Fantasy, realism and the dynamics of reception: the case of the child reader

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Fortunately for young readers, a revolt occurred, around the middle of the nineteenth century, against didactic and moralizing children's literature, with its inherent distrust of fiction. Centuries of stern judges, of which the Puritans, the thinkers of the Age of Reason and J.J. Rousseau were but a few of their representatives, condoned fiction as mere "fantasy", deemed harmful to the healthy moral and mental development of the child. Literature written for children, it was commonly believed, was to transmit an image of reality, reality then being understood as an empirically-existing set of absolute social conventions, on the one hand, and concrete scientific data, on the other. Inherent in this literary production process was the epistemological conception of knowledge as a passive absorption of empirical data. Intelligence consequently, was but a mere receptacle whose function was reduced to the registration and classification of data. The imagination had no function, being seen as a harmful impediment to a constructive moral and scientific training.

Slowly however, and due to highly complex and varied philosophical, social and scientific factors which will not be analysed here, the "reality-imitation" principle began to crumble. Suffice it to say, for the purposes of this article, that in the realm of aesthetics, the traditional notion of "real" came under vehement attack, and acquired new conceptual and cultural dimensions. Writers and artists asked themselves, "just what is reality?" and "how is it best portrayed?" Creative endeavours began to testify to the complexity of the modern perception of reality through artistic configurations which transformed empirical reality in the form of innumerable symbolic representations — ludic, oniric, allegorical, ironic, parodic, etc. Symbolism, surrealism, expressionism, etc., all presented diverse interpretations of reality. What all of these modern aesthetic movements have in common is the overturning of the traditional epistemological conception of reality as something given, an absolute entity, and of knowledge as a passive, perceptual ingurgitation, followed by acts of registering, classifying, relating; the modernist vision rests on the concept that reality corresponds to the depth of perception of the human mind, eye, psyche, or faculties of knowledge. Thus to both knowledge and reality modernism assigns a dynamic, creative role.

In the field of children's literature, the ensuing consequence of the revolt was an apotheosis of "imaginative" works of fantasy which defiantly challenged

the obsession of the reality-imitation advocates, and which invalidated its implicit epistemological basis. Today, the works of fantasy produced during this period are considered classics in children's literature.[1] Their success, which established itself immediately, remained permanently.

But what is the reason for their continued success, indeed, for their conversion into classics? The ultimate test or proof of literary success is the continued reception of a work through posterity. From this point of view, the works of fantasy in question are indeed classics, as they continue to charm and fascinate children today. Yet this does not answer "why this success?", "what are the factors that make this success possible?" Logically, the reason must be rooted in the aesthetic components of the works and in their interrelation with the reader, or reading subject. In other words, the works must obviously possess a set of aesthetic characteristics which elicit and indeed, ensure, a given kind of literary response, regardless of the temporal or spatial limitations of the reader. To this phenomenon of text-reader interaction we allot the term "the dynamics of reception." Whatever these reasons may be, and we will attempt to elucidate them through the course of this article, critics did not delay in perceiving them, at least intuitively. Scholars such as Brauner, Hurlimann, Hazard and others attempted to elucidate the mystery by praising the suitability of such works to the particular necessities of the child's mind (the greatest necessity being the need for imaginative stimulation). What they no doubt perceived was the problematic of the "dynamics of reception", although they were never able to formally articulate the aesthetic characteristics of the literary work of fantasy and the psychological mechanism of reception they activated through the reading process, i.e. the particulars of the text-reader interaction. It is precisely this task that we have set for ourselves.

Another equally interesting and important question is, in comparison to the reception of "fantasy" works, that of the characteristics activated at the level of reception by the so-called "realist works." Although such a comparison has never, to our knowledge, been attempted (speaking within the realm of children's literature), critics and scholars in children's literature nonetheless take sides for or against either one of these two modes of writing. With regards to "fantasy", in spite of the continually renewed reception of these classical works and the fact that the initial praise afforded them continues to be propagated by many, the belief in fantasy as a literary necessity for children is by no means an opinion unanimously shared by all. Indeed, a veritable *querelle* or debate has been sustained for many years over precisely this question.[2] Regardless of this *querelle,* the fact remains that we are continuing to witness a prolific flourishing of this mode of writing or genre, if it is indeed a genre;[3] and its branching out into a multiplicity of divergent forms. Paradoxically however, one of the reasons for the querelle is perhaps to be sought precisely in this divergent proliferation, for many of the modern forms of children's literary fantasy have deviated completely from the traditional model, giving

rise to a need for a clear definition of terms. The advocates who argue against fantasy are often concerned scholars who express discontentment over many of the more contemporary forms of fantasy, and who frequently bemoan the loss of certain traditional principles of the genre.

Whatever the reasons be, one thing remains certain — and that is the conceptual confusion that exists today among scholars regarding the terms "fantasy" and "realism", which are sometimes understood as literary modes in their relation to the precision by which they evoke the referent (which is rooted of course in "reality"), sometimes as aesthetic modes eliciting different psychological faculties (e.g. the "imagination", the "reality principle"), etc. We believe that much of the confusion can be dispelled by broaching the terms from the point of view of the reception of the child reader. We hope to illustrate, in this way, that the definition of the terms does not depend on the evokation of the referent (representational theory), for both modes, as we will see, achieve this, nor on intrinsic aesthetic qualities which account for a more or less "emotional" response (expressionist theory), for both can achieve this; rather the definition is to be sought in the cognitive operations each form activates (reception theory), for only this approach can account for *how* or *why* a more "imaginative" response occurs.

"Fantasy" and "Realism" as Both Literary Products and Psychological Modes

As we have seen, for centuries scholars have condoned "fantasy" as a harmful mode of writing. In doing so, they were no doubt thinking of the term not as a literary product, but as a psychological mode. Indeed, in the realm of psychology, "fantasy" is a term which has been isolated by numerous psychologists to designate a faculty of the mind whose operations are opposed to another faculty referred to generally as the "imagination."

Between the two terms, there exists a qualitative difference in meaning, "fantasy" seen in more negative terms as a delusive activity, imagination seen more positively in terms of a creative operation. In his book *Estructura de la Personalidad*, P. Lersch defines "fantasy" as a fundamentally centripetal activity centered around the ego and fulfilling a compensatory function which is manifested in activities akin to daydreaming. Generally it operates by means of the production of mnemic representations which evoke the past, or past experience, be it direct or indirect. Thus a young girl can fantasize on romance based on images and information retained from stories, soap operas, adult behaviour, friends' conversation, etc. Child's fantasy (as a faculty) in particular is usually restricted to the evocation of the known.

This conception of the term is seconded by the Oxford Dictionary which defines "fantasy" as:

"A delusive imagination, hallucination, the fact or habit of deluding oneself by imaginary perceptions or reminiscences",
"a supposition resting on no solid ground, a whimsical or visionary notion or speculation"
"a spectral apparition, phantom, an illusory appearance."[4]

As the ego evolves through higher stages of development however, there emerges a new capacity to create structured worlds transcending experience. This faculty Lersch calls the "imagination", which he defines as a "creative, intellectual fantasy", or the capacity to:

"anticipate, in the form of representations, reality in its feasibility without having perceived it sensorily and without limiting oneself to projecting past experiences into the future. Creative fantasy therefore possesses a cognitive nature, it is a kind of knowledge of the world, which is not possible without experience, but which transcends it. It is a cognitive anticipation of reality."[5]

The Oxford Dictionary defines it as:

"The power of mind to form concepts beyond those derived from external objects..."
"The creative faculty of the mind in its highest aspect, the power of framing new and striking intellectual conceptions, poetic genius."[6]

If fantasy is a centripetal activity of the ego, imagination is rather a centrifugal *élan* away from it.

As literary products, however, there are no such clear-cut distinctions and the problem is more complex. In the realm of literature, when we speak of "imagination" we can in fact be referring to any kind of literature, be it works of "fantasy" or of "realism." In this sense, "imagination" implied "fiction" would stand in opposition to non-literary discourses: the philosophical, scientific, documentary, conversational, etc. It therefore implies a degree of artistic quality in the arrangement of the literary elements, a creative, aesthetic, literary quality. Even the apparently most "imitative" works, i.e. those most closely translating perceptual reality, can thus be great works of "imagination", for the quality of their descriptions, plot development, structure, etc. "Fantasy" works are not necessarily superior to "realist" works. In this respect, there are only literarily good or not so good works.

Fantasy, on the other hand, is more difficult to define. To begin with, is all fantasy "imagination"? Naturally, that will depend on how we define the term. At a superficial level, the answer would be "yes, obviously." Upon more careful consideration however, we will see that not all kinds of imagination make for good fantasy, nor is all fantasy imaginative. Then there is the question of the hypothetical opposition between fantasy and realism, hypothetical because, as Antonio Risco well explains in his book *Literatura y Fantasía,* this distinction is not at all so clear.[7] In a loose sense, explains Risco, all literature is fantasy, for all literature is fiction, and all fiction "fantasy." And yet, some literature

communicates a realist intention. Whereas one limits itself to the representation of the empirical reality we perceive through our senses, the other transcends these perceptual limits. It would therefore appear that the differentiating principle is that of "mimesis" — realism imitating the elements of reality, or referential reality, or simply the referent to a closer degree, fantasy transforming it in an insolite way. But upon closer scrutiny, the mimesis principle is not so clear-cut, and does not dispel all the difficulties, for all literature, adds Risco, attempts to present at least an illusion of reality, if not at the level of the referent, at least at the level of the signified, so that in fact even the most incredulous bears an illusion of reality.

As Risco observes, fantasy in fact "exaggerates the problem presented by all fictional literature" (p. 20), namely, the problem of the very interpretation, or re-interpretation of reality which by definition is a subjective, (either individual or culturally shared) matter of perspective or relativity. Thus the modern understanding of "mimesis" accentuates the dynamics of the dialectic opposition between reality and irreality. Fantasy "imitates" the world of ludic representations which we do not perceive outside ourselves, it "imitates" our imaginative view of a utopic society, which we create in a critical attitude towards reality as we know it. Fantasy "imitates" not what we perceive to be, but that which is intuited or imagined possible, not yet known; it speculates on that which is still unknown, anticipating what would or might be, the conditional, probable, hypothetical, potential; it delves into new and disconcerting, even shocking dimensions of the already supposedly known. If the text can be read referentially, it is realist; if it cannot be read referentially because the referent is "unreal" from the point of view of our perceptual experience, but we can deduce, at the level of the signified, the potential reality of the "unreal", we are dealing with fantasy. Fantasy "imitates" a transcendent perception of the real.

From these observations we can deduct a fundamental principle of fantasy: it is a symbolic transformation/deformation of reality executed from the relativist perspective of the aesthetic eye, which signifies unsuspected, new dimensions of reality, thus imparting a higher level of consciousness, a new awareness of the same.

Thus for Lewis Carroll, for example, reality was a phenomenon whose complexity could not be limited by the stiffening, reductionist vision of social, scientific, empirical knowledge. Reality was rather something over and beyond the perceptual, the conventional, the contextual. In spite of its anecdotal and referential "irreality", *Alice in Wonderland* instigates, at the level of the signified, a reality which is epistemological in nature in that it implies as re-questioning and interpretation of the very concept of reality.

However, as we suggested earlier, not all imagination makes for good fantasy. Etymologically, the meaning of "fantasy" was "pure invention", not the possible unreal but the "unreal unreal." We have seen, in dealing with fantasy

and imagination as mental faculties, that "fantasy" bears a pejorative connotation: literary history attests to the correlative of this faculty in literature. For example, *Don Quijote* parodies the works of pure fantasy called the "libros de caballería." There exists one branch of fantasy which neither on the level of the extra-textual referent nor on the level of the intratextual signification bears any significant relationship to any sphere of reality, be it ludic, allegoric, oniric, parodic, etc. To avoid terminological confusion, then, the first form of "imaginative" fantasy we will call simply "fantasy", the other "pure fantasy."

Of concern to us are the consequences that can arise, and indeed have arisen, when "fantasy" and "pure fantasy" are erroneously taken as synonomous. No doubt, many of the opposers of "fantasy" for children were preoccupied with precisely this problem. For just as each term designates a specific mode of writing, so does each elicit very different, psychological responses from the reader. Since children's literature is an edifying experience in the child's imaginative construction of reality, each mode therefore performs different receptive and psychological functions. "Realism", "fantasy" and "pure fantasy" are three modes of writing which each activates concrete psychological operations in the child which assist him in his acquisition of knowledge of the world, thus conditioning his concrete epistemological and cognitive experiences, (as well as social and emotional).

The polemic earlier alluded to is evidence of a perceived danger of the confusion and lack of sound understanding of these terms. For if some argue that "fantasy" and "imagination" are innate necessities of the child, to which literature must cater, others warn against the risk of vulgarisation or degradation of fantasy that can, and has resulted, when a mere adherence to this simple law or principle becomes in itself the generating impulse of creation.

Before proceeding to examine the nature of these innate faculties in the child and to extrapolate from this the receptive and literary needs of the child, it is worth reflecting, for a moment, on some of the possible causes of this "vulgarisation." Undoubtedly, and without wishing to imply any single, direct influence or cause-effect relationship, we can look to the increased awareness and concern for the autonomous world of the child, promoted irrevocably by modern theories in child psychology, which in turn revolutionized the foundations of educational methods. Interestingly enough, the reversal of the reality-imitation principle affected this field as well, for as reality came to be viewed more and more as something to be discovered and created, rather than an absolute, inherited value, traditional methods of passive memorization and inculcation were discarded in favour of new methods promoting active and creative participation, and until then blatantly neglected role of the imagination was accorded a prominent role in the cognitive development of the child. Piaget himself strongly stressed the role of "invention" in cognitive development, understood in terms of a spontaneous, active rediscovery, a "building-

up structures by restructuring reality.[8] One of this brilliant child psychologist's most innovative contributions was that of defining intelligence as a dynamic process whereby the epistemic subject engages in a continual interaction with the object, thus "acting upon" it, to use his own term. Rather than simply absorb, classify and organize, intelligence, through multiple transformation operations, displaces, interrelates, transforms objects. Not excluding the importance of genetic and natural evolution, the development through higher stages of development occurs by means of a double process of assimilation and accommodation: the subject assimilates or integrates external elements to already existing structures, which themselves subsequently accommodate to the new experience, thus in fact creating new structures. The ultimate pedagogical goal thus came to be seen in terms of the designing of new methods apt to stimulate and reinforce the "experimental attitude of mind."[9] Hence the principle of *adaptation* arose, as educationalists zealously sought to adapt methods of learning to the structures of the child's mind.

Regrettably however, new advancements in any field can breed misunderstandings and deviations as much as they can foster progress and improvement, and in the midst of all this zealous application of educational strategies, the notion of "adaptation" spread to the field of children's literature. Throughout the world, symposiums were organized and innumerable articles were written in an attempt to answer the questions "what is children's literature", "what should it be", etc. In countries where the promotion of national children's literature aroused governmental interest and support, explicit policies were elaborated outlining directions, orientations, guidelines deemed worthy of following. Many of these theoretical suggestions were incorporated as criteria designed to assist and regulate the granting of national and international awards.[10]

Interestingly enough, the question of "fantasy" in children's literature came to occupy an important role in the course of scholarly discussions, and hence the already alluded to polemic. In the meantime, the proliferation of different forms of "fantasy" continues, often spurred by what some criticize as a "fantasy for fantasy's sake" attitude. In his *Science of Education and the Psychology of the Child,* Piaget bemoans the fact that educators often attempt to induce cognitive competencies without clearly understanding what these are. Allow this digression to serve to underline this preoccupation.

Having postulated what fantasy implies for the author and the text itself, it is now necessary to reflect on its implications on the reader. We have said that it imparts a higher level of consciousness, a new awareness of reality, or discovery of a new reality. The important question is "how does fantasy achieve this?", i.e. "what are the mechanisms involved?"

If fantasy is indeed a "symbolic transformation/deformation of reality executed from the relativist perspective of the aesthetic eye", which signifies a second, higher, new order of reality, it is obvious that the reader's intellectual

faculties must necessarily be engaged. The subject (reader) "acts upon" the text through a series of simultaneous intellectual operations — reconstruction, restructuring, transformation, association, deduction, inferences, interrelation, etc. Naturally, the same faculties are also engaged in the reading of "realist" literature, but to a lesser extent, as the referential level, familiar to the reader's perceptual experience of reality, calls more upon more concrete operations of recognition, classification of information, thus making lesser claims on the other, more abstract operations. Thus as the reader of fantasy assimilates a new model of reality with its inherent signification, the accommodation of his existing structures is more radical and involved. Consequently, the reading process constitutes a more stimulating epistemological experience, as the very roots of the already known and familiar are shaken, and a new awareness, perspective, viewpoint, conception of reality is demanded of the reader.

The reception of fantasy thus entails a particular kind of reader-text, or subject-object interaction, which can be defined dialectically in terms of a balanced centripetal and centrifugal operation. Centripetal in that it makes the subject the centre of an active experience of discovery and construction, whereas in the reading process of "realist" literature the subject is less an actor than a spectator whose receptive activities are reduced more to registering, ordering and classifying — operations more characteristic of assimilation than of accommodation; it is the reader's role as an epistemic subject in an active relation with reality — the world, that is emphasized. Centrifugal in that the experience of this epistemic subject is projected beyond the known, experienced, recollected. Through an "imaginative", "inventive", active participation, the reader steps beyond himself into new spheres of reality. This fundamental "experimental attitude of mind", if sufficiently reinforced, will come to constitute an intellectual habit in the subject's continual evaluation and construction of reality.

In the case of "pure fantasy" however, this fundamental dialectic process is absent as the very activity of discovery and the basis for the new subject-world interaction are impeded. The subject can engage his intellectual capacities neither to bringing or relating the discovery-experience to his existential reality, nor to project beyond himself. At the most, he will be "entertained" as he will be relieved of any participatory effort. As we will see, this kind of reception can be called a "closed reception."

In recapitulation, "fantasy", "pure fantasy" and "realism" are three modes of writing which elicit or activate three corresponding kinds of cognitive reception on the part of the child reader. The question that arises from this is that of the correlation between these modes and the so often talked about "necessities of the child." In this respect, it would certainly appear naive to categorically reject or prefer one to the other, for the "suitability" is a relative matter, the relativity being dependant on the child's stages of mental and psychological development. Jean Piaget has brilliantly defined these stages,

which we will outline for the purposes of this article.

Throughout these stages, the centripetal-centrifugal functions evolve in a dynamic manner, and it is in relation to this evolution that the modes or faculties referred to become relevant and "necessary" to the child.

Given that it is really prior to any real literary reception, the first stage, the sensory-motor one, extending from birth to two years of age, and during which the symbolic function appears, enabling the child to retain images of disappearing objects, thereby differentiating between signifier and signified, will be omitted. It is the second stage which is of interest to us, the preoperational stage, ranging from ages two to seven. Here fantasy as a faculty assumes a reproductive (mimetic), and therefore centripetal, as well as an experimental, and therefore centrifugal function. While playing with a doll, for example, a little girl imitates her anticipation of the mother's possible, hypothetical reaction to a hypothetical situation, i.e. the girl's stealing of cookies, the anticipation based on past experience and recollection of it. Concludes Piaget that imaginative play functions as a mediator at the service of the self and its necessities, for it is "the unfolding and flowering of the self and a realization of desires."[11] Its purpose is to assimilate "reality into activity proper, providing the latter with its necessary substance and transforming reality in accordance with the self's complex needs."[12]

It is during this stage also that the child attains the "fairy tale stage", where the "merveilleux" captivates his/her literary taste. Both André Jolles and Bruno Bettleheim coincide in their explanation of the reason for this fascination. According to Jolles, the "conte merveilleux" is a simple form which serves to bring or reduce the world to the ego, as opposed to the literary story, which serves to reach away from the ego towards the world in an effort to interpret it. Rather than an intellectual form attempting to the needs of the self.[13] Bettleheim interprets the mixture of fantasy and reality, projected through the anthropomorphization of the fantastic elements, as providing a necessary balance between the familiar and the unfamiliar, which creates a reception involving centripetal and centrifugal operations. Bettleheim's theory, as well known to all, is that the symbolism of these stories functions on the level of the child's subconscious, which "acts upon" the fictional elements, deriving from them answers and levels of meaning related to subconscious questions, drives, uncertainties, intuitions, etc. To anticipate a term to be elaborated shortly, the reception that occurs is an "open" reception.

Later, at the concrete operational stage, ranging from ages seven to twelve, the child's literary needs have proven to thrive on more realist fiction, a few favorites being *Uncle Tom's Cabin, Robinson Crusoe* and *Little house on the prairie.* During the following adolescent stage, when the mind progresses from concrete mental operations to more abstract ones, it is the "imagination" as a faculty that is in greater need or stimulation. As the capacity for abstraction and the hypothetical is projected beyond mimetic representations to the pure-

ly "imaginative", the young reader is capable of experimenting intellectually with new spheres of reality, such as may be offered by science fiction and stories such as those alluded to by Jolles' term "conte littérature." The polyvalent levels of meaning codified in these more sophisticated literary mechanisms of this kind of narrative offers stimulating material for intellectual operations, thus affording a more complex epistemological experience. Again, an "open" reception.

Therefore throughout these stages, the child's intellectual needs revolve, at progressively higher stages, around the need to know reality as it is perceived, and to know it at a more transcendant, profound level as it is discovered, imagined, created by the subject.

The Child's Literary Reception and the "Poetics of the Open Work"

For children's fantasy to be truly suited to the needs of the child, it must assist in the epistemological function of intellectual creation. For Umberto Eco, the conditions which render this function possible come to constitute the "aesthetic" elements proper, "aesthetic" understood not in the traditional sense of reading pleasure or the effect produced on the reader, but rather in the modern sense of the dynamics of reception, that is, the inherent capacity of the text to "elicit highly organized responses" which orient the reader towards an "open", polyvalent interpretation engaging his mental faculties in the active discovery of new possibilities.[14]

If, as Piaget has defined, "the real is the actualization of the possible",[15] understanding by "actualization" the active cognitive operations of the reading subject, then the "open" text is one which, through its organization of structure, characters, descriptions, axiology, etc. will stimulate the active actualization of meaning, and the "closed" text one which in some way curtails this process.

If we examine the works of a few authors who have written on children's fantasy, we will see that "pure fantasy" constitutes a "closed text", while true fantasy constitutes an "open" text.

Edward W. Rosenheim Jr., for example, militates against "easy fantasy", or the "escapum-identification literature", as it offers no challenge to the imagination, and against:

> "the transient titillations afforded by flamboyant and minimally credible writings which exploit the violent or exotic or prurient or sentimental."[16]

Jacqueline Held denounces fantasy which endorses the Berklian assumption of an objective world, or non-ego, existing independently of the ego, and which invents fictional entities "ad nihilum", for it lacks the necessary roots in reality, relatable to the ego (the centripetal).

Both scholars endorse the belief that true fantasy must be rooted in the human experience which always affords "the reassuring sensation of knowing where one is."[17] The totally alien is discarded in favour of "a judicious blending of what is novel and unfamiliar with what is real and significant."[18]

The ultimate goal of children's fantasy must always be that of promoting in the child reader an actively curious and independent mind, so that he/she arrive at adulthood ready to assume new creative endeavors. After all, social, scientific, cultural change is a work of fantasy, as much as is the development of self. Fantasy is the recognition that there are no limits, that norms can be transcended, history invented and the "unreal" tamed. In order to achieve this, the work must always, in some way, mirror the essence of the human being, translating his "needs, anguishes, desires, be they conscious or unconscious", thus the work must always combine "sufficiently known human, psychological, historical, sociological elements" or "situational references" so that the reader may not find himself "totally disoriented."[19] Held argues that fantasy is only effective if the child can sustain the feeling of being a participant, and not a stranger in a totally strange world.

Such instances of pure fantasy induce either an empty, disoriented reception, or allow for any number of unpredictable aberrations of interpretation. This is what Eco calls the "closed text." On the other hand, the "open" text cannot be read any way at all; it invites the reader to construct reality and meaning along with the author. Through its judicious and artistic configuration of literary elements, it is aimed at the competent reader, while increasing competency. Its perceptive ambiguities, which Eco calls the "aesthetics of indetermination" foster polyvalent levels of interpretation. Some critic has said that it is harder for the child (and adult) to shake off old habits than to acquire new ones. If this is true, then fantasy, by taxing the credulous and stimulating new visions of reality, and by inducing new receptive and reading competencies, impedes the formation of stiffling mental habits and conventions, and provides the conditions for an "open" epistemological attitude with which to face reality and life in general. It is probably legitimate to conclude therefore that, in this sense, fantasy affords for a greater degree of "openness" than realism, and that the success of a work will be determined by the child's need for greater or lesser openness at a specific moment.

As literary critics devoted to the promotion of high quality children's literature, and one truly suited to the specific needs of the child, we must understand the relationship between the aesthetic mechanisms involved in each kind of literary product and the corresponding form of reception each illicits. Serious consequences can arise if we promote as one kind a product which is really something else, for we may believe that we promote one kind of reception when in fact the intrinsic properties of the particular mode elicits another, which may or may not be that which we believed to be promoting.

Space providing, it would have been our desire to examine and evaluate a

few examples of Canadian children's literature in the light of these observations. Hopefully, we will some day have the opportunity in another article.

NOTES

[1]A few examples are the works of Lewis Carroll, Charles Kingsley, George MacDonald and E. Nesbit.

[2]On the international level for example, such a *querelle* took place in Cuba, in 1973, during the First Symposium on Children's Literature, the proceedings of which are published in *Primer Forum sobre Literature Infantil y Juvenil,* Ano 111, marzo-junio, no. 2-3, 1973, published by the Ministry of Education. During this symposium, certain kinds of fantasy were rejected, for example, stories of princes and castles, Donald Duck, and Little Red Riding Hood, of mystic, supernatural figures. Although not resolved, the interventions of numerous speakers evoke the problem of fantasy and reality. North American scholars often reject tradional forms of fantasy as being out of touch with the times, as provoking fear. Jacqueline Held, in her book *L'Imaginaire au pouvoir, Les enfants et la littérature fantastique,* Les Editions Ouvrières, Paris, 1977, recapitulates and discusses the arguments of this *querelle.*

[3]Todorov discusses this question in his *Introduction à la littérature fantastique,* Ed. du Seuil, Paris, 1970.

[4]*The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1979. p. 961.

[5]Lersch, Philip. *La estructura de la personalidad,* Edición Scientia, Barcelona, 1972. p. 380. The translation is mine.

[6]*Oxford English Dictionary, Op. Cit.* p. 1377.

[7]Risco, Antonio. *Literatura y Fantasia.* Ibérico Europea de Ediciones, S.A. Madrid, 1984.

[8]Piaget, Jean. *Science of Education and the Psychology of the Child.* pp. 27-28.

[9]Piaget, Jean. *Op. Cit.* p. 37.

[10]I have elaborated this problem in another article entitled "Language, Culture and Identity in Canadian Children's Literature", (publication imminent), where it is referred to as the phenomenon of the "institutionalization" of literature. In a sense, Louise Lemieux, in *Pleins feux sur la littérature de jeunesse au Canada français,* Leméac, Ottawa, 1972, refers to the same problem in her discussion of editorial politics and governmental legislation and of "la littérature de jeunesse canadienne française intentionnelle" (Chapter 9).

[11]Piaget, Jean. *Op. Cit.* p. 156.

[12]Piaget, Jean. *Op. Cit.* p. 157.

[13]See André Jolles, *Formes Simples.* Edition du Seuil, Paris, 1972.

[14]Eco, Umberto. *The Role of the Reader.* Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1979.

[15]Piaget, Jean. "Lo posible, lo imposible y lo necesario" in *Monografia de Infancia y Aprendizaje: 2, Piaget,* Siglo Veintiuno de España Escritores, S.A. Madrid, 1981. p. 120.

[16]W. Rosenheim Jr., Edward. "Children's Reading and Adult Values" in *A Critical Approach to Children's Literature,* the University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1975. p. 6.

[17]W. Rosenheim Jr., Edward. *Op. Cit.* p. 10.

[18]W. Rosenheim Jr., Edward. *Op. Cit.* p. 12.

[19]Held, Jacqueline. *Op. Cit.* p. 121.

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