Shavit (Tel Aviv University) confronts the literary limbo in which children's literature has traditionally been placed because of the expectations of adult society. Children's books must provide wholesome moral nourishment for the young, with no complicated narrative structures, difficulties in language, or adult ambiguities and complex ironies. Shavit, concerned with typical literary strategies of writers for children and how these techniques respond to adult social pressures, does not attempt a full history of the literary reputation of children's literature, yet she provides a broad and illuminating social context for the particular examples chosen: Little Red Riding Hood, Roald Dahl, Lewis Carroll, the Enid Blyton and Nancy Drew series, translations of Swift's Gulliver's Travels, Hebrew children's literature, and 18th-century chapbooks. Shavit does not supplant Gillian Avery (Nineteenth Century Children, London 1965) nor John Rowe Townsend (Written for Children, 1967), but she pinpoints the theoretical issues that earlier scholars have only alluded to. Though Shavit's critical terminology is at times ponderous and repetitive, this is a coherent study, with thorough documentation, and bibliography. It will be useful for graduate students and upper-division undergraduates. —C. Rees, University of Connecticut
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Published monthly except bimonthly in July/August: 11 issues. Annual cumulated index. Indexed in Book Review Index, Book Review Digest, and Legal Information Management Index and partially indexed in Bibliographic Index and Library Literature. Available on microfilm from University Microfilms. Second-class postage paid at Middletown, Connecticut, and additional mailing offices. Printed in U.S.A. ISSN 0009-4978. Pub. No. 106240. Copyright © 1986 by American Library Association. All material in this journal subject to copyright by ALA may be photocopied for the noncommercial purpose of educational or scientific advancement.

Subscription Price:
$110.00/yr. for United States subscribers; $120.00/yr. for foreign subscribers, who should remit payment in U.S. dollars. Single copies, prepaid, $12.00. Reviews-on-Cards $175.00/yr.; $185.00/yr. foreign subscribers (available only to CHOICE subscribers). Sample box R-O-C; prepaid, $25.00.

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