

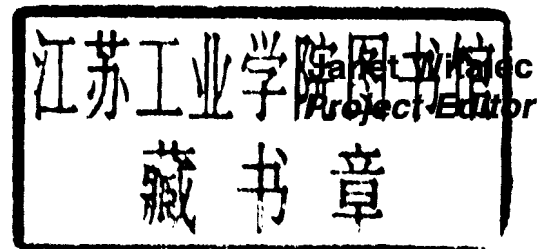
Twentieth-Century
Literary Criticism

TCLC 143

Volume 143

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Criticism of the
Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers
Who Lived between 1900 and 1999,
from the First Published Critical
Appraisals to Current Evaluations**



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Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism, Vol. 143

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Preface

Since its inception more than fifteen years ago, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC) has been purchased and used by nearly 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. TCLC has covered more than 500 authors, representing 58 nationalities and over 25,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as TCLC. In the words of one reviewer, "there is nothing comparable available." TCLC "is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own."

Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author's works. Volumes published from 1978 through 1999 included authors who died between 1900 and 1960. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, TCLC helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in TCLC presents a comprehensive survey on an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of TCLC is devoted to literary topics. These topics widen the focus of the series from the individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

TCLC is designed as a companion series to Gale's *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, (CLC) which reprints commentary on authors who died after 1999. Because of the different time periods under consideration, there is no duplication of material between CLC and TCLC.

Organization of the Book

A TCLC entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author's actual name given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the original date of composition.
- A **Portrait of the Author** is included when available.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose

works have been translated into English, the English-language version of the title follows in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication.

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- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism. Source citations in the Literary Criticism Series follow University of Chicago Press style, as outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

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A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by the Gale Group, including *TCLC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

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An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *TCLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale also produces an annual paperbound edition of the *TCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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Bruno Bettelheim

1903-1990

Austrian-born American nonfiction writer and essayist.

The following entry provides criticism on Bettelheim's works from 1990 through 1999. For criticism prior to 1990, see *CLC*, Volume 79.

INTRODUCTION

A renowned child psychologist, Bettelheim is best known for writing about emotionally disturbed children, the therapeutic value of fairy tales, and the experiences of Nazi concentration camp survivors. While many of his theories—which incorporate the work of Sigmund Freud—are considered outdated, critics concur that Bettelheim brought to the field of psychoanalysis an important humanistic element often missing from a clinical approach.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Born in Vienna, Bettelheim became interested in psychology after undergoing psychoanalysis as a teenager. He went on to study with Freud in Vienna, establishing himself in the late 1930s as an authority on childhood autism. In 1938 he was incarcerated in concentration camps at Dachau and Buchenwald but was freed the following year due to international pressure for his release. Bettelheim moved to the United States, where he joined the faculty of the University of Chicago in 1944 and was appointed head of its Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School. Under Bettelheim's supervision the institution gained a reputation for helping the most severely autistic and emotionally challenged children. Many of Bettelheim's publications during this period chart the progress and setbacks he encountered with his students. In 1973 Bettelheim retired from the school, devoting his time to researching and writing. After suffering a long illness, he died of self-inflicted suffocation in 1990.

MAJOR WORKS

"Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations," one of Bettelheim's earliest works written after his release from Nazi Germany, incorporates his own experiences of the concentration camps and describes how the Nazi leaders tried to rob Jewish prisoners of their iden-



ties and self-respect. Because the Nazi atrocities were generally unreported during the war, Bettelheim's descriptions were deemed unreliable and publishers were generally unwilling to print the article. When the piece was finally published in 1943, the essay garnered worldwide attention and became required reading for all United States military officers serving in Europe. Continuing with this subject in *The Informed Heart* (1960), Bettelheim outlined his survivor philosophy, asserting that an individual's psychological well-being and determination dictated his ability to endure the Holocaust and that most survivors felt guilty about surviving the experience. Although this theory was widely accepted in the scientific community, Bettelheim was attacked for suggesting that the historical passivity of European Jews made them partially responsible for Nazi antagonism.

Bettelheim's views on child development and parenting, like his theories on survivors, are also drawn from personal experience and observation. His brief stay in

an Israeli kibbutz in 1964, for example, resulted in a study of communal life entitled *The Children of the Dream* (1969), and the majority of his writings describe his work at the Orthogenic School. In these works Bettelheim details the attempts of his staff to treat individual patients by creating a nurturing environment and recognizing their basic needs through a process of empathetic identification. Bettelheim's work at the Orthogenic School, however, has proven to be a source of controversy: after his death former patients accused Bettelheim and his staff of brutality and abuse. *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976) is often regarded as one of Bettelheim's more literary works. In this volume Bettelheim provides Freudian analyses of fairy tales, arguing that these stories act as therapeutic tools that help children—frequently subconsciously—to define and accept their desires and fears.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Upon their publication, Bettelheim's works on the Nazi concentration camps and child development were generally well received. Most critics note the autobiographical nature of his writings and speculate on how Bettelheim's experience in the camps impacted his later work with autistic children. Freud's influence on Bettelheim's philosophy and career has been a recurring interest for reviewers. Soon after his suicide, Bettelheim's reputation declined precipitously when allegations were made that he had falsified many of his credentials. Also, some former patients charged that he had physically abused them and other children in his care at the Orthogenic School. After a close examination of his writings, some detractors asserted that his research and anecdotal material was often exaggerated, invented, or plagiarized. Despite his many detractors and the controversy surrounding his life and work, Bettelheim remains an important figure in the field of psychology and child development.

PRINCIPAL WORKS

- "Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations" (essay) 1943; published in journal, *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*
- Dynamics of Prejudice: A Psychological and Sociological Study of Veterans* [with Morris Janowitz] (nonfiction) 1950
- Love Is Not Enough: The Treatment of Emotionally Disturbed Children* (nonfiction) 1950
- Symbolic Wounds: Puberty Rites and the Envious Male* (nonfiction) 1954; revised edition, 1962
- Truants from Life: The Rehabilitation of Emotionally Disturbed Children* (nonfiction) 1955

- The Informed Heart: Autonomy in a Mass Age* (nonfiction) 1960
- Dialogues with Mothers* (nonfiction) 1962
- The Empty Fortress: Infantile Autism and the Birth of the Self* (nonfiction) 1967
- The Children of the Dream* (nonfiction) 1969; also published as *The Children of the Dream: Communal Childrearing and American Education*, 1970, and as *The Children of the Dream: Communal Childrearing and Its Implications for Society*, 1971
- A Home for the Heart* (nonfiction) 1974
- The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (nonfiction) 1976
- Surviving and Other Essays* (essays) 1979; also published as *Surviving the Holocaust*, 1986
- Freud and Man's Soul* (nonfiction) 1982
- On Learning to Read: The Child's Fascination with Meaning* [with Karen Zelan] (nonfiction) 1982
- A Good Enough Parent: A Book on Childrearing* (nonfiction) 1987
- Freud's Vienna, and Other Essays* (essays) 1989
- Recollections and Reflections* (essays) 1990

CRITICISM

Anthony Storr (review date 24 March 1990)

SOURCE: Storr, Anthony. "Suffering of the Little Children." *Spectator* (24 March 1990): 29-30.

[In the following favorable review of *Recollections and Reflections*, Storr maintains that "Bettelheim's many admirers will not be disappointed by this final volume."]

Bruno Bettelheim, who died last week in his 87th year, was the best-known child psychologist in the USA. This [*Recollections and Reflections*] is his 16th book. Most of the essays have been published before, but many have been revised, and some are appearing in English for the first time.

Bettelheim was born in Vienna in 1903. As an adolescent, he became interested in psychoanalysis because Otto Fenichel, later to become the author of a standard textbook of psychoanalysis, appeared to be appropriating his girl friend by filling her head full of Freud's teachings. Not to be outdone, Bettelheim bought all the Freudian writings he could find, and promptly became fascinated.

Two main themes derived from his personal experience pervade all Bettelheim's writings: the psychosocial milieu of the concentration camps and the treatment of psychologically disturbed children. Bettelheim himself was, for a year, confined in Dachau and then Buchenwald. After his release, in 1939, he emigrated to the US where he founded and became Director of the Ortho-

genic School in Chicago for the treatment of mentally ill children. His experience in concentration camps led to his recognition that a malignantly controlled environment can have disastrous effects upon the mental health of its inmates. He concluded that a properly constructed benign environment would have positive effects. So, instead of confining the psychological treatment of severely mentally ill children to psychoanalytic sessions, he designed what he called a 'total therapeutic milieu' in which those treating the children were expected to offer unequivocal emotional security by making their relationship with the children part of their lives. This demanding technique required great dedication from the staff, but achieved some extraordinary therapeutic successes with psychotic children whom many would have deemed incurable.

Bettelheim's experience in Dachau and Buchenwald led to one of the classics of concentration camp literature, *The Informed Heart* (1960). It also helped him understand the destructive, self-punitive behaviour of disturbed children. If the therapist assumed that such children were living in a hell of misery which was comparable with living in a concentration camp, he could enter into their world and appreciate that 'mad' behaviour was often an understandable reaction to an emotionally extreme situation. Bettelheim was sometimes regarded as autocratic by his staff, but he was always ready to learn from his child patients.

There is an essay on Freud's Vienna, and an interesting adverse comment on Ernest Jones's three-volume biography of Freud, which most critics have regarded as indispensable, even if partisan. Bettelheim is especially critical of Jones's failure to set Freud within the context of his society and date, a fault which has been remedied by Gay's more recent biography. And he is rightly intolerant of Jones's dismissal of all Freudian rebels as psychotic or neurotic.

Bettelheim himself regarded Freud as a pioneering genius, but he was by no means an uncritical disciple. In one essay, he accurately pin-points one of Freud's major failings. 'Freud believed that feelings and emotions were irrational and therefore suspect. . . . Like many philosophers of the Enlightenment, Freud could not see that if man's thinking is split off from his feeling, both become distorted.'

An essay on Lionel Trilling claims that his writings 'accurately interpreted Freud's work for American intellectuals'. It is curious that one reason for his approval of Trilling is that he shares Bettelheim's own acceptance of Freud's 'death instinct' or 'death drive': a concept which has long been rejected by most biologically-minded theorists, but which crops up again in Bettelheim's final essay. This addresses the still unsolved problem of how and why so many Jews in the

extermination camps appeared to acquiesce in their own destruction. Bettelheim attributes this fatal passivity to what he calls 'ghetto thinking':

In the ghetto, one complied and waited for the tempest to subside. The Jews had not troubled to learn that things had changed, so they could not know that this tempest was of a wholly new order.

Bettelheim thought that, although Jews were capable of fierce resistance when ordered to fight by an authority, the majority were incapable of acting in self-defence when without an official leader. Passivity and resignation are aspects of human behaviour which are not often studied, although such attitudes have been held responsible for the British working-class lack of interest in education and opportunities of betterment; 'it's not for the likes of us'.

Bettelheim's many admirers will not be disappointed by this final volume.

Paul Roazen (essay date spring 1992)

SOURCE: Roazen, Paul. "The Rise and Fall of Bruno Bettelheim." *Psychohistory Review: Studies of Motivation in History and Culture* 20, no. 3 (spring 1992): 221-50.

[In the following essay, Roazen investigates the reasons for the decline of Bettelheim's reputation.]

Bruno Bettelheim's role in the history of psychoanalysis has long been known to be a special one, but now it appears that his place is bound to remain every bit as contentious as that of any other figure in the controversial story of the development of Freud's school. Perhaps the height of Bettelheim's stature, at which time he was probably the most famous psychoanalyst in the world, came when Woody Allen cast him for the part of an interpreting psychiatrist in *Zelig* (1983). Ever since his suicide in 1990, however, Bettelheim's standing has been in a slump, and subsequent accusations against him by former patients have meant that the downturn of his reputation has deepened drastically.

Out of all his impressive body of writings, he will probably remain best known for his famous study on Nazi concentration camps. In 1943, while Bettelheim was associated with a little-known institution called Rockford College in Illinois, he published in a relatively obscure journal, after being turned down elsewhere, an article titled "**Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations.**" Here he had a chance, at a time when the general public was still unaware of some of the worst atrocities of the Nazis, to report on his own observations after having spent "approximately a year" (1943,

417) at Dachau and Buchenwald in 1938-39. Dwight MacDonald republished parts of Bettelheim's piece soon afterwards, and it has subsequently become a classic document in modern social science.

They were then camps, Bettelheim reported, "for political prisoners, (418) and he detailed the ways in which he thought the inmates reacted oddly, by the standards of pure rationality, to their confinement. Bettelheim said he himself had survived the ordeal by having made the decision, as a psychologist, to protect the integrity of his personality through observing and collecting data about how the camps affected the personalities of other prisoners. He distanced himself from what he experienced and differentiated his own response from that of others by the self-protective device of using his knowledge of depth psychology to interpret behavior under the extremity of what only later came to be known as the Holocaust.

Although he reported that at the time "extreme malnutrition" had "deteriorated" his memory, Bettelheim recounted how he found two compatriots, one the son of a Viennese psychoanalyst, to share their thoughts and feelings with him. (The analyst's son has since reported that Bettelheim spent seven to eight months in the camps.) Bettelheim proposed that the "initial shock" of incarceration had been hardest for the nonpolitical middle-class prisoners, who were "a small minority," to resist: "They had no consistent philosophy which would protect their integrity as human beings, which would give them the force to make a stand against the Nazis." From this population came "the several suicides" and these people were the ones responsible also for antisocial behavior like cheating on fellow inmates and spying in behalf of the Gestapo (422, 424-7).

Bettelheim contrasted the behavior of others with his own fundamental choice. Perhaps the most enduring sentence in all Bettelheim's work, for me, was how he summed up in italics "his main problem" during the time he spent in the camps: "*to safeguard his ego in such a way, that, if by any good luck he should regain liberty, he would be approximately the same person he was when deprived of liberty*" (431).

Prisoners adapted to the camp situation in different ways. Bettelheim studied their dreams and fantasies; readers at the time must have been startled to learn how impossible "open resistance" was, "as impossible as it was to do anything definite to safeguard oneself." In passing, he commented that the "few who had tried to fight back could not be interviewed; they were dead." While everyday experiences that might have occurred in "normal" life provoked a "normal" reaction, he argued that paradoxically the greater the suffering in the camps the more apt people were to accept their lot as martyrs and not to resent it (434, 430, 435).

Those who stayed in the camps more than a year became, in Bettelheim's terms, "old prisoners," and were, he held, apt to change their attitudes towards families and friends in a way that he thought qualified them for being described as having "transgressed to infantile behavior." Such people, he alleged, exhibited a wide variety of irrational responses. For example, they wanted to believe that in the outside world, which they had been forced to leave, "their worldly possessions should be secure and untouched, although they were of no use to them at this moment" (439, 440). To think of change back home was too threatening.

More troubling, and here some have thought that Bettelheim was insulting his fellow sufferers, was his proposal that such old prisoners tended to adopt the convictions of their persecutors. "*They had learned to direct a great amount of aggression against themselves so as not to get into too many conflicts with the Gestapo, while the new prisoners still directed their aggressions against the outer world, and—when not supervised—against the Gestapo*" (443). (This was another sentence that Bettelheim italicized.)

While Bettelheim and "the few other prisoners who realized what was happening" held back and retained their autonomy, he complained about a mass behavioral pattern that he considered an example of regression into infantilism: "ambivalence to one's family; despondency, finding satisfaction in daydreaming rather than in action." By allowing themselves to be pushed by circumstances into "childhood attitudes and behaviors," they "became in this way more or less willing tools of the Gestapo (444, 447).

It is hard for me to evaluate how Bettelheim's argument was then received. He was, of course, describing the perfectly dreadful, almost unimaginable circumstances of concentration camp life. But he was not talking about factories of extermination, since that part of Hitler's program had yet to be inaugurated during the period in the late 1930s when Bettelheim himself was imprisoned. The public has too easily been muddled over the extent of Bettelheim's personal experiences. William Styron in *Sophie's Choice* somehow relied on Bettelheim's authority about Auschwitz, while in fact Bettelheim had nothing to do with any of the death camps; he was already in the United States by 1939.

It is still memorable and shocking how Bettelheim in his 1943 article thought that a prisoner had reached "the final stage of adjustment to the camp situation when he had changed his personality so as to accept as his own the values of the Gestapo" (447). In 1936 Anna Freud, in a book written while her father was alive and in the spirit of the work of his disciple Sandor Ferenczi, described the "defense" of identifying with the aggressor (1937, Ch. 9), and Bettelheim was giving concrete il-

illustrations of this unconscious self-defeating process. For example, he said "It was not unusual to find old prisoners, when in charge of others, behaving worse than the Gestapo. . . ." He maintained that not only did "old prisoners" seem "to have a tendency to identify themselves with the Gestapo" in regard to aggressive behavior, but "they would try to arrogate to themselves old pieces of Gestapo uniforms." While rationally the old prisoners should have resisted their tormentors, Bettelheim was saying that instead they "accepted their goals and values, too, even when they seemed opposed to their own interests" (1943, 448). Bettelheim was appalled at what he observed, though it confirmed some of the worst of what psychoanalysis had taught about the human condition.

At the end of his paper, just before summarizing its findings, Bettelheim placed a paragraph that struck me, when I reread the essay long after first coming across it, as weird. For he seemed here to be trying somehow to retract, under pressure from his editors or out of conformity to contemporary sensibilities, the essential theoretical message of his piece, covering the tracks of his iconoclasm with words that might protect him from critics:

After so much has been said about the old prisoners' tendency to conform and to identify with the Gestapo, it ought to be stressed that this was only part of the picture, because the author tried to concentrate on interesting psychological mechanisms in group behavior rather than in reporting types of behavior which are either well known or could reasonably be expected. These same old prisoners who identified with the Gestapo at other moments defied it, demonstrating extraordinary courage in doing so.

(1943, 451)

In essence, however he may have tried to pull back at the last moment, the crux of Bettelheim's argument led in a different direction. When he went on to call "greater Germany" a "big concentration camp" (452), he meant to denounce how people collectively had failed to resist outside conformist pressures. Bettelheim was trying to uphold the ideal of the individual as an autonomous and self-reliant entity, as opposed to what he perceived as the degradation of the human spirit under the extremity of the Nazi system.

However critically others might have reacted to Bettelheim's article later on, at the time it did seem to register an important anti-fascist message. Bettelheim's publisher for many years, The Free Press of Glencoe, reported on a later book jacket that General Dwight D. Eisenhower had made "**Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations**" required reading "for all military government officers in Europe." It is known that when, at the end of the war, Eisenhower first saw the liberated camps, he was literally sickened, and insisted

on the local townspeople being marched through them to see the horror for themselves. I do not know how he heard about Bettelheim's piece; a staff officer may have brought it to his attention. Alternatively, the impetus may have come from higher up; one story has it that Eleanor Roosevelt was involved in getting Bettelheim out of Buchenwald in 1939, and perhaps she took notice of his work. She stayed once with General Lucius Clay, head of the American military government in Germany, and it is known that he thought the world of her.

Growing up in the 1950s, as I did, meant that Bettelheim had not, in my own education, attained the general stature he had acquired by the 1980s; his writings were never included as part of my own required reading. As a Jew I was reasonably aware of the significance of what had happened in the concentration camps; on a trip through Europe as a teenager I had paid a silent pilgrimage through a barren detention camp in the Netherlands used by the Germans during both world wars. And during my first year at Harvard College, in the spring of 1955, one of my best teachers showed us movies taken of the camps by liberating allied soldiers; these amateur-seeming black-and-white shots were all the more impressive for their immediacy and lack of professionalism, and as a college instructor myself I have always shown first-year students some comparable film footage. But psychoanalysis, or at least Bettelheim's use of it, was by no means central to my undergraduate reading. We were, to be sure, assigned Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* in another freshman course and, in my second year, I read Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom*. (The rise and fall of the reputation of Fromm, another nonmedical analyst like Bettelheim, would be altogether another tale. In the 1950s Fromm was critically important to our undergraduate life. I later read every book he ever published, and I was subsequently impressed by his special insightfulness when I was lucky enough to have some personal contact with him; but from the so-called radical 1960s on his standing among the intelligentsia began to slump. Although some of his books continue to sell widely, he has never recaptured among intellectuals the ground he lost since the 1950s.)

During my first year of graduate work in political science at the University of Chicago during 1958-59, I heard a good deal about Bettelheim. He was then teaching on the Committee of Human Development there, and also since 1944 had been head of the Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School for "autistic" children. As it was first explained to me, according to the strict categories of classical psychiatry, children could not be labeled psychotic, since psychosis means the breakdown of an already well-integrated and functioning personality; autism was a way of referring to the most emotionally troubled sorts of youngsters.