GETTING TO KNOW THEM: CHARACTERS LABELLED AS MENTALLY DISABLED IN TEN CANADIAN SHORT STORIES AND NOVELS

by

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This thesis is a study of the treatment of mental disability in Canadian literature. Literature reflects the perceptions and practises of the culture of which it is a part. Radical changes have been made in recent years in the thinking about persons with mental handicaps. The issue of whether the changes are reflected in literature prompted the writing of this thesis.

Little is known about characters labelled as mentally disabled in non-didactic, Canadian Literature. They are not commonly discussed in the academic journals of Canadian Literature and Education. The purpose of this thesis was to get to know ten of the above characters.

The following questions were drawn from issues in the academic literature regarding mental disability. All seven questions were applied to each character in turn. (1) Label? (2) Personal relationships? (3) Thoughts and feelings? (4) Choices? (5) Daily activity? (6) Relationship with service providers? (7) Personal assets and abilities?


Findings indicated that Canadian literature is not yet reflecting the new movement to develop full personhood. Most characters were limited in the choices they made. A variety of labels were used. Little was said about what the characters think or feel. No characters were married, had children, or a job. Most of the characters had a personal relationship with another character.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"To know people is to bring one closer to understanding and accepting them--and their weaknesses as well as that which makes them unique and marvelous" (Blatt, 1981, p. 276).

This thesis is a study of the treatment of mental disability in Canadian literature. Literature reflects the perceptions and practises of the culture of which it is a part. Radical changes have been made in recent years in the thinking about persons with mental handicaps. The issue of whether the changes are reflected in literature prompted the writing of this thesis.

Recent Historical Context: Normalization and Social Role Valorization

Mentally Retarded, edited by Robert Kugel and Ann Shearer. The normalization principle is as follows:

The normalization principle means making available to all persons with disabilities or other handicaps, patterns of life and conditions of everyday living which are as close as possible to or indeed the same as the regular circumstances and ways of life of society. (Nirje, 1985, p. 67)

Wolfensberger brought significant international attention to the concept of normalization (Briton, 1977; Mesibov, 1976; Szivos & Travers, 1988). Wolfensberger and many others sought to improve the quality of life of individuals who are labelled as mentally disabled. The normalization principle and its application joined a humanistic philosophy with the values of normalization to develop more humane treatment of persons who were being segregated into large warehousing institutions.

The term "normalization" was changed by Wolfensberger (1983) to "social role valorization." Wolfensberger (1987) wrote that we need to get to know, understand, and appreciate the people in our community, no matter what their level of intellectual ability.

The writings of Wolfensberger, Blatt, Dybwad and many others radically transformed the treatment of persons labelled mentally handicapped. They were brought out of institutions and into the community. New educational, recreational, and work programs were
established. With new programs has come new insights and understanding of the capacity of disabled persons to become productive and even independent citizens.

**Canadian Literature Background**

The question of whether and how changing perceptions of mental disability is reflected by the larger society is an important one. This thesis explored Canadian literature to observe how persons with mental handicaps are portrayed in contemporary Canadian fiction. The lives of characters who have been labelled as mentally disabled in Canadian short stories and novels needs to be studied.

In 1920, Helen MacMurchy published a pioneering study of characters in English Literature (*The Almosts: A Study of the Feeble-Minded*). MacMurchy analyzed the characters whom she described as feeble-minded in the works of Shakespeare, Bunyan, Scott, Dickens, Lytton, Teade, Hugo, McDonald, Eliot, Conrad, Stevenson, Hawthorne, Hegan Rice, Wiggin, Greene, and Mudder.

MacMurchy (1920) asked questions pertaining to their portrayals. What does the character wear? How does the character behave? What idiosyncrasy does the character have which is typical of a person labelled as mentally disabled? Characters were compared with people that she knew or had heard about. MacMurchy's book stereotyped the labelled characters.
Atwood (1972) pointed out that Canadian Literature has been, thematically speaking, concerned with issues of survival. In the last page of her book, *Survival*, Atwood asked, "Have we survived?" and "If so, what happens after survival" (p.246)?

Now that we have survived (even though we still face basic issues of survival in many parts of Canada) it is now possible to take a closer look at the variety of people who are a part of Canadian culture. If the appearance of characters who are labelled as mentally disabled in Canadian Literature--beginning in approximately the 1960's--is an acceptable indicator, then it is reasonable to suggest that Canadian writers are becoming more concerned with social issues--including those related to mental disability.

There are many thousands of people who are labelled as mentally disabled in Canada. Who are they? What are their dreams? Where do they live? How do they feel about themselves? Are they portrayed in Canadian literature?

Atwood (1972) cited the following lines from Avison's (1970) poem "Snow:" "Nobody stuffs the world in at your eyes. / The optic-heart must venture: a jail-break / and re-creation" (p. 246). Atwood explained:

What these three lines suggest is that in none of our acts--even the act of looking--are we passive. Even the things we look at demand our participation,
and our commitment: if this participation and commitment are given, what can result is a 'jail-break,' an escape from our old habits of looking at things, and a 're-creation,' a new way of seeing, experiencing and imaging--or imagining--which we ourselves have helped to shape. (1972, p.246)

It is important that characters who have been labelled as mentally disabled become known. They are a part of the Canadian literary landscape.

Characters who have been labelled as mentally handicapped are culturally marginalized by institutions, programs, policies, caregivers, and fear. Communities are changing as labelled individuals are moving back into the community. During the past few decades, mental disability is coming out of the institutional closet in Canada.

This thesis studied the portrayals of "labelled" characters in contemporary Canadian fiction.
"We in the field of mental retardation have not given our poets and artists very much of a chance to inform us about this world" (Blatt, 1984, p. 628).

The study of literature adds an important dimension to understanding our culture and its acceptance of differentness. Sarason and Doris (1979) referred to Derek Slocum, a character in Joseph Heller's novel Something Happened, as an individual who could best be understood in relationship to his family. Sarason and Doris did not analyse Derek as a client, student, or person in need of a program plan. The character of Derek was developed through his connections with the members of his family. Heller clarified relationships in relation to each family members' connection or lack of connection with Derek.

Kriegel (1982) noted that characters in early American fiction who were physically or mentally disabled were, "incapable of meeting the challenge of the wilderness, the infirm of body and feeble of mind discovered that the virtues the culture celebrated were unattainable" (p. 16). Kriegel wrote that "the disabled, at best, served merely an ornamental function in the literature of early America" (p. 17).
Kriegel (1987) pointed out that characters "whose relationship to the world" derives from some inadequacy of body or mind are often treated first as a cripple and then as a person (p. 32). One result of being identified as a person with a disability is that the person is too often deprived of the ability to create a self (p. 33). Kriegel argued that self is much more than disability (p. 33).

According to Kriegel (1969), the task for the labelled person is to create a self independent of socially imposed labels (p. 430). Thus through the study of labelled characters in literature emerges many issues of "personhood."

Biklen (1987) observed that there are many "entry points for analysts" of culture--for example, film, humor, religion, and TV (p. 516). Literature, noted Biklen, offers the advantage of convenience due to readily available texts. Biklen maintains that "literature warns us . . . that society (e.g. through social policy) will pursue change in the form of more and more varied services without recognizing that it is society's conception of disability and of people with disabilities that also requires change" (p. 532).

Literature tells us that it is necessary for people to change (Biklen, 1987). Labelled people, Biklen argued, need to be understood as people first. Biklen added that cultural acceptance implies a shift from
depicting labelled persons as overwhelmingly dependent upon services and service providers to persons who are connected with friends, relatives, and neighbours, living and participating in communities. McKnight (1984) stated that the nature of relationships between service providers and people who need support is crucial to healthy communities.

Heshusius (1988) stated that science and the arts need to be integrated in order to further our understanding of exceptionalities. She wrote that artistic "insights into the phenomenon of exceptionality may better sensitize researchers" and others regarding the social complexity of the field (p. 63). Heshusius is concerned with "sensitizing" people regarding the "social complexity" of the cultural phenomenon of labelling some people "mentally disabled" (p. 63).

Heshusius (1988) observed that the work of artists and scientists together provides a "fuller grasp of reality" than either one alone (p. 63). The value of an organized, structured study of labelled people in Canadian short stories and novels is an effort to achieve a fuller grasp of reality. This approach has the advantage of preparing one for "the deeply human dimension" of work in support of labelled people, and at the same time increases the accuracy of the gathered information (Heshusius, 1988, p. 64). Such studies also promote a sense of the "complex interdependencies between
self, other, and society, which cannot be articulated by scientific methods alone" (Heshusius, 1988, p. 64).

Blatt (1984) observed that "the great books and ideas on mental retardation are not necessarily in [the field of] 'mental retardation'" (p. 627). The great books of mental retardation, Blatt argued, are great books for everyone, because mental retardation is "part of everything else" (p. 628). The field of mental retardation, Blatt maintained, is the field of life, and is "too universal" to be limited to social science research (p. 628).

Poets inform us "about what we do to one another" (Blatt, 1984, p. 628). The field of mental retardation can be enriched by looking to artists and poets for insight. Blatt suggested that there is a need to understand how we feel about interacting with those labelled as mentally disabled.

Heshusius (1986) considered the goal of research to be an understanding of persons as persons, and how life is experienced (p. 30).

The goal of this thesis was to examine the cultural attitudes, percepts, and feelings towards persons with mental handicaps as it is reflected in Canadian literature.

The Problem

There are a few publications which have explored portrayals of individuals with mental handicaps--
published in the United States. For example, the
character of Benjamin Compson in William Faulkner’s *The
Sound and the Fury* has been examined by Tilley (1955),
Stewart & Backus (1958), Peavy (1966), and Feldstein
(1986). Frances G. King (1975) has prepared a
bibliography: "Treatment of the Mentally Retarded
Character in Modern American Fiction." There are no
comparable publications in Canada. This thesis will
attempt to discuss portrayals of individuals with mental
handicaps in Canada.
CHAPTER THREE:  METHOD

Characters


The purpose of the analysis was to explore how literary portrayals reflect societal attitudes, and to get to know the full dimensions of characters labelled as mentally disabled.

The characters were labelled by the characters themselves, another character, or the narrator of the story. This thesis does not discuss characters who might possibly be labelled as mentally disabled because of perceived IQ or adaptive behaviour.

The intent was to know characters who were labelled. This thesis does not classify labelled people—in terms of medical syndromes, for example "Down’s syndrome." Judgements are made, however, regarding the labels that might be equivalent to "mentally disabled."
This thesis neither challenged nor agreed with the use of the label attached to the character. The study was directed to trying to understand the character’s life as portrayed by the author.

Procedure

A library search was made to thoroughly survey Canadian literature. Nine faculty in Canadian Literature at the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, and the University of Victoria were contacted, and offered suggestions.

Developing the questions

The questions were formulated on the basis of current philosophy and policies practiced in Canada. The author’s experience in the field of mental disability—working with individuals living in the community—proved valuable in identifying the research questions.

Research Questions

The issues explored in this thesis concern how characters with mental handicaps are portrayed. Are they characterized as full people? Specifically, the writer of this thesis asked: (1) What labels are used to describe the character’s disability? (2) What relationships are experienced by the character? (3) What thoughts and feelings are attributed to the character? (4) Does the character have opportunities to make choices? (5) How does the character spend her or his
time? (6) What relationships do the characters have with service providers? (7) What abilities are displayed?

Labels

The issue of labelling is important because it addresses the problem of applying labels to persons. Mental disability or mental handicap are labels which describe a condition, not an individual. This writer is interested in how labels are applied in literary works. The nature of the label, as well as its effect on the character will be examined.

Empirical definitions of mental disability are necessary in order to provide social and educational programs and government benefits. But categorizing individuals is a different matter. Empirical definitions tend to perpetuate negative attitudes. Labelled persons are perceived as incompetent.

Everyone--whether or not they have a disability--needs to be understood and accepted as a whole person. Persons with disabilities need to be enabled to participate, and not be grouped to the sidelines of their communities.

Longmore (1985) argued that labelled people are minority group victims of community attitudes and fears (p. 422). No matter what the label--whether it be "idiot," "mentally retarded," "mentally disabled," "intellectually disabled," or "mentally challenged"--the
effect on the person who has been labelled is the same. She or he is devalued.

Blatt (1981) wrote that "mental retardation is an invented disease, an untrue and unnecessary story about a large group of people" (p. 118).

Relationships

The next issue to be explained is depiction of the relationships. Does the labelled character enjoy meaningful and intimate relationships?

Normalization or social role valorization extends to the personal and social relationships the persons with a mental handicap has with their families and communities. Vanier (1985) defined "community" as "a place where people grow toward wholeness" (p. 169). McKnight (1987) also defined community as "the social place used by family, friends, neighbors. . . . the informal sector, the unmanaged environment" (p. 56). Vanier observed that persons labelled as mentally disabled do not have enough equal, sharing friends; instead they have "helpers." Vanier pointed out that true friendships imply true equality (p. 173).

McKnight (1987) stated that the essential problem is one of weak communities (p. 58). He suggested that caring relationships are essential (p. 58). McKnight described "care" as "a special relationship characterized by consent rather than control" (p. 57). McKnight noted
the need for acceptance and participation as family, friends, and neighbours.

An important aspect of the portrayals of characters is their relationships within their families or communities. Dybwad (1982) observed that his forty-two years in the field of mental retardation had shown him that "what we call the inability of persons with severe handicaps to communicate may well be our ineptness in listening. So we must learn to listen" (p. 30).

Sarason and Doris (1979) analysed Joseph Heller's *Something Happened*. The novel described a middle-class family's relationships with each other, including their son, Derek, who was labelled as mentally disabled. Sarason and Doris observed that Derek was not brought into focus as a human being capable of relationships (p. 61). Derek never came alive as a person in Heller's novel.

In his perceptive essay on L'Arche, a community of handicapped and non-handicapped persons, Sumarah (1987) noted that valuing relationships is a "primary principle" of L'Arche. Relationships are based upon a "philosophy of interdependence," with each person recognizing the value of the other (p. 166). Given the importance of interdependent relationships, an important question to ask is: Are the characters of labelled persons in Canadian literature depicted as involved in interdependent relationships?
Thoughts and feelings

Berkeley (1985) wrote that "mental retardation is one of the most totalizing social identities that our society has produced" (p. 38). She stated that—in the case of a person who is mentally disabled—dialogue about family, friends, love is usually taken over by technical, descriptive, or prescriptive dialogues (p. 38). The labelled person's vulnerability to remaining "unheard"... "demands not strategies for technical control, but rather the response of more profound strength," so that identification with the labelled person becomes possible (p. 37).

Bogdan and Taylor (1975) argued that researchers must listen carefully and non-judgementally to a person's life story. A significant part of understanding anyone—including a character in a story—involves getting a sense of their joys, pains, successes and failures, from the character's point of view.

Bogdan and Taylor (1982) wondered if their co-researchers who were labelled as mentally handicapped thought about themselves, and if so what they thought (p. xii). They found that persons with mental handicaps "have perspectives on their lives and situations; they have feelings and emotions; they subjectively experience the world much like anyone else" (p. 25).

Edgerton (1984) used a "participant-observer" technique in his work in order to "provide some sense of
how these people think and feel about their lives" (p. 498).

Levine and Langness (1986) showed that, "the viewpoints of retarded persons themselves must be included in any comprehensive study of retardation" (p. 191). They found that there was little concern in the literature for the "emotional states of retarded persons" (p. 96).

Making choices

Rioux and Crawford (1982) identified the issue of self-determination as central to dialogue in the field of mental disability. Dickey (1982), spokesperson for self-advocacy, remarked that "what we treasure most in our daily lives is our self-determination, the control over our own lives" (p. i).

In their monograph, Salisbury, Crawford, & Dickey (1987) emphasized the crucial role of self-determination and personal autonomy in the planning of support services. Rioux (1987) stressed that empowerment of people with a mental disability included the exercise of a "meaningful voice in decision-making about matters affecting their lives" (p. 2).

Nirje (1972) stated that individual choice is a fundamental right. He suggested that:

By resolving the issue of self-determination with the retarded who are among the most voiceless and devalued of those considered deviant by society,
then we can reach new heights in achieving a meaningful and culturally common self-determination for other devalued and impaired groups. . . . But if the right of self-determination is not taken seriously for the retarded, it will not be taken seriously for many other groups. (p. 189)

The issue of how self-determination is realized in non-didactic, Canadian fiction is relevant to the portrayal of persons with mental handicaps.

Perske (1972) suggested that the dignity of risk follows from the dignity of choice. He maintained that every person's "growth potential" is jeopardized by overprotection. The experience of risk-taking in ordinary life "is necessary for normal human growth and development" (p. 195). Individual choice is natural and necessary for human growth.

**Daily activities**

Dalziel (1990) stated that his "idea of a handicapped person is like they can do just about anything they want to do. I know it because I am one and I like to be free. That's it" (p. 42).

In an essay about social role valorization, Wolfensberger (1983) wrote that "the most explicit and highest goal of normalization must be the creation, support, and defense of valued social roles for people who are at risk of social devaluation" (p. 234). Wolfensberger argued that people who have a social role
in society will be better treated, because they have more value "in the eyes of others" (p. 236).

Wolfensberger (1983) discussed how persons or groups of people who are at risk of social devaluation use their time (p. 237). He argued that individuals who spend their time in socially valued ways are valued more highly than those who have no roles.

The portrayal of the social roles of the characters is central to the value placed on the lives of persons with mental disabilities

Service providers

The labelled character's involvement with professional service providers reflects how the character is perceived. The central issue here is how the labelled character interacts with the service provider. McKnight's (1984) essay drew attention to the processes by which flourishing communities can be turned into deserts by the tools and efforts of service providers. McKnight stated that "a service technology can produce the specific inverse of its stated purpose. Thus, one can imagine sickening medicine, stupidifying schools, and crime-making corrections systems" (p. 601).

In L'Arche communities, founded by Jean Vanier in 1964, the buildings are places for people to live together (Sumarah, 1987). People who live together form a community of equals. Blatt (1985) pointed out that, "modern responses to problems of the disabled have been
for the most part, technical" (p. 122). While acknowledging the value of scientific advances, Blatt argued that too much faith has been placed in the ability of science and technology to solve problems related to disability.

This thesis explored the relationships between "service providers" and characters labelled as mentally disabled.

The portrayal of assets and abilities

This thesis explored how the assets and abilities of labelled characters were portrayed. Wolfensberger (1988) suggested that "it is hard to acknowledge that a person has certain valued assets and even nobilities when that person belongs to a societally devalued class in whose devaluation one is at least partially participating" (p. 70). Wolfensberger defined "assets" as "strengths, virtues, gifts, capacities, prosocial dispositions, and resources" (p. 63). For too long professionals have taken an "adversarial" approach by stressing deficits, and behaviour, rather than ability (Wolfensberger, p. 69). Berkson (1988) agreed that persons labelled as mentally disabled "have personal assets" (p. 71).

Tisdale (1990) wrote that as she researched her article about people labelled as mentally disabled, the gulf between her and labelled persons disappeared; she began to regard them as real people (p. 47). Her article
became a "search for some understanding of the fit between them and me" (p.47).

At the end of the essay, Tisdale (1990) reports her conversation with a recreation center worker who told her "if they give back a sense of trust, and joy, and courage--well, these are things I’d think the world would be hungry for" (p. 56).

Dybwad & Dybwad (1977) encouraged professionals to appreciate the positive human element that was all too easy to overlook in studies and reports about mental handicaps (p. 55). The Dybwads argued that people need to change their "traditional perception of the retarded person as a defective individual" (p. 55).
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the results of the analysis.

John Gustav Skandl (Kroetsch, What the Crow Said, 1978)

John Gustav, or JG as he is called, lived in the Lang family home in the Municipal District of Bigknife somewhere on the Canadian prairie. JG is confined to the parlour by his family. The house, especially the parlour, was his entire world.

JG lived with his mother Tiddy Lang, his grandmother, six sisters, and for awhile John Skandl, whom his mother weds after Martin Lang (her husband) dies. Gus Liebhaber, a family friend occasionally stayed at JG’s family home.

It is not clear who JG’s father is, although it is reasonably clear that it was either John Skandl or Gus Liebhaber (note that JG has the given names of both men). John Skandl appeared indifferent to whether he is JG’s biological father, while Gus Liebhaber is willing to fight anyone who challenges his part in the conception of JG. JG appeared to have no interest in which man is his biological father.

The theme of the novel centers on the idea that everything is uncertain. As the black crow wryly suggested, there are no winners in the seemingly endless
card game of life (p. 87). Life is not a question of winning; life is a matter of making meaning where none exists.

Kroetsch goes one step further than Henry David Thoreau’s observation that the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. Kroetsch would add that at the end of the life of desperation there is no winner. There are simply those who have lived, those who have used their imagination, and those who have at least tried, like JG, to fly.

JG never speaks; he even laughs noiselessly (p. 87). Tiddy tells Joe Lightning, however, that "JG sang in her womb. Before he was born he had the habit of singing. . . Only at the moment of birth did JG fall into his terrible silence" (p. 156).

JG’s notable characteristics include his tendency to walk in figure eights (p. 146). He is portrayed as incontinent--moving his bowels in his trousers regularly (pp. 79, 133, 149, 155). JG is remembered by his mother as making the parlour smell of excrement (p. 155). The reader is not told much about JG, but the narrator repeatedly speaks of JG’s "handsome face" (pp. 61, 86, 146). JG is killed trying to fly from the top of the poplar tree. His sister, Theresa, left him alone for a moment and forgot to close the little wooden gate that kept him in the parlour.
The narrator refers to JG as: "the strange child" (p. 41); "forever innocent" (p. 62); "eternally young" (p. 86); "not guilty of thought" (p. 147); and a person of "simple knowing" (p. 147).

JG is prevented from making his own choices. It has been assumed that he had no choices to make. His family confined him to the parlour. None of the characters seem interested in encouraging JG’s sense of self or self-determination. There is nothing to suggest that JG is aware that he has choices. His family has chosen for him.

There is an absence of meaningful activity in JG’s existence. His main activities are playing with jigsaw puzzles (pp. 87, 192), watching the men play cards (pp. 79, 87), and sitting in the parlour with the black crow (pp. 62, 88, 130). He is portrayed as spending most of his time alone, or being cared for by family and neighbours.

The author does not allow us access to JG’s mind, so the reader is unaware of JG’s thoughts. But JG can be assumed to think. He played with jigsaw puzzles (p. 87). Also, he figured out how to climb a huge old poplar. The author suggested through some of the characters that the crow understood JG, and "sometimes spoke on behalf of JG" (p. 64). Generally, though, JG is portrayed as a "silent child" (p. 64), understood and befriended by only the crow (p. 157). At the time of JG’s escape and subsequent
death, the narrator tells us that JG is "not guilty of thought" (p. 147).

JG’s feelings are less mysterious than his thoughts. He sulks when he is expected to go to bed (p. 81); and his joy is forcefully evident when the unkempt, card-playing men return to the Lang home (p. 129). Feelings are attributed to him such as consternation—caused by the reactions of everybody when his sister’s son returns (p. 133). During the episode when Theresa leaves him unattended with the door open, and he steps outside, it is easy to empathize with JG’s "simple joy" in his experience of freedom. He can feel the wind on his face (p. 146).

JG’s mother and sisters are portrayed as thinking of JG as someone who needs to be looked after. The card-playing, unruly men in the novel mostly ignore him (p. 129). JG’s only real friend is the black crow (p. 148). JG’s memory is honored by Joe Lightning, who thought that JG had succeeded in entering the sky (p. 156). Other characters in the novel considered that JG was able to communicate with the crow (p. 157). Liebhaber and Tiddy talk to JG by addressing the crow (pp. 62, 69).

Since the reader never knows what JG is thinking, it is not possible to know what he thinks of his family. His mother, according to the narrator, "accepted his existence as she accepted the stinkweeds, the
grasshoppers, the green grass in spring, the sun" (p. 69).

There are no characters in the novel who value or listen to JG, except Liebhaber who thought he was JG’s biological father; but even he is not so much attached to JG, as he is keen to be acknowledged as Tiddy’s man.

The black, unnamed crow unconditionally accepts JG. It simply shows up when JG is born, and attaches itself to JG who is fascinated by it, and the crow is never seen again after JG’s death (pp. 62, 148). Both the crow and JG are inscrutable characters.

JG is not involved with any professional service providers. But he is the victim of his family’s low expectations (they keep him confined to the parlour). JG is not treated for any "condition." He is simply accepted for what his family perceives him to be: neither man nor child--just a being to be fed and sheltered.

JG is portrayed with a gift for feeling joy, and laughing, albeit silently (pp. 87, 129, 146). His laughter seems to lighten the load of the men burdened by the almost endless card game (p. 87). JG is able to experience joy by simply feeling an ordinary wind (p. 146).

JG’s friendship with the black crow has a significant role in the novel. Joe Lightning appreciated JG’s ability to communicate with the black crow. JG
appears to be a mythic figure--able to communicate with a bird, but not his fellow man.

Rowena Ross (Findley, *The Wars*, 1977)

Rowena is the eldest daughter of Mr and Mrs Thomas Ross, and sister to Stuart, Margaret, and Robert Ross. She has her own room in the family’s Toronto, Ontario home. Rowena is devoted to her pet rabbits which are kept in cages made especially for her by Robert so that she can have easy access to them while sitting in her wicker wheelchair.

The larger political and social context for her life is the Great War. Rowena dies in 1915. She falls from her wheelchair while caring for her rabbits, the victim of her brother Stuart’s lack of care (p. 22).

The setting for Rowena’s existence is not only the wealthy Ross family home, but also Robert’s consciousness as he endures the horrors, the stench of putrefying corpses, chlorine gas, and the desolation of soul caused by the meaningless killing of thousands of people over a few yards of stinking mud.

Rowena Ross’s part in Findley’s Governor General’s Award winning novel is minor yet pervasive. She dies early in the story, but she lives on as a powerful feature of Robert’s spirit (p. 21). Rowena’s love for animals is reflected in the character of Captain Rodwell with whom Robert lived in the trenches during World War I. Like Rowena, Captain Rodwell cared for small animals.
He too died a senseless death without Robert's presence (p. 134).

Rowena's death prompts Robert to enlist. Like a nightmarish dream, the story is filled with images of suffering and dying during World War I in the mud and trenches of France. Robert's despair over failing to protect Rowena was deeply distressing to him.

The theme of *The Wars* is concerned with the idea that "people can only be found in what they do" (p. 11). The character of Rowena is connected to this theme by her care. She cares for Robert and her rabbits (p. 22).

Rowena has curly, short hair, with perpetually hunched shoulders; and she has an adult-sized head on a body that looks like a ten-year-old's, although Rowena is twenty-five years old (p. 14). A photograph of Rowena is described as "pensive" and "lovely" (p. 14).

Although Robert keeps a picture of Rowena on his bureau, her pictures are not shown in public. The narrator says "in fact she is not much admitted into the presence of a camera" (p. 13). Rowena's absence from family photos indicates a paradox, because, as the narrator observes, Mr and Mrs Ross love all their children (p. 21). Yet their love of Rowena is kept separate from the public image of a prosperous family.

Rowena is accepted by her family in private. Publicly she is denied. The author considered that the
position of the family made it more difficult to let other people know about Rowena’s existence.

Rowena Ross is described by the narrator as "hydrocephalic," born "with water on the brain" (p. 14). Hydrocephalus (presently controlled by shunting) is caused by an excess of undrained cerebrospinal fluid. Before surgical intervention this syndrome was associated with mental retardation (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1982, p. 334).

Rowena’s label, "hydrocephalic" (p. 14), is a medical term, but no medicine is mentioned, nor is there a reference to a public or private school or treatment centre. Rowena is characterized as a person to be protected and cared for by Robert and her family.

Findley’s description of Rowena’s condition is sensitive. She is described as a well-dressed young women in a wicker wheelchair who is loved and cared for, who loves Robert, and enjoys playing with and caring for her rabbits. Neither she nor the other characters are troubled by her label. There is no indication that she is aware of being "mentally disabled."

Rowena is not aware of choices that had been made for her. She spends her time sitting and staring at Robert when he was a baby (p. 14). She chooses to play with her rabbits, feeding and caring for them, and holding them on her lap (p. 22). In a moving speech she
expressed her wish that Robert and her rabbits would last forever. Findley writes:

"'Robert?'

'Yes, Rowena?'

'Will you stay with me forever?'

'Yes, Rowena.'

'Can the rabbits stay forever too?'

'Yes, Rowena'" (p. 22).

Throughout the novel Rowena exists more as a powerful memory in Robert’s consciousness than a strong character. Whether he is killing an innocent horse, observing Rodwell’s animal friend, or burning Rowena’s photograph, Rowena’s memory haunts Robert (p. 172).

The narrator does not allow us access to Rowena’s mind, so we can only infer what she feels or thinks from her appearance and actions. Rowena is attached to Robert and worries that someday Robert would leave her (p. 22).

Rowena’s only significant human relationship appears to be with Robert, her younger brother. He is the only person who interacts with her in a friendly way. Robert treated Rowena as a person. Their relationship could be described as interdependent. Her parents are not depicted as involved with her as they are with Robert. Like JG in What the Crow Said, Rowena is described as attached to her animal friends, the rabbits.

Rowena’s death early in the story works to make her simply an appendage to Robert’s despair. Rowena is less
a person in her own right as much as she is a weight in Robert's mind, a reminder of his frustrated need to love.

However, Rowena is also depicted as bringing joy to Robert. Findley writes, "it was for her he learned to run" (p. 14). She made Robert feel like he wanted to be with her all the time (p. 95).

**Lotte (Findley, Not Wanted on the Voyage, 1984)**

Lotte (no surname) is described as a female child, with ape-like arms and an underslung jaw. She wears a cotton dress, and has an irrepressible grin (pp. 169, 179). She has her mother's brown eyes. And she is tiny, because little Mrs Noyes seems to carry her with ease (p. 257).

Lotte is not wanted on the ark by Doctor Noah Noyes because he is repulsed by her ape-like appearance, lack of mental ability, and her differentness. She is treated as a reminder of human imperfection. Noah had a child of his own (like Lotte) which he killed (pp. 162-166). It was the custom in Noah's community to destroy babies who are born with unusual features. Noah was intent on following the custom in order to protect his prestige as a good friend of Yahweh. Concern regarding community censure, and fear of not being recognized as the perfect, all-knowing right-hand man to God motivated Noah's cruel behaviour.
Noah is an elitist whose fear of the unknown, whose cruelty and violence toward animals and humans make him the novel's antagonist, conspiring with Yahweh Lord God against ordinary, hard-working, sane people like Lotte's family. Yahweh and Noah's Edict does not include the likes of Lotte. Lotte perishes despite Mrs Noyes' desperation to save her. So the ark sets out without the dead child.

In this tragic-comic fantasy Findley imagines the flood as God and Noah's prideful, horribly wasteful, and cruel conspiracy to eliminate all who are different and all who do not admire and obey them. *Not Wanted on the Voyage* is a condemnation of God and Noah's flood as merely an attempt to destroy individual diversity and to force obedience to Yahweh and Noah.

Findley characterized Noah's relationship with all other beings as that of master and slave. Lotte cannot be a useful slave. She is an embarrassment to Noah's appetite for control and order--his control and his order.

The story is told mostly from the point of view of the protagonist, Mrs Noyes, and her dear companion, Mottyl the cat. The narrator does not allow us access to Lotte's mind.

The novel is set in a pastoral countryside. There is an apple orchard in which Mrs Noyes picks and eats the forbidden apples. Lotte lives in the woods across a
river from Mr and Mrs Noyes. She is found near the river by Mrs Noyes who helps Lotte to board the ark.

Like Rowena, Lotte is portrayed as a young, innocent female. Both characters have protectors, Robert Ross and Mrs Noyes. The reader is not told the thoughts of these characters, rather other people's thoughts about them are made explicit. Rowena Ross greatly affects the feelings of the main character, Robert Ross; and the same is true of Lotte and Mrs Noyes. The characters are depicted as loved by their parents, but there is little description of either their physical appearance or their emotions. The characters function as literary devices used to focus and develop the story plot.

Because the character of Lotte is the focus of other people's ideas, thoughts, and feelings, the reader does not experience Lotte as a real person with real concerns. She is depicted as the object of Mrs Noyes' affection and strength, her family's love, and Noah's cruelty.

Shortly after she is introduced, Lotte is labelled by Noah as having a mental age of "anywhere between two and nil" (p. 148). The narrator refers to Lotte as a "stay-at-home child" (p. 117), who is ape-like in appearance (p. 179).

Lotte's name is used to describe one who is like her. Thus Mrs Noyes' baby, Adam, is referred to as "Lotte-like" (p. 160-163). Lotte-like people are not allowed to live in Noah and Mrs Noyes' world, so Adam,
Japeth's "Lotte-like" twin, is drowned soon after his birth (p. 165). The characters in the novel generally use the label "Lotte-like" as a term of contempt. The author does not allow Lotte to express how she understands the contempt shown to her.

However, Lotte is depicted as experiencing other thoughts and feelings. Lotte's father tells Mrs Noyes that Lotte misses her sister Emma who has married Mrs Noyes son, Japeth (p. 117). During the rescue incident at the river Mrs Noyes perceives Lotte to be "frightened" (p. 153). After Mrs Noyes succeeds at crossing the swollen river, Lotte smiles with "pleasure" (p. 154). But then Lotte begins to "chatter and cry" because she had been abandoned by her parents (p. 156). Lotte's eyes are "full of tears" at the thought of her parents (p. 156). During the boat trip across the flooding river, Lotte sits "cringing in the stern" (p. 159).

Little choice is available to the character of Lotte. Her wish to visit Emma is ignored. She is kept at home by her parents, for her protection from the community (p. 117). Against her wishes, Lotte's parents leave her by the river during the flood.

Lotte is depicted as an object of other character's affection, love, cruelty, and violence. She is reactive, and not in control of her life. The fact that her family or Mrs Noyes do the choosing for her contributes to her
Lotte is not depicted as being concerned that her choices are made by others.

Lotte’s character contrasts with that of the scheming Doctor Noyes. Noah’s obsession with doing everything his own way is in contrast with Lotte’s powerlessness. She is the victim of Noah’s obsession with total control.

Lotte’s social role is not a valued one, despite the fact that she is loved. Lotte is not involved in many activities outside her home. She spends her time with her family and Mrs Noyes. Lotte participates in family rituals of work and play: she goes to work with her father and brothers, and she sits with her family in the bathhouse once listening to her father’s stories (p. 257).

Before the event of the flood Lotte lived comfortably within the circle of her hard-working, happy family. She was favored by her siblings and parents (p. 257). Her brothers spoiled her, her father carried her around, and she was hardly out of her mother’s sight (pp. 257-258). One member of the family was always with her, especially when they needed to hide Lotte because a stranger dropped by (p. 258). Lotte was used to curling up beside and being stroked by her sister Emma (p. 258).

Lotte is depicted as being capable of affection. Lotte missed Emma after her marriage to Japeth Noyes (p. 117), and Emma adored Lotte (p. 161). Lotte is
protected by her family from the cruelty of the community (p. 149). In contrast with Noah’s family, who are controlled by Noah, Lotte lived within a family whose relationships were warm and caring.

Despite the threat of Noah’s anger and cold-heartedness, Mrs Noyes brought Lotte aboard the ark to save her from the flood (p. 160). Mrs Noyes’ concern for Lotte was motivated by both love for Lotte and her guilt for having killed her own Lotte-like child eighteen years earlier, an act she desperately regretted (p. 161). Mrs Noyes held Lotte’s corpse, talking and singing. She sewed up her throat, and dressed her in clean clothes, before placing the body in her trousseau chest (p. 181).

Lotte is depicted as happy and loving. She has an "irrepressible grin" (p. 179). She trusts Mrs Noyes to help her (p. 158); and she has the special power of being able to see the Faeries (p. 155).

Francis Cornish (Davies, *What’s Bred in the Bone*, 1985)

There are two brothers in this novel with the name "Francis Cornish." This thesis will refer to the character under study as Francis, and the other Francis will be "younger brother."

The book is a biography of Francis’ younger brother. Davies portrays Francis as a significant influence on his younger brother. The narrator (Daimon Maimas) tells the younger brother’s life story to a fellow spirit (the
Lesser Zadkiel). He is not overly concerned with the details of Francis’ life, except as they relate to the younger brother.

Francis has no Daimon, and no biographer. He was created to make the author’s point that nothing is a matter of chance. Zadok Hoyle, Francis’ biological father, says, "Life’s a rum start," and, "nothing comes by chance. Everything’s written down somewhere, you know, and we have to live the lives that are foreseen for us long before the world began" (pp. 137, 139). Francis is one more suffering mortal among many.

Francis’ story is set in Blairlogie, a town of 5,000 people, mostly Scots, sixty miles northwest of Ottawa, Ontario (p. 14). Francis was born in Switzerland in 1903; and brought to Blairlogie as a baby, and he never leaves (p. 27).

Davies describes Francis: "its head was very small for its body, and the skull ran, not to a point, but to a knob, not very big, on which grew black hair" (p. 131). His small eyes "peeped out at the world without much comprehension" (p. 131). Francis spent most of his time dressed in "crumpled flannelette pyjamas" (p. 131).

Like JG, Rowena, and Lotte, Francis also dies young. His death is less dramatic than JG and Lottes’, but he too is a victim of a momentary lapse in care. Victoria left him alone with the drunken Zadok who did not notice that the boy was struggling to breathe (p. 193).
Francis Cornish was described by the narrator as the "tedious little intruder" (p. 38), "the regrettable baby" (p. 51), "the sick child" (p. 57), "odd being" (134), "the creature" (135), "it" (136), and "the Looner" (p. 381). Francis' brother thought about him as "not like a human person" (p. 131), "Looner" (p. 132), "goblin" (p. 265), "that dark inheritance" (p. 265), "punishment for something" (p. 265), "badly afflicted" (p. 309), and "that poor wretch, the Looner" (p. 432).

Francis' grandfather, James McRory, called him "that poor creature" (p. 144). One of the townspeople of Blairlogie told her son that the McRorys have "a looner" in their attic (p. 132). Daimon Maimas, the narrator, called him the "dark brother" (p. 147), and an "oddity" (p. 148). Dr Jerome, physician to the McRory family, labels Francis as "a burden" (p. 57), "idjit" (p. 54), "poor idjit" (p. 144), and "that idjit" (p. 147).

Francis is not portrayed as caring about the above descriptions. The family tolerates the names applied to Francis in their fear and abhorrence of Francis. Only Francis' brother ever called him by his proper name. Victoria Cameron and Zadok Hoyle, the people who cared about him, addressed him more affectionately (p. 136).

Francis is under the care of the family physician, Dr Jerome, whose advice reduced the quality of Francis' life. The doctor proposed no method of nurturing Francis, or helping the family to understand Francis'
needs, and he encouraged the hiding of Francis in a "hospital prison" in the attic (p. 137). Dr Jerome predicted that Francis would not live long, but Francis lived on well past the doctor's expectations. His bleak medical opinion doomed Francis to a heavily restricted life. Francis' grandfather preferred that Francis die, but Dr Jerome refused to make his death convenient. Dr Jerome made it clear that he would not kill anyone, no matter what their mental and physical condition (p. 146).

Dr Jerome's attitude led him to suggest that Francis was the result of his mother having a "disease of the mind" (pp. 145, 146). Dr Jerome ordered Francis to be padlocked into a very uncomfortable wire contraption whenever he attempted to masturbate (p. 136).

Francis was hidden in the attic for the first six years of his life. His family then staged a funeral, complete with coffin and headstone, which had no surname (p. 58). Only a few people knew that the funeral was a fake. Francis' mother was unaware that her son did not actually die. She had no interest at all in Francis. Francis lived in his grandparents' attic (p. 130), spending most of his time in a hospital bed, described as "a sort of topless cage" (p. 130).

Francis' was cared for by Zadok Hoyle the hired man, and Victoria Cameron the cook (p. 133). When his brother discovered that Francis was alive he joined Zadok and
Victoria for pleasant evenings in the attic. Zadok and Victoria sang to him and Francis (p. 133).

Zadok Hoyle does not realize that he is in fact Francis' biological father (pp. 198, 199). Mary-Jacobine McRory, Francis' mother, had a fleeting sexual encounter with Zadok Hoyle, a temporary hotel worker, when she visited London. Zadok came to Blairlogie as a hired hand for Mary-Jacobine's father, but no one--least of all Mary-Jacobine--recognized him; nor did Zadok recognize Mary-Jacobine.

Francis' brother was technically his half-brother. Interactions between the brothers were limited to the younger brother sneaking up to the attic--without his grandparents' knowledge--to draw pictures of Francis (p. 136). Francis was a figure in his younger brother's finest painting (pp. 391, 396). The younger brother felt pity for Francis (p. 432). Francis had a profound influence on his brother's spiritual development. Daimon Maimas explains that influence:

The Looner was a lifelong reminder of the inadmissible primitive in the most cultivated life, a lifelong adjuration to pity, a sign that disorder and abjection stand less than a hair's breadth away from every human creature. A continual counsel to make the best of whatever fortune had given him. (Davies, 1985, p. 207)
Although Francis has a stirring effect on his brother's soul, there is no mutuality in their relationship. Aside from a few moments of merriment with Zadok and Victoria, the brother did nothing to free Francis. He could not even bring himself to ask about his brother until after Francis' death.

Francis' mother and father wanted little to do with their son. They had no relationship with him. Francis' grandmother, Marie-Louise, according to the Daimon Maimas, inadvertently caused Francis' disabilities by attempting to help her daughter to abort (p. 207). She made her drink gin and take hot baths. The grandparents never visited Francis in the attic. Francis' grandfather hoped that his grandson would die. He perceived Francis as being less than human, and as an embarrassment to a powerful family.

Francis made few choices. Francis' highly restrictive physical confinement had a powerful negative impact on the range of choices available to him. The reader is not told how Francis felt about his virtual imprisonment.

The narrator tells us that Francis enjoys and is "enchanted" by his friends' singing (p. 134). Also, he enthusiastically responds to music by hopping up and down in his bed (p. 135). None of the characters "could tell how much the Looner understood of anything, but he responded to rhythm" (p. 135). The reader knows little
of Francis' thoughts. He "could not talk" (p. 135), and is described as "quiet" and "attentive" when Victoria and Zadok spoke (p. 135).

Francis enjoyed music, and inspired his younger brother's drawing and painting. The narrator noted that Francis was physically "very strong" (p. 148). Francis brought love into the life of Zadok Hoyle, and the experience of motherhood to Victoria Cameron (p. 207).

Tehmul Lungraa (Mistry, Such a Long Journey, 1991)

This Governor General's award-winning novel is set against the backdrop of political corruption and civil unrest in Indira Gandhi's India. Tehmul lived in an apartment building and was well known to his neighbours. He is depicted as a solitary figure, wandering about the compound of Khodadad Apartment Building, sometimes helping, sometimes offending his neighbours. The building is located in a middle-class area of Bombay. His neighbours include a bank clerk, police inspector, lawyer's mother, and a retired major.

Tehmul is described as "lame" because he walks with difficulty (pp. 29, 30). His swaying, rolling gait is one of his traits. Tehmul is in his "mid-thirties," and is often smiling (pp. 30-31).

Tehmul's personal hygiene is so poor as to cause "revulsion" in his neighbour (p. 152). His nails are uncut with "greenish black stuff" beneath them (p. 152).
He picks his nose and eats the pickings (p. 153). His feet are covered with dead skin and "little black bits," smelling like "vomit" (p. 153).

Tehmul is one of the main characters in the novel. He is described as speaking quickly and repetitively; few people can understand what he says. His quick, repetitive speech causes "extreme frustration for both Tehmul and the listener" (p. 31).

Both Tehmul's physical and mental disability are blamed on a fall from a neem tree when he was a boy (p. 30). After the accident he was dismissed by his school (p. 30). He ends up as a free spirit wandering about Khodadad Building and the neighbourhood.

_Such A Long Journey_ is about the strength of hope in the face of suffering. Despite his disability Tehmul wants to take part in the life of his community. As the pavement artist observes, "the journey--chanced, unplanned, solitary--[is] the thing to relish" (p. 184).

Tehmul is an interesting character; he exasperates or helps others. His charm derives from the fact that he is free to come and go within his neighbourhood. Few people can ignore him. Tehmul is often at the centre of events. Tehmul is well-known for scratching and rubbing his groin and armpits in public (p. 31). The women neighbours thought that he did this to annoy them (p. 31).
The narrator introduces Tehmul as "lame Tehmul" (p. 29). His neighbour’s nickname for him is "scrambled egg" (p. 31). On several occasions the profane Inspector Bamji calls Tehmul "scrambled egg" to his face, and sometimes accompanies his verbal abuse with a slap or wallop on the face (pp. 126, 168, 331).

Gustad Noble refers to Tehmul as "God’s unfortunate one" (p. 86), "poor fellow" (p. 116), and "poor lame fellow with a half-cracked head" (p. 203). Gustad’s reaction of pity and sympathy for Tehmul is reflected in the names he uses in reference to his friend.

Gustad Noble’s wife, Dilnavaz, calls Tehmul an "idiot" several different times (pp. 89, 112, 119). Dilnavaz also uses the terms "empty shell" and "damaged head" (pp. 152, 153). Gustad’s wife is obviously less gentle than her husband in the matter of labelling Tehmul.

There are no service providers involved with assisting Tehmul. His parents died long before the story begins. He lives with a brother, who does not make an appearance in the novel (p. 30). Tehmul is left to his own devices because he has no other relatives. Tehmul liked being with the children of the neighbourhood, even though they tormented and teased him (p. 31).

Dilnavaz Noble, in conspiracy with Miss Kutpitia, treated Tehmul poorly, and thought she could transfer her
daughter’s sickness to Tehmul in a magic spell. Dilnavaz also had Tehmul run her errands.

Tehmul "adores" Gustad, who can understand his unusual speech (pp. 30, 32). Gustad listened carefully to Tehmul, and was like a father to him. But even Gustad was quick to assume that Tehmul had nothing of importance to say (p. 86). Gustad threatened to slit Tehmul’s throat if he tells anyone about the mysterious money (p. 118). Tehmul was horrified when Gustad took out his knife, and showed Tehmul how he would cut his throat (p. 118).

Tehmul was thrilled by Roshan’s (Gustad’s daughter) large doll, and was overwhelmed with a desire to touch it (p. 88). He burst into tears of adoration, and petted the doll’s cheeks lightly, stroked its lips, and looked into its blue eyes, and laughed with joy (pp. 88, 89). Tehmul stole the doll, and used it for sexual pleasure (pp. 301, 302). When Gustad discovered Tehmul with the doll, Tehmul was sorry, ashamed, and cried (pp. 302, 303). Gustad is so affected that he allows him to keep the doll (p. 304).

Tehmul’s emotional life had many twists and turns. He was frustrated by his rejection from the women at the brothel (p. 203). Things that soared or fluttered through the air enchant him (p. 31). And he was "engrossed" by the fire truck (p. 290). He followed his neighbours, but he was bewildered when they chased him
away (p. 31). Gustad is moved by both Tehmul’s "innocent joy" at seeing the rusty old flashlight, and his gratitude when Gustad helped him find the doll’s bracelet (p. 309). Tehmul was excited during the riot outside his compound (pp. 328, 329). He was spellbound by fighting, and unhappy when Gustad made him keep clear of the rioting crowd (p. 329).

Compared to other labelled characters in this study, Tehmul’s relatively free range of movement throughout the neighbourhood affords him significantly more choices and risks. Tehmul’s choices tended to get him into trouble. He angered Gustad by telling others about the money, and by stealing the doll. Inspector Bamji walloped him for imitating him (p. 330). Neighbours were offended when he follows them (p. 31). He innocently tortured live rats by watching them change colour and die as he poured boiling water over them (p. 33). Tehmul died when he ventured too close to a riot. A falling brick hit him on the head.

Tehmul earned money by returning captured rats to the municipality (p. 32). Tehmul is described as helpful to his neighbours and their children. Tehmul runs errands for Gustad and other characters. When Gustad has a load of packages, Tehmul helps him carry them (pp. 108, 151). Without complaint, Tehmul runs off to find the night watchman at Gustad’s behest (p. 137). Dilnavaz receives Tehmul’s assistance in fetching Gustad from the
bus stop (p. 188). Tehmul helps by taking the petition around for signatures (p. 216). When a phone message comes for Gustad, it is Tehmul who brings it (p. 232).

Tehmul had a sense of humour (p. 32). He could imitate chickens squawking (p. 32). He was trusting to a fault (p. 86). The Shiv Sena group used him to distribute propaganda; and Dilnavaz used him to be the recipient of her daughter’s evil spell. Tehmul’s gratefulness to Gustad is apparent—he appreciated Gustad’s generosity and concern (pp. 33, 304). Gustad mourned his death (pp. 333-337). Tehmul and Gustad were friends, a rarity for labelled characters in fiction.

**Dolores Boyle** *(Munro, "Dance of the Happy Shades," 1968)*

Dolores is a musician. The impatient, irritable mothers in the story surrender to the "unemotional happiness," and the "fragile, courtly, and gay" feeling of Dolores’ piano playing (p. 222).

The effect of Dolores’ superb musicianship upon the mothers and their children is anxiety provoking (p. 222). The skeptical listeners are unwilling to accept Dolores’ giftedness. They are unable to celebrate Dolores’ ability, because it is somehow "perhaps not altogether in good taste," to speak about the girl from a school for the mentally disabled (pp. 222, 223).

In this story there is a division between the sophisticated world of the mothers, and the "other
country" (wherein live the overly simple Miss Marsalles and the plain children from Greenhill School). The narrator explains: the children from Greenhill School love Miss Marsalles but the rest of us do not (p. 223).

The narrator describes Dolores and her fellow students as "a procession of little—little idiots" (p. 222). Mrs Clegg refers to the school children as "not all there" (p. 221). But Miss Marsalles treats all of them as just children who "need music" (p. 213).

Dolores has few choices. Given the brevity of Dolores’ role in the story (she arrives at the party, plays the piano, then her role is finished), it is difficult to speak of anyone deciding for her. We are not told about her thoughts. Dolores is not a person with volition, hopes, and fears.

Miss Marsalles is portrayed as interested in Dolores (p. 217). The story suggests that Miss Marsalles looks forward to Dolores’ presence because of her musical ability.

No family of the children from Greenhill school are portrayed. Dolores’ parents are not at the recital.

The character of Dolores is used as a literary device to expose the shallowness of the mothers’ attitude toward people who are different.

Dolores’ asset is her musical talent, and her talent is the focal point of the story.
Neddy Baker (Findley, "Hello Cheeverland, Goodbye," 1984)

The story is a *potpourri* of character sketches tied together in time and place. All of the characters are portrayed over the period of a few days in early summer--on a dead-end street in an affluent neighbourhood near New York. Neddy is a man, weighing "two-hundred-and-thirty pounds" (p. 173). Neddy’s mother, Mrs Baker, observed that "the only time he looks like a man" is when he is asleep (p. 208).

Neddy is introduced by the narrator as "twenty-three years old, with a mental age of five" (p. 172). Another character, Rosetta Fillimore, referred to him as "that boy," "the kid," and "that Neddy Baker kid," even though Neddy is a young man (p. 178).

Neddy’s obscenities are connected with his mental age (p. 172), connecting mental disability with shouting obscenities. Neddy often shouts obscenities for "an hour or so at a stretch," accompanied by "tears of frustration and a flail of fists" (p. 172).

Except for his brother and mother, no one else in this story goes to the trouble of talking with Neddy. Neddy’s relationships with his family are not elaborated, but we are told that Neddy loves his brother (p. 172).

Neddy’s mother loves him (p. 208). She is his most important relationship. He is her "favorite son" (p. 207). Mrs Baker sings to Neddy: "You’ll never know just how much I love you. You’ll never know just how
much I care" (p. 208). There is some irony in this because even his mother spends very little time with him (p. 172). Neddy’s mother has pretty much organized and determined his life for him.

Neddy is cared for by a nurse, who is described as "unattentive" and "remote" (p. 172). Neddy is portrayed appreciating being left to do what he pleases. Since Neddy’s physical needs are served by a nurse, his family goes about their business without having to be connected with him.

Neddy’s role is minor. His character is a personification of unfocussed frustration, and he never emerges as a developed human being.

Benny Parry (Munro, "The Time of Death," 1968)

Benny is an eighteen month old baby who exists as a memory in the thoughts of the other characters, because he has already died when the story begins. Benny’s death occurred when he was home with only his siblings. He is killed when he knocks boiling water onto himself.

After Benny’s death, the neighbour women gather with Mrs Parry to mourn Benny and support the mother (p. 91). Allie McGee, a neighbour who nursed Benny until he was ten months old, describes Benny as the best little one she ever looked after (p. 92).

The narrator mentioned that other children Benny’s age are "cuter to look at" (p. 93). He is "long and thin
and bony," and his face is "pale, mute, unexpectant" (p. 93). He smiles if he is picked up, but his smile is tinged with "timidity or misgiving" (p. 93). Benny’s dubious smile gives Patricia, his sister, a "sad tired feeling" (p. 93).

Patricia thinks of her little brother as "stupid" (p. 93). Despite her hatred of stupid things, Benny is "the only stupid thing she [Patricia] did not hate" (p. 93). In the "Foreword" to Munro’s book, Hugh Garner referred to Benny as "pitiably retarded" (p. vii).

Benny lives with his mother, father, and siblings in an unpainted, wooden house. Benny’s home is described by the narrator as dark, messy, and smelly (pp. 92, 93, 94).

Mr Parry stays away from the house, getting drunk and belligerent with the other men (p. 92). He senses that something is expected of him, but he is "not equal to it" (p. 92).

Mrs Parry’s pride in Patricia’s budding beauty and talent does not prevent her from placing complete blame for Benny’s death on Patricia, despite the fact that Mrs Parry leaves Benny alone at home with the other children for far too long. Mrs Parry’s neglect can be interpreted as a failure to care about Benny. Mrs Parry fails to accept responsibility for her son before and after his death. Mrs Parry’s response to Benny’s death is selfish, but Patricia responds with love.
Patricia is the only character who cared about Benny. She rescued him from the blows of their sister Irene; she spent time with him looking out the window; she tried to teach him to talk; and even wiped his nose (p. 93). Patricia is the only person who listened to Benny. And she was the only one who mourned Benny. Patricia is described as breaking down in uncontrollable despair when an incident reminded her of Benny (p. 99). In a spiritually and physically infertile setting, Patricia’s love for Benny is able to flourish.

Various thoughts and feelings are attributed to Benny’s character. He whimpers when Irene hits him (p. 92). He expresses interest in the neighbour’s dog (p. 93), and is excited when Bram the travelling scissors-man comes calling (p. 93). He likes to be picked up and held "like a little baby" (p. 93). Benny likes to look out the window "for hours." Benny is in deep pain after the boiling water accident (p. 94). He makes noises, "not like crying, but more a noise like . . . a dog . . . . after its hind parts were run over, but worse, and louder" (p. 94).

Benny is described as a curious and happy baby whose activities included climbing a couch, grabbing a catalogue from his sister, and looking out a window. The only words that Benny spoke are "Bram" and "Bow-wow" (p. 93).
Kelvin (Munro, "Circle of Prayer," 1986)

Kelvin (no surname) is "fifty-two years old, still slim and boyish-looking, well-shaved, with soft, short, clean dark hair" (p. 350). But the lamplight whitens his brown hair and makes him look bewildered, with a saggy face (p. 372).

The story is set in a small Ontario town (p. 348). Kelvin chooses to live in a "House for the Mentally Handicapped," which is referred to as "'the Misses Weir’s house,’” or the "Half-Wit House" (pp. 348, 350). There is a ramp for wheelchairs going into the house, and a swimming pool that does not work in the back yard (p. 348).

The narrator refers to Kelvin’s "gentle head fog" (p. 350). He has epilepsy, and has had surgery to his head (p. 350).

Kelvin’s main relationships are with his housemates Josephine and Marie, and the caregivers Janet and Trudy. Kelvin is critical of his two housemates, Josephine and Marie, who ignore him. Trudy listens carefully to Kelvin when he talks about his feelings. Kelvin enjoys talking to Trudy, who plays cards with him. Janet remarked "I wouldn’t hurt [Kelvin’s] feelings for a million dollars" (p. 370).

Some thoughtless men tease Kelvin about his relationship with Josephine and Marie. This disturbs
Kelvin who becomes depressed. He tells Trudy that "you think they’re your friend, but they’re not" (p. 369).

Kelvin is thoughtful and careful. He buys mugs for Trudy and Janet (p. 370), and he is concerned about knowing the meaning of prayer (p. 373). News of a girl killed in a truck crash upsets him (p. 350). He likes living at the house, and is interested in television shows about mental problems (p. 352). Kelvin likes to appear neat and well-dressed, and prefers his housemates to look tidy when they walk into town together. The spectacle of his two housemates messing themselves with ice-cream agitates Kelvin (p. 368).

Some of Kelvin’s daily activities include walking into town, watching TV, playing cards, and exchanging gossip about events in town. Kelvin cleans up the cans and bottles that are thrown into the front yard of the house (p. 350).

Stella Bragg (Findley, "Bragg and Minna," 1988)

Since there is so little description of Stella, the reader never gets to know her as a person. Other than the fact that Stella is born with six fingers on each hand, and six toes on each foot, no other physical description is given (p. 17).

Stella’s part in the story is small, but she is at the centre of the conflict and tension. She is the "bone of contention" between Bragg and Minna (p. 13). Findley
writes, "the birth of the child had driven them apart" (p. 13).

The doctor who delivered Stella claimed that Stella was brain damaged (p. 18). He warned Stuart that Stella had "half a brain" (p. 18). Stuart thought that Stella was "doomed to be a baby all her life" (p. 19).

In contrast to her father, Stella is deeply loved by her mother who carries her everywhere (p. 19). Just before Minna dies she places Stella with a family, Viv and Charlie Roeback, who love her, and are willing to make her a part of their family.

Minna’s final request is that her ashes be scattered among the petroglyph figures carved into rocks on a hill in Australia. One of the petroglyph figures is an unusual child, like Stella. The figure seems to be proudly presenting its six-fingered hand for all the world to see. The petroglyph child’s parents are beside her in the picture. They appear to have made a box for her one short leg to rest on. The narrator describes the box as "loving," and "forever visible" (p. 26).

Stella’s birth is long and painful. When Stella is born, the doctor’s warnings are ominous and disturbing. Stuart is unable to accept his child until after Minna’s death.

Instead of congratulating Stuart that he and Minna have a new baby girl, the doctor jolts Stuart with his description of the baby (p. 17). He tells Stuart about
the fingers and toes. Then he talks about Stella being "doomed," and unable to recover (p. 18). The doctor's offer to speak with Stuart pales beside the negative force of the doctor's description.

The stone picture of the proud family who celebrate their child by drawing themselves together changes Stuart's mind, and he begins to appreciate his own child (p. 26). Stuart looks forward to bringing Stella to the hill where her mother's ashes are scattered (p. 26).
A variety of terms are used to label characters as "mentally handicapped" or its equivalents. Often the labels carry negative connotations. Tehmul Lungraa is called "empty shell," or "damaged head." Dolores Boyle and her classmates are described as "little idiots." Dr Noah Noyes referred to Lotte as "anywhere between two and nil." Francis's grandfather referred to him as "poor idjit." Neddy Baker is introduced as "twenty-three years old with a mental age of five." John Gustav is "not guilty of thought."

Only Kelvin is given awareness about how he is affected by a devaluing label. Labelled characters are described as passive and unknowing.

Each of the characters are described as having friendly relationships with at least one other character. Most of the characters live within their families.

Few of these characters have a significant relationship outside their family. Francis has a relationship with his grandfather's servant (who is also his biological father), and Lotte becomes very trusting of Mrs Noyes.

Generally, labelled characters are not presented as having their own thoughts and feelings. Of the six older characters, only two (Tehmul and Francis) are depicted as interested in sexual activity, but this in itself was cause for repugnance. Anger appears briefly--only two
adults are shown to be angry. Some of the characters show curiosity. Tehmul, JG, Benny, and Kelvin are curious. Four characters (Lotte, Rowena, Tehmul, Kelvin) are depicted as fearful, but the fear appears to dissipate quickly. Sorrow is evident, and so is joy.

The labelled characters are able to make few choices. Tehmul and Kelvin had more choices than others; they were older males and did not live with their parents. Some characters had no choice at all--and lived as virtual prisoners, like Francis. His lack of contact with the community deprived him of an opportunity to experience a wide range of activity, emotions, and choices. Independent actions are generally depicted as harmful or dangerous. The choices made in behalf of these characters were often not helpful.

None of the adult characters were married or had children. Nor did they have a job—with the possible exception of Tehmul, who collected pocket money for taking rats to the municipality. School-age characters were not depicted as going to school, except Dolores who attended a school for children who are mentally handicapped.

Labelled characters of working age were cast into non-work-related roles. They were depicted as complications presented to family and community. All of the characters were depicted as dependent. They were looked after, cared for, and supported by other people.
Two characters, Tehmul and Kelvin, were involved in a wider range of activities. The other characters were seen to participate in limited activities.

Only Francis and Neddy were in the care of service providers. Francis was not helped by his doctor, and Neddy was mostly ignored by his nurse.

Often, labelled characters in these examples of Canadian fiction were youthful victims of caregiver inattention. Six characters died. Four of them were killed in accidents caused by neglect.

The asset shared by most of the labelled characters was their capacity for being affectionate. Most of the characters were shown as loving and trusting.

Kriegel (1982) noted the need to move away from a view of the person who is disabled as perhaps less than human, as an ornament, toward a vision of labelled people as survivors in all their varied humanity, survivors making choices every day of their very personal, individually challenging, and dignified lives (p. 23).

Persons labelled as disabled have been routinely portrayed by the media as "dangerous" (Bogdan, Biklen, Shapiro, & Spelkoman, 1982, p. 32). Bogdan et al. pointed out that the image of Lennie Small as a dangerous person in Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* is readily apparent, as is the image of Lennie as deficit in intellectual ability (p. 32). Yet it can be observed
that Lennie is a productive worker. The question that ought to be asked is: What are Lennie’s assets?

Dexter (1964) pointed out that we need to stop teaching our children and each other "to abhor stupidity" (p. 38). Gartner (1982) wrote about how images in the Arts reinforce how one engages with the world. He recommended that we need to view labelled persons as "whole persons" (p. 15). We need expectations of achievement, and expectations that a person with a mental disability is capable (p. 15).

The study of characters labelled as mentally disabled in non-didactic, Canadian literature is important because literature reflects the perceptions and practises of the culture of which it is a part. Radical changes have been made in recent years in the thinking about persons with mental handicaps. Canadian literature is not yet reflecting the new movement to develop full personhood.
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