: in order to appeal to an audience, the author must become two persons, or two

different points of view: the person who arranges the text, and the person who is the

disinterested receiver of the text. The most important example of this in the Narnia books

is Lewis's creation of Aslan, who is the prime mover of his work, and yet is a character within it.

Therefore, while we often talk of public discourse communities, Lewis illustrates that there are private, inner-discourses that play a part in how we see reality and how we decide what course of action to take when faced with a choice. In Lucy's situation, she is able to rediscover the truth, which Plato contends is one of the higher goals of rhetoric. In the case of Pittencream, he is able to persuade himself to accept a more pleasing reality for himself. Lewis illustrates in his fiction that inner-discourse is as much a community as an outer one: it is in the realm of the inner where what Kevin Kinghorn calls 'virtue epistemology' begins: its life commences as a discourse of the mind, an 'inward-outward' approach as Kinghorn puts it, which presents itself to us in many stories such as the debate Bilbo Baggins has with himself in *The Hobbit* when he faces his decision of whether to go on and face the dragon or to go home.

> "Now you are in for it at last, Bilbo Baggins," he said to himself.
> "You want and put your foot right in it that night of the party, and now you have got to pull it out and pay for it! Dear me, what a fool I was and am!" *said the least Tookish part of him*. "I have absolutely no use for dragon-guarded treasures… if only I could wake up and find this beastly tunnel was my own front-hall at home!"
>
> He did not wake up of course, but went still on and on, till all sign of the door behind had faded away…Wisps of vapour floated up and past him and he began to sweat. A sound, too, began to throb in his ears, a sort

of bubbling like the noise of a large pot galloping on the fire, mixed with a rumble as of a gigantic tom-cat purring…It was at this point that Bilbo stopped. *Going on from there was the bravest thing he ever did.* The tremendous things that happened afterwards were as nothing compared to it. *He fought the real battle in the tunnel alone, before he ever saw the vast danger that lay in wait*… (Tolkien 226-7, emphasis added)

The implications of this ethical progression are that almost every character can (and should) become the hero of their tale. Every character, through debate and contemplation, has the ability to discover and remember the truths of the world they share, and they can find peace and certainty at the center of their souls. While Lewis and Tolkien take pains to demonstrate the process and the moral evaluation of this internal deliberation, heroism in many other stories cannot be called mere happenstance, nor can it be measured by the greatness of the deeds, but it is frequently the result of a moral choice. This burden of choice is the moment where a rhetoric of possibility is needed because we as readers have been brought to different experiences, perplexities, and choices just as the characters experience them as they are confronted with different possibilities through signs and language.

Chapter 5:

A Garden of Possibilities

Even though the postmodern worldview makes it difficult for us to be too confident about any certainties, the voices of modernism have left their thumbprint on our culture because of how confident and complacent we can sometimes be in our assumptions. In some of the conversations I see on social media or in the classroom, I continue to hear an echo of the old theories from the early 20th century which were replete with warnings about the pitfalls of 'metaphysics,' or 'wishful thinking,' or an inability, to face 'reality.' Many of us (no matter how postmodern we think we have become) are perhaps guilty of holding onto some positivistic assertions towards questions in our cultural or political discourse.

Nevertheless, today we generally concede that the belief of our neighbor is part of our own reality (even if we do not share it) because it in some way has an effect upon our own existence. The theory of possibility that I wish to introduce relies on this acknowledgement: just as it is part of our human experience to see our world and to choose those things we need or desire, it is also part of our experience to see our world for what it lacks and to dream that it were different.

Throughout our lives, we are faced with the world with which we are confronted, but we are also confronted with an equally real world of potentiality: or, to quote John Poulakos, we are confronted by a vision that takes us to "another place or at another time and takes" us away "from the world of actuality and transports" us instead to a new world "of potentiality" (Poulakos 42-44). But when do we first become aware of this world of

possibility? Does our consciousness of the possible need to be taught, or is it biological and innate for all human beings?

These questions will be explored, though not definitely answered, in this chapter. However, what is important when it comes to juvenile literature is that authors for children quite frequently appeal to our sense of the possible. As developing readers once ourselves, perhaps it was the allusion to something unlikely that was made to seem—through the use of clever wordplay or an absorbing illustration—feasible and even desirable that first lured us into the realm of possibility.

An example of this is P.D. Eastman's *Go, Dog, Go* (1961) which uses the action and interplay between words in order to teach and delight the reader with the possibilities of language. Eastman takes what could have been merely a lesson on the spatial relationships between words, and uses these semantic interactions to create all sorts of potentialities that are meant to entice the imagination. Eastman demonstrates the relational possibility of words in many unusual ways, such as in the simple sentence, "Three dogs at a party on a boat at night", accompanied by Eastman's own illustration of three blue dogs in a small lifeboat playing games and music.

This image itself is a statement of possibility: the forms of the dogs are outlined and hardly distinguishable against the backdrop of a monochromatically clear evening, which is accented by a crescent moon, waves, a boat lantern, a checkerboard, a banjo, three hats, the eyes of the dogs, all of which are pinpricks of radiance resembling a sky lit by stars, or a darkened room illuminated by furtive flashlights. In this snapshot of a world, Eastman creates an interesting dalliance of calmness (the night, the sea) and fun

(the checkerboard, the banjo, the hats) that is spawned from the possibility contained within nothing more than a creative mix up and merging of simple words; this visualization, like the words in the book, generate a new range of possibilities and create a distinct threshold for us as readers to cross if we choose.

As a reader, the part of the book for me that best typifies this sensation is probably nearer to the end. I have not read *Go, Dog, Go* as a child in almost 30 years, but the image that has continued to remain with me is the one where the dogs are having a party on the top of a tree. Perhaps children and adult readers are tempted to forget this physical impossibility by the impressive spectacle of following a long column of single-rider cars with dog drivers who are all heading to a giant umbrella-shaped tree with a ladder already propped against it, which is the canine beach party in the tree. One by one all the dogs climb the ladder to the top of the tree where there is

A dog party! A big dog party! Big dogs, little dogs, red dogs, blue dogs, yellow dogs, green dogs, black dogs, and white dogs are all at a dog party!

What a dog party!

Eastman's two-page representation of dozens of dogs swinging, sleeping, jumping, blowing on party favors, eating cake, coming out of cannons, wearing birthday hats, is an image that I can recall seeing as a child. More importantly, I can recall often looking at trees in my yard, and though even as a child I understood that the branches of trees were not like the decks of cruise ships, I nonetheless remember moments where I wished I could be as light as air, or that tree tops could be courtyards as Eastman depicted

in *Go, Dog, Go*. In other words, the story with its images and imaginative wordplay put me as a child in the mood to contemplate possibilities that were not before apparent.

This notion of the possible and the desire for it is a constantly reoccurring theme in much of children's literature and is profusely discussed in the pre-modern and pre-postmodern literary theory of Tolkien and C.S. Lewis. For this chapter, in contradistinction to Rose's claim, I will provide a theory of possibility for children's literature. Once this is established, I hope to illustrate how authors convey a sense of the possible in their stories to entice the reader to choose to momentarily live within the confines of their carefully-crafted Secondary Worlds.

A Theory of Rhetorical Possibility

The foundation of this theory for children=s literature is largely drawn from a theory of Sophist discourse developed by John Poulakos. In his essay "Towards a Sophistic Definition of Rhetoric" (1983), Poulakos' foremost goal is to reconstruct something of the philosophy of rhetoric that the Sophists might have held (a challenging task when considering how scarce their documents—originals or fragments—are). However, Poulakos' rhetorical discussion of past epistemologies leads him to make some profound acknowledgments concerning the relationship that exists between the rhetor (or the writer in our case) and her audience.

Poulakos begins by reminding us of Hegel's point that the Sophist teachers and philosophers are "a necessary link between Pre-Socratic (especially Anaxagoran) and Platonic thought" and that without the Sophists our picture of the rhetoric that came out of the Greek experience is incomplete (Poulakos 35). Poulakos was hardly alone in his

165

interest in the role of the Sophists in the development of Classical Platonic and

Aristotelian rhetoric and thought, but at the time he was developing his Sophistic

characterization of rhetoric, Poulakos was concerned that "the meaning of their rhetorical

perspective has not received adequate attention", and he felt that exploring their

intellectual outlook would add to our own understanding of language, persuasion, and the

human mind (35).

To begin, Poulakos' offers his own definition of rhetoric, one that focuses on its

potential at each moment and in every person:

> *Rhetoric is the art which seeks to capture in opportune moments that*
>
> *which is appropriate and attempts to suggest that which is possible*. Very
>
> briefly, this definition intimates that rhetoric is an artistic undertaking
>
> which concerns itself with the how, the when, and the what of expression
>
> and understands the why of purpose. Further, *this definition links rhetoric*
>
> *to a movement originating in the sphere of actuality and striving to attain*
>
> *a place in that potentiality*. [Emphasis added except with the exception of
>
> the opening sentence] (36)

In many ways Poulakos' definition of rhetoric is similar to that of his

contemporaries such as Lloyd Bitzer or Wayne Booth. In defining his 'rhetorical

situation,' Bitzer called rhetoric "a mode of altering reality, not by direct application of

energy to objects, but by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the

mediation of thought and action" (Bitzer 4 [RS]). Booth's 'rhetorical stance' is more of a

balance where the common ingredients are "the available arguments about the subject

itself, the interests and peculiarities of the audience, and the voice, the implied character, of the speaker" (Booth 141 [RS]). However, Poulakos' special emphasis on the link between *rhetoric* and *potentiality* makes his theory intriguing as he implies that the responsibility for 'all things possible' in the world and in language lie with the rhetor. Finally, Poulakos' definition invites us to look at rhetoric beyond its mere technical aspects, or its political or ceremonial genres of discourse, and into the realms of imaginative play, life, and literature.

Poulakos begins his theory with the technical and formal aspects of rhetoric, starting with timeliness (*kairos*), but he soon begins to move in a somewhat less traveled direction when he states that in "distinction to *kairos*, which focuses on man's sense of time, *to prepon* emphasizes his sense of propriety" (41). For Poulakos, the bridge between rhetoric from the Classical Era and the world of theoretical possibility begins here with the rhetor's concern with propriety:

> Appropriateness refers to that quality which makes an expression be correlative to the formal aspects of the situation it addresses. When appropriate, speech is perfectly compatible with the audience and the occasion it affirms and simultaneously seeks to alter. An appropriate expression reveals the rhetor's rhetorical readiness and evokes the audience's gratitude; conversely, an inappropriate expression indicates a misreading on the rhetor's part and a mismeeting between rhetor and audience. If what is spoken is the result of a misreading on the part of the rhetor, it subsequently becomes obvious to us, even to him, that "this was

167

not the right thing to say."…If speech is needed and silence prevails instead, we have a rhetor who has misread the situation, a frustrated audience whose needs and expectations are not met, and a situation that perpetuates itself (41-2).

Before going further, to enlist Poulakos's ideas in the service of interpreting literary texts is beyond the scope of his original intent, and I intend to use his theory of the possible in ways not foreseen. Furthermore, while at times he does seem to leave behind antiquity and venture into contemporary times, Poulakos's focus is on Sophistic Rhetoric and its place in the history of rhetoric, which complicates any definitive analysis on modern children's literature. Nevertheless, Poulakos's theory of possibility seems to naturally lend itself to literary interpretation. Furthermore, fiction allows us to ask 'what if' and provides a chance to imagine how Poulakos' theories might sublimate themselves in an actual world.

Returning to the problem of 'misreading,' in fiction as in oratory this misconstruing of the situation is not always the fault of the author. Returning to an earlier example, Anne Carol Moore in her criticism of *Charlotte's Web* seemed to believe that the book was really about Fern rather than Wilbur or Charlotte, and so Moore faulted the novel for not developing Fern's character more thoroughly. However, in other circumstances, there are clear 'mismeetings' created by the authors of some of our most acclaimed novels.

For instance, Elizabeth Lennox Keyser in her criticism of *The Secret Garden* argues that one of the shortcomings of the book is where "Mary slips into the background

until she disappears entirely from the final chapter. The novel ends with the master of Miselthwaite and his son, Master Colin, crossing the lawn before their servants' admiring eyes" (Keyser 9). Keyser has such a problem with this conclusion because she finds Mary to be "a more memorable creation than Colin because she is both recognizably human and refreshingly different." Keyser claims this is because of Mary's 'freedom from sex-role stereotypes,' but for Keyser as for other readers, it seems to be Mary's 'independent' and 'self-assertive' qualities—hidden from the adult characters earlier in the novel beneath some of her less-endearing and more visible attributes—that we admire most about her character.

It would be easy to dismiss Keyser's criticism of *The Secret Garden* for the same reason Moore's criticism of *Charlotte's Web* might also be discounted: that Keyser wants a different book than the one she has been given. Indeed, while Keyser's assertion that the novel could be "a defense of patriarchal authority" might be meant to provoke the scholarly community into a discussion about latent ideologies within the text, in the end her claim depends on a rather selective reading of the book. However, aside from this concern, as a reader I do believe Keyser is right in asking why does Mary seem to *fade* towards the end of *The Secret Garden*?

While I am not questioning Frances Hodgson Burnett's book's venerated place in children's literature, it is probable that she (even if in a small way) did misread the desires of her readers when her novel ended without some further resolution for Mary. After all, Mary is the one who is led to the key to the garden, finds the door, and Mary is the impetus for Colin's restoration to health and personal growth, and Mary's discoveries and

efforts lead to the very satisfying reunion between Colin and the long emotionally-estranged Mr. Craven.

Perhaps what could be missing from *The Secret Garden* is an epilogue (similar to the one Roger Lancelyn Green wrote for his adaptation of *Robin Hood*) that allows the reader a glimpse of the new life at Misselthwaite where the father and son relationship is established. Such an epilogue need not be long (and should certainly not be didactic), but it could provide assurance for the reader that (1) Mary will share equally in this newly restored life; (2) she is assured that all of her efforts and sufferings have been instrumental in this renewal, and (3) the burden of Mary's history has quietly become the foundation for the joys of her new Yorkshire life. As readers, perhaps many of us come away with this understanding anyway, and thus we need no such epilogue; however, some of us evidently do not. That readers like Keyser are left unsatisfied does not necessarily indicate an authorial failing on Burnett's part, but rather a mere 'mismeeting' between her and some of her readers who are less easily assured than others about how Mary fits into this new Misselthwaite future. To better suit the expectations of a wider readership, perhaps something such as the proposed epilogue could assuage the concern for readers like Keyser, and perhaps further please and delight the other readers who did not necessarily need the epilogue.

As Poulakos reminds us, a writer uses such 'opportune moments' as our concern for Mary's place in the end of *Secret Garden* to "suggest that which is possible" for her in this unique world within the novel. The reason for this overall preoccupation of the rhetor with 'timeliness' and 'appropriateness' is because that before a speaker can persuade the

170

audience of the worthiness of her argument, she first has to persuade them that her argument is worthy of their attention and time: *to prepon* has special implications for fiction writing and how we respond to it as readers. For now, I will contend that this connection between rhetorical propriety and literature is inherent because Poulakos makes the Sophistic case for rhetoric as an 'art' above all else:

> Both timeliness and appropriateness are rhetorical motifs whose essence cannot be apprehended strictly cognitively and whose application cannot be learnt mechanically. As George Kennedy states, "The two together constitute what may be called the artistic elements in rhetorical theory as opposed to the prescribed rules." Unlike rigid scientific principles, the two are more a matter of feeling. Some of the factors contributing to one's sense of the timely and the appropriate are one's discretionary powers, the cultural norms in which he participates, his reading of the situation he wishes to address, his image of his audience, and his prediction of the potential effects of his words on his listeners…As pointed out earlier, these two qualities are vague in conceptualization and elastic in application. Their observance [according to Mario Untersteiner] does not "confine reality within a dogmatic scheme but allows[s] it to rage in all its contradictions, in all its tragic intensity, in all its impartiality imposed by an intelligibility which will revive the joy of truth." (Poulakos 42)

So returning to *The Secret Garden*, how does Frances Hodgson Burnett attempt to 'feel out' her readers? How does she use the cultural norms of her time to convey

something timely about Mary and Colin? Furthermore, using a rhetoric of possibility, how does Burnett escape the perfunctory mundanity of ideological clichés or conventional dogmatism in order to allow the contradictions of the possible to not merely 'rage' but to dalliance in such a way that they revive the reader's love for the truth of the created world? Last of all, how does Burnett instinctively anticipate the dreams and wishes of her readers?

<center>"It doesn't matter…whether I care nor not"</center>

One of the reasons that rhetoric can be useful for the study of literature is because of our more modern understanding of the role of rhetoric in all discourses. As with his contemporaries, Poulakos seeks to move rhetorical study away from the old formal (or 'modal') model for communication where rhetoric had stagnated for so long, and into something centered more on a theory of human experience. Indeed, Poulakos suggests that the development of rhetoric was a primal response to the desires, apprehensions, and aspirations of human beings; this is why the old "abstract absolutism created in the spirit of a priori truths" system of rhetoric had failed to achieve what it had intended: because it was not suitable for modern man since it lacked basic continuity with the wishes of ancient man.

Most of all, whereas Sophist rhetoric made the moods and aspirations of the audience one of the pivotal parts of their persuasive model, the formal models of rhetoric often tended to reduce the role of the audience from their persuasive formulas. Indeed, Plato and Aristotle were often suspicious of audiences and wary of appealing to their emotions. In order to revitalize the role of the audience for modern rhetoric, scholars in

<center>172</center>

the 1960s returned to the Sophist teachings and tried to reconstruct a more comprehensive picture of their philosophy. What we get from the Sophistic view of rhetoric, argues Poulakos, is a persuasive art that instinctively anticipates the dreams and wishes of its audience:

> …the rhetorician is not confined to a single movement. After he captures the appropriate and places it temporally, he moves toward the suggestion of the possible. The starting point for the articulation of the possible is the ontological assumption that *the main driving forces in man's life are his desires, especially the desire to be other and to be elsewhere*. Another relevant assumption is that the sphere of actuality *always entails a lack*, the absence of that which exists only in the future; more particularly, that actuality frustrates man when he dreams of being other and binds him to where he already is when he wants to be elsewhere. (Poulakos 42-43, emphasis added)

The insight that Poulakos offers here into the nature of human longing is important when considering literary texts, and perhaps more so when thinking about fiction written for children and young adults. So where do we see this desire 'to be other…elsewhere', this 'lack' and 'frustration' among potential readers of children's and juvenile literature? Do some of our favorite characters such as Mary Lennox or Lucy Pevensie embody the concerns of their readers? Furthermore, how do authors anticipate these concerns and address them in their stories?

Of course, authors are free to use the obvious method of didacticism, which Charles Kingsley often resorts to when (among other things) contrasting Tom's limited understanding of the world with the rich and profound sphere of the water-babies. However, the rhetorical appeal to the 'possible' in *The Water Babies* is most powerful when Kingsley vicariously compels the reader to experience Tom's reaction to his new world and his growing awareness of intricacies and depths that Tom has never known before. The moment happens when Tom comes to a 'deep still reach' where he sees a water-forest:

> They would have looked to you [like] only little weeds; but Tom…was so little that everything looked a hundred times as big to him as it does to you, just as things do to a minnow, who sees and catches the little water-creatures which you can only see in a microscope…[Tom] saw the water-monkeys and water-squirrels…and nimbly enough they ran among the branches. There were water-flowers there, too, in thousands; and Tom tried to pick them: but as soon as he touched them, they drew themselves in and turned into knots of jelly; and then Tom saw that they were all alive—bells, and stars, and wheels, and flowers, of all beautiful shapes and colours; and all alive and busy, just as Tom was. *So now he found that there was a great deal more in the world than he had fancied at first sight.* (Kingsley 62-3, emphasis added)

Tom's realization "that there" is "a great deal more in the world" is a moment of great epiphany that is nearly universal in fiction for children, and it is better when we

174

actively experience it instead of reading a lecture. Of course, Kingsley is appealing not to Tom as a character, but to us as readers because Tom's problem is *our own*: our limited understanding of the world and its complexities, as well as our confidence and comfort with our own limitations, is what keeps us from developing a fuller perspective and reaching our full potential as human beings. The growth of our perception begins at a very early age, but continues into early adulthood and—if we choose not to inhibit ourselves—beyond.

As much as it might seem at times, Kingsley is not merely preaching to us, but he foresees the sense of 'lack' in his readers—the idea that there is something more to explore and enjoy other than their daily reality, that somewhere within his readers is the "desire to be other and to be elsewhere". In the earlier passage, Kingsley uses both Tom's discovery of this fresh new world and an appeal to us as readers to feed, enhance, and even reawaken our sense of the possible. Kingsley intrinsically understands, Poulakos explains, that 'possibility' is the continual human exigence for all rhetoric, language, dreams, passions, and desires. He argues that after any speaker "captures the appropriate and places it temporally," then he naturally "moves toward the suggestion of the possible."

> Consideration of the possible affirms in man the desire to be at another place or at another time and takes him away from the world of actuality and transports him in that of potentiality…it intensifies in him the awareness that actuality is hostile to what he wishes and, as such, denies its existence. Finally, it refines his wishes and shows him how to apply

them, what to ask, and whom to reach. To be sure, man walks on earth and

his feet are a constant reminder of his connection to the ground. But at the

same time, *he looks at the horizon about him and perceives himself "not*

as he is, not where he is, but precisely as he is not and where he is not."

Even though he functions daily in the world of actuality, he often finds

himself concerned with his situation not as it is here-and-now but as it

could be there-and-then. Thus*, he participates at once in two worlds each*

of which opposes the other. (Poulakos 43, emphasis added)

In order to appeal to our human sense of the *possible*, authors must first discover a

way to meet their readers where they are, and lead them from there to a realm where they

are more open to possibilities. While all fiction writers must strive to meet their readers at

least part of the way, I believe that the demand on the authors for children and young

adults to meet their readers is greater than that on authors for adults. The first question for

us is, how do authors manage this? Secondly, where can we find examples of this in

children's fiction? *The Secret Garden* provides a couple of illustrations.

Earlier in the story, Mary Lennox is traveling to her mysterious new home in

Yorkshire with Mrs. Medlock, who decides to tell Mary something of Misselthwaite

Manor where they are traveling. Medlock describes the house and the grounds that are

'gloomy enough', then turns to Mary and asks, "Well…what do you think of it?" Mary's

reply is interesting: She says, "It doesn't matter…whether I care or not" (Burnett 15

[SG]). Taken together with her previous situation in India, Mary's response is not

surprising since she is earlier characterized as 'self-absorbed', 'always been taken care

of,' and 'not an affectionate child'—these characteristics could be applied to many children who might read *The Secret Garden*. However, Mary's situation here and her attitude towards her circumstances falls within the generally-restive nature "to be at another place or at another time" of human beings that Poulakos describes.

Similar to Kingsley, Burnett is trying to anticipate some of the concerns of her readers so she can address them in her story, and Mary's character personifies many of these anxieties. Furthermore, modern psychologists and sociologists have done many studies that give us a window into the minds of many of our young readers, and many of these empirical inquiries can illustrate Mary's situation and her attitude. For instance, Father Henri J.M. Nouwen—who taught psychology and did counseling at the University of Notre Dame and at the Menninger Foundation Clinic in Topeka, Kansas—offers a case study of Peter: a college student who came to Nouwen at the encouragement of his parents for psychological counseling in the late 1960s. Nouwen makes it clear that while Peter might need 'help' for his current mental condition, Peter's "experiences and feelings cannot be understood merely in terms of individual psychopathology."

As he talks to his young patient, it becomes clear to Nouwen that "the many boundaries" that structured Peter's life now seem "increasingly vague" to him: "It is a life over which he has no control…determined by many known and unknown factors in his surroundings." Peter can no longer perceive any 'clear distinction' between his own consciousness and the feelings that sputter about in his social environment: Peter "feels that his ideas and feelings are not really his…they are brought upon him." Nouwen's overall diagnosis of Peter is worth quoting at some length:

[Peter] does not know whom he can trust and who not, what he shall do and what not, why to say "yes" to one and "no" to another. The many distinctions between good and bad, ugly and beautiful, attractive and repulsive, are losing meaning for him. Even to the most bizarre suggestions he says: "Why not? Why not try something I have never tried? Why not have a new experience, good or bad?"

In the absence of clear boundaries between himself and his milieu, between fantasy and reality, between what to do and what to avoid, it seems that Peter has become *a prisoner of the now*, caught in the present *without meaningful connections with his past or future*. When he goes home [from the university to his parents] he feels that he enters a world that has become alien to him.

The words his parents use, their questions and concerns, their aspirations and worries, seem to belong to another world, with another language and another mood. *When he looks into his future everything becomes one big blur, and impenetrable cloud*. He finds no answers to questions about why he lives and where he is heading. Peter is not working hard to reach a goal, he does not look forward to the fulfillment of a great desire, nor does he expect that something great or important is going to happen. He looks into empty space and is sure of only one thing: *If there is anything worthwhile in life, it must be here and now*. (Nouwen 7-9, emphasis added)

While Peter is willing to say 'why not' to any new experience that comes his way, his life is hardly one that embraces a world of possibility. Indeed, as Nouwen points out in the last sentence, Peter concedes that he feels the impossibility for anything to have value that is not a momentary pleasure. In a different way, Peter seems to be echoing what Mary says about nothing mattering and not caring one way or another. The real person, Peter, might suffer from the social ills of his contemporary society, or he could be afflicted by some form of mental illness and be in need of psychotherapy or medical treatment. However, Father Nouwen maintains that "Peter's situation is in many ways typical of the condition of modern men and women."

According to American psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton, the defining characteristics of modern human beings are (1) historical dislocation, (2) ideological fragmentation, and (3) a desire for a new form of immortality. Nouwen believes that Peter's situation illustrates all 3 of these traits, and the root of the problem lies in the reality that young persons such as Peter have never experienced these three assurances—historical continuity, ideal wholeness, or a sense of the immortal—in any meaningful way.

As with other activities, reading is also an experience where we come into contact with new ideas and realities and where, by living through the characters, we face new joys, sufferings, escapes, delights, and tragedies. But how do authors use words, language, images, and literary devices to awaken and enhance our notion of the possible? As Poulakos argues, readers must be sought out and found before they can be brought to world of new probabilities:

Unlike the actual, the possible is not given which can be known or

verified; it exists in the future as something incomplete and dormant,

something awaiting the proper conditions to be realized. Therefore, its

evocation goes hand in hand with hope and modesty; hope because the

speaker always awaits his listener's contribution, which will bring the

possible to completion and realization; and modesty because what the

speaker says is always potentially dismissible. By voicing the possible, the

rhetor discloses his vision of a new world to his listeners and invites them

to join him there by honoring his disclosure and by adopting his

suggestion. Essentially, *he is asking them to abandon the shelter of their*

prudential heaven and opt for that which exists [according to Richard

Weaver] *"by favor of human imagination and effort."* (Poulakos 44-5,

emphasis added)

Poulakos seems to suggest here that the writer's ability to persuade her reader to

'abandon the shelter' of their own world for a possible one is a far greater and more

important task than the creation of the secondary world itself. Put in another way, no

matter how beautiful or fantastic the created world might be in itself, its primary function

will always be to woo us within its walls with whispers of the possible. So how does

Burnett convey a sense of dislocation and fragmentation in her characters? Having done

so, how does she move them (and us) beyond this and towards entering into a new

possible world? Using each of Lifton's characteristics to examine juvenile fiction can

help to illustrate how authors for children and young adults reach their readers and draw

them into experiencing a new possibility.

<p style="text-align:center">'We are cousins'</p>

According to Lifton, *historical dislocation* is a "break in the sense of connection, which men have long felt with the vital and nourishing symbol of their cultural tradition; symbols revolving around family, idea-systems, religion, and the life-cycle in general" (318 [HHS]). Nouwen argues that the lack of continuity for young persons like Peter is paramount because it is 'so vital for a creative life.' Those who are impaired with a sense of historical dislocation find themselves "part of a non-history in which only the sharp moment of the here and now is valuable", and the result is that such a person's "reactions are not anxiety and joy, which were so much a part of human existence [prior to the dislocation], but apathy and boredom." Outside of her prison of the 'now,' a dislocated person sees the world as something of impossibility. Nouwen indicates that human beings can recover their intuitive need for the possible only "when we feel ourselves responsible for the future can we have hope or despair" (Nouwen 12-13).

In *Alice in Wonderland*, when she believes that the mouse who has been forced to swim (because of her tears) cannot understand her because it might be a 'French mouse, come over with William the Conqueror", Lewis Carroll notes that "For, with all her knowledge of history, Alice had no very clear notion how long ago anything had happened" (Carroll 28-29). The lack of any sense of historical progression and time is part of *dislocation*. However, in a realm without the possibility of 'a sense of connection', Lifton's notion of a historical 'break' goes much further to the question of existence. For instance, when it comes to Mary Lennox, she is described by the narrator "as tyrannical

<p style="text-align:center">181</p>

and selfish a little pig as ever lived", and though the volatile Mary from earlier seems far different than the detached and apathetic Peter, the condition that affects them both is similar.

As Mary begins to listen to Medlock's story about Mr. Craven and Misselthwaite Manor "in spite of herself," it is because it "sounded so unlike India, and anything new rather attracted her," which sounds similar to Peter's 'why not' attitude towards new experiences. However, Mary's sense of historical dislocation is evident when the story begins. Not only is Mary a British girl who has been born in India and raised by Indian servants, she is an outsider to her own personal history. Mary's father is merely a note in the novel, and her mother cares "only to go to parties" and wants Mary kept "out of sight as much as possible." Indeed, when the cholera breaks out, Mary is looking at her mother talking to the young officer—the 'Memsahib' as she calls her—and Mary sees her as a 'thin and floating' thing, 'full of lace' with 'large laughing eyes.' Her mother is more of an image in a storybook than any sort of filial caregiver or even someone with whom Mary has the barest modicum of companionship. As the clergyman said, "people never even knew [Mary's mother] had a child at all" (Burnett 11). Mary herself begins "to wonder why she had never seemed to belong to anyone even when her father and mother had been alive. Other children seemed to belong to their fathers and mothers, but she had never seemed to really be anyone's little girl" (12).

Mary begins to locate her history on the journey to Misselthwaite. Mrs. Medlock asks Mary what she knows about her uncle, Mr. Craven. Because Mary's parents "had never talked to her about anything in particular", she has no sense of continuity with her

past or her family. As such, she becomes absorbed with what little she learns about Mr. Craven and her aunt's history, and later she discovers the key to the Secret Garden, and then her cousin Colin. As all of this is happening, Mary's history becomes a functional part of her life and this establishes a continuity with her past. Indeed, the other characters such as Ben Weatherstaff recognize that the garden is a living monument not merely to Mary's aunt, but to the beauty of her imaginative mind:

> Then the green things began to show buds, and the buds began to unfurl and show colour [sp], every shade of blue, purple, every tint and hue of crimson. In its happy days flowers had been tucked away into every inch and hole and corner. Ben Weatherstaff had seen it done and had himself scraped out mortar from between the bricks of the wall and made pockets of earth for lovely things to grow on…'She was main fond o' them—she was,' Ben Weatherstaff said. 'She liked them things as was allus pointin' up to th' blue sky, she used to tell. Not as she was one o' them as looked down on th' earth—not her. She just loved it, but she said as th' blue sky allus looked so joyful.' (235-6)

Nouwen argues human beings need a knowledge of their own personal and cultural history that is 'vital for a creative life' that leads to useful activities such as working, creating, building, producing, having a family, raising children, caring for others, and creating a legacy to leave behind. Before Mary finds the hidden garden, she is already beginning to experience a reawakening of her own creative life:

> Living, as it were, all by herself in a house with a hundred mysteriously

closed rooms and having nothing whatever to do to amuse herself, *had set*

her inactive brain to work and was actually awakening her imagination.

There was no doubt that the fresh, strong, pure air from the moor had a

great deal to do with it…In India she had always been too hot and languid

and weak to care much about anything, but in this new place she was

beginning to care and to want to do new things. (67-8, emphasis added)

As Lifton points out, the restoration of "the sense of connection," which

represents for human beings a "vital and nourishing symbol of their cultural tradition" can

mean a reawakening of the mind and the possibilities within ourselves and our

surroundings. The finding of the 'secret garden' for Mary is the embodiment of her

connecting with her tradition and history. While she was still in India, Mary feels as if she

has never 'belonged' to anyone—it is the garden that links her to her past, and once she is

aware of part of her past, Mary can turn to the possibility to a future. For example, after

Mary discovers the garden she immediately begins to weed and clear out some of the

areas so that the seedlings can grow, we see how her discovery is 'vital for [her] creative

life':

The Secret Garden was what Mary called it when she was thinking of it.

She liked the name, and she liked still more the feeling that when its

beautiful old walls shut her in, no one knew where she was. It seemed

almost like being shut out of the world in some fairy place. The few books

she had read and liked had been fairy-story books, and she had read of

secret gardens in some of the stories. Sometimes people went to sleep in

them for a hundred years, which she had thought must be rather stupid.

She had no intention of going to sleep, and, in fact, she was becoming

wider awake every day which passed at Misselthwaite. (Burnett 89)

The rejuvenation of the garden is easily juxtaposed with the changes Mary is undergoing. The reconnection of Mary to her history somehow leads her to delight more in her present circumstances, but it also makes her more visionary concerning her surroundings and gives her an eye to the future. All of this is illustrated fully when Mary and Colin are sitting in his room to visit and to look at picture books, and all three—past, present, and future—seem to be rolled into one moment. Mary talks to Colin about Dickon, which 'was the best thing' because to talk about him means talking "about the moor and about the cottage and the fourteen people who lived in it on sixteen shillings a week…children who get fat on moor grass like the wild ponies". As Mary talks about the natural world surrounding her and Colin, everything to them seems 'so alive' that both children become so happy together that they can hardly control their laughter:

They enjoyed themselves so much that they forgot the pictures and

they forgot about the time. They had been laughing quite loudly over Ben

Weatherstaff and his robin, and Colin was actually sitting up as if he had

forgotten about his weak back when he suddenly remembered some thing.

'Do you know there is one thing we have never once thought of?'

he said. 'We are cousins.'

It seemed so queer that they had talked so much and never

remembered this simple thing that they laughed more than ever, because

185

they had got into the humour [sp] to laugh at anything….(Burnett 148)

Here at last is a new beginning for Mary and now Colin. The new sense of connection has been found through the reawakening both children are experiencing through interaction and by a sense of shared story. Furthermore, as Nouwen argues, by having something of value more than the mere "sharp moment of the here and now", once their new sense of *historical location* has freed them from their 'prison of the now', both Mary and Colin are freer to delight in the present than was before possible.

<p align="center">"Magic in everything"</p>

The second concern that Robert Lifton has for modern human beings is that they have become afflicted with a *fragmented ideology*—that is, our system of idealism has become disjointed and confusing, and muddying rather than clarifying our view of the world, and this stultifies our desires to think or act. Lifton argues that the "extraordinary flow of post-modern cultural influences" has enabled human beings to shift from preset and all-encompassing creeds to more adaptable dogmas, or for us to even sever them and then fuse together fragments from various systems of thought into our own custom-made personal ideologies (Lifton 318 [HHS]; 98 [Boundaries]).

While adaptability of ideas (when given a particular context) is not necessarily a bad predicament for human beings, a philosophy for living that is incoherent can cause many problems for the person who holds it—and when many persons are afflicted with ideological fragmentation, then the result can be an entire society that is confused, contradictory, incompetent, listless, and (perhaps at times) even dangerous. One of the reasons for the prevalence of 'fragmented ideology' in Western culture is because of mass

communications and multimedia; people are exposed to different religions, lifestyles, personal moralities, ideas, and traditions.

As Henri Nouwen points out, through their exposure to media, modern people face the extremes of existence, often within the span of only a few minutes. Although Nouwen was writing in the early 1970s, I believe that these 'extreme' exposures have intensified with our increasing reliance on a constant barrage of multimedia, conveniently made to seem omnipresent to us by our phones or other portable computers. The unrelenting bombardment of extremes has inflamed further the condition that Nouwen here describes:

> [They] are confronted not only with the most elaborate and expensive attempts to save the life of one person by heart transplantation, but also with the powerlessness of the world to help when thousands of people die from lack of food…humanity's ability to travel to another planet, but also with our hopeless impotence to end a senseless war on this planet…."
>
> (Nouwen 14-15)

Perhaps no other character in *The Secret Garden* more than Colin seems to be so afflicted by being confronted with such extremes of existence. On the one hand, he is well read and has a much broader knowledge of the world than Mary or Dickon; however, when he juxtaposes some of the mysteries contained in his library with both the tragedy of his family and his fears about his health, these extremes of existence leave Colin fragmented, and since—like Peter earlier—he feels he has little control over the direction his life is taking, Colin is tyrannical over the things he feels he has power over. And yet,

187

as a 'prisoner of the now', Colin still has some nebulous notion of his past, but it leads to no 'creative life' for two reasons: (1) he has no relationship with his past, just stories and shadowy representations of it; (2) Colin also feels that the past has both simultaneously doomed him and is mocking his present condition.

His historical connection does not give Colin hope for the future as it should, but he feels that his personal past has taken away his future. He feels no joy in his authority over others, and Colin seems to despair that his life lacks intimacy and affection, even if his actions do little to encourage either of these sentiments. The confusion and contradiction caused by Colin's modern instincts are well-displayed after he and Mary meet for the first time and he tells her to remove the curtain that covers the portrait "of a girl with a laughing face" with "gay, lovely eyes [that] were exactly like Colin's unhappy ones. It is Colin's mother:

> 'If she had lived I believe I should not have been ill always,' he
>
> grumbled. 'I dare say I should have lived, too. And my father would not
>
> have hated to look at me. I dare say I should have had a strong back...'
>
> 'She is much prettier than you,' she said, 'but her eyes are just like
>
> yours—at least they are the same shape and colour. Why is the curtain
>
> drawn over her?'
>
> He moved uncomfortably.
>
> 'I made them do it,' he said. 'Sometimes I don't like to see her
>
> looking at me. She smiles too much when I am ill and miserable. Besides,
>
> she is mine, and I don't want everyone to see her.' (Burnett 135-6)

The curtain is an effective symbol for the modern mindset in that it confidently obscures the desires and insecurities that we would prefer to shield away from others, but like all veils, it is a thin layer and easily moved aside.

As with Mary earlier in the novel or with Tom in *The Water Babies*, Burnett takes such pains with Colin not to appeal to him but to us as readers because Colin's problem is *ours*. In an odd way throughout this passage, the fictional Colin is the embodiment of what Nouwen deduces from observing Peter: "The many distinctions between good and bad, ugly and beautiful, attractive and repulsive, are losing meaning for him." Indeed, the values that Colin expresses—sadness, regret, wistfulness, nostalgia, idealism, aesthetic, envy, possessiveness, pride, bitterness, etc.—are so multifarious and ambivalent, centered on the experiences of his life and are so void of any philosophy of living, that terms of value and evaluation seem to have little meaning for Colin.

Colin's 'milieu' seems to be defined by the extreme joy and beauty expressed in his mother's portrait and (what seems to be) his own miserable condition and looming mortality. As Lifton and Nouwen both argue, these exposures to such extremes of being has led our society to more often vicariously experience 'exhilaration and exaltation' outside what we would normally come across in our daily lives. Paradoxically though, such vicarious high spirits does not always lead to a catharsis that strengthens our human resolve, but as Nouwen points out, leads many human beings to "no longer believe in anything that is always and everywhere true and valid…Our art is…a short impression of how we feel at the moment…Our lives often look like playful expressions of feelings and ideas that need to be communicated and responded to, but which do not attempt to oblige

anyone else" (Nouwen 15-16). Hence Mary's concern that "It doesn't matter…whether I care or not" as well as Colin's ambivalent feelings about his mother and his past.

At times Lifton and Nouwen often discuss their professional observations of young persons in the 1960s as if the characteristics they are describing are singularly unique for that time and generation. However, long before the age of *Rubber Soul*, Frances Hodgson Burnett seems to anticipate a similar young person who is afflicted with the same attitudes and anxieties. For instance, Mary also seems to have ambiguous ideas about the authority that is placed over her. On the one hand, while she despises anyone who seems to have power over her (the clergyman's family and Mrs. Medlock) earlier in the novel, she has little mercy on those over whom she herself has authority. Also, while she seems to despise adults who represent traditional order in the parent/child relationship, one of the first places we see Mary is hiding in the garden in India looking at her mother covered in lace—in an odd paradox, Mary sees a vision of the benevolent authority that was her right to have as a child, which she has been denied; and in being denied this natural authority, Mary rebels against all authority.

In the end, however, the story of *The Secret Garden* is less about the modern instincts that afflict us, and more about being restored to the sort of existence we feel that we were meant to have. To that end, Burnett provides some of the most moving prose of healing and revitalization, of the body and the mind, of human beings becoming who they were meant to be. However, healing is a process and we see what is involved in mending the modern fragmentation that troubles human beings. Once Colin decides to embrace health and joy in both is body and his mind, a conversion begins in him. However, it does

190

not happen all at once. For example, Colin does "not know in the least what a rude little brute he was" in his habit of giving orders to others. Colin has "lived on a sort of desert island all his life" as "king" and "he had made his own manners and had…no one to compare himself with." After Dr. Craven, Colin's uncle, visits him, Mary decided that she needs to help Colin 'discover' that his manners are not appropriate.

> 'I'm thinking that I am rather sorry for Dr Craven…but I was thinking just then that it must have been very horrid to have had to be polite for ten years to a boy who was always rude. I would never have done it.'…'If you had been his own boy and he had been a slapping sort of man,' said Mary, 'he would have slapped you.'
>
> 'But he daren't,' said Colin.
>
> 'No, he daren't,' answered Mistress Mary, thinking the thing out quite without prejudice. 'Nobody ever dared to do anything you didn't like—because you were going to die and things like that. You were such a poor thing.'
>
> 'But,' announced Colin stubbornly, 'I am not going to be a poor thing. I won't let people think I'm one. I stood on my feet this afternoon.'
>
> (Burnett 233-4)

Mary points out to him the contradiction that he is currently living: Colin is relishing the newness of his restored life that promises health, a future, and companionship, but Colin out of habit is still clinging to the ways of interaction he used as a spoiled, sickly boy. Unless he takes pains to change his habits, and unless he is

191

willing to take the advice of an honest companion like Mary, Colin faces a new ideological fragmentation: not to be a pitiable and afflicted tyrant on his deathbed, but a tyrant who goes among the living. Furthermore, as Mary implies, the world around her and Colin is in the process of becoming remade: it is starting to be something fresh and new—a renewed world.

If Colin and Mary want to be part of this new world, they must become renewed persons, and this takes time. But what is this new world that we see being created in *The Secret Garden*? By taking such pains, what concern of the reader is Barnett seeking to address? In the end, all of these modern predicaments are perhaps founded on our biggest concern, and a yearning for the possibility of an escape from it.

"I shall live for ever and ever and ever!"

As a final yet all-embracing point, Robert Lifton argues that one of the most defining characteristics of modern people is that they are engaged in a desperate search for a new *sense of immortality*. According to Lifton, the lack of assurance in our earlier notions of immortality is at the heart of the problem for modern human beings because immortality "represents a compelling universal urge to maintain an inner sense of continuity over time and space, with the various elements of life." For most persons, this sense of the everlasting is "man's way of experiencing his connection with all human history" (Lifton 22 [Boundaries]).

Applying Lifton's hypothesis to his own counseling work, Henri Nouwen concludes that modern young people like Peter are stuck in a paralysis because they "have lost the source of their creativity, which is their sense of immortality" (Nouwen 17).

192

While Nouwen points out some of the specific events of Peter's life that has contributed

to his current state of listlessness, Nouwen also argues that the condition of Peter's

generation also springs from the multiple anxieties (fear of nuclear war, environmental

hazards, economic turmoil, etc.) of the modern times:

> Many people [in the modern age] feel they do not want to bring children
>
> into this self-destructive world. This means that the desire to live on in
>
> children is extinguished in the face of the possible end of history. And why
>
> should we want to live on in the works of our hands when one atomic blitz
>
> may reduce them to ashes in a second? (Nouwen 18)

Arguably the nuclear age ended in the 1990s, but American culture became

preoccupied with a large-scaled terrorism after 9/11 that was similar to the fear of atomic

destruction of the Cold War. Perhaps most of this apocalyptic anxiety has subsided in

recent years, but the apprehension regarding our economic future also acts as a reminder

(in a different way) of mortality since the loss of a job, a house, or savings account

destroys any notion of personal stability or assuredness. The 'shifting sand' of our

economic well-being reminds us of how tenuous our existence really is and often inhibits

our human fruitfulness and creativity. Obviously, the fear of mortality is so present in

much of *The Secret Garden* that it nearly seems at times to be ubiquitous. Mary sees her

mother's fear of dying early in the novel, and the cholera in India kills everyone around

her and leaves her alone as the soul survivor in a house of death. On her way to

Yorkshire, Mary learns about the death of her aunt and the foreboding gloominess that

surrounds Misselthwaite Manor, and then she meets her cousin who believes he is dying.

However, Colin's character is the one who dreads his own mortality and desires

most of all an escape from what seems to be an inevitability: for him, the garden provides

a new, salubrious vision of existence. As Colin is brought into the secret place and he

absorbs himself in the beauty and vitality of the garden, he begins to not only hope for

health but to rejoice in a sense of immortality: "I shall get well! I shall get well…I shall

get well! *And I shall live for ever and ever and ever*!" (Burnett 214, emphasis added).

In this moment of high exultation, Burnett does not necessarily show us a Colin

who has become deluded into believing that he will be immortal like Hercules or Robin

Goodfellow. Instead, Colin's certainty that he will "live for ever and ever" is meant to

shows us that he no longer dreads his mortality, which may be what much of our human

longing for immortality really is: an act as well as a philosophy of living that is free from

the anxiety (if not the knowledge) of death.

If the opposite of dying is living, then the quintessence of life is perhaps the

creating of new life, which is what we see as the garden comes back from its winter

dormancy and long neglect. Since the 1990s, scholars have explored the topic of latent

sexual reproduction in *The Secret Garden*. Tim Morris summarizes several of these

scholarly discussions, and he captures the essence of how eroticism is known to sublimate

itself into classic children's literature:

> *The Secret Garden* speaks from a historical moment when heterosexual
>
> love, and the origin of every person in heterosexual love, cannot be
>
> directly spoken. We recapitulate such moments in our own growth as
>
> persons; there is always some moment when the truth of our existence is

both known and not known. Our desire…is to hold that moment of

uncertainty in stasis, to refuse to surrender it. We cannot hold the moment.

We can only read about doing it. (Morris 92)

Morris is careful in making it clear that the presence of sexuality is not intended to

suggest that *The Secret Garden* is pedophilia or even some sort of crass pre-sexuality

between the child characters. Rather, Morris points out that erotic desire is similar to

other desires in that it wishes not only to be fulfilled, but that it wishes for a fulfillment

that is optimal and lasting. Most of all, similar to our erotic desire, all desires wish (in

some small way) to recreate themselves so that each time is somehow like the first time

when we are aware of our longings and yet unaware simultaneously. As Morris suggests,

one of the endearing qualities of children's literature is that we can relive this period of

uncertainty through reading. As Colin comes to no longer dread his mortality, our own

human longing for immortality is not merely satisfied: we remember and relive (through

Colin) that moment where we, at least momentarily, were freed from the anxiety of death.

The recognition of sexuality in *The Secret Garden*, and its role in alleviating our concern

for mortality, poses a further question: how can the possibility of immortality address the

human desire and need for procreation?

Ulf Boëthius argues that "*The Secret Garden*" is "a meeting between two different

discourses, one male and naturalistic, the other female and juvenile", and he claims the

narrative that Burnett's story meets is Émile Zola's *La faute de l'abbé Mouret* that was

written in 1875 at the same time Burnett was living in Paris (Boëthius 189). Provoking as

this connection is, Boëthius' intertextual claim that "*The Secret Garden* is a text full of

gaps and unfinished events" which a reading of Zola's novel can 'fill in' becomes more

complicated when we consider the large body of literature since Milton that invokes

(directly or not) the Garden of Eden. Boëthius is correct in that both stories can be read as

a sort of paradise rediscovered, but the connection he makes between the two novels is at

times tenuous (e.g., both Burnett and Zola's narratives refer to the sun as masculine, the

invocation of the Virgin Mary in both stories, and so forth). Furthermore, the tenuous

connection with a feral love affair in Zola's *La faute de l'abbé Mouret* causes Boëthius to

make more specious analogies concerning the sexuality of Mary's garden.

Nevertheless, Boëthius' is correct in arguing that "*The Secret Garden* is a tribute

not just to motherhood and nurturance but also to procreation itself", though perhaps he is

relying too much on Zola in his interpretation of what sex is in Burnett's story when he

talks about "the cruel cycle of nature", concerning Mary and even Dickon, which "does

not care about individuals. They must sometimes be sacrificed—and disappear" (188-9).

Unlike in Zola where sex seems to be part of the 'violent intensity' and restive power of

the natural world, sex in *The Secret Garden* has to do with life and the hope in that life

because Barnett does not see the 'cycle of nature' as ultimately 'cruel.' Therefore, in

contrast to the sensuous determinism we see in Zola's eroticism, the allusion to sexuality

in Burnett's story has to do with continuity and immortality: just as Colin's mother

becomes in part eternal through the garden she designs and creates, some part of her is

also everlasting through her son Colin. Lastly, if *The Secret Garden* is a sort of pre-

romance between Colin and Mary who will one day raise their children at Misselthwaite

Manor and watch them play in the garden, then Colin's mother's influence on those who

live there will be unending: a part of her will continue to transcend her own mortality.

As discussed earlier already, in dealing with the rising 'Baby Boomer' generation and the spirit of the 1960s, Nouwen and Lifton at times both seem to assume that they are discussing the traits of a new youth and a different set of values and concerns than young persons have previously held. But this search for the possibility of something transcendent is universal to human experience, especially with the young—it is a constant personal yearning for many of us, and Burnett opens a dialogue with this part of our humanity in different ways.

Throughout the various episodes and images in *The Secret Garden*, immortality is not tightly defined, but it is illustrated in different ways so that we as readers can explore this transcendent state of being for ourselves. Obviously, the garden represents the beauty and creativeness of Colin's mother, and it is the immorality of her mind. However, there is something of a broader philosophy in the novel that is on display towards the end of the book when Ben Weatherstaff, overwhelmed at Colin's improved health, relents on a long-standing gripe and joins the children in singing the Doxology:

> Colin took off his cap and the sun shone on and warmed his thick
> hair as he watched Dickon intently. Ben Weatherstaff scrambled up from
> his knees and bared his head, too, with a sort of puzzled, half-resentful
> look on his old face, as if he didn't know exactly why he was doing this
> remarkable thing.
>
> Dickon stood out among the trees and rose-bushes and began to
> sing in quite a simple, matter-of-fact way, and in a nice strong boy's voice:

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,

Praise him all creatures here below,

Praise Him above ye Heavenly Host,

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

When he had finished, Ben Weatherstaff was standing quite still with his jaws set obstinately, but with a disturbed look in his eyes fixed on Colin. Colin's face was thoughtful and appreciative.

'It is a very nice song,' he said. 'I like it. *Perhaps it means just what I mean when I want to shout that I am thankful to the Magic*.' He stopped and thought in a puzzled way. '*Perhaps they are both the same thing.* How can we know the exact names of everything? Sing it again, Dickon. Let us try, Mary. I want to sing it, too. *It's my song*. How does it begin? "Praise God from whom all blessings flow?"

And they sang it again, and Mary and Colin lifted their voices as musically as they could, and Dickon's swelled quite loud and beautiful— and at the second line Ben Weatherstaff raspingly cleared his throat, and at the third he joined in with such vigour that it seemed almost savage, and when the 'Amen' came to an end, Mary observed that the very same thing had happened to him which had happened when he found out that Colin was not a cripple—his chin was twitching and he was staring and winking, and his leathery old cheeks were wet. (Burnett 272-3, emphasis added except the Doxology)

198

This passage of *The Secret Garden* is not a widely studied one, and little critical or scholarly work seems to exist on it. However, while there is little in her biography to suggest that Francis Hodgson Burnett is seeking to evangelize her readers (and she has Colin, in a rather unorthodox way, insisting that perhaps the God of the Holy Trinity and the 'Magic' are 'both the same', which hardly sounds like strict Protestant instruction), Burnett's insertion of the Doxology is explicitly meant to help tie together some of the different parts of the novel that occur throughout the story, all of which touch on the notion of human transcendence and immortality.

First of all, in emphasizing the Doxology's importance in *The Secret Garden*, it is necessary to point out that the classical concept of heaven and earth has been distorted in popularized Christianity (as well as in non-religious thinking) because these ideas have largely been reduced to a *here/there* dichotomy in our current perception. However, as New Testament scholar N.T. Wright reminds us, ancient Jews and early Christians had a very different concept of heaven, earth, human transcendence, and the immortal:

> Remember…"heaven" in biblical thought is not a long way away from
> "earth." In the Bible, "heaven" and "earth" overlap and interlock, as the
> ancient Jews believed they did above all in the Temple. Remember too
> that "heaven" and "earth" are not like oil and water, resisting one another
> and separating themselves out. Most people in today's Western world
> imagine that "heaven," by definition, could not contain what we think of
> as a solid, physical body. That's because we are Platonists at heart,
> supposing that if there is a "heaven," it must be nonphysical, beyond the

reach of space, time, and matter. But suppose Plato was wrong?

Suppose, in other words, that the ancient Israelite scriptures were right, and that heaven and earth where after all the twin halves of God's created reality, designed eventually to come together. (Wright 192-3)

Invoking the Doxology in the garden seems to be one more way that Burnett asks us as readers the same question as Wright: "suppose Plato was wrong?" While Colin, Mary, and Mr. Craven could be described as living 'shadows' of the sort of persons that they were meant to be before the 'magic,' the mysterious energy that works in the garden, with Dickon, and with the others does seem to be a sort of luminous power that works through the earth and other human beings—it 'overlaps' and 'interlocks' with hard reality so that the hopeless receive new hope, sleeping minds and hearts are awakened, and the dying receive new life. Unlike some grim Gnostic view of life, matter and essence are not at odds in *The Secret Garden*, but they work together and become one creation: this is the mystery, or 'magic', of the little hidden piece of earth.

This then is what immortality is throughout *The Secret Garden*. As the garden is restored, as the children are restored, elements of the transcendent begin to make their homes there and this changes what the garden is and who the children are. This is what we as readers want it to do because throughout the story we believe in the possibility of immortality. While our rationalism might be chiefly concerned with reason, communication, or inventiveness, John Poulakos implies that it is the notion of the possibleCand how this creates an amphibious state of reality for all of humanity that

cannot be circumventedⒸwhich is the defining characteristic for all human beings and society itself: possibility is the source for all human ingenuity and resourcefulness.

What does this experience in *The Secret Garden* teach us about ourselves? Poulakos often draws on the work of Georges Poulet, who asserts in *The Interior Distance* (1959), that human beings find themselves in

> Two realities which simultaneously exist at a distance and which reciprocally deny each other: the reality in which one lives and that in which one does not live, the place in which one has situated one=s dream and the place where with horror one sees oneself surrendered to chance and ill luck. (Poulet 239)

Here is the starting place not just for a discussion of *The Secret Garden*, but for many of our classic texts of children's fiction. Mary, Colin, and perhaps even Mr. Craven all seem to be two contrasting views of the world—the one they see as a trap, and the possibility of this world being remade into something beautiful and meaningful. This is a common thread in much of our literature because it is the reality we as readers envision deep within ourselves. As Poulakos implies, the task of each writer is to anticipate this complex and yet basic desire that is at the crux of all of our human endeavors, and to use it to win her audience over by a vision of what could be in a world of possibility.

> The rhetorician concerns himself with the possible because he refuses to keep people in their actual situation. Granted, he must initially address them as they are and where they are. The earlier discussion about *kairos* and *to prepon* established that. But subsequently he tries to lift them from

the vicissitudes of custom and habit and take them into a new place where new discoveries and new conquests can be made. Gorgias hints at this notion in the *Encomium to Helen*…when he states that "to tell the knowing what they know has credibility but brings no delight." Gorgias is stressing here that to speak about actualities to those who are already aware of them is nearly a purposeless act whose most notable defect is that it fails to please the audience…The *Encomium to Helen* suggests that the province of rhetoric is the possible, that which has not yet occurred to the audience…A special dimension of the possible, then, is afforded by the novel, the unusual, that prior to which we have no awareness, the unprecedented. (43-44)

What we begin to see through Poulakos is that for an audience, the possible influences the actual and that these two different visions influence each other and often become one in the world we inhabit. If we return to our question in Chapter I, Poulakos seems to concur that our secondary worlds can be as real (or realer if we look at social or political perceptions) as our primary one because these possibilities are already alive in the minds of most people. A successful rhetor, therefore, appeals to this innate sense of the possible. If this rhetor is a storyteller, and she is talented and devoted one, she can renew us as readers and even persuade us into allowing her to make us into a new sort of reader.

Finally, this vision of literature that we get from looking at *The Secret Garden* through Poulakos's lens of rhetorical possibility intersects with C.S. Lewis's theories of

children's literature. Through Poulakos and Lewis, we begin to see a literature that is creative, highly imaginative, interactive, full of fluidity, but grounded within discursive and rhetorical practices. Lewis's discussions on secondary worlds and his exploration of the boundaries between adult authors and child readers, together with a framework of rhetorical possibility, helps us see why writing fiction for children is possible. From here we can begin to consider the possibilities that might come from using children's literature in other fields, starting with English Composition.

Chapter 6:

Children's Literature in the Composition Classroom

The books we study and enjoy during our childhood and young adulthood undoubtedly play a crucial role in our development, which is why teachers and parents should select them with consideration and care. Even in a multicultural world or an ideologically-fragmented nation, there seem to be virtues we want our children to learn and experiences we want them to have: perhaps we want them to share some of Heidi's optimism, or we want them to be open to the possibilities of a place for growth and healing such as Mary's hidden garden. We give our children these books because they draw them into other worlds that nurture salubrious thinking and moral character growth, and we hope that the qualities *from this world* will follow our children *into their own* so that they are drawn into societies, communities, and friendships that are healthy and beneficial.

But can these same books also play an important role in our development as writers? Furthermore, can these same children somehow draw upon their experience as early readers once they become adult writers in a first-year English composition class? What might be some of the benefits of having students tap into the stories of their past? Finally, while designing a composition class around the literature our students enjoyed in their earlier years has some benefits, what are some of the challenges? It is with these difficulties that I wish to begin.

As children and young adult readers develop into grown-ups, they naturally become aware of a need to establish a newer and more 'adult' identity. As an adult who

enjoys these stories for children, I have discussed some of the benefits in this dissertation for including these previous experiences and delights as part of this new and independent individuality. However, from what I have observed, college students usually feel the need to chunk a lot of their earlier experiences, and unfortunately, they often do not distinguish between those experiences which are more sophomoric, and those which could be useful in their present circumstances.

Lars Eighner chronicles this tendency in his essay "On Dumpster Diving". Eighner lived homeless in Austin, Texas for a time during the 1980s, and his essay is frequently anthologized in first-year English Composition readers. In his brief memoir, Eighner talks about his 'scavenging' activities around the campus of the University of Texas, and what he finds in the garbage often reveals more about the people who jettisoned it than the trash itself. One passage in particular is worth quoting here at length:

> The area I frequent is inhabited by many affluent college students…*the Dumpsters in this area are very rich.* Students throw out many good things, including food. In particular they tend to throw everything out when they move at the end of a semester, before and after breaks, and around midterm when many of them despair of college. *So I find it advantageous to keep an eye on the academic calendar*.
>
> The students throw food away around the breaks because they do not know whether it has spoiled or will spoil before they return. A typical discard is a half jar of peanut butter. In fact non-organic peanut butter does not require refrigeration and is unlikely to spoil in any reasonable time.

The student does not know that, and since it is Daddy's money, the student

decides not to take a chance.

Opened containers require caution and some attention to the

question "Why was this discarded?" But in the case of discards from

student apartments, the answer may be that the *item was discarded*

through carelessness, ignorance, or wastefulness. This can sometimes be

deduced when the item is found with many others, including some that are

obviously perfectly good.

Some students, and others, approach defrosting a freezer by

chucking out the whole lot…[they] throw out canned goods and staples at

the end of semesters and when they give up college at midterm. Drugs,

pornography, spirits, and the like are often discarded when parents are

expected—Dad's day, for example. And spirits also turn up after big party

weekends, presumably discarded by the newly reformed. Wine and spirits,

of course, keep perfectly well even after opened. (Eighner 457-8, emphasis

added)

Notice here that Eighner's analysis on how what is tossed out has little to do with

the quality or even usefulness of the items that find themselves in the dumpster: from

food, to drugs, to pornography, these bits and pieces are jettisoned not because they can

no longer fulfill their intended purposes but for some other reason, which leaves him to

constantly question 'Why was this discarded?'

All of the elements are here—unawareness, a lack of care, the usual siphoning

from benefactors, and parents' expectations; but more than anything else, we see this treadmill sense of time in the form of the academic calendar. Eighner concludes that the dumpster itself is a metaphor for the consumer-driven paralysis that our larger society has fallen into. However, since the scene Eighner describes is at an American university, the case can be made that the dumpster is somehow a symbol for the continuous state of discarding and transitioning that our students undergo during their college experience, especially in their first year of studies. What is it that our students toss away? Why do they do it? Most of all, is there anything that goes into this figurative trash heap that could be recycled and put to better use in their writing? Could there be within this debris something than could inspire them and get them to use their own innate creativity when approaching their assignments?

Indeed, the dumpster is an intriguing metaphor for what often happens in college life, especially in regards to the transformation our students seem to undergo—they come to our classes with personal histories and experiences, tastes and likes, but they too quickly 'discard' them for their new (and often idealized through media, myth, popular culture, and most especially, their peers) 'college experience.' Is it only 'to spit on the images' of their past, or is something else happening? Sometimes we should wonder if our students are discarding more than just food, alcohol, drugs, or pornography. Students today are being encouraged to tap into their high school and childhood experiences and professional conferences, such as the CCCC 2010 conference in Louisville that I attended, have panels that discuss ways students can draw on hobbies or religious beliefs and craft these into an insightful discourse for the classroom. However, I want to explore

207

the possible benefits of using the stories our students enjoyed as children and high school readers in their composition classrooms.

I believe that the study of children's literature can be relevant to composition practices, especially when it comes to teaching students to write for different audiences. In discussing his Narnia stories, Lewis said that he was writing 'for children' not in the sense that he "collected information about child-psychology and decided what age group I'd write for…This is all pure moonshine. I couldn't write in that way at all" (Hooper 38). Nevertheless, sometimes we tell students to 'invent the university' or write for the professionals in their field as their audience, and sometimes we suggest that students might interview all of the professors in the computer science department or collect information on business leaders in the community. While I am not at all opposed to such assignments, and I grant that such information might help some students in the writing process, I also believe (as Lewis does) that such methods might not be useful for all students when it comes to audience awareness: some students whose writing methods are more Platonic than others might even be impaired in the writing process if such a requirement of audience development were forced upon them in the early stages of the writing process. Children's literature can offer a less abstract notion of audience than some of the strategies currently in use.

From here I will suggest ways of using children's literature to stress composition concepts, and finally imply some ways that a topical course where issues in children=s literature will be researched and explored. (To do this, I will rely on an Aristotelian

framework that is often used in composition classrooms—deliberative, forensic, and ceremonial—and I will draw once more upon the work of Wayne C. Booth.)

I will need to delve into composition-rhetoric and the ongoing debate about the place for literature in English composition classrooms. Unlike Erika Lindemann in her essay "No Place for Literature," I believe that rhetoric needs literature, and literature needs rhetoric: the two fields of study (if indeed they really are separate at all) explain and reveal different things about each other. Some of the best non-literary writing that I have ever read, in a composition classroom and beyond, is in that 'border land' where rhetoric and literature meet, such as the writings of Wayne Booth or Mikhail Bakhtin. This concept has the potential to be fully explored in a topical composition class that examines children's literature and children's culture.

After assessing the merits of literature in college composition as argued by Booth, Erika Lindemann, Gary Tate, and Michael Gamer, I will create a practicum and suggest many ways and possible activities where children's literature and popular culture can be used as materials to spawn student creativity and critical thinking, which can led to student writing that is engaged, thoughtful, and insightful.

<center>The Inward Generation</center>

In a sense, the postmodern culture that all of us as teachers and students live in is the result of the changes of the 1960s where multimedia and popular culture began to pay a larger part in each individual identity, and how the consumer-modeling of culture and entertainment has inadvertently played a part in our social fragmentation and wide divergence of individual tastes. Since the post-Vietnam period has given way to the 21st

<center>209</center>

century, the characteristics of that era have not been ameliorated, but seem to have become further inflamed. Therefore, to understand our own culture, it is necessary to review some of the psychological analysis from the time where it all began, the 1960s, where psychologists first diagnosed a cultural move towards a more inner consciousness and morality.

In October 1969, the American sociologist Jeffrey K. Hadden proposed that the best label for college-aged persons for that day was "the inward generation" because his study indicated that the defining characteristic of the rising Baby Boomer generation was its tendency towards acts of self-reflection and self-understanding as a means to discovering truth and freedom. As with many of his contemporaries, Hadden was not overly optimistic as to where this 'inwardness' might be leading:

> The prospects are both ominous and promising. If turning inward to discover the self is but a step toward becoming a sensitive and honest person, our society's unfettered faith in youth may turn out to be justified. However, inwardness' present mood and form seems unbridled by any social norm or tradition and almost void of notions for exercise of responsibility toward others. (Hadden 50)

The data in Hadden's study indicated that the young persons of the 1960s who were most inclined towards this 'inwardness' were actually prone to a sort of 'privatism' that could be insalubrious at times—in other words, some of these youths could have an extreme aversion to authority and institutions; they could display selfishness and egotistical attitudes; finally, they also seemed interested in only satisfying their own

needs, even if that meant causing harm to the property of others or to someone else.

Despite his reservations, Hadden did believe that there was the possibility for this 'inwardness' to be "molded into a commitment to transform society." Therefore, perhaps compassionate adults in positions to help should reach out to these young adults so that they might guide and direct their energies; one way is that college faculty and liberalized religious leaders should seek out the student leaders, the heads of informal groups, and youthful organizers.

Hadden was not the first to hope that this inward energy could be channeled by such social mentoring methods. However, in the same 1969 issue of *Psychology Today* that published Hadden's study, American sociologist David Riesman cautioned such adults about misreading what actually mattered to these inward Boomers:

> …adults fear to be thought old-fashioned or square and, by taking the part of the radical young without seeing the latter's own ambivalence, they are often no help to them but contribute to the severity of pressures from the peer group. And I expect to see that some faculty who have thought of themselves as…on the side of students will themselves join the backlash when many students fail to reciprocate and are especially hostile towards the permissive faculty who have in the past been on their side. (Riesman 64-7)

C.S. Lewis illustrates such a situation at the beginning of his sixth Narnia novel, *The Silver Chair*, when he places Eustace Scrub and Jill Pole at the Experiment House, which is a modern, coeducational (which in England used to be called 'mixed', as the

narrator points out) school. The story begins with Jill behind the gym, crying and hiding from the bullies, when Eustace finds her and tries to comfort her. While several of the bullies are named (e.g., Adela Pennyfather, "Spotty" Sorner, the 'loathsome Garrett twins', etc.), they are usually called "Them" collectively by Eustace and Jill, and so the narrator sometimes uses the same reference because it gives the tormentors a sort of ubiquitous presence at Experiment House.

However, the bullying is not merely a product of the cruelty of other children because, as the narrator points out, the 'mixed school' is "not nearly so mixed as the minds of the people who ran it" (Lewis 1 [SC]). Indeed, the people who run the House seem eager to befriend and aid the students, particularly the bullies. Similar to what Riesman argues, the headmistress of Experiment House seems eager to 'take the part' of these aggressive clique leaders as she sends for them and talks to them for hours in her office, and because most of the bullies "knew the right sort of things to say to the Head, the main result was that [they] became rather a favorite than otherwise" (2). Therefore, the headmistress does almost as much damage to students like Eustace and Jill as the bullies themselves because she legitimizes this tyranny of 'Them.'

Of course, the traditional English schools that Lewis hated had a distinct system of peers who had powers over others, but Lewis wants us to see this school as something different. Experiment House is a modern school in that it uses modern methods of measuring and diagnosis. However, in spirit the House is more 'democratic', allowing students to develop as they want and do what they like, which enables the 'Them' to bully the others with the blessing of the school officials.

212

This rule by their peers does not create the purgatory that Eustace and Jill live in: it is itself the purgatory from which many of our college students come (especially those who come from inner-cities and other areas that suffer from high crime and rising poverty). Indeed, as Father Nouwen points out, with the decline of parental and institutional authority young persons today face a 'new danger': "the danger of becoming captive to themselves" (Nouwen 36). Riesman adds to this by arguing, "As adult authority disintegrates, the young are more and more the captives of each other…When adult control disappears, the young's control of each other intensifies" (Riesman 64-7). This is the anguish that confronts Eustace and Jill at the beginning of *The Silver Chair*, and it is perhaps one of the most predominate authoritarian forces present in most of our students' lives.

When it comes to the power dynamics that lie behind many social relationships, literary critiques have been done in many areas, particularly when it comes to the oppressive potential of traditional patriarchy. Perhaps it is tempting to apply some of the same characteristics of patriarchal oppression (father-figures, male authority) to peer groups, but as Father Nouwen points out, contrasting peers with patriarchy is not at all an 'apples to apples' comparison for different reasons:

> …the tyranny of fathers is not the same as the tyranny of one's peers. Rejecting the first means disobedience; rejecting the second, non-conformity. Rejecting the first creates feelings of guilt; rejecting the second, feelings of shame. In this respect there [has been] an obvious shift from a guilt-based culture to a shame-based culture (Nouwen 37).

As we see from the opening scene in *The Silver Chair*, Jill chooses to cry behind the barn because though her despair is deep, she cannot let the other children (especially the bullies) see it because of the shame-based culture of the school. Therefore, Jill's opening anger at Eustace is brought on by the shame she feels. In contrast, Jill's posture in the presence of Aslan is more the 'guilt' she would feel for failing a father figure, such as when she admits to Aslan her culpability in Eustace's fall from the precipice. Nevertheless, it is the fear of shame and disgrace that haunts Jill earlier in the story, and what eventually changes her relationship with Eustace (and the other characters in the book) is that she comes to see him as someone she can put aside the shame-proof facade that she relies on to face the others. Jill can do this because as she becomes more secure in her relationships to Eustace, Aslan, and Puddleglum, the less she fears judgment or worries about ridicule because of the special relationship she forms with them.

Shame has a hold on our students as well. I often believe that this sense of shame is the reason why they abandon so many of their former delights (from the entertainment they once enjoyed to even the relationships with family and friends that were once crucial to them) when they matriculate to the university. While such abandonment varies depending on the student culture, it happens on most campuses to many students. Of course, students might hold on to their Harry Potter, or break out into Disney songs from *Aladdin,* or wear shirts depicting their favorite cartoon character, but this should not necessarily be taken for an indication that they are freeing themselves from all notions of shame. In many cases, students embrace these iconic emblems from their past because these are "safe" with the peers, thrice approved by their merchandise vendors, the culture

in their media and entertainment, and the right attitudes embraced by those from whom they seek approval and friendship. No matter the mask it wears, the awareness of shame does not diminish.

Beyond the world of Jill Pole, the inwardness of our students (and the sense of shame it often harbors) presents a perplexity when forming any pedagogy for a writing classroom. Indeed, while students can often manage to be ebulliently extroverted in discussions or in instructor-student conferences, quite often most of their creativity and opinions about various phenomenon are so turned toward the inside, that they have difficulty responding to such broad, open-ended questions such as 'Since you chose this topic, where do you stand on this issue?' or 'How might you rearrange your essay so that it is more exploratory rather than argumentative?'

Aristotelian Arrangement for Children's Texts

If students are too inwardly turned towards their own desires or amusement, then one strategy is to use rhetoric and children's literature to help turn them outward towards the maladies and social unrest: it moves these problems out from inside themselves and into the light of day where they can be (with a degree of anonymity, of course) examined, discussed, and addressed. A neoclassical rendering of such a composition course is a possibility, using a three-category Aristotelian scheme of deliberative, forensic, and epideictic to divide the course readings and arrange the writing topics.

Aristotle conceptualizes deliberative rhetoric as persuasion aimed at influencing the future or bringing about a future action. While such rhetoric is usually aimed at public policy or a call to larger democratic action, deliberative persuasion is also a part of the

individual decision-making process that we discussed with C.S. Lewis's internal discourse communities in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Such rhetorical appeals, Aristotle reminds us, invoke one moral principle over another, or appeal to our desire to embrace 'common sense solutions,' which often necessitates a clash between worldviews or ideological differences. Since Lewis' characters in Narnia are dynamic ones who are in the process of evolving, a good selection for a composition class would be where Lucy tries to persuade herself to say the spell to make her 'beautiful beyond the lot of mortals,' or where Pittencream manages to persuade his conscious mind that his own lies are true but is forced into a lifetime of unconscious anxiety when remembering the deeds of Reepicheep.

While Narnia meets these pedagogical needs, any story for children where the characters are approaching a moral choice that will determine what sort of character they will become is the deliberative approach. Some stories such as Mary's in *The Secret Garden* illustrate how as we evolve our different values might conflict with each other and force us to constantly negotiate our approaches to belief; other stories for children such as Tom's in *The Water Babies* illustrate how our human acts and habits cannot remain in stasis but must adapt alongside our evolving views of the world. Of course, each of these examples could easily overlap with epideictic or forensic rhetoric, but the persuasion happening here is not intended only for praise or contemplation: these stories bring characters to the point of decision-making and seek a consensus (internal or otherwise) for what could be an irrevocable change in the policy of the person. As students experience these moral dilemmas vicariously through their readings, student-

216

centered discussions in class should focus on those parts of the texts that touch on the personal philosophies and values of our students and how these values inform their own choices. This is designed to lead to constructive expository assignments where the students can either reflect and examine their own choices, or look at the choices of the smaller societies or literacy communities they have joined.

Moving to forensic rhetoric, lots of children's literature deals with customs, behavior, issues of value, and character. The nature of all forensic rhetoric, as Aristotle classifies it, seeks to determine the facts of what happened, to reveal or bring to light matters that were before unclear, as well as to issue a judgment of the rightness or wrongness of past acts. E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, for instance, deals with a world of established rules and customs when it comes to the different animals on the farm, the natural order of things, friendship, growing up, and sacrifice. Furthermore, as the story unfolds we see how these boundaries, though daunting at times, can be mollified or even renegotiated with some creativity, dexterousness, friendship, and most of all, love: such children's texts can help facilitate class discussions about society, order, and other conventions and how individuals and groups have either challenged outright or found creative ways to move within these conventions. Students can write on a variety of social and critical topics, or they can turn to autobiographical topics where they relate the text anecdotally to an experience they have had where they were forced to be innovative and experienced new freedoms within the social framework within which they exist.

Judicial persuasion has further possibilities within children's literature in a composition classroom when exploring legalistic discourse conventions. Much fiction

and poetry for children deals with rules children must obey at school and home. While some instructional texts might feel didactic, much instructional literature can be fun and amusing such as Robert Louis Stevenson's "Good and Bad Children" where "Cruel children, crying babies,/All grow up as geese and gabies", or Stevenson's "Whole Duty of Children" where he admonishes children to "always say what's true" and speak when "spoken to", and finally, children should always "behave mannerly at table;/ At least as far as he is able."

Stevenson's verses return us to Henri Bergson's theories: rules often create tension for us, but they create opportunities for elasticity and creativity, which is the result of learning to work within the tension where it is intractable and where bendable, and using these constraints as an opportunity for unique activities and solutions. Literature often delves into forensic rhetoric by juxtaposing two different codes, or human systems of values, against each other—the effect of this technique sometimes produces outrage or sadness, but more often it produces irony that can be used to provoke laughter or deep contemplativeness. Again, in literature the rhetorical borders will be more porous, yet the persuasion in these instances deals with codes of living and the implications of the broader moral law within each created world: through the stories, we see how characters work within or go against these codes or laws and how the author asks the reader to adjudicate accordingly. Creative writing-assignments are possible where two or more different systems of values are juxtaposed, and these can actually prove to be fun for students. Comparative cultural or literary studies are also possible for a more research-centered composition course.

Shifting finally to ceremonial rhetoric, the third part of the classical scheme, much literature for children takes pains to point out what is admirable and what is despicable in how characters choose to live, what feelings and acts are good and which ones are bad. Charlotte saves her friend by using epideictic rhetoric that in turn forces Zuckerman to deliberate on Wilbur's qualities, and the characters in *The Secret Garden* often praise the 'magic' in each other and show concern when they do things that push magic away. Authors use the epideictic so that the reader understands what she should love and despise, what actions and deeds are commendable, and what character traits are worth imitating.

Epideictic rhetoric, according to Aristotle, is situated with the present moment, or the appropriate time to celebrate or laud a person, a people, or an act. Ceremonial rhetoric is about who should be praised and who criticized and attempts to set forth examples of behavior that is laudable and also showcases illustrations of conduct that is reprehensible and shameful. In the end, perhaps what ceremonial rhetoric is designed to teach us is similar to the minister's sermon after Charlotte's first message in the web, "that human beings must always be on the watch for the coming of wonders" (White 85). Completing the Aristotelian scheme of rhetoric, selections from such texts of fiction and poetry could be used for creative or expository assignments: students could practice the sublime by creating their own ceremonial essays about some common part of their everyday lives. For a research class on children's literature topics, students could perform a critical examination of the rhetorical ethos after several classroom discussions on the epideictic and how it depends so much on character.

So why not use children's literature? After all, stories help readers deal with issues in a more oblique way than argumentative writing, and imaginative texts help readers to experience problems and conflicts beyond the logical or evaluative parts of our consciousness. While most of our students have never experienced anything having to do with labor and environmental disputes, political organizing, or questions of diplomacy, many of them have experienced things through entertainment and imaginative works and might be inspired to apply these experiences to their college writing.

If student inwardness makes some composition tasks difficult, then we should consider rhetoric and children's literature as an option to turn them outward towards their problems where they can be discussed. While I have suggested here a rhetorical framework for such a course, developing a pedagogy would take more time and planning. Furthermore, there are also entrenched attitudes within composition theory that oppose the inclusion of literary texts in the classroom, which we will explore next.

Requiem for a Reader

For better or worse, public school curriculums usually change far more slowly than the ones in higher education because of the bureaucratic nature of the former. I entered high school in 1992, three years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and a year after the breakup of the Soviet Union. As a result, most of the standard literature that I read was influenced by the concerns of the Cold War. Some of the assigned readings like George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *1984*, while not as compelled upon the core of the curriculum as they once were, are still used in many classrooms. Other books like Pat Frank's apocalyptic story, *Alas, Babylon*, which is set in rural Florida in an alternate

1950s history, have just about disappeared from the classroom setting.

Nevertheless, I was fortunate to enter high school when I did because these books were beneficial in different ways. As I argued earlier, literature often illustrates for the reader how important concepts work—concepts that would probably remain obtuse if all the reader had were abstract conceptions. Though the needs of education might have shifted by the early 1990s, some of the Cold War readings did teach me ideas that most of my students have difficulty with today, such as the 'law of unintended consequences,' supply-side economics, balance of power, game theory, and factors of labor innovations.

Furthermore, most of the Cold War readings helped me to be more forward-looking and gave me an understanding of how events in far, remote places could touch my life for the better or worse. Most of all, the literature of my schooling gave me an idea of what was possible—good and bad—beyond my snug, middleclass, suburban world. I believe there are many benefits to having imaginative texts in a college composition classroom to balance some of the abstract ideas that students are learning. Despite efforts to review and even restore some literature to college composition classes, its reintroduction was slow and is still resisted by many composition theorists.

While there is not much evidence to indicate that college composition classes were ever solely literature-based, the disappearance of poetic and imaginative readings from the composition classroom (while remaining something of a mystery) was largely a deliberate act, as Gary Tate laments:

> We have denied students who are seeking to improve their writing the
> benefits of reading an entire body of excellent writing. It is not unlike

telling music students that they should not listen to Bach or Mahler. Why

have we taken such a seemingly illogical stance? Three reasons seem to

me important: the pedagogical sins of teachers in the past, the revival of

rhetoric, and changing attitudes about the purposes and goals of freshman

composition. (Tate 317)

While the benefit of having non-fiction and process-centered readings in the

course syllabus in undeniable, I agree with Tate that the studious avoidance of literature

(which seems to have been more absolute prior to 1991) seemed rather selective.

Furthermore, banning literature in some cases can have the opposite effect of what was

intended—it might lead to poorer or less inspired writing.

For example, when I took English Composition I over the summer of 1996 at a

community college in rural Mississippi, I remember my first college textbook: while I

was unable to sell back this reader, I have since lost it and have been unsuccessful in

finding the book or learning its title. It had an orange "used" sticker and was well worn,

and I believe it was printed before the Clinton administration or the "dot-com boom"

because I recall nothing topical to that political period or any references to websites or

other electronic resources.

I remember thinking that the readings were dull and not engaging when I

compared them with the imaginative texts that I had recently read in my high school

classes or the fantasy and horror fiction I was reading that summer. From the point of

view of a seventeen year old student who enjoyed books and was experiencing new

learning and relationships through his part-time job unloading trucks and being a janitor

at a local department store, the selected readings from the textbook seemed at times dry, even superficial at times, and (cardinal sin for all our impatient, self-assured students) 'boring.'

I confess that I was not fair towards most of the assigned readings, and that I often obstinately overlooked the purpose of those texts. However, what is also clear from the small number of old papers I sill have is that my first attempts at 'inventing the university' were poor. I was a good writer in high school, and writing was also a hobby, so I'm surprised at how placid, lifeless, and uninspiring my papers were. Furthermore, my freshman essays, while average in most respects, fail at any notion of "rhetorical situation" since there is no notion of audience in these writings, no sense of purpose (exigency does not seem to exist), and there is no sense of timeliness, which is most amazing of all because this was a concept I had some grasp of as a high school student judging from my creative and personal writings.

I had two papers that were the exception: one was a paper about my grandfather; the second was a response to the instructor's comment to a reading-response I wrote about the cultural implications of Barbie, namely her breasts and long, thin legs. My instructor simply wrote, "How does this reading have meaning for your life?" She wrote that statement so often that I must have had been extremely flummoxed by then. With an impertinence that surprises me today, teenaged egotist though I was, I responded to her with a 3 page polemic that explained that since I had not owned a Barbie doll, I did not see how the reading had 'meaning for my life.' Secondly, I told the instructor that the girls I knew who had owned Barbies were not the suffering, unconfident creatures that the

author had described them to be. Indeed, since many of my girlfriends seemed more confident and were better performing academically than many of my male friends who drank beer on the weekends and were repeating their 12th grade year that summer, I concluded that the reading was 'meaningless for my life.'

Compositionists like Andrea Lunsford and John Ruszkiewicz take pains to help avoid situations such as the one I experienced: the awareness of our students' difficulty to write on or form arguments with topics that they have difficulty conceptualizing. However, pressure to standardize (along with learning outcomes and other objectives) a single text across all first-year English classes remains the reality at many community colleges and lower-tier institutions such as the one where I teach. As long as this is the case, teachers and students will struggle with the same issues regardless of the best practices prescribed.

On a personal level, however, I believe my experience with the Barbie text, my struggle to meet the instructor's expectations, and my written response to her comments show that I was becoming aware of the relationship between what I read and what I wanted to say. Despite my one outburst, I was never interested in responding critically. Generally, my papers tried to conform to the expectations of the instructor and the point of view that I inferred from the readings.

Did I learn much about college discourse or writing for my discipline in my first-year English courses? I do not believe I did, and some of the struggles that my history and literature professors later had with my writing testify to this. The composition courses that I took did not, as Erika Lindemann and others argue for, prepare me for the

conversations within the academy and the disciplines within it. Of course, I do not blame the assigned reader since the main reason composition has been taught poorly has less to do with texts and more with forces beyond the classroom. However, I believe that in some cases the readings and how they can be selected for textbooks do not help when it comes to writing, and in my case, they might have hindered it.

Literature and Composition

While many of the composition textbooks and readers that I see today are much improved from my 1996 textbook, I believe that many first-year students have the same responses as I did to some of the poor readings which they do not find engaging and for them does not lead to inspiring discourse. While I concede that it is probably impractical to expect our scholars to be specialists in both the compositionist and literary discipline (especially since the two fields are vastly lush and overgrown with their own unique theories and scholarship), I do believe that both areas suffer from the demarcation between literature and composition professionals. But how did we get to this point?

Maxine Hairston in her often quoted essay "Diversity, Ideology, and Teaching Writing" (1992) is hostile to any notion of including literature in composition and encourages us to oppose it. Indeed, Hairston accuses the literature faculty of trying to subvert the process pedagogy of composition, making the composition class little more than a stage for New Marxist teachings, and Hairston argues that all of this is what comes from having composition classes housed in English departments that are controlled by literature specialists.

Hairston concluded that the only way to protect composition studies is to separate

those courses from literature departments, as they were at the University of Texas at Austin in the 1990s, and so the split between the two English concentrations grew wider as other universities followed Austin. Hairston has some valid concerns about the ethics of the teaching practices regarding the cultural studies class at Texas in the 1990s, and Erika Lindemann later adds more valid criticisms of how teaching literature badly can have a deleterious effect on our students' efforts to become better, more rhetorically-aware and metacognitive writers, and she is correct when she argues that when "freshmen read and write about imaginative literature alone, they remain poorly prepared for the writing required of them in courses outside the English department" (Lindemann 311).

Nevertheless, I still have some unanswered questions: (1) Can literature and imaginative works help (rather than hinder) students as they try to write argument and expository papers in a first-year writing class? (2) Do the arguments against literature hold up against scrutiny, or is this just a scapegoat for the real issues such as poor pedagogical practices and the interference of other forces (social, administrative, political, etc.) in the composition classroom?

Before these questions can be answered, Lindemann and Tate in his counterpoint seem to agree that the broader question we must consider before beginning a conversation on the role of literature in composition classes is, what is the purpose of a first-year writing course? Lindemann, Tate, and Michael Gamer each offer their own accounts of this purpose, which goes to the heart of the discussion about literary texts and the place they should hold in composition classes.

Problems with Literature

According to Lindemann, the reason every first-year student needs to be >dragged through= our composition courses is because our courses supposedly do what no other high school course can do: (1) prepare students to write in the styles and modes of academic discourse that are universal in the academy and in the professions that our students will be entering, as well as equip them with the strategies that will help them in those discourses; (2) prepare students to 'enter the conversations' of the academy and to write for the different academic disciplines that they are training for.

Because this two-fold preparation is the goal of first-year composition, Lindemann maintains that literary texts are not suitable for classroom readings because, in her view, the 'conversations' that revolve around literature are too narrow:

> [Students] rarely connect literature with life. If students get to write a paper or two, they must assume the disembodied voice of some abstruse journal as they analyze the ingrown toenail motif in Beowulf. Such assignments silence students' voices in the conversation literature is intended to promote. In other words, literature teaching offers the writing teacher no model worth emulating. (Lindemann 314)

In Lindemann's view, a composition class is broad and involves multiple discourses, points-of-view, and ways of knowing (and this will help students when they leave first-year English and go to write in their academic majors), whereas literature can offer students only esoteric conversations about 'Beowulf's ingrown toenail' that cannot help them when they go to write about healthcare or political science.

Furthermore, Lindemann argues that since most instructors tend to lecture about

literature (or 'great works') rather than facilitate discussion, then this leads students away from the process-oriented nature of a composition class where they are no longer taking an active role in their learning and, hence, their writing:

> Not only do [literature teachers] sometimes express misgivings about the
> writing teacher's use of group work and peer evaluation, but they also
> report clear preferences for teaching by lecture and discussion. A 1989-
> 1990 survey of upper-division literature courses supports this preference:
> "almost all respondents devote some time to [lectures and discussions],
> while relatively few devote time to [small-group activities and writing].
> Further, even respondents using small-group activities and writing
> exercises generally devote only a small percentage of class time to them"
> (Lindemann 313)

However, Lindemann is critical of the sort of readers I had in college as well when she discusses a similar problem with focusing a composition course on 'great ideas' or 'great works':

> Focusing the course on great ideas also limits students' attention to
> writing, primarily because "ideas" courses devote too much time to lecture
> and discussion and too little time to planning, drafting, and revising. For
> this reason, I am also unhappy with WAC courses that substitute "global
> warming" or contemporary social issues for the great ideas listed in the
> thematic tables of contents of more traditional essay readers. The emphasis
> is still on the essay; the pedagogy, in practice, still involves too much

teacher talk and too little writing. (Lindemann 312)

Lindemann moves on from there to argue that students need reading assignments that more closely resemble the types of writing that they will perform in the class, and since students will not be writing plays or poems, then these forms of writing are not relevant to a composition pedagogy based in process and critical theory.

Where Lindemann Goes Wrong

As a process pedagogue, Lindemann wants to do all in her power to ensure that the composition instructor does not forget that the writing of students should be at the center of her course; therefore, Lindemann is exceedingly wary of any other material that might take the focus from this writing. Lindemann wants to 'complicate' what she sees as an attempt to reinstate literature at the center of the first-year composition course, and she makes a very convincing case for the bad past pedagogical practices regarding the use of literature. However, does Lindemann make an absolute case that there is 'no place for literature' in composition? I believe she does not because as Tate and Gamer warn us, good or bad pedagogy does not always depend on the texts selected as it does the practices and decisions of the instructors themselves when they are in the classroom. Furthermore, literature and fiction can be used as composition tools and even topics for good papers if we use a rhetorical approach.

Bad practices surrounding composition deserve more scrutiny. As Gamer and Hairston argue, some of the newer critical theory or cultural studies models, especially when taught by under-trained TAs and adjuncts, can pose the same problems of silencing student voices and increased lecturing as the teaching of literature:

This does not mean that we still don't have plenty to worry about

regarding what teaching assistants do in the composition classroom; the

arrival of critical theory to the academy, however, has changed the

parameters of what can go wrong in a writing course, even if the result of

bad teaching—the silencing of student voices—is the same. Our graduate

student teachers—at least those in the humanities and even in the social

sciences—usually have just begun their own theoretical reading, and if

anything are too eager to impart these powerful ways of seeing to their

students. Today, instead of being on the lookout for writing instructors

who want to lecture on "The Great Tradition" rather than listening to their

students, we now need to watch for teachers who celebrate the death of the

author so rambunctiously that they also kill off the student authors sitting

in their own classroom. (Gamer 283)

Finally, if we reinterpret Hairston's angst against the 'literature' influence on composition

classes, perhaps what really happened in the cultural studies classes is that the bad

pedagogy was carried over from the old model to the new curriculum. Therefore, perhaps

teaching practices, and not literature, were partially to blame for Hairston=s concerns at

Austin. However, a better practice of teaching composition would always rely on a

student-centered pedagogy and, depending on the circumstantial needs, if literature could

be useful for such a pedagogy then it should also be used.

For example, years ago I had a student who was a fan of the Stephanie Meyer's

Twilight series and wanted to write about them for our Composition I class. Since I was a

TA and trying to adhere to the approved FYE syllabus, I told her that there was not much of a place for a book review or literary analysis, but if she truly wanted to write about *Twilight* then she might have one possibility that semester, which was the literacy autobiography.

In keeping with the assignment, she would need to tell the story of how she became a *Twilight* aficionado by gaining knowledge and proficiency by accepting the values of similar persons who enjoy *Twlight* culture. In a student-teacher conference, she and I discussed some of the issues such as 'suspension of disbelief,' and what specific elements that pertain to *Twilight* she as a reader has to suspend in order to engross herself into that world. For example, why would this ancient vampire be romantically interested in an otherwise unremarkable American teenage girl? Furthermore, to liberally paraphrase a professor of mine, why would a 100 year old vampire be hanging out at a high school in the middle of the northwestern sticks?

However, after the student loaned me a copy of book one, I began to have other ideas about how she could use *Twilight*. At the time, I wasn't sure if these ideas would be appropriate (in the course of an academic semester I didn't have time to ponder the complexities of whether these ideas were fit within the 'insider/outsider' community concept of the assignment, etc.), so I did not suggest them. However, duing the conference, the student told me she wasn't sure why none of her family, and only a handful of her friends, could really 'get into' *Twlight*. She let me borrow the book, and though I did not have time to do more than read the first chapters and do a cursory overview, I did see why the people in her circle might not enjoy *Twilight* as she did.

Bella Swan, the narrator and heroine, is not a remarkable character nor is she extremely interesting. This is not to say that Bella cannot tell the reader a good story because many narrators in literature are not remarkable, like Nellie Dean or Nick Carraway, because their purpose is to guide the reader through the created world (so we don't have to navigate it alone) and to offer perspective when the actions of those in the story perplex us. However, if Bella is going to be such an unremarkable narrator, why does the reader need to see so much of her?

Of course, Bella is an important character in the novel, and as the narrator her thoughts and observations are important to us as readers. However, while the teenage gothic world of *Twilight* could be alluring to many readers, the introduction of this world seems to be inhibited from the onset because of Bella's various preoccupations: a constant, circular treadmill concerning what she wears, her feelings about her family, her self-consciousness about her new surroundings and the local community, and so forth.

I later talked to the student again and offered my insights as to why some readers might be 'put off' by the *Twilight* story, namely that the introspection and self-consciousness surrounding Bella's narration of the story might hinder some readers who might prefer to be left alone instead to explore this new American gothic world. Her response was, "I can see that, but I guess the way the story is told is why I like it." I didn't go any further with this, but I saw that what was an impediment for a more extroverted, explorer-minded reader like me was a narrative gateway for an introverted, more retiring reader such as my student.

We both agreed that different books appeal to different personalities before

moving on to how she might use *Twilight* for her assignment. Overall, our discussions were successful in moving my student into a critical discussion of the book and making it work for the assignment. However, not long afterward I had another idea: what would it take to change *Twilight* into a book that she could still enjoy, but that her family and friends would also appreciate? Perhaps another assignment where the student became the editor who selected parts of Bella's narration as essential, and then addressed the parts that could be shortened or removed so that a broader readership might enjoy it. She could pull examples of these passages and, as she did this, she would justify her decisions based on how they would improve the receptiveness of specific readers (i.e., her boyfriend, mom and dad, etc.) towards *Twilight*.

With the hindsight of an instructor, she could have creatively used such an assignment for the literacy autobiography because only someone who was knowledgeable and had achieved a sort of proficiency with the books could perform such a duty. Furthermore, the assignment would have stressed the areas of rhetoric, process, and metacognition. Clearly, literature could be useful here in a college composition classroom if our pedagogical practices were more student-centered and if we could be more sympathetic to it since our students have had many experiences through it, and there are many opportunities if we are open to using the young adult fiction that many of them already enjoy.

The problem is that compositionists such as Lindemann create such a narrow purpose for the composition classroom that all fiction is 'ipso facto' excluded, and this is hardly a surprise considering the centrality that composition has in the university (as well

as the burdens that comes with that authority), and the careful maneuvering it has taken to place it there.

<div style="text-align:center">Ultimate Service Course</div>

Another problem with Lindemann's argument for banning literature is her assumption that the composition course prepares students for all the discourses and conversations within the academy and the professions, and that for this reason the course cannot use any literary content:

> Freshman English does what no high school writing course can do: provide opportunities to master the genres, styles, audiences, and purposes of college writing. Freshman English offers guided practice in reading and writing the discourses of the academy and the professions. That is what our colleagues across the campus want it to do; that is what it should do if we are going to drag every first-year student through the requirement. (Lindemann 312)

As salesmanship, Lindemann's argument probably echoes dozens of similar proposals that have helped to loosen the funding from tightfisted college administrators, but is the reasoning sound? As Tate argues, such an approach is 'intellectually suspect' because it reduces composition to a mere 'service course' for other departments. Tate also seems skeptical with the notion of one or two courses preparing students to write on any academic subject:

> I am increasingly bothered…by the current focus on academic discourse…I sometimes think that we are very close to turning freshman

composition into the ultimate "service course" for all the other disciplines

in the academy. I reject…that vision of the course. Does the vast apparatus

of our discipline…exist in the cause of nothing more than better sociology

and biology papers? I hope not, because such a view is not only

intellectually suspect, but impractical as well… (Tate 319)

Indeed, if this were the goal of my composition courses, then my own experience

with my college reader shows that I was not prepared, and Sharon Crowley in her book

Composition in the University (1998) argues effectively that the composition course

cannot deliver on all of these promises. Crowley's claim is supported by the development

of writing courses for majors in other departments. But even if the composition course

could defy all the skepticism and do all that Lindemann claims it can do, why is it an

argument for banning literature? Lindemann's rationale takes an extreme-specialist view

that assumes literature to be for entertainment and aesthetic appreciation that is outside of

the narrow scope of professional studies. Furthermore, it overlooks the cross-curriculum

potential of literature. Gamer argues that novels are multidisciplinary by nature (e.g.,

Frankenstein with its scientific, philosophical, sociological, and literary overtones), so it

seems literature could support these goals to make composition courses the writing course

for the whole university.

While I have discussed the rhetorical and popular culture implications for using

Twilight in the composition classroom, it is full of multidisciplinary possibilities for our

students who enjoy the series. For example, in 2006 the History Channel produced the

docudrama *Vampire Secrets*, which traces the origins of the vampire myth through many

mediums of study, including history, literature, and science. The show uses traditional documentary techniques such as narrative storytelling, expert interviews, and historical images. However, *Vampire Secrets* makes use of dramatization as well, using many theatrical recreations of historical events and subculture phenomena. The creation of the show required a mixing of performances and creative methods, as well as the cognitive tools of observation and diagnosis, and technological and new media savvy.

Most of all, *Vampire Secrets* looks at the subject of vampirism across several professional and academic disciplines in including folklore studies, history, forensic science, criminology, biological science, psychiatry, literature, business, commercial marketing, tourism, sociology, and popular culture. Furthermore, all of these studies help to inform the others, and to fill in gaps when necessary, in tracing the metamorphosis of the vampire from its Hungarian origins as an undead parasitical bloodsucker to its 21st century characterization as a sexy, aristocratic, immortal hero with a dark side.

Popular YA fiction can possibly be a useful in emphasizing certain multidisciplinary aspects of the composition course, but classic texts of children's literature are also helpful as well. For example, *The Secret Garden* lends itself to botanical and environmental studies, and *The Island of the Blue Dolphins* lends itself well to medical, cultural, and survival analysis, and both books overlap in the academic areas of psychology, sociology, and social work. However, when it comes to teaching process in the composition class, how might literature be useful?

For me, Lindemann=s most persuasive argument for excluding literature is her assertion that students need reading texts to model their own classroom writings and

assignments:

> A better way to teach style is by asking students to examine the texts they encounter in the academy, texts that define a much larger repertoire of rhetorical options than literary language customarily allows. Simply recognizing or appreciating these conventions is not enough; students must also make them work in their own writing, by creating texts like those they read, by talking back to the models. (Lindemann 314)

In theory, Lindemann is correct: students must be able to conceptualize the sorts of writing they are expected to produce, and so they need access to these sorts of writing samples. Having said this, in my own experience with freshmen wring, modeling sample essays yields mixed results at best. When I pass out photocopies of sample student papers on exploratory papers or position essays, I find this helps some students, depending on the class. However, when we are looking at samples of a literacy autobiography or another genre of writing in a textbook reader, I frustratingly find that students sometimes do not conceptualize these readings as samples with which to explore and experiment.

Some psychological barrier is there: perhaps the appearance of an essay published in print and inside a textbook makes the sample seem impalpable to students, which might be why they do not experiment with the techniques that those authors use. This problem is very similar to the one that Lindemann describes when dealing with literary textsCstudents see them as something on a pedestal, or as something to write about rather than to emulate.

The ineluctable reality is that many of our lower-performing writers simply do not

think in terms of process when it comes to anything: these students believe writing projects are something to be done in a beginning to end, one setting, and 'all nighter' manner. All of this is very flummoxing for us as instructors because many of the activities these same students have learned outside of the classroom (baseball, cheerleading, card games, musical instruments, etc.) had to be learned as a long and continual process where they improved through much work and practice over a period of time.

When it comes to our students' unawareness of process, perhaps literature is not the culprit. However, literature is very good at capturing life *as* a process. For instance, Scott O'Dell in the *Island of the Blue Dolphins* captures Karana's development from a mere girl of the island to someone who has to do everything to keep herself alive—from finding food and creating a shelter, to eluding raiders and fighting off wild dogs. The most vital need of all—aside from food and safety—is Karana's need for companionship, which is not easily met since she is the last inhabitant of her island homeland.

While a finished literary product does not lend itself well to teaching students about development or the 'writing process' as we discuss it from a compositionist viewpoint, it can teach them something about process itself, mainly the importance of continual development and individual growth. Furthermore, entering fictional worlds helps to stretch the creative capabilities of the mind so that it can see potentialities that it sometimes misses without training and practice: this helps students to be better editors, peer reviewers, and revisers. Furthermore, imaginative texts can add something to composition that has perhaps existed in our own classes in an underground fashion, but

238

has been overall absent in a broader sense (especially as TA programs give into administrative pressure to become more standardized) for a long time.

Composition: Where the Child Grows and Plays

Though composition courses are not all that we would like them to be, it is too easy to blame everything on college politics and academic conformity: perhaps our popular philosophy of composition—that students 'invent the university', which is closely tied to Lindemann's argument about students writing for their professions and majors—is flawed. As Tate and others seem to suggest, not only was such a premise faulty, but it did not have the student's best interest in mind:

> The "conversations" I want to help my students join are not the conversations going on in the academy. These are too often restricted, artificial, irrelevant, and—let's be frank—boring. I refuse to look at my students as primarily history majors, accounting majors, nursing majors. I much prefer to think of them and treat them as people whose most important conversations will take place outside the academy, as they struggle to figure out how to live their livesꟷthat is, how to vote and love and survive, how to respond to change and diversity and death and oppression and freedom. (Tate 320)

Perhaps Tate is right in arguing that we have been mistaken in choosing to 'look at our students' as merely professionals-in-making. After all, our profession is only a small part of our complete humanity, and so when we rely on a pedagogy that identifies

our students so closely with their institution or academic major (which might only be tentative for them at the time), are we treating them as only half of a human being?

While literature should be considered for composition classrooms because it can be useful for many of the reasons previously discussed, I have not touched on one of the most important potentialities, which is that imaginative texts tend to draw our students outside the academy and into the world. Through literature, students are lured into the lives of others, and literature asks them to consider things about themselves that they have so far avoided. Students will face most of their fiercest challenges, as Tate says, 'outside the academy' as they are forced to confront many problems in the world they live in: this is why it is not enough to make the goal of the composition course to 'invent the university' or train for professional discourses.

I propose another vision for the purpose of first-year composition, which will draw some from Tate and Gamer, but will also draw from Wayne Booth and a broader vision of rhetoric, namely on the "rhetoric of possibilities" that has been discussed earlier in this dissertation. To do this, we first must ask, what has composition lost from its separation from literature?

Tate describes what he believes to be a devolution of composition studies, which he links to the complete and systematic divorce of the course's rhetorical strategies from its literary tradition:

> [We] gave up some words that I regret losing. "Imagination…" sounds as antique today as another word we lost: "Style." Instead of imagination, we now have "inventive procedures" such as cubing, looping, and

240

brainstorming. Instead of style, a piece of writing now has "surface features"…Cubing and looping and brainstorming are sometimes useful pedagogical devices, but to assume…that inventive procedures or the plotting of cognitive strategies do more than scratch the surface of the human mind thinking and imagining is to trivialize the creative act of composing. (Tate 318)

Tate persuasively points out the very mechanical and proscriptive characteristics of composition practice, and how it seems to be devoid of the preoccupations of the human inventiveness which is often the impetus for writing in the first place. Indeed, for those of us who love rhetoric, what Tate describes seems to embody the most 'cosmetic' sham of rhetoric that Plato sometimes attacked. What then is the balance that a composition course should have between rhetoric and literature, and how should the two forces counterbalance each other so that both are helping—not hindering—the creative processes our students need to use? The writings of Wayne Booth make use of literature and rhetoric in a unique way that touches on this very question.

In his essay "The Rhetorical Stance", Booth argued that the writing that is most persuasive to him—or, as he states it, the writing that gets people like him to 'change their minds'—is the writing where the author manages to engage the audience in the process of thinking through a pressing problem, appealing to our thought and feeling, and providing us with a fully dramatized and recreated 'spectacle of a man' considering every option or point of view on an issue, and thus vicariously involving us on every turn of thought and every momentous decision until we come (as the author does) to the same

241

conclusion.

Booth gives a couple of examples such as Winston Churchill and Edmund Burke, and Booth looks at some of their non-political writings in order to illustrate that this rhetorical positioning was not merely a persuasive tactic, but a 'habitual' movement throughout everything they wrote on any subject:

> What makes the rhetoric of Milton and Burke and Churchill great is that each presents us with the spectacle of a man passionately involved in thinking an important question through, in the company of an audience. Though each of them did everything in his power to make his point persuasive, including a pervasive use of the many emotional appeals that have been falsely scorned by many a freshman composition text…none would have polled the audience in advance to discover which position would get the votes. Nor is the highly individual personality that springs out at us from their speeches and essays present for the sake of selling itself. The rhetorical balance among speakers, audience, and argument is with all three men habitual, as we see if we look at their non-political writings. (Booth 245 [RS])

Booth then illustrates how this process would work by drawing on one of Edmund Burke's writings on the sublime. What we see is a 'way of seeing' that is extroverted, engaging, and popular for an audience—an audience willing to follow an appealing rhetor from one topic to another: "In short, because [Burke] was a man engaged with men in the effort to solve a human problem, one could never call what he wrote dull, however

242

difficult or abstruse." Booth will later develop the 'rhetoric of assent' that deals with two questions: "What are good reasons" and "When should I change my mind?" Booth's ideas of the 'stance' or 'assent' of rhetoric lends itself naturally as a bridge to literature, and can probably help revive literary studies in certain ways beyond the composition classroom if we want it to.

For example, novels selected for high school such as *The Great Gatsby* or *Huckleberry Finn* begin with a narrator facing a problem—Nick who is at odds over his immediate dislike of Gatsby but is drawn to the protagonist because of Gatsby's admirable qualities, or Huck who faces a dilemma of either violating his social conscience or violating the trust of his friend Jim. We as readers vicariously watch and experience both Nick's and Huck's struggle through every stage of the story, and at the end we rejoice that Huck decides to 'go to hell' and Nick decides to return to Minnesota and leave his affluent, amoral companions behind.

In such a way, literary texts may be more engaging for students in ways that many of their issue-driven readers are not, and while a student might not have much to say about abstract notions of 'sustainability' or 'social justice', some of them more naturally might want to discuss what they experience through fiction or entertainment because they feel more involved in the process. For myself, writing about a text that I find inspiring helps me to write about it better, and in my experience the same is true for many students. While being better citizens and voters is something most of us would like our students to be able to be through our composition classrooms, I find that this gets harder if we try to tackle some of these issues too directly.

Instead, as Gamer tells us, fiction can be useful by helping students understand some of these universal concepts such as 'poverty' or 'injustice' in a particularized narrative that becomes personalized for them:

> Well-chosen imaginative texts, when combined with other of nonfiction readings addressing similar issues, not only provide students with a pleasurable way to interact with other ways of seeing, but also enrich student writing by showing students that they can make arguments by telling stories and that their own experiences are not merely personal and entirely subjective. An imaginative text, after all, if it has any power to persuade us to reexamine the way we think about something, is more than just the narrative of a single fictitious person. Even while it communicates on the level of particular detail and personal testimony, an imaginative text almost always makes more general claims for the truthfulness of a particular way of seeing. People rarely just tell stories for the sake of telling stories; fiction, poetry, and drama may do subtly what essays do more overtly, but both are partial (in all senses of the word), both have agendas, and both seek to persuade readers. (Gamer 283)

Gamer points out not only the nuanced arguments that often lie within literature, but he further emphasizes the crucial interactive quality that they have as well. I have proposed a composition course that asks students to consider the children's texts within an Aristotelian rhetorical framework. However, courses could also be developed around the cultural and social implications of the stories we read as children, why we enjoy them,

the role of the 'hidden adult,' and the importance that these stories play in a lifetime of human growth. In many ways, children's and young adult literature is perfect for a writing course because as a subject matter it has familiarity for most students, but it often contains implications for our culture (i.e., social, political, language, media, or even our connections to friends or strangers, etc.) that are not apparent in an obvious way.

A reader for the class that could help students to think critically, read carefully, and could encourage discussions about children's or young adult literature and eventually lead to expository or research writing topics. Literature should be mixed in with non-literary texts such as criticism, commentary, and historical studies. However, sample papers, process work, critical interpretations, and other supplemental texts should also be included in the pedagogy of such a course. The readings can vary depending on the focus of the instructor topically (i.e., *The Secret Garden* and *The Island of the Blue Dolphins* for sustainability and eco issues, *Twilight* for medical or family issues, etc.) or schematically (using an Aristotelian model or popular cultural one, etc.), but all of them should provide a foundation for class discussions (rather than literature lectures) on cultural, individual, historical, and rhetorical issues within the contemporary classroom.

I believe such a course offers some possibility for growth for a college writer, and it could further illustrate the natural meeting place between rhetoric and literature, and prove that they are natural companions and to rivals at all.

There are Always Possibilities

John Poulakos argues that the notion of the 'possible' is a concept that has been with rhetoric since its creation thousands of years ago. Poulakos claims that the Sophists

held a philosophy of human beings in which all people occupied two spheres: the real and the possible. Behind this notion is the idea that people, while they understand reality, do not accept it as the final statement on the way things are, but instead cling to possibility, or that which is not real but of an existence that could be achieved in some way.

If the possible is discussed at all in composition, it is usually done so by those rhetoricians of the 'social-epistemic' school such as James Berlin and those who follow him: they wish to create a theory and a classroom that strives to make students aware of the forces that are in place in a capitalistic society so that they will have the language and the theory to dream of a new possible world without oppression and inequality. I believe that this is a very limited view of the 'possible' that rhetoric has the power to convey to others.

Even if Berlin and his followers could conquer injustice, oppression, and poverty, does that mean that people will no longer dream of other possible existences from their real existence? Assuredly, they will. Assuming that poverty and injustice can be eliminated worldwide, there are those other evils such as death, pain, loss, poverty (in a new standard of comparison), and the dogged question of existence that will continue to linger for all of us. Therefore, people will continue to dream about a possible world where they are not but wish to be.

Here is another bridge between children's literature and rhetoric, because— whether discussing a healing of the body and spirit in a hidden garden, or a party for dogs on the top of a tree—imaginative texts for children often demand that we reach for a new level of the possible. No author of a fictional text, no matter how clever he or she may be,

will be able to persuade us of the possibility of their vision without first understanding us as readers—writers must anticipate what we dream of and what we want our world to be. The best samples of children's fiction and poetry excel at this.

I believe students should be encouraged to use Booth=s 'habitual stance' as their own, and students need to dream more and try to envision the 'possible' for themselves, and that texts for children that students have previously experienced and enjoyed can be a conduit in this direction. This will not be the same for all, but I believe every student has the ability to do this in a way that is individualized and acceptable to our pedagogy. To do this, I believe children's literature should be considered as a resource.

Tate claims that the most important conversations our students will have are going to be outside of the academy, and I agree with him, and I believe that most of our students think this way as well. Since 'possibility' is part of what makes us human, and because literature evokes this sense of the possible, then it is here where we should seek to shape our readings and discussions for the purposes of not only encouraging students to improve their skills at research, analysis, contrast, argument, and refection, but so that their thinking and writing abilities might continue to grow beyond our classrooms. Let us embrace a pedagogy that embraces a whole student.

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