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Pedagogical Directions in Subjective Criticism

MANY OF US who have been in close touch with the classroom over the past decade or so are aware of how impatient students are with most of the time-honored rituals of teaching English. While it is easy and, in some part, true to say that such impatience is a response to the increasing urgency of global problems, we teachers would be transforming our personal failures of leadership into impersonal, uncontrollable, external conditions. My perception has been that while students are increasingly concerned with how world events affect them, they are most concerned with finding something interesting to do through school and with connecting whatever they do to their abiding feelings, their emotional preoccupations, and to their idiosyncratic questions about their own lives. The liberation of minorities, of colony states, of the poor has its counterpart in the minds of our privileged youth: it is the liberation of their emotional lives, as expressed in sexual experimentation, in group exposure of thoughts and feelings, in political activism, and in impatience with both authoritarian and pusillanimous pedagogical leadership. All children know that thoughts and feelings go together, and yet when they get to school, they are taught to abandon the first person, abandon their feelings, and concentrate on learning the material. In English the material is "the spelling," "the punctuation," "the grammar," "the sentence," "the paragraph"; it is also "the story," or later, "the text," and even later, "the scholarship" and "the criticism." If a student asks why learn all this, the plain fact is that most teachers cannot give a satisfactory answer, partly because they just don't know one, but mostly because they do not perceive the dimensions of the question. My guess is that, also, teachers can't answer the question because they never asked it of themselves; if this is so, they never answered it for themselves, and if this is so, how can they answer it when the serious, innocent student gets up the courage to ask it? If a person—student or teacher—asks why learn anything, not just English, there can be only one answer—because he wants to know.[1] Without this motive, knowing, thinking, or learning just will not happen. But if we wish to speak of motivation in learning, there is no alternative than to explore our feelings about learning and knowledge. Feelings are tricky and often downright mysterious or uncanny. Yet for the most part they are comprehensible. If a

[1]The Editor has used the pronoun "she" and related forms to alternate with the author's original uniform use of "he" and related forms, in impersonal contexts.

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teacher believes that feelings are important, that one's own feelings have a great deal to do with what one learns and teaches, that one can understand for oneself why one wants to know the subject, one will be able to lead students to discover what they want to know, and how to connect their feelings about who they are with their efforts to become involved in what they do.

My work in subjective criticism has developed in response to these issues, going back to my experiences in elementary school and high school. I became an English teacher less because I liked to read than because I liked words and was impressed with the remarkable effect the same words have when coming from different people. As this interest developed, it became clear to me that it is not possible to understand words without understanding the people who use them, just as we normally say in conversation, "I understand you," rather than, "I understand your words." To me, language, literature, and human psychology comprise a single subject, and my thinking is grounded on that presupposition.

Subjective criticism is a way of thinking about how people use language and literature, how our words function in our thoughts and feelings, how stories, sagas, and scenarios activate our daily lives, how the minds of children use language to grow, and how major artists, with the help of a few carefully chosen lies, can tell the truth about their own lives, and make it seem like the truth about the lives of their readers. Criticism, as the term as been used in the parochial, professional sense, describes an academic activity. More literally, it refers to act of interpretation, of judgment, of evaluation, as well as to the kind of mental initiative we take every day; it even implies that a critic has his own standards which regulate his initiatives. Nevertheless, the professional custom has been for critics to deny their own roles in their work, and to pretend that their judgments are not influenced by their forethoughts and feelings, but that they are developed only from objective perception. While the assumption of judgmental objectivity has prevailed in most of the hermeneutic disciplines over the past century, numerous developments in the quantitative as well as the hermeneutic fields have indicated that the assumptions of objectivity must be greatly curtailed in scope and that they be generally superseded by the assumption that all consequential knowledge is developed, created, or synthesized by the subjective initiative of individuals and groups. Subjective criticism is therefore part of a major intellectual shift of assumptions that has been growing in our century and that has substantially affected almost every major branch of knowledge.

In the discussion that follows, I will outline what I think are five main areas in which teaching and research in subjective criticism can proceed. I will try to show how, in each area, both pedagogy and the development of new knowledge are one and the same practice, so that, on a day-to-day basis, all those in the classroom may explore their feelings in and about the study process. Most of the areas that I will discuss will bear an obvious relation to topics that are presently accepted in most curriculums. My argument here is that all of these areas go together, that new, more productive connections can be made among them, and that these connections help create a new conception of the discipline of English. This conception depends on our recognition of the primary role played by con-

siderations of individual and group subjectivity in our thinking about language, literature, psychology, and knowledge in general.

1. Critical Epistemology

This topic tries to engage the student's first question, "Why should I learn this?" Traditionally, the field of epistemology studies how we know things rather than why, but "why" describes the child's feelings and the adult's motives. It has been argued by many in all disciplines that it is no longer possible to think of knowledge as separate from the knower. Therefore, if we are to speak of *what* we want to know, we have to first identify ourselves, and then ask ourselves, "why do I in particular want to know this in particular"? If two or more people agree that they know the same thing, then that community's knowledge also identifies a common feeling in the group. As T. S. Kuhn has discussed, when medieval people "knew" that Ptolemy's astronomy was correct, they also claimed to know something about God's plans and methods. Knowledge is thus never independent of a system of individual motives and collective beliefs.

In order to articulate the subjective character of knowledge, I have been using the term "subjective paradigm." The idea of a paradigm, as first used by Kuhn, is a way of describing the shared forms of thought in a community; these forms are, at the same time, the largely unconscious presuppositions of each individual about the way human experience is to be perceived and understood. My claim is that over the past five decades the hitherto prevailing objective paradigm, which held that knowledge, nature, and usually God, are all objective things whose existence does not depend on human perception and experience, is of rapidly declining use in our lives—it is less adaptive. The subjective paradigm, whose cardinal principle is that knowledge and objects are inseparable from the knower and the perceiver, respectively, is rapidly growing as the governing principle of intellection. Without tracing the history of subjectivity in detail, let me indicate that the idea was present in the thinking of Hume, Berkeley, and Emerson; large scale modern manifestations of it first appeared in the psychological, stream-of-consciousness novel, as Leon Edel has discussed, at the end of the last century. At the beginning of this century we find it taking hold in the techniques of psychoanalysis, in the early criticism of I. A. Richards, and then in a more dramatic way in physics, as a result of the work of Einstein, Heisenberg, Bohr, and Bridgman. The latter, in fact, who was once hailed as the ultimate hero of positivism, came to see that the key thought-method of positivism, operationalism, itself produced the insight that "we never get away from ourselves," and that this insight, he maintains, "is perhaps the most important problem before us." In philosophy, even the objectivistically oriented Whitehead felt the need for a more anthropocentric form of thought. More importantly, Husserl, likewise a mathematician, spent the last decade of his life trying to articulate a philosophical framework for subjective thinking. In the past few years, Roger Poole has followed the work of Husserl through, and argues that subjectivity is a necessity for political survival in our overcrowded world. Coordinately, Cassirer and Langer, as well as Wittgenstein, have shown how language and the symbolic behaviors of people con-

strain knowledge to wholly subjective circumstances. In the social sciences, the Marxist tradition has produced the work of Mannheim and Habermas, which develops a comprehensive picture of how communal and societal interests create the demands for knowledge and shape its acceptable forms. It is perhaps familiar to us how in the past few decades, perceptual psychologists such as Kohler and Arnheim have demonstrated how completely perception is determined by the subject's previous habits and expectations. This tack is taken up by the eminent art critic, E. H. Gombrich, in well-known study, *Art and Illusion.* Even in biology, where the pragmatic effects of the subjective paradigm are least prominent, C. H. Waddington has reached the belief that a change in the thought-paradigm of science is upon us. If this is the case, and the subjective paradigm is becoming our way of thinking, then what we think of as knowledge is going to take unprecedented new forms, where the individuals and groups that develop knowledge will be increasingly dependent on their own self-knowledge and on the strength of their interpersonal relationships.

This new sort of self-reliance is especially productive in an area like aesthetic criticism, where the fundamental act of mind is interpretation. As most of us will allow privately, but deny publicly, the truth value of interpretation is negotiated by the responding community, and does not inhere in the interpretation. Contrary to the popular illusion, meanings are constructed and not discovered, and their strength is determined by the extent to which others can assimilate the constructions to their own pre-existing perceptions and thoughts. It may be a useful shorthand to say that an accepted interpretation is "true," but once the idea "true" is taken to mean "objective and permanent," fatuous argumentation begins, subjective forces enter the argument unannounced, and personalities clash. If these same subjective forces and feelings were consciously acknowledged to begin with, the result would be an increase in mutual enlightenment both with regard to how one interprets and how each participant is predisposed beforehand. Therefore, if our presupposed forms of thought acknowledge subjectivity and renounce the demand for objective truth, the likelihood of developing new knowledge in the community is vastly increased.

There is no better place to observe, understand, and participate in knowledge-making processes than the classroom. Traditionally, it is the place where intellectual problems are raised and discussed. When the problems are conceived as objects, the teacher's presentation of them is taken as an object, let us say, the interpretation of a poem. Without any announcement, the interpretation is identified with the teacher's authority. The students' contributions, also silently, are measured against this seemingly objective standard. This process may yield new knowledge, but that knowledge is, inevitably, reluctantly received by most students because the teacher has no means of permitting the students subjective dominion over either the poem or its interpretation. This means that the classroom community is prohibited from developing new knowledge on a communal basis. Unless each class member is as free to negotiate his own responses and judgments as the teacher is, there is no way for that member to create new knowledge. Furthermore, the teacher, although often free enough to do this, usually

doesn't because it is hard enough just to get through her notes. (And besides, "it is very hot today; why don't we all sit outside"?)

What is first required of a teacher in order to raise fundamental questions about interpretive knowledge is to keep asking how we know what we say we know. For example, most inexperienced readers say that a poem means what the author intended it to mean. But then what is the author's intention? If the author announces the intention, do we then "know" it? What knowledge *is* given to us by the author's announced intention? And so on. One may ask a reader who thinks he knows the meaning of a poem, "how do you decide what you think it means? When will you be satisfied that you have a meaning? What do you do with your meaning when someone disputes it? Do you really know a meaning if you are the only one who knows it?" And so on. Such lines of questioning about how one knows things about what one reads show how psychological issues will be broached. But only after such questions are asked will readers begin to suspect that they cannot answer without knowing more about themselves. In this way, fundamental issues of critical epistemology may be raised in the classroom—issues about how we have to account for ourselves when we say we want to know, interpret, or just get involved in something. Unless the classroom can find a way to take each member seriously and fully, it is an arena of set rituals, and no more. As a rule, students can get from convenient books the sheer facts about literature, criticism, or yoga. What they cannot get from books is why they as unique individuals want to know anything. Because this answer will be different for each person, it is especially difficult to reach in a crowded classroom. But unless a personal, subjective framework is established for each knowing person, he will never command any knowledge at all, since he will never have any way of seeing that what he knows and how he knows is determined by what he wants to know and by who he thinks he is. The age-old tradition of seeking interpretations of works of art provides an especially accessible context for understanding our subjective epistemological authority.

2. Language Acquisition and Symbol Formation; Talking and Writing

By and large, we may generalize this title into "developmental psychology," with special emphasis on the growth of intelligence in young people. However, I have a specific orientation in mind that relates the topic to the more familiar interests of language and literature, namely, the mechanism of psychological growth that explains the infant's first acquisition of syntax and of denotative symbols (as defined by Susanne Langer) probably remains with the child to activate and explain subsequent experiences of insight, new ideas, and knowledge. I have set out this thesis at length in a forthcoming essay, "New Considerations of the Infantile Acquisition of Language and Symbolic Thought," but I can present its argument briefly. The prevailing effort at explaining infantile language acquisition and representational thought has not yet met with success. It considers only cognitive behaviors in children and seeks the explanatory principle as if language and cognition were an isolated mental faculty. If, on the other hand, we conceive the development of this faculty in terms of a psychology of motives, its

appearance is less perplexing. In particular, there is considerable reason to suppose that the normal emotional development of the infant in the second year creates an increasingly urgent feeling of separation from the mother, observable in a distinct series of behaviors, conceptualizable as a need for return, and which provides a natural developmental motive for the onset of syntax and of representational thought. Therefore, when a child learns to speak syntactically—that is, like an adult speaks—and when at the same time she learns to think deliberately, she has developed a faculty that permits symbolic return, or better, mental return, to the *person* from whom she feels separated in experience, usually the ever-present mother. This explanation allows us to conceive of the syntactic and representational ability as adaptive in the Darwinian sense; it allows us to accept Piaget's tentative characterization of intelligence as an adaptive organ with an organismic purpose, like the kidneys or the liver. At first intelligence serves the infantile purpose of recreating a symbiosis; but later in the various stages of life it is the means of an individual's integration in her community and society. And further, intelligence is the means by which a human being survives ontogenetically, since unlike animals, he does not depend on the immediate proximity of food or water, but relies on intelligence to bring these and other life-sustaining items into his access.

Whatever the ultimate fate of this argument, let me only observe now that its principle of reasoning is the subjective paradigm. In this regard, it follows Piaget's precedent in aiming to demonstrate a connection between psychological action and biological needs; it aims to understand both cognition and motivation as part of a living organism's inertial tendencies to preserve, prolong, and protect its life.

For the most part, in the education of young people from the nursery through the university, such considerations rarely enter the picture. I am thinking of what is generally known as "language skills" and reading. Whatever a person's management of his language may be, it is least of all a skill. It is something that is so deeply a part of his psychological character, that it is simply not possible to deal with his use of language without engaging his whole personality. For this reason few people are able to define any particular method for teaching children to read well, or to write well, no matter how far up the educational ladder we look. A child learns to speak his "mother's tongue." He learns to speak the language of other adults, and then, in nursery school, of other children. By the time he is in the first grade his own idiosyncratic language is so entrenched that the drilling of objective exercises is just about idle if the aim is to improve or develop reading and speaking. While most children are able to learn the skills of spelling and punctuation, almost none can be taught to be articulate. Those who do become articulate have been around well-spoken people when very young, and their early efforts at self-expression are met with the encouragements of intelligent and loving responses. How many children get intelligent and loving responses in school? The capacity to make language a self-directed instrument of one's mind has an emotional and psychological basis, established considerably before a child gets into primary school. How many teachers of "language skills" have taken

the time to inquire of a child's family about the speaking habits in the home? How many have investigated the unique home circumstances that govern when children may speak, when conversations take place, what things may be said, whether people shout orders or commands easily, how deeply a child's early questions are answered? How a child's family speaks to him is something that can be determined. It is information that a teacher can use in understanding each child's special way of handling language, and most important of all, in understanding the child's underlying attitudes, inhibitions, and pleasures with language. Finally, how many teachers believe that a child's language is more important to him than most of the things with which he is consciously preoccupied?

If we shift our attention to the university, we may ask an analogous series of questions. The issue of comparable debate in this quarter is in composition or, once again, "communication skills." From an inspection of existing programs, we could easily draw the conclusion that communication will never take place between two people until each knows how to create a perfectly formed paragraph, whose import could never be grasped without mastering the art of the topic sentence. Students are given weighty samples of great expository prose, whose styles they are supposed to emulate even though they have no idea of how to recognize style, much less create one. When examining such programs, I always wonder why anyone would want to write "expository prose" at all. I don't think I know how. The discussion of communication skills thus grinds on while the most important motive for writing–having something to say to someone else–is considered either too deep or too obvious for serious attention. If we remember that a child first uses language because she has something of the greatest importance to say to someone of the greatest importance to her, the first consideration in writing is deciding if one has something to say, and then to whom it is to be said. Writing is only a subcategory of talking, and everyone knows that when we talk we think we have something to say to someone else. If a student is to learn how to say what is important to her, she has to identify such things, at least privately to begin with. She has to identify her own feelings and tell herself what she thinks is the truth. If she can do that, she has to decide if she wants to tell such truths to a strange teacher wielding a grade-book. I don't know of any composition course where it is openly acknowledged that the students' writing is to and for the teacher, rather than to and for "the audience." I suppose that unless this secret is kept, few students would want to tell anything to the teacher. Yet the meaning of communication is that one *person* is telling another *person* something. For the most accomplished author, writing is never abstract, and neither is her audience. When a national leader addresses an audience of millions, the language is geared by the speaker's conception of her relationship to the audience, and by her motives for enhancing that relationship. Writing, like language, grows from a sense of an interpersonal relationship; unless it is based on the student's own language attitudes and feelings it is, once again, a ritual skill devoid of consequence.

A person cannot teach writing unless he is aware of his own motives for both teaching and writing. Who would trust a writing teacher who does not himself

feel that writing is important? In any event, for a teacher to motivate students, he has to make the effort to identify his own motives; doing less than this is a failure of leadership, and it will let writing remain a motor function rather than a mental function.

3. Subjective Response in the Study of Literature

I have written most extensively in this area. Last Spring my monograph, *Readings and Feelings: An Introduction to Subjective Criticism*, was published by the National Council of Teachers of English; shortly, Harper and Row will publish my classroom study module, *Literature and Self-Awareness: Critical Questions and Emotional Responses*. Several related essays were printed over the last five years in *College English*. I will assume that these materials speak for themselves, and I will only try to draw a distinction now between my own technique of studying literary response and two others that have been presented at some length.

Alan Purves has done numerous studies in this area and his work is also published by the NCTE. I think it is best characterized as quantitative. Purves has developed an extensive catalogue of terms to describe almost any statement a reader makes about a work of literature. Thus, if we examine a paragraph of a student's response, we can look up, so to speak, each statement in the catalogue and decide what kind it is. In principle, if the writing sample is large enough one can get a statistical distribution of the kinds of response the student characteristically gives. Now it may be of some interest to know if a student's responses are primarily descriptive, evaluative, interpretive, or miscellaneous, but I find it hard to see what significance the catalogue rating has. I doubt that any teacher needs statistical techniques to reach a decision of this kind. Does the teacher then inform the student of the rating, and if so, what does the student do with that knowledge?

The most disturbing effect of this catalogue is its depersonalization of the response process. If the classroom time is spent in such testing to get such bland and ordinary information, the student's complex emotional response remains about as far from the classroom as it regularly is in a formal lecture situation. Although Purves collects for us a useful bibliography on response studies, he seems not to be aware that a reader's responses are idiosyncratic. Even insurance companies, who turn a profit on statistical information, advertise their service on the assumption of each customer's individuality. The classroom is well suited to engage in depth a student's subjective responses. And yet Purves would have us divide the class into 67-33 describer-evaluators, or 58-42 interpreter-describers. Do we then teach the describer-evaluators interpretation, or do we just let them describe and evaluate to their heart's content? And what shall we do with the unfortunate reader who is only a "miscellaneous"? I think that only with a sense of the student's perceptual style, a sense of his motives for reading, a sense of his tastes, does the information obtainable with Purves's catalogue have potential relevance. But by the time student and teacher understand their own styles, motives, and tastes, there is little need for the catalogue. Such quantitative methods,

motivated as they are by the illusory need for objectivity, have little effect on the study of subjective response.

The work of Norman N. Holland shares an important principle of study with my own work, namely, that in order for a reading experience to be meaningful to a reader, and in order for someone to understand another's experience, that experience must be examined in depth and as a function of the reader's personality style. It would seem that two people sharing this principle would develop similar methods of study; but this does not turn out to be the case.

Holland studied readers' responses by paying a group of students what he calls a "modest wage" for reading several stories and poems and then, in his office, going through an extensive taped interview with him. The students were also paid to undergo several psychological tests, including the Rorschach and the Thematic Apperception Tests. Using the materials of the test results as well as his own perceptions of the students, Holland defined what we thought was each's "identity theme," or overall schema or personality functioning. He then argued that each student's reading of the stories was consistent with her identity theme. His conclusion is that every reader's response may be described with the DEFT formula: (1) a reader perceives her own characteristic DEFENSES in the work; (2) a reader finds what she EXPECTS to find in the work; (3) a reader finds a core FANTASY in the work consistent with her personality; (4) a reader TRANSFORMS her fantasy according to her characteristic means of transformation.

I find several problems in this study, but I will address two. First, the paying of subjects. As soon as an economic arrangement is made between two parties, it defines their relationship; that is, the student is "in the pay of" the teacher. The subject is performing a service and the feelings that arise under that circumstance, positive or negative, must be related both to the service and to the remuneration. Holland presents his findings as if this arrangement did not affect the responses. However, there is a more serious dimension to this problem: this context of response does not correspond with any real-life reading situation. I can think of few situations in which one is paid to read, and none where one is paid to respond "freely." The knowledge gained from such a contrived situation can apply only to that situation, except if one assumes the objective paradigm. In spite of Holland's attention to subjective response, objectivity governs his thinking. He lifts the conclusions drawn from his artificial context and claims that they apply to normal reading situations. To me, the already existing forms of reasoning, such as structuralism, operationalism, and the subjective paradigm have made it clear that knowledge is context-dependent. Holland seems to claim that his context of observation did not determine the nature of what he observed. Even if the classroom has its own authority structure that determines response, this structure is much different from the economic one used by Holland. Response has consequence either in the classroom or in the home, but not in the laboratory.

The second problematical feature of Holland's work is his concluding formula. Here again we may discern the unannounced operation of the objective paradigm. Holland speaks as if defenses, expectations, fantasies, and transformations are discrete items perceivable by anyone studying a response. I have worked with student

responses in the classroom for about as long as Holland has in his office, and there is a temptation to apply a formula and say "thus we see." But let us imagine what will happen if we actually try to use the four ideas in discussing a student's 2500-word free-associative response. The first problem is that one cannot identify defenses or fantasies, let alone "expectations," unless one knows the respondent well. Either everyone in the class has to know everyone else very well, or each student has to take the battery of tests and distribute the results to the rest of the class for analysis. This would not be unthinkable, except for the fact that projective tests depend heavily on the leanings of the interpreter; for as long as these tests have been used there is still no good reason to suppose that they yield objective knowledge about the subject. Such a course of action transforms the student into either an experimental subject or a patient, which is just what we reject in the classroom. The neatness of Holland's formula and the elements which comprise it do not apply to the workings of response in an interpersonal situation. In his theoretical discussions, Holland goes through elaborate conceptual acrobatics, auxiliary concepts, and pleas for intellectual pluralism in order to rationalize this formula. His work is a good example of the tenacity of the objective paradigm. Still, Holland's effort to explore the processes of response helps to put the issue before us, and gives us the opportunity to consider other kinds of understanding.

I think that the context for studying literary response is defined by our reasons for wanting to scrutinize it to begin with. Without details, let me adduce four such context-defining reasons, with the understanding that they are for use either in the classroom or out, and that they may be applied as I have outlined in my essay, "Operational Definitions of Literary Response." First, we may study subjective response as it influences interpretive judgments of meaning, historical character, or generic form. Second, we may examine a series of subjective responses to different works by the same person, or to the same work by different people for purpose of understanding the dimensions of an individual's or a special group's local tastes. Third, we may examine responses from individuals or groups over long periods of time in order to determine the change of taste and the connections between growth and taste. Fourth, we may collect responses with the purpose of determining the influence on ourselves of the group we are in, such as other teenage girls, other university students, other policemen, other Americans, and so on. In each of these cases, the feelings and associations we are collecting are *related to a specific conscious concern in both the respondent and his co-examiners at the time of response.* A subjective response is never plain "data," and it is not a symptom, unless the respondent is a patient at the time of response. It is hard enough to develop an identity theme for someone who has grown old or died. I don't see how it is possible to define one for a student. Even if we explore many responses and in depth, they have to be conceived as local phenomena and related not to permanent character structure, but to immediate motives, preoccupations, and character*istics*. A response always helps us find out something about ourselves. The context we choose for response-study is our way of posing our question.

4. Biographical Criticism

In the study of biography the concept of the identity theme or personal myth gains considerable relevance. Although biographical facts for many writers are often lost, there is frequently enough material on these writers, and copious information about others, to make the attempt at full biographical conceptualization viable. But here again the kind of knowledge we are seeking about authors is heavily influenced by our reasons for seeking such knowledge to begin with. It is true that, regardless of our reasons, studying biography involves getting and authenticating facts and, usually organizing them in a psychologically plausible way. However, which facts we will seek and which priorities of organization we will use depend on what we are asking of ourselves when we ask about an author's life. With this in mind, I will discuss two issues in biographical criticism that I think are of general and pedagogical interest.

The first has to do with why people want to create works of art at all. Freud characterized writers as people who are capable of making their private daydreams into cultural artifacts; he vaguely implies that they are self-indulgent because, in a sense, they are only playing when they do their work. Knowing several writers and artists, I can believe this, but let me consider the enormous discipline accomplished artists are able to maintain. The majority of undergraduates who think they want to be writers soon discover that they have to write all day every day through many years and rejection slips if they are to make a career of it; so they usually stop writing and get a job. Only those who are very highly motivated are able to persevere into professional maturity, and this is the case with the great majority of authors we encounter in the classroom. One general biographical question, therefore, relates to discovering what an author wanted badly enough to expend so much of his energy trying to achieve it, and how can we relate his characteristic writing style to his unusually strong motivation. This issue is psychologically similar to the question of how a child develops his own characteristic language habits. In one sense it is easier to observe the life of a living child than a dead author, but we have the advantage in the latter case of seeing the author's completed lifespan. One of the sources of success in Edel's study of James lies in his systematic use of this retrospective advantage, and we can follow James's full language development into its richest and most complex forms. Edel shows how prohibitions about speaking worked with various psychological incentives in James and produced both the desire to write and his personal writing style. The study of literary biography can shed a great deal of light on the connections between motivation and the development of language, intelligence, and art.

My second issue has to do with the psychology of reading. It is not only a learned ritual that readers inquire after the author's intention. The question reflects an important feeling readers get at one point or another while reading, namely, that they are in the hands of a powerful authority. Sometimes, imaginary knowledge about an author serves an important purpose in reading. I have found that when someone feels the author very distinctly while reading, this perception functions as a surrogate parent figure. Whether the response to the author is good or bad, the reader tends to feel herself being either guided or lectured at.

Initially, the reader is almost never aware that she is allowing such a peremptory perception to shape her response. Only from her free-associative response can she see this happening. I have collected, from the same reader, responses to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* before and after he has read Ellmann's biography of Joyce. The result was that while the reader did not stop perceiving the author as a parent figure, his responses shifted from a concern with father to an interest in mother, and with considerable reduction in concern with the author's greatness. Biographical knowledge helps the reader transform an author from an authority into a person, and thereby reduces the narcissism in reading. Working with the involved imagination there is a responsible intellectual curiosity about the personality of the author. The reading experience takes on a more interpersonal shape in which different parts of the reader's mind are dialectically activated.

In these two contexts, at least, biography is a natural interest of most students, and its minor role in university curriculums is very puzzling to me.

5. Children's Literature

Most schools of education require children's literature in the elementary education major. Before I came to Indiana University, someone seems to have prevailed with the thesis that because children's literature is literature, it should be taught in the English department. It is hard for me to tell what effect this change had since I have seen examinations in one currently offered section which asked the student to distinguish between an illustrated book and a picture book, and between a fairy tale and a folk tale. If the course is taught by incompetent teachers, it is an oral encyclopedia of available children's literature. When taught by more enterprising teachers, the students hear lectures on the organic unity of *Huckleberry Finn.*

Such subject matters represent painful cases of the failure to lead students. If someone expects to spend his professional time with young children, he may rightly expect his training to acquaint him with how children respond to literature, both at home and in school. Encyclopedic knowledge can be obtained from encyclopedias, and organic unity is not what a ten-year-old feels when he reads *Huckleberry Finn.* Almost every professional teacher I know reports first learning about children and youth by breaking up fights and intercepting notes. Few teachers understand the ways in which the various forms of children's literature, from nursery rhymes to science fiction, represent the perceptual and emotional paradigms of children's minds. Much as *Anna Karenina* may represent for the adult important conflicts of sexuality, *Little Toot* can easily reflect to a three-year-old boy the great importance of emulating father.

Obviously, there is no way to predict how anyone, child or adult, will perceive or respond to a given work of literature. But we do know that the preoccupations of each person are determined by his age, sex, size, family situation, race, income, among other things. Many hours of classroom time are spent in deciding in advance which books will instill in a child good or bad morality. In Indiana, many local libraries have banned Sendak's "In the Night Kitchen" because adults have decided that it is bad for a child to see pictures of a naked little boy with a penis.

Teachers of children's literature cannot help remove such fearful peculiarities because so little classroom effort is spent on the means by which particular children get involved in particular books, or on the feelings that prompt a child to ask that the same story be read to her over and over again, or on the nature of the child's interest in nonsense, or on the connection between a child's array of tastes and the situation in her immediate family. If a teacher's responsibility is only to familiarize students with what literature is available, he may as well be employed as an information clerk in a department store.

One need not be a child psychologist to understand child development, in fact, child development is not even an academic subject, as the sales of Dr. Spock's book show. In one sense, it is the easiest subject to learn, since almost everyone remembers a great deal about her own childhood, and has seen siblings grow up around her. Such common experiences make one ready to understand systematic conceptualizations of growth. As with biography and subjective response, a person will be motivated to understand child development as soon as she sees how it can help her understand herself. Teachers who are usually described as "good with children" are those in whom, say, the five-year-old mentality is still at peace with the adult mentality; such teachers are at peace with their own childhood and they can derive enlightenment from children in the act of teaching. Teachers who are anxious or tense probably need to make a more conscious effort to come to terms with their childhood and with their motives for going back into the atmosphere of young children. The foundation for understanding children, their literature, and their responses, is the understanding of oneself.

The more advanced curriculums in education have discovered that it pays to send the aspiring teacher into the classroom at length during every year of his training. A program in children's literature can take special advantage of such habitual classroom experiences. Students who have initiated independent study programs with me find it quite enlightening to read a story to either individuals or to groups of children and then to discuss what they think about the story. I have tapes and transcripts which told the student-teachers, before I could say anything, what a great effect they had on the discussion. These transcripts also show that it is not possible to separate a teacher's attitude toward children from his attitude toward literature. There is much technology now available—tapes, television, and so on—to help students become teachers. But no amount of technology can force a teacher to confront himself. Without such self-examination, and without person-to-person engagement with individual children, neither teacher nor student nor child will feel that his mental efforts are either satisfying or significant.

In the foregoing outline of study areas in subjective criticism, I have tried to suggest both the forms of thought and the pedagogical practices that can help bring the traditional discipline of English into tangible contact with our subjective lives. I have to admit that the authority I am claiming for these suggestions is my own experience as a child, a student, and a teacher. However, I believe that when something subjective is proffered and shared, it is more powerful, authoritative, and persuasive than something objective that is proclaimed and passed along.

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