

questions about his fantasy similar in design to those we would raise when considering an adult novel or short story we were particularly interested in--questions of plot, detail, character motivation, and thematic meaning--pursued out of genuine curiosity yet in language the child can understand. And it finally assumes, once the child demonstrates sufficient interest, that we raise simple questions designed to illuminate important similarities and differences between tales of the same genre. In such ways can the adult strengthen the child's intuition of those formal features which free the imagination by providing for it a functional idiom, a means of expression.

NOTES

¹The essays are all conveniently reprinted in Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature, ed. Sheila Egoff, G. T. Stubbs, and L. F. Ashley (Toronto and New York, 1969), pp. 91-96; 121-132; 133-49; 323-46.

²See especially two essays by Les Whipp of the University of Nebraska: "Understanding Children's Writing," and "Morning Haze," in Essays and Addresses on Composition, ed. Geoffrey Summerfield (Lincoln, 1968-69), pp. 37-50; 51-65.

³Not anticipating the subsequent developments, I did not record on tape either this story or the one to follow, and thus the versions given here are not verbatim. Both, however, are close paraphrases of the originals, the details of plot and character exactly as they were described. The differences are consequently mostly syntactical, since I have streamlined both narratives a bit by omitting those elements ("And you know what?" etc.) clearly irrelevant to the meaning.

⁴Whipp, pp. 61-65.

⁵The inconsistency of pronoun gender so noticeable in "Wildlife" is not uncommon in children's fiction throughout the pre-school and elementary years. Cf. Whipp, p. 43.

⁶Thus I would emphasize that the significance of the preceding is less the exactness of my interpretation, which admittedly is in part tentative speculation, than the conclusions to which any convincing interpretation of "Wildlife" must surely lead concerning the cathartic value of children's oral fantasy.

Swan Song

It is peaceful here tonight
with these tame wild ducks,
these geese, few people
and this swan.

As graceful in water
as she is awkward on land,
she knifes her bill under the surface
like the stroke of a violin bow.

Quiet, and moving as effortlessly
as a woman stepping out of her bath,
I say she is beautiful
preening and ruffling herself.

As easy as a glance
over a shoulder, she was home
but will glide on my memory
like a swan.

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