

1995

Of an "Only Child" 's World

Michael Benedikt

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview>

Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Benedikt, Michael. "Of an "Only Child" 's World." *The Iowa Review* 25.2 (1995): 116-119. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.4369>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact lib-ir@uiowa.edu.

Of an “Only Child” ’s World

Michael Benedikt

1.

It’s hard for anyone who hasn’t grown up as an “only child” to imagine just exactly what that’s like, I guess!

However (& I think I can speak about this subject with a certain authority, having grown up, once, as an “only child,” myself)
I believe that—just as with most other things in this world (if not, in fact, just as with just about everything else on *earth!*)—

In understanding this particular subject, too,
A little stretch of the imagination can help

2.

For example, I’ll bet that you, yourself—right from the start & even just for openers—can imagine quite easily
That “only,” can sometimes mean kind of “lonely”;

—After all, for *any* “only child,” right from the start,
There are no elder sisters & no elder brothers nearby, much less in the very same room

For a kid to talk to when it gets dark, or cry out in the night to;
Therefore, a child who is an “only child,” will often fall asleep at night

Listening to TV, or to the radio.

3.

Nor is there any older sister, or big brother to turn to, daytimes, to share with the “only child” the benefit of his or her experience
By offering the usual, well-meant advice, on things like “How To Get Along In Life”;

On the other hand, there can be a certain element of excitement, can there not?—

& Even a certain “Pioneering Sense of Exploration”
(as we might term it, to be brief)—

In “Finding Out Things For Oneself”!

4.

Of course, in such a situation, it’s also true that there’s no little sister, or little brother either

To watch over, look out for, & eventually share various favorite toys with
—& Of course, sooner or later, to perhaps become jealous of!;

Yes, I can say from experience; & even with a certain authority,
That it’s inconceivable that an “only child” experience anything at all

Like the usual feelings of “Sibling Rivalry”

5.

In any event, a kid can get to be kind of independent,
Growing up that way, relatively-speaking on his or her own; & all by his or her own “lonesome”;

—He or she learns to “Look Within,” in the main, for solutions to many of the usual, youthful “Growing Pains,”

First during childhood, & then in later years

Revolving his or her own thoughts, & racking his or her own brains again
& again

About things that, to be sure, concern most other people, too!

—Such as what, in the world, might be best for one.

6.

—Even the parents the child might have depended on a whole lot more (& yes, maybe even loved a little bit better)

Had not such a one, from early on, started the habit of “Going It Alone”

Being seen (whether those two were sleeping invisibly together, during the long dark hours of the night

In the room they inevitably gravitated to, which was their private space; or whether they were hard at work, during long hours of the daylight, & thus also absent & in some other place)

As presences in a private world of *their* own, too; & therefore, as beings mostly merely “out there” somewhere, somewhat like mysteries; &—What with all the other preoccupations of their own, adult, lives—

As distant as stars or galaxies.

7.

The fact that in their *own* younger years, at least *they* were once Accompanied

Being testified to, by seemingly endless hosts

Of laughing-&-joking-together Aunts & Uncles, *etc.*,

Passing through the halls many nights—yes, by all those footsteps passing by one’s bedroom door, & into radiant, multicolored party-lights;

All coming & going, during their frequent, mysterious visitations,

Like meteors or like comets in the nights.

8.

So, just possibly, it takes a certain peculiar kind of courage for a kid to go on growing up that way—as isolated, & separated, & aware of the vastness & the indifference of the darkness that surrounds him or her,

As our Astronomers are, scanning the entire universe, from all around the world, & from outer space, too,

With both optical & radio telescopes;

All of them hoping—amid the unanswering, obscure silences that *they* know, too—

To hear one signal or find one Sign
That our Earth, itself, is not the only inhabited planetary Child in the
Universe that's thus far known;

—& That none of us is really alone. . . .