The Fable and the Fabulous: The Use of Traditional Forms in Children's Literature

Ned Samuel Hedges

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/englishdiss

Hedges, Ned Samuel, "The Fable and the Fabulous: The Use of Traditional Forms in Children's Literature" (1968). Dissertations, Theses, and Student Research: Department of English. 94.

http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/englishdiss/94

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the English, Department of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations, Theses, and Student Research: Department of English by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.
THE FABLE AND THE FABULOUS:
THE USE OF TRADITIONAL FORMS IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

by

Ned Samuel Hedges

A THESIS
Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College in the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of English

Under the Supervision of Professor Bernice Slote

Lincoln, Nebraska
June, 1968
TITLE

The Fable and the Fabulous: The Use of Traditional Forms in Children's Literature

BY

Mr. Ned Samuel Hedges

APPROVED

Bernice Slote, Chairman
Dudley Bailey
Robert E. Knoll
C. E. Pulos
Robert E. Dewey

DATE
May 27, 1968
May 27, 1968
May 27, 1968
May 27, 1968
May 27, 1968

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE

GRADUATE COLLEGE

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA
There is in the academic community a paucity of serious critical concern for children's literature. As an illustration of the existing situation, consider the relative critical and literary status of George Orwell's Animal Farm and Kenneth Grahame's The Wind in the Willows. Grahame's The Wind in the Willows is almost universally acknowledged as a "great" children's book; it would probably be a rare list of the ten best children's books that did not include it. Animal Farm has received considerable acclaim; yet I would suspect that it would be a rare list of the ten best English novels that would include it. Nevertheless, it is probably safe to say that Animal Farm has been taught in literature classes in nearly every college and university in this country, while The Wind in the Willows is relegated to the nursery or the elementary school classroom.

Where is the criticism of the classic The Wind in the Willows in comparison to that of Animal Farm? Just the bibliography of critical materials pertaining to Animal Farm would perhaps fill a small volume rivalling in size a volume that included the text of all the serious criticism of The Wind in the Willows. There is in print at the present time only one relatively thorough critical treatment of Grahame's masterpiece, consisting of two chapters in Peter Green's Kenneth Grahame: A Biography. And Green's analysis, appearing as it does in a biography, seems to attempt primarily to determine what The Wind in the Willows as a document will provide
in the nature of biographical information about its author. The implication is clear enough: these two books are simply in different categories to be judged according to different standards. The comparative status of these two books contains the further implication that, even at its best, children's literature is second rate, unworthy of the serious attention of the professional critic. These assumptions may be true, either or both of them, but they should go unchallenged no longer.

If I were to ask a typical modern literary critic which of the two, Animal Farm or The Wind in the Willows, were the "better" book, I would expect him to answer, at least in part: "Well, The Wind in the Willows is perhaps a better children's book." But let me persist in my questioning and ask: "Yes, but forget for the moment that it is a children's book. Both books use the devices of fable. Both use fable to some extent for the purposes of political satire. On the basis of their artistic revelation of the corruption in a specific political system, and their implicit recommendations for improvement of the system or correction of the corruption, which is the better of the two books?" I would expect my literary critic to say: "Oh, I'm afraid I can't answer that question offhand. You see, I've never thought of The Wind in the Willows in that way before. I would have to analyze it rather carefully on that basis before I would be prepared to commit myself." Ah—precisely. He has never considered it in that way before; and he would have to analyze it rather carefully on that
basis before he could render such a judgment. Why should superior children's books not be submitted to careful analysis? Why should they not be considered as serious literary works with serious meaning?

By constructing this hypothetical situation, I do not intend to prove the superiority of Grahame's satire to Orwell's; nor do I intend to prove a point by setting up and knocking over a straw man. The purpose is rather to illustrate the present relationship between the discipline of literary scholarship and the subject of children's literature. And this example is representative of the general situation. Children's books have not been carefully analyzed to any great extent; and, when they have been treated critically, they have not been considered on the same basis as other literary works.

Consider the following statement from a book about children's literature, Margery Fisher's *Intent Upon Reading*, a book strong enough to survive some nit-picking. Speaking of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Mrs. Fisher writes: "It is like traditional fairy-tale in one way. It has no moral teaching." Now, to my typical modern critic, if he knows anything either of traditional fairy-tale or of Tolkien, such a statement would be simply preposterous. Such a statement is to deny the stories any "meaning" at all in a literary sense; indeed, the general implication of the statement would be to deny all of literature its very essence. But, to the probable audience of Mrs. Fisher's book, teachers and
librarians who work primarily with children, her statement would indicate high praise of Tolkien. It would probably be understood as an assertion that the "moral" of Tolkien's book, like the "moral" of traditional fairy-tale, arises unobtrusively. The moral is not too obvious and offensive, because it is clothed in an imaginative conception of specific characters acting within a specific narrative structure. Mrs. Fisher's statement would be taken as praise of Tolkien because she is saying that he has not found it necessary to "get his point across" by inserting overt philosophical or platitudinous statements which might interfere with a reader's initial pleasurable and imaginative response. Again the implication is clear: even the language of "talk about books" is different in the world of children's literature and in the world of literary criticism. Must it be so? Should it remain so?
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Fable and the Fabulous: An Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Fable and Myth: Kipling's Just So Stories</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Fable and Epic: Grahame's The Wind in the Willows</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Fable and Romance: Tolkien's The Hobbit</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Fable and Criticism: In Conclusion</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writing of writing for children, C. S. Lewis once remarked: "I am almost inclined to set it up as a canon that a children's story which is enjoyed only by children is a bad children's story." I would propose as a corollary: The best children's stories are likely to provide for more than one level of interpretation. The converse of that statement is not necessarily true—a children's book is not good just because it provides for a number of levels of interpretation. In this study, I will be concerned with some of the best works of children's literature that exist, considered best according to standard received opinion. Their authors have produced stories that do provide for more than one level of interpretation, stories that are relatively complex in their configurations of representation and symbolism.

Because children's literature is generally considered to be a development of the past two centuries, it is generally believed that there are differences between children's literature and adult literature. The majority of people who have written extensively about children's literature have been primarily concerned with those differences. I too believe that there are differences between children's literature and adult literature; but those differences seem to me to be neither as
extensive nor as significant as has been commonly assumed. What are the differences? Can they be described? Are there also significant similarities between children's literature and adult literature?

I believe that there are features common to both children's and adult literature, and that those similarities are much more important to a proper understanding of children's literature than are the differences that exist. This study will carry the burden of proof for that belief. If good children's literature is susceptible to serious interpretive criticism, and I believe that it is, it is so primarily because of what it contains in common with general literary tradition rather than because of what it contains different from general literary tradition. The complexity of the children's books that I will analyze in this study results from the use of traditional conventions in quite involved, but systematic, combinations. I will seek answers to the following questions: What conventional devices do good writers of children's literature employ? In what combinations? For what purposes?

I have chosen specific books for this study at least partially on the basis of the literary conventions that they use, and especially on the basis of the combinations of conventions that they use. The method of the study will be limited by a particularly close analysis of a certain pattern of various
devices used together with the convention of fable. I will attempt to provide a critical interpretive analysis of the use of the conventions of fable in combination with those of myth in Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories*, with those of epic in Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*, and with those of romance in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*.

To justify these choices, it will be necessary to make some general observations about children's literature and to establish some definitions. By "children's literature" I mean those literary works read to, or by, children; and by "good" children's literature I mean that generally approved by established opinion. Now these are hardly specific definitions, but they must do for the present. The alternative includes the near impossibility of defining, in such a manner as to gain general agreement, terms such as "children" and "literature" and establishing suitable criteria for value judgment. If the thesis of this study is to attain any validity, it must have the most general application possible. So it is best to reserve the impossible for later consideration.

Assuming this definition of children's literature, it is possible to divide the body of the literature into two relatively distinct parts: (1) those literary works that in some way have been especially designed for children, and (2) those that have
not. Historically, the first of these two groups could not begin to develop until the state of childhood was recognized as being different from adulthood. According to Jan Van den Berg, that recognition first occurred in Rousseau, about the middle of the 18th century: "Rousseau understood. He was the first to view the child as a child, and to stop treating the child as an adult." Other historians of children's literature date the beginnings of literature designed specifically for children more precisely, perhaps with the publication of Pilgrim's Progress in 1678, or the appearance of Perrault's Histoires ou Contes du Temps Passe ("Mother Goose"), published in Paris in 1698, or with the publication of John Newbery's Little Pretty Pocket Book in 1744. The second part of children's literature, including those books that children read although the books have not been specifically designed for them, has always existed. Children have participated in the literary experience throughout the history, and pre-history, of literature.

Moral and cultural traditions and systems of values have been transmitted from generation to generation in every civilization through story and verse. In the pre-literate stages of societies of men, or in the non-literate portions of literate societies, the transmission has been oral. Children
have always been part of the audience around the fire; and, although they may have frequently been relatively inconspicuous in the audience, they have been within the sound of the voice of the teller of tales. The tale, the ballad, the legend, and earlier, the fable, the myth, the epic—all those forms that originated in an oral tradition have always been a part of the literary experience of the child. Further, as a society becomes more sophisticated and more literate, those particular forms, at least approximately in their original form of expression, tend to become almost the exclusive possession of childhood. Philippe Ariès, beginning by speaking of the origin of games in France, explains the general process:

What eventually became an individual toy unconnected with the community or the calendar and devoid of any social content, would appear to have been linked at first with traditional ceremonies which brought together children and adolescents—between whom, in any case, there was no clear distinction—and adults . . . . There was a close connection between the communal religious ceremony and the game which formed its essential rite. Later this game lost its religious symbolism and its communal character to become at once profane and individual. In the process of becoming profane and individual, it was increasingly confined to children, whose repertory of games became the repository of collective demonstrations which were henceforth abandoned by adult society and deconsecrated.4

In terms of story and verse, perhaps Ariès's explanation would apply most directly to the deconsecration of myth; but Ariès goes on to assert that the general evolutionary process so
illustrated applies to other societies than the French and to other social phenomena than games, including literature, with "repetitious monotony." The old stories which everyone listened to are gradually abandoned by the adults of the upper classes, then the middle classes, then the lower classes, as literacy spreads down the scale, until childhood becomes the "last repository" of things abandoned by the adults. Indeed, symptoms of the same social evolutionary process are observable in contemporary society. The radio, once the entertainment center for the family, has become to such a great extent the exclusive property of the "teeny-bopper" that adults have had to invent FM radio for themselves. The movie musical spectacular for "the whole family" produced in the heyday of Hollywood appears to have been given over to the adolescent, catering to him with beach parties and "rock." The family situation-comedy of television's fifties today garners an audience made up of a continually growing majority of children. Perhaps the undershirt-clad, beer-drinking male viewer may even someday surrender television football and baseball to the kids.

But even in the seventeenth century, a child's literary experience was not limited to oral literature, whether heard around the fire or at his mother's or nurse's knee. Children learned to read in literate societies in "olden times"--perhaps
not as many and not as well as today. Yet we cannot doubt that those who did learn to read consumed the books available to them as voraciously as children do today. And there was considerably more available to them than Pilgrim's Progress and ABC's. It is not necessary here to conduct a survey of printed works available to children, or to the literary community at large, prior to the advent of books written for children; the first several chapters of F. J. Harvey Darton's Children's Books in England and the first two chapters of M. F. Thwaite, From Primer to Pleasure, among other books, perform that task admirably.

It is useful to summarize here, however, the categories of materials that children read widely before the middle of the eighteenth century in England. First, and foremost in terms of the purpose for which people were taught to read at all, was scripture. Apparently the standard learning process involved a combination of memorization and word and letter recognition. A typical ABC or primer would be composed primarily of brief scripture in verse, usually rhymed couplets. The student would memorize the scripture, and then "pick out" or "spell out" words in the text. The second category of material would include those things familiar enough to the fledgling reader for him to extend his recognition practice upon, stories that he already knew, including fables, simple
moral tales, and bits of verse. After he had learned to recognize words reasonably well, the whole world of literature was fair game for him; and he selected whatever suited his taste. Apparently what suited his taste was not always what adults thought was suitable for him, then as now; for the greatest traffic in books read by children was probably the nearly clandestine trade in "chapbooks." The chapbooks of the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries were small, poorly printed, shortened versions of popular romance, specializing in the adventures of Guy of Warwick, Bevis of Southampton, Jack the Giant-Killer, Dick Whittington, St. George, the Seven Champions of Christendom, and the like--heroes and their adventures taken from medieval metrical romance. Much to the dismay of the establishment of adult society, especially of the middle class, the literate of the lower classes and children from all classes appropriated these books in great quantity from the running stationers, or pedlars. In addition to books in these three general categories, children took unto themselves a smaller number of more respectable (at least, more respected) books, notably Gulliver's Travels, Robinson Crusoe, and Pilgrim's Progress.

"Literature," then, was not unknown to children prior to the recognized development of children's literature. The
only part of this material, however, that was in any sense designed for children was the ABC book and the primer; but it must be noted that they too were designed for the beginning reader, not always necessarily a child. Although the materials in the pre-history of children's literature did not make any special consideration of the child reader or listener, neither did they automatically exclude him from their audience. After Rousseau recognized that children were psychologically as well as physically different from adults, and after writers began to write specifically in consideration of that recognized difference, these materials—the forms of the oral tradition, religious didacticism, and pirated romance—continued to constitute a major portion of what was then recognized as legitimate children's literature.

The same is true in modern society—children actually read a good deal of material that is not specifically designed for them, and that material must be included in the body of children's literature. But, just as at the time of the advent of literature specifically designed for children, this part of children's literature contains relatively few kinds of books—primarily those of traditional materials (fable, myth, folk tale) and adventure stories (epic, romance, and their "degenerate" cousins, mystery, picaresque, travelogue). Children have not in large numbers,
at any time in history, voluntarily read the essay (even the informal essay), the psychological novel, tragedy, indeed almost any kind of drama, and very little non-narrative prose, except perhaps as textbooks in the context of formal and informal education.

The bulk of the literature that children read or have read to them today, in an ever-increasing mass, belongs to that part of children's literature identified as "literary works that in some way have been especially designed for children." This part can itself be divided into two parts: (1) those works not originally designed for children but newly designed or republished in editions especially for children, and (2) those works originally created for a child audience. Books belonging to this first part require little discussion here: they include such things as adaptations of classics like Robinson Crusoe or Arthurian romance or The Odyssey, or abridged editions of history and biography, or new translations and collections of myths, fables, and folk tales, newly illustrated. It is with the other part of this category, books originally designed for children, that we are mostly concerned here. They are the primary critical concern of this study.

At the beginning, it was admitted that there are differences between children's literature and adult literature.
If that is so, those differences should be subject to
description. The fact that a book may be designed especially
for children implies that an author would write differently
for an audience of children than he would for an audience
of adults, perhaps that he makes some concessions in
consideration of his audience. That hypothesis can be
easily enough tested, for there are many skilled writers
who have written both adult literature and children’s
literature—Ruskin, Robert Louis Stevenson, Kipling, Kenneth
Grahame, Tolkien, A. A. Milne, Ian Fleming, C. S. Lewis,
Mark Twain, Andrew Lang, E. B. White, Nathaniel Hawthorne,
Rumer Godden, Pearl Buck, William Faulkner—to name a
relatively small, but quite distinguished, company. An
analysis of a story by each written for children, compared
with an analysis of a story, similar in kind, written for
adults, or at least for a general audience, should provide
some evidence of the differences actually in existence
between children’s and adult literature, or it should at
least provide evidence of the concessions that these
authors have made for a child audience. I have conducted
just such a comparative analysis, though on an admittedly
superficial and limited scale, and the results are quite
revealing.7

The first and most immediately obvious difference between
the writing of these authors for children and their writing for adults is a matter of language, and to a lesser degree, style. The writing for children utilizes a vocabulary limited to some extent by the expected intellectual capacity of the audience—though the difference is nowhere near as great as one might expect, or at least as great as I had expected, and in no sense limited to a basic vocabulary in the number of words used. The style of writing for children is marked by longer, looser, more casual sentence structures, by less dependence upon casual subordination, and by extensive use of rhythmical parallel structures in appositive positions. The writing for children is much more likely to use verbal as well as structural repetition, and it makes abundant use of the kinds of parenthetical interrupters common to oral literature (some examples from books central to this study: "you must not forget the suspenders, O Best Beloved," "things lived ever so long in those days," "and by this he meant the Crocodile," from the Just So Stories; "and they have no beards," "which is curly," "neatly brushed," from the first chapter of The Hobbit; "It never is," "as is always the case," from the first chapter of The Wind in the Willows).

Second, the characters in books written for children
include, without exception, the young and/or the marvelous. Usually, the hero of a child's story will be a child, or a child-like animal, or a child-like adult, perhaps a little old man, perhaps a naive prince or knight. The prime requisite seems to be that the hero should be innocent and inexperienced, like the child reader, so that the reader may readily identify with him. Frequently, stories for children will employ marvelous characters--dragons, striped giraffes, the made-up animals of Dr. Seuss, and so on, but they too are usually child-like. And then occasionally, the hero of a story for children will be a real hero, but if so, he must be a most marvelous hero indeed, equal to Achilles or Odysseus.

Third, the narrative flow is almost always chronological. Writers for children apparently assume that the child's mind is not capable of holding time and space in abeyance except temporarily, so they do not use flashbacks or other discontinuous elements or begin their stories in medias res. In order that he may work on a broader canvas, however, the skillful writer may suspend a basic chronological string of narrative by using frequent changes of scene ("meanwhile, back at the ranch"), but when he does go back to his basic narrative he must pick it up at the point he previously left off.

Fourth, the plot of the children's story is much more
likely to progress through physical action, as opposed to psychological action. That is not to say that a children's story must contain more action than a story for adults; the observation is simply that what action does occur is of a more predominantly physical nature. Neither is that to say that a children's story ignores motivation, but the motives of the actions must be interpreted rather than observed. Curiously enough, that necessarily means that the writer for children must work more precisely with symbols than the writer for adults, and nearly every good story for children then necessarily demands that it be read beyond the literal level, and by the child.

Fifth, the beginning of a story for children almost invariably establishes a time of "no time," unless the story is historical fiction (Johnny Tremain, for example). The story will begin: "Early one summer morning," "In the High and Far-Off Times, when the world was new and all," "Once upon a time, when pigs could still talk in riddles," "on the eve of his seventh birthday." Stories by the same authors for adults will typically establish a specific historical time and place in order to take advantage of the sense of history that an adult audience may be expected to have and to take advantage of the cultural set that certain conditions can achieve. A story set in Berlin in 1937, or in a small
New England town in 1950, or in a speakeasy in Chicago in 1924, or in Paris on the eve of the storming of the Bastille, or "on the eighteenth of April in Seventy-five" immediately establishes a perfectly predictable assortment of attitudes in an adult audience, so that the writer can play his characters and actions against what he can safely assume to be the knowledge and reactions of his audience. When he writes for children, the writer can assume no such sense of history in his audience. But he can assume an imaginative set on the part of the children in his audience if he transports them to an imaginary, literary world by establishing the time and place of "no time," "no place." The child then knows that he is to hear a "story" and that he is to be limited only by his own and the writer's imagination.

Finally, there may be some differences in terms of subject, but the only very obvious difference is in the matter of sex. As in the case of vocabulary, the lack of significant difference between adult and children's literature in the subjects treated in stories by these authors was most surprising. Children's stories contain treatments of crime, violence, corruption, disillusion, politics, ambition, philosophy, death, religion, or what you will. But they do not deal extensively with the psychological complexities and physical urgencies of sex that make up such a decided portion.
of adult literature, although children's stories do include all the external manifestations of sex—love, courtship, marriage, and the home.

It should be clear that these characteristic differences arise from a study of pieces in traditional fictive modes, that they do not include biography, history, textbooks, or information books of any kind. The differences noted, in most cases, tended to vary to a greater degree as the apparent age of the intended audience decreased, especially in regard to the first and last items noted. In other words, the language of a book aimed at the six year old will vary more from the language of an adult story than would the language of a story written for the ten year old. Even considering this variation, however, the differences in language and subject were much less marked than I had expected.

Further, as a general observation not dependent on this comparative analysis, books for children may contain physical differences. They are much more likely to be illustrated (nowadays, invariably illustrated), to be printed in large type, or on heavy paper, even cloth, or in odd page sizes and shapes. Again, the younger the intended audience among children, the more extreme these differences appear. The "picture book," in which the pictures carry a significant portion of the narration, as opposed to the "illustrated book," in which the pictures merely illustrate the text,
is a major development of modern literature. But even in these cases, the differences in literary text are not so great as one might expect; for the great majority of the best books designed for the very young appear to be written to be read to rather than by children, and are consequently not severely limited by the reading ability of the novice reader, or illiterate infant.

In my discussion of that part of children's literature consisting of literary works not specifically designed for children, there was a constant assumption that children are not automatically excluded from the audience of literature, just because that literature does not happen to be especially written for them. With the enormous growth of the quantity of materials that are specifically designed for children there has developed a growing schism between the materials children read and the materials adults read; it is possible for a child today to read as much as he is able, or as much as he likes, without having to resort to materials not designed for him. Nevertheless, there is no assumption on the part of skillful writers of children's literature that the concessions they must make for a child audience necessarily render their works unfit for the adult audience, or beneath the dignity of a serious concern for those works. In other
words, a book, by virtue of the fact that it is designed
for children, does not necessarily exclude an adult audience.

Writing in explanation of their art and its intention,
authors of children's books almost invariably speak to this
specific point. While they almost universally admit that
writing for children demands special considerations and
techniques (their works demonstrate that demand, if not
their comments about their works), they also almost
universally deny that they write exclusively for the
pleasure of children. In prefaces to Once On a Time, a
"fairy tale" that A. A. Milne considered his best book at
the time (the time of his judgment was previous to the
publication of the Pooh books), Milne wrote:

This is not a children's book. I do not mean
by that ... 'Not for children,' which has an
implication all its own. Nor do I mean that
children will be unable to appreciate it ... .
But what I do mean is that I wrote it for grownups.
More particularly for two grown-ups. My wife
and myself.

He added later, in a preface to a second edition, more unsure
of his actual audience:

For whom, then is the book intended? That is
the trouble. Unless I can say, 'For those, young
or old, who like the things which I like,' I find
it difficult to answer. Is it a children's book?
Well, what do we mean by that? Is The Wind in the
Willows a children's book? Is Alice in Wonderland?
Is Treasure Island? These are masterpieces which we
read with pleasure as children, but with how much
more pleasure when we are grown-up ... . But I

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
am very sure of this: that no one can write a book which children will like, unless he writes it for himself first.8

C. S Lewis, a very successful author of children's books as well as an eminent scholar and literary critic, judges it unlikely that any superior story for children would result from a desire to write deliberately for "hypothetical children" or from an attempt to give such a hypothetical audience "what it wants." His advice to the writer of children's stories, if we may be so presumptuous as to call it "advice" (though Lewis certainly would not), is that the process "consists in writing a children's story because a children's story is the best art form for something you have to say." He continues: "Where the children's story is simply the right form for what the author has to say, then of course readers who want to hear that will read the story, or reread it, at any age."9

Typically, in his defense of his art, an author of children's books not only asserts the multiplicity, or universality, of his audience, but he also asserts the literary dignity of the forms he uses and defends the seriousness of their intention to convey meaning worthy of serious critical investigation. The paramount apology for any specific form generally associated with children's literature is J. R. R Tolkien's essay "On
Fairy-Stories." Tolkien speaks of the use of fairy stories with children:

It is true that in recent times fairy-stories have usually been written or "adapted" for children. But so may music be, or verse, or novels, or history, or scientific manuals. It is a dangerous process, even when it is necessary . . . . Fairy-stories banished in this way, cut off from a full adult art, would in the end be ruined; indeed in so far as they have been so banished, they have been ruined.

The value of fairy-stories is thus not, in my opinion, to be found by considering children in particular. Collections of fairy-stories are, in fact, by nature attics and lumber-rooms, only by temporary and local custom play-rooms. Their contents are disordered, and often battered, a jumble of different dates, purposes, and tastes; but among them may occasionally be found a thing of permanent virtue: an old work of art, not too much damaged, that only stupidity would ever have stuffed away. 10

Discussing the values and functions of fairy stories currently, both new publications of old tales and the deliberate creation of new ones, Tolkien hesitatingly admits that perhaps such stories must first be written for children to read. But he vigorously argues the necessity for adults to realize that fairy story is very serious and profitable business, in terms of its literary and moral pretensions. Tolkien continues:

If fairy-story as a kind is worth reading at all it is worthy to be written for and read by adults. They will, of course, put more in and get more out than children can. Then, as a branch of a genuine art, children may hope to get fairy-stories fit for them to read and yet within their measure; as they may hope to get suitable introductions to poetry, history, and the sciences. Though it may
be better for them to read some things, especially fairy-stories, that are beyond their measure rather than short of it. Their books like their clothes should allow for growth, and their books at any rate should encourage it.

Very well, then. If adults are to read fairy-stories as a natural branch of literature—neither playing at being children, nor pretending to be choosing for children, nor being boys who would not grow up—what are the values and functions of this kind? That is, I think, the last and most important question. I have already hinted at some of my answers. First of all: if written with art, the prime value of fairy-stories will simply be that value which, as literature, they share with other literary forms. But fairy-stories offer also, in a peculiar degree or mode, these things: Fantasy, Recovery, Escape, Consolation, all things of which children have, as a rule, less need than older people. Most of them are nowadays very commonly considered to be bad for anybody.

Lewis, after the manner of Tolkien, whose essay he utilizes, professes the fairy tale as the art form most useful to the modern writer for allegorical purposes. (And by "fairy tale," he apparently means, along with Tolkien, that form probably most recognizable to the student of children's literature as "fantasy.") Lewis asserts its value:

For Jung, fairy tale liberates the archetypes which dwell in the collective unconscious, and when we read a good fairy tale we are obeying the old precept 'Know thyself.' I would venture to add to this my own theory, not indeed of the kind as a whole, but of one feature of it: I mean, the presence of beings other than human which yet behave, in varying degrees, humanly—the giants and dwarfs and talking beasts. I believe these to be at least (for they may have many other sources of power and beauty) an admirable hieroglyphic which conveys psychology, types of character, more briefly than novelistic presentation and to readers whom novelistic presentation could not yet reach. Consider
Mr. Badger in *The Wind in the Willows*—that extraordinary amalgam of high rank, coarse manners, gruffness, shyness, and goodness. The child who has once met Mr. Badger has ever afterwards, in his bones, a knowledge of humanity and of English social history which he could not get in any other way. 12

It would appear from these remarks that the problem of the writer for children is how to achieve complexity, not how to achieve simplicity—how to supply materials within the intellectual range of children yet sufficiently demanding in complexity to challenge the interest and consideration of adults. The writers of the most superior children's books have generally solved this problem by deliberately writing on several different levels at once, employing the devices of symbolism and allegory.

We have been noting the observable differences between literature that is designed for children and literature that is not. A writer might, in writing a book for children, employ as a formula that set of features we have noted as distinctive of children's stories. If he used only that formula, however, he would probably produce a relatively inferior book—and many have done so. For what is most significant in a consideration of children's literature is that which literature designed for children has in common with literature in general. Historically, when children have selected books from that part of literature not specifically designed for them, they have selected what
pleased them; and we have seen that what pleased them was apparently a limited number of kinds of literature--among them, fable, myth, legend, folk tale, epic, romance, and their modern descendants. When modern writers create works for children, they undoubtedly intend, at least at some level, to please children; and they have selected from among the forms available to them precisely those forms that have proven to be pleasurable to children--fable, myth, legend, folk tale, epic, romance, and their modern descendants. That is not to say that a writer for children "writes" fable or myth or epic; it is only to say that he utilizes the basic conventions of those traditional forms as the essential structures of his stories.

In short, the writers involved in the modern development of children's literature have no more invented literary forms than they have invented children. Children's literature, including that portion of it specifically designed for children, utilizes the literary devices, narrative structures, and characters according to type that are common to literary tradition in general. The writers of the best children's literature have employed these traditional forms and characters just as have the writers of the best literature in Western tradition--in essentially the same patterns, for the same symbolic and allegorical purposes, to assert the
same cultural and individual human values.

Furthermore, the literary value and quality that superior children's books attain derive primarily, not from the skilled use of features that differentiate children's literature from adult literature, but from the skilled use of those conventions common to general literary tradition. To solve his problem of maintaining simplicity and at the same time providing complexity, to provide levels of meaning for a multiple audience, the writer for children will typically employ these traditional conventions in a variety of combinations. It is the piling up of patterns, producing increasingly complex levels of symbolism and allegory, that causes a reader to have in his bones a knowledge and understanding that he cannot gain through a purely rational reaction to a purely literal level of language. It is the bones of literature, its structural forms, that work in the bones of the reader; the indirect apprehension of truth and beauty through the interpretive imagination most significantly distinguished the literary art from the more direct art of simple communication.

Too frequently, what serious criticism of children's literature there is in existence has concentrated on an evaluation of those features which distinguish children's literature from literature generally. The effect of that
process has been to further alienate children's literature from the consideration of the scholarly and critical world. It should be one function of criticism, perhaps its ultimate function, to do precisely the opposite—to place a literary work or body of literary works within a general tradition, to ascertain its proper place in "literature as a whole." If we wish to understand a child's book as a literary work, and to be able sensibly to assess its literary quality and its place in literary tradition, we must first of all undertake an analysis of the common, rather than the uncommon, literary conventions that it employs. This study purports to perform that analysis upon some excellent children's books.

But which books, and why? If we are to perform an analysis of children's books according to "kind," it behooves us to select for an initial study the most dominant kind of children's story. A cursory glance at the body of children's literature produced in this century will reveal that the greater portion of those books generally considered to be superior belong to a class generally identified as "fantasy." Frank Eyre, in a survey of twentieth century children's books, notes:

... a significant development was the immense revival of interest in fairies (which, although producing a few original and distinguished books,
also released a spate of trivial and imitative stories) and the new emphasis, which has persisted for the greater part of the period, on fantasy in general. It is noticeable that many of the best books of the period have been of this type, and the present century has also been notable for the number of writers distinguished in other fields who have written books for children. Whatever the reason for this may be, throughout the century famous scholars and scientists, novelists and writers of all kinds have produced children's books of distinction which have, without exception, been fantasies. ... The majority of genuine writers when writing for children turn instinctively to fantasy, leaving the story of everyday life, with rare exceptions, to the second-raters. 14

Eyre goes on to mention a "few that come to mind," including A. E. Coppard, John Masefield, Eric Linklater, Vaughan Wilkins, T. H. White, Rumer Godden, Professor Haldane, Professor Tolkien, and, previous to this century, Ruskin, Dickens, and Thackeray. His list could be continued at some length with such names, for example, as Lewis Carroll, C. S. Lewis, Rosemary Sutcliff, Kipling, Grahame, Pearl Buck, Milne, Sir James Barrie. "Fantasy," whatever that may turn out to be, is obviously a candidate for our consideration. But if it means just "make believe," it doesn't help narrow our limits very much.

Writing in 1955 of recent trends in children's literature, Mary Eakin remarks the dominance of "animal stories." She reports that of 2159 books of fiction she examined for review purposes between 1951 and 1953, animals figured in fully 814
titles. Of the other 1,300-odd books, it is safe to assume that a goodly number were "about" animals in one way or another, even though the names of the animals did not appear in the titles of the books.

If the most dominant kind of children's story in terms of quantity is the "animal story," and the most dominant kind in terms of quality is the "fantasy," perhaps it would be best to begin with a consideration of "animal fantasy." It does not necessarily follow, of course, that animal stories are at the same time fantasies; but even if it were so, it would not be of much help at this point. Our proposal is to undertake the analysis of some superior examples of children's literature according to their use of traditional literary devices, particularly the conventions of narrative structure; but categories identified as fantasy or animal story indicate kinds according to subject or content rather than according to form or genre. There is one observable relationship between fantasy and animal story, however, in structural terms. Most of the stories of both types utilize some of the traditional devices of fable. The conception of character in animal story is usually similar to the conception of character in fable; the conception of the fabulous in fantasy is usually similar to the conception of the fabulous in fable. Thus it seems at least tentatively
justifiable to limit our initial analysis to children's stories which utilize the conventions of fable as an integral part of their structural apparatus.

By "fable," I mean a certain kind of story. The fable has been a part of the traditional literature of nearly every known literate society, in most cases undoubtedly originating in the "pre-literate" history of most civilizations. As such, fable is probably the oldest kind of children's story—at least the first to become the "property" of children. As a traditional form of narrative, it has certain identifiable characteristics. A fable is usually a brief narrative, typically using animals (but sometimes inanimate objects and/or men) as speakers and actors in predictable narrative patterns. Most fables employ one of two basic patterns: (1) a single actor involved in a single incident, or (2) multiple characters involved in single or multiple incidents. The second pattern is most notable in that it allows for a reversal of fortune. The characters involved in the fables represent human characteristics in simple emblematic fashion.

The fables of Aesop, in their various translations, are so pervasive in the literature of Western civilization and so engrained in the Western mind that they may be considered "archetypes" of the form. Aesopian fables typical of the first
basic narrative pattern include "The Dog and His Shadow" and "The Fox and the Grapes." In each case, a single actor representative of a single human characteristic reveals in a single incident either the folly or the wisdom of acting according to that characteristic: the dog suffers for his greed by losing his dinner, the fox is emblematic of the "sour grapes" attitude so closely associated with this particular fable that it has no other precisely equivalent term in English. The characters are completely "flat"--they represent only one characteristic and assume no psychological complexity; and they are completely "human"--any characteristics they may contain of the natural animal are irrelevant to the narrative. The eidola of animals in fable have become so firmly established in our culture by the fable tradition that we immediately associate slyness with the fox, frivolity with the grasshopper, industry with the ant or bee, gentleness with the lamb, ferocity with the lion. These associations testify to the pervasive power of fable, for most people make them immediately on the basis of reputation rather than natural observation.

Aesopian fables typical of the second basic narrative pattern include "The Hare and the Tortoise," "The Fox and the Crow," "The Ant and the Grasshopper." A close analysis
of all these examples would indicate a number of subtle variations in structure, but the general structure is subject to brief description. The basic form is the wise beast-foolish beast pattern, another "archetypal" pattern. At the beginning of the tale, the foolish beast appears to hold the upper hand: the hare entertains a distinct advantage over the tortoise in his natural talent for track and field, the crow holds a choice morsel far from the reach of the covetous fox, the grasshopper frolics as the ant toils in the summer sun. At the end of the fable, in a second confrontation or a continuation of the first, the folly of the foolish beast brings him low, he suffers for his folly, and the wise beast prevails at last: the tortoise wears the laurel, the sniggering fox devours both the meal and the pride of the flattered crow, the grasshopper perishes while the ant enjoys the fruits of his labor in comfort. Even the very briefest of fables can allow for this kind of classic reversal. Consider, for example, this complete fable:

A vixen sneered at a lioness because she never bore more than one cub. "Only one," she replied, "but a lion." In one stroke, the lioness brings the "superior" vixen to shame.
In the classic fable of this type, the two beasts represent opposite human characteristics and a confrontation between the two illustrates the superiority of one characteristic over the other. This wise beast-foolish beast pattern is the most extensively used fable pattern in literature. That is not to say that it is necessarily the most common pattern in traditional collections of fables; indeed, the number of fables in the Aesopian corpus that fit the pattern precisely is relatively small. But because the pattern allows for considerable narrative development and conflict, it is the one most widely adapted for literary purposes. And of course, the characters in such fables need not be exclusively animals; men and inanimate things (rocks, wind, rivers, trees, etc., occasionally even gods) figure in perhaps a majority of Aesopian fables. Yet no matter what the character, the conception of character is the same: each figure represents a single human characteristic, with no complexity of personality, no mixture of good and bad.

By the "fabulous," I mean that which is not to be understood as actually true, or that which could not be "possible" in a realistic sense, or that which cannot be observed as fact in the actual world. It is the fabulous quality of the fable which provides for its moral—and a
fable always assumes the fabulous and consequently always contains a "moral," whether or not it is explicitly expressed at the end of the fable. To be properly understood, a fable must be understood allegorically or symbolically, that is, it must be interpreted on an extra-literal level. The characters in fables are fabulous, not just by virtue of the fact that they appear in fables, but by virtue of the fact that they are not to be understood as actual creatures. They are symbols, or emblems—not actual animals. The animals and inanimate objects in fables are invested with human qualities—they speak, they are guided by human reason or passions—and are consequently fabulous. Even though an animal may not speak in a fable, it is still fabulous; for it is implicitly invested with human qualities and represents human characteristics. A man appearing in a fable is a fabulous creature as well, not because he cannot possibly be understood as a "real" man, but because he is not to be understood as "a man": he is to be understood as a symbol of a single human characteristic.

The "fabulous" in this sense is not the exclusive property of fable; it operates in many kinds of literature, indeed in most literary works that deal with story, and lies at the very heart of romance and fairy tale. It is undoubtedly
the distinguishing characteristic of that literature so common in children's literature that has been called "fantasy."

But the fabulous is most significant at this point because it is a never varying feature of the fable.

It may be useful here to suggest some distinctions and present some examples. The fabulous does not deny "truth" or "reality," but it inhabits what Tolkien calls the "Secondary World" of sub-creation rather than the "Primary World" of actuality. The fabulous treats of truth on an interpretive rather than a literal level, and it treats of reality as the reality of the creative imagination. Odysseus is not a fabulous character; Hamlet is not a fabulous character. They are "men like ourselves." In literature, characters of this sort serve as examples of men in action. Polyphemus is a fabulous creature; the ghost of Hamlet's father is a fabulous creature. They are to be understood as emblems, to be understood in terms of what they stand for. The typical in literature, that which represents the world as it is, is intended to "create the illusion of reality"; the fabulous is intended to "invite the willing suspension of disbelief."

In most literary discussions, the term "fable" goes hand in hand with the term "myth." Certainly fable and myth are
two of the oldest forms of literature. Nearly every literate
society in the history of civilization has produced some
body of fable; and every society known to the modern
anthropologist has produced some system of mythology.18
Perhaps each society has felt the need to explain what it
could observe in the natural world and what it could "feel"
in the supernatural world--explanations which blend the two
are what we call "myth." It is at least one of the differences
between fable and myth that fable treats of the human world
and myth treats of the non-human world. Perhaps each society
has felt the need to assert the human values it deemed
admirable and to expose the human characteristics it deemed
foolish--from time to time and place to place stories which
fulfill that need took the form of fable. But such speculation
belongs in the realm of anthropology or the history of folk
lore. What we are concerned with here, for the purposes of
criticism, is the describable pattern that such stories assume.

As in the case of fable, by "myth" I mean a certain kind
of story. A myth is a narrative, usually quite brief, which
treats of the relationship between the human and the non-human
worlds, between man and "superman" or "supra-man," between
man and the creatures which inhabit the natural or supernatural
spheres. In attempting to explain their natural surroundings
in terms of their feeling for the existence of superhuman
powers, most societies have produced as part of their mythology a "creation myth," or set of myths dealing with the process of creation. The types of this kind most familiar in Western civilization are probably Hesiod's *Theogony* and the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament. The central part of this body of myth usually includes stories of anthropomorphic gods in relationship to one another, without necessarily any specific reference to man beyond the explanation of his creation and the creation of the world he inhabits.

As a part of this general creation myth, most bodies of mythology include a series of relatively brief narratives which can be identified as "nature myths." These stories are susceptible to more specific description, in terms of their typical structure. The typical nature myth renders an explanation of the origin of some specific natural detail or natural event: the peculiar characteristic or existence of an animal or a plant or some topographical feature, the explanation of lightning, thunder, earthquake, etc. The story brings about a confrontation between god and man, frequently as a test of the human being's reverence for the god or obedience to his will. Depending upon the action of the human being, as a reward or punishment he is transformed into some natural creature or object. Some typical examples:
the origin of spiders and their ability to weave nets in the story of Arachne; the origins of a flower which seems to continually seek its own reflection in the story of Narcissus; the explanation of the peculiar relationship between two specific trees in the story of Baucis and Philemon; the origin of the red-headed woodpecker, his appearance and his feeding habits, in the American Indian myth "The Story of the First Woodpecker." The metamorphosis achieved is usually dictated by the behavior of the human being involved in the story. Inasmuch as the transformed character in a nature myth brings his fate upon himself, the resolution of such a story is similar to the typical resolution of a fable in the wise beast-foolish beast pattern. But, in general, the character in a fable is rewarded or punished according to his wisdom or folly in terms of human relationships, whereas the character in a nature myth is rewarded or punished in accord with his wise or foolish behavior in relationships with the gods. The fable usually deals with matters of social morality or ethics; the myth usually deals with matters of religion, at least in its original form.

Fable and myth are related too, in a rather complex way, in their attainment of the quality of the fabulous. In common usage, the terms "fable" and "myth" frequently
refer to untruths, but they are not quite synonymous within this general usage. A person will use the term "fable" when he means to say: "That is not literally true; it's just a story; somebody made it up." But when he uses the term "myth" in this sense, he probably means to say: "Some people may believe that to be true, or we (that is, most of us) used to believe it, but it isn't really true." The matter of belief is central to our problem. Fable always attains the quality of the fabulous, because it is always "just a story," somebody made it up. And its creator neither believed it to be literally true nor expected his audience to take it as literally true. "True" myth, on the other hand, never assumes the quality of the fabulous. It is necessary to the understanding of the nature of myth to realize that any myth was at one time, and sometimes still is, believed to be a true account of something that actually happened. A story cannot properly be called a myth if it is "just a story," if "somebody just made it up," that is, if it was never an article of belief among a group of people in a society. Thus, the body of mythology available in literature includes myth of two kinds. Some myth is still very much alive--it is still believed to be literally true, most notably in our society, Christian myth. But most myth existing in our literary culture is dead--few people believe
it to be a true account of something that actually happened. Every body of mythology yet devised by man eventually goes through this transitional process from belief to literature, from the true to the fabulous. Christian myth itself has been going through the process for some time: some people believe the story in Genesis to be an historical account, literally true; some people believe it to be only a symbolic account. For the "God is dead" people, the transition has been completed; and they are actively seeking a new mythology. Once a myth becomes dead, it partakes of the quality of the fabulous; and it is precisely this quality which provides myth with its literary value. If a myth loses its historical validity, it retains value only in the degree to which it is an effective symbolic rendition of truth.

I intend to use the terms "epic" and "romance" in the same fashion as I have used "fable" and "myth." By "epic" I mean a certain kind of story, a heroic poem, typically (and specifically in this study) represented by The Odyssey. By "romance" I mean the type of medieval narrative commonly known as "metrical romance" or "chivalric romance." These definitions are not very precise, but no good purpose would be served by badgering them about here. Description of their specific characteristics as narrative will be included in chapters of this study when they come under direct
consideration: epic in Chapter III, romance in Chapter IV. All that is important about the terms at this point is that they be understood as critical terms, predominantly nouns, or names of kinds of narrative stories. It is important to understand thoroughly that limitation of this discussion. The terms "table," "myth," "epic," and "romance" refer to kinds of stories, or kinds of narrative patterns; they do not refer to literary productions which assume some of the characteristics of a type without assuming others, or in combination with others. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is a romance; Treasure Island uses some of the characteristic devices of romance.

Two other critical terms to be used frequently in this study deserve some brief explanation. A "symbol" is a literal element in a work of literature which represents another element that is not named in the work of literature. The symbol may be a person, or an animal, or a rock, or a sword, or whatever; it may represent an abstraction, a human characteristic, a person. In the first book of The Faerie Queene, the Redcrosse Knight is a symbol of the human soul in search of holiness, or salvation; Orgoglio is a symbol of pride. An "allegory" is a narrative relationship among elements in a story on a literal level which represents the same narrative relationship among extra-literal
symbols. Orgoglio subdues the Redcrosse Knight and impedes his journey. That relationship represents pride overpowering the human soul and impeding its progress toward salvation. The process is allegory. In short, "symbol" and "allegory" are to be understood in their simplest critical sense: any extra-literal interpretation involves symbol if it refers to a single item; it involves allegory if it refers to relationships among two or more items.

Typically, the characteristics which serve as the identifying marks of one literary kind do not belong exclusively to that kind. Although fables usually employ talking beasts as characters, that is no reason to assume that talking beasts could not appear in epic, or myth, or romance, for example. Whole kinds may be employed in other kinds. One of the characteristics of epic, for example, is that it typically includes myth, and invariably includes the major device of myth—a relationship between men and gods, or their equivalent. A fable, then, is a story which employs the typical devices of fable and no other; a myth is a story which employs the typical devices of myth and no other.

It has been necessary to be persistently repetitive here in order to insure unmistakable clarity. We are going to conduct an analysis of a number of children's stories according to their use of the typical devices of some
traditional kinds of narrative; we are not going to study children's stories as examples of traditional kinds of narrative. An understanding of the limitations of the critical terminology is significant to an understanding of the difference between writing a fable, for example, and writing a story which uses the devices of fable. To say that writers for children do not write fable but use the devices of fable is necessarily to imply that they use those devices in combination with other literary devices.

We have noted previously that that part of children's literature which was not specifically designed for children originally consists primarily of stories in traditional forms, among them, fable, myth, epic, and romance. We have also observed that that part of children's literature which has been specifically designed for children characteristically makes use of the devices of those same traditional forms. General observation of the best children's books indicates that they tend to combine the devices of traditional forms, and that they rarely correspond to a particular kind.

It has been established that the specific form utilized most frequently in good books for children is the fable; but a limited study must select even further. In order that the results of this analytical investigation may have a relatively broad application, I have chosen to submit to the proof
children's books representative of several kinds of combinations of devices rather than a series of books representative of only one kind of combination of devices. Specifically, I have chosen to analyze children's stories which utilize the devices of fable in combination with those of myth, epic, and romance. It only remains to select specific books from among those which could possibly represent each category of combination of literary devices. The first criterion of this selection should be that the books must be universally acknowledged as superior children's books.

The three I have chosen have received that universal acclaim. Kipling's *Just So Stories* and Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* both hold the rather remarkable distinction of having never been out of print since their publication over a period of more than sixty years in a rapidly changing civilization. The writings of Tolkien are presently enjoying a surge of interest of fantastic proportions. Although relatively unknown outside the circles of those particularly interested in children's literature for nearly twenty years following its publication, *The Hobbit* is enjoying tremendous popularity today. Tolkien's books, including *The Hobbit* and the trilogy of *The Lord of the Rings*, usually considered together in one package, have gained the attention of the fanatic, faddish college-high school audience and presently
hold the same position among the youth that Salinger's Catcher in the Rye held some years ago. The Hobbit, first published in England in 1937, was published in paperback in the United States in 1965 and has since sold over 700,000 copies. Publishers' Weekly, reporting on paperback sales in 1966, reported: "we can report that in the mass market field the overwhelming bookstore favorite, with no close competition, was the J. R. R. Tolkien books about life in Middle Earth published by Ballantine."22

There is sufficient justification for the choice of these three books. The following critical analysis may discover whether or not there is any justification for their reputation. But mostly, I have selected the Just So Stories, The Wind in the Willows, and The Hobbit for the following analysis because I like them very much, and so do my children.
CHAPTER II

FABLE AND MYTH:
KIPLING'S JUST SO STORIES

On the surface of things, Rudyard Kipling's Just So Stories are among the least complicated of his works. Since they were obviously written for the delight of little children, and since they are completely successful in that they do delight little children, the great temptation is to pass them off lightly as idle fancies lacking any significant complexity. But the evidence of the stories themselves, along with scattered statements by Kipling concerning his general methods of composition, belie the utter simplicity and frivolity of the Just So Stories. There is perhaps more to them than meets the eye, particularly the eye of the child or the eye of the adult attempting to react as a child.

One honored method of criticism consists in bumping against the backboard of previous criticism, always with the assumption that previous criticism is erroneous or insufficient; indeed, if it were not so there would be little need for additional criticism. It is my view that previous critical comment on the Just So Stories is in fact insufficient and erroneous--if not erroneous, at least misleading. Serious professional critics of Kipling's work simply have not considered the Just So Stories, perhaps assuming that children's
stories do not demand the application of their expertise in order to be sufficiently understood. In the enormous Kipling bibliographies compiled in English Literature in Transition,¹ there are no more than perhaps two dozen references to the Just So Stories. The bulk of the references are to reviews of the book upon the occasion of its publication; the rest are to considerations of Kipling's juvenile literature as a group (The Jungle Books, the Puck books, the Stalky stories, the Just So Stories, and sometimes Kim and Captains Courageous), and these considerations are usually extremely brief judgments of this great quantity of literature. In the standard critical biography of Kipling, C. E. Carrington's The Life of Rudyard Kipling,² there are just five brief references to the Just So Stories, none of them more than a few sentences in length and none of a critical nature.

The Just So Stories have received rather better treatment at the hands of critics of children's literature, at least rather "more" treatment if not rather "better." But the comments of these critics are nearly all of a kind, descriptive comments rather than critical or interpretive, usually descriptive of the peculiar features that make the stories suitable for children. In her standard book of children's literature,
May Hill Arbuthnot writes:

Living in India for many years and thus familiar with the Indian Jatakas and the usual pattern of a 'why' story, Rudyard Kipling wrote his own collection of explanatory tales in amusing imitation of the old form. . . .

These are stories to be read aloud. They are cadenced, rhythmic, and full of handsome, high-sounding words, which are both mouth-filling and ear-delighting. It isn't necessary to stop and explain every word. The children will learn them, even as they learn 'Hey diddle diddle,' and the funny meanings will follow the funny sounds, gradually. The mock-serious tone of these pseudo-folk tales adds to their humor. Once the child catches on to the grandiloquent style and absurd meanings, he loves them. These stories are a good cure for too tight, humorless literalness. 3

Although Arbuthnot's statement may not be the definitive statement about the Just So Stories in the criticism of children's literature, it is fair to judge her statement as representative. The peculiar style, the "nonsense" quality of words and sounds, receives more comment than any other single feature of the stories. Rosemary Sutcliff, for example, writes, with considerable grace:

The Just So Stories are as full of primitive noises as Stalky, and yet they, of all Kipling's stories, must be read aloud. Read to oneself they are poor things shorn of half their glory. Of what use is an incantation merely thought within one's head and not cried aloud to the stars? The Just So Stories are the true stuff of incantation and magic-making, with the inspired repetition of words and phrases . . . .

Incidentally, like Peter Rabbit, the Just So Stories, with their camels most 'scruciating idle, and their Parsees with hats from which the rays
of the sun were reflected in more-than-Oriental-splendour, are the answers to the people who think that one should not use long words in writing for children. Half the glory of the Just So Stories, as I remember across thirty years, was the glory of their long words. I didn't always (I didn't often) understand what they meant, but that was not of the least consequence. They tasted superb.  

On occasion, critics have noted that there may be more to the stories than a superficial nonsense. For example, Rosemary Sutcliff again:

My feeling for their stories has of course changed with the years, and in a way the stories themselves seem to have changed too, for like all Kipling's children's books—like all the really great children's books—they are written on many levels.

And in the only lengthy treatment of Kipling's books for children, R. Lancelyn Green's Kipling and the Children, Green states:

This mastery of many levels over which he gained more and more control in his later stories, is one of the most potent of Kipling's spells. In this lies the extraordinary power that most of his fiction has of appealing in different ways to his readers at different ages, and it was a power that grew. It is hardly there in the early stories which have a direct and unchanging appeal; it is beginning to make itself felt subconsciously in "The Drums of the Fore and Aft" and "The Man Who Would be King"; it is being more consciously used in "On Greenbow Hill" and The Naulahka and is perhaps at its most potent in the next stage of Kipling's literary career which produced The Jungle Books and led on to the Just So Stories and Kim.

But neither Sutcliff nor Green goes on to provide any inter-
pretation of the various levels of meaning that they indicate are operative in the stories.

In sum, nearly all of the commentary on the Just So Stories is commonplace and descriptive. The stories are simple little tales written for the delight of little children, explaining for infants at bedtime the features of zoo creatures: how the elephant's trunk got to be "just so," how the camel's back got to be "just so," how the rhinoceros' skin got to be "just so." As such, they are pourquoi, or "how," stories pure and simple, clearly after the fashion of the Indian folk matter that Kipling would have heard himself as a child in India. And, above all, they are full of marvelous nonsense sounds, full of lovely mouth-filling phrases a la Lewis Carroll or Edward Lear. Although there is now and then a suggestion that the stories may contain some allegory, or extra-literal levels of meaning, it appears to be pretty generally agreed that the stories should not be spoiled for children by exposure to the critic's scalpel of analysis and explication.

Now I do not wish to deny that the Just So Stories delight little children, or for that matter the parents and teachers who read the stories to little children. Indeed, undoubtedly is the most significant critical statement that
can be made about them in the long run. But trusting overly much to superficial descriptive statements about the *Just So Stories* may lead to lack of understanding, if not downright misunderstanding, of the stories, their nature, and their expression. The stories are full of delicious phrases ("the banks of the great grey-green, greasy Limpopo River, all set about with fever-trees" tastes best to me, and to my children); but the strange words and phrases that Kipling exploits are rarely, if ever, "nonsense." They constitute remarkably complete and accurate detail, mostly geographic. Without doubt, the dominant kind of the stories is the *pourquoi* story, or the nature myth, as I should prefer to call it. But the structure of the stories is not at all simple; Kipling utilizes a relatively large number of structural conventions and traditional devices in surprisingly complex patterns. Perhaps most surprising to me, there is no evidence in the stories that they were prompted by Kipling's boyhood in India, either in their structures, or in their characters, or in their plots, or in the subject matter of the tales. In fact, there are only two specific references to India in all of the tales, as nearly as I can determine. One is the use of "Parsee" in "How the Rhinoceros Got his Skin," a tale set in the area of the Red Sea, Arabia, and
Persia; but, of course, though the Parsees as most people know them are "of" India, they were originally from Persia in "the high and far-off times." The other is the identification of the Parsee as Pestonjee Bomonjee, a Parsee who was actually a good friend of the Kipling family, whom young Kipling knew in India prior to his being sent to school in England. Considering the complexity of their structures, and the profusion and accuracy of their detail, it is almost certain that the Just So Stories contain rather carefully worked-out levels of meaning, meaning sufficiently significant to warrant the effort of its complex expression.

Although the intention of an author may count but little in the world of criticism, a clear statement of his method by the author himself ought not be ignored completely. Writing in Something of Myself about the composition of Rewards and Fairies, Kipling says:

Yet, since the tales had to be read by children, before people realized that they were meant for grown-ups; and since they had to be a sort of balance to, as well as a seal upon, some aspects of my 'Imperialistic' output in the past, I worked the material in three or four overlaid tints and textures, which might or might not reveal themselves according to the shifting light of sex, youth, and experience. It was like working lacquer and mother o' pearl, a natural combination, into the same scheme as niello and grisaille, and trying not to let the joins show.

So I loaded the book up with allegories and allusions, and verified references until my old Chief would have been almost pleased with me; put in three or four really good sets of verses; the
bones of one entire historical novel for any to clothe who cared; and even slipped in a cryptogram, whose key I regret I must have utterly forgotten. It was glorious fun; and I knew it must be very good or very bad because the series turned itself off just as Kim had done. 8

The assumption that Kipling's comments on his method of composition of Rewards and Fairies apply to the composition of the Just So Stories may, of course, be an unwarranted assumption. Nevertheless, there is sufficient evidence available to support the contention that Kipling's method at work in the Just So Stories was generally similar. Although Rewards and Fairies (1910) was published some eight years later than the Just So Stories (1902), Kipling performed a good deal of the work on both books, particularly the "checking of references" and allusions, during his winters in Capetown, South Africa, at the same time that he was preparing the Just So Stories for publication in book form. 9 All but one of the twelve stories to appear in the volume called the Just So Stories had been previously published in periodicals between December, 1897, and October, 1902. When he prepared the volume for publication, Kipling changed the stories little; but he added verses to follow each, most of which had not been published with the stories previously; and he illustrated the volume, complete with long, detailed commentary on the illustrations themselves. 10 It may be significant that the majority of
"specific references and allusions" to appear in the Just So Stories did appear in these verses and commentaries on illustrations. Kipling remarks at numerous points in his autobiography that he was always careful to check out all his details in his stories and poems, mostly as a result of his journalistic training in India and as a result of his father's insistence on meticulousness. But whether the careful use of detail was habitual with Kipling prior to his work on the Just So Stories, or whether it only started with his research for Rewards and Fairies, it is safe to assume that he was actively at work with the process of weaving a multitude of detail and allusions and perhaps even "allegories" into his stories during the period of the preparation of the Just So Stories.

Naturally, the most persuasive evidence that Kipling utilized a multiplicity of detail at several different levels in the Just So Stories appears in the stories themselves. In order to illustrate the weight of the evidence, I must relate an initial, fumbling scholarly adventure that I had with Kipling. First of all, before I had located a good deal of material that I have found since to be relevant, I had assumed that the general view of the Just So Stories was indeed "just so"—that the stories were delightful, but essentially frivolous, that they probably came from Indian sources and
analogues, and that most of the strange terms were nonsense, made up by Kipling for the sake of their cadences and sounds. But fortunately, I became curious. One of the most delicious repetitions in "The Elephant's Child" describes the journey of the small elephant in search of the crocodile: "He went from Graham's Town to Kimberley, and from Kimberley to Khama's Country, and from Khama's Country he went east by north, eating melons all the time, till at last he came to the banks of the great grey-green, greasy Limpopo River, all set about with fever-trees, precisely as Kolokolo Bird had said" (JSS, pp. 65-66). Having been brought up on The Jungle Books, and Kim, and the Indian poems, such as Barrack-Room Ballads and Departmental Ditties, and knowing that "East was East and West was West, and never the twain shall meet," I had always assumed that my small elephant was a small Indian elephant, roaming the jungles of India, probably bulgy-nose-in-hand with Mowgli. After all, wasn't Kipling the great spokesman for the British Empire in India?

Curious, as I say, I unearthed some maps of India to see if I could discover precisely where in India my small elephant roamed, or perhaps even more to see if Kipling used actual geographical names or if he did indeed make up all those nonsense words as I had been led to believe. Of course, I searched the
the maps I had unearthed were in a large world atlas with a very long index. All these terms appeared in the index, referring to a map of southern Africa. In short, I discovered that my small friend was a small African elephant, and that he could indeed start at Grahamstown near the southern coast of South Africa, travel north to Kimberley in the Orange Free State (which I should have known of course, being enamored of diamonds), turn slightly to the east to an area of Bechuanaland called "Khama's Country," and then go east by north until he came to a river bordering the Transvaal and Rhodesia—a river alternately called the "Crocodile" or the "Limpopo." It increased, rather than decreased, my admiration of Kipling's originality to discover that he could form such an "ear-delighting" incantation while describing a "real" journey from Grahamstown (where were to be found the only large numbers of elephants in the Cape Colony at the turn of the century) to the Limpopo River (where were to be found crocodiles). I was later to discover that Kipling himself had taken precisely that journey with Cecil Rhodes during the Boer War.

Even more curious, I persisted in my investigation of geographical detail. By chance, I next turned to "The Crab that
Played with the Sea," and looked in my atlas for the strange terms accumulated in that story. "Singapore" was clear enough, and the other geographical references were in close proximity: the Perak River is a river in western Malaya, Selanger is the name of a province and river in the vicinity of Kuala Lumpur, Malacca is in southwestern Malaya, Sarawak is a territory in northwest Borneo, Pahang is a territory in eastern Malaya, and so on. All of these areas coast upon the South China Sea; thus, it was clear that it was with that sea that the crab played, and it was the coastal areas surrounding the South China Sea that were affected by the tides produced by the crab's playing. But the plot thickens. Later, after discovering for the first time that Kipling spent several winters in South Africa and became deeply involved in the Boer War, and while I was reading some articles to banish some of my ignorance of South Africa and the Boer War, I discovered that there was a considerable Malay population in South Africa. Many Malays had been imported generations previously as slaves, and the "Cape Malays" became by 1900 a high personal servant class. The chances were excellent that the Kipling servants in Capetown were Malay. Especially after I discovered that Carrington fixed the time and place of the composition of "The Crab that Played with the Sea" as
Capetown, December, 1901, I formed the initial hypothesis that Kipling was probably retelling an old Malay folk tale, perhaps one that he had heard a servant tell to the Kipling children. Looking then for a collection of Malay folk literature, I happened first upon Walter Skeat's *Malay Magic*, which contained an account of a myth about a giant crab which caused the tides by periodically leaving and returning to the "navel of the sea," called the "Pusat Tasek" precisely as in Kipling. The Pusat Tasek was a large hole in the ocean bottom, supposedly in the depths of the South China Sea between Malaya and Borneo.

Flushed with success and excitement, I searched my atlas for all the geographical references in all the stories. This investigation revealed, for the most part, the same kind of consistent pattern. The references in "How the Whale Got His Throat" included a reference to a location in the mid-Atlantic ("latitude Fifty North, longitude Forty West") known for both stormy weather and whales, and a reference to some New England towns located along the "Fitchburg Road." At the time Kipling was writing this story at Naulahka, his home in Brattleboro, Vermont, he was also engaged in research in Gloucester, a whaling center, for *Captains Courageous*. He had to travel back and forth a few times, and undoubtedly took the Fitchburg Road. The fact that the mariner in the story is cast up on
the shores of Albion rather than Massachusetts does not upset me greatly. The references in "How the Rhinoceros Got His Skin" were to areas for the most part bordering on the Arabian Sea; the references in "The Sing-Song of Old Man Kangaroo" were of course to place names in Australia, some of them "made up," but according to native pattern. (I could not find Warrigaborrigaroo on my map, but there are a great many shorter names very like it.) Thus, I became tempted to further my hypothesis and assume that each of the Just So Stories was probably a retelling of a folk tale or existing story associated with the area in which it occurred.

But in the end, the hypotheses, and in a sense even the exciting research, all came to naught. First of all, I unearthed a marvelous tool, the Readers Guide to Rudyard Kipling, being published in sections by the Kipling Society. Part of the Readers Guide became available, containing a section on the Just So Stories (pp. 1655-1698); and nearly all the references I had previously found, along with a multitude of others in the stories, were fully explained in the Readers Guide. Most of the time spent in my investigation was "wasted," in the sense that the information I had gathered could have been gained much more easily--but that fact did
not diminish in the least the glory of the chase.

Second, information in the Readers Guide disproves in part my hypothesis that Kipling retold the tale of the crab on the basis of a possible rendering by a household servant in Capetown. The guide includes parts of two letters by Kipling, the first written to Walter Skeat on January 5, 1935:

You sent me, years ago, your Malay Magic out of which I took ("pinched" is another word for it) my tale of "The Crab that played with the Tides," and used your Eldest Magician, including the phrase Kun, Paya Kun; the Rat; the Man in the Moon; Rajas Moyong Kaban and Abdullah; the Pusat Tasek, etc., etc. The evidence of this "adaptation" is as plain as print.
Then why not say so? I should feel honoured and, anyhow, it would be no more than acknowledgment after many years of my just debt to you. 13

My hypothetical, faithful, grandmotherly Malay nurse has been transformed into Walter Skeat. In the other Kipling letter cited, a letter to Sir John Bland-Sutton, after explaining what the Pusat Tasek is, Kipling says:

From what I know of the author of the tale to which you refer, I should imagine that he compounded Pau out of Pauh-Jangi, invented Amma, and presented the composite as the crab's name.
You can rely on the crab being authentic Malay folklore. 14

Third, I could find no further evidence that any of the other Just So Stories are based on specific works of folk literature of societies native to either the area associated with the geographical names in any particular story or any
other area. Neither do the editors of the Readers Guide cite any further relationships to specific folk tales. There are frequently literary references in the tales, most notably the story of Solomon and Balkis that lies at the center of "The Butterfly that Stamped." The story of Solomon is of course related in I Kings in the Old Testament; but Kipling's tale undoubtedly owes much more to the account of Solomon and Queen Balkis in Chapter XXVII of the Koran and perhaps more yet to Browning. G. Moir Bussey uses the curious phrase "infinite sagacity" in the preface to his collection of fables published in 1839. There is no certain proof from this tiny detail that Kipling derived from Bussey his characterization of the mariner in "How the Whale Got His Throat" as a man of "infinite-resource-and-sagacity"; but since the book would have been available to Kipling, and since it was at the time one of the standard introductions to the subject and one of the most comprehensive collections of fable, and since Kipling was working with the genre, the probability is quite high that Kipling knew the book.

Kipling undoubtedly derived the names of the Little God Ngä, and the Middle God Nqing, and the Big God Ngong (the Australian gods in "The Sing-Song of Old Man Kangaroo") from Andrew Lang's Myth, Ritual and Religion, first published in
1887. The first volume of Lang's book notably contains chapters on nature myths and non-Aryan creation myths, including those indigenous to Asia, Australia, Africa, Malaya, and Brazil, among others, although a reading of Lang's book has not convinced me that Kipling owes the plot of any specific tale in the Just So Stories to Lang's discussion. The Readers Guide traces some of the language of "How the Leopard Got His Spots" to Sterndale's Mammalia of India. Beyond the case of the tale of the crab, there is little if any evidence to support the hypothesis that the geographical references in the tales indicate that Kipling used as sources actual folk tales or myths native to the regions indicated by the geographical data. To the contrary, what limited evidence there is available in these references would indicate that Kipling's specific sources tended to be not oral and traditional but literary, or at least "printed"--maps and atlases, Skeat, Lang, Browning, Bussey, the Bible, the Koran, etc.

To what purpose then is this lengthy narration of my adventure? There are a number of reasons for it. For what it may contain of propaganda value, my experience illustrates the rich possibilities there may yet be for original scholarly and critical work with the classics of children's literature,
indicating that the field is essentially virgin territory. The initial appeal of that fact would appear to be to the ambitious beginning scholar or the dilettante; but from the interest of the dilettante may bloom productive criticism, a criticism that is sorely needed in the present educational atmosphere because of the rapidly intensifying interest in the development of informed literature curricula for the elementary schools of this country.

But there are other reasons more immediately pertinent to this study. This material forms demonstrable testimony to the careful craftsmanship of Kipling, even in these "frivolous" tales—a craftsmanship involving careful use of quantities of materials and meticulous attention to detail. Although this discussion does not prove that in the Just So Stories Kipling intended to work his material in "three or four overlaid tints and textures," it does lend credence to such an assumption. And the derivative nature of the details of language in the stories does not prove that the structures of the stories are also derivative. But it is not necessary to rely upon a vain attempt to discover the intention of the author; a descriptive analysis of the structural conventions at work in the stories themselves should reveal the extent to which the narrative conventions, and consequently much of the
layered effect, of the *Just So Stories* derives from the interweaving of traditional literary conventions and variations of them.

The popular notion that the stories are simply fanciful explanations for little children of the peculiar features of a few zoo animals (how the elephant's trunk came to be "just so," etc.) undoubtedly derives in part from a misconception of the title of the stories. The first three stories to be published were published as a group in the United States in *St. Nicholas Magazine*: the "whale" story in December, 1897, and the "camel" and "rhinoceros" stories in January and February, 1898. The whale story appeared first under the title "The Just So Stories," accompanied by the following introductory paragraph by Kipling:

> Some stories are meant to be read quietly and some stories are meant to be told aloud. Some stories are only proper for rainy mornings, and some stories are bedtime stories. All the Blue Skalallatoot stories are morning tales (I do not know why, but that is what Effie says). All the stories about Orvin Sylvester Woodsey, the left-over New England fairy who did not think it well-seen to fly, and who used patent labour-saving devices instead of charms, are afternoon stories because they were generally told in the shade of the woods. You could alter and change these tales as much as you pleased; but in the evening there were stories meant to put Effie to sleep, and you were not allowed to alter those by one single little word. They had to be told just so, or Effie would wake up and put back the missing sentence. So at last they came to be like charms, all three of them, the whale tale, the camel tale and the
rhinoceros tale. Of course, little people are not alike, but I think if you catch some Effie rather tired and rather sleepy at the end of the day, and if you begin in a low voice and tell the tales precisely as I have written them down, you will find that Effie will presently curl up and go to sleep.¹⁷

At least at this point, the "just so" in the title referred to the manner of expression of the stories rather than to their form or content, although that fact does not deny double entendre in Kipling's titling. In stories written later, Kipling has the elephant's child ask how things came to be "just so" (JSS, p. 63), using the meaning of "exactly that way," and he ends the elephant story with: "And it was so--just so-- a little time ago--on the banks of the big Wagai!" (JSS, p. 163)

"Effie" in the paragraph above refers to Kipling's eldest daughter, Josephine, who was just five years old when the whale story was published, and who died of pneumonia in New York in March, 1899, more than a year before any of the other stories were ready for publication. ("The Elephant's Child" was the next to be published, in April, 1900; Carrington fixes the precise date of composition as Autumn, 1899, in Capetown, South Africa.)¹⁸ The references to the "Blue Skalallatoot" and "Orvin Sylvester Woodsey" stories may have been a clever kind of advertisement for future series of children's stories that Kipling had planned; but,
whatever his plans may have been, Kipling never brought any such stories to the point of publication. Although a number of the other stories may have been told to the Kipling children and their cousins prior to Josephine's death, there is no evidence that any were in written form until the fall of 1899. Whatever the reasons for this two year hiatus in the writing of the *Just So Stories* (it was a time of great turmoil in Kipling's personal life—Josephine's death, Kipling's near death from pneumonia, the troubles with Beatty Bales tier), when Kipling took the series up again he resumed both the form and the expression, or style, of the early stories. The new stories, like the old, were characterized by the same oral and repetitive features that would be memorable to a child listener, the features that render the stories "just so," even though Kipling's own "Best Beloved girl-daughter" was gone.

A too hasty identification of the kind of the *Just So Stories* as simple *pourquoi* stories, or as imitations of the Bidpai fables or Jatakas of Indian folk literature, fails to recognize the relative complexity of Kipling's narrative invention in the structures of the stories. In general, the stories have one basic narrative pattern, a combination of the major traditional devices of beast-fable and nature myth: the pattern of the story turns upon the conflict between wise
beast and foolish beast, and one of the beasts gains a new physical characteristic in resolution of the conflict. Nearly all the stories make use of this basic pattern, including characters readily identifiable as wise and foolish and accounting for some natural phenomenon; but Kipling employs these patterns in a wide variety of combinations.

Each of the Just So Stories is an independent unit, with the exception of the two stories of the Tribe of Tegumai (the letter and alphabet stories). No one story depends to any degree upon any other story, but an analysis of the structural features of the stories may be more comprehensible if they are considered in groups. The first group to be considered includes "How the Rhinoceros Got His Skin," "How the First Letter Was Written," and "How the Alphabet Was Made." These stories form a natural group, not because they utilize the same structural devices, but because they are similar in their relative simplicity. The second group contains "The Crab That Played With the Sea," "How the Camel Got His Hump," and "The Sing-Song of Old Man Kangaroo"—alike in that they include a "god-like" character. Next to be considered will be "The Cat That Walked By Himself"—the cat still walks by his wild lone, and excludes himself from any group. Fourth is a series of four tales, somewhat similar in their use of conventions: "How the Whale Got His Throat," "The Beginning of the Armadillos," "How the Leopard Got His
Spots," and "The Elephant's Child." Last, we will consider the different, but very interesting, "The Butterfly That Stamped." It should not be implied that Kipling was supposed to have conceived the stories in these groupings. For the sake of convenience, and not just for the sake of pun, we will refer to the stories occasionally as the "camel tale," the "cat tale," the "whale tale," and so on.

The simplest of the stories, in terms of the blend of the traditional devices of fable and myth are "How the Rhinoceros Got His Skin" and "How the Alphabet Was Made." Beyond the fact that it is clearly fabulous, the alphabet story and its companion "How the First Letter Was Written" employ none of the characteristic devices of fable. Beyond the explanation of the origin of the rhinoceros' wrinkly skin, the rhino tale employs almost none of the characteristics of myth.

Perhaps the key to the simplicity of these simplest of the Just So Stories lies in the number of active characters they employ. The rhino tale and the alphabet tale contain only two actors, characteristic of the archetypal beast-fable and nature myth, and they are the only stories in the Just So Stories to do so. In "How the Rhinoceros Got His Skin," the Parsee, "from whose hat the rays of the sun were reflected in more-than-oriental-splendour," and the unmannerly rhino confront one another in nearly the classic
manner of the wise beast and foolish beast. In the beginning, the physically superior rhino clearly has the best of the situation—he chases the Parsee up a palm tree and devours his cake, a Superior Comestible. But Parsees, like dogs, will have their day; and the Parsee is clever enough to revenge himself upon the rhinoceros, providing him with a wrinkly skin and cause for an even worse disposition. Thus the rhino suffers for his greed, and the story accounts for some particularly noticeable features of the rhinoceros—his folded hide and his notorious temper.

But even this simple story departs from the classic wise beast-foolish beast fable pattern. The characters are not both animals, and they do not speak. These differences are only superficial, for both characters are clearly fabulous and invested with human qualities. Its departure from typical fable at the level of its symbolic interpretation is significant however; and the departure is significant because it establishes a pattern of variation that is characteristic of most of the *Just So Stories*. In the typical fable, such as "The Hare and the Tortoise" or "The Ant and the Grasshopper," the wise beast and the foolish beast represent opposite moral or ethical attributes: frivolity as opposed to stability, industry as opposed to sloth,
persistence as opposed to capriciousness, pride as opposed to humility. And the plot of the typical fable turns upon the classic reversal of fortune: persistence overcomes, or is proved superior to, capriciousness in a direct confrontation; or the passage of time and circumstance proves the superiority of industry to sloth. But in "How the Rhinoceros Got His Skin" the characters do not represent opposite qualities, virtue as opposed to vice. The rhinoceros is unmannerly and bad-tempered, but the Parsee does not achieve his victory by being particularly courteous or even-tempered. As a matter of fact, the Parsee is particularly vindictive, for he sets out for revenge, to prove that:

Them that takes cakes
Which the Parsee-man bakes
Makes dreadful mistakes. (JSS, p. 31)

In a sense, as in the archetypal beast fable, the rhinoceros brings his punishment upon himself through his foolish behavior; but the Parsee is only an instrument of justice, not a representative of virtue opposite to the vice of the rhino. This pattern is fairly consistent throughout the Just So Stories. Their effect is to condemn certain vices, or to extoll certain virtues; but rarely does Kipling equate the superiority of specific virtues to their opposite corruptions, beyond a general assumption that cleverness is always superior to stupidity, or wisdom is always superior to foolishness.
The structure of the rhinoceros tale may be considered relatively simple among the *Just So Stories* because it utilizes few of the devices of myth in combination with the basic devices of fable. In the same way, "How the First Letter Was Written" and "How the Alphabet Was Made" may be considered relatively simple because they utilize few of the devices of fable in combination with the basic pattern of nature myth. Of these two stories, the structure of the alphabet story is less complex, partially because it uses only two actors: the Primitive, Tegumai Bopsulai, and his little girl-daughter, Taffimai Metallumai. The translation of their names, "Man-who-does-not-put-his-foot-forward-in-a-hurry" and "Small-person-without-any-manners-who-ought-to-be-spanked" (*JSS*, p.123, 124), would suggest that the characters are to represent specific human traits—perhaps the "conservatism" of adulthood versus the "impetuosity" of childhood. But the stories do not deliver such a confrontation or such an interpretation. The two characters cannot be conceived of as a typical wise and foolish pair. True, it is Taffy who strikes upon the new notion of sending a message in the letter story, and it is Taffy who first conceives the new notion of representing sound pictorially in the alphabet story. But her Daddy does not lag far behind as one might suspect, displaying an overly conservative and reactionary attitude.
To the contrary, in the alphabet story he immediately seizes upon the possibilities of Taffy's excellent notion; and he exercises a good deal of ingenuity, and a good deal of logical and linguistic wisdom, in helping Taffy to execute the entire alphabet in phonetic terms. Neither is it Taffy who exhibits folly. Taffy does not suffer for her impetuosity or foolishness; she deserves, and receives, only praise for her ingenuity. In the letter story, the friendly Tewara man suffers considerably, and the ladies of the Tribe of Tegumai could be condemned somewhat for their precipitate reactions and their clamorous deeds, but we do not necessarily have folly here or the results of folly. What we have here is a lack of communication--and that's precisely the point of these stories. If there is any folly represented very clearly in these stories, it is the folly of the Neolithic culture in not having any system of written communication. The letter story exhibits the difficulties and confusion that such a lack can cause; the alphabet story exhibits the wise evolution of a process which will correct the deficiency.

For the purposes of this study, what is most significant about the structure of these stories concerns those traditional devices of fable and myth that the stories do not employ. These two stories utilize none of the major structural features of fable. They do not employ animals as characters,
though that in itself is not of particular importance, since human beings can serve as emblems of virtue and vice as well as animals can. These stories do not bring about a confronta-
tion of the wise and the foolish, except to a minor degree, (perhaps in the case of the Neolithic ladies) in the letter story or in consideration of the stories as a pair. The stories do not even partake of the fabulous. Taffy and her Daddy are not to be understood as emblems of abstract human characteristics; they are to be understood as a typical daddy and his typical little girl-daughter who love each other very much, and who love to be together. Much of the charm the stories have derives from the relationship so pleasantly exhibited.

The letter story and the alphabet story do assume the structure of nature myth, but in only one respect. They do account for the origin of written communication and an alphabetic system of written expression. But the advantages the Neolithic culture gained did not come about as reward or punishment; there is no evidence that the alphabet, for example, was given to Taffy or her Daddy by any supernatural power. Neither do the stories involve a transformation, or metamorphosis. Since they do not treat of the relationship between the human and the super-human, it is perhaps proper that the alphabet should be an evolutionary development, a
product of the ingenuity and necessity of human beings. Both stories are comparatively lacking in literal and allegorical complexity, perhaps because they are lacking in complexity of structure in terms of their use of the devices of fable and myth. For whatever reasons, the stories remain the dullest of the Just So Stories. Only the humorous treatment of the Tewara in the letter tale, and the remarkable style and lovely familial relationship achieved in both stories, rescue them from utter failure.

In spite of their relative inferiority, the stories of the Tribe of Tegumai are not without interest. To the Kipling scholar, the close relationship between Taffy and her father is particularly appealing. It is certain that that relationship contains biographical inference. Taffy must represent Josephine, "Effy," and her father must represent Kipling. Although these stories may have had their genesis in stories Kipling told to Josephine, they were not completed or published until some time after Josephine had died. "How the First Letter Was Written" was not completed until September, 1900, fully a year and a half after the death of Josephine, and was not published until December, 1901. 19 "How the Alphabet Was Made" is the only one of the Just So Stories not to be published in a periodical prior to its appearance in the volume of the
Just So Stories in 1902, although Carrington "suspects" that it existed in "some sort of draft from 1898." Considering those facts, and considering the closeness of Kipling and his "Best Beloved" Josephine, the stories contain a particular poignancy, especially the "Merrow Down" verses, which follow the alphabet story, and even more especially the last stanza of the poem:

For far--oh, very far behind,
So far she cannot call to him,
Comes Tegumai alone to find
The daughter that was all to him. (JSS, p. 169)

There are bits of satire in the stories, most apparent to married men, that are good fun. After the failure of communication has been discovered in the letter tale, everybody laughed, except: "The only people who did not laugh were Teshumai Tewindrow and all the Neolithic ladies. They were very polite to all their husbands, and said 'idiot!' ever so often" (JSS, p. 138). The rationale of the evolutionary development of a writing system which bridges the gap between pictographic and alphabetic writing systems reveals a good deal of linguistic sophistication on the part of Kipling. But generally, the stories lack the intensity of narrative conflict that is necessary to hold the attention of children, and they lack the complexity of multi-levels of meaning that is necessary to hold the attention of adults. This lack of
conflict, which Kipling achieves in most of the rest of the 
Just So Stories through the use of the devices of the wise 
beast-foolish beast motif of fable, limits the effectiveness 
of the stories as apologue as well as entertainment. At 
least part of Kipling's intention, secondary though it may 
be to the intention of "pleasing," was most certainly to 
"teach" children. As a second guess, perhaps the stories 
would have taught more effectively had Taffy gotten herself 
in some real trouble by failing to learn her language 
lessons. As it happened in the stories Kipling apparently 
felt compelled to attach a lame moral to "How the First 
Letter Was Written": "But from that day to this (and I 
suppose it is all Taffy's fault), very few little girls have 
ever liked learning to read or write. Most of them prefer 
to draw pictures and play with their Daddies--just like 
Taffy" (JSS, p. 139). The rest of the Just So Stories do 
not require such attachments.

The stories in the next group to be considered are most 
similar in their common use of the "super-human" character 
of myth. Of all the Just So Stories, only "The Crab That 
Played With the Sea," "How the Camel Got His Hump," and 
"The Sing-Song of Old Man Kangaroo" treat of a relationship 
between god and man, to the extent that they include gods, 
or representatives of deity, in their roster of characters.
As gods, these characters are capable of rendering transformations as a manner of dispensing justice. In each of these stories, the metamorphosis is accomplished as a means of punishment, though mixed with blessing.

The most complex of these three tales is "The Crab That Played With the Sea," the nearest of all the Just So Stories to creation myth and the only one of the stories to have a specific identifiable folk antecedent which is in turn creation myth. As a story which utilizes the devices of creation myth, the beginning of the story is significant: "Before the High and Far-Off Times, O my Best Beloved, came the Time of the Very Beginnings; and that was in the days when the Eldest Magician was getting Things ready" (JSS, p. 171). The beginnings of the tale account for the creation of a number of major topographical features: the Himalayas, the Indian and Sahara deserts, the Florida Everglades, the Malay Archipelago. But the significant action at the conclusion of the tale accounts for some other natural phenomena, in the more limited pattern of nature myth: the tides of the ocean, and some of the specific characteristics of the crab—his pincers, his occasional amphibious characteristics, the annual shedding of his shell, his ability to protect himself by hiding in his own little "Pusat Tasek."

The Eldest Magician gives the crab these characteristics,
transforming him in punishment for his foolish disobedience. The crab's folly is in contrast to the obedience of other beasts in the story. The elephant, cow, beaver, and turtle "play" as ordained and provide for the creation of the mountains, deserts, swamps, and islands—all as desired and foreseen by the Eldest Magician. But Pau Amma, the crab, unseen, scuttles off and plays with the sea. The pattern, however, is not the simple pattern of the wise beast and foolish beast in conflict with one another. It is complicated by the presence of the creator, the Eldest Magician; and it is further complicated by the presence of Man, a kind of first lieutenant of the creator, who is "too wise for this play." The play of the son of Adam is to reign supreme over all other creatures and demand their obedience; but because of the silence of his little girl-daughter, the son of Adam misses his opportunity to adequately perform his play when Pau Amma escapes his assignment. Thus, there are several combinations of the wise and foolish in the story, with characters representing various degrees of wisdom or folly, virtue or vice. There are characters representing contrasting qualities—obedience and disobedience in respect to divine will, in conformity with typical fable pattern but in contrast to the typical pattern in the *Just So Stories*. Nevertheless, the punishment
of Pau Amma results from his own folly alone, it is not brought about through a direct conflict between characters representative of opposite qualities. It is the Eldest Magician who renders judgment to each according to his just desserts in the end. In punishment for his disobedience and arrogance, the crab is sentenced to be deprived of his protective shell; but his sentence is mitigated--by Man because of his failure, by the daughter of man since she was partly at fault for Pau Amma's predicament, by the Eldest Magician because of his wisdom and mercy--and Pau Amma receives his other "gifts." And the son of Adam receives the gift of the tides to "save paddling," but his children shall ever afterward be the laziest people in the world--the Malazy. It is worthy of note that the truly good, the creatures who perform their assigned play, receive no reward for their goodness.

"How the Camel Got His Hump," though neither as lengthy nor as complex as the crab tale, closely parallels it in terms of its structural patterns. The tale includes the same set of characters: (1) an eminently foolish creature, the camel; (2) a supernatural creature who passes judgment and renders punishment for folly, the Djinn in charge of All Deserts; (3) other beasts representative of virtue opposite to the vice of the camel--the horse, the
dog, and the ox; and (4) Man, the overseer of all lower creation. This tale, too, smacks of the creation myth, since it begins: "In the beginning of years, when the world was new and all, and the Animals were just beginning to work for Man" (JSS, p. 15). But since it is more limited in its scope, explaining only one physical characteristic of one creature, and since the Djinn operates as a sort of lesser deity (he is only in charge of All Deserts), the use of the devices of myth correspond rather closely to the more limited kind—nature myth.

Although the combinations of the wise and the foolish are somewhat more complex than the typical fable which employs only two characters, in this respect the camel tale is not quite so complex as the crab tale. In this case, the wise beasts, that is, the dutiful, industrious, obedient beasts—the horse, the dog, and the ox— not only represent virtue opposite to the vice of the "most 'scruciating idle camel," they also indirectly bring about the camel's downfall by informing on him. Since the camel will not work, the man increases the work load of the other animals and they relate their unhappiness to the Djinn. The Djinn works a great magic to give the most 'scruciating idle camel a hump—a most suitable punishment in the best tradition of fable and myth, since the camel not only brings it upon
himself by not working but he actually decrees his own
punishment with his repeatedly insolent and obstinate
"Humph!" Conceivably, one could interpret the man and
the Djinn as a wise and foolish pair, creating a sense of
even more complexity in the use of the devices of fable.
The man may appear to deal unjustly with the Three by causing
them to work harder since he does not compel the camel to obey
him and work. The Djinn, however, only dispenses the
justice that man is incapable of dispensing; and the
contrast appears to be the contrast between power and lack
of power rather than the contrast between one who exercises
responsibility and one who wilfully shirks his proper duty.

The justice in the story is again the justice of the
gods rendered in the form of a metamorphosis. Although the
Three, emblems of characteristics opposite to that represented
by the camel, indirectly bring about his downfall, the actual
instrument of justice remains the supernatural Djinn. The
punishment of the sinner, as a punishment rendered by the
wisdom of the gods, is once again tempered with mercy. The
physical attribute decreed as punishment also contains some
redeeming value—the food reservoir in the ugly and burdensome
hump will enable the camel henceforth to go three days without
sustenance, a matter of distinct advantage to a desert
creature. The punishments that are not granted by deity
can not so readily be recognized as containing any redeeming value (for example, the rhinoceros' skin and bad temper, or the whale's small throat).

"The Sing-Song of Old Man Kangaroo" is the third of the Just So Stories to employ a representative of deity as an actor, after the manner of nature myth. Old Man Kangaroo, in his inordinate pride, goes to the Big God Nqong in the middle of Australia at ten before dinnertime and demands that he be made different from all other animals and "popular and wonderfully run after by five this afternoon" (JSS, p. 86). Of course, his inordinate pride is a great foolishness, and Nqong in his wisdom grants the kangaroo's request, precisely as it is made. By order of Nqong, Yellow Dog Dingo chases the proud kangaroo up and down and across the length and breadth of Australia, so that he is indeed most wonderfully run after and by five in the afternoon he is certainly different from all other animals, with his enormous hind legs. Although it is fable-like in its use of an animal to represent pride, the basic conflict in the story resembles the pattern of myth more closely than the pattern of fable in that the initial confrontation is between man (or kangaroo) and god. And it must be so. The kangaroo's error is pride--a "sin."

It is a violation of the proper relationship between man and god, rather than a corruption of the social contract,
a corruption emblematic of man's inhumanity to man. It is of such stuff that myths are made, treating primarily of religious matters instead of purely humanistic matters.

The other two stories of this group also utilize god-like characters to treat of the relationship between man and god, and they incorporate the contrastive device of the wise and foolish creatures into their plot patterns. The crab story and the camel tale contained animal characters representative of virtue opposite to the vice of the foolish one; and, though the virtuous did not act directly as instruments of justice bringing about the downfall of the vicious, they at least served as exempla justifying the punishment of the miscreant wrought in the form of metamorphosis achieved by the god-like. The story of the kangaroo contains no such representative of a virtue opposite to the kangaroo's vice. There is no indication that Yellow Dog Dingo represents humility in opposition to the inordinate pride of Old Man Kangaroo, even though he does display immediate but grudging obedience to the command of the Big God Nqong. Although the god decrees the form of retribution, the earthly Yellow Dog Dingo acts in this story as the instrument of justice, carrying out the plan of the divine desire—in contrast to the other two stories in which the representative of deity himself actually accomplishes the punishment. As in the camel tale, the punishment of the kangaroo's folly is
dictated by his own expression--his desire to be sought after and different from all other animals. And, as in the case of other punishments rendered by deity, his punishment is tempered by advantage. The kangaroo's long legs, and ability to flee, serve him henceforth as protection from his natural antagonist, the dingo, or wild dog of Australia.

These three tales, in their combinations of the devices of fable and myth, partake more of the quality of myth than the other Just So Stories, simply by virtue of the fact that they include gods as characters. After a consideration of the qualities represented by those who are punished in these three stories, the reason for the inclusion of representatives of deity becomes apparent. The nature of the vice punished in each of these tales is sin, a willful corruption of the divine will: pride, sloth, and disobedience. As sins against gods, they can only be punished by gods. The punishments dealt out in the other Just So Stories are requital for sins against man, for violations of the social contract. As such, they are rendered by man, or society. And it is significant that the other stories frequently deal with reward as well as punishment: virtuous creatures are rewarded for their special attainment of especially useful social virtues--
ingenuity, persistence, intelligence. But the good in these three tales receive no specific rewards. The industry of the three performing their duties is opposed to the camel's sloth, and the obedience of the other creatures in the story of the crab carrying out their assigned plays is opposed to the crab's disobedience; but, though there is implicit approval of their behavior, there is no immediate overt reward for their virtue. Sin is immediately punishable, but the virtue of conforming to God's holy ordinances carries its own reward, at least on this earth. It is also characteristic of these three tales, as opposed to the other of the Just So Stories, that punishment decreed by Providence can be tempered by mercy. The sentences bestowed upon the camel, the crab, and the kangaroo are not unmixed with blessings—physical characteristics allowing them advantages in the struggle for survival. In the other stories, the wise are rewarded by the gain of helpful physical characteristics, or the foolish are punished by unmitigated misfortune, as we have already seen in the case of the rhinoceros.

The remaining Just So Stories, as has been suggested, deal more with the celebration of those human characteristics essential to the success of man as a social animal than with those qualities necessary to personal salvation. Although these stories maintain the pattern of nature myth in that
they all explain some natural characteristic or phenomenon, they depend to a greater extent upon the conventions of fable than myth for their structure and the expression of their meaning. "The Cat That Walked By Himself," perhaps because it contains vestiges of creation myth and perhaps because it retains the interesting notion of man operating as the sovereign over all other created creatures, attains a slightly more mythic flavor than the remaining stories. A discussion of the cat tale should then walk by itself.

"The Cat That Walked by Himself" belongs, in the non-systematic time line of the stories, to the beginning of times, "when the Tame animals were wild . . . . and they walked in the Wet Wild Woods by their wild lones" (JSS, p. 197). And of course the Man was wild too. The Woman first tamed the man, then made magic and enticed the dog, then the horse, then the cow into the cave, where they made agreements to serve man in exchange for the benefits of domesticity and became respectively First Friend, First Servant, and Giver of Good Food. But the cat, not being enticed by magic, retains his independence and seeks out the cave of the Woman of his own accord, expressing his desire to come into the cave, sit by the fire, and drink the warm milk three times a day. This meeting is the initial confrontation of the wise and the foolish. The woman, perhaps too smugly secure in her
reliance on her magical powers, too rashly offers to accomplish
the cat's desire if she is ever brought to utter words in his
praise. Since she is determined never to utter a word in
the cat's praise, it would appear at this point that the
woman has the last word, and it would appear that the cat
was initially foolish in not surrendering his independence
for the fruits of service and domesticity. But the cat, who
still walks by himself, bides his time; he then seizes upon
the occasion of a fussy baby to cleverly trick the woman into
uttering words in his praise, thus gaining the fruits of
life in the cave, the cozy fire, and warm milk three times
a day for always and always, without surrendering his
independence or rendering service in return.

Wisdom has thus far triumphed, according to the classic
pattern. The wisdom of the cat accomplishes his desire of
enjoying the benefits of domesticity without surrendering
his independence; his wisdom is exemplified in direct con­
frontation with the folly of the woman, in the classic
fashion of the beast fable, and in contrast to the behavior
of the other animals, in the established pattern of the Just
So Stories. Since the woman with her magical powers acts
as a sort of sub-creator, and since the story thus far
accounts for the domestication of wild creatures, the tale
resembles those previously discussed as related to creation myth. In addition to the parallelism inherent in the dual incident of the fable confrontation, Kipling very effectively utilizes the repetition of threes so characteristic of the popular tale, or "folk tale": the taming process is repeated three times in the incidents of the dog, the horse, and the cow; the three desires of the cat match the three promises of the woman; and his subsequent three actions elicit in three incidents the three words of praise. The structure of the story exhibits a blend of not only the devices of fable and myth, but of folk tale as well.

But the cat's tale does not yet end. When the man and the dog return, the cat must also make deals with them. His asserted independence extends to the point of obstinacy. He initially agrees to the terms of the deals that Man and First Friend offer, but since he foolishly insists on having the last word, he brings upon himself the fruits of their anger. In the end the cat's blessing is mixed--he has retained his independence, and he is still the cat who walks by himself, for he was clever enough to gain that advantage; but he will forever be persecuted by all proper men and chased by all proper dogs.

We observe here another variation of the wise beast-foolish beast motif, in which the wise beast is mostly wise but
commits some folly in the end. Since wisdom is usually rewarded and folly punished in such a beast fable, in this case a single character must both win and lose. The variation of fable structure in this story operates in exactly the right way—it is so "right" one is tempted to pass it off as merely obvious, at any level of interpretation. Since the cat remains the most independent of domestic creatures, and since it performs no serviceable function in the household, and since it is continually hounded by men and dogs, the story strikes one symbolically as a true accounting. The moral of the story arising naturally from its structure, also strikes one as remarkably apt and true: freedom and independence are greatly to be cherished and admired, but they must be bought at a certain price. It is not a bad thing to teach a child that if he walks the path of independence, he deserves admiration; but he should also be made aware that if he chooses to walk alone he must frequently suffer the scorn and derision, and perhaps even persecution, of those his more docile contemporaries. Along with the charm of repetition and parallelism in the expression, this perfect match between form and meaning in "The Cat That Walked By Himself" renders it, in my judgment, the most successful artistically of all the Just So Stories.

Another set of four of the Just So Stories may be considered
together in that they all employ a similar variation of the typical beast fable pattern—at least one additional character in the role of adviser to one of the principal characters. As advisers, these characters resemble the god-like to some extent in their superior knowledge and wisdom, but they do not perform in the stories as dispensers of justice and they do not accomplish metamorphoses of the other characters. The 'Stute Fish in "How the Whale Got His Throat" and the Mother Jaguar in "The Beginning of the Armadillos" counsel with the creatures representative of folly; the wise Baviaan in "How the Leopard Got His Spots" and the Kolokolo Bird and the Bi-Coloured-Python-Rock-Snake in "The Elephant's Child" serve as aides to representatives of success.

In the whale story, after the whale in his greed has devoured all the fish in the sea with the exception of the 'Stute Fish, as an intelligent act of self-preservation the 'Stute Fish most astutely informs the whale of man, his taste and his location. The whispered information, and temptation, of the 'Stute Fish is a betrayal of the whale, leading him to the confrontation with the mariner which causes him first extreme discomfort and finally the punishment of the grate in his throat. (It is only fair to remark that the 'Stute
Fish is a most scrupulous traitor, for he did indeed warn the whale that the mariner was a man of infinite-resource- and-sagacity.)

The 'Stute Fish and the whale may be one wise and foolish pair, since the small fish certainly exhibits wisdom in his ability to turn the greed of the whale to his own protective purposes; but the basic conflict in the story remains that between the whale and the mariner, in a single classic incident. When the mariner is swallowed, he has the worst of the situation; but in the end, he not only gains his freedom but wreaks vengeance upon the whale through the exercise of his ingenuity. The story contains no evidence that the mariner and the 'Stute Fish work in concert as do Nqong and Yellow Dog Dingo, or that the mariner is even aware of the presence of the small fish. But again, as a departure from the typical pattern, a departure in itself typical of the Just So Stories, the whale and the mariner do not represent opposite characteristics. In this respect, the story is very like the rhino tale—the punishment of the greedy whale is not brought about by a superior display of temperance. Indeed, the punishment of the whale by the mariner is gratuitous, perhaps performed only to display the resourcefulness of the mariner in working
with the limited materials he has at hand--gratuitous because the mariner got precisely what he most desired, freedom and an express ride home from being shipwrecked. He only lodged the grating in the whale's throat after the fact as an act of vengeance, though the act served to prevent the whale from again swallowing a mariner, or for that matter, even a little 'Stute Fish. There may have been some divine plan of Providence that prompted his action and brought about the metamorphosis of the whale's throat; but if so it is not apparent in the story, and the punishment, typical of those rendered by human creatures, contains no mitigating advantage to the whale. Given the limitations of the conventions employed in the story, however, justice is sufficiently served.

The Mother Jaguar in the story of 'The Beginning of the Armadillos" serves her son as a counsellor, but with no treachery in her heart or self-interested advantage in her intent. It is not her fault that the painted jaguar is foiled, just when he holds the greatest advantage, by the cleverness of the hedgehog and the tortoise in turning his dutifully learned lesson into a conundrum; and it is not her fault that the painted jaguar must go hungry in the end, most utterly foiled by the evolutionary development of the
clever pair. His mother serves the painted jaguar as teacher prior to his first confrontation with the puzzling pair, as corrector between incidents so that he learns the value of verse in the process of memorization (Stickly Prickly and Slow-and-Solid become convinced of the necessity for change when they hear Painted Jaguar recite his verse, for "He'll never forget that this month of Sundays"), and as commentator and adviser at the end--naming the new creatures and advising Painted Jaguar to leave them alone. But the mother in no way enters into the basic conflict of the story, the conflict between the wise and the less wise, and she in no way either dispenses justice or shares in the fruits or penalties of its dispensation.

The metamorphosis that is so characteristic at the end of nature myth comes about in this story as the result of positive action by the wise; it is not the result of punitive action undertaken by the divine in requital of wickedness or folly. The jaguar suffers a slight hurt to his paw and he suffers some temporary hunger, perhaps as an admonishment to remember his lessons more accurately and permanently in the future, but he does not bring severe retribution down upon himself--youngsters are after all entitled to some mistakes. As in the other stories in this group, and including the rhino tale, the metamorphosis at the end arises directly
from the basic conflict between the wise and the foolish; it does not depend upon the action of the god-like. In these stories, the end result, a transformation, is similar to the nature myth, but that transformation is about the only significant feature of myth that Kipling utilizes in the stories. The resolution of the tales, as well as their internal plot patterns, is based almost exclusively on the devices of the beast fable.

The Wise Baviaan, the dog-headed baboon, resembles the Big God Nqong, squatting stolidly in the middle of things entirely absorbed in his own affairs. But since the inscrutable Wise Baviaan neither decrees justice nor dispenses it, his role in "How the Leopard Got His Spots" is most nearly akin to that of the advisers in the whale and armadillo tales. He is even less an actor in the story than are the 'Stute Fish and the mother jaguar, for he gives advice only on the occasion of being consulted, and his advice is as inscrutable as he. The structure of the leopard tale closely resembles the structure of the armadillo story: it operates with pairs of characters (leopard and Ethiopian, giraffe and zebra), the metamorphosis achieved is the result of positive action willed by the wise, the metamorphosis is evolutionary in nature, and there is no particular indication of severe
punishment of folly. The problem of the leopard and the Ethiopian is primarily to compensate for their own deficiencies, not to achieve a conquest of other foolish creatures. They are clever enough to reward themselves, which they do by following the advice of the Baviaan to go into other spots, and their adaptability rewards them in their self-willed evolutionary metamorphoses, providing them with the characteristics necessary to their survival.

The general pattern of reward and punishment in the Just So Stories should be apparent by this time. The typical fable in the wise beast-foolish beast pattern achieves a resolution which both rewards the wise and punishes the foolish. But rarely does Kipling utilize his characters as representatives of opposite vices and virtues. The effect of his method is to celebrate wisdom by rewarding proper behavior or to condemn folly by punishing improper behavior, but rarely to do both in the same story. The metamorphoses that resolve the Just So Stories, the explanations of specific characteristics or natural phenomena, serve to symbolize these rewards and punishments. The transformations that are in the nature of distinct advantages assert the values that bring the transformations about (the stories of the leopard, the armadillos, the letter, the alphabet, the cat); the transformations that are wrought as forms of retributive justice
denounce the folly of the corrupted behavior that brings
punishment upon itself (the stories of the whale, the camel,
the rhinoceros, the kangaroo, the crab). Occasionally, as
we have seen, punishment may be mixed with mitigating
advantage and reward may be mixed with some pain or effort;
but the metamorphoses initially take the form of reward or
punishment and as such serve to assert or condemn specific
human values.

The last of the four stories in the group which utilizes
characters in the role of advisers, "The Elephant's Child," is resolved in a relatively subtle mixture of reward and
punishment. Of all the Just So Stories, "The Elephant's
Child," has undoubtedly been the most popular among children.
It is true that the effect of the story is due in large part
to the "mouth-filling and ear-delighting" language. The
lightness and humor of Kipling's considerable stylistic prowess
are revealed at their best in this story—a serious stylistic
analysis of Kipling's writing (which would be a most valuable
thing) would perhaps best begin with "The Elephant's Child."
But what renders this story most satisfactory to children is
that it treats of things a child knows best: insatiable
curiosity, unreasoning grown-up restriction, gratuitous
spanking, condescending relatives, occasional sympathetic
assistance, and physical revenge. And it engages these subjects
in a narrative of conflict and adventure, consistently related according to a child's view of the world.

Basically, the structure of "The Elephant's Child" depends upon the use of the conventions of fable and myth utilized in the other *Just So Stories*: the eventual advantage of the persistent curiosity of the elephant's child is contrasted to the arbitrary and tyrannical conservatism of his relatives—the motif of the wise and foolish; and the story explains how the elephant got his trunk, according to the basic convention of nature myth. In addition, however, "The Elephant's Child" utilizes as an integral part of its structure another strong literary tradition: the journey motif common in popular folk literature. The elephant, a small creature, leaves his home, encounters a "monster," or threat to his safety, defeats the monster or overcomes the threat with the assistance of an outside agent (usually the very old or the very young or an animal, possessed with magical abilities, but in this case, the Bi-Coloured-Python-Rock-Snake), and returns with greater glory or wealth to make his home a happier place. Just how pervasive this pattern is in folk literature should be apparent with only a cursory glance at any body of folk or fairy tale. (Examples: French—"Puss in Boots," English—"Tom Thumb," German—"Hansel and Gretel," Persian—"The Adventures of Sinbad.") One could go on indefinitely with
examples or variations of the type. Kipling certainly did not invent the pattern, but he exhibited skillful judgment in its selection and its combination with the conventions of fable and myth. As in the case of "The Cat Who Walked By Himself," this story, in its perfect marriage of form, expression, and meaning, strikes one as "just right"--the story had to be told "just so."

The fuller narrative treatment provided by the use of the journey pattern helps to explain the appeal of the story, with its greater possibilities for suspense and the thrill of imminent danger. But more significantly, the journey pattern is essential to the meaning of the story. The small elephant could not gain his desire in his immediate grown-up, overprotective environment. He needed experience as well as knowledge; and he could not get either from his relatives, obviously too busy with grown-up affairs to bother with the insatiable curiosity of an elephant's child. He had to go elsewhere, as far as the great grey-green, greasy Limpopo River itself; and when a diminutive creature leaves the security of his home he faces the possibility of danger. Children understand such a story thoroughly. Their identification is immediate, for the pattern is a part of their very lives.
So, at the beginning, the elephant's child appears to be foolish: he suffers pain at the hands (and feet) of his relatives for his persistent curiosity, and he suffers the even greater pain of a severely stretched nose in his further persistence because he is a "rash and inexperienced traveller." Another of the just so stories might end at this point--the elephant's trunk has been accounted for as a punishment of folly. But justice has not yet been served, and it remains to be seen who is most wise and most foolish. Thoroughly instructed by his ally the python as to the usefulness of his newly gained possession, the elephant's child returns home to himself administer the truly just retribution: knocking his brothers head over heels, heaving his hairy uncle the baboon into a hornet's nest, pulling out the ostrich's tail-feathers, dragging the giraffe through a thorn bush, blowing bubbles into the hippo's ear, generally dealing out vengeance and "getting even," now that he has more than just a mere-smear nose. (Perhaps indicative of the generation gap, I have heard children break into applause at this point of the story.) It is clear that persistence and curiosity in the young are to be celebrated, not punished. The moral of the story is obvious enough, even to the very young: the knowledge and experience gained from a praiseworthy curiosity are valuable things, enabling one to deal effectively
with an adult world, but they are not to be gained without considerable effort, persistence, and perhaps even some pain. As in the case of the independent cat, that does not seem to me to be a bad, or untrue, thing to teach children. "The Elephant's Child" deserves its popularity.

This brings us to the last of the Just So Stories, "a new and a wonderful story--a story quite different from the other stories," as Kipling writes (JSS, p. 225), "The Butterfly That Stamped." Indeed, the story is so different that one is tempted to place it with the stories of the Tribe of Tegumai and simply dismiss them as not belonging in the Just So Stories. "The Butterfly That Stamped" is most different in that it is not a "how" story, not a nature myth; it does not explain the origin of any physical characteristic of the butterfly or any other creature. It does explain how Suleiman-bin-Daoud became delivered of the vexations of his vexatious wives, and it does explain how Suleiman-bin-Daoud became completely aware of the qualities of Queen Balkis (perhaps analagous to the tests Solomon requires of Balkis in the account of their transactions in the Koran); but the fact remains that the predominant kind of the story is not the explanatory myth.

The story contains some flavor of myth in its confrontation of the very mighty (Solomon, god-like) with the very insig-
significant (the butterfly, man-like). It utilizes this confrontation in fable fashion, contrasting the presumptuous to the humble—one of the rare instances in the Just So Stories in which two characters represent opposite characteristics. The match between the two conventions creates the humor of the tale: the very mighty represents humility, and the very insignificant represents presumption. Therein lies the moral, of course, in that the folly of presumption is exposed most glaringly because of the exaggerated difference between the power of Solomon and the impotence of the butterfly. But the fable limits itself to exposure, for the presumption of the butterfly goes unpunished and even uncorrected. The teaching of the fable centers in what is affirmed, rather than what is condemned. Solomon's deliverance results from his willingness to use his great power to aid a kindred spirit in difficulty, and his unwillingness to display his pride and vindictiveness by using his power to deliver himself of his own difficulties. Perhaps the assumption should be that the story illustrates, in paraphrase, that "inasmuch as ye do it for the least of these your brethren, ye do it also for yourself."

What of critical value does such an analysis reveal? Its greatest value exists in what it contributes to a better
understanding of the **Just So Stories**, considered as individual stories, considered as a group, and considered as a significant part of the art of Rudyard Kipling. The investigation of the use of traditional structural devices in the **Just So Stories** refutes the assumptions of much of the established criticism of the stories as simple stories written exclusively for the delight of little children. Elizabeth Nesbitt, in a chapter about Kipling entitled "The Great Originator," provides as a part of her summation of Kipling's achievement in all his children's stories the comment: "His originality of mind, his utter lack of dependence upon past or existent patterns, make him the great innovator of form and type." 21 The assumption that the form of the **Just So Stories** was "pure invention" by Kipling is fairly widespread. R. Lancelyn Green, a noted Kipling scholar and usually reliable commentator on Kipling's work, writes:

**Just So Stories** is a difficult book either to criticise or to assign a place in the history of children's literature. Even more than the **Jungle Books** and **Puck of Pook's Hill** it has no real literary ancestors: unlike **Stalky & Co.** it has no descendants. Whatever existing literary form Kipling took for his use--the animal story, the school-story, the historical adventure story--he transformed and revivified until he seemed each time almost to have created a new art form. But the **Just So Stories** seem to be a new creation out of nothing: in hardly any of them can we trace even the clay that formed the image into which Kipling's genius was to breathe the breath of life. 22

It is simply untrue to state that the **Just So Stories** indicate
Kipling's "utter lack of dependence upon past or existent patterns" or that the stories are a "new creation out of nothing." If specific references in the stories to Lang, Bussey, Skeat, and the like do not necessarily reveal Kipling's debt to existing literature, the structural evidence of the stories does reveal his debt to the general patterns of fable and myth.

But to establish the derivative nature of the forms that Kipling utilizes in the Just So Stories is not to deny Kipling inventiveness or originality. To the contrary, the analysis of the Just So Stories further enhances an admiration of Kipling's inventive and original craftsmanship. Although he did not invent the structural devices that inform his stories, he did exercise immaculate skill in putting them together in effective combinations. The more closely one analyzes the Just So Stories, the more strikingly appropriate Kipling's choices of pattern and combination appear to be. The perfection of the match between form and expression in "The Elephant's Child" and "The Cat That Walked by Himself" has already been noted. It would be difficult to imagine how Kipling could have chosen his devices and woven them together in any better fashion to create narrative conflict, to produce humor, to solve the practical problem of providing a "true-seeming" explanation, to serve justice, to represent an appro-
priate complexity in the relative value of human characteristics (that is, to exhibit in proper balance the advantages and disadvantages of curiosity and independence), and to tell tales enjoyable for and understandable to children—all at the same time. When human folly deserves to be treated summarily, Kipling chooses a structure which provides for unilateral retribution, as in the tales of the whale, the rhinoceros, and the kangaroo. Consider the appropriate blend of pattern and detail in the armadillo story, for example. The tale explains the origin of the armadillo and turns upon the cleverness of the turtle and hedgehog in producing a conundrum for the young jaguar. The choices of structure and character could not have been more fortunate. The jaguar could not have been made to suffer the same sort of confusion he does had he been confronted with only one wise beast, no matter how wise. And what two creatures did Kipling choose? One armor-plated creature who could swim, and one "stickly-prickly" creature who curls into a ball as a protective device. The two assume each other's characteristics, and the product is an armadillo—an armor-plated creature which can swim and curl up into a ball as protection from predators, and which furthermore is "stickly-prickly" in some variations of the species. The problem of the characters in the story is survival, escape from a predator.
The characteristics of one another that they assume are defensive mechanisms, and the creature they originate through the process employs that precise combination of defensive mechanisms. And all the creatures are native to South America, the armadillo and the jaguar native only to South and Central America. This kind of careful attention to detail is typical of all the *Just So Stories*. Kipling's ability to retain such an attentiveness to detail and appropriate structural devices drawn from fable and myth while telling stories that are still pleasant, exciting, and representative of true moral relationships increases rather than decreases one's admiration of his inventiveness and originality.

In 1958, the Reverend Marcus Morris, editor of several children's publications, declared in a lecture that "Kipling's *Just So Stories* might be charming, but they could do damage to the child's outlook in the scientific age."23 Such a statement does not deserve to be taken seriously, of course, but it does direct one's attention to a rather remarkable feature of Kipling's tales. Assuming the devices of fable and myth as they do, the *Just So Stories* are surprisingly scientific. As we have noted, the naturalistic detail is scrupulously accurate, for one thing. But more significant are the principles of evolution that seem to underlie the stories. Nearly all the 'things' that are explained in the stories are precisely those distinguishing characteristics that have enabled the
species to survive or to be superior. The evolutionary nature of the development of these characteristics is most apparent in the stories in which the specific feature or "thing" to be described comes about as a result of the wise behavior of the major character or characters involved: the coloring of the leopard and the Ethiopian, the elephant's trunk, the armadillo's armor and ability to curl into a ball, the written system of communication in the Tribe of Tegumai, the cat's relative independence among domestic animals. It is possible that the predecessors of the leopard were not spotted, and only those who "went into other spots" survived the process of natural selection; it is possible that the species from which the armadillo developed had no protective armor, and only those members of the species which developed that protective device survived. Even those animal characteristics decreed by the god-like as punishment for folly are features which allow a species to survive: the camel's hump, the kangaroo's power of flight, the crab's ability to burrow himself into hiding. At any rate, even on the literal level, the Just So Stories are unlikely to "do damage to the child's outlook in the scientific age."

The correct answer to Reverend Morris' objection to the Just So Stories, of course, is not to argue the scientific
accuracy of the tales but to argue vigorously in justification of the literary mode. Whether Kipling intended any representation of an evolutionary process in nature, or whether a child reader understands that process, or whether an adult reader interprets the stories in that way either for himself or for an audience of children is a minor matter after all. For the stories are not to be taken as literally true. They partake of the quality of the fabulous, and as such, the truth that they represent must be found at a level of interpretation beyond the literal. The preceding analysis of the Just So Stories contained notice of the moral interpretation of the stories, in terms of the identification of human characteristics and of the relationships among abstract human qualities. But we have been arguing for the complexity of the stories by exhibiting the relative complexity of their structures, and we have been speaking of the possibilities of multi-levels of interpretation, implying more than two levels. What further evidence is there that the Just So Stories may operate on many levels, in terms expressed by Green and Sutcliff previously?

A number of factors indicate the possibility that the stories may contain topical political satire. The utilization of the form of fable itself would suggest satiric intent. Fable has been the dominant mode of satire from Aesop to James Thurber;
and the devices of fable have been utilized by political satirists from Aristophanes to Orwell. Fable, with its concentration on the exposure of human folly, is a natural tool for the satirist. It is so closely associated with satire, and especially political satire, that it is very difficult for the sophisticated reader to avoid the temptation of interpreting fable as political satire. We know that Kipling was intensely concerned with the political affairs of England and the British Empire. The bulk of the criticism of Kipling's works deal with the controversy that raged over Kipling's "Imperialism." Further, at the time he was writing most of the *Just So Stories*, or at least preparing them for publication, Kipling spent his "winters" (about six months long) in Capetown, South Africa, where he befriended the controversial Cecil Rhodes, became acquainted with Leander Jameson (of the "Jameson Raid" which precipitated the Boer crisis), and ultimately became deeply involved in the Boer War and its attendant political controversies. It was during this period that Kipling produced much of the political poetry which led to the critical and political controversy surrounding Kipling for the remainder of his career. Some of the political poems produced during this period are "Recessional," "The White Man's Burden," "The
Islanders," "The Lesson," poems in which Kipling most vigorously asserted his political views and his purported "jingoism." His work on poetry of this kind alternated with his work on the Just So Stories, since he habitually kept a work of prose and a work of poetry in hand at the same time. As we have noted, the Just So Stories abound with specific references and allusions, mostly of a geographical sort—the kind of detail frequently used by the satirist to point up his specific topical and satirical targets. All of these conditions make it seem almost imperative that the Just So Stories reek with political satire, or at least they suggest that the critic of the Just So Stories would be guilty of gross negligence if he did not attempt to seek out the satiric implications of the tales.

But do the stories deliver? Perhaps they do, but I cannot. The story which holds the most promise for the interpretation of specific topical satire is "The Elephant's Child." It is purely South African. Kipling completed the story in Capetown in October, 1899, at the time of the serious outbreak of hostilities in the Boer War. The journey that the small elephant took parallels precisely a journey that Kipling had taken more than a year earlier with Rhodes. If it is specific, topical, political satire, the characters in the story must represent specific people or groups of people and the incidents
must represent specific incidents. But I must confess that I cannot construct any hypothesis that seems conclusive to me. Perhaps the elephant's child represents Jameson, who went off, got himself into a skirmish with the Boers (the crocodile), was advised and supported by Rhodes (the python), was tried and convicted by the British government (the pain of the elephant's poor stretched nose), vilified by the liberals (spankings delivered by the "relatives"), but was finally "proved right" by the subsequent deterioration of the political situation and the war (the small elephant's revenge, with the relatives all joining the bandwagon by going off to get themselves new noses). Perhaps the elephant's child represents Rhodes and his attitude generally, with the relatives representing the opposition and the liberal attitude generally. But the correspondences do not "fit" specifically enough to convince me that these interpretations are exactly right. And my attempts to find topical satire in other of the Just So Stories have been even less productive. The evidence of political satire seems to me to be so strong, however, that I am persuaded that a scholarly investigation of the entire matter would be interesting, even exciting, and would perhaps be extremely profitable. Although I am convinced that there is probably more to this matter than has met my eye, I can
only conclude on the basis of the limited fruits of my investigation that any satirical references in the *Just So Stories* are both general and gentle in nature.

The language of the stories provides for multi-levels of interpretation to some extent. To a child, the 'Stute Fish is probably just a kind of fish, and the child must recognize his "astuteness" on the basis of his behavior, whereas an adult can immediately recognize the representative quality of the fish from his very name. An adult reader immediately understands "'satiable curiosity," but Kipling adds for his child audience, "and that means he asked ever so many questions" (*JSS*, p. 63). The stories are full of examples of the same kind. On the other hand, there may be elements in the stories more readily understood by children than by adults. The spankings that the elephant's child receives probably mean more to a child than to an adult, and the behavior of adults who are too busy to bother with children (notably, in *The Elephant's Child* and *How the First Letter Was Written*) probably speaks more clearly to children than to adults.

The most significant level of meaning, beyond the literal level, remains the moral interpretation of the fabulous creatures. The general method of the stories, as we have observed, is
either to celebrate admirable human qualities or virtues or to condemn certain vices or kinds of folly. Although the
Just So Stories cannot be considered as a book with a continuous organized kind of unity (the order of the arrange-
ment is with only two exceptions, the order in which the stories were originally published in periodicals—the
leopard story, the eighth to be published originally, occupies fourth position in the collection, and the alphabet story, not previously published in a periodical, immediately follows its companion, the letter story), when the stories are considered as a whole, in terms of what human qualities they condemn or celebrate, the result is somewhat surprising, in view of the general criticism of Kipling and his art. The most popular view of Kipling, put in the kindest way, is that he was above all a patriot, and his writings espoused patriotism and loyalty to the British crown. Defenders of Kipling generally admit that that is so, and maintain that that is good. It is a rare admirer who may say, "Yes, but that has nothing to do with his artistic achievement, one way or the other." Those critics who have attacked Kipling, for many years in goodly numbers, have accused him of "Imperialism," "jingoism," vulgarity, brutality, violence, racism—all espoused in the name of patriotism. One would expect that Kipling would attempt to "teach" children
those things most important to him. Consequently, if one were to accept the popular view as a proper view, one would expect the *Just So Stories* to assert the values of loyalty, obedience, duty, patriotism, tradition, conservatism, and the like, and to condemn disobedience, sloth, novelty, treachery, new-fangledness, and the like. But what qualities do the resolutions of the *Just So Stories* punish and what do they reward?

Surprisingly, the single characteristic which most frequently gains reward in the *Just So Stories* is ingenuity, or adaptability (the mariner of infinite-resource-and-sagacity, the leopard and the Ethiopian, the turtle and the hedgehog, and Taffy in both the alphabet and letter stories). The overly conservative reap the most ridicule (the Neolithic ladies and the relatives of the elephant's child) and the proud and disobedient receive the greatest punishment (the kangaroo, the camel, the crab, and in a sense, the butterfly). It is significant that two of the stories (the butterfly tale and the kangaroo tale) deal almost exclusively with pride, or presumption, generally considered to be a matter of religion, and it is usually assumed that Kipling had no extensive interest in religion. It is also significant that the disobedient who are punished are not punished for their
disobedience of parental or governmental decree, but for their disobedience of divine decree. Further, perhaps most surprising, independence and persistent curiosity in the face of authoritative restraint are rewarded—qualities that fly in the face of obedience, tradition, and conservatism. Some may consider the charge of brutality to be justified because of the retributive nature of the justice rendered so frequently in the Just So Stories, specifically the "revenge" rendered by the elephant on his relatives, the Parsee on the rhinoceros, and the mariner on the whale. But in this matter, Kipling works entirely within the traditions of fable and myth that he utilizes—the justice in such stories is swift and evenhanded. And it is precisely the kind of justice that children can most readily understand. In short, the view of Kipling's scale of values and sense of morality that one gains from a close analysis of the Just So Stories is quite different from the view one gains from Kipling criticism.

The most significant value of the Just So Stories remains as before: they successfully render delight to child and adult alike. But they teach as well as please, and a close analysis of the structural and symbolic patterns that the stories employ not only yields a clarified understanding of their teaching, it contributes to a heightened sense of their delight. And that is so, just so.
CHAPTER III

FABLE AND EPIC:
GRAHAME'S THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS

It is a testimony to the impressiveness of Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* that one's initial encounter with the book frequently becomes a memorable event in one's personal history. A person is likely to remember vividly the circumstances surrounding the incident in much the same way he recalls relatively extraneous detail associated with the shock of the first news of momentous historical events. Everybody of sufficient years recalls, or believes that he recalls, precisely what he was doing on December 7, 1941, when he first heard the radio crackle out its news of the attack on Pearl Harbor, or precisely what he was having for lunch on November 22, 1963, when he first heard of the shooting in Dallas. As with such an event, an initial relationship with *The Wind in the Willows* becomes a precious and personal thing. Subsequent statements about the book are typically greeted with more than a usual amount of passion, particularly if they do not happen to correspond to the reader's response to the book. Consequently, an interpretive critic of *The Wind in the Willows* must proceed warily, all defensive mechanisms on the alert.

Preposterous as it may seem in view of the fact that *The Wind in the Willows* has gone through more than one hundred
editions and sold an average of about 80,000 copies annually for sixty years, through some cultural accident I first read the book as a professional duty when I was more than thirty years old. I had been employed by the Nebraska Curriculum Development Center to provide critical interpretations of a great number of children's books and stories for curriculum committees who were working to prepare a series of units for use in elementary schools. The Wind in the Willows had been chosen by the committees to culminate a series of units on fable, exhibiting the use of the devices of fable in children's literature and particularly exhibiting the use of the devices of fable for satiric purposes. I was prompted by Professor Paul Olson to look for indications of a satire on the social and political milieu of England at the turn of the century. Thus, I approached the book with preconceived notions and the jaundiced eye of the critical analyst. But the charm of the book immediately captured me, and by the time I finished the very first page, I had forgotten my critical task completely. I too had been working very hard, so perhaps I was ripe for capture; at any rate, I found in Mole a kindred spirit, and the first paragraph of the book represented my situation almost precisely:

The Mole had been working very hard all morning, spring-cleaning his little home. First with brooms, then with dusters, then on ladders and steps and chairs, with a brush and a pail of whitewash; till
he had dust in his throat and eyes, and splashes of whitewash all over his black fur, and an aching back and weary arms. Spring was moving in the air above and in the earth below and around him, penetrating even his dark and lowly little house with its spirit of divine discontent and longing. It was a small wonder, then, that he suddenly flung down his brush on the floor, said 'Bother!' and also 'Hang spring-cleaning!' and bolted out of the house without even waiting to put on his coat. Something up above was calling him imperiously, and he made for the steep little tunnel which answered in his case to the gravelled carriage-drive owned by animals whose residences are nearer to the sun and air. So he scraped and scratched and scabbled and scrooged, and then he scrooged again and scabbled and scratched and scrooged, working busily with his little paws and muttering to himself, 'Up we go! Up we go!' till at last, pop! his snout came out into the sunlight, and he found himself rolling in the warm grass of a great meadow. 'This is fine!' he said to himself. 'This is better than whitewashing!'

And I said to myself, "Ah, this is fine! This man can write!"

Grahame's incantatory power called me imperiously, and I rolled in its sunlight and warm grass without pause until the book was finished, banishing all thoughts of literary structures, politics, and social history.

But it was soon necessary then, as it is now, to banish instead the sentiment and emotion and excitement of a delightful experience and get back to white-washing. Unquestionably, the essential quality of The Wind in the Willows is "charm," both in that it renders a peculiarly delicate and whimsical kind of delight and in that it works with the magic of a spell.
Truly, *The Wind in the Willows* speaks to the heart; but it also speaks to the mind, and that more powerfully and more specifically as experience with the book grows. The question of most concern here is not so much how to account for the charm of the book as how to explain the "meaning" of *The Wind in the Willows* and how to account for its effectiveness in producing meaning. The purpose is to create understanding, not just to revel in the meadows of pleasurable reaction.

To state the intention of creating understanding and discovering meaning may be to imply that *The Wind in the Willows* "teaches" as it "pleases," and to many people that implication suggests an undesirable didacticism. Such assertions and implications immediately raise the hackles of thousands of devoted lovers of *The Wind in the Willows* and elicit outraged protest: "There the critics go again, spoiling a beautiful children's book by reading into it what isn't there!" Besides, the author himself denied any allegorical intention, in a letter to Theodore Roosevelt:

> Its qualities, if any, are mostly negative--i.e.--no problems, no sex, no second meaning--it is only an expression of the very simplest joys of life as lived by the simplest beings of a class that you are specially familiar with and will not misunderstand.3

Kenneth Grahame was noted for his honesty and personal integrity; and it is hard to believe that he would deliberately lie, or even if he would, that he would choose the President of the
United States to be the recipient of his lie in writing. This letter is invariably quoted by those, including one of his biographers, Patrick Chalmers, who wish to "dispose of the allegory idea for good and all." But, as Peter Green, another biographer of Grahame, observes: "Even on the internal evidence of the book itself this is so flagrantly untrue that one's curiosity is at once aroused." Green goes on to explain in characteristic fashion (characteristic in that he continually interprets Grahame's work in terms of psychology and "subliminal desires" and repressions of those desires) that this statement by Grahame "suggests an unconscious covering-up action." Nevertheless, whatever the reasons for Grahame's denial of the existence of "second meaning" in *The Wind in the Willows*, or whatever may have been the specific meaning of his words, it is unquestionably true that "second meaning" exists in the book for those who would discover it. An inquiry into the intent of an author is frequently fruitless; and sometimes, as in this case, the statements of authors themselves may be misleading even when they may be found. The evidence in *The Wind in the Willows* refutes Grahame's statement to Roosevelt, at least as that statement is generally understood.

As we have observed in an analysis of the *Just So Stories*, it is again apparent that one of the keys to the multiplicity
of levels of meaning in *The Wind in the Willows* is its use of traditional literary devices. The most obvious feature of the book is its use of fable: its use of animals as characters, behaving not as animals but as human beings in disguise. Much has been made of the "naturalness" of the characters, of the correspondence between the characters in *The Wind in the Willows* and the animals of wood and stream, of the correspondence between the ideal society exhibited on the River Bank and the relationships that exist among the furry friends of field and forest. That is all patent sentimental nonsense, of course, and Kenneth Grahame knew that as well as anybody else. Where in nature does one find moles who walk in daylight and yearn for adventure, rats who write poetry and mess about in boats, toads who live in stately mansions and caper around in motor-cars? Where does one find in nature various species living together in closely knit societies built upon loyalty, friendship, love, sympathy, understanding, and respect—not only respect for one another's rights but respect for one another's hopes and dreams and longings and desires? Animals do live in societies, of course, in the balance of nature, dependent upon one another for survival; but that balance of nature operates on the basis of instinctive behavior, prompted by fear, hunger, desire for procreation and self-preservation. What vestiges there are in Grahame's book
of "natural" behavior and actual "animal" characteristics depend upon an awareness of this instinctive behavior. The natural physical characteristics of the creatures do not carry them far. Mole comes from under the ground, but he doesn't stay there. In the animals there exists a constant awareness of the need for food and shelter; but the shelter assumes the form of places like Toad Hall or Badger's expansive and well-furnished dwelling or Rat's solidly comfortable apartment, and the food typically consists of "very hot buttered toast, cut thick, very brown on both sides, with the butter running through the holes in it in great golden drops, like honey from the honeycomb" (WW, p. 167) or of "coldtonguecoldhamcoldbeefpickledgherkinssaladfrench­rollscresssandwidgespottedmeatgingerbeeriemonadesodawater" (WW, p. 8), hardly animal fare. Toad puffs himself up with pride or indignation, and reduces himself to a toad with a small "t" in shame, as a real toad appears to do on occasion. Badger is especially torpid during the hibernation season. But all these matters are of little moment, and actually have very little to do with the considerable charm that the characters retain. In only one way, in the matter of instinctive motivation, do animal characteristics play any significant role in the book, and that in a peculiar and peculiarly
effective way, as we shall later see. And most fortunately, Grahame has avoided bestowing upon his characters the one human characteristic that small woodland creatures may have when they are viewed objectively—"cuteness."

It might appear that these comments are in brutal condemnation of The Wind in the Willows. Not at all—though they may be somewhat brutal in condemnation of those who insist upon reading the book only on the literal level. Clearly, the animals are not real animals; they are fabulous creatures, characters in a fable: they are invested with human qualities, and they are intended to be taken as such. The charm of the characters arises only inasmuch as they achieve human qualities and human personality. In this respect, the animal characters in The Wind in the Willows go far beyond characters in typical beast-fable, because the typical fable character represents a single human characteristic. It is for this reason, among others, that The Wind in the Willows cannot properly be called a "fable," as I have defined and intended to use the term in this paper; it must be called a story which "uses the devices of fable." At times, in specific situations in the story, individual characters may serve as emblems of specific human characteristics: pride, prudence, naivety, cunning, and the like. And those characteristics may be the dominant characteristics of the animals in question; but the matter of
character in the story is quite complex, both in the factors that have gone into the making up of specific characters and in the behavior they exhibit in the story. Just how far beyond the characters in the beast-fable the creatures in The Wind in the Willows have gone is a question very adequately discussed by Peter Green in the twelfth chapter of his biography of Grahame. Green performs an admirable analysis, or more accurately, "synthesis," of each of the major animal characters, tracing the factors that went into the make-up of each of the personalities on the basis of Grahame's personal life, his reading, his acquaintances, and so on. It is not necessary here to provide a résumé of Green's investigation, but only to give some summarized illustration of the process. The Donnec on at least three of the characters appear in literary sources: Mole from a poem by John Davidson which appeared side by side with an essay of Grahame's in The Yellow Book, July, 1894; Rat from Oscar Wilde's story "The Devoted Friend," published in The Happy Prince in 1888, which, by the way, also undoubtedly provided the genesis of Rat's "Ducks' Ditty" (WN, p. 25); Badger from Richard Jefferies' Amaryllis at the Fair, published in 1904, which also contains what Green terms a "striking similarity" to many of Grahame's loveliest descriptive
passages of life on the River Bank (the "whispering reeds," most notably). Green finds Kenneth Grahame reflected in the characters: in the poetic temperament of Rat; the tact, naivety, and awakening of Mole; the shyness of Badger, out of place in Society. Green discovers in the characters elements of the personalities of specific people: Alastair ("Mouse," the son for whom the adventures of Toad were first related), Henley (W. E. Henley), "Atky" (Edward Atkinson), "Q" (Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch), Dr. F. J. Furnivall—all literary figures and particular friends of Grahame, with the exception of "Mouse," of course. After performing a sample synthesis of the character of Mole, Green summarizes:

Thus the Mole has evolved, a being in his own right, rather as crystals accumulate on a thread suspended in solution: he begins with a line in a poem of John Davidson's, gathers up not only subterranean symbolism but also the behaviour of a real live mole in the garden, and is completed with oblique strokes of autobiography and self-analysis. This is Grahame's normal method of composition: and Mole is a comparatively simple example. All the other animals reveal similar constituent elements—natural observation of the beast in question; literary associations; underlying symbolism; a degree of self-portraiture. They also incorporate features borrowed from Grahame's friends.6

(In view of earlier remarks on the natural characteristics of animals, it may be wise to remark that Green's comment about the "real live mole in the garden" refers not to the "moleness" of Mole, but to a specific incident related by
Elspeth Grahame in which Kenneth Grahame captures a mole in the garden. 7) Interesting as all Green's specific information may be, its value in accounting for the effect of *The Wind in the Willows* is limited, since the total personality of the characters works on an audience at least on one level, irrespective of the specific allusive detail.

Much like the detailed allusions in Kipling's *Just So Stories*, however, the detail that Green's scholarship has unearthed helps to serve as a corrective to the attitude so often assumed that Grahame, or almost any writer for children for that matter, created lovely little stories entirely out of his imagination. Kenneth Grahame did "create" *The Wind in the Willows*, of course, and a marvelous creation it remains, yet he did not create it out of nothing. Although an analysis which reveals the specific sources of a work of art cannot ever quite account for its particular genius, a thorough analysis which reveals that a good deal did go "in" lends credence to the assertion that a critic is not completely beyond the bounds of propriety when he gets a good deal "out."

In *The Wind in the Willows*, then, Kenneth Grahame did utilize the device of fabulous animal characters, animals invested with human qualities, although in contrast to the typical animal in beast-fable, each of his animals achieves
a more or less complete personality. In addition, Grahame utilizes the wise beast-foolish beast fable structure to a considerable extent. The animals are frequently brought into confrontation with one another in situations which exhibit the relative wisdom or folly of their actions. Mole lets himself in for a terrible fright when he ventures into the Wild Wood in direct opposition to the advice of Rat: naïve inquisitiveness suffers when it fails to heed the prudent voice of experience. The low cunning of duplicity triumphs over kind-hearted concern when Toad escapes the friendly guard of Rat. The story contains innumerable meetings of this sort, and the structure of the whole of the book turns upon exposure of folly in a similar pattern, that is, the structure of the whole if the central concern of the story is considered to be the adventures of Toad. The continual folly of Toad contrasts with the sensible behavior of his friends, and Toad suffers imprisonment and the loss of his ancestral home because of his folly. But the folly of Toad in turn is contrasted to the even greater folly of the stoats and weasels, the Wild Wooders. Toad is an irresponsible wastrel, but the Wild Wooders are usurping destroyers. The right and might of a proper social and political order are reasserted at the end in the confrontation between the lawless stoats and weasels and the righteous Badger and his associates.
For a reader who knows the traditional devices of fable and the near-traditional tendency of using the devices of fable in literary works for the purposes of exposing social folly and political corruption, the satiric implications of *The Wind in the Willows* are obvious. It is quite impossible to accept Grahame's protest that the story contains "no second meaning." In a manner worthy of Dickens, the trial of Toad ([*WW*, pp. 139-143]) condemns the British courts and the inverted system of severity of punishment for offenses (one year's imprisonment for theft; three years for reckless driving; and fifteen years for "cheek," all "rounded off" at twenty years). When Toad returns to find that the Wild Wooders have taken over Toad Hall, Rat explains that Badger and Mole have been faithfully protecting Toad's interests to the best of their ability. Toad begins to swell himself up, delighted that somebody retains the loyalty and respect due to one so eminent, when Rat deflates him:

'But Mole and Badger, they stuck out, through thick and thin, that you would come back again soon, somehow. They didn't know exactly how, but somehow!'

Toad began to sit up in his chair again, and to smirk a little.

'They argued from history,' continued Rat. 'They said that no criminal laws had ever been known to prevail against cheek and plausibility such as yours, combined with the power of a long purse.' ([*WW*, p. 254])

Now if that isn't satire----
The satire of *The Wind in the Willows* centers in the social and political atmosphere of England at the end of the nineteenth century. It reflects a thoroughly conservative point of view, asserting the old values of proper rule and proper control by the landed aristocracy in opposition to the vicious anarchy of the new liberalism brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Grahame fixes the responsibility for the decay of the squirearchy directly upon the irresponsible behavior of the privileged class itself, represented by the foolishness of Toad, as described by Badger:

'You've disregarded all the warnings we've given you, you've gone on squandering the money your father left you, and you're getting us animals a bad name in the district by your furious driving and your smashes and your rows with the police. Independence is all very well, but we animals never allow our friends to make fools of themselves beyond a certain limit; and that limit you've reached.' (*WW*, p. 125)

Toad, of course, heedless of the advice of what he considered to be alarmists, escapes the restraints of his friends and lands in jail, unable now to fulfill the responsibilities of his position even if he desired. If the aristocracy leaves a gap by failing to assume its responsibility to rule wisely and well, somebody will fill that gap. It might be a dictator, it might be an intellectual entente—but in Edwardian Britain it was the ambitious liberal middle class, apparently viewed by Grahame as ignorant rabble intent on destroying the very
structure of rural traditionalism. The Radicals can only destroy, for they do not know what to do with power and wealth once they attain it:

'And the Wild Wooders have been living in Toad Hall ever since.' continued the Rat; 'and going on simply anyhow! Lying in bed half the day, and breakfast at all hours, and the place in such a mess (I'm told) it's not fit to be seen! Eating your grub, and drinking your drink, and making bad jokes about you, and singing vulgar songs, about—well, about prisons, and magistrates, and policemen; horrid personal songs, with no humour in them. And they're telling the tradespeople and everybody that they've come to stay for good.' (WW, pp. 255-256)

The only way to bring order back from this chaos is for the members of the old power structure to take themselves in hand, especially the more irresponsible members of the faddish, foppish, horsy aristocracy, and re-establish themselves in their proper station, in turn relegating the proletariat to its proper station. It is not necessary here to belabor the issue further. A relatively complete analysis of the satire, and the positions represented by various characters in the social structure, appears elsewhere. Chapter XI of Peter Green's biography contains an excellent discussion of the social and political attitudes of Kenneth Grahame as they appear in The Wind in the Willows and his other writings, complete with specific and convincing evidence of their origins in W. E. Henley, Ruskin, Carlyle, and William Morris, among others. The general allegory and satire are so obvious in The Wind in the Willows.
that, again, one need not have at hand the kind of specific information provided by Green in order to create a general interpretation.

There is much in the structure of *The Wind in the Willows* that yet remains unaccounted for. The analysis of the use of the devices of fable in the book and the interpretation of the satirical and allegorical implications of fable devices really touch only part of the story, that part dealing with the adventures of Toad. I have said little about the structure or power of some of the most significant chapters in the book, chapters such as "The River Bank," "The Wild Wood," "Dulce Domum," "The Piper at the Gates of Dawn," and "Wayfarers All." The first two serve to introduce a number of the essential actors in the affairs of Toad; but the references to Toad are more or less incidental, and the narrative structure of both the literal and satirical levels of Toad's adventures could have been served more economically. The last three chapters mentioned here contain almost no reference to Toad; and it would appear that one could dispense with them completely and not disrupt the narrative pattern of the book. Yet the entire book, including these "extraneous episodes," retains a curious, elusive kind of unity. The search for the principle of organization is worthy of some effort.

*The Wind in the Willows* contains three different sets of
materials: the adventures of Toad ( Chapters 2, 6, 8, 10-12), some stories of woodland creatures and their pleasant life on the River Bank ( Chapters 1, 3; 4), and three essays (Chapters 5, 7, 9). The three "essays" -- "Dulce Domum," "The Piper at the Gates of Dawn," and "Wayfarers All" -- appear to be complete in themselves, independent of the other materials, even though they use the characters of Rat and Mole. Although Grahame did not consider himself a professional writer, The Wind in the Willows was not his first, but his fourth major publication. Preceding The Wind in the Willows (1908) were three collections of essays and stories on various subjects, entitled Pagan Papers (1893), The Golden Age (1895), and Dream Days (1898). Most of the materials in these three books had been previously published as independent essays or stories in periodicals, usually in Henley's National Observer and The Yellow Book. Grahame's collections of essays, especially The Golden Age and Dream Days, became tremendously popular in their day, though they are largely unread today. They became so popular, in fact, that there was a great deal of disappointment among the general public with The Wind in the Willows because it was not like Grahame's other books.

The earlier pieces in these three books, especially in Pagan Papers, consisted primarily of informal essays on a wide variety of subjects. A sampling of titles includes: "A Bohemian
in Exile," "Of Smoking," "Loafing," "The Romance of the Road," "The Roman Road," "A Holiday," "An Autumn Encounter," "The Rural Pan." The titles themselves of these "Stevensonettes" suggest interests similar to those expressed in the three "essay" chapters of The Wind in the Willows. The first of these volumes of essays, Pagan Papers, included an essay called "The Olympians" which depicted a set of intolerable relatives who persecute young children, usually unwittingly but in devastating fashion. Gradually, especially in the pieces included in the later books, more and more of the sketches adopted a narrative form, centering on the persona of an irrepressible boy named Harold and his struggles against the attempted repressions of the Olympians. The bulk of these stories was about children in the "golden age" of childhood--the period between four and eleven or thereabouts; but they were reminiscent in nature and not intended in any way "for" children. Throughout these three books, the pieces tended to become more and more in a narrative mode as opposed to the essay mode, but they were still independent stories and still rather difficult to classify as either essay or short story. The last piece published in the last of these books (Dream Days) was a story called "The Reluctant Dragon," which represented the fullest development of Grahame's narrative abilities up to that time.

Between the publication of Dream Days in 1898 and the
publication of *The Wind in the Willows* in 1908, Grahame produced very little, indeed almost nothing except a few prefaces. In a very general way, then, Grahame's writing as exhibited in these three books progressed from the sketch or informal essay to the short story, although none of the books pretended to any kind of unity in terms of a continuous narrative development. Thus, the fact that Grahame would write "essays" similar to the three "extraneous" chapters in *The Wind in the Willows* should not be surprising, but that still doesn't answer the question of why they should produce their peculiar sense of belonging within the full-blown narrative of *The Wind in the Willows*.

The familiar story of the writing of *The Wind in the Willows* has been told, re-told, and mis-told so many times that it is hardly necessary to rehearse it at any length here. The story goes that "Mouse" (Alastair) revolted against going off on holiday to the seashore until his father agreed to write out stories of Toad in continuation of some story that Grahame had been telling the boy periodically at bedtime. Grahame performed his duty faithfully, and, since the separation lasted through more than the "holidays," he sent off fifteen letters between May and September, 1907, which Alastair's nurse or mother then read to him. The nurse, Miss Stott, fortunately preserved the letters she had received and returned them to
Mrs. Grahame, though it is problematic whether she may have failed to preserve all the letters. She could not have discarded many, however, since the first letter is dated May 10, and Alastair did not go off until some time in May, and since the letters continue the narrative through to the end with only one obvious break. At the end of the first letter, Toad has just stolen an automobile, "And now he has vanished & every one is looking for him, including the police. I fear he is a bad low animal" (FW, p. 51). The next letter begins: "No doubt you have met some of the animals & have heard about Toad's Adventures since he was dragged off to prison by the bobby & the constable" (FW, p. 52). There is the implication, but no proof, that there may have been a letter in between these two which reconstructed the capture and conviction of Toad. From this point, the letters continue the adventures of Toad similar to the story as told in Chapters 8 and 10-12 in The Wind in the Willows.

The existence of these letters frequently leads critics to misconceptions about the composition of The Wind in the Willows. Chalmers uses them to disclaim any allegorical intent, for the letters prove that "it was, and is, but a bedtime story, a fairy-tale, for a very little boy." The additional story that accounts for the publication of the book adds to the misconception. It, too, has been recounted so often that
we need not repeat it at length here. Briefly, so the tale goes, the female representative of an American publisher visited Grahame at his home and begged him for a manuscript. He replied that he had nothing ready, and then Mrs. Grahame reminded him of the letters that she had kept. The popular conception is that he more or less simply handed over the letters, and that was *The Wind in the Willows*. But it was not so simple as all that. The material in the letters, recounting the adventures of Toad, constitutes a relatively small portion of *The Wind in the Willows*. The letters contain no account of, and almost no reference to, the material in over half the book, (Chapters 1-7 and 9). In addition, the letters supply only the genesis even for the adventures of Toad, in total comprising a document of approximately half the length of Chapters 8 and 10-12. Further, hardly a line of the original letters has survived unaltered in the text of *The Wind in the Willows*. In short, the letters popularly believed to "be" *The Wind in the Willows* yielded only about one-fourth the ultimate text, and that in exceedingly "rough" copy.

About half way through the "letter" account of the adventures of Toad, suddenly the characters of Rat, Badger, and Mole appear, without explanation. Clearly, they are characters familiar to "Mouse," for they are introduced as "The Water-Rat,"
"The Badger," and "The Mole" rather than as "a rat," "a badger," and "a mole," And just as clearly, they are previous friends of Toad. So we must assume that stories about these creatures existed prior to the writing of The Wind in the Willows, and that they were undoubtedly some of the stories that Grahame had been telling "Mouse" when the boy revolted against going on holiday for fear he would miss out on the stories. First Whisper of "Wind in the Willows" contains other evidence of the existence of these stories (FW, pp. 2-22 passim). Whether or not these stories bore any resemblance to the incidents related in the first seven chapters of The Wind in the Willows has not yet been determined, and to inquire into the matter is fruitless at this time.

These are the three different sets of materials: the adventures of Toad, the stories of the River Bank, and three essays. But still, these three quite different things exist in a book that retains a very strong sense of unity. In a lecture on the art of writing delivered at Oxford, Grahame made the following statement about organization and theme:

But you must please remember that a theme, a thesis, a subject, is in most cases little more than a sort of clothes-line on which one pegs a string of ideas, quotations, allusions, and so on, one's mental under-garments of all shapes and sizes, some possibly fairly new, but most rather old and patched; they dance and sway in the breeze, they flap and flutter, or hang limp and lifeless. And some are ordinary enough, and some are of a rather private and intimate shape and give the owner away, even
show up his or her peculiarities. And, owing to the invisible clothes-line, they seem to have connexion and continuity. And when they are thoroughly aired, they are taken down and put away, and the clothes-line is coiled up and disappears.  

My search is for the "invisible clothes-line" that holds the materials of The Wind in the Willows so mysteriously together. I think I have discovered it, and I think it makes a difference.

The structure of The Wind in the Willows derives from Homer's Odyssey. Initially, that should not be a startling statement. Critics have frequently remarked that some of the adventures of Toad appear to be "mock epic"; everybody who has read both The Odyssey and The Wind in the Willows immediately recognizes the parallels between the rout of the stoats and weasels in Toad Hall and the slaughter of the suitors in Odysseus' great hall in Ithaca; and everybody who has even read The Wind in the Willows observes that Grahame himself entitled the last chapter, "The Return of Ulysses." But I mean to assert that the structure of the "whole" derives from The Odyssey and that that fact helps to explain some of the significant power that The Wind in the Willows achieves.

It is best to begin with the most obvious parallels, basically parallels of characterization and situation. Although there appear to be occasional verbal parallels, it is difficult to trace them specifically, since I can discover no certain
indication of the translation or edition of Homer that Grahame himself knew or used. Green, and others, have provided sufficient proof, partly through the testimony of people who knew Grahame and partly through Homeric allusions in his works, that Grahame knew Homer thoroughly, and probably even translated some Homer from Greek as a schoolboy. The general parallels between the last chapter of *The Wind in the Willows* and the return of Odysseus are obvious. The stoats and weasels have the same characteristics as the suitors. Rat reports on their scandalous behavior in this fashion:

'And the Wild Wooders have been living in Toad Hall ever since,' continued the Rat; 'and going on simply anyhow! Lying in bed half the day, and breakfast at all hours, and the place in such a mess (I'm told) it's not fit to be seen! Eating your grub, and drinking your drink, and making bad jokes about you, and singing vulgar songs, about—well, about prisons, and magistrates, and policemen; horrid personal songs, with no humour in them. And they're telling the tradespeople and everybody that they've come to stay for good.' *(WW, pp. 225-256)*

In much the same terms, Telemachus complains of the suitors to the council in Ithaca:

No; these men spend their days around our house killing our beeves and sheep and fatted goats, carousing, soaking up our good dark wine, not caring what they do. They squander everything. *(ODY, II, 11. 20-23)*

Or Eumaios, reporting to Odysseus on his return to Ithaca:
All they want is to prey on his estate, proud dogs; they stop at nothing. Not a day goes by, and not a night comes under Zeus, but they make butchery of our beees and swine— not one or two beasts at a time, either. As for swilling down wine, they drink us dry. Only a great domain like his could stand it—

(ODY, XIV, 11. 93-99)

The general correspondence has been clear enough, but the precision of the parallels becomes even more impressive.

When Toad and his friends emerge from the underground passage into Toad Hall, they can hear the revelry going on. At the heart of it is the taunting of the (supposedly) absent Toad, just as the mockery going on constantly in the great hall of Ithaca centers in taunting of the (supposedly) absent Odysseus.

And then comes the moment of revelation:

The Badger drew himself up, took a firm grip of his stick with both paws, glanced round at his comrades, and cried—

'The hour is come! Follow me!'  
And flung the door open wide.  
My!  
What a squealing and a squeaking and a screeching filled the air!  
Well might the terrified weasels dive under the tables and spring madly up at the windows! Well might the ferrets rush wildly for the fireplace and get hopelessly jammed in the chimney! Well might tables and chairs be upset, and glass and china be sent crashing on the floor, in the panic of that terrible moment when the four Heroes strode wrathfully into the room! (WW, p. 283)

It is not practical to quote extensively from the parallel scene in The Odyssey, but the character of the scene is very similar to that in which Odysseus reveals himself and the slaughter begins: consternation, panic, flight, confusion, overturned
tables, spilled cups, and all. The parallel continues beyond the battle, complete with Mole's securing the outside of the hall, Badger's praise of the novice warrior Mole in the manner of Odysseus' pride in the ability of his untutored son, and the cleansing of the hall by the guilty. A re-reading of pages 243-246 of Grahame's book against the first 400 lines of Book XXII of The Odyssey will reveal how closely the two compare.

The initial reaction to such a parallel is to remark, and perhaps praise, the "fine mock epic" of the scene in The Wind in the Willows. But the scene is not quite epic turned upside-down. True, the vision of a toad, badger, mole, and rat, armed to the teeth, rushing warlike into a band of weasels, is ludicrous. But by the time the reader reaches this point in the story, he has lived so long with these fabulous creatures that it is difficult to conceive of them as other than human figures. The scene does not assume the precise quality of "mock epic" in the manner of Belinda preparing herself for "battle" in The Rape of the Lock or of Parson Adams and Joseph Andrews in skirmish with a pack of hounds. Grahame achieves humor and his pose is essentially comic; but he does not achieve burlesque in this scene, and did not intend to. Considering their stature, the four Heroes do assume a heroic posture, limited as it may be; and Grahame is not poking fun at them. The battle has in it
something of the quality of Odysseus' justice and wrath, and it is only upon reflection that readers may recognize the incident as humorous.

If the incident of the cleansing of the hall matches The Odyssey, what of the characters? Surely, one cannot "match" Toad and Odysseus? Granted, this is a somewhat difficult matter, but a significant matter. It will be best to come about its solution by a circuitous path. Let us consider as a beginning the whole of Toad's adventures in relationship to The Odyssey. In all, four of the traditionally "epic twelve" chapters of The Wind in the Willows are taken up with Toad's wanderings; eight of the twenty-four books of The Odyssey are taken up with Odysseus' wanderings. The similarity of proportion provides an interesting fact, though no particular significance should be attached to it at this point, especially since only two of the twelve chapters in The Wind in the Willows deal with events following the return of Toad and fully half The Odyssey (the last twelve books) occurs after Odysseus' return to Ithaca. There is no "match" between The Wind in the Willows and The Odyssey book for book, incident for incident, character for character. Grahame did not write a "miniature Odyssey with animal characters," but a closer analysis will reveal the heavy influence of The Odyssey in the selection of elements from the epic, especially as an organizational device.
There is little to be found of *The Odyssey* in the adventures of Toad until he has been arrested, at the end of
Chapter 6, at just about the point in the "story" that the
letters of Grahame begin. At that point, Toad is sentenced
to twenty years' imprisonment, although he does not actually
spend twenty years in exile as did Odysseus. At the beginning
of his sojourn in jail, Toad falls into deep despair and self-
reproachment:

... he flung himself at full length on the floor,
and shed bitter tears, and abandoned himself to dark
despair. 'This is the end of everything' (he said),
'at least it is the end of the career of Toad, which
is the same thing; the popular and handsome Toad, the
rich and hospitable Toad, the Toad so free and careless
and débonair! ... With lamentations such as these
he passed his days and nights for several weeks,
refusing his meals or intermediate light refreshments,
though the grim and ancient gaoler, knowing that Toad's
pockets were well lined, frequently pointed out that
many comforts, and indeed luxuries, could by arrange­
ment be sent in--at a price--from outside. ([W], pp. 163-
164)

Odysseus, too, spends his days in weeping when he is held prisoner
by Calypso on the island of Ogygia, refusing the gift of
immortality and avoiding the blandishments of the nymph, in
his everlasting yearning for home:

... Odysseus
in his stone seat to seaward--tear on tear
brimming his eyes. The sweet days of his life time
were running out in anguish over his exile,
for long ago the nymph had ceased to please
Though he fought shy of her and her desire,
he lay with her each night, for she compelled him.
But when day came he sat on the rocky shore
and broke his own heart groaning, with eyes wet
scanning the bare horizon of the sea.

(ODY, V, 11. 148-157)

But, just as Odysseus is released and assisted in his leaving
by his captor, at the prompting of Hermes, the messenger of
the gods, Toad escapes through the stratagem of the jailer's
daughter, prompted by her sympathy--her natural goodness.

Little more can be made of the parallels between the imprison-
ment and release of Toad and the imprisonment and release
of Odysseus. And this pattern continues through most of
Toad's remaining adventures--they contain hints of the details
of Odysseus' wandering, but never a direct retelling of a
specific tale.

Toad assumes a disguise, a very humbling disguise, and must
suffer taunts because of it. Keeping his temper in check is a
very difficult thing for such a dignified creature, even though
he may appear to be a washerwoman; but like Odysseus when he is
made to suffer the taunts of the suitors in his disguise as a
beggar, Toad is able to avoid discovery by his prudent behavior:

... The chaff and the humorous sallies to which he
was subjected, and to which, of course, he had to
provide prompt and effective reply, formed, indeed,
his chief danger; for Toad was an animal with a
strong sense of his own dignity, and the chaff was
mostly (he thought)poor and clumsy, and the humour
of the sallies entirely lacking. However, he kept
his temper, though with great difficulty, suited
his retorts to his company and his supposed character,
and did his best not to overstep the limits of good
taste. (WW, p. 174)
This paragraph is as near a description as one can get of the predicament and behavior of Odysseus disguised as a beggar in his own hall.

The parallels between the adventures of Odysseus and Toad are not so striking as the parallels between the characteristics of Odysseus and Toad. Odysseus, as one patronized by the goddess of wisdom, Pallas Athena, is "skilled in all ways of contending"; but he is especially known, both in The Iliad and The Odyssey, for his cunning--his cleverness. Upon his encounter with Athena in disguise, after his return to Ithaca, he is praised (and characterized) by the goddess:

> Whoever gets around you must be sharp and guileful as a snake; even a god might bow to you in ways of dissimulation. You! You chameleon! Bottomless bag of tricks! Here in your own country would you not give your stratagems a rest or stop spellbinding for an instant?
>
> You play a part as if it were your own skin. . . . Always the same detachment! That is why I cannot fail you, in your evil fortune, coolheaded, quick, well-spoken as you are!

(ODY, XIII, 11. 286-293, 331-333)

Not by accident, these qualities are the very qualities Toad recognizes in himself, exulting in his "cleverness" after every hairbreadth escape in his escapades. When he gets out of a pickle, he congratulates himself:

>'Ho, ho!' he said to himself as he marched along with his chin in the air, 'what a clever Toad I am!'
There is surely no animal equal to me for cleverness in the whole world! My enemies shut me up in prison, encircled by sentries, watched night and day by warders; I walk out through them all, by sheer ability coupled with courage. (WW, p. 235)

And:

'Ho, ho!' he cried, in ecstasies of self-admiration, 'Toad again! Toad, as usual, comes out on top! . . . Toad, of course; clever Toad, great Toad, good Toad!'

Then he burst into song again, and chanted with uplifted voice--

'The motor-car went Poop-poop-poop,
As it raced along the road.
Who was it steered it into a pond?
Ingenious Mr. Toad!
O, how clever I am! How clever, how clever, how very clever--' (WW, pp. 243-244)

Again, the immediate tendency is to regard Toad as a completely non-heroic, anti-Odyssean, mock epic character, in his ridiculous posturings. Guileful? Dissimulator? Trickster? Spell-binder? Cool-headed? Quick? Well-spoken? Are these terms one would apply to this conceited ass? Well, yes and no, or rather, no and yes. Toad prides himself most highly on his cleverness and courage, the precise qualities of Odysseus identified so frequently by Homer. But Toad is not precisely "anti-Odyssean." He does not have courage to the degree he discovers in himself, but he is not without some courage in spite of his frequent passionate terror. He overcomes his terror sufficiently to escape his difficulties. And one must grant his occasional cleverness, particularly in the use of his tongue. He is an accomplished liar, with some spellbinding
power—witness his near hypnotic power over Mole in his description of life on the "open road" (pp. 33 ff.), his skillful deception when he escapes the guard of Rat (pp. 131 ff.), his ability to gain initially the sympathy and assistance of the engine-driver (pp. 179 ff.), the barge woman (pp. 220 ff.), and the owners of the motor-car (pp. 237 ff.). Toad reveals his greatest folly in these respects, not insomuch as he lacks the qualities, but insomuch as he over-estimates to a great extreme the degree to which he has them. He allows himself to be transported absolutely by his self-congratulation, only to immediately plunge into despair and severe self-reproach.

But are these qualities after all so unlike Odysseus? One tends to recall the greatness of Odysseus and forget his human errors, to forget that he is a "man like ourselves."

Odysseus frequently plunges into despair:

'Rag of man that I am, is this the end of me?
I fear the goddess told it all too well—
predicting great adversity at sea
and far from home. (ODY, V, 11. 299-302).

Indeed, it is surprising to observe, on re-reading The Odyssey, the frequency with which Odysseus' emotions rise and fall with his successes and failures. And he is not completely free from self-reckoning. Flushed with self-gratulation over his conquest of Polyphemus, Odysseus taunts the Cyclops; and his men beg him to be quiet before he brings destruction on them
all, but:

I would not heed them in my glorying spirit, but let my anger flare and yelled: 'Kyklopes, if ever mortal man inquire how you were put to shame and blinded, tell him Odysseus, raider of cities, took your eye: Laertes' son, whose home's on Ithaka!'

(ODY, IX, 11. 500-505)

This boastful revelation of Odysseus' identity allows Polyphemus to cry out to his father, the sea god Poseidon, for vengeance:

... Should destiny intend that he shall see his roof again among his family in his father land, far be that day, and dark the years between. Let him lose all companions, and return under strange sail to bitter days at home.

(ODY, IX, 11. 428-433)

Poseidon hears the prayer, and it is granted in every detail, bringing about the long travail of Odysseus. In the same fashion, Toad's boastful revelation of his identity deals him trouble. At last unable to control himself because of the indignity he is suffering as a "washer-woman," Toad bursts out to the barge-woman:

'You common, low, fat barge-woman!' he shouted; 'don't you dare to talk to your betters like that! Washer-woman indeed! I would have you to know that I am a Toad, a very well-known, respected, distinguished Toad! I may be under a bit of a cloud at present, but I will not be laughed at by a barge-woman!' (WW, pp. 226-227)

When the barge-woman thus becomes aware that he really is just a "horrid, nasty, crawly Toad," she simply picks him up by a hind leg and throws him into the canal. Again, after
he has gained the wheel of the car, intoxicated with the sense of power that driving once again gives him, he whoops:

'Washerwoman, indeed!' he shouted recklessly. 'Ho! ho! I am the Toad, the motor-car snatcher, the prison-breaker, the Toad who always escapes! Sit still, and you shall know what driving really is, for you are in the hands of the famous, the skillful, the entirely fearless Toad!' (WW, pp. 241-242)

After this revelation and boast, Toad soon winds up in the water once again.

It is at this point that The Wind in the Willows begins to parallel The Odyssey in specific incident as well as in general structure and characterization. 12 Toad, in fleeing from the pursuing owners of the motor-car, runs right into the river:

He rose to the surface and tried to grasp the reeds and the rushes that grew along the water's edge close under the bank, but the stream was so strong that it tore them out of his hands. 'O my!' gasped poor Toad, 'if ever I steal a motor-car again! If ever I sing another conceited song'--then down he went, and came up breathless and spluttering. Presently he saw that he was approaching a big dark hole in the bank, just above his head, and as the stream bore him past he reached up with a paw and caught hold of the edge and held on. Then slowly and with difficulty he drew himself up out of the water, till at last he was able to rest his elbows on the edge of the hole. There he remained for some minutes, puffing and panting, for he was quite exhausted. (WW, 212)

This scene is remarkably close to the description of Odysseus' being washed ashore on the island of Skheria, quoted as sparingly as possible:

He gripped a rock-ledge with both hands in passing and held on, groaning, as the surge
went by, to keep clear of its breaking. Then the backwash hit him, ripping him under and far out. An octopus, when you drag one from his chamber, comes up with suckers full of tiny stones: Odysseus left the skin of his great hands torn on that rock-ledge as the wave submerged him.

Now even as he prayed the tide at ebb had turned, and the river god made quiet water, drawing him in to safety in the shallows. His knees buckled, his arms gave way beneath him, all vital force now conquered by the sea. Swollen from head to foot he was, and seawater gushed from his mouth and nostrils. There he lay, scarce drawing breath, un stirred, deathly spent.

Then the man crawled to the river bank among the reeds where, face down, he could kiss the soil of earth . . . .

(ODY, V, 11. 424-431, 452-459, 464-466)

Although Odysseus has only reached the land of the Phaiakians, not yet Ithaca, and Toad has arrived at Rat's hole, the resemblance between the circumstances under which the bedraggled wanderers arrive on shore are so obvious that they can pass without further comment.

When Toad arrives at the River Bank, Rat feeds him and clothes him and warms him, then informs him of the take-over of Toad Hall by the stoats and weasels and of the faithful but ineffective service of Badger and Mole. When Odysseus returns to Ithaca, he first meets Athena (in disguise) who informs him of the actions of the suitors in the great hall and of the faithful but ineffective efforts of Telemachus and Penelope; then he goes to the hut of the swineherd, Eumaios,
where he receives hospitality and gains more information.

Toad rushes off to Toad Hall, where he is scorned and reviled by the stoats and weasels, who throw rocks at him. Odysseus goes to the great hall in disguise, where the suitors scorn and revile him and where he is even the recipient of blows and thrown objects. Soon Mole comes into Rat's hole and is joyously reunited with Toad. Telemachus escapes the suitors' ambush and arrives at the hut of Eumaios and is joyously reunited with his father. After Badger arrives and the plans for the invasion of Toad Hall are set, Mole goes into the hall (in Toad's washer-woman disguise) and foretells the return of Toad and the impending arrival of an army of rats, badgers, and toads that will descend upon the stoats and weasels to wreak vengeance. Telemachus goes to the great hall, and through his accomplices warns the suitors of the return of Odysseus and prophesies vengeance to come, and shortly. And then the battle occurs, in parallel circumstances as we have seen previously, with the four Heroes (in either book) performing great deeds.

In view of the startlingly precise parallels between The Wind in the Willows and The Odyssey, must not the four Heroes in one case (Badger, Rat, Mole, and Toad) just as precisely "match" the four heroes in the other (Odysseus, Telemachus, Eumaios, and Philoitios), and must not Toad especially play
the same role as Odysseus? Clearly Toad is not the leader of the expedition, either in its plan or its execution. He is not, and he cannot be—because of his characterization, because of what he is and what he represents. Neither the demands of consistency in his personality, well established long before he re-enters Toad Hall, nor the demands of the plot in its symbolic and satiric manifestations, will allow Toad to achieve the heroic stature of Odysseus. He can represent Odysseus' wandering and adventuring, his low cunning, his despair, his emotional transports, his pride, his boastfulness; but Toad cannot represent Odysseus in his great wisdom, restraint, and physical achievement. Toad simply cannot attain heroic stature—it is not within his "nature."

To so convert Toad would be to destroy the exceptional charm with which Grahame has invested him. But again, Toad is not precisely "anti-Odyssean": he can fight with some courage and ability—and does, going straight for the Chief Weasel. The symbolic necessities of the plot will not allow Toad to become the complete hero. He is not to be the reformer, but one of the reformed. If his conversion were great and sudden prior to the re-establishment of the proper order, it would augur ill for the permanence of the arrangement, for Toad's conversions are frequent, sudden, emotional, and of very brief duration.
If Toad is not Odysseus, then who is? Badger—or nobody. As we have seen previously, Grahame's method is not to "write an Odyssey," but to select from it those devices which serve his own narrative and thematic purposes. Badger leads the charge, and Badger masterminds the operation—in the manner of Odysseus. And Badger represents the permanence and authority of the old order—in the manner of Odysseus. But Odysseus never acts without the prompting and assistance of Pallas Athena, who has bestowed upon him those precise qualities which she as a goddess represents, the same qualities in which he excels—wisdom, or guile, and valor in battle. Badger serves throughout the story in a number of capacities corresponding to various characters in The Odyssey, but he always serves as the adviser (unheeded, for the most part) of Toad and as the representative of the establishment, of which Toad is a corruption. Badger here serves the same function; he stands for those qualities granted Odysseus by Pallas Athena. Rat is easy enough: in the last two chapters of The Wind in the Willows he performs precisely those functions performed in The Odyssey by Eumaios. He provides the home and hospitality that become the working base of reunion and conspiracy, he exhibits stolid loyalty, and he assists in the rout of the suitors. In general, Rat performs the same function throughout the story. He is a combination of all the
characters in the early part of *The Odyssey* who remain loyal to Odysseus and who assist in the education and arousal of Telemachus (Mentes, Mentor, Eurykleia—usually Athena in disguise) and who accompany Telemachus on his journeys (particularly Nestor's son Peisistratos). Good Mole, of course, is Telemachus.

Still we have hardly escaped the adventures of Toad, and still we must account for the peculiar unity of the apparently disparate parts of *The Wind in the Willows*. Mole provides the key, for Mole is our real hero. The story of the title of *The Wind in the Willows* may be of some little significance here. Grahame originally submitted the book to his publishers with the title, *The Wind in the Reeds*. His publishers suggested that it be changed, since a relatively recent collection of Yeats' poems was entitled *The Wind in the Reeds*. Precisely what stages the renegotiation of the title went through, we don't know, but we have Chalmers' testimony that Grahame's "own second string was *Mr. Mole and His Mates.*"13 As we have observed, only a relatively small portion of *The Odyssey* treats of the fabulous adventures of Odysseus, and a similarly small portion of *The Wind in the Willows* treats of the adventures of Toad in the Wide World. Although the widest appeal that *The Odyssey* appears to contain, especially to young readers, centers in the story of Odysseus' fabulous adventures, The
**Odyssey** does not begin with the telling of Odysseus' wanderings and the epic does not derive its major themes from that telling. The first four books are devoted to the revelation of the state of affairs in the realm of Ithaca and to the awakening and education of the hero's son, Tele-machus. Similarly, although the widest appeal that *The Wind in the Willows* appears to contain, again especially for young readers, centers in the adventures of Toad, *The Wind in the Willows* does not begin there. It begins, in the first four chapters, with the revelation of the nature of life on the River Bank and with the "awakening" and education of Mole.

The parallels between the first four chapters of *The Wind in the Willows* and the corresponding parts of *The Odyssey* work in the same fashion as those we previously noted between the adventures of Toad and Odysseus. There is no exact correspondence in detail, no "match" of incident for incident, character for character, place for place. Those similar incidents that do occur do not necessarily occur in the same order and do not always involve the same characters. The most striking parallels are again those remarkable resemblances in tone and characterization.

When Athena has plead the cause of Odysseus and reminded Zeus of the fate of the wanderer, she proposes action:
For my part, I shall visit Ithaca
to put more courage in the son, and rouse him
... let him find
news of his dear father where he may
and win his own renown about the world.

(ODY, I, 11. 89-90, 96-98)

After Athena visits Telemachus in the guise of Mentes, and
revives his hope, Telemachus responds:

But as she went she put new spirit in him,
a new dream of his father, clearer now,
so that he marvelled to himself
divining that a god had been his guest.

(ODY, I, 11. 319-322)

Mole, like Telemachus despondent and lethargic, feels the call,
a "spirit of divine discontent and longing," and becomes
aware that "Something up above was calling him imperiously"
(WW, p. 1). Telemachus reacts to the call by calling a council
of the civic leaders of Ithaca, the first council to be called
in Odysseus' absence, and dismays the tremulous council with
his open and vehement condemnation of the suitors and his call
for action. Mole's first encounter upon the emergence from
his underground home exhibits the arousal of the same qualities:

'Hold up!' said an elderly rabbit at the gap.
'Sixpence for the privilege of passing by the private road!' He was bowled over in an instant by the
impatient and contemptuous Mole, who trotted along
the side of the hedge chaffing the other rabbits
as they peeped hurriedly from their holes to see
what the row was about. 'Onion-sauce! Onion-sauce!' he remarked jeeringly, and was gone before they could
think of a thoroughly satisfactory reply. Then they
all started grumbling at each other. 'How stupid you
are! Why didn't you tell him--' 'Well, why didn't
you say--' 'You might have reminded him--' and so
on, in the usual way; but, of course, it was then
much too late, as is always the case. (WW, p. 3)

Then Mole goes on to the exhilaration of life in the open on the River Bank and his eventual meeting with Rat.

In order to establish a correspondence between the education of Mole and the education of Telemachus it is not necessary to analyze the first four chapters in detail; a general summary will serve to establish the parallel situations. Neither Mole nor Telemachus lacks the basic qualities fundamental to a significant development: Mole is a friendly, warm, loyal creature whose heart is given readily and who holds naturally the basic principles of "animal etiquette"; Telemachus has a princely grace and sense of propriety, and, as Athena tells him:

"You'll never be fainthearted or a fool Telemakhos, if you have your father's spirit;

... .

The son is rare who measures with his father, and one in a thousand is a better man, but you will have the sap and wit and prudence—for you get that from Odysseus—to give you a fair chance of winning through."

(ODY, I, 11. 268-269, 275-279)

What both Mole and Telemachus lack is experience and knowledge. Telemachus, though he is invested with a natural princely grace, knows nothing of arms, the power of government, the skill of dealing with men, and surprisingly little of history and legend—all those things that a father, especially a king, should teach his son. Athena sends him off to the mainland,
not only to provide him with information about his father, 
but also to provide him with an opportunity to prove himself 
as a man through experience. Mole, too, is innocent and 
ignorant; and he learns in much the same fashion as Telemachus, 
through experience and story-telling. Telemachus' actual 
education begins when he goes to sea; and Mole's begins when 
he comes to the River:

Never in his life had he seen a river before--this 
sleek, sinuous, full-bodied animal, chasing and 
chuckling, gripping things with a gurgle and 
leaving them with a laugh, to fling itself on 
fresh playmates that shook themselves free, and 
were caught and held again. All was a-shake and 
a-shiver--glints and gleams and sparkles, rustle 
and swirl, chatter and bubble. The Mole was be­
witched, entranced, fascinated. By the side of 
the river he trotted as one trots, when very small, 
by the side of a man who holds one spellbound by 
exciting stories; and when tired at last, he sat 
on the bank, while the river still chattered on 
to him, a babbling procession of the best stories 
in the world, sent from the heart of the earth to be 
told at last to the insatiable sea. (WW, p. 4)

In his day with Rat, Mole learns of the history, inhabitants, 
and social structure of the River-Bank, as Telemachus in his 
travels on the mainland at the courts of Nestor and Menelaos 
learns of the history and fate, and vices and virtues, of the 
Achaeans. Mole actually meets some of the River-Bankers--he 
speaks briefly with Otter and sees Toad on the River; but he 
gets most of his information from the tales told by Rat, 
before and after a great feast, and especially in the evening 
after the return home:
When they got home, the Rat made a bright fire in the parlour, and planted the Mole in an armchair in front of it, having fetched down a dressing-gown and slippers for him, and told him river stories till supper-time. Very thrilling stories they were, too, to an earth-dwelling animal like Mole. Stories about weirs, and sudden floods, and leaping pike, and steamers that flung hard bottles—at least bottles were certainly flung, and from steamers, so presumably by them; and about herons, and how particular they were whom they spoke to; and about adventures down drains, and night-fishings with Otter, or excursions far afield with Badger. Supper was a most cheerful meal; but very shortly afterwards a terribly sleepy Mole had to be escorted upstairs by his considerate host, to the best bedroom, where he soon laid his head on his pillow in great peace and contentment, knowing that his new-found friend the River was lapping the sill of his window. (WW, p. 22)

The hospitality, the feasting, the story-telling, the gifts, the satisfied slumber—these details are not lost on one who reads again the accounts of Telemachus' entertainment in Pylos and Lakedaimon.

The education of Mole reaches this point at the end of the first chapter of The Wind in the Willows, but it continues more specifically in the following three. From Nestor and Menelaos, Telemachus hears the old stories of the fate that befell the Achaeans, full of bitterness that the gods decreed the spoilage of so much that was good in Greece. He hears of the cause of the troubles in Ithaca in the first place, the beginning of the war with Troy that took Odysseus away and left the country to the gradual dissolution that usually occurs
in a country when its rightful ruler is absent. In the second chapter of *The Wind in the Willows*, Mole sees, not hears of, the actual beginning of the breaking up of the old order that leads to a dissolution of the idyllic life on the River-Bank. Toad and Rat and Mole are trudging along the dusty road with their "gypsy caravan," when suddenly:

... and there disaster, fleet and unforeseen, sprang out on them--disaster momentous indeed to their expedition, but simply over-whelming in its effect on the after-career of Toad. (*WW*, p. 37).

The motor-car indirectly accomplishes the wreck of the cart, and Toad is captured completely by the vision, in much the same way that the heroes of Greece were hypnotized by the desire for fame and glory in battle:

Toad sat straight down in the middle of the dusty road, his legs stretched out before him, and stared fixedly in the direction of the disappearing motor-car. He breathed short, his face wore a placid, satisfied expression, and at intervals he faintly murmured 'Poop-poop!' (*WW*, p. 40)

Toad's trance and his subsequent madness for motor-cars "cause" the difficulties to come: his arrest and absence from Toad Hall, the rising of the stoats and weasels, and the eventual battle.

The next two chapters of *The Wind in the Willows* combine parallels to Telemachus' dangerous confrontation with the suitors and certain features of his trip to and from the court of Menelaos. The innocent and inexperienced Mole ventures
into the Wild Wood and encounters the stoats and weasels for the first time. He escapes, through the help of Rat, just as Telemachus escapes the ambush of the suitors through the advice and assistance of Athena. There is another interesting commentary here on the Ithacans who fail to support Telemachus in his difficulties. After Rat and Mole have safely arrived in Badger's comfortable home, Otter appears and relates his search for Rat and Mole in the Wild Wood:

About halfway across I came on a rabbit sitting on a stump, cleaning his silly face with his paws. He was a pretty scared animal when I crept up behind him and placed a heavy fore-paw on his shoulder. I had to cuff his head once or twice to get any sense out of it at all. At last I managed to extract from him that Mole had been seen in the Wild Wood last night by one of them. It was the talk of the burrows, he said, how Mole, Mr. Rat's particular friend, was in a bad fix; how he had lost his way, and 'They' were up and out hunting, and were chivvying him round and round. 'Then why didn't any of you do something?' I asked. 'You mayn't be blest with brains, but there are hundreds and hundreds of you, big stout fellows, as fat as butter, and your burrows running in all directions, and you could have taken him in and made him safe and comfortable, or tried to, at all events.' 'What, us?' he merely said: 'do something? us rabbits?' So I cuffed him again and left him. (WW, pp. 81-82)

There is a suggestion at the close of Book IV of The Odyssey that the Ithacans knew of the suitors' plot to ambush Telemachus, enough of a suggestion to justify this satirical jab at the ineffective countrymen of Odysseus.

In the court of Menelaos, a court of astonishing splendour
and hospitality, Athena comes to Telemachus, advises him of the plan to waylay him at sea, and advises him of the action that eventually brings him home again to the meeting with Odysseus in the hut of Eumaios. During the sojourn at Badger's house, a home also full of history, tradition, hospitality, and splendour, the River-Bankers meet to discuss their future plans to take Toad in hand and correct him of his folly. After this meeting, the education of Mole is complete:

As he hurried along, eagerly anticipating the moment when he would be at home again among the things he knew and liked, the Mole saw clearly that he was an animal of tilled field and hedgerow, linked to the ploughed furrow, the frequented pasture, the lane of evening lingerings, the cultivated garden-plot. For others the asperities, the stubborn endurance, or the clash of actual conflict, that went with Nature in the rough; he must be wise, must keep to the pleasant places in which his lines were laid and which held adventure enough, in their way, to last for a lifetime. (WW, p. 92)

This summation of the character of Mole, achieved by his exposure to education and experience, is typical of the relationship between features of *The Wind in the Willows* and corresponding features of *The Odyssey*. For the past few pages, we have been remarking the similarities between items in the two books, without being concerned with the differences. The differences are very great—greater indeed than the similarities, particularly in the most effective parts of *The Wind in the Willows*. 
The charm of the animals, the tremendous emotional power of
the unseen terror in the Wild Wood, the appeal of the Open
Road and its Bohemian existence, the subtle but pervasive
constancy of the River--these things have no parallel in The
Odyssey. That is not to say, of course, that The Odyssey
contains nothing to match them in quality; we are not to be
drawn into meaningless comparisons of the relative worth
or degree of artistic excellence in the two books. The
Wind in the Willows achieves its own flavor in its own way,
quite apart from its relationship to The Odyssey. Thousands
of readers have relished that flavor without ever having once
noticed any peculiar relationship to epic. But the comparisons
of the two make it obvious that The Odyssey forms the structural
basis of The Wind in the Willows, that Homer's epic is the
"clothes-line" upon which Grahame's individual and excellent
materials depend. And the "summation of Mole," as we have
remarked, illustrates the relationship between the clothes
and the clothes-line. Telemachus' education prepares him for
action, for the impending struggle, while Mole recognizes in
himself the development of quite different qualities. Yet
the essential part of Telemachus' educational process consists
precisely in that self-recognition, and Grahame has put his
finger exactly on that essential element in his description of
the development of Mole. Simply the possession of a particular
quality or characteristic does not enable a character like
Telemachus or Mole to act; before he can become effective in the role he is to play in future events, such a character must recognize what he contains in himself—what he is really made of, and what his superior qualities are.

The relationship between Odysseus and Toad is quite different from that between Telemachus and Mole. Toad is like Odysseus in some respects, primarily in his faults, but even when he is "like" Odysseus he is an "unheroic" Odysseus. He simply cannot achieve heroic stature, even though he is not completely a burlesque, or "anti-Odyssean," creature.

In the relationship between Mole and Telemachus there is no suggestion of "diminishment." They achieve essentially the same stature, considering the different circumstances and stories in which they are placed. The difference lies not so much in the difference between Mole and Toad as in the difference between Odysseus and Telemachus. The difference is significant here because it creates a problem that every writer for children who utilizes the devices of epic must eventually face. The hero, or heroes, of children's stories are almost invariably the young, at least the young in experience, complete with the physical weaknesses and inferiorities that allow the young reader to identify himself with the hero. If this young and relatively weak hero suddenly becomes a hero of epic stature, in terms of his physical
prowess at least, the story in which he is involved immediately loses its plausibility, and consequently the possibility of a young reader's identification with the hero. An epic hero, like Odysseus, is "complete": he combines the physical prowess, intellectual and moral superiority, and usually political power, that render him representative of a cultural ideal. He need not learn of his abilities—he possesses them, and full knowledge of them, from the beginning; and his deeds serve to demonstrate in action the superior characteristics of his culture. The young hero must first of all discover his abilities and the power that he has within him; but, since he is usually relatively weak, the qualities that he discovers within himself tend to be moral and intellectual qualities, usually quite divorced from physical power, and the deeds that he performs tend to be accomplished by the exercise of his discovered intellectual or moral superiority. The epic hero is to be admired, almost worshiped, to be idolized, to be "sung of"; but the typical youthful hero is to be emulated, to be "identified with." In order that the identification may be complete and effective, the "conversion" of a youthful hero cannot be too extensive—he cannot attain the stature of an epic hero.

Thus, the beginning of The Wind in the Willows (the stories of Rat, and Badger, and Mole) and the end of the book
(the adventures of Toad) hang together upon the clothes-line of The Odyssey. Specifically, the materials of the bedtime stories and the letters, of the River-Bank and the Wide World, come together in the same fashion as do the matter of Odysseus and the matter of Telemachus. But what of the third part of the materials in The Wind in the Willows, the three "essays"?

Obviously, the chapters entitled "Dulce Domum" and "Wayfarers All" operate as a pair, one an essay on the inexorable appeal that "home" always has for the wanderer and the other on the inexorable appeal that "wandering" has for the home-bound.

One winter day, at Christmas time, when the attraction of an original home is strongest, while on an excursion with Rat, Mole "feels" the call of home:

It was one of these mysterious fairy calls from out the void that suddenly reached Mole in the darkness, making him tingle through and through with its very familiar appeal, even while as yet he could not clearly remember what it was...

Home! That was what they meant, those caressing appeals, those soft touches wafted through the air, those invisible little hands pulling and tugging, all one way! Why, it must be quite close by him at that moment, his old home that he had hurriedly forsaken and never sought again, that day when he first found the river! And now it was sending out its scouts and its messengers to capture him and bring him in.

The call was clear, the summons was plain. He must obey it instantly, and go. (WW. pp. 97-99).

When Rat fails to notice Mole's behavior, or to hear his plea, Mole is driven to make the heart rending choice between the loyalty of his friendship to Rat and the nearly irresistible
summons. At great price, he follows Rat. But of course Rat eventually notices his condition, and they return to spend the night in Mole's old home. At the end, Mole is ready to once again break away from his native ground:

He saw clearly how plain and simple—how narrow, even—how all it all was, but clearly, too, how much it all meant to him, and the special value of some such anchorage in one's existence. He did not at all want to abandon the new life and its splendid spaces, to turn his back on sun and air and all they offered him and creep home and stay there; the upper world was all too strong, it called to him still, even down there, and he knew he must return to the larger stage. But it was good to think he had this to come back to, this place which was all his own, these things which were so glad to see him again and could always be counted upon for the same simple welcome. (WW, pp. 118-119)

Mole has answered to the inexorable pull of home. In "Wayfarers All," the situation is the reverse. It is Rat, the steady bulwark of the River-Bank, a "self-sufficient sort of animal, rooted to the land, and whoever went, he stayed" (WW, p. 189)—it is Rat to whom the call comes this time. In the waning days of summer, he first notices the "feeling in the air of change and departure," and hears at night the southing birds "passing in the darkness overhead, the beat and quiver of impatient pinions, obedient to the peremptory call" (WW, p. 188). He engages some swallows in conversation, and their descriptions of the sweet unrest have their effect on Rat: "In himself, too, he knew that it was vibrating at last, that chord hitherto dormant and unsuspected" (WW, pp. 194-195). It takes only the
seafaring rat to complete the weaving of the hypnotic spell, and Rat, in a trance, starts off for the life of adventure and travel when Mole meets him at the door and questions him:

'Why, where are you off to, Ratty?' asked the Mole in great surprise, grasping him by the arm.

'Going South, with the rest of them,' murmured the Rat in a dreamy monotone, never looking at him.

'Seawards first and then on shipboard, and so to the shores that are calling me!'

He pressed resolutely forward, still without haste, but with dogged fixity of purpose; but the Mole, now thoroughly alarmed, placed himself in front of him, and looking into his eyes saw that they were glazed and set and turned a streaked and shifting grey—not his friend's eyes, but the eyes of some other animal! Grappling with him strongly he dragged him inside, threw him down, and held him. (WW, pp. 212-213)

The ambivalence of the powerful attractions of home and the life of travel and adventure have been "ne'er so well expressed" as in these two works of prose-poetry.

This ambivalence finds its parallel in The Odyssey as well. Telemachus, at home in Ithaca, heeds the call to travel as issued by Pallas Athena; and then in the middle of the night at the court of Menelaos, Athena once again arouses in him the feeling of a need to return home. Odysseus, heeding the call to fame and glory, leaves for battle on the fields before Troy; and then he wanders for ten years, constantly longing for homeland and family. The conflicting desires represented in Odysseus and in these two "essays" work very deeply in the hearts of most men, tugging first this way, then that. "Dulce Domum" and "Wayfarers All" hang upon the clothes-line of The Odyssey partially in their treatment of this eternal
conflict.

These chapters contain a quality much more significant to the epic structure of *The Wind in the Willows* than their subject matter, however. They are most remarkable for their expression of the power of the "call," and the "call" serves as the prime motivation in every key situation in *The Wind in the Willows*. Mole leaves his home, prompted by a "divine discontent and longing," and a "something up above...calling him imperiously." He is practically hypnotized by the song of the river. Toad, ravished by the vision of the motor-car, falls into a trance-like state. Mole's complete panic and terror in the Wild Wood affect him in the same fashion. When Toad gets into the car at the inn, not intending to steal it, the spell of the auto captures Toad completely, and leads to his imprisonment:

Next moment, hardly knowing how it came about, he found he had hold of the handle and was turning it. As the familiar sound broke forth, the old passion seized on Toad and completely mastered him, body and soul. As if in a dream, he found himself, somehow, seated in the driver's seat; as if in a dream, he pulled the lever and swung the car round the yard and out through the archway; and, as if in a dream, all sense of right and wrong, all fear of obvious consequences, seemed temporarily suspended. He increased his pace, and as the car devoured the street and leapt forth on the high road through the open country, he was only conscious that he was Toad once more, Toad at his best and highest, Toad the terror, the traffic-queller, the Lord of the lone trail, before whom all must give way or be smitten into nothingness and everlasting night. He chanted as he flew, and the car responded with sonorous
drone; the miles were eaten up under him as he sped
he knew not whither, fulfilling his instincts,
living his hour, reckless of what might come to
him. (NW, pp. 138-139)

"Instincts" is the key word here, for that is the precise term
for the motivating factor in the lives of these animals. The
compulsion and the mysterious power of animal instinct form
the heart of the attraction of "Dulce Domum" and "Wayfarers
All," but they attain the peak of their expression in the
hauntingly beautiful "Piper at the Gates of Dawn." Rat and
Mole, searching for the lost baby otter, fall under the spell
of the "clear, happy call of the distant piping," at first
like "the wind playing in the reeds and rushes and osiers."
They go on, in trance-like state:

Rapt, transported, trembling, he [Rat] was possessed
in all his senses by this new divine thing that
captured his helpless soul... and swung and dandled
it, a powerless but happy infant, in a strong sus-
taining grasp...

Breathless and transfixed the Mole stopped rowing
as the liquid run of that glad piping broke on him
like a wave, caught him up, and possessed him utterly
... then the imperious summons that marched hand-
in-hand with the intoxicating melody imposed its will
on Mole, and mechanically he bent to his oars again.
(W, pp. 151-152)

Mole and Rat continue in this state to the center of the small
island in the River until they achieve the mystical vision
of Pan:

Then suddenly the Mole felt a great Awe fall
upon him, an awe that turned his muscles to water,
bowed his head, and rooted his feet to the ground.
It was no panic terror—indeed he felt wonderfully
at peace and happy—but it was an awe that smote
and held him and, without seeing, he knew it could
only mean that some august Presence was very, very near (WW, p. 154).

Rat and Mole look up and look into the very eyes of the Friend and Helper, the great god Pan, see his horns, his bearded mouth, the shaggy limbs, the pan-pipes; and they kneel, bow their heads, and do worship.

It is in respect to the all-pervasive power of animal instinct that The Wind in the Willows achieves its greatest sense of unity; for all the disparate elements coalesce—all the narrative and symbolic elements of the materials that go into the book, all the narrative structures of fable and epic. With the establishment of animal instinct as the motivating factor in The Wind in the Willows, Grahame achieves a very rare thing—the expression of the single great theme of all epic literature, the assertion of "eternal Providence."
The patterns of myth, the expression of relationship between god and man, the sense of Providence, pervade every epic. In The Odyssey, none of the characters makes a single move without the prompting of the gods, working out their divine decrees. In The Wind in the Willows, the characters are always prompted by the natural calling of their instincts. It is in this respect, and this respect only, that the characters in The Wind in the Willows are truly "animals."

The effect of this providential instinct is so powerful that it works
on all readers; and ironically it is this epitome of epic expression that causes those who would most deny *The Wind in the Willows* any extended levels of meaning to "feel in their bones" and most vehemently defend the "naturalness" of the story and its characters.

*The Odyssey* expresses other great themes that the peculiar combination of the devices of fable and epic allows *The Wind in the Willows* to achieve, at least in part. In addition to presenting an epic hero as an heroic ideal, an epic will typically exhibit a cultural ideal as it is achieved by the action of the hero. At least, this is the case in *The Odyssey*, and the particular kind of cultural ideal exhibited in *The Odyssey* concerns a proper harmony and order in domestic and political affairs. Beginning in *medias res*, the structure of *The Odyssey* emphasizes the thematic arrangement which most economically and classically illustrates the bringing about of harmony from discord. Since it begins in the middle of things, *The Odyssey* first establishes a picture of a society run rampant, a society operating without the controls that are proper to it. The picture is a picture of chaos: Penelope is without a proper husband; Telemachus' proper training as a prince cannot be accomplished without the presence of his father; usurpers assume the power of
the absent king, destroying the wealth of the land,
violating all the precepts of proper control and behavior,
blaspheming the gods, indulging all their wanton temporal
desires to excess; the people of the land suffer the irre-
sponsible tyranny of the usurpers; licentious and lasci-
vious excesses pervade the populace. After the latent
powers of Telemachus have been aroused, and after the
powers and qualities of Odysseus have been exhibited in
the relation of his wanderings, proper power and control
return to Ithaca in the form of Odysseus, retribution
is visited upon the wicked, and peace and harmony are
restored to the realm. The resultant restoration of the
family and government exhibits the "ideal" of domestic and
political order, and the qualities that Odysseus exhibits
in bringing about the reformation represent both the heroic
ideal and the most praiseworthy accomplishments of a culture.

The Wind in the Willows neither utilizes the conception
of the ideal epic hero nor the specific narrative development
of The Odyssey. We have already seen that it is extremely
difficult for a children's book to elevate one of its
characters to completely heroic status, especially if that
color appears in the guise of a diminutive animal. But
the River-Bankers as a group do tend to exhibit the qualities
discernible in the heroic Odysseus. Only on very rare
occasions do children's stories begin in medias res; they almost invariably utilize a chronological narrative pattern. Since *The Wind in the Willows* is basically chronological in its order, it does not assume the classical pattern of "discord to harmony," but instead uses the pattern of "harmony to discord to the restoration of harmony." However, by shifting the scene frequently, and involving a series of characters in a series of episodic adventures, Grahame has achieved in the book some of the emphasis of "theme" over "story" that the classical arrangement achieves.

In the assertion of a cultural ideal, and the restoration of proper order and control in domestic and political affairs, the devices of fable blend perfectly with the devices of epic utilized in *The Wind in the Willows*. The fable pattern, previously discussed, yielding a satiric allegory of social and political structures, accomplishes approximately the "assertion of a cultural ideal" that arises from nearly every epic. The satiric allegory matches the allegorical pattern of *The Odyssey*, complete from its conservative emphasis on the re-establishment of the old order to its assertion of the particular qualities which enable that re-establishment. The idyllic society of the River-Bank achieves an ideal: a society built upon loyalty, friendship, tradition, restraint, prudence, trust, unerring natural instinct, honest emotion, humility,
guided by a benevolent natural Providence. In the true
tradition of fable, Kenneth Grahame represents this cultural
ideal through the use of a charming set of animals invested
with human characteristics.

Thus it is that a structural analysis of *The Wind in
the Willows* can assist in the revelation of the nature of
its appeal. It appeals on many levels, each of which depends
ultimately on the fortunate blending of a number of structural
devices. One need not know anything of either the devices
of fable or the devices of *The Odyssey* to "appreciate" *The
Wind in the Willows* on some level, but the story would not
be nearly so effective at any level if those devices had
not been so judiciously selected and employed. And the
complexity of structure produces meaning on other levels for
those who would find it.

Stubbornly, I must append one final comment. I have
little faith in the "unconscious" artist, in spite of the
testimony of a great many writers, among them Kenneth Grahame
(witness his letter to Teddy Roosevelt). An artist may select
devices and materials from the same forms; but it is inconceivable to me that a writer could select so carefully and
so precisely from a specific form without being aware of what
he was doing. I believe that a work of art is a result of a
conscious act of creation, a conscious process of the creative
imagination, selecting bits of material from every range of its experience, and impressing that material into primarily traditional literary molds. When Kenneth Grahame told stories to his son at bedtime, or when he wrote the letters to Alastair, he may have been simply "telling a story." But I am convinced that when he actually wrote The Wind in the Willows, he consciously impressed the mold of the devices of fable and epic upon it. Without that mold, The Wind in the Willows would have been "delightful," given the remarkable stylistic abilities of its author, and it would undoubtedly have achieved considerable "charm" in its characterizations, given the sensitivity and humanity of its author, but without the basic structure of one of the greatest of stories, The Wind in the Willows would not have been the distinguished work of art that it now is.
CHAPTER IV

FABLE AND ROMANCE:
TOLKIEN'S THE HOBBIT

At the outset, it is well to admit the near impossibility of speaking, writing, or even thinking, about J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* without reference to *The Lord of the Rings*, the trilogy which follows it. The four books together tell a continuous story of events in Middle-Earth, Tolkien's imaginary world. The history of the great War of the Rings related in the trilogy is sequel to *The Hobbit*, inasmuch as it was written after the story of Bilbo's journey to the Lonely Mountain and home again, and inasmuch as the specific events recounted in the trilogy chronologically follow the events of *The Hobbit*. But *The Lord of the Rings* contains much in explanation of the great consequences of many of the seemingly minor references and accidental occurrences in the story of Bilbo's adventure. Thus it is that, after one has read and absorbed the volumes of *The Lord of the Rings*, one cannot escape the sense of history that adds richness to nearly ever fibre of *The Hobbit*.

The relationship between *The Hobbit* and the four volumes considered as a whole might be exhibited by the relationship between *The Odyssey* and a single incident from it. If a reader were to read the story of Odysseus and the Cyclops, without reading any of the rest of the epic, without having had any
previous knowledge of Greek legend or literature, without knowing anything at all of Greek or classical culture—if a reader were to read the Polyphemus episode in such ignorance, the story would probably be of interest and it would probably achieve some kind of completeness. Indeed, this particular episode from *The Odyssey* has been presented to children as a single story, and occasionally with considerable success. If the same reader were then to imbue himself completely with classical knowledge, and then go back to the Cyclops episode, he would find that he would be reading an entirely different story. The sense of history that the reader would have gained from his study would provide the single episode with an entirely different rationale of cause and effect. It is one of the most remarkable of Tolkien's achievements in his four books of Middle-Earth that his imagination has created an entire world, complete with its own history, its own legend, its own mythology, its own folklore. The tremendous mass of information provided in the Ring trilogy cannot help but have its effect on the reader of *The Hobbit*.

The comparison of the relationship between *The Hobbit* and the four books together to the relationship between the Polyphemus episode and *The Odyssey* is apt in another way. If one were to read *The Odyssey*, omitting the episode of the Cyclops, his understanding of motivation in *The Odyssey* would
be considerably impaired. Without the example at the beginning of the Cyclops episode of Odysseus' characteristic desire to know, his overpowering intellectual curiosity, and without the explanation that the episode provides for the enmity of Poseidon and the consequent hardship of Odysseus' wandering and homecoming, the reader of The Odyssey would necessarily wander a good bit in confusion. The situation is similar in the case of The Hobbit. One can "get on" with The Lord of the Rings if he hasn't read The Hobbit, but not always easily or with complete understanding. But The Hobbit is complete within itself, independent of the trilogy, and can be so considered. One can gain an understanding of The Hobbit as a complete work, even though it is true that that understanding would be modified if one were to read the books as a unit. Since The Hobbit is widely recognized as a children's book, and the sequel to it is not, this investigation will be concerned primarily with The Hobbit as an independent entity.

On the surface, The Hobbit is a simple story of a journey, as indicated by Tolkien's alternate title: "There and Back Again." A hobbit of sound reputation, Bilbo Baggins, undertakes the journey in company with a group of dwarves, led by Thorin Oakenshield, son of Thrain son of Thror King under the Mountain. Many years ago, a dragon drove the people of
Thror from their dwellings under Erebor, the Lonely Mountain, and despoiled them of their treasure. Old Smaug, the dragon, remains under the mountain, guarding the treasure hoard; and the dwarves, thirteen in number (Bilbo makes up the "lucky number"), intend to return to Erebor, wreak vengeance on Smaug, and regain their treasure with the help of their "burglar," Bilbo. When it is set against the Ring trilogy, this story has many beginnings and no endings; but by itself, of course, The Hobbit does have its own beginning. In terribly cryptic form, with each ellipsis representing an extremely painful decision to delete, that beginning is something like this:

In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat; it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort . . . . This hobbit was a very well-to-do hobbit, and his name was Baggins . . . . This is a story of how a Baggins had an adventure, and found himself doing and saying things altogether unexpected. . . .

By some curious chance one morning long ago in the quiet of the world, when there was less noise and more green, and the hobbits were still numerous and prosperous, and Bilbo Baggins was standing at his door after breakfast smoking an enormous long wooden pipe that reached nearly down to his woolly toes (neatly brushed)—Gandalf came by. . . .

"Gandalf, Gandalf! Good gracious me! Not the wandering wizard that gave Old Took a pair of magic diamond studs that fastened themselves and never came undone till ordered? Not the fellow who used to tell such wonderful tales at parties, about dragons and goblins and giants and the rescue of princesses and the unexpected luck of widows' sons?"
Then something Tookish woke up inside him, and he wished to go and see the great mountains, and hear the pine-trees and the waterfalls, and explore the caves, and wear a sword instead of a walking-stick.

To the end of his days Bilbo could never remember how he found himself outside, without a hat, a walking-stick or any money, or anything that he usually took when he went out; leaving his second breakfast half-finished and quite unwashed-up, pushing his keys into Gandalf's hands, and running as fast as his furry feet could carry him down the lane, past the great Mill, across The Water, and so for a whole mile or more.

This is a very fine beginning indeed, and none the less fine just because Kenneth Grahame used it thirty years earlier in *The Wind in the Willows*. That is not to accuse Tolkien of plagiarism; but the similarities of this beginning (culled from nearly thirty pages of introduction) to the first chapter of *The Wind in the Willows* are rather striking: the "awakening" of a small earth-dwelling creature, the mysterious call, the tales told, the precipitous abandonment of a comfortable home. The endings of the two books are very much alike as well: a battle occurs, intruders and usurpers are driven out, and rightful rulers are re-established in their proper realms. The heroes of the two books are very much alike: both are small, relatively weak, inexperienced, innocent, but capable of significant action if properly cultivated. But the middles and meanings of the two books are very, very different.

A closer analysis of the beginnings of these two tales
will even reveal great differences, differences central to the differences in the "middles and meanings." Both Mole and Bilbo answer to an inexorable summons: what is its source? where does it call them? In: the preceding chapter, we have already discovered the source of the inspiration to action in *The Wind in the Willows.* Instinct prompts the behavior of Mole and the other creatures--Nature calls in a demanding voice. The instinctive call of the animal world is akin to the voices of the gods, to the destiny assigned by Providence in epic literature. The divine discontent and longing of Spring call Mole out of his tunnel to the River-Bank, out of solitude to Society, where he is to perform his designated function. Enchantment calls Bilbo--the spell cast by a wizard, the music of a magic harp, the thrill of song and story. This baffling enchantment calls Bilbo away from Society to individualism, away from the Shire to Wilderland, away from the River-Bank to the Wide World. Destiny lurks behind the happenings of the story, but Bilbo never becomes aware of its inevitable working until the end:

"Then the prophecies of the old songs have turned out to be true, after a fashion!" said Bilbo.
"Of course!" said Gandalf. "And why should not they prove true? Surely you don't disbelieve the prophecies, because you had a hand in bringing them about yourself? You don't really suppose, do you, that all your adventures and escapes were managed by mere luck, just for your sole benefit? You are a very fine person, Mr. Baggins, and I am very fond
of you; but you are only quite a little fellow in a wide world after all!" (Hobbit, p. 315)

Providence works out its patterns in *The Hobbit* as well as in *The Wind in the Willows*, but the devices of destiny are very different in the two books. In *The Wind in the Willows*, a most natural motivation works on most natural characters; in *The Hobbit*, a most unnatural motivation works on most unnatural characters.

Tolkien would dispute the term "unnatural" applied to his characters, but perhaps he could be appeased by some discussion. The heart of this matter of differences concerns the conception of the fabulous. The creatures in *The Wind in the Willows* are all natural: mole, rat, badger, toad, otter, stoats and weasels, rabbits, even men. Yet they are all fabulous: they are not to be taken only as they appear. They are mostly non-human creatures invested with human characteristics. The creatures in *The Hobbit*, on the other hand, are mostly unnatural: hobbits, elves, dwarves, wizards, goblins, wargs, changeling men. They too are all fabulous: they cannot be taken in truth as they appear, at least not in the actual world. They, too, are invested with human characteristics. The characters in *The Wind in the Willows* are both fabulous and "fable-like," but not the characters in *The Hobbit*—they are fabulous but not fable-like. Wizards, and goblins, and elves do not ordinarily appear in fables—that is not to say that they could not, just as well as talking foxes, but
that they typically do not. Where do they appear? Where do they come from?

Popularly, they appear in "fairy tale" and they come from the "folk imagination." But what in the world, or out of the world, do these terms mean? In his essay "On Fairy-Stories," originally delivered as an Andrew Lang lecture at the University of St. Andrews in 1938, following the publication of The Hobbit by about one year, Tolkien himself defines and defends the form, asserting its dependence upon the creation of the fabulous, or the fantastic:

The human mind is capable of forming mental images of things not actually present. The faculty of conceiving the images is (or was) naturally called Imagination. But in recent times, in technical not normal language, Imagination has often been held to be something higher than the mere image-making, ascribed to the operations of Fancy (a reduced and depreciatory form of the older word Fantasy); an attempt is thus made to restrict, I should say misapply, Imagination to "the power of giving to ideal creations the inner consistency of reality."

Ridiculous though it may be for one so ill-instructed to have an opinion on this critical matters, I venture to think the verbal distinction philologically inappropriate, and the analysis inaccurate. The mental power of image-making is one thing, or aspect; and it should appropriately be called Imagination. The perception of the image, the grasp of its implications, and the control, which are necessary to a successful expression, may vary in vividness and strength; but this is a difference of degree in Imagination, not a difference in kind. The achievement of the expression, which gives (or seems to give) "the inner consistency of reality," is indeed another thing, or aspect, needing another name: Art, the operative link between Imagination
and the final result, Sub-creation. For my present purpose I require a word which shall embrace both the Sub-creative Art in itself and a quality of strangeness and wonder in the Expression, derived from the Image: a quality essential to fairy-story. I propose, therefore, to arrogate to myself the powers of Humpty-Dumpty, and to use Fantasy for this purpose: in a sense, that is, which combines with its older and higher use as an equivalent of Imagination the derived notions of "unreality" (that is, of unlikeness to the Primary World), of freedom from the domination of observed "fact," in short of the fantastic. I am thus not only aware but glad of the etymological and semantic connexions of fantasy with fantastic: with images of things that are not only "not actually present," but which are indeed not to be found in our primary world at all, or are generally believed not to be found there. But while admitting that, I do not assent to the depreciative tone. That the images are of things not in the primary world (if that indeed is possible) is a virtue, not a vice. Fantasy (in this sense) is, I think, not a lower but a higher form of Art, indeed the most nearly pure form, and so (when achieved) the most potent.²

It is necessary to wander further into the bog of definition before we search for a way out. In "An Essay on Romance,"

Sir Walter Scott provides some more distinctions:

Dr. Johnson has defined romance, in its primary sense, to be "a military fable of the middle ages; a tale of wild adventures in love and chivalry." But although this definition expresses correctly the ordinary idea of the word, it is not sufficiently comprehensive to answer our present purpose. A composition may be a legitimate romance, yet neither refer to love nor chivalry--to war nor to the middle ages. The "wild adventures" are almost the only absolutely essential ingredient in Johnson's definition. We would be rather inclined to describe a Romance as "a fictitious narrative in prose or verse; the interest of which turns upon marvellous and uncommon incidents;" being thus opposed to the kindred term Novel, which Johnson has described as a "smooth tale, generally of love;" but which we would rather define as "a fictitious narrative,
differing from the romance, because the events are accommodated to the ordinary train of human events, and the modern state of society."

I have asserted in the definition of the fable and the fabulous in the opening chapter of this study that the "fable always assumes the quality of the fabulous"; Tolkien asserts that it is a quality essential to fairy-story that it deal with "strangeness and wonder," "notions of unreality," "freedom from the domination of observed fact," "things that are not only not actually present, but which are indeed not to be found in our primary world at all"; Scott asserts that the only absolutely essential ingredient of romance is "wild adventures," "marvellous and uncommon incidents."

What are the differences and relationships then among fable, romance, and fairy tale in their use of the fabulous? First, we must assume that Tolkien's comments in his essay "On Fairy-Stories" refer in a general way to his own story, The Hobbit, especially since the lecture upon which it is based was delivered shortly after the publication of The Hobbit. I wish to argue from, and at the same time quarrel with, a number of Tolkien's assumptions and distinctions. In his essay, Tolkien first discusses fairy tale by speaking of what it is not. He maintains that it is not "limited" to popular literature which employs elements of "magic" or even elements of the "fantastic" as he goes on to explain
Tolkien refers to the "folklore" of Germany, England, Scandinavia, Wales, Ireland, and so on, in this regard. He is emphatic in asserting that "fairy-story" is especially not to be limited to literary tales which "turn towards the dainty and diminutive," a "flower-and-butterfly minuteness" (TL, p. 6). Then Tolkien attempts to explain what "fairy-stories" are:

"... Oberon, Mab, and Pigwiggen may be diminutive elves or fairies, as Arthur, Guinevere, and Lancelot are not; but the good and evil story of Arthur's court is a "fairy-story" rather than this tale of Oberon. ... So that Spenser was in the true tradition when he called the Knights of his Faërie by the name of Elfe. ... Now, though I have only touched (wholly inadequately) on elves and fairies, I must turn back; for I have digressed from my proper theme: fairy-stories. I said the sense "stories about fairies" was too narrow. It is too narrow, even if we reject the diminutive size, for fairy-stories are not in normal English usage stories about fairies or elves, but stories about Fairy, that is Faërie, the realm or state in which fairies have their being. ... Most good "fairy-stories" are about the aventures of men in the Perilous Realm or upon its shadowy marches. ... The definition of a fairy-story--what it is, or what it should be--does not, then, depend on any definition of historical account of elf or fairy, but upon the nature of Faërie: the Perilous Realm itself, and the air that blows in that country. ... For the moment I will say only this: a "fairy-story" is one which touches on or uses Faërie, whatever its own main purpose may be: satire, adventure, morality, fantasy. (TL, pp. 7-10)

Tolkien goes on to exclude "Beast-fable" from fairy tale (he specifically mentions The Wind in the Willows in that category, outside the realm of fairy tale), and to imply occasionally a
significant difference between fairy tale and romance, though he never explains what he means by "romance" or what that implied difference may be. It is notable that Tolkien continually refers to three things as particularly fine examples of the type, that is, "fairy story": the tales of Arthur generally, The Faerie Queene, and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.

Since I doubt that Tolkien would wish to say that Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is not a romance, all this leads me to make some distinctions. First, "fairy tale" and "romance" are not synonymous terms. A fairy tale is distinguished by its use of fantastic elements: magic spells, enchanted princesses, magic rings, enchanted woods, elves, wizards, dragons, and the like. A romance is distinguished by its form: a story with a certain kind of structure, like the typical or general structure of medieval chivalric romance. The two may or may not occur together. When Tolkien speaks of "good" fairy stories, or of what fairy story should be, it seems to me that he is simply making the observation that the two kinds of things quite naturally do go together, that the best fairy stories to have been produced happen to have been written in the form of romance. It would appear to me that Tolkien gets questions of quality confused in his essay with
questions of kind. Pigwiggery is not to be admired, but it is being overly Humpty-Dumptyish to deny a story about a diminutive elf sleeping in a cowslip the title "fairy tale" just because it is of inferior quality.

In this context, it is somewhat easier to speak of moles and hobbits. Mole of The Wind in the Willows, like a typical character in fable, is a mole, and moles exist. Mole becomes a fabulous creature when he takes on the additional characteristics of a human personality. Bilbo Baggins, like other fantastic characters, need not "take on" human characteristics—as a hobbit, a creature not to be found in our primary world at all, Bilbo already has the characteristics of a human personality—that is part of being a hobbit. Even the goblins in The Hobbit need not assume human qualities; for, again, as fantastic creatures they may have whatever qualities one chooses to give them. The distinction here is between "fable-like" creatures and "fantastic" creatures. Although a typical fable character may originate as a creature that exists in the primary world and the fantastic creature has no correspondent in the primary world, the two kinds of characters are ultimately similar on the allegorical level: they both symbolize human characteristics or human personalities. In this sense, Mole and Bilbo Baggins are very like, even though they become involved in very different kinds of stories. The connections
between the characters of The Hobbit and the traditional character of fable, then, are somewhat tenuous. The Hobbit employs a set of creatures quite different from the set employed in traditional fable. Fantastic creatures and fable-like creatures are related only in regard to their ultimate attainment of the fabulous.

The machinery of The Hobbit is related to the machinery of romance in much the same way that the characters of The Hobbit are related to the characters of fable. Although we can assert that The Hobbit is related to fable in the use of its characters and in its achievement of the fabulous, we cannot assert that The Hobbit necessarily derives from fable tradition, except in the sense that much of the symbolic nature of all literature probably derives from that tradition. The Hobbit employs the machinery of the fabulous, the fantastic, the "fairy tale": a wizard, dwarves, a dragon sitting in a faraway cave on a stolen treasure hoard, trolls, elves, legend and prophecy, moon letters, goblins, a powerful magic ring, a man who can change himself into a bear, an enchanted river, two lost kingdoms, giant eagles, birds with the power of speech—the list would end if it were complete, but not soon. Men play little significant part in the story at all until the very end, although it is true of course that Bilbo represents
ordinary men and Shire represents that part of human
society that is essentially outside the realm of Faërie.
Romance typically employs similar fabulous elements, although
fewer in number at any one time on most occasions, and men
(or enchanted folk in human form) generally serve as the
central and significant actors. From this example at least,
if we must consider The Hobbit as fairy tale and thus different
from romance (as Tolkien implies), it would appear that
romance would be much more likely than fairy tale to be
"about the adventures of men in the Perilous Realm or upon
its shadowy marches." Thus, although we can assert that The
Hobbit is related to romance in its use of fantastic elements,
that in itself is not enough to support the further assertion
that The Hobbit derives from the traditions of romance.

In addition to its use of the fabulous, however, The Hobbit
utilizes other devices that are characteristic of medieval
chivalric romance. Structurally, The Hobbit resembles the
typical romance in at least three of its features: the nature
of the quest, the nature of the hero, and the nature of its
symbolic rendering of the forces of good and evil. The first
of these resemblances strikes one immediately; the other two
are not so obvious. The meaning that The Hobbit generates,
however, depends quite as much on the latter two features as
on the first. None of these features—fabulous machinery, the quest, a certain kind of hero, symbolism of good and evil—is the exclusive possession of romance, but the combination of them in fairly predictable patterns does provide for a relatively satisfactory description of the characteristic conventions of the romance. The following analysis of the conventions of romance in *The Hobbit* will occasionally make reference to specific romances. Professor Tolkien has for many years been recognized as a leading scholar in the area of the pre-Renaissance literature of northwestern Europe. Because of his extremely wide range of knowledge of epic and romance literature, it would not be necessary for him to draw upon any specific story for a convenient pattern. Whether for this or other cause, a search for Tolkien's specific sources is a singularly unrewarding task. Any specific reference included here should not be interpreted as an implication that the romance mentioned served as a specific source for *The Hobbit*, unless otherwise indicated.

We have noted previously the difference between the "call" that Mole answered at the beginning of *The Wind in the Willows* and the "call" that Bilbo answered at the beginning of *The Hobbit*. At least part of that difference arises from the variant kinds of stories the small heroes become involved
in. Mole, like Telemachus, is called by the gods to emerge from his sheltered isolation and enter the "larger stage," as Mole refers to it--to begin life generally as a social animal. Bilbo answers to the spell of enchantment, and he is called into Wilderland for a specific purpose to perform a specific duty--in short, he is called to perform a quest. Although the spell of the music from Thorin Oakenshield's harp awakens the Tookishness in Bilbo, after the appearance of Gandalf has already brought back to him memories of old romantic tales ("about dragons and goblins and giants and the rescue of princesses and the unexpected luck of widows' sons"), it is a challenge that actually spurs Bilbo to his decision to take up the quest:

Then Mr. Baggins turned the handle and went in. The Took side had won. He suddenly felt he would go without bed and breakfast to be thought fierce. As for little fellow bobbing on the mat, it almost made him really fierce. Many a time afterwards the Baggins part regretted what he did now, and he said to himself: "Bilbo, you were a fool; you walked right in and put your foot in it."

"Pardon me," he said, "if I have overheard words that you were saying. I don't pretend to understand what you are talking about, or your reference to burglars, but I think I am right in believing" (this is what he called being on his dignity) "that you think I am no good. I will show you. I have no signs on my door--it was painted a week ago--, and I am quite sure you have come to the wrong house. As soon as I saw your funny faces on the door-step, I had my doubts. But treat it as the right one. Tell me what you want done, and I will try it, if I have to walk from here to the
East of East and fight the wild Were-worms in the Last Desert" (HOBBIT, pp. 28-29)

In the manner of a knight whose honor has been threatened, Bilbo answers the challenge with an extravagant, and unwittingly prophetic, pledge to the fulfillment of the quest. The danger of besmirched honor, the extravagant oath, and even the prophecy, are typical of romance. We do not have here the splendor of the court of Arthur or the Faerie Queene, nor the giver of gifts ensconced on the high throne, nor a range of doughty knights vying for the honor of assignment to the quest; but we do have a relatively taciturn wizard, some suppliants, a story of an evil and unjust usurpation, and the promise of a journey dangerous and long, with a dragon and treasure waiting at the end. Bilbo does not start out a hero, but is he after all so different from the eager but inexperienced Perceval or Redcrosse Knight? The difficulty of comparing The Hobbit to specific romances is obvious even in this opening scene. In Book I of the Faerie Queene, Redcrosse Knight is setting out on his first quest and a usurping dragon waits for him at the end. Perceval sets out with the same inexperience, stubbornness, and rusticity as Bilbo. If Bilbo does not rise to the challenge, dignity and honor will suffer as they would have if Gawain had not rescued the honor of the fellowship of the Round Table by answering to the challenge of the Green Knight. This
pattern continues throughout The Hobbit—the devices of romance that are utilized form a pastiche of elements from a great number of kinds of romance.

Bilbo assumes a considerably more business-like manner than does the typical questing knight who is bent on honor and glory and no more. Bilbo wishes to know about "risks, out-of-pocket expenses, time required and remuneration, and so forth" (HOBBIT, p. 32). The hobbit's motives for insisting upon specific arrangements, however, arise more from his desire to prove himself "professional" than from a desire for material aggrandizement. The dwarves come as suppliants prompted by even less noble desires. Although they seek to take back their own and to restore Thorin Oakenshield to his rightful throne as King under the Mountain, they are principally fired by a wish to wreak vengeance on Old Smaug and by the desire of the hearts of dwarves—"a fierce and a jealous love" of "beautiful things made by hands and by cunning and by magic" (HOBBIT, p. 25). The somewhat less than commendable desires which initiate the quest lead the expedition to difficulty, eventually even to tragedy and warfare; yet the quest is finally achieved because it fits the scheme of providential design. The quest in romance typically works in this way, at least in romance which intends Christian
allegory. If the champion pridefully undertakes a quest only to enhance his personal glory, he must be tempered and tested severely during his journey before he can become spiritually fit for the achievement of his goal.

Bilbo and his company must surpass many obstacles before they arrive at the Lonely Mountain; and, after the fashion of the typical romance hero and his companion (usually female and lovely), they cannot escape from peril unaided. Bilbo's first opportunity to prove himself to his companions ends in temporary disaster. In order to vindicate himself as a first class burglar, Bilbo attempts to pick the pocket of William, the cockney troll. All the dwarves find themselves firmly trussed up in sacks because of Bilbo's foolish pride, and the party is in a pretty pickle until Gandalf returns to save the day. But the expedition has passed its first serious test, or at least its members have received their first tempering; and as a result of the episode, the principals arm themselves with swords of might and elvish virtue—Orcrist, Glamdring, and Sting. Perhaps it is not reading too much into a simple little story to note that Bilbo learns from the episode a good deal about care, and humility, and respect for his own limitations—or that he wears a cloak over his newly found armor and keeps the power of his sword hidden from view. It is well that he does so, especially when he finds himself
alone deep under the Misty Mountains.

The adventurous journey continues through alternate periods of peril and respite; the company progresses toward the Lonely Mountain and the waiting dragon by stages, alternating from imminent disaster to miraculous escape to assistance by external agents. Elrond furnishes provisions, guidance, and wisdom, "luckily" looking at the map in a crescent moon on midsummer's eve. The wizardry of Gandalf and the valor of Thorin Oakenshield, wielding the redoubtable elvish blades, rescue the company from disaster under the mountains; the eagles rescue them from wolves or a fiery death in trees; Beorn assists them to the eaves of Mirkwood. Gandalf, pressed by other business away south, leaves them here to their own devices, and Bilbo must prove his worth. Assisted now by the invisibility produced by his golden ring, Bilbo exercises his wit and valor to carry them across the Enchanted River, past the spiders, through Mirkwood, out of the halls of the Elven-King, and to Esgaroth upon the Long-Lake, where Thorin's majesty coupled with the strength of legend gain them further assistance from the men of Esgaroth. At last they find themselves upon the doorstep. The fulfillment of the quest appears to be as remote as it was long ago in Bilbo's parlor, for the door is closed and Smaug has yet to be conquered. True to
Bilbo's unwitting prophecy, after sitting on the doorstep long enough, they do "think of something"; or more precisely, true to the prophecy of the moon writing on the map, as they stand by the grey stone when the thrush knocks, the last light of Durin's Day shines upon the key-hole (HOBBIT, p. 64).

The door is opened, and Thorin speaks:

"Now is the time for our esteemed Mr. Baggins, who has proved himself a good companion on our long road, and a hobbit full of courage and resource far exceeding his size, and if I may say so possessed of good luck far exceeding the usual allowance--now is the time for him to perform the service for which he was included in our Company: now is the time for him to earn his Reward."

(HOBBIT, p. 223)

Bilbo makes two trips into the cave at considerable risk, and discovers the weakness of the vast red-golden dragon--the bare spot in the left breast of "the old Worm's diamond waistcoat" (HOBBIT, p. 240). And then suddenly and miraculously, Smaug disappears and the quest is achieved by default.

It is at this point that The Hobbit departs significantly from the characteristic pattern of romance, or at least appears to. The reader, any reader--child, adult, scholar alike--has every right to expect Bilbo Baggins, in a third confrontation with Smaug ("third time pays for all"), to plunge Sting into the unprotected breast and vanquish the mighty worm. That is the typical pattern. Gawain wanders in the wilderness, wins
his way past all obstacles (most of the obstacles and the stories of their overcoming deliberately omitted, uncharacteristically) to the castle of Bercilak, where his worthiness is further tested, until he finally encounters the Green Knight at the Green Chapel, in fulfillment of his knightly oath. Redcrosse Knight wanders through the wilderness of Faërie, conquers most temptations, succumbs to some, is alternately rescued by his own virtue or valor, Una, her dwarf, and Arthur: his testing and healing, assisted by grace, allow him to fulfill the quest and defeat the dragon.

Bilbo and the dwarves have survived the tests of the journey and should be sufficiently prepared for the ultimate conquest of Smaug. Yet Smaug flies off to Esgaroth to meet the fate of the waiting arrow delivered by Bard. And who is Bard? An interloper in the story. True, Bard has grievance and Bard has ability. His credentials are sufficient for a slayer of dragons: he is the rightful heir of Girion, Lord of Dale that was, the kingdom yet to be re-established in the vale of the River Running between the arms of the Lonely Mountain. But where on earth has he been? Bard has appeared in no legend or prophecy—he did not even make an appearance during the stay of Bilbo and the dwarves in Esgaroth prior to the last lap of their journey to Erebor!
If Bilbo is not to conquer the dragon, there are two other logical choices: Thorin Oakenshield or Gandalf. Why Bard? The explanation is simple enough, at least on the surface of things: the story just got away from Tolkien. It started with romance and grew to epic; a person of heroic stature was needed and so Tolkien found one in the shadows of the town on the Lonely-Lake. But this is romance, or at least it started out to be, and we must look beneath the surface of things.

In the previous chapter, the discussion of *The Wind in the Willows* eventually turned on the conception of the hero. When we came to the crucial impasse of an identification of the unheroic Toad with the heroic Odysseus, it was necessary to pursue a circuitous route to the solution. In that round-about journey we happened upon the "real" hero of *The Wind in the Willows*—Mole, the uninitiated who receives his initiation in the course of the story. In considering *The Hobbit*, we are brought to the same impasse: can a small hobbit, Bilbo Baggins, become a dragon slayer? And again, it will be necessary to go round the corner, perhaps several, to arrive at a proper solution to the problem. In both of these stories, two conventions run headlong into one another—perhaps in *The Hobbit* more than two are involved in a collision course.
It should not be difficult at this point to establish the conventional patterns upon which the character of Bilbo Baggins depends. In the tradition of romance, he is a novice knight, involved in his very first quest; he is very much like Perceval or the Redcrosse Knight in this respect. Bilbo is fired with zeal, with the "call" to adventure, with the intense desire to prove himself. Before such a novice knight can achieve great deeds, he must, like Telemachus, gain knowledge, primarily knowledge of his own capabilities. He becomes prepared for great deeds, like the Redcrosse Knight, by testing himself in incidents of increasing complexity and difficulty. And he finally needs assistance before he is ultimately prepared for great action: Mole is educated by Rat and Badger and Pan; Telemachus by Pallas Athena; Redcrosse Knight by Una and Arthur.

Bilbo Baggins undergoes this very process. He has certain capabilities, but he must discover them. Gandalf repeatedly remarks that there is more to Mr. Baggins than meets the eye, as much for the benefit of Bilbo as for the benefit of his skeptical companions. Bilbo discovers some of his limitations in the incident with the trolls; he discovers that he is a child of destiny when he happens upon the ring; he discovers that he has wit and composure under pressure in
his confrontation with Gollum; he discovers that he has courage and valor when he rescues the dwarves from the spiders; he discovers that he has skill in the halls of the Eleven-King--and he needs everything he finds in himself to encounter the dragon in his lair. He goes into the cave until he can see the glow of Smaug and can hear the gurgling of his vast snoring:

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. At any rate after a short halt go on he did; and you can picture him coming to the end of the tunnel, an opening of much the same size and shape as the door above. Through it peeps the hobbit's little head. Before him lies the great bottommost cellar or dungeon-hall of the ancient dwarves right at the Mountain's root. It is almost dark so that its vastness can only be dimly guessed, but rising from the near side of the rocky floor there is a great glow. The glow of Smaug! (HOBBIT, pp. 225-226)

Although Bilbo's successful escape from this initial encounter with Smaug means that he does not require such great courage to go back down the tunnel, in his second confrontation with the great worm Bilbo needs to utilize all his other newly discovered characteristics to their very limit--wit, self-possession, luck, invisibility; and still he comes within a whisker of falling under the spell of the dragon.

But the character of Bilbo Baggins also derives from
another convention--the convention of the diminutive hero of children's literature. The match of the two conventions is a natural one; the small and relatively weak represents the inexperienced, the naïve, the innocent. The novice knight can be brought to the performance of great physical deeds. Perceval's experience and Redcrosse Knight's knowledge of self lead them naturally to deeds of valor, but they are after all knights. Bringing the very small to mighty feats of armed strength is simply too preposterous. The incongruity of the match between the extreme littleness of Bilbo and the extreme vastness of Smaug, as they are so emphasized in the passage quoted above and throughout the scenes under the mountain, could only lead to humor (mock-epic) or incredulity. The other solution to the matter would be to reduce the power, or size, or cunning, or evil of the great dragon, to render a travesty of a monster--a "reluctant dragon." Tolkien cannot, or will not, perpetrate any suggestion of a reduction of the proper awe of a dragon's might. He has very specific notions about dragons and their slayers, as he comments in his fine essay on Beowulf:

As for the dragon: as far as we know anything about these old poets, we know this: the prince of the heroes of the North, supremely memorable--hans nafn mun uppi medan veroldin stendr--was a dragon-slayer. And his most renowned deed, from which in Norse he derived his title Fafnisbani,
was the slaying of the prince of legendary worms. Although there is plainly considerable difference between the later Norse and the ancient English form of the story alluded to in *Beowulf*, already there it had these two primary features: the dragon, and the slaying of him as the chief deed of the greatest of heroes . . . A dragon is no idle fancy. Whatever may be his origins, in fact or invention, the dragon in legend is a potent creation of men's imagination, richer in significance than his barrow is in gold . . .

*Beowulf*'s dragon, if one wishes really to criticize, is not to be blamed for being a dragon, but rather for not being dragon enough, plain pure fairy-story dragon.  

Bilbo Baggins is no match for a creature of this sort. He has enough in him to be the kind of hero that Sam describes to Frodo just prior to the last part of their journey into Mordor, where the shadows lie, in *The Lord of the Rings*:

And we shouldn't be here at all, if we'd known more about it before we started. But I suppose it's often that way. The brave things in the old tales and songs, Mr. Frodo: adventures, as I used to call them. I used to think that they were things the wonderful folk of the stories went out and looked for, because they wanted them, because they were exciting and life was a bit dull, a kind of sport, as you might say. But that's not the way of it with the tales that really mattered, or the ones that stay in the mind. Folk seem to have been just landed in them, usually--their paths were laid that way, as you put it. But I expect they had lots of chances, like us, of turning back, only they didn't. And if they had, we shouldn't know, because they'd have been forgotten. We hear about those as just went on--and not all to a good end, mind you; at least not to what folk inside a story and not outside it call a good end. You know, coming home, and finding things all right, thought not quite the same--like old Mr. Bilbo.  

Old Mr. Bilbo certainly has that kind of heroism, the kind of
heroism and satisfaction in the knowledge of his own heroism that make one understand ToKien's remark at the beginning: "He may have lost the neighbours' respect, but he gained--well, you will see whether he gained anything in the end" (HOBBIT, p. 12). The skill and courage of the hobbit do lead to the dragon's destruction. The initial theft of the cup arouses Smaug from his long slumber and brings him out seeking vengeance; and the discovery of the worm's weak spot, passed on to Bard by the thrush, enables the fatal blow. A diminutive hero can achieve a great deal, but he must use his internal strengths--courage, intelligence, humility, compassion, and the like--rather than external strength to overcome great adversaries. Bilbo Baggins becomes as much a hero as he can become, given the conventions within which he operates; but he simply cannot achieve the title of supreme renown, "Fafnisbani."

Then why not Gandalf? Gandalf clearly has the power to slay dragons. But he, too, operates within the limitations of convention. Gandalf is a wizard, a Merlin-like wizard; he is a mover, not a doer. In a world of supernatural places and beings and actions, Gandalf serves as the herald of the super-supernatural forces behind it. And I am perfectly willing to accept ToKien's prohibition:
Supernatural is a dangerous and difficult word in any of its senses, looser or stricter. But to fairies it can hardly be applied, unless super is taken merely as a superlative prefix. For it is man who is, in contrast to fairies, supernatural (and often of diminutive stature); whereas they are natural, far more natural than he. Such is their doom. (TL, pp. 4-5)

The wizard himself is not a god, he is in and of this world; but it is his task to prepare men (or hobbits) for deeds of significance, not to perform them himself. By the time Gandalf gets to The Lord of the Rings, he has grown along with the story; but in The Hobbit his stature conceals his art—and there is more to him than meets the eye also. In this world, if evil is to be overcome and civilization is to be preserved, it must be overcome in the hearts of men and preserved by the willful actions of men. Gandalf can see more into the past and into the future than can the human eye, but dimly. He can only use the power of his vision to prepare the way for men, to bring to pass the moment of crisis in which man must resolve the struggle of good and evil within himself and make his own decision. The triumph of Good over Evil has no meaning unless it is the result of the willful action of men.

Then why not Thorin Oakenshield? Thorin is a mighty dwarf, a king among dwarves; it is his realm that must be restored; Thorin has steadily grown in power and stature as
he has gotten closer and closer to the throne under the mountain. But Thorin, too, is a victim of convention: the conventional nature of the relationships between good and evil. Just because we are concerned with marvelous adventures in a marvelous world, we must not assume that we are concerned with a marvelous system of morality. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Aragorn and his companions fall into the hands of Eomer of the Riders of the Mark, and Eomer is perplexed as to what course of action he should pursue:

"It is hard to be sure of anything among so many marvels. The world is all grown strange. Elf and Dwarf in company walk in our daily fields; and folk speak with the Lady of the Wood and yet live; and the Sword comes back to war that was broken in the long ages ere the fathers of our fathers rode into the Mark! How shall a man judge what to do in such times?"

"As he ever has judged," said Aragorn. "Good and ill have not changed since yesteryear; nor are they one thing among Elves and Dwarves and another among Men. It is a man's part to discern them, as much in the Golden Wood as in his own house."

*The Hobbit*, in typical romance fashion, treats of the forces of good and evil in clearly distinct symbols of antithetical quality: the beautiful and the ugly, black and white, darkness and light. Only a very few characters in romance, primarily the questing hero himself, are of "mixed" quality, that is, eminently good but susceptible to the corruption of evil. The creatures in *The Hobbit* operate within this same
general construct. There are no good goblins, no good
spiders, no good trolls, no good wargs; there are no bad
eelves, no bad eagles, no bad wizards. (Evil wizards do
exist, of course, but that is another story--the story of
The Lord of the Rings.) Only the most human creatures par-
take of the complexity that allows the struggle between
good and evil to take place within them. The internal struggle
attains its greatest significance in one pair of characters:
Bilbo and Thorin Oakenshield.

The one great evil, more powerful and more dangerous
than all others, resides in this story in Smaug the Terrible.
But Smaug is only the symbol of the evil; for the great
danger lies not in the physical power of Smaug but in the
dragon-spell, the lust for treasure. If anything, the power
of Smaug's treasure is greater after his fall than before.
The desire for great treasure, coupled with the opportunity
for seizing it in the absence of Smaug, gathers the five
armies together at Erebor for the Last Battle. To the extent
to which they overcome or fail to overcome the dragon-spell,
the major characters in The Hobbit achieve victory or defeat.
The significant battles and the significant victories in
romance occur "inside" the characters, prior to the final
battle which is only a manifestation of the previous resolution
of an internal struggle. It is in this respect that romance differs most markedly from epic, depending as it does upon the development and assertion of personal, individual values rather than upon the assertion of cultural values (domestic and political, in The Odyssey).

Cases in point, revealing the central issue of The Hobbit, are the cases of Bilbo and Thorin Oakenshield. In his parlor, in the dark, listening to the songs of the dwarves, Bilbo feels within him a stirring of the "desire of the hearts of dwarves"; and he accepts the challenge of the quest. Under the Misty Mountains, in the dark, Bilbo picks up the lost ring, and then confronts Gollum. He is ready to escape. With Sting and his newly discovered invisibility, he holds great power over the waiting Gollum:

Bilbo almost stopped breathing, and went stiff himself. He was desperate. He must get away, out of this horrible darkness, while he had any strength left. He must fight. He must stab the foul thing, put its eyes out, kill it. It meant to kill him. No, not a fair fight. He was invisible now. Gollum had no sword. Gollum had not actually threatened to kill him, or tried to yet. And he was miserable, alone, lost. A sudden understanding, a pity mixed with horror, welled up in Bilbo's heart: a glimpse of endless unmarked days without light or hope of betterment, hard stone, cold fish, sneaking and whispering. All these thoughts passed in a flash of a second. He trembled. And then quite suddenly in another flash, as if lifted by a new strength and resolve, he leaped. (HOBBIT, p. 98)

Pity and compassion stay Bilbo's hand; he does not succumb to
the dreadful power of the ring. (This incident, too, "makes" *The Lord of the Rings*, but again, that is another story.)

The cumulative incident of Bilbo's solitary adventures under the Lonely Mountain parallels the Gollum incident very closely. Bilbo confronts an evil monster; he combats him with "riddles" in the dark; he discovers the means of the monster's destruction; and he "accidentally" picks up a single item of great value and power, the Arkenstone, the Heart of the Mountain. But Bilbo's great moment is yet to come. The hobbit achieves his victory when he decides to give up the Arkenstone. It is a very difficult decision. The power of the treasure mixes with feelings of loyalty and companionship; but Bilbo triumphs over the dragon-spell, over selfishness and greed, and sacrifices his portion of the treasure and his honor among his companions in the interest of peace and the resolution of the larger struggle of good and evil. It does not matter that Bilbo's sacrifice does not prevent war--he has achieved heroism in his victory over himself and over the attractions of very great and very powerful evil possessions.

Thorin Oakenshield, however, succumbs to the dragon-spell. When Smaug miraculously disappears, Thorin gloats over the treasure and is unwilling to part from a farthing--not to reward the dragon slayer, not to return to the heirs of Dale
the treasure that Smaug had taken from them, not to provide for the rebuilding of the destruction of Esgaroth, not even to redeem the Arkenstone, if he could help it, for "already, so strong was the bewilderment of the treasure upon him, he was pondering whether by the help of Dain he might not recapture the Arkenstone and withhold the share of the reward" (HOBBIT, p. 287). The fall of Thorin could provide a simple solution for the slaying of the dragon. Could not Thorin and Smaug, in one great battle, destroy each other, with Thorin plunging Orcrist into the bare breast discovered by Bilbo and then falling beneath the fiery expiration of Smaug? The simple provides no solution. Thorin has been disarmed—physically since Orcrist was taken from him in the halls of the Elven-King, and spiritually by his fall to the temptation of the treasure. But even more significantly, in such a story as this, built upon the conventions of romance, evil cannot destroy evil. It must be Good that destroys Evil. Although the forces of evil may be put to the use of good through some providential design, evil cannot be turned upon itself without the intervention of some positive force.

That leaves us with Bard as the dragon slayer, and brings us to a story suddenly blown to epic proportions. The silent and grim appearance of Bard is very like the first appearance
of Aragorn in the inn at Bree in the opening book of The Lord of the Rings. The resemblance does not stop with appearance: both are rightful heirs to the thrones of lost kingdoms, both reveal great virtue and wisdom, both conduct themselves with inestimable valor in battle, both rule wisely and well. The last few chapters of The Hobbit recount in brief a story of the Return of the King parallel with the story of the restoration of order and harmony in The Lord of the Rings. But what induced Tolkien to tack that story on to The Hobbit? Surely he could have discovered some other fate for the dragon.

In Faerie Queene, Tolkien has a precedent for his solution. The Faerie Queene, that great combination of romance and epic, employs Arthur as its epic hero. Each of the books of The Faerie Queene exhibits one essential virtue of a Christian knight, in a story utilizing the machinery and the devices of chivalric romance. In each case, a hero serves as the patron of the virtue that is the subject of the book, not as the example of the virtue. Through the trials of a romantic quest, the hero learns of the qualities of the virtue he must protect in the last battle. But Arthur serves as the epic hero, moving through all the books as the epitome of virtue and grace, rescuing the several knights in their greatest need.
In his letter to Raleigh, Spenser writes:

So in the person of Prince Arthure I sette forth magnificence in particular, which vertue for that (according to Aristotle and the rest) it is the perfection of all the rest, and conteineth in it them all, therefore in the whole course I mention the deeds of Arthure applyable to that vertue, which I write of in that booke.  

Arthur need not learn of his own qualities. Like Odysseus, he contains them, and full knowledge of them, from the beginning. His actions illustrate his virtue; they do not serve him as either instruction or revelation. In the same way, Bard needs no education, no self-preparation for his role as dragon slayer. I can identify Bard in this conventional role, and I think I can understand him as an Arthurian figure arriving out of nowhere to pull the chestnuts out of the fire. Nevertheless, for myself, I would have preferred that Tolkien prepare me for Bard's appearance, at least by including him in the legend and prophecy that inform the book throughout. The suddenness of his appearance does not destroy the book, not even its inner consistency, if it is understood in the context of the conventions with which the story operates; but only a relatively thorough knowledge of Spenser on the part of the reader can rescue The Hobbit from this flaw.

An analysis of The Hobbit, in terms of its use of traditional conventions, reveals a great wealth of "meaning" that a casual reading of the book cannot provide. Yet it is true, as in the case of the analyses of The Wind in the Willows and
the *Just So Stories*, that dissection and recognition of sources alone cannot "discover" the ultimate quality or appeal of any story. After he has been discussing just these matters in relationship to fairy tale, Tolkien remarks: "It is precisely the colouring, the atmosphere, the unclassifiable individual details of a story, and above all the general purport that informs with life the undissected bones of the plot, that really count" (*TL*, pp. 18-19). It is fortunate, especially for children, that that is so.
Beyond arousing the specter of another Pooh Perplex, what do these analyses of the Just So Stories, The Wind in the Willows, and The Hobbit prove?

This study began with two very general hypotheses: (1) the writers of the best children's literature tend to produce stories with relatively complex structures, appealing to readers on a number of levels of interpretation; and (2) good children's literature makes use of those literary conventions common to literature regardless of its audience, among them the devices associated with fable, myth, epic, and romance. The method of the study in the preceding chapters has been to submit to analysis some excellent children's books in an attempt to discover whether a close consideration of the conventional devices in them would help to reveal or to account for significant levels of meaning. I submit that these analyses have supported the validity of both the hypotheses and the method. Partially in summary and partially in extension of the results of the analyses, it is well to make some further remarks based on the sum of the evidence.

The treatment of the stories in the three books considered in this study has concentrated on interpretation of the stories
at levels of meaning beyond the literal level. But the stories are effective at the extra.literal level only because they tell fascinating stories and they tell the stories very well; that is of primary importance to any audience, whether it be made up of children or adults or both. The fact that the books do tell delightful stories in a delightful manner belies both the complexity of their structures and the supreme art of their style. The deceptive facility of the expression in the stories is testimony to the craftsmanship of the writers; for Kipling, Grahame, and Tolkien have all combined an impressive amount of detail and allusion in complex narrative structures without ever sacrificing charm. A mixture of complexity and free-flowing narrative is not produced easily. In an interview with Clayton Hamilton in 1910, Grahame spoke to this point:

"What, then, is the use of writing for a person like myself? The answer might seem cryptic to most. It is merely that a fellow entertains a sort of hope that somehow, sometime, he may build a noble sentence that might make Sir Thomas Browne sit upward once again in that inhospitable grave of his in Norwich.

"But language--before this ancient world grew up and went astray--was intended to be spoken to the ear. We are living now in an eye-minded age, when he who runs may read and the average person glimpses his daily reading on the run. What is the use, any longer, of toying with the pleasurable agony of attempting stately sentences of English prose? Apart from you and myself, who sit alone upon this ancient barrow, there are not more than six men in
the United Kingdom who have inherited an ear for prose. I would set Austin Dobson at the top of the list; he is endowed with a delicate and dainty sense of rhythm. Rudyard Kipling knows his King James Bible, and that means very much—now that John Ruskin has passed away...

"The lovers of The Wind in the Willows have been counted by the thousands," I objected. "All of them are eagerly awaiting another book by the same author."

"They liked the subject-matter," he replied. "They did not even notice the source of all the agony, and all the joy. A large amount of what Thoreau called life went into the making of many of those playful pages."

Commenting on Treasure Island while recommending it for a boy, Willa Cather remarked:

When a boy once begins the book he is not happy until he has finished it, and then he is unhappy because there is no more of it to read. And yet his tale that is as thrilling in interest as police fiction is written in the purest English that any man of this generation has written, and handled with so masterful a skill that it would frighten the boys away if they knew of it. But, bless you, they never do know it. It's the height of art to conceal art, and this story reads so easily that you never think it wasn't written easily. You are concerned with Black Dog and terrible John Silver and the treasure that was the price of so much blood and villainy, and never think what skill it took to make all these things of such vital interest. For an artist is most truly great when you can care so intensely for his characters themselves that you almost forget to admire the rare craft with which they were put together.

Although these remarks are directed toward the matter of style, the analyses of the Just So Stories, The Wind in the Willows, and The Hobbit indicate that Kipling and Grahame and Tolkien have exercised care in putting the narrative elements of
their stories together in a manner to conceal art, quite as much as they have exercised care in putting their words together.

One cannot fail to be impressed by the sheer amount and remarkable accuracy of the detail that Kipling has woven into the Just So Stories, or by the number of literary allusions and personal references that Kenneth Grahame has squeezed into a tale of the ordinary life of woodland creatures, or by the symbolism and foreshadowing that Tolkien has adroitly manipulated in a simple story of "There and Back Again." All this specific detail merges so completely with the grace of the expression that it is hardly noticeable. Yet when one does become aware of the skillful inclusion of serious material in the stories, the richness and significance that it provides can only strike one with delight and surprise. I cannot help but marvel at the ability these writers have shown in packing a children's story full of intellectual substance without faltering in the telling of fascinating tales.

As impressive as the literal level of these stories may be, it has been the major concern of this study to ferret out the meaning that lies beneath the surface and to describe the combinations of traditional forms that produce extra-literary levels of meaning. What effect do extra-literary levels of
meaning have on various readers of children's literature? What does the interpretive analysis of levels of meaning contribute of value to the writer, critic, and teacher of children's literature?

The multiplicity of detail in these stories provides for a complexity in the personalities of the characters involved in them, and it also provides for the possibility of interpretation of symbols at a number of levels of meaning, depending upon the experience and sophistication of the reader. For example, the small elephant in Kipling's "The Elephant's Child" could be taken as a symbol standing for one of Kipling's own persistently questioning children, for any typically curious child, for a specific historical figure (perhaps Jameson), for intellectual curiosity, even for a general example of wisdom mixed with folly. It is possible to consider Toad as just a toad, or as a caricature of Alastair Grahame in the heights and depths of his emotional transport, or as a symbol of Kenneth Grahame's wanderlust, or as an unheroic Odysseus, or as a representative of the irresponsible horsy aristocrat set, or as a warning to those smitten with pride, or perhaps just as a naughty little boy, eminently good in heart, but incorrigible in behavior.

The most significant complexity in the Just So Stories, The Wind and the Willows, and The Hobbit, however, is a
complexity of structure. Each of them provides for the interpretation of characters as multi-level symbols; but they combine these multi-level symbols into multi-level allegories by utilizing surprisingly complex superstructures. Although the stories employ the relatively simple narrative conventions of fable, myth, epic, and romance, the combinations of narrative conventions in a variety of patterns produce intricate effects. In The Wind in the Willows, Badger is a badger, and he has some of the habits of a badger, or at least some of the external appearance of a badger—he hibernates in winter, he lives in a den previously built and used by another creature, he is shy (avoids "Society"), he is slow to be aroused but tenacious and ferocious when he is aroused. As an animal character, he is also fabulous, or fable-like, and "stands for" human characteristics. His conservative stability contrasts with Toad's frenetic inconsistency; his loyalty to tradition contrasts with the radical subversion of the stoats and weasels. As a figure acting in the stead of Athena, he contributes advice and wisdom to his society; as a figure acting in the stead of Odysseus, he serves as a military and political leader. But it is not through description that one gains a knowledge of these characteristics of Badger, it is through interpretation of Badger's actions in particular situations that one discovers
the character of Badger. Grahame's combinations of the patterns of fable and epic bring those situations about. The art of the writer is his ability to select those devices that will merge together to suit his purposes at a particular time. We have already noted the effectiveness of the variants of traditional devices in Kipling's "The Elephant's Child" and "The Cat That Walked By Himself."

In each of these stories, the combination of patterns leads naturally to the moral of the story, a moral more complex and more significant than the moral of a simple fable could be.

The complexity of the stories yields interpretation on any number of levels, depending upon the literary sophistication of the reader. I cannot read The Wind in the Willows without recalling The Odyssey, and that adds a certain richness to the story for me that I could not gain in any other way. For one who does not notice the parallels to The Odyssey, or for one who is not familiar with Homer's epic, that richness does not come through. The devices of fable and epic are so skillfully combined, however, that another reader could readily observe social and political concerns. And another reader, who has little literary sophistication at
all, can thoroughly enjoy, and understand, the book as it represents an ideal society based upon goodness and virtue. Yet another reader, perhaps a very young child, may be completely charmed by the narrative itself. Without utilizing the precise patterns that he did, Grahame could not have achieved success on so many different levels.

When the traditional devices, an author's style, and the charm of the characters coalesce, the result is the kind of magic that belongs only to art. I am convinced that these multi-level structures and patterns work on even those readers who are not aware of them. The structures of stories must work in the bones of an audience somehow. I don't know how or why the Odyssean structure of The Wind in the Willows or the structure of the quest in The Hobbit should have a profound effect on my children; but I am convinced that that is the case, that they would not respond to the stories the way they do if the books had not had traditional superstructures beneath their "stories."

Perhaps the patterns of fable and myth reach an audience because they are deeply imbedded in a group subconscious. Perhaps the forms and conventions of fable and myth and epic have lasted so long and continue to work so well because they hit something basic in human nature. We do know that fable, and epic, and myth, and even romance as it appears in folk
literature, have reached audiences for at least three thousand years, audiences frequently made up of such unsophisticated people that we would call them uncivilized. Perhaps the reason that these stories appeal to children or relatively unsophisticated adults unaware of literary tradition is that the authors are just such masterful writers that they would hypnotize anybody with their style.

Style alone, or structure alone, or perhaps even both together do not account for the magic that happens when reader and author come together in a story. A writer for children might well conduct a thorough analysis of good children's literature, similar to the analyses in the preceding chapters of this study, in order to determine the manner in which he should write his stories. The development of an active criticism of children's literature should have some effect on the quality of children's literature in general, even though it may have little effect on any individual writer in the immediate future. The present poverty of criticism may create future poverty of good literature; for, if neither as children, nor as adult students of literature, writers have never come to a serious grip with what makes children's literature tick, they may not be so likely to produce it.

If a writer did discover the secrets of structure through
critical analysis, and then if he would study child psychology with some care, he ought to be able to write a good story for children--children in the abstract. But I suspect that very little high quality literature has been produced according to formula. Each of the books that we have considered in this paper was first told, in one form or another, to the author's own children. Each of the following books was also written by a person who first told it or wrote it for a specific child: *Treasure Island*, *Winnie-the-Pooh*, *Little Black Sambo*, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, *Alice in Wonderland*. Furthermore, at the time the stories were written, none of the authors of these stories were professional writers for children, although some were professional writers. Perhaps what happens is that a grown-up is asked to "tell a story." He is on the spot, and has to make up a story on the spur of the moment. In such a situation, he is likely to draw upon his experience and tell a story that is "like" a story or number of stories that he knows. Maybe that is why he begins to use traditional forms. Then if he gets interested, he may begin to tell the story for himself as well as for the child; but he always has the immediate reaction of a child he knows very well and loves very much. If a person who possesses great literary ability, or a touch of genius, should go through this process, a great story might be the
result. The circumstances surrounding the invention of any particular story would undoubtedly vary from this hypothetical situation. But I think there are two things involved in the situation that would be almost universal: (1) the author must know his audience very well—"hypothetical" children cannot provide much inspiration; and (2) the author must be personally involved—he must have a sincere desire to create for a specific purpose.

It is probably the willingness to put forth his best effort for specific children, coupled with talent, that enables a writer to discover the match between form and meaning that is distinctive of superior children's literature, or distinctive of any superior literature. Excellence of the exterior (style, strong narrative) must be combined with the complexity and profundity of the interior (the "Truylt"). One without the other is the mark of an inferior book. Attention to style alone tends to create preciousness, and children reject it immediately; they are just as likely to reject a story written in a traditional pattern if it does not achieve some stylistic excellence. I think this helps to explain the essential failure of certain kinds of books, particularly imitations. If a writer attempts to imitate the humor of Alice in Wonderland without recognizing the
satire in that humor, or to imitate the logical nonsense without recognizing the convention of the dream vision that frames the Alice stories, or to imitate the fantastic characters and setting without recognizing the epic conventions of the journey and the monsters that Alice faces, he is not likely to produce a very good book, even for children.

In a similar way, I think the necessity of "fruity" as well as entertaining chaff also helps to explain the relative inferiority of the new Dr. Seuss books as opposed to the "vintage" Dr. Seuss. I like the nonsense and the rhythms and the sounds of One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish or the "Cat in the Hat" books, and so do my children--these books are infinitely superior to the colorless pap of modern suburbia represented in the Dick and Jane type readers. But beneath the style and linguistic play of these books there is no structure, no "bones," at least none that I have been able to determine. When my children choose a Dr. Seuss book for me--to read to them, they invariably choose one like Yertle the Turtle or one of the Bartholomew Cubbins books (The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins, The King's Stilts, Bartholomew and the Oobleck). All of these are pointed satires, dealing in complex patterns with rather complex
notions about the proper responsibilities of kings. I don’t think my children are aware of the satire or of the narrative structure, but I know that they prefer these books over the later "fun" books—and I suspect that somehow the "fruyt" makes the difference.

The analyses in this study have been directed not to the general reader nor to the writer for children but to the literary critic, partly to illustrate a critical method but mostly to convince him that good children’s literature is worthy of his attention. How does one go about the process of discovering the levels of meaning in children’s stories? The same way one goes about discovering the meaning of any other story—through some process of literary criticism. I have used a method of analysis based upon a genre theory in order to initiate inquiry; but any other critical approach could do as well, though it may start and end in different places. A sound Jungian critic would have a perfectly glorious time wandering through tunnels and caves, from darkness to light, with Mole or Bilbo Baggins. The generic approach seems to me to have certain advantages in the study of children’s literature. Since the number of literary kinds represented in children’s literature is relatively small, it is with some ease that one can identify the devices of fable, or myth, or epic, or romance, or the picaresque, as
they work in a children's story. The recognition of formal devices provides a significant key to extra-literal interpretation, since an author who selects a specific formal pattern is very likely to assume as well its traditional function. Thus, when one identifies the pattern of fable, one immediately suspects that the story will treat of wisdom and folly, usually in terms of ethical behavior, and perhaps it will even assume the mode of satire, particularly political satire. In the same way, the pattern of myth suggests a treatment of moral and religious subjects, the pattern of epic suggests a treatment of social and cultural ideals (the public virtues and their corruptions), the pattern of romance suggests a treatment of the development of "internal" human characteristics (the private virtues and their corruptions).

This generic approach only begins the process of critical interpretation, however, for the suggestions supplied by traditional patterns and devices cannot be trusted overmuch. Since writers for children rarely select from only one set of literary conventions, it is necessary to analyze the unique combinations of devices that writers employ and to consider those traditional devices that the writers do not choose to employ. A decent critic will then go on to consider all the other evidence at hand: other critical
works, the stated intentions of authors when available, the social and cultural milieu of the author, biography, specific literary sources, or any other material related to the work. But the matter of specific form is an excellent place to begin.

The method and the results of the analyses of children's literature represented here have some implications relevant to teachers of children's literature. The generic approach has some pedagogical advantages in the training of elementary school teachers. In order to teach literature at all, a teacher must practice the art of criticism. Thus, there are thousands of literary critics at work every day in the elementary schools of this country; and there are also thousands of books available to those teachers. The basic conventions of traditional literary forms are relatively easy to teach in a brief period of time; and, once he has gained an understanding of traditional conventions and their characteristic functions, an elementary school teacher has some convenient tools at his disposal which will enable him to begin a sensible interpretation of the hundreds of books that he must teach although he has never seen them before.

Ultimately, a discussion of criticism and children's literature must come to the point of deciding not whether children's literature can be submitted to critical analysis
but whether it should be. When one speaks of the complexity of children's stories and the levels of meaning that they represent, questions of the author's intention and the intended audience arise sooner or later. F. J. Harvey Darton begins his excellent history of children's books with the definition: "By 'children's books' I mean printed works produced ostensibly to give children spontaneous pleasure, and not primarily to teach them, nor solely to make them good, nor to keep them profitably quiet." Darton immediately qualifies: "The definition is given as a broad principle liable to perpetual exception." It is well that he does qualify his definition; for he maintains that the first book that could rightfully be called a "children's book" is John Newbery's A Little Pretty Pocket Book, published in 1744, and he goes on to discuss children's books for fully seven chapters and 121 pages before he arrives chronologically at Newbery's book. Darton's book is marvelous in all respects, but since it is a seminal book in children's literature, his definition has caused great mischief. Too many people have accepted Darton's knowledge without accepting his wisdom; they have replaced Darton's "ostensibly" with "only," and applied it in rather strict fashion. Too often a definition of children's books assumes that they are for "children only" and that they are intended to produce "pleasure only."
Children have not been excluded from the audience of adult literature; adults should not be automatically excluded from the audience of children's literature. The writers of the best books for children have not excluded adults from their audience; at least, the evidence presented in this study certainly indicates that adults are not to be excluded from the audience of the Just So Stories, The Wind in the Willows, and The Hobbit.

These misconceptions of the intention and audience of children's literature lead to some irrational fears. In the introduction to her collection of children's literature, Miriam Blanton Huber writes:

There are two things needed in the equipment of one who wishes to teach literature to children--an understanding of children and a genuine appreciation of literature. An appreciation of literature is deepened and broadened by acquaintance with it. By acquaintance we do not mean analysis and dissection of literature but wide reading and enjoyment of it.4

I could quarrel with this statement on several grounds; for example, I do not believe that a love of children and a love of poetry, in themselves, should certify anyone to teach poetry to my children any more than a love of life and a love of cutting things up should certify a person to perform appendectomies on my children. I am not suggesting that teachers should not have the equipment that Mrs. Huber describes; but I am suggesting that they should also have
something else—knowledge and understanding. But what
disturbs me most about this statement is its implied distrust
of analysis and criticism. Nearly every writer who writes
about children's literature eventually cautions against
"over-analysis" and "over-interpretation." Frankly, I
cannot understand that attitude. The suggestion is always
that somehow analysis and interpretation will spoil enjoyment.
I have never known anyone who has enjoyed any work of litera­
ture less just because he understands it better. My enjoyment
of The Wind in the Willows is immeasurably increased by the
additional knowledge that an analysis of the richness of its
detail and structure provides.

By their very nature, particularly by their use of the
fabulous, the books central to this study demand analysis and
interpretation. The choice does not lie between interpreta­
tion and non-interpretation; the choice lies only between
sound interpretation and unsound interpretation. A close analysis
is much more likely to produce the former.

As I have said, these irrational reactions against
criticism arise from misconceptions of the intention and
audience of children's literature. The implication of the
cautions against over-analysis is that a teacher of literature
must teach everything he knows to his students, that the only
proper audience for children's literature is children, so the
literature does not contain anything that should not be apparent to children. Surely a teacher is in error if he attempts to lead children through an analysis or interpretation beyond their intellectual capabilities or beyond their immediate desires. But that does not speak to the impropriety of analysis and interpretation—for the teacher or for the reader who is ready for it. I am convinced that a teacher is much less likely to commit this error, and is much more likely to be a superior teacher of literature, if he understands literature, its manner and its method.

Most assuredly, any particular interpretation of a children's book, or any other book, may be pushed too far, as it has undoubtedly been on occasion in this study. But there is nothing essentially pernicious in the method. There is no harm in an unsound interpretation, unless it is let to stand. In a healthy critical environment, when a critic pushes an interpretation too far, somebody else pushes back. The process continues until criticism of a work or the body of an author's work achieves some perspective. But the present paucity of serious criticism deprives the world of children's literature of any meaningful dialogue, so that what criticism does appear tends to be either flatly rejected or embraced as absolute truth. The result of this situation is the widespread assumption that a children's story has one meaning, and one
only. It denies the unique and dynamic quality of one's experience with literature. Every time I read *The Hobbit* or the *Just So Stories* or *The Wind in the Willows*, I find that I am reading a slightly different story from the one I have read before, just as I find *Hamlet* to be a slightly different play every time I read it or see it performed. My experience is modified by other experiences, by other interpretations, by other moods, by additional technical information or skill. That is the source of the fascination and the joy. Good children's literature contains enough substance to provide for this continual process of adjustment. It is worthy of the serious attention of professionals.

If professional critics do turn their attention to children's literature, they will eventually be required to render value judgments. What are the criteria of excellence in children's literature? At the very beginning of this paper, I declined to define "best" or "good" in reference to children's literature, suggesting that the impossible should be reserved for later consideration. I again respectfully decline a definition. Serious criticism of children's literature is in a fledgling state, and there has not yet appeared an Aristotle to tell us what good children's literature ought to be like. If the criticism of children's literature does
flourish, and then continues to remain alive, and if we are very fortunate and wise, perhaps firm principles never shall become established. It has been my contention throughout this paper that the proper function of criticism is to interpret and describe, not to prescribe. Although criticism may nourish future art, it feeds on past art. For the present, I am content to identify "good" children's literature as that generally considered to be good, and to work diligently to discover and describe the peculiar characteristics that it contains. As that knowledge grows, the ability to judge should also grow.

As close as I can come to a set of criteria for judging the quality of children's literature is a statement by Paul Hazard, who also declined to establish standards, but described the kinds of children's books that he "liked":

I like books that remain faithful to the very essence of art; namely, those that offer to children an intuitive and direct way of knowledge, a simple beauty capable of being perceived immediately, arousing in their souls a vibration which will endure all their lives. . . .

And books that awaken in them not maudlin sentimentality, but sensibility; that enable them to share in great human emotions; that give them respect for universal life--that of animals, of plants; that teach them not to despise everything that is mysterious in creation and in man. . . .

I like books of knowledge; not those that want to encroach upon recreation, upon leisure, pretending to be able to teach anything without drudgery. There is no truth in that. There are things which cannot
be learned without great pains; we must be resigned to it. . . . I like them when they do not claim that knowledge can take the place of everything else. I like them especially when they distill from all the different kinds of knowledge the most difficult and the most necessary—that of the human heart. . . .

Finally, I like books that contain a profound morality. Not the kind of morality which consists in believing oneself a hero because one has given two cents to a poor man, or which names as characteristics the faults peculiar to one era, or one nation; here snivelling pity, there a pietism that knows nothing of charity; somewhere else a middle class hypocrisy. Not the kind of morality that asks for no deeply felt consent, for no personal effort, and which is nothing but a rule imposed willy-nilly by the strongest. I like books that set in action truths worthy of lasting forever, and of inspiring one's whole inner life; those demonstrating that an unselfish and faithful love always ends by finding its reward, be it only in oneself; how ugly and low are envy, jealousy and greed; how people who utter only slander and lies end by coughing up vipers and toads whenever they speak. In short, I like books that have the integrity to perpetuate their own faith in truth and justice.

Literature that produces the effects noted by Hazard has some elusive quality that defies description. It uses words, and it uses narrative structures, and it uses typical characters, and it uses all of these in observable patterns. But there must be something in it deeper than the readily observable, a circulating blood that comes from the heart and gives color to the flesh, or a sound skeleton that provides an anchor for the movement of the muscles. I am convinced that it is something very deep within good children's stories that enables them to affect children very deeply.

In the first chapter of Great Expectations, the escaped
convict Magwitch seizes little Pip; and, in order to fully impress upon him the necessity to fulfill his promise to bring Magwitch food and a file, the convict growls:

   Now, I ain't alone, as you may think I am. There's a young man hid with me, incomparably with which young man I am a Angel. That young man hears the words I speak. That young man has a secret way peculiar to himself, of getting at a boy, and at his heart, and at his liver. It is in vain for a boy to attempt to hide himself from that young man. A boy may lock his door, may be warm in bed, may tuck himself up, may draw the clothes over his head, may think himself comfortable and safe, but that young man will softly creep and creep his way to him and tear him open.6

As my own private little allegory, I interpret that passage as a statement about good children's literature. It is the terrible Magwitch who makes a tremendous immediate impression on the frightened boy, just as it is the style and narrative in a good story that most immediately capture the excitement of a young reader or listener. He may think that the surface of the story is working all alone; but for a young reader a good book contains subliminal levels of meaning and appeal, in comparison with which the literal level is "a Angel." The profundity and complexity creep and creep their way into a boy's insides without his being aware of them, and they have a way of getting at his heart and at his soul. Pip is awed by the convict, but it is the young man who disturbs his dreams.
I want to find that young man. I want to find out what moves him, what air he breathes, what color of blood runs in his veins. Maybe my training in literary criticism has caused me to make that young man up; maybe my young man exists no more than did the one Magwitch made up for his purposes. But I don't think so. My young man is worth searching for. I challenge my colleagues to join me in the quest.
NOTES

PREFACE

1. Cleveland, 1959, Ch. XI and XII, pp. 239-286.


CHAPTER I


5. Aries, p. 71.

6. Darton, Ch. 1-6, and Thwaite, Ch. 1-3, passim.

7. I have examined the basic devices utilized in a fair number of stories by a great number of writers, including all those listed in the text. In addition, I have had a number of graduate students enrolled in my classes (during the Experienced Teacher Fellowship Program sponsored by the USOE at the University of Nebraska in 1966-67) perform some structural analyses of pairs of stories by the same authors. Most of my conclusions are based upon these investigations, nearly all of them my own. These students also performed comparative stylistic analyses under the same conditions, including studies of the following: Elizabeth Goudge's
Linnets and Valerians and The Scent of the Water; Walter Edmonds' The Matchlock Gun and Drums Along the Mohawk; Antoine de Saint Exupery's The Little Prince and Wind, Sand and Stars; William Faulkner's The Wishing Tree and Light in August; R. L. Stevenson's Treasure Island and The Master of Ballantrae; Pearl Buck's The Big Fight and The Good Earth; Kipling's Just So Stories and Soldier Stories; Rumer Godden's The Doll's House and An Episode of Sparrows; Esther Forbes' Johnny Tremain and Rainbow on the Road; Oscar Wilde's The Selfish Giant and The Model Millionaire; and William J. Lederer's The Ugly American and Timothy's Song. The students chose the books and did the work. Most of the conclusions that I can make about differences in style derive from a cumulative consideration of these studies.

8. Prefaces as quoted in the paperback Camelot Edition (New York, 1966), pp. v-vi. It may be a revealing comment on the state of the reputation of children's literature in academic circles to note that no edition of Once On a Time is available in either the library of the University of Nebraska or the Lincoln, Nebraska, Public Library. It seems strange that an author as significant as Milne, minor figure though he may be, should not be represented in these libraries by a book he once considered his best. I leave it to the reader to judge whether that fact is a reflection on the libraries, Milne's judgment, or his other books.


13. This is, as I understand it, the major thesis of Northrop Frye in such works as The Educated Imagination (Bloomington, Ind., 1967) and Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology (New York, 1963).


17. Tolkien, Tree and Leaf, passim.

18. My authority for that statement is Professor Douglas Oliver, Department of Anthropology, Harvard University. In response to my direct question to that effect during a conference of the USOE Tri-University Project in Denver, Colorado, September, 1967, Professor Oliver answered, "Well yes, that is true."


20. My authority is again Professor Oliver.

21. A useful discussion of the relationships and differences between the two forms may be found in the first two chapters of W. P. Ker, Epic and Romance (New York, 1957).


CHAPTER II


7. Rudyard Kipling, Just So Stories (Garden City, N. Y., 1912), pp. 65-66. Subsequent references to the Just So Stories will be indicated in the text with the abbreviation "JSS."


10. R. E. Harbord, ed., Readers Guide to Rudyard Kipling, Pt. I (1962), Pt. II (1963), Pt. III (1964). Published privately in limited edition (Canterbury). The material in Part III dealing with the Just So Stories was compiled and edited by Alexander Mason and Roger Lancelyn Green. This reference will be subsequently indicated in the notes as RG. Fairly complete information concerning the circumstances of composition (time and place) and publication of the Just So Stories can be discovered in Carrington's biography, Green's book (Ch. IX), and the Readers Guide, especially in a lengthy note to the editors from Carrington (pp. 1689-1690). All of the Just So Stories except "How the Alphabet Was Made" were published prior to their inclusion in the volume of 1902. Since Kipling published much of his work in newspapers and journals, it is possible that some of the Just So Stories may have been published even before they appeared in magazines, although I have no evidence that any were. I have not collated the texts of all the stories as published in magazines with the texts as published in the volume. I have collated the first three and have discovered only minor differences that do not affect this study.

12. London, 1900, Ch. I.
13. RG, p. 1677.
14. RG, p. 1678.
16. London, 1887.
17. St. Nicholas, XXV (December, 1897), p. 89.
20. Loc. cit.
23. From a lecture in 1958 as quoted by R. L. Green, p. 181.
CHAPTER III


2. Kenneth Grahame, The Wind in the Willows (New York, 1908), pp. 1-2. Subsequent references to The Wind in the Willows will be made in the text, using the abbreviation "WW."


4. Loc. cit.

5. P. Green, p. 274.

6. P. Green, p. 279.

7. Kenneth Grahame, First Whisper of "The Wind in the Willows," ed. with intro. Elspeth Grahame (New York, 1945), pp. 8-10. Subsequent references will be made in the text using the abbreviation "FW."

8. Published in A Curriculum for English, Grade 6, Unit 65 (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1966) and in Paul A. Olson and Ned S. Hedges, Analyzing Literature in the Elementary Institute, Source Book on English Institutes for Elementary Teachers (Champaign, Ill., 1965), pp. 35-50.


10. Chalmers, p. 216. Irritatingly, Chalmers does not indicate his source. He had access to the Grahame papers when he did the biography, including notebooks kept by Kenneth Grahame; but he rarely reveals the source of the material that he presents as previously unpublished—whether it is from a manuscript, or from a notebook, or from Elspeth Graham's diary, or from consultation with Grahame's acquaintances. Frequently, as in this case, Chalmers does not even provide dates. If Chalmers' sequence of materials and his accompanying remarks are proper, Grahame must have delivered this lecture at Oxford "several years" after 1910, at any rate some time after the publication of The Wind in the Willows. Green is of no help on this score—he quotes the passage himself without identifying his specific source (which I assume to be Chalmers), and he does not mention the Oxford lecture in his biographical material.
Since I neither read Greek nor can determine what Homer it was that Grahame used, and since I wish in the quotations I offer from *The Odyssey* only to suggest general correspondence rather than specific verbal parallel, I will use for the source of my quotations my own favorite, the excellent translation of *The Odyssey* by Robert Fitzgerald (Garden City, N. Y., 1961). Quotations will be cited in the text using the abbreviation "ODY."

12. Although it is probably fruitless to speculate too much about the order of the composition of the materials in *The Wind in the Willows* or to attempt to discover at what point Grahame began to "think of" *The Odyssey*, it is interesting to note that at the point where *The Wind in the Willows* begins to resemble *The Odyssey* most closely, the text of the book becomes closer to the text of the original letters. The beginning of Chapter 12 in the book corresponds to the beginning of the eighth letter in *First Whisper*. From this point on, the text of the book corresponds rather closely to the text of the letters, even verbally. But the resemblances that I have noted between *The Odyssey* and *The Wind in the Willows* that occur prior to Chapter 12 have all been added to the text of the original letters. I suspect, then, that it was at about this point, the beginning of the eighth letter, that Grahame first "discovered" that he was writing in the mode of the epic. When he was preparing the book for publication, he had to go back and re-write the earlier letters; he had to write the essays; and he had to write the River Bank episodes. I believe that he probably had not only the River Bank episodes in his head from telling stories to "Mouse" earlier but that he also had the essay materials left over from some earlier things of his essay-writing days. When he put this material together, I believe that he deliberately wrote-in the Odyssean structure. It will take a good deal of very careful scholarship and research to support this hypothesis.


CHAPTER IV

2. Tree and Leaf (London, 1964), pp. 46-47. The lecture, published in Essays Presented to Charles Williams (Oxford, 1947), has been revised slightly to appear in Tree and Leaf along with a previously unpublished short story, "Leaf by Niggle," which serves as an example of the sub-creation that Tolkien speaks of in the essay. Subsequent references will be made in the text with the abbreviation "TL."


4. The statements about the conventions of romance are my own conclusions based on reading of romances themselves. The most helpful secondary text I have discovered in this regard is W. P. Ker, Epic and Romance (New York, 1957).


7. Ibid., pp. 49-50.


CHAPTER V


BIBLIOGRAPHY:
A SELECTION OF WORKS CITED OR CONSULTED


-----. "The 'Just So' Stories," *St. Nicholas*, XXV (December, 1897), 89-93.

-----. *Something of Myself*. Garden City, N. Y., 1937.


Mahoney, Bertha E. "Criticism of Children's Books," *The Horn Book Magazine*, XXII (May, 1946), 175, 224.


-----. *Toad of Toad Hall.* London, 1929.

"Mr. Kipling's Allegories," *Spectator,* XCVI (May 12, 1906), 742-743.


Smith, Lillian H. *The Unreluctant Years.* Chicago, 1953.


Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Essays of Travel and In the Art of Writing.* New York, 1919.


Tompkins, J. M. S. The Art of Rudyard Kipling. Lincoln, Nebraska. 1959.


